Telecom Authorisation Rules, 2026

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Why in News?

- **New Rules -** The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) under the ***Ministry of Communications*** has officially notified 3 rulebooks under the parent Telecommunications Act, 2023.
  - The Telecommunications (Authorisation for Provision of Principal Telecommunication Services) Rules, 2026
  - The Telecommunications (Authorisation for Captive Telecommunication Services) Rules, 2026
  - The Telecommunications (Authorisation for Provision of Miscellaneous Telecommunication Services) Rules, 2026
- This notification marks the formal dismantling of the ***Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933.***

Key Highlights of the New Rules

- **Shift from "Licensing" to "Authorisation" -** The multi-layered, paperwork-heavy telecom licensing regime has been completely replaced by a simplified Authorisation framework.
- Telecom operators and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been given the option to either
  - Voluntarily migrate to this new streamlined regime immediately or
  - Continue operating under their existing licenses until they naturally expire.
- **Dedicated Frame for Private & Captive Networks -** The rules formalize four clear categories of internal corporate networks under the Captive Services vertical
  - Captive Mobile Radio Trunking Services (CMRTS)
  - Captive Non-Public Networks (CNPNs) targeting smart factories, ports, and industrial campuses.
  - Captive Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) Services

    - Captive General Services (primarily reserved for governmental and public enterprises).
- **Isolation Clause -** Captive networks must run completely isolated from the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) and public internet to prevent regulatory arbitrage.
- **Strict Data Localisation-** All captive network data logs, architecture, and routing information must be stored locally in India.
- **Removal of Satellite (GMPCS) References -** The final notified rules removed all explicit references to Global Mobile Personal Communications by Satellite (GMPCS).
- This exclusion indicates a cautious approach by the government over strategic national security controls.
- It particularly concerning foreign satellite internet operators (such as Starlink), given the challenges in regulating or shutting them down during geopolitical standoffs.

The Telecommunications Act, 2023
• The parent Act has been progressively implemented in phases since 2024. Key changes already enacted include: - **Expanding Statutory Scope -** The legal definition of "telecommunication" was widened, granting the state potential regulatory leverage over over-the-top (OTT) internet messaging applications. - **Digital Bharat Nidhi-** The Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), funded via corporate contributions to expand telecom reach into rural and isolated zones was officially renamed and re-engineered as the Digital Bharat Nidhi. - **National Security Interventions -** The law gives the Union government the power to seize, take control of, or suspend any telecom infrastructure during times of war or national security emergencies. - **Interception Safeguards -** The updated law retains old state surveillance powers, allowing senior bureaucrats to issue legal tapping and data interception directives without heavy external judicatory checks.

Reference

[The Hindu | The Telecommunications Act, 2023]

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