



Press Release



## **Operators battle against odds to restore mobile connectivity in flood-hit Tamil Nadu**

New Delhi, December 3, 2015

India's leading Mobile Telephony Operators including Aircel, Bharti Airtel, Idea Cellular and Vodafone have come together with the common objective of alleviating and aiding the communication needs of the rain-flood affected citizens of Tamil Nadu, whose lives have been severely impacted by the near non-stop torrential rains over the past few days.

As has already been notified by the Government of Tamil Nadu that a helpline number 1948 has been activated to provide information on missing persons and telecom services in the state (including Chennai and Puducherry) and 1070 has been activated for assistance through Call Centre. The operators will also be sharing these critical helpline numbers with their customers across the State through text messages for the information and assistance of the people.

Mobile telephony operators are working collectively to put their networks back online and facilitate continuous availability of services and networks and for reaching out and helping people in other affected areas as well. The floods have caused severe damage to telecom infrastructure, thereby impacting networks across all operators in a huge way. Unavailability of grid power, water-logging resulting in submerged sites and unavailability of diesel in the absence of transportation have emerged as severe roadblocks towards network operations in the affected areas. Operators are also facing problems in some areas in restoring operations due to non-accessibility by road in affected areas/sites. The industry has requested assistance urgently from the government for restoration of grid power, availability of diesel and opening up of road access to flooded areas there.

Apart from ensuring seamless network operations in the region by restoration of affected sites, operators have also announced some special concessions & services which are being made available to the people for the next few days.

**Aircel** is offering free 10 minutes Aircel to Aircel calls across India to all its Chennai customers for the next three days in its support towards the families affected by the natural calamity faced in Chennai. In this need of the hour, Aircel is also offering auto credit of Rs. 30 to all its customers along with 10 Free all India SMS valid for 3 days and 100MB 2G/3G free data valid for 3 days.

**Bharti Airtel** announced 'Talk Time' credit up to INR 30 for all Airtel pre-paid mobile customers which it will adjust later once the shops are open and people are able to recharge their phones. Further, it has credited 10 minutes of Airtel-to-Airtel calling talk time free of cost for pre-paid mobile users with a validity of 2 days. It has also credited 50 MB of mobile Internet for free in their account with the same validity.

Realizing the inconvenience faced by lakhs of customers in the region to recharge and connect with loved ones in such times of emergency, **Idea Cellular** has started crediting 10 Local mobile minutes and 50 MB of 2G data in the prepaid accounts of 19.5 lakh customers in the five affected Districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, Thiruvallur and Pondicherry. The credit process started on Wednesday, 2nd December, 2015. For postpaid customers whose bills are due, Idea is extending the payment dates and will ensure that services continue.

**Vodafone India**, in order to enable Chennai customers to remain connected in this precarious time, is offering pre-approved 'chota credit' of Rs.10 to all pre-paid customers and a credit of 10 minutes for Vodafone to Vodafone calling. In addition, free 100MB mobile data is being offered to all customers. The validity of the talk time credit and free data is two days. For postpaid customers whose bills are due for payment immediately, the time to make the payment is being extended.

**Mr. Rajan S. Mathews, Director General, COAI** stated, "*We at COAI stand by the people of Tamil Nadu in the face of nature's extremities and wish to extend help by facilitating seamless communication and conversations of affected people with their families and well-wishers, and in terms of access of essential services in this hour of need. The Mobile Telephony Industry has proposed and ensured that steps are taken by introducing some special concessions and services in terms of talk-time/data/tariff so that the people are not deprived of much needed communication facilities.*"

Additionally, all mobile service providers are assisting the government by setting up free Wi-Fi zones at the relief camps, and deployment of Mobile Base Stations (COW) at district magistrate offices as required.

Mobile telephony operators are committed to work with The State Government of Tamil Nadu, Local authorities and the DoT to restore full connectivity at the earliest. The Telecom industry body is mobilizing all manpower and other infrastructure resources to expedite this process.

### **About COAI**

COAI was constituted in 1995 as a registered, non-governmental society. COAI's vision is to establish India as the global leader of innovative mobile communications infrastructure, products and services and achieving a national teledensity of 100%, including broadband. The association is also dedicated to the advancement of modern communication and towards delivering the benefits of innovative and affordable mobile communication services to the people of India.

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