



Uniform guidelines for Cell Site location and RoW critical for providing seamless networks – Indian Telecom Industry

New Delhi, August 17, 2015: Leading telecom companies led by their CEOs and heads of industry associations COAI, AUSPI, and TAIPA, in a press conference today, jointly opined on the need for uniform guidelines for Cell Sites and Right of Way (RoW) across the telecom circles in India, in order to have more efficient networks and facilitate seamless connectivity to the citizens. The industry reaffirmed its commitment to realize the Government's vision of Digital India, but requested support towards addressing the challenges the industry is facing in setting up mobile infrastructure, a prerequisite for a digitally empowered society and a knowledge economy.

Mobile networks in cities like Chandigarh, Delhi NCR, Jaipur, Bhopal, Patna, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai and North-East are being impacted by limited and restricted network and infrastructure presence. Roadblocks in installation of cell sites and arbitrary shutting down of operational ones is leading to network congestion and spotty coverage, further resulting in inconvenience for the customers.

Challenges faced by the Industry:

The industry cited several challenges faced in installing mobile infrastructure due to reasons varying from State bodies' actions against towers without prior notices; restrictions imposed by Municipalities coupled with sealing orders being issued; power supply issues; difficulties in getting clearances for installing sites; non-renewal of lease due to reasons such as EMF related misconceptions; fibre cuts due to other infrastructure projects, besides others.

In fact, over 10,000 cell sites have been made non-operational due to some of these reasons, across major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Patna, Jaipur, etc. This is in stark contrast to the requirements of the industry for enabling a digital economy, wherein at least 1,00,000 Cell Sites need to be put up in the next couple of years.

Challenges in setting up Mobile infrastructure

- *Restrictions imposed by State Governments and Municipalities*
- *Issues pertaining to Right of Way (RoW)*
- *State bodies actions against towers- disconnecting electricity supplies, sealing premises, dismantling of tower sites, without any prior notices*
- *Shortage of Spectrum amid surging data traffic growth*
- *Frequent fibre cuts due to infrastructure projects*
- *Site outages due to long power failures*
- *Owner/legal issues*
- *Interference due to illegal wide band radio*

Industry captains jointly echoed the sentiment that these operational challenges coexist in an environment of shortage of spectrum at a time when data traffic growth is surging and is only adding to the woes of the industry and more importantly the customers. Indian mobile operators' spectrum holding per subscriber is as low as up to 1/4th that of the Chinese players.

Steps taken by the Industry to enhance coverage and Quality of Service:

The telecom industry has invested approx. INR 750,000 crores in the last 20 years to provide seamless connectivity to over 950 million mobile users. Over INR 1,09,000 crores have been committed in the spectrum auction held in March 2015 itself. In 2014-15 alone, the industry committed INR 1,34,000 crore+ towards development of networks. Additionally, INR 24,000 crores has been spent by the incumbent operators on capital equipment in 2014-15. The investment has ensured improvement in network coverage and capacity enhancement.

Industry players have been consistently working towards network optimization and rolling out of 3G & 4G network.



The industry has also been engaging with various State Governments and local bodies on alignment of state policies with the DoT's Advisory on telecom infrastructure installation. Meetings with various Municipal corporations and other state departments are also being organized regularly, across the country, to raise awareness on the prevalent myths related to EMF and educate various stakeholders to address their concerns.

Support Required from Govt.:

The Telecom Industry jointly urges the State governments and other relevant bodies to help implement DoT's tower guidelines in all Indian states, and draft guidelines against any possible coercive action on cell sites without the consent of State TERM cells. Further, issues paying a nominal one-time administrative fee to recover administrative expenses, granting all requisite permissions, time-bound Single Window Clearance of applications and priority of provision of electricity connection to cell sites, will go a long way in building a more robust and efficient telecom infrastructure in the nation.

Various governments and municipal corporations are requested to provide permissions for site installation on Govt. buildings and supportive and affordable Right of Way (RoW) for fibre.

Industry also seeks expedited steps towards international spectrum harmonisation and availability of increased quantum of spectrum. Also, interference from illegal wideband radios – intra-country and cross border, need to be removed.

The industry welcomes the central government's efforts such as issuance of advisory guidelines to state governments and municipal corporations on installation of cell sites, inter-ministerial coordination to ensure smoother approval processes, to support the industry. In fact, very recently, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, the Hon'ble Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India, stated in the Rajya Sabha that in a meeting with the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), it has been in-principle agreed that MoUD shall permit installation of mobile towers/in-building solutions in government buildings. The industry is hopeful that these will be implemented soon. His assurance in the Rajya Sabha on the efficacy of the EMF safety norms issued by the Govt. of India is also most welcome in assuring citizens.

Mobile infrastructure is an essential part of the mobility services ecosystem and constraining its expansion and development will impact quality of services and customer inconvenience. The industry is committed to the growth of mobile services in India and has been working towards achieving the Prime Minister's vision of Digital India.

