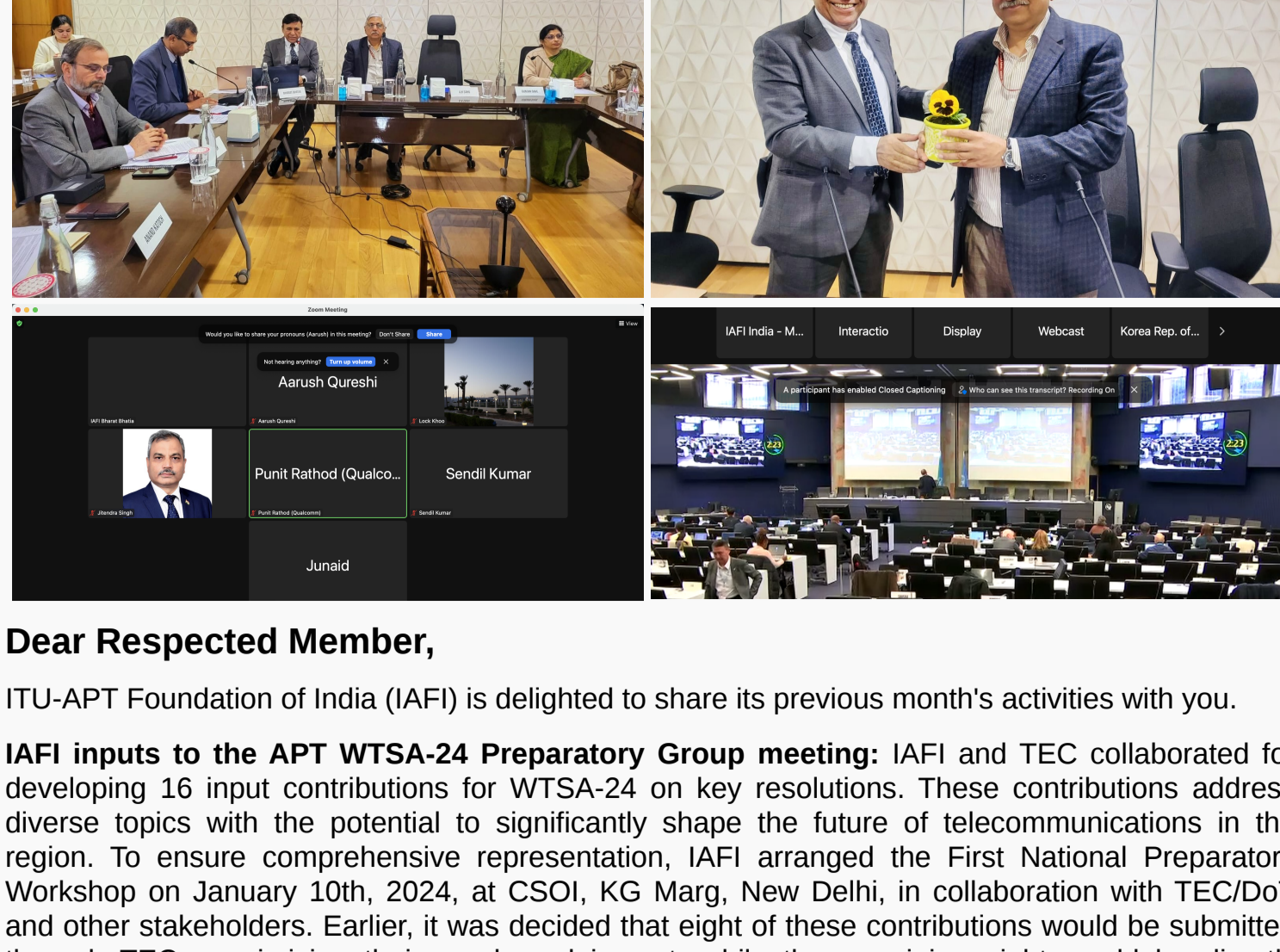


## Monthly News Summary



### Dear Respected Member,

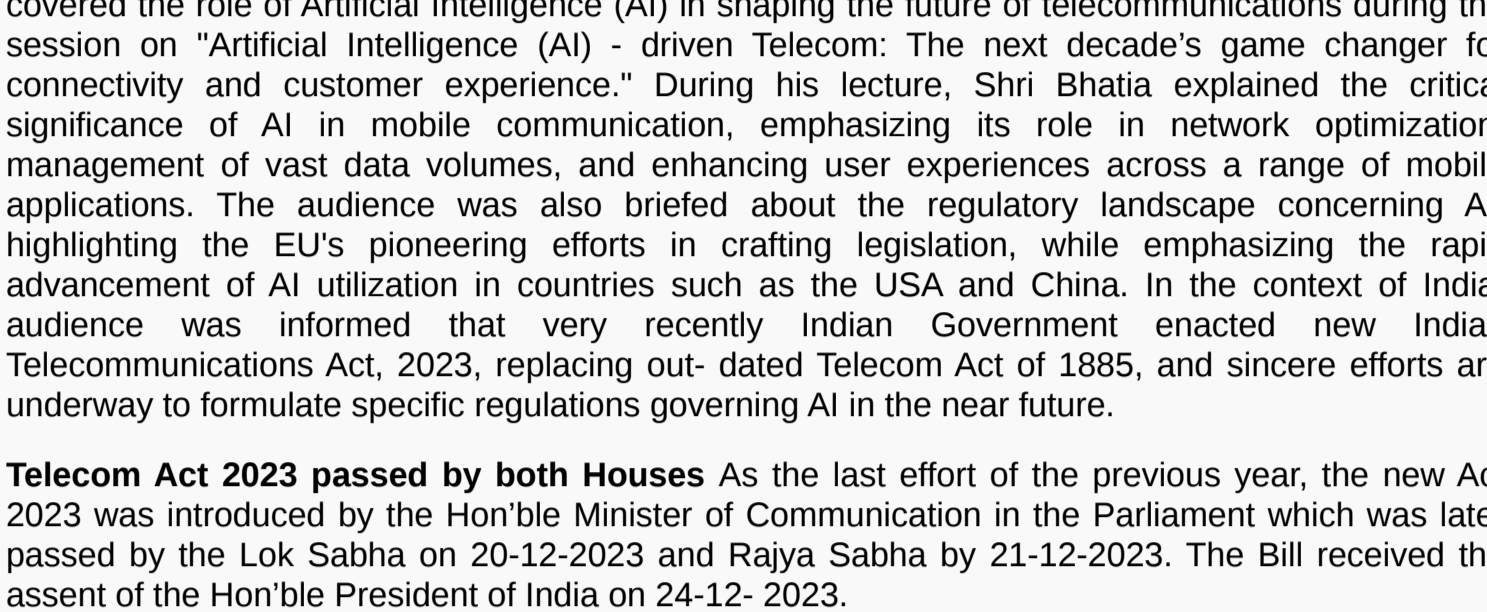
ITU-APT Foundation of India (IAFI) is delighted to share its previous month's activities with you.

**IAFI inputs to the APT WTS-24 Preparatory Group meeting:** IAFI and TEC collaborated for developing 16 input contributions for WTS-24 on key resolutions. These contributions address diverse topics with the potential to significantly shape the future of telecommunications in the region. To ensure comprehensive representation, IAFI arranged the First National Preparatory Workshop on January 10th, 2024, at CSO, KG Marg, New Delhi, in collaboration with TEC/DoT and other stakeholders. Earlier, it was decided that eight of these contributions would be submitted through TEC, maximizing their reach and impact, while the remaining eight would be directly submitted to APT, ensuring IAFI's distinct voice is heard.

Subsequently, following an in-depth discussion with DoT, it was agreed that all contributions from IAFI would be submitted via TEC/DoT as official contributions representing India. A total 30 contributions were submitted by India to the forthcoming APT meeting and all contributions are now accessible on APT Web Portal. Out of 30 contributions, IAFI shared 15 contributions on different WTS-24 Resolutions and remaining 15 were developed by TEC (12 old WTS-24 Resolutions and 3 new resolutions). It may please be noted that the 2nd Meeting of the APT Preparatory Group for WTS-24 (WTS-24-2) is scheduled to take place virtually from February 5 to February 6, 2024.

