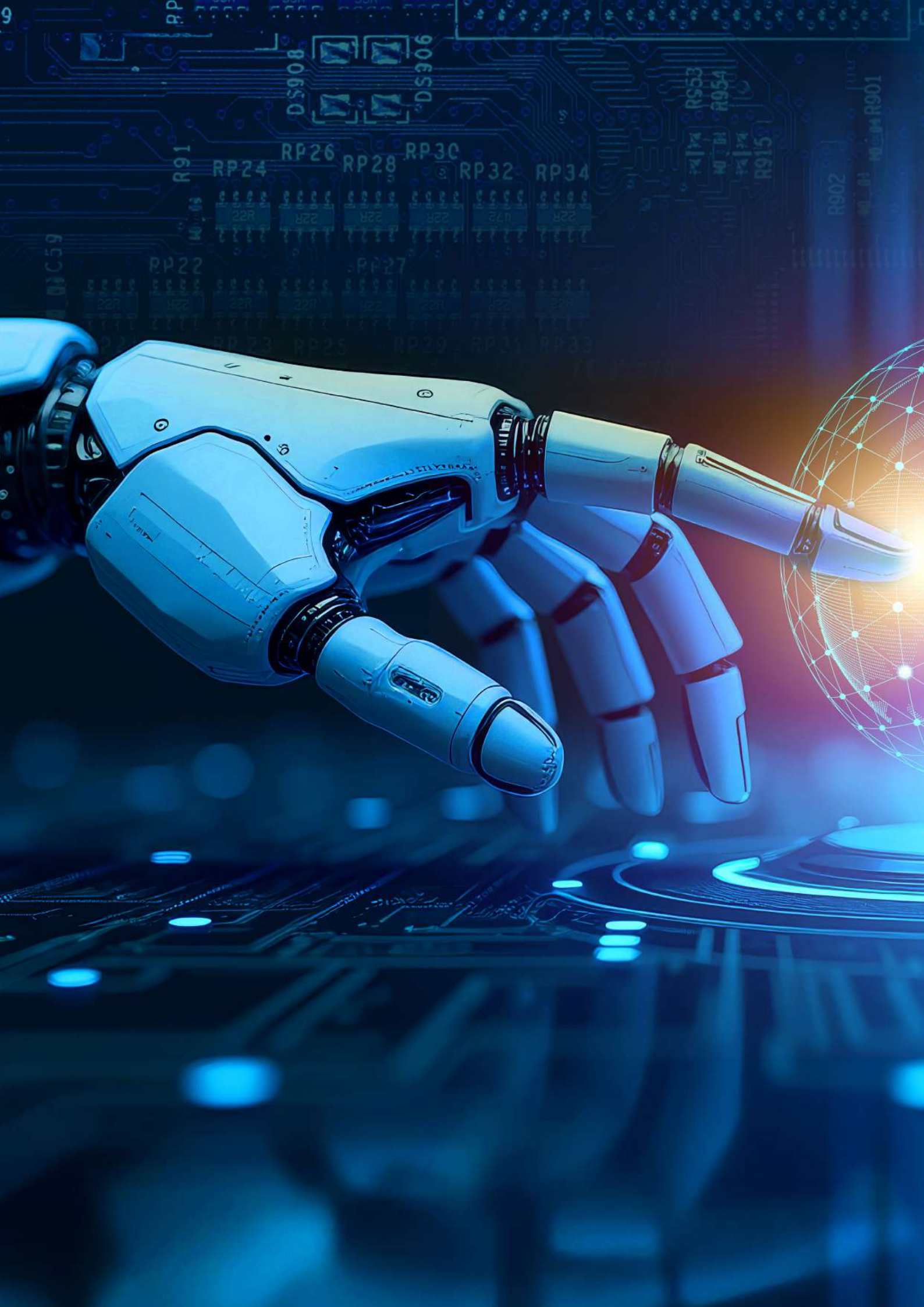




ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26



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डॉ. पेम्मासानी चंद्र शेखर
Dr. Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar



सत्यमेव जयते

राज्य मंत्री
संचार एवं ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार
Minister of State for Communications
and Rural Development
Government of India

MESSAGE

I am pleased to convey my best wishes for the COAI Annual Report 2025–26, a year that has witnessed significant advancements in India's telecommunications and digital infrastructure landscape.

Telecom connectivity today underpins every dimension of India's digital journey from financial inclusion and e-governance to startup innovation and Artificial Intelligence deployment. As India moves toward becoming a global AI powerhouse, robust, secure and future-ready telecom networks are essential to ensure that innovation scales responsibly and inclusively.

During the year, the Department of Telecommunications has undertaken important measures to strengthen the integrity of telecom networks. The Sanchar Saathi platform has emerged as one of the most consequential consumer-facing interventions in recent years — enabling citizens to trace, block and report misuse of telecom resources, and helping the Government dismantle large-scale SIM fraud networks.

Consumer protection, digital trust and network resilience remain key priorities. The Government's approach balances innovation with responsibility enabling growth while ensuring that misuse of telecom resources is effectively addressed.

The continued rollout of 5G services, increased fiberisation and early-stage 6G research efforts demonstrate India's preparedness for next-generation connectivity. As AI applications increasingly demand ultra-low latency, high capacity and reliable networks, telecom infrastructure will play an even more central role in supporting economic productivity and public service delivery.

It is equally important that we continue to invest in skilling and human capital development. The evolution toward AI-native networks will require a future-ready workforce equipped with advanced technical and cybersecurity capabilities. Industry participation in these efforts is critical.

I would urge the industry to play a far more active and purposeful role in research and development — particularly in the domain of 6G. India's telecom industry has the capacity, the talent and the institutional depth to move from being a consumer of global technology to a contributor and creator. That potential must now be translated into investment, commitment and outcomes.

I appreciate COAI's constructive engagement with the Government throughout the year, including its contributions to policy consultations, technical discussions and industry collaboration platforms. I look forward to continued collaboration between the Government and the industry as we work together to strengthen India's telecom infrastructure and ensure that connectivity remains the backbone of AI-powered Bharat.

(Dr. Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar)



अनिल कुमार लाहोटी
Anil Kumar Lahoti



सत्यमेव जयते
Message

अध्यक्ष
भारतीय दूरसंचार विनियामक प्राधिकरण
Chairman
TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA



It gives me great pleasure to extend my greetings to the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on the release of its Annual Report for the year 2025-2026.

Over the years, COAI has played a pivotal role as the voice of India's telecom industry and provided a platform for fostering constructive dialogue among service providers, policymakers, regulators and other stakeholders. This engagement has significantly contributed to shaping policy discourse and addressing key issues affecting the growth and development of mobile communications in the country.

India's telecom sector continues to remain a critical enabler of the nation's digital transformation with implementation of Telecommunications Act, 2023 and forward-looking regulatory framework in place. TRAI is committed to fostering a fair and competitive and consumer centric telecom ecosystem. TRAI will continue to prioritize rapid expansion of broadband connectivity, the proliferation of advanced mobile technologies and increasing digital adoption across sectors.

Digital Connectivity Rating Framework for Buildings, by TRAI is a significant initiative in the direction of providing improved indoor digital connectivity inside residential, commercial, and public buildings across the country. The QoS and Telecom Consumers Protection Regulations introduced by TRAI, stand as a strong testament to ensuring quality telecom services for over 1.2 billion consumers and help them stay protected from unsolicited commercial communications.

The telecom sector today is a foundational enabler of digital public infrastructure, enterprise innovation and citizen services. In this evolving landscape, regulatory agility and stakeholder dialogue are essential. TRAI remains committed to a transparent and consultative approach. Industry associations such as COAI facilitate this dialogue to ensure that regulatory objectives and industry growth move in tandem.

I am confident that COAI will continue to play an important role in achieving connectivity for all and driving digital transformation, thereby contributing to the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

I extend my best wishes to COAI and all its members for continued success.


(Anil Kumar Lahoti)

COAI Chairperson's Message



Abhijit Kishore

Chairperson
COAI

It gives me great pleasure to present the Annual Report of COAI for the year 2025–26; a year that marked a defining transition in India's digital journey, as the convergence of connectivity, compute and artificial intelligence began shaping the next phase of national transformation.

The telecommunications sector has long served as the backbone of India's digital economy. Over the past decade, the sustained investments and innovation by telecom service providers have enabled unprecedented connectivity, bringing over a billion citizens into the digital ecosystem and powering transformative digital public infrastructure such as Aadhaar, UPI and nationwide digital governance platforms. As India now stands at the threshold of the AI era, telecom networks are evolving beyond communication infrastructure into foundational platforms that enable intelligence, inclusion and innovation at population scale.

This year marked continued progress and strategic engagement for COAI, as we worked closely with the Government, regulator and the ecosystem stakeholders to strengthen the telecom sector's ability to support India's digital and economic ambitions.

One of the most significant developments during the year was the continued expansion and strengthening of next-generation telecom infrastructure, particularly with respect to 5G deployment, fiberisation and network modernisation. These investments are enabling enhanced capacity, lower latency and improved reliability — critical prerequisites for supporting emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT) and Industry 4.0.

COAI has consistently advocated for policies and regulatory frameworks that support sustainable infrastructure investments, including rationalisation of spectrum pricing, improved Right-of-Way processes and infrastructure facilitation. These measures are essential to ensuring that telecom networks remain resilient and capable of supporting the exponential growth in data consumption and emerging AI-driven applications.

Ensuring secure and trusted communications remained a key priority for the Association during the year. Telecom Service Providers have deployed advanced AI-driven network intelligence systems to proactively detect and mitigate spam, fraud and malicious communications. These initiatives demonstrate the sector's commitment to protecting consumers and strengthening trust in digital systems.

COAI has actively supported collaborative efforts with the Government agencies, regulator and the ecosystem stakeholders to enhance cybersecurity frameworks and ensure that India's digital infrastructure remains secure, resilient and future-ready. As emerging technologies such as generative AI and quantum computing reshape the digital landscape, COAI remains committed to supporting the development of trusted and secure telecom networks that safeguard national digital interests.

The telecom sector continues to operate in a dynamic regulatory and economic environment. COAI has played an active role in engaging with policymakers and regulators on key issues impacting the sector, including spectrum management, licensing frameworks, regulatory levies, infrastructure facilitation and enabling emerging technologies. Our engagement has been guided by a consistent objective — to ensure that India's telecom ecosystem remains sustainable, investment-friendly and capable of supporting the country's long-term digital ambitions.

COAI continues to contribute actively to global telecom and standards development forums, ensuring that India's perspectives and deployment realities are represented in shaping future network technologies, including 6G and AI-native networks. COAI has remained at the forefront of industry dialogue and thought leadership, organising and participating in numerous national and international forums, including the DigiCom Summit 2026, the India AI Impact Summit 2026 and other strategic platforms. These engagements have facilitated meaningful dialogues between policymakers, industry leaders, academia and global stakeholders on the evolving role of telecom networks in enabling digital transformation, AI adoption and national competitiveness.

COAI has also continued to support industry collaboration through working groups, consultations and policy submissions, ensuring

that the telecom ecosystem remains aligned with national priorities and global technological developments. As telecom networks evolve toward AI-native architectures and future technologies such as 6G, the importance of building a skilled and future-ready workforce has become increasingly evident.

The coming years will represent a transformative period for the telecom sector. Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, edge infrastructure and next-generation networks will reshape how economies function and how societies operate. Telecom networks will serve as the foundational infrastructure enabling these transformations. Ensuring the continued strength, sustainability and security of telecom infrastructure will therefore be essential to India's success in the AI era.

COAI will continue to work closely with the Government, the Regulator and the ecosystem stakeholders to support policies and initiatives that promote innovation, investment and inclusive digital growth. India has already demonstrated its ability to build digital infrastructure at unparalleled scale. With continued collaboration and forward-looking policies, the country is well positioned to emerge as a global leader in AI-enabled digital transformation.

As I conclude my tenure as the Chairperson of COAI, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government, the Department of Telecommunications, TRAI, our member operators, industry partners and the COAI Secretariat for their constant cooperation, constructive dialogue and shared commitment towards strengthening India's telecom ecosystem. It has been a privilege to serve the industry at a time when telecommunications has emerged as a foundational pillar of India's digital progress. I remain confident that the spirit of collaboration that defines this sector will continue to drive innovation, inclusion and sustainable growth in the years ahead.

From The **Director General's Desk**



Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar

Director General, COAI

The year 2025–26 has been a defining period for India's telecommunications sector, marked by rapid technological advancements, progressive regulatory developments and a growing recognition of telecom as not just a driver of economic growth, but as a critical pillar of national resilience and digital sovereignty.

As India commemorated over three decades of mobile communications and crossed the milestone of 1.2 billion telecom subscribers, the sector has further consolidated its position at the heart of the country's digital, economic and security architecture. The convergence of connectivity, artificial intelligence and data-driven ecosystems has redefined the role of telecom — from a provider of services to a value-added horizontal that underpins every sector of the economy.

In an increasingly complex global environment, characterised by evolving geopolitical dynamics and rising cybersecurity challenges, the importance of resilient, secure and trusted communication networks has become even more pronounced. Throughout this period, COAI has continued to play a pivotal role in shaping a

policy environment that enables innovation while safeguarding national interests.

India's 5G rollout has continued to scale at an unprecedented pace, with over 5.15 lakh base stations deployed and nearly 400 million users onboarded within a short span, making it one of the fastest network expansions globally. Data consumption trends further reflect this transformation, with average monthly usage reaching approximately 36 GB per user. This growth underscores a fundamental shift in the sector — from enabling connectivity to powering digital ecosystems across governance, enterprise and society.

COAI has also actively championed collaborative approaches to building digital trust, engaging stakeholders across the sector through refined industry platforms such as the COAI DigiCom 2025 as well as the COAI Dialogues 2025, which were successfully conducted and resulted in aggregation of the industry's views on several issues of importance. Further, the India Mobile Congress 2025, brought together global stakeholders and highlighted over 1,600 use cases across emerging technologies, including AI, 5G, IoT and beyond. These events facilitated meaningful engagements across policymakers, industry leaders and global stakeholders, reinforcing India's growing influence in the global digital discourse.

Positive Developments of the Year 2025-26

Policy developments such as the National Frequency Allocation Plan 2025 have further strengthened the sector's growth trajectory, with the identification of the 6425–7125 MHz band for International Mobile Telecommunications marking a critical step in enhancing spectrum availability for 5G and future technologies. The industry continues to advocate for the allocation of the entire 6 GHz band to ensure adequate capacity for future data demands and to enable cost-efficient, high-performance networks.

A landmark development during the year was the introduction of the SIM-binding mandate for app-based communication services — a measure that establishes a new global benchmark in digital security by aligning accountability standards between traditional telecom operators and over-the-top communication platforms. COAI strongly advocated for this persistent SIM-binding approach, highlighting the risks associated with untraceable communication once SIM linkage is removed and the misuse of unregulated channels. By linking communication services to verified mobile identities, the framework addresses growing concerns around cybercrime, fraud and abuse of digital platforms, while maintaining ease of access for legitimate users.

Efforts to combat spam and restore trust in communications have also shown tangible progress during the year. The deployment of distributed ledger technology, structured messaging formats and AI-driven detection systems has significantly improved monitoring and control of unsolicited communications. The implementation of SMS header suffixes — 'P', 'S', 'T', and 'G' — has further enhanced transparency and reduced spam, reflecting progress in consumer-centric regulatory measures. Regulatory initiatives now focus on network-level intelligence sharing and proactive enforcement, marking a shift from reactive, complaint-based mechanisms to predictive and preventive approaches.

The broader push for a unified regulatory framework under the principle of “Same Service, Same Rules” remains a core priority, particularly as security and traceability concerns continue to mount across unregulated communication ecosystems.

Alongside security reforms, the operationalisation of the Digital Personal Data Protection framework represents a major step in strengthening India's data governance architecture. While the framework has been broadly welcomed, there remain areas where harmonisation with existing telecom regulations is necessary to avoid duplication and ensure smooth implementation.

AI and the Next Frontier of Innovation

A defining theme of the year has been the deepening integration between artificial intelligence and telecommunications. The India AI Impact Summit 2026 underscored the reality that AI development is fundamentally dependent on robust and intelligent telecom infrastructure. Discussions at the Summit highlighted the emergence of cognitive networks capable of supporting advanced applications such as edge computing, IoT ecosystems and large-scale data processing.

Significant progress has also been made in laying the groundwork for 6G, with future networks expected to support the exponential data demands of generative AI.

Telecom networks are evolving into intelligent, self-optimising systems capable of predictive maintenance, real-time decision-making and enhanced security. AI-driven capabilities are increasingly being deployed to address critical challenges such as spam, fraud and network efficiency, thereby reinforcing trust in digital communications.

The telecom sector has demonstrated strong momentum in domestic manufacturing and export growth, supported by initiatives such as Make in India and production-linked incentives.

With substantial import substitution achieved and exports increasing significantly over recent years, the sector is transitioning towards greater self-reliance and global competitiveness. This transformation is critical not only from an economic perspective but also in strengthening technological sovereignty — a strategic imperative that has gained further importance in the context of national security and the evolving geopolitical landscape of digital infrastructure.

Significant progress has also been made in laying the groundwork for 6G. India's ambitions to emerge as a global leader in 6G technologies are reflected in its ongoing efforts toward indigenous research, standards participation and the development of future-ready infrastructure.

Strengthening Digital Resilience and Security

As digital ecosystems expand, so do the associated risks. The year has highlighted the need to view telecom not only as an economic enabler but also as a critical component of national security infrastructure.

Emerging challenges include vulnerabilities across communication systems, data flows and global infrastructure dependencies. Increasing reliance on connected devices, sensor networks and digital platforms has underscored the importance of securing end-to-end ecosystems — from devices and networks to data processing and storage.

Industry asks

The year also surfaced critical infrastructure vulnerabilities that demand coordinated attention. Incidents such as widespread fiber disruptions exposed the fragility of coordination between utilities and telecom operators, underlining the need for stronger frameworks around infrastructure protection and contingency planning.

Operational challenges such as Right of Way approvals and infrastructure deployment continue to require coordinated efforts across

Central, State and local authorities. Ensuring seamless connectivity at emerging infrastructure hubs such as airports and transport corridors has become increasingly important, reflecting the growing expectation of uninterrupted digital access in all aspects of daily life.

At the same time, the sector continues to face structural and financial challenges that require urgent policy attention. The sector is facing a capital expenditure revenue gap exceeding ₹10,000 crore, raising serious concerns about long-term financial sustainability and continued investment in network infrastructure. Issues related to regulatory levies, GST treatment of telecom payments and spectrum costs remain critical concerns impacting the industry's financial health.

COAI has consistently opposed direct spectrum allocation to enterprises, emphasising that such allocation could undermine national security, reduce government revenues and create an uneven competitive landscape. Policy discussions have also focused on the need for spectrum pricing reforms and satellite spectrum usage fee rationalisation. Addressing these challenges through rationalisation of fees, improved tax structures and more efficient utilisation of existing financial resources will be essential to sustain investment in next-generation networks and rural connectivity.

Cybersecurity too has emerged as an increasingly pressing concern across the telecom ecosystem. The growing sophistication of threats — including advanced persistent attacks — has highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive and continuous security frameworks. Evolving areas such as Direct-to-Mobile broadcasting also require transparent and consultative policy approaches to ensure efficient spectrum utilisation and avoid unintended disruptions to existing networks.

Way Forward

Looking ahead, the trajectory of India's telecommunications sector will be shaped by the convergence of three key priorities: enabling

the growth of the AI-driven digital economy, expanding and upgrading network infrastructure for 5G and beyond, and building a secure and trusted communications ecosystem. The success of emerging technologies and digital services will depend heavily on the strength, reliability and adaptability of telecom networks. As India moves towards universal connectivity, 5G expansion and future 6G leadership, the sector stands at a critical inflection point where policy clarity, regulatory parity and infrastructure resilience will determine the trajectory of its digital future.

COAI remains committed to advancing these objectives and to representing the collective voice of the telecom industry. Continued collaboration between industry and government will be essential to create a policy environment that supports innovation while ensuring long-term sustainability.

The contributions of the Executive Council – headed by Chairman - Mr. Abhijit Kishore, Vice Chairman - Mr. Rahul Vatts and comprising senior representatives from our member operators are 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. Their continued engagement and expertise have enabled COAI to effectively address industry challenges and contribute meaningfully to policy development.

Last but not the least, I would like to place on record my deep gratitude to the COAI Secretariat team, whose support, dedication and assistance has excelled in all our endeavours. As the sector moves forward, this collective effort will remain central to ensuring that telecommunications continues to power India's digital transformation and support its broader economic and strategic aspirations.

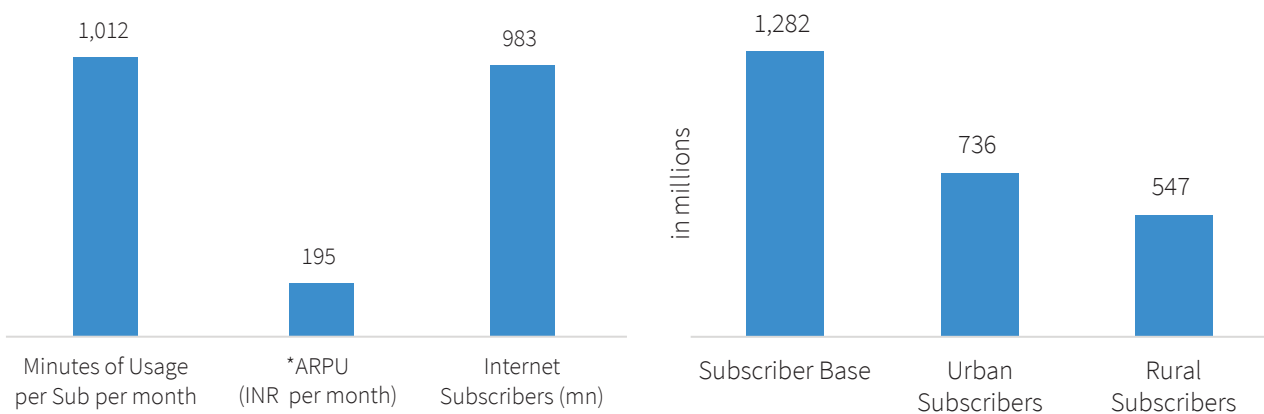


Indian Wireless Industry – An Overview



INDIA TRENDS

A. Wireless Industry in India - Snapshot

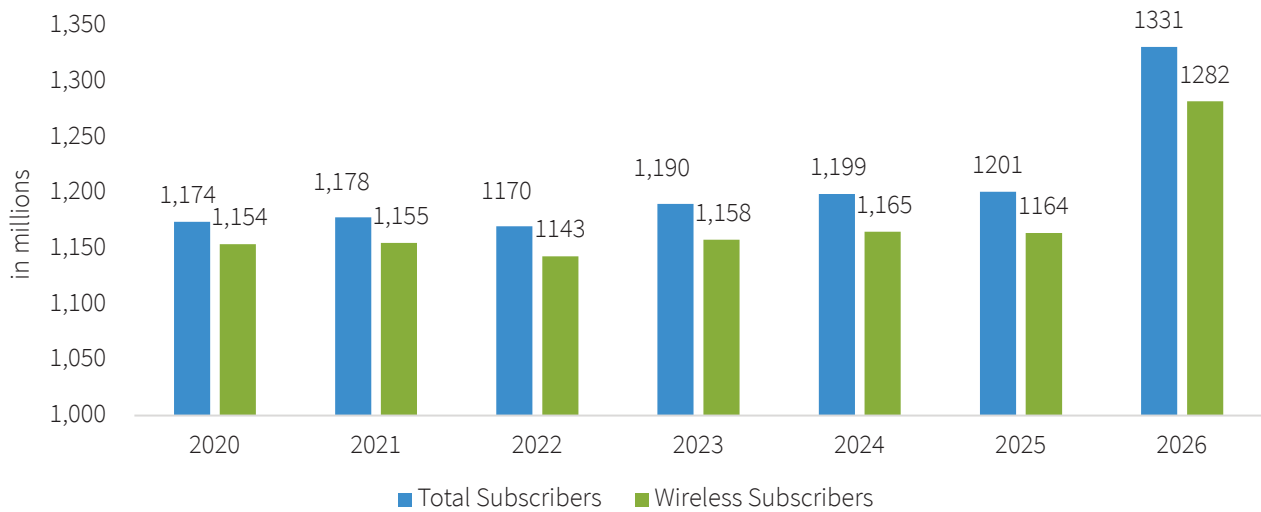


Source: TRAI

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

In 2026, Wireless figure includes M2M Wireless connections & 5G FWA subscriptions also

B. All India Total & Wireless Subscribers

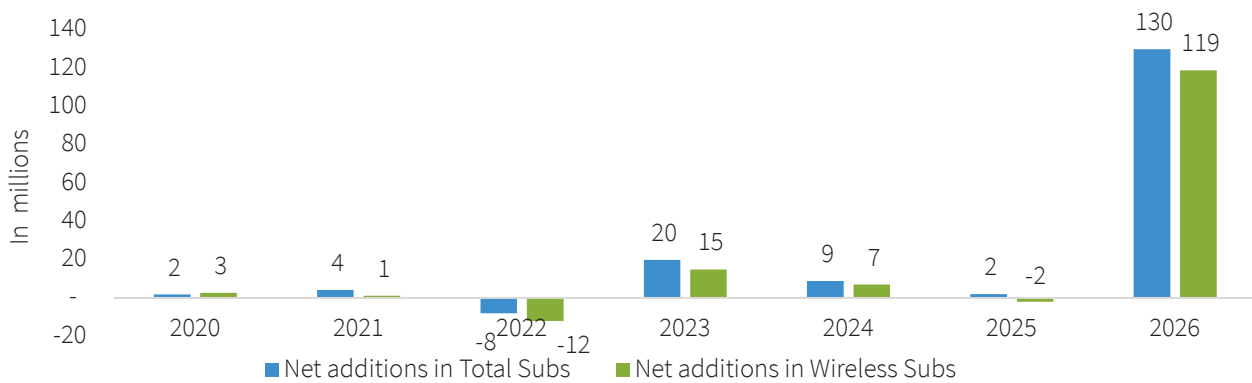


Source: TRAI

Note: All the yearly data is as of 31 Dec, except for the year 2026, which is as of 31 Mar 2026

In 2026, Wireless figure includes M2M Wireless connections & 5G FWA subscriptions also

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

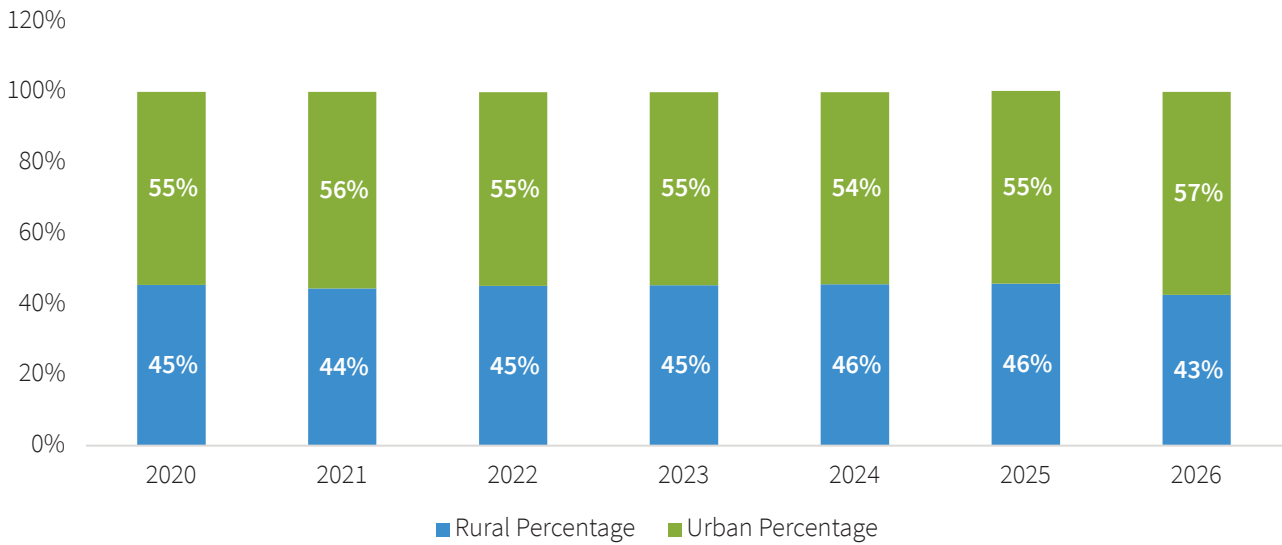


Source: TRAI

Note: All the yearly data is as of 31 Dec, except for the year 2026, which is as of 31 Mar 2026

In 2026, Wireless figure includes M2M Wireless connections & 5G FWA subscriptions also

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

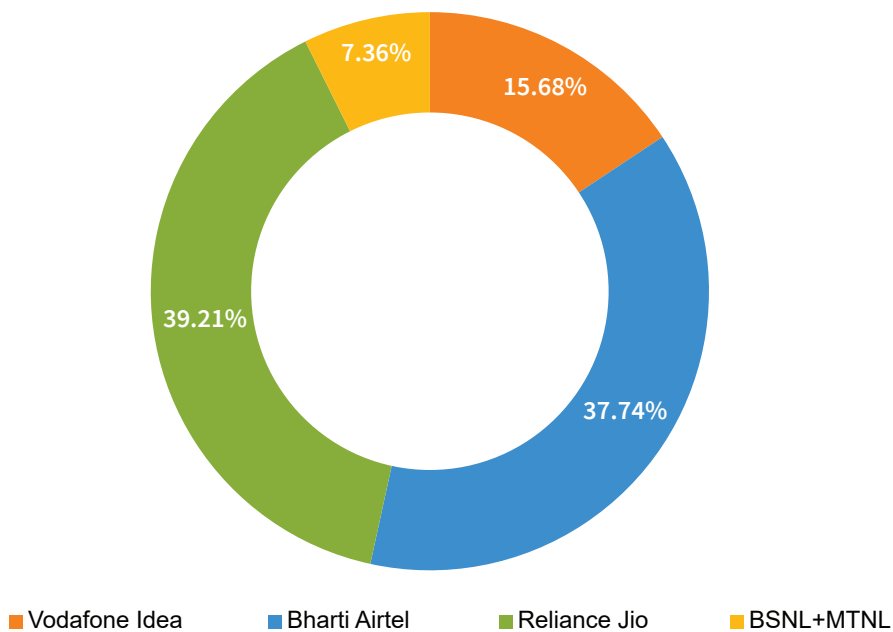


Source: TRAI

Note: All the yearly data is as of 31 Dec, except for the year 2026, which is as of 31 Mar 2026

