



**COAI**

ISSUE  
JANUARY 2022

# I-DIGEST

Connecting the World

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information that matters*



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## LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)

Director General, COAI

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### From DG's Desk

The Telecom industry in India is the second largest in the world. As per GSMA, India will have 88 million 5G connections by 2025. It is also estimated that 5G technology will contribute approximately \$450 billion to the Indian Economy in the period of 2023-2040.

As all of us are well aware of the fact that the budget is an extremely vital part of the economy of any nation since it helps in planning and controlling its financial affairs. Telecom industry also had some expectations from this year's budget that included the government bringing down licence fees from 3% to 1% & reducing SUC by 3% on spectrum acquired in past auctions.

We are glad to see the Union Budget 2022-23 announcement for the required spectrum auction in 2022 for the rollout of 5G mobile services in Union Budget 2022-23. We also welcome the proposal for taking progressive decisions in encouraging affordable broadband and mobile services through facilitating PLI scheme for 5G equipment, laying optical fiber cables through PPP model under BharatNet project.

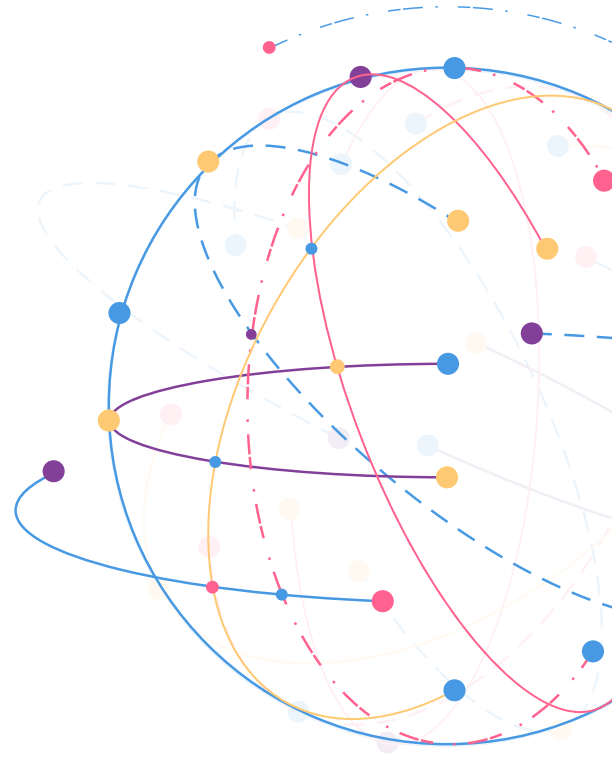
Budget still didn't address our long-standing demands. We look forward to fruitful engagement with the Government of India for betterment of telecom industry.

Telecom industry is ought to face new challenges & opportunities in this new year that will include reassessing cybersecurity in the 5G era. Telecom sector will continue to make progress in augmenting its network capacity with additional fiber and wireless deployments to meet the constant demand for higher-speed networks.



# COAI

## Latest Updates:



### **Return of Bank Guarantees:**

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 25th January, 2022 requesting for early return of Bank Guarantees.

### **TRAI Consultation Paper on Regulatory Framework for Promoting Data Economy Through Establishment of Data Centres, Content Delivery Networks, and Interconnect Exchanges in India:**

TRAI has issued this consultation paper on 16th December 2021. Due date for submission of inputs is 3rd Feb 2022 and for counter comment is 17th February 2022. Due to the ongoing pandemic situation, COAI has submitted a request letter to TRAI on 28th December 2021 and 24th Jan 2022 seeking extension in timelines for submission of inputs till 10th March 2022.

### **TRAI Consultation Paper on Ease of Doing Business in Telecom and Broadcasting Sector:**

TRAI has issued this consultation paper on 8th Dec 2021. Post COAI request submitted on 12th Jan 2022, TRAI has extended the timelines for the submission of inputs till 9th Feb 2022 and for counter comment till 23 Feb 2022.

