



COAI

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I-DIGEST

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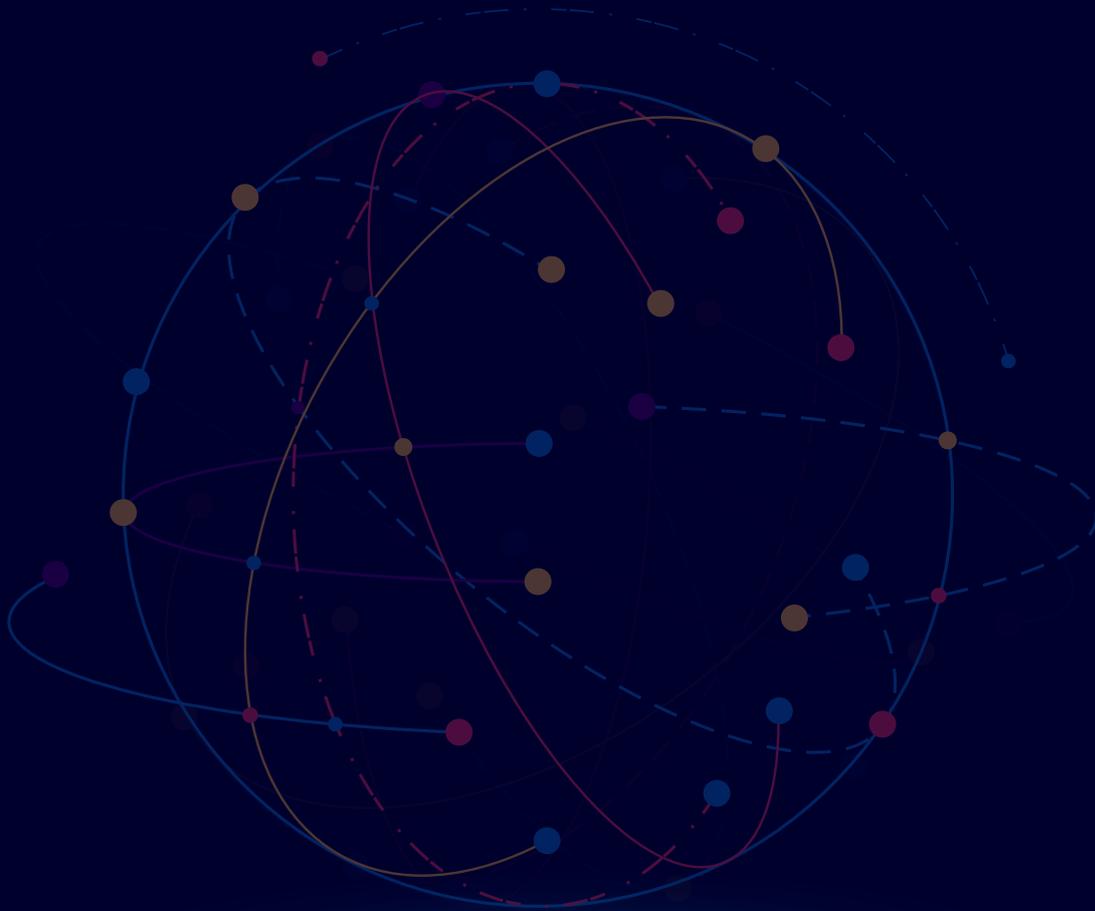
News for you,
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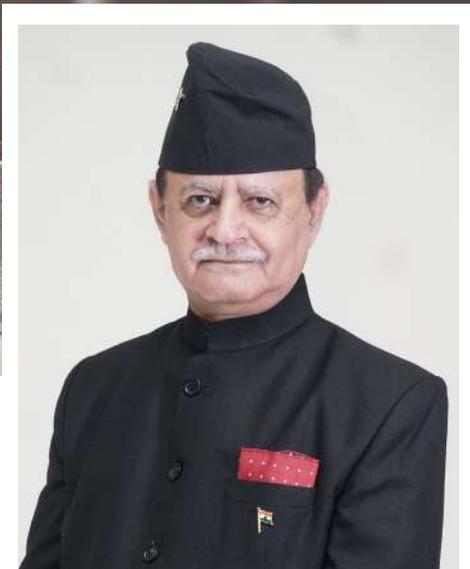


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LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)

Director General, COAI

From DG's Desk

The Indian telecom industry has seen tremendous growth in recent years and has become one of the largest in the world, with over 1.2 billion subscribers. With the increasing demand for data services, the industry is focusing on providing high-speed internet services, and data now contributes a major share to the industry's overall revenue.

