# TRAI’s New Regulations on Inter-connections

## What is the issue?

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- Providing interconnections between networks is mandatory according to TRAI guidelines for telecom operators.
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- But the implementation of these guidelines has been poor and hence the new TRAI rules are focused for bringing in better compliance.
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## How has the conflict spanned?

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- Interconnection between telecom operators has been the cause of many disputes since the sector was opened up to the private sector.
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- Some incumbent operators resort to malpractices by using interconnections as a tool to delay or block competition from new entrants.
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- Existing dominant operators have either refused to interconnect on flimsy grounds or have arbitrarily priced interconnections to deter new entrants.
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- Notably, in 2003, MTNL (which was then the largest operator), had pulled not provided interconnection with new private operator networks.
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- Resultantly, subscribers of the private operators could not call MTNL users (the majority) for days, which would mean bad reputation for the new entrants.
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- More recently, incumbent players declined to give sufficient points of interconnection to Reliance Jio which in turn impacted the latter’s 4G roll out.
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## What regulations have been brought in?

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- The quality of competition and services offered by an operator is highly dependent on how well it is interconnects with rival providers.
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- Hence, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recently decided to further tighten rules governing interconnection to ensure better compliance.
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- The regulator has made it mandatory for operators to offer interconnection within 30 days (earlier it was 90) of receiving a request from another operator.
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- Which previously there was no financial cost for non-compliance, TRAI has now prescribed a penalty of up to Rs.1 lakh per day for violating operators.
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- Also, to stop unilateral disconnection of points of interconnection, the TRAI has also prescribed conditions under which interconnections can be cancelled.
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## What else could've been done?

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- **Dispute Resolution -** TRAI has dropped the idea of setting up a "Coordination Committee" to resolve issues between operators.
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- Rather, operators will have to continue to approach "Telecom Dispute Settlement Appellate Tribunal", which has proven to be time consuming.
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- **IP level interconnections -** As data networks grow, voice calls will also switch to internet-based modes, which require separate interconnections.
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- But TRAI hasn't laid down the building blocks for migrating from the current circuit switch level interconnection to the Internet Protocol level.
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**Source: Business Line**

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