### **TRAI Consultation Paper on "Auction of Spectrum in frequency bands identified for IMT/5G"**

TRAI has issued this consultation paper on 30th Nov 2021. Due date for submission of inputs is 10th Jan 2022 and for counter comment is 24th Jan 2022. COAI has submitted the response to TRAI on 10th Jan 2022. TRAI has scheduled the Open House Discussion for this consultation paper on 8th Feb 2022.

### **Request for additional time to file periodic reports and relaxation in QoS benchmarks:**

Due to the ongoing pandemic situation, COAI has submitted the letter to TRAI on 13th Jan 2022 requesting to provide additional timelines of four weeks to file the periodic reports and respond to any Show Cause Notices. Additionally, COAI has also requested for relaxation in QoS parameters for the ongoing quarter i.e., QE March 2022 and till the situation stabilizes.

### **Conduct of Consumer Education Workshops (CEWs) through digital/online mode:**

Post submission of COAI's request on 21st Dec 2021, TRAI on 20 Jan 2022 has allowed TSPs to conduct Consumer Education Workshops (CEWs) through digital/online mode for next two quarters i.e., up to 30 Jun 2022.

### **Need for utilization of eNodeB enabling maximum coverage in the expansion of 4G networks across rural India**

COAI has submitted this letter to DoT on 11th Jan 2022 requesting to give priority and mandating use of eNodeB which facilitates maximum coverage with greater tower heights for 4G networks established under USOF project.

### **Releasing the Broadband Readiness Index (BRI) of States and UTs**

COAI has submitted this letter to DoT on 17th Jan 2022 requesting for early release of Broadband Readiness Index of states and UTs and also requested to make this an annual feature to enhance Ease of Doing Business.

Support Required from DoT during the Current Situation in the Country:

COAI made a submission to DoT on 10th January, 2022 on the subject seeking abeyance/suspension for next three months on the following activities:

- a) Time bound CAF submissions for routine/monthly/quarterly/special or MHA referred cases
- b) All category of CAF audits
- c) EMR Audits
- d) Documentation compliances w.r.t. CLIR renewals. CLIR service should be allowed to be continued for cases whose renewal date is falling during these 3 months. Documentation in this regard will be completed after the end of abeyance/suspension period



- e) Field visits inspections
- f) SACFA compliances
- g) Periodic/six-monthly physical inspection of Bulk user premises
- h) Leased circuits (to cover ILL inspection)

DoT issued a circular on 18th January, 2022 wherein DoT has decided that the audit process conducted by LSA field units in respect of EMR and Subscriber Verification (CAF) shall be kept in abeyance till 28th February, 2022.

#### **Police Verification of PoS / PoS Agents in J&K, Assam and NESA**

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 13th January, 2022 on the subject mentioning DoT that the process adopted for police verification in North East service area is quicker & efficient and hence, the same process should be replicated in J&K and Assam service areas, so as to standardize the overall procedure on police verification as well as speed up the process.

#### **Exclusion/removable of consumer electronic products/devices from Phase-3 of MTCTE Procedure**

COAI made a submission to DoT on 13th January, 2022, on the matter.

COAI requested DoT to direct TEC, to exclude currently mentioned consumer electronic products/devices such as Smart Watches and Smart Cameras from MTCTE Procedure Phase 3 as these Products/Devices are currently governed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under the Compulsory Registration Scheme 2012 and are implemented by BIS under CRO. COAI also made a request to TEC to consider not including such products/devices including any mobile phones in the future to avoid certifications requirements thereby increasing the compliance costs of any other consumer electronic products.

#### **Assignment of Spectrum Resource in 6 GHz band for IMT/5G services only through Auction**

COAI submitted a letter to Hon'ble Minister for Communications on 15th January, 2022 on the subject stating that auction-based allocation method ensures the principles of efficient allocation of natural resources in a legally tenable manner, enables orderly growth, reduces regulatory arbitrage, supports non-interference assignment, aids in improved quality of services, improves the investor confidence, leads to a market determined revenue for the exchequer and more importantly significantly contributes in the speedy proliferation of broadband services in India and any proposal for delicensing of 6 GHz band should thus be completely rejected.

