



World Telecom Day 2023

For Prelims: World Telecom Day, Sanchar Saathi portal, Central Equipment Identity Register, [International Telecommunication Union \(ITU\)](#)

For Mains: [Achievements of India's telecom sector](#), Role of the Sanchar Saathi portal in addressing fraudulent activities, Positioning India as a global telecom power.

Why in News?

India on May 17, 2023, commemorated **World Telecom Day**, celebrating the advancements and **achievements in the telecommunication sector**.

- The **Sanchar Saathi portal** was launched on the day to enhance **transparency, security, and accountability in the telecom industry**.
- The year 2023 also marks the completion of **20 years of [Universal Service Obligation Fund \(USOF\)](#)**.

What is World Telecom Day?

- **About:**
 - World Telecommunication Day is celebrated annually since 1969, to mark the founding of [International Telecommunication Union \(ITU\)](#) and the signing of the first **International Telegraph Convention in 1865**.
 - It aims to raise **awareness of the importance of telecommunication** and its contribution to social and economic development.
 - The [World Summit on the Information Society \(WSIS\)](#) called for the declaration of **May 17 as World Information Society Day**.
 - In 2006, the **ITU combined both tents and celebrated them on May 17 as World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD)**.
- **Theme:**
 - The theme of World Telecom Day 2023 is "**Empowering the least developed countries through information and communication technologies**".
 - The theme reflects the commitment of the ITU and its partners to support the **least developed countries (LDCs) in harnessing the power of [Information and Communications Technologies \(ICT\)](#) for achieving their [sustainable development goals \(SDGs\)](#)**.
- **Highlights from the Event:**
 - Exhibition showcasing innovations in the telecom sector by start-ups.
 - Recognition of top performing **Bharat Udyamis** ensuring last mile connectivity.
 - Udyami Bharat a programme launched by the government of India to empower the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector.
 - Release of a report on the **First International [Quantum Communication Conclave](#)**.
 - Insights shared by national and international experts on the roadmap and developments in [quantum technologies](#) and their potential impact in various

sectors.

- Emphasis on the important role played by **USOF** and **BharatNet** in bridging the digital divide and providing connectivity to underserved areas.

What is the Sanchar Saathi Portal?

▪ About:

- The **Sanchar Saathi portal**, developed by the **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)** under the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**, is revolutionizing the telecom sector in India.

▪ Objective:

- The primary objective of the Sanchar Saathi portal is to address various **fraudulent activities** prevalent in the telecom industry, such as **identity theft, forged KYC, and banking fraud**.
 - By leveraging advanced technologies and frameworks, the portal aims to provide users with a secure and trustworthy telecommunication experience.

▪ Reforms Introduced:

- **CEIR (Central Equipment Identity Register):**
 - Implemented to **block stolen or lost mobile phones**.
 - Users can submit **IMEI numbers** along with a copy of the police complaint to verify and block stolen devices.
 - Integrated with Telecom Service Providers and Law Enforcement Agencies.
 - **Prevents stolen devices from being used in Indian networks** and allows tracing by law enforcement when necessary.
- **Know Your Mobile Connections:**
 - Allows users to **check mobile connections registered in their name**.
 - Enables **identification of unauthorized or fraudulent connections**.
 - Users can report fraudulent or unrequired connections, triggering **re-verification and termination of reported connections**.
- **ASTR (Artificial Intelligence and Facial Recognition powered Solution for Telecom SIM Subscriber Verification):**
 - Developed to identify **subscribers who obtain connections using fraudulent or forged documents**.
 - Utilizes **facial recognition and data analytics** techniques.
 - Analyzes connections obtained through **paper-based KYC documents**.

▪ Impact:

- Over 40 lakh fraudulent connections were identified and over 36 lakh were disconnected using the portal.
- Provides a secure and trustworthy telecommunication experience for users.
- Protects against identity theft, forged KYC, mobile device theft, and banking fraud.
- Enhances user safety and supports the draft Telecom bill.

What is Scenario of India's Telecom Sector?

▪ About:

- In 2020-2021 the telecom industry contributed **6% to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** and is set to grow at a CAGR of 9.4% from 2020 to 2025. India is one of the largest consumers of data globally.
- The Union Cabinet approved a Rs. 12,195 crore **production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme** for telecom and networking products under the Department of Telecom.
- Growing demand for skilled workers in 5G-centric technologies: India will need around 22 million skilled workers in areas like **IoT**, and **AI** computing **by 2025**.

▪ Recent Developments in the Telecom Sector:

- **5G Rollout:**
 - Trials and testing conducted in various cities.
 - Expected global **5G** subscriptions reach 3.5 billion by 2026.
- **BharatNet:**
 - Project to provide broadband connectivity to **gram panchayats**.
 - Over 180,000 Gram panchayats connected with optical fiber.

- Revised implementation strategy with \$7.8 billion outlay to cover all inhabited villages by August 2023.
- **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF):**
 - USOF ensures that there is **universal non-discriminatory access to quality ICT** (Information and Communications Technology) **services** at economically efficient prices **to people in rural and remote areas.**
 - Statutory fund to extend telecom services to rural areas.
 - Supports schemes like BharatNet, mobile connectivity, public Wi-Fi hotspots, etc.
- **Draft Indian Telecommunication Bill 2022:**
 - The **DoT** released the **draft Indian Telecommunications 2022 Bill** to regulate Internet-based **OTT (Over-The-Top)** telecom services.
- **Telecom Sector Reforms:**
 - Rationalization of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) definition.
 - Moratorium on spectrum dues and increased tenure.
 - Spectrum sharing, surrender, and trading allowed.
 - Rationalization of bank guarantees and increased foreign investment limit.
 - Measures to simplify licensing and regulatory compliance.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following is/are the aims/aims of the “Digital India” Plan of the Government of India? (2018)

1. Formation of India’s own Internet companies like China did.
2. Establish a policy framework to encourage overseas multinational corporations that collect Big Data to build their large data centers within our national geographical boundaries.
3. Connect many of our villages to the Internet and bring Wi-Fi to many of our schools, public places and major tourist centers.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a)** 1 and 2 only
- (b)** 3 only
- (c)** 2 and 3 only
- (d)** 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Source: PIB