**First National Preparatory Workshop for WTS-24:** With IAFI collaborating closely with Telecom Engineering Center TEC, in drafting more than 20 Resolutions, which are likely to be presented in the upcoming mega event, WTS-24, IAFI along with TEC planned for a full-day workshop, the First National Preparatory Workshop for WTS-24, on 10th January, 2024, at CSO, KG Marg, New Delhi. This crucial event was arranged to unite stakeholders, refine strategies, and propel India's participation to new heights at the upcoming global telecommunications forum. The full-day preparatory workshop's key objective was to support Indian administration to prepare proposals for the ITU WTS-24 and the forthcoming APT preparatory meeting for WTS-24, the APT For SA24-2. The TEC-IAFI workshop on 10th January was inaugurated by Shri Manish Sinha, Member Finance and Smt Gunjan Dave, Member, Technology of the Digital Communications Commission (DCC). The Occasion was blessed by many stalwarts from DoT/TEC viz Member (Finance), Member (Technology) and Sr DDG (TEC). In addition, workshop was attended many DDG level officers of DoT/TEC and senior management level officers from various stakeholders. The main aim of the workshop was to finalise contributions from India for the forthcoming APT Preparatory Group meeting for WTS-24 (APT WTS-24-2), likely to be held from 05th and 06th February, 2024.

**IAFI Radio Group Meeting for preparation for the upcoming WP-5D:** A meeting of the IAFI Radio Group was held on 12-01-2024 at the IAFI office and in hybrid mode, to discuss the contributions to be submitted by IAFI in the upcoming 45th WP-5D meeting, likely to be held from 31-01-2024 to 07-02-2024 at Geneva, Switzerland. One contribution has already been submitted (WP-5D/C-5) and six more are likely to be submitted in the coming weeks. These were discussed in detail. It was decided to hold the next meeting on 16-01-2024 in a hybrid mode, to finalize the contributions. The IAFI Radio Group meeting was again held on 16-01-2024, in hybrid mode, to discuss the contributions to be submitted by IAFI in the upcoming 45th WP-5D meeting, which is likely to be held from 31-01-2024 to 07-02-2024 at Geneva, Switzerland. Seven contributions were finalized and submitted to TS2 for further necessary action. All contributions have been uploaded on the ITU website as detailed below. The following is a list of the seven contributions



**Brief about 31st Convergence India Expo:** The 31st Convergence India Expo was held from 17th to 19th January, 2024 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Shri T R Dua, Chairman, IAFI and Shri Bharat Bhatia, President, IAFI, were guest speakers at the Convergence India conference. Shri Bhatia covered the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping the future of telecommunications during the session on "Artificial Intelligence (AI) - driven Telecom: The next decade's game changer for connectivity and customer experience." During his lecture, Shri Bhatia explained the critical significance of AI in mobile communication, emphasizing its role in network optimization, management of vast data volumes, and enhancing user experiences across a range of mobile applications. The audience was also briefed about the regulatory landscape concerning AI, highlighting the EU's pioneering efforts in crafting legislation, while emphasizing the rapid advancement of AI utilization in countries such as the USA and China. In the context of India, audience was informed that very recently Indian Government enacted new Indian Telecommunications Act, 2023, replacing out-dated Telecom Act of 1985, and sincere efforts are underway to formulate specific regulations governing AI in the near future.

**Telecom Act 2023 passed by both Houses** As the last effort of the previous year, the new Act 2023 was introduced by the Hon'ble Minister of Communication in the Parliament which was later passed by the Lok Sabha on 20-12-2023 and Rajya Sabha by 21-12-2023. The Bill received the assent of the Hon'ble President of India on 24-12-2023.

It shall come into force, when the Central Government will issue notification in the Official Gazette. The bill seeks to replace the existing regulatory framework for the telecommunication sector, based on the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Wireless Telegraphy Act (1933), and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act (1950). In addition, amendments in the existing Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997, used to set up TRAI as the telecom regulator, for regulating tariffs for the telecom sector and having provision to establish the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT), for adjudicating the disputes and disposal of appeals, are also provisioned.

The structural reforms envisaged under The Telecommunications Bill - 2023 is aimed to streamline the existing complex licensing system in the telecom sector and instead ushers-in a simple authorisation mechanism.

The Major highlights of the bill are:

