COAI ISSUE
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I - DIGEST
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From DG’s Desk

COAI Latest Updates

Telecom Infrastructure Policy Alignment with RoW Rules, 2016

News Wires

5G Hackathon
From DG’s Desk

With rampant spread of connectivity and integration in the economy especially post COVID-19 pandemic in not just India but all across the world, telecommunications has become one industry that stands the tallest. Everyone is aware of the problems, but this industry is aiding people and patients by spreading awareness, providing the platform to call for help, and be of service to the corona warriors.

Several businesses especially the MSMEs have suffered major losses due to blockages in their operations, supply chain and finances. Payments got blocked which increased the cash conversion cycle by a massive amount. However, IT enables services, technology, the banking industry alongside telecommunications has been able to support these MSMEs by being able to receive grants and transfers made by the ministries. DoT alongside Telcos were able to minimise BTS’s shut down by Municipalities ensuring additional coverage and capacity for the users.

COAI will be committed to its intention of sustainably growing communications, take down barriers and finding better ways to get past this storm. Speed of development in all industries, innovation and modifications in the existing practices of getting things done, makes me very hopeful of a better and flourishing economy in the near future. We will be able to achieve the current Government of India’s $5 Trillion dream!
COAI submitted letter to DoT on Payment of License Fee (LF) & Spectrum Usage Charges (SUC)

COAI submitted letter to DoT on Payment of License Fee (LF) & Spectrum Usage Charges (SUC) during Q4 FY 2020-21 on 15th Jan 2021 requesting DoT to allow the TSPs to do the payment of LF & SUC dues on 25th March 2021 basis the estimated revenue earned during the quarter.

COAI submitted letter to DoT on Inter-band Spectrum sharing

COAI submitted letter to DoT on Inter-band Spectrum sharing on 4th Jan 2021. COAI made the following request to DoT:

a) Allow inter-band sharing of the spectrum considering that all the spectrum is being allocated through auction and is liberalised/technology-neutral spectrum.

b) Issue instructions on following two aspects in order to facilitate the spectrum sharing:

- As per TRAI recommendation dated 17.08.2020 for existing spectrum-sharing being done, only an increment of 0.5% on SUC rate should apply on the spectrum holding in specific band in which sharing is taking place, and not on the entire spectrum holding (all bands) of the TSPs.
- Also, for all future spectrum sharing no increment of 0.5% on SUC should apply.

TRAI issued Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicator Report

TRAI issued Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicator Report for the Quarter ending September, 2020 on 21 Jan 2021. The key highlights are:

- Total Subscribers: 116.866 Crore
- Total Wireless Subscribers: 114.858 Crore
- Total Wireline Subscribers: 2.008 Crore
- Total Internet Subscribers: 77.645 Crore
- Gross Revenue (GR) during the quarter: Rs.68,228 Crore
- Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) during the quarter: Rs.45,707 Crore
- Monthly ARPU of Wireless Service: Rs.96.87
- Minutes of Usage (MOU) per subscriber per month – Wireless Service: 761 minutes
- Average Wireless Data Usage per wireless data subscriber per month: 11.96 GB
- Average revenue realization per subscriber per GB wireless data during the quarter: Rs. 10.95

Sale of Illegal Repeaters and Boosters on e-Commerce Websites/Platforms and Outlets

COAI letter was submitted to DoT on January 4, 2021 regarding the sale of Illegal Repeaters and Boosters on e-Commerce Websites/Platforms which causes Spectrum interference to the Telecom Service Providers network signals.

COAI appreciated the efforts of the officers at WMO for their support to conduct inspection drive on several locations across Delhi, Agra, Mathura and Mumbai to take down illegal mobile signal repeaters installed by individuals. Earlier WPC had issued a circular to curb such sales and also issued notices to some platforms as well as retailers.

Also, DoT was requested to intervene in the matter and take strict measures to ensure complete ban of sale of these illegal repeaters and boosters on all the e-commerce websites/platforms with these e-commerce companies through an appropriate notification to them.
COAI Response on Readiness of the TSPs to implement the e-KYC process with immediate effect

COAI submitted its response to DoT on January 05, 2021 on the TSPs’ readiness on implementing the e-KYC process. COAI reiterated that the cost of e-KYC needs to be brought down to a maximum of 70-80 paise per subscriber activation. Even after the revised reduction of cost from INR 40.50 to INR 20.50, the issue about the high activation cost would remain unaddressed and would make it difficult, if not impossible, to embrace e-KYC. COAI submitted that TSPs should not be burdened with any unreasonable costs for adopting a digitally safe & secure process that is in the interest of ensuring national security.

