

IPTV INDIA FORUM

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I&B MINISTRY PUTS IPTV ON FAST TRACK

February 22nd, New Delhi: From all indications, the Information & Broadcasting Ministry is going about in a time-bound manner to ensure that they can enable the fledgling IPTV industry to become the next big thing.

With the Indian media industry growing at a healthy clip of 20% and television and mobile penetration on the rise, a new converged platform is around the corner. Speaking at the IPTV India Forum Round Table Discussion held here today, the I&B Secretary, Smt. Asha Swaroop and her team conveyed a sense of steely resolve in making the IPTV platform a near reality. Internet Protocol Television or IP TV is the passage of audio and video signals on high bandwidth broadband lines. IP TV is seen as the next “killer apps” as it allows the same line to carry telephony, internet and video. Delivery of a host of interactive value added services are possible on the IPTV platform.

If all goes as per plan, the ministry will issue general guidelines and amend the existing broadcast Downlinking Guidelines over the next 30 days. The amendment of the Downlinking Guidelines will allow content aggregators and broadcasters enter in to legal agreements with Telcos, ISPs and Cable operators to offer IPTV services. The guidelines will be “enablers” to creating a viable industry model and more consumer choice. The I&B Ministry has already accepted the TRAI recommendations on IPTV services which were issued earlier in January 2008. I&B is now awaiting the recommendations of Prasar Bharti so that they can also work on regulations related to Terrestrial and Mobile Television.

However there is concern that the Information Technology Act of 2000 which applies to broadband services, have draconian provisions. Indian courts have been willing to harshly punish those

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involved in illegal acts online. On the IPTV platform it may be possible to upload user generated content which would make the service provider liable to prosecution should there be objectionable material uploaded.

Also from a regulatory standpoint there is concern on the part of the industry that the new industry should provide a "level playing field" to all entrants. The key areas of concern remain in the area of pricing of services, interoperability of set top boxes, taxation and media cross-holding norms. Currently a different set of regulations apply to cable, DTH, Telecom players.

Secretary I&B also indicated that TRAI's recommendations on Mobile TV will also be examined quickly and the process of identification of spectrum sub band for this and digital terrestrial broadcasting followed by auction of spectrum will be taken up with Department of Telecom soon.

Today's Round Table discussion was attended by industry leaders as well as consumer activists, government and regulators. The IPTV India Forum is a non-profit society set up in September 2007 to be a neutral platform for the industry.

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Issued by Anil Prakash, Secretary General, IPTV India Forum today 23 February, 2008 at New Delhi India.

For more information please visit our website <http://iptvforum.org.in> or contact Anil Prakash +91-98-11155846, e-Mail anil@iptvforum.org.in

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