

75
Azad Ka
Amrit Mahotsav



Towards Digitally



Telecom Reforms

2021



राष्ट्रीय ब्रॉडबैंड अभियान
National Broadband Mission





“ It is a watershed moment for the telecom sector, which plays a critical role in connecting and empowering our nation. Today's reforms approved by the Cabinet are a win-win for the sector and consumers. They ensure sectoral growth and job opportunities.”



Introduction

Empowering Citizens, Empowering India

Digital India programme envisions to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Digital communications infrastructure and services are key enablers and critical determinants in achieving this vision.

The digital transformation of critical sectors in our country like health, education, agriculture etc. rests on the availability of broadband. From communication to working from home in the new normal, internet has been the backbone of smooth functioning of day-to-day affairs. This has made the availability of broadband more critical.



‘Ease of Doing Business’ along with ‘Ease of Living’ has been the focus of the Government. Growth in Telecom sector has been affected by litigations and the sector is financially stressed. The ideal way to de-stress the sector is to identify root causes of the litigation and the financial stress.

Telecom industry is highly capital intensive. Rapid changes in technology are clearly visible in migration of mobile technology from 2G to 5G. Growth of the telecom infrastructure is directly dependent upon the financial viability of the players in the sector.

While telecom sector managed to keep up with the unprecedented increase in the demand for enabling digital services during the pandemic, the financial distress of the telecom sector needed attention.



What was the need for the reform?

Telecom service requires continuous cash flow and investment. To address the dire need to relieve the sector from the financial burdens and take initiatives to boost the sector, Government of India has approved some bold and much awaited reforms. This reform package contains both structural and process reforms. This has been designed to reduce financial and compliance burden on the service providers.

What are the highlights of the reforms?

A qualitative change in the lives of consumers is envisaged through these reforms by enabling the horizons of the industry. These much-awaited reforms are likely to change the landscape of the telecom sector. The impetus provided to the sector by these reforms will in turn deliver better value to the consumers. A healthy and flourishing sector also needs manpower to keep it up and running. With this vision, these reforms are introduced to bring the telecom sector out of distress and in turn help creation of jobs as well.

There are nine structural and five procedural reforms approved by the Government which can further be classified as:





Citizen Centric Reforms

Any reform initiative of Government of India directly or indirectly is centred towards its citizens. Direct reforms aim towards easing of consumers' processes. Indirect reforms will eventually lead to job creation. All such initiatives are meant to be citizen friendly and convenient. Know your customer (KYC) reforms, is one such reform. This will enable easy on-boarding of customers.

How will the KYC reform, help the citizens?

This reform introduces simplified consumer friendly methods such as e-KYC and Self-KYC for obtaining new mobile connection. It enables OTP based Conversion from prepaid to postpaid and vice-versa.



KYC Reforms

- Aadhaar based e-KYC.
- Self KYC.
- OTP based conversion from postpaid to prepaid or vice-versa.

How Aadhaar based e-KYC will be operationalized?

This is a paperless, digital process in which the demographic details along with photograph of the customer will be received online by the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) from the Aadhaar database. UIDAI will charge TSPs One Rupee only (inclusive of GST) for this service.

What is the process of the self-KYC

In this mode, KYC will be done online using Aadhaar or DigiLocker based authentication. SIM will be delivered at the customer's address.

What is OTP based conversion?

Subscribers will be able to convert from Prepaid to Postpaid and vice-versa using OTP based authentication.



Spectrum Reforms

Spectrum reforms have always been the core of telecom sector reforms. From easy access to spectrum by delicensing several frequency bands to spectrum trading and harmonization, it has always been very important to the industry as well as Government.

What major spectrum reforms have been approved in this package?

Realising the importance of spectrum reforms, the Government has approved the following:

- Sharing of spectrum has been allowed between two service providers without any financial burden. The requirement of payment of additional 0.5% of AGR as Spectrum Usage Charges (SUC) has been removed.
- The validity period of spectrum acquisition in future auctions has been increased from 20 to 30 years.
- Service providers can surrender the spectrum after a period of 10 years.
- Spectrum auctions will be conducted regularly on annual basis.
- Levy of Spectrum Usage Charges (SUC) on the spectrum to be acquired in future auctions has been removed.
- Requirement of submitting a Financial Bank Guarantee (FBG) to securitize the annual deferred spectrum instalments in future auction has been removed.



How spectrum reforms will benefit the sector?

These reforms will provide flexibility to telecom service providers. TSPs will be able to plan future networks and investments more efficiently. Removal of charges and enabling sharing will also reduce the financial burden of service providers.

It will contribute towards efficient use of scarce resources thereby making a more competitive and robust sector. This will in turn enable a healthy telecom industry ultimately leading to better service quality.

Spectrum Reforms

- Spectrum acquisition period increased from 20 to 30 years.
- Spectrum can be surrendered after 10 years.
- SUC removed for spectrum acquired in future auctions.



Reforms to Address Financial Stress in Telecom Sector

Telecom is one of the most dynamic sectors and any shift in technology requires newer infrastructure. While the country is transitioning from 2G to 4G networks, very soon we shall see a shift from 4G to 5G networks. This will require more capital to be deployed into the sector. A healthy sector is required to improve the quality of service and investment which will in turn connect the unconnected.

Financial reforms are critical for the industry from sustainability standpoint. These much-awaited reforms are likely to boost the sector and enable India to leapfrog towards the next generation of digital communication.



What major reforms have been approved to address the financial stress in the sector?

These reforms are

- Non-telecom revenue has been removed from the definition of "Adjusted Gross Revenue". This solves one of the most contentious issues that the telecom sector was facing.
- Payment of interest on shortfall of payment of various fees/charges like license fee, spectrum charges etc. has been rationalised.
- Annual compounding of interest and penalty on interest has been removed.
- Four-year moratorium to pay AGR dues and spectrum auction instalments with applicable interest has been allowed.
- Provisions to convert interest payable during moratorium into equity to be held by the Government, has been permitted.
- Requirement of Bank Guarantees has been reduced to 20% for all service providers

How the revised definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) will help the sector?

This reform introduces a new definition of AGR which excludes non-telecom revenue. It will encourage healthy competition amongst TSPs by encouraging more entrants to the sector. It will also minimize future litigations in the sector.

This reform will boost investor confidence in the sector. It will add to capital investment capacities of TSPs for growth of telecom infrastructure for 4G and 5G. This will give an impetus to network growth in rural and remote areas.

How these reforms will benefit the sector and the citizens?

The reduction in financial burden will enable telecom service providers to invest in improving their networks. This will enable better services and increased coverage. A healthier sector will help TSPs in reaching out to unconnected areas. Ultimately, a healthy telecom sector will lead to an improved quality of service for citizens and job creation in the sector.

Addressing Financial Stress

- Certainty for the industry to be enabled by auction calendar.
- Rationalization of interests on shortfall of payment of various levies.
- Annual compounding of interests and penalty removed.
- AGR redefined to exclude non-telecom revenue.





Ease of Doing Business Reforms

To bridge the 'Digital Divide' in India, there is a need for creation of a robust telecom infrastructure across the nation that can deliver high speed telecom services at affordable prices.

Telecom infrastructure enhancement mainly lags due to the procedural issues. Installation of telecom towers is one of the key drivers of penetration of internet in the country.



What ease of doing business reforms have been carried out?

Following reforms that will simplify the approvals, ease procurement and investments in the sector have been approved.

- Procurement of wireless equipment has been simplified. TSPs can import wireless equipment on the basis of an auto generated self-declaration certificate. This will replace the existing system of obtaining an Import License from Wireless Planning & Coordination Wing before importing wireless products.
- Simplified tower approval process based on self-declaration through Saral Sanchar Portal of DoT has been introduced. Integration of relevant portals, like civil aviation, Joint Communication and Electronic Staff (JCES) etc. with DoT portal for simplified approval processes will be done.

- 100% FDI has been permitted under automatic route in telecom sector. However, this will be subject to Press Note 3 (2020) series guidelines on investments from countries sharing land border with India.
- Digitization of customer application forms has been allowed. This will save cost and reduce compliance burdens. Paperless, secure, digital applications will improve customer experience. This will also lower the cost of maintaining warehouses and ease compliance burden.

Ease of Doing Business

- 100% FDI is permitted under automatic route in telecom sector subject to requisite guidelines.
- Simplified tower approval process based on self-declaration.
- "Customer Application Form" digitized to reduce compliance burden.

How these reforms will benefit the sector?

These reforms will enable TSPs to rollout networks with lesser compliance burden. The ease of application process and investments in the sector will ultimately lead to better customer service and faster roll out to unconnected areas.



The telecom sector has a multiplier effect on various sectors of the economy. These reforms will enable large scale transformation in the telecom sector. This will lead to growth in all sectors riding the telecom connectivity.

Telecom sector has been and will be critical to ensure inclusivity of every citizen irrespective of geographical, demographic or social barriers. Therefore, a series of such reforms have been carried out in this sector. This has been done with a focus towards providing robust telecom connectivity to the uncovered areas. The Government revenue has been secured along with reducing the stress and burden on the industry.



Encouraging Words

 **Narendra Modi** ✓
@narendramodi

It is a watershed moment for the telecom sector, which plays a critical role in connecting and empowering our nation.

