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TD-SCDMA chipmaker's problems ring alarm bells

The decision by China-based TD-SCDMA IC design house Commit to cease operations at the end of April 2008 has dealt a severe blow to the TD-SCDMA community, according to market research firm ABI Research.

Commit said it had failed to gain revenue from its TD-SCDMA venture deals. "Commit is one of the few successful companies with a full-blown dual mode TD-SCDMA/HSDPA chipset solution. In fact, handset companies such as LG, Ningbo Bird, DbTel and Lenovo showcased the capabilities of Commit's dual mode TD-SCDMA/HSDPA solution with great success in last October's PT/Expo Comm China in Beijing," ABI says.

According to Hwai Lin Khor, research analyst, wireless at ABI Research, "Commit is also the only IC design house that participated in China Mobile's TD-SCDMA trials. With such rosy results, its cessation is totally unexpected. Industry players cite the Chinese government's indecisive stance on its 3G licensing and the delay of TD-SCDMA standard certification as the major contributors to Commit's failure. Most importantly, it does not have other product lines to supplement its TD-SCDMA investment."

Commit has 17 shareholders, with mainland China investors accounting for 31.24 percent of the shares and foreigners the remaining 68.76 percent. Potevio, Texas Instruments and Nokia collectively hold a 13.5 percent share of the company.

ABI says: "It came as an even bigger surprise that Commit failed to persuade these heavyweight shareholders to pump in more money to sustain its operations. Internal sources reveal that shareholders are sceptical about the whole TD-SCDMA landscape after such a long wait. Other TD-SCDMA IC players such as Taiwan-based MediaTek, Analog Devices, T3G, Spreadtrum, and Chongqing Chongyou Information Technology Co Ltd (CYIT) may also be on shaky ground with their TD-SCDMA ventures."

ABI Research believes that the Chinese government is unlikely to let the company collapse, as TD-SCDMA's success is a matter of national pride and it is not ruling out the possibility of a takeover by other bigger mainland Chinese organisations such as Datang Mobile, Huawei, or even ZTE, to ensure continuation of TD-SCDMA IC production. "More importantly, the Chinese government must get its act together quickly to start the TD-SCDMA ball rolling, so as to raise the confidence of its investors." ABI says.

TD-SCDMA handsets delivered for Beijing Olympics

China's TD-SCDMA 3G mobile phone service is ready for use in the upcoming Beijing Olympics, China's official Xinhua news agency reports.

It said that China Mobile, China's top wireless operator, and South Korean cell phone producer Samsung had presented 15,000 3G handsets, plus data cards and almost \$US0.5m in call credits to the Beijing Organising Committee for the 29th Olympic Games. China Mobile is the exclusive mobile communications provider for the Beijing Olympics and Samsung the exclusive mobile terminal supplier.

"With the offer, work staff and volunteers of the Games can enjoy high-speed data transmissions, which allow them to watch televised games, play videos, and surf the Internet on cell phones," Xinhua said.

It claimed that China Mobile had basically finished construction of the TD-SCDMA network in eight cities, five of which are to host events for the Beijing Olympics in August, including Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin, said the company.

China has promised to provide 3G service for the Games. China Mobile is the sole cooperative partner for the Beijing Olympics in mobile communications services while Samsung is the only one in mobile terminal supply.

India

Cisco, Tata and CII team for TelePresence

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Tata Communications and Cisco have announced a mutual collaboration to set up TelePresence 'virtual reality' videoconferencing rooms at four CII offices in India.

CII will collaborate with Tata Communications and Cisco to set up the rooms at CII offices in New Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Cisco will provide the TelePresence equipment and Tata Communications the connectivity services that will link the four CII sites. The facilities will be available for CII members on a 'pay-per-use' basis.

The rooms will be connected to Tata Communications' planned international network of Cisco TelePresence rooms worldwide, and will enable video conference meetings for Indian enterprises with their partners in India and overseas.

Vinod Kumar, president, global enterprise solutions at Tata Communications, said: "Cisco TelePresence is a platform for supporting the emergence of transformational business models on a global scale. We expect these new facilities at the CII offices to spark creative ideas for new business models amongst its members. Our hope is that Indian executives will come away with transformational ideas that take advantage of rural connectivity, such as distance learning, remote healthcare management and virtual business models overall, which will be a catalyst for inclusive growth."

Singapore

SingTel and Maritime Authority team for telecoms R&D

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) and SingTel have signed a MoU on maritime telecommunications technology research and innovation.

The two organisations will collaborate to promote maritime technology R&D as part of Singapore's development as a maritime telecommunications hub and international maritime centre. The MoU will leverage SingTel's global satellite infrastructure and expertise, and MPA's insights and on-going efforts to further develop Singapore's port and maritime industry.

