



COAI

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I-DIGEST

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LT. GEN DR. SP KOCHHAR (RETD.)

Director General, COAI

From DG's Desk

2021 has been a year of major reforms for world's second largest telecom market, India. This year welcomed the announcement of the telecom relief package by government which will in turn ensure a robust & healthier telecom sector. The structural reforms announced by the Union Cabinet gave the much-needed relief to the telecom industry.

Telecom sector also welcomed the national masterplan Gati Shakti for multi modal connectivity of Rs. 100 lakh crores for developing holistic infrastructure. Additionally, agreement between USOF and BSNL for high-speed internet access to north eastern states, allocation of 7000 crores towards BharatNet to connect all Gram Panchayats, and provide all telecom service providers with non-discriminatory access to the network are one of the major highs of the telecom industry this year.

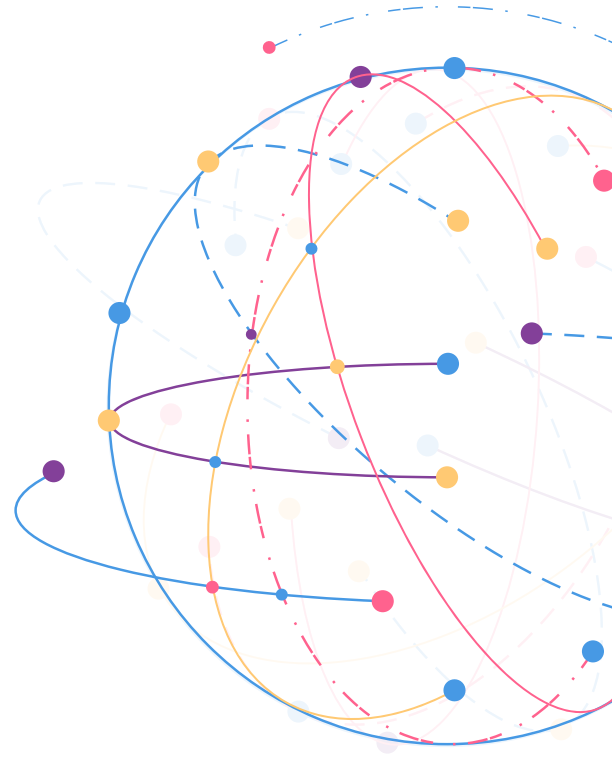
As the world steps into a fresh year 2022, we hope this year brings revolutionary changes in telecom industry with 5G spectrum auctions and businesses start adopting technologies like IoT and Industry 4.0, Cloud Computing, block chain, AR/VR, artificial intelligence & machine learning to ensure there is an optimal future growth.

2021 took away a lot from a lot of us, our hearts go out to the families that lost their loved ones. Our respect & gratitude to all the doctors, frontline workers, the essential workers, volunteers who stepped out of their houses during peak pandemic & worked tirelessly without break. With the new variant increasing rapidly, we all should be better prepared to deal with it. We wish that this new year brings better days for each one of us, have a blessed year ahead.



COAI

Latest Updates:



Tariff issues related to SMS and Cell Broadcast alerts disseminated through Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) platform during disasters/non-disasters

COAI responded to Consultation Paper on December 01, 2021 issued by TRAI on November 03, 2021 on the subject.

COAI submitted that SMS is the preferred mode of disseminating these messages as it is more customer friendly and it provides a clear advantage in the diverse devices spread in the country. COAI also submitted that Cell Broadcast method adds no significant value to the system as it is handset dependent. Cell Broadcast method has even caused corruption in the SIMs and instances of SIMs becoming faulty have been faced after the Cell Broadcast. Therefore, without adding any value to the system, Cell Broadcast can potentially cause disruption of services to the customers.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Promoting Telecom and Networking Products Manufacturing in India

COAI made a submission to DoT on December 06, 2021 on the subject requesting as below:

- a) Extend scheme window by a year from previous FY25-26 to FY26-27
- b) Give option to bidder to choose one of two five-year windows: either FY21-22 to FY25-26 OR FY22-23 to FY26-27

Feedback on C-DOT document on proposed Cell Broadcast Solutions

COAI made a submission to DoT on December 08, 2021 on the subject mentioning various challenges identified while implementing the cell broadcast-based solution.