COAI requested an opportunity for further discussions with DoT & UIDAI for further reduction of authentication charges for issuance of mobile connections.

Clearances for Pending SACFA Applications on SARAL SANCHAR Portal Due to Non-availability of Comments from State Airport Authority of India

COAI made a submission to DoT on January 11, 2021 on the matter. Airport Authority of India (AAI) has declined to provide comments for the Airports / Airfield owned either by State government or private parties i.e., airports which do not fall under the jurisdiction of AAI. Thus, non-availability of comments for the airports/airfields operated by state government or private parties has resulted in non-award of siting clearances for approximately 30,000 sites, applied by TSPs.

COAI requested DoT to define a mechanism for issuing clearances for such pending cases on immediate basis under a special drive at WPC as these SACFA applications are pending for more than a year.

Implementation of New CDR Format

COAI submitted letter to DoT on January 15, 2021 based on the email communication received by TSPs vide which DoT requested the TSPs to ensure the provision of CDRs in 22 fields only without any further delay and compliance to be submitted to DoT.

COAI reiterated the earlier submissions made to the DoT wherein technical concerns around the inclusion of certain fields in the CDR format were highlighted. COAI has requested DoT to issue the amended format for CDRs and provide the timeline of at least 8 to 10 weeks to the TSPs for implementation post the issuance of amended format.

Roadmap for Use of Radio Frequency Spectrum in India during next 10 years

DoT initiated consultation with the industry on a Roadmap for Spectrum and held a meeting on January 06, 2021 and sought inputs from COAI.

COAI submitted detailed response to DoT on January 15, 2021 on the subject. The submission includes details of requirements on identification of IMT spectrum, availability of relevant spectrum, pricing of spectrum and suggestions for long term approach.

5G Regulatory Policy Committee Report


Most of the COAI inputs submitted were incorporated in the Report. COAI signed the final Report of 5G Regulatory Policy Committee on January 15, 2021.

Communication Security Certification (ComSeC) Scheme

COAI submitted letter on January 19, 2021 regarding Challenges and Concerns in respect of Security Requirements for telecom products under MTCTE faced by OEM Members.

COAI requested DoT to incorporate suggestions with respect to implementation of ComSeC scheme to reduce burden of Multiple Testing and Certifications on the sector and requested that there should be a single window scheme for testing and certification including for security in DoT.

Request for removal of Corona Pre-Call Announcements and Caller Tunes

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on January 20, 2021 on the subject and a recent media article dated January 15, 2021 on “Mobile users spend 3 crore hours on Covid message, which holds up distress calls”. COAI submitted that the message being played across networks invariably results in holding up or delaying critical calls from going through during emergencies and ends in consumption of precious bandwidth resources. This overloads the TSP network and creates a significant delay in call connection.

COAI has requested DoT to kindly issue suitable orders regarding the removal of Corona pre call announcements as well as caller tunes at the earliest.
**Alignment of Telecom Infrastructure Policy of State/UT with RoW Rules, 2016**

Based on the industry’s feedback provided to Puducherry, West Bengal State and Andaman & Nicobar UT, their Telecom Infrastructure Policies got approved by their cabinet in January 2021.

COAI appreciated the efforts of the state of West Bengal Government, Puducherry and Andaman & Nicobar (A&N) Administration towards the formulation of rules for underground communications infrastructure (Optical Fibre) and overground communications infrastructure (mobile towers).

The timely and smooth implementation of laying the telecom infrastructure will contribute immensely towards the realization of the Digital India dream.

COAI is following with the remaining 11 States/UTs for alignment of their Telecom Infrastructure Policies with RoW Rules, 2016.

**COAI Letter to Chief Secretaries/ Administrators of States/UTs across India to allow Telecom Infrastructure in Government Land and Buildings**

COAI submitted letter to Chief Secretaries/ Administrators of States/UTs across India to allow Telecom Infrastructure in Government Land and Buildings.

COAI reiterated that the importance of telecom Infrastructure to achieve the dream of Digital India. On request of COAI many States/UTs like Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttarakhand Govt, etc. have issued directives/letters to help telecom operators install telecom infrastructure in Govt. land and buildings.