Hence, COAI submitted that the spectrum resources in the 6 GHz band be assigned through the auction process only.

#### **Industry Inputs on Instructions for re-verification of existing mobile connections identified by the DoT / Licensee / Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs)**

COAI made a submission to DoT providing industry inputs on 19th January, 2022 on DoT's Instructions dated 7th December, 2021 on re-verification of existing mobile connections identified by the DoT / Licensee / Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs).

Further, COAI submitted that once these clarifications are issued, the TSPs would need sufficient time to implement the instructions as the business & IT teams of our member TSPs are working remotely due to outbreak of Covid which is acting as a limiting factor for timely roll-out. Hence, COAI requested to provide additional time of 60 days for implementation of the circular from the date the clarifications are issued by DoT.

#### **Extension of MTCTE Phase 4**

COAI made a submission to DoT on 21st January, 2022, on the matter.

TEC in several discussions with our members individually as well as in an online meeting conducted on 10th January, 2022, with all MTCTE stakeholders, wherein it was informed that the February 2022 deadline will be postponed or will be aligned with the June 22 deadline for other ERs. COAI requested DoT to direct TEC to release the formal notification regarding extension of Phase 4 soon as informed by them. COAI also submitted that the overall testing and certification under MTCTE needs to be reviewed in line with lab capabilities.

#### **DoT issued a notice to all e-commerce companies on "Illegal Facilitation and Sale of Wireless Jammers on On-line Platforms" on 21st January, 2022**

DoT issued a notice to all e-commerce platforms on "Illegal Facilitation and Sale of Wireless Jammers on On-line Platforms" on 21st January, 2022.

DoT informed that such facilitation/sale of by the online platforms as well as any other off-line dealer/seller for general consumption will be considered illegal. Jammers may be allowed only under exceptional circumstances only when authorised by Secretary (Security), Cabinet secretariat as per guidelines issued in this regard.

#### **DoT OM on Display of Site Details and Geo-coordinates on communication tower/masts"**

On January 18, 2022, DoT issued an OM stating that the "SACFA Site ID" and "Six-digit Geo-coordinates" of the sites as cleared by SACFA Secretariat shall be affixed/displayed prominently on all the towers/mast by the concerned TSPs with immediate effect

In this regard, COAI made a submission to DoT on 31st January 2022 requesting that there should be no need to display the SACFA and TSP related information on Towers as the information is already available with concerned Government authorities including SACFA members and hence, the O.M. shall be withdrawn with immediate effect.

## **Safety and Security of Telecom Infrastructure**

COAI's submission done to the Chief Secretaries/ Administrators of States/UTs to issue appropriate directions for the following:

- a) Take strict legal action against the obstructers/ persons damaging / unlawfully obstructing the existing/ upcoming Telecom/Digital Infrastructure.
- b) Make the damage to the Telecom infrastructure by the miscreants a cognizable offence.
- c) To issue a copy of approvals for Tower / OFC installation permissions given to TSPs/IPs to the nearest SHO for safeguarding tower installation.
- d) Take Coercive action against the miscreants spreading misleading information regarding the health effects due to the EMF emissions from the Mobile Towers and causing opposition for installation of duly approved Telecom Infrastructure.

## **NDMC revised license fee @8% per annum (compounding) for installation of Cell on Wheels (CoWs)**

COAI's submission was done on the issue. On COAI's request, a letter was issued by Delhi LSA, DoT to Chairperson, New Delhi Municipal Council dated 6th January 2022, highlighting that the request of COAI may be considered sympathetically and the present arrangement be allowed to continue on reduced nominal charges to ensure continuity of communication network across NDMC area.

## **NESA CCC meeting**

NESA CCC meeting was held on 7th January, 2021. Circle CEO of Airtel was selected as Chairperson & ATC representative was selected as Vice-Chairperson with convenors from Airtel, VIL and RJio. Issues raised during the meeting were as follows:

- a) Movement of staff under COVID restrictions - D.O letter of DoT, Secretary was shared for support
- b) Forest permission issue - It was agreed that TSPs will take legal opinion on sites to be installed in dense forest/restricted areas

## **Himachal Pradesh State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC)**

A State Level Coordination Committee meeting was held on 3rd January 2022 to discuss pending RoW permissions and difficulties being faced by TSP's / IP's. A reminder letter was submitted to Chief Secretary HP for the alignment of OFC Laying Charges.