COAI requested that there should not be any mandate to implement CB system to response to such situations. Such situations are beyond the control of any stakeholder and all of us have been putting our best efforts to deal with them.

Concerns in the Saral Sanchar portal post implementation of the simplification process from Cabinet Reforms

COAI made a submission to DoT on December 08, 2021 on the subject proposing the following changes in the Saral Sanchar portal on priority:

- a) Applications for SACFA clearance to be applied with complete frequency band earmarked for telecommunication services and same should be incorporated in the Saral Sanchar portal.
- b) Reinstatement of NEFT and RTGS options for payment, as existed earlier.
- c) BharatKosh Challans issued on or prior to November 22, 2021 should be also considered for the payment of applications to be applied.
- d) Provision to delete the SACFA applications by TSPs on Saral Sanchar portal prior to final submission may be provided to avoid junk creation.

DoT issued notification on December 21, 2021 based on COAI submission mentioning that issues a), c) and d) (mentioned above) have been addressed and necessary changes have been implemented in the SACFA module of the Saral Sanchar portal and in case of issue b), technical feasibility is being examined and will be informed shortly.

Issue of Blacklisted Point of Sale (PoS)

COAI submitted a letter to DoT on December 15, 2021 on the subject as DoT vide its notification dated December 02, 2021 instructed TSPs to share details of blacklisted PoS by 8th of every month.

As this activity requires IT system developments at TSPs' end for monthly reporting to LSAs, COAI requested DoT to provide at least 3 months' time to provide this data and to kindly consult TSPs in case of preparation of guidelines/process on blacklisting of PoS.

Safety and Security of Telecom Infrastructure

Based on COAI's submission for the safeguard of Telecom Infrastructure, Chief Secretary of Manipur has issued a memorandum to All Deputy Commissioners, Director (IT) and Joint Director (IT) directing them to ensure Safety and Security of Telecom Infrastructure.

- a) Take strict legal action against the obstructers/persons damaging / unlawfully obstructing the existing/upcoming Telecom/Digital Infrastructure.
- b) Make the damage to the Telecom infrastructure by the miscreants a cognizable offence.
- c) To issue a copy of approvals for Tower / OFC installation permissions given to TSPs/IPs to the nearest SHO for safeguarding tower installation.
- d) Take Coercive action against the miscreants spreading misleading information regarding the health effects due to the EMF emissions from the Mobile Towers and causing opposition for installation of duly approved Telecom Infrastructure.

Police protection to sites all over Kerala- Interim Orders/Judgment

Blanket Police protection across Kerala for all our tower sites irrespective of benefits as per Section 22 of ID Act. Certified copy of the judgement is attached herewith. Blanket police protection across Kerala is obtained for the first time, in this case, and all previous attempts went in vain as the courts then were not inclined to grant such a police protection. There is an unequivocal direction to the State Police Chief to instruct all Station House Officers to provide police protection against any kind of interruption by both the Unions (CITU & BMS).

Also, meetings are being organised by DoT and State Official Kerala on Small Cell deployment in 5G scenario.

Central RoW Portal

Industry demonstration of the Centralised RoW Portal i.e 'Sugamsanchar.gov.in' was done on 13.12.2021. The link of the portal that is hosted on AWS cloud is: <http://sugamsanchar.gov.in>.

The aim of creation of this Centralised RoW Portal is to help to bring-in more transparency in the system and in speedy roll-out of Telecom Infrastructure.

Geo-Spatial Digital Platform for National Plan

An Industry meeting held under the Chairmanship of DG(T), DoT was coordinated on 17.12.2021 regarding Telecom Infra (OFC & Tower) GIS mapping i.e. Geo Spatial Digital Platform for National Plan. As per DoT, the Sugamsanchar portal (to be developed for centralized RoW permissions) will also be integrated with this Gati Shakti Portal being developed by BISAG.

