

Policy and Regulation

- ❖ The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has **informed** that **new SIM card rules** will be **enforced in India** from **December 1, 2023**. As per the new rules, all SIM card dealers must undergo mandatory verification. Registration for selling SIMs is now a prerequisite, with telecom operators responsible for police verification. Failure to comply may result in a fine of Rs 1 million. With the new rules, the government aims to combat frauds involving fake SIMs and curb rising scam cases.
- ❖ The **Haryana Cabinet** has **approved** the **revision** of the **Communication and Connectivity Infrastructure Policy, 2023**. The updated policy supersedes the Communication and Connectivity Policy, 2017 and aligns with the amended Indian Telegraph Right of Way (RoW) Rules, as notified by the Ministry of Communications in 2022.
- ❖ The **government** has **suspended 7 million mobile numbers** to **combat digital frauds** emerging from a meeting to **address escalating concerns** over **financial cybersecurity** and **surging digital payments fraud**. According to the Department of Financial Services, banks have been asked to strengthen the system and process in this regards, with more such meetings to take place in the future. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in January 2024.
- ❖ The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** has **extended** the **deadline** for **submission of comments** and **counter comments** on its **consultation paper** titled '**Assignment of Spectrum in E and V Bands, and Spectrum for Microwave Access (MWA) and Microwave Backbone (MWB)**'. Keeping in view the request from stakeholders for further extension of time for submission of comments, TRAI has decided to extend the last date of submission of comments and counter comments up to December 13, 2023 and December 27, 2023, respectively.
- ❖ **TRAI** has **extended** the **deadline** for **submission of comments** and **counter comments** on the **issues raised** in the **consultation paper** titled "**Digital Transformation through 5G Ecosystem.**" Keeping in view the request of stakeholders for further extension of time due to difficulty in collating the essential information from the respective teams, the TRAI has decided to extend the last date for submission of written comments and counter comments up to December 26, 2023 and January 8, 2024 respectively.

Operators

- ❖ **Bharti Airtel** has **announced** that it has **connected** the **Zanskar valley in Kargil district** with its **Airtel 5G Plus service**. This makes Airtel the only operator to offer 5G services in the Zanskar valley. Airtel 5G Plus is available across all districts in the union territory of Ladakh and all 25 villages in the Zanskar valley can now enjoy the power of 5G as enjoyed by millions of Indians. The company has been ramping its 5G roll-out in the country and has already connected 20,000 villages and 5,000 towns by October 2023.

Vendors

- ❖ **Qualcomm Technologies, Inc.** has **proposed** an **investment** of **Rs 1.75 billion** for its **research and development (R&D) unit** at **Whitefield in Bengaluru**, projecting the **creation of 1,553 jobs**. Qualcomm already has an R&D unit in Bengaluru, and the fresh investment is part of the company's expansion plans.

Infrastructure

- ❖ The **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras Pravartak Technologies Foundation** has **launched** a **facility** called the '**ComNet Lab**' for **testing 5G networks** and **providing a one-stop solution** for **network security testing labs** for the **domestic and global markets**. Its mission is to accelerate indigenous 5G secure solution development that would be suitable for the Indian environment and become the foremost security compliance testing lab for 5G networks.
- ❖ **Dixon Technologies' subsidiary, Padget Electronics** has **set up** a **new smartphone manufacturing facility** in **Noida, Uttar Pradesh**, with an **annual capacity of 25 million devices** and an **investment of Rs 2.56 billion**. Padget has also commenced smartphone manufacturing for Xiaomi in the third quarter (Q3) of 2023.

Finance

Note: Rs 1 crore = Rs 0.01 billion; Rs 1 lakh = Rs 0.1 million; Rs 1,000 million = Rs 1 billion

- ❖ **Bharti Telecom is planning to raise bonds worth approximately Rs 80 billion** (\$961 million) in the **local currency bond market**. If the deal is executed, it will be Bharti Telecom's largest-ever rupee issuance. It is also the company's first in the onshore market in almost a year. It raised Rs 32 billion through three-year notes in December 2022. The bids will open on December 1, 2023.
- ❖ The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** has **approved the proposed acquisition by Atlas 2022 Holdings Limited to increase its voting rights/shareholding in Vodafone Group Plc**. Atlas 2022 Holdings is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Emirates Telecommunications Group Company PJSC (e&). It was incorporated for the purpose of acquiring and holding e&'s current 14.6 per cent interest in Vodafone.
- ❖ **Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)** has **reported a widening of net loss to Rs 14.82 billion in the quarter ended (QE) September 2023**, from **Rs 14.7 billion in the previous quarter**. The higher sequential loss during the quarter was primarily due to an increase in expenses on advertisement, business promotion and marketing, interconnect usage charge to other operators, higher revenue share to business partners, bad debt write-off, and expenses on construction contracts, among others. However, on a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the company's net loss narrowed from Rs 20.33 billion in the corresponding quarter last year largely due to a fall in employee benefit expenses, licence and spectrum fee, finance costs, etc.

Miscellaneous

- ❖ **According to Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister of Communications, Electronics and Information Technology and Railways**, the **Ministry of Railways is planning to upgrade indigenous anti-collision system Kavach to long-term evolution (LTE)-based (4G/5G) and expedite its implementation**. The tenders for the next-gen Kavach will be rolled out in May to June 2024, while the tender to upgrade the existing Kavach technology to LTE will be floated by December 2023.
- ❖ **According to Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI)**, the **adoption of Green Open Energy Access rules has started to rise in several states of the country with the continued support from the DoT, TRAI, and the Ministry of Power**. COAI has cited five states, including Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Uttarakhand that have adopted the amendment to the Green Open Energy Access Rules issued by the Ministry of Power in May 2023.
- ❖ The **National e-Governance Division (NeGD) of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** is **organising state capacity building workshops, under its Capacity Building Scheme in collaboration with their knowledge partners**. The aim of these workshops is to demystify the potential of emerging technologies in improving service delivery and how to shape the policies and strategies to accommodate new digital landscapes. The fifth workshop in the series is being conducted in Haryana, from November 29-30, 2023.
- ❖ **According to Ashwini Vaishnaw, 99.2 per cent of all mobiles sold in India are now stamped as 'Made in India'**. The Indian mobile industry has experienced exponential growth, expanding by a remarkable factor of 20 in nine years. This remarkable achievement aligns with the government's vision to enhance self-reliance and boost the manufacturing sector under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.
- ❖ **According to Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**, the **government sees artificial intelligence (AI) as a kinetic enabler for the \$1 trillion digital economy goal by 2026**. However, he said that the world is now also aligning with India's view that there is a need for guardrails of safety and trust in the area of AI.
- ❖ **GSMA has expressed concerns over India's intervention regarding the 6 GHz spectrum band during the ongoing World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23)**. The industry body has requested Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister of Communications, Electronics and Information Technology and Railways, to direct the Indian delegation to support the mid-band for international mobile telecommunications (IMT) or mobility usage.