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Director General, COAI

From DG's Desk

October was an important month for the Indian telecom sector, with the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2026 providing a significant platform for industry leaders, policymakers and global stakeholders to deliberate on the future of digital connectivity. COAI actively participated in the event, contributing to conversations around artificial intelligence, next-generation networks, cybersecurity and the development of a trusted digital ecosystem. The discussions reinforced the central role of telecom infrastructure in enabling India's digital ambitions and supporting its emergence as a global technology leader.

During IMC, COAI had the opportunity to highlight some of the key challenges and priorities shaping the sector. As AI adoption accelerates, the need for stronger telecom networks and adequate spectrum availability becomes increasingly important. The AI boom will require significantly greater network capacity, while spectrum constraints continue to remain a hurdle. COAI was also a part of panel discussion titled, "Digital Trust as a National Capability". During the discussed COAI highlighted that Trust in the digital ecosystem can't rest on any one stakeholder. It needs technology providers, platforms, businesses, regulators and consumers to work together, with greater cross-border data and information sharing as the next step for India. Further, if the gap between investments and returns continues to persist, tariff rationalisation may become necessary to support the industry's ability to invest in future-ready networks. The discussions also brought attention to the need for a stronger and more coordinated approach to tackling spam and digital fraud, with trust and security becoming essential pillars of the digital ecosystem.

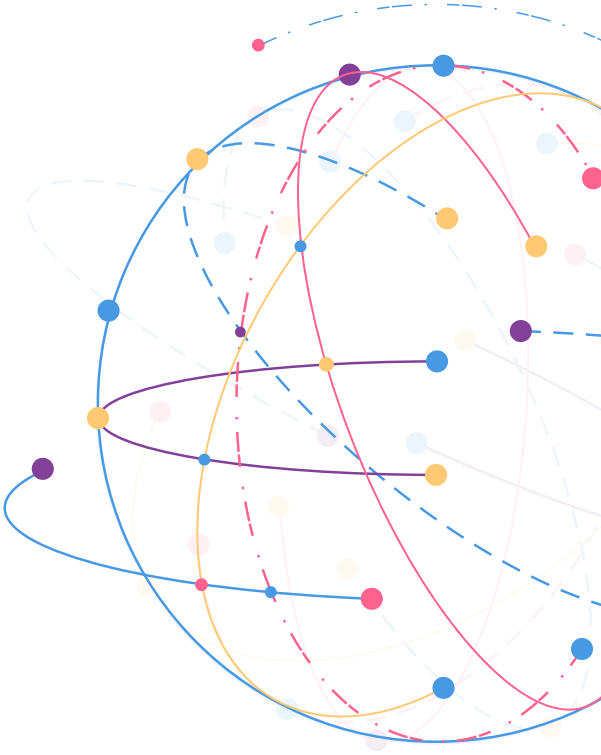
These priorities were reflected in the wider industry conversations at IMC, including discussions on AI for Good, telecom cyber defence and trusted digital infrastructure. The sector's evolution towards intelligent, AI-enabled networks will require not only technological advancement but also greater collaboration between government, industry and other stakeholders. As we look towards 6G, it is important to focus on viable use cases, sustainable business models and the ability to translate innovation into meaningful value for consumers and businesses.

Beyond IMC, COAI continued to advocate for a policy environment that enables the telecom industry to expand connectivity and strengthen network capacity. In a key statement, COAI called for allowing Standard Power outdoor use in the lower 6 GHz band. This is important for improving last-mile broadband connectivity and making more efficient use of available spectrum. Enabling standard power operations in the delicensed lower 6 GHz band, through the necessary regulatory amendments, can support wider and more effective broadband deployment.

COAI also issued a note advocating rationalised pricing of microwave backhaul spectrum. Microwave backhaul plays a critical role in connecting telecom sites to the core network and supporting reliable, high-capacity services. Rationalising its spectrum pricing, in line with the industry's requirements and the recommendations placed before the government, is important to ensure that network expansion remains economically viable. Both these interventions underline COAI's continued focus on practical policy measures that can strengthen infrastructure, improve connectivity and support the country's growing data requirements.