The Chairman emphasised that the Government is seized of the need to facilitate RoW permissions and to grow the Digital Infrastructure and that this Portal will help in coordination amongst various entities and facilitate this work. He exhorted the industry to come forward and work with dedication to progress the usage of this facility.

Delhi-NCR

- a) COAI submission was done on 'Removal of Way leave charges reduction by North & East DMC' on 20.12.2021
- b) COAI submission done on 'Reduction in 8% annual compounding interest on CoW rental charges by NDMC' on 17.12.2021
- c) COAI submission done on 'DPCC putting ban on use of DG set on telecom infrastructure' on 20.12.2021
- d) Delhi CCC meeting was organised on 23.12.2021 to discuss the prevailing industry's issues

Maharashtra

- a) A letter to Pri Secretary (UD-2) GoMH is written on 07-Dec -21 regarding "Seek support to get RoW Policy Implemented in the State of Maharashtra in Letter and Spirit". Again, one more letter is written to Pri Sect 9 UD-2) on 21 Dec 21 on same issue.
- b) A Thanks giving DO was written to Deputy Chief Minister, GoM after physical meeting with him and other secretaries
- c) A meeting was organised by the State Govt. to discuss the high restoration charges and additional Taxes like Access, Property charges in Mumbai by various corporations. COAI raised industry issues in the same.

- d) There is an issue cropped up in sites maintained by SUYOG. MSRDC is switching off these sites due to some issue with third party and dues with him. A letter to VC & MD has been written to intervene in this issue and support in getting these sites restored. A meeting is also sought with Chairperson in this regard.

Karnataka

- a) Detailed response on the draft RoW policy both for Urban and Rural were submitted to Concerned department and also to the DoT LSA.
- b) Policy on Rural and Panchayat Raj is already received, however policy for Urban is still awaited.

Rajasthan

- a) Letter was written to Secretary (DoT) and to Chief Secretary Rajasthan on the issue hindering roll-out of Telecom Infrastructure.
- b) Based on COAI's request, a meeting of the Government Officials was held on Nov 16, 2021. and on 21 Dec 21. among State Officials and DoT.

West Bengal

SLCC meeting with the industry was held on 27.11.2021. COAI submitted industry issues along with the pending permissions to the department of IT, West Bengal on 17.12.2021.

Sikkim

2nd SBC meeting held under the Chairmanship of CS, Sikkim. COAI raised industry issues like EB supply to be provided on Industry rates, Poles Charges for deployment of aerial fibre to be rationalised, etc. A submission was also done by COAI on the same to Chief Secretary, Sikkim.

Odisha

2nd State Broadband Committee meeting was held on 23.12.2021. COAI raised the following industry issues:

- a) Despite roll-out of state policy, on-ground implementation is still a challenge
- b) As per the current SLA, RoW permissions are granted but the struggle is being faced on the NHAI route.
- c) Frequent Fiber cuts – “Dig Once” & “Call before You Dig”
- d) Lots of sites getting “On Hold” because of public issues due to radiation issues.
- e) Un-availability of Government property for setting up of telecom infrastructure
- f) Delay in getting EB connection
- g) Need for District Level Committee meetings
- h) COAI highlighted the need for provision for the usage of Street furniture for the roll-out of Telecom Infrastructure for 5G deployment.

State Government was requested to issue favourable appropriate directions to resolve the issues.

Chhattisgarh

2nd SBC is convened on 10th Dec 21. Meeting was chaired by Chief Secretary State.

Issue related to NoC pendencies, use of Street furniture and Charges on Industrial Rates were raised. CS asked to write to him for looking into these issues.

Tamil Nadu

A letter to Chief Secretary, Tamil Nadu is written requesting for draft RoW policy for the perusal by Industry.

Ministry of Environment & Forest (MoEF&CC)

A letter has been submitted to Secretary (MoEF&CC) for for Extending approval to Telecom Infrastructure within the existing Right of Way (RoW)

Gujarat

A DO letter was submitted to Secretary DoT to take up with Chief Secretary Gujarat for notifying a Comprehensive Telecom Policy Uniformly Applicable on all land/ properties aligned with RoW Rules, 2016

TRAI Consultation paper on "Auction of Spectrum in frequency bands identified for IMT/5G"

TRAI has issued this consultation paper on 30th Nov 2021. Due date for submission of inputs is 10th Jan 2022 and for counter comment is 24th Jan 2022.

