



COAI

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I-DIGEST

Connecting the World

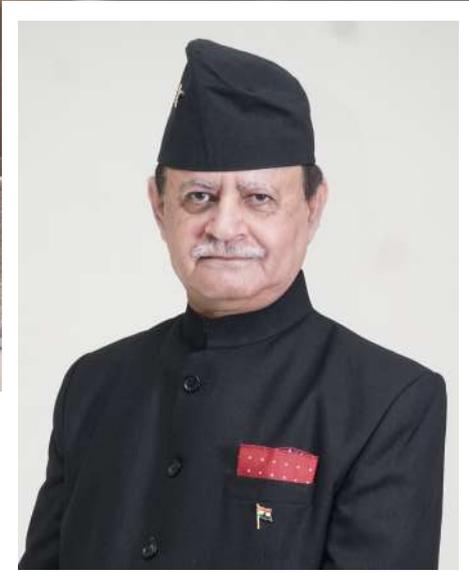
News for you,
information that matters



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LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)

Director General, COAI

From DG's Desk

As we step into 2026, India's telecommunications sector stands firmly at the centre of the nation's digital and economic vision. With strong network expansion, rapid 5G adoption and growing digital integration across industries, the next phase of growth will depend on ensuring a sustainable financial framework that empowers operators to continue building India's digital backbone.

January has been a month of critical policy engagement and sectoral reflection. Ahead of the Union Budget, COAI has called for a reduction in regulatory levies, specifically recommending that the License Fee be brought down from 3% to between 0.5% and 1%, limited to covering only administrative costs. COAI has further requested that the Digital Bharat Nidhi contribution be paused until the existing unutilized corpus under the fund is deployed by the Department of Telecommunications. These measures would directly ease financial stress and unlock additional capital for network modernization, rural connectivity, and 5G-Advanced expansion.

On the GST policy front, COAI has highlighted persistent challenges arising from input tax credit (ITC) accumulation and reverse charge obligations on spectrum payments and license fees. The industry has recommended the exemption of GST on regulatory payments such as LF, SUC, and spectrum charges, or alternatively, the reduction of the applicable GST rate from 18% to 5% to minimize ITC buildup. COAI has also proposed allowing the use of accumulated ITC to discharge GST under the Reverse Charge Mechanism, a move that would significantly reduce cash outflows and enhance liquidity.

Further, COAI also raised industry concerns regarding the ongoing Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) broadcasting evaluations, emphasizing the need for a transparent, consultative and technically inclusive approach that safeguards efficient spectrum utilization and avoids potential interference with mobile networks. COAI remains committed to engaging with stakeholders to ensure that innovation progresses within a framework of fairness and co-existence.

Additionally, the month highlighted the importance of Right of Way (RoW) facilitation and proactive infrastructure planning in ensuring seamless connectivity, particularly at newly developed public hubs such as airports and transport corridors. Ensuring telecom readiness as an essential utility in infrastructure projects remains a top priority for the industry.

As India advances toward its vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, the telecom sector's role as the nation's digital enabler cannot be overstated. The coming budget presents an opportunity to recalibrate fiscal and regulatory policies that will empower the industry to deliver affordable, secure, and future-ready connectivity for every citizen.

Looking ahead, COAI remains aligned with the government's ambition for the telecom sector to contribute 20 per cent to India's GDP within the next decade. The path forward is clear: robust fiscal reforms, spectrum efficiency and policy alignment will together define the next phase of India's digital growth. As we begin this new year, COAI's commitment endures to enable networks that are intelligent, secure and inclusive, that not only connect India but empower every citizen to thrive in the digital age.



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Latest Updates:



REGULATORY & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

OHD on Consultation Paper on Review of existing TRAI Regulations on Interconnection matters: COAI participated in an Open House Discussion (OHD) on a Consultation Paper on Review of existing regulations on Interconnection matters conducted by TRAI on 28.01.2026. The following submissions were made: (a) Immediately move towards LSA-based interconnection; (b) Mandate IP based interconnection; (c) Significant upward revision of Termination charges for International calls; and (d) Reciprocity in Interconnection Agreements.

