



Telecommunications Bill 2023

For Prelims: Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, [Telecommunication services](#), [SpaceX's Starlink](#), [TRAI](#), [Universal Service Obligation Fund](#), Digital Bharat Nidhi, [Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface](#), [Bharatnet project](#), [Production Linked Incentive \(PLI\) Scheme](#), [Bharat 6G Alliance](#)

For Mains: Telecommunications Bill 2023, Status of the Telecom Sector in India.

[Source: BL](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the government introduced the **Telecommunications Bill 2023** in the **Lok Sabha**. It seeks to repeal the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**, the **Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933**, and the **Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950**. It also amends the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997**.

What are the Key Provisions of Telecommunications Bill 2023?

- **Authorisation for Telecom-related Activities:** Prior authorisation from the central government will be required to **provide [telecommunication services](#), establish, operate, maintain, or expand telecommunications networks, or possess radio equipment**.
 - Existing licenses 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. These include purposes such as **national security and defense, [disaster management](#), [weather forecasting](#), transport, satellite services such as DTH and satellite telephony**, and BSNL, MTNL, and public broadcasting services.
 - The central government may **re-purpose or re-assign any frequency range**. The central government may also permit sharing, trading, leasing, and surrender of spectrum.
- **Satellite Internet Allotments:** The Bill introduces provisions for **allocating spectrum to satellite Internet providers like OneWeb (supported by Bharti) and U.S.-based companies such as [SpaceX's Starlink](#)**.
 - Presently, active authorizations have been granted to **OneWeb and Jio**, paving the way for satellite-based Internet services.
- **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: security of the state, prevention of incitement of offenses, or public order.
 - **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 authorized by the government may search premises or vehicles for possession of unauthorized telecom networks or equipment.

- **Powers to Specify Standards:** The central government may prescribe standards and assessments for **telecom equipment, infrastructure, networks, and services.**
- **Right of Way:** Facility providers may seek a **right of way over public or private property** to establish telecom infrastructure.
 - Right of way must be provided on a non-discriminatory and non-exclusive basis to the extent possible.
- **Protection of Users:** The central government may provide for measures to protect users which include: **prior consent to receive specified messages** such as advertising messages, **creation of Do Not Disturb registers**, and a mechanism to allow users to report malware or specified messages.
 - **Biometric Authentication** is mandatory for telecom customers to combat spam calls and messages.
 - Entities providing telecom services must establish an online mechanism for registration and redressal of grievances.
- **Appointments to TRAI:** The **Bill amends the TRAI Act** to also allow individuals with: at least 30 years of professional experience to serve as the chairperson, and at least 25 years of professional experience to serve as members.
- **Digital Bharat Nidhi:** The **Universal Service Obligation Fund** has been established under the **1885 Act** 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.
- **Regulation of OTT Apps:** It has **removed over-the-top (OTT) services and apps from the definition of telecommunication services**, in a big relief to communication service providers such as WhatsApp and Telegram.
 - The **Ministry of Electronics and IT** will handle the regulation of OTT apps under the potential Digital India Act, not included in the Telecom Bill.
- **Offenses and Penalties:** The Bill specifies various criminal and civil offenses. Providing telecom services without authorisation, or gaining unauthorized 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 up to **five crore rupees.**
 - Possessing unauthorized equipment, or using unauthorized 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 offenses 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.
 - Appeals against the orders of the Committee, in connection to breach of terms and conditions, may be filed with Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) within 30 days.
- **Trusted Sources Regime:** A measure initially established post the India-China border conflict in 2020 to prevent the importation of telecom equipment from potentially adversarial nations is **now integrated into the law.**

What is the Status of the Telecom Sector in India?

- **Status:**
 - The Telecom industry in India is the **second largest in the world** with a subscriber base of 1.179 Billion as of August 2023 (wireless + wireline subscribers).
 - It is also the **4th largest sector in terms of FDI inflows**, contributing 6% of total FDI inflow.
 - India has an overall **tele-density of 84.69%**. Tele-density denotes the number of telephones per 100 population, and is an important indicator of telecom penetration.
 - The average monthly data consumption per wireless data subscriber has also increased to 17.36 GB in March 2023 from 61.66 MB in March 2014.
- **Related Government Initiatives:**
 - **Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI)**
 - **Bharatnet project**

- [Production Linked Incentive \(PLI\) Scheme for manufacturing of telecom and networking products.](#)
- [Bharat 6G Alliance](#)

International Energy Agency's Coal 2023 Report

For Prelims: [International Energy Agency](#), [Coal](#), [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development](#), [Renewable Energy](#)

For Mains: Factors contributing to the decline in coal demand, Challenges and Opportunities for emerging economies in balancing growth with renewables,

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

The [International Energy Agency's \(IEA\) annual coal market report](#) predicts a significant shift in the trajectory of global coal demand, **hinting at a structural decline by 2026.**

- This anticipated transformation is influenced by various factors, including the expansion of [renewable energy](#) and a rise in [nuclear generation](#) in key regions.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