- The power to issue licenses for providing telecom services will remain with the central government.
- Authorization for telecom-related activities: Prior authorisation from the central government will be required to: (i) provide telecommunication services, (ii) establish, operate, maintain, or expand telecommunications networks, or (iii) possess radio equipment. Existing licences will continue to be valid for the period of their grant, or for five years, where the period is not specified.
- Assignment of spectrum: Spectrum will be assigned by auction, except for specified uses, where it will be allocated on an administrative basis. Specified purposes include: (i) national security and defence, (ii) disaster management, (iii) weather forecasting, (iv) transport, (v) satellite services such as DTH and satellite telephony, and (vi) BSNL, MTNL, and public broadcasting. The central government may re-purpose or re-assign any frequency range. The central government may permit sharing, trading, leasing, and surrender of spectrum.
- Powers of interception and search: Messages or a class of messages between two or more persons may be intercepted, monitored, or blocked on certain grounds. Such actions must be necessary or expedient in the interest of public safety or public emergency, and must be in the interest of specified grounds which include: (i) security of the state, (ii) prevention of incitement of offences, or (iii) public order. These actions will be subject to procedure, safeguards, and duration as may be prescribed. Telecom services may be suspended on similar grounds.
- The government may take temporary possession of any telecom infrastructure, network, or services on occurrence of any public emergency or public safety. An officer authorised by the government may search premises or vehicles for possession of unauthorised telecom network or equipment.
- Protection of users: The central government may provide for measures to protect users which include: (i) prior consent to give specified messages such as advertising messages, (ii) creation of Do Not Disturb registers, and (iii) a mechanism to allow users to report malware or specified messages. Entities providing telecom services must establish an online mechanism for registration and redressal of grievances.
- Right of way: Entities laying telecommunication infrastructure may seek right of way over public or private property. Right of way must be provided on a non-discriminatory and non-exclusive basis to the extent possible.
- Appointments to TRAI: The Bill amends the TRAI Act to also allow individuals with: (i) at least 30 years of professional experience to serve as the Chairperson, and (ii) at least 25 years of professional experience to serve as members.
- Digital Bharat Nidhi: The Universal Service Obligation Fund has been established under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 to provide for telecom services in underserved areas. The Bill retains this provision, renames the fund as Digital Bharat Nidhi, and also allows its use for research and development in telecom.
- Offences and penalties: The Bill specifies various criminal and civil offences. Providing telecom services without authorisation, or gaining unauthorised access to a telecom network or data, are punishable with imprisonment up to three years, a fine up to two crore rupees, or both. Breaching terms and conditions of authorisation is punishable with a civil penalty of up to five crore rupees. Possessing unauthorised equipment, or using unauthorised network or service, is punishable with a penalty of up to ten lakh rupees.
- Adjudication process: The central government will appoint an adjudicating officer to conduct inquiries and pass orders against civil offences under the Bill. The officer must be of the rank of joint secretary and above. Orders of the adjudicating officer may be appealed before the Designated Appeals Committee within 30 days. Members of this Committee will be officers of the rank of at least Additional Secretary. Appeals against the orders of the Committee, in connection to breach of terms and conditions, may be filed with TDSAT within 30 days.
- Need for biometric verification - The Bill provides that telecom service providers must verify the identity of their users through any verifiable biometric-based identification.
- Maximum number of SIM Cards - One of the civil offences in the Bill is the use of Subscriber Identity Modules (SIM cards) in excess of the number notified (nine). The penalty for this offence is up to Rs 50,000 for the first offence and up to two lakh rupees for each subsequent offence.
- The central government may provide for measures to protect users such as requiring prior consent to receive specified messages, and creation of a do not disturb register.

**The Telecommunications Act, 2023 still to be implemented** The Legislative Department of Ministry of Law and Justice issued Gazette Notification to publish The Telecommunications Act, 2023 for general information, as the Hon'ble President of India assented to the same on 12-12-2023. The Department of Telecommunications also published the Act through its website on 01-01-2024. However, there is no specific date mentioned in the Act for its commencement, leaving its effective date unclear. As per the Section-1(3) of the Act, it shall come into force, from the date, when the Central Government authorises in separate notification for commencement of provision/s or different dates for different provisions.

