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Government's decision above Trai views in case of difference: SC

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has said that the government's decision on the issue of the terms and conditions of the licences given to the telecom companies will prevail over the view of the telecom watchdog, Trai. The regulatory and other non-recommendatory functions of the authority granted under the provisions of the Trai Act, 1997 shall be performed independent of the Central government's functions which are binding on the licencee companies, the apex court said.

"If there is a difference between the Trai and the Central government with regard to a particular term or condition of a licence, as in the present case (validity of the definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue in the licence agreement), the recommendations of the Trai will not prevail and instead the decision of the Central government will be final and binding," said an SC bench.

The bench said "the Trai and the Tribunal had no jurisdiction to decide on the validity of the definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue in the licence agreement and to exclude certain items of revenue which were included in the definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue in the licence agreement between the licencer and the licencee". The court considered the issue of whether the enactment of the Trai Act, 1997 in any way affected the exclusive privilege of the Central government in respect of the telecommunication activities and altered the contractual nature of the licence granted to the licencee under the proviso of the Telegraph Act.

The court also interpreted the provision contained in section 11 of the Trai Act 1997, which provides that notwithstanding anything contained in the Telegraph Act, the regulator authority shall have the function to make recommendations, either suo motu or on a request from a licencor on terms and conditions of licence to a service provider.

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