

# TELCOS SEEK NORMS FOR CAPTIVE PRIVATE NETWORKS

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“Nevertheless, since the Government has taken initial decision to enable the CNPN (captive non-public networks) through direct spectrum assignment from DoT... we propose the following steps to provide clarity and reduce” risks, the industry group said in its letter dated June 18.

The COAI has argued that there is a need to clearly define the scope of CNPN, which it stressed should be restricted to machine-to-machine communication inside the CNPN’s premises only. The CNPN must also ensure that they do not cause any interference with public networks.

Citing national security, the industry group said that these networks should be made to comply with the prescribed subscriber verification norms to ensure adequate verification and traceability of every user. It further added that these networks would need to be even more secure than ordinary handsets as any security breach in a network, which is controlling machine/production, would be catastrophic for the economy of the country.

“Therefore, each and every network element for a CNPN (captive non-public networks) should comply with the requirements of trusted product/trusted source and any equipment should be installed only after obtaining the approval of the NSCS (National Security Council Secretariat).”

Also, the CNPN must be bound by the same security conditions as per the licensing terms applicable for telecom service providers. This would include having to store call/data records for 2 years, command logs for 3 years, keeping records of software updates, ensuring data localisation with remote access only from in-country and no remote access from outside of India, COAI (Cellular Operators Association of India) said.

“Given the geopolitical & cybersecurity risks and to mitigate national security concerns, CNPN should be permitted only after installing” authorised and secure equipment and providing connectivity to law-enforcement agencies and commence services under similar conditions as TSP, it said. “Some of the CNPN may be very large, handling a large number of users/employees and machines for which lawful interception becomes important,” COAI added. Also, it stressed that the private captive networks must remain ‘truly private and isolated’ as networks. Contending that it was likely that the enterprises obtaining the spectrum for CNPN would be tempted to connect multiple offices, COAI said it was essential not to allow such interconnection.

Additionally, use cases meant for the masses could not be allowed to be a part of CNPN as the use cases may include financial inclusion and the agriculture sector.

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