



COAI

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I-DIGEST

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LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)

Director General, COAI

From DG's Desk

The rapid rollout of 5G has been a major achievement in 2024, but there are several challenges which still hover around the telecom service providers. The year 2024 was a foundational year for the telecom industry and going forward, the attempt will be to build upon this.

With 5G and 6G innovation and cutting-edge technology, India's start-ups are redefining telecom, positioning the nation as a global leader in connectivity. The startup ecosystem in India has emerged as a powerhouse, driving innovation and contributing significantly to the country's GDP. Apart from the growing entrepreneurial spirit, another reason for the flourishing startup ecosystem in the country is supportive government policies and initiatives.

The telecom industry as a whole, has ventured far beyond providing traditional communication services. The combined efforts of startups, industry and the government underscore the transformative impact of start-ups in India's telecom sector, hence reshaping the industry and establishing India as a global leader in technological innovation. With the rapid roll out of 5G, there are also challenges that lie ahead such as spectrum shortages, the slow implementation of telecom regulations and revenue losses due to policy constraints. One critical issue highlighted is the need for more spectrum to ensure effective 5G rollout.

Telecom operators have further said that the proposed Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) technology will pose new challenges for them. The new technology will create a separate broadcasting network, thereby underlining market fairness. However, the proposal for the D2M network requires re-evaluation on the aspects of level playing field, spectrum allocation, network integration and regulatory and cost arbitrage in favour of the proposed PPP model and against the TSPs. The spectrum envisaged for D2M Service (i.e., 526 – 582 MHz) should be allocated to the service providers to use broadcasting capabilities (D2M) as per the market requirements on the spectrum assigned through auctions, in line with TRAI's recommendations. Once implemented, the D2M services would pave the way for streaming television and video content directly to mobile phones, without an Internet connection.

In line with the directive issued by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on August 20, 2024, all commercial messages sent by Principle Entities (PEs) must now be fully traceable. To comply with TRAI's directives, all member Telecom Service Providers of COAI have successfully deployed the necessary technical solutions and have been technically ready to implement the PE-TM binding process. Member TSPs actively engaged with Telemarketers (including Delivery TMs) and Principle Entities from various sectors, facilitating comprehensive awareness on the chain registration process, providing guidance on technical changes for hashing functions and addressing other operational requirements. This initiative will not only safeguard consumers from fraudulent and unsolicited commercial messages but also enhance trust in the communication networks.



The internet services have become an integral part of our modern life with approximately 90% of essential services relying on online connectivity. These services range from transportation to navigation, online education and digital payments of utilities and bills. One of the biggest fallouts of Internet shutdowns is that people are not able to perform online banking transactions and online education. This leads to major disruption to the public at large. COAI brought it to the notice of DoT Secretary that it has been observed that state governments frequently impose internet shutdown at various locations within the states by simply citing the temporary suspension of telecom services. It was suggested to bring practicable alternatives in this evolving digital landscape.

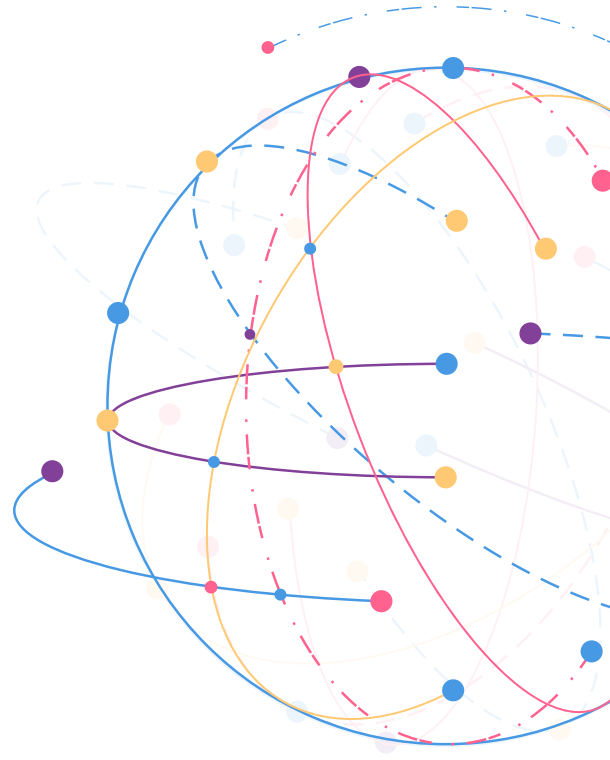
As we enter the new year 2025, I would like to convey my warm greetings and deep gratitude for the support towards creating a better and more able Digital Communications system in India and look forward to being able to contribute more on the same going forward.

– LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)
Director General, COAI



COAI

Latest Updates:



PE-TM Binding

It is to be noted that TRAI released a direction dated 20.08.2024 directing all TSPs to implement PE-TM Binding and the same has been implemented PE-TM in blocking mode by all the TSPs from 11.12.2024.

Standard for Assessing & Rating Robustness of AI Systems in Telecom Networks and Digital Infrastructure

TEC issued the Draft Standards for Assessing and Rating Robustness of AI systems, wherein the last date to submit the comments was 15.12.2024. However, COAI sought for an extension of one month and TEC has provided an extension till 15.01.2025 in order to respond to the said Draft Standards.

Authorization Framework for Telemarketers (TMs)

TRAI has invited TSPs to give a detailed presentation on Authorization Framework for TMs, however, COAI has submitted a letter to TRAI regarding an extension of timeline till 13.01.2025 for the same.

COAI Letter- KYC rules in respect of Sub Section 3 (7) of Telecommunications Act, 2023

- This is with respect to the meeting of TSPs held with DDG (LFP) on the rules in respect of sub-section 3 (7) of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 on 07.11.2024.
- In this regard, COAI Letter was submitted to DoT on 05.12.2024.

Need for Alignment of EMF Limits with Globally accepted ICNIRP Standards

COAI Letter submitted to DoT on the above subject on 23.12.2024. In the letter, COAI highlighted the need for a minimum time period of one year be granted to the industry for submitting EMF compliance self-certifications for 5G BTS after the release of the revised EMF thresholds.

Request for Extension of Timeline to prepare inputs on the Draft Telecommunications (Regulatory Sandbox) Rules, 2024

- This is with reference to the Draft Regulatory Sandbox rules issued by DoT on 27.11.2024.
- In this regard, COAI submitted an extension request of 4 weeks to DoT on 24.12.2024.

Communication Security (COMSEC) Scheme

- COAI submitted letter requesting extension for submission of "Pro Tem Certificate" for one month to the industry. Submitted on 12.12.2024.
- COAI submitted a letter to the Secretary, DoT, outlining industry concerns regarding COMSEC and requesting a reconsideration of the approach to the undertaking, ensuring it aligns with the needs of the industry. Submitted on 11.12.2024.

Mandatory Testing & Certification for Telecom Equipment (MTCTE)

- COAI submitted letter to MTCTE requesting extension on ILAC for one year. Submitted on 17.12.2024.
- Letter submitted to requesting issuing of "interim certificate for the new products undergoing for MTCTE. Submitted on 21.12.2024.

TRAI Recommendations on International Traffic

TRAI issued Recommendations on 10.12.2024. TRAI agreed with our request and recommended that any incoming application to person (A2P) SMS message shall be treated as an international SMS message, if it cannot be generated, transmitted or received without the use or intervention of any electronic device, computer system or computer application located outside India."

Letter to TRAI seeking exemption for non-compliance on FD

We submitted the letter to TRAI on 04.12.2024. In the letter,

we have highlighted the issue of restriction on usage DG sets in various states and UTs which results in operational limitations that TSPs face, thereby impacting QoS. We requested the authority to take into consideration these challenges and grant exemption on FDs due to non-compliance in QoS parameters resulting from these constraints.