One of the key projects will explore the integration of SingTel's maritime satellite broadband solutions with the MPA's Wireless-broadband-access for SeaPort (Wiseport) facility.

This will facilitate vessels close to the shore switching their satellite broadband connections to higher bandwidth land-based broadband services such as the Wiseport's mobile WiMAX service and WiFi, resulting in cost-savings for ships.

Other initiatives include developing low-cost maritime broadband solutions and establishing test-bed facilities to boost R&D in maritime telecommunications technology and services for the maritime community.

Capt Khong Shen Ping, MPA's acting CEO, said he wanted to encourage research institutes and infocommunication service providers to ride on the MoU to research and develop new initiatives to benefit and grow the maritime sector."

Bill Chang, SingTel's executive vice president for Business, said that, by creating a platform for innovation and knowledge-sharing, SingTel hoped to increase the adoption of ICT services in the maritime industry

Hong Kong

Reach upgrades Ascade to boost international voice services

Reach, the Hong Kong based global wholesale carrier, joint venture between Telstra and PCCW, has awarded an upgrade contract for the latest release of Ascade's Carrier Cockpit and will also acquire Ascade's quality management modules and test services.

According to Ascade, Reach has for several years used Carrier Cockpit as a central part of its business decision and management environment and has decided to upgrade as a result of growing volumes of voice traffic, increased business complexity and in preparation of additional growth.

Ascade claims that, with Release 6.0 of Carrier Cockpit, "Reach will further strengthen its end-to-end business process for wholesale and interconnect services and set the general operations team in a solid position to handle expected growth in the years to come...[and] the additional integrated quality management functionalities in Carrier Cockpit will enable Reach to offer an increased granularity of differential and innovative quality products to its customers. Reach will also benefit from Ascade's unique Global Test Network which enables carriers to test for the successful delivery of caller line ID in 200 mobile networks across the globe."

According to Ascade, the ability to display the correct number of a calling party on a mobile handset has a great impact on the roaming revenues of mobile operators, which is the key customer segment for Reach. Ascade's Global Test Network will also enable carriers to verify the correct delivery of SMS, MMS and Video Calls.

According to Reach CEO, John Wright, "The international telecommunications market for voice is becoming more competitive and demanding, and as such, we must continue to improve our capabilities to ensure we are exceeding customer's requirements...Our expectation is that the upgrade to release 6.0 of Carrier Cockpit and the implementation of the Global Test Network will provide us with the tools to continue to grow our international voice business in 2008 and beyond".

Japan

Japan's Softbank is leading a \$US430 million investment into Oak Pacific Interactive (OPI), the leading provider of Web 2.0 communities in China and Masayoshi Son, president and CEO of Softbank will join its board.

The investment, representing a 35 percent stake in the company, will be used to augment the market leadership of Oak Pacific's Xiaonei.com, China's largest social-networking site. SBI and JOHO Capital also participated in the funding.

Xiaonei.com is billed as "a full-featured community and social networking destination that provides an immersive experience for its users." Features of the site include multiplayer gaming and wireless value-added services for mobile users. Xiaonei.com claims to be the dominant player in the college market. OPI also owns and operates Mop.com, the largest entertainment portal, and Donews.com, one of the leading IT blogging services in China.

Existing investors of OPI include General Atlantic, DCM, Technology Crossover Ventures, Accel Partners, and Legend Capital.

Vietnam

VTN to demo Cisco TelePresence

Vietnam National Telecoms (VTN) has introduced Cisco TelePresence technology to the country with installations in two demonstration centres in Hanoi and Hochihminh City.

Designed to "provide an advanced technological showcase designed to communicate to individuals and organisations in Vietnam the potential benefits of ICT for work, play, education and everyday life, according to Mr. Le Duc Hoa, VTN deputy general director. He added that similar centres may be built in other cities in the country.

Cisco now claims to have around 500 TelePresence rooms (it has co-oped the generic telepresence name for its own product offering) installed on or order at customer sites around the world since the product's introduction in October 2006.

GIS vendor ESRI opens Hanoi office

Geographic information system (GIS) systems supplier ESRI has launched ESRI Vietnam in association with ESRI Thailand.

According to Wichai Saenghirunwattana, managing director of the new office, ESRI software has been sold in the region for a number of years but the addition of ESRI Vietnam will provide better support for both end users and partners. Saenghirunwattana said the company hoped to expand the education market in Vietnam and to increase GIS training through joint initiatives with local schools and universities.

