



# ANNUAL REPORT



**2022-23**



# COAI



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डा० पी. डी. वाघेला  
Dr. P. D. Vaghela



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भारतीय दूरसंचार विनियामक प्राधिकरण  
Chairman  
TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

#### Message



India is in the process of rapidly accelerating its digital infrastructure in a holistic manner so as to accomplish the vision of a 'Digital India', 'Broadband for All' and the NDCP Targets for inclusive digital growth. India is poised to achieve the goal of raising the share of digital economy to \$1 trillion by 2025.

The telecom industry has been at the forefront in the digital transformation and innovation led growth which is enabled by telecom reforms, responsive policies and dynamic regulations. Technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and cloud computing are increasingly being adopted by the industry to improve user experience, optimize network performance, and generate new income sources. In addition, the sector has partnered with stakeholders, including governments, regulators, academia, start-ups and civil society to develop an environment that is favorable to digital governance, convergence, data transmission, digital inclusion and cybersecurity.

India took a historic step last year to enable the launch of the advanced 5G technology across the nation, initiating India's leap into the next 'tech-ade' on the basis of recommendations of TRAI. TRAI also initiated pilots at Bhopal Smart City; GMR International Airport, New Delhi; Deendayal Port, Kandla and Namma Metro, Bengaluru on use of street furniture for Small Cells and aerial fiber deployment in March 2022. The objective was to develop cross-sectoral framework which makes available and allows use of various street furniture owned by central, state and municipal authorities for 5G deployment in a seamless and time bound manner, and also promotes sharing of street furniture among various service providers. I thank and congratulate DoT, COAI and its members, as well as the participating authorities for their cooperation and contribution in these pilots. We hope that the learnings from the pilots will help us to effectively plan rollout and penetration of 5G deployment in cities, towns and villages.

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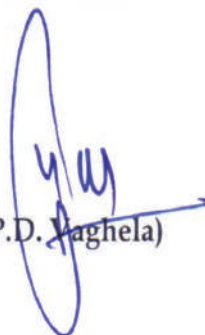


Recently, Hon. Prime Minister unveiled the Bharat 6G Vision Document and launched the 6G research and development test bed. The Bharat 6G Vision Statement is to *"Design, develop and deploy 6G network technologies that provide ubiquitous, intelligent and secure connectivity for high quality living experience for the world"*. The 6G Vision is based on principles of Affordability, Sustainability and Ubiquity, aligned with the national Vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. It aims to ensure that India takes its rightful place in the world as a leading supplier of advanced telecom technologies and solutions that are affordable and contribute to the global good.

With the uptake of new technologies, India is poised to play a significant role in Global Value Chain system as new technologies are increasingly being adopted by communication and other vertical sectors. Also, reforms announced in the telecom sector with an objective to scale up digital economy will create healthy competition and encourage investments in the sector.

We appreciate the role of COAI and its members in facilitating Digital Connectivity thereby helping in realizing Government's vision of 'Digital India'. I am sure, TRAI will continue to receive support and cooperation from COAI.

I compliment COAI and its members for their continuous efforts in providing quality digital communication services and building up inclusive infrastructure in India. I wish them all the success for its Annual General Meeting.



(P.D. Vaghela)



के. राजारामन, भा. प्र. से.  
सचिव  
**K. Rajaraman, IAS**  
Secretary



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संचार मंत्रालय  
दूरसंचार विभाग  
Government of India  
Ministry of Communications  
Department of Telecommunications

### Message

I would like to congratulate COAI for its outstanding role in representing and promoting the interests and aspirations of the telecom service providers in India. COAI has also been a catalyst in creating awareness and dialogue on various topics related to digital communication and technology among various stakeholders.

Telecom service providers have shown remarkable agility and innovation in meeting the growing demand for data and voice services from various segments of society. The telecom infrastructure providers have also ensured seamless network availability and quality across the country in the most vital times.

The Government of India has taken several steps to boost the growth and ease of doing business in the telecom sector. This would be instrumental in helping faster deployments of networks and roll-out of services, which would be pivotal to our objective of making India a global leader in 5G and 6G technologies. I congratulate the telecom service providers to make India as the fastest country in 5G network rollout since its inauguration on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2022, by Hon'ble Prime Minister.

6G Vision document has already been released by the Hon'ble Prime Minister during the inauguration of ITU Area Office and Innovation Centre, New Delhi. India is already participating in the global 6G standards development process and we envisage that the recently unveiled Telecom Technology Development Fund will support early-stage startups working on such future technologies.

Several vital policy decisions have been taken by the Government to ensure an upward growth path for the country's widespread Digital ecosystem. Government has already launched Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Telecom and Networking products. Telecom Service Providers are requested to cooperate and make the use of AtmaNirbhar Bharat initiative of the Government.

I urge the telecom service providers for proliferation of 4G/5G connectivity and digital services in rural and remote areas of the country, which need special attention and support. The department plans to provide mobile coverage in uncovered villages through various USOF schemes. By improving mobile coverage in these areas, the Government and the telecom service providers can bridge the digital divide and empower people with better access to information, education, health, governance, and livelihood opportunities.

I wish COAI all the best for their future endeavours.



(K. Rajaraman)

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# CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

**Mr. Pramod K. Mittal,**  
Chairperson, COAI



India has emerged as the second-largest telecom market in the world, with 117 crore subscribers, including nearly 114 crore mobile users. The year 2022-23 was marked by several significant developments and achievements in the Indian Telecom Sector, with the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) playing a pivotal role in these advancements.

The year saw the highly anticipated 5G spectrum auction, in which the Government of India offered 72,098 MHz of spectrum, of which 51,236 MHz i.e., 71% of the total was sold. The telecom industry reacted positively to the Prime Minister's Telecom reforms, committing over Rs. 1.5 lac Cr. to 5G spectrum investment. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022, the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji launched 5G services at the India Mobile Congress 2022, marking the beginning of a new era of digital transformation and connectivity in the country.

Combined with cutting-edge technologies such as IoT, M2M, Drones, AI and Big Data analytics, 5G is anticipated to revolutionize various sectors. GSMA estimates that 5G technologies will contribute around US\$ 450 billion to India's economy from 2023 to 2040. Additionally, a report by Deloitte India and CII projects that 5G will boost the Indian telecom industry's growth by US\$ 12.5 billion triennially.

Sustaining the trend of reformative policymaking, the Government floated the draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, which is a milestone step towards developing a modern and future-ready legal framework in telecommunication. The era of digital convergence necessitates such futuristic and forward-looking policy. The draft Telecom Bill is a big step in this direction.

As the apex body in the Indian Digital Communications sector, we appreciate and support the government's efforts on the cause of data privacy and believe that it would be critical to safeguard the rights and interests of consumers. We believe that the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022 would be instrumental in enhancing users' control over the collection and processing of their data, while also increasing the ease of doing business in India.

The deployment of the nation's telecom infrastructure has been greatly expedited and made easier by the Wireless Licensing Reforms of 2022 and the Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, both of which came into effect in 2022. The new progressive RoW Rules framework issued by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has simplified the existing regime, making it less tedious and time-consuming. This will also help in the faster rollout of 5G in the defence-owned land and establishments across the country by the Indian telecom operators, who are looking to cover the entire nation with the next-gen networks in less than two years.

India's telecom equipment sector is expected to register strong manufacturing and export growth in the coming years, with the benefits of schemes like the Performance Linked Incentive (PLI). Along with the PLI scheme and a similar design-led initiative, India's own 4G/5G stack will enable the country to prove its mettle in the telecom manufacturing space, though it may take longer than expected.

The sector also has its share of challenges that include high taxes and levies, increasing compliance burden which impact the profitability of operators and are not in line with Ease of Doing Business. COAI has been



actively engaging with the government and other stakeholders to address these challenges. We have been advocating for a reduction in taxes and levies and have been highlighting the need for a stable and predictable regulatory environment with reduction in compliance burden.

We believe that the telecom sector will continue to play a critical role in the country's socioeconomic development. With the government's focus on Digital India and the increasing adoption of digital technologies across industries, the demand for telecom

services is only set to grow. The sector has shown remarkable resilience and adaptability, and we believe that it is well-positioned to capitalise on the opportunities presented by emerging technologies such as 5G, Artificial Intelligence, and the Internet of Things. COAI is committed to working closely with our members and stakeholders to ensure that the industry continues to thrive and deliver value to customers and society at large.



# VICE CHAIRPERSON MESSAGE

## Mr. P. Balaji

Vice Chairperson, COAI



It is my pleasure to present our annual report for the year 2022-23, and to reflect on the accomplishments and challenges of the Indian telecom sector.

One of the most significant changes induced by the pandemic has been the growing dependence on telecommunications technology, which, in turn, has fuelled the demand for strong networks and better connectivity. The Indian Telecom sector did extremely well to cater to this rising demand in 2022.

India's economy, society and culture have been propelled forward by the telecommunications industry, with over 1.17 billion subscribers today, making it the second-largest telecom market globally, while also becoming the world's largest data consumer. Taking on the challenges usually associated with any industry, COAI has continued to work tirelessly to support our members and ensure that our industry remains at the forefront of India's technological advancement.

## Significant progress

The telecom industry is collaborating actively with the government and other relevant stakeholders to keep pace with the global technological advancements, and numerous significant developments have occurred in the past year - the major one amongst them being the historical launch of 5G services in India at the IMC 2022, by none other than the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. We have now entered an elite group of nations possessing such a niche technology, while also creating new records in terms of the fastest deployment of the 5G network compared to

anywhere else in the world.

5G adoption is expected to be rapid and will usher in Industry 4.0 and enhance the efficiency and flexibility of production processes in small and large industries. This aligns with the Indian government's initiatives such as "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat", and paves the way for a more advanced and connected society.

Furthermore, notable advancements are being made by India in providing telecommunications services to the rural regions and populace. The BharatNet initiative has established connectivity for more than 190,000 Gram Panchayats, involving the installation of over 600,000 km of optical fibre cable. Moreover, considerable efforts have been made to offer mobile services to remote villages, specifically in regions affected by left-wing extremism.

Several key measures have been implemented last year, with the objective to pave the way for the development of smart cities, simplify and accelerate infrastructure deployment and foster a business-friendly environment, all of which are poised to establish India as a leader in the global technology industry:

- a. The Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, 2022, will enable faster proliferation of digital infrastructure and deployment of 5G networks, leading to the integration of IoT devices into city infrastructure enabling interconnected systems for traffic, healthcare, security and the environment. The amendments in charges for deploying Aerial OFC, installing small cells using street furniture and establishment of own poles will drive private investment and innovation in



digital infrastructure, providing a catalyst for the development of smart cities.

- b. The Wireless Licensing Reforms, particularly the simplification of Standing Advisory Committee on Frequency Allocation (SACFA) certificate clearance guidelines and the reduction in processing fees, will enable the deployment of thousands of small cells, which will make up the backbone of 5G and even future 6G networks, and will aid in the quicker roll-out of networks and services, while promoting ease of doing business through reduced compliances. Furthermore, the Government's aptly strict guidelines issued on the appropriate usage of wireless jammers, boosters and repeaters will enhance the security, quality and dependability of wireless networks in the future.

The emergence of the Draft Telecommunication Bill of 2022 is a noteworthy advancement that aims to establish a modern and future-ready legal framework for telecommunication network providers and services. We hope that this new legislation will address the issue of non-level playing field with reference to OTT communications service providers. The extension of the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to a more comprehensive

"Telecommunications Development Fund" (TDF) encompassing additional objectives such as underserved urban areas, research & development, and skill enhancement, represents a significant stride towards reinforcing the financial stability, operational capability and technological ability of the telecommunications industry.

### Crucial steps

With the progress made in the field, it is evident that in the years to come, cybersecurity and resilience will be of paramount importance. It is imperative for India to prioritise the development of a skilled cybersecurity workforce in order to protect the networks and applications of the future.

As India marches aggressively towards fulfilling its ambitious digital aspirations, we are sure that the government will continue to build on reforms and work towards enhancing Ease of Doing Business. This will help attract more investment, create more jobs and promote economic growth.

As an industry, we look forward to providing our support and efforts towards helping minimise the digital divide and assist India in becoming a USD 1 trillion digital economy by 2025, as we march towards accomplishing the nation's "Digital India" vision.



# FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S DESK

**Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar**

Director General, COAI



The telecom sector in India witnessed some major developments in the year 2022, which further cemented its role as a vital catalyst for the Indian economy going ahead. With new technologies being introduced every day, the deepening trend of dependency on data and the much-awaited 5G services, the expectations from the sector have multiplied. To keep pace with these technological advancements, the industry has been working hand-in-hand with the Government and other stakeholders.

## Launch of 5G – A step ahead for India

As the country witnessed the landmark launch of 5G services by the Hon'ble Prime Minister at the India Mobile Congress 2022, we entered into the next era of technological advancement and progress. And that being in several sectors for a plethora of utilities and applications – whether manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, education, logistics, smart cities or more effective use of new-age technologies like AI, IoT, M2M, drones, big data analytics, etc. 5G also promises to generate greater demand for skilled manpower and a substantial number of direct and indirect job opportunities, bringing about socio-economic growth, besides enhanced connectivity. The deployment of 5G services in India is also happening, that too at an incredible record-breaking pace, which has necessitated heavy investments by the telecom service providers.

## New Laws for a New Technological Era

Today's era of digital convergence demands that futuristic and forward-looking policy and regulatory provisions be introduced to replace the legacy directives. The draft Indian Telecommunication Bill 2022, introduced by the Government last year, is an apt step forward in this direction as it intends to consolidate and modernize the existing laws governing

the provision, development, extension and operation of telecom services, networks and infrastructure, as well as spectrum allocation. Positive provisions have been made in the draft Bill with the objective to enable regulatory certainty, ensure a level playing field and apply the law prospectively. The Bill mandates related to effective use of spectrum, license framework, dispute resolution and graded penalties will improve the efficiency of the law. The draft Bill also lays emphasis on spectrum related reforms such as refarming and harmonization, sharing/trading/leasing, technology agnostic use, returning unused spectrum to Government, surrender of spectrum, etc., which will help in making prudent use of the national resource. We highly appreciate the legal backing for Right of Way also, which has been the biggest hindrance in the 5G roll-out.

The draft Telecom Bill proposed that Over-the-Top (OTT) communication platforms which offer services similar to telecom such as voice/video calls and messaging directly to the same customers, be brought under the Telecom Act. While effectively both TSPs and OTTs provide similar communication services to the same Indian population over the same application layer of the networks set up by TSPs; they presently operate under different rules. OTT Communication Services must be defined clearly and incorporated into the Draft Telecom Bill's framework to bring in accountability, security, fair competition and a level playing field in the sector. Doing so will make them compliant to all security and regulatory provisions, which is all the more important considering the fast rising incidences of frauds over such Communication OTT platforms, which create lapses in the security of both the nation as well as our citizens. OTTs can pay the TSPs for the usage of its networks for providing





their services to their customers in a fair and equitable manner basis the actual traffic carried by these OTTs on the TSPs' networks. This usage charge will contribute towards the development, maintenance and upgradation of the network infrastructure, while also contributing to the exchequer as part of the AGR payments of TSPs. If OTTs and TSPs both contribute financially towards infrastructure development, it will have a significant impact on the pace, robustness and vitality of India's digitally powered economy.

### **Continued Reforms & Ease of Doing Business**

The structural and procedural reforms introduced last year, such as e-KYC, rationalizing bank guarantees, eliminating SUC for future auctions, 100% FDI via automatic route, rationalizing AGR as well as interest rates and penalties, and facilitating RoW, were positive for the sector and helped expedite ease of doing business, while easing the sector's financial stress.

The Government's focus on digitization of processes on several fronts is also enabling ease of doing business. For example, the GatiShakti Sanchar Portal's introduction of the 5G RoW application form established a cooperative institutional mechanism between all parties, including the Central and State/UT government(s), to facilitate Right of Way (RoW) applications and permissions for the deployment of the country's digital infrastructure, including mobile towers and OFC. The process for obtaining an import licence has also moved online and self-declaration-based clearance has replaced the erstwhile scrutiny-based clearance, facilitating quicker equipment deployment across the country. Similar streamlining has been done in the process of obtaining technical approval for telecom towers from DoT. The time taken to deliver services has reduced drastically due to the digitization of records and automatic renewal of licences. The entire licencing process has been made online through the Saral Sanchar portal, reducing the turnaround time to an average of just two months. The directions issued by the Department of Telecommunications to Chief Secretaries across

India to accept online applications through the GatiShakti Sanchar Portal to enhance broadband connectivity in the country added further to this initiative's forte.

We also appreciate the DoT for the order issued to clarify the applicable fees for EMF audit tests, based on the TDSAT ruling passed in favor of the industry on the issue of charging the fees for EMF testing/audit conducted by field units of DoT. As per the order, the pending demand of testing fees since 20.11.2014 (date on which Hon'ble TDSAT had passed interim stay in the matter), shall be revised and charged at the rate of INR 4000 per test, while the closed demands of the testing fees i.e., demands raised by DoT after 20.11.2014, and having been paid by the licensees in entirety, shall be revised and charged at the rate of INR 4000 per test and the excess amount arising from those closed demands shall be adjusted against the pending/future testing charges. COAI had been coordinating on this with the DoT, which has been receptive to the industry's concerns and considered the same on merit to take this favorable decision, which is in the spirit of the Government's efforts towards facilitating ease-of-doing-business.

### **Enabling Policy for Infrastructure Development**

DoT issued the amended RoW Rules last year with active inputs from COAI. The RoW Amendment Rules address issues caused by lack of access to sufficient street furniture for deployment and restrictions on installing towers or small cells close to educational institutions, hospitals, airports, etc. The new reduced fees for aerial OFC and construction of poles for small cells installation are also big positives. Many States/UTs have already started revising their RoW rules based on these 2022 amendments.

The Wireless Licensing Reforms of 2022 has further helped simplify and enable faster infrastructure deployment in the country. Reduction in processing fee and expedited process for obtaining SACFA certificate clearance are welcome measures indeed.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD), in a much-awaited positive move, introduced new progressive Right of Way (RoW) rules for rolling out mobile towers, optical fiber and other



telecom infrastructure in Military Stations/ Cantonments. COAI had been long pursuing this with the MoD, in coordination with DoT.

The new framework has simplified the existing regime, making it less tedious and time-consuming. With these facilitative steps and enabling rules, proliferation of telecom infrastructure in areas inside cantonments and the other areas under the defence will have far reaching benefits for the residents and users who have been facing challenges in getting basic telecom connectivity.

This collaborative working between MoD, DoT, and industry (COAI) is a splendid example on overcoming hurdles with the joint involvement and efforts by vital stakeholders. Given that 5G will transcend beyond telecom and be an enabler for various verticals in terms of enhancing efficiencies and outputs, this also sets an excellent precedent for other central ministries/agencies like Road Transport and Highways, Power, Civil Aviation, Housing and Urban Development, Metros, etc. to work towards enhancing the digital prowess of their respective sectors through greater proliferation and penetration of telecom, and towards overall progress to achieve the collective “Digital India” vision of the nation.

The Indian Telegraph (Infrastructure Safety) Rules 2022, were notified in January 2023, laying down the procedure for exercising of legal right to dig or excavate any property, which will help avoid unwanted damage to telegraph infrastructure. Further, the ‘Call Before U Dig’ mobile App was launched by the Hon’ble Prime Minister, which will aid in mitigating damages to underground utilities caused by digging activities undertaken by various agencies.

### Other Industry Updates

Post the spectrum auctions held last year, we witnessed one of the fastest and most hassle-free allocation of spectrum to the TSPs, showcasing a positive approach from the Government. For microwave spectrum, DoT doubled the number of microwave carriers in the existing frequency bands of 13, 15, 18 and 21 GHz bands in each circle, based on COAI submission. DoT also opened up the E-band and 2 carriers of 250 MHz each are being allotted to

TSPs, in consonance with COAI representation.

The industry was facing issues with the Lawful Interception requirements, whereby multiple Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and Government Authorized agencies were approaching the TSPs to provide 1:1 traffic and space for placing their equipment. COAI’s submission to DoT helped resolve this issue as going forward, all traffic monitoring requirements will be routed through DoT. This would take care of the security needs without impacting the user experience and prevent further financial burden on the telcos.

Some positive recommendations also emerged last year from the Regulator. Many of the recommendations released by the Authority on ‘Rating of Buildings or Areas for Digital Connectivity’ are aligned to the industry’s submissions and would be beneficial to the telecom industry. The TRAI Recommendations on ‘Regulatory Framework for Promoting Data Economy Through Establishment of Data Centers, CDNs and Interconnect Exchanges in India’ also include some important ones which would be positive for the sector.

In terms of infrastructure development, many Central Ministries were engaged for enabling expansive telecom infrastructure deployments across the nation. Fruitful engagements were made with important ministries like Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways and Ministry of Railways, which resulted in some positive outcomes.

COAI actively engaged with the Maharashtra Government on the aspect of RoW and enabling robust telecom infrastructure in the State. We were pleased to see that the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation reduced the Access Charges for laying of telecom optical fiber cable to INR 1000/Km from the earlier rate of INR 1 Lakh/Km, a substantial reduction that will benefit the industry. Other positive developments took place via engagements with various State Governments like that of Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Delhi and Haryana. COAI continues to liaison with all States/UTs on pertinent issues for strengthening telecom infrastructure across India.

While telecom continues to play an increasingly

vital role in propelling the nation's economy and bringing forth immense socio-economic benefits to its people through access, inclusion, opportunities and empowerment, the power needs of this essential infrastructure sector remains to be facilitated. COAI has made comprehensive submissions to all States/UTs, seeking Industrial Tariff and Green Open Access facility for the essential telecom industry, while engaging with relevant Central and State authorities on this vital issue. Supporting the industry's energy requirements would not only help in faster and more extensive deployment of telecom infrastructure across the nation, but also aid India meet its green energy objectives.

Telecommunications is the backbone of India's digital economy, as established by the success of the JAM trinity – Aadhar, Jan-Dhan Yojana and penetration of mobile telephony, which has propelled financial inclusion in recent years. These progressive steps and developments in the industry can be seen playing a vital role in energizing this essential infrastructure sector. The telecom operators, while investing heavily in 5G networks, are also catering to the rural markets to provide services across the length and breadth of the country. Such robust connectivity clearly defines the steps towards achieving the nation's "Digital India" vision as we look forward to bridging the digital divide and help India become a USD 1 trillion digital economy by 2025.

#### **The Association's Updates**

The COAI website has been revamped into a dynamic one with improved features, to cater to all stakeholders of the sector who visit the website – Government, Industry, Academia and Public.

Last year the first step was also taken in streamlining organisational memory, and COAI's databases are now getting expanded with all organisational documentation being made easily accessible to all relevant. Continuance of memory has also been instituted with the email structure changed in a manner so that in case any employee exits the organisation, the trail of work and data remains in COAI to facilitate the new joinee.

The **COAI Executive Council** – headed by **Chairman, Mr. Pramod Kumar Mittal, Vice Chairman, Mr. P. Balaji**, and comprising senior representatives from all member operators are, as always, an integral part of the progress that the Association has been making. My special thanks to the Chairman and the Vice Chairman for their commitment and active involvement in the activities and initiatives of the Association, and we look forward to their continued support and guidance going forward.

The Executive Council was also ably assisted by professional advice from the various Working **Committees** set up in COAI. I express my gratitude and appreciation to all the Committees and **Working Groups**, their **Chairpersons** and **Vice-Chairpersons**, for providing their unstinted support and cooperation, and taking out time from their busy schedules to contribute to various industry issues and help the association represent itself in a proficient manner.

Last but not the least, I would like to place on record my deep gratitude to the **COAI Secretariat** team, which has always provided excellent support, dedication and assistance in all our endeavors. I deeply appreciate their efforts in contributing significantly to all the achievements of COAI.







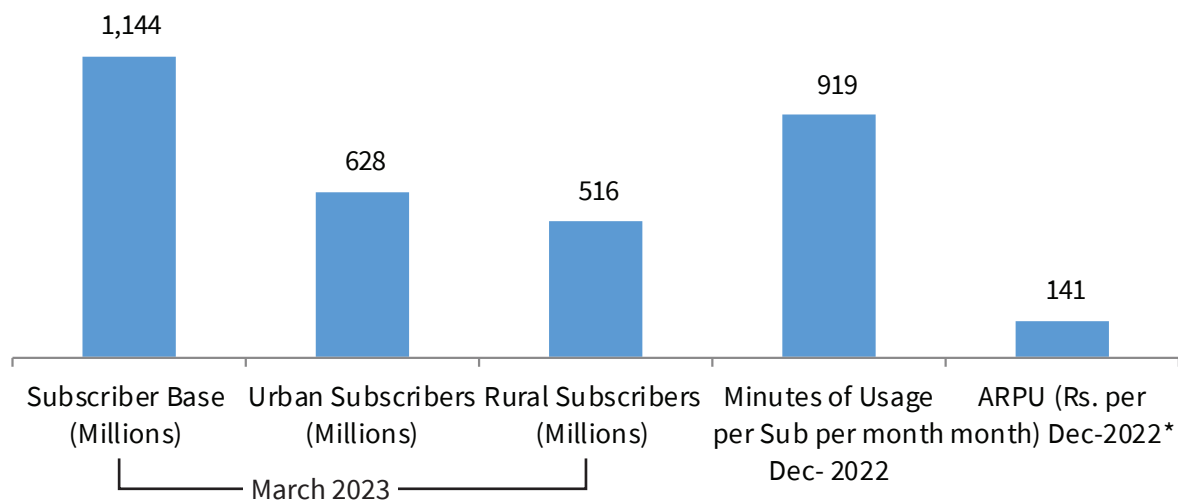
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## INDIAN WIRELESS INDUSTRY – AN OVERVIEW



### Key Statistics of the Wireless Industry in India

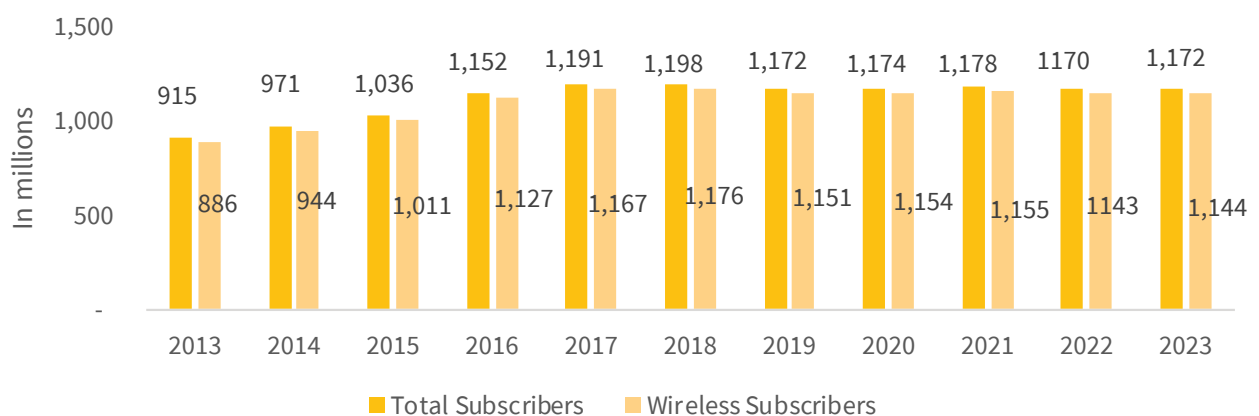
#### A. Wireless Industry in India - Snapshot



Source: TRAI

Note: \*ARPU arrived after adjusting interconnect usage charges and roaming settlement charges

#### B. All India Total & Wireless Subscribers

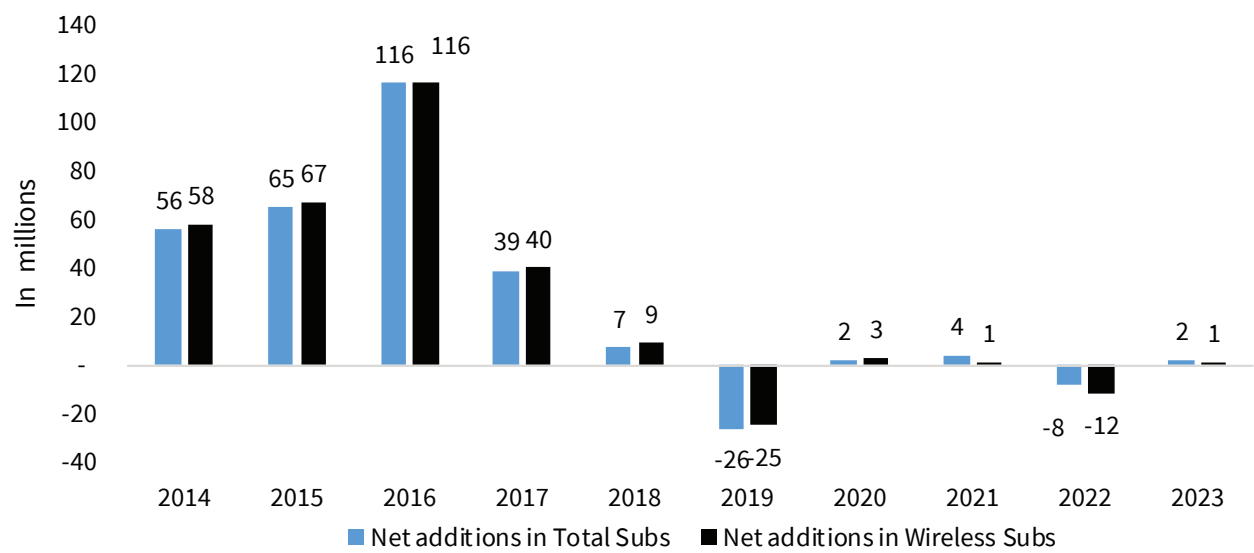


Source: TRAI

Note: All the data is as of December 31st, except for 2023 which is as of 31st March 2023, as per TRAI Reports



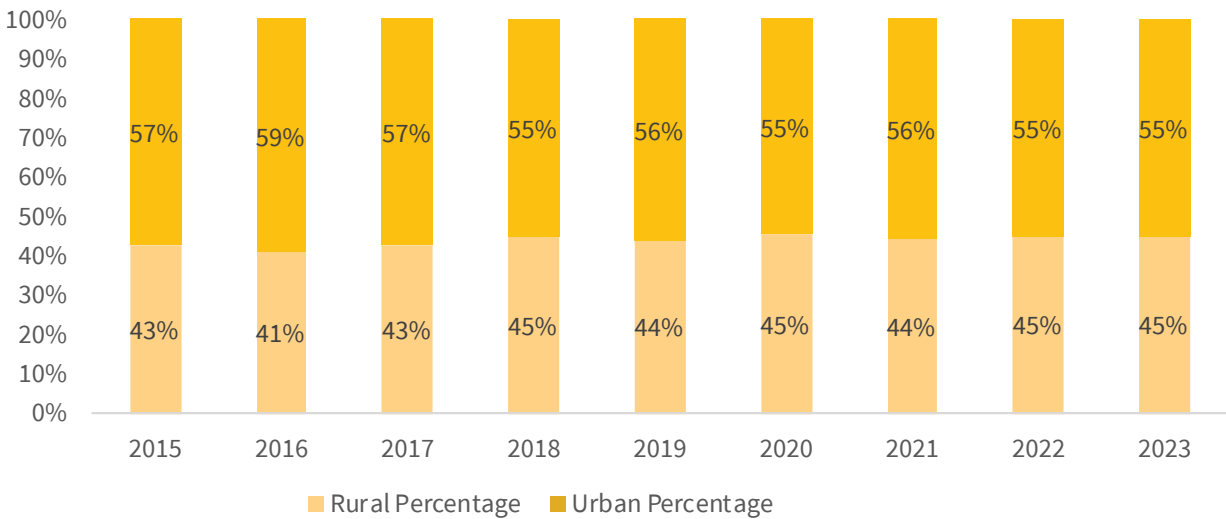
C. All India Total & Wireless Subscribers - Annual Net Additions



Source: TRAI

Note: All the data is as of December 31st, except for 2023 which is as of 31st March 2023, as per TRAI Reports; 2023 addition is quarterly addition

D. Wireless - Rural & Urban Subs as % of Total Subs

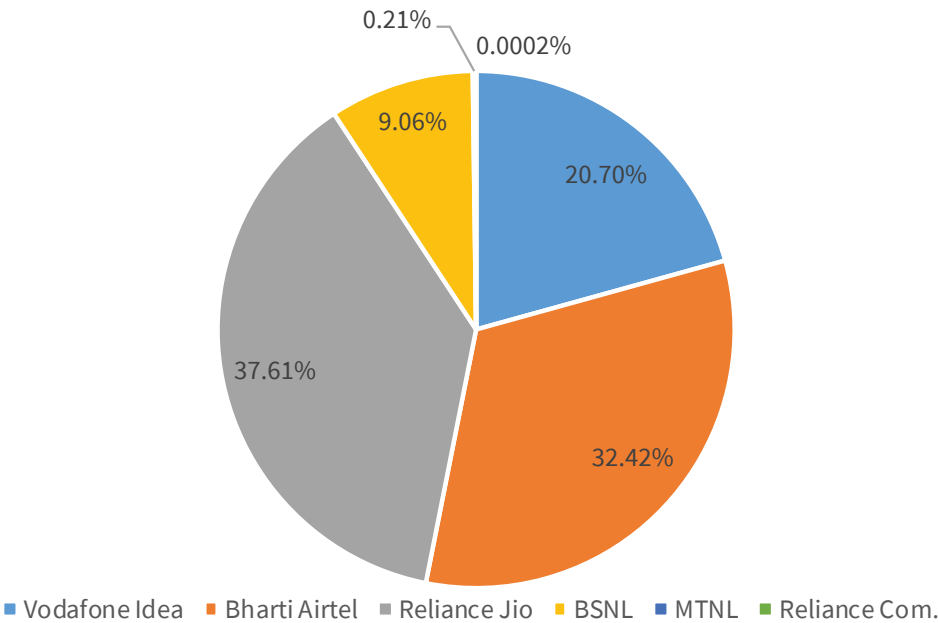


Source: TRAI

Note: All the data is as of December 31st, except for 2023 which is as of 31st March 2023, as per TRAI Reports

