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 By Christy Chasteen September 22, 2022



India's Telecommunications Bill, 2022 builds on the Wireless Planning Coordination (WPC) reforms aimed at making the process of businesses applying for permits more efficient and without physical interference, the Telecommunications Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

Vaishnaw said the bill would reduce licensing time to 28 days and usher in licensing reforms through an online process. "This will now reduce the paperwork and permit approval of the right of way (RoW) to 6-7 days," he said at the 9th Annual Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI) on Thursday.

The minister said that the reforms are essential for companies to plan their investments in the country. It is part of the review exercise that the telecommunications department is carrying out internally, as it seeks to simplify procedures and provide ease of doing business to the industry.

The right of way (RoW) is a prerequisite for establishing telecommunication networks and improving telecommunication services. The existing regulatory framework, based on the 2016 Right of Way Rules, had limited impact in addressing bottlenecks in the rapid expansion of telecommunications infrastructure.

Effective mechanisms to obtain RoW will be essential for the rapid deployment of newer technologies such as 5G, the government said. The Telecommunications Law Project establishes a solid regulatory framework within the federal structure, to obtain the right of way in a uniform and non-discriminatory manner, for the establishment of the telecommunications infrastructure.

The bill seeks to remove the limitations by providing an enabling framework that facilitates the RoW to install or build telecommunications infrastructure by any facility provider. In this case, "facility provider" includes any licensee or registered entity, including any contractor, subcontractor, or agent working for the central government or the licensee or registered entity.

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