

CRACKING WHIP

Trai issues norms for TV rating agencies

New Delhi: Trai on Wednesday 11 September supported self-regulation of television rating points through industry-led body Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) but **also recommended inviting other eligible companies to join in.**

Recommendations issued on Wednesday said that the minimum number of panel homes for collecting television viewership ratings should be 20,000 and established within six months of the notification. In a strongly worded set of regulations, Trai said that the I&B ministry's 'track-record' did not inspire confidence and suggested that the guidelines be notified in two months.

TV rating agencies should have a minimum of 20,000 panel homes for collecting viewership data and this number should increase by 10,000 every year till the figure of 50,000 is reached, said Trai. Eligibility conditions for agencies include minimum net worth of Rs 20 crore with cross-holding restrictions. According to Trai's recommendation, no company can hold 10 pc or more of paid-up equity in more than one rating agency operating in the same area or in both rating agencies and in broadcasting or advertising agencies simultaneously.

Describing the present rating system as 'terrible' and 'faulty', **TRAI chief Rahul Khullar said, "Our present system has collapsed. We have a terrible TV rating system and we have known it for 10 years."**

Khullar said the Ministry should take a decision on the issue or TRAI could take suo moto cognizance in larger public interest. "There must be some degree of certainty when we make a recommendation, you take action on it, reject the recommendations if you don't like it," he added.

In its latest recommendations, TRAI suggested that panel homes should be selected from a pool which is at least 10 times the number of panel homes for audience measurement. It also suggested **a voluntary code of conduct** by the industry for maintaining secrecy and privacy of the panel homes. The rating agency should set up an **effective complaint redressal system**, TRAI has said. The rating agency should get its processes audited internally quarterly and through an **independent auditor** annually and all reports should be posted on the website of the agency, TRAI said.

It also suggested penal provisions for noncompliance of guidelines including financial penalty from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore and cancellation of registration. All agencies should follow the norms and existing rating agencies should comply within six months time.

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Dr Rahul Khullar IAS BA Eco Hons 1972 St Stephen's MA Eco 1974 DSchool and his wife Sidhushree Khullar IAS BA Eng Hons 1972 Lady Shri Ram Member Secretary Planning Commission are among our Very Special Alumni Couples.