From DG’s Desk

COAI Latest Updates

News Wires

COAI Events
In 2020, India bore the brunt of the first wave of coronavirus. The pandemic affected almost each part of India dimming the prospects for the entire country’s health and economy. When we were beginning to think that the worst was over, the second wave of the pandemic hit us in the form of various mutant versions with an increased transmissibility rate. It is similar yet very different from what we faced last year. The sense of ambiguity lengthens every passing day.

Connectivity is vital when we are in the thick of the crisis. Telecommunication has stood as a strong pillar for all segments of the population. All over the world, telecom companies are increasing internet speed and capacity at no or negligible cost to the consumer. Upsurge in industry-wide usage has been pre-dominant since last year. Amid social distancing, connectivity is what keeps us informed and employed; it maintains our mental and physical well-being. For those without internet access, the economic and social impact of the pandemic will be even more colossal.

Today, more than trade, industry or economy it is about connecting people and the resources. The disruptive nature of this pandemic has helped us find unconventional ways to fight and the biggest facilitator of them all are our telecom providers who are making sure that the end users have all the information that they need, on their fingertips.

The consistent efforts by telecom providers and related bodies have ensured infrastructural integrity that has aided a good communication pattern in the present times. This has been possible due to the untiring efforts of our frontline telecom warriors in maintaining the networks 24X7.

In the battle against COVID-19, digital technologies are front and center. Now is the time to work together to achieve the promise of new technologies for all and keep the world connected even in these times of social distancing.
Letter to DoT on release of Bank Guarantees

Vide letter dated April 02 to DoT, COAI requested that, once the Rollout obligations are completed, Performance Bank Guarantee (PBG) should be returned to the TSPs at the earliest and going forward the submission of PBG by TSPs should be done away with. Similarly, going forward, the submission of Financial Bank Guarantee (FBG) by TSPs should be done away with OR DoT may kindly consider reduction in FBG from 2 qtrs. to 1 qtr.

Mobile Number Revocation List (MNRL) published on TRAI website

Vide letter dated April 09 to DoT, COAI requested DoT that the inclusion of Subscriber Name, TSP Name, Issuance City and Reason for Deactivation, in Mobile Number Revocation List (MNRL) published on TRAI website would lead to concerns of privacy and confidentiality of customer information. The same should not be implemented.

Review of Definition of AGR and allowing deductions of lease line / bandwidth charges and the charges paid by one TSP to the other TSP as pass-through charges

COAI submitted letter to DoT on April 20, requesting for a Review of Definition of AGR Prospectively and Allowing deductions of lease line / bandwidth charges and the charges paid by one TSP to the other TSP as pass-through charges.

Request for additional Time to file Monthly and Quarterly Reports due in April and May 2021

Given the present Covid situation, COAI, vide its letter to TRAI dated April 20, requested TRAI to kindly provide our member TSPs additional time of at least 6 weeks, from the due date, to file all Monthly and Quarterly reports which are due for submission in April and May 2021.

Handling of Non-Payment Disconnection (NPD) Requests in view of the Current Situation due to COVID-19

COAI Letter was submitted to TRAI on April 22, 2021 regarding disconnection of the mobile numbers due to Non-Payment Disconnection (NPD) process in accordance with MNP regulations, for the subscribers who have recently ported their mobile numbers and are not able to pay their bills to their Donor Operator (DO), post porting.

Impact in SLAs of Quality-of-Service Parameters due to COVID-19 advisory

We have requested TRAI vide letter dated April 22, 2021 to not treat any deviations that may be observed in benchmark of the QoS parameters for all the services in upcoming QE June 2021 reports and reports for the upcoming quarters till the situation stabilizes.

Allowing denomination in multiples of Rs. 10 for Special Tariff/ Combo/ Plan Vouchers

COAI wrote to TRAI on April 16, 2021 for allowing denomination in multiples of Rs. 10 for Special Tariff/ Combo/ Plan Vouchers and doing away with the provision of mandatory colour coding of the vouchers.

