



Government of India
Ministry of Communications
Department of Telecommunications
O/o Spl. Director General-Telecom, TN LSA
3rd Floor, TNT Complex, 60 Ethiraj Salai, Egmore, Chennai-600008.

No. SpecialDGT/TNLSA/CHN/Rural/SBC-TN/2023-24/ Dated: 27.12.2023

Minutes of the 3rd State Broadband Committee (SBC) held at Chief Secretary's conference hall on 10.11.2023 at 03.00 PM.

The 3rd State Broadband Committee (SBC) was held at Chief Secretary's conference hall on 10.11.2023 at 03.00 PM. The meeting was chaired by the Chief Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu.

The following Officials have attended the meeting:

Members of SBC:

- Additional Chief Secretary (Environment, Climate change and Forest Department)
- Additional Chief Secretary (Information Technology and Digital Services Department)

Representatives of Members of SBC:

- Special Secretary (Public Works Department)
- Additional Secretary (Housing & Urban Development Department)
- Deputy Secretary (Rural Development & Panchayat Raj Department)

Special invitees of SBC:

- Managing Director (FAC), ELCOT
- Chief Technology Officer (Information Technology and Digital Services Department)
- Chief General Manager (BSNL- Tamil Nadu Circle)
- Chief General Manager (BSNL-Chennai Telecom District)
- Representative of the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI)
- Representative of the Digital Infrastructure Providers Association (DIPA)
- Senior officers & officers from Government of TN & Department of Telecommunications (DoT)
- Officers from BSNL

- Executives from Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)

The Principal Secretary to Government (Information Technology and Digital Services) welcomed all the participants and briefed the vision and three principles of universality, affordability and quality, the intrinsic features of broadband services. He also mentioned that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India (GoI) has issued amendment to The Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 [As amended from time to time (in 2017, 2021, 2022 and 2023)] and Tamil Nadu Telecom Infrastructure Policy-2022 was issued in alignment with the amendment issued up to 2021.

2. Based on the request of the Additional Director General Telecom (Member Convener), the ADG (Rural) TN-LSA, DoT has presented the power point presentation for the following:

A. Amendment of Tamil Nadu Telecom Infrastructure Policy in alignment with the Indian Telegraph Right of Way(RoW) Policy 2016, as amended from time to time (in 2017, 2021, 2022 and 2023).

(i) Amendment of Tamil Nadu Telecom Infrastructure Policy:

The Government of Tamil Nadu is yet to incorporate the amendments issued in the years 2022 and 2023 by amending The Tamil Nadu Telecommunications Infrastructure Policy 2022. The IT Right of Way (RoW) amendments for the years 2022 and 2023 clearly indicate the fees, charges for restoration, compensation, and provisions regarding the usage of street furniture for the installation of small cells and telegraph lines, as well as the establishment of telegraph infrastructure over private property and temporary overground telegraph infrastructure in case of damage to any existing underground infrastructure, among other provisions.

The presentation from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) covered the salient features of the 2022 and 2023 amendments. In the previous SBC the amendment issued during 2022 to be incorporated was discussed.

Principal Secretary (IT & DS) informed the Chief Secretary that the draft amendment has been circulated to other departments. Replies were received from seven departments, and responses are awaited from two departments, namely Municipal Administration & Water Supply and Water Resource Department.

A D.O. letter seeking concurrence for the amendments was sent from IT&DS Department to the above two departments. Consolidated issues regarding amendments will be brought for discussion. For land issues pertaining to private property, discussions will be held with the Housing and Urban Development Department. He also informed that a study is in progress on a comparison with other states for the 5G rollout.

Action: The Chief Secretary asked the Principal Secretary (IT & DS) to include the Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Highways & Minor ports Department and Principal Secretary to Government, Municipal Administration & Water Supply Department as members of the SBC and asked to conduct a review meeting with the above two departments. He advised to send the proposal at the earliest.

(ii) Status of RoW applications:

Deemed approval has been enabled for applications of new installations, and cases pending more than 60 days are nil. The list of reasons for rejection has been intimated by DoT, and the same has been incorporated in the portal.

Action: The Chief Secretary suggested that the applications submitted for regularization and pending for more than 60 days need to be studied. ELCOT may study the number of cases rejected reason-wise to improvise further.