Today's reforms approved by the Cabinet are a win-win for the sector and consumers. They ensure sectoral growth and job opportunities.
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePa...>

7:56 PM · Sep 15, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone





“

The telecom sector is one the prime movers of the economy and the key enabler for making India a digital society. I welcome the government's announcement of reforms and relief measures”

MUKESH AMBANI
CHAIRMAN AND MD, RIL



“

These reforms demonstrate the government's firm commitment to ensuring healthy growth of the industry. The measures also reflect the decisiveness of... the government to address longstanding issues”

KM BIRLA
CHAIRMAN, ADITYA BIRLA GROUP



“


The latest reforms ensure that the industry is able to invest fearlessly and support India's digital ambitions. We also compliment the Minister of Communications and FM for their support”

SUNIL MITTAL
CHAIRMAN, BHARTI AIRTEL

 **Confederation of Indian Industry** ✓
@FollowCII

Today's #CabinetDecisions on the #TelecomSector will go a long way in restoring its financial stability and ensuring healthy competition and strong players. ~ @CB_CII, Director General, CII on #TelecomReforms. @AshwiniVaishnaw @pib_comm @DoT_India



6:25 PM · Sep 15, 2021 · Twitter for Android

 **COAI**
@ConnectCOAI

We welcome @DoT_India orders on the simplifying #KYC Process. It will streamline the process, make it more convenient & time-ef fective for the end consumers. We're looking forward to more such announcements corroborating the #TelecomReforms & soon we will adhere to the process.



Encouraging Words

 **Neeraj Bajpai**  [@NeerajCNBC](#)

KM Birla Says Reforms Announced Today Will Go A Long Way In Unshackling The Telecom Sector Reforms Demonstrate Govt's Firm Commitment To Ensuring Healthy Ind Growth Measures Reflect The Decisiveness Of PM Modi, Telecom Min, And Govt [@CNBC_Awaaz](#)

8:26 PM · Sep 15, 2021 · Twitter Web App

 **Shekhar Gupta**  [@ShekharGupta](#)

Our [#50WordEdit](#) on Modi Govt's telecom reforms



 **Swarajya**  [@SwarajyaMag](#)

Telecom Reforms: Govt Simplifies KYC Processes, Now Get Mobile SIM At Doorstep Using Aadhar, DigiLocker Documents



[swarajyamag.com](#)
Telecom Reforms: Govt Simplifies KYC Processes, Now Get Mobile SIM At Door...
These reforms include - Aadhaar based e-KYC; self-KYC and OTP based conversion of mobile connection.

10:06 AM · Sep 22, 2021 · TweetDeck



 **BowerGroupAsia** [@BowerGroupAsia](#) · Oct 1

"India's [#telecom](#) reforms are expected to generate employment opportunities, promote healthy competition and protect the interests of consumers," [@BowerGroupAsia](#) Managing Director [@Ratan_Shrivasta](#) writes for Asia Street: [bowergroupasia.com/asia-st-why-in...](#)



 **NRI Herald** [@nriherald](#) · Sep 15

NRI Herald Australia reports [#breaking](#): In a massive reform, Indian government increases the FDI cap to 100% FDI from 49% earlier via direct route in India's massive Telecom sector.

It is expected to finish the cash crunch within this sector and bring over \$50b in investments.

 **Rajiv Kumar**  [@RajivKumar1](#) · Sep 15

The slew of historic reforms will relieve the much stressed [#telecom](#) sector; the approval of the 9 structural reforms & 5 process reforms will undoubtedly lead to unprecedented development; with more players & more competition, better options & services for consumers.

 **Rahul Shivshankar**  [@RShivshankar](#) · Sep 15

Telecom license raj ends. Slew of **reforms** to relieve stressed sector. More players, more competition, more price options for consumers, less monopoly. Politically "cronysism" charge also blunted.



National News Coverage

Times of India, New Delhi

Friday, 17th September 2021; Page: 20

Width: 30.77 cms; Height: 29.35 cms; a3r; ID: 26.2021-09-17.163

This Call Won't Drop

Telecom package will likely lead to a paradigm shift in consumer experience

Prashant Singhal



The telecom sector has played a pivotal role in keeping us connected and a mobile phone is vital to our life, whether at work or play. But telecom has been financially stressed, and for far too long.

GoI announced bold reforms, bringing in slew of measures to address the dire situation. These reforms will have a domino effect – empowering consumers with improved coverage, quality of service, technological shift from 2G to 4G, embracing 5G and ease of adoption. The measures have the potential to fast-track digital spread.

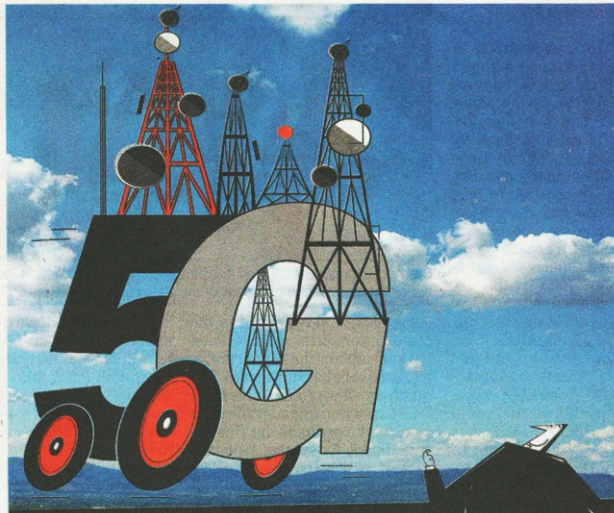
Making consumers 'atmanirbhar'

GoI has permitted self, app-based know-your-customer (KYC) process, which will allow users to validate their credentials remotely, followed by contact-less delivery of SIMs at their premises. Which means there is no need for consumers to visit the physical store or for operators' executives to visit consumer premises for KYC validation. This will empower consumers and ensure faster onboarding.

Moreover, shifting from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa will not need fresh KYC anymore. This will help to seamlessly shift between prepaid and postpaid services. The process can further be simplified by removing KYC requirement for any additional service such as fixed broadband or pay-TV subscribed through the same operator.

Another broadband 'booster'

The relaxation or moratorium of four years on spectrum pay-outs and Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dues will ease operators' balance sheets and free up much needed working capital. Operators are likely to make weighty investment in 4G expansion. This, coupled with affordable handsets being manufactured in India on the back of PLI scheme may lead to accelerated shift from 2G to 4G. And 4G users who have been struggling with



data drops, are likely to be delighted with a 5-on-5 signal strength bar.

Lightning fast 5G

5G spectrum auction has been announced for the first quarter of calendar year 2022. Participation from the industry in the auction is likely to be promising, since there are hints of spectrum base price revisions. Further, removal of spectrum usage charges on 5G will make it more viable and could fast-track service availability. Faster rollout of 5G services will enable India to become a global innovation hub.

5G is revolutionary. The user experience of mobile internet will be completely different with 5G. Ever-greater speeds and much-lower latencies will allow for the download of an HD movie in 10-40 seconds.

5G is set to unleash innovative service offerings for Indian consumers. Consumers will have access to an array of immersive content-related services, made more real with elements of virtual and augmented reality, using specialised headsets or glasses.

Picture this, sports enthusiasts can

Picture this, sports enthusiasts can have amplified in-stadium experience. They can watch larger than life images of their favourite players towering over the stadium or watch the game through the player's perspective in an augmented reality set-up. Virtual games aficionados can be teleported to e-sports environment. One will feel and experience the game, as if playing it in real life situation. Consumers can watch UHD, 4K and 8K content and make 3D video calls

have amplified in-stadium experience. They can watch larger-than-life images of their favourite players towering over the stadium or watch the game through the player's perspective in an

augmented reality set-up. Virtual games aficionados can be teleported to e-sports environment. One will feel and experience the game, as if playing it in real life situation. Consumers can watch UHD, 4K and 8K content and make 3D video calls.

5G-based holographic telepresence can be used to beam a professor/teacher located in the city to a classroom in a remote area. One can be at two or three or many places at once, finally, 5G-enabled telemedicine can be a game changer to improve health of people in less accessible places.

5G can add \$450 billion to the Indian economy by 2040. It will lead to more job creation, bolster the startup ecosystem and fuel the digital aspiration of the nation. 5G has the potential to change the socio-economic character of India.

Dabangg 4.0 in the making?

The AGR definition has been rationalised to prospectively exclude non-telco services from the computation. This move not only has a positive financial impact but can attract a lot of innovation. One can see operators' offering end-to-end adjacent services. Consumers can potentially buy content, healthcare consultation, e-learning courses, or even their next pair of jeans through a telco.

International 'khalidis' in India

GoI has allowed 100% FDI through the automatic route in the sector. This is a welcome move. It will encourage investment in the country and up the ante on the innovation index. Healthy competition amongst operators and a stable environment will allow customers to opt for differentiated experience and taste innovation from around the world.

To sum up, GoI's wide-ranging reforms can not only improve telecom's financial health but also re-energise telecom. India can get back to being a telecom blockbuster story. Millions of Indians will have superlative connectivity, the digital divide will shrink and innovation will accelerate. It for all purposes, a new beginning.

The writer is Technology, Media, Telecom Leader, Emerging Markets, EY



National News Coverage

Pioneer, Delhi
Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1
Width: 49.78 cms; Height: 35.19 cms; a3r; ID: 7.2021-09-16.8

Govt OK's big telecom reforms

Allows 4-year moratorium on dues, 100% FDI, PLI scheme for auto, drones

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved major reforms in telecom sector by handing out a four-year moratorium on payment of dues. The Cabinet also approved 100 per cent FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in telecom via the automatic route. The Government also came out with a ₹26,058 crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for auto, auto-components and drone industries.

The four-year moratorium in the AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) dues is a major relief to telecom players Vodafone-Idea, facing acute financial problems, and Airtel. They have a combined dues of more than ₹80,000 crore.

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi also approved a slew of measures in spectrum usage charges, sharing of spectrum and 100 per cent FDI in telecom sector.

Briefing reporters on the decisions taken by the Cabinet, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said nine structural reforms for the telecom sector were approved. The definition

of AGR, which had been a major reason for the stress in the sector, has been rationalised by excluding non-telecom revenue of telecom companies.

