From DG’s Desk

COAI Latest Updates

Telecom Infrastructure Policy Alignment with RoW Rules, 2016

News Wires

COAI Events
May 2021 witnessed the country bravely fighting the peak of deadly second wave of COVID-19, which brought the importance of connectivity to the forefront. The telecommunications sector stood strong facilitating real time communication among governments, businesses, and societies.

In the second half of the month when severe cyclonic storm Tauktae hit the states of Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra followed by yet another severe cyclonic storm Yaas that affected West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar majorly, telecommunication came to the rescue in order to facilitate smooth transmission of information and in giving timely warning to people so that they can reach safer places.

As we continue to reel from the shock and the lasting impact of the pandemic, “work from home” and “social distancing” have become the buzzwords in today’s business landscape, with the telecom sector being the invisible hand driving this shift. Clearly, the biggest impact that the COVID-19 crisis has had so far on the telecom industry has been that the industry has become ever more central to how modern society operates. While demand for services continues to spike, there is increased pressure on cellular infrastructure. As multiple organizations warn about the probability of a third wave, the telecommunication industry also prepares itself to provide better connectivity at reasonable costs. The pandemic has widened the prospects for digital market as everything is being shifted to a digital platform which makes connectivity of utmost importance.

Several State Governments are doing a commendable job in this direction organizing extensive vaccination drives and categorizing telecom warriors as frontline workers and in helping them get the vaccination on priority. The past one year has proved to be a landmark in the telecommunication sector as it continues to be the indispensable cornerstone for facilitating all the social and economic activities.
COAI

Latest Updates:

Letter to TRAI on Floor Tariffs

COAI submitted a follow-up letter to TRAI on May 24, 2021 on the issue of floor tariffs requesting authority to conduct an Open House Discussion (OHD) on this issue at the earliest through an online platform.

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 submitted a follow-up letter to TRAI on May 20, 2021 requesting to repeal the redundant activities like welcome letter and mandatory hard copy of the bill, etc.

Facilitating the Infrastructure Sharing between the Telecom Operators

COAI submitted a follow-up letter to DoT on May 19, 2021 requesting DoT to allow pass-through any consideration paid by one TSP to another for active infrastructure sharing and allow sharing of core network elements.

Proposal for implementation of Project Arachnid list as alternate to IWF list for filtering online CSAM

Joint COAI ISPAI letter was submitted to MeitY on May 17, 2021 requesting MeitY to allow the project Arachnid list as an alternate list to IWF for prevention of distribution and transmission of online CSAM in India.

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

COAI has submitted a follow-up letter to TRAI on May 17, 2021 requesting TRAI 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.

Customer inconvenience in telecommunications services due to violation of TRAI’s MNP regulations by M/s. BSNL (South Zone)

COAI wrote to TRAI on May 14, 2021 and subsequently wrote on May 26, 2021 that there is non-generation of Unique Porting (UPC) by BSNL (South Zone) since April 27, 2021, which has created customer’s inconvenience for telecommunications services. TRAI communicated the same to BSNL and they have assured to resolve it soon.

Request for additional time to file Monthly and Quarterly reports due in April and May 2021

Given the present COVID situation, COAI vide its follow-up letter to TRAI dated May 13, 2021 requested TRAI to kindly provide our member TSPs additional time of at least 8 weeks, from the due date, to file all Monthly and Quarterly reports which are due for submission in April and May 2021. On our request TRAI has given an extension till May 31, 2021.

Letter to DoT on Bank Guarantees

Vide letter dated May 11, 2021 to DoT, COAI requested that, once the rollout obligations are completed, PBGs should be returned to the TSPs at the earliest and going forward the submission of PBG by TSPs should be done away with OR DoT may kindly consider reduction in FBG from 2 qtrs to 1 qtr.
Allow Inter-Band Sharing of Spectrum

COAI submitted a follow-up letter to DoT on May 10, 2021 requesting to allow Inter-Band sharing of spectrum by TSPs, considering that all the spectrum is being allocated through auction and is liberalized/technology-neutral.

