



COAI

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I-DIGEST

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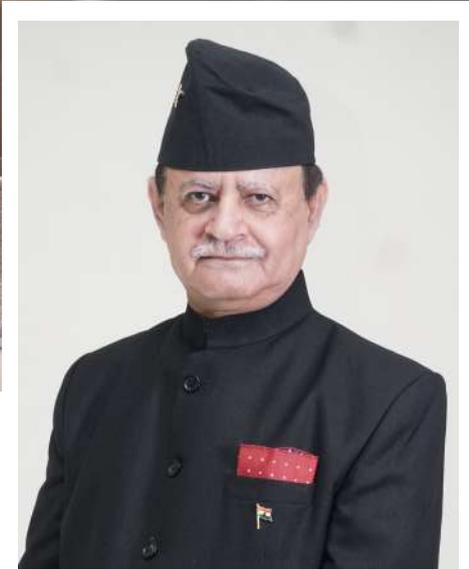
News for you,
information that matters



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LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)

Director General, COAI

From DG's Desk

As we close 2025, the Indian telecommunications sector stands at a defining moment in its journey. With a subscriber base reaching 1.2 billion and teledensity rising to 86.76 per cent by November, the sector has not only powered India's digital transformation but has also emerged as a critical pillar of national security and economic growth. This year witnessed remarkable milestones, from adding nearly 400 million 5G users to crossing 5.15 lakh 5G base transceiver stations, while average mobile data usage climbed to 36 GB per month, with projections indicating 65 GB by 2031. These numbers underscore telecommunications' evolution from a connectivity provider to the backbone of Digital India, supporting governance, education, commerce and innovation across the nation.

December proved to be particularly transformative, defined by decisive policy actions aimed at fortifying the security and trust framework of our digital ecosystem. The Department of Telecommunications' landmark directive mandating SIM-binding for app-based communication services represents a watershed moment, a global first that COAI unequivocally welcomes as essential for national security. By linking accounts on over-the-top communication apps to verified mobile devices and SIM cards, this mandate creates robust deterrence against anonymity-driven cybercrimes, global spyware threats and digital fraud that have increasingly migrated from traditional telecom channels to unregulated platforms.

COAI's position has been consistent and clear: while technology provides powerful tools, the fight against fraud requires regulatory parity. Licensed telecom operators comply with stringent security obligations including lawful interception, subscriber verification through biometric KYC, and comprehensive fraud detection systems. App-based calling services offering equivalent functionality must operate under equivalent accountability frameworks. Contrary to concerns regarding user convenience or privacy, SIM-binding enhances digital safety without disrupting legitimate usage, it simply ensures that the same verification standards protecting traditional voice calls extend to app-based communications.

The year also saw significant progress in combating spam and scams through multiple TRAI-mandated measures. The nationwide rollout of the P/S/T/G suffix system for commercial SMS, distributed ledger technology-based registration, and analytics-driven spam detection led to measurable reductions in spam on traditional telecom channels. The government's proposal to mandate display of KYC-registered names on incoming calls, coupled with industry recommendations for higher deterrence charges against spammers, represents the next frontier in restoring trust in voice communications.

Beyond security, 2025 demonstrated the sector's growing contributions to India's manufacturing vision. Domestic production gained significant momentum under Make in India and PLI schemes, achieving nearly 60 per cent import substitution in telecom products and positioning India as an emerging exporter of 4G and 5G equipment. Telecom exports increased by an impressive 72 per cent over five years, rising to ₹18,406 crore in FY25 from ₹10,000 crore in FY21. This transformation from import dependence to export competitiveness reflects the industry's commitment to self-reliance and technological sovereignty.

Crucially, this month marked a significant policy advancement with the release of the National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP) 2025. COAI has welcomed DoT's progressive approach, particularly the identification of the 6425–7125 MHz band for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT). This decision significantly enhances mid-band spectrum availability, critical for expanding 5G, 5G-Advanced, and future 6G networks. By signaling alignment with global standards, this move encourages the development of a robust equipment ecosystem and supports affordable broadband services. However, COAI reiterates that the remaining 500 MHz in the 5925–6425 MHz band should also be identified for IMT to fully meet India's exponential data growth needs. With mobile networks carrying the vast majority of India's internet traffic, fragmented spectrum could limit performance and increase costs; thus, the full 1200 MHz in the 6 GHz band remains essential for enabling economies of scale and accelerating our digital ambitions.