AGR refers to revenues that are considered for payment of statutory dues.

The Minister said spectrum user charges will also be rationalised. In other measures expected to ease the cash flow issues being faced by most big telcos.

The FDI easing rule will apply to all areas of telecom, including the manufacture of infrastructure. Earlier, 100 per cent FDI was allowed in telecom equipment manufacturing and provision of IT-enabled services, but only 49 per cent came under the automatic route.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said that ₹26,058 crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for auto, auto-components and drone industries will enhance India's manufacturing capabilities. The PLI scheme will incentivise the emergence of advanced automotive technologies global supply chain in India, added Thakur.



Union Ministers Anurag Thakur and Ashwini Vaishnav during a Press briefing on the Cabinet decisions at National Media Centre in New Delhi on Wednesday

It is estimated that over a period of five years, the PLI scheme for the automobile and auto components industry will lead to fresh investment of over ₹42,500 crore, incremental production of over ₹2.3 lakh crore and will create additional employment opportunities of over 7.5 lakh jobs, Thakur said. The PLI scheme for automobile and drone industries is part of the overall announcement of PLI schemes for 13 sectors made earlier during the Union Budget 2021-22, with an outlay of ₹1.97 lakh crore.

The scheme for the auto sector envisages overcoming the cost disabilities to the industry for the manufacture of advanced automotive technology products in India. The incentive structure will encourage industry to make fresh investments for the indigenous global supply chain of Advanced Automotive Technology products, Thakur said. The scheme for the auto sector is open to existing automotive companies as well as new investors who are currently not in automobile or auto component manufacturing business. The scheme has two components — Champion OEM Incentive scheme and Component Champion Incentive scheme.

The Champion OEM Incentive scheme is a "sales value linked" scheme, applicable on battery electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles of all segments, he said.

MAJOR REFORM PUSH

• The four-year moratorium in the AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) dues is a major relief to telecom players Vodafone-Idea, facing acute financial problems, and Airtel. They have a combined dues of more than ₹80,000 crore

• In another significant decision, the Cabinet cleared 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the telecom sector through automatic route, which will encourage greater participation of players. However, all safeguards will apply, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said

• The Cabinet also rationalised definition of AGR by excluding non-telecom revenue of



telecom players from payment of statutory levies

• Bank guarantees have also been rationalised, while interest rates too have been modified with removal of penalties

• For future spectrum auctions, no bank guarantees will be needed. Also the spectrum tenure has been increased from 20 years to 30 years. Surrendering of spectrum will only be allowed after 10 years, the Cabinet decided

New Indian Express, Chennai
Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1
Width: 73.15 cms; Height: 31.50 cms; a3r; ID: 23.2021-09-16.6

Stress-buster reforms for telecom sector

100% FDI through automatic route; 4-year moratorium on all government dues; non-telecom revenues out of AGR

JONATHAN ANANDA @Chennai

THE Centre on Wednesday opened up the telecom sector to 100% foreign direct investment through the automatic route and announced a slew of measures to lift the distressed industry. These include a four-year moratorium on government dues such as adjusted gross revenue (AGR) and spectrum payments, besides rationalisation of spectrum charges.

The government also tweaked the definition of AGR to confine it to telecom revenues, seeking to ease the ₹1.52 lakh crore burden on telcos caused

by a 2019 Supreme Court order that held that the existing definition of AGR included non-telecom revenues.

The moratorium on AGR dues provides an annual cash flow breather of around ₹14,000 crore for the industry, while the break on spectrum dues gives another ₹32,000 crore of annual cash flow relief, according to rating agency ICRA. Companies opting for moratorium need to pay interest on the amount and such firms will have the option to pay this interest by way of equity. Guidelines for the same will be finalised by the finance ministry.

The relief on AGR and statutory dues will have a big impact on freeing up the telecom industry's cash flow. Upcoming AGR due payments had placed serious financial constraints on Bharti Airtel and Vodafone

Idea, which were struggling to arrange large-scale capital expenditure required for network upgradation and expansion.

AGR dues of cash-strapped Vodafone Idea amounted to ₹58,000 crore and for Airtel, it

₹26,058 crore incentive scheme for auto sector

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Production Linked Incentive scheme for the auto sector to promote advanced automotive technologies, including clean energy vehicles, with incentives worth ₹26,058 crore over a five-year period | P15



was ₹43,000 crore. Reliance Jio only had to pay ₹190 crore as AGR dues by virtue of being a late entrant to the market.

Among the other reforms announced by Union telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnav are an 80% reduction in bank guarantees against licence fees. From now on, there will be no need to produce multiple bank guarantees to secure licences, he said. Interest rates and penalties on delayed statutory payments have also been cut, while the tenure of spectrum licences for future auctions has been raised from 20 to 30 years.

With the enhanced FDI limit, the Centre expects to attract fresh investment in the sector.



National News Coverage

Statesman, Delhi

Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1

Width: 43.18 cms; Height: 51.14 cms; a3; ID: 4.2021-09-16.16

Govt okays incentives for telecom industry

Measures will provide relief to Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 15 SEPTEMBER

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a wide slew of measures aimed at providing relief to the stressed telecom sector, by way of granting a four year moratorium on payment of statutory dues, rationalising Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) and allowing 100 per cent FDI in the telecom sector via the automatic route.

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi also decided to rationalise Bank Guarantee requirements, including by considerably reducing such requirements against License Fee (LF) and other levies.

The package was expected to boost 4G proliferation, infuse liquidity and create an enabling environment for investment in 5G networks, said Union telecom minister Ashwani Vaishnav while briefing the media on the Cabinet decision.



The reforms include rationalisation of AGR definition, reduction in bank guarantees to be made against license fee and other levies, rationalisation of interest rates and removal of penalties on delayed payment of license fee and Spectrum Usage Charge and no bank guarantee for future auctions.

He said the Cabinet has approved nine structural and five procedural reforms with additional relief measures for the telecom sector.

These reforms were expected to protect and generate employment opportunities, promote healthy competition, protect interests of consumers, and encourage investment. The move would also reduce regulatory burden on Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), the minister said.

The government excluded non-telecom revenues from the definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) prospectively. Telecom companies have to pay a prefixed percentage of AGR to the government as statutory levies but this will apply prospectively. The inclusion of non-

telecom revenues had led to thousands of crores of dues piling up on companies like Vodafone Idea, pushing them to the verge of bankruptcy. For past dues, the Cabinet allowed a moratorium or deferment of up to four years in annual payments, though telecom companies will have to pay a small interest during the moratorium period.

The structural reforms also include rationalisation of interest and penalties, no bank guarantees for future auctions, increased spectrum tenure from 20 to 30 years, while spectrum can be surrendered after 10 years.

The reforms also encouraged spectrum sharing, the minister said. The measures should provide relief to

companies such as Vodafone Idea that have to pay thousands of crores in unprovisioned past statutory dues.

Telecom firms such as Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Reliance Communications owed nearly Rs 92,000 crore to the Centre as license fee and Rs 41,000 crore as spectrum usage fees.

Among the procedural reforms, the government fixed auctioning of spectrum in the last quarter of every financial year, stopped cumbersome requirements of licenses and replaced it with self declaration, revised the rate of E-KYC to just Rs 1, replaced paper customer acquisition forms with digital application and eased norms for SACFA clearance for telecom towers, the minister said.



National News Coverage

Tribune, Delhi

Friday, 17th September 2021; Page: 6

Width: 32.77 cms; Height: 45.04 cms; a3; ID: 5.2021-09-17.78

Telecom reforms

Ensure healthy competition to revitalise industry

OVER six years after the launch of the Digital India programme, aimed at transforming the country into a 'digitally empowered society and knowledge economy', the Union Government has approved a major relief package for the debt-burdened telecom sector. Such a bailout plan was long overdue, considering that one of the major players, Vodafone Idea, was on the brink of bankruptcy. In all, Vodafone and other telecom firms owed about Rs 92,000 crore to the Centre as licence fee and Rs 41,000 crore as spectrum usage fees. The confidence-building measures include a four-year break for companies from paying statutory dues, the scrapping of the Spectrum Usage Charge for airwaves acquired in future spectrum auctions, and 100 per cent FDI (foreign direct investment) in the sector under the automatic route. The breather should hopefully spur the firms to overcome their financial woes and provide affordable and improved services.

The government has claimed that the reforms package is adequate for the survival of the existing players and will ensure robust competition, besides paving the way for the entry of new players. This is easier said than done as a duopoly has become well-entrenched in the industry in recent years. What's needed is a level playing field that can attract new firms and encourage investment, along with a sustainable tariff regime. From the consumer's point of view, the more choices he has the merrier.

India's telecom sector has the potential to spearhead an economic turnaround. The nation accounts for the world's second-largest telecommunication market (after China) with a subscriber base of over 115 crore. It is estimated that over the next five years, the rise in mobile phone penetration and the drop in data costs will add 50 crore new Internet users. The disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past year and a half have driven more people towards digital platforms. Still, the digital divide persists and the government has a key role to play in making digital resources universally accessible. Much will depend on how transparently and effectively the reforms are implemented.



