



COAI

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I-DIGEST

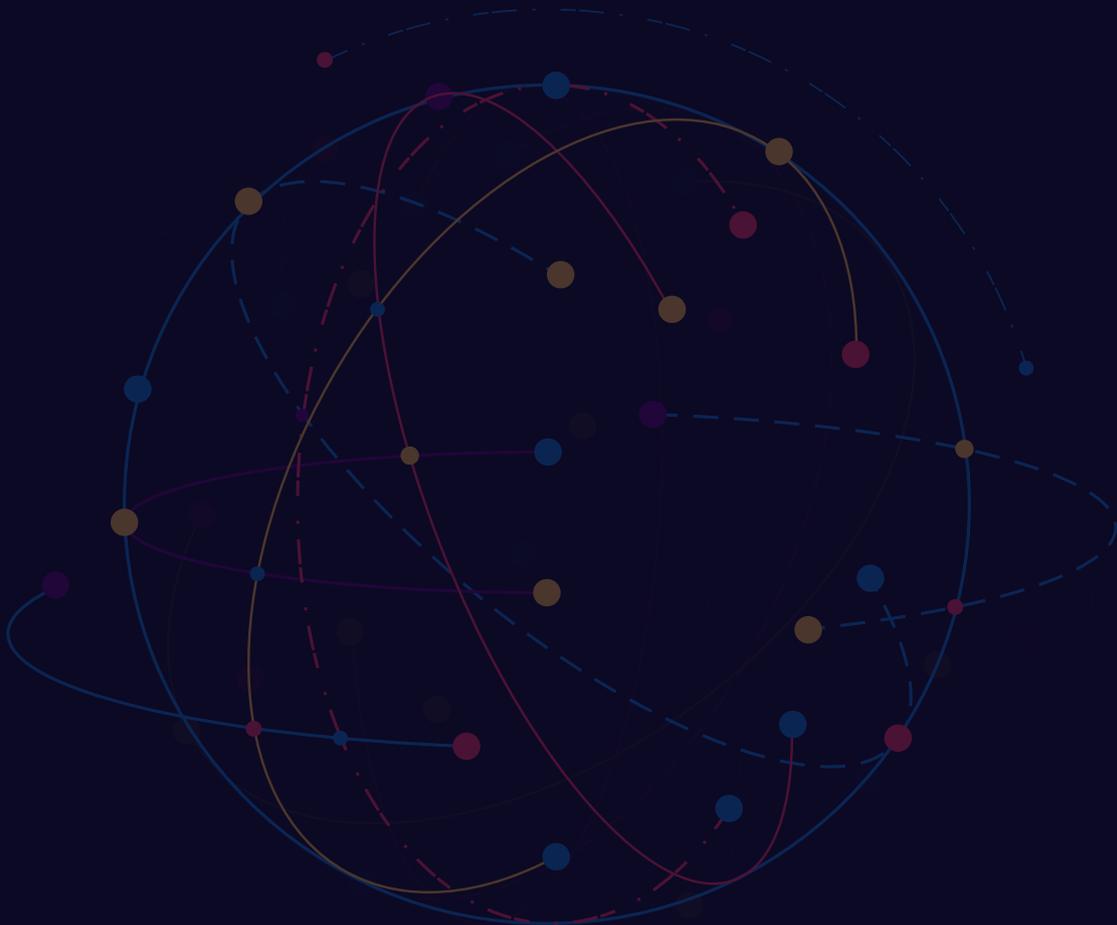
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LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)

Director General, COAI

From DG's Desk

India has accomplished a significant number of milestones in telecom in terms of accessibility and connectivity. Internet and telecommunication services act as a mast to many sectors and are attached to the core operations of these industries. COAI along with its members has been advancing towards newer technologies like Artificial Intelligence, IoT, Blockchain etc. which are bringing a dramatic shift in the world of technology. However, for the economy to reap maximum benefits from the expansion of these new technologies, government's support is vital. Cumulative and efficient use of these cost-effective technologies will also boost revenue and bring some much-needed respite to the debt-ridden telecommunications sector.

Expansion of Digital infrastructure in India will support sustainable long-term growth of the economy as it has a very high multiplier effect on economic growth across all sectors. It will further strengthen the digital economy with key benefits ranging from increased efficiency to significant job creation via increase in contemporary offerings like e-learning, e-commerce, e-healthcare etc.