Dissemination of SMS campaign for consumer awareness: COAI submitted a letter to TRAI on 14.01.2026 requesting that (a) the SMSs should be disseminated only in the consumer's language preference registered with their service provider. Alternatively, a single SMS in English may be mandated as a uniform standard where the consumer preference is not registered; (b) awareness campaigns should be conducted on a quarterly basis instead of monthly.

Reduction in DBN levy: COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 19.01.2026 requesting that (a) The DBN levy be abolished, given the unutilized corpus; (b) Till the utilization of this fund, no DBN levy be charged from the operators. This will leave funds with TSPs to expedite expansion of service to underserved areas; (c) Until the decision on the above is taken, DoT to immediately start implementing a graded reduction in DBN levy, to enable higher cash flow for Telcos to invest in

expansion of service.

Discontinuation of publishing of consumer care and General Information numbers in leading newspapers: We have submitted a letter to TRAI on 19.01.2026 requesting the Authority to consider removing the requirement for publication of the Consumer Care Number and General Information Number in newspapers, and allow TSPs to continue to provide this information through various digital modes such as Mobile Apps, websites, etc. to the consumers.

TELECOM INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Submission to Principal Secretary (Energy) Government of Rajasthan: A Letter was submitted to Principal Secretary (Energy), Rajasthan on 02.01.2026, regarding Green Energy Open Access for Telecom Sector in Rajasthan. A request made to the Principal Secretary to intervene and issue necessary advisories and directions to DISCOMs in addressing the gaps, thereby enabling effective GEOA implementation for LT consumers like Telecom.

Submission to Chief Minister, Maharashtra: A Submission was made to Chief Minister, Maharashtra on 06.01.2026, requesting an opportunity for a in-person industry meeting, for discussion of important RoW related issues, like implementation of the Right of Way (RoW) Rules 2024, Activation and effective adoption of the online portal, industry issue pertaining to Property Tax levied on telecom infrastructure and support on regularisation of existing telecom installations.

Submission to Secretary, Telangana Electricity Regulatory Commission (TERC): A submission was made to Secretary TERC on 08.01.2026, requesting for notification of separate wheeling charge for Green Energy sourced power, considering its inherent intermittency and lower efficiency. Alternatively, it was requested to clearly define wheeling charge per unit to ensure the viability of Green Energy Open Access and promote renewable energy adoption in the State. Subsequently, received a response on 19.01.2026 from Power Distribution Companies of Telangana on industry submission, same was circulated with members for their information. None of the requests were accepted.

Submission to Chairman TRAI: A Letter was submitted to Chairman TRAI on 13.01.2026, requesting for Regulatory Intervention on denial of Right of Way Permission at Navi Mumbai International Airport, resulting in a monopolistic bottleneck via exclusive In-Building Solutions (IBS), and lack of cost-based pricing by VNO/IP-I.

Letter to Madhya Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission: A Letter submitted to The Secretary, Madhya Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission on 19.01.2026, requesting to not increase the Tariffs for the next Financial Year, extending Industrial tariff category to the telecom industry, defining Green Energy Open Access transmission & distribution charges and losses for LT consumers connected at 11 kV and below.

Letter to Secretary (Information Technology), Government of Maharashtra: A Letter was written to Secretary (Information Technology), Maharashtra on 22.01.2026, requesting to facilitate early circulation of the Minutes of the 10th State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting, which was held on 19.11.2025, especially in view to track the progress on Action Taken as agreed during the meeting.

Internal Meeting with the Members in preparation of State Broadband Committee (SBC) meetings: Internal pre-meeting with Members of Maharashtra and Puducherry was held on 27.01.2026, to discuss the RoW related issues to be taken up on behalf of Industry during respective SBC meetings.

Submission to Chief Secretary Jharkhand: Pursuant to the Jharkhand State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting, a post-SBC

submission was made on 31.12.2025 to the Chief Secretary, Jharkhand, seeking support for resolution of key Right of Way (RoW) issues being faced by the telecom industry.

Extension of Right of Way Rules 2024 Notification in Himachal Pradesh: The Government of Himachal Pradesh, vide notification dated 16.12.2025, has implemented and extended the Right of Way (RoW) Rules, 2024 till further notice. The earlier notification was valid only for a period of one year.

