Issues with telecom regulations

What is the issue?

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There are no clear telecom regulation policies on net neutrality in the country.

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What is net neutrality?

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- Internet service providers should enable access to all content and applications regardless of the source, and without favouring or blocking particular products or websites.
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- Net neutrality would enhance the innovation in the Internet.
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- There are no laws governing net neutrality in India, which would require that all Internet users be treated equally.
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- There have already been a few violations of net neutrality principles by Indian service providers.
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- On February 2016, Telephone Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) published a Regulation titled, the ‘Prohibition of Discriminatory Tariffs for Data Services Regulation, 2016,
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- Whereby different pricing rate for different services or for a certain type of services were allowed.
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- TRAI rolled out a Consultation Paper on Net neutrality for public Consultation recently
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What are the issues with telecom regulations?

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- Treating service providers and Internet companies as single or separate entities comes with much complexity
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- Revenues from telecom firms contribute to more than 90 per cent of the government for 2017-18.
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- Monitoring device or company favourable networking is difficult.
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- Earlier different companies provided voice telephony, Internet service, and Internet content and applications.
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- Presently telephony, internet connectivity and Internet content and applications have become heavily vertically integrated.
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- Increasingly, the new model of value creation involves integrated eco-systems or “walled gardens”.
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What are complexity in regulatory approaches?

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- If telecom and internet industries treated as same industry, the difference are not neglected.
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- The telecom industry has geographical jurisdiction, are subject to a variety of national regulations.
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- Internet companies operate globally and are subject to light touch regulations, in most national jurisdictions.
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- India is silent on the vertical integration of different layers of the Internet.
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What can be done?

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- The reduction in levies will allow the cash-rich internet companies to create integrated value networks.
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- Treatment of connectivity providers and Internet companies as separate industries can be followed.
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- The principle of net neutrality has to be strictly enforced with respect to the walled gardens created by Internet companies.
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- Telecoms should stop supporting one particular company or applications, it can depend on ad services for revenues.
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- Stronger data protection laws should be enforced, and telecom providers need to assure data security to the users.
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- The complexities in telecom regulations can be resolved only when telecom product vendors innovate constantly.
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Quick fact

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Walled gardens

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- In the realm of open and free Internet, the term walled garden refers to a browsing environment where users are restricted to certain content on a website and allowed to navigate only particular areas of the website.
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- The main purpose of creating a walled garden is to shield users from certain kinds of information.
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- This method is often used by an Internet service provider (ISP) to restrict users from accessing some websites
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Source: Business Line

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