

Telecom industry demands sops for using green energy

Plea Stems From Need To Have Back Up For Continuous Power Supply

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THE energy intensive telecom industry has sought subsidies for use of green energy in telecom sites. Telecom giants including Bharti Airtel, Reliance Communications, VSNL, Tata Teleservices and BSNL have sought reduced levies on solar equipment and land at concessional rates for operators that use renewable sources of energy for powering their base stations, telephone exchanges and repeaters.

The demand for incentivising green energy stems from the need to have back up facilities for continuous power supply at telecom sites.

With the telecom network spreading at a rapid pace amidst power scarcity in the country, especially in rural areas, alternative sources of energy such as solar energy need to be explored, said Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the body representing all GSM operators.

"The Capital expenditure involved in setting up of non-conventional energy infrastructure should be fully subsidised by the appropriate authorities. Even after that the operations and maintenance expenses will be borne by the service providers," COAI added.

In fact, the Association of Unified Service Providers of India (AUSPI), the body representing CDMA players has demanded a slew of incentives to encourage telcos



GO GREEN

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to go green — these include, reduced levies and duties on such equipment and tax incentives and land at concessional rate to operators who use renewable forms of energy.

"In areas with minimal access to electricity, the government should provide free solar cells from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to run the mobile services," AUSPI added. All operators pay 5% of their total revenues towards the

USOF, which is used to subsidise telephony services in rural India. The Tatas — both VSNL and Tata Teleservices, in their correspondence with Trai have endorsed the AUSPI stance.

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Green shelters, which are made up of thermal batteries, filterless air conditioning and a reflecting enclosure conserve up to 35% of the annual power consumption in telecom cell sites.

Similarly, Bharti Airtel, has said that lesser radio frequency and GHG emissions due to less sites and renewable energy technologies would add to the overall benefits and enhance the corporate reputation as a social responsible organisation.

"By renewable energy consumption we are not only becoming environment-friendly, but also engaging and providing business opportunities for clean energy companies (i.e. the energy providers)," it said.

In an unique recommendation, BPL Mobile Communications has said that the higher capital expenditure for setting up non conventional energy infrastructure should be offset against the license fee payable.

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