

Trai Will Unveil Norms for Transparent Tariff this Week

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New Delhi: The Indian telecom regulator will likely come out with broad guidelines this week to ensure transparent, non-discriminatory and non-predatory pricing, seeking to plug loopholes in rules that had led to an acrimonious war on tariffs between incumbent operators and new entrant Reliance Jio.

“Tariff principles are final: We will issue

them in a couple of days,” RS Sharma, Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), told ET. “In a way, these principles will set the broader architecture of non-predation, non-discrimination and transparency. There can be a positive list or negative list or a combination of both lists on the attributes of something being transparent or non-transparent, for instance, in broad terms.”

He added that the authority will bring out its recommendations on data ownership, privacy and se-

ON AADHAAR ISSUE

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curity by end of February or March, even as its views on the issue will be shared with the Justice Krishna committee that is devising the data protection framework for the country. Sharma said the pricing principles will plug in regulatory gaps that came to light after Jio offered free services for more than six months.

“We must understand that regulation follows the industry in some sense; you can't write a law in real time, plugging these things in real time can lead to more issues. You can't devise an antidote for a disease

unless it has happened,” Sharma said.

Bharti Airtel, Vodafone India, and Idea Cellular had alleged that Jio was violating rules governing promotional schemes, which limited such offers to only 90 days and that the tariffs were predatory since these were offered below cost. The incumbents moved the telecom tribunal arguing that Jio's tariffs were predatory.

Subsequently, Trai issued a consultation paper on regulatory principles of tariff assessment in February, seeking views on the constitution of a promotional offer and its features, and the attributes of a relevant market so that the contours of dominance can be defined.

Meanwhile, Sharma criticized reports of Aadhaar breaches, saying their purpose was to malign and discredit the nation-wide project. “It's not my case that there should not be privacy, or data protection, or extremely adequate cyber security. But it's (on Aadhaar) a hue and cry for no reason. These stories of data breach that are appearing at constant intervals... their intention appears to be to just malign and discredit the project,” Sharma said.

