



**COAI**

ISSUE  
SEPTEMBER 2021

# I-DIGEST

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## LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)

Director General, COAI

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### From DG's Desk

Telecommunication industry plays an important role in ensuring a nation's economic development as it provides businesses a number of solutions for reliable and timely communication to do business globally.

Recently, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved a number of structural and procedural reforms for the sector which will play a vital role in shaping telecommunication industry and in scripting the success of Digital India and in accelerating the journey to meet Digital India goals which will ultimately deliver ample benefit to the individual consumers.

Cabinet also addressed the liquidity requirements of TSPs that will provide relief by easing liquidity and cash flow and will help in relieving the financial stress the sector is facing, boosting investments and encouraging healthy competition in the sector.

We thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister for recognizing the telecom industry as a critical infrastructure, which has played a vital role in the growth of the economy during this pandemic. The path-breaking policies announced for the sector will help in paving the way for a sustainable telecom infrastructure, which will be utilised in serving the common man. Telecommunication industry will keep thriving. We have been working hard in the direction of providing better solutions to telecommunication and digital needs of the country and we will keep doing that with our best capabilities.



# COAI

## Latest Updates:



### **Clarifications on Various Issues with Respect to Subscriber Verification through D-KYC Process**

COAI made a submission to DoT on 6th September, 2021 on the issue of verification of PoS / PoS agents requesting DoT to kindly reconsider the provisions of the circular on the merit or alternatively

- a) Extend the date of implementation till 31.10.2021 for on-boarding of new PoS agents in compliance with the circular.
- b) Extend the date of implementation at least till 31.03.2022 for ensuring compliance with the circular for all existing PoS agents.
- c) Exempt COCP connections issued to TSP owned stores from the ambit of the circular.

### **Addition of Mobile Prepaid Recharge category in Bharat Bill Pay System (BBPS)**

On 6th Aug 2021, DoT has sent an email to our member TSPs for the addition of mobile prepaid recharge category in Bharat Bill Pay System (BBPS) and asked the TSPs to submit the compliance of the implementation of the said requirement by 31st Aug 2021. COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on 8th Sept 2021 requesting to keep the requirement for the addition of mobile prepaid recharge category in BBPS on a voluntary basis only as there is considerable investments and development efforts are included in this in terms of manpower, time, internal IT system configuration changes, and integration cost etc. This will also lead to significant financial implications to the TSPs with an implementation time of at least 3-6 months.

### **Cabinet approved Telecom Reforms**

On 15th Sept 2021, Cabinet has approved the telecom reforms (9 Structural reforms and 5 Procedural reforms). These telecom reforms cover rationalization of definition of AGR, Spectrum reforms, Spectrum sharing, Moratorium in payments of telecom dues and KYC.

### **Regulatory Framework for Over-the-Top (OTT) Communication Services**

COAI has submitted a follow-up letter to DoT on 24th Aug 2021 requesting DoT that:

1. Players providing OTT communications services should be licensed by introducing the OTT Communication Authorization under the Unified License.
2. Till the time any decision is taken regarding licensing of OTT communication providers, no new licensing conditions, including that of Traffic Management Practices for Net Neutrality etc., should be imposed on TSPs.
3. In case the Government is unable to apply similar obligations to OTT players, then the existing rules/obligations of TSPs should be reviewed and minimised by making these proportionate to that of OTT players.

### **Letter on Platform for Digital Intelligence Unit (DIU) at central level and Telecom Analytics for Fraud Management and Consumer Protection (TAFMCP) at LSA field units of DoT**

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on 26th Aug 2021 requesting to involve the industry (SPOCs) in the initial stages of planning and formulation of the processes of DIU to save efforts, time and avoid changes post launch.



### **Challenges faced by the TSPs/ISPs during website blocking**

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on 31st August 2021 highlighting the challenges faced by TSPs/ISPs during the blocking of websites and request DoT to schedule an industry meeting on this issue. DoT has agreed to our request and scheduled an industry meeting on 17th Sept 2021 to discuss the website blocking challenges in detail. In the said meeting, Technical SPOCs of the members briefed about the challenges of website blocking faced by them in detail.

### **Incorporation of Digital Signature Certificates (DSC) for CDR/IPDR request from Law Enforcement Agencies**

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 6th September, 2021 proposing to incorporate the Digital Signature Certificates (DSC) in all forwarding letters and Sec. 65B Certification issued by their respective Nodal Teams across circles in respect of the CDR/IPDR provided to LEAs, which are as of now being provided in hard copies signed individually by the Nodal officer. COAI requested DoT to take this forward with the LEAs, MHA and Law Ministry and allow us to have this process digitized and more secured.