Congratulatory DO to Chief Secretary, UT of Ladakh: A Congratulatory DO letter was sent on 06.01.2026 to the newly appointed Chief Secretary of the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Delhi State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting: The Delhi SBC meeting was held on 08.01.2026 under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary. Key industry concerns were raised by Delhi LSA, COAI and industry representatives, and several industry favourable directions were issued during the meeting.

Telecom Infrastructure Committee Quarterly Meeting: The quarterly Telecom Industry Council (TIC) meeting was held on 12.01.2026, wherein ongoing concerns of the members were deliberated, and a way forward was agreed upon for select issues.

Industry Meeting on Power-related Issues in Delhi: An industry meeting chaired by the Special Secretary (Power), Government of Delhi, was held on 13.01.2026 with participation from DISCOMs, DERC and other stakeholders to discuss electricity-related issues of the telecom sector. The meeting resulted in some positive outcomes.

NBM - MoRTH Industry Meeting on Common Ducts: An industry meeting was chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), in presence of National Broadband Mission (NBM) on 22.01.2026, to deliberate possible models for adoption of common duct deployment. This was after a similar meeting was chaired by NBM on 13.01.2026 along with senior officials from the MoRTH.

Submission to Gujarat Electricity Regulatory Commission: A submission was made on 16.01.2026 to the Gujarat Electricity Regulatory Commission (GERC) on the electricity tariff Aggregate Revenue Requirement (ARR) for FY

2026–27.

National Broadband Mission Meetings on ‘Single Tower, Multiple Utilities’: On 20.01.2026, NBM chaired two separate meetings under the theme ‘Single Tower, Multiple Utilities’. One on installation of weather sensors on telecom towers and the other on utilisation of towers for Wi-Fi installations.

Communication from DSIIDC, Delhi: On 27.01.2026, communication was received from Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (DSIIDC) regarding redevelopment of roads and storm water drainage systems in Wazirpur Industrial Area, Delhi. All utility and service agencies were advised to review their existing utilities and undertake required works on priority. The communication has been shared with members for their suitable action.

Submission to Hon’ble Minister of Power: A submission was made on 28.01.2026 to the Hon’ble Minister, Ministry of Power, seeking support on key electricity-related issues impacting the telecom industry.

Meeting with CPCB on DG Set Compliance: A meeting was held with Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) officials on 29.01.2026 along with TSP and IP members to seek regulatory support and clarity on DG set compliance requirements for the telecom sector.

Tripura State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting: The Tripura SBC meeting was held on 15.01.2026 under the chairmanship of the Hon’ble Chief Secretary.

Congratulatory DO to Chief Secretary, Odisha: A Congratulatory DO letter was sent to the newly appointed Chief Secretary of Odisha s on 06.01.2026.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Implementation of Rule 88B: Vide circular dated 30.01.2026, the Government has implemented Rule 88B of the CGST Rules, 2017. This provides significant relief by allowing members to utilize excess IGST Credits to offset CGST and SGST credits in any order.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE:

EMF Compliance Schedule Extension

This is with reference to the EMF Exposure

compliance deadline for the telecom Industry till 31.01.2026. COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 23.01.2026 to grant an extension for EMF exposure self-certification and triennial submission by at least two months.

In pursuance of COAI request, DoT has extended the timelines till 28th February 2026 for:

- i)** Submission of EMF Self Certificates for new BTSs and upgradation cases
- ii)** Exemption of EMF Audits by LSA field units of DoT for 5G BTS sites.

Issuance of mobile connections to customers with age less than 18 years

This is with reference to the observations made 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. On this matter, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 22.01.2026 requesting DoT to issue instructions to all the LSA Units to recognize such CAFs as compliant.

Seeking Identification of Entire 6 GHz band (5925–7125 MHz) for IMT

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 02.01.2026 for Identification of the entire 6 GHz band (5925–7125 MHz) for IMT in the National Frequency Allocation Plan.



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News Wires:

Interaction: Ahead of the Union Budget SP Kochhar of the Cellular Operators Association of India shares insights into the telecom sectors priorities and highlights progress on easing right of way challenges

ET Now (Video)



Telecom industry seeks AI policy clarity, warns uncertainty may hit investment

Money Control



Telecom 2026 - Global trends powering India's connectivity revolution

Communications Today



TRAI mulls slashing outdated price ceilings for high-speed business lines

Mint



Telcos push I&B ministry for fresh D2M tech assessment: What they want

Business Standard





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