Letter to TRAI regarding concerns for publication of Download and Upload speeds in Tariff Offerings

We submitted the letter on 16.12.2024. In the letter, we have highlighted that regular filing of uplink/downlink speed for each tariff offering with TRAI would be a huge burden on TSPs. We requested that these details may be displayed on the TSP's website.

Submission to Chief Secretary Karnataka post State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting

On 03.12.2024, a submission to the Chief Secretary was made post the 7th SBC meeting of Karnataka. COAI thanked Govt of Karnataka for the provision of common duct, it was requested that these duct be provided on reasonable rates to TSPs for use. Apart from this, industry issues like coercive action on fibre in Bangalore, Property Tax on Towers, No new approval of RoW applications were raised.

Letters to Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra

On 19.12.2024 and 23.12.2024, submissions were made to Chief Secretary, Govt of Maharashtra regarding the sudden coercive action, dismantling of mobile towers in Mumbai by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and requested CS to intervene in this issue and support the industry.

Letter to Principal Secretary, Govt of Maharashtra

A letter was written to Principal Secretary, Govt of Maharashtra on 27.12.2024 regarding the forcible deactivation/ dismantling of Towers in Mumbai by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and requested PS to instruct BMC to stop dismantling of these towers, grant in-person meeting with TSPs to hear them for more clarity on the issue and also impressed the adverse impact of masses by such an action by the Corporation.

Letter to Chairperson, Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission

A submission was made to Chairperson, Tamil Nadu Electricity Commission on 24.12.2024, requesting for necessary amendment in the State Electricity Tariff Orders as per State RoW policy G.O.(Ms). No. 4 dated 25.1.2022, of the Information Technology (IT) Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, thereby extending industrial tariff to the industry.

12th State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting of Rajasthan

The 12th SBC of Rajasthan was held on 24.12.2024, chaired by Chief Secretary. Industry issue like pending

regularization of towers, high restoration charges, releasing of Security Deposit money of service providers, increased cases of thefts etc. were raised during the meeting attended by COAI in-person.

Internal Meeting with members on Mumbai mobile tower coercive actions

An internal industry meeting with members was held on 19.12.2024 to discuss the impact of dismantling telecom assets by the local authority, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), pose a significant concern and disrupt essential connectivity, and deliberated on the way forward.

Meeting on RoW Pendencies in Tamil Nadu

An online meeting was organised by NBM on 16.12. 2024 to discuss the RoW application processing pendencies in the state. Concerned State Government officials, LSA representatives, TSP Members, COAI attended the same.

Meeting on RoW and related pendencies in Ministry of Defence

A meeting was organised by NBM on 09.12.2024 to discuss the issues related to RoW and the pendencies in applications being processed under Ministry of Defence. Concerned officials from Army, Airforce and Navy attended, in addition to DoT official and TSP Members.

State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting of Delhi

Delhi state's 8th SBC Meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary on 12.12.2024. Industry challenges like Exorbitant charges for usage of poles by DISCOMs, Tower Charges in MCD area, and other RoW related issues were highlighted.

Order on Facilitating Broadband Expansion by allowing Leasing of fiber on Optical Ground Wire (OPGW)

Central Electricity Authority (CEA) under Ministry of Power vide its order dated 22.11.2024 directed its all Central Transmission Utility (CTU), POWERGRID, State Transmission Utilities (STUs) that all their future transmission schemes should support laying of at least 48F OPGW instead of 24F OPGW for the upcoming TBCB (Tariff based Competitive Bidding)/RTM (Regulated Tariff Mechanism) schemes, also to facilitate broadband expansion by allowing leasing of fibers to Telecom Service Providers(s) instead of Bandwidth.

NBM meeting on RoW Pendencies in Bihar State

An online meeting was organised by NBM on 09.12.2024 to discuss the RoW pendency in the State of Bihar. Concerned State Officials, Officials of LSA, TSP Members and COAI attended the meeting to discuss and address the RoW pendency.

