Regulating Satellite TV

Why in news?

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Government is reviewing the process of granting permission to satellite television companies for uplinking and downlinking channels.

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What is up-linking and downlinking?

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- In satellite telecommunication, a downlink is the link from a satellite down to one or more ground stations or receivers.
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- An uplink is the link from a ground station up to a satellite.
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- For creating such links different radioactive frequencies are used, the C band is the most frequently used.
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- The Ka and Ku bands are reserved exclusively for satellite communication.
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- These frequencies will be somewhere around 3700 MHz - 31 GHz.
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- Some companies sell uplink and downlink services to television stations, corporations, and to other telecommunication carriers.
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What is the plan on satellite television communication?

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- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has floated a consultation paper on issues related to up-linking and downlinking of TV channels in India.
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- TRAI is reviewing provisions of the guidelines that came into effect six years

ago in December 2011.
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- One of the central questions being examined is whether satellite TV channels should be auctioned by the government.
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- While auction of any natural resource, in this case, spectrum or airwaves used to broadcast satellite TV channels, holds merit for reasons of transparency as well as for higher revenues.
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What are the challenges involved?

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- The television Industry is very large as there are close to 900 permitted satellite TV channels, along with seven direct-to-home (DTH) operators, and a large number of cable TV operators.
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- There are technical issues that need to be settled before the sector can undergo any radical change.
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- Due to low entry barriers, non-serious players have been able to obtain TV broadcasting licences, such licences are even traded or leased to different entities later.
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- The government is also expecting higher revenues from a fast-growing TV satellite broadcasting sector, especially when the rules are much more stringent for DTH.
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- Auctions could help right market price for a channel, but this is likely to happen at the risk of discouraging local and regional players.
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How the issues can be addressed?

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- TRAI must examine the feasibility of one-time entry fee for all TV channels, apart from arriving at a revenue-sharing model with the government.
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- That will check the entry of non-serious players into the broadcasting space

while being a source of meaningful revenue for the government.
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- Satellite TV channel should not be regulated in isolation but in sync with the overall technological and business models prevalent in the telecom and broadcasting space.
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Source: Business Standard

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