B. Addendum To Model Building Bye-Laws, 2016:

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has issued an addendum to Model Building Bye-Laws, 2016 in March 2022 regarding provisions for in-building solutions for Digital Communication Infrastructure. Vide Ref: Additional Secretary (Telecom) D.O No.2-11/2022-Policy dated 20th June 2022).

The above point was discussed in the previous SBC and it was stated that action is being taken on these changes.

The Additional Secretary (H& UD Department) informed that Housing and Urban department has proposed the amendments to the Tamil Nadu Combined Development Building Rules, 2019 regarding the provisions for in building solutions for Digital communication Infrastructure as per the Model Building Byelaws. Draft sent for scrutiny by Law Department, remarks were received from Law Department, will be amended accordingly.

Action: Chief Secretary instructed H&UD Department to have regular consultations with Law Department and expedite the same.

C. Implementation of the "Call Before You Dig" (CBuD) App.

It was informed to the committee that most of the States/UTs have issued order for mandating the usage of CBuD application/portal before any excavation activity taken up and recently Government of Puducherry issued the order, and it has been shared with ELCOT.

CBuD utilisation status: Registered users: 1033, Registered excavators: 250 and Number of enquiries raised: 172. Considering the excavations undertaken in the TN State by various agencies the enquiries in the portal shows low figure. The advantage of CBuD App to State/UT is many utilities can be saved from unwanted damages and wasteful cost towards restoration, resulting into saving Crores of expenses for businesses and associated tax loss to Government.

For effective implementation of CBuD App, States were asked by DoT HQ to complete asset owner user configurations by 15-02-23, States may issue directions mandating use of CBuD App by excavation agencies before commencing any type of excavation and capacity building programmes on CbuD.

DoT has come out with a notification dated 03.01.2023 regarding safety of Telecom assets which mandates the use of a common portal/app (CBuD) and prescribes the procedure of giving notices etc. for digging and applicable damages in case of damage to telegraph property. States may come out with similar notifications covering respective areas of Electricity, Gas, Water pipelines etc.

Activities to be taken up by TN State:

- ✓ Mapping of contact details of all the concerned officials of utility/asset owner agencies of the State/UT up to Tehsil is to be ensured on the CBuD platform.
- ✓ All digging agencies must be mandated by the State Govt to commence digging only after raising request through the "Call Before u Dig" App.
- ✓ All excavation approval/permission letter(s) format may include, "Agency which is excavating must use the CBuD App before commencing any excavation on public lands/roads in the State".
- ✓ Enhance the usage of the CBuD app (Awareness workshops, Randomized monitoring, etc).
- ✓ Notification Similar to DoT's notification dated 03.01.2023 regarding safety of Telecom assets may be issued for covering respective areas of Electricity, Gas, Water pipelines etc.

With respect to capacity building programmes on CBuD for Departments/Asset owners and excavation agency users in the state, awareness programme demonstration and training was conducted on 01-09-2023 at Greater Chennai Corporation premises and through VC, other departments have also participated. DoT jointly with TN State Govt ready to train the trainers for utilisation of CBuD App by the concerned officials/agencies.

Action: The Chief Secretary informed that Utilization of CBuD app/portal is important and it saves lot of resources. He directed concerned departments to come up with proposal to make it mandatory. He further informed that Greater Chennai Corporation and Directorate of Municipal Administration has single window for road cutting and digging. Feasibility to integrate this system with CBuD app to be studied.

He asked DoT Officials to conduct training programs to line departments.

Chief Secretary asked PWD Department to go through the DoT Notification dated 03rd Jan 2023 and come up with proposal after suitable consultations and deliberations with all stakeholders.

D. 5G Rollout at faster pace: D.O Letter from the Secretary (Telecom) to Chief Secretary, ref: No. 39-I/2020-DGTHQ/3 dated 11-02-2022, DoT HQ Lr, File No.:5-01/2022-NBM dated 18-07-2022 to Chief Secretary of all States/UTs regarding "Roll out of Small Cells for 5G Networks by leveraging Street Furniture in proposed Towns" & Joint Secretary- DoT D.O No.2-2/2023-Policy dated 21-06-23)

- i. 5G form activation is yet to be activated since RoW policy is yet to be in alignment with IT (RoW) rules amended upto 2023 and 5G Working Committee is yet to be constituted.