Need to remove paper-based information to consumers and shift to digital modes

This is with reference to the various requirements, under various Regulations and Directions, of communicating certain information to the telecom consumers through physical mediums like newspapers and other such modes. COAI requested TRAI vide letter dated April 14, 2021 to repeal the redundant activities like Welcome Letter and mandatory hard copy of the bill etc.
Restriction of movement of telecom staff/vehicles/equipments during COVID Curfew/lockdown

COAI requested Secretary(T), DoT and DG(T), DoT office to instruct all LSAs (DoT unit) to support and facilitate this request to allow movement of telecom staff/vehicles/equipments during COVID Curfew/lockdown. Post COAI's follow-up, an email was sent by DG(T), DoT (HQ) to all LSAs.

COAI engaged Secretary (IT) of the State Government to allow the movement of staff/personnel/field engineers of TSPs, ISPs, IPIs, their Partners (OEMs) and Optical Fiber maintenance entities.

Government of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi NCT, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Haryana, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh issued directions to allow movement of telecom staff/vehicles/equipments during COVID Curfew/lockdown.

COAI further wrote to Chief Secretary, Maharashtra, and informed that though Telecom has been categorised as essential service, however Telecom staff is not being allowed to use public transport/local Trains by local Authorities. We requested Maharashtra Government to look into this matter and issue necessary instructions to various Government officials/local Authorities in this regard.

Revision of rates by South MCD

Hon’ble Delhi High Court has held that No coercive steps shall be taken by South MCD till the next date of hearing and the respondents who have made payment under the settlement shall be granted permission for erection and construction of towers in accordance with the judgment of the learned Single Judge and the settlement agreement. An industry meeting is scheduled on 05.05.2021 under Delhi HC order to meet in a bid to amicably resolve the issues.

Exorbitant Charging for the OFC laying and Restoration in Rajasthan

COAI sent letter to CS, DoT (HQ), LSA and Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) of Rajasthan regarding the issue. Following request was made:

i) Rajasthan Government need to prescribe No or nominal Charges for putting Manhole/Chamber on the OFC Route and accordingly amend their order dated 6th Feb 2017.

ii) In case charges are being prescribed for putting Manhole/Chamber on the OFC Route, the same should be aligned with the charges been prescribed by other States.

iii) Notwithstanding the above, demand made by JDA should be immediately withdrawn and charges should be calculated based on the provisions of the Rajasthan Government order dated 6th Feb 2017.

Fibre Cut Challenges in Bangalore

COAI had a meeting with Chief Commissioner, BBMP, along with the member TSPs, regarding the Fiber cut challenges being faced by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)/ISPs in Bangalore. Following was agreed in the meeting:

a) Commissioner agreed to stop the aerial drive and suggested for a joint survey by operators along with the BBMP officers.

b) Commissioner also suggested that the aerial cables are to be made underground in locations wherever feasible with specified timelines

c) It was agreed that BBMP to nominate Nodal Officer to look into the issues pertaining to aerial fibre etc.

d) Commissioner advised that the clauses mentioned in RoW permissions are to be very clear.

e) Commissioner advised that going forward the restoration shall be carried out by TSP and not by BBMP.

f) Commissioner discussed about the utility’s corridor and the facilities available in other cities and need for facilitating these in Bangalore.

Airport Authority of India

COAI is coordinating with WPC wing of DoT, GMR, DM and LSA officials of Delhi NCT for clearing of hinderance in new runway being planned at Delhi Airport.

Concerns regarding Handset OS Impacting LBS Reporting Accuracy

COAI made submission to DoT on March 24, 2021 on the issue requesting DoT for its urgent intervention to:

a) Define mandatory requirements (Features, Functionalities, security guidelines etc.) for Handset OEMs/Chipset Manufacturers/OS providers for India market and define the validation agency for the same.

b) Issue clear guidelines to Chipset/OS providers and handset/Device OEMs.

c) Define immediate & clear plan of implementation of existing devices in market and forthcoming launches by OS providers, handset and device OEMs.
Implementation of Single Number based Emergency Response Support System

COAI made submission to DoT on March 30, 2021 requesting DoT to reconsider the following:

a) Issue suitable instructions to CDAC/State Agencies to reconsider the new addition of locations of PSAP.

b) Instruct PSAP service providers to desist from demand of PRI cards of PSAP at every location to TSPs.

c) Instruct state agencies to approve RoW applications pending at their end and not to levy any RoW charges for the work concerning PRI connectivity to PSAP.

