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Trai makes 1 million IDs public, invites hactivists to its website

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IN WHAT many allege is a gross violation of citizens' privacy, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on Monday put up the email ids of more than one million of the respondents to its consultation paper on net neutrality and regulatory framework for over-the-top (OTT) services. Later in the day hactivists going by the Twitter handle @opin-dia_revenge allegedly brought down the Trai website using a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack. The attack came after several internet users took to social media platform like Twitter to voice their concerns regarding publishing of confidential data and possible spam attacks.

While the revelation of responses in a public consultation process is standard procedure, it is the disclosure of sensitive infor-

REGULATE OTTs: TELCOS

New Delhi: TSPs like Airtel, Vodafone and Idea have been uniform in their response to Trai's consultation paper, asking for the regulator to license OTTs which provide basic communication services. Nasscom provided one of the dissenting voices, saying OTTs were already regulated by the IT Act, CrPC, IPC etc. ENS & PTI

mation like email ids that has been controversial. "While there cannot be anonymity in public consultations and Trai is obliged to reveal all responses, they must not reveal the email ids and contact details unless they can prove that petitioners provided no other form of identification, including a name," said independent Rajya Sabha MP Rajeev

Chandrashekar, in an email to *The Indian Express*.

Trai had invited comments from various stakeholders in response to its paper and a set of 20 questions that discussed zero-rating platforms and whether OTT services like WhatsApp and Skype should be regulated. Over one million people had responded, most of them through customised reply options that sent a set of prepared answers favouring net neutrality. On Monday, Trai had put up all the responses, including the email ids of the respondents, in pdf files which could be downloaded. The issue also opened up the larger debate on the lack of clearly defined laws protecting privacy of individuals.

"Laws pertaining to consumer protection and individual privacy are very loosely defined in our country," he said. "We give out information to tax authorities, election authorities and so on. There is no way of knowing if the information is given out or misused. If it is, there aren't regal remedies," he said.