In March, the biggest 4G spectrum auction took place. The pay-out generated post spectrum auction 2021 is approx. 19% of overall spectrum sold out at reserve price of the spectrum.

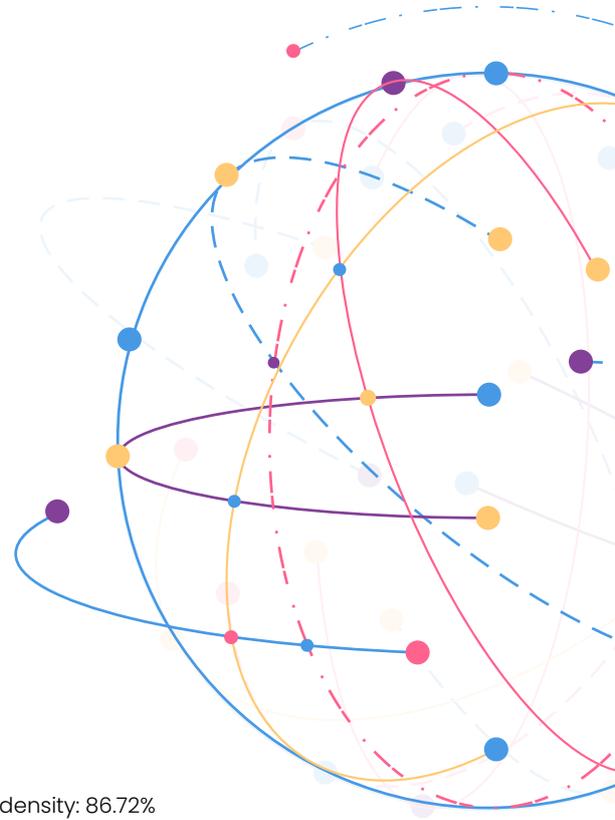
The pandemic has also severely impacted Indian economy, as the lockdown resulted in temporary closure of businesses, suspension of flights, interruption of train services and restriction of mobility of goods and people. Hence, during the time of such crisis, when our country is entering into the second wave of the pandemic, it is important for Government to support, finance and make conducive policies for digital infrastructure, one of the key pillars to achieve the next phase of economic growth. Digital fortification of entire ecosystem is vital to keep India's economy unaffected by external factors like the present pandemic.

However, optimism being our driving force, our members expect to invest more in enhancing connectivity, engaging with more partners and contributing significantly to the government's mission of attaining a fully digitized economy. With 5G launch expected later this year, massive investment is expected in this segment as well. Thus 2021 will be another landmark year for Indian telecom.



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Latest Updates:



Review of the Quality-of-Service Regulations

TRAI conducted an Open House Discussion on Review of The Quality of Service (Code of Practice for Metering and Billing Accuracy) Regulations, 2006 on Mar 03, 2021. In the OHD COAI stated that:

- a) TRAI may avoid conducting multiple audits for the same process/activity.
- b) Financial disincentives need to be completely done away with and if at all, should be toned down.
- c) TRAI may issue the draft Regulations first for taking the inputs of stakeholders, after the conclusion of this Consultation process.
- d) Auditors should choose the top 5 tariff offers i.e. data packs, STVs, multiple tariff packs at a time, etc. of the quarter and conduct their audits.
- e) Tools being used by the auditors may be standardized across all the auditors who conduct the M&B audit of the TSPs.
- f) Records need not be retained for a longer period for future Special or Peer audits.

TRAI Telecom Subscription Data

TRAI released the Telecom Subscription data as of 31.01.2021 on Mar 17, 2021. The key data points of the report are as below:

- a) Total subs - 1179.49 million
 - I. Wireless Subs - 1159.42 million
 - II. Wireline Subs - 20.07 million
- b) Urban Subs: 651.59 million
 - i. Wireless Subs - 633.27 million
 - ii. Wireline Subs - 18.32 million
- c) Rural Subs: 527.90 million
 - i. Wireless Subs - 526.15 million
 - ii. Wireline Subs - 1.75 million