National News Coverage

Tribune, Delhi
Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1
Width: 65.29 cms; Height: 45.81 cms; a3r; ID: 5.2021-09-16.10

BIG-BANG REFORMS IN TELECOM SECTOR

4-yr loan moratorium, 100% FDI

MUKESH RANJAN
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15 The Centre today approved the much-awaited relief package for the stressed telecom sector that includes a four-year moratorium on payment of dues by telecom companies and allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) under the automatic route. Announcing the decisions cleared at a Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Information Technology and Communication Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "The reforms are deep and broad... structural... will bring in change today, tomorrow and in the future. I do not like to put a number on the package as it is revenue-neutral for the government." He went on to add that the moratorium would not impact the government's revenue. Incidentally, the government announced the pack-



SPECTRUM AUCTION TENURE NOW 30 YEARS

- In future auctions, tenure of spectrum will be 30 years instead of 20 currently
- Spectrum auctions will be normally held in the last quarter of every fiscal
- The tower set-up process will now be simplified on the basis of self-approval
- AGR (adjusted gross revenue) definition rationalised to exclude non-telecom revenues
- Spectrum user charges rationalised too

EASY SWITCH FROM PREPAID TO POSTPAID

KYC process for shifting from prepaid to postpaid has been done away with. All portals to be integrated with that of Telecom Dept for ease of doing business.

FUEL, GAS UNDER GST? COUNCIL TO TAKE CALL

- In first physical meeting in 20 months, GST Council will take a call on Friday on extending cut in GST on Covid items
- It's also likely to recommend rate changes on textiles, footwear and fabrics
- May take call on bringing petro products like aviation turbine fuel, CNG under GST

SENSEX, NIFTY SURGE TO LIFETIME PEAK

On agenda is whether or not to extend relief cess for states beyond 2022 by five years

The fate of National Anti-profiteering Authority (tenure ends in Nov) is to be discussed

age six weeks after Kumar Mangalam Birla resigned from the post of chairman of Vodafone Idea Limited, which was created following the merger of British tele-

com giant Vodafone's India unit and Birla's Idea Cellular Ltd. The company has to pay around Rs 50,000 crore as statutory dues based on AGR (adjusted gross revenue)

over the past several years. The relief package will include a moratorium on payments for airwaves and is aimed at helping telecom service providers (TSPs) like Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea, industry sources said. They said as per the announcement, the companies would also have the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Tribune, Delhi
Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1
Width: 65.29 cms; Height: 45.81 cms; a3r; ID: 5.2021-09-16.10

Big-bang reforms in telecom sector: 4-yr..

option to convert interest on spectrum dues of the four-year moratorium period into government equity.

Last year, the Supreme Court passed a ruling asking Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea to clear government dues, which hit the sector hard and even banks led by the SBI had called on the government to give Vodafone Idea more time to clear its tax dues.

Along with the relief package, the government has also approved a number of structural and process reforms in the sector. "These are expected to protect and generate employment opportunities, promote healthy competition, protect interests of consumers, infuse liquidity, encourage investment and reduce regulatory burden on

the TSPs," the minister said. Among these changes, there are nine structural and five process reforms that have been rationalised to exclude non-telecom revenues, the minister said.

To encourage investment, he said, 100 per cent FDI under automatic route had been permitted, besides rationalising spectrum user charges. "In future auctions, tenure of the spectrum will be increased to 30 years from 20 currently. Auction calendar has been fixed. The spectrum auctions will be normally held in the last quarter of every financial year. The tower set-up process will now be simplified on the basis of self-approval," Vaishnaw said.

Economic Times , Delhi
Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 10
Width: 25.11 cms; Height: 21.17 cms; a3r; ID: 28.2021-09-16.73

ET Q&A ASHWINI VAISHNAW
UNION TELECOM MINISTER

Robust Telecom Sector Necessary for Bridging India's Digital Divide

The government is open to the idea of lowering 5G spectrum prices, but cannot touch telecom tariffs as that is a matter between the telcos and subscribers, Union telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. He told Anandita Singh Mankotia that the government hopes to change the course of the telecom sector through its latest reforms move and make it viable for investors. Edited excerpts.



What was the trigger for the government to announce such wide-ranging reforms? Was it the plight of Vodafone Idea?

The Prime Minister's vision is very clear. He wishes to bridge the digital divide, and robust telecom networks are key to serving the marginalised and far-flung areas. To have robust networks in the country, the sector needs to be in good shape. It needs massive capital injection. We didn't wish to just give some temporary relief, but to go after the underlying malaise afflicting the growth of this sector and solve it. Our analysis showed that the root causes... were issues such as the AGR (adjusted gross revenue), the way interest was compounded every

month, penalties were imposed, how for sharing spectrum, spectrum usage charge (SUC) for telcos would go up by 0.5%, the way approvals were given. When we presented our findings to the PM, he boldly supported our efforts to usher in reforms. AGR has been a legacy issue in the sector, it has been there for 20 years. However, the PM gave us full support to overhaul the sector and steer it towards reforms to make it viable and attractive.

REFORMS 2.0

Will these reforms bring investment into existing telcos and maybe even

The reforms (announced Wednesday) clearly demonstrate the government's intent, and this kind of clarity will certainly infuse confidence among investors

attract new players? I certainly see expansion in the sector, technological upgradation, and more innovation as the direct impact of these reforms. One can

safely say that the reforms clearly demonstrate the government's intent, and this kind of clarity will certainly infuse confidence among investors. As for attracting more players, that is a distinct possibility. I don't have any specific proposals with me, but I believe people would look at these reforms as something that

changed the direction of the telecom sector.

Only the SUC has been scrapped, while the licence fee has remained unchanged...

SUC was akin to double taxation. When a telecom operator has already paid for airwaves, why should it still be paying an annual spectrum charge? However, the principle of charging a licence fee is very different from that of the SUC.

The industry feels the pricing of airwaves for 5G technology is exorbitant. Will the government look to lower it?

The telecom regulator is looking at the pricing aspect right now, so I don't think it would be appropriate to comment at this point. However, if rationalisation is needed in public interest, why wouldn't the government do it?

The sector has been seeking higher tariffs. Any move on that?

This matter is between the Industry and consumers. Tariffs are a function of demand and supply. The telcos, along with the consumers, have to decide the tariffs. Tariff is not our mandate.



National News Coverage

Indian Express, Delhi

Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1

Width: 65.14 cms; Height: 43.87 cms; a3r; ID: 33.2021-09-16.13

PLI SCHEME FOR AUTO, DRONE SECTOR; REFORMS FOR TELECOM

Major relief for telecom sector, Govt gives 4-year moratorium on AGR dues

Will help address liquidity concerns: Vaishnaw; telcos welcome measures

AASHISH ARYAN & KARUNJIT SINGH
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

THE UNION Cabinet Wednesday approved reform proposals for the telecom sector, entailing nine structural and procedural measures that aim at alleviating sectoral stress by addressing near-term liquidity concerns.

It also cleared a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for automobile, auto component and drone manufacturers to boost domestic production.

Among the steps approved for the telecom sector, the one that is likely to provide immediate relief to debt-laden companies such as Vodafone Idea is the decision to provide a four-



Union ministers Vaishnaw, Thakur brief the press. PTI

BID TO BOOST PRODUCTION
PAGE 13

year moratorium on payment of all dues arising due to the Supreme Court's September 1, 2020, judgment on adjusted gross revenue (AGR).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

A HELPLINE

TELECOM

- Non-telecom revenues out of definition of AGR
- 4-year break from paying statutory dues
- 100% FDI through automatic route
- Scrapping of Spectrum Usage Charge for airwaves acquired in future auctions
- Shifting between prepaid, post-paid to not require fresh KYC

AUTO

- Rs 26,058 cr PLI scheme
- Scheme to incentivise high-value advanced automotive technology vehicles and products

Indian Express, Delhi

Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1

Width: 39.64 cms; Height: 67.61 cms; a3; ID: 33.2021-09-16.13

AGR dues

A moratorium of four years on payment of spectrum purchased in past auctions, barring the auction of 2021, has also been offered to the telcos. All these measures are prospective in nature.

The telecom sector will also be able to receive 100 per cent foreign direct investment through the automatic route, up from the 49 per cent permitted right now.

Following the Cabinet meeting, Union Minister for Communications Ashwini Vaishnaw said the reforms for the telecom sector will help all companies address their short-term liquidity concerns as well as build capacities for investing in future technologies.

"We have decided to rationalise the definition of AGR by removing all non-telecom revenue from AGR. This was a contentious and legacy issue, which has now been resolved. Similarly, the compounding of interest on late payment of spectrum usage charges and licence fees will be done on an annual basis, rather than monthly basis," he said, adding that the penalty and interest on unpaid penalty would be done away with entirely.

On September 1, 2020, the Supreme Court, in its final ruling on the AGR issue, had directed telecom companies to pay AGR, interest and penalty on non-payment on AGR dues, and interest on penalty for non-payment of AGR dues in yearly instalments within a period of 10 years starting April 1, 2021.

Although the government has said the four-year moratorium on payment of AGR dues will respect the Supreme Court judgment, since it will be prospective in nature, and there will be no change with respect to past dues, it will have to seek clarification from the apex court on the annual payment of dues.

In its ruling, the Supreme Court had said that telecom service providers would have to make payments in yearly instalments between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2031. It also said that in case of

default on payment, interest and penalty on interest would automatically be payable, and that non-payment "would be punishable for contempt of court".

Companies which avail of the four-year moratorium, either on payment of AGR dues or on dues of spectrum they had purchased in past auctions, will have to pay interest which will be calculated from October 1 this year.

The government will also have the option to convert the due amount, arising due to the moratorium, to equity at the end of four years if a telco fails to make the payment.

Wednesday's meeting also saw approvals for major overhaul of the spectrum auction and usage ecosystem, with the government deciding that all future spectrum auctions will normally be held in the last quarter of every financial year.

Further, for all future auctions, the DoF will not ask for bank guarantees to secure instalment payments, while the SUC (spectrum usage charge) too has been waived.

For future auctions, the tenure for which spectrum can be held has been increased to 30 years from 20 years, with the option of allowing the telecom service provider to surrender the spectrum after 10 years following payment of certain fee. An additional SUC of 0.5 per cent, which was levied on spectrum sharing, has also been done away with, Vaishnaw said.