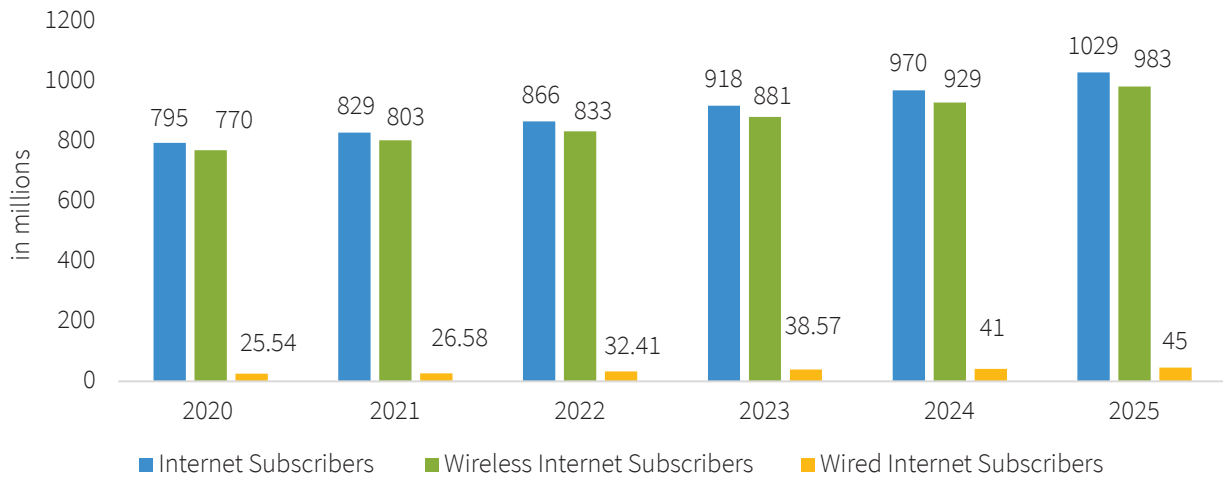
In 2026, Wireless figure includes M2M Wireless connections & 5G FWA subscriptions also

E. Subscriber Market Share of Wireless Operators (March 2026)



Source: TRAI

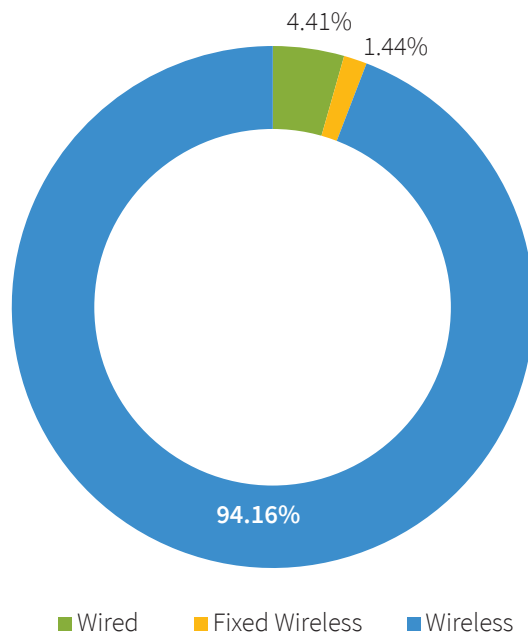
F. All India Total, Wireless & Wired Internet Subscribers



Source: TRAI

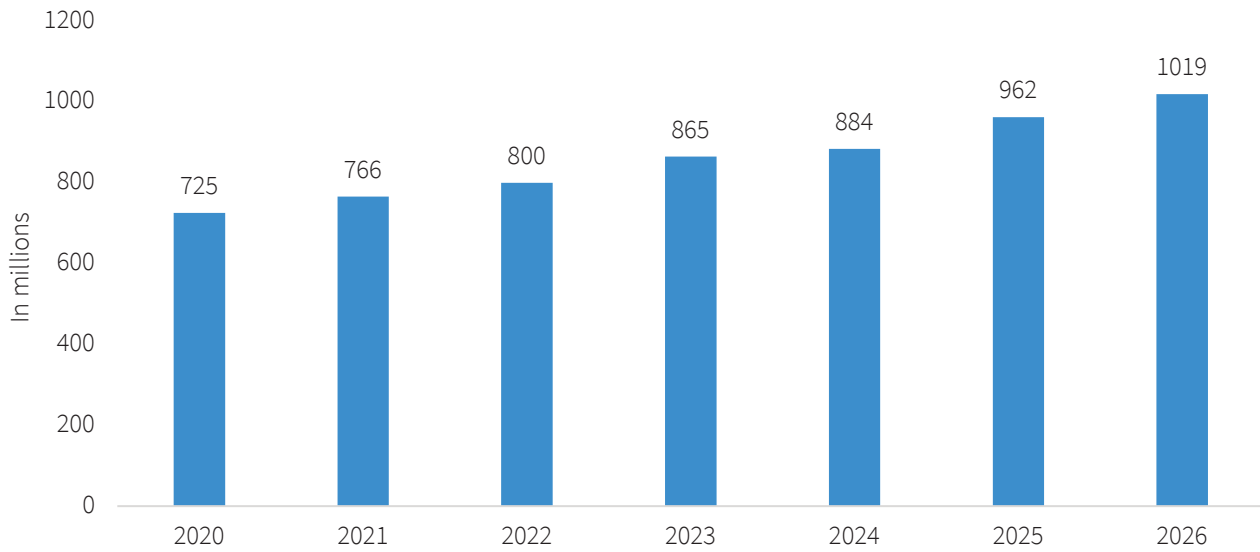
Note: Figures are as of 31 Dec for every year, as per TRAI Reports

G. Composition of Internet Subscribers – Dec 2025



Source: TRAI

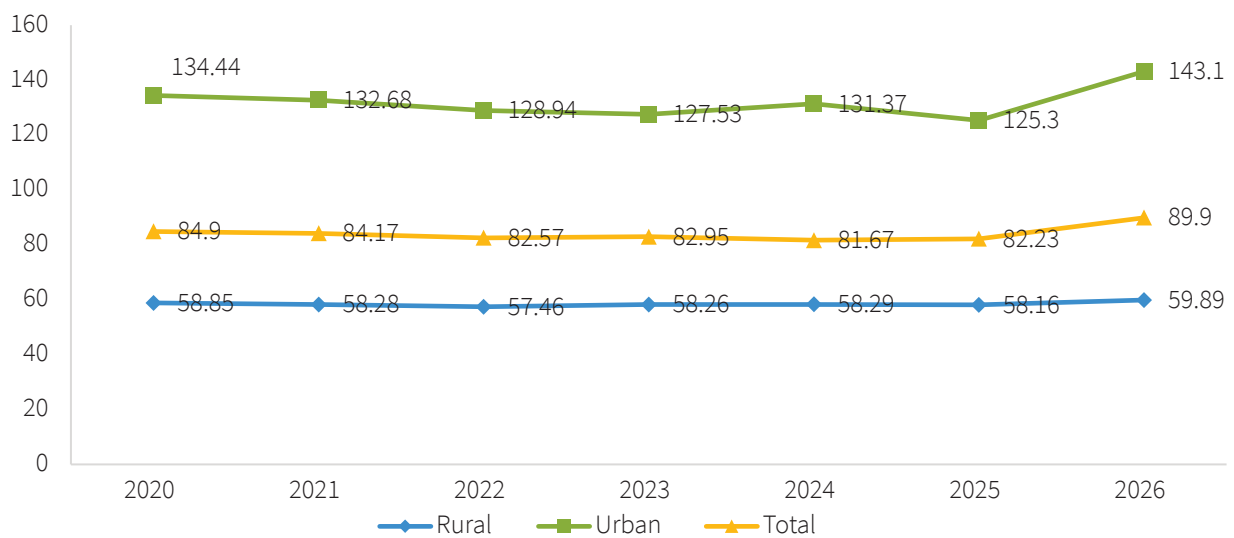
H. Wireless Broadband Subscribers



Source: TRAI

Note: All the yearly data is as of 31 Dec, except for the year 2026, which is as of 31 Mar 2026

I. Total Wireless Teledensity (%)

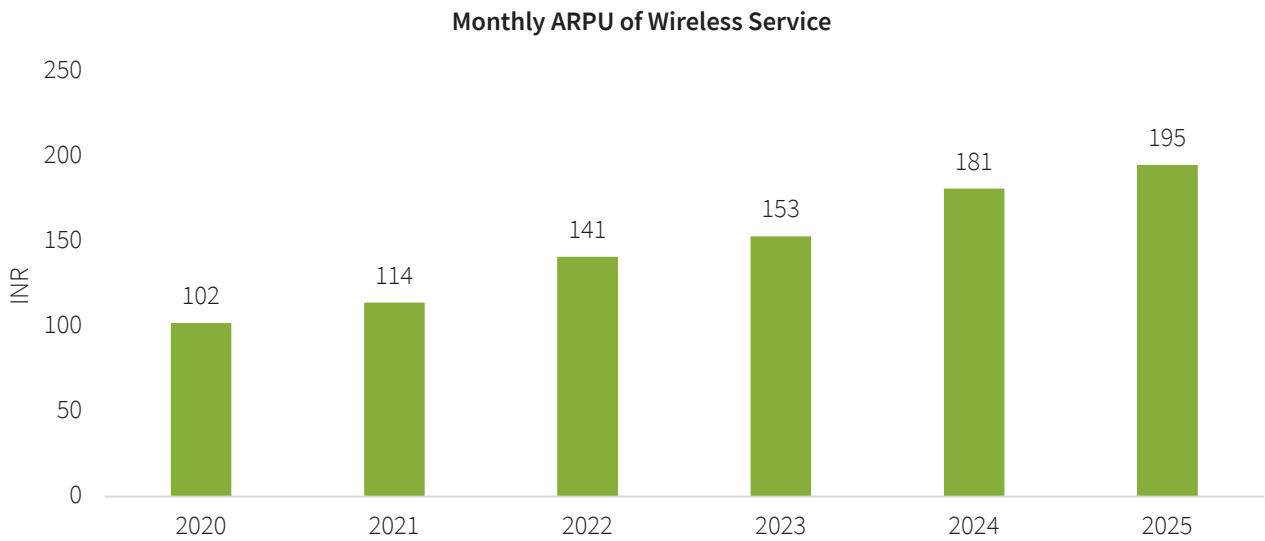


Source: TRAI

Note: All the yearly data is as of 31 Dec, except for the year 2026, which is as of 31 Mar 2026

In 2026, Wireless figure includes M2M Wireless connections & 5G FWA subscriptions also

J. Monthly ARPU of Wireless Services

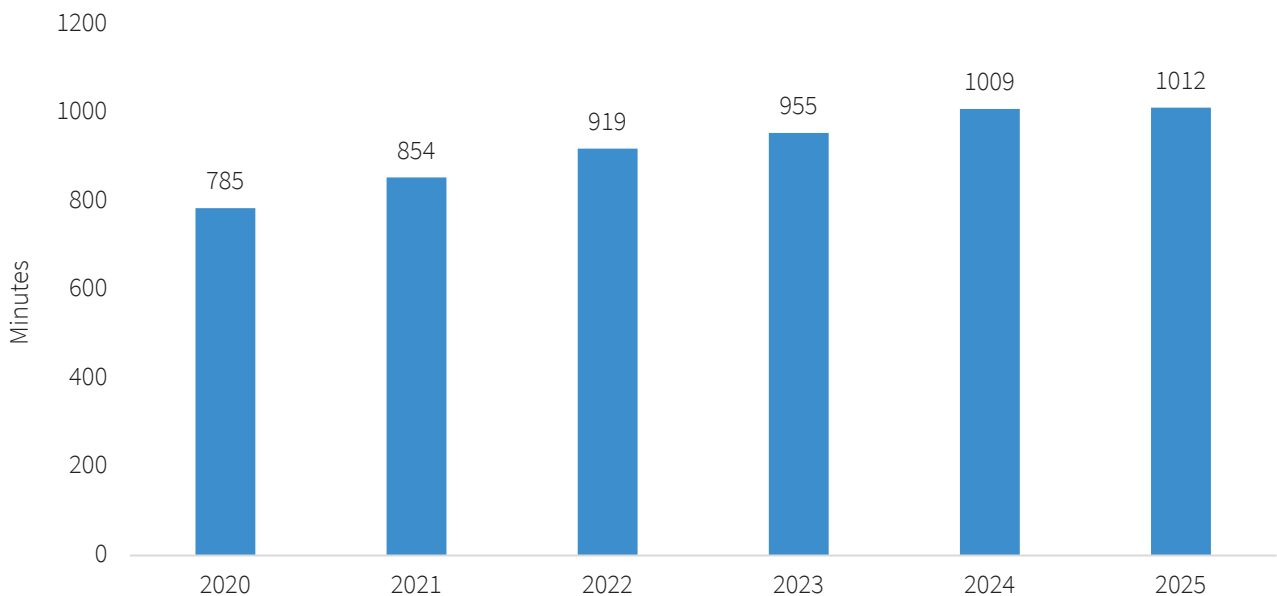


Source: TRAI

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

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

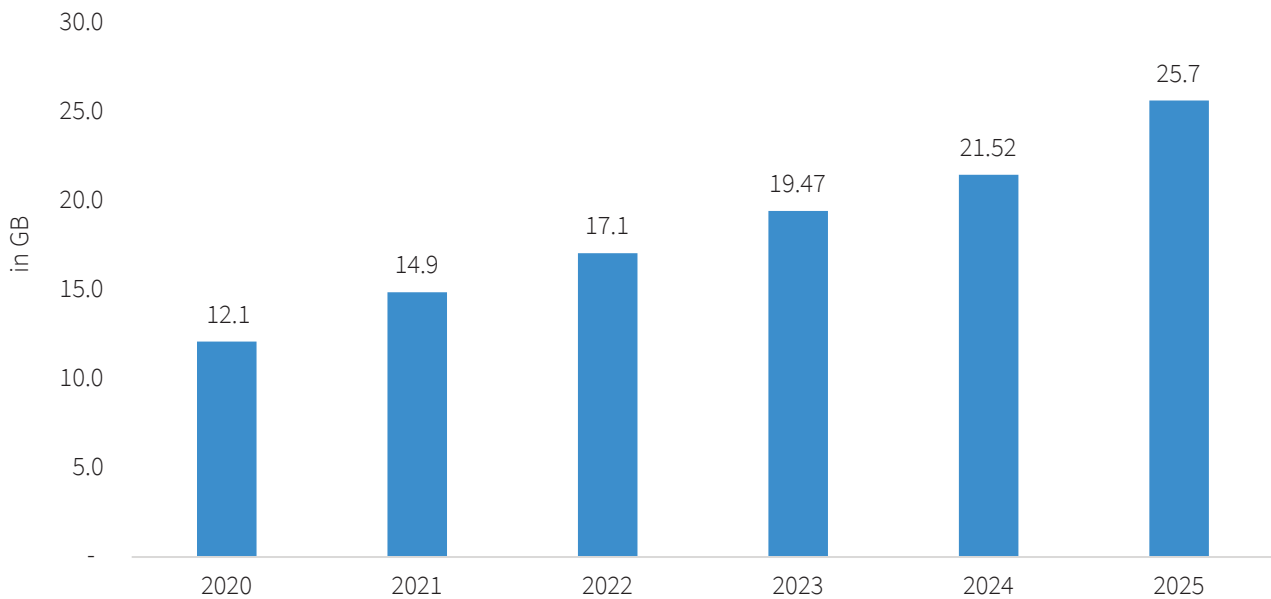
K. Minutes of Usage (Voice Calls) per Subscriber per month – Wireless



Source: TRAI PIR

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

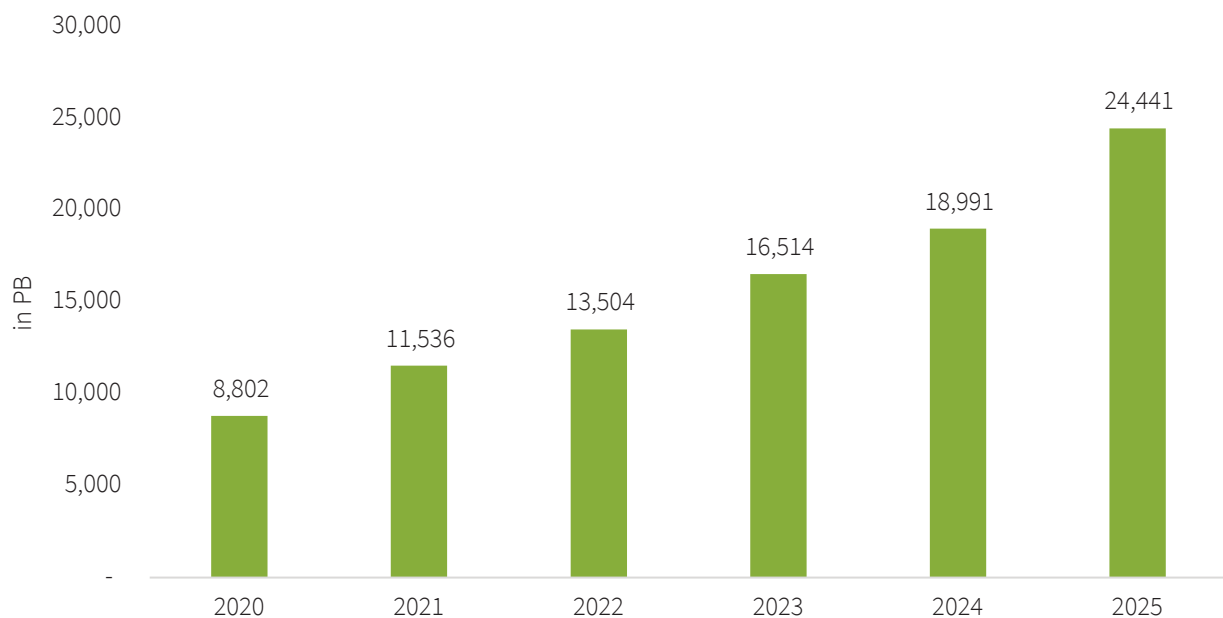
L. Wireless Data usage per sub/month (in GB)



Source: TRAI PIR

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

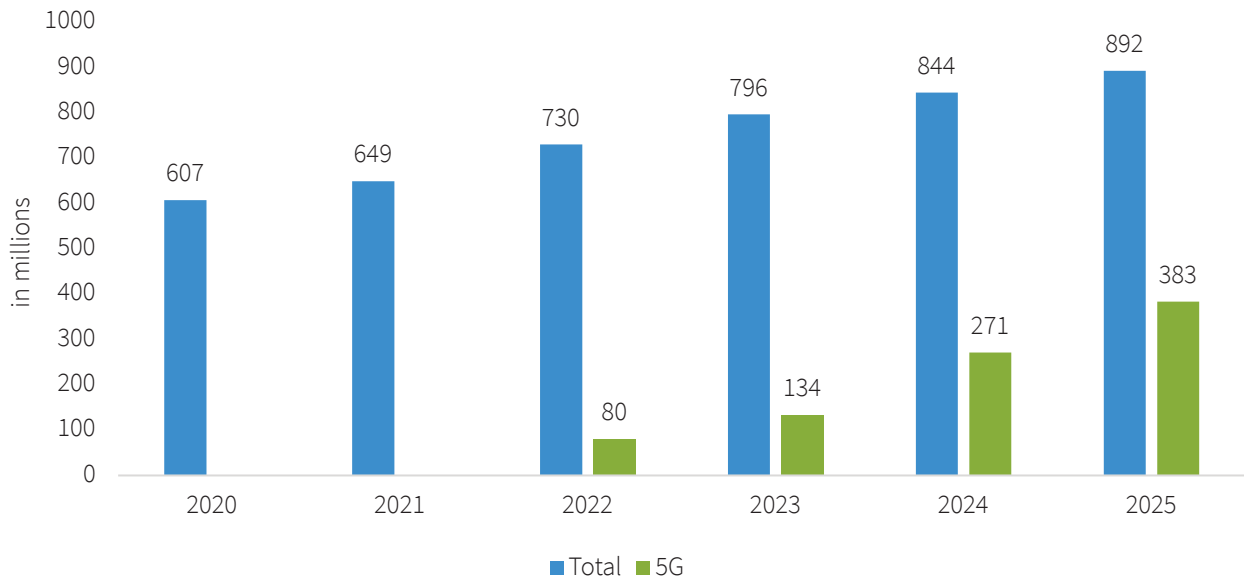
M. Total Wireless Data Usage (in PB) per month



Source: TRAI PIR

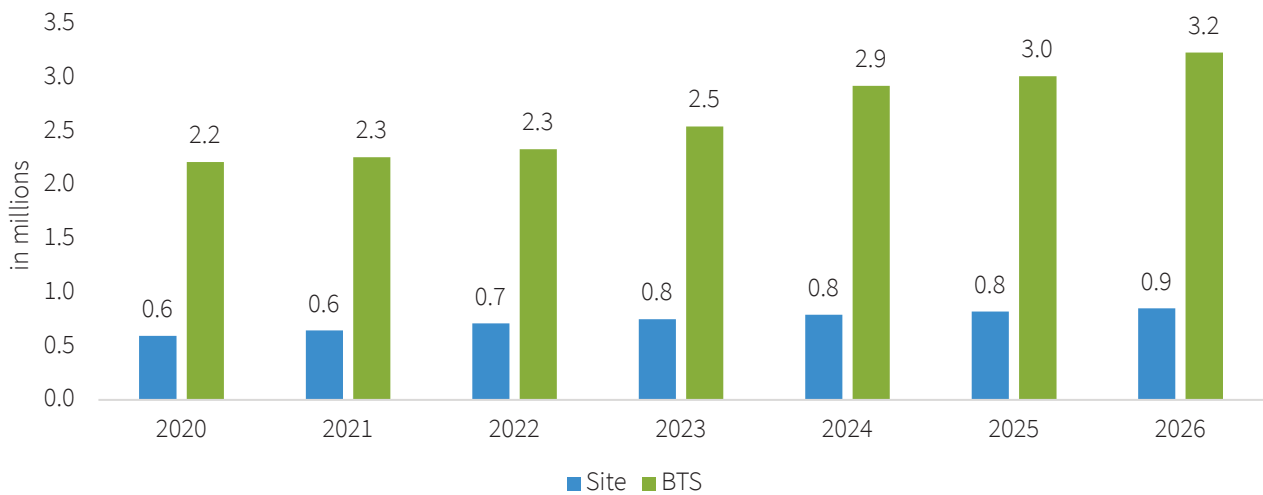
Note: All the data is as of 31 Dec for every year, as per TRAI Reports

N. Total Smartphone Devices



Source: Nokia MBiT Report 2026

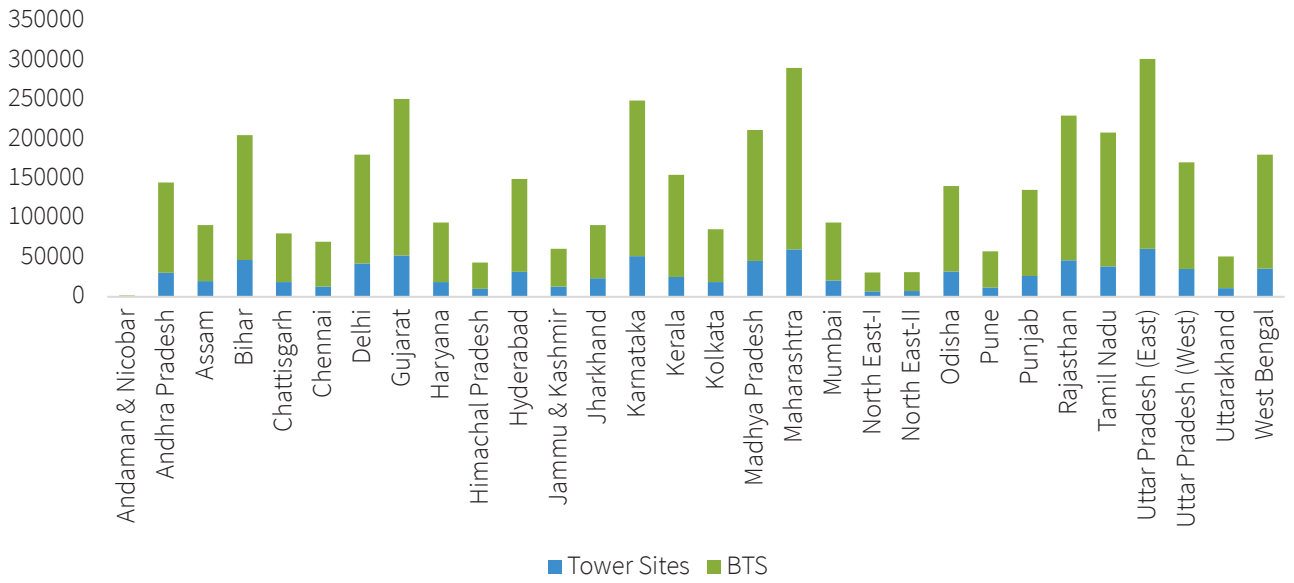
O. Total Number of Sites and BTS



Source: Tarang Sanchar

Figures are shown as of end of March for every year.

P. Tower & BTS (State-wise)



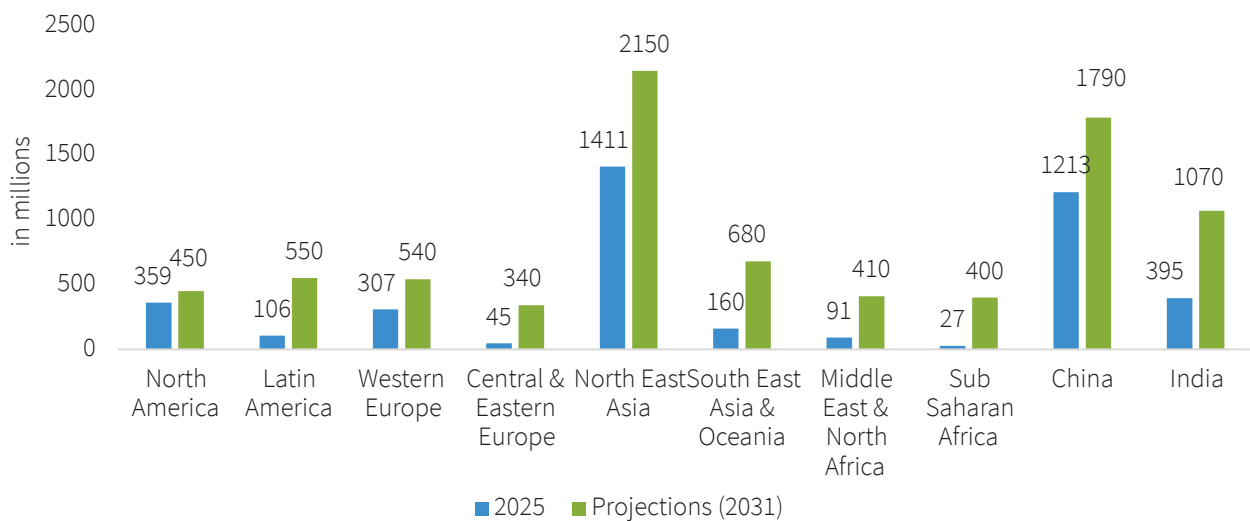
Source: Ramboll (as of Mar 2026)





International Trends

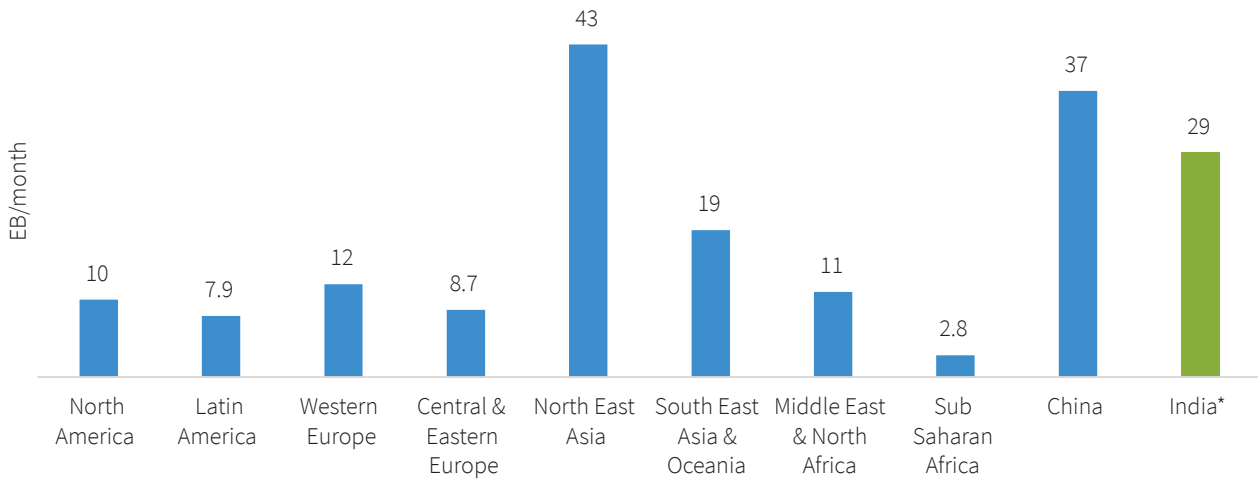
A. 5G Subscriptions



Source: Ericsson Mobility Report (2025)

Note: India data includes Nepal and Bhutan

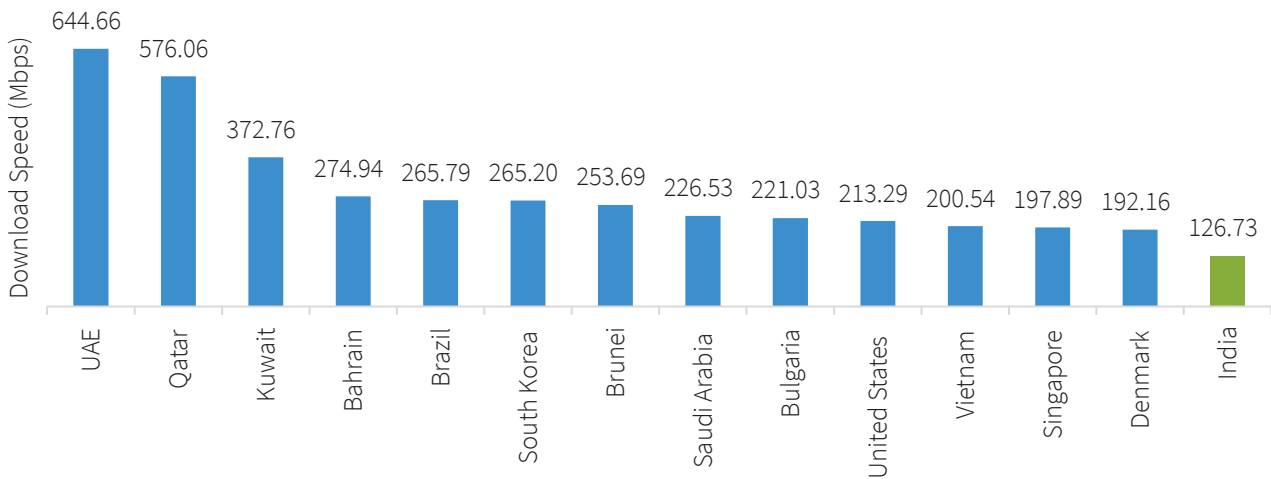
B. Global Mobile data traffic



Source: Ericsson Mobility Report (2025)