The government has taken various steps to encourage the growth of the telecom sector, such as auctioning spectrum and granting licenses, and has also initiated policies to boost digitalization and internet penetration in the country. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) recently introduced new progressive Right of Way (RoW) rules for rolling out mobile towers, optical fiber and other telecom infrastructure to extend communication networks in Defence land/establishments like Military Stations/Cantonments. The new framework has simplified the existing regime, making it less tedious and less time consuming. This was long awaited and the Department of Telecommunications, along with COAI, had worked cohesively with the Ministry Defence towards the introduction of these enabling rules, which will help facilitate 5G rollout in these important areas.

This collaborative working between MoD, DoT, and industry (COAI) sets a brilliant precedent for more such productive collaborations and an excellent example for other central ministries/agencies like Road Transport and Highways, Power, Civil Aviation, Housing and Urban Development, Metros, etc. to enumerate in their respective sectors and work towards overall progress to achieve the collective "Digital India" vision of the nation.

Another positive development was the DoT issuing an order clarifying on the applicable fees for EMF audit tests conducted by Telecom Service Providers. Vide its order dated 18.01.2023, DoT provided clarity that the closed demands of the testing fees i.e., demands raised by DoT after 20.11.2014, and having been paid by the licensees in entirety, shall be revised and charged at the rate of INR 4000 per test. Also, the excess amount arising from those closed demands, if any, shall be adjusted against the pending/future testing charges. COAI had been strongly advocating on the issue and coordinating on the same with DoT, which has been receptive to the industry's concerns and considered the same on merit to take this favorable decision.

The Union Budget is indeed crucial for Telecom this year as the industry is in its revolutionary stage of deploying 5G networks, which has made a lot of investments - both in monetary and manpower terms. Considering these massive investments in the expansion and deployment of networks, besides the huge outflows from the telcos towards the 5G spectrum auctions, the industry had submitted detailed recommendations to the Ministry of Finance for measures to be introduced in the Union Budget 2023-24, so as to ease the regulatory and financial burden on the already ailing sector. While our requests have not been taken up in the recently announced Union Budget for 2023-24, we hope that they will be addressed by the Government during the course of the year.



Some provisions made in the budget would likely have a positive impact on the telecom sector, though indirectly – like emphasis on innovation, job creation and skilling, with continued push towards Digital India. We hope that the announced increase in capital investment outlay by 33% to INR 10 lakh crore would include development of infrastructure for proliferation of telecom and digital services. The 3 Centres of Excellence announced to ‘Make AI in India’ are a progressive step towards leveraging new and future technologies. The 100 5G labs to be set up in engineering institutions for developing applications in various areas like education, agriculture, healthcare, transport, etc. would also help propel the advancement and proliferation of 5G, while promoting technology-based solutions in these sectors. This will help in the growth and development of these industries by making them more efficient and effective, thereby contributing to the overall economic development of the country.

Telecommunications plays a crucial role in India's digital economy and the success of initiatives like the JAM trinity (Aadhar, Jan-Dhan Yojana, and mobile phone penetration) has greatly contributed to increasing digital and financial inclusion in the country, particularly in rural areas. The remarkable increase in rural internet subscriptions in the recent years is a testament to the government and industry's efforts to improve digital connectivity across India. The collaboration between the government and private sector will continue to drive digitization efforts and help bridge the digital divide, thus contributing to India's goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25.

– LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)
Director General, COAI



COAI

Latest Updates:



Relaxation of restrictive features on M2M SIMs

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on 30th Dec 2022, requesting to relax the number of IPs and URLs that can be accessed from M2M SIMs, to ensure that all genuine IoT use cases can be served. The guidelines should be amended to ensure that the TSPs enable public internet access on the M2M SIMs, while the count of ULRs required could be defined as per the customer needs.

