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19 APR, 2012, 04.06PM IST, PTI

Trai approves processing fee hike on mobile recharge coupons

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NEW DELHI: Telecom regulator [Trai](#) today approved hike in processing fee for all [mobile recharge coupons](#) (top-up vouchers) priced above Rs 20 but has left it unchanged for the vouchers below that.

Trai cleared the increase of 50 per cent in the charge through an amendment made to the Telecom Traiff Order (TTO) after about two-and-half years.

"Authority has decided to increase the ceiling on Processing Fee on Top up vouchers to Rs 3 from Rs 2 in respect of Top up vouchers having maximum retail price (MRP) of Rs 20 and above and to continue with the existing ceiling of Rs 2 in respect of top up vouchers having MRP of less than Rs 20," Trai said in TTO.

This order will effect more than 90 per cent pre-paid users in the country. The processing fee is included within the MRP of recharge coupon purchased.

Trai noticed that top up vouchers priced below Rs 20 are not available with some service providers and directed all telecom service providers to provide consumers with at least one top up voucher priced at Rs 10.

"With a view to protect the interests of users, the Authority mandates that every service provider shall offer and make available to the consumer at least one top up voucher, of denomination of Rs 10," Trai said.

The order comes after telecom industry body COAI and AUSPI made written submission to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India arguing that there have been inflationary pressures over the last three years, since the ceiling of Rs 2 was prescribed by Trai.

COAI has also cited the rising cost of providing services by way of hike in salaries and wages, increased transportation and diesel cost and so in support of raising the fee.

Trai considered views of consumer groups that the top up vouchers of smaller denominations should be exempted from hike in processing fee in order to protect interests of marginal and low usage subscribers and hence left processing fee on lower denominations recharge coupon untouched.

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