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India

Gov't announces 3G licence plans

The Indian Government has announced its long awaited 3G licence plans.

Spectrum in the 2.1GHz band will be auction in blocks of 2 x5MHz paired under 20 year licences with no bidder permitted to hold more than 2 x5MHz in any service area. MTNL will be allocated a licence for Mumbai and one for Delhi at a price equal to the highest bid received for those areas, and BSNL will be allocated a licence in every other service area on the same basis. However, the companies with the highest bids in each area get to choose their spectrum blocks first, followed by each remaining bidders in decreasing order of the size of their bids.

Licence will be allocated with an obligation to provide 90 percent coverage in metro areas after five years and 50 percent of cities in non-metro areas. They will carry licence fees of one percent of gross revenues after the first year. Five operators will be licence in each of the 23 telecom circles.

The market will be open to any operator holding UAS (Unified Access Service) license, or any company that "fulfills the eligibility criteria for obtaining" a UAS license and which has "previous experience of running 3G telecom services." Foreign telcos will be able to bid through joint ventures with Indian companies in which they can hold up to 74 percent equity.

The government has separately called for bids from organisation to provide mobile number portability services.

Reliance teams with Internap for content delivery services

Reliance Globalcom, a division of Reliance Communications, and Internap have formed a strategic alliance to Bring content delivery network (CDN) Services to India.

Reliance says its contract with Internap will enable it to enhance its managed services portfolio with world-class content delivery network services, enabling Indian businesses to add graphics, audio, streaming video and live events to their Web sites and Internet applications.

Internap will engineer and build a CDN point of presence (PoP) in Mumbai and operate the network service point as part of its global CDN infrastructure. Internap will also provide the professional services, project management and consulting expertise to deploy and launch enterprise-grade CDN infrastructure and services for Reliance Globalcom. The two companies will work together to sell and support these Reliance Globalcom services 'powered by Internap CDN' in selected regions.

Internap's CDN solution integrates media servers, enhanced storage, network acceleration and route optimisation to deliver, manage and monetise media content. The global CDN infrastructure includes Internap's patented MIRO (Managed Internet Routing Optimiser) and CDN long haul technologies. MIRO monitors the performance of Internet backbones and automatically selects the best path to global destinations. CDN long haul reduces network latency for global transit of large-scale applications and content. Internap says its CDN service is "fully-managed and provides rich business intelligence, real-time statistics, digital rights management and a performance dashboard through its MediaConsole."

"Reliance Globalcom was created to serve the fast-growing global telecommunications needs of business and government organisations," said Punit Garg, president of Reliance Globalcom. "Our strategic alliance with Internap enables us to bring world-class content and application delivery network services to underserved and emerging markets in India. Internap is unique among network

service providers because they offer us an integrated and global portfolio of CDN solutions along with the engineering expertise and professional services to speed our time to market."

"A key element of Internap's growth strategy is to expand our product offerings into high-growth markets outside of the United States," said James P DeBlasio, president and chief executive officer at Internap. "Our strategic alliance with Reliance Globalcom, a highly successful multinational company, is an important milestone for us that validates the strength and quality of our CDN offerings. We have now dramatically expanded our reach into new and fast-growing markets in India."

Reliance Globalcom serves over 1200 enterprises, 200 carriers and 1.5 million retail customers in 50 countries across five continents. It owns and operates the world's largest private undersea cable system spanning 65,000 kms and integrated with Reliance Communications Indian domestic optic fibre network.

Tata Comms launches new global ethernet services

Tata Communications has launched two new ethernet services to extend its global wide area network (WAN) ethernet portfolio.

It is now offering dedicated point-to-multipoint ethernet and dedicated multipoint ethernet, available across India and to major business centres in Asia, North America, Europe, Africa, and soon, the Middle East.

Dedicated point to-multipoint ethernet delivers a hub and spoke network model for transmitting content between a central location, such as a corporate headquarters or data processing centre, and satellite locations. The dedicated multipoint service allows customers to deploy any-to-any network topology to create a global ethernet WAN for the free flow of information.

According to Tata Comms "Diverse global locations can communicate on a network that creates the feeling of a virtual business campus, with users around the world communicating as if they were in adjacent offices."

"These two new services further deepen our WAN ethernet service set, provide additional value to our customers and provide high quality services with features not found elsewhere in the market," said James Walker, vice president, global VPN services for Tata Communications. "Our new services combined with our global rollout of new ethernet PoPs deliver on our commitment to provide the most flexible and complete set of ethernet services to the widest range of global destinations."

Tata Comm's dedicated point-to-multipoint ethernet and dedicated multipoint ethernet are both MEF 9 and MEF 14 certified, indicating compliance with the international standards developed by the Metro Ethernet Forum (MEF), a global industry alliance of more than 120 organisations. Tata Communications claims to have been the first provider to pass the more than 400 service tests required to achieve these certifications across its entire global network.

