

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA



E-NEWSLETTER



MAY 2023



Dr. P. D. Vaghela, Chairman-TRAI addressed the audience on "Ensuring a Level Playing Field in Entertainment Broadcasting" in the presence of Mr. Harit Nagpal, Managing Director & CEO, Tata Play during FICCI FRAMES 2023 at Mumbai on 3rd May 2023

YEARS
ANNIVERSARY

Recommendations

TRAI released recommendations on “Improving Telecom Coverage and Backhaul Infrastructure in far-flung areas of Ladakh” on 24th April 2023

Media reports during COVID-19 and prior have brought out the challenges that are being faced by the people living near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in accessing high-speed internet, which is critical for pursuing online education by students, accessing digital banking and healthcare services, for instance for registering for COVID-19 vaccine. Furthermore, many remote areas in Ladakh lack mobile towers, resulting in network issues, particularly for those residing near the LAC and the Line of Control (LoC). As these areas are of strategic importance, mobile connectivity is crucial for ensuring the safety of the region by facilitating round-the-clock communication to the security forces deployed in these regions.

In this regard, TRAI obtained the current status of mobile network coverage and backhaul infrastructure layout data in the UT of Ladakh from operating TSPs, as well as details of ongoing USOF sponsored telecom projects and Optical Ground Wire (OPGW) infrastructure availability from Power Distribution Companies (DISCOMs). Based on the gap analysis and evaluation of the Government sponsored USOF schemes, TRAI has come up with recommendations on "Improving Telecom Coverage and Backhaul Infrastructure in far-flung areas of Ladakh". The salient points of these recommendations are as follows: -

- a. There are three villages in Ladakh which neither have any coverage nor were included in the ongoing schemes. During discussions with the Authority, BSNL has indicated that these villages will be included under ‘Saturation of 4G mobile services’ project. However, USOF must ensure inclusion of the three uncovered villages of Ladakh, under ‘Saturation of 4G mobile services’ project.
- b. There are 19 villages in Ladakh which neither have 4G coverage nor are they included in the ongoing schemes for providing 4G coverage. The CAPEX and OPEX expenditure to be incurred for upgrading the existing non-4G based cellular mobile infrastructure at these 19 villages should be funded by the Government through USOF. In 12 out of the 19 villages, the Authority recommends that the VSAT connectivity provided under BharatNet can also double as backhaul for 4G connectivity. In the remaining seven uncovered villages, VSAT connectivity on shared basis should be considered till connectivity on OFC media is extended to these villages.
- c. All operating TSPs in UT of Ladakh must provide fair and non-discriminatory access to their spare backhaul transmission media resource capacity via lease/rent or on mutually agreeable terms and

conditions, to other TSP/ ISP. A committee of TERM field unit of J&K and representative(s) of all TSPs should be formed at the earliest to help resource pooling across TSPs. A second level Committee at the DoT headquarters should be formed to periodically review and resolve any impediment being experienced by any affected entity.

- d. The Authority recommends that charges paid by lessee (a TSP) to any lessor TSP for use of spare backhaul media transmission resource capacity should be reduced from the Gross Revenues of the lessor to arrive at Applicable Gross Revenue (ApGR).
- e. There is one Block Headquarter (Rupshu) which has no optical fibre connectivity. USOF should fund the backhaul connectivity on optical fiber from Rupshu Block Headquarters to Nyoma/Chumathang.
- f. Licensed TSPs should maintain a waiting list of service demands. DoT should establish a mechanism to obtain, examine and analyze the data on waitlist from all TSPs.
- g. DoT may take up the case with concerned authorities for not levying Right of Way (RoW) charges to TSPs/IP-Is for connecting administrative setup in remote and hilly areas in Ladakh. RoW rules should be aligned to ROW Rules 2016.
- h. DoT should plan for a VSAT based alternate communication overlay in all border areas of strategic importance in the country, including Ladakh, which should co-exist as backup communication medium in all such areas along with terrestrial connectivity. This will ensure continuity of crucial communication services during occurrence of natural calamity and/ or critical situations triggered due to border conflicts in such areas.
- i. TRAI has made recommendations to the Government on improving telecom connectivity/infrastructure in far-flung areas of Himachal Pradesh, many of which are valid for Ladakh also. Recommendations for providing electricity to telecom sites as a priority at Utility/Industrial tariff, waiving off last mile installation charges for extending electric connection to telecom sites etc. should be *mutatis mutandis* made applicable to Ladakh also.
- j. DoT should work with the MNRE and the Ladakh UT Administration for coming up with a scheme to fund installation of solar panels at important strategic telecom sites in remote hilly areas.
- k. DoT should take up with the Ladakh UT Administration, National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and Border Road Organisation (BRO) that all road construction, road widening, or other related works should be undertaken with prior coordination involving TSPs, and the liability of Contractor for making the damages good to the TSPs should be included

