

Amended RoW Rules 2023 to further smoothen 5G deployment in India

New Delhi, 18th August 2023: COAI, the leading representative body for the Indian telecommunications industry, lauded the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for introducing the “The Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, 2023” as being progressive and forward-looking, with a clear focus towards enhancing the 5G ecosystem and expansive digital connectivity for all citizens across India.

These amendments are in continuation to the earlier amendments made in 2017, 2021 and 2022, for further facilitation of rolling out robust telecom infrastructure in the country. The amendments add to the many steps initiated by the Government to facilitate Ease of Doing Business in the sector and will support the industry in further enhancing and maintaining the networks in a much speedier manner.

The latest amendment allows licensees to set up temporary overground telegraph infrastructure when their existing underground infrastructure is damaged. This would help restore telegraph services on priority, thus preventing major disruptions in services to the users. It is also positive that the Government has directed that no fees will be charged by the appropriate authority for this temporary setup.

The amendment also adds the much-needed clarity in the regulations itself, on the definition of Street Furniture, which means post or pole used for electricity, streetlight, traffic light, traffic sign, bus stop, tram stop, taxi stand, public lavatory, memorial, public sculpture, utility pole or any other structure or contrivance of such nature established over the property of an appropriate authority, which will aid in faster rollouts and more efficient network deployments.

According to the new amendment, the appropriate authority shall make provisions allowing the licensee to submit single application for multiple sites for establishment of small cells. Further, the appropriate central authorities are now allowed to deploy small cells on their buildings and structures without administrative fees, except for charges related to power and fixtures provided by building owners.

Appreciating the initiative, **Lt. Gen. Dr. SP Kochhar, Director General, COAI** said, *“We welcome the move by DoT to introduce the new amended RoW rules which is a positive step forward for the industry and will contribute to the faster deployment of 5G services in the country. These forthcoming changes will provide significant advantages to the telecom industry and the digital connectivity provision for the nation. It will enable rapid network reinstatement in the event of underground telecom infrastructure damage, expedite 5G rollout by utilizing the state’s existing infrastructure, simplify application procedures for multiple small cell sites and allocate Central government areas for small cell deployment at no cost. We believe these measures will collectively enhance ease of doing business within the sector, while aiding in expansive network deployments for ubiquitous connectivity across the country.”*

“However, the real benefits of these measures would depend upon their effective implementation by local authorities in letter and spirit. The industry looks forward to working with state governments and

different agencies to bring these changes on ground and speed up as well as smoothen the network deployments,” he added.

Last year, the government introduced The Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, 2022, to help the industry in faster proliferation of Digital infrastructure, deployment of small cells, aerial fiber and street furniture.

About COAI

Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) represents the leading Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and telecom equipment vendors in India. COAI is dedicated to the advancement of mobile telephony and broadband in the country through development and provision of world-class infrastructure, products and services; for delivering the benefits of innovative and affordable mobile communication services to the people of India. The association works closely with Ministries, Policy Makers, Regulators, Financial Institutions and Technical Bodies towards these objectives. (www.coai.in)