



**COAI**

ISSUE  
OCTOBER 2023

# I-DIGEST

Connecting the World

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

### Director General, COAI

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#### From DG's Desk

In the wake of the grandeur that was the 7th Edition of the India Mobile Congress, I am filled with an immense sense of national pride. The event, inaugurated by our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, was not just a congregation but a celebration of India's leap into the future of telecommunications with 5G technology and its applications across pivotal sectors like education, agriculture, healthcare and power, among many others. This year's IMC marked a significant shift in the narrative – the emergence of Indian startups and government entities in spaces once dominated by international conglomerates. This transition is a reflection of our growing self-reliance and the innovative spirit of India's entrepreneurs. It is a testament to our collective vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' where local solutions are addressing global challenges.

The discourse at IMC also brought to the forefront the ongoing debate on the 'fair share' principle. We are steadfast in our resolve to ensure that Large Traffic Originators (LTOs) contribute their fair share towards the infrastructure that not only supports, but also propels their services. It is a call for a collaborative approach to sustain and enhance the telecom network backbone that supports the burgeoning digital traffic.

A significant highlight of this year's IMC was the emphasis on the role of Women in Tech. We celebrated their contributions and discussed ways to further amplify their impact in innovation. The presence of women leaders and entrepreneurs at IMC was not just inspiring, but also a clarion call for inclusivity and diversity in the technology sector. Affordability, Accessibility and Advancement – these are the three pillars that will unlock the full potential of 5G and ensure its massive adoption. Our discussions at IMC revolved around making 5G accessible to every Indian, ensuring that this technological marvel is not just for the urban elite but a tool for empowerment across every strata of society, thereby catalyzing an inclusive digital revolution.

Looking beyond 5G, we have set our sights on becoming frontrunners in the 6G space. To achieve this, we are nurturing a generation of young innovators, encouraging them to envision and create applications that leverage these advanced services. The youth of India are brimming with ideas that can transform the way we live, work, and connect. It is their ingenuity that will propel India into the leadership position in the next wave of telecom innovation. As we conclude a successful edition of IMC, we are reminded that the journey towards a digitally empowered India is a collaborative effort. It requires the participation of every stakeholder in the ecosystem. With the collective will of our innovators, the guidance of visionary leaders and the indomitable spirit of our citizens, we are paving the way for a future that is connected, empowered and resplendent with opportunities for all. Together, we are not just participants but drivers of this digital revolution. Let us continue to march forward with resolve and unity.



# COAI

## Latest Updates:



### **TRAI Consultation Paper on "Digital Inclusion in the Era of Emerging Technologies"**

TRAI released the Consultation Paper on 14.09.2023, with the last date for submission of Response on 16.10.2023. COAI submitted a letter of extension to TRAI on 04.10.2023. Extension was granted till 16.11.2023.

### **TRAI Draft Telecommunication Mobile Number Portability (Ninth Amendment) Regulations, 2023**

TRAI released the Draft Regulation on 27.09.2023, with the last date of submission of Response on 25.10.2023. COAI submitted a letter of extension to TRAI on 13.10.2023. Extension granted up to 08.11.2023.

### **DoTs Clarification on AGR Issues**

Letter submitted to DoT on **09.10.2023**, responding to the Clarifications issued by DoT on **17.07.2023**. Requested DoT to re-evaluate the issues presented by us in a holistic manner, as well as suggested initiating a comprehensive Consultation process on the matters surrounding AGR.

### **Immediate Identification of Critical Services in M2M**

COAI wrote to DoT on 19.10.2023, asking for the immediate identification of Critical services in M2M sector. Also highlighting the need for immediate identification of list of critical M2M services, we submitted that absence of the same will lead to Security related issues and cause huge loss to the National Exchequer.

### **Bringing RF Mesh under UL**

A follow up letter was written to DoT on **18.10.2023**, re-iterating our stance on the need to immediately include RF Mesh service providers under the ambit of M2M authorization and bringing it under Unified License.

### **Extension of Deadline for Submission of Documents for Verification of Deductions Claimed from Gross Revenue for Q1'FY 2023-24 (F)**

Apropos the representations made by COAI, on 06.10.2023, DoT extended the timeline till 31.10.2023.