Action: Chief Secretary asked IT & DS Department to look into constitution of the 5G Working Committee.

ii. **GIS Mapping of Street Furniture data:**

As on date, 1,217 Traffic lights, 3,051 (500 Only mapped) Government Buildings in Salem, Coimbatore, Nagapattinam and Thiruvavur, 626 Bus Terminals/shelters are mapped.

The data of the street furniture for the 5G rollout such as Electric poles, Traffic light poles, Bus shelters, Government buildings, Streetlights, billboards, etc are to be provided as the details provided is lesser than

what could be provided. The complete data for a street furniture have to be provided to BISAG-N in excel format to map in NMP platform as per DOT format.

Action: Chief Secretary asked IT & DS Department to do the exercise in collaboration with all line departments and the same to be submitted as required.

iii. **5G Use cases in Government Departments and Agencies.**

The National Broad band Mission (NBM) Team conducted State Level Hybrid Conference on 5G Roll out in which various use cases of 5G were explained to line departments. Further DoT TN LSA (field unit) arranged meeting with start-ups and Tamil Nadu IT & DS Department.

Additional DGT, TN LSA requested Tamil Nadu Government to come up with more 5G Use cases as possible from each Department.

The Principal Secretary IT&DS informed that already Fisheries department has commenced 5G use cases.

iv. **Fiberization of Towers:**

Benefits of fiberization are better Quality of Service for mobile coverage, higher internet speeds.

In Tamil Nadu, 46% of BTSs are fiberized. The number of BTSs fiberized by Airtel (22.86%) and VI (27.42%) is comparatively low. Timely resolution of RoW cases related to OFC laying, provision of street infrastructure for laying overhead OFC lines, and the development of modalities to extend the bandwidth or dark fiber of Bharat Net to TSPs for BTS fiberization, along with the creation of a common duct in at least greenfield projects, can enhance fiberization.

Action: The Chief Secretary directed that BharatNet has to be expedited and asked the Principal Secretary (IT &DS) to conduct meetings with all stakeholders periodically for review.

v. **Policy Formulation-Composite Electricity Billing and Green Open Access:** Ref: JS(Telecom) to Minister of Power vide D.O No.2-2/2023-policy dated 28-04-2023 and an Advisory issued by Minister of Power on

“Implementation of composite billing scheme for multiple connections like Telecom Service Providers” vide Lr No. 23/1/23 -R&R dated 24.05.2023 and Secretary (Telecom) to Chief Secretary D.O No. 39-I/2020-DGTHQ/3 dated 11-02-2022.

Action: Chief Secretary said that Principal Secretary (IT & DS) should have consultations with Energy Department and DISCOMs and come up with a proposal for implementation.

Ministry of Power notification “The Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy through Green Energy Open Access) Rules, 2022 “, allowed aggregation of loads within the same division for 100 kW eligibility and which have been notified by Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

Action: Chief Secretary informed that this is a larger issue and not just confined to Telecom industry hence more deliberations and consultations required. He advised Energy Department to expedite the consultations with all stakeholders and submit the proposal to Government at the earliest.

E. Implementation of the Digital Communication Readiness Index (DCRI) Framework:

This point was discussed earlier in the 1st SBC meeting. The DCRI framework was circulated to all States/UTs and preparatory time was given up to 31-03-2023, States/UTs will be evaluated for this full year (FY 2023-24) and ranking also will be announced shortly after March 2024.

Secretary (Telecom) to Chief Secretary of all States/UTs vide D.O No.18-39/2022-ERU dated 17-02-2023 requested to form Inter Departmental Coordination Committee (IDCC) of the mapped Departments, under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary and Department of IT&DS as the Nodal Department and IDCC should meet periodically.

It was informed that documentation of best practices under each sub-pillar of DCRI is required to be initiated if not started.

Chief Secretary mentioned that DCRI has to be given high importance and care has to be taken for collecting data in a systematic matter which truly reflects the Initiatives undertaken by Government and Outcomes.

MD-ELCOT informed that the ELCOT has asked for nomination of one Officer of senior rank for the IDCC and once the committee constituted it will review the progress of all parameters in the DCRI Questionnaire in periodic manner.

F. Prime Minister 500 Aspirational Block program:

As a part of 500 Aspirational Block Program, 16 Blocks from 16 Districts are selected in the State of Tamil Nadu, consisting of 526 Gram Panchayats. In This program's Key performance indicators framework is having 5 Themes among which "Basic Infrastructure" is one of the theme, and in which one of the KPI is Internet connectivity availability in GPs. It is pertinent to note that out of 526 GPs, 21 GPs, not having coverage have been planned to cover under 4G Saturation Project taken up by BSNL under USOF.