### **Reference of mmWave Bands to TRAI**

COAI made a submission to Secretary, DoT on 8th September, 2021 requesting DoT to immediately send referral to TRAI for earmarking and including mmWave bands for auction along with other 5G bands (namely 3.5 GHz) as this is an imperative requirement as recommended by 5G HLF and also to achieve targets identified in NDCP-2018.

### **Digital Storage of CAFs**

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on 23rd September, 2021 requesting DoT to kindly issue guidelines on the subject at the earliest, which would include the following:

- a) Instructions on storage of existing & new CAFs only in Digital format and discard all paper CAFs.
- b) Doing away with Warehouse Audits.
- c) Storage of digital CAFs of churned/ disconnected subscribers only for a period of 1 year after the subscriber is deactivated from the TSP network unless directed otherwise by the Licensor/LEAs/ Courts.

### **SACFA Clearances for Mobile Towers**

COAI made a submission to DoT on 27th September, 2021 post Cabinet announcement on September 15, 2021 on the matter. COAI proposed a simple process to DoT which may be reviewed in consultation with industry and

adopted by DoT/ WPC and requested to issue guidelines on the subject at the earliest. It was also mentioned that all the applications submitted till implementation of this process and pending shall be considered under the new process i.e. cleared until rejected and once finalized, the process may be implemented on the Saral Sanchar Portal.

### **Adverse Impact on FTTH Network Expansion, Delinking of MTCTE and NSDTS, Easing Manufacturing Location Restrictions under TEC MTCTE Certification for Global Telecom OEMs**

COAI submitted a letter to TEC on 23rd September, 2021 on the subject requesting urgent intervention to issue instructions to lift abeyance on these certificates irrespective of origin of manufacturer/Global OEMs and provide relief for the industry and citizens alike. This will tremendously help rollout of necessary broadband networks and enable mass connectivity in line with NDCP-2018.

### **Andhra Pradesh (AP) Telecommunication Infrastructure and Underground Optical Fibre Cable Rules, 2021**

The State of AP had issued the final RoW Policy on 6th September 2021. COAI have shared salient features of Policy with Members.

### **Reduction in Way leave charges by South Delhi municipalities (MCD)**

On COAI's request, South MCD has now reduced the Wayleave charges being levied on OFC deployment to INR 200/- per mtr from INR 881/-per mtr.

### **District Level Telecom Committee (DLTC) Meetings**

Industry's issues hindering telecom were taken-up by COAI with District Collector/Magistrate during various DLTC meetings of Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, etc.

### **Meeting with UDH, Rajasthan**

A meeting was organised to discuss telecom issues with Principal Secretary, UDH on 2nd Sep 2021. A detailed note highlighting the charges for using the electricity poles for aerial fibre and the charges for the Manholes/chambers for the underground fibre deployment across all the States was submitted to Principal Secretary, UDH through DoT LSA.

### **EMF Awareness Webinars for Mobile Communications and EMF Emissions**

EMF Awareness Webinars for Mobile Communications and EMF Emissions led by Uttarakhand Unit, UP(W) LSA and Kerala LSA was organised on 10th September 2021 and 28th September 2021 respectively to debunk the prevailing EMF myths w.r.t installation of Telecom Towers.

## State Broadband Committee (SBC) Meeting

COAI raised industry's concerns in the 2nd SBC meeting of Andhra Pradesh (AP) held on 06th September 2021, 1st SBC meeting of Manipur on 13th September 2021, 3rd SBC meeting of Kerala held on 16th September 2021 and 2nd SBC meeting of Sikkim held on 28th September 2021.

In AP 2nd SBC meeting COAI put forward the issues of Safety & Security, Industrial rates for EB, Common Ducts, Fibre Cuts, Dig one policy, NBC implementation, pending RoW NoC, etc. As requested in various COAI's submissions to the AP Government, AP Policy was notified on 6th September 2021 and same was also announced during the 2nd SBC meeting of AP.

Based on the discussions that was held in the meeting of SBC of Manipur held on Monday, 13th Sept 2021; Manipur policy was Gazette notified on a retrospective basis. A letter was issued by IT Department, Manipur to DC, Manipur to clear up / for speedy grant of EB connection permission. List of district-wise IT Department officials, Manipur to be contacted for issues being faced was also issued by IT Department of Manipur.

In Kerala 3rd SBC meeting COAI put forward the issues of Safety & Security, Industrial rates for EB, Common Ducts, Fibre Cuts, Dig one policy, withdrawal of Rs.75,000/- onetime contribution, pending RoW NOCs, etc.