Looking ahead, Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia's ambitious target for the sector to contribute 20 per cent to India's GDP over the next decade, reflected in the draft National Telecom Policy, aligns perfectly with industry vision. COAI remains engaged in constructive dialogue to fine-tune policy specifics, but the fundamental direction is clear: telecommunications must be recognized as a strategic national enabler, not just another vertical industry. As we enter 2026, our commitment remains unwavering, to build networks that are not just ubiquitous but inherently secure, trusted and capable of supporting India's journey toward becoming a developed nation by 2047.



COAI

Latest Updates:



REGULATORY AND STRATEGY TEAM

Request for Open House Discussions (OHD) for the draft 'Reporting System on Accounting Separation (Amendment) Regulations, 2025' and the draft 'Telecommunication Tariff (Seventy Second Amendment) Order, 2025' –

TRAI has issued the draft 'Reporting System on Accounting Separation (Amendment) Regulations, 2025' and the draft 'Telecommunication Tariff (Seventy Second Amendment) Order, 2025' on 16.10.2025. COAI had submitted its comments on said drafts on 07.11.2025. The Authority has proposed a significant increase in the levy of Financial Disincentives (FD) for non-compliance in the above referred draft Regulations/Order. This would place an undue financial strain on service providers and would act as a deterrent to investments in the telecom sector. We submitted a letter on 11.12.2025 requesting TRAI to conduct an Open House Discussion (OHD) to discuss the comments provided by our members on these two draft Regulations/Orders, at the earliest. We further requested that TRAI allocate sufficient time during the OHDs to facilitate a detailed deliberation on the rationale and impact of the levy of Financial Disincentives on the sector's financial stability and its alignment with the principles of regulatory certainty.

TRAI Consultation Paper on "Review of existing TRAI Regulations on Interconnection matters" – COAI submitted its response to the TRAI Consultation Paper on 15.12.2025. The following points were highlighted:

- (i) Immediately move towards LSA-based interconnection,
- (ii) Mandate IP based interconnection, (iii) Significant upward revision of Termination charges for international calls, (iv) Reciprocity in interconnection arrangements

Submissions on TRAI Guidelines Regarding Publication and Validation of Service-wise Geospatial Coverage Maps –

COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 29.12.2025 requesting to kindly take into account the technical differences between prediction-based maps and drive test samples. COAI also urged TRAI to maintain the intent of publishing coverage map on different TSPs websites as flexibility for end customer to check network coverage of different TSP members. A further request was made to TRAI to review the

updating of coverage maps using IDT samples, which is not feasible.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Letter to MoF seeking clarification regarding calculation of interest on wrongful utilization of CGST and SGST: A letter was submitted to Ministry of Finance on 04.12.2025 regarding Manner of Calculation of Interest under Section 50 (3) of CGST Act, 2017. COAI requested that the tax authorities should calculate the total balances of all three revenue heads together while calculating such interests.

TELECOM INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Congratulatory DO Letter to New Chief Secretary, Maharashtra – A Congratulatory DO was written to the new Chief Secretary, Maharashtra. It was submitted that the industry remains committed to extend all possible support/assistance and will look forward to continued collaboration with his office to further strengthen the cooperation between the Government and the telecom industry.

Letter to Chief Secretary, Maharashtra – A letter was written to Chief Secretary, Maharashtra, on 24.12.2025, on the matter regarding the mandate from the Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to TSPs for submission of GIS data for Mapping of Underground Utilities. We requested that instructions be issued to BMC to withdraw any requirement for submission of GIS mapping data and expedite Right of Way permissions for TSPs.

Submission post the Uttar Pradesh SBC Meeting – A submission was made to the Chief Secretary, Uttar Pradesh on 04.12.2025, post the Uttar Pradesh State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting held on 11.11.2025, highlighting the industry concerns and requesting for resolution(s).

Submission to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on DG Set Classification – A submission was made to the Chairman, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on 05.12.2025, requesting review of the revised classification of DG Sets issued in February 2025. A request for an in-person industry meeting was also sought.

Submission post the Andaman & Nicobar State Broadband

Committee (SBC) Meeting – A post SBC submission was made to the Chief Secretary, Andaman & Nicobar Islands on 05.12.2025, seeking the State's support in resolving key Right of Way related issues faced by the telecom industry.