## **2nd State Broadband Committee (SBC) of Uttarakhand**

Uttarakhand 2nd SBC was held on 6th Jan 2022 under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Chief Secretary. Points highlighted by COAI during the meeting:

- a) Instructions should be issued from CS office to the concerned departments for implementation of Uttarakhand RoW policy in true spirit.
- b) Proper working and Adherence of timelines of Single Window Clearance System (SWCS) including OFC permissions
- c) Single Online application process for telecom infrastructure including environment & forest clearances is required to be made operational
- d) Inclusion of Provision/Permissions for Aerial OFC on Poles
- e) Penalty clause on fibre cut to be included as a standard contract clause
- f) National Building Code for in-building fibre layout be adopted by new cluster houses and link it to issue of completion certificate
- g) Municipal and State authorities to facilitate construction of common ducts for UG electrical cable and OFC during new/widening road construction
- h) Priority Electricity connection may be given at Industrial rates/Utility Charges
- i) A Dig-once policy and 'Call before you dig' policy should be encouraged as part of State's Policy during development of Road networks with access to all utility infrastructures.
- j) For Safety and Security of Telecom Infrastructure appropriate Directions need to be issued to District Magistrate/District Authorities/Police authorities.

## **2nd SBC of J&K**

The 2nd J&K State Broadband Committee meeting was held on 19th January 2022 held under the Chairmanship of Hon Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Mehta, IAS. The following major issues were discussed during the meeting:

- a) Chief Secretary (CS) directed the Deputy Commissioners (DC) to clear all the RoW pendency before 28th Feb 2022
- b) CS clearly instructed Government officials to resolve all telecom issues
- c) CS directed EB officials to ensure EB connection on priority
- d) J&K UT to adopt the Central Online RoW Portal.

e) Digital Maps/Village Boundary Maps of J&K UT are available in the scanned form and can be availed on the portal <https://landrecords.jk.gov.in>

Subsequent to DoT meeting on November 18, 2021, DoT has sent a letter on 30th Nov 2021 to all TSPs and sought information of OFC data for the BISAG and Central Telecom Network Portal projects. On 1st Dec 2021, we have submitted the letter to DoT and requested to seek this information from BBNL and USOF.

## 2nd State Broadband Committee of Bihar

The 2nd Bihar State Broadband Committee meeting was held on 21st January 2022 held under the Chairmanship of Hon Chief Secretary. The following major issues were discussed during the meeting:

- a) CS directed the State Authorities and Forest Dept. to clear 100% pendency by 31st Mar 2022
- b) Secy UDHD assured to give approval for connecting connect Bihar RoW portal (Developed by UDHD) with Central RoW portal by 31st Jan 2022 (Max by 15th Feb 2022)
- c) Tower Density: Bihar LSA asked Bihar Govt. to fund telecom Infrastructure to accelerate the growth. CS confirmed 'Free land' has been allotted for setting up towers in LWE areas
- d) Availability of Govt. Lands & Buildings: CS highlighted that IT Dept. has made a policy and has authorized District Magistrate to approve and action further. CS directed to review the same and asked to make a policy at the earliest if the policy is not in place
- e) Common Duct and Dig Once Policy: Bihar LSA request to amend Building byelaws for provision of telecom infrastructure in New Housing Societies/Colonies. Prl. Secretary UDHD requested to share details of necessary provisions followed in Neighbouring states. He also confirmed partial funding to be given by respective parties. CS recommended for necessary implementation
- f) Fiberization of Towers: Sr. DDG asked to expedite permission for increasing Fiberization.
- g) Utilization of Broadband/FTTH connectivity: Prl. Secretary UDHD stated BSWAN connectivity POPs are available and fully penetrated in Bihar State. He requested that BBNL network also needs to be popularized and motivated for further usage and directed Panchayat Bhawan to be equipped with BBNL connectivity.
- h) EB connection at Industrial Rates: CS requested details to be mailed to Energy Dept. with CC to him.