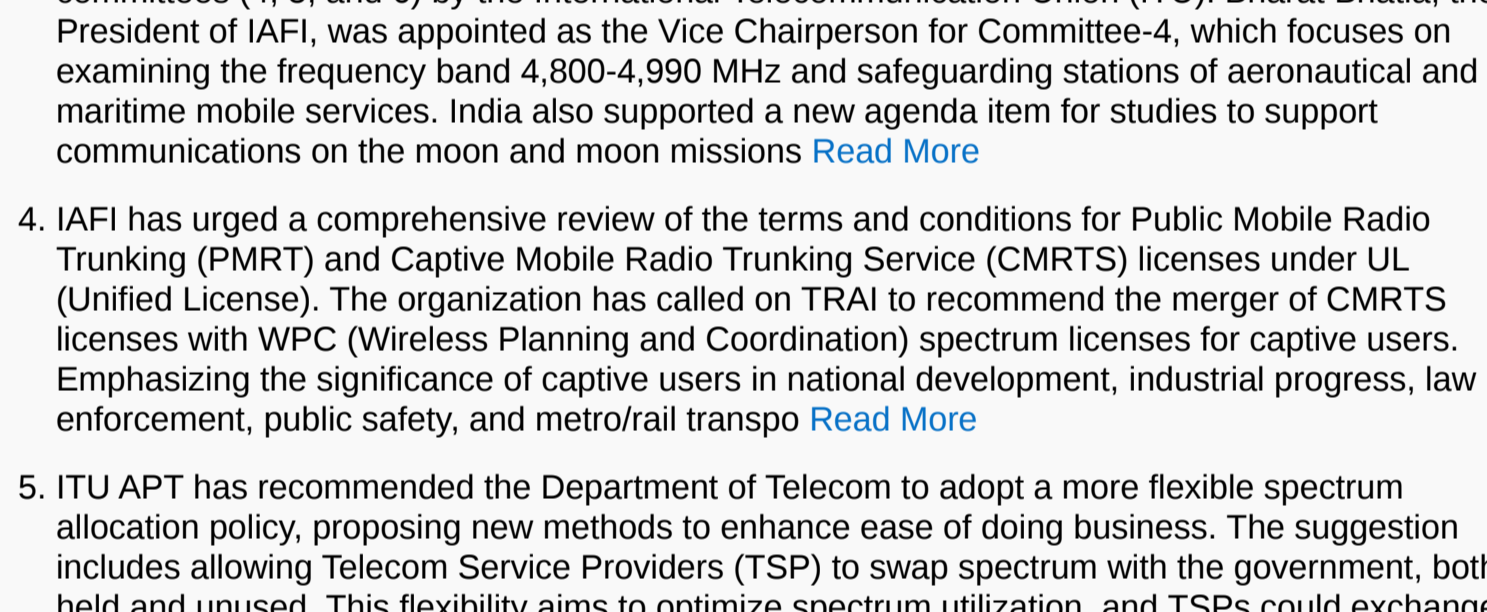
So, till that time, the old Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 will continue to remain in force. With the notification of the new Act, the three old laws — the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950, have been repealed. It means that virtually every rule governing the telecom sector needs to be defined afresh.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is currently drafting over 30 key telecom rules under the newly enacted Telecommunications Act. These regulations, to be rolled out in the coming months, will shape the landscape of India's telecom sector. The upcoming telecom rules promise extensive reforms, from setting prices for satellite spectrum allocation to establishing legal call interception methods for carriers. They will also address trading, sharing, and surrendering of spectrum, collection of biometric data (KYC) and many more. Significant reshaping of India's telecom landscape will be achieved, once these rules are implemented.

The DoT has yet to take a call on doing stakeholder consultations on the proposed new telecom rules.

**Digital India: Achievements and challenges:** Bharat Bhatia President IAFI participated in a panel discussions on achievements and challenges of Digital India initiative of the Hon'ble prime minister of India organised by the Doordarshan. The discussions will be telecast on DD in the coming weeks.

### Media Showcase: Following Items relating to IAFI were covered in the media



- The first national preparatory workshop for the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTS-24) was organized by the Telecom Engineering Centre of the Department of Telecom and IAFI. The workshop focused on key topics such as the structure and organization of WTS-24, review of existing resolutions, and proposals for new resolutions in the field of telecommunication standardization. [Read More](#)
- The World Radio communication Conference (WRC) has globally allocated 100 MHz spectrum in the 6 GHz band for mobility services, and the upper 6 GHz band has been designated for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. In India, telecom operators are advocating for the 6 GHz band to be reserved entirely for IMT, asserting its significance in achieving national connectivity goals and fulfilling future spectrum requirements for 5G and 6G technologies. [Read More](#)
- WRC-23 commenced on November 20 in Dubai, with major technical work divided into three committees (4, 5, and 6) by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Bharat Bhatia, the President of IAFI, was appointed as the Vice Chairperson for Committee-4, which focuses on examining the frequency band 4,800-4,990 MHz and safeguarding stations of aeronautical and maritime mobile services. India also supported a new agenda item for studies to support communications on the moon and moon missions. [Read More](#)
- IAFI has urged a comprehensive review of the terms and conditions for Public Mobile Radio Trunking (PMRT) and Captive Mobile Radio Trunking Service (CMRTS) licenses under Unified License. The organization has called on TRAI to recommend the merger of CMRTS licenses with WPC (Wireless Planning and Coordination) spectrum licenses for captive users. Emphasizing the significance of captive users in national development, industrial progress, law enforcement, public safety, and metro/rail transport. [Read More](#)
- ITU APT has recommended the Department of Telecom to adopt a more flexible spectrum allocation policy, proposing new methods to ease of doing business. The suggestion includes allowing Telecom Service Providers (TSP) to swap spectrum with the government, both held and unused. This flexibility is intended to optimize spectrum utilization, and TSPs could exchange their auctioned spectrum in one band for government-held spectrum in another, aligning with their business strategies. The adoption of [Read More](#)
- The 3rd India Spectrum Management Conference (ISM-23) took place in New Delhi from October 16th to 18th, 2023. Hosted by ITU APT, the University of Chicago, USA, and IIT Delhi, the event, inaugurated by Shree Bharat Bhatia, President of IAFI, featured notable dignitaries in the telecommunications field. The conference focused on spectrum policy, planning, technology balance, and strong regulations to accelerate India's digital growth. Discussions highlighted the Department of Telecommunication. [Read More](#)
- DoT and TRAI Announce Auction of 10 Spectrum Bands for 5G at the 3rd India Spectrum Management Conference Organized by IAFI and University of Chicago. [Read More](#)