ab-initio in the contracts. DoT should also explore the possibility of constructing utility ducts in all future road widening and new road construction projects, and any ban on giving RoW permissions to utility service providers during Defect Liability Period.

1. DoT should do a site-wise analysis of all such sites that are being run by BSNL or any other TSP on VSAT in remote and hilly areas in Ladakh. The entire operational costs of running all such sites that are being run to serve strategic or service delivery needs of the Government, should be borne by the Government.



https://traigov.in/sites/default/files/Recommendation_24042023.pdf

Consultation Papers

TRAI released Consultation Paper on "Assignment of Spectrum for Space-based Communication Services" on 6th April 2023

Department of Telecommunications (DoT), through its letter dated 13th September 2021, had requested TRAI to provide recommendations on "Auction of spectrum in the frequencies identified for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT)/ 5G". Through the said letter, TRAI was also requested to provide recommendations, *inter-alia*, on appropriate frequency bands, band plan, block size, applicable reserve price, quantum of spectrum to be auctioned and associated conditions for auction of spectrum for space-based communication services.

In this regard, TRAI through letters dated 27th September 2021 and 23rd November 2021, sought information/ clarifications in respect of space-based communication services from DoT. In response, DoT through the letter dated 27th November 2021 informed, *inter-alia*, that the information with respect to space-based communication services sought by TRAI will take some time. Therefore, to avoid delay in 5G roll-out, TRAI may go ahead with consultation/ recommendations on issues excluding space-based communication services referred in DoT's reference dated 13th September 2021 and 23rd September 2021. DoT also mentioned that the issues related to space-based communication services may be taken up separately on receipt of information from DoT. Subsequently, TRAI gave its recommendations to the Government on 'Auction of Spectrum in frequency bands identified for IMT/5G' on 11th April 2022.

Thereafter, DoT through letter dated 16th August 2022 provided information with respect to space-based communication services as sought by TRAI through the

letters dated 27th September 2021 and 23rd November 2021. While providing the requisite information, DoT requested TRAI to provide recommendations on certain additional issues, as mentioned below:

- a) TRAI, through consultations, may assess the demand for space-based communication services and accordingly provide recommendations on the quantum of spectrum in each band required to be put to auction.
- b) It is envisaged to auction the Space Spectrum on an exclusive basis. TRAI may explore feasibility and procedure of sharing auctioned spectrum among multiple service licensees. TRAI may provide recommendations on sharing of auctioned frequency bands between satellite networks and terrestrial networks also, the criteria for sharing and appropriate interference mitigation techniques for sharing and coexistence.
- c) In frequency bands 27.5-28.5 GHz (identified for IMT) and 28.5-29.5 GHz (being studied for Captive Non-Public Networks), TRAI may recommend mechanisms for sharing of auctioned frequency bands in which both IMT/ CNPN and satellite-based services (both user terminal and Gateways) can be provided in a flexible manner.
- d) Since the service providers may require spectrum both in user link as well as in feeder link, TRAI may take inputs from the stakeholders and recommend the appropriate auction methodology so that the successful bidder gets spectrum for user link (shared with IMT in flexible) as well as feeder link.
- e) In addition, TRAI is requested to provide any other recommendations as deemed fit for the purpose of spectrum auction in these frequency bands, including the regulatory/ technical requirements as enunciated in the relevant provisions of the latest ITU-R Radio Regulations.