Submission to Uttarakhand Electricity Regulatory Commission on Industrial Tariff – A submission was made on 09.12.2025 to the Chairman, Uttarakhand Electricity Regulatory Commission (UERC), seeking support for extending Industrial Tariff benefits to the Telecom Industry.

Gujarat State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting – The Gujarat SBC meeting was held on 10.12.2025 under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary. COAI presented key industry issues on behalf of its members. A post SBC submission was also made to the Chief Secretary, on 24.12.2025, seeking the State's support in resolving key Right of Way related issues faced by the telecom industry.

Submission to the Chief Secretary, Karnataka – A submission was made to Chief Secretary, Karnataka on 09.12.2025, regarding common ducts. It was requested to direct the Municipal Corporation of Bengaluru (BBMP) for reviewing and rationalizing the current common duct rental charges. It was conveyed that a revised and reasonable fee structure will ensure better utilisation of the available duct infrastructure.

State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting of Karnataka – The 8th SBC meeting of Karnataka was organised on 20.12.2025, chaired by Chief Secretary. Important issues like Use of common ducts, making available Aerial Fiber deployment, Implementation of RoW rules 2024 and adoption by local authorities in the State and other important issues were raised by COAI.

Submission to Deputy Chief Minister, Karnataka – A Submission was made to the Deputy Chief Minister, Karnataka on 22.12.2025, requesting an opportunity to meet with member Telecom Service Providers, to apprise of certain challenges, impediments affecting network expansion and operation of existing infrastructure being faced by the industry.

Assam State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting – The 15th SBC meeting of Assam was held on 16.12.2025 under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, wherein the LSA presented key issues being faced by the telecom industry.

COAI Submission to Administrator, Chandigarh – A submission was made on 18.12.2025 to the Administrator, Chandigarh, requesting directions to the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation for alignment with the RoW Rules, 2024 and rationalisation of ground rent and user charges for mobile tower installations.

Submission to DISCOMs of Andhra Pradesh – Submission was made to various DISCOMs of Andhra Pradesh on 22.12.2025, against the public notice issued for the upcoming year tariff finalization, reiterating industry request to extend the electricity tariff under Industrial rates.

Letter to Principal Secretary (IT), Govt. of Rajasthan – A letter was written to Principal Secretary (IT), Rajasthan on 11.12.2025, requesting the intervention from his office for early resolution of the important matters of Telecom Industry which were discussed in the State Broadband Committee meeting, to enable faster, more efficient connectivity

enhancement across the State.

Letter to Principal Secretary (Energy), Rajasthan – A letter was written to Principal Secretary (Energy), Government of Rajasthan, on 22.12.2025, with submission of recommendations regarding conduct of District Level Telecom Committee (DLTC) meetings in the State, which will make the activity more productive.

Submission to Chief Secretary, Chhattisgarh – A Submission was made to the Chief Secretary, Chhattisgarh regarding annual Tower Renewal Fees and compliance to the Right of Way Rules, 2024 on 11-12-2025. COAI again requested for discontinuation of charges which are not aligned with the Right of Way Rules, 2024. It was suggested that one-time permission fee of ₹10,000 for regularizing existing towers be implemented and State.PSU units be formally instructed to comply with the Right of Way Rules, 2024.

Response received from Chhattisgarh Government on Annual Tower Renewal Fee – A response was received from the Chhattisgarh Government, which was shared with members on 15.12.2025. The response denied the industry request for stoppage of the fee by referring to clarification issued by the DoT that the RoW Rules 2024 are prospective in nature. This response was against our submission written to Chief Secretary earlier, highlighting the industry concern on 20.08.2025.

Submission to Chief Secretary, Himachal Pradesh – A submission was made on 23.12.2025 to the Chief Secretary, Himachal Pradesh, requesting issuance of a fresh notification for implementing the Right of Way Rules, 2024 in the State. The current notification is valid for a period of one year only.

Jharkhand State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting – The Jharkhand SBC meeting was held on 24.12.2025 under the chairmanship of the Hon'ble Chief Secretary, wherein the LSA presented key issues being faced by the telecom industry. A submission was also made to the Chief Secretary, on 31.12.2025.

Submission to Secretary (T), regarding Navi Mumbai Airport – A submission was made to Secretary (T) on 30.12.2025, seeking urgent intervention on industry concerns arising from actions of Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited (NMIAL), including denial of Right of Way permissions in contravention of RoW Rules 2024 and the imposition of exclusive in-building telecom arrangements.