From October 1, 2021, delayed payment of SUC will attract interest rate of State Bank of India's Marginal Cost of Funds Based Lending Rate (MCLR) plus 2 per cent, instead of MCLR plus 4 per cent currently, which will be compounded annually, instead of monthly, while the penalty on interest and penalty will be removed altogether.

The quantum of bank guarantees to be submitted against licence fee and other levies has been reduced by up to 80 per cent, with only one bank guarantee to be submitted for the entire country, instead of one for each li-

quency service area.

The reforms were welcomed by all the three private telcos, with Reliance Jio Infocomm calling it "a timely step towards strengthening India's telecom sector".

Aditya Birla Group Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla, who had in June this year written to the government requesting it to take over Vodafone Idea and save it, also welcomed the move. He said that the reforms demonstrated the government's commitment to ensuring healthy growth of the telecom industry.

Nick Read, global CEO of Vodafone Group, in a statement, said he hoped these reforms would be "the beginning of a new era for India's digital ambitions". Bharti Airtel Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said the reforms "ensure that the industry is able to invest fearlessly and support India's digital ambitions".

Apart from the steps for the telecom sector, the Union Cabinet also announced a Rs 26,058-crore PLI scheme for automobile, auto component and drone manufacturers. The scheme is expected to attract additional investment of Rs 42,500 crore to the automobile sector and generate 76 lakh jobs, according to the government.

Millennium Post, Delhi

Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1

4-yr moratorium, digitised KYC: Cabinet clears telecom reforms

No separate KYC required to switch from prepaid to postpaid or vice versa in mobile connections; 100% FDI via automatic route

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: In a big-ticket reform in the telecom sector, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the rationalisation of highly contentious Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) by excluding non-telecom revenue of telcos from the payment of statutory dues and cancelled the penalty clause.

The other major relief measures announced by the government for the telecom sector include granting a four-year moratorium on unpaid dues, 100 per cent FDI in telecom through automatic route, which means the investor would not need any prior approval from the Reserve Bank or the government and relaxation in the spectrum usage charges (SUC), etc.

The mega relief package would provide a much-needed relaxation to telecom companies — Vodafone Idea, Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel. While briefing about the decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting, Union Telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Cabinet has approved nine structural and five procedural reforms regarding the telecom sector. "The Cabinet has decided to make spectrum sharing free, all KYC (Know Your Customer) forms are to be digitised and there would not be any sep-

RELIEF MEASURES



Ashwini Vaishnaw

- Four-year moratorium on payment of statutory dues by telecom companies, both AGR and spectrum charges
- Definition of AGR has been rationalised by excluding non-telecom revenue of telecom companies
- 100% FDI in telecom via the automatic route has been approved
- The regime of heavy interest, penalty and interest on penalty on payment of license fees, spectrum charges and all kinds of charges has been rationalised today
- Annual compounding (of interest) will be done instead of monthly compounding. A reasonable interest rate of MCLR + 2 per cent interest rate has been offered and the penalty has been completely scrapped. This will pave way for large-scale investments in the telecom sector. Investment means employment — more the investment, more the employment," Vaishnaw said, adding that spectrum duration has also been increased from 20 years to 30 years.
- The minister also added that all Indian firms, including BSNL, MTNL, etc will use India-made technology and infrastructure. "We now aim to not just use it domestically, but become an exporter of these technologies, with an aim for India to be a global player," he said, adding that till now a large part of the 3G and 4G technologies were imported. However, the firms from neigh-



Spectrum auction will be done for 30 years, instead of 20. After completing 10-years lock-in period, the buyer will have the option to surrender by paying surrender charges

arate KYC for consumers switching from prepaid to postpaid connections and vice versa," he said, adding that there would be an auction calendar place for spectrum auction, which would be held in the last quarter of every financial year. Stressing on digitisation of KYC records, he said, "All KYC forms are deposited in the warehouses and there are 300-400 crore forms in warehouses. In Digital India, there is no need for this paperwork. So all these will be digitised and going forward, there will be no physical KYC."

PM Modi took a bold decision over AGR. All non-telecom revenue will be taken out of AGR. There was a regime of heavy interest, penalty and interest on penalty on payment of license fees, spectrum user charges, and all kinds of charges. It has been rationalised today," he added.

"Annual compounding (of interest) will be done instead of monthly compounding. A reasonable interest rate of MCLR + 2 per cent interest rate has been offered and the penalty has been completely scrapped. This will pave way for large-scale investments in the telecom sector. Investment

means employment — more the investment, more the employment," Vaishnaw said, adding that spectrum duration has also been increased from 20 years to 30 years. The minister also added that all Indian firms, including BSNL, MTNL, etc will use India-made technology and infrastructure. "We now aim to not just use it domestically, but become an exporter of these technologies, with an aim for India to be a global player," he said, adding that till now a large part of the 3G and 4G technologies were imported. However, the firms from neigh-



National News Coverage

Deccan Herald, Bengaluru

Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1

Width: 20.37 cms; Height: 20.32 cms; a3r; ID: 41.2021-09-16.9

Govt rings in major reforms in telecom sector

100% FDI via automatic route, relief on dues, AGR redefined

ANNAPURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI, DHNS



Ashwini Vaishnaw



UPWARDLY MOBILE

- 100% FDI through automatic route
- 4-year moratorium on payment of statutory dues
- AGR not to include non-telecom revenue
- Boost to 4G proliferation, lay base for 5G network
- Firms can hold spectrum for 30 years, surrender after 10 years

In big reforms in the telecom sector, the Centre on Wednesday allowed 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) through automatic route in place of the 49% at present. The rule, however, will not apply to Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Myanmar and Bhutan, that share the land border with India.

In April 2020, the government had imposed regulations on FDIs from countries that share a land border with India to thwart any hostile takeover of domestic businesses.

The government also approved a four-year moratorium on payment of statutory

dues by telecom companies, a move that comes as a relief to ailing telecom operators like Vodafone Idea that have to pay thousands of crores of rupees of past statutory dues.

The government also rationalised the definition of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) by excluding non-telecom revenues of telecom firms. The AGR issue was a major reason for stress in the telecom sector.

Telecom shares jumped by 5% after the relief package was approved. Briefing reporters on the Cabinet decision, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said these measures are expected to ease the cash flow issues being faced by

some players in the industry.

He said the moratorium will facilitate capital investment cycle and de-stress the balance sheet of the telecom sector. It will also infuse healthy competition in the sector.

The reforms are expected to boost proliferation of broadband and telecom connectivity. The package is also expected to boost 4G proliferation, infuse liquidity and create an enabling environment for investment in 5G networks. In another major decision, a telecom firm can hold spectrum for 30 years instead of the current 20. Spectrum can also be surrendered after 10 years in case of any technology change.

No KYC for switching from prepaid to postpaid

As part of the major reforms in the telecom sector, shifting from prepaid to postpaid connections and vice versa will not require fresh KYC. Acquiring a new SIM or MNP will be paperless.

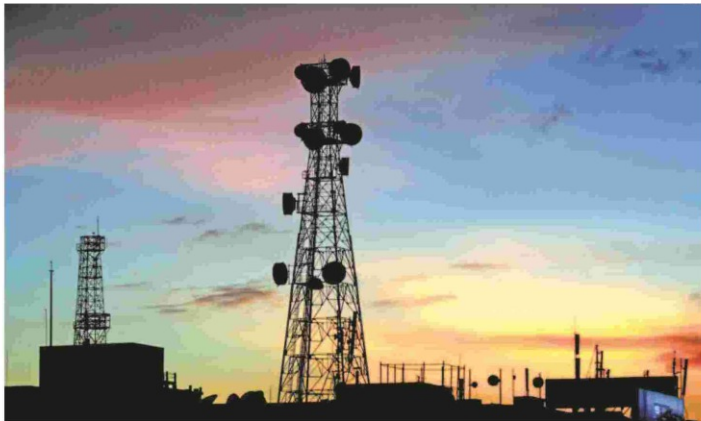


National News Coverage

Mint, Delhi

Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 12

Width: 32.77 cms; Height: 68.82 cms; a3; ID: 14.2021-09-16.86



A relief package to lift India's telecom gloom

The government's mix of measures doesn't just lighten a heavy burden on telecom firms, its AGR redefinition also shows a welcome ability to rethink its stance in response to a crisis

After a painfully long wait, even as India's telecom sector struggled under the weight of an extraordinary regulatory burden, relief finally arrived on Wednesday. The Union cabinet approved a package to rescue the ailing sector. The Centre announced a slew of financial relaxations, with sectoral liberalization and procedural easing thrown in, and declared a dramatic reversal of its long-held stance on an issue that had roiled the industry in general and older telecom operators in particular: whether their adjusted gross revenues (AGR), to be shared with the government as part of a public-private pact made about two decades ago, should include revenues from their non-telecom operations. It was New Delhi's insistence that they must, upheld by our apex court, that slapped older players with huge bills on past dues and threw the finances of Vodafone-Idea (VI) and Bharti Airtel into a tizzy, though their numbers had already been battered by a price war led by the relatively recent entrant, Reliance Jio. The worst hit was VI, which has been on the verge of collapse, a possibility that raised worries of India being left with an effective duopoly in a vital market from an infrastructure perspective. That prospect has receded for now, thanks to a breather given on AGR dues, but even more notable is the official redefinition of the term to mean just telecom revenues from now on.