Positive Office Memorandum (OM) issued by Ministry of Coal for the industry

Office Memorandum dated 18.09.2024 notified that the Right of Way (RoW) Rules 2016 needs to be adopted,

thereby Access to User Agencies for laying OFC on the lands of CIL, its subsidiary companies, and NLCIL. Ministry of Coal issued guidelines to allow the use of lands for laying OFC on their lands.

Bihar notified Green Energy Open Access (GEOA) Regulations, 2024

Bihar Electricity Regulatory Commission (BERC) vide order dated 25.11.2024 Bihar Electricity Regulatory Commission (Green Energy Open Access) Regulations, 2024, allowing consumers having aggregated 100kW load to avail GEOA.

District North-East (Delhi) DLTC meeting

COAI participated in DLTC meeting held under the chairmanship of DM (District North-East) on 11.12.2024. COAI highlighted delay in refunding of Security deposits and Bank Guarantee furnished by the members to MCD, taking months/years, which are paid by service providers as part of the permission given for OFC laying and restoration work.

Chandigarh SBC meeting

Chandigarh SBC meeting was held on 23.12.2024 under the chairmanship of Advisor to the Administrator, Chandigarh. Discussions took place regarding industry RoW issues and challenges for faster roll-out of 5G services.

CBuD Workshop

CBuD workshop was organised on 18.12.2024 by Govt. of Uttarakhand to sensitize stakeholders on increasing usage on CBuD App in ITDA office, Dehradun.

Meeting at Central Electricity Authority (CEA) for Notification of Metering Regulations Amendment –A meeting was held with Member (GO&D, CEA) on 18.12.2024 regarding support on notification of the amendment to Metering Regulation, so that Low Tension (LT) consumers below 11KV can be facilitated to avail the Green Energy.

Inter Ministerial Coordination and Monitoring Committee (ICMC) meeting to address forest land related permission issues

An Inter Ministerial Coordination and Monitoring Committee (ICMC) meeting was held on 18.12.2024 under the chairmanship of DGF&SS (MoEFCC) to address the Right of Way issues on forest land.

District South-East (Delhi) DLTC meeting

COAI participated in DLTC meeting held under the chairmanship of DM (District South-East) on 19.12.2024. Police support for installation of telecom infrastructure was highlighted during the meeting.

HPERC notified Green Energy Open Access (GEOA) Regulations, 2024

Himachal Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (HPERC) vide order dated 17.12.2024 notified HPERC (Green Energy Open Access) Regulations, 2024, allowing consumers having aggregated 100kW load to avail GEOA.

Positive order from Government of Andhra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Manipur

The state governments have issued an order conveying that the DoT Right of Way Rules 2024 will supercede the state rules on 1st January 2025.

State Broadband Committee meeting of Arunachal Pradesh

The 9th State Broadband Committee meeting of Arunachal Pradesh took place on 19.12.2024 under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary of the state. COAI highlighted the need for a written order to all local authorities regarding the acceptance of the DoT RoW rules 2024 from 1st January 2025 onwards in letter and spirit.

Bihar State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting

The Bihar State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting was held under the chairmanship of CS, Bihar on 18.12.2024. COAI highlighted the need for Adoption of RoW Rules 2024, faster RoW approvals and mandating usage of CBuD App by all concerned authorities.

COAI's Pre Budget-Recommendations for the year 2025-26

The presentation was made in Ministry of Finance on 14-11-2024. During the meeting, discussions were held on the following topics:

- a. Reduction in regulatory Levies
- b. Direct Tax issues
- c. Indirect Tax issues
- d. Service Tax
- e. Custom Duty

Post discussions, following points were agreed for examination:

- a. Carrying forward of losses of Telecom operators
- b. Speedier disposals of appeals with CIT(A) & disposal of rectifications order giving effects
- c. Additional information in Form 26AS
- d. No TDS on purchase of electricity
- e. Sunset clause to Custom Duty exemption for submarine cable

Additional follow up representation was submitted Carrying forward of losses of Telecom operators. An online meeting was also held with Joint Secretary, TPL, CBDT to discuss the same.