Currently, the largest user of ESRI software in Vietnam is the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). The ministry has 76 offices throughout the country and has completed a number of significant projects. One project was the implementation of the Vietnamese spatial data infrastructure (SDI), which provides an integrated national database for natural resources and the environment. It includes a Web-based mapping service that provides users with accurate information on national parks, conservation zones, mangrove forests, and wetland areas. The service also provides information on land use, particularly in economic zones, and seabed topography at 1:1,000,000 and 1:25,000 scales.

Thailand

AIS trials Motorola mobile WiMAX

Motorola is working with Advanced Info Service (AIS), the largest mobile operator in Thailand, to conduct trials of mobile WiMAX and enable AIS to gain insight into the next generation personal wireless broadband services.

AIS started trials over Motorola's WiMAX Access Point-400 (WAP-400) platform in Bangkok and Lamukha in the first quarter of 2008 to study performance of real-life applications and customer usage models in metropolitan, suburban and rural areas.

"Instead of focusing only on technology features, we evaluate how customers apply applications over WiMAX network in real life. The results have been outstanding, and it gives us an insight into how we can offer new services through WiMAX," said Mr Vikrom Sriprataks, CEO of AIS.

During the trials, WiMAX technology was tested with various applications such as substitution of phone line, content delivery platform and high-speed Internet connection. According to Motorola, "AIS considers WiMAX an effective replacement for ADSL in providing broadband and various telecom services in cities and suburban areas." Motorola currently has 19 contracts for mobile WiMAX 802.16e deployments and is involved in 80 WiMAX engagements with customers in more than 40 countries

New Zealand

Brightstar wins cellphone supply deal from Telecom NZ

Telecom New Zealand has chosen Brightstar to deliver mobile devices, supply chain services and "improved business intelligence" in the run up to the planned launch of its 3G WCDMA cellular network in November.

The new relationship will be phased in over the next six months and is expected to be up and running prior to the new network launch in November. Initially the five year agreement will involve supply of mobile phones as well as services like warehouse operations, product lifecycle management, detailed reporting and stock management.

Telecom GM of Mobile, Martin Butler, said: "Brightstar's global experience and scale put them in the best position to help us meet this need. Given the number of new technology projects on the go at Telecom we have been looking at the best ways we can source and deliver wireless devices such as mobiles for our customers."

Brightstar, headquartered in Miami, is one of the largest wireless device distribution, logistics and supply chain solutions companies globally. It is run by Marcelo Claire, an associate of Telstra CEO, Sol Trujillo. Brightstar provides mobile devices and supply chain services to Telstra: a relationship which has been heavily criticised.

Pan Asia

BlackBerry supporters now certifiable

Research In Motion (RIM) has launched a worldwide programme to certify the skills of IT professionals and service providers who sell and support BlackBerry push email services, devices and BlackBerry based mobile applications.

The program has been designed for IT professionals and consultants, wireless carriers and other BlackBerry partners and will be available in 135 countries. According to RIM, the program "is intended to provide an empirical means of measuring and validating the real world skills and knowledge used in planning, administering and supporting BlackBerry product deployments."

RIM is working with two specialists in certification testing: Alpine Testing Solutions is developing and designing the certification exams; Prometric is providing a comprehensive suite of services, including test development, test delivery and data management capabilities to enable the BlackBerry Certification Program to be offered as a controlled, proctored testing service at over 4700 test centres in the 135 countries.

Certification will be offered in three areas: technical certifications for IT professionals and consultants who want to establish their credentials as administrators, implementers and supporters of BlackBerry solutions; certifications for professionals in the IT industry who want to prove their advanced knowledge in the use of BlackBerry technology; and certifications for corporate developers to validate their skills in the development of mobile applications for the BlackBerry Enterprise Server.

Certifications planned for availability in 2008 include: BlackBerry Certified System Administrator - for technical professionals who install, configure and manage the BlackBerry Enterprise server - available May 13; BlackBerry Certified Server Support Specialist - for technical specialists supporting BlackBerry Enterprise Server and its associated components - available late 2008; BlackBerry Certified Support Specialist - for specialists who support BlackBerry smartphone users in a BlackBerry Internet Service or BlackBerry Enterprise Server environment - available late 2008; BlackBerry Certified Solution Designer - for technical professionals who provide pre-

and post-sales technical consulting services to organisations that have deployed the BlackBerry Enterprise Solution - available late 2008

Additional certifications for individuals planned to be available in 2009 will include: BlackBerry Certified Enterprise Application Developer; BlackBerry Certified Trainer; BlackBerry Sales Expert and BlackBerry Expert User. Organisational certifications planned for 2009 include BlackBerry Certified Reseller and BlackBerry Certified Training Centre.

UTStarcom names new Asia-Pacific sales chief

UTStarcom has named Frankie Sum as regional vice president of international sales for Asia-Pacific.