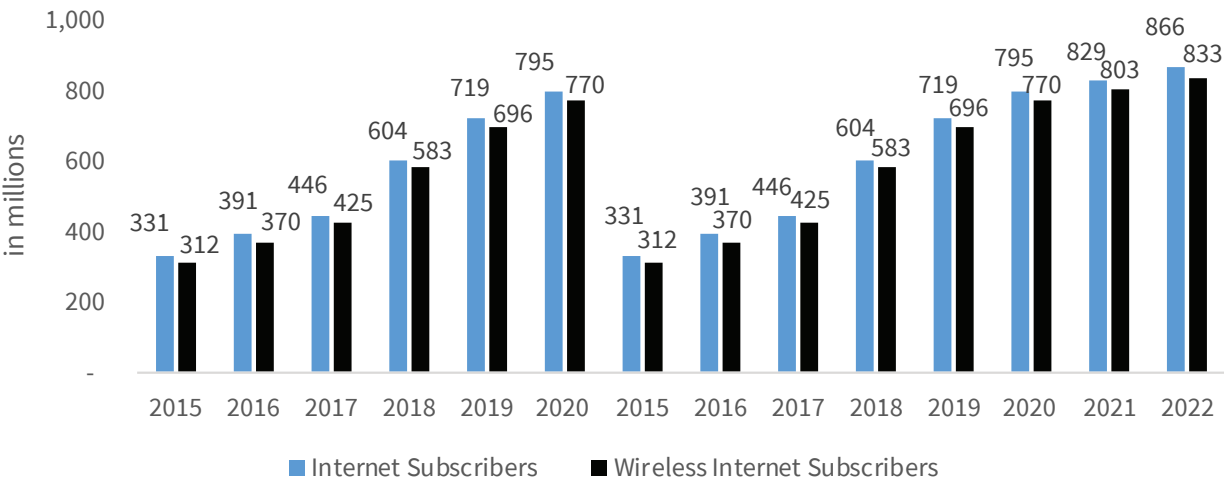


E. Subscriber Market Share of Wireless Operators (March 2023)



Source: TRAI

F. All India Total & Wireless Internet Subscribers

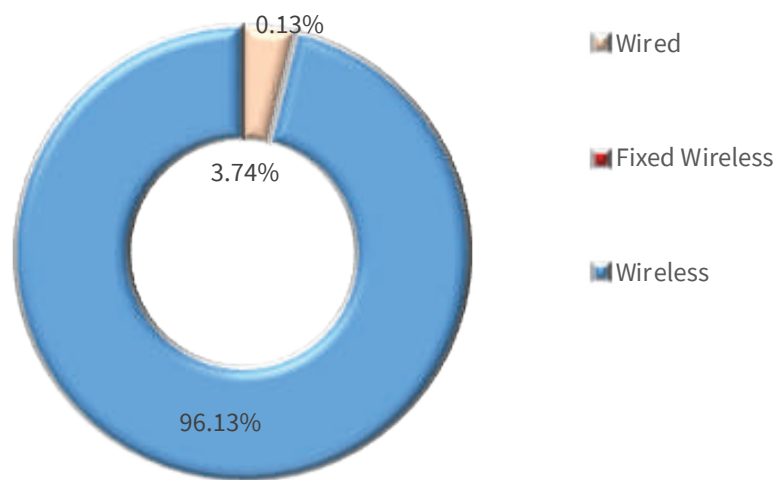


Source: TRAI

Note: Figures are as of December 31st for every year, as per TRAI Reports

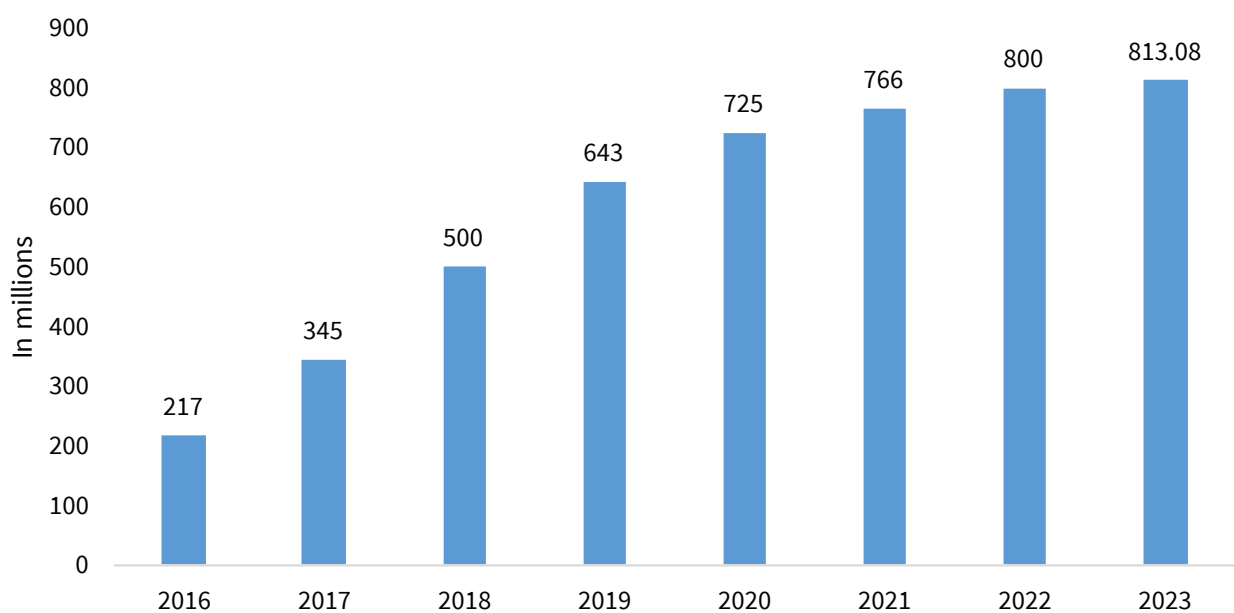


G. Composition of Internet Subscribers - 2022



Source: TRAI

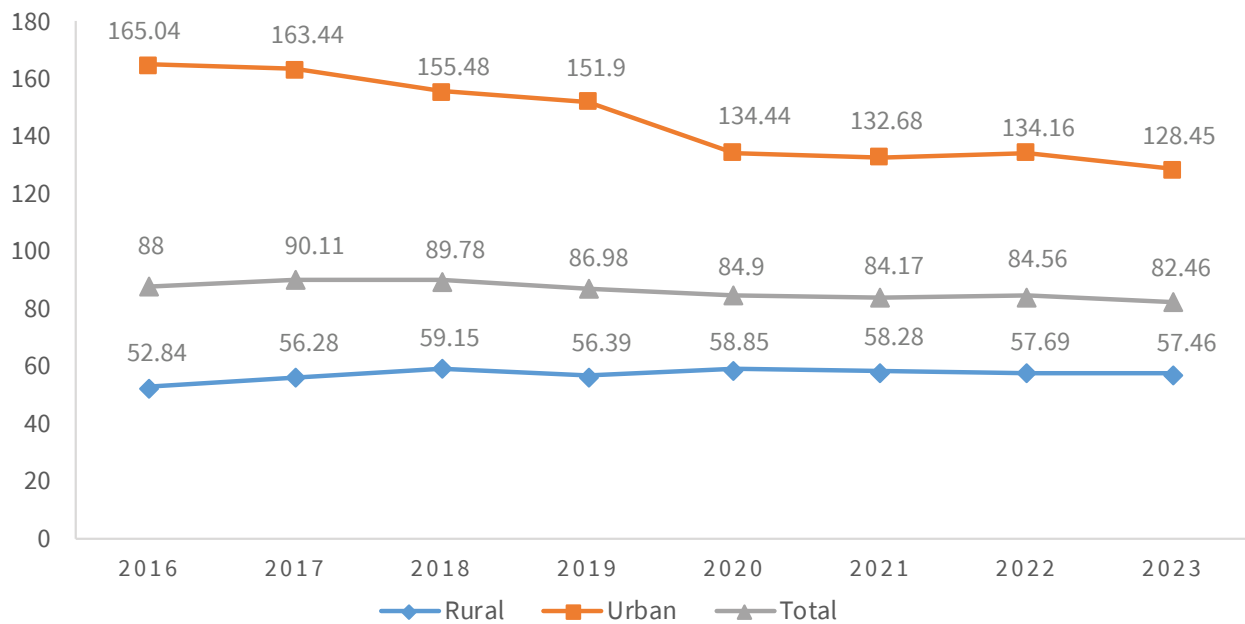
H. Mobile Broadband Subscribers



Source: TRAI

Note: All the data is as of December 31st, except for 2023 which is as of 31st March 2023, as per TRAI Reports

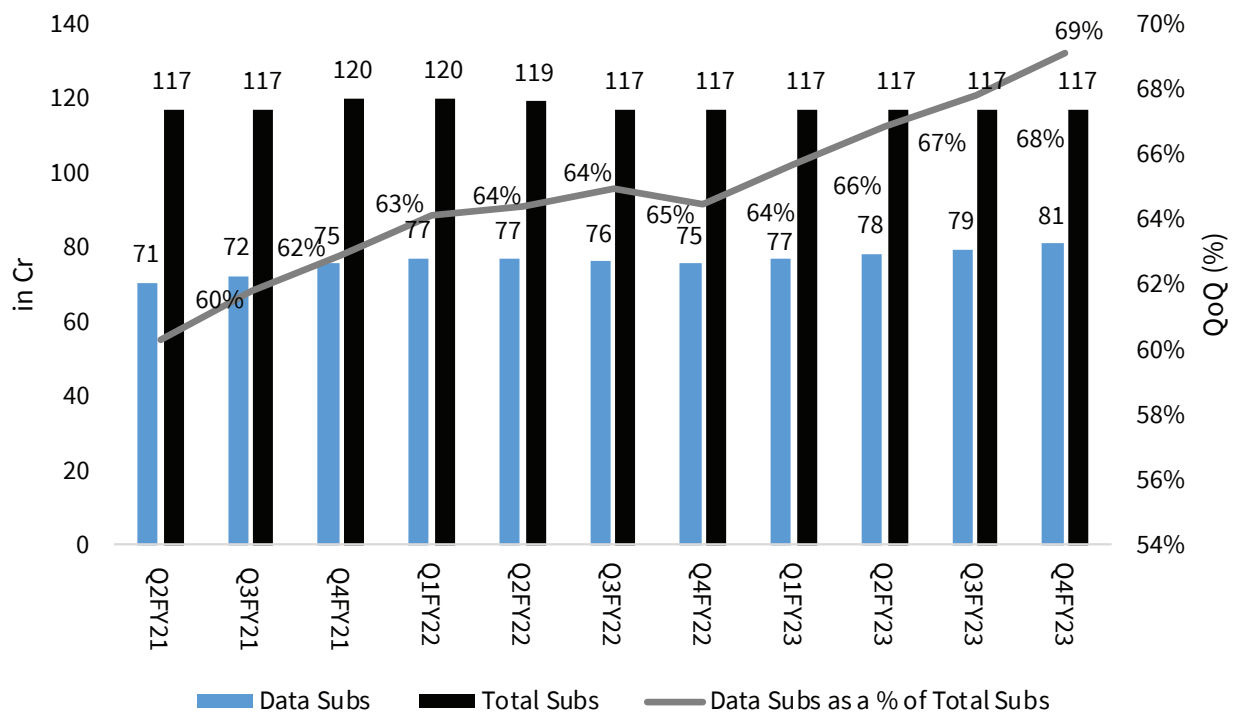
## I. Total Wireless Teledensity (%)



Source: TRAI

Note: All the data is as of December 31st, except for 2023 which is as of 31st March 2023, as per TRAI Reports

## J. Data Subs as % of Total Subs

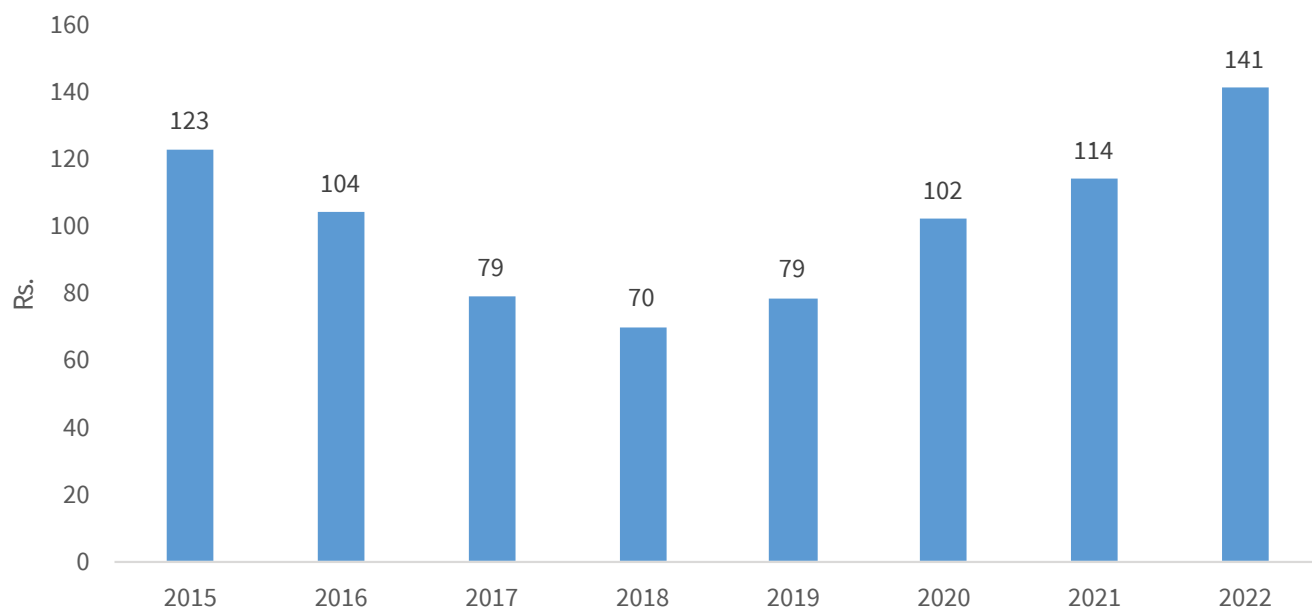


Source: Operators quarterly results, Total subs from TRAI PIR





## K. Monthly ARPU

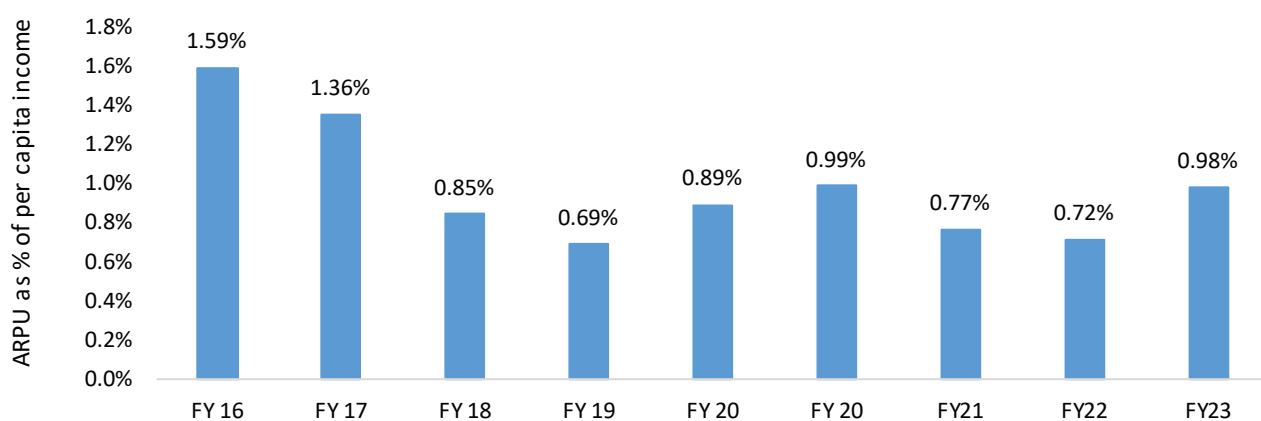


Source: TRAI

Note: All the data is as of December 31st for every year, as per TRAI Reports

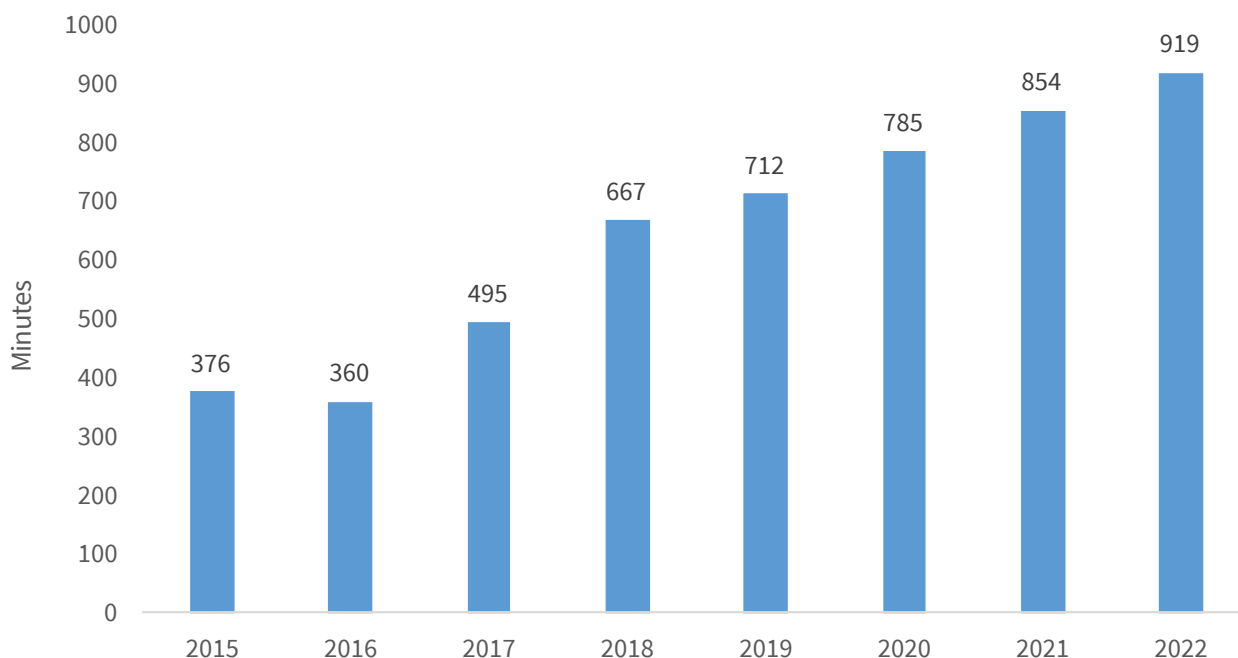
ARPU arrived at after adjusting interconnect usage charges and roaming settlement charges

## L. ARPU as % of per Capita income



Source: tradingeconomics.com; india-briefing.com; COAI analysis

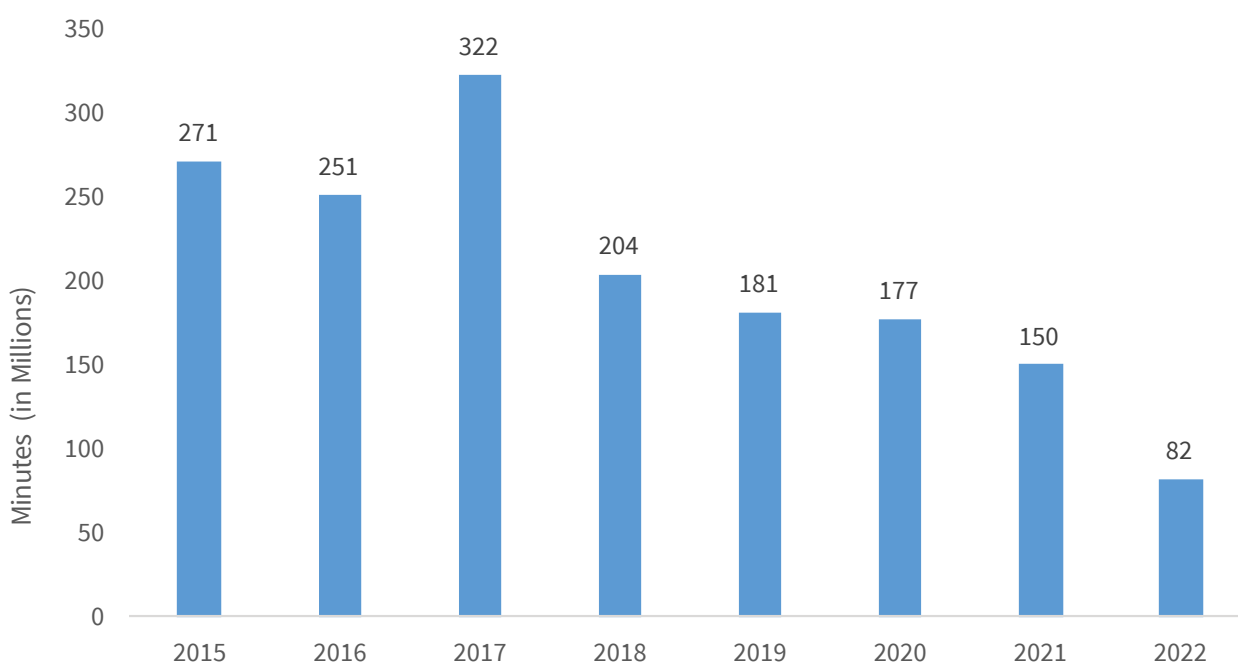
### M. Minutes of Usage per Subscriber per month - Wireless



Source: TRAI PIR

Note: All the data is as of December 31st for every year, as per TRAI Reports

### N. Total outgoing Minutes of Usage for Internet Telephony

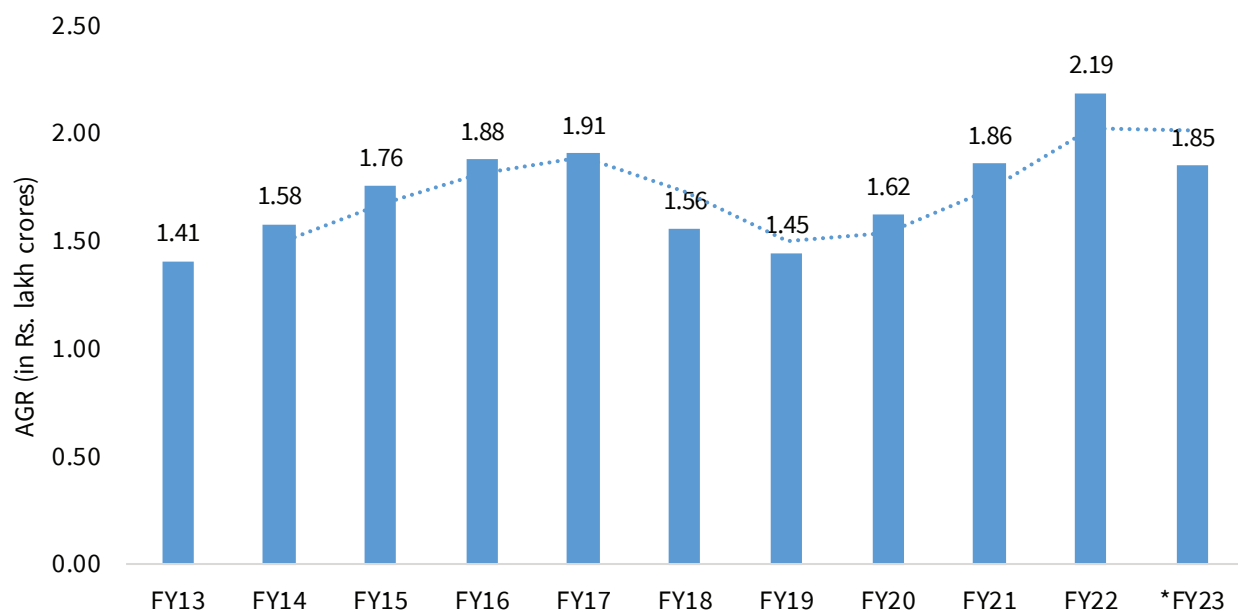


Source: TRAI PIR

Note: All the data is as of December 31st for every year, as per TRAI Reports



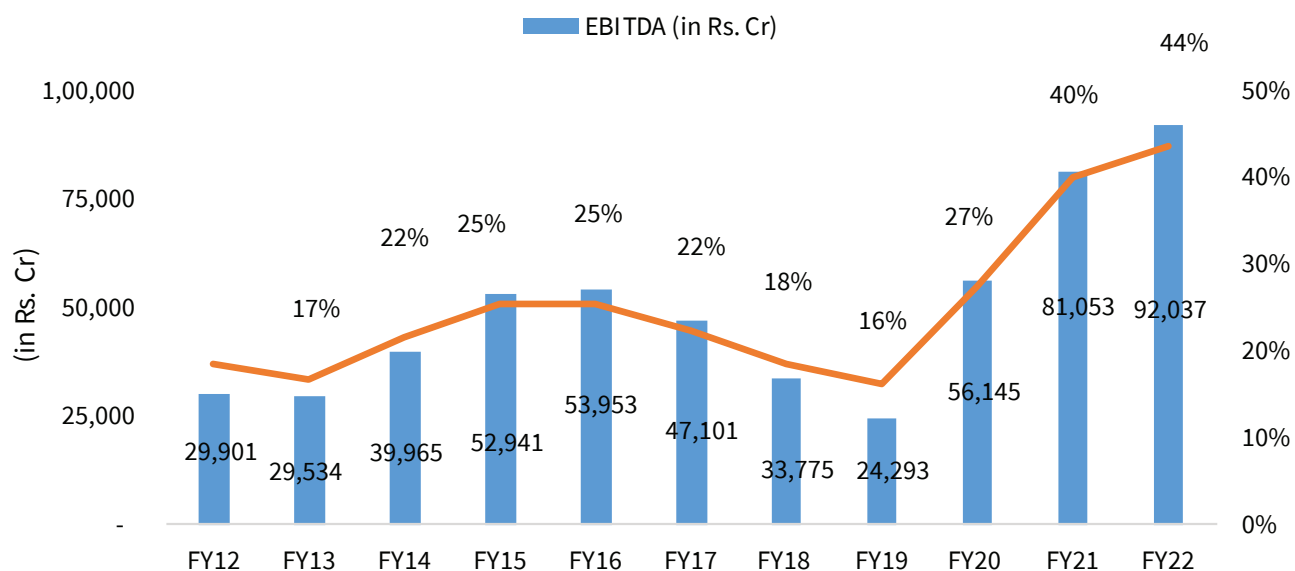
## O. Industry AGR (in Rs. Lakh Crores)



Source: TRAI PIR, COAI Analysis

\*Note: FY23 figures include data till Q3FY23.

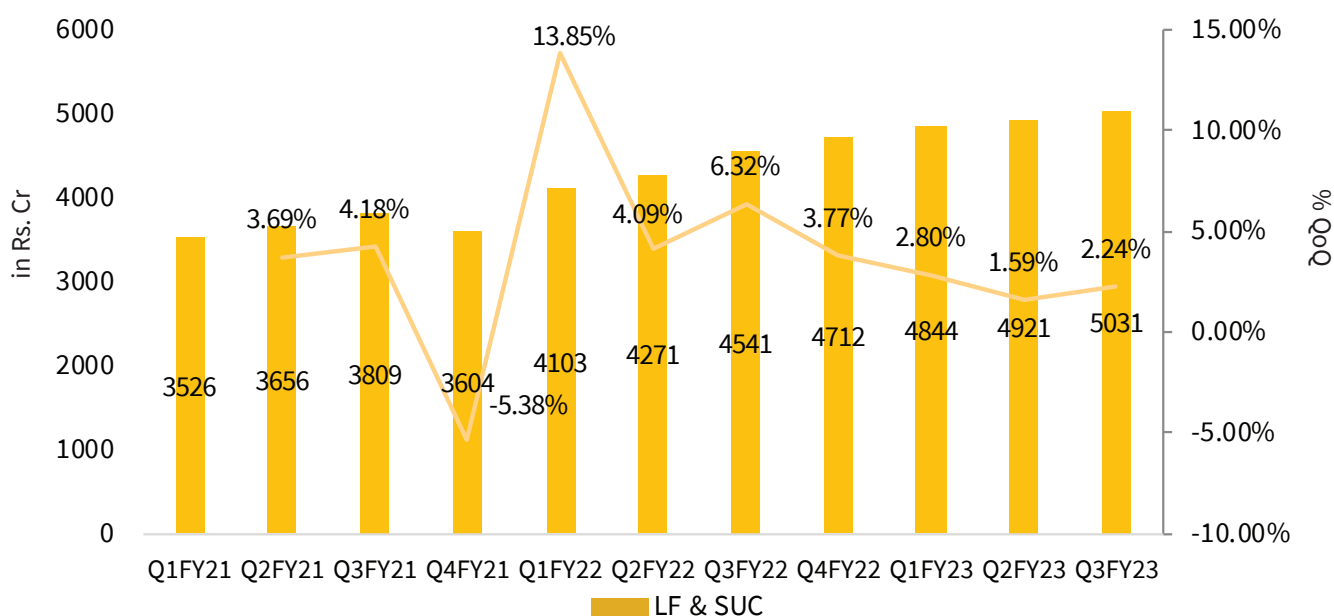
## P. Industry EBITDA & EBITDA Margin



Source: TRAI PIR; COAI Estimates

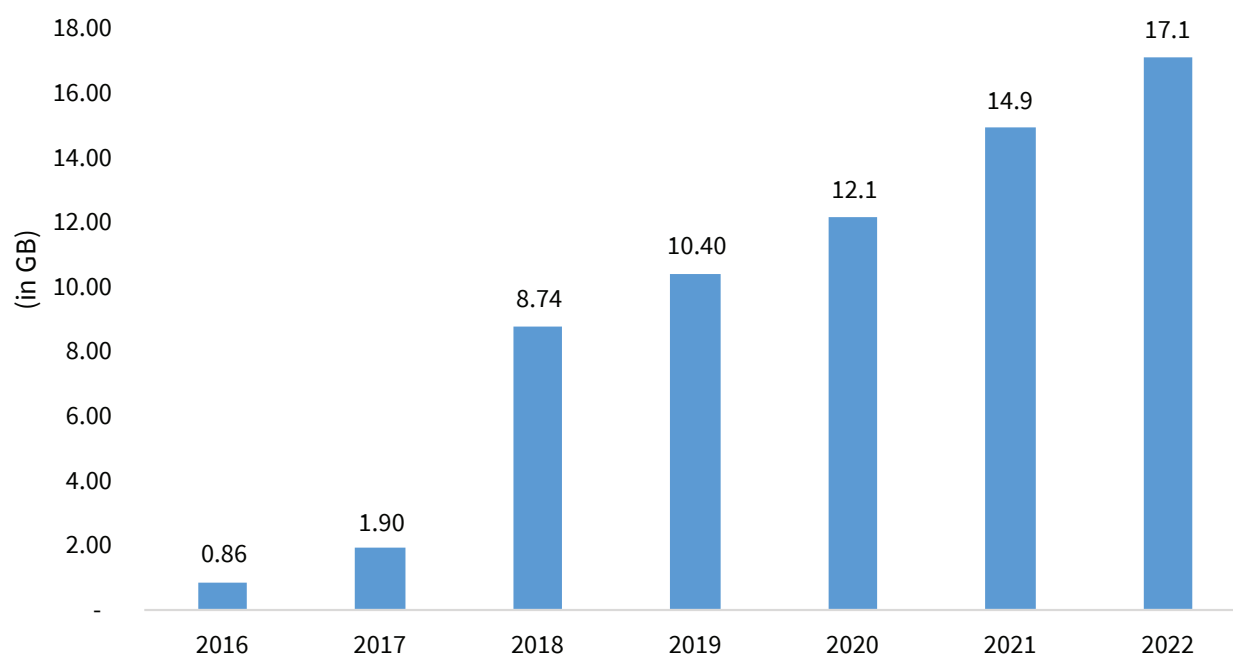


## Q. Regulatory Levy - LF + SUC



Source: TRAI Financial Report

## R. Wireless Data usage per sub/month (in GB)

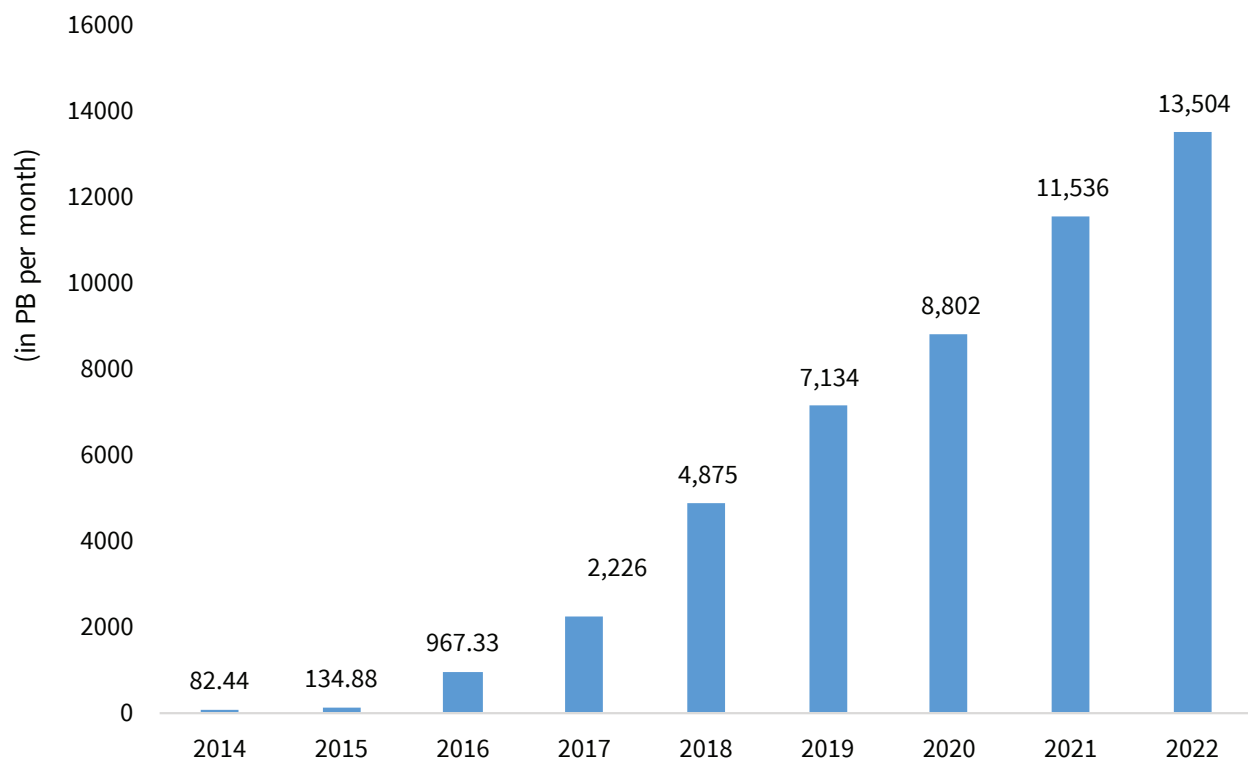


Source: TRAI PIR

Note: Figures are as of December 31st for every year, as per TRAI Reports



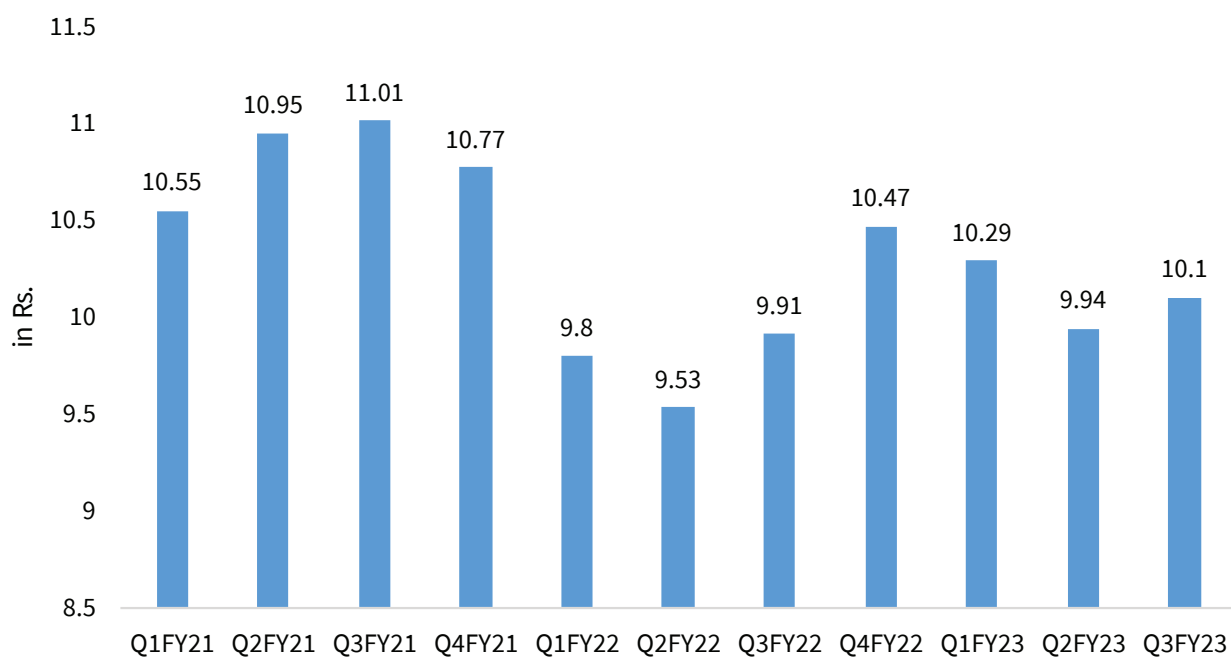
### S. Wireless Data Usage (in PB) per month