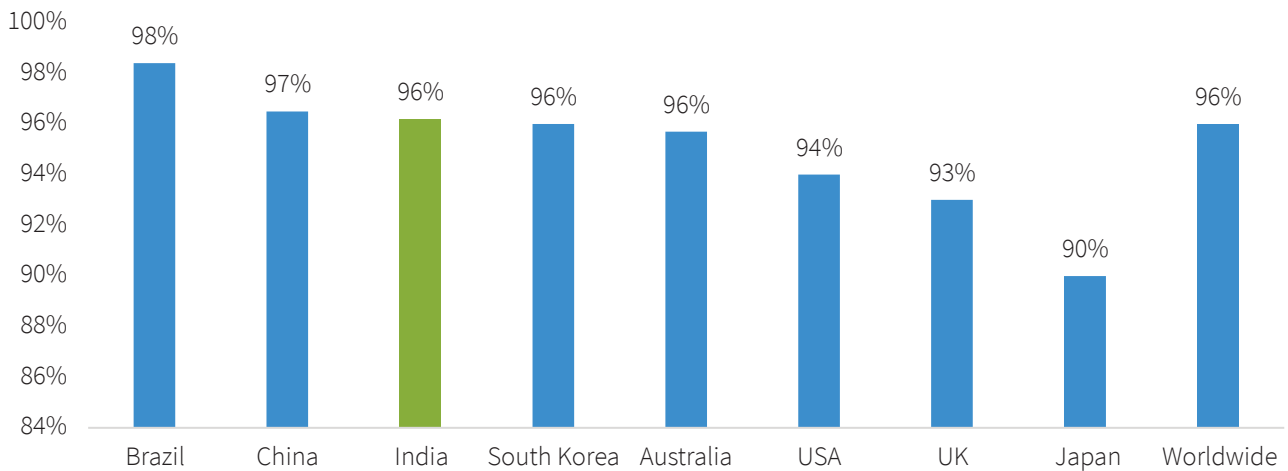
*Note: India data includes Nepal & Bhutan

C. Mobile Broadband Speed Performance



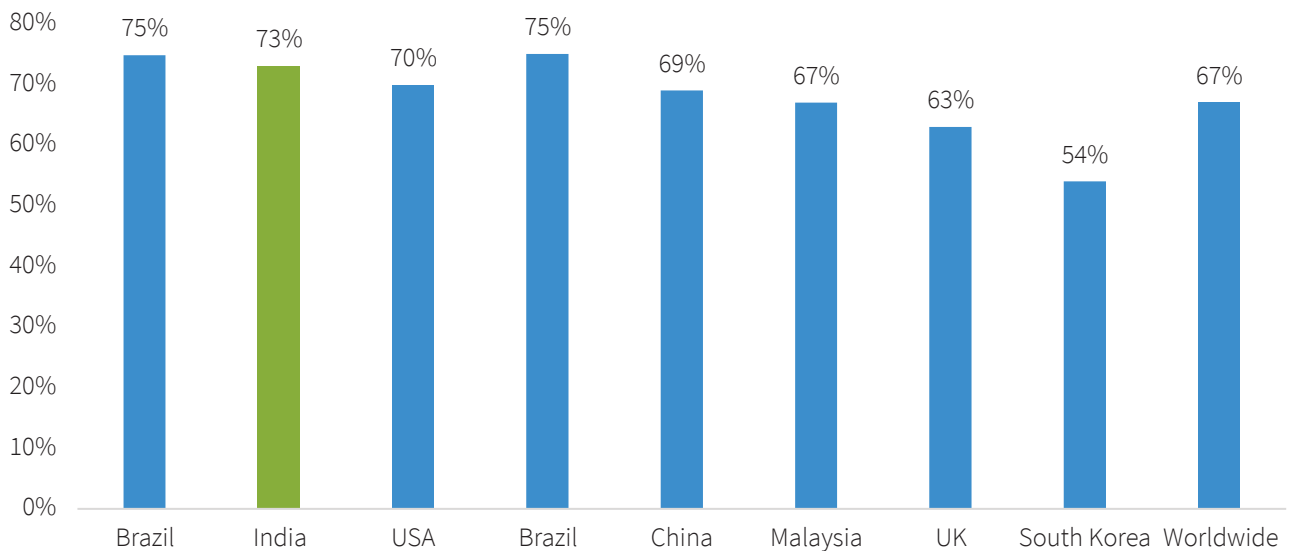
Source: Speedtest by Ookla (March 2026)

D. % of People using Mobile Phones to access Internet



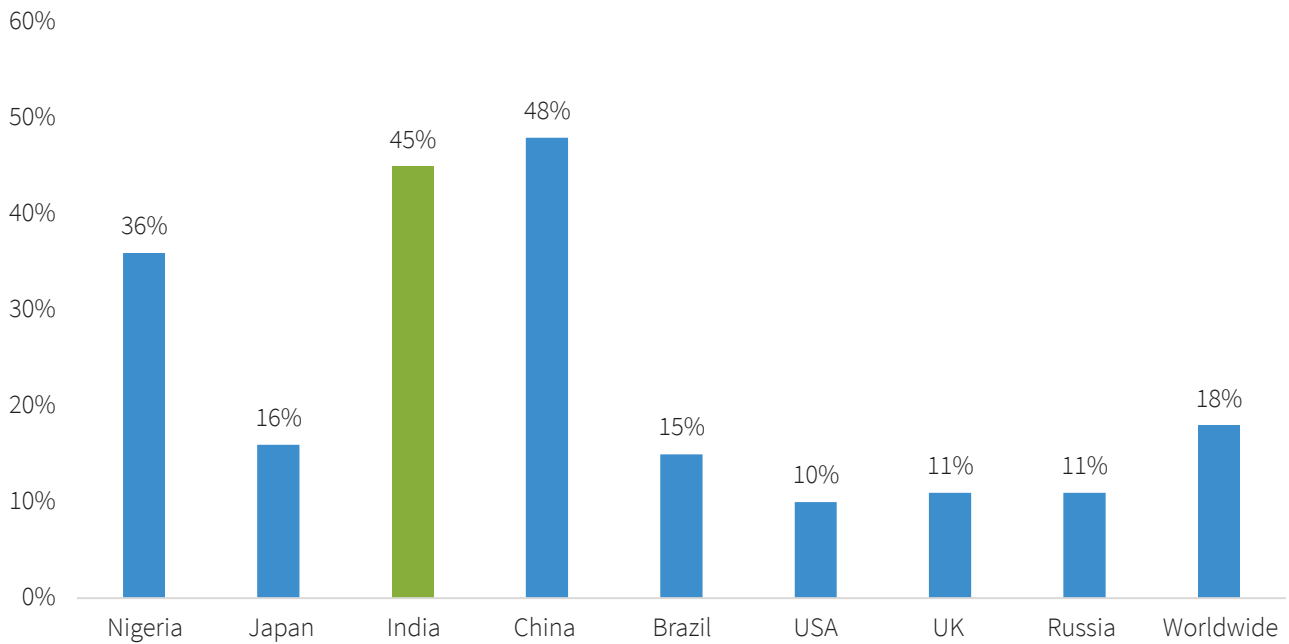
Source: Digital 2026 Global Overview Report

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



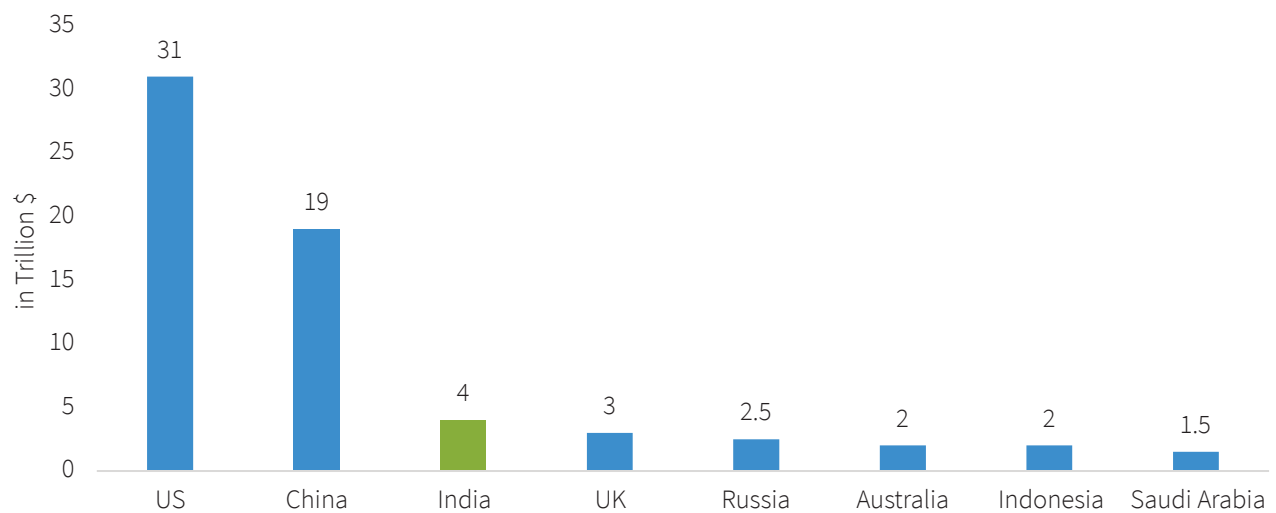
Source: Digital 2026 Global Overview Report

F. Digital Payment Transactional Value vs GDP



Source: Digital 2026 Global Overview Report

G. Global Cybercrime Cost vs GDP



Source: Digital 2026 Global Overview Report



Significant Achievements FY 2025-26



1. Assignment of Spectrum for Certain Satellite-Based Commercial Communication Services

TRAI issued a Consultation Paper on 27th September 2024 on “Terms and Conditions for the Assignment of Spectrum for Certain Satellite-Based Commercial Communication Services”.

COAI has submitted its response to the said CP on 25th October 2024. COAI has been advocating that to ensure a level playing field, spectrum assignment for satellite services must align with the principles of transparency and competition applicable to terrestrial networks, as well as the provisions of the Telecommunications Act, 2023.

COAI submitted that comparable spectrum pricing to terrestrial services should be enforced for satellites providing services in urban areas and to retail customers, while administrative assignment with nominal pricing may be considered for traditional use cases in rural and remote areas, including Government functions, disaster recovery, cellular backhaul and sectors

such as defence, maritime and aviation. COAI further emphasized that a flexible and forward-looking spectrum policy framework would foster innovation, encourage investments and promote fair competition across the satellite and terrestrial telecommunications sectors. The matter is currently under active consideration of the DoT.

2. Amendments to WANI Guidelines

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 11th February 2025, highlighting the significant concerns rising from the amendments to the WANI Guidelines on 16th September 2024, and the Draft “Telecommunication Tariff (Seventieth Amendment) Order, 2024” issued by TRAI for consultation on 23rd August 2024.

COAI submitted that Regulatory price caps interfere with market-driven pricing mechanisms that balance supply and demand. Such caps fail to account for varied cost structures, infrastructure investments, maintenance costs and scalability. Price caps also distort competitive market equilibrium. They discourage businesses from differentiating their offerings

based on value-added services or efficiency. Instead of promoting sustainability, these interventions may result in underfunded operations and inefficiencies.

Further, COAI submitted that mobile has become the dominant platform for broadband access. Affordable data plans and declining smartphone prices have created strong network effects. These factors have diminished the utility of public Wi-Fi hotspots. Consumers prefer mobile broadband for its enhanced security, seamless connectivity and convenience. Given this shift, the viability of smaller PDOs depends on efficient business models, secure communications and innovation, rather than price caps. Mandating price caps in the B2B market will not serve any purpose. Any regulatory intervention in B2B pricing could undermine competitive dynamics, create inefficiencies and disrupt negotiated agreements between businesses.

Subsequently, TRAI issued its Telecommunication Tariff (Seventy First Amendment) Order, 2025 on 16th June 2025, with respect to Tariff for retail broadband connectivity for Public Data Offices (PDOs) under the PM-WANI scheme. The said order states that “Every service provider providing retail Fiber to the Home (FTTH) broadband services shall offer all of its retail FTTH broadband plans up to 200 Mbps to the PDOs under the PM-WANI scheme, at tariff not exceeding twice the tariff applicable to the retail subscribers for the corresponding FTTH broadband plan of the bandwidth (capacity) offered”. There is no restriction on tariff offerings beyond 200 Mbps.

3. SIM binding of App based communication services

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 5th August 2025, highlighting a critical gap in India’s digital security framework, viz. unverified usage of app-based communication platforms over mobile telephony services and to propose regulatory reforms essential to safeguarding our citizens and persevering national sovereignty. This loophole was being exploited for cyber frauds,

phishing and impersonation scams, undermining traceability and regulatory oversight.

COAI proposed that all app-based communication platforms be mandated to bind user accounts to verified mobile SIMs at all times. This approach would ensure consumer trust, accountability, traceability and alignment with existing regulatory frameworks.

Following our advocacy, DoT issued Directions under the Telecom Cyber Security Rules on 28th November 2025, mandating that the App based Communication Services are continuously linked to the SIM card (associated with Mobile Number used for identification of customers/users or for provisioning or delivery of services) installed in the device, making it impossible to use the app without that specific, active SIM. The web service instance of the Mobile App, if provided, shall be logged out periodically (not later than 6 hours) and allow the facility to the user to re-link the device using QR code. These directions plug a major security gap, strengthen India’s telecom cyber security framework and bring App based communication services in line with regulatory standards, improving traceability and reducing digital fraud.

4. Recognition of Submarine Cables as Critical Telecommunication Infrastructure

COAI submitted its response to the Consultation Paper issued by TRAI on “Licensing Framework and Regulatory Mechanism for Submarine Cable Landing in India” on 13th February 2023, suggesting that Cable Landing Stations (CLS) should be mandated as infrastructure of critical national importance. COAI has been consistently advocating with the Department of Telecommunications and TRAI on this matter.

Subsequently, DoT, vide Gazette Notification S.O. 4703(E) dated 16th October 2025, declared Submarine Cables under ILD Services as Critical Telecommunication Infrastructure under Section 22(3) of the Telecommunications Act, 2023. This notification is a critical step toward enhancing

the protection, security and resilience of submarine cable infrastructure, which is essential for a robust digital economy.

5. Dissemination of SMS campaigns for consumer awareness on subjects such as fraud prevention, the DND app and related matters

COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 14th January 2026, highlighting operational challenges faced by member TSPs due to the high frequency of mandated SMS awareness campaigns and the requirement to send identical messages in multiple languages. While acknowledging the importance of consumer awareness initiatives such as the DND App campaign, COAI submitted that repeated dissemination in English, Hindi and regional languages led to consumer inconvenience, information fatigue and significant strain on SMS capacity, affecting the timely delivery of essential services and transactional messages. COAI proposed that such campaigns be aligned with the consumer's registered language preference or alternatively disseminated through a single SMS in English where no preference is available, along with rationalizing the frequency of campaigns.

Following these submissions and our advocacy on the same, TRAI modified its earlier direction vide its notification dated 30th January 2026 and permitted dissemination of SMS campaigns only in the consumer's registered language preference or through a single English SMS where preference is unavailable.

6. Rationalization of Reserve Price for Spectrum Auctions

COAI, submitted its response on 6th June 2024 to the consultation paper issued by TRAI on "Auction of Frequency Spectrum in 37–37.5 GHz, 37.5–40 GHz and 42.5–43.5 GHz bands Identified for IMT" on 4th April 2024, voicing that the ratio between the reserve price for auction and the spectrum valuation should be maintained at 50% to ensure greater industry participation

and efficient price discovery. COAI emphasized that a lower reserve price is critical to encourage bidding activity and support optimal spectrum utilization, while also underlining the need for related payment terms.

Subsequently, TRAI, in its recommendations dated 24th February 2026, reduced the reserve price. For spectrum in 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz, 3300 MHz and 26 GHz across LSAs where spectrum remained unsold in both the 2022 and 2024 auctions, the reserve price would be fixed at 60% of the average valuation. Further, to promote investments in telecom infrastructure in the Northeast and Jammu & Kashmir LSAs, and in line with past recommendations, the Authority recommended a 50% reduction in reserve prices for these LSAs across various bands. TRAI has also relaxed the payment terms for the 600 MHz band.

7. Engagement with State Authorities

The Telecom Infrastructure Committee engaged with various State Governments on Right of Way and Electricity related support, by participating in 47 State Broadband Committee meetings during the year, covering 28 States and Union Territories. These interactions and subsequent follow ups resulted in better implementation of the Right of Way Rules, 2024 in these geographies. The continuous engagement has resulted in:

- a. Making live the online Portal(s) aligning with the Rules,
- b. Issuance of orders from different State departments/authorities on implementation of RoW Rules within their jurisdiction,
- c. Aligning with Property Tax norms prescribed in the Rules by many States,
- d. Alignment of Pole Leasing charges by some States, and
- e. Removal of hindrances for telecom infrastructure deployment like relaxation in Change of Land Use policy, providing

support from law enforcement agencies, etc.

8. State IT Ministers meeting, chaired by Hon'ble Union Minister of Communications

During the State IT Ministers meeting held as part of IMC 25, COAI raised the industry concerns hampering the digital connectivity enhancement in the States. This included major issues, especially Support for facilitation of shared ducts in the States, Enforcing the norms for Coverage inside buildings/public spaces, Support on Regularization of towers and Considerate view on extending Industrial tariff category for Electricity. The issues were supported by the Hon'ble Minister of Communications.

9. Electricity Related Initiatives and Persuasions

After regular and persistent efforts, the industry managed to get the Central Electricity Authority under the Ministry of Power to issue amendments to the Metering Regulations, "Installation and Operation of Meters" Amendment Regulations 2026. With these amendments, the industry's long-standing demand of using Smart Meters in Green Energy Open Access was accepted. This has now paved the path for the Telecom industry to embrace the Government of India's commitment on Green Energy. With Smart Meters being allowed, the mobile tower sites can get the benefit of aggregating the load to achieve 100 kW in a cost effective manner, removing a big hurdle which existed earlier.

Further, the Ministry of Power issued a directive, seeking Action Taken Reports from all States and UTs on installation of Prepaid Smart Meters on priority at Telecom Sites. This push has resulted in many States seeking details of the telecom sites where Smart Meter deployment is pending, giving speed to overall Smart Meter availability for the telecom sites.

10. Central Ministries Alignment

With active support from the Department of Telecommunications, the industry managed to get improved alignment from the Ministry of Defence as well as the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. The Ministry of Defence issued the revised Policy on deployment of Telecom Infrastructure in Military Stations and Cantonments, which is industry friendly and aligned with the RoW Rules, 2024. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas also issued guidelines aligning with few important provisions of the RoW Rules, 2024, bringing relief to the OFC deployment of the members.

11. Coordination with DoT for on-ground support in implementation of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Right of Way Rules, 2024

The Government of India, through a gazette notification, has listed the Nodal Officer of 30 States and Union Territories, which are mandated as per the Telecom Act 2023. This facilitation will support the industry in handling coercive action(s) upon telecom infrastructure more effectively. With support from members in highlighting the gaps in the existing RoW online portal of various States, the DoT was persuaded in getting the RoW online portals aligned with the RoW Rules. Out of the total 36 States and Union Territories, 19 are being developed as part of the Central 'e-services' portal, with 17 fully functional and 2 States partially functional. Similarly, 19 States have their own portal, with 18 being live.

Further, the department clarified that Navi Mumbai International Airport, Noida International Airport and Goa's new International Airport are Public Entities, based on the industry request. This has helped the industry in impressing upon these entities to allow permission for deployment of Telecom Infrastructure as per the norms prescribed by the Right of Way Rules, 2024.

12. Extension of Timeline for submission of self-certificates in up-gradation cases

Vide its letters dated 7th May 2025, 14th August 2025 and 23rd January 2026, COAI submitted that there is an urgent need for Extension in the timelines for Submission of EMF Self certificates and abeyance of 5G Site testing. In this regard, DoT, vide its instructions in February 2026, had extended the timeline for submission of self-certificates for new BTSs and upgradation cases, and triennial submissions of up to 31st March 2026.

13. 6 GHz Band

COAI, vide its letter dated 6th November 2025, submitted that the entire 5925–7125 MHz band may be kindly considered for identification and reservation for IMT/6G services in India, in alignment with the Asia-Pacific harmonization approach to ensure sustainable and future-ready network capacity growth. In this regard, India's National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP-2025) has designated the upper 6 GHz band (6425–7125 MHz) for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT), covering 5G Advanced and future 6G services.

14. Communication Security Scheme (ComSEC)

Over the past three years, COAI has led sustained policy advocacy efforts to address critical concerns of the OEM industry regarding the Communication Security Scheme administered by the National Centre for Communication Security (NCCS) under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). The original framework posed significant challenges, particularly around mandatory source code submission, exhaustive parameter testing for each product and getting equipment tested through NCCS-designated laboratories.

Through continuous engagements with industry stakeholders and the Government, COAI played a pivotal role in facilitating constructive dialogue

and aligning perspectives to arrive at a pragmatic and implementable solution. These efforts have resulted in the development of a structured three-tier certification framework:

- a. Security Level 1 certification has been made mandatory with clearly defined and mutually agreed security parameters, reviewed by OEMs and accepted by NCCS, while
- b. Levels 2 and 3 remain voluntary, providing flexibility to industry players.
- c. Revision of the Self Declaration of Conformity (SDoCs) along with the industry inputs.
- d. No submission of source code.

COAI has contributed to shaping a streamlined testing and reporting mechanism, ensuring that only minimal and essential data is required to be shared with the authorities. The industry is currently awaiting formal notification from the DoT outlining the implementation framework for software security testing within telecom equipment.

15. Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and DPDP Rules, 2025

Over the past year, COAI has led sustained policy advocacy efforts on the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, 2025 notified on 13th November 2025 by MeitY. From the draft stage through to final notification, COAI remained actively engaged, submitting detailed representations highlighting key implementation challenges, rule–licence conflicts and operational concerns, and issuing a press note capturing critical gaps. Through continuous engagement with MeitY and DoT, COAI also facilitated the development of industry positions on Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA), consent frameworks and Significant Data Fiduciary (SDF) obligations, while closely tracking legal developments, including proceedings before the Supreme Court.

These sustained efforts enabled constructive dialogue where industry concerns were formally acknowledged and is being actively considered in the evolving regulatory framework:

- a. In response to MeitY's consultation following the stakeholder meeting held on 22nd January 2026, regarding the proposal to accelerate implementation of select provisions of the DPDP Act/Rules, COAI submitted a formal representation dated 6th February 2026; requesting retention of the original compliance timeline and the need for further stakeholder consultation.
- b. The representation emphasized practical implementation challenges and the need for a calibrated approach to ensure regulatory certainty and operational readiness across the sector.
- c. Intervention contributed to the decision to halt the proposed acceleration of timelines and initiate a more consultative process through the constitution of a formal committee to deliberate on stakeholder concerns in shaping a balanced and implementable data protection framework through ongoing stakeholder consultations and policy engagement.

16. CERT-In Cyber Security Audit Guidelines

COAI undertook focused advocacy efforts in relation to the CERT-In Cyber Security Audit Guidelines notified on 25th July 2025, particularly to address concerns regarding duplication of compliance requirements for telecom service providers. The original framework posed significant challenges due to overlaps with the DoT's existing cybersecurity obligations, leading to increased compliance burden on the industry.

Through targeted engagement with CERT-In and DoT, COAI played a pivotal role in articulating industry concerns and facilitating alignment between regulatory frameworks:

- a. A formal representation was submitted to CERT-In on the duplication of audit and compliance requirements, followed by a dedicated meeting with the DG, CERT-In on 18th December 2025.
- b. Members clearly articulated overlaps between CERT-In guidelines and DoT's cybersecurity framework, underscoring the need for harmonization and streamlined compliance.
- c. Subsequent engagement with DoT ensured that the issues were taken up for detailed discussion and consideration towards resolution by enabling constructive inter-agency dialogue and reducing duplicative obligations for the industry.

17. Implementation of Rule 88A on GST – Portal

The Government of India in 2019, vide a notification, amended Rule 88A which would allow for utilization of excess of any Input Tax Credits, i.e., IGST, CGST and SGST Credits in any order. However, the same was not implemented on the GST – Portal, thereby increasing the accumulation for the Sector. Vide COAI's submissions dated 2nd May 2025 and subsequent meetings with the Government officials in DoT and MoF, an advisory was issued on 30th January 2026, vide which the same was implemented on the portal. This would provide significant monetary relief to the sector.

18. Introduction of “Hold” option for Credit Notes

The present architecture of the GST Portal proposes real-time matching by Recipients towards the Credit Note (CN) issued by Suppliers (before filling of GSTR 3B). This is practically difficult. Accordingly, if the Credit Note does not match with the Books, the Recipient would be forced to Reject the same, leading to addition/s in the Supplier's liability. This would increase reconciliation requirements and be against the principle of 'Ease of Doing Business'.

COAI carried out the advocacy for introduction of a hold option for the Credit Notes and vide an advisory dated 23rd September 2025, GST – Network, Ministry of Finance, introduced a “hold” option for the credit notes for a period of up to 60 days. This would provide significant operational relief to the Telcos in the sector.

19. Exemption on levy of Basic Customs Duty on vessels and ships entering the EEZs

The Government of India had granted an extension till 31st March 2026, for zero levy of Basic Customs Duty on the vessels and ships entering the EEZ for the purpose of repairing and maintenance of the subsea cable ecosystem in the country. Vide COAI advocacy and subsequent meetings with the Government, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs issued an Office Memorandum stating that there would be no levy of Customs duty in case the ships/vessels

are involved in providing cable laying or repairing services.

20. Direct Tax Issues

The Income Tax Act, 2025 was notified by the Government of India on 21st August 2025, thereby repealing the Income Tax Act, 1961. The Central Board of Direct Taxes had sought inputs on the Forms and Rules, to be used for the enforcement of the Act. COAI made a detailed representation with regard to the Forms and Rules on 13th October 2025, suggesting that the policy level and operational challenges should be addressed in the upcoming Rules and Forms.

Vide its notification dated 20th March 2026, the CBDT released the Income Tax Forms and Rules, wherein one of the requests of COAI, for Complete Digitization of obtaining Tax Residency Certificate, was accepted and is under implementation. This would provide significant operational relief to the sector.





Significant Submissions for FY 2025-26



1. Letter to TRAI regarding information for the preparation of comprehensive index and rating framework for digital connectivity and services for villages in India

TRAI issued an order on 11th April 2025, seeking village-level information from member service providers for the preparation of a comprehensive index and rating framework for digital connectivity and services for villages in India.

In response, COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 1st May 2025, raising concerns regarding the granular nature of the data sought, which is largely unavailable with member TSPs. COAI requested TRAI to reconsider the requirement and instead consider using technology-agnostic village point-level coverage data, which is more practical for TSPs to provide and would still support the objectives of the proposed framework.

2. Letter to DoT on TRAI Recommendations on Issues related to critical services in M2M Sector

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 8th May 2025, requesting the Department to consider certain measures regarding critical M2M services, urging DoT to centrally classify and regulate all critical M2M services to ensure uniform security standards, including MTCTE/NSDTS compliance and consistent performance benchmarks across sectors.

COAI further recommended that critical M2M services operate only on licensed spectrum to ensure guaranteed QoS, enhanced security and interference-free connectivity. Further, DoT was requested to re-evaluate TRAI's recommendations through urgent stakeholder consultations, with due emphasis on national security, use of licensed spectrum and unified compliance requirements.

3. Letter to DoT regarding TRAI’s Recommendations on the terms and conditions for Assignment of Spectrum for Satellite Based Communication

TRAI issued the recommendations on 9th May 2025. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 30th May 2025, raising concerns that the recommendations appear to be non-transparent and based on non-justifiable assumptions rather than factual data. It was also highlighted that the limited consideration of stakeholder inputs and the absence of comprehensive consultations on key issues such as ensuring a level playing field, assessing network capacity, determining appropriate assignment methods and establishing fair spectrum valuation, could render the recommendations inequitable and inconsistent with the principles of the Telecommunications Act, 2023. Accordingly, DoT was requested to constitute a committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the recommendations, guided by the principles of fairness, transparency and equity, while providing telecom service providers an opportunity to present their views.

COAI has also submitted a letter to Hon’ble MoC/DoT on 31st May 2025, stating that the TRAI Recommendations may inadvertently disrupt level playing field as well as create substantial regulatory arbitrage by providing advantage to commercial NGSO satellites over terrestrial broadband service providers. COAI has requested for a comprehensive review of the recommendations in their entirety, ensuring fair spectrum pricing maintaining competitive neutrality and level playing field for similarly positioned satellite and terrestrial service providers.

4. TRAI’s Consultation Paper on “Regulatory Framework for the Sale of Foreign Telecom Service Providers’ SIM/eSIM cards for the use in M2M/IoT Devices meant for Export purposes”

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 4th July 2025. COAI, in its response dated 1st August 2025, proposed introduction of a new service authorization for the sale of foreign telecom service providers’ SIMs/eSIMs in India for M2M/IoT devices meant for export, with a suggested validity of 10 years. COAI also recommended a light-touch KYC framework for such foreign SIMs, requiring authorized entities to maintain only the OEM’s name and details, along with the number and country of origin of the SIMs assigned. Further, it was proposed that foreign SIMs be allowed to remain active in India for up to six months for testing, with provision for extension on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, COAI emphasized the need for clear customs guidelines and a simplified single-window clearance system for import and export of SIMs/eSIMs, with deemed approval if applications are not processed within two weeks.

5. Letter to DoT on SIM binding of App based communication services

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 5th August 2025, advocating for the immediate implementation of persistent and continuous communication app – SIM binding. This measure will ensure continuous accountability, align messaging platforms with telecom regulatory standards and prevent malicious exploitation of the current system. Timely adoption of this will help secure digital ecosystems, uphold lawful oversight and harness revenue opportunities for telecom operators. Binding app-based communication services to verified SIM-linked mobile identities is a logical, enforceable extension of current digital security mandates.

It reinforces India’s charge against digital fraud, ensures harmony with international security standards and supports swift tracing of cyber criminals. COAI urged the authority to adopt this framework without further delay.