- d) Teledensity: 86.72%
 - i. Wireless Teledensity - 85.24%
 - ii. Wireline Teledensity - 1.48%
 - iii. Urban Teledensity - 138.89%
 - iv. Rural Teledensity - 59.25%
- e) Broadband Subs - 757.61 million
 - i. Wireless Broadband Subs - 734.94 million
 - ii. Wireline Broadband Subs - 22.67 million

Implementation of the TRAI Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation -2018

- 1) The industry started the content template scrubbing, as a part of the implementation of TRAI TCCCP-2018 on 8th March 2021.
- 2) On 9th March 2021, TRAI observed that some of the Principal Entities (PEs) have not fulfilled the requirements as envisaged in TCCCP-2018. As a result, their SMS was getting dropped after the implementation of scrubbing. Considering the same, TRAI decided to suspend the scrubbing of SMS by TSPs for 7 days in order to protect the interest of the consumers and also to enable the PEs to register the template of SMS.
- 3) Further, TRAI vide its instructions dated March 16, 2021, asked all the TSPs to:
 - a) Resume the scrubbing as envisaged (from 17th March 2021), however, allow the message to be delivered to the recipients in case of failure of the messages due to any reasons including content id, mismatch of template etc.
 - b) A report indicating the % of traffic failed in scrubbing along with the reasons, to be sent to PE and TM at the end of the day.
 - c) Summary report to be shared with TRAI every Tuesday and Friday as per the Prescribed format.

Temporary suspension of internet services due to law-and-order situation

COAI submitted a representation to DoT on 22nd March on the issue of Temporary suspension of internet services due to law-and-order situation.

Vide the said letter COAI requested that exemptions be made in the public interest by allowing the subscribers to recharge their balance through TSPs applications so that the telecom services to the subscribers are not disrupted.

Use of e-EPIC/Digital Voter ID card for issuance of SIMs

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on February 25, 2021 stating that the e-EPIC is just like an e-Aadhaar and can only be printed and is not editable. Also, this e-EPIC or Digital Voter ID card hosts a secured QR code with image and demographics like serial number, part number, etc. and the authenticity of the card can also be established by scanning the QR code and checking with the information available on the card.

Hence, COAI requested DoT to allow the use of EPIC or Digital Voter ID for the issuance of SIMs.

Amendment on guidelines issued to Import prototype wireless devices working within unlicensed bands and restricted by DGFT

COAI letter was submitted to DoT on February 26, 2021 on the matter. COAI highlighted that earlier such prototypes were allowed based on self-declaration basis by WPC as it was not a licensed product. But according to the new DGFT policy, such prototypes were categorised as a licensed product and cannot be imported without a license from DGFT

DoT was requested to work cohesively with DGFT to allow test equipment based on self-declaration in WPC format for regular import license will be taken.

Instructions for provisioning of telecom services to Persons with Disabilities (PwD)

COAI made submission to DoT on March 11, 2021 seeking extension till April 30, 2021 for complete implementation of the referred Instructions for provisioning of telecom services to Persons with Disabilities (PwD). COAI submitted that all TSPs have been diligently working on implementation of the process as cited in the DoT circular but some requirements in the same may lead to delay in complete implementation of this process within the stipulated timeline. In this regard, DoT issued notification on March 18, 2021 conveying the approval of extension on the same till April 30, 2021.

Requirement of Storage of Paper Based CAFs

DoT sought response on some queries based on the COAI

submission dated October 22, 2020 on the subject. In this regard, COAI submitted detailed point-wise Response on March 02, 2021 to DoT's queries in respect of storage of paper based CAFs of active and disconnected subscribers.

MTCTE Test Sampling Equipment to be brought under ATA Carnet Scheme

COAI made submission to DoT on March 5, 2021 on the matter. COAI requested DoT that test sample equipment be allowed under the testing equipment category (ATA Carnet) and to work in collaboration with Ministry of Finance to issue relevant notification / circular for imports of telecommunication equipment by Registered Importer with TEC for mandatory testing without payment of Basic Customs Duty (BCD) & Social Welfare Surcharge (SWS). Such equipment can be restricted to 5 (five) units per model.

COAI suggested that post testing, not only majority of equipment will not be in a condition to be reutilize after undergoing such EMC/EMI stress / drop tests and must be discarded / destructed, but also it will not be possible to deploy them for commercial purpose.

