

Caller Name Presentation (CNAP) proposal by TRAI

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In news– Telecom operators have said that the CNAP proposal by the Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRAI) of India to display callers' names could have privacy implications.

About Caller Name Presentation (CNAP)-

- In November 2022, TRAI floated a consultation paper seeking comments about the potential introduction of CNAP.
- **The feature will allow users to know the identity of the person when they call them.**
- The basic **idea is that if people are aware of the person who is calling them, they can make an informed choice** about those calls.
- At the same time, such a feature could potentially **help in curbing harassment and other spam calls.**
- **Currently, there are some applications which offer a similar service, for instance, Truecaller.**
- However, all of them are **third-party apps** and depend on crowd-sourced data. There is no unifying solution offered by telecom operators.

Key proposals by TRAI-

The regulator has proposed four possible methods through which the CNAP feature can be rolled out:

- **The first model includes telcos managing a CNAP database of their respective subscribers** and when its user makes a call to a user on another network, extract their data from the database and present it to the receiving telco's user.
- **The second model** is similar to the first one except that

in this case, the operator through which the **call is made will permit the receiving operator to access its CNAP database.**

- **In the third model, TRAI has envisaged a third party operating a centralised database.** In this case, the receiving operator would be responsible to delve into the centralised database to retrieve and present the caller's data.
- **The fourth model** would require that each telco **retain a copy of a synchronised central database** operated by a third party.

Opposition to the proposal-

- Telcos seem to be in two minds over the proposed feature, saying that **it has both privacy risks and could become a complex technical exercise.**
- They have largely said that the **feature should be optional.** Concerns have been raised over different aspects.
- According to the Telecom operators, the proposal, called CNAP, will be **difficult to execute from a technical perspective** given that a number of phones in the Indian market may not be able to support it.
- Meanwhile, Truecaller, which already offers a similar service albeit through a crowdsourcing model has said since several people purchase SIM cards using forged identity cards, **TRAI's proposal to use SIM registration data to display callers' names might be fraught with inaccuracies** since the identity of the actual user of a mobile number may not be the same as the subscriber.
- The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), a trade body representing **Airtel, Jio and Vodafone Idea has said that** given that **handset manufacturers and Operating System (OS) providers have control over the data obtained through the CNAP facility, this could result in the breach of subscriber data privacy** as the

manufacturers of mobile devices and OS providers would amass subscriber data for the entire country

- **The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)**, which represents digital industry firms, echoed a similar sentiment and pointed out that women in particular could be the most vulnerable.
- **COAI said that a significant obstacle in implementing CNAP would be the fact that time-division multiplexing (TDM) based interconnection** between telcos does not support CNAP.
- Further, there are no standards for CNAP over 2G/3G networks and hence, there is no ready solution available for it.
- **Another major challenge is with regard to handsets as not all handsets are capable of supporting CNAP functionalities.**