6. Letter to TRAI on exemption of FD on Quality of Service

COAI has submitted a letter to TRAI on 13th August 2025, requesting for exemption of levy of Financial Disincentives on non-compliance of QoS parameters for the Quarter ending March 2025 and for the months of April, May and June 2025. COAI further requested TRAI to consider the ongoing industry efforts and collaborative improvements in service delivery, and accordingly, not impose any Financial Disincentives for the quarter ending March 2025 and for the months of April, May and June 2025.

7. DoT Public consultation on the draft National Telecom Policy, 2025

DoT issued a Public Consultation on the Draft National Telecom Policy, 2025 on 23rd July 2025. COAI submitted its response on 18th August 2025, highlighting key concerns, including the need for reduction in sectoral levies, development of a policy framework for App based communication services, provision of budgetary support for meeting security-related requirements and ensuring shared and proportionate responsibility between TSPs and App based communication services in addressing spam and scam-related issues.

8. Letter to DoT regarding clarification of Applicable Gross Revenue (ApGR) Definition

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 8th September 2025, stating that revenues from non-licensed activities such as handset/device sales, OTTs and third-party bundled services should be excluded from AGR, as only licensed telecom activities fall within the scope. It was further submitted

that despite DoT’s clarification dated 17th July 2023 and TRAI’s recommendations dated 18th September 2024, such revenues are still being treated as “ancillary”, leading to regulatory overreach and burden on TSPs. COAI has proposed a fair valuation approach for bundled offerings, certified by statutory auditors, ensuring only licensed components are included in AGR.

9. Letter to TRAI requesting redirection of consumer complaints to Telecom Consumer Complaints

COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 9th September 2025, regarding the handling of consumer complaints. In the letter, it was requested that TRAI upload all complaints directly on the Telecom Consumer Complaints Monitoring System (TCCMS) portal instead of forwarding them through email or other channels. It was highlighted that the TCCMS portal, operated by TRAI’s Consumer Affairs Division, is already functional and capable of handling such submissions. Utilizing the portal for this purpose would help automate the process, reduce duplication of efforts and significantly improve the efficiency and timeliness of complaint resolution.

10. Submission of comments to DoT on the Feasibility of State/UT-wise Monitoring of ‘Quality of Service’ (QoS) and other operational parameters

DoT issued an Office Memorandum to all TSPs on 2nd September 2025, to submit their comments on feasibility of State/UT-wise monitoring of ‘Quality of Service’ (QoS) and other operational parameters.

COAI submitted a letter to DoT regarding the proposal to mandate State/UT-wise Quality of Service (QoS) monitoring on 30th September 2025, wherein it was advised against such a mandate, noting that it would be misaligned with the existing regulatory and licensing

framework. Under the Unified License regime, licensing, spectrum allocation and network deployment are structured based on Licensed Service Areas (LSAs) rather than state boundaries. COAI highlighted that implementing state-level reporting would be inconsistent with the current rollout obligations and would impose additional compliance burdens while introducing operational inefficiencies, without providing any meaningful enhancement to regulatory oversight. It was further pointed out that TRAI's 2023 consultation had concluded in favour of retaining LSA-level monitoring. Accordingly, it was recommended that the existing LSA-based framework be maintained to ensure regulatory predictability, simplicity and alignment with the national telecom architecture.

11. Telecommunications Draft rules

- i. Draft Telecommunications (Authorisation for Provision of Main Telecommunication Services) Rules, 2025 issued on 6th September 2025

COAI highlighted key concerns and recommendations submitted via its comments on 24th October 2025, wherein publication of a consolidated compendium of all finalized rules for stakeholder review prior to Gazette notification to ensure a coherent framework was requested. COAI emphasized that the rules should promote investment, reduce compliance burdens and provide regulatory certainty, while retaining the contractual nature of the authorization framework. All amendments undertaken should be carried out in consultation with TRAI and guided by the 'no worse-off' principle. The protection of existing rights relating to spectrum assignments, interconnection arrangements and contractual nature were further stressed. COAI recommended that migration remains voluntary, allowing licensees to retain existing licenses until expiry. Further, uniform application of terms across all authorized entities and exclusion of areas already regulated by TRAI

were sought, such as QoS and coverage reporting. Concerns were also raised regarding the newly introduced definition of "Prohibited Investor". COAI further suggested extending the framework to App-based communication services to ensure a level playing field for the same offerings.

It was further recommended reducing the proposed 8% authorization fee to 1% along with abolition of bank guarantees and that security-related compliance costs be shared by the Central Government. The provision of domestic leased circuits and M2M services should not be permitted under Internet Services (including VNO), as these fall within the scope of access services and long distance services. COAI further submitted that EMF norms be aligned with the latest ICNIRP standards and suggested that AGR be limited to revenues directly arising from licensed telecom activities, excluding device sales and digital services.

- ii. Draft Telecommunications (Migration) Rules, 2025 issued on 19th September 2025

COAI submitted its comments on 22nd September 2025, emphasizing that migration to the new framework should be voluntary, allowing existing licensees the option to retain their current licenses until expiry. It was recommended that no entry fee be imposed on existing licensees who have already paid such fees, with refunds where the new fee is lower and pro-rata adjustments only where migration extends license validity. COAI also submitted that the requirement to clear pending dues at the time of migration is excessive. To ensure contractual certainty, the issuance of an authorization number should be followed by a mutually signed authorization agreement. Moreover, it was recommended that DoT should not amend or issue directions materially affecting authorization holders' rights without prior consultation and written consent, with disputes falling under the jurisdiction of TDSAT. Additionally, it was suggested that authorization applications

be processed within 60 days, with written reasons for any rejection and deemed approval if no response is received within the stipulated period. COAI further emphasized automatic continuity of existing permissions and resources, no retrospective application of new terms, and the right of operators to continue under the existing licensing regime. Lastly, publication of a consolidated compendium of all finalized rules with an explanatory note prior to notification to ensure clarity and alignment among stakeholders was also requested.

- iii. Draft Telecommunications (Authorisation for Telecommunication Network) Rules, 2025 issued on 9th October 2025

COAI submitted its comments on 6th September 2025, requesting publication of a consolidated compendium of all final draft rules for holistic stakeholder review prior to Gazette notification, along with an explanatory note outlining the background, intent and objectives of the new authorisation framework. The need for clear delineation of entities covered under the authorisation regime, such as TSPs, ISPs and M2M providers, to ensure regulatory certainty and avoid overlaps was further emphasized. COAI supported the proposal of zero authorisation fee for Infrastructure Providers (IPs) to promote infrastructure growth and maintain low entry barriers and further recommended measures to enhance ease of doing business, including a single-window portal, automatic migration for existing IPs, DoT-facilitated Right of Way approvals, no retrospective dues, a simplified renewal process and non-discriminatory access to infrastructure. It was also emphasized that regulations for IP authorisation should remain proportionate to their role as passive infrastructure providers and not extend to active service obligations such as QoS. Additionally, it was submitted that the draft rules should remain aligned with the Act's objective of reducing regulatory burden and provisions such as

the 15-day shareholding change reporting requirement should be reconsidered to avoid unnecessary compliance obligations and disincentives to investment.

12. Letter to TRAI on submission of comments on the draft 'Reporting System on Accounting Separation (Amendment) Order, 2025

TRAI issued this draft regulation on 16th October 2025. COAI submitted its response on 7th November 2025, recommending that ASR submissions be phased out and that reliance instead be placed on audited financial statements and AGR reports. It was further suggested that turnover-linked financial disincentives should be avoided.

13. Letter to TRAI on submission of comments on the draft Telecommunication Tariff (Seventy Second Amendment) Order, 2025

TRAI issued the draft Telecommunication Tariff (Seventy Second Amendment) order, 2025 on 16th October 2025. COAI submitted its comments on 7th November 2025, stating that the Authority should focus on collaborative approaches and strengthening reporting processes rather than introducing punitive financial disincentives. Financial disincentives should not be the first line of response for administrative or procedural issues, particularly when the industry has largely demonstrated compliance with the applicable regulations. Accordingly, COAI requested TRAI to reconsider and revise the proposed financial disincentives and urged the Authority to convene an industry meeting to allow member TSPs to share their concerns on the draft regulations.

14. TRAI CP on "Review of existing TRAI Regulations on Interconnection matters"

TRAI issued this CP on 10th November 2025. COAI submitted its response on 15th December 2025, highlighting the need for a comprehensive

overhaul of the interconnection regime, driven by the emergence of pan-India IP-based networks, increasing adoption of 4G and 5G services, and changing traffic patterns. An immediate transition to LSA-based interconnection and mandatory adoption of IP-based interconnection frameworks was recommended. COAI also emphasized that the revised regime should be guided by principles of fairness, reciprocity, transparency, non-discrimination and cost-based charging, while ensuring parity between private and PSU operators as well as between domestic and international carriers. In this context, a significant upward revision of international termination charges and adoption of reciprocity in interconnection arrangements was proposed. Additionally, consolidation of the existing interconnection regulations into a single streamlined framework and the establishment of a centralized industry coordination mechanism to facilitate a smooth transition to the new regime were also suggested.

15. Letter to TRAI regarding SINR threshold for the parameter ‘Connections with Good Voice Quality’

COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 20th November 2025, requesting to consider certain issues relating to QoS parameters, such as urging TRAI to consider the operational factors that significantly impact compliance with the prescribed benchmarks while assessing the relevant QoS parameters. It was also recommended that the SINR threshold of ≥ -6 dB be considered acceptable for computing “Connections with Good Voice Quality,” instead of the current threshold of > 0 dB, which is not practically achievable. Further, COAI submitted that financial disincentives should not be prescribed for any reported non-compliance with these parameters. The regulations may be suitably amended to reflect practical realities faced by service providers while maintaining optimal customer experience and adequate clarity should be provided to DoT that no

compliance should be sought for monitoring parameters while submitting QoS reports.

16. Letter to DoT regarding nomination-based Award of Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) Project to BSNL without Competitive Tender/ Selection Process

DoT signed an agreement with BSNL awarding the DBN Project to BSNL on 1st October 2024. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 7th January 2026, emphasizing that DBN funds should be allocated through a transparent and competitive bidding process to ensure efficient use of public funds and adherence to the statutory objective of bridging the digital divide. It was also suggested that the due process under Rule 7 of the DBN Rules be mandatorily followed for all DBN-funded projects, with selection through bidding unless exceptional circumstances justify otherwise. Further, any award of projects on a nomination basis should be preceded by public consultation, with reasons recorded in writing, approval from the Central Government and public disclosure to ensure transparency, accountability and stakeholder confidence in the DBN framework.

17. Letter to TRAI letter regarding the dissemination of SMS campaigns for consumer awareness on subjects such as fraud prevention, the DND app and related matters

TRAI has been requesting member TSPs to disseminate SMS campaigns on consumer awareness initiatives, including promotion of the TRAI DND App. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 14th January 2026, requesting that such messages be sent in the consumer’s preferred language as registered with the service provider, or alternatively in English where no preference is available. It was also suggested that these awareness campaigns be conducted on a quarterly basis instead of monthly.

18. Letter to DoT regarding reduction in Digital Bharat Nidhi levy

The levy to the Digital Bharat Nidhi (erstwhile USO Fund) is presently contributed by licensed entities under the Unified License and the upcoming Service Authorization Rules. Despite being a major contributor to the growth of Digital India, the telecom sector continues to bear significant regulatory levies, including License Fee and contributions to DBN, amounting to 8% of the AGR. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 19th January 2026, highlighting the large unutilized DBN corpus of over ₹94,000 crore and requested abolition of the DBN levy. It was also submitted that until the fund is effectively utilized, the levy should not be charged from operators so that resources can be redirected towards expanding services in underserved areas. Further, pending a final decision, DoT was urged to initiate a graded reduction in the DBN levy to improve cash flows and support continued network expansion.

19. Discontinuation of Publishing Consumer Care and General Information Numbers in Newspapers

TRAI mandated through its regulations that every service provider publish the Consumer Care Number and General Information Number in leading newspapers at least once every six months. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 19th January 2026, stating that reliance on newspaper publication, particularly in rural and remote areas, is an outdated approach and may not effectively benefit consumers, given the rapid expansion of digital access and increasing reliance on mobile-based information channels. It was also highlighted that newspaper distribution in such areas is often inconsistent and requires consumers to purchase and retain specific publications to access the information. Accordingly, TRAI was requested to reconsider this requirement and allow TSPs to disseminate such information through digital modes such as mobile applications, websites and other online platforms.

20. Conduct of Consumer Education Workshops (CEWs) through digital/online Mode

TRAI has issued guidelines for conducting Consumer Education Workshops (CEWs) in hybrid mode and introduced a structured four-year calendar, effective April 2025, requiring TSPs to cover 25% of districts in each LSA annually to achieve full coverage by 2029. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 6th February 2026, requesting that TSPs be permitted to conduct CEWs through online or digital platforms, with the option of holding one physical CEW per LSA each year. It was further submitted that allowing the remaining workshops to be conducted online would enable a more inclusive, consistent and operationally feasible engagement process while supporting the objectives of consumer outreach.

21. Letter to MoC/DoT on retaining Contractual nature of Authorisations

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 27th February 2026, requesting that the final Authorisation Rules explicitly safeguard regulatory certainty and investor confidence. It was requested that authorisations under Section 3 be issued in the form of a mutually signed authorisation agreement, similar to licences under the Indian Telegraph Act. In case a non-contractual framework is adopted, it was urged that any amendments to the rules be undertaken only after prior consultation with TRAI and the written acceptance of the authorised entity, and that such changes apply only prospectively. COAI also submitted that existing licensees applying for authorisation should not be required to mandatorily migrate all existing licences to the new framework and that existing operators should not be placed in a worse-off position compared to new entrants. Further, it was requested to have flexibility in merger scenarios, allowing resultant entities to continue under either licence or authorisation, subject to Government approval.

22. TRAI CP on Review of Tariff for Domestic Leased Circuits (DLCs)

TRAI issued the Consultation Paper on 23rd January 2026. COAI submitted its response on 2nd March 2026 stating that regulatory intervention in the DLC segment is unwarranted and that tariff forbearance remains the most appropriate approach. It was highlighted that DLC services operate in a business-to-business market where pricing is determined through commercial negotiations, and regulatory intervention would disrupt an already well-functioning and competitive ecosystem without delivering consumer benefit. COAI further submitted that allowing ISPs to provide DLC services would distort the level playing field given the significantly lighter regulatory and financial obligations applicable to ISPs compared to TSPs. Instead, to promote DLC services in remote areas, TRAI may focus on facilitating reduction of Right-of-Way costs. It was further cautioned that technology-specific or cost-based price regulation would undermine investment, innovation and long-term market efficiency.

23. Letter to DoT regarding interim measure for registration of M2MSP on Saral Sanchar Portal

DoT, through a Press Information Bureau press release dated 24th October 2025, suspended acceptance of new applications on the Saral Sanchar Portal with effect from 10th November 2025. As a result, entities seeking registration as M2M Service Providers were unable to complete the process, though member TSPs continued to receive such requests. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 5th March 2026, requesting that, as an interim measure, TSPs be permitted to provide connections to new M2M Service Providers based on an undertaking from such entities, with the condition that they complete registration on the Saral Sanchar Portal within 90 days of the portal reopening, failing which the connections may be suspended.

24. Request for consolidated Self-Certification for 5G-Relaxed sites as per new TSTP issued by TEC

As per the extant DoT guidelines, operators are required to submit self-certificates in the National EMF Portal (NEP), in a sequential manner for each individual activity done on the BTS. As a result, multiple certifications will be required to be done for a single site, along with submission of OTS by the co-tenants for each submission. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 28th May 2025, requesting for consolidated Self-Certification for 5G-Relaxed sites as per the new TSTP issued by TEC. COAI also submitted a letter to DoT on 1st July 2025, requesting to expedite the consideration of approval of the site-wise certification approach for the identified 5G Relaxed sites in the NEP portal.

25. Request intervention on Industry concerns regarding Unauthorised installation of Repeaters

COAI has been raising concerns with the DoT regarding the critical issue of the quality of telecom services being affected due to unauthorised installation of repeaters/signal boosters, causing severe adverse impact on the Quality of Service (QoS) provided to telecom consumers and on the operational efficiency of licensed Telecom Service Providers (TSPs). In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 16th May 2025, requesting intervention on Industry concerns regarding Unauthorised installation of Repeaters.

26. Request for Full Alignment of India's EMF Limits with ICNIRP Guidelines

The existing EMF limit of 50% of ICNIRP thresholds in India is severely impacting the network rollouts since a substantial percentage of the already deployed sites by our member TSPs are failing in the broadband compliance measurement, not because of any technical

deficiencies in equipment or deployment, but are solely due to the lower EMF thresholds which are not aligned with internationally accepted ICNIRP guidelines. This is causing a serious challenge in meeting the compliance requirement and would also result in severe impact on overall 5G user experience in India. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 7th May 2025, requesting for full alignment of India's EMF exposure limits for BTS with 100% of ICNIRP limits.

27. Request for extension to meet the 2nd phase of roll-out obligations for spectrum in the 26 GHz band

In reference to the 2nd phase of roll-out obligations pertaining to spectrum in the 26 GHz band acquired by our member operators in the auction held in the year 2022, COAI submitted a letter to DoT 8th May 2025 seeking extension to meet the 2nd phase of roll-out obligations for spectrum in the 26 GHz band.

28. Draft Report - Vision, Strategy & Action Plan for Circular Economy in the Indian Telecom Sector

COAI submitted inputs to TEC on the draft report for Circular Economy in the telecom sector on 19th May 2025, ensuring key industry perspectives were incorporated. The submission emphasized practical implementation, sustainability and regulatory clarity. This is expected to help shape a balanced, industry-aligned framework and serve as a guiding vision document for sustainable telecom growth in India.

29. Mandatory Testing and Certification of Telecom Equipment (MTCTE)

On 19th January 2026, TEC conducted a stakeholder meeting with industry members to discuss pending issues and provide updates on the current status of MTCTE and NCCS. During the meeting, TEC invited inputs from the

industry on MTCTE Procedure v3.0 to review and align the process with ongoing developments. Subsequently, COAI submitted its response through the online submission process, contributing to the refinement of the updated framework on 4th March 2026.

30. Communication Security Certification (ComSEC)

On 6th January 2026, NCCS proposed a graded certification mechanism, leading to the formation of a 10-member industry committee to review and submit feedback. The committee raised concerns and sought additional time for detailed evaluation, which was granted till 28th January 2026. Following deliberations, a joint meeting was held between DoT, NCCS and the committee on 3rd February 2026, which resulted in key decisions, including keeping the SDOC and pro tem certification on hold, while accepting hardening guidelines. Members also submitted clause-wise inputs on ITSARs and NCCS proposed a Simplified Security Certification Scheme for review. The industry is now awaiting action from the DoT and NCCS to issue the notification and implementation plan accordingly.

31. Public Procurement Preference – Make in India Order 2017

On 3rd June 2025, DoT invited comments from industry stakeholders to revisit the PPP-MII order for the telecom sector. In response, COAI submitted its detailed inputs on 14th June 2025, highlighting key industry concerns and recommendations to ensure a balanced approach aligned with operational realities and market conditions.

32. Electronic – Waste Management Rule

COAI submitted inputs to TEC on 19th May 2025 and to DDG (Satellite) on 19th June 2025, highlighting the issues towards e-waste management implementation related issues such as High end-metal prices relative to

global benchmark indices, link price fixation for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Environmental Compensation (EC) credits, etc.

33. Data Centre Connectivity

COAI submitted a letter on 5th September 2025, to the Secretary, MeitY requesting the following:

Data centre operators to obtain telecom connectivity only from licensed telecom operators. In cases where a data centre operator wishes to establish dark fiber / connectivity on their own, it may do so within the existing licensing / regulatory regime, i.e., after obtaining Unified License / Registration.

34. Potential Amendments to the Act/ Rules for Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living

COAI submitted its inputs on 6th October 2025, on the newly introduced Act and Rules governing the telecom sector, with a focus on ensuring that the regulatory framework is aligned with Ease of Doing Business (EoDB). The submission emphasized the need for simplified compliance requirements, regulatory clarity and a balanced approach that reflects industry realities. Through this, COAI aimed to support a progressive policy environment that facilitates growth, innovation and efficient operations for all industry stakeholders.

35. Review of Experimental License

COAI submitted a letter to DoT-WPC on 24th November 2025, requesting for review of constraints in experimental license issuance on Saral Sanchar portal, as follows:

- i. Increasing the per-model quantity limit for Experimental Licenses to 500 units and the request that the same be modified on the Saral Sanchar portal.
- ii. Extending the validity of the initial Experimental License from 1 year to 5 years, with a provision for subsequent renewals for a minimum period of 2 years each.

- iii. Introducing appropriate safeguarding mechanisms to enhance the overall integrity of the Experimental Licenses.

36. 5G Deployment Restrictions Near Airports Due to Radio Altimeter Concerns

The industry expressed deep concern regarding the continuing restrictions on 5G deployment in the C-band (3300–3600 MHz) near airports and runways. These limitations, originally imposed via DoT orders dated 29th November 2022, as an interim safety measure, have now persisted without any substantial progress towards a permanent resolution — adversely impacting both the telecom sector and end consumers. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 16th June 2025, regarding the continuing restrictions on 5G deployments in the C-band (3300–3600 MHz) near airports and runways.

37. Submission of incremental SDR data for all numbers

DoT had issued an immediate requirement by the AI & DIU Wing vide Office Memorandum dated 25th June 2025 (ref-1.), mandating TSPs to submit incremental Subscriber Database Records (SDR) along with activated, deactivated, ported in and ported out numbers on a daily basis, via the existing secure interface with DIP hosted at C-DOT starting from 1st July 2025. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 2nd July 2025, citing operational challenges on the instructions by DoT to mandate TSPs to submit incremental SDRs.

38. TRAI CP on Assignment of Microwave Spectrum in 6 GHz (lower), 7 GHz, 13 GHz, 15 GHz, 18 GHz, 21 GHz Bands, E-Band and V-Band

TRAI issued a Consultation Paper on Assignment of Microwave Spectrum in the 6 GHz (lower), 7 GHz, 13 GHz, 15 GHz, 18 GHz, 21 GHz Bands, E-Band and V-Band on 28th May 2025. In this

regard, COAI submitted its comments and counter comments on the TRAI CP on Microwave spectrum on 2nd July 2025 and 16th July 2025, respectively.

39. Request for reconsideration of DoT's OM on Direct spectrum allocation for CNPN based services

- i. DoT issued OM dated 30th June 2025, regarding the demand survey being conducted to assess the demand for direct assignment of spectrum to CNPNs.
- ii. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 21st July 2025, requesting to reconsider its decision to conduct a demand survey to assess the demand for the direct assignment of spectrum to CNPNs.

40. COAI Letter: Published Draft Rules by DoT – Review Process for Public Consultation

DoT issued various draft rules for public consultation. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to the Minister of Communications on 27th October 2025, requesting DoT to adopt a consultative and transparent process, as followed in other leading economies.

41. COAI Clause wise Response to DoT draft Telecommunication (User Identification) Rules 2025

DoT issued Draft Telecommunication (User Identification) Rules, 2025 on 19th September 2025. COAI submitted its response on 23rd October 2025, with the feedback focusing on ensuring:

- i. Improved customer verification.
- ii. Consider exemptions for end user verification.
- iii. Data Governance and Audit Responsibility.

42. COAI Letter: Challenges concerning user validation after changes in Aadhaar information/credentials

In view of various changes being made in the Aadhaar Cards of citizens, the TSPs are experiencing several cases wherein critical information for a person on Aadhaar has undergone a change after an update at UIDAI. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 17th October 2025, highlighting various challenges faced concerning user validation after changes in Aadhaar information/credentials.

43. Request for extension regarding Suspension of USSD based Call Forwarding Facility

TSPs were instructed to implement the immediate disabling of USSD-based call forwarding codes in discussion with DoT on 15th October 2025. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 5th November 2025, requesting for an extension of 30 days to disable the USSD-based call forwarding codes.

44. Representation on Inclusion of Critical Issues in Terms of Reference (ToR) for Technical Evaluation of D2M by Prasar Bharati

A COAI letter was submitted to DoT on 18th September 2025 and to MIB on 19th November 2025 and 23rd December 2025 on Inclusion of Critical Issues in the ToR for Technical Evaluation of D2M by Prasar Bharati. In the letter, COAI requested:

- i. ToR for technical evaluation being finalized by Prasar Bharati to comprehensively cover all the critical aspects highlighted in the letter.
- ii. Conduct stakeholder consultation under the aegis of DoT/TRAI.
- iii. TEC to conduct an open consultative process understanding the standards, good practices and KPIs required for performance evaluation of D2M.

45. Request for Assignment of Entire 6 GHz band for IMT (5G/6G) services

There was a need to emphasize the critical importance of the 6 GHz frequency band (5925–7125 MHz) in meeting India’s future mobile broadband and connectivity needs. This band represents the only remaining mid-band spectrum capable of delivering the capacity, coverage and affordability required to realize India’s vision of becoming a digitally empowered nation and supporting the country’s strategic priorities.

In this regard, a COAI letter was submitted to DoT on 6th November 2025, requesting that:

- i. The entire 5925–7125 MHz band may kindly be considered for identification and reservation for IMT/6G services in India.
- ii. A clear refarming plan may be developed.
- iii. Seek TRAI’s Recommendation on 6 GHz band spectrum.
- iv. Adopt an IMT band plan that provides wide contiguous carriers (≥ 400 MHz) per licensee to enable future 6G performance targets.

Further, COAI submitted another letter to DoT on 2nd January 2026, requesting the Government to:

- i. Identify the entire 6 GHz band (5925–7125 MHz) for IMT in the National Frequency Allocation Plan;
- ii. Provide a clear policy roadmap assuring availability of at least 400 MHz of contiguous mid-band spectrum per operator; and
- iii. Refrain from delicensing any portion of the 6 GHz band, in the absence of a rigorous India-specific cost–benefit analysis.

46. TRAI on the CP on the Auction of Radio Frequency Spectrum in the Frequency Bands Identified for IMT

TRAI Consultation Paper on the “Auction of Radio Frequency Spectrum in the Frequency

Bands Identified for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT)” was released on 30th September 2025. In this regard, COAI submitted its comments to TRAI on 11th November 2025. In the response, COAI submitted that:

- i. There is no structural over-supply of spectrum in India.
- ii. Entire available spectrum in the existing bands should be put for auction.
- iii. Most optimal and efficient manner for 600 MHz should come with the n105 band plan, which gives 2x40 MHz spectrum.
- iv. COAI recommends the approach of prescribing no rollout obligations if an existing licensee has already met the obligations.
- v. The reserve price be fixed at a rational % to the valuation of the assessed valuation of spectrum.

COAI also submitted its counter comments to TRAI on 18th November 2025.

47. Draft Guidelines on Accessibility of Content on Platforms of Publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms) for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment

COAI submitted its response to MIB on 10th November 2025, outlining key recommendations to refine the guidelines to avoid overlaps with existing sectoral regulations. COAI also recommended a phased or sandbox-based rollout to account for varying technical and resource capacities across platforms.

48. Comprehensive Framework on Accessibility Standards for Service Sector – Proposed Recommendations

COAI submitted its response to DePWD on 24th November 2025, reiterating that the DoT directions are under implementation by the

members. The submission emphasized that introducing an additional or parallel standard or a separate compliance mechanism, is unnecessary and may lead to duplicate obligations. Regarding adoption of the Draft Guidelines for the Prevention and Regulation of Unsolicited and Unwarranted Business Communications, 2024, a representation was sent to DoCA on 5th November 2025, requesting to issue the Guidelines to create a harmonized and enforceable accountability mechanism for originators of unsolicited business communications.

49. Request for Immediate Convening of Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on EMF and Extension of EMF Guidelines Abeyance Period

The industry emphasised DoT's kind intervention in matters concerning the EMF emission guidelines, particularly with respect to aligning India's threshold limits with internationally accepted ICNIRP standards and for continuation of the existing abeyance on the applicability of the current EMF guidelines for 5G deployments. In this regard, a COAI letter was submitted to DoT on 5th December 2025, requesting immediate convening of the meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for adoption of 100% of ICNIRP standards.

50. Requesting Extension for Conducting 5 yearly Police Verification of Point of Sale (PoS) in J&K, Assam and NE LSAs

DoT issued a letter dated 10th February 2025, to conduct Police Verification of each PoS in every 5 years in J&K, Assam and NE LSA. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 22nd December 2025, wherein it was requested that TSPs should be allowed an extension of 6 months for completion of police verification of PoS whose last police verification was conducted prior to 1st April 2020.

51. Disruption in Aadhaar authentication for issuance of SIMs and re-verification of subscribers

This is with reference to the frequent disruptions being faced by our member TSPs during Aadhaar-based authentication. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to UIDAI on 10th December 2025, requesting a comprehensive investigation into the root cause of the recurring disruptions.

52. COAI Letter: Issuance of mobile connections to customers with age less than 18 years

There were observations by various LSA Units wherein CAFs of connections issued to customers with age less than 18 years are being arbitrarily marked as non-complaint without any explicit instructions from the DoT. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 23rd January 2026, requesting DoT to urgently issue instructions to all the LSA Units to recognize such CAFs as compliant.

53. Concerns regarding fixing of charges for Mobile Number Validation (MNV) under Telecom Identifier (TI) validation framework

DoT issued Telecommunications (Telecom Cyber Security) Amendment Rules, 2025, notified by the DoT on 22nd October 2025, pursuant to which the DoT, vide its order dated 14th November 2025, prescribed charges for Mobile Number Validation services. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 30th March 2026, requesting DoT to kindly reconsider the prescribed pricing construct and allow TI validation services to operate under a commercial framework consistent with statutory provisions and established principles of market-based pricing.

54. Implementation of Single Number Based Integrated Emergency Communications and Response System (ERSS)

It was observed by TSPs that currently only the short code 112 is being accepted at PSAPs while the remaining secondary emergency short codes, namely 100, 101, 102 and 108, are yet to be accepted or routed through the ERSS platform. This partial implementation has led to certain operational challenges.

In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT requesting:

- i. Instruct PSAP Provider for immediate augmenting the congested PRI capacities.
- ii. The Acceptance of end-to-end SIP PRI only at PSAP locations leading to seamless delivery.
- iii. Review the entire project and issue appropriate instructions to the concerned departments for re-routing of secondary emergency numbers 100, 101, 102 and 108 through PSAPs and for enabling acceptance of these short codes at PSAP locations under ERSS, in line with the original policy directions.
- iv. Further, permitting private TSPs to route overflow calls for these emergency numbers using available spare network capacity would significantly enhance system resilience, minimize call failures during high-traffic situations and ensure uninterrupted access to emergency services for citizens.

55. Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, 2025 notified by MeitY

COAI has been actively engaged across the entire lifecycle of the DPDP Rules from draft stage to final notification in November 2025. COAI submitted detailed representations highlighting implementation challenges, rule–licence conflicts and operational concerns, and issued a press

note capturing key gaps. COAI initiated sustained engagement with MeitY and DoT; developed industry positions on DPIA, consent and SDF-related issues; and continued tracking legal developments, including proceedings before the Supreme Court. Further, on the proposal to accelerate the implementation of select provisions of the DPDP Act of the DPDP Rules, a request to retain the original compliance timeline and permit further stakeholder consultation was raised to MeitY and DoT via COAI letter dated 6th February 2026. Based on the requests, the current proposal to accelerate timelines have been halted and a formal Committee is being formed to discuss the issues raised.

56. CERT-In Cyber Security Audit Guidelines notified by CERT IN

COAI successfully escalated industry concerns regarding duplication of compliance by submitting a letter dated 26th November 2025 to CERT-IN and secured a dedicated meeting with the DG, CERT-IN on 18th December 2025. The members clearly articulated overlaps with DoT's cybersecurity framework and initiated further engagement with DoT to streamline regulatory requirements and reduce compliance burden. Consequently, the DoT ensured redressal of the issues raised.

57. Data Centre Policy & Connectivity Issues

In reference to a stakeholder consultation on Draft National Data Centre Policy, 2025, held by MeitY, a COAI letter dated 5th September 2025, was submitted with request for targeted engagements with MeitY on policy discussions recommending data centre connectivity only via licensed operators.

58. Regulation on UCC (Spam & Business Communication)

Multiple representations were made to DoCA on unsolicited communications and spam regulations with the last submission vide COAI letter dated 5th November 2025, ref: DG/COAI/

TECH/2025/3106. Additionally, it was also ensured that industry concerns were reflected in broader policy discussions, including the NITI Aayog policy discussions on EODB.

59. MIB issued Regulations

Following the stakeholder consultations convened by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) on Draft Guidelines on Accessibility of Content on Platforms of Publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms) for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment and Draft Accessibility Standards for Persons with Disabilities in Television Programmes; detailed representations were made via COAI letters dated 10th November 2025 and 21st August 2025 respectively, with inputs advocating clarity in scope, avoidance of regulatory overlap and phased implementation.

60. Engagement with State Authorities and Central Departments

The Telecom Infrastructure Committee engaged with various Central Government Ministries, State Government and other key Authorities on Right of Way and Electricity related support, through more than 190 formal submissions. Majority of these submissions were to highlight the industry concerns with various States and Union Territories, facilitation for on-ground implementation of RoW Rules, 2024 and Electricity related support. Important Submissions have been made to the Ministry of Power on:

- a. Draft amendment to the Metering Regulations,
- b. Draft Electricity Bill 2025,
- c. Draft National Electricity Policy 2026.

Submission was also made to the Chairman, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), on applicability of consent requirements and waiver of fees for DG Sets co-located with telecom towers.

61. Critical Submissions Made on Right of Way Rules, 2024

- a. Submissions made to the Telecom Secretary included:
 - i. Requesting intervention to advise State Governments and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to ensure uniform implementation of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, including withdrawal of property tax demands on telecom infrastructure and avoidance of coercive actions inconsistent with the Act.
 - ii. Issues relating to the levy of property tax on telecom towers and the undertaking of coercive actions by local authorities in the State of Gujarat, contrary to the provisions of the Telecommunication Act, 2023 and the Right of Way (RoW) Rules, 2024.
- b. Submissions were also made to the Joint Secretary, Telecom to direct major entities as Public Entities under RoW Rules. These included:
 - i. Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA),
 - ii. Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru,
 - iii. Indira Gandhi International Airport Delhi (IGIA),
 - iv. National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC),
 - v. Delhi Metro.

Further, submissions were made to the Chief Ministers of Delhi and Maharashtra, the Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka and the Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Karnataka, requesting for support on Right of Way industry issues. Submission(s) were also made to the Hon'ble Minister of Power, on various electricity-related industry concerns and the way forward.

62. Alignment of ITC utilization order on GST Portal with Rule 88A of CGST Rules

A letter was submitted on 2nd May 2025, requesting the GST – N to implement the changes required as per Rule 88A of the GST Rules in utilization of Central Tax ITC and State Tax ITC on the GSTN Portal in alignment with the previously mentioned provisions of the CGST Act, 2017, as amended and CGST Rules, 2017, as amended.

63. Inputs for Upcoming Rules and Forms under Income Tax Act, 2025

The Income Tax Act, 2025 was notified by the Government of India on 21st August 2025, thereby repealing the Income Tax Act, 1961. The Central Board of Direct Tax had sought inputs on the Forms and Rules, to be used for the enforcement of the Act. COAI made a detailed representation with regard to the Forms and Rules on 13th October 2025, suggesting the policy level and operational challenges that should be addressed in the upcoming Rules and Forms.

64. Budget Recommendations for 2026 – 27

COAI made a detailed submission for the Budget 2026 – 27 to the Ministry of Finance on 27th October 2025, seeking consideration on key industry priorities, including reduction of compliance burden for customs-related processes, rationalisation of regulatory levies and a permanent exemption from Basic Customs Duty on submarine cables, among other measures.

Further submissions were made to the Ministry of Finance on 6th November 2025, for the Government to take into consideration issues such as Exemption on Levy of Service Tax on Incremental LF and SUC Payments; Manner in Calculation of Interest on wrongful utilization of IGST, CGST and SGST; and Levy of Compulsory Interest on Payment of Tax with interest on non-realization of export proceeds, which were policy level issues requiring the need to address the challenges.

65. Manner of Calculation of Interest under Section 50 (3) of CGST Act, 2017 read with Rule 88B of CGST Rules, 2017

COAI submitted a detailed letter on 4th December 2025, requesting the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs to issue a clarification regarding the manner of calculating interest on the wrongful availment of CGST/SGST Credit, in order to prevent any wrongful calculation and further requested CBIC to consider the total balance of all three heads together when computing interest on wrongful availment and utilization of CGST/SGST Credit.

66. Reduction of Rate of GST payment from 18% to 5% under Reverse Charge Mechanism

COAI made a detailed representation, requesting the Ministry of Finance to Rationalize the RCM rate from 18% to 5% for payment of License Fee/Spectrum Usage Charges via suitable clarification in the GST Framework, without changing the ITC eligibility for Telecom Operators. This would help the member TSPs in preventing further ITC Accumulation as well as remaining revenue neutral to the Government.

Media Advocacy and Stakeholder Outreach



COAI continued to strengthen its position as the leading and most credible voice of the Indian telecom industry through sustained engagement with Ministries, policymakers, regulators, financial institutions and technical bodies. During FY 2025–26, the association actively shaped discourse on critical issues such as regulation of App based communication platforms, SIM-binding for app-based services, allocation of 6 GHz spectrum, private network policies, data protection under DPDP Rules 2025, and emerging challenges around spam, cybersecurity and digital infrastructure. These interventions underscore COAI's continued commitment to enabling a secure, resilient and future-ready telecom ecosystem aligned with India's digital ambitions.

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape marked by 5G expansion, increasing convergence and emerging technologies, COAI maintained a strong focus on ensuring robust, affordable and ubiquitous connectivity. Its strategic advocacy on issues such as spectrum availability, infrastructure challenges in urban centres, illegal signal boosters, cable cuts impacting network integrity and seamless connectivity at critical infrastructure

like airports further reinforced its role as a trusted industry representative. COAI's positions on key regulatory developments, including the Telecom Act considerations and Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) broadcasting, contributed meaningfully to policy discussions and stakeholder alignment.

A defining highlight of the year was COAI's successful push for enhanced regulatory oversight of App based communication platforms, particularly through its advocacy on persistent SIM-binding, which was subsequently reflected in DoT's directive. The association also played a key role in advancing the industry's perspective on fair share, traceability and security frameworks, while continuing to champion the need for regulatory parity across communication platforms. Additionally, COAI's proactive engagement on spectrum matters, including strong support for full utilization of the 6 GHz band, further strengthened India's roadmap for 5G, 5G Advanced and future 6G technologies.

Through impactful media advocacy, thought leadership and strategic outreach, COAI amplified the industry's voice across leading national, busi-

ness and digital platforms. Key moments included extensive coverage around the COAI Dialogues 2025, Union Budget 2026–27 recommendations, India Mobile Congress 2025 and the year-end outlook for 2026. The association also drove strong visibility through participation in high-impact forums such as the AI Impact Summit 2026, where it positioned telecom at the centre of AI-led transformation. Authored articles, interviews and multimedia engagements across platforms further strengthened COAI’s narrative on emerging technologies and policy priorities.

Guided by its Executive Council, COAI’s advocacy efforts have fostered deeper collaboration between industry stakeholders and the Government, enabling informed and constructive dialogue on sectoral priorities. By consistently

presenting data-driven insights and actionable recommendations, COAI has reinforced its reputation as a credible and solutions-oriented industry body. Its leadership in areas such as AI in telecom, 6G, cybersecurity, digital infrastructure and inclusive connectivity continues to support India’s vision of becoming a global digital powerhouse.

In close partnership with the Government of India, COAI remains committed to strengthening telecom infrastructure, promoting investments in next-generation technologies and ensuring inclusive access to digital services. These efforts continue to bridge the digital divide, enhance consumer experience and accelerate India’s journey toward a resilient, secure and innovation-driven digital economy.



Significant media activities by COAI in FY 2025-26

Regulation of App based Communication Platforms

On the ongoing debate around regulation of App based communication platforms, COAI welcomed MeitY's move to engage stakeholders on tackling spam and scam from App based communication platforms, noting the growing shift of such activities from telecom networks to app-based channels. The association highlighted traceability and security gaps in App based communications and called for uniform cybersecurity and regulatory frameworks across TSPs and App based communication services to effectively curb spam and fraud.

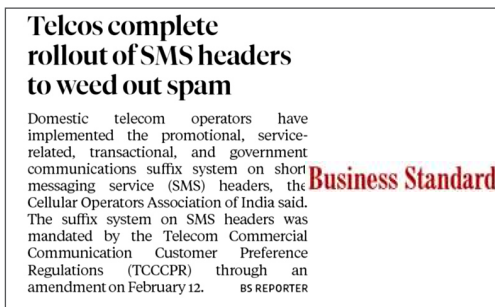
In context of the armed forces operation in Jammu & Kashmir, COAI issued a statement reiterating its stance on the need for regulation of App based communication services.

COAI also issued a statement the implementation of suffixes to Header structure for identification of type of commercial communications as mandated by TCCCPR.

Media Coverage: PTI, IANS, IANS Hindi, Economic Times and The Telegraph, Business Standard, Hindu BusinessLine, ET Telecom, Zee News, Dainik Bhaskar, Storyoard18, Outlook Business, Inc42, YourStory, Voice&Data, Communications Today, Tele.Net, etc.








DoT directive on SIM-binding for devices for App-based Communication Services

COAI advocated for mandatory, persistent SIM-binding of App based communication services to address rising cyber fraud and national security concerns, highlighting that current app-SIM linkage is limited to initial verification and allows continued use even after SIM removal, creating gaps in traceability.

Building on this push from COAI, DoT issued a directive mandating continuous SIM-binding for app-based communication services - a move COAI termed a landmark step to strengthen accountability, traceability and cybersecurity by ensuring apps remain linked to registered mobile numbers.

Media Coverage: Conversions in PTI, IANS, ANI and Univarta, Economic Times, Hindustan Times, Business Standard, Financial Express, Dainik Jagran and Navbharat Times, Times of India, The Indian Express, The New Indian Express, Hindu BusinessLine, ET Telecom, Moneycontrol, Business Today, NDTV, Zee News, Republic World, ABPLive, The Tribune, Voice&Data and Communications Today, among others.



Telcos for SIM Binding with OTT Apps at All Times to Curb Frauds

Our Bureau

Suggested Tech Interventions

- Persistent/Mandatory SIM-to-App re-authentication Binding if SIM is changed
- Device-SIM-App linkage for traceability

Without persistent SIM binding, OTT apps become blind spots in the digital security framework

SP Kochhar, DG, COAI

New Delhi: Top Indian telecom operators have suggested mandating the binding of over-the-top (OTT) communication applications with the verified mobile SIMs at all times to prevent cyber fraud and strengthen national security.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), in a statement on Wednesday, said this approach would ensure consumer trust, accountability, traceability and alignment with existing regulatory frameworks.

The association represents incumbent telcos Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea (Vi).

At present, the binding happens only once for verification of the user's mobile number while registering or signing up for application-based communication services. However, the application can continue to work independently on the device even if the SIM card is removed, replaced, or deactivated, which presents a potential security threat.

"If the original SIM card is removed from the device and the device with the OTT communication app is used for a criminal activity, since no SIM is present during the crime, there is no verifiable link—such as call records, location data or carrier logs—to prove which device was used or where the activity occurred," said SP Kochhar, director-general, COAI.

That this would ensure that the communication service cannot operate without the authenticated SIM physically inserted in the device, maintaining critical traceability between the user, the number and the device.

Telcos said persistent SIM binding with OTT communication apps would also help establish a regulatory level playing field by ensuring that laws and compliance (D.L.T.)-based suffix rules for OTT messaging platforms that are installed, used, independent of SIM verification and are immune to telecom-level controls," said Kochhar.

regime, citing that telcos already have a regulatory mandate to ensure a transparent and safe communications ecosystem.

The association underscored that telcos are proactively implementing caller name presentation (CNAP) and have deployed artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML)-led solutions to prevent suspected spam via voice and SMS.

Furthermore, it said that telcos, as per the Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation (TCO-CPR), 2018, are conducting checks on principal entity (PE) and telemarketer (TM) binding, A2P SMS header and content registration, and keyword-based content screening of messages transmitted, as well as enforcing distributed ledger technology (DLT)-based suffix rules for OTT messaging platforms that are installed, used, independent of SIM verification and are immune to telecom-level controls," said Kochhar.

ever, fraudsters are ingeniously adapting by shifting to OTT messaging platforms that are installed, used, independent of SIM verification and are immune to telecom-level controls," said Kochhar.

app-based, communication services and telecom service providers. Previously, the COAI urged the government to bring communication apps under a regulatory

and misuse," COAI said.

"COAI welcomes and commends the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for taking a landmark step towards bolstering national security and safeguarding our citizens, by mandating SIM-binding for devices for app-based communication services," SP Kochhar, director general of COAI, said.

The comment from the apex body comes after directions by the **FINANCIAL EXPRESS** would ensure app-based communication services are continuously linked to a user's active SIM card. —PTI



Telcos: Mandatory move for messaging apps a milestone

INDUSTRY BODY COAI on Monday said Telecom Department's move mandating that messaging apps like WhatsApp will work only with an active SIM would bolster national security and pledged telecom operators' commitment to supporting seamless implementation of the latest directive. Such continuous linkage ensures complete accountability and traceability for any activity undertaken by the **FINANCIAL EXPRESS** that have enabled anonymity

and misuse," COAI said.

"COAI welcomes and commends the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for taking a landmark step towards bolstering national security and safeguarding our citizens, by mandating SIM-binding for devices for app-based communication services," SP Kochhar, director general of COAI, said.

The comment from the apex body comes after directions by the **FINANCIAL EXPRESS** would ensure app-based communication services are continuously linked to a user's active SIM card. —PTI



Telcos for SIM-binding on OTT apps

AASHISH ARYAN
New Delhi, 6 August

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has suggested that over-the-top (OTT) communication applications — such as WhatsApp and Telegram — should be "mandated to bind" with a verified mobile SIM at all times.

The move will help prevent cyber fraud and strengthen national security, said COAI. Currently, OTT communication apps are bound to users' devices only once, during the service registration process on the device.

These apps continue to function even after the SIM card against which the account was registered is removed from the device, replaced or deactivated.

"It will also help establish a regulatory level-playing field by ensuring that laws and compliance frameworks governing user identification, geographic

accountability and lawful interception protocols apply equally to app-based communication services and telecom service providers," COAI director general Jio Infocomm, Bharti Airtel, and Vi — said that a mandatory and persistent SIM-binding that remains active beyond initial installation will ensure that the communication service cannot

operate without the authenticated SIM being physically inserted in the device. It will thereby maintain critical traceability between the user, the number and device.

COAI's demand to mandate the binding of communication apps to a single SIM comes at a time when there has been a rise in OTT app-based spam and fraud messages, as well as calls.

The telecom industry body also said that India's mobile network operators

are taking measures such as implementing caller name presentation, and checking principal entity-telemarketer binding.

OTT communication apps, which are immune to telecom-level controls, are being used without any oversight, the body said.

"If the original SIM card is removed from the device and the device with the OTT communication app is used for a criminal activity from any geographic location, since no SIM is present during the crime, there is no verifiable link — such as call records, location data or carrier logs — to prove which device was used or where the activity occurred," COAI said.

Earlier this year, Bharti Airtel launched and deployed fraud and spam detection solutions across its network. These were aimed at protecting consumers from not only calls but also messages received on various OTT communication apps.

COAI's case for binding

- Says binding prevents cyber fraud, strengthens national security
- Will also help establish a regulatory level-playing field
- Maintains critical traceability between the users, numbers, and device
- Crimes committed via OTT apps are hard to trace due to lack of SIM-based records

Business Standard

COAI's demand to mandate the binding of communication apps to a single SIM comes at a time when there has been a rise in OTT app-based spam and fraud messages, as well as calls.

The telecom industry body also said that India's mobile network operators



COAI welcomes DoT's SIM-linking mandate for messaging apps

At present, app-based communication services link to a subscriber's mobile SIM card only once during initial installation and verification.

By Vishal Samraj
Updated: December 01, 2023 at 07:28 PM

Telco representative body Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) commended the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for its device-to-**businessline** sapping apps to further reinforce telecom cybersecurity.

Allocation of 6 GHz spectrum for 5G/IMT

COAI backed GSMA's recommendation to include the 6 GHz band in the upcoming spectrum auctions, stressing that additional mid-band spectrum is critical for 5G expansion, innovation and meeting rising data demand. It also highlighted the current spectrum deficit and urged DoT to adopt a balanced policy and release more spectrum to support nationwide 5G rollout and future telecom growth.

COAI further welcomed DoT's NFAP 2025, for identifying the 6425–7125 MHz band for IMT, calling it a key step to boost mid-band spectrum availability and support 5G, 5G Advanced and future 6G growth in India. It reiterated the need to allocate the full 1200 MHz in the 6 GHz band, stressing that adequate contiguous spectrum is critical to meet rising data demand, ensure network efficiency and enable affordable, high-quality mobile broadband.

Media Coverage: Conversions in ET Telecom, Voice&Data, Communications Today, Telecom Talk, tele.net and other publications.

Mixed reaction to govt identifying upper 6 Ghz band for mobile services

Press Trust of India
New Delhi

Telecom industry body Cellular Operators Association of India said the government's decision to identify upper frequencies in the 6 gigahertz spectrum band for advanced mobile services reflects its commitment to support the expansion of 5G and future 6G networks.

Broadband technology providers' body BIF, however, expressed disappointment because the National Frequency Allocation Plan, which was released on December 30, mentioned allocation of lower frequencies in the 6 Ghz band, a clear departure from an already articulated policy direction.

The COAI reiterated its demand that the 500 MHz in the band from 5925-6425 MHz should also be identified for mobile services.

COAI Director General SP Kochhar said high population density, rapid growth in mobile data consumption and relatively low fixed broadband penetration — mobile networks carry the majority of the country's internet traffic — make adequate mid-band spectrum availability critical.

Internet platforms like Apple, Amazon, Cisco, Meta, Corporation allocation of the entire 6 Ghz band for wi-fi services.

6GHz band crucial for telcos to drive rural 5G connectivity: COAI

COAI, echoing its views with the London-based association, said the 6.425-7.125GHz range was identified for IMT (mobile services) at WRC-23 by several countries, and will be essential for 5G expansion and the future development of mobile networks.

ET Telecom
Updated on Apr 8, 2025 at 04:30 PM IST



COAI backs GSMA's push for 6GHz band allocation in India's 5G expansion

The GSMA highlighted that giving telecom operators access to the 6GHz band is essential to bolstering India's digital economy and preserving its competitive advantage in the global telecom market.

Voice&Data Bureau
Updated on Apr 8, 2025 at 04:30 PM IST



In order to assist the spread of 5G mobile services and boost the nation's telecom competitiveness, the GSMA has encouraged India's Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to include the 6GHz band (6.425-7.125GHz) in the next spectrum auction.

Industry · 3 Min Read

NFAP-2025: Telcos reiterate demand for lower 6GHz band to drive 5G, 6G; broadband cos dejected

According to Kochhar, India's unique market characteristics make the availability of mid-band spectrum "absolutely critical", as mobile networks carry the majority of the country's internet traffic.

ET Telecom

ETTelecom Desk · ETTelecom
Updated On Jan 1, 2026 at 02:18 PM IST · Read by 925 Professionals

Recommendations made by Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications & Information Technology

COAI welcomed the Parliamentary Committee's recommendation to unify MeitY, MIB and DoT, noting it could streamline policymaking and improve coordination in a converged digital ecosystem. It also stressed the need for a unified regulatory framework across TSPs and App based communication services to tackle spam and fraud, highlighting gaps in current oversight of app-based communications.

Media Coverage: Coverage in IANS, Hindustan Times, Hindu BusinessLine, ET Telecom, The Telegraph, Voice&Data, Communications Today, etc.

COAI calls for same rules for telcos, OTT services

Aditi Agrawal

aditi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A prominent industry body that represents telcos lauded the IT parliamentary committee's recommendation that the IT ministry, information and broadcasting ministry, and the department of telecommunications should be brought under one umbrella to address regulatory issues stemming from technological convergence. This will lead to efficiency in policy formulation and compliance by companies, the body said.

In a statement, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), whose core members

are Airtel, Jio and Vodafone Idea, said that such convergence of the ministries would lead to the same regulations being equally applied to telcos and over-the-top (OTT) communication platforms such as WhatsApp, especially anti-spam regulations. "Taking the same logic into the operational domain covering spam/fraud messages and calls spanning over both telecom networks and OTT channels, it is necessary to apply one set of policies and regulatory components, i.e., OTTs," the statement said that while telcos are governed by the Telecom Commercial Communication Customer

THE TELCOS ARGUED THAT THE ACT REQUIRES WHATSAPP-LIKE SERVICES TO NEED AUTHORISATION FROM THE GOVT TO OPERATE

Preference Regulation (TCCCPR) 2018 to fight spam, app-based

consumers and the government," the statement said.

The "same service, same rules" argument is something that the telcos have been making for many years, much to the chagrin of technology companies. It was a sticking point in the open house discussions that the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) held last year to discuss how authorisations (to replace the licensing regime) should be implemented under the Communications Act, 2008. Telcos argued that the WhatsApp-like services need government authorisation from the government to operate in India while the tech companies

and their industry bodies argued otherwise. The debate over regulatory convergence is not new. In 2023, the Trai sought public input on whether telecom services (carriage) and broadcasting services (content) should be governed by a unified regulator, considering the changing technological landscape. Trai also explored whether such a regulator should oversee OTT services including streaming platforms (Netflix) and communication platforms (WhatsApp). While the telcos batted for convergence, civil society and other industries including broadcasters, publishers and technology companies argued against it.



INFO-TECH

COAI supports convergence of MeitY, DoT and MIB under one roof

COAI also calls for similar regulatory convergence for telecom service providers and app-based communication providers

By Vallari Sanzgiri

Updated - March 26, 2025 at 02:54 PM.



Telcos support merger of allied ministries

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Calcutta: The telecom industry has supported the recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology to bring the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) under one umbrella.

The recommendation was part of the 11th report of the standing committee presented in the Lok Sabha last week.

Telecom operators' body—the Cellular Operators Association of India—on Wednesday said that if the government decides on the merger, it would improve transparency and compliance.

"In whatever format this is implemented, it will lead to a focused and composite



S.P. Kochhar, director-general, COAI

handling of issues, thereby formulating policies which are equally applicable to all the ministries concerned and reduce multiple policy formulations on the same subject, thus improving transparency and compliances," said COAI director-general S.P. Kochhar. "While telcos are governed

by the Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation (TCCCPR) 2018 and noticeable results have been observed in the spam/unwanted forms of communication via the TSPs, the app-based communications not under the same regulation remain unchecked and are becoming a growing concern for the consumers and the government," he said.

"We are hopeful that this step will help in uniformly addressing the issue of spam, telemarketing across all communication channels and help remove/restrict the scourge of unwanted/fraud communications, thus providing much-needed relief to the consumers," he said.

The Union communications ministry last week said that the department of telecommunications and WhatsApp have collaborated to prevent misuse of telecom resources for digital frauds and scams.

Government's Strong Action to Curb Illegal Signal Boosters Through New E-Commerce Guidelines

COAI welcomed the government's new e-commerce guidelines banning the sale of illegal signal boosters and jammers, calling it a crucial step to address network disruptions and protect consumer experience. It also urged strict enforcement and platform compliance, reiterating industry support to safeguard the integrity of India's telecom ecosystem.

Media Coverage: Coverage in The Hindu BusinessLine, ET Telecom, Inc42, Voice&Data and Communications Today, among others.

Industry · 1 Min Read

Guidelines against illegal sale of radio equipment to help improve mobile QoS: COAI

With the guidelines being notified on May 27, 2025, the DoCA said it aims to enforce penalties and platform liability in case of non-compliance, mandate verification of seller credentials and certification, introduce automated monitoring and takedown mechanisms for unauthorised listing, and drive consumer awareness through disclosures.

ETTelecom
Published On Jun 2, 2025 at 02:58 PM IST



INFO-TECH

COAI welcomes ban on illegal sale of radio equipment on e-commerce platforms

The CCPA issued 'Guidelines for the Prevention and Regulation of Illegal Listing and Sale of Radio Equipment' on May 27, 2025 to address the sale and misuse of unauthorised wireless devices

By Yathuri Sunziri
Updated - June 02, 2025 at 09:01 PM




The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) welcomed the Centre's decision to prevent the illegal sale of radio equipment like walkie-talkies on e-commerce platforms, describing it as a "much-needed regulatory response to the persistent challenge."

COAI Hails Govt Move To Ban 'Illegal' Online Sale Of Walkie-Talkies

02 Jun 25 | By Team Inc42



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- Raids On Zepto, Blinkit: The Ugly Side Of Dark Stores

SUMMARY

- Terming the norms a "much-needed regulatory response to the persistent challenge", COAI said that sale of such products "significantly" degrades network quality of telcos
- Finalised after inter-ministerial consultation with MHA and DoT, the new rules bar the sale of "illegal" radio equipment online, including walkie-talkies
- The new guidelines allow online sale of only authorised walkie-talkie devices and disclosure mandates for the ecommerce platforms



Home > Business

COAI welcomes govt's move to stop illegal signal boosters on e-commerce platforms

IANIS | 2 June 2025 5:23 PM IST



HIGHLIGHTS

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on Monday welcomed the government's new guidelines aimed at stopping the online sale of illegal mobile signal boosters and wireless jammers.




Telcos opposing MMRC's Vendor-Driven Model for Mobile Services on Metro Line 3

COAI opposed the MMRC's arbitrary vendor-driven model for mobile services on Metro Line 3. The association also issued a statement on Mumbai Metro ignoring the consumer-first proposal of Telcos.

Media Coverage: Conversions in PTI, ANI, PTI Bhasha, Univarta, Times of India, Economic Times, Financial Express, Business Standard, Hindu BusinessLine, ET Telecom, Moneycontrol, ET Infrastructure, NDTV Profit, ABP Live, Voice&Data, etc.

SAY IT VIOLATES TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

Telcos Oppose MMRC's Plan to Award Deal to Third-party Vendor

Our Bureau



New Delhi: Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea (Vi) have strongly opposed the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation's (MMRC) decision to award telecom infrastructure deployment on Metro Line 3 to a third-party IP-1 vendor, arguing that the move is "anti-consumer" and violates Telecommunications Act, 2023.

Metro Line 3 refers to the Colaba-Bandra-Aarey corridor.

"Under the current telecom licensing framework, IP-1 providers are prohibited from deploying active infrastructure. This move not only breaches the Telecommunications Act, 2023, but also sidelines licensed telecom service providers," the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) said in a statement Monday.

The Delhi-based association represents the top telecom incumbents.

COAI said telcos are legally authorised and technically equipped to independently deploy mobile networks, adding that deployment of such networks is a norm. It cited two examples from Delhi—the PWD tunnel in Pragati Maidan and the Central Vista—wherein telcos are laying infrastructure without

uninterrupted connectivity for commuters, without putting financial onus on MMRC.

However, COAI alleged that MMRC arbitrarily rejected their request for right of way (RoW) permissions, citing the selection of a vendor through its internal tender process.

"This decision prioritises commercial gains over public convenience and stands in blatant violation of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, which guarantees fair, non-discriminatory access to public infrastructure for licensed operators," COAI said.

The Economic Times

INFO-TECH

Mumbai Metro trying to extract monopolistic rents from telcos: COAI

COAI said Mumbai Metro ignored the earlier offer by TSPs for a common network for mobile connectivity; Instead, it appointed ACES as a third party vendor, that offered "unviable rates" to the telcos

By Vallari Sanzgiri

Updated - May 18, 2025 at 04:11 PM.

businessline.

Telecos oppose vendor model for metro 3 mobile network coverage

Mumbai: Telcos and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) have raised concerns over the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (MMRCL)'s decision to use a vendor-led model for deploying mobile network infrastructure on the upcoming Metro Line 3 Colaba-Bandra-Aarey (CBA) corridor. MMRCL has chosen to work with an infrastructure Provider (IP-1), but telecom operators argue that this approach raises regulatory and consumer-related issues.

The COAI, representing Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea, claims that MMRCL's decision to allow an IP-1 vendor to install active telecom infrastructure violates the Telecommunications Act, 2023. This act reserves such rights for licensed operators only.

The COAI stated that all three operators offered to install a common In-Building Solution (IBS) network across the underground corridor at their own expense, ensuring seamless connectivity for commuters without any financial burden on MMRCL. However, MMRCL rejected this proposal and selected a vendor through an internal tendering process, denying the telcos their Right of Way (RoW) permissions.

An MMRCL spokesperson said that the vendor-led model has already been implemented in the project. However, the COAI has argued that this vendor-driven

model prioritises commercial interests over consumer convenience and undermines the principle of fair, non-discriminatory access to public infrastructure guaranteed under telecom law. The state-owned MMRCL has not signed any agreement with the selected vendor, despite industry claims in some media reports.

Telcos also highlighted that they do not earn revenue from the deployment but were willing to bear the cost in the public interest. A senior official from one of the service providers noted that similar models have been implemented in Pragati Maidan and Central Vista, where telecom operators laid the network without paying any fees.

TOI

Unviable terms so pulled plug on Metro 3: Cell operators

Mumbai: Amid commuter concerns over the loss of mobile connectivity in the underground Metro 3, telecom operators clarified that the disruption stemmed from unresolved commercial and operational issues with Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (MMRCL).