Source: TRAI PIR

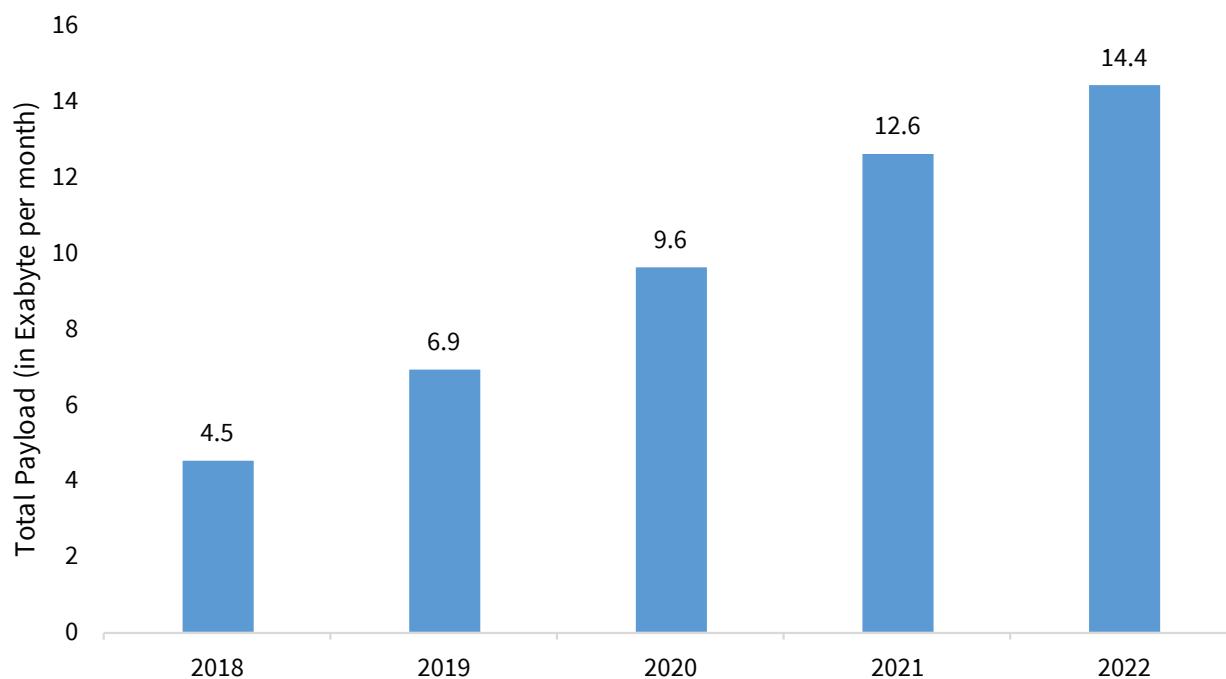
Note: Figures are as of December 31st for every year, as per TRAI Reports

### T. Average Outgo (Per GB Cost for users)



Source: TRAI PIR

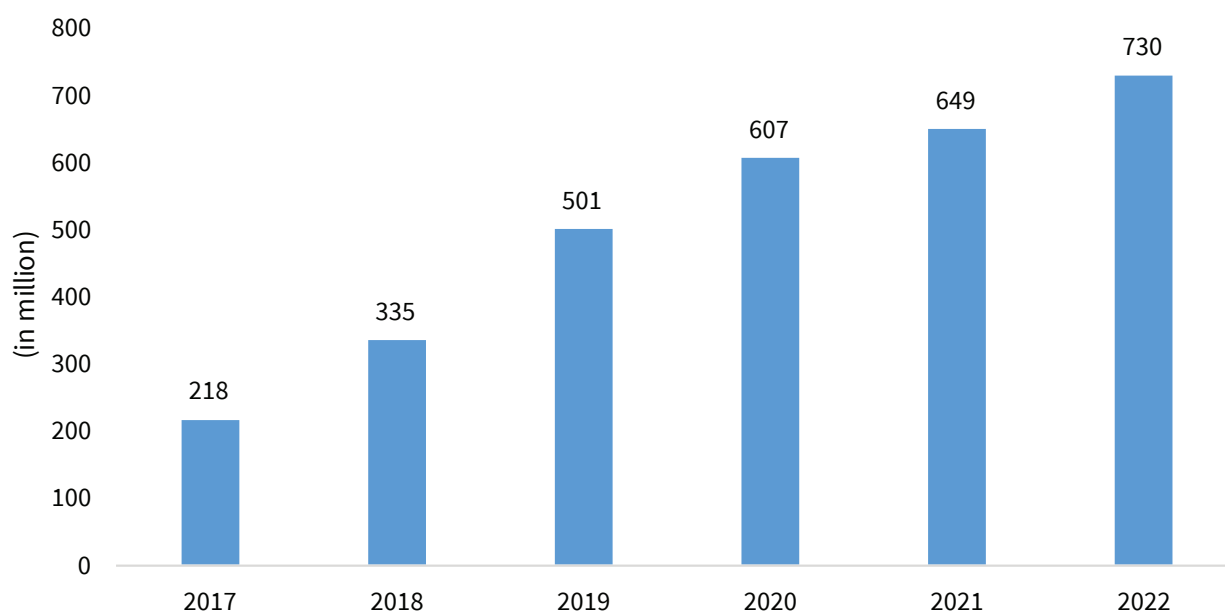
## U. Total Data Payload



Source: Nokia MBiT 2023

Note: 2022 data includes 5G

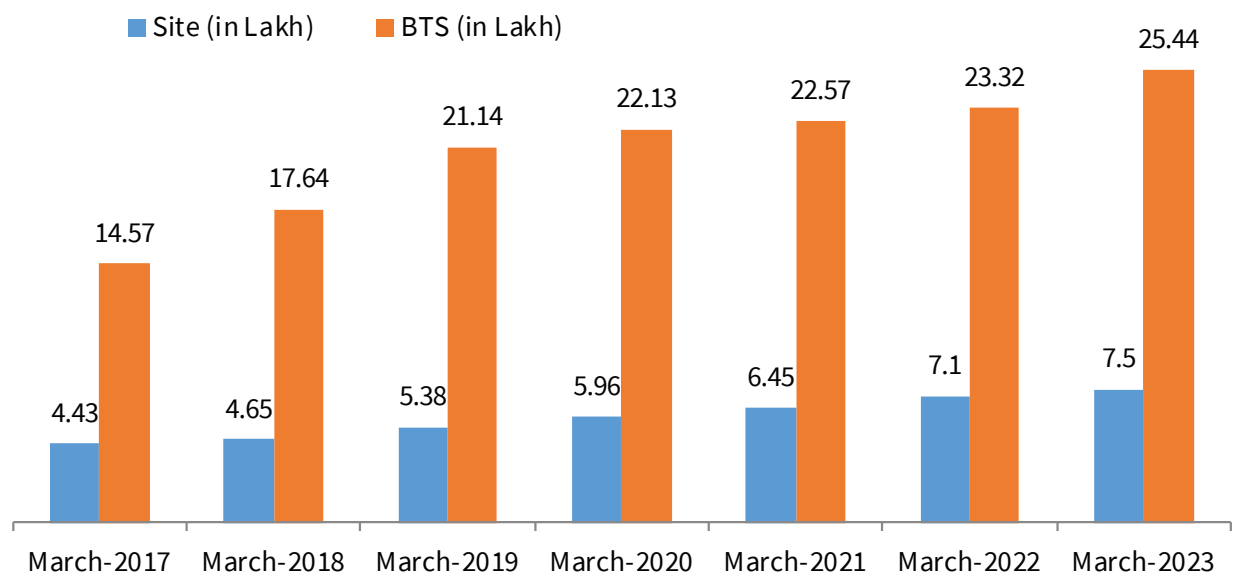
## V. 4G capable unique Devices (in Mn)



Source: Nokia MBiT Report 2023



W. Total Number of Sites and BTS



Source: Tarang Sanchar



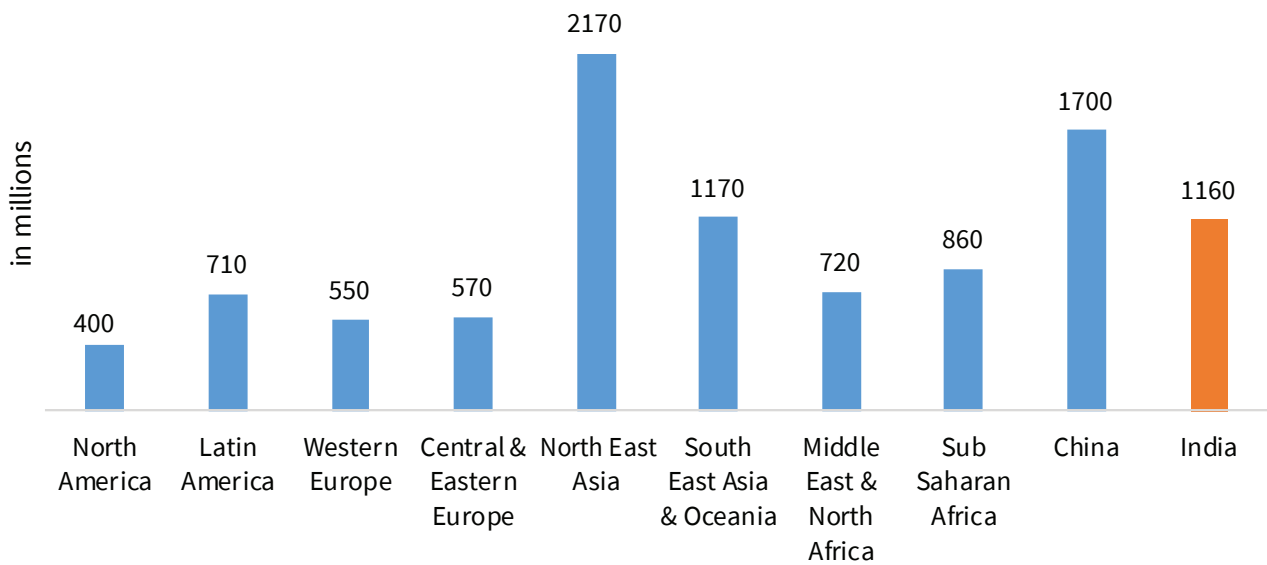


# 07

## INTERNATIONAL TRENDS



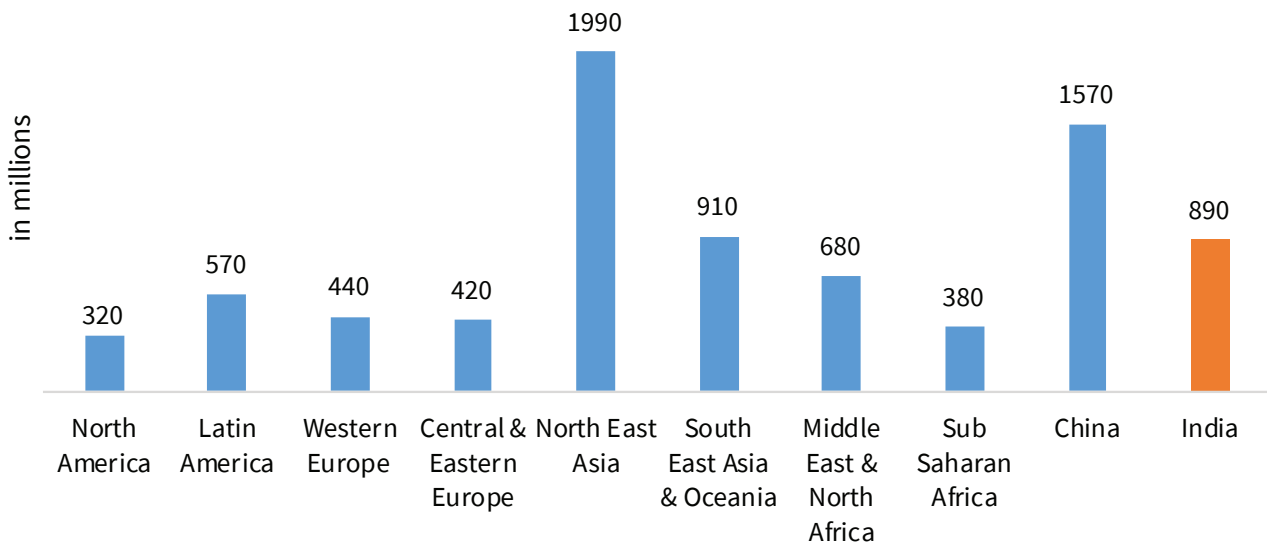
### A. Mobile Subscription



Source: Ericsson Mobility Report (2022)

Note: India data includes Nepal & Bhutan

### B. Smartphone Subscription

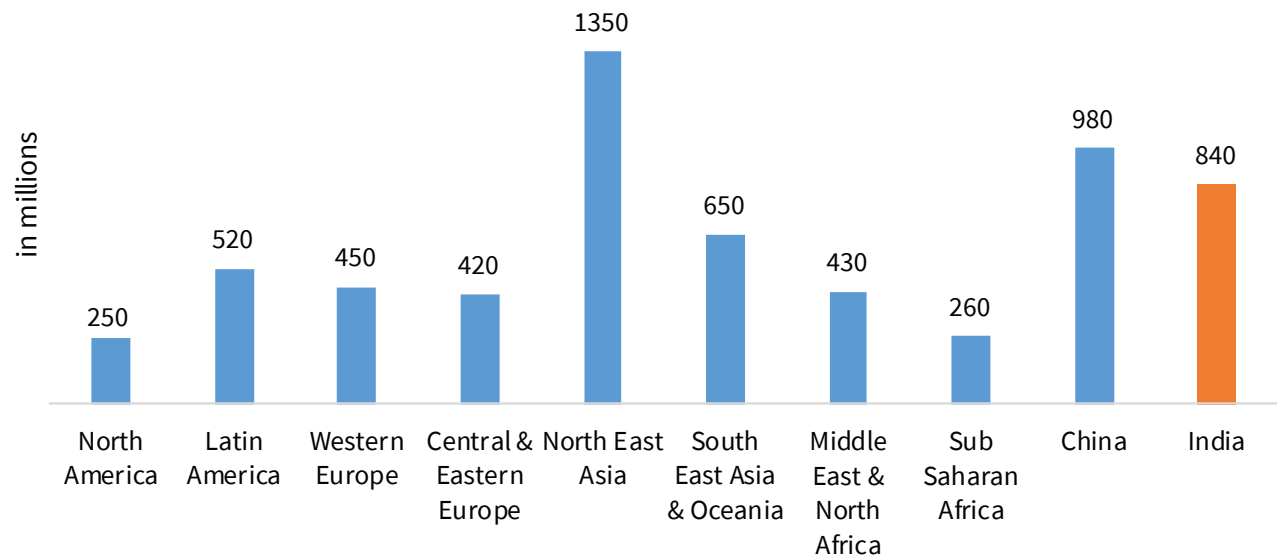


Source: Ericsson Mobility Report (2022)

Note: India data includes Nepal & Bhutan

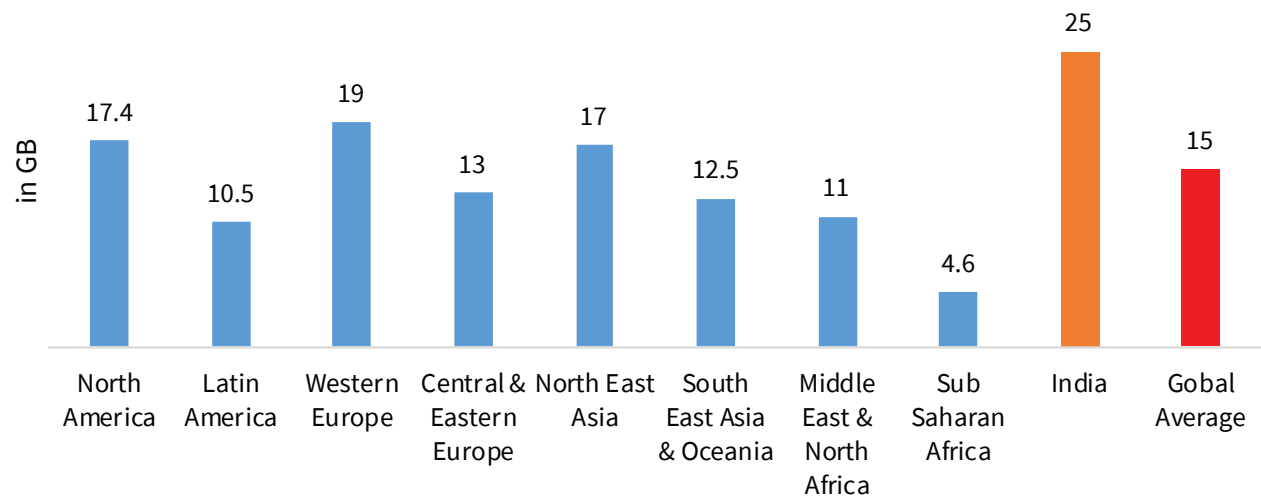


C. LTE Subscription



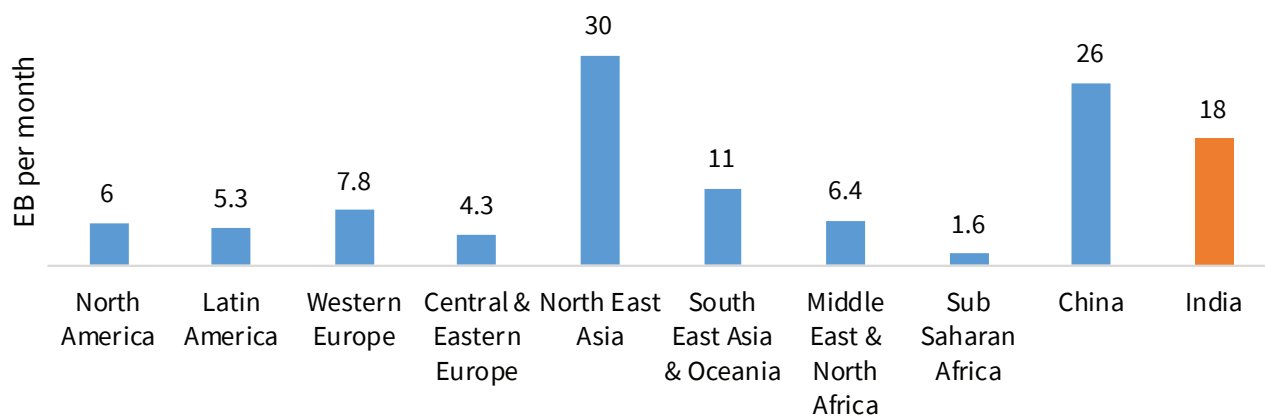
Source: Ericsson Mobility Report (2022)  
Note: India data includes Nepal & Bhutan

D. Mobile data traffic per smartphone



Source: Ericsson Mobility Report (2022)  
Note: India data includes Nepal & Bhutan

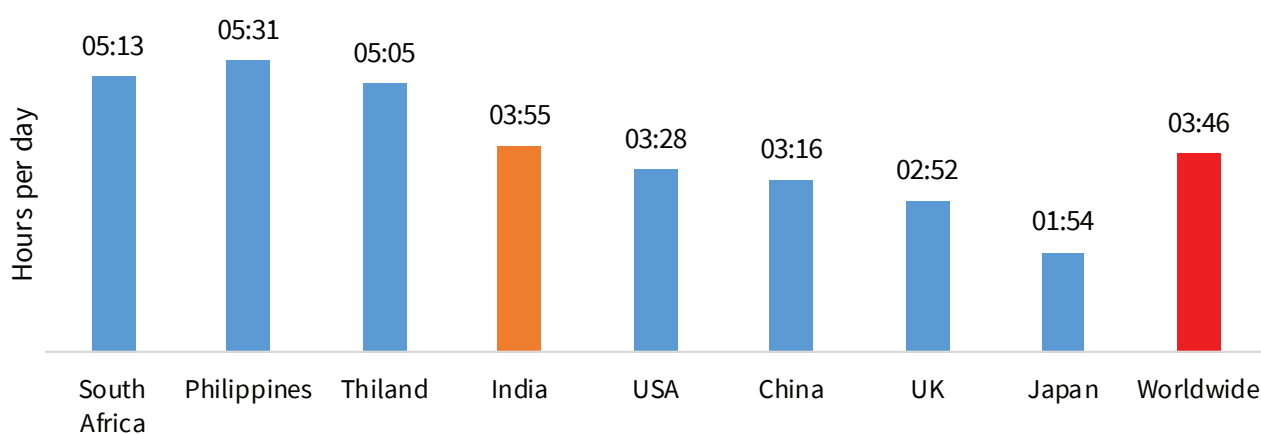
## E. Mobile data traffic



Source: Ericsson Mobility Report (2022)

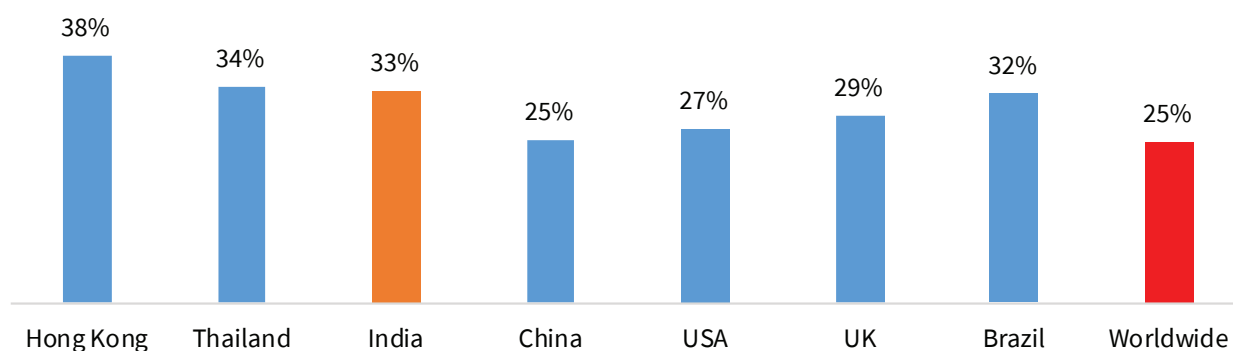
Note: India data includes Nepal & Bhutan

## F. Average time spent in hours per day per user to access the Internet through Mobile



Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

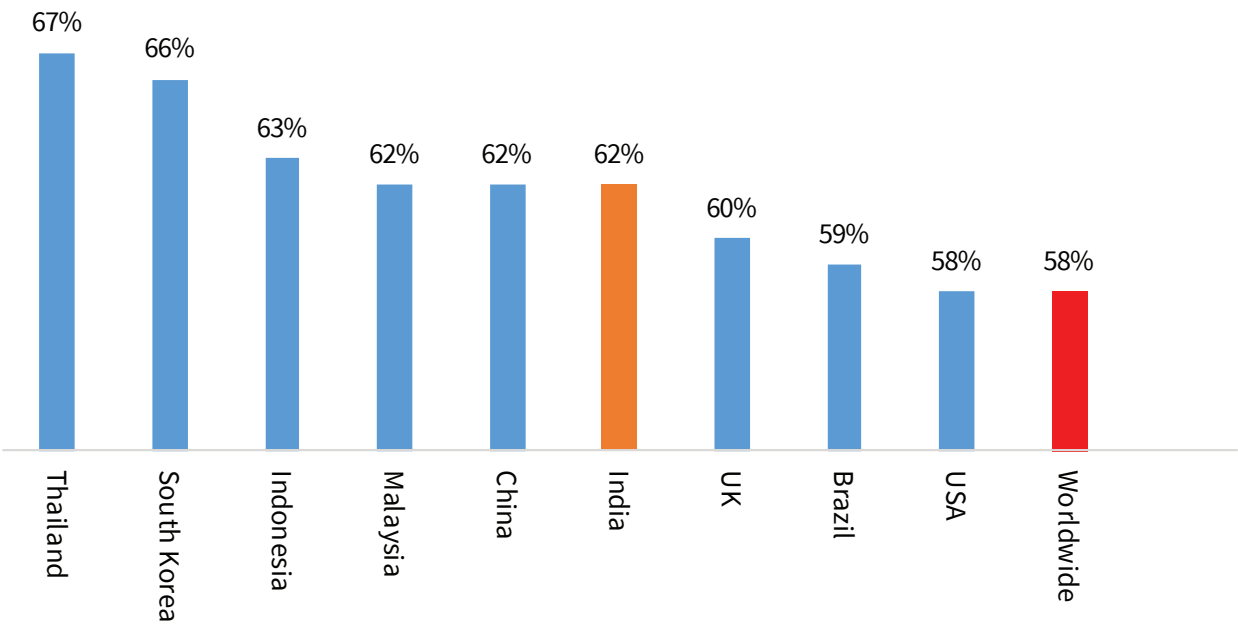
## G. Mobile Payment platform users as % of total Internet users



Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

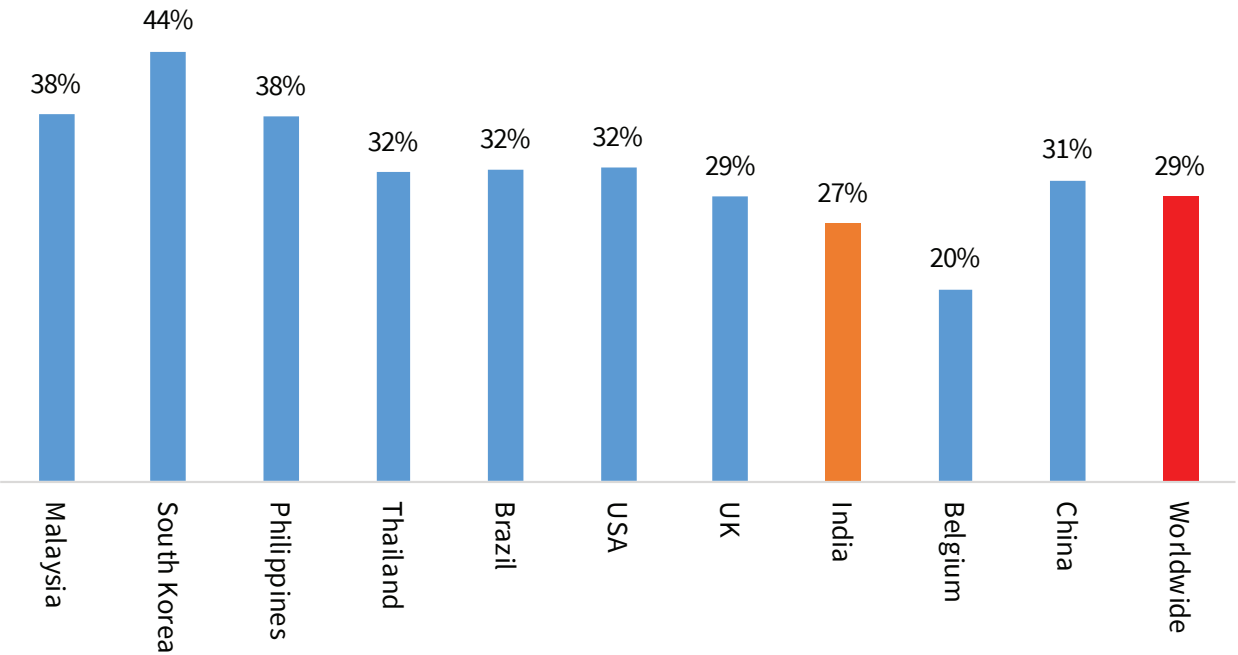


H. % of Internet Users who bought something online each week



Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

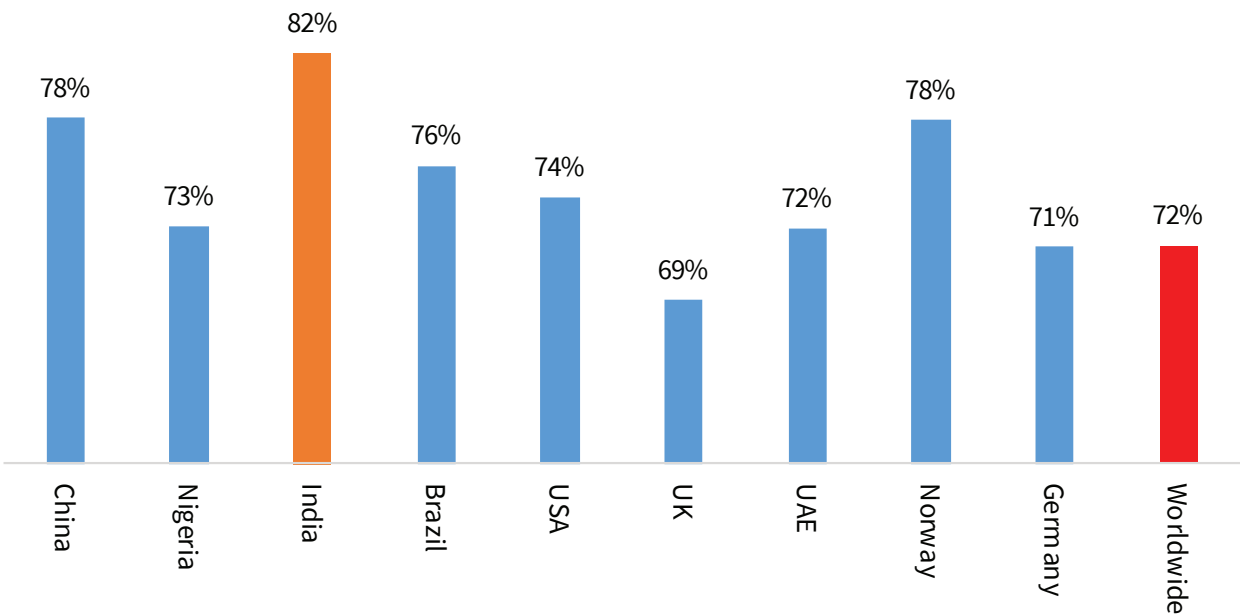
I. % of Internet Users who bought something online each week via a mobile



Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

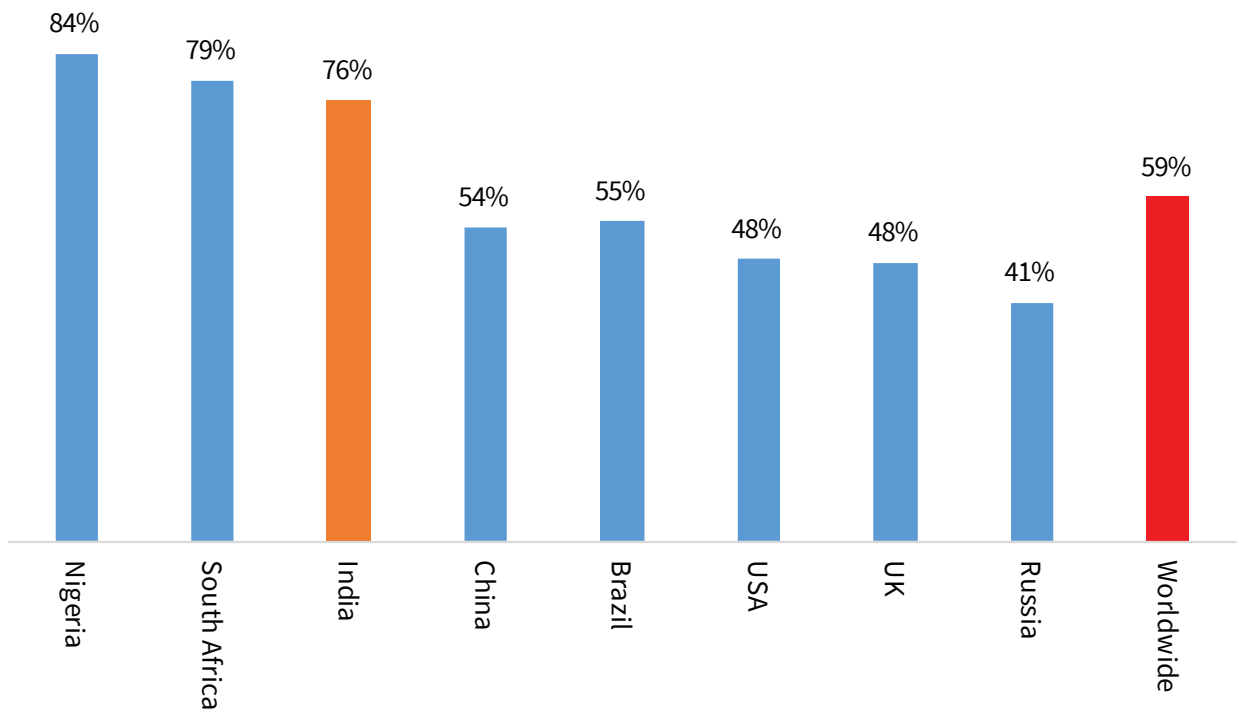


J. % of Internet Users who purchase any type of digital content in month



Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

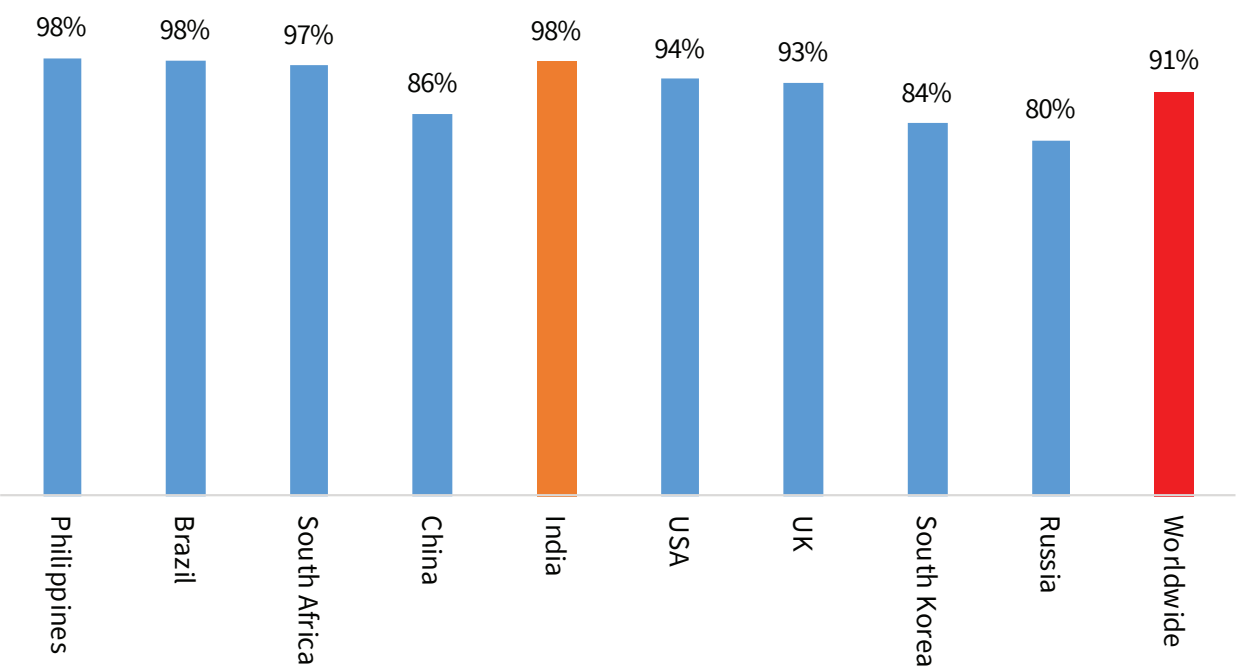
K. Mobile's Share of Web Traffic



Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

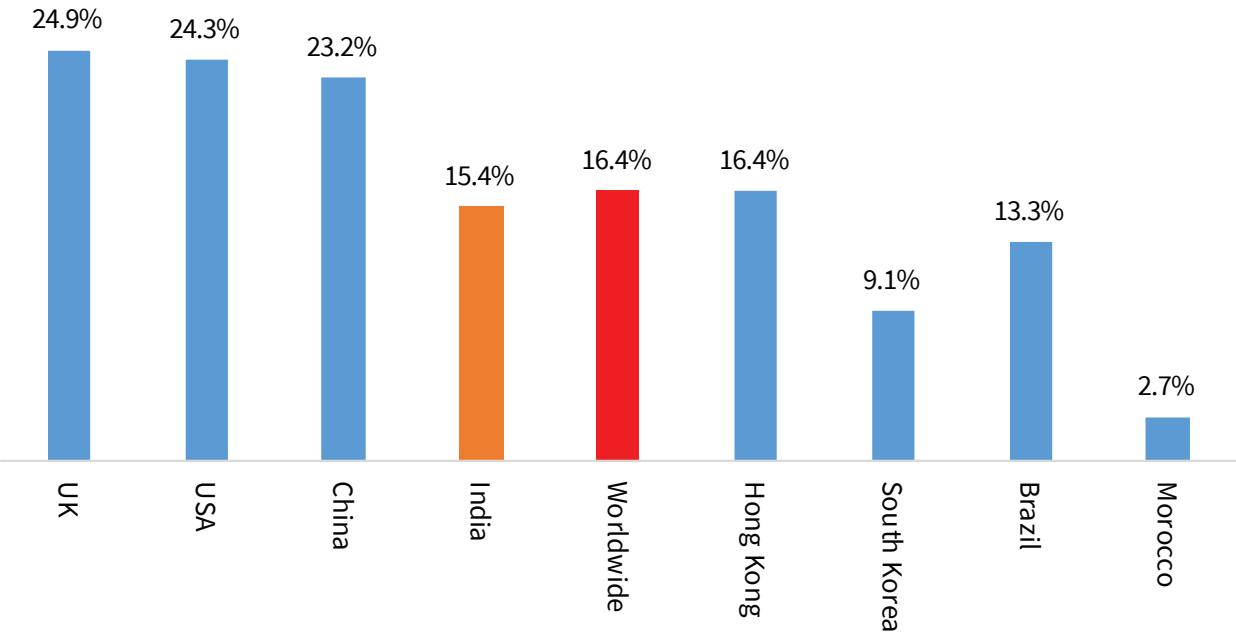


L. % of Internet users who watch Streaming TV content via Internet



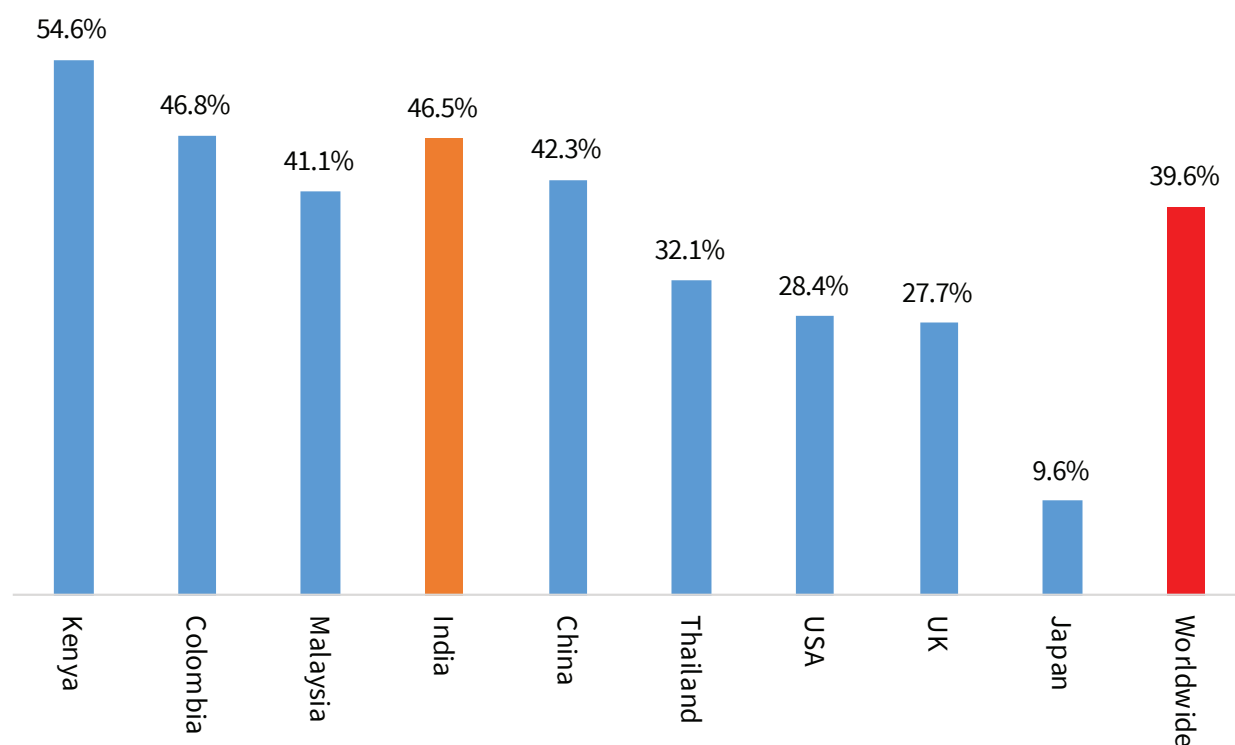
Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

M. % of Internet users who own some form of Smart Home device



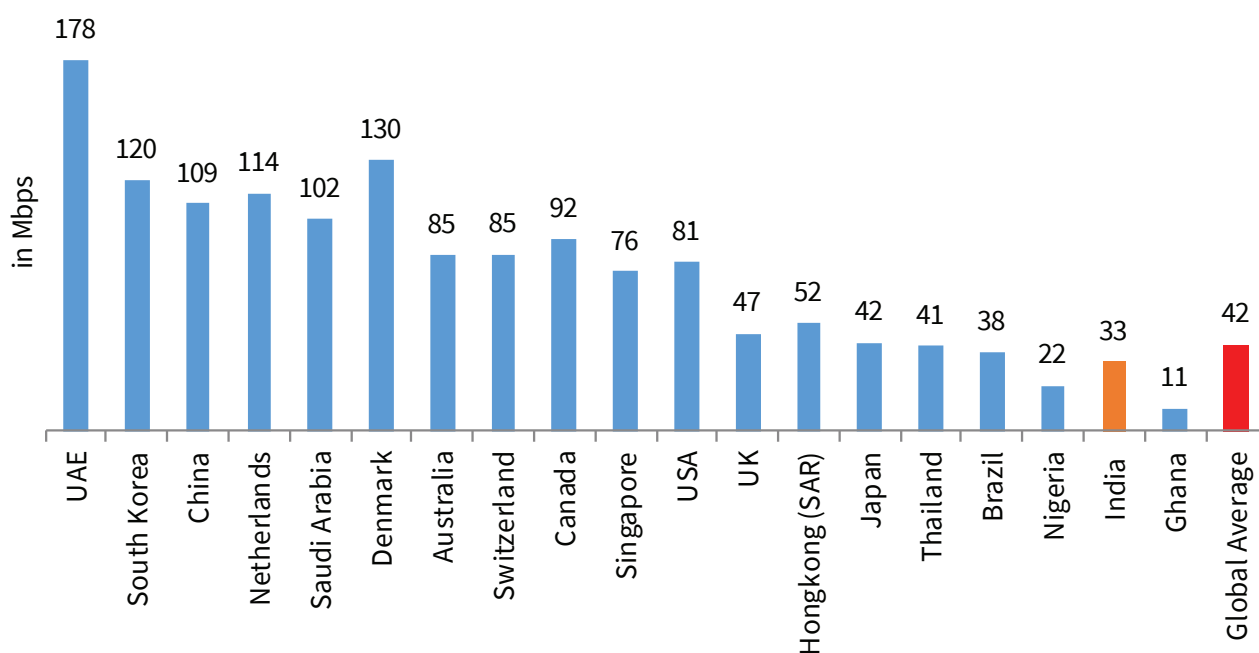
Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

## N. % of Internet users who use Social Media for Work Purposes



Source: Digital 2023 Global Overview Report

## O. Mobile Broadband Speeds

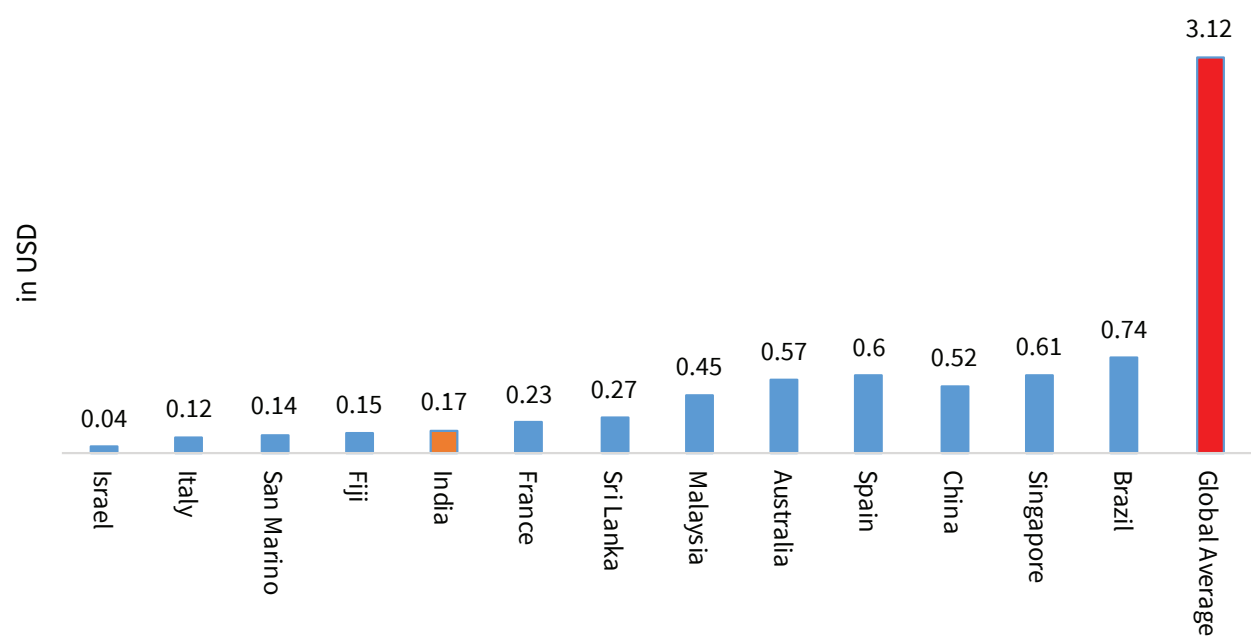


Source: Speedtest Global Index

Note: Data is of March 2023



P. Data Price per GB



Source: Cable.co.uk





# 08

## SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022-2023



### 1. Lawful Interception requirements - Multiple Law Enforcement Agencies and Government Authorized agencies were approaching Operators to provide 1:1 traffic and space for placing their equipment:

Basis COAI's submission to DoT, this issue has been resolved and going forward, all traffic monitoring requirements will be routed through DoT. All agencies (Law Enforcement/ Authorized agencies) would approach DOT and seek the traffic/interception from CDOT setup, as our members have already provided 1:1 traffic to CDOT. This would take care of the needs of the security/authorized agencies without impacting the user experience and not put further financial burden on the operators, while ensuring the confidentiality of the data.

### 2. TRAI Recommendations on Rating of Buildings or Areas for Digital Connectivity:

Post the consultation on the subject, TRAI released its recommendations on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023, many of which are in line with our submissions and would be overall beneficial to the telecom industry. Some of these critical recommendations are as follows

- a. The Authority recommended that Model Building Bye-Laws (MBBL) and National Building Code of India (NBC) should be amended to incorporate necessary provisions on Digital Connectivity Infrastructure (DCI).
- b. DCI should be made an essential component of the building development plans on the line of water supply, electrical services, gas supply, etc.

- c. The Authority recommended that the Property Manager shall be the owner of the deployed DCI whether created by himself or through his agent and shall be responsible for the maintenance, expansion and upgradation of such DCI.
- d. Further, the Authority recommended that an amendment to the present Unified license conditions with a proviso for compulsory sharing of active wireless equipment in the Buildings may be carried out.
- e. The Authority also recommended that the Rating of the Buildings of public importance such as Airports, Ports, Railway/Metro Stations, Bus Stations, etc., should be made mandatory.
- f. For Buildings other than those mandated, the Property Manager may get their Buildings rated for digital connectivity on a voluntary basis.
- g. Approval of DCI design, implementation and use of Buildings should remain with the existing institutions as per statute of State/ UT Governments for the purpose.

### 3. TRAI Recommendations on Regulatory Framework for Promoting Data Economy Through Establishment of Data Centres, CDNs and Interconnect Exchanges in India

Basis the consultation held on the topic, TRAI released its recommendations on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022 – some of the important recommendations being in line with our submissions and would be overall positive for the telecom industry. These are –



- a. TRAI recommended the inclusion of Data Centres as an essential service under the respective Essential Services Maintenance Acts of the states.
- b. The Authority recommended that if DCs have to establish captive fibre network, they should be allowed to do so under the existing licensing framework.
- c. CDN players should be registered with the Department of Telecommunications through a simple online registration process.
- d. The Authority recommended that a separate authorization in Unified License may be created for IXPs with terms and conditions that are much less onerous than ISP license authorization.
- e. The Authority further recommended that Right of Way (RoW) charges for laying and maintaining Optical Fibre Cables (OFC) infrastructure for CLS may be waived off for encouraging and supporting the new CLS establishment of submarine cables.

**4. Indian Telegraph Right of Way (RoW) Rules 2016, amendment 2022:** With active inputs from industry through COAI, DoT issued the amended RoW Rules last year, laying down the path for use of street furniture for small cells for faster 5G deployment. The rules also clarified that for telecom infrastructure placement on private property, only intimation (along with structural stability) to civic authorities would be required. Also, various charges for telecom infrastructure deployment were rationalized and standardized. More the 30% of States/UTs have already issued fresh rules post the 2022 amendments, including Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

**5. Single window online application processing:** The 'Gati Shakti Sanchar Portal' i.e., Central RoW Portal was launched last year and has currently integrated portals of 36 States/UTs and 4 Central Ministries. Almost 2 lac applications have been processed since inception, out of which 10% have been deemed approved i.e., cleared as the stipulated time post applying got over. The

portal has a host of reports and is a repository of policies notified by various authorities. Training sessions for member TSPs/IPs on use of the portal, were also conducted by NBM on the request of COAI.

## **6. Alignment of Central Ministries in Telecom Infrastructure deployment**

**a. Ministry of Defence (MoD):** The ministry issued revised Right of Way policy on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023, doing away with the system of tendering for telecom infrastructure deployment. MoD has completely aligned with the DoT's RoW rules. The revised policy was the outcome of the efforts of the Committee which was formed under the instructions from MoD, basis the request from COAI. COAI was a member of this Committee and actively participated in its deliberations towards enabling smooth installation of telecom infrastructure in Defence areas.

**b. Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEFCC):** Process improvements were made by the ministry basis COAI representations and discussions - New Form E developed and implemented, considerably reducing the processing steps, authorizing Nodal officer to issue permissions outside the protected areas, and provision of permitting Aerial OFC in existing RoW. Issues related to working of the online application processing portal - Parivesh 1.0 and 2.0, were also taken up for resolution. Regular FRCM meetings are being conducted by the IRO office, reducing forest pendency.

**c. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways:** Basis COAI representation and interactions, the ministry issued clarifications/changes for laying telecom infrastructure, whereby requirement of safety clearances from CCOE, PESO, OISD and DoE, and need for putting applications in public domain were dispensed with. Regular meetings continue to be held under the chairmanship of Chief Engineer, MoRTH, for reducing the National Highways area RoW permission pendency.

**d. Ministry of Railways:** The ministry revised the 'Policy for Management of Railway Land' via circular dated 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 2022. Way leave charges for track crossing of underground public utilities including telecom cable and OFC (up to diameter 300 mm) have been brought down to INR 1000/- for 35 years and for more than diameter 300 mm, the charges have been reduced to 1.5% of market value per annum with annual escalation of 6%, which is a substantial reduction from the earlier rates of 6% of land value with 7% escalation. Further, timeline for granting permission has been fixed to be within 15 days.

**7. Breakthroughs in reduction of charges and removal of hinderances:** Basis COAI's active engagements with State/UT Governments and local authorities, the following positive developments for the industry emerged in the past year -

- a. Tamil Nadu government provided two extensions for regularization of telecom infrastructure and have rationalized the per application fee.
- b. Rajasthan government fixed the rate for using common duct at INR 21 Lacs per KM for 10 years.
- c. Municipal Commission of Delhi completely removed the 'Way Leave' charges.
- d. Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam Ltd. (DHBVNL) withdrew the Pole leasing tender.

**8. Safety and Security of Telecom Infrastructure:**

- a. The Indian Telegraph (Infrastructure Safety) Rules 2022, notified on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023, laid down the procedure for exercising of legal right to dig or excavate any property. This will help mitigate/avoid unwanted damage to telegraph infrastructure. More than 20 states have already issued orders to make this operational.
- b. Further, the Hon'ble Prime Minister launched the 'Call Before U Dig' mobile App, an excavation information exchange platform envisaged to mitigate the damages to underground utilities caused

by digging activities undertaken by various agencies.

**9. EMF Awareness activities**

COAI has been regularly supporting the EMF awareness events hosted by DoT and its various LSAs, both through hybrid and physical modes. The year saw physical events held in Sikkim, Kolkata, Ghaziabad and multiple hybrid events in Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Sikkim, Northeast, etc. More than 500 direct connects were made through these engagements.

**10. Advocacy**

- a. On Right of Way: COAI actively participated in more than 100 engagements with various states through the State Broadband Committee, 5G working committee and Open House meetings, highlighting the industry issues and sharing constructive suggestions for bringing out a facilitative environment for telecom infrastructure deployment, with major focus on 5G.
- b. On Electricity tariffs for essential telecom sector: COAI has made comprehensive submissions to all States/UTs, seeking Industrial Tariff and Green Open Access facility for the telecom industry. This year heralded the beginning of COAI's participation in tariff finalization exercise in 10 states, with subsequent follow up and engagements with key stakeholders in select states. COAI also met, made submissions, and had extensive discussion(s) on industry access to Green Open Energy and tariff rationalization with various stakeholders, including Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, Ministry of Power, TRAI and DoT.

**11. Spectrum Allocation:**

- a. Allocation of Microwave Spectrum: Basis COAI submission, DoT has doubled the number of microwave carriers in the existing frequency bands of 13, 15, 18 and 21 GHz bands in each circle.
- b. Allocation of E-Band: DoT has opened up E-band and 2 carriers of 250 MHz each are being allotted to TSPs, in consonance with



COAI representation.

## 12. EMF Testing:

- a. As per Industry's request, DoT, vide its letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022, has stated that the LSA units of DoT will now test annually up to 5% of the total BTS (new and existing sites) randomly at their discretion. Thus, the testing sample is reduced from 10% to 5%.
- b. With the request of Industry, DoT has asked TEC to review the parameters in the self-certificates which have no role in actual EMF radiation measurement.
- c. On the request of COAI, the timeline for submission of self-certificates for new BTS and up-gradation cases, where BTS first radiation/up-gradation is done from the date of allocation of frequencies to the Licensees till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, was extended by DoT up to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
- d. COAI also requested DoT to further extend the timeline for submission of self-certificates for new BTS and up-gradation cases. In this regard, DoT extended the said timelines up to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024.
- e. COAI had made a request that closed demands of the testing fees should be revised and charged at INR 4000 per test, and the excess amount already paid by TSPs should be adjusted against the future testing charges. In this regard, DoT has agreed to the request of COAI vide its order dated 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## 13. IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2022

- a. COAI submitted inputs on the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2022 dated 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023.
- b. In its submission, COAI highlighted that the provisions contained in the rules should be imposed on applicable intermediaries and that Guidelines would not be applicable to TSPs as intermediaries to the extent that the content flowing in the telecom pipes is not visible or known to the TSPs.

- c. MeitY, vide its mail dated 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023, agreed to the COAI submission.

## 14. V2X/ITS policy formulation: COAI signed the final Committee report on V2X/ITS policy formulation. COAI has recommended that IMT identified spectrum within Sub 1-GHZ should not be considered for V2X since this band is very critical to us in terms of deep indoor coverage. COAI inputs have been considered in the final report.

## 15. 6G:

- a. The government formed the Technology Innovation Group (TIG) on 6G, under which, the following Task Forces (TFs) were formed–
  - i. Multi-platform Next Generation Networks
  - ii. Spectrum Policy
  - iii. Multi-disciplinary Innovation Solutions
  - iv. Devices
  - v. International Standards Contribution
  - vi. Financing Research & Development
- b. COAI is a member of the above TFs and has submitted comments on the reports of the TFs.
- c. The Bharat 6G Vision document prepared by DoT was released in the public domain, which incorporates COAI inputs.
- d. An Apex Council has been formed by DoT for the Bharat 6G Mission, wherein COAI is a member. The Apex Council will lay down the Phase-wise objectives of the Bharat 6G Mission, which includes:
  - i. Phase 1 from 2023-2025 (2 years),
  - ii. Phase 2 from 2025-2030 (5 years),
  - iii. Consulting Bharat 6G Alliance,
  - iv. Suggesting research and innovation pathways,
  - v. Reviewing the progress from time to time,
  - vi. Ordering external evaluations and suggesting course corrections.

## 16. Mandatory Testing and Certification of Telecommunication Equipment (MTCTE)



### Phases 3, 4 and 5:

- a. Basis COAI's coordination, extension has been received on Phases 3 & 4 of MTCTE. Both Phases are to be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023.
  - b. ILAC Certification has been increased for 2 years for certain categories of products.
  - c. COAI continues to take up the issue of testing capabilities of Indian Labs and has submitted additional responses sought by DoT on Reforms, EoDB, etc. in collaboration with Invest India.
  - d. The validity of Regular MTCTE Certificate has been increased from 5 years to 10 years.
- 17. MRO for the 3.3 GHz and 26 GHz Band:** DoT released the Test Schedule and Test Procedure for Rollout Obligation testing in 3300 MHz and 26 GHz spectrum bands.
- 18. Mobile IMEI Registration:** Based on letter submitted by COAI, the Security Assurance Wing of DoT notified that the requirement of registration of IMEIs of mobile phones being manufactured in the country for export is to be kept in abeyance till further orders.
- 19. Submission of Unaudited/Audited AGR documents and related documents in SARAS**
- a. COAI had made representation to DoT that the earlier need for parallel physical submissions of financial compliance documents, such as Unaudited/Audited AGR Statements, Audited Annual Accounts, Deduction claims documents (including Claim Sheets, bank statements, invoices, TDS certificates, etc.) may be discontinued.
  - b. On 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022, DoT clarified that the physical submissions of the following documents would not be required for Q3 of FY 2022-23 and onwards:
    - i. Unaudited/Audited AGR Statements (Statement of Revenue and License Fee)
    - ii. Audited Reconciliation Statement
    - iii. Audited Annual Accounts
    - iv. Payment Proofs including GAR-6/GAR-7 and Affidavit.

c. This will help in ease of doing compliances.

### 20. Alignment of Formats given in SoP and SARAS – (variations in AO/AG/PP/IR sheets in DVR SOP vis-a-vis SARAS/previous orders)

- a. It was informed to DoT that member TSPs have submitted AO, AG and other claim sheets for Q1, Q2 and Q3 for FY 2021-22 in the original formats, prior to the issue of the SoP dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Hence, it was difficult for them to revise the same and submit claim sheets in new formats. Moreover, there were variations in a few Claim Sheet formats in SARAS and SOP. The exercise of preparing Claim sheets in different formats would be quite burdensome for the TSPs.
- b. On 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022, DoT clarified that the variations in format of AO/AG/IR sheets in the DVR SOP of May 2022, vis-à-vis formats of the same in SARAS, are not significant and the AO/AG/IR sheets as implemented in SARAS are appropriate for submissions.
- c. This is a big relief as members will not be required to submit documents again for the previous period in revised format.

### 21. GST – Procedural issues in Compliance – Clarification by MoF

- a. COAI made representation to GST Council and concerned senior officers in the MoF/DoT on key issues and suggestions of Members.
- b. During the 48<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the GST Council held on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2022, the Council issued clarification on various issues, including:
  - i. Input Tax Credit (ITC) Reversal for Invoices Not Paid Within 180 Days.
  - ii. Procedure for confirming ITC discrepancies for FY 2017-18 and 2018-19 between GSTR-3B and GSTR-2A.
- c. This will help in saving IT upgradation and administrative costs, ease doing compliance and reduce need for litigation.





### 1. TRAI Consultation Paper on Use of street furniture for small cell and aerial fiber deployment

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022. COAI submitted its response to the Paper on 11th May 2022. COAI contributed extensively to the preparation of the report for the Pilot Projects for deployment of Small Cells at the four locations viz. Delhi International Airport, Kandla Port, Namma Metro – Bengaluru and Smart City-Bhopal.

TRAI released its recommendation on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022, accepting most of the suggestions made by COAI. These recommendations are very comprehensive and positive for the industry.

### 2. TRAI's Consultation Paper on Rating of Buildings or Areas for Digital Connectivity

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022. COAI submitted inputs on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022, and participated in the Open House Discussion held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

TRAI released its recommendations on February 20, 2023, which is very inclusive and would be beneficial to industry.

### 3. TRAI's Consultation Paper on Embedded SIM for M2M Communications

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022. COAI submitted inputs on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022, and participated in the Open House Discussion held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

COAI has submitted that International SIMs should be converted/replaced with Indian

TSP's SIMs/profiles. Further, SM-DP should remain within India and SM-SR should be allowed to be situated across geographical boundaries. The integration between SM-SR and SM-DP should be driven by mutual agreement/market forces, and user-initiated transfers should not be supported.

### 4. TRAI's Consultation Paper on Rationalization of Entry Fee and Bank Guarantees

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022. COAI submitted inputs on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022, and participated in the Open House Discussion held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

In its interventions, COAI has stated that the Licensees pay huge amounts of Entry Fee for a particular Licensed service and any reduction on the amount of Entry Fee for the new entrants would undermine the policy of the level playing field amongst the incumbent licensed service providers and new licensees. COAI further stated that requirement of BG should be completely done away with in accordance with EoDB.

### 5. TRAI's Consultation Paper on Leveraging Artificial Intelligence and Big Data in Telecommunication Sector

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2022. COAI submitted its inputs on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022, and participated in the Open House Discussion held on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

COAI has stated that the concepts of AI and Big Data are still at a very nascent stage and any specific regulatory intervention/mandate/regulation around its deployment in telecom networks or services will constrain its development and the adoption. Further,

before any regulation related to AI and BD comes up in the country, a comprehensive PDP Bill and NPD Governance Framework is to be put in place to strike balance between harnessing potential of AI & BD and protecting interest of a data principal.

**6. TRAI's Consultation Paper on Introduction of Calling Name Presentation (CNAP) in Telecommunication Networks**

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022. COAI submitted inputs on the same and participated in the Open House Discussion held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

COAI has submitted that implementation of CNAP should not be mandatory and be left to TSPs, so that they may consider implementing the same keeping the market dynamics/business case in mind.

**7. TRAI's Consultation Paper on Licensing Framework and Regulatory Mechanism for Submarine Cable Landing in India**

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022. COAI submitted its inputs and participated in the Open House Discussion held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

COAI has stated that CLS should be mandated as infrastructure of national importance and the approval process for CLS should be simplified, made online and time bound. Further, the requirements of mandatory presence of DoT officials on ships should be removed and the Access Facilitation charges and co-location charges paid to CLS should be allowed as pass-through expenses.

**8. TRAI's Consultation Paper on Telecommunication Infrastructure Sharing, Spectrum Sharing and Spectrum Leasing**

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023. COAI has submitted inputs on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.

**9. TRAI's Recommendation on Regulatory Framework for Promoting Data Economy Through Establishment of Data Centres, Content Delivery Networks, and Interconnect Exchanges in India**

TRAI issued this Consultation Paper on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021. COAI actively participated

in the consultation process. TRAI released its recommendations on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022, which are comprehensive and beneficial for the industry.

**10. Review of the definition of AGR**

The AGR definition is still complex and arbitrary and needs to be reviewed and simplified urgently so as to avoid any further litigation and ensure timely payment of revenue share to the Government.

COAI has submitted various letters to DoT and TRAI regarding various clauses to be considered by the Authority for incorporating the same in the definition of Gross Revenue and Adjusted Gross Revenue. This would facilitate unhindered growth of the telecom sector.

**11. Modification of IP Cat-I registration clauses to enable implementation of Disaster Management related systems in the State of Kerala**

A joint industry letter (COAI-DIPA) was submitted to DoT on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022, requesting that rather than adding permanent additional load on telecom infrastructure for all times, irrespective of the fact whether there is a disaster or not, it may be better for NDMA to use government buildings and street furniture for the deployment of EWDS equipment.

**12. Cloud Based Service offerings by new licensees**

COAI made various submissions to DoT on the Mobile Series and LRN codes being allotted to an Access Service licensee to provide Internet Telephony Services. However, the said licensee does not have spectrum, access network and pan India license. This has raised serious concerns with mobile service providers who have invested in the spectrum, access network and all India licenses, and have various obligations to meet such as QoS and Emergency Services. Thus, this would lead to a serious regulatory imbalance and violation of regulatory principles of the level-playing field, and severely impact investments and orderly growth in the sector.



### 13. SoP for Deduction Verification

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 11th July 2022. Vide this letter, COAI submitted the SoP for DVR issues by DoT which were highlighted by our members in the meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022, and also submitted our requests against each DVR issue.

### 14. Introduction of E-SIM in handsets

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022, requesting that necessary instructions may be issued recommending introducing E-SIMS (in addition to the physical SIM slot) in all smartphone handsets costing Rs. 10,000/- and above to handset manufacturers in the country. Furthermore, considering the wide proliferation of eSIM devices in the coming times, solution may also be mandated in the handsets to facilitate device to device transfer if customer changes between eSIM devices.

### 15. Conduct of “Consumer Education Workshops (CEWs)” through digital/online mode

COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022, requesting to allow TSPs to conduct the CEWs via online mode for at least the next four quarters i.e., from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023, as it would be more efficient and enable greater participation. Moreover, the risk of COVID spreading is still present as new variants keep emerging.

In this regard, TRAI has decided that TSPs shall conduct at least 50% of the target CEWs in physical mode and the rest may be conducted through online/hybrid mode till 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

### 16. Reforms in Telecom Sector

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022, with suggestions on the second phase of reforms in the telecom sector and various steps that can be taken to further enhance Ease of Doing Business and attracting investments in the sector.

### 17. Guidelines for Registration Process of M2M Service Providers (M2MSP) & WPAN/WLAN Connectivity Provider for M2M Services

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on 4<sup>th</sup>

August 2022, stating that Proprietorship firms should be allowed for taking registration (M2MSP/WLAN/WPAN) under the mentioned Guidelines. The Guidelines may be amended to that effect and relevant changes may also be carried out in the Saral Sanchar Portal to facilitate the same. DoT has been requested to transparently publish the names and registration details of the M2MSPs on the Saral Sanchar portal.

### 18. Application of Incremental 0.5% SUC rate under Sharing of Spectrum

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2022, requesting DoT that an incremental SUC rate of 0.5% of AGR should be applied only to the shared spectrum bands and not the entire spectrum holding.

### 19. Lawful Interception requirements - Multiple Law Enforcement Agencies and Government Authorized agencies approaching Operators to provide 1:1 traffic and space for placing their equipment

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022, requesting that all agencies, be it Law Enforcement Agencies or other Authorized agencies, be asked to approach DOT and seek the traffic/interception from CDOT setup as our members have already provided 1:1 traffic to CDOT setup. This solution would take care of the needs of the security/authorized agencies without impacting the user experience, and would not put further financial burden on the operators, while also ensuring confidentiality of the data.

### 20. Reporting of major outages of the network and submission of state-wise data for QoS Parameters to TRAI

TRAI issued letter No. N-2/8/ (2)/2022-QoS on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, regarding the ‘formation of the working group for giving recommendations on reporting of major outages of network and submission of state-wise data for QoS parameters to TRAI’, and the first meeting of the working group was held on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022, in which all TSPs participated.

COAI, vide its letters dated 20<sup>th</sup> October



2022, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023, raised its concerns on the complexity involved in re-defining the network architecture for such reporting of district-wise outages and extracting of such information from the back end. It was further emphasized that the LSA-wise data being supplied to the Authority is more useful than the impact of district-level QoS Parameters on the size of the population, as the latter would be inaccurate due to the possibility of inaccurate data extraction. It was requested that TRAI accepts our submissions and not insist on state-wise QoS parameters.

