# Role of a Robust and Secure telecom Infrastructure Will Continue to be important and critical

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**The article has been written by Mr.T.R.Dua, Director, General, Digital Infrastructure Providers Association (DIPA)**

The telecom revolution is one of the biggest success stories post-liberalizations of India that has helped the country's visibility in global markets. Today, India is the 2nd largest telecom market and the largest data consumer, globally. With 1.3 Billion of Indians accessing voice and data services at the world's lowest tariffs, the ubiquitous wireless network in India is unmatched for its reach and impact on people's lives. This unprecedented success of India's telecom sector is attributable to wireless growth, backed by a robust and State-of-the-Art telecom infrastructure that has been fundamental backbone for this growth of telecom services and has played a pivotal role in bridging the digital divide, connecting the unconnected and facilitating ubiquitous mobile connectivity. The Indian telecom infrastructure industry has laid a strong foundation of growth for the telecom sector and has supported the sector in keeping pace with the fast-paced technology advancements. The telecom tower Industry has played a critical pivotal role in the unhindered growth of India's telecom sector. It is quite evident that the growth of telecom services could not have been possible without a robust and ubiquitous telecom infrastructure.

### Evolution of Telecom infrastructure Industry in India

In 2000, The Telecom Infrastructure Industry came into existence with DoT inviting applications for IP-I registrations. Prior to that, telecom service providers were installing towers and other passive infrastructures on their own and there was no sharing. Even up to 2005, the telecom towers were being operated under integrated model and no sharing was taking place. Only a few operators shared towers on barter system. However, post 2005, the tower industry evolved under independent tower companies which maintain and install assets like tower and related infrastructure for renting/ leasing to telecom service providers for providing cellular telecom services. Thus, the concept of sharing became popular as the towers were shared in a non-discriminatory, transparent, and cost- effective manner, by a neutral/ independent infrastructure service provider.

India's telecom journey has moved paces away from the first telegraph communication set up in Kolkata and is on a dizzying trajectory towards digitalisation. Further reforms in telecom regulations will propel the future of Digital India to greater heights.

The advent of Infrastructure providers – 1 (IP -1) industry has helped in shaping the growth of the entire ICT eco system. Telecom infrastructure is the backbone of “Digital India” program. Telecom infrastructure providers are playing a key role in realization of transformative and revolutionary initiatives of the Government of India and foster partnerships under its various programs like Bharatnet and Smart city mission to enhance connectivity by creation of robust telecom infrastructure. A robust telecom infrastructure will play a key role in a seamless connectivity, which is the essence of true digitization.

To summarize, the infrastructure providers are in the transformational mode to support the data centric growth in telecom series which would continue to grow as the technology evolves to 5G and aided by reduced data prices, smart phones and mobile applications. The policy reforms like enhancement in scope for IP 1, rationalization of taxes and duties i.e. property taxes and administration fee, securitization of telecom infrastructure, single window clearance and availability of Government lands/ buildings would provide tremendous impetus to the telecom infrastructure sector.

As IP-1, we have stood the test of the times and continue to be able to get it through. Massive adoption of digital services in last two years has led to higher usage of internet bandwidth as well as data which could have been possible only by maintaining the robust telecom infrastructure behind it. It is the telecom infrastructure providers (IP-1) who are ensuring 24x7 availability of network.

Going forward, the digitalization has become a necessity and not a choice anymore. The telecom infrastructure will have far more important role to play as the emerging technology would require tower densification and fiberization to support new applications like enhanced broadband, IoT applications, AI, VR, AR and block chain etc. over 5G. The existing infrastructure would have to be complimented through small cell, Wi-Fi and in building solutions. Thus, the role of a robust and secure telecom infrastructure will continue to be important and critical.