



Subject: Minutes of Meeting of Gujarat State Broadband Committee for the year 2025-26 (2nd SBC) held on 15-09-2025.

2nd meeting of Gujarat State Broadband Committee (SBC) for the year 2025-26 was held on 15-09-2025 under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary Shri Pankaj Joshi (IAS), Govt of Gujarat at Committee Room, 5th Floor, Block No. 1, Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar. Shri Sandeep Sawarkar Addl. DGT, Gujarat LSA, DoT was the convenor of the meeting. The list of participants is placed at Annexure-I.

At the outset, Shri Sandeep Sawarkar Addl. DGT welcomed Chairperson and all the participants of the Meeting. Shri Avinash Khatri, Director (Rural-2), Gujarat LSA, provided a briefing on the detailed agenda points. The points discussed in the meeting and action plan for the issues are as under:

1. Telecom status in Gujarat:

- A. It was informed that 1,19,983 4G BTSs of all four TSPs are operational in Gujarat. In addition, 33,445 5G BTSs are also functional in the state. A district-wise bifurcation of 5G BTSs was also presented.
- B. The Chair inquired about the number of towers installed for these 4G and 5G BTSs in Gujarat. Indus Tower clarified that, on an average, 1.6 BTSs are deployed per tower, i.e., many towers are hosting two or more BTSs.
- C. The DDG (Rural) suggested adopting the concept of street furniture for telecom infrastructure to minimize the need for new tower installations for 5G. The Chair appreciated this concept as a means to strengthen telecom infrastructure.

2. 4G Saturation Project status:

- A. Director (Rural) appreciated the support provided by the State Government in the allotment of Revenue and Forest land. DDG (Rural) further informed that the issue related to Gauchar land has also been resolved.
- B. District-wise progress of the 4G Saturation Project was presented. Some districts have already achieved more than 90% of the target.
- C. It was observed that many 4G Saturation sites are carrying data traffic proportionate to the number of sites radiated. However, in Surat, Tapi, Valsad, and Chhota Udepur districts, the data traffic is comparatively lower despite the number of sites radiated.
- D. DDG (Rural), Sh. Ashish Thaker, suggested implementation of Intra Circle Roaming (ICR) in the identified four districts to enhance data traffic and ensure optimum utilization of the Government of India's initiatives. The Chair further instructed that the reasons for underutilization be analyzed.

Action Point:

DoT, along with BSNL, will conduct a survey in Surat, Tapi, Valsad, and Chhotaudepur districts to identify the reasons for low utilization of towers and suggest possible solutions.

3. Right of Way (RoW) issues:

- A. It was reported that 29 RoW applications submitted before 01.01.2025 are still pending, distributed as follows: UDD – 16, Panchayat – 10, R&B – 3. These applications pertain to the years 2022, 2023, and 2024.

The Chair instructed the concerned State Departments to expedite and promptly dispose of all RoW applications submitted prior to 01.01.2025.

Action Point:

Concerned departments, i.e., UDD, R&B, and Panchayat, to ensure that all RoW applications submitted before 01.01.2025 are disposed of immediately, with the highest priority.

4. BharatNet status in Gujarat:

- A. Director (Rural-2), Sh. Avinash Khatri, presented the status of FTTH connections at Government Institutions and Gram Panchayat locations of Gujarat under various schemes of Phase-I & Phase-II.
- B. It was highlighted that under the flagship Amended BharatNet Project, 5.47 lakh Broadband connections are targeted to be provided in five years. GFGNL will function as the Project Management Agency (PMA) for this initiative.

5. Samriddh Gram Panchayat project: -

- A. The Department of Telecommunications has launched the *Samriddh Gram Panchayat* pilot project to transform 247 Gram Panchayats in Gujarat into digitally empowered model villages through high-speed internet connectivity via BharatNet. In this regards, Gujarat State to formally notify a "Gram Panchayat Digital Access Committee (DAC)" for each Samriddh Gram Panchayat for building awareness about benefits of high-speed broadband access (i.e. FTTH) among rural communities, public institutions, private institutions and village level entrepreneurs/enterprises for socio-economic development of villages. The composition of the committee is as follow:

Chairperson	Elected President of GP (Sarpanch/Gram Pradhan)
Member convener	Panchayat Secretary
Member	Principal/Teacher of Govt. Secondary School/high school or primary school in the Gram Panchayat
Member	Representative from Primary Health Center (PHC)/ Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society (PACS)/ Krishi Vigyan Kendra
Member	Representative from village level entrepreneur/SHGs/ NGOs
Invitee	BharatNet Udyamis (BNUUs)

- B. The timeline for the pilot project and targets are as follow:

SN	FTTH Users	Target for FTTH per GPs	Target Date
1	Public Institutions	At least 05 Nos. of FTTH Connections	31.12.2025
2	Private Enterprises/ Entrepreneurs	At least 05 Nos. of FTTH Connections	
3	Households	At least 5% of total Households in GP	

Action Points:

- a) The Panchayat Department to request the DDOs of all the district for formulation of Digital Access Committees (DACs) in 247 villages of the State.
- b) GFGNL/BSNL to prepare the roadmap to meet the given timeline of Samridhh GP project and share with Gujarat LSA.