As part of compliance process, TSPs are required to submit various documents, including Annexure-AO, for the process of verification of deductions, which is required to be mapped with entries in Form 26Q (TDS).

Since the Ministry of Finance (CBDT) had extended the deadline for the submission of the statement of deduction of tax for the first quarter of FY 2023-24 (as required to be furnished in Form No. 26Q) to 30.09.2023 from the earlier due date of 31.07.2023, Form 26Q is currently not available.

Hence, members were unable to submit the required documents within the originally specified time frame. The extension granted by DoT will help the Members in ensuring compliances.

### **DoT -Single sign on via Unified portal and Unified Dashboard and issues related to SARAS**

A detailed representation was made to DoT regarding improvement of the SARAS System.

For improving synergy between two main portals SARAS and SARAL SANCHAR, DoT is developing a "single Unified portal and Unified Dashboard" and to discuss the issues represented by COAI related SARAS, a meeting was held in DoT on 09.10.2023.

On 20.10.2023, DoT directed CCA offices to do the needful to guide the Licensees in submitting representations/appeals against LF/SUC Assessments through Grievance Module in SARAS.

DoT has also directed CCA office to arrange:

- Demo Session on SARAS from Licensee's Login
- Discussions regarding calculation of License Fees dues
- BG Rationalization and new BG requirements
- Payment Modules in SARAS and GAR6 & GAR7

### **Industry meeting with Joint CGCA, New Delhi**

Meeting was held in the office of Joint CGCA, New Delhi on 29.09.2023. During the meeting, few key issues were

discussed, the resolutions of which will significantly ease operations for businesses and contribute to reducing disputes, ultimately benefiting both the TSPs and the Government:

- Issues concerning De-centralized Assessment of SUC
- Multiple SUC Assessments and Opportunity to respond to Show cause cum Demand Notices
- Resolution of Disputes/Grievances related to SUC Demands
- Simplification of Verification Process for Access Service
- Issues in DVR SOP including Anomaly in the formats
- Issue with format of AGR
- Issues related to improvement in SARAS

It was conveyed that SARAS is currently undergoing development and there is room for improvement in various areas like the substantial delays in generation of provisional receipts (URN generation), final payment challans, etc. resulting in payment after due date and attracting interest liability.

#### **Levy of SUC on Sale and Lease of Bandwidth**

On 26.12.2022, vide which levy of SUC on the revenues from wireline service has been exempted. However, as per the letter dated 29.03.2023, DoT has issued instruction to:

- Show revenue from "Sale/lease of Bandwidth, links, etc." at Sl. No. 8 of the statement instead of Sl. No. 1A(ix) from FY 2022-23 onwards, and
- Deposit the SUC payable with interest on the said matter for previous years.

SUC is now being imposed on the revenue from the sale/lease of bandwidth, which is a wireline service provided under the access license. The issue has now arisen primarily for the reason of the AGR format.

We have requested DoT for issuance of a clarification mentioning that there should not be a levy of SUC on Sale and Lease of Bandwidth.

#### **GST issues plaguing telecom sector**

A follow-up representation is being made to DoT highlighting a few key issues, which have potentially disrupted the entire credit chain in the sector. If not clarified at this stage, it would have an adverse impact on the telecom industry and the national economy. We are requesting support from DoT in making recommendations to the GST Council on these key issues:

- Denial of ITC on telecom equipment and accessories installed on towers.
- Multiplicity of compliance, scrutiny, audits, investigations and litigation for large pan India service providers
- Exemption from GST on Spectrum payment, License Fees and SUC
- Inter-state transfer and/or utilization of CGST and IGST
- Refund of Accumulated balance in Input Tax Credit as large amount of Input Tax Credit is piled up which cannot be utilized in near future.

#### **SBC of Maharashtra State**

The 6th SBC of Maharashtra was held on 30.10.2023,

chaired by Chief Secretary, Govt. of Maharashtra and attended by secretaries of various departments, DoT LSA and COAI. Issues regarding non-implementation of state RoW policy by local municipal authorities, challenges on regularizations, high rentals, laying of overhead OFC, delay in refund of Security Deposits, Composite electricity billing and Green Open Access amendment adoption by state government were raised by COAI. The response of Govt. was positive and a formal submission is also being made.