Earmarking the 3.3 – 4.2 GHz band for IMT Services (5G deployment)

COAI made submission to Telecom Commission on March 30, 2021 requesting the Government to earmark the 3.6-4.2 GHz for IMT services, in addition to the present earmarking of 3.3 – 3.6 GHz.

Exemption of Licence fee on Wireline Revenues

COAI made submission to TRAI on March 30, 2021 requesting the Authority to recommend complete exemption of entire wireline revenue from License Fee obligations to provide an impetus to proliferation of the wireline services and to fulfill the vision of Hon’ble Prime Minister as announced on Independence Day last year.

Request to bring the Carriage Distribution (DTH & Cable) Platform under the Ministry of Communications

COAI made submission to the Cabinet Secretary on April 01, 2021 requesting that the Government create sharper focus and orderly separation between content and carriage by:

a) Assigning the DoT to be a single Department for all licensing requirement across the access platforms & Mobile, Broadband, Cable and DTH.

b) Retaining Ministry of Information & Broadcasting as an umbrella body for all content regulation, management and appropriate censorship across all mediums with these platforms being covered under orderly rules to carry the same content.

Audit of Latest Self-Certificates in LSA Window of EMF Portal

Various scenarios for audit of Latest Self-Certificates mentioned as per DoT notification were implemented and made live on April 01, 2021.

Traffic from International Internet Gateway routers – Requirements of Authorized agencies

COAI made submission to the DoT on April 02, 2021 seeking intervention of DoT to ensure that the legitimate needs of the agencies are met without impacting the performance of the networks and putting any additional financial burden on the operators.

In the interim, COAI also requested DoT to please take it up with CERT-In to not take any coercive steps to get the Rules of Engagement (RoE) agreement signed by TSPs that allows collection of un-sampled traffic flows (1:1) metadata from these International Internet Gateway routers, and to wait until such time that DoT has formulated a considered opinion on the same in consultation with all stakeholders.

Issues Related to Revised Process for Use of ‘Aadhaar’ Authentication Service for Issuance of Mobile Connections

COAI made submission to UIDAI on April 08, 2021 to reduce authentication charges for e-KYC to cover the costs of administration and the same may be restricted to around 70-80 paise at maximum per subscriber activation. Further, we urged UIDAI to institutionalize one time KYC for PoS/ PoS agents. Also, COAI sought a joint industry meeting with UIDAI, DoT, TSPs and COAI to discuss authentication charges.

Security Audits conducted by DoT

COAI made submission to DoT on April 08, 2021 requesting that a final framework/SOP be published at an earliest to clearly bifurcate the points which are to be conducted at Central Level and LSA Level and henceforth, comprehensive audits be conducted at central level audit only to minimize overlap.

OSS Snapshot for LPBTS

This facility was implemented in TSP window of the National EMF Portal on April 08, 2021.

Timelines of Equipment Labelling Requirements on certified telecom products under MTCTE

COAI made submission to DoT on April 13, 2021 seeking an extension for three months on equipment labelling guidelines under MTCTE to comply.

TEC is under the process of revising the Labelling Guidelines for mandatory compliance under MTCTE. This would require modification and overhauling the previous logo designs, hampering the logistics and huge cost implication to our members. Members are ready to comply, however, they need time for the same.
Methodology for allocation for E&V Spectrum

COAI made submission to PMO on April 09, 2021 on the matter. In this regard, COAI requested PMO as below:

a) Recognizing the role of Spectrum in E and V Band in Broadband proliferation and 5G roll-out and its high commercial and competitive value, spectrum in these bands should be alienated only through auction as per settled legal position.

b) Without admitting that delicensing of spectrum in E or/ & V band is either legally tenable or in public interest or technically appropriate or for orderly growth of telecom sector, in the event that the Department of Telecommunications delicense fully or partially E or/ and V band spectrum, it is submitted that the Government must also delicense all the bands being presently used for providing “Broadband Services” to 95% of population by TSPs and refund the expenses already incurred in acquisition of such spectrum.

