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Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the State Broadband Committee, Kerala held on 21.01.2021 through video conference

The 2nd meeting of the State Broadband Committee, Kerala was held on 21.01.2021 at 04:00 pm through video conference under the Chairmanship of Shri Satvajeet Rajan, Additional Chief Secretary, General Administration (Co-ordination) Govt of Kerala. The meeting was convened by Dr.P.T.Mathew, Senior Deputy Director General, Department of Telecommunications, Kerala LSA.

2. Sr.DDG Kerala LSA and Convenor of SBC Kerala, Dr.P.T.Mathew in his welcome address stressed upon the importance of broadband and the objectives set by the National Broadband Mission. Sr.DDG, Kerala LSA also emphasised the need to increase the number of towers, need for fiberisation of towers, in view of the latest advancements in telecom technology, 5G, IoT, M2M, Artificial Intelligence, etc and the necessity of a simplified Right of Way policy to meet these objectives. He extended a warm welcome to all the participants to the meeting. The list of participants is given in Annexure-I. Sr.DDG Kerala LSA then requested the Chairman to deliver his address.

3. The Chairman welcomed all the participants and suggested that the committee may discuss agenda points. The agenda and points of discussion for the meeting are given in Annexure-II.

4. Secretary (IT) briefed the action points of the first State Broadband Committee meeting. DTC meetings could not be conducted frequently due to Covid-19 and LSGD elections. Meetings are being started over time as the situation is getting normalised. In the meantime, instruction has been given to all District Collectors to convene the DTC meetings at regular intervals through video conferences. Regarding policy for leasing of Govt land and building for tower installation, Secretary (IT) informed that, it will be published before the public for their comments.

5. DDG (Rural), DoT Kerala, LSA presented the points from Department of Telecommunication. In his presentation he briefed the action points and requested the Government of Kerala for their support in addressing the following. The details are in the presentation enclosed and summary of points are listed below.

a) A Single Comprehensive Kerala State RoW Policy aligned with the Government of India - Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 may be notified by the State at the earliest. It was also informed, that Secretary, Dept of Telecom had written to Chief Secretary (23rd Nov 2016), requesting for co-operation in implementing these rules in letter and spirit in creation of telecom infrastructure. This is also a point of discussion in the National Broadband Mission review meetings conducted by DoT New Delhi, with the States. It is also informed that 25 States/UT have already notified their RoW policy aligned with Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016.

(b)An early policy may be notified for utilizing Govt Land and Buildings, for installation of mobile towers. Increase in tower density (0.53 present to 1 per 1000 population) is an objective of National Broadband Mission. Increase in tower density is essential to enhance connectivity and improve Quality of Service; and there is need for large number of towers/ posts due to small cell size in 5G environment (for high capacity, low latency etc). It was suggested that this can also be part of the comprehensive RoW policy, as done in some of

the other states, charging nominal annual rent fixed by the State Government.

(c)There is a need for a Single Window Online Portal to receive and process all type of Telecom related applications for grant of RoW/ permissions (OFC underground, Aerial; Tower, Post etc) which is also a requirement of Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016. KSITM has already developed a portal which is functional for PWD roads. On boarding of LSG authorities onto the RoW Online Portal has to be completed and necessary directions to LSG field units is also to be given. Existing separate portals of LSG/ Municipal Corporations for tower permissions, may be integrated in the Single Window Portal and all agencies may be brought under the single window.

(d)It was also informed to the Committee that there is significant delay for RoW permissions for OFC, under various road authorities, including that under Municipal corporations, municipalities, KRFB, KSTP, etc even after getting in principle permission from the State Government. About 4892 Km of OFC permissions are pending. Details have been shared with Director KSITM, as per the decision in the 1st SBC meeting. Review of pendencies and streamlining of process by the authorities concerned is desired in this regard.

(e)It was also informed that DoT, Kerala LSA will be conducting a webinar on Electro Magnetic radiations & Health, in February, 2021. District Collector who is heading the DTC along with ADMs, officials from Municipal Corporations/ Municipalities/ Village Panchayats etc. who are dealing with Tower permissions,may be directed to attend the webinar. This will help them in better understanding, to clear apprehensions/ misconceptions regarding the effect of Electro Magnetic radiations during the DTC meetings.