Need for uniform timelines for the declaration of revenue related details by TSPs

COAI submitted a follow-up letter to DoT on May 3, 2021 requesting to maintain the uniformity in the timelines for declaration of price sensitive information/revenue related details to DoT as well as the Stock Exchanges as prescribed by SEBI.

Comments/Suggestion on M2M and e-SIM related documents

DoT vide email dated 26.03.2021 sought comments/suggestions by April 03, 2021 on the below mentioned M2M related documents:


b) Extracts of the report of the Inter-Ministerial working Group constituted to identify critical services in M2M sector.

c) Issues involved in the deployment of embedded SIM

Vide letter dated May 3, 2021, COAI submitted inputs to the Draft M2M guidelines, Embedded SIM and List of critical services issued by DoT on 26th March.

Handling of Non-Payment Disconnection (NDP) Requests in view of the current situation due to COVID-19

On the basis of COAI request, TRAI vide its letter dated May 4, 2021, temporarily suspended raising of new NDP requests by the DO till May 31, 2021 and TSPs as DO shall have to cancel the ongoing NDP requests raised in the last 15 days, i.e., from 20.04.2021 to 04.05.2021.

Self-KYC (S-KYC) as an alternate process for issuing of mobile connections to individual and outstations category customers

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on May 17, 2021 stating that all member TSPs have already provided the inputs/comments on the draft guidelines for consideration but issuance of necessary instructions by DoT is still awaited. Hence, COAI requested DoT to issue the final Self-KYC (S-KYC) process PoC guidelines as early as possible, which is not only the need of the hour but essential in the public interest during this pandemic. The issue was discussed in a meeting with Secretary DoT on May 20, 2021. DoT has issued draft PoC guidelines on May 28, 2021 for comments by the industry.

Conversions of mobile connection from pre-paid to post-paid and vice-versa

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on May 17, 2021 on OTP based process for conversion of mobile connection from pre-paid to post-paid and vice-versa. In the wake of present COVID-19 pandemic situation, such contact less process will not only offer immense convenience to the customers but will also be necessary to adhere to the health and safety aspects for all individuals. DoT has issued PoC guidelines on the same on May 21, 2021.

TAFCO Portal

Issues related to the Subscriber Retention/Disconnection:

COAI made submission to DoT on May 5, 2021 as all the TSPs had received the request from AP TERM enclosing numbers received from subscribers and their comments on these mobile numbers, through the portal https://tafcop.dgtelecom.gov.in asking the TSPs to delete the numbers and submit the compliance. COAI submitted that it would not be prudent to just disconnect the numbers without understanding the entire process and creating a uniform process across industry on dealing with this newly developed process. COAI requested DoT to put such orders in abeyance immediately and review the submission, post which can deliberate and draft appropriate uniform process which would enable us to implement this process in letter and spirit. The issue was discussed with DoT in a meeting on May 7, 2021 and subsequently in the meeting with Secretary DoT on May 20, 2021. The TSPs will discuss with AP LSA to resolve the issue.

Issues related to Revised Process for use of ‘Aadhaar’ Authentication Service for Issuance of Mobile Connections

Post meeting with CEO UIDAI on May 04, 2021, COAI submitted that authentication cost is a major driver and the industry would want the authentication services to be reasonable to ensure, traceability and consumer interest. Hence, UIDAI charges should be reasonable to cover the costs of administration and the same way be restricted to not more than Rs. 2 at maximum per subscriber activation.
Support required from DoT during the current situation in the Country

COAI made submission to DoT on May 7, 2021 seeking abeyance/suspension for next few months on certain activities including field visits like various audits, in order to maintain and practice the need of social distancing in time to come. The extension was provided till May 31, 2021 and later further extended till June 30, 2021.

Exemption from the period inspection requirement for Internet Leased Line

COAI made submission to DoT on May 10, 2021 that due to this ongoing pandemic and partial/complete lockdown in various states, TSPs are facing great difficulty in complying to the said licensing requirement i.e., first inspection of ILL customer premise within 15 days of commissioning of the ILL services and periodic inspection of the existing ILL customers. COAI requested DoT to provide exemption from the inspection requirement under the said license condition, till September 30, 2021.

