



## Chapter - 26 Mass Communication

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting plays an effective role in helping people to have access to a free flow of information. The Ministry is functionally divided into three sectors viz., Information, Broadcasting and Films.

### Snapshot of India's Telecom Sector

- The **Telecom industry in India is the second largest in the world** with a subscriber base of ~1.18 Billion as of August 2023 (wireless + wireline subscribers).
  - It is also the **4th largest sector in terms of FDI inflows, contributing 6% of total FDI inflow.**
- India has an **overall tele-density of 84.69%**. Tele-density denotes the number of telephones per 100 population, and is an important indicator of telecom penetration.
  - The average monthly data consumption per wireless data subscriber has also increased to **17.36 GB in March 2023 from 61.66 MB in March 2014.**

### Government's Initiatives to Enhance the Communication Infrastructure

- **5G spectrum auction:** 5G spectrum auction was initiated by the government. 5G is the fifth generation of mobile communications networks and is characterised by an innovative architecture for both the core network and its wireless component.
- **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan Platform for 5G rollout.**
- **National Broadband Mission:**
- **Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, 2022:** The rules aim to facilitate faster and easier deployment of telegraph infrastructure for enabling speedy 5G rollout.
- **Bharat Net:** It is an ambitious programme of the department of telecommunication to provide network infrastructure with affordable broadband connectivity on a nondiscriminatory basis to all households in the country.
- **Prime Minister's WiFi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI):** Launched in 2020, the scheme aims to enhance the proliferation of public WiFi hotspots to create robust digital communications infrastructure in the country, especially in rural areas.
- **6G:** The Prime Minister unveiled a vision document for the rollout of 6G communications technology in India by 2030.
- **Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan (CTDP) for the North-Eastern Region.**

### Telecommunications Act 2023

It seeks to repeal the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950. It also amends the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997.

#### Key Provisions of Telecommunications Bill 2023:

- **Authorization for Telecom Activities:** Central government authorization required for telecom services, network establishment, and radio equipment possession.
  - Existing licences remain valid for their grant period or five years if unspecified.
- **Spectrum Assignment:** Spectrum assigned through auction, except for specific uses allocated

administratively.

- Government empowered to repurpose or re-assign frequencies, allowing sharing, trading, leasing, and surrender of spectrum.
- **Satellite Internet Allotments:** Provisions for spectrum allocation to satellite Internet providers like OneWeb and SpaceX's Starlink.
  - Active authorizations granted to OneWeb and Jio.
- **Interception and Search Powers:** Message interception allowed in public interest, including for state security and public safety.
  - Telecom services suspension possible under similar circumstances.
- **Standards Specification:** Government authorised to prescribe standards for telecom equipment, infrastructure, and services.
- **Right of Way:** Facility providers permitted right of way over public or private property for telecom infrastructure.
- **User Protection:** Measures for user protection, including prior consent for specified messages and biometric authentication for customers.
  - Online grievance redressal mechanism mandated for service providers.
- **TRAI Appointments:** Amendments in TRAI Act allowing individuals with professional experience to serve as chairperson and members.
- **Digital Bharat Nidhi:** Universal Service Obligation Fund renamed as Digital Bharat Nidhi, allowing funds for research and development.
- **Regulation of OTT Apps:** OTT services excluded from telecom services definition, regulated by Ministry of Electronics and IT under potential Digital India Act.
- **Offences and Penalties:** Various criminal and civil offences specified, including unauthorised telecom services provision and breach of terms.
  - Penalties range from imprisonment to fines.
- **Adjudication Process:** Adjudicating officer appointed by central government for inquiries and orders against civil offences.
  - Appeals process outlined before Designated Appeals Committee and Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT).
- **Trusted Sources Regime:** Integrates measures to prevent importation of telecom equipment from potentially adversarial nations.