**Exorbitant RoW Charges across India**

COAI made submission to PMO regarding Review and Rationalisation of Unduly High Right of Way (RoW) Charges and Specification of Uniform Process Across India for installation of Telecom and Broadband Infrastructure. COAI reiterated the following earlier submissions made to the DoT:

a) Alignment with the Gazetted RoW Rules, 2016. Issuance of necessary instructions/ directions to the State/UT Governments and the government land-owning authorities (Municipal Corporations, Cantonments/ Military Stations, CPWD/PWD, NHAI, Railways, and others) to review and revise their current RoW charges and processes for laying of OFC and installation of Telecom Towers in alignment with the Gazetted RoW Rules, 2016.


c) Central Online Facility. Establishment of a central online approval process to facilitate expeditious approvals for the installation of towers and laying of OFC across the country with the provision of system generated deemed approval after the stipulated period.

d) Adoption of MoUD Specified Rates. Central Ministries / agencies like MOHUA, Morth/NHAI, Indian Railways, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Forest, Ministry of Civil Aviation/Airport Authority of India, Metro, etc. to adopt MoUD rates for rationalization of restoration charges.

e) Financial Guarantees. Municipal Corporations should either ask to furnish Bank Guarantees or should ask for Security Deposit. The amount of the Security deposit to be standardized across the country and it should not be more than 10–20% of the restoration charges.

**Exorbitant Restoration charges & exceedingly high Aerial OFC laying charges across Telangana**

COAI made submission to Telangana Govt. regarding exorbitantly high restoration charges and the charges for use of LT poles for OFC laying across Telangana that have been one of the major causes of very low penetration of wireline/OFC network in the country.

Telangana Govt. assured that they will issue appropriate directions to reduce the charges for laying Aerial OFC over LT Poles.

**COAI represented members issues in State Broadband Meetings**

1) Telangana: 06.01.2021
2) Daman and Diu & Dadar and Nagar: 11.01.2021
3) UP(E&W): 12.01.2021
4) Kerala: 21.01.2021

COAI highlighted need for the alignment of Telecom Infrastructure Policy and formation of Online RoW Application Portal of Telangana, D&D and D&N and Kerala with RoW Rules, 2016.

COAI requested UP Govt. for implementation of UP RoW Policy. COAI requested UP Govt. to review exorbitant restoration charges. ACS-IT, UP agreed to allow self-restoration of roads by applicant along with reasonable bank guarantee.
COAI’s submission to Airport Authority of India

An industry meeting led by COAI was held with Airport Authority of India for alignment of IBS and RoW policy for Airports with The Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules of Nov 2016 of Govt. of India. COAI submitted a letter in this regard. COAI requested the following:

a) To review and revise the RoW charges at par with the charges levied by Local Self-Governing Bodies (LSGBs) in the vicinity of the Airport for laying of OFC, erecting Ground-Based Masts, providing IBS and align these with the provisions of Govt RoW Rules 2016 for enabling installation of latest technology telecom infrastructure at airports.

b) To establish an online approval process as done by other state or civic bodies to expedite permissions.

Online RoW Application Portal

Online RoW Portal of SDMC(Delhi), BBMP(Karnataka), West Bengal & Punjab were made operational. Training sessions were arranged for members.

Circle Coordination Committee (CCC) Re-constituted for Punjab, Jammu, Haryana, Himachal, Chandigarh and Ladakh

Mr. Mannu Sood, Airtel CEO, Punjab & Upper North circle selected as Chairperson of the CCC. Office bearers of CCC were also re-elected. Industry issues and the way forward were discussed for action.

Implementation of DoT Guidelines / Clarifications towards the deduction verification exercise.

On February 03, 2020 clarifications were issued by DoT vide file no 1-10/2019/LFA/SC1 dated February 02, 2020 towards the deduction verification exercise to be carried out by the CCAs.

Various CCA offices have commenced the process of assessing the DVRs for FY 2018-19 & subsequent financial years; however, some of the CCAs are not accepting these clarifications citing that the same is applicable till FY 2017-18.

We have requested DoT to allow the clarifications/guidelines issued on February 03, 2020 to be applicable for FY 2018-19 & subsequent financial years also.

Simplification of Verification Documents of Deductions claimed from Gross Revenue (GR) to arrive at Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)

TSPs submit AGRs duly audited at the end of financial year. In addition, the Revenue share is subject to regular CAG audits and Special Audits. In the backdrop of three independent audits of revenue share and as deductions claimed are going to be small fraction of GR. We have requested DoT that deduction reporting and verification may be modified in the following manner:

- There should only be reporting requirement of deductions claimed from GR in simplified AG, AO and IR formats without any requirement of submitting supporting documents.
- The regular verification of deductions claimed from Gross Revenue by Office of CCAs should be discontinued.
- The format AG, AO and IR can be audited on annual basis to replace the verification process.