GST Input tax Credit Accumulation in Telecom Companies

Post meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee for Telecom Service Providers We have made the following suggestions that will provide considerable relief for the telecom sector:

- a. Monetising accumulated input tax credit through tradeable scrips
- b. Permit accumulated GST Credit to be offset against other Central Government levies under the Telegraph Act.

This issue has huge financial implications. Estimated INR 35,000 crore is blocked in the system for the past 3 years or more. A meeting was held with Member (F), DoT to discuss the same. Additional follow-up representations are also being submitted with the department.

Input Tax Credit on Equipment Installed on Telecom Towers

Some State Tax Authorities were proposing to deny ITC on telecom equipment including antenna, base stations, etc. installed on towers, by interpreting that such equipment is to be treated at par with telecom towers.

On 20-11-2024, Hon'ble Supreme Court ruled in favor of telecom companies. Credit of taxes and duties was disputed by the department. The Supreme Court affirms the entitlement of the industry and allows them to take credit for taxes and duties paid by them on towers and its parts including green shelters. This is a big relief to the industry. Estimated financial impact is INR 10,000 Cr. This will help with ease by making compliances and will reduce the financial burden of the industry.

We will try to ensure that the principal laid down in this judgment will help in getting the restriction removed for

telecom towers also under GST laws.

GST - Invoice Management System (IMS) and its functionality

GSTN has proposed many changes in IMS functionality. Such IMS initiative would enable matching of transactions between Supplier and Recipient on a real time basis and reduce gaps.

Few Key features of IMS facility are:

- a. Invoice/Debit Note – Accept, Reject or Hold;
- b. Credit Note – Accept or Reject; Hold option not available;
- c. In case of no action by Recipient – transactions will be 'deemed accepted';
- d. Post filling of GSTR 3B, records would move out of IMS;
- e. In case of Rejection of Invoice, Recipient's ITC eligibility would be reduced.

Deemed acceptance of credit note, would increase reconciliation requirements and will be against the principle of Ease of Doing Business. We have made detailed representation to GSTN to resolved these issues.



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News Wires:

Provision of Telecom Act have to be enforced in letter and spirit: COAI

While the rapid rollout of 5G has been a major achievement in 2024, there are several challenges which still hover around the TSPs.

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Seeds of Startups sowing India's telecom transformation

India's startups are redefining telecom with 5G and 6G innovation and cutting-edge tech, positioning the nation as a global leader in connectivity.

[Read more](#)



India's Telcos implement SMS traceability to combat spam and enhance security

Indian telecom operators have implemented a system to track commercial SMS messages, aiming to curb spam and fraud. Over 90% of principal entities have registered, ensuring minimal disruption to legitimate messages like OTPs.

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COAI flags burdensome QoS norms, calls for regulation of OTT players

Telecom operators contend proposed QoS norms are overly burdensome, highlighting challenges like RoW issues, spectrum interference, and infrastructure constraints.

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India poised to lead global race towards 6G: COAI

With the ongoing efforts like the Bharat 6G vision, the government aims to create 10 per cent of 6G patents from India and is evaluating 470 proposals.

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News Wires:

Consumer affairs ministry to issue guidelines to curb pesky calls, messages

The Department of Consumer Affairs is finalizing guidelines to combat spam calls and messages, working with stakeholders and the Department of Telecommunications.

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Internet vital for life, shutdowns hurt banking, education: Telcos to Govt.

Telecom firms urge the govt to limit internet shutdowns, citing their impact on essential services like banking, education, and digital payments, and stress exploring alternatives for law-and-or.

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Telecom industry grows amid tug of war over spectrum auctions

ARPU increase marked a crucial phase in which the industry transitioned from merely surviving to witnessing growth.

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Emerging tech sectors stake claim on 600 MHz Spectrum band

Lately, Qualcomm said the smartphone ecosystem is good to support enhanced telecom services in the 600 MHz band.

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