He will oversee all the country managers in the region except China, India and Japan. Prior to joining UTStarcom he was head of Asia sales for EDS and held a variety of senior positions over nine-years at Cisco including Hong Kong managing director responsible for the company's operations in Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Previous roles were with Software AG, Informix Software, Concurrent Computer Corporation and IBM.

RightNow appoints VP for Asia Pacific - south

CRM specialist RightNow Technologies has appointed Brett Waters as vice president Asia Pacific – south, based in Sydney and responsible for Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

He joined RightNow three years ago to lead the company's sales push for its on demand customer relationship management solution to carriers and ISPs. Before joining RightNow he worked at Oracle Corporation for more than six years in a variety of positions including regional account director, regional marketing manager, business solutions consultant and solutions sale representative.

Technology

WiMAX and WiFi bodies plan to merge

The Wireless Broadband Alliance (WBA) - which represents primarily major carriers operating WiFi hotspots - and the WiMAX Spectrum Owners Alliance (WiSOA) are collaborating "to advance global roaming for WiMAX and inter-standard roaming between WiMAX and WiFi" as a first step towards an eventual merger.

Under the terms of an agreement between the two, WiSOA will effectively merge all of its roaming activities into WBA, and will work towards the eventual merger of its membership base into WBA. The membership of WiSOA includes Unwired (Australia), NextWave (USA), Liberty Global (USA), YTL (Malaysia), Telecom New Zealand, UK Broadband and Irish Broadband. The much larger

WBA was formed in 2003 to develop a common commercial and technical framework for wireless broadband technologies and by October 2006 had grown to 26 network operators across Asia Pacific, Americas and Europe.

Executive committee members include Deutsche Telekom/T-Mobile, Orange France, BT, KT, Swisscom and Tata Communications and clearinghouse providers such as MACH, Syniverse and VeriSign.

The WBA has developed the Wireless Roaming Intermediary eXchange (WRIX), a set of modular specifications and standards for radius interconnection, data & financial clearing that is now used extensively to support commercial WiFi roaming amongst WBA members.

According to WiSOA spokesman, and Unwired founder, Steve Cosser: "The ability to use WBA WRIX provides both WiFi and WiMAX operators with instant access to a commercially and technically proven roaming capability along with an ecosystem of interconnect and clearinghouse providers. As WBA members have a global WiFi footprint and some are evaluating WiMAX, working together allows all of us to swiftly upgrade the WBA WRIX to support WiMAX roaming as well as inter-roaming between WiFi and WiMAX."

Prateek Pashine, chairman of WBA, said: "The agreement between WiSOA with WBA brings the rich experience of the participant operators on WiMAX which would help accelerate the development and deployment of commercial roaming for WiMAX operators as well as inter-standard roaming between WiMAX and WiFi. This is in line with WBA's vision to provide customers with seamless internet access and services across networks and geographies, just as the customers would use in their home networks."

Pashine added that an industry collaboration project to support requirements for WiMAX roaming and inter-standard roaming between WiMAX and WiFi had already been commissioned by WBA, and the initial results were expected to be available for operators by second half of 2008.

Nokia boosts S60 with widget support

Nokia has enhanced its S60 Symbian based handset platform to enable the creation of personal and context aware widgets.

According to Nokia, "S60 was the first mobile software platform to support the creation of widgets and this announcement enables web developers to create even more compelling and relevant services. In addition, S60 has expanded choices for open source innovation in native application development through adding support for several popular platform-independent C++ libraries."

Matti Vänskä, vice president, mobile software sales and marketing at Nokia claims that: "Anyone with Web development experience can now create powerful mobile applications in days or even hours, drastically reducing the cost of development and further expanding the application offering. In addition, Internet services can be made more powerful and relevant for users by adding personal data such as the current location of the user, through GPS. The user experience from such services goes beyond what the desktop based environments can provide."

According to Nokia the enhanced S60 "enables the development of exciting new services and mash-ups by combining the power of the Web with the power of the S60 platform. For example, a weather widget can now access the user's current location via the built-in GPS and in just a moment display the latest weather forecasts for that location. The flight tracker widget fetches the user's itinerary from the airline's Web site, saves it to the mobile device's calendar, and sets a reminder. A few hours prior to the travel time, the widget automatically checks for the flight status by getting the flight details from the calendar."

To support the S60 software strategy and cross platform development, S60 is also expanding its support for open source innovation through support for Open C++. This support brings the Standard Template Library and other popular platform-independent C++ libraries to the S60 platform, extending the Open C offering that was announced last year. "Together, Open C and Open C++ create opportunities for developers to utilise existing skills and code from other platforms in their S60 development projects, including open source components targeted at Linux and other platforms," Nokia says.