## Electricity at industrial tariffs

COAI engaged the Ministry of Power to seek their support in considering the below request:

- a) To provide Electricity Boards (EB) connection at Utility/Industrial rates
- b) Provide uninterrupted supply to Telecom Towers on a 24x7 basis and on top priority
- c) Further an exemption from schedule power load-shedding is granted to the Telecom sector
- d) Allowing Telecom Infrastructure Open Access for Solar / Renewal Energy without any policy restrictions on minimum usage (Single point generation-multi point consumption allowed to be aggregated for multiple tower sites)
- e) Consolidated Billing and payment with the availability of supply hours:
  - Consolidated electricity bills to be provided on company's registered email id eliminating physical collection and download of thousands of bills
  - Accept consolidated online payment to avoid late payment and disconnection
  - Electricity availability hours for the period of the bill should be provided in bills

## Shutting down of the pole sites by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corp (MSRDC)

COAI actively engaged MSRDC, the state Government of Maharashtra and the Department of telecommunication to permit TSPs to restore and continue services till the time the new tender is awarded.

Small cell deployment in 5G network by utilizing KSEB poles: A committee under the chairmanship of Sr. DDG, DoT, Kerala LSA was constituted to provide a concrete proposal for utilising the electric poles of KSEB for 5G small cell deployment. The Committee had detailed deliberations with KSEB, various stakeholders, OEMs and the TSPs. Some of the key recommendations are as follows:

- a) Small cells are absolutely essential for densification and utilising the existing electric poles will be a win-win situation for both the service provider as well as the DISCOM
- b) Modification of poles will be required at some places as all poles will not be suitable
- c) The performance of the small cells installed as POC are found satisfactory, largely meeting the regulatory requirements
- d) Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 should be suitably amended to incorporate provisions for small cells and Wi-Fi Access points on Street Furniture and Electric poles
- e) Sharing of Small cells and other resources should be encouraged.

### **OFC cut by BBMP**

There was an OFC cut drive by BBMP to cut the hanging wires including OFC. A meeting with Karnataka members was convened to discuss issues and way forward Karnataka issued the policy for the rural areas and urban w.r.t deployment of Telecom Infrastructure.

### **OFC cut in Odisha**

There were massive OFC cuts by the workers of Bhubaneswar Smart City Ltd. (BSCL). A meeting was held between all TSPs/IPs/ISPs and BSCL on 10th January 2022 to discuss and amicably reach a resolution. However, in the meeting, BSCL was unresponsive and no cooperation is being extended from BSCL on this issue. COAI's submission was done to the Hon'ble Chief Secretary, Odisha to take up the issue with BSCL to stop fiber cut, give advanced timely alert/communication to TSPs, IPs, ISPs, and BSCL to allow and cooperate with TSPs/IPs/ISPs and provide time and support to restore the OFC cut.

### **Exorbitant charges laid by Pune Municipal Corporation for laying of OFC by Telecom Service Providers**

Pune Municipal Corporation ("PMC") had issued letters/notices to Telecom Service Providers (directly or through its vendors) demanding payment of charges (including penalty) for regularisation of aerial OFCs within its municipal limits. COAI engaged Hon'ble chief Secretary of Maharashtra to seek his intervention to resolve the matter and issue the following direction to PMC

- a) to withdraw the demands made upon TSPs including its vendors/infrastructure providers in respect of charges/penalty for aerial OFCs within its municipal limits of PMC
- b) that pending the withdrawal of the demands, to not take any coercive action against the aerial OFCs to ensure continuation of essential telecom services
- c) for initiating the due process of creation of a legal framework for laying OFC cables by the PMC/State government as detailed at para 6 above

### **High Restoration charges across Maharashtra**

A letter to Principal Secretary ( UDD), GoM was written on 10th January 2022 requesting early resolution of the issues like high restoration charges, additional Tax which are not aligned with RoW policy 2016. COAI has also requested to include members from COAI and Industry in committee deliberate these Restoration and Taxes issue.