Immediate succour for telecom firms has taken the shape of a four-year moratorium on the payments they owe the Centre after our judiciary rejected the argument some two years ago that they only needed to part with a portion of their telecom earnings. To the extent that significant liabilities have been pushed forth, this

will improve the survival odds of VI, give Airtel space to regain its earlier levels of performance, and relieve the market's leader Jio of its payment burden as well. A write-off of AGR dues may have been left out of the cabinet's consideration for the fulfilment of judicial orders, but something clearly had to be done. Kumar Mangalam Birla, who stepped down recently as VI's chairperson, had even offered the government his business group's stake in the company to keep it going. With pressure on its cash flows relieved, VI's calculus would now have changed. Interestingly, once the period of forbearance is over, telecom companies will have the option of paying some dues through equity.

Among other measures, the interest rate charge on delayed licence and spectrum fees has been reduced, no bank guarantees will be sought for future spectrum auctions, the tenure of allocated airwaves has been stretched by a decade to 30 years, allottees will be allowed to surrender this resource after 10 years, and air-wave-sharing had been eased. For global investors, India's cap on foreign direct investment in the sector via the automatic route has been removed, permitting full overseas ownership of local firms without any need of prior approval. The very sweep of these revisions is an indication that the Centre remains responsive to distress in fields of business that need to prosper for the sake of our economy's expansion in a scenario of rapid internet adoption. All in all, if its display of flexibility on policy details has offered the sector reassurance of its concern, its big shift on what slice of the sector's action it's entitled to is impressive. It reflects appreciation of the fact that the spirit and letter of an agreement may differ. And sometimes, the former serves our collective interest better.

Hindustan Times, Delhi

Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 16

Width: 18.68 cms; Height: 57.07 cms; a3; ID: 17.2021-09-16.86

{ OUR TAKE }

A lifeline for the telecom sector

The government has done well to step in. Now, sustain the spirit of reforms

One way of looking at the Union Cabinet's decisions on the telecommunications sector announced on Wednesday is to say that these should have been taken long ago. The more pertinent way of looking at them would be that they have come just in time to offer relief to a beleaguered sector. The redefinition of adjusted gross revenue (AGR), prospectively, not retrospectively, the enhancement of the life of spectrum by 10 years, the removal of a financial constraint to spectrum sharing, and, more importantly, a four-year moratorium on all spectrum and AGR dues come as a lifeline to the sector. It should ensure that the sector does not become a duopoly and encourage companies to invest in customer service and new technology. Sure, companies have to pay an interest on the dues during the moratorium, but they have the option of doing this through equity (an option some of them will actively consider). And the government has retained the option of converting remaining dues at the end of the moratorium period too, to equity. Vodafone Idea is the biggest beneficiary of the new announcements; it owes the government around ₹50,000 crore. Bharti Airtel owes the government around ₹26,000 crore.

The announcements (which also allow 100% foreign direct investment in the sector through the automatic route) come shortly after the government decided to scrap a controversial retrospective tax on transactions involving underlying Indian assets (something that affected Vodafone Group, one of the shareholders of Vodafone Idea). Together, these signal the return to an investor-friendly climate, or, at the least, a strong attempt to do so. The challenge for the government — it stopped short of announcing a floor price for telecom services, especially data, something that would have ensured there is no predatory pricing in the sector — is to carry forward the spirit of Wednesday's announcements into its future telecom policy. India's telecom policy has evolved in fits and starts, and usually disadvantaged incumbents while favouring new entrants.

India's telecom revolution sparked a change in the social, economic and political structures. The spread of first mobile phones, and then smart phones, led to enhanced connectivity, empowered citizens, expanded access to information, generated economic activity, made India a more attractive destination for foreign investment, sparked off newer forms of political mobilisation, and democratised society. Wednesday's announcements ensure that this story continues — for now. A thriving sector cannot be built on the backs of failed companies.



National News Coverage

Navbharat Times, Delhi
Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1
Width: 25.20 cms; Height: 36.12 cms; a3; ID: 18.2021-09-16.7

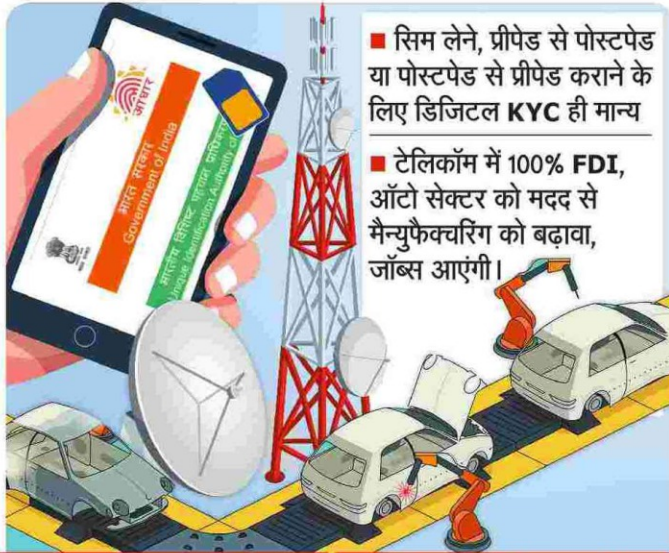
टेलिकॉम की पुकार पर सरकार का हेल्पो

फोन कंपनियां टाल सकेंगी बकाया, ऑटो को प्रोत्साहन पैकेज

■ विशेष संवाददाता, नई दिल्ली

केंद्र सरकार ने वित्तीय संकट से परेशान टेलिकॉम सेक्टर और दबाव से जूझ रहे ऑटो सेक्टर को राहत देने वाले बुधवार को कई फैसले लिए। इसके तहत टेलिकॉम सेक्टर में ऑटोमैटिक रूट से 100% विदेशी निवेश को मंजूरी दी गई यानी अब विदेशी निवेश के लिए सरकार की मंजूरी की जरूरत नहीं है। टेलिकॉम कंपनियों को बकाया चुकाने के लिए 4 साल की मोहलत दी। साथ ही, ऑटो और ड्रोन इंडस्ट्री को प्रोत्साहन राशि देने वाली योजना के तहत 26,058 करोड़ की मदद का ऐलान हुआ।

इस कदम को दोनों सेक्टरों को वित्तीय संकट से उबारने, मैन्युफैक्चरिंग क्षमता बढ़ाने, नई नौकरियां लाने और प्रधानमंत्री के 'आत्मनिर्भर भारत' अभियान की ओर बड़े कदम के रूप में देखा गया। सरकार का दावा है कि ऑटो सेक्टर को मदद से 7.6 लाख नौकरियां आएंगी। फोन कंपनियों के एजीआर पर ब्याज को कम करके 2% सालाना किया गया है। इस पर लगने वाली पेनल्टी को खत्म किया गया है। कंपनियां AGR चुकाने को 4 साल तक टाल सकती हैं, लेकिन इस दौरान बकाया पर ब्याज देना होगा। इससे वोडाफोन जैसी कंपनियों को राहत मिलेगी। आम आदमी के लिए राहत की बात यह है कि मोबाइल का सिम लेने या पोस्टपेड से प्रीपेड या प्रीपेड से पोस्टपेड कराने जैसे सभी कामों के लिए डिजिटल KYC ही मान्य होगी। ▶▶ पेज 16



■ सिम लेने, प्रीपेड से पोस्टपेड या पोस्टपेड से प्रीपेड कराने के लिए डिजिटल KYC ही मान्य

■ टेलिकॉम में 100% FDI, ऑटो सेक्टर को मदद से मैन्युफैक्चरिंग को बढ़ावा, जॉब्स आएंगी।

ड्रोन इंडस्ट्री के लिए 120 करोड़ मंजूर

कैबिनेट ने PLI स्कीम के तहत ड्रोन सेक्टर के लिए 120 करोड़ रुपये मंजूर किए हैं। अनुमान है कि सरकार की इस मदद से ड्रोन सर्विस इंडस्ट्री का बिजनेस 3 साल में 30 हजार करोड़ रुपये हो जाएगा। इस दौरान 5 लाख नौकरियां भी ड्रोन इंडस्ट्री में पैदा होंगी। 2020-21 में इन कंपनियों का उत्पादन 60 करोड़ का रहा, जो 2023-24 में 900 करोड़ होने के आसार हैं। (विस)

हर जिले में हेल्थ सेंटर, मोबाइल अस्पताल

कैबिनेट ने 64 हजार करोड़ रुपये से ज्यादा की 'आत्मनिर्भर स्वस्थ भारत योजना' को मंजूरी दी। सूत्रों के अनुसार, इसका औपचारिक ऐलान शुक्रवार को होगा। इसके तहत सभी जिलों और 3,382 ब्लॉक में हेल्थ जांच की लैब लगेगी। देश के 602 जिलों में क्रिटिकल केयर हॉस्पिटल खुलेंगे। हर जिले में 15 इमरजेंसी हेल्थ सेंटर और दो मोबाइल अस्पताल बनेंगे। (विस)



National News Coverage

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केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने किया एलान दूरसंचार क्षेत्र में 100% प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश

नई दिल्ली, 15 सितंबर (भाषा)।

केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने दूरसंचार क्षेत्र में बड़े सुधारों की घोषणा की है। इसके तहत दूरसंचार क्षेत्र के लिए राहत पैकेज की मंजूरी देने के साथ-साथ मंजूरी प्राप्त हो 100 फीसद प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश (एफडीआई) की अनुमति दी गई है। राहत पैकेज में दूरसंचार कंपनियों के ऊपर वार्षिक बकाया के भुगतान पर चार साल के लिए रोक यानी मोहलत दी गई है।



दूरसंचार मंत्री वैष्णव ने कहा कि दूरसंचार क्षेत्र के लिए नई संरचनात्मक सुधारों को मंजूरी दी गई है। सकल सामायोजित राजस्व (एजीआर) की परिभाषा को युक्तिसंगत बनाते हुए इसमें से दूरसंचार क्षेत्र से इतर होने वाली आय को हटा दिया गया है।