NBM Online Industry Meeting on Central Ministries – National Broadband Mission (NBM) organised an online industry meeting on 27.11.2025 to discuss policy-level issues pertaining to Central Ministries including Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG), which can be taken up by the respective Ministries for resolution.

5G Capacity Building Workshop in Jammu – COAI participated in the 5G Capacity Building Workshop held on 28.11.2025 in Jammu, hosted by the IT Department, Government of Jammu & Kashmir. Presentations were made by NBM, 5G start-ups and COAI among others.

Submission to West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission – A submission was made on 31.12.2025 to the Chairman, West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission (WBERC), as a response to the draft Terms and Conditions for Tariff Regulations 2025 seeking support for extending

Industrial Tariff benefits to the Telecom Industry.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

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

COAI Letter was submitted to DoT on 05.12.2025 requesting immediate convening of the meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for adoption of 100% of ICNIRP standards.

Inclusion of Critical Issues in Terms of Reference (ToR) for Technical Evaluation of D2M by Prasar Bharati and Other Key Aspects

COAI letter was submitted to MIB on 23.12.2025 on Inclusion of Critical Issues in Terms of Reference (ToR) for Technical Evaluation of D2M by Prasar Bharati and Other Key Aspects. In the letter, we requested:

- a) Re-Conduct of the Technical Study / Tests on D2M.
- b) A stakeholder consultation, under the aegis of DoT/TRAI,
- c) Standards, good practices and KPIs be developed by TEC.

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

- a) This is with reference to the DoT letter dated 10.02.2025 to conduct Police Verification of each PoS in every 5 years in J&K, Assam & NE LSA.
- b) In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 22.12.2025 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 01.04.2020.

Concerns Regarding Fixing of Charges for Mobile Number Validation under Telecom Identifier (TI) Validation Framework

- a) This is with reference to the DoT order dated 14.11.2025 wherein DoT has prescribed charges for Mobile Number Validation services.
- b) In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 12.12.2025 requesting that the pricing and commercial terms for TI-validation services must remain wholly market-determined.

Disruption in Aadhaar authentication for issuance of SIMs & re-verification of subscribers

- a) This is with reference to the frequent disruptions being faced by our member TSPs during Aadhaar-based authentication.
- b) In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to UIDAI on 10.12.2025 requesting a comprehensive investigation into the root cause of the recurring disruptions.

A stakeholder meeting under the Chair of the Joint Secretary (MIB) was convened on 02.12.2025 to examine the **Draft Guidelines on Accessibility of Content on Platforms of Publishers of Online Curated Content (OTT Platforms) for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment**. Industry identified concerns regarding heavy compliance obligations on publishers and aggregators and proposed request for phased adoption of standards were raised. MIB sought technical solutions for issues. Guidelines are awaiting finalization.

CERT-In convened a stakeholder discussion on 18.12.2025, at COAI's request, to discuss overlaps between the CERT-In Cyber Security Audit Guidelines (issued 25.07.2025) and DoT's Telecom Cyber Security Rules, 2024/2025, particularly on audits, SOC/SIEM, logging, and incident reporting. Members

expressed duplication of audit and reporting requirements, increased compliance burden, and suggested a unified reporting framework.

National Centre for Communication Security (NCCS): NCCS has extended the validity period for granting Pro-Tem Certificates beyond 31 December 2025, allowing an extension of up to two additional years. The TSTL Designation Application Fee Structure has been revised to provide concessions and support for Start-ups, Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), and enterprises owned by women entrepreneurs, thereby encouraging wider industry participation.

NCCS has mandated Security Certification for Optical Network Terminal (ONT) devices. Based on the representations received from industry, the testing and certification process for ONT devices and their customised variants has been simplified.

Mandatory Testing & Certification of Telecommunication Equipment (MTCTE)

MTCTE has extended the acceptance of the ILAC certificate till 30.6.2026

Provided exemption against certain parameters of ER of PON family Broadband Equipment under MTCTE. Also on the various parameters/ Interfaces of ERs under MTCTE.

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COAI News Wires:

COAI welcomes government's move mandating SIM-binding for devices for app-based communication services.

ANI

'DoTs SIM-binding directive gains telco support, even as WhatsApp users voice concerns.

The Indian Express

'COAI welcomes DoTs SIM-linking mandate for messaging apps.

The Hindu Business Line

NFAP 2025 a big boost for 5G expansion: COAI.

IANIS

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

The Economic Times





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