(f)The National Digital Communication Policy (NDCP) 2018 recommends a Broadband Readiness Index for States/UTs as a tool for states to attract investments and address Right of Way (RoW) challenges. The Broadband Readiness Index has high weightage for parameters related to RoW, Single Window Electronic Process, Priority and Preferential Rates for Electricity connections etc. He requested that the parameters in BRI may be addressed especially in regard to RoW policy, to ensure that Kerala State gets a high ranking in the Broadband Readiness Index, which in turn will attract investments.

(g)Overview of **Public Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI)**, for proliferation of broadband services through Public Data Offices (PDOs) spread across the length and breadth of the country, was also briefed.

6.Shri.T.R.Dua,DG,TAIPA stated that the service providers are at a disadvantage because Right of Way charges for OFC are high in the current policy. Secretary(IT) replied that the service providers are not at any disadvantage because there is no comprehensive policy and also explained the difficulties in combining all these policies, as Tower erection is mostly related with KMBR and KPBR under LSGD. Shri.P.Ramakrishna, Pr.Advisor, COAI stated that service providers had agreed to the charges prior to notification of Govt Of India RoW Rules. Post notification of the GoI rules, charges need to be aligned. Secretary(IT) replied that the charges were fixed after consultation with service providers and they had agreed to it. Secretary stated that the amount now collected by way of OTC from the TSPs was fixed 6 years back and no increment has been made so far to that amount by the Govt. The Secretary, IT further added that the amount so fixed was with the consensus of all the TSPs and the decision was then taken with the approval of the Council of Ministers. The request to reduce the amount of OTC has been rejected by the Government with the approval of Hon: Chief Minister.

7. Secretary(IT) expressed concern over the non fulfilling of bandwidth obligations by the TSPs by providing free bandwidth/ connectivity to the nearest Government offices. The Secretary said that the attention of the DoT authorities should be focused on this aspect too. Shri.P.Ramakrishna, Pr.Advisor, COAI replied that the TSPs will be advised to look into it, and a special meeting is required to sort out this issue. COAI requested to waive-off the OFC laying charges in providing Govt. obligatory connection. Secretary(IT) stated that some of the applications submitted by TSPs do not furnish all the required information and this will cause unwarranted delay in fulfilling the bandwidth obligations. Shri.P.Ramakrishna, Pr.Advisor, COAI replied that the lacunae in this regard will be addressed.

8. Sr.DDG, DoT Kerala LSA raised the next agenda point regarding online single window portal for RoW (OFC and Tower permissions). The LSGD authorities are still not on board the RoW portal. Shri.Ashish Garg, Dy.Manager,TAIPA stated that separate portals exist for OFC and tower permissions. Industry requested for Single Integrated portal in place of multiple portals for Towers and OFC. It was also suggested that there can be a single portal atleast at the front end for RoW permission, even if at the back-end, applications are processed through the current system, by suitable integration. Dashboard should also show details of tower permissions in addition to OFC RoW permissions. Secretary (IT) replied that LSGD authorities will be onboarded to the RoW portal within a month and that the other suggestions will also be looked into later.

9. Sr.DDG, DoT Kerala LSA requested the State Govt to expedite RoW OFC permissions since underground cable laying work will be hindered during monsoon.

10.The Chairman called for swift approvals and all pendency to be shared with respective District Collectors for resolution. He directed the Secretary (IT), to call a VC meeting with the District Collectors in the 1st week of February and a letter may be sent in this regard, asking them to co-ordinate and reduce the RoW pendency. The Chairman, also stated that he faced network connectivity issues when he visited hilly areas of Kannur and Kasargod recently. Service providers should work on improving connectivity in hilly regions of the State.

11. The Chairman emphasised that during these meetings only core issues be raised and discussed for resolution. Sr DDG DoT stated that there were only 3 core issues (a) Comprehensive RoW Policy aligned with the Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules 2016 (b) Single Online Portal – Single window clearance for all telecommunication RoW (OFC, Tower)permissions (c) Policy for installation of towers in Government Land and Buildings.

12.Shri.P.Ramakrishna, Pr.Advisor, COAI,in his briefing informed that the aerial OFC charges are not uniform across local bodies in the state. Certain municipalities and corporations have stopped giving permissions. Municipality and LSGD pole charges need to be made uniform. He also requested for an amendment in circular for the HDD rates, as bank guarantees are being collected for the entire width of the roadtill the end of Defect Liability Period.