### UPCOMING EVENT

### PAST IAFI EVENT

### Links to our Activities & Programmes

- Letter to Secretary DoT & Chairman DCC Assignment of Spectrum for Satellite Communication Services
- Letter to Secretary DoT & Chairman DCC Suggestions for formulation of a new Policy for Spectrum Swapping
- Letter to Minister of External Affairs on Deregulation of 6GHz band
- Letter to Secretary DoT on Important issues awaiting solution in the telecom sector
- Letter to DDG TEC for Nomination to join the member of TSAC
- Letter to MOC on Policy for 5G Network for Industries
- 44th Working Party 5D Summary
- IAFI Comments on In-Space Draft guidelines for implementation of the Indian Space Policy 2023
- Request for amendment of NFAP-2022/IND 16 for removal of frequency band 27.50 – 28.50 GHz for the use of IMT/5G on primary basis
- Letter to MOS on 6G standardisation Roadmap

### IAFI MEMBERSHIP

ITU-APT Foundation of India (IAFI) is a non-profit, non-political, non-partisan industry foundation registered as a Society under the Societies Registration Act, 1960. IAFI has been working for the last 20 years with the objective of encouraging the involvement of professionals, corporate, public/private sector industries, R&D organizations, academic institutions, and such other agencies engaged in the development of the Indian Telecom sector. The members of IAFI are corporate members are 25 and individual members to 133 making a total of 158 members. The EC also emphasized on the Creation of a new member category for academia and a campaign to register Eminent educational institutes as members.

The benefits provided to the members include an invitation to all the events of the Foundation which include: Training programs, seminars, workshops, etc. conducted by the society on a complimentary basis. Besides, EC Members will also have access to information related to ITU and APT and other telecom journals where members can subscribe. Members are further eligible to participate in ITU-T, ITU-D, and APT activities. The individual Membership Fee of IAFI has been reversed to the previous fee that was applicable since the beginning. Please click: [Membership details](#)



### Activities in our focus areas during November 2023



TSAG met in Geneva from 22nd to 26th January. IAFI attended the meeting in Virtual mode. One of the key discussions at the TSAG was about consolidation of ITU-T SG9 into SG 16 thus reducing the total number of study groups from 11 to 10.



The invitation on Training Workshop on Digital IPv6 Migration Strategy for Regulators and Governing Authorities (Hybrid Mode (in person and online)), 20-21 June 2024, IPv6 Forum Malaysia was sent to IAFI members to take attend the training course and the last date for submission of the nomination is 10th May 2024.



IAFI welcome the opportunity to respond to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) consultation paper on Digital Transformation through 5G Ecosystem (Consultation Paper). Given the rapid advancement of new technologies, particularly in relation to the development of virtual worlds and the metaverse, IAFI believes that the decision to initiate a public dialogue will go a long way in ensuring that such technologies are able to meet their full potential. IAFI along with its partner, Meta are happy to act as a joint contributor to these conversations, to support a transparent, responsible, equitable and collaborative ecosystem for digital transformation. To this end, we have provided our responses and recommendations below. The Consultation Paper was thoroughly reviewed, and IAFI, in collaboration with its partner, offers our recommendations with the objective that they will guide that several ministries and stakeholders toward a shared objective. It may also be noted that all pertinent issues and legal questions posed in the Consultation Paper may not fall within TRAI's regulatory ambit.