Submission of Subscriber Database in uniform format across all LSAs

COAI made submission to DoT on March 08, 2021 as a response to DoT circular issued on March 03, 2021. COAI shared that the TSP members have carefully examined the requirements mentioned in the circular & associated annexures for standardizing the subscriber database format and shared some observations for DoT's consideration and advice before any changes are initiated.

COAI submitted that making the desired changes is a complex activity which would need IT intervention for appropriate formatting of database to ensure integrity of information. Also, COAI requested DoT to allow 90 days for implementation starting from the date of clarification to ensure accurate data submission which is the most critical input for success of the project.

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

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on March 01, 2021. In this regard, COAI requested DoT for the following:

- a. Review the requirement of Police verification of each POS agent that is currently taking an inordinate amount of time and to do away with this requirement. OR
- b. Keeping in mind the time taken by the local Police as in Para 3 above, kindly allow PoS agent to be on-boarded after a reasonable 15 days of request being made to Police/TERM for verification.

Covid Vaccination for Telecom Warriors

COAI made submission to DoT on March 15, 2021 to categorize telecom warriors as frontline workers and take up the issue with the Ministry of Health to get them in the priority list for getting the vaccination.

Exemption of IMEI Certificate from ICDR portal for Devices imported for Manufacturing, Testing or Research and Development (R&D) purpose

COAI made submission to DoT on March 22, 2021 on the matter. COAI wrote to DoT seeking exemption on IMEI certificate requirement from ICDR portal to import mobile phones into India for manufacturing, testing, research, and development purposes for Manufacturing and R&D entities

It was highlighted that, prior to the development of ICDR portal such phones were imported on self-declaration-based process, hence needs to be continued with this well-established process. This Self-declaration process can also be automated to allow the industry to make online submission of undertaking on ICDR portal, which will further help the government to track the exemptions sought and imports done.

Extension of timelines for EMF Self-Certificate Submission due to deployment of the newly acquired Spectrum during March 2021 Auction

COAI submitted the letter to DoT on March 23, 2021. TSPs have to deploy the newly acquired spectrum in 2300 MHz, 1800 MHz, 900 MHz and 800 MHz bands in the recently concluded auction.

The network reconfiguration due to new acquired frequencies will include multiple upgrades for different band spectrum upgrades. Each band upgrade will need EMF compliance and submission. In the current situation regarding the outbreak and spread of Covid-19 pandemic across the country again, it is very difficult to get access and permission in building and surrounding buildings where tower is installed to conduct field visits for EMF survey, Broadband measurements, panoramic photographs etc.

In view of the above, COAI requested DoT to consider extending timeline for 6 months for EMF compliances from date of spectrum related parameters upgradation in the network (extended timeline of 6 months commencing from 15th April 2021).

Industry Inputs on SARAL SANCHAR Portal for SACFA Clearances

COAI provided inputs to WPC, DoT for efficient handling of SACFA applications through SARAL SANCHAR Portal vide

letter dated March 24, 2021. This will enhance ease of doing business.

Inputs to WPC WG-1 (upto 1 GHz), WG-2 (1-6 GHz) and WG-3 (above 6 GHz)

WPC committee was formed to review/revise National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP)- 2018. COAI submitted inputs and attended meetings of the three Working Groups WG-1 (upto 1 GHz), WG-2 (1-6 GHz) and WG-3 (above 6 GHz).

DCC Meeting on TEC Test Procedure on EMF from BTSs

DCC- Sub Committee meeting was held on March 5, 2021 where industry inputs were discussed and submitted to TEC.

The DCC meeting was held on March 18, 2021 and points like OTS certificate submission, Photograph for Site Layout, format for less than 2 W count reporting, Hm & Dm table for frequency greater than 2GHz for Simplified Assessment Criteria were discussed and identified as action items for inputs from the industry.

Earmarking Spectrum in mmWave Bands for IMT 2020 (5G)

COAI submitted a reminder letter to DoT highlighting the importance of 26 GHz (24.25-27.5 GHz) band and 28 GHz band which are prime bands for 5G and for an early referral to TRAI for earmarking and including these mmWave bands for auction.

Amendment of Karnataka RoW Policy in alignment with RoW Rules, 2016

After follow up with Government of Karnataka at all level regarding the RoW policy, the Government has withdrawn its regressive RoW policy on 18-March -21. It has been assured that new policy shall be aligned on the lines on RoW policy 2016.