As India's digital ecosystem continues to expand, the priorities remain clear: building robust and intelligent networks, ensuring the availability and efficient use of spectrum, strengthening digital trust and creating a sustainable investment environment. COAI will continue to engage with policymakers and industry stakeholders to advance these objectives and help build a connected, secure and future-ready Digital India.

COAI Latest Updates:



Regulatory Committee

Draft Amendments to the Standards of Quality of Service of Access (Wireline and Wireless) and Broadband (Wireline and Wireless) Service Regulations, 2024: TRAI conducted an Open House Discussion (OHD) on 30th September 2026, in which COAI participated and reiterated its earlier submissions. Subsequently, COAI submitted additional written submissions to TRAI on 13th October 2026, highlighting the need for an independent and merit-based review mechanism for Show Cause Notices (SCNs) and Financial Disincentives, a holistic review of Financial Disincentive provisions across all regulations, and recognition that coverage maps are predictive, model-based representations that cannot guarantee actual coverage or user experience at every location.

Letter to DoT on Delays in Issuance of M2M Service Authorisations: COAI submitted a letter to DoT requesting the prescription of defined timelines for the scrutiny and issuance of M2M Service Authorisations. Further, COAI sought an interim clarification that TSPs should not be subjected to CAF-related penalties solely due to delays in the issuance of pending M2M Service Authorisations.

Technology Committee

1) Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) – Request for Early Consideration of Industry Representation on Re-verification of Flagged Mobile Connections

a) COAI submitted a follow-up representation to DoT on 19.10.2026 regarding the substantial increase in mobile connections flagged on the Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) for re-verification within the existing 15-day timeline, highlighting the operational challenges for TSPs and inconvenience to genuine subscribers.

b) Vide this letter, COAI reiterated its request for risk-based categorisation of flagged connections, a reasonable 60-day re-verification timeline for cases not directly linked to fraud, risk assessment based on relevant inputs and subscriber history, and greater transparency regarding the rationale and parameters used for flagging connections.

2) EMF Self-Certification – Request for Clarification on Mandatory Site Photographs and Withdrawal of Show Cause Notice

a) COAI communicated to DoT's office on 05.10.2026 regarding the Show Cause Notice issued by AP LSA concerning proposed penalties for non-compliant EMF self-certificates relating to site photographs uploaded through the National EMF Portal (NEP).

b) In this regard, COAI clarified that GPS and sector photographs were optional on the portal and that the prescribed mandatory photograph requirements were covered by the existing categories. COAI requested DoT to withdraw or dismiss the Show Cause Notice, noting that optional photographs not prescribed under the applicable norms should not, by themselves, constitute grounds for penalties.

3) COAI Inputs on DCC Draft Amendment to TEC Standard 13019:2025 (EMF TSTP)

a) COAI submitted its inputs to TEC on 12.10.2026 for the DCC meeting regarding the proposed amendments to TEC Standard 13019:2025 on EMF-related Technical Standards and Testing Procedures (TSTP).

In this regard, COAI proposed that, under Broadband Measurement, only the applicable frequency bands assigned to TSPs be specified instead of broad frequency ranges. COAI also requested that the current exercise shall only focus on the proposed amendments with respect to ICNIRP alignment while the other suggested changes to the TSTP may be

considered subsequently by the TEC.

4) IST-based Time Synchronisation in Telecom Networks – Industry Concerns and Recommendations Regarding Implementation

a) COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 22.10.2026 highlighting industry concerns regarding the implementation of Indian Standard Time (IST)-based synchronisation in telecom networks, including NavIC readiness, compatibility with existing network equipment, reference-clock connectivity and dependence on OEMs and chipset manufacturers.

b) In this regard, COAI requested clarification on the proposed synchronisation architecture, compliance requirements, connectivity arrangements and cost implications, along with permission to use GPS as an authorised timing source. COAI also sought an extension beyond the proposed 180-day implementation period, with timelines commencing only after the requisite infrastructure and ecosystem are ready and recommended a phased implementation approach.