Subsequently, TRAI, through the letter dated 19th October 2022 to DoT, sought further clarifications, wherein DoT was requested, inter-alia, to clarify that for which kind of licensed services, spectrum for space-based communication has been envisaged to be granted through Auction. In response, DoT, through the letter dated 16th December 2022, conveyed that TRAI may provide suitable recommendations for each of the space-based communication services after detailed examination. Hence, in the present Consultation Paper, TRAI has considered all the spectrum bands relevant for space-based communication services as indicated by DoT.

https://traigov.in/sites/default/files/CP_06042023.pdf



TRAI released a Consultation Paper (CP) on ‘Issues Related to Low Power Small Range FM Radio Broadcasting’ on 17th April 2023

TRAI on 17th April 2023 released a Consultation Paper (CP) on ‘Issues Related to Low Power Small Range FM Radio Broadcasting’. MIB vide its reference dated 07th March 2022 has sought recommendations of the Authority, on the need and timing for introduction of new service provider for drive-in theatres application. The low-power short range FM Radio broadcasting is an effective method of sound broadcasting for services that are intended for limited locations and reception areas. Some of the examples for such services include drive-in theatres, hospital radio services, amusement parks, business premises, closed communities such as residential complexes, small habitations, local events such as air shows and sports events, etc. Accordingly, the CP has been prepared to seek the comments/views of the stakeholders on the issues related to Low Power Small Range FM Radio Broadcasting. Full text of the consultation is available on TRAI’s website.

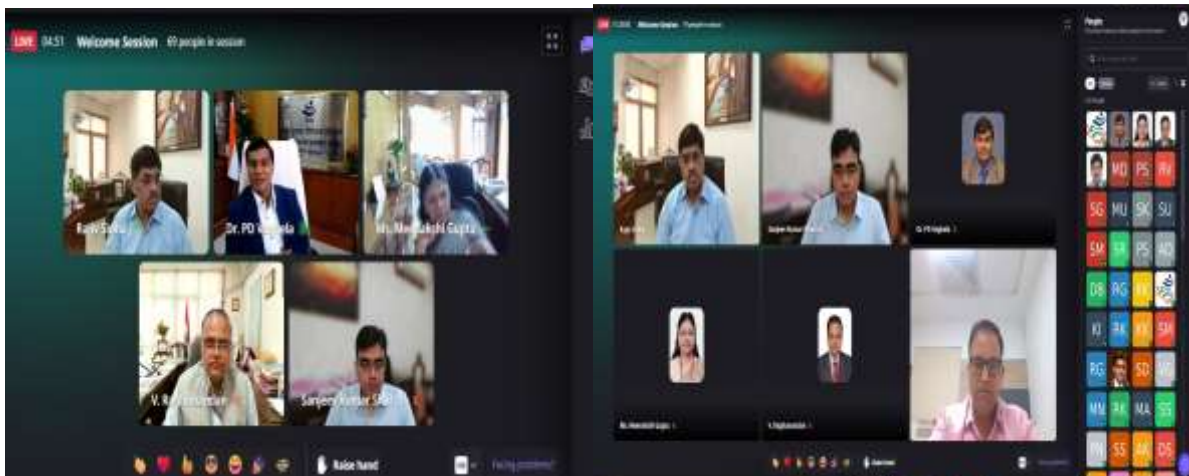


https://traigov.in/sites/default/files/CP_17042023.pdf

Open House Discussion

An Open House Discussion was held on 19th April 2023 on Consultation Paper on "Licensing Framework and Regulatory Mechanism for Submarine Cable Landing in India dated 23rd December 2022"

The OHD was conducted through Video Conferencing. Several stakeholders including Telecom Service Providers, Industry Associations etc. participated. The open house discussion received a good response. Some visuals of the said OHD are given below: -