Among 526 GPs, 299 GPs are having BharatNet Service ready status.

TANFINET MD informed that 139 internet connections given so far and by end of January'24, roll out will be completed.

Action: Chief Secretary said that BharatNet progress has to be expedited and special focus has to be given to GPs in Aspirational blocks.

G. USOF Funded BSNL 4G Saturation Program

This point was discussed earlier in previous (2nd) SBC meeting. To cover 241 uncovered villages under this scheme, there are 219 new proposed towers/sites, including 186 revenue sites (allotted), 10 BSNL-owned rental sites, and 23 forest sites.

Among the 23 forest sites, permission was received for 8 sites. The status of the remaining 15 forest sites are as follows: 4 are FCA sites from Kanyakumari district, having crossed stage-I compliance given by BSNL and are now with the DFO for stage-II approval. Additionally, 11 sites have been referred to the National Board (FCA+WLC-9 from Kanyakumari (8) and Erode (1), and FRA+WLC-2 at Tiruppur).

Chief Secretary informed that state is putting all out efforts for the success of the project as it benefits the far-flung areas.

H. Common Duct-Integrated Planning.

A common duct provides a robust and flexible infrastructure that supports reliable telecommunication services. The advantages have been presented during the meeting.

The Additional DGT mentioned that the DoT has shared the common duct guidelines obtained from GIFT CITY and NHAI with the Puducherry Government, and the same will be shared with the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Action: Chief Secretary informed that the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has undertaken a pilot project for the Common Duct in specific locations. He directed the Highways & Minor Ports Department to examine the policy for the Common Duct after due consultation and deliberation with all stakeholders.

Chief Secretary asked Department of Telecommunications (DoT) officials to obtain a list of best practices and guidelines from other states/union territories (UTs) and public sector undertakings (PSUs). Additional DGT, TN LSA, said that it will be arranged.

I. Progress on BharatNet rollout in Tamil Nadu and efforts to enhance last-mile connectivity:

This point was discussed in previous (2nd) SBC.

BharatNet status (as on 09-11-2023): Out of 12,525 GPs in Tamil Nadu 6,690 GPs are visible in S-NOC.

The Last Mile Connectivity (LMC) to access broadband or internet services can be provided through Wi-Fi in public places or any other suitable broadband technology, including FTTH at Government institutions such as schools, hospitals, post offices, anganwadis, police stations, etc.

The Principal Secretary to Government, IT&DS informed that 2 packages are in slow progress and meeting is scheduled to expedite.

Action: Chief Secretary directed the Principal Secretary (IT &DS), MD TANFINET and CTO that all out efforts need to be taken for expediting the Bharat Net and its utilization.

J. Representatives from industry bodies such as COAI and DIPA (special invitees of SBC) joined through video conferencing (VC) and briefed the participants on their issues.

(i) The rejection of RoW cases:

The rejection of applications by District Nodal Officers (DNOs) is occurring without valid reasons. ELCOT has been facilitating resolution through regular meetings with Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and District Nodal Officers every week to address issues in a timely manner. Similarly, regular monthly meetings conducted by DNOs with district officials and TSPs will ensure the clearance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for towers and Optical Fiber Cables (OFC). The industry requests that District Collectors be instructed accordingly. The LSA office is playing a crucial role in these District Level Coordination Committee (DLCC) meetings, clarifying many issues at the field level, which is commendable. They should be utilized for addressing radiation-related issues.

Action: Chief Secretary asked the IT & DS Department and ELCOT to conduct coordination meetings regularly.

(ii) Municipal Administration Dept:

- ✓ **Common rates suggested; to be issued by CMA/MAWS:**
On the request of TSPs, a proposal to adopt common rates for Municipal bodies was discussed. While GCC preferred to have its own rates, all other Corporations, Municipalities, and TPs worked out their own common rates. Orders are awaited. A request has been made to issue the order for GCC and other local bodies separately. This will reduce time and manpower, and authorities will receive restoration charges upfront along with the process fee.
- ✓ **Property tax being asked for from TSPs for towers:**
Notices are served on TSPs to pay Property Tax for towers. Since TSPs take land or building rooftop on lease, such notices, if at all, have to be issued to landlords. A case is pending with the Hon'ble High Court. It is sincerely requested that until the disposal of the case, such notices may be avoided. GCC and other ULBs may kindly be instructed accordingly.