#### **Meeting convened by Director (IT), Maharashtra**

On 26.10.2023, a meeting was held in Mantralaya Mumbai, to review the pending RoW applications. Representatives of members from the circle office attended in person and COAI attended the same through VC link provided. Extensive deliberation happened to reduce the pendency, which is highest in the country. Director's office also noted the important actions to be taken forward.

#### **Submission to Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC)**

Submission was made to Chairperson, APERC, on 20.10.2023. Industry observations and suggestions on the Draft - Promotion of Renewable Energy through Green Energy Open Access Regulations, 2023 were made. Main request is for amending the eligibility criteria, which is to be aligned with 100 kW aggregate load within same division.

#### **Submission made to Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC)**

For the States/UTs of Goa, Lakshadweep and Puducherry, COAI submitted a letter on 20.10.2023, to Shri Alok Tandon, IAS (Retd.), Chairperson, JERC, requesting for implementation of The Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) (Second Amendment) Rules 2023, as notified by the Ministry of Power.

#### **Submission made to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Maharashtra**

COAI made a submission to CS, Maharashtra on 19.10.2023, seeking support in getting the official English translation of State Telecommunication Infrastructure Policy of 04.11.2022. The industry also requested for provision of issuance of English version of future notifications from the state government.

#### **Submission to Chief Secretary, Puducherry**

Submission was made to CS, UT of Puducherry on 19.10.2023, regarding adoption of Indian Telegraph Right of Way (RoW) Rules, 2016 and its subsequent amendments in the UT.

#### **Submission made to Chairperson, Chhattisgarh State Electricity Regulatory Commission (CSERC)**

A formal submission was made to Chairperson, CSERC on 18.10.2023, requesting implementation of The Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) (Second Amendment) Rules 2023.

### **Submission to Chairperson, Kerala Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC)**

Submission made to the Chairperson, KERC on 18.10.2023, requesting implementation of The Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) (Second Amendment) Rules 2023.

### **Submission to Chairperson, Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission (TNERC)**

A submission was made on 16.10.2023, to Chairperson of TNERC, requesting implementation of The Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) (Second Amendment) Rules 2023.

### **Submission to Chairperson, Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission (RERC)**

Submission was made to Chairperson, RERC on 16.10.2023, requesting implementation of The Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) (Second Amendment) Rules 2023.

### **Letter to Managing Director, BESCO, Bengaluru, Karnataka**

A formal submission was made to MD of BESCO on 09.10.2023, requesting facilitation of Robust Telecom Infrastructure in Bengaluru. Our members are facing challenges in telecom infrastructure deployment in the city and the industry had met the MD for sharing their concerns.

### **Submission made to Principal Secretary, PWD Department**

A submission was made to Principal Secretary of PWD department on 09.10.2023, regarding permissions from PWD having been stopped since July 2023, owing to pending issuance of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). Despite repeated requests from the industry, the department hasn't started resumption. A formal request was made for resumption of approval of RoW related Applications.

### **Letter written to Chief Commissioner, BBMP, Bengaluru**

Submission made to Chief Commissioner, BBMP, Bengaluru, Govt. of Karnataka on 11.10.2023, requesting for facilitation of Telecom Infrastructure in their jurisdiction. Members have been facing challenges in deploying and maintaining telecom infra since long.

### **Submission made to Additional Chief Secretary, Govt. of Karnataka**

Owing to continuous challenges being faced in Karnataka, especially Bengaluru, a formal submission was made to the Additional Chief Secretary on 13.10.2023, requesting for addressing these concerns for creating robust telecom infrastructure in the state.

### **Letter to Principal Secretary, UDH, Govt. of Rajasthan**

On 11.10.2023, submission was made to the PS, UDH on the points discussed during the industry meeting held on 03.10.2023 – the main issues being charges of restoration, State policy misalignment and multi-cabling charges.

### **Letters to Mission Director, NBM, DoT**

Three separate submissions were made to NBM on 09.10.2023, regarding the issues being faced by the members in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Puducherry. Requests were made for their support in smooth deployment of telecom infrastructure in these states.