Review Requirement of Storage of CAFs/Documents

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on May 18, 2021 requesting DoT to issue instructions on the following at the earliest:

a) Active Subscribers: The requirement to store physical copies of CAF & documents should be done away with since these are available in digital form with all operators. Accordingly, DoT should also do away with CAF warehouse audits being carried out by DoT LSA units.

b) Churned/Disconnected Subscribers: Kindly modify the time period for storage of CAF/documents and make it only for a period of one year after the subscriber is deactivated from the TSP network unless directed otherwise by the Licensor/ LEAs/ Courts. Further, these paper CAFs should only in digital form.

Request for extension of timelines for EMF Self-Certificate submission due to deployment of the newly acquired spectrum during March 2021 auction

COAI submitted reminder letters to DoT dated May 6, 2021 and May 12, 2021 to consider extended timeline of 6 months for EMF compliances from date of spectrum related parameters upgradation in the network (extended timeline of 6 months commencing from April 15th, 2021). DoT has issued extension till Oct 16, 2021 for which the certificates may be submitted till Oct 31, 2021.

Review of document storage on National EMF Portal—Tarang Sanchar

Inputs were sought by DoT from all portal stakeholder’s basis our earlier letter dated May 18, 2021 and September 29, 2020 to retain only the latest self-certificate in the portal and delete/purge all old self-certificates. COAI submitted inputs to DoT’s draft proposal on May 21, 2021.

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

COAI submitted reminder letter to DoT on May 27, 2021 to allow e-EPIC or Digital Voter ID card to be used as a valid PoI & PoA for the issuance of SIMs as it hosts a secured digital QR code (just like Aadhaar and e-Aadhaar) and would also facilitate ease of doing business.

Compliance to Minimum Roll-Out Obligation (MRO) in wake of COVID

COAI submitted letter to DoT on May 27, 2021 to Government that due relaxation to be provided to TSPs for the compliance pertaining to Minimum Roll-Out Obligation in occurrence of up-gradation of technology due to constraints posted during lockdown in various LSAs. Hence, the submission requested DoT to consider extending the due date of the MRO at least by six months.

Demystifying the misinformation being spread linking 5G testing with COVID

On COAI’s submission to Secretary (T), DoT, LSA Heads and Ministry of Health; DoT Secretary wrote to Chief Secretaries of the States/UTs to actively communicate/informative video circulation to the public debunking the myth. Haryana Police, UP Police & Gujarat Police Heads had also issued orders in support of the telecom industry for action to be taken against miscreants spreading myths.

Allow movement of Telecom staff and vehicles during COVID

On COAI’s request, DG(T) of DoT (HQ) sent an email to all LSAs and issued letters to Chief Secretaries for ease of movement of telecom staff/vehicles/equipment during COVID Curfew/lockdown. 29 States/UTs have issued orders to allow the movement of staff/personnel of TSPs and COAI’s members.

COVID Vaccination for Telecom Warriors on priority

The efforts being made by the Department of Telecom (DoT), DoT (LSA), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, various State Governments, Telecom Industry, COAI Members with coordination by COAI to ensure that the field employees of the TSPs/ips/OEMs are given priority for getting the COVID-19 prevention vaccine.

Due to these coordinated efforts orders have been issued by Govt. of Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Mizoram, Goa, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh for categorizing telecom warriors as frontline workers and helping them to get the vaccination on priority.
Rationalization of restoration charges

Engaged Chief Secretary of Maharashtra, Delhi, UP & AP for rationalization of Exorbitant restoration charges, exceedingly high aerial OFC laying charges and for removal of additional charges.

Stopped Fiber cut in Bengaluru

On SOS call from Bangalore, a meeting with Chief Commissioner BBMP was organized to stop the rampant fiber cut. On the request of COAI & on instruction by Chief Commissioner fiber cut drive was stopped by BBMP.

Common Duct & In-building solutions for OFC laying

Submission done to TRAI to promote infrastructure for broadband connectivity. Note on laying of common duct i.e., requirements, structure, etc. was shared with Uttarakhand, AP and Delhi LSA.