#### 21. Relaxation of restrictive features on M2M SIMs

COAI has submitted letters to DoT on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023, requesting to relax the number of IPs and URLs that can be accessed from M2M SIMs, to ensure that all genuine IoT use cases can be served. The guidelines should be amended to ensure that the TSPs enable restricted public internet access on the M2M SIMs, while the count of URLs required could be defined as per the customer needs.

#### 22. Letter to Ministry of Power regarding Open Access policy for Telecom Networks

COAI submitted letter to the Ministry of Power on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023, whereby certain recommendations were made for the Telecom Industry to transition to green energy.

#### 23. Letter to Ministry of Power regarding Expansion of Telecom Networks by utilizing Energy Infrastructure and Enhancing Ease of Doing Business for the Telecom Sector

COAI has submitted a letter to the Ministry of Power on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023, providing certain recommendations on the issue, for the consideration of the Ministry.

#### 24. Letter to MNRE regarding Duty on Solar Cells impact on Telecom Industry and switch to Renewable Energy

COAI submitted a letter to the MNRE on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023, requesting a review of the imposition of duty on Solar Modules and

Solar Cells for the Telecom Industry to transition to green energy.

#### 25. Abolition of USOF Levy

Letter was submitted to DoT on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023, requesting USO Levy to be abolished, along with information on international practices in this regard.

#### 26. Re-evaluation of permission for Smart Grid deployment via RF Mesh using unlicensed band (865-868 MHz)

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023, requesting to immediately recommend to the Ministry of Power to use licensed spectrum bands and the infrastructure created under the telecom license for deployment of Smart Grids.

#### 27. Advocacy

- a. On Right of Way - COAI made submissions to all the States and UTs on adoption of Indian Telegraph RoW 2022 amendment rules, highlighting industry issues and the need for bringing out a facilitative environment for telecom infrastructure deployment, with major focus on 5G.
- b. On Electricity - COAI was active in making submissions to all the States & UTs, asking for Industrial Tariff and Green Open Access facility for the telecom industry. COAI also made submissions in the Tariff finalization exercises in 10 states, with follow up and advocacy through relevant channels. Electricity related submissions were made to various other relevant stakeholders, including Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, Ministry of Power, TRAI and DoT.

#### 28. Consultation Paper on “Promoting Networking and Telecom Equipment Manufacturing in India”

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022. COAI made a submission to TRAI on the matter on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

#### 29. Instructions for issuing new mobile connections in case of bulk mobile connections category

COAI submitted letters to DoT on the subject on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and 23<sup>rd</sup> March



2022, requesting to extend the timelines for updating end user details for bulk connections by 6 months. Based on the submissions made by COAI, DoT issued a notification on 11th April 2022, providing extension on the same till 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

### **30. Implementation of Central Monitoring System (CMS)**

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022, requesting DoT to hold discussion with security agencies/stakeholders to expedite increase in utilization of CMS for LI provisioning and only after a reasonable acceptance of CMS for LI, efforts be made to make additional features of CDR and SDR functional.

### **31. Need for Rationalization of EMF Exposure Norms**

COAI submitted a reminder letter to DoT on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2022, regarding the need for Rationalisation of EMF Exposure Norms and considering suggested changes in EMF compliance testing methodology. COAI submitted that this is the need of the hour to have a successful and widespread rollout of 5G services, to quickly augment the existing telecom services, achieve improvement in cost-efficiency for network rollouts, and to further reduce the digital divide.

### **32. Extension of timelines for EMF Self-Certificate Submission**

Vide its letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022, COAI requested DoT for extension of timelines for EMF Self-Certificate Submission due to deployment of the Spectrum newly acquired during the July 2022 Auction and allocated in August 2022. COAI submitted that there would be an unprecedented and massive upgrade exercise in the existing networks with new acquired frequencies. The network reconfiguration will include multiple upgrades like bandwidth/power/antenna change, etc. for existing as well as newly acquired spectrum. Each upgrade will need EMF compliance and submission. TSPs need to upgrade over 7 lakh sites and also install many new BTSs and sites.

### **33. TASSCOM**

- a. The 7<sup>th</sup> TASSCOM Meeting was held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022, wherein DoT requested 'Addition of new fields' to be provisioned in the Tarang Sanchar portal.
- b. In this regard, a meeting was held with member TSPs & M/s Ramboll (vendor) and it was suggested that a separate web page will be created with separate login details for the additional data fields linked to the Tarang Sanchar Portal.
- c. Further, a meeting was held with DoT on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022, to discuss/ deliberate on the matter and the Action items emerged from the meeting were shared with members.

### **34. Subscriber verification**

- a. Regarding the activity of updating the end-user details for existing bulk connections by the TSPs as per the Directions of DoT, members had asked COAI to seek extension from DoT till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, for complying with updating of end-user details of some of the remaining bulk connections.
- b. COAI submitted a letter in this regard to DoT on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022.

### **35. Compliance Requirements for EMF Exposure**

- a. COAI had requested DoT to defer the various compliance requirements related to EMF testing such as self-certification prior to launch, routine testing, site audit, etc., for both 5G shared sites and standalone sites to expedite 5G rollouts across the country. COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022, requesting to put in abeyance the compliance requirements for EMF Exposure for 12 months.
- b. In this regard, a letter was issued from DoT on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022, extending the timeline of self-certification for new BTSs and upgradation to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

### **36. Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation (TCCPR)**

- a. COAI submitted letter to TRAI on 20<sup>th</sup>

September 2022, seeking two weeks' time to revert on sharing of the Opt-in supporting documents sought by TRAI.

- b. COAI letter was submitted to TRAI on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022, requesting to provide the updated consolidated list of the Headers exempted from charge @ up to Rs.0.05 per SMS with the TSPs, along with the expiry date for the exemption/date of the renewal, and uploading of the list on the TRAI website.
- c. With reference to the issue of providing information on Opt-in/supporting documents to the complaints closed on the grounds of Service Messages & Not a UCC for the period from QE Sep 2020 to Dec 2021, COAI submitted a letter to TRAI requesting to allow TSPs to submit the sample information of the Opt-ins for each quarter starting from QE Sept 2020, considering the volume of the said information, and consider initiating discussion with the TSPs along with said sample size opt-ins from first week of November 2022 onwards.
- d. COAI submitted the Status Report of the implementation of the TRAI Directions on measures to curb misuse of Headers and Content Templates under Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation, 2018 and TRAI Directions to curb unauthorized activities using telecom resources and amendment in Codes of Practice under Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation, 2018 dated 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023, on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023.
- e. COAI submitted the DLT Voice solution to TRAI on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

### 37. Internet Resilience Roadmap (IRR)

COAI submitted comments to DoT on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022, on various issues related to IRR. In its response, COAI highlighted following points:

- a. Business continuity plan for Internet resilience

- b. Policies initiatives required and expected to tackle internet resilience issues
- c. Issues pertaining to cable landing station, laying and repairing of submarine cables
- d. Issues w.r.t. terrestrial connections.

### 38. Dealer Possession License-related challenges

A letter was submitted to DoT on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022, with reference to simplifying the process related to Dealer Possession License-related challenges faced by our OEM members.

### 39. Regarding issuance of guidelines for Numbers activated and deactivated within a given calendar month

In reference to the Letter received from DoT regarding numbers activated and deactivated within a given calendar month. COAI letter "Regarding Issuance of Guidelines for Numbers Activated and Deactivated within a given Calendar Month" was submitted to DoT on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022.

### 40. Committee constituted to study the apportionment/sharing of frequency bands 37-43.5 GHz, 47.2-48.2 GHz and 66-71 GHz

The Committee was constituted to undertake the study for the Sharing/Apportionment of Frequency Bands 37-43.5 GHz, 47.2-48.2 GHz and 66-71 GHz among various co-primary services, considering their existing and future requirements. COAI inputs were captured in the Committee Report.

### 41. Removal of old and deployed devices from Authentication ecosystem strengthening authentication security

A UIDAI circular mandated all Authentication User Agencies (AUA) and KYC User Agencies (KUA) to identify and upgrade or phase-out the old devices with expired STQC certificated from the Authentication ecosystem, otherwise such devices will be stopped at UIDAI end from authentication with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022, requesting to postpone the deadline for discontinuing these devices by at least 3 months, to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.



#### 42. Benefits of Introducing E-SIM in handsets

Further to the COAI letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022, on “Introduction of E-SIM in handsets”, a COAI letter highlighting the various benefits to include E-SIM in mobile phones was submitted to DoT on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

#### 43. Request for Removing Export Requirements and Extension in Timelines for Registering IMEIs of Locally Manufactured Phones

DoT had issued clarification regarding the subject on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022. In this regard, a COAI letter requesting to remove the requirement of registering the IMEIs of mobile devices meant for export and also for extension in Timelines for registering IMEIs of locally manufactured phones was submitted to DoT on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

#### 44. Safety measures regarding C Band radio-altimeter vs. 5G/IMT band stations

COAI Letter on the Safety measures proposed regarding C Band radio-altimeter vs. 5G/IMT band stations with regard to the DoT letter File No. T-11012/04/2022-Conf. (Pt.) was submitted to DoT on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022.

#### 45. TEC Discussion Paper on Radio Frequency (RF) Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Compliance Assessment of 5G Base Stations

COAI Response on the TEC Discussion Paper on “Radio Frequency (RF) Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Compliance Assessment of 5G Base Stations” was submitted to TEC.

#### 46. Committee formed for Studies In 6 GHz Frequency Band (5925-7125 MHz)

Final COAI inputs were submitted to the Committee formed for Studies in 6 GHz Frequency Band (5925-7125 MHz) on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

#### 47. Representation on additional process for eSIM transfer from one device to another

In reference to increasing availability of eSIM enabled devices in the market and associated requirements, a COAI letter was submitted to DoT on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022, on the requirement of additional process for eSIM transfer from one device to another.

#### 48. Court Appearance and deposing of evidence, U/s 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, by TSP Nodal officers and Alternate Nodal Officers

In reference to the COAI Letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022, regarding “Court Appearance and deposing of evidence, U/s 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, by TSP Nodal officers and Alternate Circle Nodal Officers”; a COAI Letter was submitted to DoT on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

#### 49. Draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022

COAI submitted its clause wise response on the draft Bill to DoT on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

#### 50. TRAI CP on Data Communication Services between Aircraft and Ground Stations Provided by Organizations Other than Airports Authority of India

COAI submitted its response to the CP on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023. The key points highlighted by COAI were:

- a. Data Communication Services between aircraft and ground stations provided by organizations other than Airports Authority of India should be brought under License.
- b. The same should be licensed through an authorization under Unified License.
- c. Communication services between aircraft and ground stations should be only restricted to the Crew Members of the Aircraft and the Cockpit and not to be provided through any medium to the passengers travelling inside the Aircraft.
- d. The validity period for the said License can be for 20 years, as in the case of other authorizations.

#### 51. Review of the TSTP for 4G LTE FDD & 4G LTE TDD and Formulation of TSTP for 5G Technology roll out

COAI submitted a letter to TEC on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023, to review the TSTP for 4G LTE FDD & 4G LTE TDD and Formulation of TSTP for 5G Technology roll out.





## 52. Report by the Committee on V2X/ITS policy formulation

The DoT Committee on ITS/V2X Policy Formulation finalised its report on the overall policy requirement, including spectrum requirement for the introduction/rollout of V2X in the country. COAI being a member of the Committee, provided its comments on the report. In its final submission, COAI recommended that IMT identified spectrum within Sub 1-GHz should not be considered for V2X since this band is very critical to us in terms of deep indoor coverage.

## 53. Standard Operating Procedure (“SOP”) for checking Grey Market Operations

COAI had submitted a letter on the above subject on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022, suggesting changes in the SOP Issued by DoT. In this regard, COAI held a meeting with DoT on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## 54. TEC Discussion Paper on “Radio Frequency (RF) Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Compliance Assessment of 5G Base Stations”

The Discussion Paper was issued in November 2022. COAI submitted its comments on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023, and additional comments on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

## 55. TSTP for 4G LTE FDD & 4G LTE TDD and Formulation of TSTP for 5G Technology roll out

COAI Letter on Network Deployment Map to be published on the websites of TSPs for 5G with reference to the “Review of the TSTP for 4G LTE FDD & 4G LTE TDD and Formulation of TSTP for 5G Technology roll out” was submitted to DoT on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

## 56. Issues pertaining to Dealer Possession Licence (DPL)

A meeting on the issue of Dealer Possession License was held with WPC (DoT) on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023. The key industry asks submitted in the meeting were:

- a. To extend the validity of Dealer Possession Licence (DPL) to 5 years

instead of the existing 1 year.

- b. To make provision for online submission of the DPL Application for any New/Renewal case.
- c. The addition of a new address (location) in DPL be integrated with the DGFT portal/ GST Portal for speedy addition of a new/additional business location in the issued DPL.
- d. DPL holders be permitted to import radios to support the existing networks under warranty/maintenance contract with the TSPs through Self-Declaration mode.
- e. Exemption of the Experimental License for the non-radiating category for locations as mentioned in the issued guidelines.

## 57. TEC standard on Generic Requirements for “EMF Strength Measuring Instrument in the frequency range of 30 MHz to 3/6 GHz”

COAI had submitted its preliminary inputs to TEC in this regard on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023. Further, COAI submitted a letter to TEC, requesting to put in abeyance the release of the GR till the 5G EMF TSTP is released.

## 58. Request Extension in Date for Submission of EMF Self certificates

DoT had issued an order on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022, wherein the timeline for submission of self-certificates of new BTS and upgradation cases for conformity to EMF exposure was extended till 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT requesting that the EMF exposure compliance requirements be held in abeyance for further 9 months i.e., till 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

## 59. Action Plan on Circular Economy in Telecom Sector

A meeting was held in MoEFCC to discuss the E-waste (Management) Rules, 2022 related concerns, wherein COAI highlighted the concerns related to the directions.

## 60. Input Tax Credit on Equipment Installed on Telecom Towers

- a. Some State Tax Authorities are proposing to deny ITC on telecom equipment



including antenna, base stations, transmitters and other items like DG sets and batteries installed on towers, by interpreting that such equipment is to be treated at par with telecom towers, which is baseless and without any precedent.

- b. In this regard, COAI made various representations and follow ups with DoT, TRAI and MoF. Both TRAI and DoT have sent their recommendations to the Revenue Secretary on the same. The matter is pending with GST Council for consideration.

#### **61. Circular w.r.t. Telecom Equipment and Customs Duty**

- a. CBIC, MoF issued a circular 08/2023 dated 13th March 2023, regarding the telecommunication equipment in the context of notification No. 02/2019- Customs dated 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019, amending notification No. 57/2017-Customs dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017.
- b. Earlier amendments were deliberated with concerned stakeholders, and they set their business roadmaps accordingly.
- c. There are significant concerns related to this recent circular as the same will inadvertently impact the pace of the roll-out of 5G services in the country and also adversely impact ease of doing business.
- d. Further, the mapping of equipment with the description of Notification in the circular had not been made basis the technical specification, primary function, and commercial marketability of the products.
- e. COAI has requested MoF/DoT the following in this regard:
  - i. CBIC to hold consultations with various stake holders.
  - ii. CBIC to extend this compliance requirement by min. six months.
  - iii. Customs Duties for the 4G/5G related network products along with other related products brought down to NIL.

#### **62. DoT Guidelines/Clarifications towards the deduction verification exercise**

- a. DoT issued clarifications on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020, on verification of deductions claimed for the years for which dues have not been finalized by the Hon'ble SC till FY 2016-17, and for all the years post FY 2016-17.
- b. A new order dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021, was also issued by DoT mentioning that the guidelines are applicable only from FY 2019-20 onwards.
- c. DoT decision to make verification applicable for 2019-20, is causing challenges in the current processes for deduction verification.
- d. Clarifications issued in February 2020, were helpful in streamlining the deduction verification process.
- e. COAI has requested DoT that the above clarification be made applicable for FYs 2017-18 and 2018-19.

#### **63. Procedural issues in GST Compliance**

There are multiple procedural issues faced by the members while doing GST compliance. A detailed representation has been made by COAI, highlighting the issues and suggestions to the GST Council and to the concerned senior officers in the MoF/DoT, seeking clarity/resolution from the concerned authorities by way of necessary notifications and clarifications. Few key areas in which operational issues are faced by the members are:

- a. Centralized registration
- b. Exemption from GST on Spectrum payment, LF and SUC or refund of INR 32000 Cr to members
- c. Input Tax Credit on telecom equipment
- d. Departmental actions - Notices/Enquiries in relation to non - compliance by the Vendors
- e. Denial of credit due to noncompliance by supplier

- f. Relaxation of compliances in relation to removal of capital goods
- g. Mismatch of tax reported in GSTR-1 Vs GSTR-3B and e-way bill
- h. Issues related to reconciliation / mismatch of ITC.

#### 64. Decriminalization of Act

- a. The following key points were presented to the Additional Secretary, Department of Revenue, MoF, and other concerned senior officers from the ministry on Decriminalization of Acts like Income Tax Act, Customs Act, GST, etc.:
  - i. GST - it was discussed that based on data analytics; various inappropriate notices are being sent by the field formation. Although most of the information is available with GSTN, the same is still being asked from the taxable persons. It was informed that even in the same state, companies are getting summons from multiple agencies such as DGCI, State intelligence agencies, State Government, & Centre Government. Companies are getting summons from various agencies for the same things, even for data seeking such as for Mismatch in 3B Vs 2B, Reconciliation of data, Decrease in revenue, etc.
- It was suggested that there should be one agency to handle and coordinate amongst each other and Summons are not required, simple enquiry should be sufficient.
- ii. Customs Duty - It was informed that there are challenges due to the imposition of penalty for minor amendments in bill of entry. Field formations are resorting to imposing penalties whenever importer requests amendments in bill of entry due to clerical errors. It was informed that DRI has now started investigating in interpretational issues in respect of classification or exemptions. These issues can be tagged to customs

formations who can deal with the same appropriately. It was suggested that clear guidelines be issued for invoking penalty provisions by customs authorities. Regarding interpretational issues, it was recommended that clarification be issued w.r.t. various terminologies used in tariff/exemption notifications, to reduce disputes with the department.

#### 65. DoT – Presentation to Member (F) and to concerned officers in the department

A presentation was made to Member (F) and concerned senior officers in DoT on the key issues of the industry. It was informed that Telcos are facing lot of issues like multiplicity of compliance, scrutiny, audits, investigations and litigations for large pan-India service providers. At state level, members are also getting notices for ITC on equipment installed on telecom towers, entertainment tax through online media/ internet implying multi-fold compliance, etc. The presentation covered the following:

- a. Operational Issues
- b. Review of GR, ApGR and AGR Definitions
- c. Ease of Doing Business
- d. Increasing Liquidity for Telecom Sector
- e. Other Taxation Issues

#### 65. GST – Representations made to Chairman, CBIC and to Member (GST, CX, ST & Legal), CBIC, MoF

The following key issues were highlighted:

- a. Clarity that input tax credit (ITC) is available on critical telecom equipment installed on telecom towers.
- b. Multiplicity of Compliance, Audits, Investigations and Litigation for large pan-India service providers.
- c. Removal of GST on License Fees, Spectrum Usage Charges and on Payment of Spectrum acquired in auction.
- d. Tax on self-supply of service.
- e. Service Tax on RoW.



## 66. Pre-Budget Recommendations for the Financial Year 2023-24

As COAI's pre-budget recommendations, detailed representations regarding key issues related to Direct and Indirect Taxes were submitted to the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Telecom, among others. Various meetings were held with concerned senior officers in the MoF/DoT in this regard.

The key issues included in the representation related to regulatory levies were as follows:

- a. Multiplicity of Compliance, Audits, Investigations and Litigation for Large Pan India service providers.

- b. Removal of GST on License Fees, Spectrum Usage Charges and on Payment of Spectrum acquired in auction.
- c. Tax on self-supply of service
- d. Service Tax on RoW
- e. Direct Tax Issues
- f. Indirect Tax Issues
  - i. Service Tax
  - ii. Custom Duty
- g. Key issues related to GST.

Other points submitted are as given below:

## Goods and Service Tax (GST)

Sr. No.	Issue	Recommendation
1.	Denial of Credit due to Non-Compliance by the Supplier	<p>Taxpayers need not be penalized due to Suppliers' default as they have legitimately paid the tax and are entitled to the resultant credit.</p> <p>Various High Courts have laid down the guidelines and rationale to be followed.</p> <p>Appropriate guidelines to be issued across the Board.</p>
2.	Invoice level data to be provided when ITC is being disputed by the department on account of any default by the supplier	<p>As the transaction level data is available with the revenue authorities, it is recommended that such transaction level data forms part of the notice/communication issued to the taxpayer.</p>
3.	Ease of doing business - Multiplicity of compliance, scrutiny, Audits, Investigations and Litigation for large Pan-India service providers	<p>Facilitate Centralized Assessment, Audit Procedure for large tax taxpayer units (LTU) having a pan-India turnover of more than INR 500 Cr AND presence in more than 12 States/Union Territories.</p> <p>This would limit this facility to less than 1% of all Corporates. This will ensure ease of doing business with no corresponding loss of revenue to the Government.</p>
4.	Exemption from GST on Spectrum payment, license fees, Spectrum usage charge, etc.	<p>Special benefit should be provided to telecom operators on GST by way of exemption on regulatory payments of LF, SUC and spectrum assigned under auction.</p> <p>Alternatively, payment of GST under reverse charge, which otherwise is required to be paid in cash, be allowed to be paid from the balance of the Input Tax Credit.</p>





Sr. No.	Subject	Recommendation
5.	Refund of Accumulated balance in Input Tax Credit	GST regulations may be amended, or notification be issued to allow refund of accumulated ITC to those Companies who are in an investment cycle and unable to recover ITC (similar to an inverted duty structure).
6.	Ambiguity on eligibility to avail ITC available on account of Telecommunication Towers and Shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TSPs should be eligible to claim credit on telecommunication towers.</li> <li>Explanation to Section 17 should be amended to include telecom towers within the definition of 'plant and machinery'.</li> </ul> <p>Law should be appropriately worded to remove ambiguity which is likely to result in widespread litigation and blockage of much needed working capital. The exclusion of telecom towers from the definition of 'plant and machinery' in section 17(5) should be removed.</p>
7.	Clarify that input tax credit is available on critical telecom equipment installed on telecom towers.	Request for issuance of an appropriate clarification to ensure that the telecom operators do not suffer on account of few authorities making a flawed interpretation. Denial of such credits, and that too right from the inception of GST, will cast a huge financial burden on this critical sector which is playing a very important role in development of basic infrastructure for providing digital connectivity across the country at very affordable tariffs.

## Direct Tax

Sr. No.	Subject	Recommendation
1.	Section 72 - Carry forward of losses	Special regime for Telecom Operators should be introduced in Section 72, wherein the losses can be carried forward and set-off till Sixteen (16) assessment years from the existing eight (8) years. Lapse of business losses post eight years would be detrimental to the already distressed telecom Industry as the income during recovery phase will be subject to tax outflows and other committed pay-outs such as AGR related pay out, spectrum related pay out, etc.
2.	Section 72A - Amendment in conditions of amalgamating companies	<p>a. Provision be amended to bring parity on the carry forward losses and unabsorbed depreciation between the amalgamation and demerger of companies. This would facilitate better reorganization of businesses.</p> <p>b. To bring down the threshold of keeping 75% of book value of fixed assets to 50%, for a maximum of 2 to 3 years' time period. The relaxation of this condition would also facilitate a conducive environment supporting the Digital India initiative of the Government.</p>



Sr. No.	Subject	Recommendation
3.	No disallowance in Assessment Order if issue is covered by Jurisdictional High Court	It is recommended that necessary amendment (or clarification) be introduced in Section 158A, providing that if any issue (or past disallowance) is now covered in Taxpayer's favour by jurisdictional High Court or Tribunal decision (against which Revenue has filed appeal), the same should not result in disallowance by Assessing Officer while passing the Assessment Order subject to submitting undertaking by the taxpayer.
4.	Overlap in definition of 'technical' and 'professional' services under the Income-tax Act, 1961	It is recommended that in definition of technical services and professional services, it may be clearly brought out by way of explanation that if technical consultancy services are rendered in the course of carrying out business, then it would fall in technical services category and the rate applicable would be 2%; while if technical services are rendered in the course of carrying out any profession (such as CA firms, Architect firms, Engineering consulting firms, etc.) then such services would be regarded as professional services and therefore, the rate applicable would be 10%.
5.	TDS under section 195 on IUC payments to Foreign Telecom Operators	It is recommended that CBDT issues a circular/instruction mandating no withholding on IUC payments to other operators, and clarifying that provision of domestic law cannot be read into or overridden by the provisions of the tax treaties between two countries, unless the treaty is amended by both the countries.
6.	TDS under section 194H on trade margins	A clarification be issued that such trade margins do not fall within the ambit of TDS provisions. However, if the government still wants to pursue this route for tax collection, it may introduce the TDS rate at 1% instead of the current 5%, which would be closer to the actual tax liability of distributors as margins earned by the distributors are low and they sustain only on volumes.
7.	No TDS under section 194J on payments towards software as a service (SAAS) transferred by reseller without any modification.	It is recommended that the benefit of notification no. 21/2012 be extended to the transactions for procurement of software as a service (SAAS) by the customer, wherein the SAAS is procured in a subsequent transfer and the transferor has transferred the SAAS without any modification and TDS has been done on the same either u/s 194J or u/s 195.
8.	Additional information in Form 26AS	It is recommended to provide Invoice reference number and PAN of the deductor in Form 26AS.
9.	Schedule AL – 1 of the Form ITR-6 (details relating to Assets and Liabilities)	To remove the hardship in inserting/filling the details, it is recommended that import/export (excel or CSV format) be provided for Schedules AL-1 (like Tax Audit Report Utility).

Sr. No.	Subject	Recommendation
<b>Service Tax</b>		
1.	Exemption from levy of Service tax on incremental LF and SUC payable pursuant to the SC decision	Request for issuance of a suitable instruction/ exemption specifying that Service tax is not required to be paid on incremental LF and SUC payable pursuant to the SC decision.
2.	Exemption in respect of levy of Service Tax on Right of Way permission granted by the Central Government/State Government and the development authorities	Scope of Exemption Notification No 1/2018 – Service Tax dated 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2018, be extended to cover similar services by the Central/State Government Department and other Development authority.
<b>Customs Duty</b>		
1.	Anomaly in BCD exemption notification on import of Printed Circuit Board Assembly (PCBA) for telecom gears	BCD on Populated, loaded or stuffed printed circuit boards falling under CTI 8517 70 10 be brought down to “NIL”.
2.	Higher duty of Customs on the telecom equipment disrupting the cost effectiveness of the Telcos	<p>Telecom is an essential infrastructure. It is critical for the economic growth of any country. Telecom sector is instrumental towards fulfilling the Government’s vision of “Digital India”. Affordability of telecom services is a key objective, enshrined in successful telecom policies of the Government.</p> <p>As the Hon’ble PM has already announced roll out of 5G and the densification of networks will require huge number of deployments of various equipment from outside India, exemption from the levy of BCD may be granted for all the technologies of the Telecom equipment (without any exclusions).</p>
3.	Levy of IGST on the value of vessels entering into India temporarily for repairing of undersea cable	Like the exemption granted from the levy of BCD, exemption from IGST may also be granted for hassle free importation of such vessels.



# 10

## MEDIA ADVOCACY AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH



COAI has emerged as the official voice of the Indian telecom industry over the years and interacts directly with Ministries, Policy Makers, Regulators, Financial Institutions and Technical Bodies. Treading on its vision to establish India as a global hub of innovative foundation, products and services, and accomplishing a national tele-density of 100% including broadband, COAI has been committed to developing modern digital communications and relentlessly working towards a ubiquitous and affordable mobile telephony ecosystem.

Its intuitive outlook on all key regulatory and policy matters reinstated its thought leadership position amongst all relevant influencers and stakeholders. Through its detailed media mapping and outreach programs, COAI has suitably represented the Indian Telecom industry amongst the media, government and other stakeholders, which has, in turn, yielded positive results.

Driven by the Executive Council's guidance and support, COAI's consistent efforts are aimed towards

fortifying the industry's overarching significance and has led it to create a ground for discussions, deliberations and exchange of ideas between member organisations, the government and other relevant stakeholders in the ecosystem.

Bringing the Telecom Industry's views and concerns to the fore, COAI has been able to consolidate its reputation of being an approachable organization that has the requisite expertise in all things telecom. COAI is also focusing on emerging technologies such as 5G, IoT, M2M, AI, AR, etc. Developments in these areas will not only open up newer opportunities for innovation, investments and income for the sector, but will also help India realize the Government's ambitious 'Digital India' dream.

COAI and the Government continue to work in tandem to deploy robust telecom infrastructure to deliver its services and benefits to the citizens of India, helping promote digital inclusion and empowerment in the true sense of the term.

### Significant media activities by COAI in FY 2022-23

#### 5G IN INDIA

Taking India's digital transformation and connectivity to new heights, the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi launched 5G services in India at the India Mobile Congress 2022. He also unveiled various 5G use cases of various Telecom Service Providers in crucial fields like Education, Health, Worker Safety, Smart Agriculture, etc.

COAI issued a statement on the launch of 5G at India Mobile Congress and mentioned that 5G will provide the road map for the next leap in the socio-

economic development of the country.

Media Outreach – Further to the 5G launch, authored articles were placed highlighting the impact and other vital aspects of 5G in India. Coverage was garnered in The Hindu Business Line, ET Telecom, Hindustan Times, The Times of India and News 18, among others.





## 5G to be a road map for the socio-economic development: COAI

"We are excited about the long-awaited 5G launch in India. Telecom operators are geared up to provide the high-speed services that are poised to transform consumer experience. 5G will open new avenues for each sector from manufacturing, healthcare, and augmented entertainment to even smart city projects by integrating with new-age technologies like IoT, M2M learning, drones, AI, and big data analytics," S P Kochhar, DG, COAI said.

ETTelecom

Updated On Oct 1, 2022 at 12:05 PM IST



LT GEN DR S P KOCHHAR

## 5G ERA WILL PLACE SKILLING ON THE FAST LANE

The next-generation telecom network will drive growth across sectors, creating new opportunities and better job options in India



India successfully launched 5G in the country last year, becoming one of the 95 nations to achieve this feat. With ultra-low latency and high data speed, 5G is on its way to becoming an extremely reliable communication system, connecting every corner of rural and urban India and seamlessly transferring real-time information.

The launch of 5G has also amplified the demand for a wide array of skilled manpower to meet the nation's deployment needs. Estimates by staffing firms indicate

that 5G services in India will likely create a demand for up to 45,000 jobs by the end of this financial year. The mere anticipation of the 5G rollout has already resulted in 80,000 5G-related hirings in the calendar year 2022.

As per TSSC, India may require an estimated 22 million skilled workers possessing 5G-related competencies by 2025. It is also likely to generate direct and indirect job opportunities significantly, thereby opening new avenues for people and businesses with the potential to change

## A new revolution. 5G set to make waves in 2023

January 06, 2023 - Updated 08:50 am IST

Cheap data plans, proliferation of smartphones to reel in more end-consumers

BY S RONENDRA SINGH

The 5G era is finally here, and the new year will see a lot of use cases in various fields and people utilising the benefits of the technology. Also, India will be one of the first countries where 5G will be used more by consumers than enterprises.

One of the main reasons for end consumers using more of 5G services in India, unlike any other country, is that India still has the cheapest data tariffs and 5G smartphones





## DRAFT TELECOMMUNICATION BILL, 2022

Department of Telecommunications proposed to replace the existing legislation governing telecommunications in India, namely, Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950 (collectively, "Telegraph Laws"), with the draft Indian Telecommunication Draft Bill, 2022 ("Draft Bill").

To amplify the messaging on industry submission capturing the various aspects of the telecom sector in the draft telecom bill, COAI conducted an interactive session for the identified media..

Media Outreach - COAI's opinion was covered in major publications including Business Standard, Financial Express, ET Government, Deccan Chronicle among others.

### Draft bill on telecom set to bring in key reforms

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

The long-awaited Indian Telecom Bill 2022 will soon govern the sector, once formalised into law, as the department of telecom released the bill late Wednesday night for public comments. The draft bill proposed a clause to waive off fees, charges and penalties of any company to protect the interests of consumers or ensure fair competition. Besides, it also proposes a slew of reforms in the telecom sector, including spectrum that can be assigned through auction or an administrative process.

The DoT has also proposes a provision for refund of fees if a telecom or Internet provider surrenders his licence. The bill has been put up for public consultation and all stakeholders can send their comments latest by October 20.

■ More on Page 7

## COAI terms draft telecom bill 'reformative'

### Synopsis

"In keeping with the recent trend of reformative policy making by the government, this draft Indian Telecommunication bill is another milestone step to develop a modern and future-ready legal framework in telecommunication. We are studying the newly drafted Bill and will share our comments with the Government in due course of time," SP Kochhar, director general of Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), said in a statement.



ThinkStock Photos

The draft Bill has been put up for public consultation and stakeholders can send their comment till October 20.

Mobile phone companies Thursday said that the draft [Indian Telecommunications 2022 Bill](#) floated by the government was "reformative".