For more information, please contact:

GENESIS BM

Nitin Shukla
+91 987 398 5197 | nitin.shukla@bm.com

COAI

Kaustuv Sircar
+91 999 961 0522 | ksircar@coai.in

Support Required

- *Implementation of DoT guidelines for installation of Cell-sites across all states*
- *The guidelines should be statutorily backed*
- *Single-window, time-bound clearance for installation of cell-sites*
- *24/7 Power to the cell-sites*
- *Installation of Cell-sites and in building solution (IBS) on government buildings*
- *Installation of Cell-sites on Defense land*
- *Right of Way for fibre*
- *Spectrum harmonization and availability of increased quantum.*

DoT Guidelines for Installing Mobile Towers

- *No restrictions for location of towers in/around residential areas, schools, hospitals etc.*
- *Single Window Clearance*
- *Priority Electricity Connection on Lowest tariffs*
- *Issuance of clearances in a time-bound manner to ensure faster clearances*
- *No ad-hoc sealing/ demolition or disconnection of electricity (i.e. any coercive action/s by State authority/s) without consent of TERM Cell in respect of all technical matters*



About COAI

COAI was constituted in 1995 as a registered, non-governmental society. COAI's vision is to establish India as the global leader of innovative mobile communications infrastructure, products and services and achieving a national teledensity of 100%, including broadband. The association is also dedicated to the advancement of modern communication and towards delivering the benefits of innovative and affordable mobile communication services to the people of India.

Visit us at: www.coai.in | @ConnectCOAI | <https://www.facebook.com/ConnectCOAI>

About AUSPI

Association of Unified Telecom Service Providers of India (AUSPI) is the representative industry body of Unified Access Service Licensees providing CDMA & GSM Mobile Services, Fixed Line Services as well as Value Added Services throughout the length and breadth of the country. AUSPI is a registered society and works as a non-profit organization with the aim of delivering the promise of improved access, coverage and tele-density in India. The objectives of AUSPI include collection and dissemination of knowledge and information for promotion and healthy growth of telecom services, enunciating a telecom vision for India, fueling unprecedented domestic investment, improving tele-density and bringing value for customers.

Visit us at: www.auspi.in

About TAIPA

As a critical member of the wireless telecom ecosystem, the key players for Telecom Infrastructure providers have come together to form a representative industry body, Towers and Infrastructure Providers Association (TAIPA). All leading independent telecom infrastructure providers like Bharti Infratel, Viom Networks, Indus Towers, Reliance Infratel, ATC India Tower Corp., GTL Infrastructures, India Telecom Infra and Tower Vision are the founding members of the Society which visualizes itself to be the official voice for the Telecom Infrastructure industry. The Association interacts and deliberates with the Ministries, Policy Makers, Regulators, Financial institutions and Technical bodies for collection and dissemination of knowledge and information for promotion of healthy growth in telecom services.

Visit us at: www.taipa.in



Quotes:

“Telecommunications is a public utility service and has emerged as the backbone of the country in times of peace and crisis. We greatly appreciate the staunch support and efforts of the Hon’ble Minister for Communications & IT and the DoT in assisting the industry. However, challenges posed by the actions of local authorities across the country act as a hindrance for further growth of the industry and will act as an obstacle to providing seamless connectivity to the subscribers. The need of the hour is to institutionalize a uniform code / rules for setting up of telecom infrastructure across the country which will help in providing the best of telecom technology and service to the citizens of India.”

- **Mr. Rajan S. Mathews, Director General, COAI**

“The local bodies’ actions are in stark contradiction to the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India’s vision of creating a Digital India and for providing Internet connectivity and Broadband for All, and for facilitating the development of Smart Cities. Such actions by authorities will not only be detrimental to this vision but will also cause grave inconvenience to subscribers’ everyday life and processes. It is important to reiterate the importance of the building a superior telecom infrastructure and it is the responsibility of the entire ecosystem to ensure that there is a conducive environment created for the same.”

- **Mr. Ashok Sud, Secretary General, AUSPI**

“Robust telecom infrastructure is important for implementation of the dream vision of Hon’ble Prime Minister. To this extent, it is important that the Advisory Guidelines of DoT are given the Statuary backing like it is being done for RoW to ensure the implementation by the States. There is a need to create awareness amongst the States through State Telecom Committees/District telecom committees to effectively address the Public Grievances relating to installation of towers and issues related to telecom infrastructure as envisaged in the DoT Advisory Guidelines. Further findings of an internal audit of telecom department have also indicated ‘inability to put towers’ is one of the reasons for call drops.”

- **Mr. T R Dua, Director General, TAIPA**



Industry representatives in Joint Industry Press Conference on Dropped Calls and Cell Sites 17th August 2015

AUSPI:

1. Mr. Gurdeep Singh, CEO, Reliance Communications Ltd.
2. Mr. Ashok Sud, Secretary General, AUSPI

COAI:

1. Mr. Kaizad Bomi Heerjee, CEO, Aircel Ltd.
2. Mr. Gopal Vittal, MD & CEO (India & South Asia), Bharti Airtel Ltd.
3. Mr. Himanshu Kapania, MD, Idea Cellular Ltd.
4. Mr. Vivek Sood, CEO, Telewings Communications Services Private Limited
5. Mr. Arvind Bali, Director & CEO, Videocon Telecommunications Ltd.
6. Mr. Sunil Sood, MD, Vodafone India Ltd.
7. Mr. Rajan S. Mathews, Director General, COAI

TAIPA:

1. Mr. Akhil Gupta, Chairman, TAIPA
2. Mr. Umang Das, Vice Chairman TAIPA
3. Mr. Amit Sharma, Vice Chairman, TAIPA
4. Mr. T R Dua, Director General, TAIPA
5. Mr. Shantharaju, CEO, Indus Towers
6. Mr. D.S. Rawat, MD & CEO, Bharti Infratel