Allowing denominations in multiple of Rs. 10 for Special Tariff Vouchers/Combo Vouchers & Plan Vouchers

COAI has submitted a letter to TRAI on 16th Jan 2023, to do away with MRP-based division of products, thereby allowing all the price point for all type of product offerings. If required, only Rs. 10, 20 and 50 be reserved exclusively for Top Up Vouchers. Additionally, the color coding of vouchers should also be done away with.

Extension of Timeline for Uploading of data in respect of 5G services, on TRAI report portal

COAI has written a letter to TRAI on 20th Jan 2023, to grant 4 quarters time from the date of launch of 5G services in order to submit the requisite report with data related to 5G services on the TRAI portal.

TRAI CP on Introduction of Calling Name Presentation (CNAP) in Telecommunication Networks

TRAI had issued this Consultation Paper on 29th Nov 2022. COAI has submitted the response to the CP on 18th January 2023. Open House Discussion on the same is pending.

TRAI CP on Licensing Framework and Regulatory Mechanism for Submarine Cable Landing in India

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 23rd Dec 2022, wherein comments have been sought from stakeholders by 20th Jan 2023, and counter comments, if any, by 3rd Feb 2023. COAI has sought extension of 6 weeks' time for submitting its response i.e., by 3rd Mar 2023. TRAI has given extension till 10th February for submitting the response. Draft response has been prepared and shared

with members; inputs are awaited.

TRAI CP on Telecommunication Infrastructure Sharing, Spectrum Sharing, and Spectrum Leasing

TRAI issued this consultation paper on 13th Jan 2023, wherein comments have been sought from stakeholders by 10th Feb 2023 and counter comments by 24th Feb 2023. Preparation of Draft response is under progress.

TRAI CP on Data Communication Services between Aircraft and Ground Stations Provided by Organizations Other than Airports Authority of India

COAI submitted its response to the TRAI CP on Data Communication Services between Aircraft and Ground Stations Provided by Organizations Other Than Airports Authority of India on 23rd Jan 2023.

The key points highlighted by COAI were:

1. Data Communication Services between aircraft and ground stations provided by organizations other than Airports Authority of India should be brought under License.
2. The same should be licensed through an authorization under Unified License.
3. Communication services between aircraft and ground stations should be only restricted to the Crew Members of the Aircraft and the Cockpit and not to be provided through any medium to the passengers travelling inside the Aircraft.
4. The validity period for the said license can be for 20 years, as in the case of other authorizations.

Review of the TSTP for 4G LTE FDD & 4G LTE TDD and Formulation of TSTP for 5G Technology roll out

COAI submitted a letter to TEC on 9th Jan 2023, to review the TSTP for 4G LTE FDD & 4G LTE TDD and Formulation of TSTP for 5G Technology roll out.

Report by the Committee on V2X/ITS policy formulation

DoT Committee on ITS/V2X Policy Formulation finalised its report on the overall policy requirement including

spectrum requirement for the introduction/rollout of V2X in the country. COAI being member of the Committee provided its comments on the report. In its final submission, COAI recommended that IMT identified spectrum within Sub 1-GHZ should not be considered for V2X since this band is very critical to us in terms of deep indoor coverage.

Standard Operating Procedure (“SOP”) for checking Grey Market Operations

COAI had submitted a letter on the above subject on 26th Sep 2022, suggesting changes in the SOP Issued by DoT. In this regard, COAI held a meeting with DoT on 27th Jan 2023. Further, COAI will reiterate their submission to DoT on this matter.

TEC Inviting comments on the draft Telecom Rules pertaining to Section 23 (Power to prescribe standards) of draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022 of DoT

TEC is in the process of preparing the relevant draft Telecommunication Rules pertaining to section 23 (Power to prescribe standards) of the Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022. In this regard, TEC has shared the Draft Rules for comments by 1st Feb 2023. COAI is preparing a draft response in this regard to be submitted to TEC.

Meeting conducted by TRAI with the Industry on January 04, 2023

TRAI conducted a meeting with the Industry on 4th Jan 2023, regarding the proposed solution for commercial communication over Voice calls. In this regard, COAI submitted a presentation to TRAI depicting high-level solutions which was agreed to by the TSPs during the said meeting.