"In keeping with the recent trend of reformative policy making by the government, this draft Indian Telecommunication bill is another milestone step to develop a modern

## दूरसंचार की तस्वीर बदल देगा नया विधेयक

सुरजीत बास गुप्ता  
नई दिल्ली, 22 सितंबर

भारतीय दूरसंचार विधेयक का बहुप्रतीक्षित मसौदा चर्चा के लिए बुधवार रात जारी कर दिया गया। इसमें देश में दूरसंचार सेवाएं नियंत्रित करने वाले मौजूदा सांविधिक ढांचे में ख़ासे बदलाव की बात कही गई है।

विधेयक में स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन की स्पष्ट रूपरेखा तय की गई है। आवंटन मुख्य तौर पर नीलामी के जरिये होगा मगर विशेष मामलों में सीधे आवंटन भी हो सकता है। इसके जरिये ओवर द टॉप (ओटीटी) संचार सेवाओं (क्वाट्रसरेप, टेलीग्राम आदि) और सेटलाइट ब्रॉडबैंड सेवाओं को अन्य दूरसंचार सेवाओं की तरह नए कानून के दायरे में लाया गया है।

मसौदे में सरकार को कई शक्तियां दी गई हैं, जिनमें बड़े खाते में डालना, बकाये को इक्विटी में बदलना और वित्तीय दिक्कतों के कारण भुगतान में चूक करने वाली दूरसंचार कंपनियों को राहत देना तथा भुगतान आगे



### मसौदा विधेयक की बातें

प्रस्ताव: स्पेक्ट्रम का आवंटन नीलामी अथवा प्रशासनिक प्रक्रिया या किसी अन्य निर्धारित तरीके से किया जाएगा

प्रभाव: स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन के लिए स्पष्ट ढांचा होगा। प्रशासनिक आवंटन के लिए गतिविधियों की सूची पहले ही दी जा चुकी है। दूरसंचार कंपनियों का कहना है कि इससे सरकार को काफी अधिकार मिलेंगे

प्रस्ताव: स्पेक्ट्रम की साझेदारी, खरीद-फरोख्त एवं पट्टेदारी की अनुमति

प्रभाव: दूरसंचार कंपनियों के लिए आवश्यक निवेश कम होगा

प्रस्ताव: विलय एवं अधिग्रहण के लिए सरकार को सूचित करना आवश्यक होगा

प्रभाव: इससे दूरसंचार कंपनियों के लिए कारोबारी सुगमता में मदद मिलेगी

टाल देना शामिल हैं। विधेयक में विलय एवं अधिग्रहण नियम आसान बनाए गए हैं और एक रूपरेखा तैयार की गई है ताकि राज्यों और

नगर निगमों में रास्ते के अधिकार के नियम आसानी से लागू किए जा सकें। हालांकि दूरसंचार कंपनियों और

विश्लेषकों ने मसौदे में शामिल कई बातों पर चिंता जताई है। उनका कहना है कि इस विधेयक से टाई को सलाहकार की भूमिका पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ेगा। सरकार ने विभिन्न हितधारकों से 20 अक्टूबर तक इस पर राय मांगी है। जानकार कह रहे हैं कि गंभीरता के साथ परामर्श करना है तो इतना समर्थ काफी नहीं होगा। भारतीय सेल्युलर ऑपरेटर संघ ने एक बयान में कहा कि सरकार की सुधारवादी नीति के अनुरूप ही यह विधेयक भी आधुनिक एवं भविष्य के अनुरूप दूरसंचार वैधानिक ढांचा तैयार करने को राह में बड़ा पड़ाव है।

विधेयक में कहा गया है कि स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन मुख्य तौर पर नीलामी के जरिये होगा, लेकिन रक्षा, परिवहन एवं अनुसंधान जैसे सरकारी एवं सार्वजनिक हितों के लिए इसका सीधा आवंटन भी किया जा सकता है। इससे सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के 2012 के आदेश से पैदा हुआ वह भ्रम भी दूर हो जाएगा कि स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन नीलामी के जरिये ही हो सकता है।

(शेष पृष्ठ 8 पर)



## OTT REGULATION

COAI came out in support of the government's move to bring over-the-top (OTT) communication service providers under the ambit of The Draft Telecommunications Bill. COAI proactively conducted a briefing session to explain the intricacies of the complex issue and its impact on the telecom sector and the national economy and security to the media.

The topic was highlighted in media again when some opposing views surfaced regarding the proposition of contribution of a fair usage charge by OTT service providers to telcos. COAI debunked the

misleading claims and clarified that the industry's stance on the matter mentioning 'usage charge' from OTTs is fair and rational.

Media Outreach - Informative and data-driven authored articles were shared with identified publications. Furthermore, a press note was issued to articulate the industry position on establishing the principle of Same Service, Same Rules for fair and healthy competition. Coverage was garnered in The Economic Times, Mint, Business Standard, Financial Express, Hindustan Times, The Hindu and The New Indian Express, among others.

### GUEST VIEW

## OTT services should not have an unfair edge over Indian telcos

Over-the-top platforms offer similar services but don't share infrastructure responsibility and bear almost no state obligations



S.P. KOCHHAR  
Director general, Cellular Operators  
Association of India (COAI)

The proposed regulation over the top OTT communication services in India's Draft Telecom Bill has triggered an intense debate. The fundamental objective of the proposed framework is to provide an appropriate regulatory framework for the operational aspects of OTT communication services.

The fact is that all digital technology enabled voice communication today requires application of data and therefore works in the application layer, whether the service is provided by telecom or OTT providers. The telecom domain and associated risks are same for both. So, they need to be governed by similar regulatory bodies which oversee security aspects, as they have for the last 25 years. If the government looks at its security risks are same as those of both TSPs and OTTs, it should be kept out of its ambit. But at this stage should not be kept out of its ambit.



regulate businesses. Incidentally, TSPs are not allowed to monetize the data of their subscribers as per Indian laws, while OTT services do at will. One major concern is that regulating OTT communication services will affect innovation and the spirit of entrepreneurship. But a bill stamping a flag of innovation and entrepreneurship, as they all OTT services do, get impacted. However, OTT services, despite their growing revenue, pay nothing to the government.

Telecom is a business of security. Innovation and entrepreneurship are not impacted adversely. Comparing the services of TSPs to OTTs is like comparing apples with oranges. One cannot compare apples with oranges. One cannot compare apples with oranges. One cannot compare apples with oranges.

One must understand that TSPs have a unique advantage over OTTs. TSPs have a unique advantage over OTTs. TSPs have a unique advantage over OTTs. TSPs have a unique advantage over OTTs.

and on have different or similar incentives. These incentives are not the same. Besides, securing high price spectrum and securing high operational expenses are not the same. Besides, securing high price spectrum and securing high operational expenses are not the same.

Telecom is a business of security. Innovation and entrepreneurship are not impacted adversely. Comparing the services of TSPs to OTTs is like comparing apples with oranges. One cannot compare apples with oranges.

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## Network usage charge on OTTs fair: COAI

JATIN GROVER  
New Delhi, February 27

THE CELLULAR OPERATORS Association of India (COAI) said that the demand by telecom operators for a usage charge from over-the-top (OTT) communication apps is fair. The association, which represents major telecom operators, opposed the argument that levying such a charge on OTTs would violate the net neutrality principles.

According to telecom companies, OTT communication apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, etc., also use the network infrastructure without paying anything for that. Therefore, a similar kind of regulation for OTTs is based on same services, same rules concept.

"Certain services with vested interests are misdirecting the issue of the need for a regulatory framework for the communication OTTs and the need of usage charge to be paid by OTTs to the TSPs for network service provided, by bringing in the aspect of net neutrality in a misleading manner, to make it a popular issue," said S.P. Kochhar, director general of COAI.

"We reiterate that all our member TSPs are committed to follow the net neutrality principles as per the Telecom Commission," Kochhar added.

The statement from COAI comes days after the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) said that the proposed to charge OTTs for using the network of telecom operators is an attempt to dilute net neutrality in India and exploit the internet businesses by formulating new seeking.

According to IMAAI, the model where the sending party network pays (SPNP) would be a 'death knell' for the digital economy and the creative ecosystem which is making India a global IT hub.

But net neutrality means open, equal internet for everyone, regardless of device, application or platform used and content consumed. According to representatives of OTT communication apps, if these apps have to pay a certain carriage fee or revenue to the telcos, then it would increase their costs, which will be transferred to the consumers and may hinder access to free and affordable internet use for a mass audience.

Their main argument is that OTT communication services are different from that of telcos and can be brought under the same regulatory framework, same rules concept.

In contrast, COAI said that net neutrality pertains to non-discriminatory treatment of content and has no nexus to the usage fee issue. "It is biased that representatives of application providers themselves be

### DEBATE RAGES ON

■ Telecom body says levying such a charge on OTTs would violate the net neutrality principles

■ Telcos say WhatsApp, Telegram, etc., also use the network infrastructure without paying anything

■ OTTs say usage charge as an attempt to dilute net neutrality and exploit the internet businesses by formulating new seeking

■ It would hike their costs, which will be transferred to consumers, to hinder free/affordable internet use

levying charges on subscribers while riding free on the telcos' network, are stating that paying for usage would effectively raise costs for users," Kochhar said.

Lately, many OTT communication players are contesting/lobbying charging subscribers a significant fee for verified accounts, adding a further load to their revenues, COAI said.

The telecom companies argue that proposed usage charge on OTTs will help them in meeting their increased network investments as an extent, which will increase with growing internet consumption. Further, this will increase revenue for the telcos as the charges paid by OTTs will be counted in the adjusted gross revenue (AGR) of telecom companies.

"The fact, though unfortunate, is that the proponents of such OTT service providers wish to continue to have free lunch at the expense of TSPs, while conveniently overlooking the fact that the TSPs continue to invest immensely towards building the nation's digital infrastructure and delivering connectivity, access and opportunities for inclusive growth to the Indian citizens," Kochhar added.

In November last year, COAI had written to the government to provide a legal framework and enforceable rules to levy a usage charge on the OTT players for using their network infrastructure.

The department of telecommunications (DoT) has sought recommendations from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to set up a legal framework for OTT apps and the regulator is seen expected to come out with a consultation paper on that.



S.P. KOCHHAR  
Director general, COAI

IMAGINE THE EXPANSIVE Indian Railways network, which spreads across the length and breadth of the country, connecting the farthest regions and carrying millions of passengers every day. This enormous network has been created through massive investments, efforts and hardships, weathering difficult terrain of all sorts, topographical challenges, and whatnot.

Now, let's assume we suddenly have a new level of service, where we can get from one place to another, but without the burden of having to travel in a crowded train or a slow-moving bus. This is the kind of service that OTTs are providing, but without the burden of having to travel in a crowded train or a slow-moving bus.

Curiously, this is something being demanded in the domain of telecom, and managing services being delivered to the users of telecom services across India. Over the top OTT services have risen fast in the digital age today, providing various services to the users.

Some of these services, also termed as OTT communication services, are offering services like video calling and messaging services to their users as the telecom service provider (TSP). Therefore, the principle of 'same service, same rules' can be applied to OTTs, where data is used in the same manner as in the telecom services.

It is time for India to introspect and decide, and on have different or similar incentives. These incentives are not the same. Besides, securing high price spectrum and securing high operational expenses are not the same.

If OTT services are being allowed to use the infrastructure that was set up by telcos, for a level playing field, telcos must also be exempt from archaic regulations that the OTTs are not subject to

the TSPs should be removed to ensure a level playing field. Otherwise, the dearth of investment in the telecom sector is being exacerbated, and that is why OTTs are being exempted. The government of India, in its continued pursuit of progress and reform, has initiated, proposed inclusion of OTT communication services in the draft Indian Telecommunication Bill 2022, recently released by the department of telecommunications. However, certain quarters with vested interests representing the TSPs and OTT players, are lobbying for communications OTTs under some misperceptions and flawed arguments.

Though technicalities behind the assertions made don't mean much, the public is being misinformed that telecom services and OTT applications do not operate within the same layer. But the truth is that communication services such as video calls and messaging, which are provided by the TSPs or OTT apps operate on the same layer, essentially riding on the network (IP layer). Consider the fact that TSPs go through a long and expensive process to acquire spectrum while undertaking critical investments in the form of infrastructure and adhering to strict regulatory compliances. They also invest a colossal

It is only fair that OTTs contribute towards this massive infrastructure development cost

about the enormous amount of bandwidth consumed by OTTs which puts tremendous pressure on the TSPs' networks. For instance, a study by Frontier Economics estimates the costs attributable to traffic from leading OTTs on European telecom networks to the tune of a colossal \$40 billion per year. So, it is only fair that OTTs contribute towards the telecom development fund proposed in the draft Bill. Moreover, under the current regime, several

in addition to paying exorbitant operational costs, levies, and taxes in the form of license fee, SBC, etc., which amount to more than 10% of their revenues. Meanwhile, OTT communication services not only use TSPs' networks to provide the same services, but also gain substantial direct and indirect benefits from them, while not having to bear any of the obligations. This is simply unfair.

Ironically, the revenue gained by OTTs by providing their services to the Indian citizens are not subject to any taxes like TSPs, thus causing losses to the government exchequer while filling the coffers of companies based outside India. Would it not be just that the revenues gained from Indian citizens are sent back to the government under a regulated regime, as applicable to all industries?

With the advent of new technologies and advancement of the telecom ecosystem, it is only logical that the new telecom Bill should provide a regulatory framework, as required for any legitimate service to ensure that OTTs assume responsibility and contribute towards the creation of the

(COAI) and internet protocol detail records (IPDR) and sharing them with law enforcement agencies, fraud detection under Telecom Analytics for Fraud Management and Consumer Protection (TAFMCP), and for compliance of security related requirements, etc., are applicable for TSPs. These requirements have been met after due deliberations and oversight from the relevant agencies and have evolved over time to keep pace with the advancements in technology. Hence, they carry a critical need - safeguarding national security.

When a subscriber gets a service like voice/video call, irrespective of whether it is engineered by OTTs or TSPs, the environmental security requirement remains the same. A differential treatment to anyone provides opens a backdoor to circumvent the above security requirements. Lack of regulation and accountability on this crucial aspect could have serious implications in terms of national security. The lives and safety of Indian citizens and soldiers posted in our frontiers may get compromised, which is not desirable at any cost.

With the advent of new technologies and advancement of the telecom ecosystem, it is only logical that the new telecom Bill should provide a regulatory framework, as required for any legitimate service to ensure that OTTs assume responsibility and contribute towards the creation of the



## MINISTRY OF DEFENCE'S ALIGNMENT WITH CENTRE'S ROW RULES

In January 2023, the Defence Ministry eased rules for rolling out mobile towers, optical fiber and other telecom infrastructure in its areas in line with the Central "Right of Way (RoW)" Rules notified by the DoT. This is an extremely progressive decision that will ease the installation of telecom infrastructure in Defence lands and estates.

Media Outreach - The MoD was lauded by the industry through a press note that was carried by publications such as ET Telecom, Voice & Data, Communications Today, Tele.Net among others.

### Defence ministry's alignment with Centre's RoW rules to speed up telecom infra deployment: COAI

*The Delhi-based industry association in a statement said that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and COAI have worked cohesively with the Ministry of Defence to introduce new enabling rules for deploying telecom infrastructure.*

#### Ministry of Defence for strengthening Telecom Infrastructure in the Nation

Hits 1,219

**New Delhi. 23 January 2023.** COAI, the apex industry body for the Digital Communications ecosystem in the country, warmly compliments the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for coming out with the new progressive Right of Way (RoW) rules for rolling out mobile towers, optical fiber and other telecom infrastructure i.e., 'Policy on Shared Communication Tower and Other Telecom Infrastructure to Extend Communication Network in Military Stations/Cantonments', which has been long awaited. COAI also thanks the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for playing an instrumental role in helping bring about this forward-looking measure through close inter-ministerial and inter-departmental coordination with the Ministry of Defence.



No comments

### COAI appreciates Defence Ministry's move to strengthening Telecom Infrastructure in the Nation

COAI, the apex industry body for the Digital Communications ecosystem in the country, warmly complimented the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for coming out with the new progressive Right of Way (RoW) rules for rolling out mobile towers, optical fiber and other telecom infrastructure i.e., 'Policy on Shared Communication Tower and Other Telecom Infrastructure to Extend Communication Network in Military Stations/Cantonments', which has been long awaited. COAI also thanked the





## DoT CLARITY ON EMF AUDIT FEES

Via an order issued on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023, DoT clarified that closed demands of the EMF testing fees should be revised and charged at INR 4000 per test, and the excess amount already paid by TSPs should be adjusted against the future testing charges.

COAI issued a press release lauding DoT by

highlighting it as a positive move that aligns with the Centre's efforts to facilitate ease of doing business (EoDB) in the telecom sector.

Media Outreach - Coverage appeared in ET Telecom, Communications Today, Tele. Net, Telecom Talk among others.

### DoT's clarity on EMF audit fees to facilitate ease of doing business: COAI

*The telecom department, in an order issued on January 18, 2023, has clarified the applicable fees for EMF audit tests conducted by telecom service providers.*

ETTelecom • Updated: January 25, 2023, 15:20 IST



NEW DELHI: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT)'s clarity on the EMF audit fees is a positive move that aligns with the Centre's efforts to facilitate ease of doing business (EoDB) in the telecom sector, according to the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).

### Indian Telcos Get a Relief as DoT Clarifies EMF Audit Fees

Reported By TANUJA K | JANUARY 25TH, 2023 AT 12:59 PM

TDSAT had passed an interim stay in the matter on November 20, 2014. Based on the order from TDSAT, DoT has issued instructions that the pending demand of testing fees shall be revised to Rs 4000 per test. Further, all the tests that happened after November 20, 2014, will also be revised to be charged at Rs 4000.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- Indian telecom operators are going to benefit from the clarity that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has provided on the EMF audit fees.
- Telcos have to pay a certain fee to the DoT for EMF audits.
- This amount used to be Rs 10000 earlier and was accordingly paid by the telecom companies.

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### Indian telcos get a relief as DoT clarifies EMF audit fees

January 25, 2023



Indian telecom operators are going to benefit from the clarity that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has provided on the EMF audit fees. Telcos have to pay a certain fee to the DoT for EMF audits. This amount used to be Rs 10000 earlier and was accordingly paid by the telecom companies. DoT has said that the charges will be revised to Rs 4000 per test instead of Rs 10000. The decision from the DoT comes after the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) ruled in favor of the telecom industry, dated October 30, 2018. The petition was filed by the COAI and other telecom operators V/s UoI on the issue of charging the test fees in the case of EMF testing/audit conducted by the filed units of DoT.





## 6 GHz SPECTRUM ALLOCATION FOR 5G SERVICES

Mid-band 6 GHz band is critical to rapid and cost-efficient deployments of 5G mobile networks in India, and is also vital for meeting the exponentially increasing data demands in the coming years. COAI conducted various interventions with the media to emphasize the essential nature of the mid-band spectrum for IMT, and how the 6 GHz band is ideal to address the requirements.

Media Outreach: Coverage was garnered in prominent media houses such as; ET Telecom, Business Standard, The Economic Times, The Hindu, The Financial Express, Mint, The Hindu Business Line, The New Indian Express and others

**5G speed to reduce to half if less spectrum allotted in 6GHz band: COAI**

By ANS - Last Updated: Apr 10, 2023, 09:12 AM IST

**Synopsis**  
5G services in India already have sufficient spectrum in the 24 GHz and 5 GHz bands (offering 600 MHz) to meet the demand for Wi-Fi access in the 2025-2030 period. Wi-Fi agencies have negligible data offered from IMT mobile to Wi-Fi because India is a mobile-first nation with more than 35 per cent of internet users accessing mobile broadband data," read the COAI letter.

**India must allocate more spectrum in mid-band like 6GHz for a seamless 5G mobile service in the country; else 5G download speed would be reduced to 50 per cent when fully deployed, if less spectrum is allocated in the 6GHz band, the Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) said on Monday.**

In a letter to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), the apex operators' body said that mid-band spectrum like 6GHz provides a balance of wide coverage and capacity which is critical to the rapid and cost-efficient deployment of 5G mobile networks in India and also meets the exponentially increasing data demands, that too at affordable terms.

**Spectrum in 6 GHz band key for 5G: COAI**

By BUREAU - New Delhi, February 23

**TELECOM TALK**  
Spectrum is mid-band critical for cost-effective rollout of 5G, and better coverage  
Mid-band spectrum of about 720 MHz available for the telecom not enough, says COAI  
Telecom body also argues concerns over the reduced 5G speeds going forward if less spectrum is allotted in the 6 GHz band

The Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) Tuesday reiterated its demand for the spectrum in 6 GHz band. The telecom body said that the spectrum is critical for cost-effective rollout of the 5G network, offering better capacity and coverage to the telecom operators.

The statement from COAI comes amid ongoing discussions in the department of telecommunications (DoT) to identify bands for cost spectrum allocation in the upcoming 5G period. The India assigned 6 GHz spectrum is crucial, given that DoT is preparing for the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23) in Geneva later this year, where there will be India regarding identification and usage of various spectrum bands.

6GHz is a mid-band spectrum range where a contiguous bandwidth of the order of 300-400 MHz per TSP is possible to make it available for meeting demands towards 2030," the COAI said. Further, it said that mid-band spectrum of about 720 MHz available for the telecom operators is not enough given the requirements of enhanced capacities and coverage of 5G networks.

COAI said in a statement. The association also expressed concerns over the reduced 5G speeds going forward if less spectrum is allotted in the 6 GHz band. "If TSPs don't undertake network densification for 5G growth, 5G download speeds would be reduced to 50% if less spectrum is allotted in 6 GHz band, or 60% if only 700 MHz is allotted to 5G," it said.

According to COAI, emergence of 5G services in India will increase to 1,300 million in 2027 from 830 million in December 2022, which would mean 94% of the total mobile subscriptions, and more 5G spectrum in mid-band will be critical to provide good connectivity.

India's telecom operators will need 2 GHz of the mid-band spectrum in 2023-2030. While in other countries, the spectrum has been deployed in the 3.8-4.2 GHz and 4.8 GHz mid-band, in India, the access to that mid-band is restricted to 367 MHz in the 3.8-3.87 MHz, the association said.

The demand for use of 6 GHz spectrum also came amid when there are discussions over the licensing the band for Wi-Fi use. However, COAI believes that the existing allocated spectrum in the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz, amounting to 643 MHz bandwidth in India, is more than adequate for meeting the needs for Wi-Fi connectivity.

"Without 6GHz, the bandwidth spectrum in India not possible without higher densification, as we have merely ~ 33% tower capacity compared to other countries like the US, China, the UK, etc, which have allocated the 4 GHz band have much higher levels of densification (over 80% in US, which is allocated to 5G) as well, which allows effective use of the band for Wi-Fi," COAI said.

**Without 6GHz, 5G roll-out to be longer, costlier: COAI**

By SUBRISH CHAKRABORTY - New Delhi, 23 February

**WITHOUT ENOUGH 6GHz SPECTRUM...**

- 60% higher annual costs nationwide to achieve optimal 5G performance
- 50% reduction in download speed if less than necessary spectrum allocated
- 4x higher network cost for 5G due to tower densification
- 2x higher power consumption in 5G

The Cellular Operators' Association of India has asked the government for access to the lucrative 6GHz spectrum range. It argued that India's 5G roll-out process will be more expensive and drawn out without it.

COAI on Tuesday stressed that 6GHz was the last remaining mid-band spectrum range where city-wide coverage can be provided with mobile networks. COAI represents the three private telecom service providers (TSPs). It said the current range of spectrum provided to TSPs is not available for meeting the 5G requirements of the country.

Meanwhile, it stressed that licensed 6GHz is ideal for commercial success and deployment of 5G New Radio, the global standard for a unified 5G wireless air interface. And it is also ideal for 5G, the next level in the current 5G network, along with 4G.

The government has till now reserved the 6GHz spectrum range and it was not available in the last round of 5G auctions. The industry body has made an official submission to the government to this effect.

"The government has obviously seen some merit in our argument. Few months back, an internal committee had been set up by the department of telecommunications (DoT) to look into the matter. It will submit a report on the issue," COAI director general (DG) SP Kochhar said.

He said that without 6GHz bands, TSPs would need to erect more towers and radios in urban areas.

"This densification of towers would push up the cost of creating 5G networks and the timeline of deployment. On the user end, the final quality of connections will suffer," Kochhar said.

The DG also hinted that 5G tariffs may go up since TSPs would need to recover the higher expenditure made for creating 5G infrastructure.

Also, power consumption due to large-scale tower densification would negatively impact the commitments made by India to reduce carbon footprint.

According to COAI's calculations, 5G download speeds would reduce by 50 per cent of the optimal levels if the government allocates lower spectrum than needed in the 6GHz band.

For higher advanced tech like 5G and 6G, spectrum requirements shift to higher bands like millimeter wave, which has greater capacity to carry data, but a lack of coverage much since it can be effectively transmitted over a smaller range. Mid-bands like 6GHz provide a balance of wide coverage and capacity. This is critical to rapid and cost-efficient deployments of 5G mobile networks and meets the exponentially increasing data demands at affordable terms.

Any shortage of 6GHz spectrum would compel TSPs to densify networks to meet International Mobile Telecommunications-2020 (IMT-2020) performance requirement for 5G.





## UNION BUDGET 2023-24

The Union Budget 2023-24 was presented on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023. It introduced some provisions which are expected to indirectly have a positive impact on the telecom sector.

In the pre- budget stage, COAI made some recommendations to the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, towards improving the financial health of the industry. On the day of the announcement, COAI shared a statement depicting the industry's views on the Union Budget 2023-24.

Media Outreach- The statement for the budget recommendations and reactions on statement carried out by the pan India media with prominent media platform which includes, media interaction, Industry story and Authored article as well, like: The Times of India, The Financial Express, The Hindu Business Line, Business Standard, Mint, , Business World and many more

### Telcos seek cut in levies, import duty

FE BUREAU  
New Delhi, January 18

THE TELECOM OPERATORS reiterated their demand for a reduction in license fee, removal of GST on license fee, spectrum usage charges, and spectrum payments, customs duty on imports, among others, in the FY24 Budget. The recommendations by the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) are focused more towards ease of doing business, which in a way will restore the financial health of telcos, it said.

Among key demands, telcos want suspension of their contribution to the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) until the current balance is exhausted as well as cut in the license fee to 1% from 3% of the adjusted gross revenue (AGR). In total, telcos pay 8% of their AGR as license fee to the government, out of which 5% goes to the USOF and the remaining 3% goes to the exchequer.

On exemption of GST on key dependent on imports. Considering the financial health of the industry and the huge investments underway, relaxation in import duties will go a long way in helping us to realize our dream of an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', said SP Kochhar, director general of COAI.

However, according to sources, the Budget will likely skip the key demands and the focus will largely be around fund allocation from the USOF for last-mile connectivity and different R&D projects, BharatNet project for broadband connectivity in rural areas, and the allocation of funds for state-owned ISM from the already approved package.

COAI has also asked for a clear definition of various terms being used in tariff exemption notifications for different equipment, to reduce disputes. Further, it wants an exemption from the basic customs duty of 20%, which is levied on most telecom equipment imports. It has also urged for a special direct tax regime, wherein the business losses can be carried forward and set off till 10 assessment years from the existing 8 years.

charges, COAI said telcos pay under reverse charge mechanism on supplies by government, and the input tax credit (ITC) arising out of this is creating a huge imbalance with outward facilities and licenses heavy cost of funds for compliance. While telcos also seek a refund of over ₹32,000 crore with regards to ITC, they have suggested the use of the balance towards payment under reverse charge mechanism on government services.

"Telcos are constantly upgrading their infrastructure to keep up with the ever-aging technologies. However, the required facility to manufacture the equipment has not yet been set up in India. Therefore, they are

### Telecom Budget Crucial This Year Because Of 5G Deployment: COAI DG

For a more comprehensive view on the requirements of the Telecom sector from the Union Budget, BW Businessworld got in touch with Lt. Gen. Dr S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI

India to Ranchi from Rs3,955

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### 5G labs & AI push to boost use cases for enterprises

JATIN GROVER  
New Delhi, February 1

THE DIGITAL PUSH through 5G labs and centres of excellence for Artificial Intelligence (AI) has led the ground for telcos and technology firms to develop more 5G use cases and grow their enterprise business. The move is not only possible for telcos companies like Airtel and Jio but also for telecom equipment makers such as Ericsson, Zte, Huawei, etc. etc.

Since 5G is going to be more about enterprises through its building connectivity solutions known as private 5G, industry executives believe that the government's focus would bring better synergies between different industries, which will bring new use cases of 5G.

"Inclusion of 5G labs in the budget will help youth and industry to develop new use cases of 5G. The aim is to make India a major exporter of telecom technology in the next 2-3 years," communications minister

noted Anand Kumar said.

"For 5G, 2023 is a watershed year. AI-based has the highest concentration in India than anywhere else in the world. These centres of excellence will provide services delivery and facilities," Anand Kumar added.

Currently, telcos are operating 5G services to over 250 cities. "Setting up labs and centres of excellence will be marginal. It is difficult to see how this will change retail users' perception of 5G value beyond faster data speeds," said

Metashree, director at Cam-Fire (India), a telecom policy consulting organisation.

"We feel that the government's support for the telecom industry is crucial, especially when 5G is slated to be an enabler for several other verticals - from manufacturing, logistics and transport to various applications and use cases... In our pursuit of achieving Industry 4.0," said SP Kochhar, director general of Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).

Last month, he had also signed an agreement with

Indian Institute of Space Technology (IIIST) to set up 5G lab.

Apart from the telecom industry and AI, the government also emphasised the contribution of electronics, especially smartphones, to the country's growth. In a bid to further lower duties on the industry players, the government made announcements like removal of customs duty of 3.7% on some components of smartphones and reduction of basic customs duty on parts of smartphones of 15% from 25%.

According to India Cellular & Electronics Association, these steps will not have significant impact on the final product price but are generally in the right direction. The cost impact on mobile phones will of ₹1,000 will be ₹1,000 to ₹1,100.

"Including relief on the customs duty of certain parts and inputs will reduce the overall price to ₹1,100 for a mobile phone as per us," said Tarun Pathak, research director at Counterpoint.



## POWER NEEDS FOR TELECOM INFRASTRUCTURE

COAI has submitted to various relevant Central and State Ministries/Departments/Agencies that the telecom sector, being an essential infrastructure, needs to be charged industrial tariffs for electricity and not commercial rates (as prevalent). Moreover, power connections need to be expeditiously provided to telecom infrastructure facilities. The cost benefits gained from this would spur expansive

infrastructure deployments across the country, including 5G.

Media Outreach: Apropos an interaction held with the national wire agency PTI, the issue was covered by relevant media houses like The Economic Times, Mint, The Hindu Business Line, Business Standard, The Financial Express, etc.

### COAI Bats for Industrial Tariff Rates for Telecom Infra

**NEW DELHI:** Telcos' body COAI has made a strong plea that the telecom sector be charged industrial tariffs for electricity and not commercial rates, and that power connections be expeditiously provided to telecom infrastructure facilities. It said doing so was important given the essential nature of services and socio-economic benefits that accrue across multiple sectors from faster 5G deployments. COAI – whose members include telecom operators like Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea – has also batted for the sector to be provided uninterrupted 24x7 power supply.

"Telecom is an infrastructure industry, but we are still being charged at commercial rates for power. So we don't get the benefits," SP Kochhar, director general of COAI told PTI. COAI has demanded that telecom infrastructure be charged at industrial and not commercial rates for electricity. Today, most states provide electricity on commercial tariff rate to telecom industry, placing it in one of the highest brackets of power tariffs. While telecom tariffs in India are the lowest, the electricity tariffs are being charged to the industry at substantially high rates under the commercial category, COAI rued. – PTI

### 'Charge industrial tariffs for electricity'

PTI  
feedback@livemint.com  
NEW DELHI

**T**elcos' body COAI has made a strong plea that the telecom sector be charged industrial tariffs for electricity and not commercial rates, and that power connections be expeditiously provided to telecom infrastructure facilities. It said doing so was important given the essential nature of services and socio-economic benefits that accrue across multiple sectors from faster 5G deployments.

COAI – whose members include telecom operators like Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea – has also batted for the sector to be provided uninterrupted 24x7 power supply. "Telecom is an infrastructure industry, but we are still being charged at commercial rates for power. So we don't get the benefits," SP Kochhar, Director General of Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) told PTI.

COAI has demanded that telecom infrastructure be charged at industrial and not commercial rates for electricity. Today, most states provide electricity on commercial tariff rate to telecom industry, placing it in one of the highest brackets of power tariffs. While telecom tariffs in India are the lowest, the electricity tariffs are being charged to the industry at substantially high rates under the commercial category, COAI rued. In most states, the difference between an industrial electricity tariff category and a commercial electricity tariff is significant, leading to an avoidable burden to the overall telecom sector.



## WIRELESS LICENSING REFORMS

The Ministry of Communications announced procedural reforms on the aspect of Wireless Licensing in October 2022, along with the release of the National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP) 2022. COAI congratulated and lauded the Ministry and DoT by issuing a press release stating that the wireless licensing reforms will help in ease of doing business

for the telecom sector and faster deployment of network and services to the end users.

Media Outreach – Coverage appeared in The Economic Times, Financial Express, The New Indian Express, to name a few

### Wireless licensing reforms to enable ease of doing business, faster network rollouts: COAI

Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Wednesday said that the government will now introduce the big ticket licensing reforms for the sector.

Written by: **ELBureau**

Updated: October 27, 2022 12:08:17



Apart from the procedural reforms in the wireless licensing, the government also declared reforms in the satellite communications aimed at simplifying satellite-related clearance process. (2)

### Wireless licensing reforms fast-track investments in telecom sector: COAI's Kochhar

"The industry lauds the reforms brought in the areas of wireless licensing which has sped up investments and made it simpler to obtain the certificate clearance from the Standing Advisory Committee on Radio Frequency Allocation (SACFA), which is necessary to place small cells on street furniture, along with a marked reduction in the processing fee," SP Kochhar, Director-General of the telco body said in a statement on Tuesday.



## 'Wireless licensing reform to expedite digital India'

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
@ New Delhi

THE Cellular Operator Association of India (COAI) said the wireless licensing reform the government has introduced will help expedite digital India efforts.

The telecom body, which represents all the three private telecom operators Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, said the reforms will aid in quicker rollout of networks and services and promote ease of doing business (EoDB) through reduced compliances.

"We greatly appreciate the government's proactive approach in implementing these progressive reforms, which are aimed towards facilitating a simpler, less time-consuming

system for quicker execution of processes, as well as towards enabling ease of doing business for the sector. This would be instrumental in helping faster deployment of networks and roll-out of services to the users," said Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Wednesday released another set of procedural reforms in the telecom and satellite com-



munications (satcom) sectors, including the National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP) 2022. For the Satcom sector, the telecom ministry has simplified SACFA (Standing Advisory Committee on Frequency Allocation) certificate clearance guidelines, in which the processing fee is reduced significantly from ₹1,000 to ₹100. COAI opines that this will help telecom operators reduce their compliance burden and save time. The

government has also made the entire import licence online and self-declaration based clearance adopted instead of the earlier security-based clearance process. DoT has also issued an advisory on the proper use of wireless jammer or booster and repeater. This will help counter the menace of illegal activities which interfere with network operations and performance, affecting consumer experience, said COAI.

"The NFAP 2022 takes into account the outcomes of the ITU's Radio Regulations and the specifics for usage of spectrum by various users in India via the India remarks. This will provide regulatory certainty to all users of spectrum in India," COAI said in a statement.

### Reforms will aid in quicker rollout, says COAI

COAI, which represents all the three private telecom operators Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, said the reforms will aid in quicker rollout of networks and services and promote ease of doing business through reduced compliances. DoT on Wednesday released another set of procedural reforms in satcom sectors, including the NFAP 2022





## ROW RULES

One of the long-standing challenges for the telecom Industry has been non-alignment of State/Local Authority RoW rules with the Central RoW Rules issued by DoT. The industry lauded the Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules which included amendments such as rationalization of fees, the implementation of a single window clearance system, and the elimination of the requirement to obtain permission from a government agency before erecting infrastructure

over private property. Additionally, the launch of the GatiShakti Sanchar Portal and directives issued by the DoT to Chief Secretaries across India to accept online applications through the same was also a progressive step.

Media Outreach - Through media sensitization on this initiative, coverage was garnered in publications such as the Mint, The Hindu, and Financial Express, to name a few.

## 5G cells to piggyback on poles, hoardings

Base stations deployed will bring network closer to people

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

To expedite the roll-out of 5G, telecom operators in the country will leverage street furniture such as poles, advertisement hoardings and bus shelters for deploying low power base stations called 'Small Cells' that will help bring the network closer to the consumers.

