

# EDITORIAL



In the current scenario, when the world is reeling under the coronavirus pandemic, communication plays a very crucial role in delivering the information with accuracy, helping us to connect to our dear ones. Life seems to be incomplete with no internet and communication. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is celebrated every year on May 17 to help raise awareness about the importance of the internet and other means of information and communication in bringing the world closer.

India's population and a competitive telecom market have led to a multi-fold increase in the number of subscribers in this sector. The Telecom industry in India is the second-largest in the world with a subscriber base of over 1.2 bn with a tele-density of 86.22% as of September 30, 2020. Gross revenue of the telecom sector stood at Rs. 66,858 crores in the first quarter of FY21. Over the next five years, rise in mobile-phone penetration and decline in data costs will add 500 million new internet users in India, creating opportunities for new businesses.

India is also the second largest country in terms of internet subscribers. As per TRAI, average wireless data usage per wireless data subscriber was 11 GB per month in FY20. App downloads in the country increased from 12.07 billion in 2017 to 19 billion in 2019 and is expected to reach 37.21 billion by 2022. Strong policy support from the Government has been crucial to the sector's development. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) cap in the telecom sector has been increased to 100% from 74%. The Government of India, through its National Digital Communications Policy, foresees investment worth US\$ 100 billion in the telecommunications sector by 2022.

India's telecom sector is expected

to see some major developments in 2021 which will fuel the growth for all telecom operators such as spectrum auction, likely launch of 5G services and Open RAN adoption. 5G is the next evolution in mobile network technology and is already available in many parts of the world. The network has low latency and presents use cases such as AR/VR, AI, high-speed broadband, among others. In the recent past Government of India has approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Telecom and Networking Products. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme intends to promote manufacture of Telecom and Networking Products in India and proposes a financial incentive to boost domestic manufacturing and attract investments in the target segments of telecom and networking products in order to encourage Make in India. The scheme will also encourage exports of telecom and networking products 'Made in India'. Through this policy, India will move towards self-reliance. By incentivizing large scale manufacturing in India, domestic value addition will increase gradually. Provision of higher incentive to MSME will encourage domestic telecom manufacturers to become part of the global supply chain.

The telecommunications industry has to exactly understand the requirements of the consumers in India across urban, semi-urban, rural, hinterlands as well as through all possible segmentations based on socio-economic demographics and create a social change through equity model that shall lead to equality. Unless this approach is adopted, the benefits of digitalization cannot be harnessed to the full potential. The telecom layer will get deployed over the uneven structure of the society which will result in uneven development of the sector. Telecom will not just drive the

communications industry going forward. It is going to be the core over which social, economic and political activities will develop ushering not just to Digital Economy, but Digital Living. As we celebrate the glorious 25 years of mobility services in India, this is the time to rise up and extensively drive research and thought-leadership to peep into the future and lay the foundation of a magnificent telecom sector in the country that will in essence drive everything.

The post COVID-19 era is resulting in emergence of digital and innovative organisations and the telecom sector has a foundational role to play in this transformation through convergence and capitalization of multiple technologies such as 5G, AI, Machine-to-Machine and IoT to build a robust ICT infrastructure. Hence there is an urgent need to re-focus on ease of doing business and improve the financial health for the sector for which CMAs can play a crucial role. CMAs, based on their techno-professional skills, can render advisory services like facilitating in framing of suitable policies concerning cost control and cost reduction; fixing of tariff; decision-making and outlining innovative schemes. CMAs are authorised to conduct Audit for Metering and Billing Accuracy and Audit of Digital Addressable System for Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). They also have the Right to Legal Representation before Appellate Tribunal as per Section 17 of TRAI Act, 1997.

This issue presents a good number of articles on the cover story "Telecommunication Sector: Potential Catalyst for Digital India Movement" written by distinguished experts. We look forward to constructive feedback from our readers on the articles and overall development of the Journal. Please send your emails at [editor@icmai.in](mailto:editor@icmai.in). We thank all the contributors to this important issue and hope our readers would enjoy the articles.

As the country is struggling to combat the deadly second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, wish everyone to stay safe and secure! Let's pray the pandemic ends soon.