▪ Global Coal Demand Trends:

- Global coal demand reached a record high in 2022 amid the global energy crisis, rising by **4% year-on-year to 8.42 billion tonnes (Bt).**
- Asia remains the primary driver of coal demand growth in both power and non-power sectors.
 - China experienced a demand rise of 4.6%, equivalent to 200 million tonnes (Mt) of coal.
 - India saw a substantial increase of 9%, amounting to 97 Mt.
 - Indonesia witnessed a remarkable surge of 32%, reaching 49 Mt, driven by nickel smelters.
- The United States faced an 8% decline in coal demand, totalling 37 Mt, the most significant drop among major markets.
- Europe, despite a 4.3% increase in consumption, exhibited more restrained growth than anticipated.
 - Subdued hydropower and nuclear electricity generation in certain European countries.
 - A weak economy and mild winter in Europe contributed to the restrained impact of natural gas price spikes.

▪ Future Projections and Uncertainties:

- Anticipated decline in coal demand in most advanced economies during 2023.
- Overall, global coal **consumption in 2026 is projected to be 2.3% lower than in 2023.**
 - Despite the expected decline, global coal consumption is projected to remain **above 8 billion tonnes through 2026**, highlighting its continued role as a significant source of [carbon dioxide emissions](#).
- **China, India, and Indonesia, the three largest coal producers globally, are**

expected to break output records in 2023, pushing global production to a new high in 2023. These three countries **now account for more than 70% of the world's coal production.**

- In China and India, in particular, rising coal consumption is driven by robust growth in demand for electricity and low [hydropower](#) output.

▪ **Factors Influencing Decline in Coal Demand:**

- The decline in coal demand is attributed to a **global [shift towards renewable energy sources.](#)**
- The IEA links the expected decline to changes in global climate, with **[El Nino conditions transitioning to La Nina,](#)** potentially leading to **increased hydropower output.**
- The report highlights a significant upward trend in **low-cost [solar photovoltaic deployment,](#)** contributing to the growth of renewable power generation.
- **Nuclear generation** is expected to see moderate increases, particularly in China, India, and the European Union, further influencing coal-fired generation.

▪ **China's Dominance in Coal Markets:**

- China's coal consumption is expected to fall in 2024 and remain steady through 2026.
 - Hydropower output is set to recover, while electricity generation from solar PV and wind is expected to increase significantly in China.
- The pace of **economic growth in China and its coal use is uncertain,** as the country undergoes major structural changes.
- India, Indonesia, and other emerging economies are expected to rely on coal for economic growth, despite commitments to deploy renewables.
- Efforts to reduce the use of '**unabated**' coal, in line with the **[28th Conference of Parties \(COP28\)](#)** are deemed essential for meeting international climate targets, aiming for a **nearly 95% reduction in coal emissions between 2020-2050.**

▪ **Coal Industry Shifts:**

- Coal prices have experienced an unexpected surge over the past two years, impacting both consumers and industry dynamics.
- Despite escalating costs, coal mining companies have maintained strong profit margins. This has allowed diversified mining firms to strategically reinvest coal profits in other commodities, capitalizing on the expected surge in demand linked to the **energy transition.**

What is the International Energy Agency?

▪ **About:**

- The International Energy Agency (IEA), which has its **headquarters in Paris, France** was set up as an **autonomous agency in 1974** by member countries of the **[Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development\(OECD\)](#)** in response to the **mid-1970s oil crisis.**
- The IEA's main focus is on energy policies, which include economic development, energy security, and environmental protection.
- The IEA also plays a major role in providing information related to the international oil market and taking action against any physical disruptions in the supply of oil.

▪ **Members:**

- The IEA family is made up of 31 member countries, 13 association countries including **[India,](#)** and 4 accession countries.
 - A candidate country to the **IEA must be a member country of the OECD.**

▪ **Major Reports:**

- [World Energy Outlook.](#)
- [World Energy Investment Report.](#)
- [India Energy Outlook Report.](#)

Prelims

Q1. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Coal sector was nationalized by the Government of India under Indira Gandhi.
2. Now, coal blocks are allocated on lottery basis.
3. Till recently, India imported coal to meet the shortages of domestic supply, but now India is self-sufficient in coal production.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Q2. Which of the following is/are the characteristic/characteristics of Indian coal? (2013)

1. High ash content
2. Low sulphur content
3. Low ash fusion temperature

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. "The Climate Group" is an international non-profit organization that drives climate action by building large networks and runs them.
2. The International Energy Agency in partnership with the Climate Group launched a global initiative "EP100".
3. EP100 brings together leading companies committed to driving innovation in energy efficiency and increasing competitiveness while delivering on emission reduction goals.
4. Some Indian companies are members of EP100.
5. The International Energy Agency is the Secretariat to the 'Under2 Coalition'.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. "In spite of adverse environmental impact, coal mining is still inevitable for development". Discuss. (2017)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/20-12-2023/print>

