

## **Seminar on rights and responsibilities of Telephony user**

Telecommunications has grown leaps and bounds in India in the last 15 years; from the penetration of just around 1.1% in 1993 to over 35% in 2008. This is still growing at the rate of 40%, the highest in the world. (Penetration of 1% is 1 telephone for 100 persons). An amazing growth made possible by the opening up of the industry to competition in 1990s.

The services offered has also grown phenomenally from just voice (often indifferent voice at that) in 1990 to voice, text, mobile, high speed data and soon it will be video. The number of service providers has grown from one to many.

This unbridled growth, while advantageous to consumers in terms of tariffs and better availability, has brought in some problems. The prime motive of the SP (service provider) has changed to 'profits' from being 'service to the people' of the DoT era. The Government of India has rightly set up a Telecomm Regulatory authority (TRAI) in 2000 to regulate the trade practices, to monitor the activities and suo-motu control; to ensure that the concept of 'service to the public' is not lost sight of and is left only to the free market forces.

How well is the industry working? How well is TRAI safeguarding the interests of the consumers? How do the consumers perceive the exponential growth? Do they have any problems? What kind of problems? How does a common man convey his/her problems to the authorities?

The last brings up awareness about TRAI. How does TRAI regulate? We expect that they issue a number of mandatory regulations and guidelines. We expect that they have defined the metrics and the measurements process. We hope that they have a mechanism for receiving feedback from the public. We pray that they can bring to book the defaulters and they have some say in the enforcement of regulations.

CAI has organized a seminar with TRAI to get some answers to the above questions and to bring some awareness to the public. This seminar is open to the members of CAI and the public. There will be participation from the service providers. TRAI will participate in numbers to explain their role.

This seminar is scheduled for 20th June at GRT hotel in T Nagar. We shall have 5 technical sessions and there will be speakers from the public, SPs and TRAI. We hope to have an honest exchange of views and information between the public (you, us and the press), the SPs and representatives from TRAI. We have allotted time for Q&A in each session.

Members and public are invited to attend. Please call CAI and reserve seats since the accommodation is limited. The fee will be Rs.100/- for a CAI member and Rs.500/- for a non member.