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Telecommunication has been one of the major pillars of socio-economic development of India, it has proved to be a significant factor in narrowing down the digital divide to some extent.

With the aim of boosting connectivity & introducing 4G services in villages that still remain to be covered by telecom sector, our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved a Rs 6,466 crore package for telecom services in remote areas. As many as 7287 villages, 44 districts of 5 states will be covered in the project. We at COAI welcome this decision & look forward to work with the Government in aligning with the same vision. It is our endeavour to provide connectivity to every nook and corner of the country.

COAI also feels that to increase adoption of the new and advanced form of communication technologies, there is a need for States to adopt uniform RoW rules for providing permissions for towers and OFC. All Government land and buildings should become the preferred choice for installation of telecom infrastructure. Faster and smoother RoW will fast-forward India into the digital world by ensuring the rollout of optical fibre cables and over-ground telecom infrastructure, ensuring the success of Digital India Mission.

Telecom sector operates well because of its diligent workers & the entire nation witnessed the importance of these warriors during second wave of COVID wherein they ensured that digital connectivity remained seamless for the citizens to continue their work and share information. So proper safety measures should be taken to keep these warriors safe in the wake of new COVID variant.
PTP PMP Microwave Fixed Radio Systems – Safety requirements

COAI made submission to DoT on November 03, 2021 on the matter. COAI requested to delete the requirement for compliance to "IT Equipment Safety for Radio Products – EN/IEC 60215:2016. Annex-A3 from PTP PMP Microwave Fixed Radio Systems ER (ER No. TEC56422005). This ER covers all types of Point to Point and Point to Multi-point Microwave Fixed Radio Systems.

International Standard – EN/IEC 60215:2016 does not apply to battery powered transmitters or to radio base stations and fixed terminal stations for wireless telecommunication. However, this ER for PTP and PMP equipment is also getting covered under other ERs released by TEC for compliances and safety purposes, hence there is no requirement for this ER separately.

Industry Participation in Spectrum Act

COAI made a submission to DoT on November 15, 2021 on the subject requesting to include COAI and its members in any discussions pertaining to the Spectrum Act. It was highlighted that the TSPs are the major stakeholders of spectrum and should be involved in any activity pertaining to spectrum and related policies.

Suggestion on keeping record of missed calls by TSPs

COAI made a submission to DoT on November 17, 2021 stating that there should be no requirement to generate CDRs of unanswered Calls as this can lead to catastrophic impact on the overall system capability to generate and process CDRs for security and commercial purposes.

Feedback on QoS document for CAP Dissemination through SMS and Cell Broadcast

COAI made a submission to DoT on November 23, 2021 on the subject that our members are committed to continue supporting DoT/Government in any event of disaster and requested that there should not be any mandate to implement QoS parameters to response to such situations.

DoT Issued Amendment for Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)

Subsequent to Telecom reforms announced by the Union Cabinet on September 15, 2021, DoT has issued license amendment for Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) on October 25, 2021 vide which definition of AGR has been rationalized prospectively.

On November 26, 2021, COAI had submitted the letters to DoT the issue of list of exclusions and pass thru.

Spectrum Auction

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT and TRAI on November 20 and November 22, 2021 respectively on the issue related to Spectrum Auction vide which we have requested for the below:

a) Align with reserve price for upcoming 5G auction with the international benchmarks and in view of low ARPU in the country, the reserve price be drastically dropped by 70-80% to ensure faster deployment of affordable 5G services in the country.

b) A moratorium period of six years (2 years beyond the completion of 4 years’ existing moratorium announced by the Cabinet) in the upcoming auction.

c) The requirement for making upfront payment be done away with for upcoming 5G auction.

d) Align the interest on annual spectrum payments (to be paid for 5G spectrum) with the repo rate.
e) Ensure auction of all the 5G spectrum bands (sub-GHz, mid-band and high-band) together to cater to different use-cases.

f) The spectrum should be put to auction only after harmonization to ensure usable & interference free allocation.

**DoT issued Amendment in licenses for FDI in Telecom sector**

DoT issued license amendment on November 3, 2021 vide which FDI up to 100% under automatic route is subject to observance of licensing and security conditions by the licensee as well as investors.

**TRAI Meeting on use of street furniture for deployment of Small Cell and Aerial Fiber**

TRAI conducted a meeting with TSPs and COAI on the use of street furniture for the deployment of Small Cell and Aerial Fiber under the chairmanship of Chairman, TRAI on November 15, 2021. Vide the said meeting, COAI had given a presentation on behalf of its members and highlighted the issues pertaining to small cell deployment, Aerial fiber, use of Street furniture and RoW related issues.