### **TRAI's recommendations on "Improving Telecom Infrastructure in the North-eastern States of India".**

Formal submissions were made to Secretary Telecom and Secretary DONER (Development of North-Eastern Region) on 23.10.2023, for their support in getting the TRAI's progressive recommendations implemented, which would result in rapid development of telecom infrastructure in the region.

### **Submission to NBM for RoW policy in Central Ministries**

COAI wrote to DDG (NBM) on 10.10.2023, requesting support in adoption of RoW Rules 2016 by Central Agencies, since members are facing challenges in deployment of infrastructure.

### **RoW 2016 amendments 2022 and 2023**

COAI submitted letters to all States/UTs for adoption of DoT Right of Way amendments. Since 21 States/UTs have adopted the RoW 2022 amendments, we accordingly wrote to all States/UTs for adoption of the 2022 and/or the 2023 amendments.

### **Delhi DLTC meetings**

COAI attended DLTC meetings of Southeast District and Shahdara, Delhi, held on 13.10.2023 and 23.10.2023 respectively. We highlighted that post OFC laying and restoration work, Security deposits and Bank Guarantee furnished to MCD by the members takes months/years for refund.

### **Haryana SBC**

The State Broadband Committee meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary, Haryana on 04.10.2023. Besides the discussions regarding industry issues, the state officials also confirmed that the RoW policy amendment notification will be happening soon.

### **Delhi SBC**

The Delhi State Broadband Committee meeting was held on 09.10.2023, under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary, Delhi.

Discussions took place regarding industry issues and the industry's long pending request of RoW policy issuance was also raised by COAI during the meeting.

### **Round Table Conference during IMC 2023**

A round table conference on 'Digital Infrastructure: Accelerating India's Growth Story' was held during the IMC 2023, chaired by the Telecom Secretary. It was attended by IT secretaries of many states, DoT LSA officials and industry. Fruitful deliberations and discussions happened, and many positive updates were shared by respective state government officials.

### **EMF Advocacy activity**

COAI supported LSA, MP for the Awareness Workshop on EMF Radiation held at the Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal on 18.10.2023.

### **Challenges in activation of SIM for foreign nationals**

In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 16.10.2023, highlighting the key challenges along with the recommendations of the industry.

### **Submission on WRC-23 positions from India on Agenda Item 1.2 (6 GHz Frequency Band) for IMT/5G in National Interest**

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 19.10.2023, with regard to the WRC-23 positions from India on Agenda Item 1.2 (6 GHz Frequency Band) for IMT/5G in National Interest".

### **TRAI Consultation Paper on Review of Terms and Conditions of PMRTS and CMRTS Licenses"**

In regard to this Consultation Paper issued on 29.08.2023, COAI submitted a letter on 20.10.2023, requesting for further extension of timelines to submit the response. TRAI provided an extension of timeline to respond to the Consultation paper till 07.11.2023.

### **Consultative Committee (CC) constituted for adoption of TSDSI adopted ATSC 3.0 standards into National Standard by TEC**

In this regard, COAI submitted its inputs to TEC on 26.10.2023.

### **Illegitimate practice of using OTT channel by International Entities to access Indian Customers**

In this regard, COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 31.10.2023, highlighting the key issues.

### **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:**

One of the key action points of the Digital India Dialogue held on 20.09.2023, was the requirement of stakeholders to provide justification to MeitY regarding the essential duration for transition from the previous regulatory framework to the new regime of DPDP Act, 2023. In this regard, COAI submitted a letter

to MeitY on 20.10.2023.

### **The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code), Rules 2021:**

Meeting was held with the Joint Secretary (P&A), MIB on 03.10.2023 and the following points were discussed:

- The queries pertaining to the IT Rules, 2022 were raised by TSPs.
- TSPs shall not be deemed accountable for the content exhibited on their platform if the content is aggregated from OTT platforms/News agencies registered with MIB.
- The content being exhibited on the TSPs' platform must undergo a thorough process of due diligence.
- The TSPs should only include content of those content providers/OTT platforms/News agencies that are registered with the MIB.
- The requirement of SRBs is not a mandate but only an essential requirement.
- No content shall be regulated twice and the TSPs do not need to form/be a part of SRB if the aggregated content originates from the platform/s duly registered with the MIB.
- TSPs to refrain from endorsing any content that is deemed obscene or has the potential to provoke religious sentiments in the nation.