IBM & MAX New York Life to revolutionise life insurance

IBM and Max New York Life Insurance have announced the rollout of an integrated solution for policy issuance and administration for Max Vijay - a new insurance offering from Max New York Life.

IBM will help Max New York Life Insurance deploy and transform its insurance policy processing platform and provide an end-to-end technology backbone for Max Vijay, billed a "a revolutionary new insurance product designed specifically for the under-served segment of the Indian society." It is claimed to "combine the best of insurance and savings and gives the customers a means to aggregate their earnings in a structured and well-planned manner."

IBM will provide insurance policy system administration, policy setup, new business processing, customer care and claims processing. IBM will use wireless handheld devices, which will enable data transfer via GPRS to the back-end systems facilitating on-the-spot issuance of insurance policies. IBM will also provide disaster recovery services for Max New York Life's critical operations.

Max Vijay is aimed at "making insurance available in every nook and corner of the country." It will be sold across channels like neighbourhood stores, microfinance institutions and NGOs among others. For the very first time an insurance product will be made available through retail channels and, according to IBM, this is a milestone being created by Max New York Life in the Indian insurance industry

"The relationship between IBM and Max New York Life will empower millions of Indians to benefit from the economic boom in financial services that was hitherto denied to them through innovative and first-of-its-kind insurance plans. IBM's application and technology platform is designed in a manner that can scale and refresh as Max New York Life's business needs evolve."

According to Analjit Singh, chairman, Max New York Life, "Max Vijay empowers millions of Indians, who may not be a part of the economic growth scenario that the country is witnessing today, to participate in the revolution and realise their dreams. The business model leverages innovation at every step, be it product design, technology, distribution or service delivery, to ensure a comprehensive offering for the common man."

Max New York Life is a joint venture between Max India, one of India's leading multi-business corporates and New York life, a Fortune 100 company. Max New York Life Insurance was incorporated in 2000 and now claims to be one of India's leading private life insurance companies.

China

Chinese consumer the digital leaders

Chinese consumers have emerged as leading users of mobile communications, instant messaging and Web 2.0 services, pushing the boundaries of digital activity in ways unimaginable just a few years ago, according to a new report by The Boston Consulting Group (BCG).

The report, "China's Digital Generations: The 570-Million-Hour Opportunity," describes how Chinese consumers have become power users of mobile services, relying on their handsets to watch videos and movies, play games, and share music.

"Not content to use IM only for sending text, Chinese consumers are also actively sending video and voice messages. And they have embraced Web 2.0 activities, reading and writing blogs on a wide variety of subjects more frequently than US consumers, playing massively multiplayer online role-playing games, and engaging in other interactive, community-based pursuits," according to BCG.

"Many people in the West think that China is still early in its digital development. In fact, however, in many activities such as IM and online role-playing games, China is more advanced than the United States and other Western economies," says Christoph Nettesheim, one of the report's co-authors and a senior partner and managing director in BCG's Beijing office.

The report contends that "The magnitude and speed of these developments have outpaced the common understanding about digital life in China. China has the most mobile-phone and Internet users in the world. In 2007 alone, more than 80 million Chinese acquired their first mobile phone, and nearly 40 million became Internet

users. With this influx of new digital consumers, China now has more than one-half billion mobile-phone subscribers and 210 million Internet users."

China's Internet users spend an average of 2.7 hours a day surfing the Internet - or, collectively, just under 570 million hours daily. Close to half of China's 1.3 billion people own or have access to a computer, a mobile phone, or both.

The report points out that although overall penetration remains much lower in China than in developed countries, a steep adoption curve will ensure continued growth for years. "At current growth rates, the proportion of Chinese consumers with digital access could increase to 87 percent by 2015. One challenge will be to increase rural penetration. Today 80 percent of the nearly 600 million urban Chinese consumers have access to either a PC or a mobile phone, compared with 19 percent of the 725 million consumers who live in rural China."

BCG says these trends have profound implications for all multinational companies that seek to access the Chinese consumer. "Many western MNCs in China are spending heavily on traditional forms of advertising," said co-author David C Michael, a senior partner and managing director and head of BCG's Greater China practice, also from BCG's Beijing office. "They risk losing touch with their target Chinese consumers, because increasingly these consumers are online - not watching TV or reading newspapers.

"MNCs in China need to revolutionise their thinking about how to reach and build relationships with Chinese consumers," Nettesheim added. "Every Western company wants to grow in China yet fails to grasp just how quickly the Chinese consumer is changing. This dramatic shift toward digital media is just one example of the rapid pace of change here. Companies ignore this at their peril."