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की अध्यक्षता में मंत्रिमंडल की बैठक के बाद निर्णय की जानकारी देते हुए दूरसंचार मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव ने कहा कि दूरसंचार क्षेत्र के लिए नई संरचनात्मक सुधारों को मंजूरी दी गई है। सकल सामायोजित राजस्व (एजीआर) की परिभाषा को युक्तिसंगत बनाते हुए इसमें से दूरसंचार क्षेत्र से इतर होने वाली आय को हटा दिया गया है।

दूरसंचार क्षेत्र में बकाया का एक प्रमुख कारण एजीआर का मुद्दा था। मंत्री ने कहा कि मंत्रिमंडल ने इसमें मंजूरी देते हुए 100 फीसद एफडीआई की भी अनुमति दी है।

उन्होंने कहा कि अन्य उपायों में बकाया, एजीआर और स्पेक्ट्रम बकाया भुगतान पर चार साल की मोहलत शामिल है। इन उपायों से दूरसंचार क्षेत्र में कुछ कंपनियों के समक्ष उत्पन्न नकदी की समस्या दूर होगी।

Dainik Jagran, New Delhi
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केंद्र ने टेलीकॉम को दिया बड़ा रिचार्ज

कैबिनेट ने लगाई मुहर, कंपनियों को वित्तीय राहत मिलेगी और ग्राहकों को भी होगा फायदा

जगरण ब्यूरो, नई दिल्ली : कई सुधार कार्यक्रमों का एलान करते हुए सरकार ने संकट से जूझ रहे टेलीकॉम सेक्टर को सुधार को बड़ा रिचार्ज दिया।

नया संवार

एजीआर से लेकर स्पेक्ट्रम, लाइसेंस फीस और अन्य बकायों के भुगतान पर चार साल की मोहलत
कानूनन के लिए नहीं करनी होगी कगजी कार्रवाई, 4जी का होगा विस्तार तो 5जी के लिए रखा तैयार



मुख्य फैसले

- एजीआर, स्पेक्ट्रम, लाइसेंस फीस के बकायों भुगतान के मोटोरिक्म की अवधि आगामी एक अक्टूबर से शुरू होगी और कंपनियों को एक अक्टूबर से ब्याज का भुगतान करना होगा
- अब कंपनियों को 20 की जगह 30 साल के लिए स्पेक्ट्रम देना होगा। वहीं, 10 साल के बाद कंपनियों को स्पेक्ट्रम को रीटर्न कर सकते हैं
- स्पेक्ट्रम रीटर्न पर कोई शुल्क नहीं लगता
- कगजी की बात बंद की और अंतिम निर्णयों में ही स्पेक्ट्रम की नीलामी होगी
- बिना वार वाले उपकरण को लाने के लिए अब सिर्फ वार प्रमाणित करना होगा
- एच की मदद से केवाईसी का काम कर सकेंगे
- ई-नेशनली के लिए सिर्फ एक रुपया देना होगा
- नया निम लेने के लिए कगजी कार्रवाई नहीं होगी

नई दिल्ली में बृहत्तर को रॉडिंग को कैबिनेट >>

के टेलीकॉम की जनसंख्या देने के दौरान टेलीकॉम मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव >>

दरार लगाने में आने वाली दिक्कतें होंगी कम

दरार लगाने के लिए अब विभिन्न एजेंसियों की मजूरी नहीं लेनी होगी। इससे नेटवर्क की दिक्कतें दूर होंगी। अभी दरार लगाने के लिए कई सरकारी एजेंसियों की मजूरी में दिक्कत की वजह से टेलीकॉम कंपनियां बाधक भी उठाने लगीं हैं। 4जी और 5जी की कवरेज पूरी तरह भारत में डिप्लॉय की जाएगी और उस तकनीक का विस्तार किया जाएगा।

शर्तों के साथ 100 फीसद एफडीआई को मंजूरी

टेलीकॉम सेक्टर में आटोमैटिक रूट से 100 फीसद प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश (एफडीआई) की मंजूरी दी गई है। इससे नया विदेशी निवेश बढ़ेगा। हालांकि, वैन से होने वाले किराये भी नए निवेश पर सरकार की पूर्ण नजर होगी।

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केंद्रीय कैबिनेट के दो फैसलों से अर्थव्यवस्था में नई रौनक की उम्मीद जगी

1. ऑटो इंडस्ट्री के लिए 26,058 करोड़ की पीएलआई स्कीम

यानी अगले 5 साल में इस सेक्टर में 42 हजार करोड़ से ज्यादा के निवेश और 7.5 लाख से ज्यादा नए रोजगार की उम्मीद।

2. टेलीकॉम कंपनियों को बकाया एजीआर पर 4 वर्ष की मोहलत

यानी मुश्किलों में चिरी मोड़ा-आइडिया और एयरटेल जैसी टेलीकॉम कंपनियां अब विस्तार पर निवेश कर पाएंगी।

त्योहारी सीजन में टेलीकॉम सेक्टर को बूस्टर रिचार्ज... ऑटो इंडस्ट्री को पीएलआई के पहिए

भास्कर न्यूज | नई दिल्ली

मुश्किलों से जूझ रहे टेलीकॉम सेक्टर और पी-कोविड स्तर पर आने की कोशिश में जुटे ऑटो सेक्टर को केंद्र सरकार ने बड़ी राहत दी है। बुधवार को केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने टेलीकॉम सेक्टर के लिए राहत पैकेज की मंजूरी दी। इसके तहत टेलीकॉम कंपनियों को बकाया एडजस्टेड ग्रांस् रेवेन्यू (एजीआर) व स्पेक्ट्रम शुल्क चुकाने के लिए चार साल की मोहलत दी गई है। इसके साथ ही अब सेक्टर में 100% प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश (एफडीआई) ऑटोमैटिक रूट से करने की अनुमति दे दी गई है। इस कदम से टेलीकॉम सेक्टर और खासतौर पर वोडा-आइडिया ने राहत की सांस ली है। कैबिनेट के फैसले

की जानकारी देते हुए केंद्रीय दूरसंचार मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव ने बताया कि टेलीकॉम सेक्टर के लिए 9 ढांचागत सुधारों को मंजूरी दी गई है। एजीआर की परिभाषा को भी सरकार ने बदला है। सभी नॉन-टेलीकॉम रेवेन्यू को एजीआर से बाहर कर दिया गया है। उधर, ऑटोमोबाइल, ऑटो कंपोनेंट्स और ड्रोन इंडस्ट्री के लिए 26,058 करोड़ की प्रोडक्शन लिंकड इंस्टीट (पीएलआई) स्कीम को भी कैबिनेट ने मंजूरी दे दी। केंद्रीय मंत्री अनुराग ठाकुर ने कहा कि पीएलआई स्कीम से अत्याधुनिक ऑटोमोबाइल टेक्नोलॉजी को रोलवेल सप्लाय चैन की भारत में उपलब्धता को गति मिलेगी। ठाकुर ने बताया कि इंस्टीट अगले 5 साल में इंडस्ट्री को दिए जाएंगे।

वोडा-आइडिया बंद होने से बची, एयरटेल अब विस्तार करेगी

4 साल बाद वोडा-आइडिया का बकाया इविटटी में बदल सकती है केंद्र सरकार

कंपनी पर स्पेक्ट्रम का 1,06,010 करोड़ रुपए और एजीआर का 62,180 करोड़ रुपए बकाया है। इसकी किस्त के रूप में 22 हजार करोड़ रुपए अगले साल मार्च तक चुकाने थे। जबकि उसकी कुल कमाई इस माली में 3850 करोड़ रुपए रहने का अनुमान है। कंपनी को अब चार साल तक की मोहलत मिल गई है। चार साल बाद भी कंपनी कर्ज चुकाने की स्थिति में नहीं आई तो संभावना है कि सरकार इस कर्ज को इविटटी में बदल दे।

बकाये के लिए राइट इश्यू से पैसा जुटा रही थी एयरटेल

एयरटेल 43 हजार करोड़ एजीआर बकायों में से 18 हजार करोड़ रुपए चुका चुकी है। कंपनी 21 हजार करोड़ रुपए राइट इश्यू से जुटाने वाली थी। अब पूरी संभावना इस बात की है कि कंपनी इस राशि का इस्तेमाल विस्तार में करे।

जियो को एफडीआई से फायदे की उम्मीद

रिलायंस जियो पर सबसे कम 1053 करोड़ रुपए का ही एजीआर बकाया था, जिसे कंपनी पहले ही चुक चुकी है। कंपनी ऑटोमैटिक रूट से एफडीआई हासिल कर सकेगी। उसे इसके लिए सरकार से मंजूरी नहीं लेनी पड़ेगी।

वोडा-आइडिया और एयरटेल को प्लान आउट करने का वक्त मिल गया है। हालांकि, स्थायी राहत के लिए दूरसंचार कंपनियों को प्रति यूजर औसत राजस्व बढ़ाना होगा। -आतिश मातलावाला, सीनियर एनालिस्ट, एयरएनजे फहनेस एंड सिक्वॉयटीज

ऑटो पीएलआई से मिलेंगी 7.5 लाख नौकरियां | पढ़ें विजनेस पेज चार



National News Coverage

Hindustan, Delhi

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डिजिटल भारत का लक्ष्य हासिल होगा

नई दिल्ली | एजेसी

रिलायंस इंडस्ट्रीज के चेयरमैन मुकेश अंबानी ने बुधवार को कहा कि सरकार के नये सुधारों और राहत उपायों से दूरसंचार क्षेत्र डिजिटल इंडिया मिशन के तहत निर्धारित लक्ष्यों को हासिल करने में सक्षम होगा।