### **TRAI Pre-Consultation Paper on Inputs for Formulation of "National Broadcasting Policy"**

TRAI had released this CP on 21.09.2023, and provided an extension of timeline to respond to the same by 31.10.2023 and subsequently till 07.11.2023, on industry request. COAI has circulated the draft response to members and inputs are awaited.

### **TRAI Consultation Paper on "Digital Transformation through 5G Ecosystem"**

The Consultation Paper was released on 29.09.2023. At the request of the Industry, TRAI provided an extension of timeline to respond to the Consultation paper till 27th November 2023. Draft COAI response is under preparation.

### **TRAI Consultation Paper on "Open and De-licensed use of Unused or Limited Used Spectrum Bands for Demand Generation for Limited Period in Tera Hertz Range"**

The CP was released on 27.09.2023, and TRAI provided an extension of timeline to respond to the same till 15.11.2023, at the request of the Industry. Draft COAI response is under preparation.

### **TRAI Consultation Paper on "Assignment of Spectrum in E&V Bands, and Spectrum for Microwave Access (MWA) & Microwave Backbone (MWB)"**

The CP was released on 27.09.2023, and TRAI provided an extension of timeline to respond to the same till 15.11.2023, at the request of the Industry. Draft COAI response is under preparation.



# COAI

## News Wires:

### Telcos need 2 GHz spectrum for better 5G coverage: Industry group

As per an industry finding, 2 GHz of mid-band spectrum per market would be required to meet the user experience of 100 Mbps download and 50 Mbps upload speeds as defined by the ITU Radiocommunication sector.

[Read more](#)



### No free rides on the telecom highway | Unusual Suspect

India witnessed the launch of 5G services in 2022. The Indian telecom sector has seen a roller coaster ride in the last decade. What are the challenges for the industry today? Why are telecom service providers (TSP) arguing that OTT platforms are taking a free ride on TSP-funded networks without contributing to the setting up, operating and maintenance costs either directly or indirectly? In this episode, Lt Gen S. P. Kochhar, DG, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) takes a deep dive into all of this.

[Read more](#)



### India's COAI chief on fair share, high taxes and the road ahead

Even as the Indian telecom industry moves from strength to strength, it continues to face several policy-related challenges. High taxation and levies, lack of innovation and the fair-share debate are hampering the growth of the industry.

[Read more](#)



### Charting the path from 'Make in India' to 'Made in India' with Industry 4.0

India's progressive strides towards Industry 4.0 have been catalysed by the introduction of 5G services. The high speed, low latency connectivity offered by 5G underpins the integration of advanced technologies such as IoT and AI into manufacturing process.

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# COAI

## News Wires:

### Understanding Governance in Web 3.0

The digital landscape has undergone a profound metamorphosis over the last few decades. From the static, one-way communication of Web 1.0 to the interactive, socially driven Web 2.0, we now find ourselves on the precipice of Web 3.0 – a decentralized web that is fundamentally reshaping how we interact, transact and govern digital spaces.

[Read more](#)



### Telecom companies body COAI hits back at OTT players, says their view on net neutrality misguided

COAI has stated that fair-share fee payments by Large over the top (OTT) players to telecom operators will improve consumer experience and network quality without violating net neutrality.

[Read more](#)



### IMC 2023 Final day focuses on India's Homegrown 5G tech, Telecom Manufacturing, Women-in Tech

Experts shed light on India's role in electronic and telecom manufacturing with discussions on the way forward for India's economic paradigm shift.

[Read more](#)



# COAI Events

## INDIA MOBILE CONGRESS 2023

This year, the 7th Edition of Indian Mobile Congress (IMC) 2023, was jointly organized by DoT and COAI from 27th – 29th October 2023, and was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi at the Bharat Mandapam, in the presence of over 7000 people. Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, DG, COAI participated across panel discussions such as "Affordability, Accessibility and Advancement: Key to 5G Adoption", "Spectrum Economics & Policy for a Digital Tomorrow" (by NICTE) and various interactions at IMC 2023 over the three days.





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