"Small cells are needed for deploying 5G as opposed to earlier generations such as 4G, because of the frequency. The higher the frequency, the lower the wavelength, which means that the distance they travel is less," S.P. Kochhar, Director General at Cellular Operators Association of India, said.

He added that for higher frequencies in the range of 3.3-3.6 GHz, which are expected to be used for offering 5G services, the waves will travel around 100-150 metres. At present, telecom towers, which are about 30 metres high, are placed at a distance of about 5 km apart.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has also issued a consultation paper on the "Use of street furniture for small cell and aerial fibre deployment", wherein it states that small cells will play a critical role



**Saves on cost:** Leveraging of existing street infrastructure will save the hassle of erecting new poles along roadsides.

in success of 5G as these are needed to exploit features of 5G such as support low latency, ultra-high speeds, and massive connection densities.

Small cells are low-powered radio access nodes or base stations that have a coverage range from a few metres up to a few hundred metres. They are portable, easy to deploy and help provide localised coverage. As per the TRAI paper, small cells provide coverage for very short distances and therefore they are installed in a large number – even more than 200 per square kilometre – for good geographical coverage to provide highly reliable and high-capacity broadband.

**All set for deployment**  
Mr. Kochhar added that lower height (6-7 metres) poles

are sufficient to install small cells, and a good ecosystem of such poles already exists in the form of street lights, electricity and traffic lights poles.

"We expect to cover about 100 meters radius from each pole for the coverage to be adequate," Mr. Kochhar said.

Leveraging of existing street infrastructure will also save the hassle and investments needed for erecting new poles along roadside, especially in highly populated areas.

The Department of Telecom last week also notified the amended Right of Way Rules, which pave the way for deployment of 5G Small Cells on existing street infrastructure, and expects these reforms to enable launch of 5G services in the country by October, 2022.

## LAYING OF OPTIC FIBRE

# Legal backing for RoW by December

FE BUREAU  
New Delhi, May 14

THE GOVERNMENT WILL provide legal backing for right of way (RoW) by December to facilitate laying of optical fibre, said communications minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Saturday while launching the GatiShakti Sanchar portal that will centralise and speed up approvals for laying optical fibre and installations of mobile towers.

"That will be our next step. We will also be working on integration of all portals, especially GatiShakti, railway, highway and others," he said.

As the country gears up to launch 5G commercial services, fibreisation of mobile towers is necessary. At present, just around 35% towers are connected with fibre, and companies have often highlighted the problems faced by them in get-



Communications minister  
Ashwini Vaishnaw

ting approvals for RoW. Currently, RoW rules are based on administrative process, and a strong legal backing is required to empower local officials, bring clarity on the fee structure and fix accountability, the minister said. The industry can apply for RoW approvals on the portal as they build telecom infrastructure, including for 5G services.

Continued on Page 2



## EMF AWARENESS WORKSHOPS

DoT frequently organizes awareness workshops on EMF radiation and mobile towers to make the consumers in various locations aware of the growing need for mobile towers to build reliable telecom infrastructure and to debunk the myths regarding the alleged health effects of EMF exposure from mobile towers.

Media Outreach - To amplify this, COAI issued the press releases in various states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat, West Bengal, Uttarakhand and Assam, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh among others. Coverage appeared in Navbharat Times, Dainik Bhaskar, Dainik Statesman, Prabhat Khabar among others.

### NELSA DoT organises awareness webinar on Electromagnetic Radiation

**ILB Express**  
GUWAHATI, Nov 25: Department of Telecommunications (DoT), North-East License Service Area (LSA) organised an awareness webinar on "Electromagnetic Radiation from Mobile Towers" on Friday.

The session was organised as part of DoT's public advocacy program to make consumers aware of the growing need for mobile towers to build reliable telecom infrastructure and break myths regarding the alleged ill effects of EMF exposure from mobile towers.

The webinar workshop was addressed by eminent key speakers including Ravi Goel, senior DDG, DoT, North-East LSA; AK Jain, DDG (Compliance), DoT, NE LSA, Shillong; PC Sharma, director (Compliance), DoT, NE LSA, and Dr Tushar Kant Joshi, advisor, ministry of Health and director, OEM Programme, Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health.

The workshop had around 200 participants including the general public, government officials, residents' welfare associations, students, doctors, telecom service providers, infrastructure providers, and other officials.

Ravi Goel, senior DDG, DoT, North-East LSA, Shillong highlighted the need for telecom services in India and pressed on the challenges faced by the stakeholders of the industry. He mentioned, "In this era of fast-advancing digital technology, mobile users have a right to enjoy the benefits of telecommunication services seamlessly. We are venturing into an age of hyperconnectivity where the government is making every effort to densify telecom infrastructure and telecom towers are the backbone of Indian mobile communications. To magnify the efforts, the first surrounding the theories about ill effects of EMF radiations from mobile towers must be addressed factually to dispel such misconceptions."

Dr Tushar Kant Joshi, advisor, ministry of Health and director, OEM Programme, Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health also shared his perspective and said, "The EMF radiation is low non-ionising RF/Electromagnetic energy emitted from mobile tower antennae and mobile handsets. Scientific research has found that low-power, non-ionising radiation emitted from cell towers has no ill effects on human health, whatsoever. Therefore, it becomes extremely essential to address the spread of misinformation and provide an authentic view of health concerns related to mobile towers. It is also important to be informed that no scientific or medical evidence is available to corroborate the argument used against mobile towers."

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### ईएमएफ विकिरण पर जागरूकता कार्यशाला

नई दिल्ली, 22 मार्च (एजेंसियां)। डायमंड में ईएमएफ उत्सर्जन और दूरसंचार टावरों पर एक जागरूकता कार्यशाला का आयोजन किया। हार्बर महिला विश्वविद्यालय, कोलकाता। यह सत्र डॉट की सार्वजनिक वकालत के हिस्से के रूप में आयोजित किया गया था। आम जनता को मोबाइल टावरों की आवश्यकता के बारे में जागरूक करने और इसके बारे में मिथकों को दूर करने के लिए कार्यक्रम मोबाइल टावरों से ईएमएफ जोखिम के स्वास्थ्य प्रभाव। कार्यशाला में सरकारी अधिकारियों, जनरल सहित 100 से अधिक प्रतिभागियों ने भाग लिया सार्वजनिक, निवासी कल्याण संघ, छात्र, डॉक्टर, दूरसंचार सेवा प्रदाता, बुनियादी ढांचा प्रदाताओं और अन्य अधिकारी। इस आयोजन में प्रख्यात कुजी श्री थे। अरुण दास, निदेशक (अनुपालन), दीपक सिंह, सहायक महानिदेशक (अनुपालन), श्रीमती। मोनालिसा नागर, सहायक निदेशक सामान्य (अनुपालन) डीओटी डब्ल्यूबी एलएसए के साथ-साथ डॉ. सुरेश अतिथी, एमडी (इंट. मेड), डीएम (एचईएम-ओएनसी), पीडीसीआर, ईसीएमओ। दूरसंचार सेवाओं की रूपरेखा देते हुए और उनके सामने आने वाले मुद्दों पर प्रकाश डाला हितधारकों, निदेशक (अनुपालन), डॉट डब्ल्यूबी एलएसए ने कहा, भारत में दूसरा सबसे बड़ा मोबाइल नेटवर्क है।

## Awareness Webinar on EMF Radiation organized by DoT, Bengal LSA

EOI CORRESPONDENT

**KOLKATA, SEPT 24/-** Department of Telecommunications (DoT), West Bengal License Service Area (LSA) today organized an awareness webinar on "EMF Emissions and Telecom Towers". This session was organized as part of DoT's public advocacy program to make the general public aware of the need of mobile towers and dispel myths regarding the health effects of EMF exposure from mobile towers. The workshop was attended by more than 100 participants including government officials, the general public, residents' welfare associations, students, doctors, telecom service providers, infrastructure providers and others officials. The eminent key at the event were R.K Sharma, Sr. DDG, DoT WB LSA, Pabitra Sarkar, DDG (Compliance), DoT WB LSA and S.K. Deka, Director (Compliance), DoT WB LSA as well as Dr Vivek Tandon, Associate Professor, AIIMS, New Delhi, sources informed.

While giving an outline of the telecommunication services and

highlighting the issues faced by the stakeholders, Sr. DDG mentioned, "India has second-largest mobile network base of active subscribers. By the end of 2025, 5G will account for over a fifth of total mobile connections, and more than two in five people globally will live within reach of a 5G network. With an increase in the pace of 5G deployment, it becomes pertinent to install a robust of telecom infrastructure including mobile towers, small cell, fiber etc. Telecom tower are a backbone of Indian mobile communications. Therefore, it becomes extremely essential to address the spread of misinformation and provide an authentic view of health concerns related to mobile towers. It is also important to be informed that no scientific or medical evidence is available to corroborate the argument used against mobile towers."

Briefing on the Telecommunication services, EMF Exposure and the status of compliance, Director, DoT WB LSA, said "The Government of India

follows norms that are 10 times stricter than what has been prescribed by (ICNIRP) and recommended by WHO. DoT continuously monitors the EMF emission levels from towers across India and ensures compliance with emission norms across country through its field.

All telecom service providers are required to ensure the radiation from mobile towers (BTSs) is within prescribed safe limits. LSA also conducts physical audits of sites by selecting them randomly and testing the power of the available EMF signals at different probable locations near the site. West Bengal LSA has tested 1738 BTSs from April 2022 to September 2022. All BTSs have been found compliant as per DoT Norms. There is a need to bust the myth around the health effects from Electromagnetic Field Radiations (EMR) exposure from diverse EMR sources especially Mobile BTS antennae and mobile phones. Therefore, one must rely on the scientific data that EMF radiations from mobile tower are safe."





## 5G PRIVATE CAPTIVE NETWORKS

It is essential to highlight the overall changes in the policy ecosystem as the TRAI recommended auctioning spectrum for setting up 5G private captive networks. COAI shared the background information with media to create awareness on the implications of the decision and sent a letter to the Department of Telecommunications to convey the industry's concerns regarding the matter.

Media Outreach – COAI led the reportage headlining their concern and urging the Government to be cognizant of the industry's challenges, garnering coverage in major publications like The Economic Times, Business Standard, Mint and many more.

### Business Standard

## 5G rollout unviable if captive private networks allowed, telcos tell govt

Telcos point to global trends and contend that 40 per cent of 5G revenues are expected from the enterprise segment and captive 5G networks will make 5G rollout unviable

#### Topics

5G | Cellular operators association of India | Bharti Airtel

Surajeet Das Gupta

Last Updated at June 9, 2022 11:20 IST



## COAI urges govt not to allot 5G on administrative basis

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
@ New Delhi

THE Cellular Operator Association of India (COAI), which represents Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea; on Thursday, again urged the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) not to provide 5G spectrum on administrative basis as it leads to no business case for the rollout of 5G networks in the country.

The comment comes after billionaire Gautam Adani's group made a surprise entry into the race to acquire 5G spectrum. "If the independent entities set up private captive networks with direct 5G spectrum allotment, it will diminish revenue so much that there will be no viable business case left for the TSPs and there will not remain any need for 5G network rollout by TSPs (telecom service providers)," said S P Kochhar, DG of COAI. Ever since the DoT released 5G auction guidelines, two industry bodies – COAI and Broadband India Forum (BIF) are at loggerheads. The telco body is opposing the government's move to provide direct allocation of 5G spectrum to enterprises to set up private 5G networks.

## COAI seeks 'fair play' on 5G spectrum

Says administrative allocation of frequency will provide backdoor entry to big players

#### OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, July 14

The Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) on Thursday said administrative allocation of spectrum for private 5G networks will be against tenets of level playing field and asked for 'fair play' to prevent backdoor entry to big tech for 5G.

#### Entry to Big Tech

The development comes after billionaire Gautam Adani's group making a surprise entry into the race to acquire telecom spectrum that will pitch it directly against Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio and Sunil Mittal-owned Bharti Airtel in the upcoming auc-

tion. "Any consideration of administrative allocation of spectrum for such networks is fundamentally against principles of level playing field and effectively provides a backdoor entry to big technology players to provide 5G services and solutions to enterprises in India without equivalent regulatory compliance and payment of levies that TSPs are subjected to," S P Kochhar, Director-General, COAI, said.

COAI represents telecom service providers (TSPs) such as Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone-Idea.

"We are happy to note that companies wanting to use 5G spectrum have made applications for open bidding of the spectrum through a transparent auction process, which ensures that level playing field is maintained and all interested parties bid for the spectrum acquired by them."

"India's structured licen-



If the independent entities set up private captive networks with direct 5G spectrum allotment, it will diminish the revenue, fear telecom operators

cing framework has helped orderly growth of India's digital connectivity landscape, the opening-up of access to spectrum to enterprises directly disturbs the level playing field," Kochhar said.

#### Business viability

The spectrum should not be provided on administrative basis as it leads to no business

case for the rollout of 5G networks in the country, he said. "If the independent entities set up private captive networks with direct 5G spectrum allotment by Department of Telecommunication (DoT), it will diminish the revenue so much that there will be no viable business case left for the TSPs and there will not remain any need for 5G networks rollout by TSPs," he further said. It is important to understand that licensed access service providers are fully capable of providing these services most competitively and economically compared to private companies, he said.

"Any consideration of administrative allocation of spectrum for such networks is fundamentally against principles of level playing field and effectively provides a backdoor entry to big technology players to provide 5G services and solutions to enterprises in India without equivalent regulatory compliance and payment of levies that TSPs are subjected to," Kochhar added.

COAI in June had also written to the DoT asking the government to ensure that a level-playing field is maintained between the incumbents and new entrants in terms of licence fees and meeting other regulatory conditions.



## 5G SPECTRUM AUCTION

One of the biggest highlights of year 2022 was the auction of frequency bands identified for IMT/5G. While it was a benchmark for the telecommunication industry, COAI proactively advocated against the high spectrum price recommended by TRAI considering the financial health of the sector. The Industry also lauded the DoT for scrapping spectrum usage charge floor rate.

Media Outreach - COAI had a prominent media presence with visibility gained through industry stories and conversations around the industry, leading to coverage in publications such as Business Standard, Mint, New Indian Express, Navbharat Times, among others.

### DoT scraps 3% floor rate on 5G spectrum usage charge

AGENCIES  
New Delhi

In a big relief for telecom companies, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has scrapped the 3 per cent floor rate on spectrum usage charge (SUC).

As the government prepares for 5G spectrum allotment next month, the telcos had been demanding to scrap the SUC floor rate, equivalent to 3 per cent of adjusted gross revenue (AGR), to cut their 5G spectrum payouts.

The DoT, in its latest SUC computation order that came out late on

Tuesday, did not mention the 3 per cent floor rate, which means it has been scrapped, industry watchers said. The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) welcomed the much-awaited DoT order regarding the levy of SUC charges for spectrum in 600, 700, 800, 900, 1800, 2100, 2300, 2500, 3300 MHz and 26GHz bands.

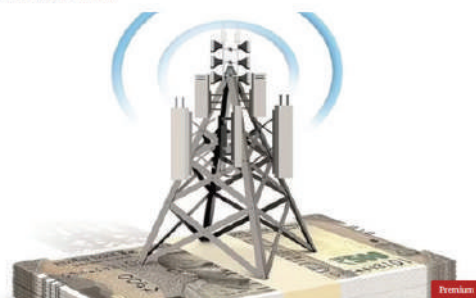
"The order will provide clarity to telecom service providers for the upcoming auctions," said Lt Gen Dr SP Kochhar, DG, COAI.

The government is set to launch 5G spectrum bids at the end of next month.

### Relief for telcos as govt scraps spectrum usage charge ahead of 5G auction

Nomura estimates annual saving of Rs 1,400-3,000 crore for telecom firms

Aneesh Pradix (Mumbai)



The government has removed spectrum usage charge ahead of the 5G airwave auction in a move that will enable companies save costs in spectrum purchase.

"For spectrum acquired through auctions held after 15-09-2021 in different access spectrum bands, no SUC shall be charged," the department of telecommunications said in its order on Tuesday.

### DoT cuts 3% floor rate on spectrum usage charges

ANIL KUMAR pradeep

In a relief to telecom service providers (TSPs), the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Wednesday announced removal of the 3% floor rate on SUC (spectrum usage charges).

The move of the government is going to benefit telcos as it would reduce their future outflows towards these statutory fees. "For spectrum acquired through an auction held after 15 September 2021 in different Access spectrum bands, no SUC shall be charged," said DoT in an order. "The weighted aver-

age is to be derived by the sum of the product of spectrum holdings and applicable SUC rate, divided by total spectrum holding. The weighted average rate should be determined operator-wise for each service area," reads the DoT order.

In 2018, the government had implemented the rule of 3% SUC to ensure that the revenues for the centre are protected. In the same year, the SUC for the telcos had been lowered. The move was welcomed by telcom operators, and they said the order will provide clarity to



telecom service providers for the upcoming auctions. "We welcome and thank the government for the much-awaited DoT order regarding the levy of SUC charges for spectrum in 600 MHz, 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz, 3300 MHz and 26 GHz bands. The order will provide clarity to telecom service providers for the upcoming auctions," said SP Kochhar, Director General, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI). Charu Palwal, research analyst at Counterpoint

Research, said the decision will be beneficial in easing out cash flow requirements considering the stressed financial health of the sector in India.

"The government's decision on scrapping of the mandatory requirement of upfront payment, spectrum payment can be made in 20 equal annual installments and option of surrendering the spectrum after 10 years are steps taken in the right direction. This will be beneficial in easing out cash flow requirements considering the stressed financial health of the telecom sector in India," said Palwal.



## MOBILE TOWER FRAUD

There has been considerable movement on India's goal to deploy 5G networks infrastructure such as mobile towers, which has been taken advantage of by miscreants. COAI, along with DIPA, carried out a public awareness campaign to caution the general public against fake mobile tower installation and to note that mobile towers in India are set up only by

the authorized infrastructure providers (IPs) or the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs).

Media Outreach - A press release was carried in leading newspapers such as ET Telecom, The Statesman, The Indian Express, and regional publications such as Samana, Punya Nagri, etc.

### Telecom industry cautions against fake mobile tower installation



AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

Telecom industry stakeholders on Monday cautioned the public against the fraud related to the installation of mobile towers on their properties in the country as it prepares for 5G roll out.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) and the Digital Infrastructure Providers' Association (DIPA) said that people must observe caution against certain companies, agencies, or individuals who are fraudulently approaching them, asking to deposit money in their personal or company accounts in the name of government tax for leasing their premises for installation of mobile towers.

The same individuals are offering fake "No Objection Certificates" from the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology for the installation of towers, they informed.

Mobile towers are installed either by telecom service providers (TSP) or infrastructure providers (IPs).

The mobile towers are

installed by the telecom infrastructure providers like

Indus Towers, American Tower Corporation, Sunmit Digital Infrastructure, Ascend Telecom, Tower Vision.

"IPs are taking several steps to caution the public about the frauds and have devised various modes to collect the information about potential locations through various channels such as toll-free number, website, email etc," said T.R. Dua, DG, DIPA.

The industry bodies requested people to verify authenticity by visiting the websites of TSPs or IPs before accepting any offers for tower installation.

"Mobile towers are quintessential to ensure uninterrupted connectivity, support various critical services and maintain communication across the states. The public suffers greatly owing to the fraud related to mobile towers," said Lt Gen Dr. S.P. Kochhar, DG, COAI.

This is causing a trust deficit and a sense of insecurity towards the team personnel working on the ground to build a robust communication network.

"The telecom industry remains committed to providing the best quality of services to its customers. Hence, we have collaborated with DIPA to build the Authorized robust infrastructure," Kochhar added.

According to reports, more than 6.8 lakh mobile towers have been installed across the country and over 15 lakh towers are to be installed by FY24 as the country prepares for 5G.

### मोबाईल टॉवर्स उभारणीच्या भूलथापांपासून सावध राहा

■ मुंबई : घर, इमारती किंवा स्वतःच्या मालकीच्या जमिनीत मोबाईल टॉवर्स बसवून देतो, तसेच ही जागा भाडेतत्वावर देण्यासाठी सरकारी कराच्या नावावर स्वतःच्या वैयक्तिक किंवा कंपनीच्या खात्यात पैसे जमा करण्यास सांगणाऱ्या विशिष्ट कंपन्या, एजन्सीज किंवा व्यक्तींपासून सावध राहा, असे आवाहन दूरसंचारासाठी पायाभूत सुविधा देणारी प्रमुख संस्था डीआयपीए व सीओएआयने केले आहे. मोबाईल टॉवर्स टेलिकॉम सर्व्हिस प्रोव्हायडर्स (टीएसपी) किंवा इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर प्रोव्हायडर्स (आयपी) च्या वतीने बसवले जातात. टॉवर उभारणीसाठी कोणत्याही ऑफर स्वीकारण्यापूर्वी लोकांनी टीएसपी किंवा आयपीच्या [www.dot.gov.in](http://www.dot.gov.in) या वेबसाइट्सना भेट देऊन सत्यता पडताळावी, असे आवाहन करण्यात आले आहे.



## ILLEGAL BOOSTERS AND WIRELESS JAMMERS

DoT issued an advisory to the public on illegal use of wireless boosters/repeaters/jammers and directed e-commerce platforms against the illegal facilitation and sale of these devices. COAI reached out to the media with a statement to amplify the advisory

issued by DoT on the proper use of wireless boosters and their illegal facilitation and sale.

Media Outreach - The issue was covered by Hindustan Times, The Times of India, The New Indian Express, Business Standard, etc.

### DoT warns e-com firms against illegal sale of boosters, jammers

Gulveen Aulakh  
gulveen.aulakh@govt.in  
NEW DELHI

The department of telecommunications has asked e-commerce companies not to sell wireless boosters or jammers, considering that existing laws authorize only licensed telecom service providers to sell and install such equipment.

"The use of jammer, GPS blockers, or other signal jamming device is generally illegal, except (where) specifically permitted by government of India," the DoT said in an advisory issued on Monday.

"It is also unlawful to advertise, sell, distribute, import or otherwise market jammers in India, except as permitted under the above guidelines," it added.

Wireless jammers or signal

blockers, 2G, 3G, 4G and Wi-Fi signals, GPS and other navigational communications by radiating strong radio signals of

similar frequencies.

According to Indian law, only states, defence forces, central police organizations can procure approved models and use jammers. Authorities conducting examinations for government bodies are also allowed to install jammers from authorized vendors after getting permission. But, private sector organizations and individuals cannot procure or use jammers in India.

Boosters or signal repeaters help amplify signals for better phone reception. However, unauthorized use of mobile phone boosters can interfere with and disrupt public telecommunication services, the department said.

This not only causes inconvenience to phone users, but can also hamper access to emergency call services from phones,

which poses a risk to public health and safety, it added.

"It is unlawful to possess, sell, and/or use mobile signal repeater or booster by any individual or entity other than the licensed telecom service. In case consumers are experiencing problems with the quality of service or connectivity (issue, the concerned TSP (telecom service provider) should be contacted to address the issue."

**Unauthorized use of phone boosters can interfere with and disrupt public telecommunication services, the department said**

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), which represents telecom firms, welcomed the move. People are unaware that buying, selling, installation and possession of boosters is a punishable offence under the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, and India Telegraph Act, 1885, it said. "The unauthorized use adversely interferes with telecom services," said SP Kochhar, director general COAI.

### Telecom industry cautions against fake mobile tower installation



AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

installed by the telecom infrastructure providers like

Indus Towers, American Tower Corporation, Summit Digital Infrastructure, Ascend Telecom, Tower Vision.

"IPs are taking several steps to caution the public about the frauds and have devised various modes to collect the information about potential locations through various channels such as toll-free number, website, email etc," said T.R. Dua, DG, DIPA.

The industry bodies requested people to verify authenticity by visiting the websites of TSPs or IPs before accepting any offers for tower installation.

Telecom industry stakeholders on Monday cautioned the public against the fraud related to the installation of mobile towers on their properties in the country as it prepares for 5G roll out.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) and the Digital Infrastructure Providers' Association (DIPA) said that people must observe caution against certain companies, agencies, or individuals who are fraudulently approaching them, asking to deposit money in their personal or company accounts in the name of government tax for leasing their premises for installation of mobile towers.

The same individuals are offering fake "No Objection Certificates" from the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology for the installation of towers, they informed.

Mobile towers are installed either by telecom service providers (TSP) or infrastructure providers (IPs).

The mobile towers are

"Mobile towers are quintessential to ensure uninterrupted connectivity, support various critical services and maintain communication across the states. The public suffers gravely owing to the fraud related to mobile towers," said Lt Gen Dr S.P. Kochhar, DG, COAI.

This is causing a trust deficit and a sense of insecurity towards the team personnel working on the ground to build a robust communication network.

"The telecom industry remains committed to providing the best quality of services to its customers. Hence, we have collaborated with DIPA to build the Required robust infrastructure," Kochhar added.

According to reports, more than 6.8 lakh mobile towers have been installed across the country and over 15 lakh towers are to be installed by FY24 as the country prepares for 5G.

### Centre warns e-commerce platforms on illegal sale of wireless jammers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 4 JULY

The Union government today said the use of cellular signal jammer, GPS blocker or other signal jamming device is illegal, except specifically permitted by the government, warning e-commerce platforms against illegally selling such wireless mobile jammers online.

Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications, on 1st July, 2022 issued an advisory to the general public on the proper use of Wireless jammer and booster/repeaters," the Ministry of Communications said in a statement.

Alarmed at its open online sale, the department warned all e-commerce companies from selling or facilitating the sale of wireless jammers on their online platforms, stressing that private sector organisations or individuals cannot procure and use jammers in India.

The Department of Telecommunication (DoT) said that the use of cellular signal jammers, GPS blocker or other



signal jamming devices is generally illegal, alerting the general public on the proper use of wireless jammers and booster/repeaters.

"It has also been stated that it is unlawful to advertise, sell, distribute, import or otherwise market signal jamming devices in India, except as permitted under the guidelines," said the DoT. With regards to signal booster/repeater, the department said it is unlawful to possess, sale or use mobile signal repeater/booster by any individual other than the licensed telecom service providers.

"Earlier, vide Notice dated 21 January, 2022 (<https://dot.gov.in/spec-tranmanagement/notice-e-commerce-companies-regard-illegal-facilitation-sale-signal-jammers>), the DoT warned all e-commerce companies

from selling or facilitating the sale of wireless jammers on their online platforms," the statement said. A mobile signal booster/repeater is a kind of amplifier, apparently used to improve cell phone signal reception. However, unauthorised use of mobile phone boosters can adversely interfere with, disrupt public telecommunication services by jeopardising the quality and coverage of such services, the department said.

"This not only causes inconvenience to mobile phone users but can also hamper access to emergency call services from mobile phones, which creates a risk to public health and safety," said the DoT advisory.

Lt Gen Dr SP Kochhar, Director General of the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) said that citizens are unaware that buying, selling, installation and possession of Mobile Signal Boosters (MSBs) is an illegal and punishable offence under Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933 and India Telegraph Act, 1885.





## YEAR ENDER STORIES

As the year was ending, it was necessary to highlight the overall changes in the policy ecosystem and how the year had been for the telecom sector, while also providing an outlook for the developments expected in the coming year.

Media Outreach- Through opinion pieces, and standalone stories, we were able to bring focus on the current financial health of the sector and the policies that directly impacted it. Coverage was garnered in Hindustan Times, The Times of India, The Economic Times, MoneyControl, Business Standard, to name a few.

### Year 2022 – Reforms-driven progress for Indian Telecom

January 11, 2023, 8:01 PM IST / Lt Gen SP Kochhar in Voices, Economy, TCI



Lt Gen SP Kochhar  
DG, COAI

The telecom sector has proven to be the backbone of the country during the pandemic. To remain connected with the world, Internet has become an indispensable need in the modern era. India is one of the biggest consumers of data worldwide making it world's second-largest telecommunications market with a vast subscriber base of 1.17 billion, second only to China. With the second largest mobile network base with 1170.45 million active subscribers and 821.49 broadband connections (TRAI, October 2022), it becomes all the more necessary to build a robust network that reaches the far-flung corners of the country. The telecom sector in India has witnessed some major developments in the year 2022, which establishes it as a catalyst for the Indian economy going ahead.

### A lookback at the year 2022 for Indian Telecom

Besides bringing in a radical transformation in the digital processes and efficiencies of industries and in the regions of governance and connectivity, 5G is also expected to generate significantly more direct and indirect job opportunities.



As 2022 draws to a close Lt Gen SP Kochhar, Director General COAI, presented his thoughts on how the Indian Telecom Industry has fared overall in 2022.

### '5G will help India become a \$5-t economy'

S Ronendra Singh  
New Delhi

The year 2022 witnessed the much-awaited launch of 5G services in India, which is expected to be a turning point for the entire country. The launch of 5G services at the India Mobile Congress paved the way for multiple opportunities in different sectors, SP Kochhar, Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), told *businessline*. Excerpts:

**5G technology is still at a nascent stage in India. How soon do you think it will start contributing to the country?**

The technology aims to deliver a communication system with seamless coverage, high data rate, low latency, and high reliability. It is anticipated that 5G services will play a significant part in India achieving its economic aim of being a \$5-trillion economy by 2024-25. It will contribute to the creation of a linked ecosystem that will improve services for smart cities, electric



It will contribute to the creation of a linked ecosystem that will improve services for smart cities, electric transportation and other areas

**SP KOCHHAR**  
Director General, COAI

adoption, too. While public 5G will have applicability and use for limited consumer sections such as high-tech gaming and AR/VR applications initially, enterprise business will be the key driver for its uptake and usage.





## Digital Media Presence & Engagements

### 5G in India

From the launch of 5G in India in October 2022, COAI's digital platform has disseminated content in various formats on and around 5G, covering multiple facets like benefits of 5G, AI, IoT, Skills, and many more.

Over the year, content surrounding the theme gained us a total of **53662 impressions** and **911 engagements**.



## Mobile Tower Fraud

In the interest of the general public, various relevant information on the recurring Mobile Tower Fraud incidents were showcased as advisories in creative formats and aimed to make the people aware of the same.

Over the year, content surrounding the theme gained us a total of **37909 impressions** and **1040 engagements**.





Illegal Signal Boosters/Repeaters

On the lines of the guidelines issued by DoT, COAI’s digital audience has been reached out to through multiple advisories and made aware of the damaging impact of illegal boosters/repeaters and the repercussions of their possession, usage and sale.

Over the year, content surrounding the theme gained us a total of **45698 impressions** and **566 engagements**.

Did you know the repercussions of using/possessing/selling illegal signal boosters and repeaters?

- ⚠️ Inspection by @DoT\_India officials
- ⚠️ Issuing of Infringement Intimation Letter
- ⚠️ Undergoing penal action

Stealing signals through boosters/repeaters is illegal!

**BEWARE!**

Stealing signals through boosters/repeaters is illegal!



COAI

Experiencing unexpected fluctuation in network signals?  
Must be an #IllegalSignalBooster around you.  
Unauthorized boosters interfere with the airwaves making them capable of distorting mobile signals for other customers in the vicinity of the booster.  
#YouCanBeCaught



**Illegal Signal Boosters**  
can hamper other networks in your vicinity.  
#YouCanBeCaught



www.coai.com    @ConnectCOAI    Cellular Operators Association of India

Installing and using #IllegalSignal boosters is a crime which hinders other people's networks in your vicinity.  
Remember, with citizenship comes responsibility.  
#BeResponsible and Stop!



**Illegal Signal Boosters cause interference and affect the Quality of Services in and around the area. Stop/Prevent the use of Illegal Boosters.**

www.coai.com    @ConnectCOAI    Cellular Operators Association of India

After investing your money in Signal boosters for better speeds, learn the consequences first.  
By buying and selling #IllegalSignalBoosters, you're committing a punishable offense.  
#YouCanBeCaught



**Buying, Selling, or Installing an Illegal Signal Booster is a punishable offense**

www.coai.com    @ConnectCOAI    Cellular Operators Association of India





## Cybersecurity

With regular warnings, updates and solutions on cyber threats, the digital platform aims to keep the audience safe and informed.

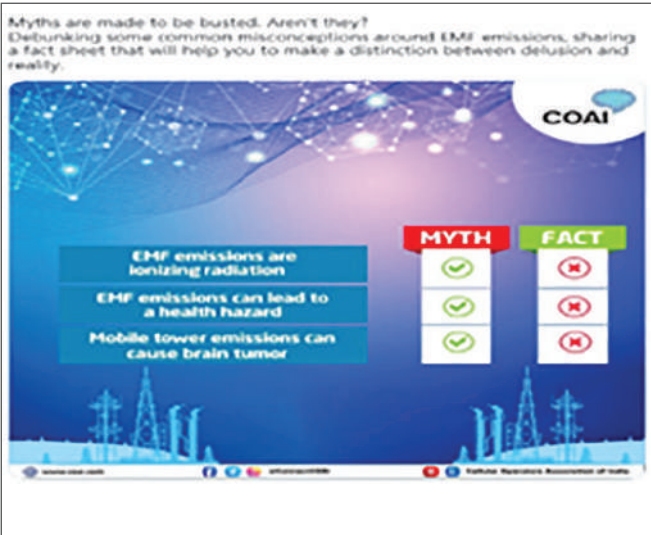
Over the year, content surrounding the theme gained us a total of **42762 impressions** and **1035 engagements**.



EMF Awareness

The regular webinars and announcements organized on EMF Awareness have been leveraged through live tweeting and creative illustrations to bust the myths surrounding the same.

Over the year, content surrounding the theme gained us a total of **181 impressions** and an **engagement of 219**.





## Union Budget - 2023

COAI's recommendations and views on behalf of the telcos, were showcased on social media in varied formats such as quotes and publications, on both occasions, pre and post the announcement.

Ahead of #Budget2023, #COAI proposed various recommendations to strengthen Indian #Telecom and the successful deployment of #5G services by the industry.

Have a look at the recommendations suggested by @DGCOAI in an article by @voicendata: [voicendata.com/union-budget-c...](https://voicendata.com/union-budget-c...)

**Voice&Data** @voicendata\_ - Jan 25  
Union Budget: COAI seeks reformative tax regime for Telecom Industry.

Read more at: [rogya7086ky](https://rogya7086ky)

#COAI #India #taxes #telecom #technology #digital #network #voicendata  
@ConnectCOAI  
@voicendata\_



COAI welcomes the provisions made in the #Budget2023 to aid the proliferation of #5G. The industry hopes for the govt. to meet the suggestions put forth for the revival & growth of the #telecom sector in the year ahead.