According to the report, In 2007 digital goods and services generated an estimated RMB580 billion (\$US88b) in revenues. By 2015 revenues are expected to exceed RMB1.8 trillion (\$US263b). China's digital market has produced several leading local players, such as Tencent and Sina, that have been able to beat their global counterparts by investing aggressively, customising their services to suit Chinese tastes, and figuring out which promising business models to pursue.

ZTE to put Telegent TV chips into handsets

ZTE will incorporate TV chipsets from Telegent Systems in selected mobile handsets for worldwide sale.

Under the agreement, Telegent will be the exclusive supplier for the free-to-air mobile TV feature for two years. ZTE said: "We selected Telegent to power the mobile TV feature in ZTE's handsets because of Telegent's proven performance in the global marketplace." These handsets will be able to receive existing free-to-air TV broadcasts, as distinct from new broadcast technologies designed for delivery to handheld devices, such as DVB-H.

According to Telegent its mobile TV chips enable consumers to receive all local broadcast channels "providing consumers with a compelling, free and easy-to-use method of watching the same news, sports and other programming that they receive on their TV sets at home. For operators, free-to-air TV handsets provide access to the most popular content without requiring any investment in new standards, infrastructure or programming."

Telegent's solutions are currently available in more than 80 handset models worldwide sold in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, Europe and Africa. "The TV feature is experiencing rapid adoption in the handset market, particularly in countries where television is the primary source of news and information," said Weijie Yun, president and CEO of Telegent Systems.

Telegent claims that its products "make television mobile, delivering both analogue and digital broadcast reception with unparalleled sensitivity and picture quality in mobile environments, ultra-low power consumption and the highest integration simplifying mobile device design and manufacture."

China Telecom to invest \$US4b in CDMA

China Telecom says it wil invest Yuan 80 billion (\$US12b) over three years expanding and upgrading the CDMA network it bought last month from China Unicom for Yuan 66.2 billion.

As part of the deal, China Telecom will pay a further Yuan 43.8 billion to take control of Unicom's CDMA customers and business

Indonesia

Grameen, Bakrie & Qualcomm launch village phone project

Grameen Foundation, Bakrie Telecom and Qualcomm through its Wireless Reach initiative, have launched the first village phone programme in Indonesia.

The programme is branded 'Uber ESIA' (joint cooperation) and uses 3G CDMA technology to provide affordable wireless telecommunications services for rural communities. The launch was held at the Asia-Pacific Regional Microcredit Summit held in Bali, Indonesia.

Uber ESIA aims to facilitate affordable telecommunications access in a sustainable, profitable and empowering way to rural Indonesia. It is one of many similar programs around the world launched by Grameen Foundation. However, this is the first program using 3G CDMA, giving users access to higher quality voice services and more advanced mobile applications, including high-speed data.

Grameen Foundation, Bakrie Telecom and Qualcomm will work with local Indonesian microfinance institutions to enable microfinance clients to borrow the money needed to purchase a Village Phone "business in a box," which consists of a wireless 3G CDMA-based phone and charger, marketing materials, tariff posters, business cards and training materials. The Village Phone Operators (VPOs) will operate their businesses in rural villages where telecommunications services did not previously exist, renting the use of the phone within their communities on a per-call basis.

"Building on the visionary leadership of Grameen Telecom, Grameen Foundation is committed to ensuring that the rural poor are not left behind in this rapidly changing information and communications technology environment," said Alex Counts, president and CEO of Grameen Foundation.

Microfinance institutions provide financial services and earn income on the loan interest, as well as commissions from mobile service providers from the sale of prepaid airtime to their clients. They also attract new clients who are drawn by the opportunity to start a technology-oriented business.

According to Grameen "Telecommunications companies benefit by tapping a new market. VPOs have strong, thriving businesses, and most importantly, individuals living in impoverished communities gain access to affordable telecommunication and information services linking them to their friends, family, business contacts and the world. "The VPOs provide affordable rates to their customers, while earning enough to repay their loan and earn a profit that will allow them to make investments in their family's health, nutrition and education, and in other business ventures."

Grameen adds: "Another positive point of this program is empowering women who live in rural area, since the main target is household community. Women have a significant role in helping the family's income, but they still have limited positions and

access to economic resources. Central Statistics Agency data shows that out of a population of 97.5 million, only 35.4 million women (36.3 percent) are recorded as employed, of which 59.9 percent or 21.2 million graduated from elementary schools. Also, 26.3 million (74.28 percent) employed women work in an informal sector. Uber ESIA will facilitate them to gain additional income for their family."

Japan

NTT Com expands core network with Juniper routers

NTT Communications (NTT Com) has deployed Juniper Networks' T1600 core routers to scale the capacity of its global IP network.