6. Call Before You Dig (CBuD) Mobile Application:

- A. It was informed that State Government departments/agencies (e.g., R&B, UDD, etc.) and their contractors/excavators are using the CBuD application far less frequently than the actual number of digging activities carried out.
- B. The Chair observed that the number of excavation enquiries recorded in CBuD is significantly lower than the actual digging activities across the state. Accordingly, all State Departments were directed to mandate the use of CBuD by including it as a condition in all RFPs, work orders, and agreements related to excavation works.
- C. Director (Rural-2), DoT presented department/agency-wise data of unreported excavations in the last six months in Gujarat. The Chair inquired about the penalty clause for damaging telecom infrastructure. DDG (Rural), Sh. Ashish Thaker, informed the following:

"According to Section 42 (5) and 42 (7) of the Telecommunication Act, 2023, damage to the telecommunication network is a cognizable and non-bailable offense, subject to compensation for the damage caused and a fine of up to fifty lakh rupees."

Action Points:

- a) All line departments (Water, Gas, Electricity, Drainage, etc.) to issue a notification mandating the use of the CBuD application for all digging works in Gujarat.
- b) Separate meetings to be conducted by all concerned State Departments to enforce mandatory use of CBuD prior to any digging activities, as directed by the Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue), Dr. Jayanti S. Ravi, IAS.

7. Sanchar Saathi: -

Director (Rural-2) informed that the Gujarat Police has successfully recovered more than 40% of the lost mobile handsets reported through the CEIR module of the "Sanchar Saathi" application.

The Chair appreciated the efforts of DoT in facilitating the recovery of lost mobile handsets through *Sanchar Saathi*.

8. Other Issues by DIPA/COAI: -

RoW Related Issues – DIPA Inputs

A. NOC Requirement for Installations on Private Land:

DIPA raised the concern that despite the clear provisions of the RoW Rules, 2024, several local bodies (Corporations, Municipalities, Nagar Palikas) are insisting on NOCs for deployment of telecom infrastructure on private property. According to the RoW Rules 2024, only **intimation is required**, and no additional permission should be demanded.

The Chair acknowledged the concern and directed the DST and UDD to take corrective steps.

Action Points:

- a) UDD to organize RoW awareness workshop for local authorities.
- b) DST to issue a GR in line with the RoW Rules 2024 and circulate it to all departments and their subordinate units.

B. Regularization of Towers on GIDC Sites:

DIPA highlighted that regularization of telecom towers on GIDC lands has been pending for a long time. While GIDC had opened a regularization window, it required documents beyond those prescribed under **GDCR circulars**, creating bottlenecks. DIPA also emphasized that:

- a) Many sites are installed by sub-lessees, and GIDC interprets this as “sub-letting,” thereby objecting to tower deployment.
- b) IP1s should be allowed to deploy telecom infrastructure on private property in GIDC jurisdiction, without any intervention/permission of GIDC and it should not be considered as “sub-leasing of property” as submitting applications through property owner is major road-block.
- c) As per RoW Rules, 2024 only intimation is required to be submitted, and no NoC/Permission is required. Hence same should be applied in GIDC also.

The Chair noted that the matter has been pending across several SBC meetings. He emphasized that telecom infrastructure is national infrastructure and should be dealt with through a lenient approach. He instructed GIDC to resolve the issue on priority and directed that the policy of MIDC be referred to for guidance.

Action point:

- a) GIDC to formally recognize telecom infrastructure as an essential public utility, Prepare an SOP for regularization with a lenient approach, and ensure alignment with GDCR and RoW Rules, 2024.

C. Disconnection of Electricity / Vandalism of Tower Equipment (Bhavnagar District)

DIPA presented a case from Talaja Road, Sardar Nagar (Bhavnagar District), Mehsana, where local authorities had disconnected electricity supply, vandalized infrastructure, and even seized telecom equipment. DIPA highlighted that such actions are in violation of **Section 14(4) of the Telecom Act, 2023**, which clearly prohibits coercive measures against telecom infra without prior approval of the designated Nodal Officer.

The Chair directed that all district authorities must strictly comply with Section 14(4). Any coercive action without Nodal Officer approval is to be treated as non-compliance.

