Make PoI congestion data public, resolve IUC issue

Not surprisingly, given there was such a big difference in the number of Points of Interconnection (PoI) that RJio wanted and what the incumbent telcos thought were necessary, Trai's delicate truce appears to have broken down. The weekend saw a flurry of press releases from RJio and Bharti Airtel levelling accusations against one another—Airtel set the ball rolling saying it had given RJio enough PoIs to take care of 15 million subscribers, RJio reacted by saying it had only got a fourth of what it needed and that Airtel was also unilaterally deviating from the PoI agreement, Airtel reacted by saying RJio was covering technical flaws in its network, to which RJio said there were two crore call failures between the two networks every day but none on the Jio network—meaning the problem was at Airtel's end.

Since the problem of inadequate PoIs is going to keep coming up, Trai needs to play a more active role to ensure this isn't just a case, as RJio alleges, of incumbents trying to stifle the competition by not giving it enough PoIs—since it will always be one telco's word against the other, it would be a good idea for Trai to indicate how many PoIs are needed to ensure uninterrupted calls between the networks, whether Airtel's PoI conditions are unfair, and put out 24×7 data on the congestion on the PoIs. At a more fundamental level, the issue remains of whether the IUC rate of 14 paise per minute is viable—if it is, and that takes into account the 10:1 call asymmetry the incumbents talk of, there can be no case for them to deny RJio the PoIs it wants. Resolving the issue will require the government to get all the cases filed against the IUC order clubbed and trying to persuade the courts, including the Supreme Court ultimately, to rule on this at the earliest. Unless this two-pronged action takes place, RJio and the incumbents are going to continue to hurl accusations at one another without any meaningful resolution.