Subsidy for roll-out of Telecom Infra in Rural

On COAI's request Uttarakhand State Government has come out with an order to provide subsidy upto 30% or INR 50 Lacs for telecom infrastructure installation in rural areas vide their G.O .. We are requesting and following it up other states for the similar support.

State Broadband Committee Meeting

COAI raised concerns of COAI members in the State Broadband Committee Meetings of Mizoram and Lakshadweep UT. Lakshadweep UT will notify RoW Policy soon.

EMF Awareness Activities

20 LSA led EMF workshops were organised to debunk the prevailing EMF myths w.r.t Emission from BTS installed on Mobile Towers. These workshops were attended by DoT official, Doctors, RWA members, State Officials, etc. and widely covered by the media.

The support provided by COAI to these workshops was highly appreciated by all.

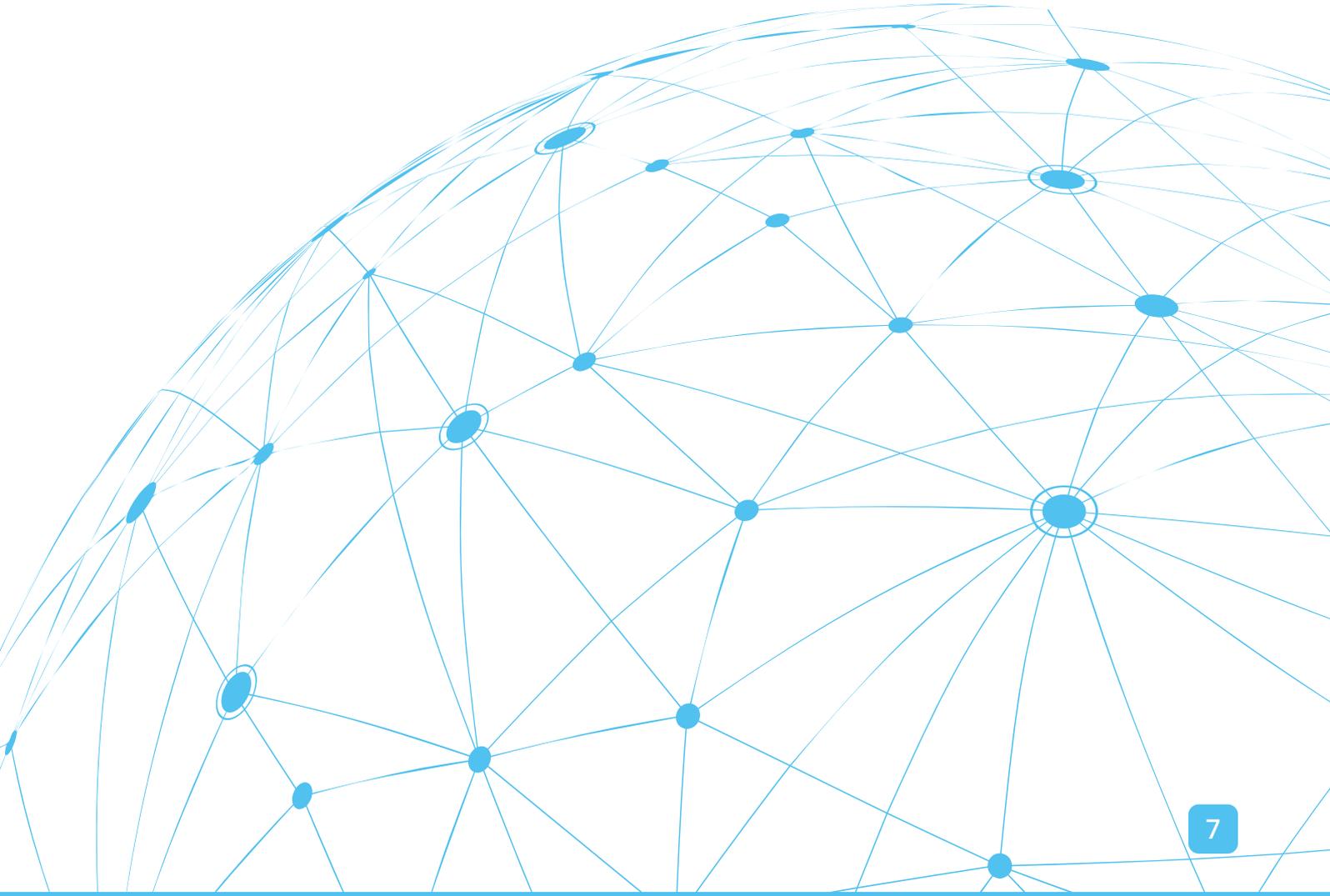
Circle Coordination Committee (CCC) Meeting