Here's a peak into @DGCOAI's views:

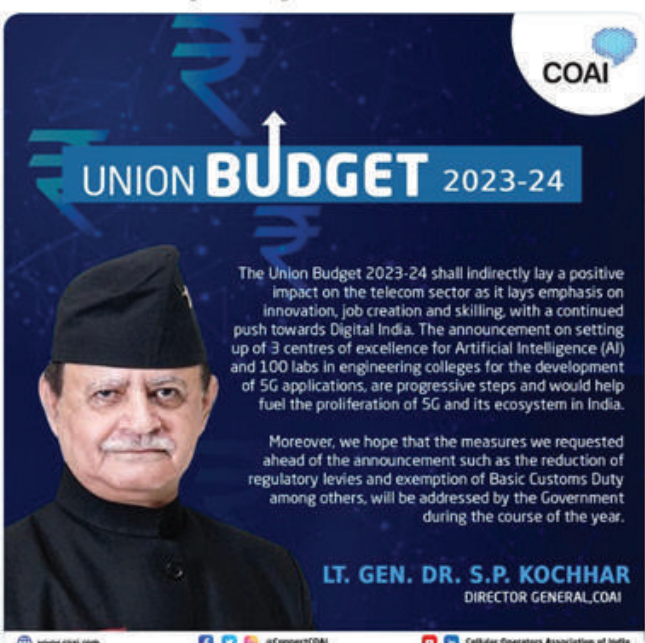


[telecom.economictimes.indiatimes.com](https://telecom.economictimes.indiatimes.com)

Setting up labs for 5G applications, CoEs for AI 'progressive steps': Telecom asso...  
5G: The associations in their response to the Union Budget 2023-24, however, expressed their dismay over the Budget not addressing their recommended ...

Over the year, content surrounding the theme gained us a total of **1308 impressions** and an **engagement of 254**.

On the #UnionBudget2023-24, @DGCOAI shares his views on the positive aspects of the announcements, whilst emphasising on the suggestions shared by the #telecom industry for the reduction in regulatory levies which aims at fostering #5G-led growth for the nation.



**COAI**

**UNION BUDGET 2023-24**

The Union Budget 2023-24 shall indirectly lay a positive impact on the telecom sector as it lays emphasis on innovation, job creation and skilling, with a continued push towards Digital India. The announcement on setting up of 3 centres of excellence for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 100 labs in engineering colleges for the development of 5G applications, are progressive steps and would help fuel the proliferation of 5G and its ecosystem in India.


Moreover, we hope that the measures we requested ahead of the announcement such as the reduction of regulatory levies and exemption of Basic Customs Duty among others, will be addressed by the Government during the course of the year.

**LT. GEN. DR. S.P. KOCHHAR**  
DIRECTOR GENERAL, COAI

[www.coai.com](https://www.coai.com) @ConnectCOAI Cellular Operators Association of India

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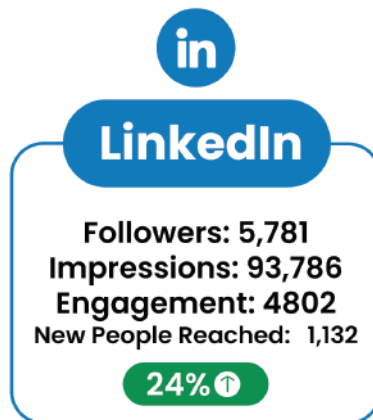
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## COAI Statement – A Lookback At The Year 2022 For Indian Telecom

Dec 20, 2022



In the post-pandemic era, our dependence on the telecom sector has increased rapidly and has become a part of our lives, which has created more demand for strong networks and better connectivity. Catering to this increased demand, the telecom sector has delivered commendably in 2022. The structural and procedural reforms in the telecom sector approved by the Government last year such as e-KYC, rationalization of Bank Guarantee, No Spectrum Usage Charge (SUC) for spectrum acquired in future auction, 100 percent FDI under the automatic route, Rationalization of Adjusted Gross Revenue, Rationalization of Interest Rates and penalties, and Facilitating Right of Way (RoW) have shown a positive impact in 2022.

## Every Village Could Be Connected To Fibre Soon: COAI DG Lt. General Dr. SP Kochhar To News18 Tech

By Sheerya Sharma | Edited By Sheerya Sharma | News18 Tech | Last Updated: FEBRUARY 23, 2023, 11:11 IST | New Delhi, India



Lt. General Dr. SP Kochhar, Director General of COAI, discusses India's rapidly changing telecommunications landscape in an exclusive video interview with News18 Tech.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

## COAI terms draft telecom bill 'reformative'

"In keeping with the recent trend of reformative policy making by the government, this draft Indian Telecommunication bill is another milestone step to develop a modern and future-ready legal framework in telecommunication. We are studying the newly drafted Bill and will share our comments with the Government in due course of time," SP Kochhar, director general of Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), said in a statement.



## अवेयरनेस वर्कशॉप का आयोजन किया

देहरादून। दूरसंचार विभाग की उत्तराखंड फील्ड यूनिट ने गुरुवार को ईएमएफ रेडिएशन पर एक जागरूकता कार्यशाला का आयोजन किया गया। इस कार्यशाला में दूरसंचार विभाग के वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों और डॉक्टरों के एक विशेषज्ञ पैनल ने नागरिकों की शंकाओं का समाधान किया और मोबाइल टॉवर से निकलने वाले रेडिएशन से जुड़ी भ्रांतियों को दूर किया। अरुण कुमार वर्मा ने बताया कि नागरिक इस बात के लिए आश्वस्त रह सकते हैं कि नॉन-आयनाईजिंग रेडिएशन का स्वास्थ्य पर कोई बुरा असर नहीं पड़ता है। इस वेबिनार में पंकज पोरवाल ने बताया इलेक्ट्रोमैग्नेटिक फील्ड एक्सपोजर को लेकर स्वास्थ्य समस्याओं पर चल रही बहस मोबाइल टेक्नोलॉजी की हर पीढ़ी में मौजूद रही है।

## BL Interview. Healthcare, Education to be at the forefront in deploying 5G: COAI DG

January 05, 2023 - Updated 04:59 pm IST

By S RICHENDEGA SINGH

The year 2022 witnessed the much-awaited launch of 5G services in India and has been a turning point for the entire country. The 5G services launch at the India Mobile Congress, paved the way for multiple opportunities in each sector from manufacturing, healthcare, and augmented entertainment to smart city projects coupled with new-age technologies like Internet of things (IoT), machine-to-machine (M2M), drones, artificial intelligence (AI), and big data analytics with 5G, said SP Kochhar, Director-General at Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) in interview with *businessline*. Edited excerpts: -

SP KOCHHAR, DIRECTOR-GENERAL, COAI

## 'There should be same rules for telecom services and communication apps'

At a time when the regulation process for the draft Telecom Bill is in progress, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) is a strong advocate for the regulation of OTT services. SP Kochhar, director general of COAI, in an interview with PTI's Jatin Grewal says that OTT services are not different from telecom services and should be regulated in a similar manner. He says that the government should not create a separate regulatory framework for OTT services, but rather, it should focus on the regulation of the telecom sector. He also mentions that the government should not create a separate regulatory framework for OTT services, but rather, it should focus on the regulation of the telecom sector.



Currently, there's no definition as to what is an OTT service and what is not. There should be differentiation between OTT communication services and other forms of OTT services. People use OTT services for various purposes, such as streaming services and social media. However, they are not regulated in the same manner as telecom services. The government should create a clear definition for OTT services and regulate them accordingly. This will ensure a level playing field for all services and protect the interests of consumers.

## WELCOMING ADANI GROUP'S FORAY

## COAI says enterprises should bid for spectrum

MUMBAI, Jan 16

TELECOM OPERATORS HAVE welcomed Adani Group's entry into the telecom sector. They have expressed their support for the group's bid for spectrum, which is a key factor in the development of the telecom sector. The operators believe that this will lead to increased competition and better services for consumers.



The industry body, whose members include Jio, Bharti, and others, has expressed its support for the group's bid for spectrum. It believes that this will lead to increased competition and better services for consumers.

## DoT's New Portal to Pave Way for Faster 5G Rollout

Gati Shakti Sanchar will slash the time taken to clear right of way applications by a fifth

New Delhi: The Telecom Department (DoT) has launched a new portal, Gati Shakti Sanchar, to facilitate the faster rollout of 5G services. The portal will allow telecom operators to submit Right of Way (RoW) applications online, which will be processed by the DoT. This will significantly reduce the time taken to clear RoW applications, thereby accelerating the 5G rollout across the country.



## Big Relief for Telcos as DoT Scraps 3% Floor on Spectrum Usage Charge

The telecom department has scrapped the 3% floor on spectrum usage charge (SUC), a move that spells a big relief to Reliance Jio Info-comm, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea (Vi) as it will sharply reduce their future outflows towards these statutory fees. >>> 10





## COAI thanks Ministry of Defence for progressive RoW Rules

January 23, 2023



## COAI bats for industrial electricity tariff rates for telecom infra; says cost benefits will spur 5G deployments

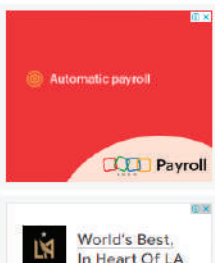
PTI • Last Updated: Apr 02, 2023, 02:00 PM IST

### Synopsis

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), which represents companies such as Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, has demanded that telecom infrastructure facilities in India be charged industrial rates rather than commercial for electricity. This would reduce costs and help to support the "essential" nature of telecom services, according to COAI's Director General SP Kochhar.



Telecom body COAI has made a strong plea that the telecom sector be charged industrial tariffs for electricity and not commercial rates, and that power connections be expeditiously provided to telecom infrastructure facilities. It said doing so was important given the essential nature of services and socio-



## Govt shouldn't allow backdoor entry to Big Tech for 5G: COAI

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the industry's apex body representing telecom, on Thursday urged the government not to allow Big Tech companies to enter the 5G spectrum auction this month via backdoor channels.

The COAI said in a statement that the 5G spectrum should not be provided on an administrative basis as it leads to no business case for the rollout of 5G networks in the country.

"If the independent entities set up private captive networks with direct 5G spectrum allocation by Department of Telecommunications (DoT), it will diminish the revenue so much that there will be no viable business case left for the telecom service providers (TSPs) and there will not remain any need for 5G networks rollout by TSPs," said Lt Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI.

It is important to understand, said the COAI, that licensed access service providers are fully capable of providing these services most competitively and economically compared to private companies.

Any consideration of administrative allocation of spectrum for such networks is fundamentally against the principles of level-playing field," Kochhar added.



The Department of Telecom has released a notice inviting applications (NIA) for the auction of spectrum in 600, 700, 800, 900, 1800, 2100, 2300, 2500, 3300 MHz and 26GHz bands.

The last date for submission of application was July 8 and it will give an indication of potential participants for the auction and earnest money deposit on July 20 which will indicate maximum spectrum pay out for each telco.

The telcos are allowed to surrender spectrum that will be auctioned after a minimum period of 10 years from the date of acquisition.

Last month, in a bid to telecom companies, the DoT scrapped the 3 per cent floor rate on spectrum usage charge (SUC).

the auction of spectrum in 600, 700, 800, 900, 1800, 2100, 2300, 2500, 3300 MHz and 26GHz bands.

The NIA provides explicit clarity on the subject of Capex Non-Public Networks (CNPN).

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## The right dial tone for telecom sector

'TECH' TONIC SHIFT. Budget proposes setting up of 100 labs for developing applications using 5G services

By Roshni Singh  
New Delhi

To tap employment potential and business opportunities, the government will be setting up 100 labs for developing applications using 5G services in engineering institutions.

"The labs will cover, among others, applications such as smart classrooms, precision farming, intelligent transport systems, and healthcare applications," Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister said.

For the telecom sector, the government has allocated ₹12,158 crore for post and telecom projects including ₹1,52,997 crore capital infusion in State-run BSNL. Total allocation includes ₹9,75,978 crore for the Department of Telecommunications and ₹25,814 crore for post projects, the Budget document said.

OPTICAL FIBRE The government has also allocated ₹2,158 crore for optical fibre cable based network for Defence Services and ₹1,16.8 crore for telecom projects in the North East. The Department of Posts has been allocated ₹25,814 crore that includes ₹250 crore capital infusion in the India Post Payments Bank.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), welcomed the government's step to set up labs for development of 5G applications, but was disappointed that 5G license for had not been released.

"The industry had requested for some measures to be introduced in the Budget 2023-24 to ease the regulatory and financial burden on the sector. We are hopeful that the industry's suggestions to reduce regulatory burden like license fee, deferring USOF contribution till the existing funds are exhausted, exemption of 5G custom duty on telecom equipment, waiving of GST on regulatory payments, refund of ITC, among others, will be considered and addressed by the government during the course of the year," SP Kochhar, Director General, COAI said.

According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), the 5G labs initiative will help build the use cases for the future upon which digital service businesses can be built.

Admittedly, the telecom sector is one of the highly-regulated sectors. There is a huge tax burden and regulatory compulsions on the industry players. It can also be seen as a deterrent to making Digital India a reality. Some of the special benefits that can be advantageous to the sector include GST exemption on regulatory payment on the license fees and spectrum usage charges.



BRIGHT PROSPECT. The 5G labs initiative will help build the use cases for the future upon which digital service businesses can be built.

growing multi-fold in exports of telecom products. Our focus in 2023 will be to roll out Anamurthi Bharat's 4G/5G telecom stack for BSNL," he said.

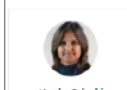
"With the government's push to establish 30 Skill India international centres, 100 premier labs for developing applications to use 5G services, and centres of excellence for artificial intelligence, India has the potential to deliver talent not only across domestic markets but also to the international market."

JOB OPPORTUNITIES An initiative like the Ekamra Model Residential Schools (EMRS) is also a progressive move by the government to uplift the tribal population and empower the students to take up new job opportunities," Arvind Balli, CEO, Telecom Sector Skill Council, said.

## Pre-budget expectations in the telecom sector

January 31, 2023, 8:00 PM IST / Harsha Solanki in Varanasi, India, TOI

Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Email



Harsha Solanki  
Harsha Solanki, Managing Director - India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, Indigo

The year 2022 was a momentous year for the Indian telecom industry. On October 1, 2022, Indian telecom operators Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel launched the much-awaited 5G services in major Indian cities. Ever since the launch, both telecom operators have expanded their services to more than 100 cities. It is expected that the 5G services will be available in most parts of the country by the next two years.

As 5G picks up steam, the telecom industry seeks support from the government ahead of the Union Budget to expedite infrastructure expansion and provide faster internet connectivity to rural areas successfully.

Faster internet and mobile services are a catalyst for creating opportunities across sectors. A robust telecom infrastructure is also an opportunity for businesses to build products and services that are accessible to all. Seamless connectivity holds the potential for accelerating economic growth in the country. It is a way forward to making Digital India a reality.

In the upcoming Union Budget, the telecom industry is expecting relaxations, tax benefits, regulations for healthy competition and protection of consumer interests.

Given that the telecom sector is one of the highly-regulated sectors, there is a huge tax burden and regulatory compulsions on the industry players. It can also be seen as a deterrent to making Digital India a reality. Some of the special benefits that can be advantageous to the sector include GST exemption on regulatory payment on the license fees and spectrum usage charges.

### HEADLINES OF THE DAY

## Union Budget 2023-2024: COAI seeks reformative tax regime for telecom industry

January 19, 2023



COAI, the apex body that represents the telecom sector, has made recommendations for the Union Budget 2023-24 to the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, towards improving the financial health of the industry.



TelecomNews • 2 Min Read

## Setting up labs for 5G applications, CoEs for AI 'progressive steps': Telecom associations

The associations in their response to the Union Budget 2023-24, however, expressed their dismay over the Budget not addressing their recommended measures such as reducing regulatory levies such as License Fee (LF), deferring USOF contribution till the exhaustion of existing corpus, exemption of basic customs duty (BCD) on telecom gear, the demand for an Rs 18,000-crore input tax credit refund by telecom infrastructure firms, and others.



ETTelecom

Updated On Feb 2, 2023 at 07:52 AM IST



**NEW DELHI:** The setting up of three Centres of Excellence (CoEs) on artificial intelligence and 100 labs in engineering colleges for the development of 5G applications are progressive steps and will drive the development of the 5G ecosystem in the country, according to telecom industry associations.

**#Telecom** has the power to transform the skilling landscape in India, enabling access to education, training and a plethora of opportunities for all. It's time to get ready to harness the potential of technology and unlock new avenues for growth!



The advent of **#5G** technology is transforming cities into **#SmartCities**! With inter-connected transportation systems to smart homes and experiential education, a **#NewIndia** is on the rise!

**#5GForNewIndia**

**#Healthcare** at your fingertips- anytime, anywhere! With the rise of **#5G**, real-time connectivity and high-speed data, **#telemedicine** will foster the unbound limits of the medical infrastructure.

**#5GForNewIndia**





With #IoT devices and software, technology has evolved not just in improving efficiency, but has also strengthened medical and healthcare sectors, allowing for better data and research to produce more precise findings.  
#WorldHealthDay

**Internet of Medical Things (IoMT)**

COAI

WORLD HEALTH DAY

- Remote medical assistance
- Chronic care management
- Real-time monitoring
- Improved data
- Transfer of medical data

Did you know the repercussions of using/possessing/selling illegal signal boosters and repeaters?

- ⚠️ Inspection by @DoT\_India officials
- ⚠️ Issuing of Infringement Intimation Letter
- ⚠️ Undergoing penal action

Stealing signals through boosters/repeaters is illegal!

**BEWARE!**

Stealing signals through boosters/repeaters is illegal!

COAI

Do not become a victim of #scammers who are after your hard-earned money!  
Keep in mind that the @DoT\_India, @TRAI, TSPs, or their representatives never request a security deposit in return for #mobile tower installation at your premises.

**BEWARE!**

Members of TSPs or Infrastructure Providers do not ask for money in exchange of mobile tower installation!

**FRAUD ALERT**

COAI

On the path to becoming truly digital, India is taking giant strides toward becoming a global superpower.  
Here are some quick stats that are a testament to the rising #DigitalIndia.

**Digital India: At a Glance**

COAI

- Digital India is expected to create business opportunities worth **\$1.3 Trillion** by 2025
- India is the **2<sup>nd</sup>** fastest digitising economy globally
- Number of internet users in India is expected to reach **900 Mn** by 2025

Source: TNS

#5G: An era of efficiency where industries will thrive on the potential of seamless connectivity, cloud computing, automation, and real-time data!

It is indeed the enabler for #Industry 4.0!

**5G for Industry 4.0**

COAI

5G will deliver an array of innovative use cases to increase factory capabilities and boost agility, freeing operations from wire-dependency

Source: Ericsson

Many organisations have been a target of #IoT Hacking & the number of victims keeps growing rapidly. Ensure the following to prevent such attacks:

- Change default router settings
- Disconnect IoT devices when not needed
- Update software & firmware
- Use strong passwords

@Cyberdost

**IoT Hacking**

COAI

IoT cyber-attacks gain access to users' sensitive data with the help of any IoT device. Attackers usually install malware on the devices to gain access to further sensitive data of the company and its employees.





Social media profile hacking is common these days and if there's no luck from the platform, you can report the crime at [cybercrime.gov.in](https://www.cybercrime.gov.in) by sharing all relevant details such as user ID & username. Protect your [#data](#).

[#DataProtection](#) [#Telecomindustry](#)



Fraudsters disguised as TSP/IP members have repeatedly duped people by promising huge amounts of rent for installing [#mobile](#) towers on their property and asking for security deposits. Remember that TSP/IP members or [#DoTIndia](#) or [#TRAI](#) officials never ask for money in such cases.



Over 18 million cases of cyber attacks and threats were recorded within the first three months of 2022 in India. With the rapid increase in cyber threats & phishing attacks, one needs to be cautious & wary of these ways to prevent oneself from phishing attacks. [#CombatPhishing](#)



A data breach is often an unprecedented calamity. However, [#DataPrivacy](#) is always a choice to make. Make sure to follow simple steps of security such as Two-Factor Authentication.



Many attacks, many precautions

Here are some ways to prevent such dangerous attacks:

- Improve network security
- Ensure server redundancy
- Beware of warning signs
- Use cloud-based protection
- Limit network broadcasting

[#Cyberdoct](#)



Hoax alert!

Many fraudsters are on the run for scamming you by asking for money to be deposited to specific accounts and promising monetary returns from installing mobile towers on your property.

[#MobileTowerFrauds](#)



With [#5G](#) technology and its varied advantages, we can help create a smarter, more expansive, efficient and sustainable telecom industry.





# 12

## EVENTS & ENGAGEMENTS



### UK-India Delegation Meeting

**Aimed to discuss the next steps for the India-UK Future Telecom Programme**

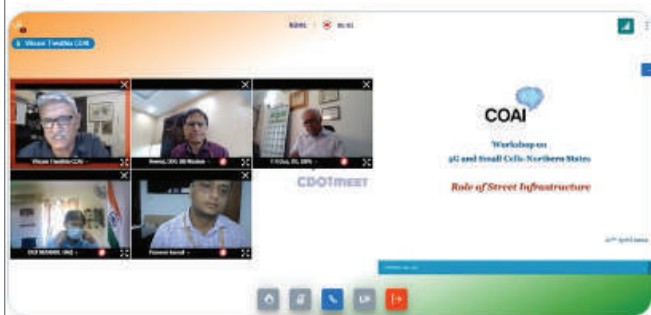
Here is another glimpse of the UK-India delegation meeting that happened at @ConnectCOAI on 30th March to discuss the next steps for the India-UK Future Telecom Programme with delegates from @SatAppsCatapult @CSACatapult, and @UKinIndia. #newtechnology #telecomsector



### Workshop on '5G and the Small Cells- Northern States – Role of Street Infrastructure

**For the Proliferation of Dense Small Cell Infrastructure across the country**

@COAI thanks @DoT\_India for organizing a workshop on '5G and the Small Cells- Northern States – Role of Street Infrastructure' on 27th April to facilitate a Standard Approach for the Proliferation of Dense Small Cell Infrastructure across the country. #NationalBroadbandMission



#5GinIndia | @NBM\_DoT, @DoT\_India is organising a workshop on "5G Rollout - Role of Street Infrastructure and Small Cells for Western States". The workshop is being joined by representatives from @ConnectDipa and @ConnectCOAI... (1/2)



## World Summit on the Information Society Forum

### Lt. Gen. Dr. SP Kochhar awarded for his “Excellent Leadership in Cyber Security

We are elated to share that Lt Gen Dr SP Kochhar (@DGCOAI) has been awarded for his “Excellent Leadership in Cyber Security” at the World Summit on the Information Society Forum (@WSISprocess). Lt Gen Dr Kochhar has been extremely vocal about #cybersecurity and allied sectors.



## 25 Years of TRAI



## 5G Test-Bed Launch

Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi dedicates Indigenous #5G Test Bed to the nation at the Silver Jubilee Function of @TRAIR. This is an important milestone for India's self-reliance in the field of critical and advanced technology.



With changing times #telecom services have become as important as Electricity, Roadways, Water, Education, Security, and Health. It has become the primary medium of internet access: @AshwiniVaishnaw, Hon'ble Minister, @Gol\_Meity at Silver Jubilee Function of @TRAIR





## Lt. Gen. Dr. SP Kochhar meets Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana, Shri Manohar Lal Khattar Ji

Here's a glimpse at a delightful meeting last evening between Lt. Gen. Dr. SP Kochhar, @DGCOAI, and Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana, Shri Manohar Lal Khattar Ji (@mlkhattar).  
@DoT\_India @GoI\_Meity @TRAI



## Launch of Gati Shakti Sanchar Portal by DoT

The launch of Gati Shakti Sanchar Portal by @DoT\_India is a milestone that will enable the Government's vision for @DigitalIndia. This is a welcoming step toward making a robust mechanism to achieve the goal of #BroadbandForAll: @DGCOAI at the launch event of the portal.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Cloud Native Telco's Forum 2022

Lt. Gen. Dr. SP Kochhar talked about Cloud-native in the #telecom sector, its advantages along with the kind of impact it will bring if adopted in India

Addressing the panel discussion at @NexgenConferen1 2nd Annual Cloud Native Telco's Forum 2022, @DGCOAI talked about Cloud-native in the #telecom sector, its advantages along with the kind of impact it will bring if adopted in India.





## Release of the Right of Way (RoW) rules amendment by Union Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology

Giving a major push to India's 5G run, Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @AshwiniVaishnaw, @GoI\_Meity & @RailMinIndia, releases the Right of Way (RoW) rules amendment. #5G RoW Application form was also launched on the #Gatishakti Sanchar portal.



A Series of reforms by the govt has solved issues like #spectrum allocation & right of way. We've taken all state governments with us & will be rolling out #5G by October: Sh @AshwiniVaishnaw, Hon'ble Minister, @GoI\_Meity & @RailMinIndia during the release of RoW rules amendment.



## 5G Rollout - Role of Street Infrastructure and Small Cells

COAI @ConnectCOAI - May 4

5G is important because it has the potential to give a serious uptick to all welfare activities like education etc. We will use the broadband network to build existing assets: @VTiwathia, DDG, COAI at a workshop on '5G Rollout - Role of Street Infrastructure and small cells'.

DoT Assam LSA and 9 others

#5G would allow us to improve economic performance. I would urge the state governments to use street furniture during the 5G deployment: @VTiwathia, DDG, COAI at a workshop on '5G Rollout - Role of Street Infrastructure and small cells'.

@Ettelcom @TelecomTalk

12:59 PM · May 4, 2022

## EMF Emissions from Mobile Towers – West Bengal LSA

Department of Telecommunications (DoT), West Bengal License Service Area (LSA) organized an awareness webinar on "EMF Emissions and Telecom Towers"



Sri Pabitra Sarkar, DDG(C), @DoT\_WB\_LSA, @DoT\_India, and Sri T. Mag, Director(CI) talked regarding EMF Exposure, Compliance Measures, and Status and informed that there is no evidence that electromagnetic fields from existing (2G, 3G, and 4G) mobile networks pose any health risks





## 13th Edition of Business IT Conclave 2022

Director general, Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar attended the 13th Edition of Business IT Conclave 2022: Future of Technology organised by The Bengal Chambers of Commerce and Industry



## 5G India 2022 – 6th International Conference



## #NASSCOMXperienceAI Virtual Summit 2022

Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, DG, COAI, talked about the transformation of AI via the new 5G technology

Addressing the #NASSCOMXperienceAI Virtual Summit 2022, @DGCOAI talked about the transformation of #AI via the new #5G technology with the features like enhanced network speed, low latency, and greater aggregation power which is ten times more than the previous technologies.



In India, we're fortunate that #5G and Industry 4.0 are launching together which will escalate growth in every sector. #5G-driven #AI incursion will provide subscribers dynamic solutions in real-time: @DGCOAI at #NASSCOMXperienceAI Virtual Summit 2022. @NasscomEvents



## CUTS Int'l Conference on Identifying Elements of Ethical & Regulatory Framework for #6G and Creating Opportunities for #India & #Australia#

Speaking at the @CUTS.CITEE Identifying Elements of Ethical & Regulatory Framework for #6G & Creating Opportunities for #India & #Australia, @DGCOAI said: Economies will depend on digital technologies & over-led by applications in the coming future while we monitor frameworks.

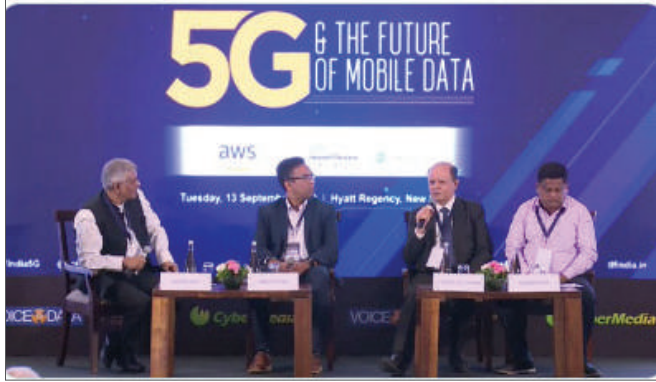


Apart from the 3 pillars for a successful partnership: Ethical frameworks, technology standards adopted across the world, & shaping the global marketplace we must also focus on the skilled manpower to achieve effective results: @DGCOAI at the @CUTS.CITEE International Event 2022.



## Fireside chat on “5G: After the auctions” during the #TLFIndia5G organised by Voice & Data

Valuable insights emerges at the #TLFIndia5G organised by @voicendata\_ during the fireside chat on “5G: After the auctions” between @DGCOAI, @PG080355, Sameer Vuyyuru, and Rashim Kapoor.



Voice&Data @voicendata\_ · Sep 19, 2022

We need to focus on areas that would probably need to look at #AI - Lt Gen Dr. S P Kochhar, DG, @ConnectCOAI speaking at @voicendata\_ #TLFIndia5G

bit.ly/3QPW4iW

youtu.be/WvMHeAxcNlc

#5G #Cloud #data

@TelcoDR @totogi @awscloud @HPE\_JN @TSSCINDIA



## ET Digital Telco Summit 2022

"We need to have networks which are all encompassing & across the nation, powered by uninterrupted, reliable electricity supply at industrial rates. This needs to be enabled through apt interventions,"; @DGCOAI, Lt. Gen. Dr. S P Kochhar at the @ETTelecom Digital Telco Summit 2022





## Rating of Buildings/Areas for #Digital #connectivity

"While technology solutions exist for all problems, it is important to have a conducive policy framework in place. We need to employ #AI, #AR & #VR technologies to create innovative solutions"- Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, DG, COAI



## CRISIL Ratings webinar on the telecom sector: "Signals around the 5G rollout"

The pandemic established #telecom as an essential service. As industry 4.0 seeps in at the same, the rise of #5G will make available whatever is required by the industry. We have indeed entered the ecosystem at the right time: @DGCOAI at the @CRISILLimited webinar on 5G Rollout.



## ET Telecom: 5G Congress

"The collaborative approach taken by the govt. to engage & involve relevant stakeholders like industry & academia, is a commendable process in making India lead the manufacturing sector," emphasised @DGCOAI at the #ET5GCongress

#ETTelecom #ETTelecomAwards #5Gnetwork #Telecom



COAI @ConnectCOAI - Mar 23

The Govt. is clear in its objective to establish India as a global leader in manufacturing. The strategic approach taken and dynamic policy changes introduced in a pragmatic manner will help achieve this objective: @DGCOAI at the #ET5GCongress

#ETTelecom #5Gnetwork #Telecom





COAI was constituted in 1995 as a registered, non-governmental society. The Association is dedicated to the advancement of modern communications through the establishment of world-class mobile infrastructure, products and services, and to delivering the benefits of innovative and affordable mobile communication services to the people of India.



### INDUSTRY POLICY

COAI has emerged as the official voice of the Indian telecom industry that interacts directly with ministries, policy makers, regulators, financial institutions and technical bodies. It provides a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas between these bodies and the service providers, who share a common interest in the development of mobile telephony in the country.



### TELECOM ISSUES

COAI collaborates with other industry associations such as CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, GSMA, ISPAI, ICA, etc., with the objective of presenting an industry consensus to the Government on crucial issues related to the growth and development of the Indian telecom industry.



### NEW TECHNOLOGIES

COAI is determined to encourage the confluence of technologies to facilitate the move towards complete convergence in communications as this could greatly help India mitigate the problems of low fixed line penetration and help realize country's vision of becoming an Information Society.



### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

COAI aims to dispense information and spread awareness among the national and international entities and consumers on issues pertaining to service quality and other value-added services provided by the operators to their subscribers.

# 14

## COAI LEADERSHIP



### MR. PRAMOD K. MITTAL CHAIRPERSON



Mr. Pramod Kumar Mittal comes with a rich experience of 42 years in telecommunications. Before joining India's largest telecom operator, Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. as President, Mr. Mittal served in the Department of Telecommunications, Government of India, for over 37 years. Since the year 2000, he served as Deputy Director General (DDG) and then as Senior DDG, working in the telecommunication policy formulation and implementation, licensing and regulatory wings of the DoT. During his tenure, he was responsible for the liberalization of Basic services, opening of National Long-Distance Services and International Long-Distance Services, introduction and implementation of Unified Access Service Licence and the Unified Licence regime.

### MR. P. BALAJI VICE CHAIRPERSON



Mr. Balaji is a member of the Core Leadership Team (CLT) of Vodafone Idea Ltd, a leading telecom operator serving citizens and enterprises across India. He leads the company's Regulatory, Public Policy and Government Relations activities along with Industry advocacy, Corporate Communications, Reputation Management and CSR.

He is a pioneer in the Telecom sector, joining the sector at its infancy in 1993. He has the unique experience of holding leadership positions in all three telecom verticals, with leading Technology, Devices companies and Telecom Operator.

Prior to joining Vodafone, Balaji was Managing Director of Nokia India and Sony Mobile. Over the years, he has held senior leadership positions in start-up and turn-around ventures of TATA group, AT&T, Ericsson and Lucent Technologies. Balaji is the Chairman of ASSOCHAM National Digital Communications Council, and Member of National Council of apex industry chambers CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM and All India Management Association.





## LIEUTENANT GENERAL DR. S. P. KOCHHAR DIRECTOR GENERAL



A decorated military veteran, he retired as ‘Signal Officer in Chief’, the head of the ICT wing of the Indian Army, where he was responsible for planning, executing and operating all Telecom and IT networks of the Army. He was the Additional Director General Personnel of the Indian Army earlier to that, wherein he was handling the HR and Empowerment functions of the 11-lakh strong force.

He was the first CEO of the Telecom Sector Skill Council (TSSC) and served there till recently, prior to joining COAI. He holds a PhD, MTech, two MPhils, and has been a member on the Executive Council of National Board of Accreditation, Jamia Millia Islamia and on the Academic Councils of IGNOU, Veltech and others. He also served as an Adjunct Professor with BITS Pilani and IGNOU for several years. Besides, he has also been a member of the interviewing boards of UPSC for Civil Services and Engineering Services.



# 15

## COAI MEMBERS



### COAI Core Members



### COAI Associate Members







The COAI secretariat comprises of the Director General at the helm, with the Deputy Director General to support him. There are five departments of teams in the association that ensure that COAI is one of the most credible and reputed industry bodies, solely dedicated towards advancement of the digital communications ecosystem in the country.

The Secretariat has a team strength of 18 people working currently, bringing in talent and skills from various areas of work, such as regulatory, legal, finance, technology, infrastructure and communications/advocacy.

### The Team:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General                          | 9. Mr. Ashish Mathur, Senior Manager - Regulatory                   |
| 2. Mr. Vikram Tiwathia, Deputy Director General                         | 10. Ms. Manisha Chawla, Executive Assistant to DG                   |
| 3. Mr. Gopal Mittal, Associate Director General - Commercial & Finance  | 11. Mr. Jagjeet Singh Sahani, Manager - Legal                       |
| 4. Mr. Saurabh Puri, Associate Director General - Research & Analysis   | 12. Mr. Deepak Kumar Gupta, Manager - TIC                           |
| 5. Mr. Dhananjay Gawanday, Director - TIC                               | 13. Mr. Suprateek Gulia, Manager - TIC                              |
| 6. Mr. Kshem Kapoor, Director - Technology & Security                   | 14. Ms. Neetu Sharma, Manager - Accounts                            |
| 7. Mr. Kaustuv Sircar, Senior Manager - Communications & Public Affairs | 15. Mr. Abhijit Panicker, Deputy Manager - Technology & Security    |
| 8. Mr. Sunder Singh Poriya, Senior Manager - Administration             | 16. Ms. Priya Bhadra Bhowmik, Assistant Manager - Associate Members |
|   | 17. Ms. Ashika V, Assistant Manager - Regulatory                    |
|   | 18. Ms. Akriti Shashank, Assistant Manager - Legal                  |





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## NOTES

[illegible]







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