Ministry of Defence RoW Policy

Ministry of Defence (MoD) issued their modified RoW policy, aligned with the RoW Rules 2016, on 18th Jan 2023. This has happened owing to the efforts of COAI, and close working with NBM, DoT team and MoD. A major achievement in the same is that the tendering process is now being completely abolished, which was a long-standing demand of our members. An online portal, deemed approval, etc. are some other key highlights of the policy.

Indian Telegraph (Infrastructure Safety) Rules 2022

With an objective to minimize the loss caused to various digital infrastructure assets such as optical fiber cable due to various excavation activities and digging, the DoT formulated and notified the Indian Telegraph (Infrastructure Safety) Rules 2022 on 3rd Jan 2023. This will support the industry in mitigating the cable cut losses and reducing the avoidable financial leakage in operations.

RoW Policy amendment issuances

Through continuous coordination with state governments and with the support of NBM, DoT, the association was instrumental in getting RoW Policy amendments issued/notified for the states of Sikkim, Tripura and Manipur on 11th Jan 2023, 16th Jan 2023 and 20th Jan 2023,

respectively.

Submission of suggestions/objections to proposed Tariff for the year 2023-24, in various states

COAI and members made submissions in the states of Andhra Pradesh (AP), Madhya Pradesh (MP), Chhattisgarh, Assam, Rajasthan and Telangana, to the respective DISCOMs, Electricity Regulatory Commissions, as per the directions mentioned in various public notices, during the month. The main suggestion was to provide industrial tariff to telecom industry. The submission was supported by recommendations of reports from TRAI, FOIR and the factual position of the state of Maharashtra, where industrial tariff is being provided to telecom towers. For AP and MP, public hearing was also done on 21st Jan and 24th Jan 2023, respectively. COAI has put forward the points to the Chairman of the Commissions.

Advocacy on power with states

As part of our continuous advocacy on power, letters were submitted to DISCOMs and the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Bihar for their support in providing EB at Industrial/Utility Tariffs, facilitating adoption of Green Energy, etc.

Submission to Chief Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu

A submission was made on 12th Jan 2023, requesting for withdrawal of order for charging of Convenience Fee from Telecom Services Providers/Infrastructure Providers, which is in addition to the application fee already being charged. The order also mentioned paying up of old dues amounting to crores of rupees and our submission made request for nullifying the same.

Submission to Chief Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh

Submission regarding facilitating the Growth of Telecom Infrastructure in Madhya Pradesh was made on 12th Jan 2023, on the pending points of the last meeting held in the state. Apart from other important issues, high charges on regularization of old towers was also highlighted.

Capacity Building 5G Conference

As part of the series of state level capacity building conferences, the Government of Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Mizoram held their respective events on 23rd Jan and 27th Jan 2023. COAI presented industry perspective and desired support from state government through VC in MP. While in Mizoram, COAI presentation was made with help of member representative.

State Broadband Committee (SBC) meetings

Uttarakhand held its SBC on 13th Jan 2023, and similarly, Arunachal Pradesh organized the 4th SBC of the state on 17th Jan 2023. COAI participated through virtual mode and raised the issues faced by members, highlighting challenges on various aspects, including fiber deployment, aerial OFC permissions and issuance of amended RoW policies of these states.

5G Working Committee meetings

Jharkhand 5G Working Committee meeting was held under the chairmanship of Smt. Vipra Bhal, IAS (Secretary, IT & e-Gov) Jharkhand, for 5G rollout on 13th Jan 2023. COAI highlighted Industry issues and support required.

A 5G Working Committee meeting was held on 16th Jan 2023, under the chairmanship of Dr. Abhishek Jain, IAS (Secretary, IT) Himachal Pradesh for 5G rollout. COAI highlighted Industry issues and the support required in facilitating faster roll out.

Similarly, the first 5G working committee meeting of Meghalaya was chaired by the IT Commissioner of the state on 27th Jan 2023. COAI participated and shared inputs for consideration by state government. This will be followed up with formal written submissions.

Submission to Principal Secretary UDD, Government of Maharashtra

COAI made a submission on 31st Jan 2023, regarding industry issues on the UDD policy issued by the Government of Maharashtra - "Telecom Infrastructure Guidelines" dated 19th Dec 2022. Various concerns and clarifications required for smooth operationalization of the policy were highlighted in the submission.