E-invoicing – B2C QR Code implementation w.e.f. 01 December 2020

MoF has clarified that effective from December 01, 2020. all taxpayers with an annual turnover of Rs.500 crore or more are compulsorily required to generate QR code on their B2C invoices.

Officials have clarified (at various forums) that Dynamic QR Code should also have GST related data points (like seller’s GSTIN, place of business, taxable value, non-taxable value, HSN, tax rates, tax amounts, etc.). In case of B2C, it is not clear if the Dynamic QR Code should only have payment QR code details, or GST related details as well.

Inclusion of Payment QR Code and GST details together will be technically difficult and will be time consuming. If both sets of details are to be included, it will be costly and may not serve much purpose since the customer will not be allowed to take credit. We have requested MoF that:

- Dynamic QR code should not be made applicable to B2C transactions in the Telecom Industry, in light of the necessary processes already in place.
- Alternatively, Dynamic QR Code should not be made applicable to transactions where invoice is issued after receipt of payment – in telecom; example, pre-paid transactions or other methods of digital payments enabled by NPCI powered UPI should be accepted in lieu of QR codes like UPI Intent and UPI Collect. In any case, compliance with Dynamic QR code should be made optional to telecom players.
### Telecom Infrastructure Policy Alignment with RoW Rules, 2016

#### Status

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High Reserve price for spectrum can pose a challenge for telcos

It has been 25 years for the telecom industry here, but the financial challenges still remain. The immediate challenge before the industry is the high reserve price (of spectrum) that the government has fixed, said SP Kochhar, Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI). Read more

Telcos ask Centre for clear roadmap on roll-out of 5G

India’s telecom operators on Wednesday pressed the government to decide when it plans to auction fifth-generation (5G) spectrum so that they have clarity on when to start field trials to test the technology and roll out services. Read more

COAI says telecom industry financially stressed; seeks govt support on key challenges

The telecom industry, which facilitated wide-spread digital adoption during the pandemic, continues to be financially stressed and seeks government support on issues like liquidity, rationalisation of levies, AGR and spectrum pricing, according to COAI. Read more

Spectrum reserve prices high: Telcos

Weeks ahead of the spectrum auctions, the telecom industry has said that reserve prices of airwaves are high and it will be financially challenging to ensure a health sale. Telecom companies want the government to fix a minimum mandated floor price for voice and internet services, apart from lower taxes and levies to improve their financial position and ensure enthusiastic sale. Read more
Spectrum Auction Bidding to Start from March 1, COAI Welcomes the Move

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) today issued a notice for next spectrum auction bidding date. The bidding for the next spectrum auction will start from March 1. This is the sixth round of spectrum auction for radiowaves worth Rs 3.92 crore. Last month, the Union Cabinet approved the DoT’s proposal to hold next spectrum auction by March 2021. Read more

Telcos should get atleast 80MHz for 5G services: Trai chairman PD Vaghela

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India chairman PD Vaghela said that each telecom operator should get at least 80MHz of 5G spectrum if not 100MHz for launching 5G services. Read more

Telcos seek levy cuts, exemption of import duty on gear in budget

The telcos have recommended that the import of certain telecom equipment crucial for building infrastructure for 4G and 5G wireless services should not attract any basic customs duty. Read more
The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) announced the top 100 use cases of the 5G Hackathon on 8th January, 2021. The winners were announced by Shri Anshu Prakash, Secretary (T) & Chairman DCC, DoT, Government of India. This ended the Phase I of the competition and started Phase II that will see further development of the use cases into fully demonstrable solutions. A total of 1024 applications were received for the Hackathon that was steered by India Mobile Congress on behalf of the Department of Telecommunications.

On 8th January, an online event was organised where Smt. Anita Praveen, Additional Secretary (T); Mr. R.K Pathak, DDG (IC) and Mr. Atique Ahmad, Director (IC) joined Secretary (T) in recognizing the selected participants. Around 3000 people watched the event live on various social media platforms. All the selected use cases were awarded INR 1 lakh each.

In the next phase of the Hackathon, participants will be given mentorship and support to develop their products and top 30 will be selected on the basis of the demonstrable products and solutions at the end of Phase II. The top 3 winners will be felicitated at IMC 2021.
The wait is finally over! COAI’s quarterly magazine, ‘The Communique’ is going to launch in March 2021.
To get featured and make your presence count, reach us at mchawla@coai.in or +91-9650263761

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