**DoT meeting on connecting 6 lakh inhabited villages**

On November 16, 2021 DoT conducted a meeting with TSPs and Industry Associations, under the chairmanship of Secretary (T), to discuss the strategy to reach out 6 lakh inhabited villages on optical fibre by exploring the possibilities of utilizing the existing fibre network and enhance the utilization of Bharatnet in the rural and remote areas.

**GST – Procedural issues in Compliance – Clarification by MoF**

Representation on key issues and suggestions of Members was made to GST Council and to the concerned senior officers in the MoF / DoT.

**Issue resolved by the Government**

As per CGST Rules, original invoice reference is mandatory to be captured on credit notes/ debitnotes. However, in case of B2C, if taxpayer tries to generate credit note using IRP portal, original invoice details do not get printed and resultant non-compliant credit note gets generated.

Issue revolved by the MoF in October 2021. This is a big relief and will help in ease doing compliances.

**Telecom Reforms – Custom Notification dated 25-09-1953**


On October 21, 2021, DoT has issued guidelines with regard to Import of Wireless equipment by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) on the basis of self-declaration.

**Issue resolved by the Government**

Post our representation, Ministry of Finance has issued instructions on November 23, 2021 w.r.t. import of wireless equipment’s by TSPs on the basis of self-declaration. This will help in ease doing compliance.

**Representation on Key Tax Issues**

Recently on November 22, 2021 key issues w.r.t taxes were discussed with Secretary, DoT. Post meeting representation is being made on the following issues.

a) Exemption from GST on payment of LF, SUC and Spectrum acquired in auction.

b) Refund of Accumulated balance in Input Tax Credit.

c) Multiplicity of compliance, audits, investigations, and litigation for large pan India service providers.

d) Input tax credit (ITC) on critical telecom equipment installed on telecom towers.

e) RoW - Service Tax Liability.

f) Service tax on AGR payable pursuant to Supreme Court.

**Constitution of Group of Ministers on GST System Reforms**

In the 45th meeting the GST Council had constituted Group of Ministers (GoM) to look into matters related to System Reforms. On November 16, 2021 we have made a detailed representation on key issues of Members to the GST Council and to the concerned senior officers. Few key issues included in the representation are:

a) Mismatch of tax reported in GSTR-1 Vs GSTR-38

b) Mismatch of ITC availed in GSTR-38 Vs GSTR-2A due to the return filing framework

c) Capital Goods – Applicability of section 18(6) on stock transfer causing undue burden

d) Refund of GST

e) Annual Returns (Form GSTR-9)

f) Departmental actions- Notices/Enquiries in relation to non-compliance by the Vendors
Pre Budget—Recommendations for the year 2022–23

We have made detailed recommendations on the following:

a) Direct Tax issues
b) Indirect Tax issues
• Service Tax
• Entertainment Tax
• Custom Duty
c) Key issues related to GST

Representation to Airport Authority of India (AAI) for alignment of RoW Policy with DoT RoW Rules 2016:

Submission done to AAI and DoT for alignment of RoW Policy of Airports across India with RoW Rules, 2016. COAI submitted letters to the Shri Pradeep Singh Kharola, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; Joint Secretary (IT); Chairman of AAI and Secretary, DoT on 12.11.2021 & 11.11.2021.

Priority EB connection at Utility/Industrial/Favourable tariffs for Telecom Industry:

Letter submitted to Secretary, DoT on November 30, 2021 and sought his support to take up the issue of Priority EB connection at Utility/Industrial/Favourable tariffs for Telecom Industry with the Ministry of Power (MoP), and concerned State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC)/ Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC).

Police support for Safety and Security of Telecom Infrastructure (Existing & Upcoming):

a) Letters have been written to Chief Secretary of 16 States on October 28, 2021, November 16, 2021 and November 18, 2021 for Suitable Directions to Safeguard Digital Infrastructure.

b) On COAI’s request; Tamil Nadu State Government on November 9, 2021 has instructed to all District Collectors to be vigilant and quickly take necessary action in safeguarding the Telecom / Digital Infrastructure in their administrative jurisdiction.

RoW related Issues taken up with States:

1. Rajasthan:

a) COAI raised issues pertaining to exorbitant Manhole/Chamber Charges, Charges for using EB Poles for deployment of aerial fibre and the RoW Charges in 3rd SBC of Rajasthan held on November 1, 2021.

b) COAI letters were submitted to Pr. Secretary UD on these Charges on November 9, 2021 & November 12, 2021.