Telecom Infrastructure Committee

Assam State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting: The Assam SBC meeting was held on 14.10.2026. COAI participated in the meeting and highlighted industry issues relating to RoW and telecom infrastructure deployment in the State.

Odisha State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting: The Odisha SBC meeting was held on 05.10.2026, where COAI raised industry concerns on RoW and sought Government support for timely deployment of telecom infrastructure.

Meeting held with National Broadband Mission (NBM): DDG National Broadband Mission (NBM) chaired an all TSP meeting on 23.10.2026, on mobile connectivity to identified Anganwadi centres across the country. Sought support from the industry in providing required data and help in improving the connectivity. Members also raised their concerns and issues related to RoW Rules implementation in various States and Central Ministries.

Common Application Form and Composite Billing for Telecom and Infrastructure Providers in Assam: LSA Assam informed on 27.10.2026 regarding the operationalization of Common Application Form (CAF) and Composite Billing for telecom and infrastructure providers by Assam Power Distribution Co. Ltd. (APDCL). Members were informed to check and take advantage of the functionality.

Trenching Policy by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC): An internal meeting with Members was held on 01.10.2026 to discuss the issue of BMC working on a draft Trench Policy and the possible non-alignment with the RoW Rules. Subsequently, a submission was made to Commissioner BMC on 05.10.2026 requesting inclusion of Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Infrastructure Providers (IP-Is) in the consultation process of the proposed Trenching Policy, thereby facilitating a more effective, practical and implementable Policy. This was followed by a submission to Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister on 13.10.2026, requesting for an in-person meeting to seek guidance on working collaboratively with State agencies for formulating RoW policies, including BMC's proposed Trenching Policy, enabling coordinated planning, minimize delays, and accelerate digital infrastructure deployment.

Government Order (G.O) by Government of Keralam on RoW: A G.O was issued (dated 24.09.2026) by the Govt of Keralam on implementation of the Telecommunications (RoW) Rules, 2024 by all State PSUs/Corporations, with directions to process RoW applications exclusively through the State RoW Portal (Sugama). This is part of the reforms linked to the Government of India's SASCI 2026–27 incentive scheme.

Availability of the Group Billing Facility for electricity connections in Rajasthan - LSA Rajasthan vide their email dated 13.10.2026 informed regarding the availability of the Group Billing Facility for electricity connections in Kota (KEDL), Bharatpur (BESL), and Bikaner (BkESL). The same was informed to members for taking suitable action and benefit.

Internal Meeting with Members of Telangana: An internal meeting with the members of Telangana was organised on 23.10.2026, to discuss the RoW related issues need to be put up with Govt of Telangana for 9th State Broadband Committee (SBC) meeting, which was scheduled on 27.10.2026, however got postponed.

Submissions on Industry Concern Related to 100% Coverage Demand by Andhra Pradesh Government: Submissions were made to Secretary (T) and Secretary (ITE&C), Government of Andhra Pradesh, on 26.10.2026, to represent the Industry Concern Related to 100% Coverage Demand by Andhra Pradesh Government, including remote, sparsely populated and commercially unviable areas. It was suggested to explore alternative models including usage of Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) funds.

Letter to Chief Secretary, Govt of Keralam on Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) Deployment in Keralam: A letter was written to the Chief Secretary, on 27.10.2026, requesting withdrawal of the instructions withholding Right of Way approvals of OFC deployment by PWD in certain locations. Further, it was requested to issue uniform directions to PWD, KSTP, KRFB and all concerned authorities to process OFC laying applications

through the Sugama Portal. Further, to review the blanket removal order of existing telecom poles in Thiruvananthapuram, to prevent disruption of telecom services.

Updating of Underground Telecom Utility Network Data in Delhi: Geospatial Delhi Limited (GSDL), the Government of Delhi's RoW portal owning entity, vide an order dated 04.10.2026, sought monthly updating of Underground Telecom Utility Network data to facilitate utility shifting under PWD's Drain Re-modelling Initiative and processing of road-cutting permissions. Members were requested to review the requirement and take appropriate action.