### **High pole and manhole charges across Rajasthan**

A letter to Principal Secretary (UDH) Rajasthan was written requesting reduction of Poles and Manholes charges in Rajasthan. According a circular showing revised pole rentals has been taken out by Govt of Rajasthan. The observations from industry have been raised by COAI vide its letter number 28th Jan 2022.

### **RoW Policy of Andhra Pradesh**

A letter was written to the Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh on 8th Jan 2022 to share industry's observation regarding RoW policy.

### **Custom Duty - Regulations for Vessel Operations in India**

Various representations were made to PMO, MoF and to DoT for seeking clarification(s) regarding activities relating to cable repair/installation operations carried out in Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). 60-70% of India's westward sea marine cables were down, and we were at high risk to ensure connectivity.

Ministry of Finance vide letter dated 20-01-2022 has issued the clarification. This is a big relief to the industry.

### **Custom Duty - Import of goods under preferential rate of duty under FTA with South Korea**

Representation filed with MoF regarding getting a suitable clarification from the department that the original, digital printouts of PTA Country of Origin Certificate, generated from the system / website of issuing authority in Korea be accepted for defacement / verification for granting Out of Charge of the imported goods, originating and manufactured in South Korea.

### **GST- Input Tax credit on equipment installed on telecom tower**

Some of the State Tax Authorities are proposing to deny ITC on telecom equipment including crucial network equipment viz. antenna, base stations, transmitters and other utilities like DG and batteries installed on towers by interpreting that such equipment is to be treated at par with telecom tower.

Follow up representation made to the finance minister with copy to concerned senior officers in MoF, DoT & GST Council requested for the intervention of MoF in getting the issue deliberated in the GST Council for issuance of an appropriate clarification to ensure that the telecom operators do not suffer on account of few authorities taking a flawed interpretation.





# COAI

## News Wires:

### **Telco seeks refund of Rs 35,000 crore input tax credit, GST waiver on license fee, SUC**

Telecom operators want the government to refund input tax credit (ITC) of around Rs 35,000 crore, reduce levies and waive GST on licence fees and spectrum usage in the upcoming Budget. [Read more](#)



### **Telcos want to be included in 6G task forces constituted by DoT**

The telecom department on December 30 had set up six academia-driven task forces under the Technology Innovation Group or TIG to work on various aspects of the latest telecom technology even as fifth-generation or 5G spectrum sale is yet to take place. [Read more](#)



### **COAI condemns removal of overhead optical fibre by Bengaluru civic officials**

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has protested what it says is the 'unannounced removal of overhead optical fibre cables by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike or BBMP' leading to connectivity outage and inconvenience in the city. [Read more](#)



### **COAI allays signal blockage fears, says 5G and aviation can safely co-exist**

In US, some 50 airports will have temporary buffer zones to ban 5G; step undertaken after representation by industry bodies seeking solutions to prioritise safety and avoid air traffic disruption. [Read more](#)



### **COAI lauds Karnataka Government's policy for 1-time fee for installing telecom towers**

Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the representative body for the Indian telecommunications industry, lauded the notification of RoW Policy on Urban Municipal Corporation by the Government of Karnataka. [Read more](#)



### **DoT, Telecom Industry working together with the support of Maharashtra Government to make State Digitally advanced by Facilitating the roll-out of Telecom Infrastructure in the State**

Department of Telecom (DoT), Telecom Industry under the aegis of Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) are working together with the support of Maharashtra Government for facilitating the deployment of the Telecom Infrastructure in the state of Maharashtra. [Read more](#)



# COAI Events

## Webinar: Small Cells: Key Driver in Effective 5G Rollout

This Virtual event was organized jointly by COAI & GSMA to discuss deployment of small cells in India as an essential step towards countries becoming 5G ready. The deployment of small cells has been a critical part of the 4G network upgrades and expansion and is expected to be a key driver in effective roll-out of 5G. Countries are increasingly appreciating the varied use cases of small cells and working towards policy frameworks that would ease the deployment of small cells and pave the way for 5G implementation.





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