13.Shri.T.R.Dua, DG,TAIPA stated that a unified policy for RoW and leasing of Govt land and buildings for installation is required. There is also need to

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expedite permissions in Govt. land and buildings. Any amendments if necessary, may be made in Kerala Municipal/Panchayat Building Rules. EB connections are pending for some towers. The details will be shared soon. He also requested the State Govt to consider issuing deemed approvals for RoW.

14. Shri.C.V.Vinod, CGM BSNL in his address, stated that BSNL along with BBNL is ready to discuss with KFON for a viable broadband deployment. BSNL broadband users are consuming an average reasonable usage of 0.75 GB per day per customer through ADSL. Data consumption on FTTH is much higher. Mobile users are using an average of 0.18 GB per day per customer in spite of not having 4G.

15. Shri.Roy.M.Jacob, CGM BBNLinformed thatBharatNet connectivity to all GPs and BHQs is stable in Kerala, and that on an average, 1110 out of 1129 ONTs are up and running satisfactorily. Only 3 GPs have long pending faults currently (tow are due to shifting of GPs). CSC e-governance Ltd is providing five connections (free for 1 year-10 Mbps) per GP to Govt Offices through mini OLTs. BBNL has already extended connectivity to CSC mini-OLT at all GPs. He requested the State Govt offices in GPs may be directed to avail of these free connections.

The meeting concluded with vote of the thanks, by DDG(Rural) DoT Kerala LSA, Shri.N.S.Deepu and ended at 5:00 pm.

Annexure-I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Govt of Kerala

Sl no	Name	Designation
1	Shri. Satyajeet Rajan IAS	Addl Chief Secretary
2	Dr.Usha Titus IAS	Pr.Secretary (Environment)
3	Shri.Anand Singh IAS	Secretary (PWD)
4	Shri.K.Mohammad Y Safirulla IAS	Secretary (Electronics & IT)
5	Shri.U.V.Jose IAS	Additional Secretary(LSGD)
6	Shri.Manoj.B.	Mission Co-ordinator, KSITM

Department of Telecommunications , Kerala LSA

Sl no	Name	Designation
1	Dr.P.T.Mathew ITS	Senior Deputy Director General
2	Shri.N.S.Deepu ITS	DDG(Rural)
3	Shri S. Ajith Kumar ITS	DDG (Co-ordination)
4	Shri.Seetharaman ITS	ADET(Rural)
5	Shri Arun Sankar	JTO(Co-ordination)

BSNL Kerala

Sl no	Name	Designation
1	Shri C.V.Vinod ITS	CGM
2	Shri.N.K.Sukumaran ITS	GM(NWP-CFA)
3	Shri.P.G.Nirmal ITS	GM(NWO-CFA)

BBNL Kerala

Sl no	Name	Designation

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1	Shri Roy.M.Jacob ITS	CGM,Kerala

COAI

Sl no	Name	Designation
1	Shri P.Ramakrishna	Pr.Advisor,COAI
2	Lt Col(Retd) Mukesh	Advisor
3	Shri.Deepak Gupta	Dy.Manager

TAIPA

Sl no	Name	Designation
1	Shri T.R.Dua	Director General
2	Shri Ashish Garg	General Manager
3	Shri.Deepak Arya	Vice President

Annexure-II

Agenda for the State Broadband Committee meeting on 21.01.2021

1) Comprehensive Telecom Policy

Discussion on the necessity for a comprehensive Telecom Policy including (a) Current Row Policy of the State Government (b) Telecom Tower Policy and (c) Policy on sharing of Towers and erection of Towers in Government land and buildings.

2) Single Online Portal

Discussion on the need for on-boarding all the Road Authorities as part of accepting applicants for RoW permission from Telecom Service Provider/Infrastructure Providers covering underground/over ground communication Infrastructure (Underground Optical Fibre Cables, Aerial/Overhead Optical Fibre cable, Tower, Posts etc).

3) Discussion on the pending tower construction permission and RoW permissions.

4) Fulfilment of Bandwidth commitments by the Telecom Service Providers in-lieu of the Right of Way permissions granted.

5) Furnishing of details of all pending RoW applications of TSPs for Last mile connectivity to the Government through Director, KSITM for considering for granting general RoW permissions.

6) Review on the actions taken by the Telecom Service Providers/IPs regarding erection of sufficient mobile towers in the rural and remote areas, where there exist connectivity issues.

7) Other related matters, if any.