According to a statement by Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the industry was committed to ensuring connectivity inside underground Metro stations, but cited non-viable terms imposed by MMRCL and the exclusive involvement of a third-party vendor as key obstacles. COAI director general Lt Gen SP Kochhar said MMRCL's decision to route mobile services only through ACES created a monopolistic setup, forcing them to operate under what they call "extortionate" conditions. Operators said the services were being provided on a trial basis, pending final agreement.

To a position, mobile operators said that the terms could be finalised. This offer, they said, went unanswered. Vodafone resumed services on May 17. **TOI**



World Telecommunications Day 2025

On the sidelines of World Telecom Day, COAI shared its viewpoint on the theme of Digital Gender Divide.

Media Coverage: Authored articles in leading publications such as Hindustan Times and ET Telecom. COAI quote was featured in industry stories from publications like ET Telecom, Entrepreneur India, Digital Terminal, Communications Today, etc.

India's telecom sector as champion of digital equality
By Lt Gen SP Kochhar
May 15, 2025 05:54 PM IST

This article is authored by Lt Gen SP Kochhar, director general, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), New Delhi.

PREMIUM

Telecom

Telecommunication services have emerged as a truly transformative force today. This has not only changed the


WTD 2025: Bridging digital gender divide for inclusive future for India

"The shift towards ICT-enabled services and digital platforms has opened new employment avenues for women. Telecom networks have laid the foundation for online work, which offer flexible, remote career options, especially useful for women constrained by mobility or family responsibilities."

S. P. Kochhar • ETTelecom
Published On May 15, 2025 at 11:38 AM IST



ET Telecom



dt

"On This World Telecom Day, It Is Important For Us To Acknowledge The Undergoing Digital Transformation In Our Country"

LT. GEN. DR. S.P KOCHHAR
Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI)

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DAY

Industry • 6 Min Read

World Telecom Day 2025: 5G networks, satcom to bring more women online in India, say executives

Bringing women online in India has been a major challenge due to factors such as socio-cultural norms and restrictions, linguistic hurdles, digital literacy and skills gap, monetary dependence, earlier school dropouts, and online safety concerns, as per experts.

ETTelecom
Updated On May 17, 2025 at 12:16 PM IST • Read by: 736 Professionals

ET Telecom

Proposal for Direct Allocation of Spectrum to Private Networks

COAI opposed direct spectrum allocation to enterprises, citing concerns around security, regulatory imbalance and potential revenue loss, while arguing that India's existing telecom networks already meet enterprise needs.

It maintained that private 5G requirements should be addressed through licensed TSPs via leasing or network slicing to ensure efficiency, accountability and a level playing field.

Media Coverage: Conversions in PTI, PTI Bhasha, IANS, The New Indian Express, Economic Times, Business Standard, Financial Express, Mint, Dainik Jagran, Amar Ujala ET Telecom, Moneycontrol, Voice&Data, Communications Today, etc.

COAI again opposes direct allocation of spectrum for pvt 5G

OJASVI GUPTA
New Delhi, August 11

FOLLOWING THE RECENT move by the department of telecommunications (DoT) to reassess spectrum demand for private 5G networks, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on Monday once again urged the government to avoid direct allocation of spectrum to enterprises for captive non-public networks (CNPN).



SP KOCHHAR,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF COAI

COAI strongly believes that all enterprise 5G needs must be met through licensed telecom service providers

COAI said direct spectrum allocation to enterprises could pose security risks, reduce government revenues, and create an uneven competitive environment. It urged the government to protect access to spectrum for licensed telecom operators without facing equivalent regulatory or financial requirements.

"COAI strongly believes that all enterprise 5G needs must be met through licensed telecom service providers, via spectrum leasing or network slicing, to ensure regulatory parity," SP Kochhar, director general of COAI, said.

Telcos oppose DoT plan on direct network allocation

Say move would be detrimental to national security, hit revenues

GAVEN ANAND
New Delhi, 11 August

Indian telcos have opposed a proposal from the department of telecommunications (DoT) on allocating airwaves for private 5G networks through direct allocation.

According to them, such a move would be detrimental to national security and result in exclusion of revenue that would have come from auctioning these airwaves.

Reiterating their views on the matter, the carriers have argued that deployment of private 5G networks independently would be costlier for companies. This is because they would have to spend significantly on equipment, spectrum management, security, network maintenance and skilled personnel, besides regular upgrades of technology, which would again require investments.

They added that captive non-public 5G networks (CNPNs) should be permitted through licensed telecom operators only through spectrum leasing or network slicing.

A CNPN is a communication network meant for an enterprise or entity's exclusive use and not for public use. Having little to no latency, the solutions were first introduced when 5G auctions were held in 2022, with the intent of offering dedicated and glitch-free connectivity to industries like manufacturing, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and others.

"All enterprise 5G needs must be fulfilled through licensed telecom service providers (TSPs) via spectrum leasing or network slicing as this would ensure national security, revenue protection and regulatory parity in this rapidly evolving ecosystem," said SP Kochhar, general of the Cellular Operators Association of India.

COAI represents leasing telcos Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea that together cater to over one billion mobile phone users in the country. "One must also consider the significant loss to the government as the national auction of spectrum generated ₹1,511 billion in 2022 alone," the industry body added.

It added that such a move from the government would create an uneven playing field between telco and private entities. These entities enjoy infrastructure benefits without comparable regulatory or financial obligations.

"Private networks managed by unlicensed or foreign entities raise serious national security concerns as these players are not bound by the same compliance, interception and regulatory obligations as TSPs," the COAI argued further. It noted that without a clear regulatory framework, there would be no accountability in case of misuse, breach or attack.

It would thus open up the country to cybersecurity, surveillance and diplomatic risks.

The wrong signal

- Jio, Airtel, Vi see direct allocation as against regulatory parity and may pose security risks for enterprises deploying private 5G alone.
- Firms say unlicensed private networks risk security breaches and misuse.
- Private companies willing to set up CNPNs want direct allocation.



The industry said that CNPNs would work for countries like the US, Finland, Germany and the UK, where there were geographically secluded areas with limited public network coverage. This was not the case for India, which had no coverage details.

It also warned that unlicensed private networks could cause signal interference and disrupt public networks.

COAI's views come at a time when DoT has asked for opinions on whether the spectrum should be given directly, which means not through the regular mechanism of auction.

The government assessed the demand for direct spectrum allocation for private networks in July. If approved, enterprises or companies could get spectrum directly, bypassing DoT.

Back in 2022, carriers had pegged CNPNs as potential revenue generators as they could charge enterprises spectrum or even part up for air side.

Private enterprises, such as manufacturing and other technology makers, have been consistently demanding direct allocation of airwaves for CNPNs.

COAI opposes spectrum allocation to enterprises, cites security concerns

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), representing private telecom service providers, has strongly opposed the direct allocation of spectrum to enterprises.

It argues that such a move is not viable in India due to the country's unique telecom ecosystem, potential revenue losses, and national security risks.

COAI — which counts Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea among its members — insists that enterprise 5G requirements should be met exclusively through licensed Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), either via spectrum leasing or through network slicing. According to the association, the Indian scenario differs significantly from countries like the US, Finland, Germany, and the UK, where private 5G networks are typically deployed in geographically isolated areas.

COAI's views come at a time when DoT has asked for opinions on whether the spectrum should be given directly, which means not through the regular mechanism of auction.

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claims that independently setting up private 5G networks would be more cost-effective for enterprises.

It points out that such deployments involve high capital expenditure, not just on network equipment, but also on spectrum management, security systems, ongoing maintenance, and skilled manpower.

"Unlike TSPs, most enterprises do not have the expertise to manage telecom infrastructure efficiently. What is written on paper could be more expensive in practice," said S P Kochhar, Director General of COAI.

Private telcos raise red flag on direct enterprise spectrum allocation; warn of security threats, revenue loss

COAI said global comparisons with countries like the US, Finland, Germany, and the UK were misleading, as private networks in those markets are typically located in remote or underserved areas.



DANISH KHAN | AUGUST 11, 2025 / 12:48 IST

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Industry · 2 Min Read

Direct spectrum allocation for enterprise 5G not tenable in India: Telcos

This comes after the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) ordered a fresh study—three years after an initial one—to assess the demand potential for setting up private networks through spectrum given directly by the telecom department to enterprises.



Ashutosh Kumar · ETTelecom
Published On Aug 11, 2025 at 02:07 PM IST



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30 Years of 1st Mobile Phone Call in India

India marked 30 years since its first mobile call, highlighting the telecom sector's rapid growth into the world's second-largest market with widespread connectivity and affordable data driving Digital India.

COAI noted that advancements from 4G to 5G, along with extensive coverage, have enabled large-scale digital adoption and positioned India as a key player in shaping future technologies like 6G.

Media Coverage: Coverage in PTI, IANS, ANI, ET Telecom, CNBC TV18, Dainik Jagran, YourStory, The Telegraph, ThePrint, etc. DG, COAI video byte on the occasion was covered in electronic media like PTI TV and CNBC Awaaz. Authored article published in ET Telecom on the occasion.



India's Digital Dominance: India Tops World In Mobile Data Usage, Telecom Subscribers Surge Past 117 Crore
30 Years of Mobile Phone in India: The usage of mobile phones in India has seen an exponential growth, with the country's telecom subscribers surging to 117 crore since the first time mobile phones were introduced in the country on 31 July 1995.

The Director General of the Cellular Operators Association of India, Lt. Gen. Dr SP Kochhar, told Jagran Prime, "After the first cellular call in the year 1995, India's telecom sector has seen a big change. Today, India is the world's second largest telecom market. Here, the rates are also low. Affordable rates have done the work of connecting crores of people. Along with this, India forward and given momentum to the development"

30 years since India's first mobile phone call: With eyes on future, country aims to lead 6G
ET Telecom
"While India followed the global curve during the 2G and 3G eras and caught up with the world in 4G, it surprised many by emerging as the country with the fastest 5G rollout in the world. Now, with a bold vision to lead in future technologies, India is actively working on developing 6G, not just to adopt, but to help shape and set global standards."
 S. P. Kochhar • ETTelecom
Published On Jul 31, 2025 at 12:27 PM IST • Read by 753 Professionals



Issue of Cable Cuts in Hyderabad

COAI strongly condemned the cable cuts by TGSPDCL in Hyderabad, stating that the “indiscriminate and aggressive” cutting of optical fibre cables caused widespread internet outages and disrupted essential services. It also highlighted that such actions violated court directions and urged authorities to stop blanket removals, protect telecom infrastructure and ensure uninterrupted connectivity for users.

Media Coverage: Conversations in PTI, UNI, Times of India, The Hindu, New Indian Express, Hindu BusinessLine, Telangana Today, Hindustan Times Telugu, NDTV, Deccan Chronicle, News18 Telugu, etc.

Broadband users hit in Hyderabad as power utility cuts cables, says COAI

KV Kurmanath
Hyderabad

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) said fiber-to-home connectivity in Hyderabad has been hit due to the ‘indiscriminate cutting of cables’ by the Telangana State Southern Power Distribution Company Ltd.

Following two electrocution incidents on Tuesday, which claimed seven lives, the company has intensified its crackdown on low-hanging wires. “We urge the department to refrain from cutting optical cables, as they result in severe disruptions to internet connectivity,” **businessline**.com Lt Gen S P Kochhar, Director General of COAI, said.

After internet outage in Hyderabad, officials spar



TGSPDCL employees remove unsafe cable wires from poles in Hyderabad



EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Hyderabad

The disruption has been caused by the electricity department's aggressive cutting of fibre optic cables. Internet cables do not carry electricity and are unrelated to power infrastructure

Lt Gen Dr SP Kochhar, Director General of COAI

PARTS of Hyderabad witnessed a major disruption in fibre-to-home broadband services, while cable TV went off air in several localities following the widespread cutting of fibre optic cables. The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) blamed the Southern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (TGSPDCL) for what it called “indiscriminate and aggressive” cable cutting.

However, the power utility defended its action, stating that it was carried out in the interest of public safety.

According to COAI, nearly one lakh fibre cables were cut by the electricity department on Tuesday, causing an outage across the city. Cable operators are expected to meet TGSPDCL CMD Musharraf Faruqi on Wednesday, warning that services may be discontinued across Hyderabad if talks fail.

A senior TGSPDCL official said operators were running cables according to norms. “Only safe cables were cut.”

He added that over a year ago, operators, but no corrective measures were taken.



Internet disruption sparks outrage

The government-imposed Internet disruption ruffled the feathers of many, as it came close on the heels of police advisories asking software firms to allow employees to work from home in view of the heavy rain predictions by the Met authorities.

Sources in major Internet service provider companies indicated that more than 1.5 lakh connections were affected just in Jio, Airtel, ACT and Hathway companies.

Several netizens expressed dismay over the haphazard measures, with some even claiming their livelihoods were affected. One user, posting under the username @SaveTheSystem, wrote: “I lost my job today due to Internet disconnection. Thanks to the government. I can stop paying taxes and live a happy life provided by the government. #Savethesystem.”

Another user, @halleyji, commented: “Should have planned

better even if it was in the interest of public safety. Many Internet service providers are down due to this action and affecting people who WFH (sic).” Similarly, @pranaykumar562 said: “No prior notice to public, neither from ISP nor from TGSPDCL. How do you expect people working from home to work?” while tagging Telangana CMO, Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, and CM Revanth Reddy. Internet users in Hyderabad, particularly those using Act Fibernet, Jio and Airtel, have extensively reported outages on Downdetector, a popular real-time platform that tracks and reports service disruptions across websites, apps and internet service providers.



Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) took a strong objection to what it termed as “indiscriminate

and aggressive cutting of optical fiber cables” by the electricity department.

In a statement on Tuesday night, the COAI director general, Lt Gen S P Kochhar acknowledged “significant problems” with fiber-to-home connectivity in Hyderabad due to cable cuts by TGSPDCL. “Today, a major network outage is affecting a large number of home broadband users in the city”.

The COAI media statement asserted that the Internet cables do not carry electricity and are therefore unrelated to power infrastructure.

“The industry is actively working to resolve the issue and restore services as quickly as possible. We urge the department to refrain from such indiscriminate actions, as they result in severe disruptions to internet connectivity, which is now an essential service”, the statement added.

COAI Dialogues 2025 Summit

COAI organized COAI Dialogues 2025, a full-day summit with participation from over 200 technology decision-makers, policy influencers and industry leaders, serving as a platform to advance India's digital growth.

A follow-up event to the COAI DigiCom 2025, the event focused on key themes such as regulatory reforms, spectrum availability and affordability, infrastructure sharing, investment opportunities and inclusive connectivity, fostering collaboration to build a future-ready digital ecosystem.

Media Coverage: Coverage in IANS, ANI, ET Telecom, BW Businessworld, Republic World, Amar Ujala, The Tribune, ET Government, Voice&Data Communications Today, etc.

INFO-TECH

India's digital economy growing 3-4 times faster: Head of Asia Pacific at GSMA

India is solidifying its position as a telecom superpower, says Julian Gorman, Head of Asia Pacific, GSMA

By ANI
Updated - September 07, 2025 at 03:27 PM | New Delhi, September 7



businessline.

Mobile technology is not just a vertical sector: it's the foundation for the digital economy, said Julian Gorman, Head of Asia Pacific, GSMA.

India has significantly expanded its addressable market for digital services, and it is estimated that the digital economy will contribute around 20 per cent of the nation's overall economy, said Julian Gorman, Head Asia Pacific, GSMA.

COAI: डिजिटल विश्वास पर सरकार और उद्योगों को मिलकर करना होगा काम, वाइस एआई की चुनौतियों को भी करना होगा कम

मिडिलेन मुक्ति, अरुण प्रसाद, सी विसी | Published by नमो इंडिया | Updated Fri, 25 Aug 2025 07:13 PM IST

भारतीय दूरसंचार उद्योग ने वर्ष 2047 तक एक विकसित भारत के लिए डिजिटल नेटवर्क को प्रासंगक बनाने की अपनी प्रतिबद्धता फिर से दोहराया है।



अमर उजाला

TRAI mulls scheme for second-hand devices to boost digital adoption

The UK and Vodafone Group PLC, according to the official, have initiatives and schemes for refurbished devices to promote digital inclusion.

Ashutosh Kumar - ET Telecom
Published On Aug 29, 2025 at 02:01 PM IST



[REPORT]
COAI DIALOGUES

Charting telecom's path to a trusted digital future

At COAI Dialogues 2025, trust, policy, and infrastructure converge to shape India's telecom roadmap for an inclusive, secure digital future.



BY PURNAM SINGH

VOICE&DATA

India's ambitious journey towards a fully digital economy took a decisive step forward at the COAI Dialogues 2025. The event, marked by strategic conversations among industry leaders, regulators and technology experts, underscored a shared national vision: to realise 'Viksit Bharat 2047' through inclusive digital infrastructure, trusted connectivity, and forward-looking regulation.

Organised by the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), in collaboration with Voice&Data, the day-long conference went beyond commercial specialties. It created a forum for problem-solving, calling for robust cross-sector partnerships and citizen engagement. From spectrum challenges to AI risks, both rural broadband to the promise of 6G, the Dialogues reflected the depth of India's telecom transformation.

FROM DIALOGUE TO ACTION: A NEW MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT
The conference opened with a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony led by Lt Gen Dr SP Kochhar, Director General of COAI, setting the tone for a participant-focused event on networks. Kochhar reiterated that the COAI Dialogues were structured not to end in platitudes but to generate actionable insights. The inaugural edition had earlier flagged key areas requiring deeper exploration: the 2025 edition aimed to convert these into strategic blueprints.

Rahul Verma, Vice-Chairman of COAI and Chief Regulatory Officer at Bharti Airtel, described telecom as the spine of India's digital story, enabling not just connectivity but national resilience. He flagged the need for trust-based digital ecosystems, pointing to rising

www.voiceanddata.com

VOICE&DATA | September 2025 | A CyberMedia Publication | 69

DPDP Rules 2025 notified by MeitY

COAI welcomed the DPDP Rules 2025, as a step forward for India's data protection framework while flagging key gaps around compliance clarity, security norms and operational alignment. At the same time, it recommended a more risk-based, harmonized approach across areas like breach reporting, consent management and obligations for data fiduciaries to ensure practical and efficient implementation.

Media Coverage: Coverage in IANS, PTI, Economic Times, Business Standard, Financial Express, Mint, Hindu BusinessLine, ET Telecom, Moneycontrol, CNBC TV18, Voice&Data, Communications Today, etc.

COAI SAYS EXISTING CONTROLS ALREADY REDUCE RISKS OF UNAUTHORISED ACCESS

DPDP Rules: Telcos Say Concerns Not Addressed

Industry body says it's compiling detailed inputs for MeitY on new rules

Operational Challenges

- Telcos push back on DPDP 2025
- Concerns on security framework & minor consent
- COAI calls for risk-based compliance
- Practical exemption sought for SIMs for minors aged 16-18 years
- Internal consent systems could replace external managers
- Unified breach reporting timeline recommended
- Overlap with IT Act, CERT-In & DoT rules flagged
- Harmonisation with sectoral laws urged
- Clear guidance from MeitY sought

COAI AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO SECURE DATA ECOSYSTEM

Our Bureau

New Delhi: Telecom operators in India that are considered significant data fiduciaries under the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules (DPDP) 2025 said most of their concerns and requests for additional clarity raised during public consultations remain unaddressed by the rules notified by the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY).

These areas include parameters for the security compliance framework, the age verification methodology for minors, data protection impact assessment (DPIA) obligations for significant data fiduciaries (SDF), operational aspects of multilingual consent, and harmonisation with sectoral laws.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), which represents the top three telecom operators, said unlike other sectors, telecom providers already deploy mature networks and system security controls. The existing controls already reduce risks of exfiltration or unauthorised access, and as such, the adequacy of safeguards should be assessed in a layered, risk-based manner for the sector.

"COAI is in the process of compiling detailed inputs for MeitY on the DPDP Rules. While the industry awaits detailed notification standards and parameters for compliance under the DPDP regime, COAI and its members affirm their longstanding commitment to a strong, secure and future-ready data protection ecosystem," COAI director general SP Kochhar said in a statement Thursday.

The COAI also recommended practical exemption in establishing verifiable consent for minors aged 16-18 years for SIM acquisition, stating that it presents practical challenges and does not adequately represent India's diverse household structures or the digital autonomy encouraged under various government initiatives.

The DPDP Rules prohibit directors and key personnel of data fiduciaries from associating with consent managers. The COAI said this is "overly stringent", adding that several established organisations in technology, financial and telecom services possess the experience required to operate a responsible consent management system.

"COAI is of the view that either a single, interoperable consent-management layer be permitted or that it be clarified that telecom operators are not mandatorily required to use external consent managers where a robust, auditable internal consent-management system is in place, provided that such systems fully meet the DPDP standards on consent," Kochhar said.

The telecom industry also opposed the current overlap of reporting security breaches, under the IT Act, CERT-In directions and DoT guidelines. The industry association recommended harmonised timelines to avoid unnecessary duplication.

The COAI also suggested that CERT-In and the Data Protection Board established under the DPDP Rules consider adopting a unified breach-reporting timeline with a single trigger, a harmonised reporting window, and a standardised incident-notification format applicable across all digital and telecom entities.

The industry has also opposed the overriding effect of the DPDP Act over other sectoral laws in case of conflict. "A review and harmonisation of sector-specific regulations with the DPDP framework, along with clear interpretive guidance, would help minimise ambiguity," the COAI said.

Telcos seek DPDP-telecom rules syncing

COAI to submit proposals to MeitY

BS REPORTER
New Delhi, 27 November

Telecommunications (telecom) service providers have flagged the need for aligning the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules with laws governing the telecom sector across areas such as security compliance frameworks, breach-notification requirements, and age-verification methodology for verifiable consent in the case of minors, among others.

For instance, on security compliance, carriers have said that the current framework in the telecom sector was highly detailed and resource-intensive. Therefore, under the DPDP Act, "a calibrated, risk-based approach consistent with global best practices and standards, aligned with established telecom-security norms" should be adopted by the Data Protection Board to ensure robust protection and an efficient compliance mechanism.

On the requirement of mandatory notification for data breaches (Rule 7), carriers have said that a proportionate reporting model, as followed in Japan and several European Union (EU) jurisdictions, should be adopted. Also, since there are multiple incident-reporting obligations under the Information Technology Act, Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) directions, guidelines by the Department of Telecommunications, and now the DPDP framework, harmonised timelines, and aligned procedures are essential.

This will "help avoid unnecessary duplication to ensure cohesive

Vodafone Idea. The industry body said that it would send a set of recommendations to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). The ministry notified the rules on November 14, bringing into effect the law which had been several years in the making. COAI has proposed that CERT-In and the Data Protection Board consider adopting a unified breach-reporting timeline, with a single trigger and a harmonised reporting window applicable across all digital and telecom entities.

"Standardised incident-notification format, accepted by all competent authorities, would ensure that regulators receive timely, consistent and decision-useful information, without necessitating multiple parallel reports under differing guidelines. This approach would be in line with the recent recommendations by the NITI Aayog panel, where they have proposed overhauling the nation's regulatory framework to promote ease of living and ease of doing business," the industry



THE MINISTRY NOTIFIED THE RULES ON NOVEMBER 14, BRINGING INTO EFFECT THE LAW

body added.

On reasonable security-safeguard mandates (Rule 6), the industry body has said that "reasonable security safeguards" should be assessed in a layered, risk-based manner, rather than through encryption and masking alone.

"From a sectoral standpoint, mature network and system security controls already deployed by telecom service providers reduce the risk of unauthorised access, exfiltration or misuse of personal data," it added, noting that the

Business Standard

Members of the association include Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and more on business-standard.com

'Data protection rules yet to clear up ambiguities on compliance'

Vallari Sanzgiri
Mumbai

Flagging various provisions of India's data protection laws as either ambiguous or overly stringent, telecom body Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on Wednesday issued a statement suggesting various revisions to the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules.

Following the notification of the DPDP Rules, the COAI

talked about persisting worries regarding children's data, breach reporting, consent-manager mechanisms and legislative overlap.

The industry body had listed these concerns in earlier submissions during public consultations.

"Most of these concerns remain unaddressed," said SP Kochhar, Director General, COAI.

It also raised concerns about the restrictions in the consent manager section, barring directors and key

personnel from having association with any data fiduciaries.

Calling it overly stringent, COAI said several organisations in technology, financial and telecom sectors have the experience required to operate responsible consent management systems.

CONSENT MANAGERS

"Either a single, interoperable consent-management layer be permitted or that it be clarified that telecom operators are

clarified that telecom operators are not mandatorily required to use external consent managers where a robust, auditable internal consent-management system that meet the DPDP standards on consent is in place," it said.

COAI also asked for a practical exemption for minors between 16 and 18 years for SIM acquisition since verifiable consent be

autonomy encouraged under various government initiatives.

On security compliance, COAI said the Data Protection Board must adopt a calibrated, risk-based approach to align with the current framework in the telecom sector.

DATA BREACH

It recommended a data breach reporting model that harmonises the various timelines for incident-reporting obligations under

the Information Technology Act, CERT-In directions, Department of Telecom guidelines and the DPDP framework.

It suggested the CERT-In and the Board consider a unified breach-reporting timeline and trigger for all entities, adhering to the recent NITI Aayog panel recommendations that proposed overhauling the nation's regulatory framework to promote ease of living and ease of doing business.

Navi Mumbai Airport Network Connectivity Issue

COAI urged the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to ensure seamless mobile connectivity at the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport. The industry body was seeking timely intervention to facilitate the necessary infrastructure and spectrum coordination required for robust 5G and 4G coverage across the airport terminals and premises.

Media Coverage: Conversions in PTI, Times of India, Hindustan Times, Mint, Mid-Day, The Hindu, Mid-Day and others.

Cellphone network row at NMLA, telcos write to govt

Mumbai: The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has alleged that Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd (NMIAL) has denied telecom operators statutory right of way (RoW) permissions and attempted to impose an exclusive in-building telecom network at commercial-unviable rates.

In a Dec 30 letter to the department of telecommunications, COAI said Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio Infocomm and Vodafone Idea had approached NMIAL in April seeking permission to set up a jointly deployed in-building solution (IBS) network at the airport. COAI said this request aligned with the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the RoW Rules, 2024.

Instead of granting RoW

'WILL HIT COMPETITION'

- COAI alleges NMIAL has denied telcos right of way permissions for a joint in-building solution network
- Says NMIAL mandated use of IBS network deployed by it
- Argues a joint IBS better designed, much cheaper
- Warns such exclusivity will undermine competition, consumer choice and regulatory neutrality
- NMIAL denies allegations made by the telcos

for the operators' joint IBS, COAI alleged that NMIAL mandated the use of an IBS network deployed by the airport operator itself, at significantly higher costs. TNN



THE TIMES OF INDIA

► Denies allegations, P 4

TELCOS' BODY, ADANI-OWNED NAVI MUMBAI AIRPORT CLASH OVER RoW ISSUE

Prss Trust Of India

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Telcos' body COAI on Tuesday sought Telecom Department's intervention over alleged denial of Right of Way (RoW) permission as well as higher charges at the Navi Mumbai International Airport, evoking a strong response from the Adani Group-owned airport, which rejected the claims and asserted that it will not give in to "cartelisation" on rates.

In a letter to the Telecom Secretary, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) said that the Department of Telecommunications' intervention is critical to ensure adherence to the statutory RoW framework, preservation of competitive neutrality, and to prevent inconvenience to consumers and passengers using the airport facilities.

COAI said its member telecom service providers, including Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio Infocomm and Vodafone Idea, had approached Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd (NMIAL) seeking requisite approvals to deploy their own telecom networks, including in-building solutions (IBS) infrastructure, to provide seamless 4G and 5G connectivity within the airport. "However, contrary to the statutory framework under the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the RoW Rules 2024, NMIAL has declined to grant the necessary permissions," COAI alleged.

In a strongly-worded statement, NMIA said the IBS infrastructure for mobile network was procured and installed after multiple discussions with individual TSPs, and in fact, government-owned BSNL is already in the advanced phase of testing for the use of IBS at the airport.

"Owing to the delay by other TSPs, NMIA is providing free, high-speed wi-fi services re-iterating its commitment to provide high-speed connectivity to all the passengers.

"We are rigorously following up with TSPs to conclude the discussions. We welcome individual TSPs to discuss and mutually agree on rates. However, we will not give in to any cartelization in this regard." NMIA said in the statement.

Adani-run airport blocking mobile infra: telcos

Jagriti Chandra
Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Telecom companies are sparring with the Adani Group and have sought the Centre's intervention over the latter's refusal to grant "right of way" (RoW) at the recently opened Navi Mumbai airport for deploying infrastructure to provide cellular services to air travellers, alleging "monopolistic arrangements" by the airport operator which has deployed an in-building network and has sought from telcos "extortionary charges" that "undermine competition and consumer choice".

Earlier a picture went viral on social media of a public display board at the Navi Mumbai airport informing passengers that mobile signals for Airtel,



Monopoly move: The Navi Mumbai International Airport operator has sought nearly ₹92 lakh per month per telecom company, PTI

Vodafone and Jio may not be available at the airport and they could use the free airport Wi-Fi.

The airport operator has countered charges from telcos, and said that as the airport was a sensitive zone, frequent servicing, maintenance and upkeep of the infrastructure was best managed by it,

and, therefore, it had opted for In Building Solution (IBS) infrastructure.

"The Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited has declined to grant the necessary permissions and directed telecom service providers (TSPs) to mandatorily utilise a network deployed by it, at exorbitant and commercially untenable

charges," the Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) said in a statement.

It has written to the Department of Telecommunications seeking its intervention on the matter.

The airport operator has sought nearly ₹92 lakh per month per operator, aggregating to nearly ₹44.16 crore per annum for four operators.

Public entity

The COAI has demanded that as the airport qualifies as a public entity as per the provisions of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024, the airport operator is obligated to mandatorily utilise a network deployed by it, at exorbitant and commercially untenable

charges," the Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) said in a statement.

It further states that the Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited has conferred upon itself exclusive RoW rights under the guise of being a "neutral host" and asserted that such a grant of exclusive RoW or creation of "monopolistic arrangements" for provision of RoW for the purpose of building the telecommunication network were not permissible under the law.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi remarked about this controversy on X and wrote, "Here comes the business



THE HINDU

India Mobile Congress 2025

The India Mobile Congress (IMC), 2025 was held from 8–11 October 2025, at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in New Delhi, centered around the theme “Innovate to Transform”. Co-organized by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the COAI, the event showcased over 1,000 use cases focusing on 6G, AI and cybersecurity to highlight India’s growing leadership in the global digital landscape.

Media Coverage: COAI quotes appeared in pre-event stories and inauguration-led stories, basis participation in panel discussions. Two authored articles by DG, COAI were published in Fortune India and Communications Today IMC 2025 Show Daily Newsletter. Garnered standalone coverage in PTI, Financial Express, Outlook Business, ETV Bharat, Informist Media and Moneycontrol. Electronic and video coverage of DG-COAI through interviews with ET Now, NDTV, NDTV Profit, Sansad TV, DD News, ANI TV, PTI TV, IANS Video and Moneycontrol Podcast were also achieved.