अंबानी ने कहा, दूरसंचार क्षेत्र अर्थव्यवस्था को गति देने वाले प्रमुख कारकों में से एक है और भारत को एक डिजिटल समाज बनाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका है। मैं भारत सरकार के सुधारों और राहत उपायों की घोषणा का स्वागत करता हूँ। यह उद्योग को डिजिटल इंडिया के लक्ष्यों को प्राप्त करने में सक्षम बनाएगा। मैं प्रधानमंत्री (नरेंद्र मोदी) को इस सहासिक पहल के लिए धन्यवाद देता हूँ। इससे कंपनी ग्राहकों के लिए नए और बेहतर लाभ

दूरसंचार पैकेज

- मुकेश अंबानी ने कहा कि दूरसंचार आर्थिक गति में अहम
- एयरटेल के प्रमुख सुनील मित्तल ने इसे साहसिक कदम बताया



लाने को लेकर प्रोत्साहित होगी। संकट में फंसी वोडाफोन आइडिया के प्रवर्तक कुमार मंगलम बिड़ला ने सरकार के निर्णय की सराहना करते हुए इसे ऐतिहासिक कदम बताया और कहा कि इससे क्षेत्र को महत्वपूर्ण गति मिलेगी।

भारती एयरटेल के चेयरमैन सुनील मित्तल ने कहा कि दूरसंचार क्षेत्र के लिए घोषित बड़े सुधारों से उद्योग अब बिना किसी डर के साहसिक तरीके से निवेश करने में सक्षम होगा। उन्होंने कहा कि प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के निवेश और देश की वृद्धि में तेजी लाने के

आह्वान पर एयरटेल सकारात्मक प्रतिक्रिया देगी। मित्तल ने कहा, एयरटेल भारत के विकास में निवेश करने और उसमें तेजी लाने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री के आह्वान का जवाब देने के लिए पूरी तरह से प्रतिबद्ध है। इस बीच दूरसंचार मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव ने कहा कि 5जी के लिए स्पेक्ट्रम की निलामी फरवरी 2022 में शुरू होने की उम्मीद है। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि और सुधारों तथा संरचनात्मक बदलाव पर विचार जारी है। क्षेत्र में और कंपनियों को आना चाहिए।

Punjab Kesari, Delhi

Thursday, 16th September 2021; Page: 1

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टेलीकॉम सेक्टर को बड़ा तोहफा

आटोमेटिक रूट के जरिये 100 प्रतिशत एफडीआई को मिली मंजूरी

पंजाब केसरी/नई दिल्ली

मोदी कैबिनेट ने संकट से जुद्ध रहे टेलिकॉम सेक्टर के लिए आज राहत पैकेज को मंजूरी दे दी। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की अध्यक्षता में हुई केंद्रीय कैबिनेट की बैठक में एडजस्टेड प्रोसेस रेवेन्यू को परिभाषा को व्यावहारिक बनाने के साथ-साथ एजीआर पर 4 साल का मोरेटोरियम और टेलिकॉम सेक्टर में ऑटोमेटिक रूट के जरिए 100% एफडीआई की अनुमति की मंजूरी शामिल है। विदक के बाद संचार मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव ने प्रेस कॉन्फ्रेंस में बताया कि कैबिनेट ने टेलिकॉम सेक्टर के लिए 9 स्ट्रक्चरल रिफॉर्म और 5 प्रोसेस को मंजूरी दी है। इन सुधारों से पूरे टेलिकॉम सेक्टर की तस्वीर बदल जाएगी। उन्होंने कहा कि प्रधानमंत्री ने आज एजीआर पर साहसिक फैसला लिया है। एजीआर की परिभाषा को व्यावहारिक बनाने पर फैसला लिया गया है। सभी तरह के नॉन-टेलिकॉम



रेवेन्यू को एजीआर से हटा दिया जाएगा। टेलिकॉम सेक्टर में ऑटोमेटिक रूट के जरिए 100% एफडीआई की अनुमति दे दी है। सरकार ने ऑटो और ड्रॉन सेक्टर के लिए 26,058 करोड़ रुपये की पीएलआई स्क्रीम

4 साल का मोरेटोरियम

वैष्णव ने कहा कि टेलिकॉम सर्विस प्रोवाइडर्स को बकाए पर 4 साल के मोरेटोरियम को मंजूरी दी गई है। जो इस सुविधा का लाभ उठाएंगे उन्हें मोरेटोरियम अमाउंट पर एमसीएलआर के साथ 2 फीसदी रेट पर ब्याज का भुगतान करना होगा। पेनाल्टी को पूरी तरह खत्म कर दिया गया है। इससे टेलिकॉम सेक्टर में भारी निवेश का रास्ता साफ होगा। निवेश से रोजगार पैदा होगा। यह निवेश से ज्यादा रोजगार का सवाल है।

को मंजूरी दे दी है। इसमें से 25,938 करोड़ रुपये ऑटो मोबाइल सेक्टर का दिए जाएंगे। 120 करोड़ रुपये ड्रॉन इंडस्ट्री को दिए जाएंगे।

उन्होंने कहा कि पहले भारी ब्याज, लाइसेंस फीस पैमेंट पर ब्याज और पेनाल्टी,

स्पेक्ट्रम यूजर चार्ज और कई अन्य तरह के चार्ज लगते थे। आज इसे व्यावहारिक बनाया गया है। मंथली कंपाउंडिंग के बजाय अब एन्युअल कंपाउंडिंग होगी। स्पेक्ट्रम शेयरिंग को भी अनुमति दी गई है और यह पूरी तरह फ्री होगी। उन्होंने कहा कि भविष्य में होने वाली नीलामी में स्पेक्ट्रम की अवधि 20 साल के बजाय 30 साल होगी। अगर कोई स्पेक्ट्रम लेता है और बिजनेस कंडीशंस या टेक्नोलॉजी बदलती है तो वह 10 साल के लॉकइन पीरियड के बाद स्पेक्ट्रम चार्ज देकर इसे सरेंडर कर सकता है। केंद्रीय मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव ने बताया कि केवाईसी अब पूरी तरह ऑनलाइन होगी। सिम लेने या पोस्टपेड से प्रीपेड करने जैसे सभी कार्यों के लिए अब कोई फॉर्म नहीं भरना होगा। इसके लिए डिजिटल केवाईसी मान्य होगी। सिम लेते वक़्त दिए गए डॉक्यूमेंट्स, जो वेअरहाउस में हैं उन्हें भी डिजिटलाइज्ड किया जाएगा।



International News Coverage

The Daily Guardian

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THURSDAY | 16 SEPTEMBER 2021 | VOL. 2 ISSUE 62 | NEW DELHI

TOP OF THE DAY

100% FDI

CENTRE SET TO RESUME TOURIST VISAS AFTER COVID DISRUPTION

NEW DELHI: In a bid to boost the economy as daily Covid-19 cases in the country have come down, the Central government is considering resuming issuing tourist visas very soon, a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) official confirmed on Wednesday. A senior MHA official confirmed that things have been formalised and a meeting has been called in the Ministry of Home Affairs that will be chaired by the Home Secretary on Thursday to discuss plans to resume tourist visas. The official said that it will be done in a phased manner and as per feasibility, it will be opened to all. The government is likely to allow only vaccinated people to apply for tourist visas. Tourist visas are suspended since March 2020, from the day the first lockdown was announced. Later, several categories of visas like business,

GOVERNMENT USHERS IN BIG BANG REFORMS IN TELECOM SECTOR

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approves nine structural and five process reforms in the telecom sector.

OUR CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

Ushering in big bang reforms, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved nine structural and five process reforms in the telecom sector. Among the key reforms are a four-year moratorium on payment of

statutory dues by telecom companies, both AGR (adjusted gross revenue) and spectrum charges. Also, 100% FDI (foreign direct investment) in telecom via the automatic route has been approved.

These schemes are expected to protect and generate employment opportunities, promote healthy competition, protect the interests of

consumers, infuse liquidity, encourage investment and reduce the regulatory burden on Telecom Service Providers (TSPs). According to the Cabinet, in the backdrop of the outstanding performance of the telecom sector in meeting Covid-19 challenges, with the huge surge in data consumption, online education, work from home, interpersonal connect

through social media, virtual meetings etc., the reform measures will further boost the proliferation and penetration of broadband and telecom connectivity.

"The Cabinet decision reinforces the Prime Minister's vision of a robust Telecom Sector. With competition and customer choice, Antyodaya for inclusive development and bringing the marginal-

ized areas into the mainstream and universal broadband access to connect the unconnected. The package is also expected to boost 4G proliferation, infuse liquidity and create an enabling environment for investment in 5G networks," read an official release.

The nine structural reforms introduced by the Cabinet are as follows:

* RATIONALIZATION OF ADJUSTED GROSS REVENUE: Non-telecom revenue will be excluded on a prospective basis from the definition of AGR.
* BANK GUARANTEES (BGS) RATIONALIZED: Huge reduction in BG requirements (80%) against Licence Fee (LF) and other similar levies. No requirements for multiple BGs in

different Licenced Service Areas (LSAs) regions in the country. Instead, One BG will be enough.

* INTEREST RATES RATIONALIZED: PENALTIES REMOVED: From October 1, 2021, delayed payments of Licence Fee (LF)/Spectrum Usage Charge (SUC) will attract an interest rate of SBI's MCLR plus 2% instead

■ P2

Khaleej Times

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India: Cabinet approves big bang telecom reforms



AFF

New Delhi - Penalty on payment of licence fees, spectrum user charges have been completely scrapped





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India's Telecom Industry Gets A Government Lifeline

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INDIA

India's telecom firms welcome reform package

The proposed measures will provide relief to debt-laden Vodafone Idea, which is facing an existential crisis

By **KS KUMAR**
SEPTEMBER 17, 2021





Telecom Reforms 2021

The new era in digital communication



DEPARTMENT OF
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
Government of India