Circle Coordination Committee Meeting for Chandigarh was held on 08 Mar 2021. CCC Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and office bearers were re-elected.

Notification of State/UT RoW Policy in alignment with RoW Rules, 2016
Chandigarh Right of Way (RoW) Policy for Telecom Infrastructure was notified on March 01, 2021.

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

- On February 03, 2020 guidelines were issued by DoT in which clarifications were issued towards the deduction verification exercise to be carried out by the CCAs. These guidelines have helped to bring clarity on the nature of documents to be submitted by the TSPs to the CCA offices. Some of the CCAs were not accepting these clarifications citing that the same is applicable till FY 2017-18.
- Representation was made by COAI mentioning that the nature of transactions remains the same irrespective of the financial year and we had requested DoT to allow the above-mentioned clarifications / guidelines of DoT for subsequent assessment years as well so that the CCA offices consider these clarifications while assessing the documents submitted by TSPs. DoT vide letter dated 23-03-2021 has clarified that DVR guidelines dated 03-02-2020 may be used for DVR verification for all licences for the years post FY 2016-17.
- Apart from ease doing compliance, above will also help in reduction of disallowances, reduction in cost and improving cashflow of members.





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News Wires:

Authorities clamp down on illegal Mobile Network Boosters in Pune

Illegal Mobile Signal Boosters lead to increased incidence of call drops, call muting, and lower data speeds thus degrading service experience for the majority of customers in the area. [Read more](#)



SMS Scrubbing: Faulty implementation wipes out OTPs, 40% traffic disrupted

Several services such as net banking, credit card payments, e-commerce services, Aadhaar authentication and even Co-WIN registrations were disrupted on Monday as SMSes and OTPs failed to arrive after telecom companies implemented a new set of regulations for commercial text messages, according to a report in Economic Times. [Read more](#)



All telemarketing messages to be delivered to mobile subscribers till TRAI takes final call: COAI

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on March 12 gave three days' time to entities like banks, e-commerce firms and others for complying with telemarketing rules, failing which they were to be barred from sending out commercial communication to customers. [Read more](#)



COAI Events

Digital Infra 2021

It was a defining event to virtually connect local and international ICT infrastructure leaders to boost investment, fibre deployment, data centre, edge and hyperscale build in one of the fastest growing economies

"The key to driving international traffic to India & SAARC is the alignment between telecom, a central subject and the necessary approvals is a state subject. It would be the synergy between telecom companies and the subscribers that would provide the linkage for driving international traffic to India" said Mr. Vikram Tiwathia, Deputy Director General, COAI.



28th Convergence India Expo 2021:

This year the theme of the expo was 'Digital India- Connecting the Unconnected'. The event provided a platform for players to promote Brand India and extend the impact of 'Make in India' and 'Digital India' campaigns globally.

Mr. Vikram Tiwathia DDG COAI spoke about how the telecommunications industry should work alongside other industries like transportation, aviation, shipping, etc. to map the digital and broadband readiness in the nation.



'Growth of India's Digital Landscape: The Atmanirbhar Way' organized by PHD Chamber

The event focused on boosting the production of telecommunications equipment in India and becoming self-reliant

Mr. Vikram Tiwathia, DDG COAI said that "**India** is no.1 globally with 13.51 GB subscription of data today. The combination of 4G and LTE has changed the impact on various sectors such as transportation, health, et. Today, India is one of the top 5 countries in terms of LTE service providers."





Contact Us

Address : 14, Bhai Veer Singh Marg, New Delhi – 110 001

Phone : +91 - 11- 23349275 | Fax: +91 - 11 - 23349276

Email : contact@coai.in | Website: www.coai.in

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