Action Points:

- a) UDD/DoT to issue advisory reiterating Section 14(4).
- b) District authorities to be instructed not to take coercive actions without Nodal Officer approval.

D. Property Tax / Other Charges:

DIPA flagged that local bodies continue to impose property tax and other charges on towers. They stressed that under **Section 18(1) & 18(2)**, District Collectors / Executive Magistrates are empowered to resolve such disputes and ensure compliance with the Act.

To avoid repeated conflicts, DIPA requested a state-wide notification to all DCs/DMs clarifying their responsibility to enforce Sections 14(4) and 18 of Telecom Act 2023.

DIPA highlighted that despite the Telecommunications Act, 2023 being in effect, several local bodies across Gujarat are still demanding property tax on telecom towers for FY 2025–26. DIPA cited the Maharashtra precedent, where the General Administration Department and UDD issued D.O. letters (16.05.2025 & 21.05.2025) explicitly prohibiting property tax on telecom infrastructure.

DIPA requested Gujarat to adopt a similar notification for clarity and uniform enforcement.

The Chair instructed the ACS(Revenue) to ensure all DCs/DMs are briefed. The ACS(Revenue) confirmed that meetings with DCs/DMs are already planned, and progress updates will be shared.

Action Points:

- a) ACS(Revenue) to issue a notification to DCs/DMs regarding Section 18(1) & (2).
- b) UDD to issue notification prohibiting property tax on telecom infra, in line with Maharashtra's example.

E. Acknowledgment of Energy Department and DISCOMs: DIPA expressed gratitude to the Energy Department and the DISCOMs of Gujarat for installing 3,272 smart meters since the last SBC meeting. PGVCL achieved the highest progress with 2,450 smart meters, improving from zero installations noted in the previous SBC meeting held on 19.06.2025.

The meeting was concluded with vote of thanks by Director (Rural-2), DoT Ahmedabad.

Encl: Annexure-1



(Avinash Khatri)

Director (Rural-2),

Gujarat LSA, DoT, Ahmedabad.

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To: -

All participants

Copy to-

1. Chief Secretary, Govt. of Gujarat.
2. Additional Chief Secretary, Revenue Department
3. Additional DGT, D.O.T., Govt. of India, Gujarat LSA.
4. Principal Secretary, Panchayat, Rural Housing & Rural Development Department.
5. Principal Secretary, Energy and Petrochemicals Department.
6. Principal Secretary, Forest and Environment Department.
7. Principal Secretary, Department of Science & Technology
8. Commissioner of Land Reforms and Ex-officio Secretary to Government, Rev Dept.
9. APCCF - Land, Forest and Environment Department.

10. CGM BSNL, CGM BBNL, Gujarat.
11. Joint Managing Director, Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC).
12. Director, ICT & e-Governance, Department of Science & Technology.
13. Deputy Secretary, Urban Development & Urban Housing Department.
14. Chief Engineer, Roads & Building Department
15. DDG (Rural), Gujarat LSA, DoT Ahmedabad
16. COAI, DIPA
17. Director (GFGNL), Gujarat

Annexure- I

1. Dr. Jayanti Ravi, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Revenue Department
2. Shri Sanjay Kumar, IAS, Secretary, Forest & Environments Department
3. Shri P. Bharathi, IAS, Secretary, DST
4. Shri Ashish Thaker (ITS), DDG, DoT Ahmedabad
5. Shri Govind Kevlani, CGM BSNL, Gujarat
6. Shri Hemant Pandey, PGM, BSNL, Gujarat
7. Shri Avinash Khatri (ITS), Director, DoT, Ahmedabad
8. Shri Nilesh Chouhan, GM, BBNL, Gujarat
9. Shri Rahul Patel, GM, BSNL
10. Shri Gaurav Dahiya, Additional Development Commissioner
11. Pankaj Panchal, Joint Secretary, Energy & Petro Chemicals Department
12. C.P.Patel, Chief Engineer, R & B
13. Ms. Ankita Shah, Deputy Secretary (Project), Urban Development Department.
14. Ms. Apexa Pateliya, Deputy Secretary (I/C), DST
15. Nilesh Modi, Deputy Secretary (I/C), Industries & Mines Department
16. Kalpesh Patel, Deputy Director (IT), DST
17. Shri Himanshu Joshi, Manager (Pre Allotment), GIDC
18. Shri Ganpat Patel, AD, DoT, Ahmedabad
19. Shri Shantanu Das, Altius Infra, COAI (VC)
20. Shri Mandar Kulkarni, CEO, Indus Towers, DIPA (VC)
21. Shri Ritesh Shah, Indus Towers, DIPA
22. Smt. Meena Bisht, Indus Towers, DIPA (VC)