Submission to Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Uttar Pradesh

A letter was submitted to ACS (IT&E, Uttar Pradesh) on 13th

Jan 2023, regarding the concern of our members with respect to the Demand Notes being issued to landlords for payment of Annual Charges amounting to INR 25K per tower by Ghaziabad Nagar Nigam. We have sought immediate action to withdraw these notices.

Meeting held by Secretary, IT, Government of Delhi

A meeting was held on 3rd Jan 2023, under the chairmanship of Secretary (IT), Delhi to review the status of 5G roll-out and the progress made on the actionables from Delhi's 4th SBC meeting. The chair was receptive of the various inputs provided by the association and industry members on achieving faster roll out of 5G in the capital city.

Joint Industry Submission with DIPA

A Joint submission was made to the National Broadband Mission, wherein it was requested for issuance of clarification with regards to the RoW 2022 amendment, as certain States/UTs are selectively adopting the 'Private Property' clause only for the installation of 5G small cells. Since most of the states are in the process of adopting the amendments, a timely issuance of clarification will be of help to the industry. This point was raised by COAI in the Telecom Secretary's virtual meeting with the states on 20th Jan 2023.



COAI

News Wires:

Defence Ministry's alignment with RoW rules to speed up telecom infra deployment

The alignment of defence ministry with the Centre's RoW guidelines (2016) will pave the way for faster and efficient deployment of telecom infrastructure in the defence-owned land and establishments across the country, including 5G.

[Read more](#)



Exempt levy of customers duty on telecom equipment to boost 5G roll out

The industry body suggested to exempt the levy of BCD charges as it will be beneficial towards importing essential equipment to boost 5G roll out.

[Read more](#)



Suspend USOF till current funds used up: COAI to Government

In its strongest representation, the COAI has called for suspension of universal service obligation payments by telecom firms until existing funds are exhausted.

[Read more](#)

KEY DEMANDS

- Utilise ₹ 64,774 cr lying in USOF fund.
- Reduce licence fee from 3% to 1%.
- Lower customs duty on telecom equipment as 85% of gear is imported.
- Clarify that revenue from activities that don't require a licence shouldn't be part of gross revenue.

WHAT IS USOF FUND?

USOF is used to boost mobile and broadband connectivity in rural and remote areas, especially in those affected by left-wing extremism and in the Northeast.

Telecom budget crucial this year because of 5G deployment: COAI DG

It's no secret that the Indian telecom sector is currently in financial dire straits and a lot of impetus needs to come directly from the centre to support its endeavors.

[Read more](#)





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News Wires:

DoT's clarity on EMF audit fees to facilitate ease of doing business: COAI

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT)'s clarity on the EMF audit fees is a positive move that aligns with the Centre's efforts to facilitate ease of doing business (EoDB) in the telecom sector, according to the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).

[Read more](#)



Budget 2023: Reformative tax regime quintessential for driving telecom sector growth

Telecom is one of the highly regulated industries in the nation, with onerous tax and regulatory burdens on telecom service providers. Considering the financial health of the industry and the huge investments underway.

[Read more](#)



COAI Events

Workshop on the Installation of Small Cells on the Street furniture

COAI expressed gratitude to Dr. Abhishek Jain, IAS (Principal Secretary IT, Himachal Pradesh) & Himachal Pradesh LSA for organizing a meeting and deciding the modalities of installation of Small Cells on the Street furniture. Deliberations held in the meeting will help in rolling out faster 5G in HP.



4th State Broadband Committee – Arunachal Pradesh

COAI thanked Shri Dharmendra, IAS, Chief Secretary, Arunachal Pradesh Government for chairing the 4th State Broadband Committee and 5G Working Group meeting. The deliberations during the meeting will pave the way for easy deployment of Telecom infrastructure in the state.



Telecom Infrastructure Deployment-related Issues

COAI thanked Shri K. Rajaraman, Secretary (T) and the National Broadband Mission team for conducting a meeting on telecom infrastructure deployment-related issues with all states & UTs. The meeting deliberations will aid in resolving RoW related issues and faster telecom deployments across India.





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