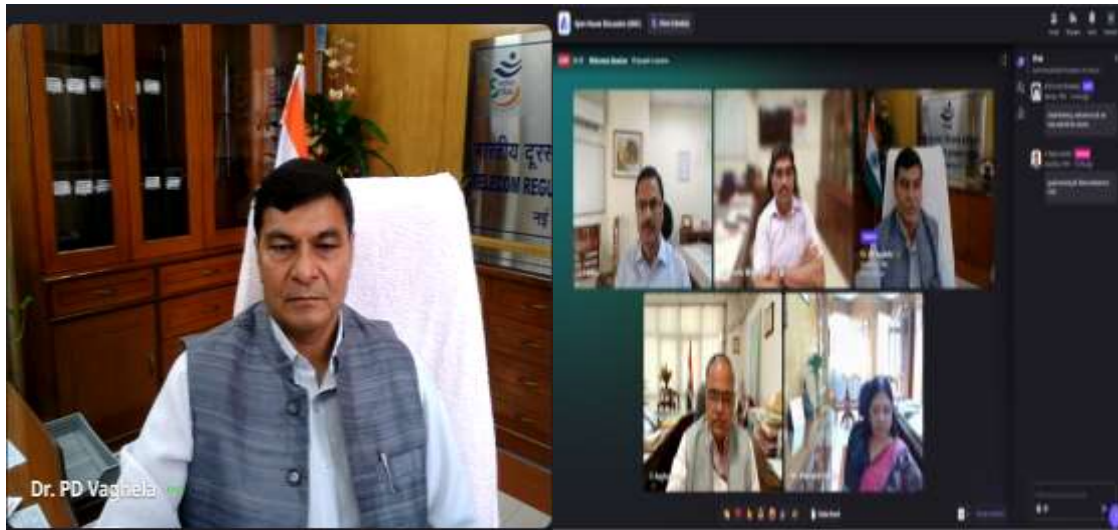
TRAI held an Open House Discussion (OHD) on the Consultation Paper on 'License Fee and Policy Matters of DTH Services' on 20th April 2023

TRAI held the Open House Discussion (OHD) to discuss the issues related to License Fee and Bank Guarantee of the DTH operators in view of the amendments carried out in DoT in Unified License Agreement in October 2021.



TRAI held an OHD on the Consultation Paper on 'Issues related to FM Radio Broadcasting' on 26th April 2023

TRAI held the OHD to deliberate upon the issues of removing the linkage to Non-Refundable One Time Entry Fee (NOTEF) in the formula for annual fee, extension the existing FM license period of 15 years by three years, permitting private FM Radio channels to broadcast independent news bulletin and availability of FM Radio Receivers in Mobile Handsets.



Telecom Subscriptions

Telecom Subscription Data as on 31st March 2023:

Particulars	Wireless	Wireline	Total
Urban Telephone subscribers (Million)	627.54	26.16	653.71
Rural Telephone subscribers (Million)	516.38	2.25	518.63
Total Telephone subscribers (Million)	1143.93	28.41	1172.34
Overall Tele-density (%)	82.46	2.05	84.51
Share of Urban Subscription (%)	54.86	92.09	55.76
Share of Rural Subscription (%)	45.14	7.91	44.24
No. of Broadband Subscribers (Million)	813.08	33.49	846.57

Active wireless subscribers on the date of Peak VLR in March 2023 were 1034.26 million.

In March 2023, 11.70 million subscriber requests were made for MNP. By the end of March 2023, a total of 819.70 million consumers have availed the MNP facility since its implementation.

Miscellaneous

TRAI released the updated list of panels of Auditors to carry out audit of Digital Addressable systems (DAS) on 17th April 2023, vide which name of one audit firm has been changed from M/s J.K. Sarawgi & Associates to M/s J.K.S.S. & Associates. As on 17th April 2023, the total number of auditors empanelled by TRAI to carry out the audit of Digital Addressable Systems of DPOs was 52.

Full details of the Directions/Orders/Consultation Paper/Report, Subscription Data, etc mentioned in this newsletter are available on TRAI website

www.trai.gov.in

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