### Input Tax credit on equipment installed on telecom towers

Some of the State Tax Authorities are proposing to deny ITC on telecom equipment including crucial network equipment viz. antenna, base stations, transmitters and other utilities like DG and batteries installed on towers by interpreting that such equipment is to be treated at par with telecom tower.

In this regard, we have submitted detailed representation to concerned officers in the Ministry of Finance as well as in DoT requesting for their intervention in getting the issue deliberated in the GST Council for issuance of an appropriate clarification to ensure that the telecom operators do not suffer on account of few authorities taking a flawed interpretation. Denial of such credits and that too right from the inception of GST will cast a huge financial burden on this critical sector which is playing a very important role in development of basic infrastructure of providing digital connectivity across the country at very affordable tariffs which are the lowest in the world.

## Representation to DoT Key Tax Issues

Recently in the last week of September, we have made a detailed representation to Secretary DoT and to the concerned senior officers in the MoF with the request that the financial health of the telecom industry has to be safeguarded and there is a need to boost the financial viability of Industry in order to meet the investment expectations.

Following points were covered into the representation.

1. Exemption from GST on Spectrum payment, license fees, Spectrum usage charge
2. Refund of Accumulated balance in Input Tax Credit
3. Representation regarding multiplicity of compliance, scrutiny, audits, investigations, and litigation for large pan India service providers
4. Extend the benefit of section 11C notification issued in respect of 'right of way' (ROW) permissions given by local authorities to other government departments and entities.
5. Clarification – Applicability of service tax on AGR payable pursuant to Supreme Court

### Regulations for Vessel Operation in India - Clarification(s) regarding activities relating to cable repair/installation operations carried out in Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

In March 2021, Custom authorities had impounded the cable repairing vessel for almost 40 days without any show cause notice operating within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Customs Department is taking the view that bringing of goods into the Indian Customs Waters qualifies as an import into India. Due to this development, the foreign vessel owners are now requiring the Indian telecom service providers to obtain all the necessary permissions from the Indian Authorities and fulfil all the vessel importation/ exportation formalities including payment of applicable customs duty, IGST, furnishing of the bond, etc. This will result into operational and financial difficulties to our members.

In this regard, we have submitted detailed follow up representation to concerned officers in the Ministry of Finance as well as in DoT and have requested for the clarification.



# COAI

## News Wires:

### **COAI welcomes TRAI's recommendations on mid-band auction, allocation of backhaul spectrum to expedite 5G rollout**

Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the representative body of the Indian telecommunications industry, on Monday welcomed the recommendations of the TRAI to expedite the auction of available mid-band spectrum (3300MHz to 3600MHz) and allocation of spectrum in millimetre-wave range for IMT-2020. [Read more](#)



### **DoT amends norms to allow active infra sharing among telcos, get satellite support via VSAT**

Telecom operators will now be able to share active infrastructure, including core networks following amendment made by Department of Telecom in the licence norms. [Read more](#)



### **COAI urges corporate entities to comply with DoT norms for bulk connections**

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has urged the corporate entities to comply with Department of Telecommunications guidelines while seeking bulk connections for their employees. [Read more](#)



### **Mechanical action against illegal mobile network boosters at Ulhasnagar**

During the operation, a number of illegal antennas and illegal boosters were removed from Ulhasnagar in Maharashtra and notices were issued to remove the found antennas and boosters. [Read more](#)



### **Awareness workshop on EMF Radiation**

Uttarakhand Unit of Uttar Pradesh (West), LSA has done EMF testing of 124 telecom towers and 652 BTS across the state during the financial year 2021-22 and all of them have been found compliant with Indian EMF norms. [Read more](#)





# COAI Events

## Joint COAI and Embassy of Israel Webinar on 5G- Era of Virtual Network & Edge Computing

COAI in collaboration with Embassy of Israel organized a webinar on 5G- Era of Virtual Network & edge Computing on Tuesday, September 14th, 2021.

On the occasion, Ms. Natasha Zangin, Head of Economic & Trade Mission said that “the collaboration between India and Israel will also help achieve our aim in the economic mission towards promising a higher level of engagement between the industries of both the countries”.



## 5G successive edition of 5G India 2021 Virtual Conference & Exhibition

The initial theme was the Open RAN Infrastructure for 5G where Mr. HL Gupta, Reliance Jio gave the introductory Remarks. Followed by a session on 5G Infrastructure & Future Business Models. The final session was Valedictory Session where the points of discussion were: Transition to a 5G World, Policy & Regulation for facilitating accelerated deployment of 5G, Readiness of the 5G Ecosystem, particularly in terms of Digital Infrastructure and Device availability, most popular use cases of 5G, how will the combination of 2G, 4G and 5G play out in the Indian market and is the presence of 2G & 4G likely to reduce possible offtake of 5G in the near and medium term.







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