2. Maharashtra:

a) 3rd SBC meeting was conducted by Chief Secretary on November 12, 2021 wherein the following issue were raised:
• Rationalization of exorbitant RoW Charges, Access Charges, Restoration charges, Exorbitant Property tax and levy of penalty on property tax
• Need to have a Structured aerial fibre laying policy aligned with RoW amendment issued by DoT dated October 21, 2021.
• Implementation of 2018 policy at local level
• Launch of Online Portal
• Regularization of existing mobile towers

b) On the request of COAI a inter Government department Committee has been constituted to look into the issues of rationalization of Restoration Charge, Access Charge and Regularization of Towers.

3. West Bengal:

a) COAI raised the following issues during State Level Clearance Committee (SLCC) meeting of West Bengal held on November 26, 2021:
• High restoration charges
• WBTELCO (RoW portal) issues
• Include provision for laying of Aerial OFC
• Non-implementation and adherence to WB RoW rules by local authorities
• Appointment of Nodal officers and regular DLTC meetings for resolution of industry’s issues
• Fee and charges to be aligned with DoT guidelines &RoW Rules, 2016

4. Delhi:

a) COAI letter Submitted to North – DMC and DG(T) on the October 20, 2021 and November 18, 2021 requesting to withdraw their order dated September 20, 2021 to put on hold installation of COW until review of the sites is done by the deputy commissioners.

b. Industry meeting held with DDG(Rural), Delhi LSA to seek their intervention for withdrawal of the said order.

5. Tamil Nadu:

a) COAI raised issues of Notification of policy, Withdrawal of Track Charges, Provision for aerial fibre, EB industrial rates, etc. in the 1st SBC meeting held on November 9, 2021.

b. Draft Policy is under review for notification.

6. Gujarat: A letter was submitted to CS, Gujarat on November 22, 2021 for Notifying Policy aligned with RoW Rules 2016 and keeping GIDC Policy in Abeyance

7. Himachal Pradesh: A letter was submitted to Chief Secretary, Himachal Pradesh on November 22, 2021 to issue necessary directives to Municipal Corporations and Local Bodies to align laying charges in-line with Himachal Pradesh Right of Way Policy, 2021 (HPROW-21)
Telcos urge govt to continue tech-neutral approach to 5G

Telcos through their representative body, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), said making 5Gi a part of 3GPP, or the global 5G standard, can ensure early adoption of the technology by operators without any policy intervention and all stakeholders can reap the benefits of economies of scale.

Read more

Cabinet nod for mobile connectivity in 7,287 uncovered villages to bridge digital divide and spur rural economy: COAI

The work related to the provision of 4G mobile services in identified uncovered villages will be awarded through an open competitive bidding process as per USOF procedures. The plan for telecom towers covers 1,218 villages (3 districts) in Andhra Pradesh; 699 villages (8 districts) in Chhattisgarh; 827 villages (19 districts) in Jharkhand; 610 villages (4 districts) in Maharashtra; and 3,933 villages (10 districts) of Odisha.

Read more

India’s biggest 5G challenge: Ensuring that it does not lead to new cybersecurity woes

5G will push us into a world of interconnected networks, devices, and applications where each activity will become a potential attack vector. It will give a strong impetus to new technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Artificial Intelligence (AI), etc.

Read more

COAI applauds TN govt for safeguarding telecom infrastructure

COAI, the leading representative body for the Indian telecommunications industry, would like to applaud and thank the State Government of Tamil Nadu for the directions issued by them to safeguard the telecom infrastructure.

Read more
“India-UK Future Telecom Programme: High-Density Urban Deployment”
This 4th roundtable, titled High-Density Urban Deployment, a part of five virtual roundtables was organized by Compound Semiconductor Applications (CSA) Catapult (UK) in partnership with Finovista (India) and Unconventional Connections (UK) under – UK-India Future Telecom Partnership programme consisting of 4 phases that run from September 2021 to March 2022 for exploring opportunities for companies and universities to collaborate on joint research and innovation projects to meet the requirements for future telecom networks.

Highlights:
Lt. Gen. S P Kochhar, DG, COAI, met with Shri Devusinh Chauhan, Minister of State for Communications, for an insightful discussion about latest industry issues on November 29, 2021.

In wake of the latest Telecom reforms, Lt. Gen Dr. SP Kochhar, DG COAI had a productive meeting with Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister for Communications on 25th November 2021.
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