OFC Data for mapping on BISAG Portal and Central Telecom Infrastructure and Coverage Portal for NBM and Gati Shakti Programme

Subsequent to DoT meeting on November 18, 2021, DoT has sent a letter on 30th Nov 2021 to all TSPs and sought information of OFC data for the BISAG and Central Telecom Network Portal projects. On 1st Dec 2021, we have submitted the letter to DoT and requested to seek this information from BBNL and USOF.

TRAI Draft Regulatory framework for USSD based Tariff

a) TRAI issued a draft regulation on Telecommunication Tariff (66th Amendment) Order, 2021 on "Regulatory framework for USSD-based tariff" vide which Authority has proposed "Nil" charge per USSD session for mobile banking and payment service on 24th Nov 2021.

b) COAI has submitted the response to TRAI on 9th Dec 2021.

TRAI consultation paper on Ease of Doing Business in Telecom and Broadcasting Sector

TRAI has issued this consultation paper on December 8,2021. Due date for submission of inputs is 19th Jan 2022 and for counter comment is February 2, 2022.

TRAI consultation paper on Regulatory Framework for Promoting Data Economy Through Establishment of Data Centres, Content Delivery Networks, and Interconnect Exchanges in India

TRAI has issued this consultation paper on December 16, 2021. Due date for submission of inputs is 13th Jan 2022 and for counter comment is January 27, 2022. COAI has submitted a request letter to TRAI on 28th Dec 2021 seeking extension in timelines for submission of inputs.

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

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on December 16, 2021 on this issue request DoT for the exemption of M2M services from the purview of internet shutdown orders issued by any competent authority.

Significant delay in permissions in respect of repair & maintenance of submarine cables

COAI has submitted a letter to DoT on December 16, 2021 on this issue and requested DoT for providing clearances of pending requests pertaining to the repair of submarine cables on priority and provide timely approval to the TSPs for such clearances in future.

Conduct of Consumer Education Workshops (CEWs) through digital/online mode

COAI has submitted a letter to TRAI on December 21, 2021 requesting to allow TSPs to conduct Consumer Education Workshops (CEWs) through digital/online mode for next two quarters i.e., up to 30 June 2022.

National Workshop on next phase of reforms for Reducing Compliance Burden

DPIIT has conducted this workshop on December 22, 2021 to discuss next phase of reforms for reducing compliance burden on telecom sector.

Custom Duty - Regulations for Vessel Operations in India

Follow up representations made to the Hon'ble Finance Minister and to the concerned senior officers in the ministry regarding activities relating to cable repair/installation operations carried out in Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). It was informed that:

a) The Submarine cable is a very critical infrastructure for the Indian Operators and is the primary carrier of the telecommunications traffic internationally. The industry is extremely dependent on it, as almost 98% of the international internet/ data and other voice traffic is carried over the submarine cables.

b) Few cable faults have happened which need urgent repair and rectification. It was informed that due to the faults in the submarine cables; industry is already dealing with a huge capacity crunch and has affected the overall international traffic carrying bandwidth of the Operators in India. **In the eventuality of further faults in any of the other operational West bound or East bound submarine cables will severely impact the international traffic & services; and will virtually cut off the nation from the other parts of the world.**

COAI has requested the Department of Revenue to clarify that that any vessel brought into India for cable laying and/or cable repair operations undertaken beyond 12 nautical miles does not constitute "import into India" for home consumption and there is no need for filing bill of entry or paying duty on the vessel or on the goods consumed on board of the vessel or on goods used for such operations, provided the cable laying or repair operations are undertaken beyond 12 nautical miles.

Pre Budget-Recommendations for the year 2022-23 submitted

COAI had detailed meeting on 06-12-2021 with concerned senior officers in the Ministry of Finance. Issues related to the following were discussed during the meeting:

1. Regulatory Levies
2. Direct Tax issues
3. Indirect Tax issues
 - a) Service Tax
 - b) Entertainment Tax
 - c) Custom Duty
4. Key issues related to GST.