Telcos seek uniform satcom, OTT rules

OJASVI GUPTA
New Delhi, October 12

AT A GLANCE

- Operators want common rules for satcom and OTT platforms
- OneWeb, Starlink, and others are set to launch services
- Satellite players oppose being regulated like traditional telcos
- Telcos demand Netflix and WhatsApp share infrastructure costs
- Industry seeks lower reserve prices ahead of 6G and satcom expansion

TELECOM OPERATORS ARE pressing the department of telecommunications (DoT) to ensure a level regulatory playing field for satellite communication (satcom) and over-the-top (OTT) platforms, saying existing rules need to evolve in line with the digital economy.

“Satcom is complementary, not competing. It can help extend coverage in rural areas faster and cheaper. But it must operate under the same rules if it’s offering the same services,” SP Kochhar, director general, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), told FE. COAI’s members include private telecom majors Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, and Vodafone Idea.

The push comes as global satellite players such as Eutelsat OneWeb, Jio-Sat, and Starlink prepare to enter the broadband market, with their licences ready for rollout. Telcos argue that asymmetrical regulation could distort market dynamics if similar services are governed by different standards.

Satellite internet providers, including Viasat, OneWeb, Hughes, and Nello, have urged the DoT to create a “satellite” licence category for operators. They claim the draft telecom authorisation framework could slow growth

and discourage investment if it subjects satellite services to the same rules as traditional telecom operators.

Both sides have raised concerns over regulatory delays and the structure of approvals for satellite-based connectivity. Incumbent telcos argue that preferential treatment for new entrants could undercut players already burdened by high spectrum costs and statutory levies.

Another major demand from telecom operators is regulatory intervention to make OTT traffic but paying nothing. If someone is getting something free, they won’t come to the table voluntarily. The government should make them sit and decide,” Kochhar added.

Operators want a framework that would require major OTTs like Netflix, WhatsApp, Amazon Prime Video, Facebook, Instagram, and Zoom to pay a share of network costs, possibly through a levy similar to the Universal Service Obligation fee.

Telcos also want lower spectrum reserve prices and rationalised levies, arguing that the current pricing models date back to the 2G era and are unsuited to the digital ecosystem. They say pricing is crucial as the industry prepares for 6G deployment.



ETV Bharat / Technology

Telecom, Startup Sectors Lead In Fighting Digital Fraud, Shaping 6G Future.
COAI DG

He said that the level of innovation taking place across India is designed to close the digital divide and advance its position on global standards.



Representational Image. (IANS)



COAI 2025 Year-end Perspective for Indian Telecom

To conclude 2025, COAI released a detailed year-end note reviewing major developments in India's telecom sector and presenting its outlook for 2026.

DG-COAI's authored article was also published in ET Telecom

Media Coverage: Conversions in PTI, ANI, Economic Times, ET Telecom, Moneycontrol, Republic World, ET BrandEquity, The Tribune, BW Businessworld, India Tv and others.

Telcos, gear makers see promising year ahead

moving into a phase where innovation and trust will define competitiveness, setting the stage for a decade of resilient and globally benchmarked digital connectivity," Kohli said.

COAI represents telecom service providers (TSPs) such as Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone-Idea, and telecom equipment suppliers such as Ericsson, Nokia, Qualcomm, Indus Towers, among others.

SUBSCRIBER BASE
According to the industry body, the Indian telecom industry remained central to the country's digital growth in 2025, with the overall subscriber base reaching 1.2 billion by November and teledensity rising to 86.76 per cent.

Wireless broadband continued to dominate with 954.99 million users compared to 44.82 million wireline connections, supported by rapid 5G adoption that rose to 394 million subscriptions by the end of the year.

WIRED FUTURE. "The outlook looks promising in 2026 because it is witnessing strong momentum across mobile networks, fixed wireless access and fixed broadband."

Network expansion was also equally strong as India crossed 3.15 lakh 5G RFS sites and average mobile data usage touched 36 GB per month, with a forecast of 65 GB by 2031.

Fixed wireless access grew rapidly with subscribers rising to 13.18 million in October across both urban and rural markets.

According to Tarun Chhabra, Senior Vice-President and Country Head, Nokia India, the outlook for the industry looks promising in 2026 because it is witnessing strong momentum across mobile networks, fixed wireless access, and fixed broadband as data consumption continues to grow in network expansion and

upgrades. Looking ahead, the industry will be increasingly defined by artificial intelligence (AI)-driven network automation and the expansion of data centres alongside transport infrastructure to support cloud and edge workloads," Chhabra added.

Ankit Jain, Managing Director, MediaTek India, said that generative and agentic AI will soon become central to edge-device experiences, while 5G and satellite (NTN) convergence will ensure seamless connectivity, even in the remotest areas.

"As 2026 approaches, India has emerged as a global engine of digital innovation, with consumers demanding flagship performance and hyper-intelligent experiences. Intelligence is rapidly democratizing — we are empowering users with 'On-Device Generative AI'. At MediaTek, we see India as both a key market and a hub of engineering excellence, shaping the global semiconductor landscape," he added.

India's telecom subscriber base hits 1.2 bn in 2025, adds nearly 400 mn 5G users: COAI

ANI - Last Updated: Dec 18, 2025, 10:52:00 PM IST

Synopsis
Citing the Ericsson Mobility Report, COAI said, "Wireless broadband continued to dominate with 954.99 million users compared to 44.82 million wireline connections, supported by rapid 5G adoption that rose to 394 million subscriptions by the end of the year."

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Industry · 8 Min Read

ET Telecom

Jio, Ericsson, Nokia, COAI say 5G monetisation, AI-led traffic, APIs, digital trust to be leading trends in 2026

Ericsson has projected that India's 5G subscriber base is set to expand from nearly 394 million by the end of 2025 to over 1 billion by 2031 – with a 79% penetration rate – as fourth-generation (4G) network subscribers continue to decline.

ETTelecom Desk · ETTelecom
Published On Dec 26, 2025 at 08:53 AM IST · Read by 3354 Professionals

COAI Recommendations for Union Budget 2026-27 for Telecom Sector

Prior to the announcement of Union Budget 2026-27, COAI issued a press release pushing forward the recommendations of the telecom sector.

DG, COAI also participated in a post-budget panel titled, “From digital infrastructure to no tax changes - the pillars for Viksit Bharat” at the Times of India Budget Dialogue 2026.

Further, interviews were conducted with ET Now, NewsX and CNBC Awaaz.

Media Coverage: Conversions in PTI, ANI and IANS, Hindustan Times, Economic Times, Financial Express, Hindu Business Line, ET Now, Times of India, Mint, Moneycontrol, ET Telecom, etc.

Telcos seek licence fee, GST relief

URVI MALYANIA
Mumbai, January 13

PRIVATE TELECOM OPERATORS, represented by the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), highlighted two primary expectations from the Union Budget: a reduction in regulatory levies and targeted relief under the goods and services tax (GST) framework.

In a statement, COAI pointed out that sustained financial pressure is constraining the industry's ability to invest in next-generation networks.

The industry body has urged the government to ease what it described as a huge financial burden arising from regulatory fees, particularly the licence fee



structure linked to adjusted gross revenue (AGR).

“The licence fee, which is a combination of the licence (3% of AGR) and Digital Bharat Nidhi Contribution (5% of AGR), is a huge financial burden for the Licensed Telcos,” SP Kochhar, director-general, COAI, said. The

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

“The Digital Bharat Nidhi contribution should be paused for the time till the unused corpus has been completely utilised by the Department of Telecommunications,” Kochhar said.

On GST-related concerns, COAI highlighted the accumulation of input tax credit (ITC) as a major cash flow challenge for telecom operators.

“Special benefit may be provided to telecom operators in GST by way of exemption of GST on regulatory payments of LE, SUC and spectrum assigned under auction,” Kochhar said.

Alternatively, COAI has suggested reduction in GST rate

mechanisms, licence fees and spectrum usage charges from the current 18% rate to the lower 5% slab, arguing that the move would be revenue-neutral for the government while easing ITC accumulation.

COAI has also called for allowing the use of existing ITC balances to discharge GST liabilities under reverse charge, a step that “will not only protect the cash outflow for telcos but also help in utilising accumulated ITC”, Kochhar said.

Positioning telecom as a foundational layer for the broader economy, Kochhar said the sector is now a “horizontal value-added enabler” for all other verticals”, underscoring the need to revisit spectrum pricing and assignment models in line with its evolving role.



ET NOW @ETNOWlive

#WATCH | Ahead of the Union Budget SP Kochhar of the Cellular Operators Association of India shares insights into the telecom sector's priorities and highlights progress on easing right of way challenges

#Exclusive #TelecomSector #UnionBudget #COAI #DigitalInfrastructure @CharuSingh_345 @ConnectCOAI

MEASURES NEEDED TO BOOST 5G ADOPTION

2:12 PM · Jan 13, 2026 · 1,145 Views

Telcos Seek Cut in Regulatory Levies

Our Bureau

New Delhi: Telecom operators have sought a reduction in regulatory levies, including the licence fee, urging the government to slash the fee from the current 0.5-3% of the adjusted gross revenue (AGR). They have also asked for a reassessment of spectrum pricing and assigning models, arguing that telco networks have become a key enabler of the digital economy. Affordable 5G spectrum will support more use cases, they said.

Telcos have also asked the government to pause their contribution to the Digital Bharat Nidhi fund, which takes up 5% of the consolidated telecom revenue, until the time the consolidated fund has been completely utilised by the Department of Telecommunications. The recommendations have been submitted by the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) to the government for consideration ahead of the presentation of the Union budget for 2026-27.

In addition, the COAI asked the government to exempt GST on regulatory payments including licence fee, spectrum usage charges and for spectrum assigned under auctions.



“As an alternative to the above, COAI has suggested that the rate of GST under reverse charge on spectrum payment, licence fees, spectrum usage charges, etc. can be reduced from the existing 18% rate to the lower rate of 5% since it is revenue neutral to the government and shall help in reducing ITC (input tax credit) accumulation,” the COAI said.

Telco body COAI seeks cut in regulatory levies

New Delhi: Telcos' industry body COAI has sought reduction in regulatory levies, including in licence fee to 0.5-1 per cent from three per cent, in the upcoming Budget. In its submission to the government, the Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) suggested that funds to the Digital Bharat Nidhi should be paused till the time unused corpus is completely utilised by the Telecom Department.

businessline.
Vodafone Idea. PTI

COAI at India AI Impact Summit 2026

India organised the AI Impact Summit 2026, held in New Delhi, the first global AI summit hosted in the Global South, focusing on fostering AI for humanity through “People, Planet and Progress”. COAI pushed its AI in telecom narrative on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit.


Published authored articles by DG, COAI in Fortune India and ET Telecom, and drove video interactions with PTI, IANS and DD News. COAI organised telecom focused sessions at the summit and the narrative was further pushed with AI in Telecom stories in media.

Media Coverage: Conversions in ANI, Mint, ET Telecom, News18, Zee News, The Tribune, Voice&Data, Communications Today, etc. and electronic/video coverage including PTI Video, IANS Live and DD News.

India AI Impact Summit 2026: Telcos to assume central role in AI age, say executives

Julian Gorman, head of Asia Pacific at GSMA, underlined that AI also reduces literacy, digital, and language barriers for how users interface with the internet.

ETTelecom Desk • ETTelecom
Published On Feb 16, 2025 at 02:01 PM IST • Hood by 508 Professionals



NEW DELHI: Telecom operators will assume a greater role in the artificial intelligence (AI) age, with their networks carrying compute capacities and further enabling intelligent consumer and enterprise services, said top industry executives on Tuesday, during the ongoing India AI Impact Summit 2026.

भारत तकनीक के बड़े मंच की मेजबानी के लिए तैयार



India AI Impact Summit 2026 | भारत का वैश्विक AI संवाद | Special Coverage | AI India | PM Modi News

DD News 7.68m subscribers

PTI Press Trust of India @PTI_News

VIDEO | AI Summit: “AI needs strong telecom foundations to deliver real impact,” says S P Kochhar, Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India.

#PTIAIImpactSummit #IndiaAIImpactSummit2026 #AIImpactSummit2026

(Full video available on ptivideos.com)



4:30 PM - Feb 17, 2026 - 1,301 Views

IANS @ians_india

Delhi: On AI in Telecom Sector, Director General, COAI (Cellular Operators Association of India), Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar says, “AI will work on Telecom networks. The data’s will be stored in data centers. When we will bring the data and take away the data, it will depend on the telecom network... The Talent pool is good. The market is good; it can be a good manufacturing base...”



8:37 PM - Feb 17, 2026 - 421 Views

Thought Leadership Articles


This year, COAI shared insights across leading publications on key industry topics such as AI and Generative AI in telecom, App based communication services-related spam and frauds, green networks, digital inclusion and rural connectivity, as well as telecom's role as a horizontal enabler of India's digital ecosystem. Articles also explored emerging areas including digital twins, spectrum refarming, 5G and 6G evolution, India's 6G leadership opportunity, investor confidence in the sector and telecom's role in disaster management and national digital infrastructure. COAI's thought leadership further addressed regulatory and ecosystem developments such as the Telecommunications Act, the rural-urban digital divide and year-end perspectives outlining trends for 2026.

Media Coverage: Articles were published across leading platforms including ET Telecom, Fortune India, Hindustan Times, BW Businessworld, Voice&Data, Communications Today, Tele.net Magazine, among several others.

Why telecom networks are India's most critical AI infrastructure

As fraudsters begin to weaponize AI, telecom networks are responding with AI of their own. This evolving AI-versus-AI dynamic will define the future of digital trust. Governance systems built on AI must be secure and telecom networks are becoming the frontline defence in protecting citizens.

S. P. Kochhar • ETTelecom
Published On Feb 16, 2025 at 12:38 AM IST



India stands at the cusp of a profound transformation. Artificial Intelligence is rapidly moving beyond novelty and convenience — it is becoming a foundational layer of governance, public service delivery, economic growth and national competitiveness. From fraud detection and healthcare diagnostics to real-time disaster response and smart infrastructure, AI is reshaping how nations function.

AI as a foundational force in shaping India's telecom and digital future

India is at a crossroads where legacy, AI-based and custom-built change every line item. This divergence presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

ET | An Investment on Google



Artificial intelligence is no longer a futuristic concept or peripheral tool. It has become a foundational pillar for managing complexity at scale. As networks expand, systems proliferate and expectations rise, AI is emerging as the critical intelligence glue that binds together the nation's digital ecosystems. However, in this transformation, one must realize that in the telecom sector, where AI is already redefining how services are planned, operated, secured and experienced.

30 years since India's first mobile phone call: With eyes on future, country aims to lead 6G

While India followed the global curve during the 2G and 3G eras and caught up with the world in 4G, it surprised many by emerging as the country with the fastest 5G rollout in the world. Now, with a bold vision to lead in future technologies, India is actively working on developing 6G, not just to adopt, but to help shape and set global standards.

S. P. Kochhar • ETTelecom
Published On Jul 31, 2025 at 12:27 PM IST • Read by 754 Professionals



AI-powered Bharat will be built on the strength of its connectivity backbone

MAINTAINING THE CONNECTIVITY

LT GEN DR SP KOCHHAR
DIRECTOR GENERAL
COAI



Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transitioning from a frontier technology to a foundational force shaping economics, governance, and societies. From intelligent healthcare diagnostics and personalised education to smart agriculture and predictive governance, AI promises to transform how nations operate and how citizens interact with public and private systems.

Yet, beneath every AI breakthrough lies a less visible but far more fundamental enabler — connectivity.

TELECOM TURNS TIDE WITH CAPITAL SPEED AND CONFIDENCE

TELECOM TURNS TIDE WITH CAPITAL SPEED AND CONFIDENCE

Telecom is becoming a strategic digital ally, not just a utility. It is now a key driver of growth and innovation across the economy.

Telecom is becoming a strategic digital ally, not just a utility. It is now a key driver of growth and innovation across the economy.

Telecom meets every sector - The rise of horizontal networks as universal infrastructure

LT GEN DR SP KOCHHAR | Director General | Cellular Operators Association of India



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Design, develop, deploy: India's end-to-end strategy for leading the next wave of digital infrastructure

Home / Opinion / Design, develop, deploy: India's end-to-end strategy for leading the next wave of digital infrastructure.

Li Gen. (Retd) SP Kochhar
October 7, 2025, 17:50 IST / 3 min read

Summary Share

India's techade: Accelerating 5G realities and shaping the 6G future

By Lt Gen. Dr SP Kochhar

This article is authored by Lt Gen. Dr SP Kochhar, Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).



Telecom meets every sector - The rise of horizontal networks as universal infrastructure

LT GEN DR SP KOCHHAR | Director General | Cellular Operators Association of India



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Media Visibility Snapshot 2025-26



COAI calls for same rules for telcos, OTT services

Aditi Agrawal
aditi@hindustantimes.com
NEW DELHI: A prominent industry body that represents telcos lauded the IT parliamentary committee's recommendation that the IT ministry, information and broadcasting ministry, and the department of telecommunications should be brought under one umbrella to address regulatory issues stemming from technological convergence. This will lead to efficiency in policy formulation and compliance by companies, the body said. In a statement, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), whose core members

are Airtel, Jio and Vodafone Idea, said that such convergence of the ministries would lead to the same regulations being equally applied to telcos and over-the-top (OTT) communication platforms such as WhatsApp, especially anti-spam regulations. "Taking the same logic into the operational domain covering spam/fraud messages and calls spanning over both telecom networks and OTT channels, it is necessary to apply one set of policies and regulations to both components, i.e., TSPs and OTTs," the statement read. It said that while telcos are governed by the Telecom Commercial Communication Customer

THE TELCOS ARGUED THAT THE ACT REQUIRES WHATSAPP-LIKE SERVICES TO NEED AUTHORISATION FROM THE GOVT TO OPERATE
Preference Regulation (TCCCPR) 2018 to fight spam, app-based services are ungoverned. "[T]he App based communications currently not under the same regulation, remain unchecked and are becoming a growing concern for the con-

sumers and the government," the statement said. "The 'same service, same rules' argument is something that the telcos have been making for many years, much to the chagrin of technology companies. It was a sticking point in the open house discussions that the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) held last year to discuss how authorisations (to replace the licensing regime) should be implemented under the Telecommunications Act, 2023. The telcos argued that the act requires WhatsApp-like services to need authorisation from the government to operate in India while the tech companies

and their industry bodies argued otherwise. The debate over regulatory convergence is not new. In 2023, the Trai sought public input on whether telecom services (carrriage) and broadcasting services (content) should be governed by a unified regulator, considering the changing technological landscape. Trai also explored whether such a regulator should oversee OTT services including streaming platforms (Netflix) and communication platforms (WhatsApp). While the telcos batted for convergence, civil society and other industries including broadcasters, publishers and technology companies argued against it.

TELCOS BAT FOR WIDENING AMBIT

Regulate OTTs Under Cyber Norms to Curb Spam and Fraud: COAI

Our Bureau

Kolkata: Telecom carriers have called on the government to bring over-the-top (OTT) communication platforms including WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram also under the ambit of India's cybersecurity and related regulatory rules to combat the menace of spam/scam calls and messages. These rules are already mandatory for telcos.

"Cybersecurity measures need to be reinforced with clear outlines, which is to free people of unwanted spam/fraud calls and messages to the maximum extent possible. It may be judicious that similar cybersecurity and regulatory rules govern all necessary players such as TSPs or OTT Communication Applications. This can be the only way to provide relief," SP Kochhar, director general, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), said in a statement on Tuesday.

COAI represents Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea. The telecom industry body also cautioned that the rising trend of spam and scam calls/messages could continue unchecked if an OTT app used in a particular mobile number is utilised in a different handset. "This, it said, happens as online fraudsters, typically, take advantage of the fact that an OTT communications app, and the SIM or specific mobile communication are not closely linked.



Cybersecurity measures need to be reinforced with clear outlines, which is to free people of spam/fraud to the maximum

REVENUE-SHARE MODEL 2.0

Levy USO-like fee on OTTs: Telcos to DoT

GULVEEN AULAKH
New Delhi, 26 May



The revenue-sharing tussle between telecom operators and over-the-top (OTT) apps has taken a fresh turn. Now, telcos want the government to play a role in getting data-guzzling OTTs — which they refer to as large traffic generators (LTGs) — to pay a charge for using the telecom networks to offer their services to consumers. Telecom service providers, including Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, have collectively proposed to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) that a levy be imposed on such OTTs' income generated from India. That levy could get pooled into the Consolidated Fund of India or the Digital Bharat Nidhi (erstwhile Universal Services Obligation Fund meant for connectivity in rural and remote areas), the telcos have suggested.

According to executives familiar with the details, the idea is to help telcos use the fund, coming from the levy on such OTTs, to provide data and voice connectivity in the underserved areas of the country. Queries to DoT, Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea did not elicit a response till the time of going to press. Earlier, telcos' demands centered around a revenue-share agreement directly between the carriers and large traffic generators (LTGs) like Netflix, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and other apps on the ground that the entities were not contributing towards supporting the data network infrastructure that telcos build. LTGs take up a significant portion of the network bandwidth, the carriers claimed

previously, while asking them to give a share of their revenues towards the infrastructure spend. Telcos have, for instance, spent more than \$3 trillion in setting up 5G networks in the country. "It is imperative that the LTGs, who transmit a huge volume of data over the networks established by telecom service providers, contribute to upgrading the network infrastructure," SP Kochhar, director general of the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), said in response to queries from *Business Standard*. Turn to page 6

Telcos oppose vendor model for metro 3 mobile network coverage

Mumbai: Telcos and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) have raised concerns over the vendor model for metro 3 mobile network coverage. The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has raised concerns over the vendor model for metro 3 mobile network coverage. The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has raised concerns over the vendor model for metro 3 mobile network coverage.

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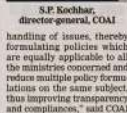
The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has raised concerns over the vendor model for metro 3 mobile network coverage. The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has raised concerns over the vendor model for metro 3 mobile network coverage.

Telcos support merger of allied ministries

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
Calcutta: The telecom industry has supported the recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology to bring the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) under one umbrella.

The recommendation was part of the 11th report of the standing committee presented in the Lok Sabha last week. "Telecom operators' body—the Cellular Operators Association of India—on Wednesday said that if the government decides on the merger, it would improve transparency and compliance. "In whatever format this is implemented, it will lead to a focused and composite

handling of issues, thereby formulating policies which are equally applicable to all the ministries concerned and reduce multiple policy formulations on the same subject, thus improving transparency and compliances," said COAI director-general S.P. Kochhar. The industry body pointed out the need to apply one set of policies and regulations that are applicable to both telecom service providers (TSPs) and over-the-top (OTT) service providers in the domain of spam/fraud messages. "While telcos are governed



6GHz band crucial for telcos to drive rural 5G connectivity: COAI

COAI, echoing its views with the London-based association, said the 6.425-7.125GHz range was identified for IMT (mobile services) at WRC-23 by several countries, and will be essential for 5G expansion and the future development of mobile networks.



6GHz band crucial for telcos to drive rural 5G connectivity: COAI

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WTD 2025: Bridging digital gender divide for inclusive future for India

"The shift towards ICT-enabled services and digital platforms has opened new employment avenues for women. Telecom networks have laid the foundation for online work, which offer flexible, remote career options, especially useful for women constrained by mobility or family responsibilities."

S.P. Kochhar - ETTELECOM
Published on May 15, 2025 at 11:38 AM IST



Telcos for SIM-binding on OTT apps

AASHISH ARYAN
New Delhi, 6 August

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has suggested that over-the-top (OTT) communication applications — such as WhatsApp and Telegram — should be "mandated to bind" with a verified mobile SIM at all times.

The move will help prevent cyber fraud and strengthen national security, said COAI. Currently, OTT communication apps are bound to users' devices only once, during the service registration process on the device.

These apps continue to function even after the SIM card against which the account was registered is removed from the device, replaced or deactivated.

"It will also help establish a regulatory level-playing field by ensuring that laws and compliance frameworks governing user identification, geographic



COAI's case for binding

- Says binding prevents cyber fraud, strengthens national security
- Will also help establish a regulatory level-playing field
- Maintains critical traceability between the users, numbers, and device
- Crimes committed via OTT apps are hard to trace due to lack of SIM-based records

accuracy and lawful interception protocols apply equally to app-based communication services and telecom service providers," COAI director general S.P. Kochhar said.

The industry body, which represents all three telecom operators — Reliance Jio Infocomm, Bharti Airtel, and VI — said that a mandatory and persistent SIM-binding that remains active beyond initial installation will ensure that the communication service cannot

operate without the authenticated SIM being physically inserted in the device. It will thereby maintain critical traceability between the user, the number and the device.

COAI's demand to mandate the binding of communication apps to a single SIM comes at a time when there has been a rise in OTT app-based spam and fraud messages, as well as calls. The telecom industry body also said that India's mobile network operators

are taking measures such as implementing caller name presentation, and checking principal entity-telemarketer binding.

OTT communication apps, which are immune to telecom-level controls, are being used without any oversight, the body said.

"If the original SIM card is removed from the device and the device with the OTT communication app is used for a criminal activity from any geographic location, since no SIM is present during the crime, there is no verifiable link — such as call records, location data or carrier logs — to prove which device was used or where the activity occurred," COAI said.

Earlier this year, Bharti Airtel launched and deployed fraud and spam detection solutions across its network. These were aimed at protecting consumers from not only calls but also messages received on various OTT communication apps.

TECH
SPECIAL



AI CALLING: THE NEW DIAL TONE OF TELECOM

From network optimisation to personalised services, AI is redefining telecom's core — making connectivity smarter, foster, and future-ready

THE Indian telecom industry is rapidly embracing artificial intelligence (AI) playing a crucial role in transforming the network operations and services. COAI has consistently emphasised the importance of AI in optimising network efficiency, enhancing user experience and managing the increasing demand for bandwidth-heavy applications like HD video streaming, cloud gaming, and high-quality video conferencing. In 2023, mobile data consumption in India reached an average of 1.1 GB per month, with mobile data usage increasing 17% YoY, indicating a 20% per year CAGR over the past five years. COAI emphasises the importance of telecom companies investing in AI-driven solutions

COAI: डिजिटल विश्वास पर सरकार और उद्योगों को मिलकर करना होगा काम, वाइड एआई की चुनौतियों को भी करना होगा कम

डिजिटल वरु, अमर उजाला, नई दिल्ली | Published by: गूगल बुक्स | Updated Fri, 29 Aug 2025 07:13 PM IST





भारतीय दूरसंचार उद्योग ने वर्ष 2047 तक एक विकसित भारत के लिए डिजिटल नेटवर्क का मासुदा करने की अपनी प्रतिबद्धता फिर से दोहराया है।

1995 में दिल्ली-कोलकाता कॉल से शुरुआत

COAI again opposes direct allocation of spectrum for pvt 5G

QIASVI GUPTA
New Delhi, August 11



COAI strongly believes that all enterprise 5G needs must be met through licensed telecom service providers

FOLLOWING THE RECENT move by the department of telecommunications (DoT) to reassess spectrum demand for private 5G networks, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on Monday once again urged the government to avoid direct allocation of spectrum to enterprises for captive non-public networks (NPN). The industry body comprising telecom service providers Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea said such networks should be deployed only through licensed telecom service providers (TSPs) using spectrum leasing or network slicing.

COAI said direct spectrum allocation to enterprises could pose security risks, reduce government revenues, and create an uneven competitive environment. It warned that private entities with direct spectrum access could use existing infra without facing equivalent regulatory or financial requirements.

"COAI strongly believes that all enterprise 5G needs must be met through licensed telecom service providers, via spectrum leasing or network slicing, to ensure national security, protect revenues, and maintain regulatory parity," S.P. Kochhar, director general of COAI, said.

Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, DG of COAI, remarks on current telecom scenario

What are the main business challenges in India's telecom industry? The industry is facing a paradigm shift due to the rapid adoption of 5G and the increasing demand for bandwidth-intensive services. This is leading to a significant increase in network costs and a need for more efficient spectrum utilization. Additionally, the entry of new players and the growing importance of digital services are creating a highly competitive environment. The industry must focus on innovation, network optimization, and customer-centric services to thrive in this dynamic market.

How do you see the future of the Indian telecom industry? The future of the Indian telecom industry is bright, driven by the rapid adoption of 5G and the increasing demand for digital services. The industry is expected to continue to grow, with a focus on innovation and customer-centric services. The government's support for digital infrastructure and the industry's commitment to providing high-quality services will be key factors in driving this growth.

Telecom firms flag hurdles in data privacy compliance

Operators need to comply with the data protection norms within 12-18 months

India's major telecom operators have flagged hurdles in complying with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill, 2023, during a meeting with the government. The operators, including Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, and Vodafone Idea, expressed concerns over the complexity of the regulations and the need for more time to implement the necessary changes. They requested the government to provide a grace period and technical assistance to ensure a smooth transition to the new data protection norms.

എറണാകുളം നഗരം കെട്ടിയിടലില്ലാതെ തുറന്നു സിറ്റിയിൽ റെഡ് ലൈറ്റുകൾ: വിറ്റഴിഞ്ഞ കവറോടുകൂടിയ കരാറുമുദ്ര; 3 രൂപയിൽ ആർക്കും വൃക്കറിവിലൊക്കട്ടെയാ?

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Cellphone network row at NMIA, telcos write to govt

Mumbai: The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has alleged that Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd (NMIAL) has denied telecom operators statutory right of way (RoW) permissions and attempted to impose an exclusive in-building telecom network at commercial-ly unviable rates.

In a Dec 30 letter to the department of telecommunications, COAI said Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio Infocomm and Vodafone Idea had approached NMIAL in April seeking permission to set up a jointly deployed in-building solution (IBS) network at the airport. COAI said this request aligned with the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024.

Instead of granting RoW

WILL HIT COMPETITION

- > COAI alleges NMIAL has denied telcos right of way permissions for a joint in-building solution network
- > Says NMIAL mandated use of IBS network deployed by it
- > Argues a joint IBS better designed, much cheaper
- > Warns such exclusivity will undermine competition, consumer choice and regulatory neutrality
- > NMIAL denies allegations made by the telcos

for the operators' joint IBS, COAI alleged that NMIAL mandated the use of an IBS network deployed by the airport operator itself, at significantly higher costs. TNN

► Denies allegations, P 4

Telcos: Mandatory move for messaging apps a milestone

INDUSTRY BODY COAI on Monday said Telecom Department's move mandating that messaging apps like WhatsApp will work only with an active SIM would bolster national security and pledged telecom operators' commitment to supporting seamless implementation of the latest directive. Such continuous linkage ensures complete accountability and traceability for any activity undertaken by the SIM card and its associated communication app, "closing long-persistent gaps that have enabled anonymity

and misuse," COAI said.

