



March 19, 2024  
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**Dr. Neeraj Mittal, IAS**  
Chairman Digital Communications Commission &  
Secretary- Department of Telecommunications  
Ministry of Communications,  
Government of India  
Sanchar Bhawan, 20 Ashoka Road,  
New Delhi – 110001

**Subject: Request for Urgent Intervention in Equipment Theft Cases**

Dear Sir,

We want to bring to your immediate attention a very serious issue being faced by our member Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) across multiple circles – i.e. the incidents of theft of active equipment which is at an all-time high. We submit as follows:

1. In the past, our members used to encounter a few infrequent incidents of theft every now and then, and the impact of the same was also insignificant. However, from October 2023 onwards, such incidents have increased multi-fold. Remote Radio Unit (RRU) and Base Band Unit (BBU) are the main equipment being stolen from the telecom towers.
2. Such incidents are disproportionately higher in few specific geographies of **Delhi NCR, Rajasthan, Assam, Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Punjab & Haryana**; and just 31 districts in these states are contributing to 50% of the theft incidents reported pan India. Further, there are a huge number of sites which have seen repeated instances of equipment theft.
3. While our members are taking several measures to prevent such incidents at their end, however no measure is full-proof, and each comes with its own set of challenges; plus, multiple incidents of theft have occurred even after implementation of such measures. Due to technical as well as legal challenges, our members are neither able to recover the stolen equipment in most cases, nor able to fully recover the losses incurred due to such incidents.
4. With the rising incidents of theft, customers are the ones suffering the most. While these incidents almost always lead to decline in the quality of services to the customers being served by the site, there may also be instances where services cease completely. In addition, considering the large scale at which these incidents are occurring now, our member TSPs are incurring huge losses as well as additional expenditure in replenishing the equipment.
5. We submit that telecommunication is an essential service and these incidents of theft create hindrances in the provision of the same. This is a matter of grave concern, not just for the service providers, but also for the public at large. Thus, strict action is required on the part of the authorities to prevent such incidents in the future.



6. We also wish to highlight that theft of active equipment would be covered within the offence of causing damage to telecom infrastructure under the Telecommunications Act, 2023. The Government has already recognized the seriousness of such an offence and classified the same as a cognizable and non-bailable offence under the Act.
7. Additionally, we have come across multiple foreign websites selling active equipment online, and it is suspected that the equipment stolen from the networks of our member TSPs may be making their way to these websites (illustrative list of websites included as Annexure). It is thus critical that these websites are blocked immediately.

**Our Request:**

In view of the foregoing, we urge DoT to urgently intervene in the matter, and request DoT to:

- i. **Write to all State Chief Secretaries to prioritize such complaints and ensure strict action on the same.**
- ii. **Coordinate with States for Police protection for telecom infrastructure, especially in theft-prone areas.**
- iii. **Issue orders for blocking of websites selling active equipment (including the ones listed as per the enclosed the Annexure -A).**

We trust our above request would merit your kind consideration and look forward to your valued support on the same.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,

**Warm Regards,**

**Bharat B Bhatia,**

President, ITU-APT Foundation of India (IAFI)

Vice Chairman, Asia Pacific, World Wireless Research Forum (WWRF)

Email: Bharat.Bhatia@iafi.in

**Copy to:**

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2. Shri Ajay Kumar Sahu, Member (S), Department of Telecommunications, Sanchar Bhawan, 20 Ashoka Road, New Delhi – 110001.