On 17-12-2021, DG, COAI made representation to the Hon'ble Finance Minister on key issues

It was discussed that Significant Funds are required for expansion of Telecom Sector in India specially for 5G rollout (includes spectrum, sites, and fibre deployment), Network Expansion (for site deployments) and for Fiberization, hence there is an urgent need to reduce the burden of Levies on the sector.

Key issues related to Direct Tax as well as indirect taxes were discussed during the meeting.





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News Wires:

SOS call answered, telecom sector to ring in 5G in 2022

A rare bonhomie among three private telecom companies in raising tariffs coming on the back of a bailout package by the government may have helped the telecom sector avert a crisis but the challenges haven't ceased to exist as the industry faces a cash-guzzling task of rolling out 5G networks in the coming months. [Read more](#)



Reforms 2.0: Review telecom licensing norms, says experts

The industry has long been demanding that the levies on the industry be reduced. Currently, the various levies account for 30% of the total revenues of the operators. [Read more](#)



DoT Secy asks field units to expedite RoW permissions for fast broadband rollout

During a meeting held by K Rajaraman to expedite approvals for the quick rollout of broadband across the country, field units were directed to conduct monthly meetings with service providers to review the application approval process and pendency. [Read more](#)



Cyclone Jawad: Telcos, IPs working with DoT to restore services

"We are taking every possible step to mitigate the cyclone's impact on the people in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal and to ensure that the disruption in telecommunications and Internet Services is restored at the earliest", said SP Kochhar, DG COAI. [Read more](#)



5G Rollout by August 2022: Lt. Gen Dr. SP Kochhar, DG, COAI

Talking at the DQDeepTech 2021, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Dr. SP Kochhar, the Director-General at Cellular Operators Association of India, shed some light on the 5G rollout, and the work ongoing on the same. The COAI DG said that if the government solves all the issues the industry has, India will see a 5G rollout by mid-August 2022. [Read more](#)



COAI appreciate Maharashtra Government's initiative to resolve industry issues

COAI, the leading representative body for the Indian telecommunications industry appreciates the Maharashtra Govt. for setting up a committee under the chairmanship of the principal secretary, urban development department. [Read more](#)



Manipur government issues memorandum to safeguard telecom and digital infrastructure

The government of Manipur has issued a memorandum to all deputy commissioners, director (IT) and joint director (IT) directing them to be vigilant in taking quick and necessary action in safeguarding the telecommunication and digital infrastructure in their jurisdiction. [Read more](#)



COAI Events

ET Telecom Digital Telco Virtual Summit'21"

The second edition of Digital Telco Virtual Summit, organised by ETTelecom.com, brought top executives from telecom carriers, technology & infrastructure providers, and regulatory & government officials together to deliberate potential strategies and bottlenecks in India's digital transformation.

Shri Devusinh Chauhan, Ministry of State for Communications, Government of India.



"DQ Deeptech by Data Quest"

Through Deep Tech, Dataquest aims at building a sustainable ecosystem that facilitates innovation generation, and innovation co-creation, bringing the synergies of private sector, including large companies.



"TLF Dialogue Series"

Voice&Data TLFDialogueSeries on Strengthening Digital Infrastructure & Technologies to Achieve Next Phase of Economic Growth.

promising startups, and all other stakeholders together.



COAI Events

“India Internet Governance Forum 2021”

India Internet Governance Forum is a platform bringing representatives together from various groups, considering all at par to discuss Internet-related public policy issues.

Its motto is to Empower India through the power of Internet.



“India Mobile Congress: Connectivity for the Next Decade”

The 5th India Mobile Congress, which was themed at ‘Connectivity for the Next Decade’, held virtual from 8th December 2021 to 10th December 2021. Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Hon’ble Minister of Electronics and Information Technology and Railways, Government of India, was the chief guest of the 3-day long virtual event. The event advocated that the future of the connected world is not just about the newest frontier technologies, such as 5G, AI, AR/VR, Cloud, edge, Internet of Things (IoT), robotics etc. but much of it will be defined by further evolution of these existing advanced connectivity technologies.





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