Issues observed in CDRs due to Handset behaviour

COAI made submission to DoT on April 13, 2021 stating that due to the intrinsic behaviour of the handset, TSP networks are unable to capture the IMEI during the VoLTE call procedure because of no information being made available by handset.

On the other hand, the IMEIs are being captured during the data session (data CDR) and being populated as per the requirement. This anomalous behaviour in the handsets is causing the situation of no IMEI/null IMEI in the CDRs. It has also been observed that this behaviour is depicted by such handsets sporadically across different handset models of various handset providers. Apart from some instances, these handsets are sending the details in the correct format and IMEIs are being captured in the CDRs. While, the said situation of null IMEI is very miniscule, however, COAI submitted that rectifying the same is not in the operator’s control, but, the corrective steps need to be taken by the respective handset providers.

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

COAI made submission to DoT, DGFT and DPIIT on April 16, 2021 on the matter requesting DoT to kindly intervene in the matter and take strict measures to:

a) Ensure complete ban on sale of these illegal repeaters and boosters, offline or online thru e-commerce websites/platforms through an appropriate notification to sellers of illegal repeaters in the country. This may be in continuation to DoT’s earlier notification of 01.05.2019.

b) Take up the issue with Ministry of Commerce & Industry to prohibit import of such illegal boosters/ repeaters in the country with immediate effect.

c) Take up the issue with appropriate Ministries including MeitY and DPIIT to curb this menace.

d) Request MHA to issue appropriate directions to State DGPs/CPs/Chief Secretaries to take action under law against the sellers of illegal repeaters in the country.

Support Required from DoT During the Current Situation in the Country

COAI made submission to DoT on April 20, 2021 seeking abeyance/ suspension for next three months on certain activities including fields visits like various audits. Also, in order to maintain and practice the need of social distancing in time to come, COAI also requested DoT to issue guidelines on Self-KYC, OTP based conversion from prepaid to post-paid and vice versa and Digital-KYC based SIM Replacement/ Exchange.

MoU of Tarang Sanchar Portal

DoT has renewed the Tarang Sanchar MoU between DoT, Ramboll, COAI, BSNL and MTNL. COAI provided inputs to the same. The last one was for a period of 2 years w.e.f 18 April 2019 and valid for two years i.e., till 17 April 2021, hence a renewal was necessitated. The renewed MoU is for 3-year duration.
5G and the power to usher in a new digital revolution

“5G has the potential to truly transform the lives of India’s citizens. Considering the robust benefits it offers, what is required is government’s support in the form of a strong and robust inter-ministerial policy that can provide a pathway for end-to-end 5G realization. It is encouraging that following the recommendations of the inter-ministerial High-Level Forum for 5G India 2020, the government is creating an enabling framework,” says Kochhar. Read more

Telcos issue advisory against fake messages promising free recharges

Telecom companies have issued a public advisory against fake messages promising free recharge plans for online education floating on social media, which could possibly steal users’ personal data from their mobile device. Read more

COAI seeks ban on illegal mobile signal boosters

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has asked the Department of Telecommunications to ensure a complete ban on sale of illegal repeaters and boosters, offline or online, through e-commerce websites. Read more

DoT allocates 4G spectrum to telcos

The department of telecommunications (DoT) on Friday completed assigning spectrum to telecom operators who bought airwaves for 4G wireless service in the auction conducted in March. The government issued frequency assignment letters to bidders, according to an official statement. Read more
COAI Events

Webinar on Artificial Intelligence Opportunities & Challenges organized by ITU APT Foundation of India

Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI spoke on ‘Artificial Intelligence Opportunities and Challenges’ and its use in the various sectors of the country at the ITU APT Foundation of India Webinar. He emphasized on the fact that we require homegrown algorithms and mechanisms to make the best use of emerging technology.

Webinar on 5G & Beyond organized by Digital Communication Connect- UK & India

On the Occasion, Mr. Vikram Tiwathia, DDG, COAI shared his thoughts on emerging technology, 5G, internet consumption by Indian users, and the role TRAI is playing in regularizing telecom industry in India.
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