Chief Secretary informed COAI and DIPA to pay all applicable taxes on time. Hence, he advised them to settle the issue in an amicable manner.

- ✓ **Levy of Dangerous & Offensive (D&O) trade not applicable for Towers:**
A few local bodies issued notices claiming D & O trade license fees, treating the tower as dangerous and offensive trade because of radiation. There are court judgments to the effect that radiation can't be a cause for

denying permissions as there is no proof. So, it is not to be brought under the D and O license. Instructions may please be issued accordingly.

Action: Chief Secretary asked the Principal Secretary (IT & DS) to coordinate with concerned departments and resolve the issue at the earliest.

(iii) **SIPCOT, SIDCO collecting Annual Track Rent (ATR) even after G.O(MS). No.4, dated 25.01.2022:**

The central notification and State G.O. by the IT and DS department have done away with Annual Track Rent (ATR), and instead, process fees are introduced. This is applicable to all authorities under the State Government, including PSUs. The said GO is yet to be adopted by State PSUs. TSPs have to pay under protest to get permissions. A request for instruction may be issued centrally to all State PSUs to adhere to G.O(MS). No.4 dated 25.01.22. Moreover, their Portal allows only 15 days for payment, and on the 16th day, the penalty starts automatically. TSPs need at least 4 weeks for payment as the internal process is there. Request modification of the Portal enabling 4 weeks' time.

Action: Chief Secretary directed the IT & DS Department and ELCOT to conduct coordination meetings regularly and sensitize PSU authorities regarding the Government Orders.

(iv) State Highways authority is issuing High-value Demand Notes. It is requested that common rates may be adopted. While laying UG cables, restoration charges are demanded by authorities. The GO by the State and Central notification provides for restoration by TSPs or, if the department insists on Department restoration, required restoration charges are to be paid to authorities. But by default, all authorities prefer to collect restoration charges in practice, and they want to do the restoration. When calculating the charges, each Division works out with varying widths of excavation while the actual open-cut width is only less than 30 cms. Even if an allowance is made for additional width, it would be 50 cms only. But this is taken as 1.00 m or 1.50 m in several cases. A uniform width of 30 cms may be adopted. Similarly, rates shall be available for trenching in mud portion, berm portion, or BT portion. If the rates are standardized, TSPs can pay along with process fees, and the manpower involved in preparing such estimations/workings will be saved. Request to instruct the State High authority to adopt common rates for restoration charges. Also, where both TSP and Authority agree self-restoration by TSPs, it shall be allowed.

Action: Chief Secretary asked the Principal Secretary (IT & DS) to coordinate with concerned departments and asked them to come up with a solution.

- (v) **Forest Dept:** Many applications seeking ROW permissions for Forest stretches. Cooperation is required from the Forest department – even after procedures are simplified by the centre, the pendency is aging between 5 months to 1 year. It has been requested, if the timeline of 60 days is provided, the waiting period will come down. Fortnightly FRCs meetings are a welcome feature, but RO can interfere only if a delay is there in stage 2 clearances.

Action: Chief Secretary asked Principal Secretary (IT & DS) to coordinate with the Forest department.

- (vi) **MoRTH/NHAI Expansion projects, permissions being denied:** Expansion of roads by NHAI/ NH is taken up in TN and citing this as a reason, ROW permissions are denied. This leads to telecom connectivity issues and dropping of calls enroute the Highways. TSPs have a mandate to ensure all Highway routes are connected. If TSPs are allowed to lay fiber cable during execution itself, it will save damages to roads. After laying of roads, the defect liability period starts, and TSPs are not allowed to lay cable for at least 2 years thus depriving customers to have telecom connectivity. Being taken up centrally by the industry, the State may also represent to MoRTH in this regard.

Action: Chief Secretary asked Principal Secretary (IT & DS) to coordinate with concerned departments and asked them to come up with a solution.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks by Principal Secretary, IT&DS Department.

The minutes of the meeting issued with the approval of Chief Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu.

Director (Rural),
O/o Special DGT, DoT, Tamil Nadu LSA
Chennai – 600008.

To

1. PS to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Tamilnadu.
2. All members of SBC.
3. All Special invitees of SBC.