

RELIEF FROM SPAM CALLS, MESSAGES COMING SOON

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: IT, Internet and Communications

The draft Bill enables a legal framework for preventing harassment of users from unsolicited calls and messages and states that “the identity of a person sending a message using telecommunication services shall be available to the user receiving such message, in such form as may be prescribed”.

Speaking to reporters, the Minister stressed that the government envisaged a light touch regulatory environment that would not stifle innovation or increase regulatory burden.

The draft Bill, which was released earlier this week inviting comments from stakeholders, seeks to replace the existing legal framework comprising the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933 and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950, that currently govern the telecommunication sector in the country.

New provisions

It includes provisions such as waiving dues for financially stressed operators, bringing over-the-top platforms (such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Netflix) within the ambit of telecom services that require a licence to operate and provisions for message interception in case of public emergency.

Replying to a query on licensing of OTT apps, the Minister said these were already included under regulation as an interpretation of ‘telegraph’ under the Indian Telegraph Act. “Already by interpretation of what is a telegraph – the service which you use today... is it telegraph? It is not... but... over a period of time all the services that you use are already interpreted under telegraph... We are in 2022...the construct that we take in 2022, we need to consider the reality of 2022...With interpretation there is confusion... law should be certain and clear. To bring that clarity this has been done.”

The Minister said this draft would go through a transparent consultation process and only then the final draft would be made on the basis of inputs received. The Minister said he expected the new telecom Bill to be converted into a law in the next six to 10 months.

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