"COAI welcomes and commends the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for taking a landmark step towards bolstering national security and safeguarding our citizens, by mandating SIM-binding for devices for app-based communication services," SP Kochhar, director general of COAI, said.

The comment from the apex body comes after directions by government that would ensure app-based communication services are continuously linked to a user's active SIM card. —PTI



DoT's SIM binding mandate for OTT communication apps to ensure accountability: Telcos

"COAI firmly believes that this mechanism will significantly reduce spam and fraudulent communications perpetrated through these platforms and help mitigate financial frauds," said SP Kochhar, director-general, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).

ETTelecom Desk • ETTelecom
Published On Dec 1, 2025 at 03:54 PM IST



Why telecom networks are India's most critical AI infrastructure

"As fraudsters begin to weaponize AI, telecom networks are responding with AI of their own. This evolving AI-versus-AI dynamic will define the future of digital trust. Governance systems built on AI must be secure and telecom networks are becoming the frontline defence in protecting citizens."

S. P. Kochhar • ETTelecom
Published On Feb 16, 2026 at 11:26 AM IST



India stands at the cusp of a profound transformation. Artificial Intelligence is rapidly moving beyond novelty and convenience — it is becoming a foundational layer of governance, public service delivery, economic growth and national competitiveness. From fraud detection and healthcare diagnostics to real-time disaster response and smart infrastructure, AI is reshaping how nations function.

Telcos seek licence fee, GST relief

URVI MALVANIA
Mumbai, January 13

PRIVATE TELECOM OPERATORS, represented by the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), highlighted two primary expectations from the Union Budget: a reduction in regulatory levies and targeted relief under the goods and services tax (GST) framework.

In a statement, COAI pointed out that sustained financial pressure is constraining the industry's ability to invest in next-generation networks.

The industry body has urged the government to ease what it described as a huge financial burden arising from regulatory fees, particularly the licence fee



structure linked to adjusted gross revenue (AGR). "The licence fee, which is a combination of the licence (3% of AGR) and Digital Bharat Nidhi Contribution (5% of AGR), is a huge financial burden for the Licensed Telcos," SP Kochhar, director-general, COAI, said. The industry body requested that the licence fee be reduced "from 3% to 0.5% — 1% just to cover the administrative costs."

"The Digital Bharat Nidhi contribution should be paused for the time till the unused corpus has been completely utilised by the Department of Telecommunications," Kochhar said. On GST-related concerns, COAI highlighted the accumulation of input tax credit (ITC) as a major cash flow challenge for telecom operators.

"Special benefit may be provided to telecom operators in GST by way of exemption of GST on regulatory payments of LE, SUC and spectrum assigned under auction," Kochhar said.

Alternatively, COAI has suggested reduction in GST rate under the reverse-charge mechanism on spectrum payments, licence fees and spectrum usage charges from the current 18%

rate to the lower 5% slab, arguing that the move would be revenue-neutral for the government while easing ITC accumulation.

COAI has also called for allowing the use of existing ITC balances to discharge GST liabilities under reverse charge, a step that "will not only protect the cash outflow for telcos but also help in utilising accumulated ITC," Kochhar said.

Positioning telecom as a foundational layer for the broader economy, Kochhar said the sector is now a "horizontal value-added enabler for all other verticals", underscoring the need to revisit spectrum pricing and assignment models in line with its evolving role.



Telcos raise concerns over direct-to-mobile tech test

OJASVI GUPTA
New Delhi, January 5

EVEN AS THE government is working on Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) broadcasting, telcos have raised concerns about the manner in which the technical tests for the technology are being conducted, cautioning that gaps in testing and stakeholder participation could impact spectrum usage and network planning.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), representing telecom operators like Bharti Airtel, Jio and Vodafone Idea, said on Monday the technical evaluation of D2M broadcasting is incomplete. Recent trials, it has argued, were conducted without the participation of telcos and key device ecosystem players, despite the technology having direct implications for existing and future mobile networks.

"D2M broadcasting has far-reaching implications for spectrum, networks, devices and consumer safety. Any national-level technical evaluation of such a technology must be transparent, inclusive and technology-neutral, with active participation of all affected stakeholders," SP Kochhar, director general, COAI, said.

MIXED SIGNALS

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has cautioned that gaps in testing could impact spectrum usage.

The COAI said on Monday the technical evaluation of Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) broadcasting is incomplete.



The concerns come even as companies are pushing ahead with broadcast-to-mobile solutions.

D2M technology works on the principle of broadcasting rather than individual data streaming.

holders," SP Kochhar, director general, COAI, said.

The concerns come even as companies such as Tejas Networks, are pushing ahead with broadcast-to-mobile solutions aimed at easing network congestion and expanding access to digital content. Tejas is advancing its Broadcast Radio Head (BRH) technology, designed to deliver live video and broadcast content directly to mobile devices without relying on mobile broadband or Wi-Fi networks.

At its core, D2M technology works on the principle of broadcasting rather than individual

data streaming. Instead of each user consuming mobile data separately, the same signal is transmitted simultaneously to multiple devices, enabling live TV, video and audio content to be received directly on phones without an internet connection.

By leveraging broadcast spectrum, held by Prasar Bharati, BRH could serve dark homes, households without broadband subscriptions and feature phone users, bringing video and broadcast content to segments traditionally unreachable by mobile broadband, according to Parag Naik, executive vice-president at Tejas Networks.

Telcos, gear makers see promising year ahead

5 Business Bhishm
New Delhi

As 2025 dawns, the telecom sector's focus is firmly on strengthening digital trust and ensuring the future network is secure, reliable and inclusive. SP Kochhar, Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), said on Wednesday.

He noted 2025 was also a year of important regulatory developments as the sector moved to align with the new Telecommunications Act, 2023, and the evolving framework for service authorisations.

"The industry has consistently emphasised that the new authorisation regime should retain the commercial certainty of the current licencing framework to support long-term investments. With the foundations for 5G, spectrum reform and unified safeguards now in place, India's telecom industry is moving into a phase where innovation and trust will define competitiveness, setting the stage for a decade of resilient and globally benchmarked digital connectivity," Kochhar said.

COAI represents telecom service providers (TSPs) such as Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea, and telecom equipment suppliers such as Ericsson, Nokia, Qualcomm, India Towers, among others.

Network expansion was also equally strong as India crossed 5.15 lakh 5G RFS sites and average mobile data usage touched 36 GB per month, with a forecast of 65 GB by November and 13.19 million in October across both urban and rural markets.

Moreover, telcos report from India have increased by 72 per cent in the last five years, increasing to ₹13,406 crore in FY25 from ₹7,800 crore in FY21.

According to the industry body, the Indian telecom industry remained central to the country's digital growth in 2025, with the overall subscriber base reaching 3.2 billion by November and teledensity rising to 86.76 per cent.

Wireless broadband continued to dominate with 954.09 million users compared to 84.62 million wire-line connections, supported by rapid 5G adoption that rose to 294 million subscriptions by the end of the year.

Looking ahead, the industry will be increasingly defined by artificial intelligence (AI)-driven network automation and the expansion of data centres alongside transport infrastructure to support cloud and edge workloads. "Cloudification, AI, and satellite (NTN) convergence will ensure seamless connectivity, even in the remotest areas."

"As 2025 approaches, India has emerged as a global engine of digital momentum, with consumers demanding flagship performance and hyper-intelligent experiences. Intelligence is rapidly democratising - we see consumers with 'On-Device' Generative AI. At MediaTek, we see India as both a key market and a hub of engineering excellence, shaping the global semiconductor landscape," he added.

Focus on fast, secure networks

INDIA'S TELECOM SECTOR STANDS AT A TRANSFORMATIVE JUNCTURE, EMERGING AS A CRITICAL PILLAR OF THE NATION'S ECONOMIC GROWTH. THE CELLULAR OPERATORS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA (COAI) WORKS CLOSELY WITH MANUFACTURERS, POLICYMAKERS, REGULATORS, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AND TECHNICAL BODIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS. IT CAN BE SAID THAT SP KOCBHAR, DIRECTOR GENERAL, COAI, SHARES INSIGHTS ON THE SECTOR WITH S.M. BOOTHBY AND THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN UNLOCKING THE ESTIMATED \$455 BILLION VALUE THAT 5G ALONE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO INDIA'S ECONOMY THROUGH 2040.

Tell us about the Indian telecom sector and its potential.
India is the world's second-largest telecom market and a cornerstone of the country's digital growth. With over 1.2 billion subscribers and teledensity close to 87 per cent, telcos have moved beyond connectivity to become the backbone of the digital economy. Network expansion has been swift, with more than 5.15 lakh 5G base stations deployed, while average data consumption reached 36 GB per month in 2025. Telcom exports have also surged by over 72 per cent in the last 5 years to cross \$18,000 crore, underlining India's rising role in global telecom manufacturing and innovation. The government's goal for the sector to contribute 20 per cent of GDP in the next decade is ambitious but achievable if telcom is positioned not as a standalone industry but as a horizontal digital platform powering every sector, from manufacturing and healthcare to fintech and smart governance.

How has the monetisation of 5G in the telecom infrastructure been a challenge for operators?
The challenge of monetising 5G is not unique to India. Globally, operators have invested heavily in next-generation networks, but commercially scalable use cases are taking longer to mature. While 5G represents a major technological leap, demand-side applications, especially in enterprise and industrial segments, are still in an early adoption phase. In India, this challenge is sharper due to low ARPU, high capital costs, and slow enterprise adoption. We have consistently flagged the widening capex-revenue gap, underlining the need for policy recalibration. Priority reforms include easing private network leasing through spectrum slicing, rationalisation of regulatory costs, and fast-track mechanisms so large traffic-generating platforms contribute to network investments. Sustainable monetisation will follow when telcom is treated as critical national infrastructure and policy aligns economics with network realities.

Could you provide your viewpoint on upcoming 6G technology and India's readiness for it?
India has set a clear ambition to become a global leader in 6G by 2030, supported by initiatives such as the National 6G Research Roadmap that integrates research, standards, and international collaboration from the outset. The transition from 5G to 6G will be evolutionary, with AI, IoT, and non-terrestrial networks embedded natively into the architecture. This will enable commercially relevant applications from day one.

What are the regulatory and spectrum issues faced by Indian telecom players?
One of the most important policy debates today concerns the allocation of the 6 GHz band for 5G. Given India's high population density,

rapidly growing data consumption, and low fixed broadband penetration, mobile networks carry most of the country's internet traffic. To unlock the full potential of 5G and prepare for 6G, adequate mid-band spectrum is essential, and the 6 GHz band provides a proven pathway to meet this need. At the same time, the industry is seeking reforms in spectrum pricing and allocation. An auction-heavy model combined with high input costs is straining long-term financial sustainability. A more balanced framework that supports investment, innovation, and affordability is critical to keep network expansion aligned with India's digital demand.

What is the outlook for the telecom industry and plans for India's digital future?
As the sector moves beyond 2025, the focus is shifting to building networks that are fast, secure, and inclusive. With momentum around 5G scale, spectrum reform, and unified safeguards, Indian telcom is entering a phase where competitiveness will be shaped by resilience, reliability, and digital trust. Looking ahead, policy convergence across telcom, IT, and broadcasting will be key to tackling challenges such as app-based fraud and cross-platform cyber risks. At the same time, telcom will increasingly serve as Digital India's invisible infrastructure, enabling AI sovereignty, rural inclusion through fixed wireless access, and India's leadership in global technology standards.

Bring OTT communication services under regulatory framework: COAI

Source: ET Telecom

Uniform cybersecurity norms should govern telcos, OTT communication apps: COAI

COAI

Source: Economic Times

Uncovering the Gap Between SIM Tracking and OTT Apps

COAI

He has two phones, one with a SIM card. The other with just an OTT communication app.

Bring OTT communication services under regulatory framework: COAI

COAI

Source: ET Telecom

Telcos Back DoT's Directive, Say SIM-Binding Strengthens National Security

COAI

There has been a crying need that the users' App based communication services are identifiable at all times without violating existing rules on privacy and data.

Source: ET Telecom

COAI PUSHES FOR SIM-BINDING IN OTT COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Lt. General Dr. S.P. Kochhar
Director General, COAI

Source: Voice&Data

Rein in OTT Spam with unified communication rules

Lt. General Dr. S.P. Kochhar
Director General, COAI

Source: Voice&Data

COAI's argument: When the services are the same, why should the regulation for communication apps be different from that of telecom companies

Lt. General Dr. S.P. Kochhar
Director General, COAI

Source: www.jagran.com

Fair Share: Ensuring a Sustainable Digital Highway

If almost 80% of the traffic comes from a few, shouldn't they help build the road?

4K Streaming, Cloud Gaming, HD Video

Large Traffic Generators

Traffic Generators

Startups & SMEs

High Infrastructure Costs, Congestion

Network Maintenance, Heavy Usage, High Skillset

SIM-Binding is Now LIVE in India

New rules now link your messaging apps to your active SIM card.

Active SIM Mandate for App Based Communication Platforms

DoT's Big Move Against Cyber Fraud

RESTRICTIONS ON APP PERMISSIONS

department of telecom
Web logins auto-logout every 6 hours and require QR re-scan to continue.

CONTINUOUS SIM BINDING

Apps must stop working if the registered SIM isn't active in the device.

TIMELINE

Platforms have 90 days to implement and 120 days to report compliance to DoT.

Source: www.jagranjoshi.com

India's Spectrum Rethink: Unlocking the Digital Future

Lt. General Dr. S.P. Kochhar
Director General, COAI

Source: Voice&Data

ISSUE

Direct Spectrum Allocation Risks

- Spectrum gets fragmented among many enterprises.
- Enterprises may bypass necessary telecom compliance.
- Regulatory oversight becomes difficult and inconsistent.

How India's New SIM Binding Directive Mitigates Digital Fraud

- Ensures Traceability
- Blocks Remote Hijacking
- Stop Mule Accounts
- Stronger Authentication
- Kills Anonymity

No telecom company asks for OTPs on calls.

- A call promises more data at a lower price.
- All it asks for is your OTP.
- That OTP is not for activation.
- It is the key to your account.

THINK BEFORE YOU SHARE. SAVING OURSELVES FROM OURSELVES.

FREE HOTEL STAY

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

FREE?

Pause, Verify, Protect.

STAY CAUTIOUS!

CLICK HERE FOR COMPLIMENTARY STAY

Solving ourselves from ourselves.

Free checkup. Costly mistake.

Share Aadhaar details
OTP required to register subsidy

No hospital asks for Aadhaar or OTPs on calls or messages.

Saving ourselves from ourselves.



Events & Engagements

COAI Dialogues 2025: Empowering Viksit Bharat

COAI organised the COAI Dialogues 2025 on 29 August 2025, in New Delhi, in association with Voice&Data, as an official follow-up to the COAI DIGICOM Summit 2025. The full-day conference, spanning five sessions, brought together over 200 technology decision-makers, policy influencers and industry leaders to deliberate on critical areas such as regulatory reforms, spectrum availability and affordability, infrastructure sharing and investment opportunities, under the theme 'Empowering Viksit Bharat'. Chief Guest Shri Ritu Ranjan Mittar, Member, TRAI, and Mr. Julian Gorman, Head Asia Pacific, GSMA, addressed the gathering alongside other Government and industry leaders.

Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI, said, "This is an important platform for dialogue building on critical cross-sectional issues from our previous DigiCom Summit. This platform is vital for fostering collaborative discussions that will address pressing challenges and shape the future of India's telecom industry for sustainable growth and innovation".



World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) 2025

On 17 May 2025, COAI commemorated World Telecommunication and Information Society Day under the theme ‘Gender Equality in Digital Transformation’. The Association reaffirmed its commitment to empowering women and bridging the digital gender divide as India’s telecom sector connects 1.2 billion subscribers and has expanded 5G coverage to 99.6% of districts. Through partnerships across industry, government and communities, COAI continues to intensify efforts to address affordability, digital literacy and access barriers, ensuring that every woman can participate fully in India’s digital future.



30 Years of Mobile Telephony in India

July 2025 marked a defining milestone for India’s digital communications sector — 30 years since the first mobile phone call was made in the country. COAI led the industry-wide commemoration through extensive social media engagements and press outreach, celebrating three decades of transformation that have powered the country’s digital revolution.

Lt. Gen. Dr. SP Kochhar, Director General, COAI, said, “Relentless efforts from the Government and the industry have ensured the reach of digital connectivity, even to villages that once remained off the digital grid. India’s fastest rollout of 5G in the world has been nothing short of transformative. Today, over 85% of India’s population and over 99% of the districts in India enjoy access to 5G services, powering innovations from remote education to telemedicine and smart agriculture”.



India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2025 – 9th Edition

The 9th edition of the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2025, jointly organised by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the COAI, was held from 8–11 October 2025 at Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, New Delhi. Inaugurated by Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi under the theme ‘Innovate to Transform’, IMC 2025 emerged as Asia’s largest digital technology forum with over 1.5 lakh visitors from 150+ countries, more than 7,000 global delegates, 400+ exhibitors and partners, 800+ speakers across 100+ sessions and 1,600+ cutting-edge use cases on display. Mr. Abhijit Kishore, Chairperson, COAI, and Lt. Gen. Dr. SP Kochhar, Director General, COAI, participated across leadership dialogues, the Industry CTO Roundtable, the Cybersecurity Summit and the UK–India Collaboration in Future Telecoms session.



Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI, said ahead of IMC 2025, “India is poised to lead the global race towards 6G, with the Bharat 6G Vision and Government initiatives aiming to generate 10% of global 6G patents from India. Our rapid innovations in AI and GenAI are creating a strong foundation for next-generation telecom growth. Efficient spectrum allocation, especially in the 6 GHz band, will be key to driving both 5G expansion and 6G readiness”.

TRAI–STPI Pre-Summit Event on ‘AI in Telecommunication’

On 21 January 2026, COAI participated in the Pre-Summit Event of the India–AI Impact Summit 2026 on the theme ‘AI in Telecommunication’, organised by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in collaboration with the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) at the STPI Conference Facility in New Delhi. The event brought together senior officials and representatives from telecom service providers, OEMs, startups and research institutions to deliberate on how Artificial Intelligence is reshaping the future of telecom networks, service delivery and customer engagement.



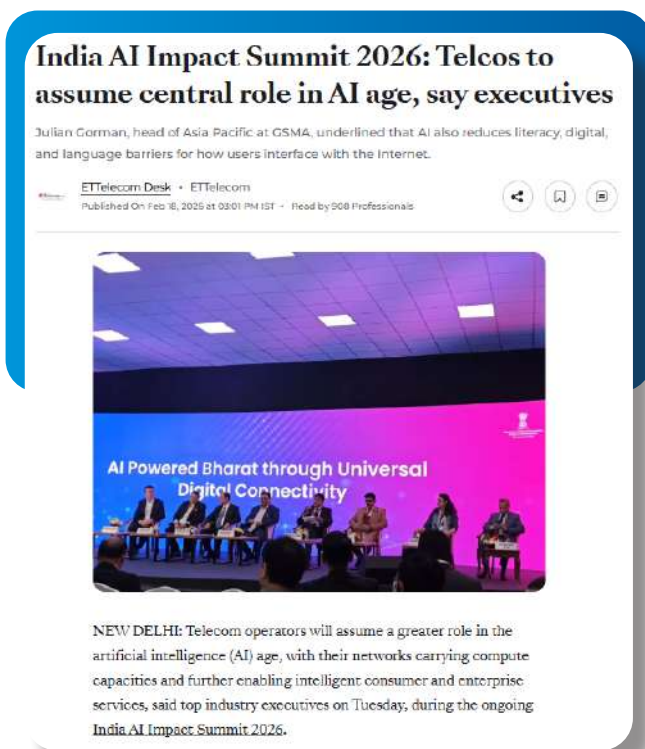
In his special address, Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI, said, “We have to build trust. Only then will the benefits of AI flow and be acceptable to the masses. Discussions on data ownership, privacy, bias, transparency and accountability now move to centre stage. TRAI, your consultative and principle-based approach strikes the right balance between innovation and safeguard. We need adaptive frameworks and those frameworks must focus on transparency, security, privacy, protection and accountability”.

India AI Impact Summit 2026

February 2026 marked an important milestone for India’s digital and telecom ecosystem with the India AI Impact Summit 2026, held in New Delhi from 16–20 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam. COAI, in collaboration with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), successfully co-organised two high-level sessions — ‘Generative AI and Future Networks’ and ‘AI-Powered Bharat through Universal Digital Connectivity’ — highlighting the critical role of telecom infrastructure in enabling India’s AI-led transformation. The keynote address for the second session was delivered by Dr. Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, Hon’ble Minister of State for Communications and Rural Development.

Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI, said, “Telecom networks are the backbone of AI-powered Bharat. As AI applications scale across sectors, telecom infrastructure will evolve into intelligent, AI-native platforms that enable secure, resilient and inclusive digital growth. Strengthening connectivity today will be critical to ensuring India’s leadership in the global AI-driven economy. By investing in future-ready networks and building secure digital infrastructure, India has a unique opportunity not only to adopt AI but to lead globally in deploying AI for the benefit of humanity”.

During the Summit, COAI also constituted an in-house team of cub reporters that conducted interviews with a wide spectrum of stakeholders — corporate leaders, think tanks, industry associations and startups from India and abroad. The initiative generated significant engagement and visibility across COAI’s social media platforms, including LinkedIn, Instagram and X.



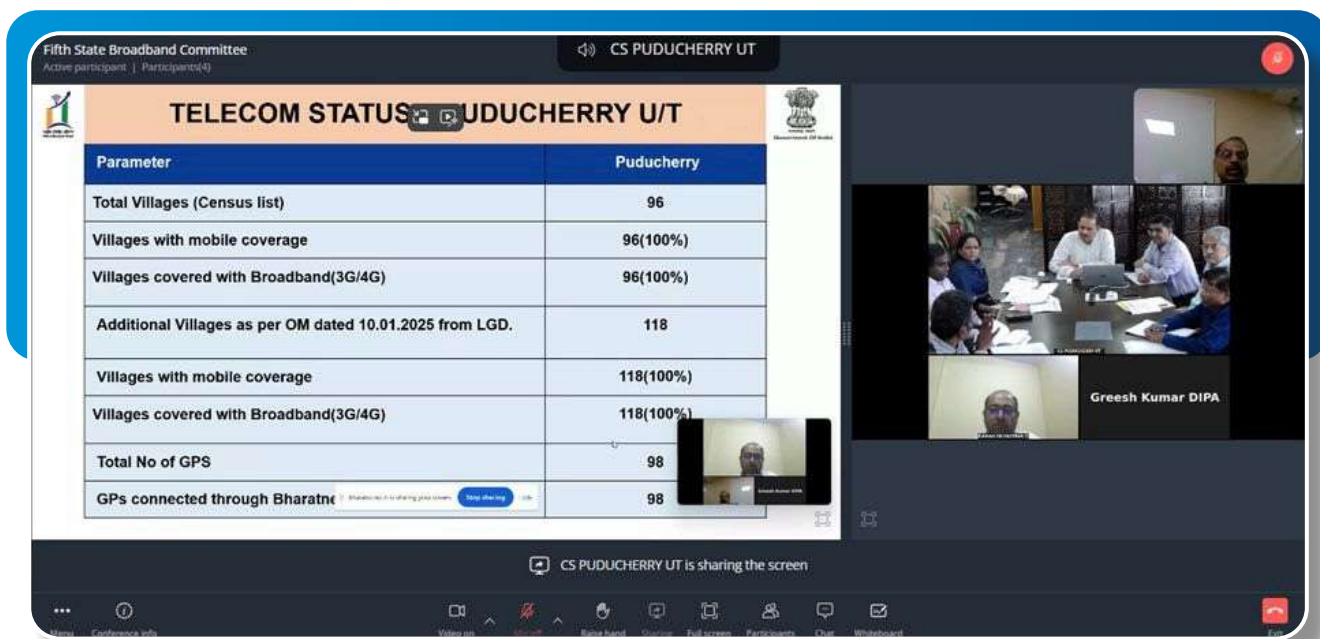


State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meetings & Other Notable Engagements

Beyond its flagship summits, COAI actively engaged with State Governments through participation in State Broadband Committee (SBC) meetings, raising key industry concerns on Right of Way (RoW) Rules, 2024 implementation, telecom infrastructure deployment and resolution of operational challenges. The following SBC meetings and engagements were publicly featured by COAI on its official X ('@ConnectCOAI') handle during FY 2025–26.

5th State Broadband Committee Meeting, Puducherry

On 30 April 2025, the 5th State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting of Puducherry was held under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Government of Puducherry. COAI participated in the meeting and raised key telecom industry concerns, including those relating to RoW implementation and tower regularisation. Positive directions were assured for resolution of pending issues. COAI publicly thanked the Chief Secretary for chairing the deliberations.



Parameter	Puducherry
Total Villages (Census list)	96
Villages with mobile coverage	96(100%)
Villages covered with Broadband(3G/4G)	96(100%)
Additional Villages as per OM dated 10.01.2025 from LGD.	118
Villages with mobile coverage	118(100%)
Villages covered with Broadband(3G/4G)	118(100%)
Total No of GPS	98
GPS connected through Bharatn	98

Chandigarh State Broadband Committee Meeting

On 13 May 2025, the State Broadband Committee meeting for Chandigarh was held under the chairmanship of the Advisor to the Administrator/officiating Chief Secretary, with the participation of the Chandigarh/Punjab LSA, DoT. The deliberations focused on strengthening telecom infrastructure deployment in the Union Territory and resolving on-ground RoW challenges. COAI placed on record its appreciation for the leadership of the Chief Secretary and Punjab LSA in advancing telecom growth.



2nd Gujarat State Broadband Committee Meeting (FY 2025–26)

On 15 September 2025, the 2nd State Broadband Committee meeting for Gujarat in FY 2025–26 was held under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat. COAI, alongside the Gujarat LSA, DoT, participated in detailed deliberations aimed at creating robust telecom infrastructure across the State, including issues on RoW Rules 2024, implementation and tower regularisation in GIDC areas. COAI publicly thanked the Chief Secretary, Gujarat and the Gujarat LSA for their continued support.



Uttar Pradesh State Broadband Committee Meeting

On 11 November 2025, the State Broadband Committee meeting for Uttar Pradesh was held under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Government of Uttar Pradesh. COAI presented multiple industry concerns relating to RoW implementation, electricity tariff and telecom infrastructure security. The deliberations resulted in directions to strengthen and advance telecom infrastructure across the State. COAI publicly thanked the Chief Secretary, Uttar Pradesh and the UP LSA for their leadership.



9th Delhi State Broadband Committee Meeting

On 8 January 2026, the 9th State Broadband Committee meeting for Delhi was held under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi. COAI participated alongside the Delhi LSA, DoT and presented industry concerns. Favourable directions were issued during the meeting for strengthening 5G telecom infrastructure and resolving RoW challenges in the Capital. COAI thanked the Chief Secretary, Delhi and the Delhi LSA for the constructive engagement.





COAI was constituted in 1995 as a registered, non-governmental society. The Association is dedicated to the advancement of modern communication 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, 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 the 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.

Leadership

Mr. Abhijit Kishore

Chairman



Mr. Abhijit Kishore comes with a rich tapestry of experience of over three decades with the Indian telecom industry across functions, organisations and geographies. Prior to taking on the role of COO, he was heading the Enterprise Business of Vodafone Idea Ltd as the Chief Enterprise Business Officer, where he led the transformation for Enterprise business from a Telco to Techco. Under his astute leadership, Vi Business introduced some of the smartest and newest technologies such as Integrated IoT, Managed Services and Security as a service to serve businesses in the digital era.

Mr. Rahul Vatts

Vice Chairman



Mr. Rahul Vatts is a telecom industry veteran with 30 years of experience and an expert on Telecom & Broadcasting Licensing, Economic Regulations, Spectrum Management and Regulatory Litigation. As the Chief Regulatory Officer of Bharti Airtel, Rahul heads the Government Relations, Policy and Regulatory interfaces across the company's Business spanning mobility broadband, DTH, Data Center, Submarine Cables, its international Subsidiaries and all Digital lines of Business.

Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar

Director General



Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, a decorated military veteran, 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. An experienced business leader, prolific speaker and a decorated military veteran with a forward - thinking vision, he is an evangelist for new technology and change -management, with a passion for developing organizations for sustainable growth. 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.

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COAI Members

(In alphabetical order)

CORE MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



COAI Secretariat

The COAI team includes dynamic, highly skilled professionals with a must-do attitude and remarkable proficiency in their respective verticals. Lean and yet highly competent, the Secretariat packs a punch in every activity undertaken towards the cause of the industry. Regular coordination with the Government, Regulator, relevant Center and State Government departments, and other stakeholders, have established appreciation and recognition of the Secretariat's efficiency and professional prowess, both within and outside the industry.

Keeping in line with the COAI culture throughout the years, the secretariat has been evolving constantly with new verticals emerging in the ever-expanding domain of the telecommunications industry. From technical know-how to communications, R&D and legal and regulatory aspects, the Secretariat has been aligning itself in all aspects, striving for expertise and excellence in all these fields so as to be prepared to face the challenges and handle the initiatives with acumen and efficiency.


The Team

1. **Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar**, Director General
2. **Mr. Savjit Singh Soin**, Deputy Director General – Regulatory
3. **Mr. Vikram Tiwathia**, Senior Advisor – Technology
4. **Mr. Saurabh Puri**, Associate Director General - Regulatory & Strategy
5. **Mr. Dhananjay Gawanday**, Director – TIC
6. **Mr. Kshem Kapoor**, Director – Technology
7. **Mr. Kaustuv Sircar**, Senior Manager – Communications & Public Affairs
8. **Mr. Suprateek Gulia**, Senior Manager – Corporate Affairs and Engagements
9. **Ms. Smriti Prasad**, Senior Manager – Legal & Data Governance
10. **Mr. Dibya Prakash Lahiri**, Assistant Manager – Finance and Commercial
11. **Mr. Mukesh Kumar**, Senior Advisor – TIC
12. **Mr. Sunder Singh Poriya**, Advisor – Administration
13. **Mr. Shiv Kumar Pandey**, Senior Manager – Associate Members
14. **Mr. Deepak Kumar Gupta**, Manager – TIC
15. **Mr. Abhijit Panicker**, Manager – Technology
16. **Ms. Neetu Sharma**, Manager – Finance and Commercial
17. **Mr. Mahavir Singh**, Deputy Manager - Administration
18. **Mr. Anay Kumar Gupta**, Deputy Manager – Regulatory and Strategy
19. **Mr. Satyam Mishra**, Assistant Manager – Legal
20. **Mr. S. Muqith Hussain**, Assistant Manager – TIC
21. **Ms. Mahima Singh**, Senior Executive - Corporate Affairs
22. **Ms. Mansi Katoch**, Senior Executive - Regulatory & Strategy
23. **Ms. Radhika Sharma**, Senior Executive - Regulatory & Strategy







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