

## Policy and Regulation

- ❖ **Government** has issued directions to the **telecom service providers (TSPs)** for **blocking of incoming international spoofed calls displaying Indian mobile numbers**. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and TSPs have devised a system to identify and block such incoming international spoofed calls from reaching any Indian telecom subscriber. Additionally, directions have been issued to the TSPs for blocking of such incoming international spoofed calls.
- ❖ **DoT** has **allocated a separate 10-digit numbering series starting with 160** for **service and transactional calls** made by **government, regulators, and financial entities**. According to an office memorandum issued, the 10-digit number series has been designed by DoT in a manner that telecom subscribers will get an idea about calling entities as well as the telecom operator and the place from where it has originated.
- ❖ **DoT** has **imposed a penalty on Bharti Airtel** for **violating subscriber verification norms**. According to an exchange filing, Airtel has received a notice from the telecom department of Punjab licensed service areas (LSAs) on May 27, 2024 for violations of subscriber verification norms under the Licensee Agreement, following a sample customer application form (CAF) audit conducted by DoT for March 2024. DoT has imposed a penalty of Rs 179,000 on Airtel for these violations.
- ❖ The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** has **issued clarifications** on the **bidding for conducting the study on artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on competition**. It has also extended the deadline for submission of bids from June 3, 2024 to June 18, 2024. In a communication dated May 24, 2024, CCI noted that the financial bids will be opened on July 11, 2024. In addition, in a set of clarifications, the minimum annual turnover of Rs 500 million has been retained for the bidders.

## Operators

- ❖ **Telecom operators** including **Airtel, Reliance Jio, and Vodafone Idea Limited (Vi)** have **sought a 5-6 years interest-free payment gap or moratorium** on the **spectrum bought in auctions in 2025 and beyond**. In a communication to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), telcos noted that such a moratorium is needed on spectrum bought in auctions from next year because they have incurred huge capital expenditure (capex) in rolling out 5G services, which they are yet to monetise. In addition, they need to keep on investing in their networks. The operators have also urged for a new payment method in addition to the two existing payment terms for spectrum bought in auctions. In addition, the operators have sought reduction in reserve price of spectrum for the newly identified spectrum bands.
- ❖ **DoT** has **identified around 600 land parcels and buildings owned by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL)** for **outright sale to government departments, public sector undertakings, and government organisations**. Through land monetisation, DoT is looking to reduce the debt of both the telcos. These properties could fetch the government over Rs 200 billion.
- ❖ **BSNL** has **signed a deal with Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to strategise a revival roadmap**. Under the 34-month deal, BSNL will pay BCG Rs 1.32 billion for its consultancy services. The expected outcomes include enabling the telco to achieve government-assigned targets by strengthening existing business segments, leveraging emerging technologies, and cost-reduction while significantly improving BSNL's service delivery in line with industry benchmarks and best practices, and transforming sales and marketing capabilities.
- ❖ **Airtel** has **surpassed the 1.9 million 5G customer mark in Odisha**. The company has deployed 5G services across all cities and districts in Odisha. According to the telco, there has been a significant increase in 5G users in Odisha over the past six months. Airtel's expansive network deployment has effectively extended its services across the entire state, enabling customers to embrace 5G.
- ❖ **BSNL** has **started the roll out of 4G services in Chennai and Andhra Pradesh**. According to the telco, the indigenous 4G services will be extended shortly across the states. BSNL aims to expand the network

infrastructure across the states and provide seamless connectivity and cater to the growing demands of digital consumers.

## Vendors

- ❖ **Jio Leasing Services Limited (JLSL)**, a subsidiary of **Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL)** is planning to buy consumer premises equipment (CPE)/devices and telecom equipment worth **Rs 360 billion** from **Reliance Retail** over the next two financial years, ending **March 2025** and **March 2026**. According to the filing, JLSL is entering into the business of operating leases via the devices-as-a-service (DaaS) model enabling it to lease CPE/devices, and telecom gear to Reliance Jio's customers.

## Infrastructure

- ❖ **CtrlS Datacenters Limited** has launched its new **AI-ready data centre, Hyderabad DC3**, located in **Gachibowli, Hyderabad**. CtrlS Datacenters has invested over **Rs 5 billion** in this facility, which has approximately 1,300 racks capacity. According to the company, Hyderabad DC3 facility has a built-up area of 0.134 million square feet and 13 MW information technology (IT) load capacity.

## Finance

- ❖ **BSNL** has reported a net loss of **Rs 53.67 billion** in the fiscal year **2023-24 (FY24)**, which has narrowed from **Rs 81.61 billion** in **FY23**, on the back of **lower expenses**, especially **finance cost**, and **higher non-operating income**. The company reported that revenue from operations grew 1 per cent to **Rs 193.43 billion**, missing the target of **Rs 200.08 billion**, set by the government as part of the **Rs 3.2 trillion** revival package. Meanwhile, revenue from cellular services and enterprise segment saw a decline during the year.
- ❖ According to a statutory filing, **Birla TMT Holdings** has transferred its **Vi shares worth Rs 353.7 million**, or **0.52 per cent stake** to **Birla Group Holdings** after **amalgamation scheme** involving certain entities got the **National Company Law Tribunal's approval**. The total Aditya Birla Group shareholding in Vi remains the same at 15.01 per cent, while the total promoter and promoter group shareholding in Vi remains the same at 38.17 per cent.
- ❖ **MTNL** has reported widening of losses to **Rs 8.17 billion** in the **fourth quarter-ended (QE) March 31, 2024**, mainly on account of **high finance costs**. The revenue from operations of MTNL fell by about 5 per cent to **Rs 1.92 billion** during the reported quarter from **Rs 202.35** in **Q4 FY22-23**. Meanwhile, for the year ended March 31, 2024, MTNL reported widening of loss to **Rs 33.02 billion** from **Rs 29.1 billion** a year ago. The annual revenue from operations declined by 15.44 per cent to **Rs 7.28 billion** in **FY23-24** from **Rs 8.61 billion** in **FY22-23**.

## Miscellaneous

- ❖ The government of **Ghana**, **Ascend Digital**, **K-NET**, **Radisys**, **Nokia**, and **Tech Mahindra**, with **mobile network operators (MNOs)** including **AT Ghana** and **Telecel Ghana** have announced their **partnership** on a **new shared infra – Next-Gen InfraCo (NGIC)**. This collaboration aims to deliver affordable 5G mobile broadband services across Ghana. NGIC has been awarded 5G license and expected to launch 5G services across Ghana within the next six months, followed by expansion to other parts of Africa. In addition, NGIC will be the first 5G mobile broadband shared infrastructure entity to build a nationwide 4G/5G network. The company will also work with MNO partners to launch affordable 4G/5G-enabled fixed wireless access (FWA) CPEs and smart phones in Ghana within this calendar year.
- ❖ **DoT**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, has taken **decisive action** to **protect citizens** from **potential SMS fraud** through the **Sanchar Saathi initiative**. In addition, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), MHA, provided information about misuse of eight SMS Headers for sending fraudulent communications for committing cyber-crime.
- ❖ **DoT** has urged enforcement units to alert all state police departments across India to clamp down on the rampant theft of critical network gear. The theft has triggered around **Rs 8 billion** of losses for telcos, disrupted 4G/5G expansions and impacted quality of mobile coverage. In a directive dated May 27, 2024, DoT has asked its field enforcement units in all licence service areas (LSAs) to also conduct quarterly reviews of the telecom gear theft situation with national law enforcement agencies.