Disaster management during Cyclone Tauktae and Yaas

COAI and its members, along with Infrastructure Providers (IPs) ISPs, closely monitored the situation. COAI also coordinating with NDMA, State and local authorities. Preventive measures and steps were taken to minimize the impact of Cyclone Tauktae and Yaas on telecom infrastructure in impacted locations. Some of the measures taken by industry are as follows:

a) Intra-circle roaming was initiated in affected areas to ensure that cell phones services always remain active.

b) Additional Cell on Wheels (CoWs) were pressed into service in anticipation of disruption to mobile towers.

c) Diesel stocks and battery backup at telecom sites were boosted in the event of power grid cuts.

d) Frontline teams identified overhead Optic Fibre Cables (OFC) that need to be safeguarded and teams kept at standby for quick repair and restoration of the networks and services.

The priority for COAI and its members was to ensure that the adverse impact of Cyclone Tauktae and Yaas remains minimal and telecom services are resumed at the earliest wherever there’s disruption.

VC meeting held with CS, Rajasthan on May 18, 2021

Major issues discussed were as follows:

a) Rajasthan telecom policy 2017 charges of Rs. 10,000 per annum be amended and policy to be implemented down the line and directive kindly be issued

b) All pending permissions for towers connections to be cleared

c) Online single window clearance portal with deemed permission be developed

d) Priority vaccination for telecom employees

e) No coercive action against telecom towers

f) Priority electricity connections

g) Appointment of nodal officers for telecom related matters

h) Organizing DLTC in each district of Rajasthan under chairmanship of DC/DM

Post meeting, orders were issued from CS, Rajasthan office to the concerned departments for prompt disposal of pending applications for telecom infrastructure installation and OFC laying. He also assured appointment of nodal officers for speedy resolution of telecom related matters.
## Telecom Infrastructure Policy Alignment with RoW Rules, 2016

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<tr>
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<th>Policy Under Discussion</th>
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*G.O Only (Detailed Policy is under discussion)  
**Policy notified with some clause not aligned with RoW Rules, 2016  
***TSPs to be included in DTC
COAI cautions General Public on FALSE Rumors regarding 5G

"Phone companies have dismissed rumors circulating in social media platforms about 5G spectrum trials fueling the spread of COVID-19, describing them as "absolutely false", and calling on people to disregard such baseless information. Read more

DoT urges Health Ministry to consider prioritizing frontline telecom workers for COVID vaccine

The Telecom department has urged the health ministry to "favorably" consider the industry's request to provide COVID-19 vaccine to frontline telecom workers on a priority basis. Read more

COAI Mitigating impact of Cyclone Tauktae on Indian Telecommunication Network

The Department of Telecom (DoT) has allowed telcos to make intra-circle roaming arrangement in Cyclone Tauktae- hit districts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu for 24 hours. Read more

COAI urges govt. to remove fake messages on social media linking COVID-19 to 5G

People have been sharing audio and video messages on social media platforms in which 5G towers are being blamed for rise in casualties across the country even though none of the companies have installed 5G technology anywhere in India. Read more
COAI Events

Accelerating Digital Transformation in Challenging Times’ webinar

“We are all digital passengers now on a digital highway. It is essential to understand that today’s out-of-the-box solutions are eventually caught up by tomorrow’s technology. The subscribers, Government, and the industry will collectively play an instrumental role in transforming the telecom services in India” Dr. SP Kochhar, DG COAI speaks at the ‘Accelerating Digital Transformation in Challenging Times’ webinar.

CII & COAI organizes Roundtable for Robust Digital Communication Infrastructure in Assam

CII & COAI hosted a panel discussion to address the challenges and recommendations for the creation of a Robust Digital Communication Infrastructure in the state of Assam in presence of various dignitaries representing both industry bodies. The guest of honor and keynote speaker for the event was Mr. Jishnu Barua, Chief Secretary, Government of Assam, who participated in the in-depth discussion for public policies and state-based initiatives.
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Contact Us

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