Jammu & Kashmir Policy notification for Shared Utility Corridors: The Housing and Urban Development Department, Government of J&K on 06.10.2026, notified a policy proposing shared underground and overground utility corridors, including telecom infrastructure, to minimise repetitive road cutting, restoration requirements and RoW delays.

Submission to Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC): On 12.10.2026, a submission was made to the Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC), seeking an industry meeting to deliberate on RoW-related issues affecting telecom infrastructure deployment in GIDC areas.

Alignment of Canal Crossing Charges in Uttar Pradesh: A submission was made on 13.10.2026 to the Principal Secretary, Irrigation Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh, seeking rationalisation of exorbitant charges levied for telecom infrastructure crossing irrigation canals and alignment with the applicable RoW framework.

Uttar Pradesh State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting: The Uttar Pradesh SBC meeting was held on 15.10.2026 under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary. RoW-related issues raised by the industry were positively highlighted by UP LSA during the meeting. A pre-meeting with industry members was also held by Uttar Pradesh LSA on 07.10.2026.

Review of SASCI Scheme 2026–27 in Haryana: An industry meeting was held on 21.10.2026 with the Haryana State Government and Haryana LSA, to review the progress of implementation of the SASCI Scheme 2026–27.

Cell on Wheels (CoW) Installation and New Site Allocation in NDMC Area Delhi: An industry meeting was held on 22.10.2026, chaired by the Deputy Director, RP Cell, NDMC, to discuss the installation of Cell on Wheels (CoW) and allocation of new sites for telecom infrastructure in the NDMC area.

Intervention Sought on Electricity Supply Disruptions in Haryana: A submission was made on 23.10.2026 to the Commissioner and Secretary (Power), Government of Haryana seeking intervention in view of the ongoing electricity strike in certain parts of the State. Later, the strike by the employees of the State DISCOM was withdrawn owing to Government of Haryana deciding not to proceed with the proposed introduction of parallel private DISCOM.

Administrative and Departmental Orders for RoW and SASCI Compliance in Uttar Pradesh: On 04.10.2026, the Government of Uttar Pradesh shared Departmental orders issued by Authorities/Local Bodies as evidence of compliance with the SASCI Operational Guidelines. Subsequently, on 27.10.2026, the State Government confirmed that all 762 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) had issued the requisite compliance orders. Further, on 28.10.2026 and 29.10.2026 departmental orders issued by Gorakhpur Industrial Development Authority, Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority, UPEIDA, Greater Noida Authority, Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority and Noida Authority for adoption of the Telecommunications RoW Rules, 2024.

Exemption Request for Telecom industry: Separate submissions were made on 27.10.2026 to the Secretary (Environment), Government of NCT of Delhi, seeking exemption for the telecom industry from workforce management restrictions and permission to undertake Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) laying through Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) technology during the period commencing 01.11.2026 (Delhi Government Winter Action Plan).

Implementation of CAF and Composite Billing under SASCI by Himachal Pradesh: An industry meeting was held on 28.10.2026 chaired by the Director, DDTG, Himachal Pradesh, to discuss implementation of the Common Application Form (CAF) and the Composite Bill provision for electricity connections under the SASCI Scheme.

Finance Committee

1) CBIC Circular: Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs issued a circular dated 26.10.2026, issuing the clarification regarding Input Service Distribution, based on the Recommendations of GST Council. This would provide the much-needed clarity on ISD and the subsequent rules regarding the same.

2) Budget Recommendations to Government on Regulatory Issues: We submitted the Budget Recommendations to Government of India on Regulatory Issues wherein relief has been sought regarding the Reduction in License Fee as well as issue pertaining to the levy for Digital Bharat Nidhi.

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News Wires:

Delhi: India Mobile Congress | S.P. Kochhar, Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), says

ANI Video



Telcos may hike tariffs if investment-revenue gap persists, says COAI DG

Moneycontrol

COAI seeks rationalised pricing for microwave backhaul spectrum

The Economic Times



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