The network is claimed to be the largest dedicated Internet backbone network in the world. According to Juniper, "Traffic growth driven by increased subscriber demand for IPTV and multiplay services compelled NTT Com to scale the capacity of its global Tier-1 IP backbone network. Key considerations for the selection included the non-disruptive upgrade path from the T640 to the multi-terabit capacity and energy efficiency advantages of the T1600."

Kempei Fukuda, director, global network department, NTT Com, said: "With the T1600, we doubled the network capacity on the same footprint and, more importantly, reduced power consumption by more than 20 percent." Juniper claims that the T1600 can deliver 1.6Tbps capacity with 40 percent less power consumption, compared to competitive platforms.

NTT Com began its global IP network service in July 1997 with 45Mbps bandwidth between Japan and the US. In 2000, NTT Com acquired a tier-1 Internet service provider, Verio, and expanded the bandwidth between Japan and the US to over 1Gbps. It does not disclose the capacity of the current network.

South Korea

60GHz wireless leader SiBeam opens Korea office

SiBeam, a leading developer of WirelessHD technology has set up a branch in Korea and appointed Young Kyun Kim as country manager.

"WirelessHD is shifting the way the consumer electronics industry addresses wireless audio/video. As a result, SiBeam has experienced increased demand for its WirelessHD-based solutions," said John LeMoncheck, SiBeam's president and CEO. "Formation of the Korean Branch enables us to better serve our growing customer base and reflects the company's commitment to serving the Korean market where two of the world's leading consumer electronics manufacturers are headquartered."

Kin joins SiBeam from Unaxis Korea, the eighth largest semiconductor equipment company in the world, where he was the director of Korean sales. According to Kim "SiBeam's 60 GHz-based semiconductor systems provide the first and only available option to deliver true uncompressed, lossless wireless high definition audio, video and data. Its advanced wireless technology solutions are designed for consumer electronics manufacturers, PC manufacturers, network infrastructure providers and others to incorporate into their next generation product lines for wireless communications.

Since the founding of the company in 2004, SiBeam has grown to include its headquarters in Sunnyvale, California and offices in San Diego, Seoul and Tokyo. SiBeam claims to be the first company to build 60GHz chipsets using standard CMOS technology. However Australian R&D organisation, National ICT Australia (NICTA) also claims this role.

The WirelessHD group was formed in October 2006 by Intel, LG, Matsushita (Panasonic), NEC, Samsung, SiBeam, Sony and Toshiba. It released its first specification in January 2008 by which time membership had grown to include 40 early adopter and promoter companies.

The group claimed that the technology would enable throughput at up to 4Gbps and said it represented "the first consumer application of 60GHz technology" and would be "suitable for a wide range of devices including televisions, HD disc players, set-top boxes, camcorders, gaming consoles, adapter products, as well as other source devices."

Thailand

Thai manager for .th domain name appointed

ICANN has signed an exchange of letters with the manager for the top level domain (ccTLD) code for Thailand (.th), the Thai Network Information Center Foundation.

ICANN's Accountability Framework program provides two mechanisms by which ccTLD managers can formalise their relationship with ICANN. The first is an Accountability Framework document that sets out the obligations of a ccTLD manager and ICANN. It also covers dispute resolution and termination and is designed for ccTLD managers requiring a formal document with ICANN. The second mechanism is an exchange of letters between ICANN and the ccTLD manager designed for those for whom a simple statement of commitment is more appropriate.

New Zealand

Vodafone NZ to launch VDSL2 before end of 2008

Vodafone NZ has begun testing VDSL2 in the first Telecom NZ exchange from which unbundled local loop access has become available, in Ponsonby.

Vodafone says it plans to have a commercial VDSL2 offer in the market later this year. It plans to rollout VDSL2 in a further five exchanges in the next few weeks. Vodafone's GM of fixed line & broadband, David Joyce, said: "We are installing equipment as rapidly as possible and every exchange we go into will be able to offer VDSL2 as well as ADSL2+...VDSL2 will deliver up to 50Mbps download and 20Mbps upload speeds...Already we have unbundled 27 exchanges covering 66 percent of Auckland's customer base and by the year's end we'll be looking outside Auckland at the other main centres."

Draft NZ terms for cell site co-location issued

New Zealand's Commerce Commission has released a draft determination setting out the non-price terms for co-location of cellular network infrastructure.

It has requested submissions from the industry by 22 August on a number of issues. There will be a period of further consultation, including a conference, before a final determination is issued, in November 2008.

The standard terms and conditions resulting from the final determination "should be comprehensive enough and contain sufficient detail so that there is no need for an access seeker and access provider to enter into a separate agreement for provision of the service within the specified timeframe." However determining a price for co-location is outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

Pakistan

Acision sets up in Pakistan

Acision, which claims to be the world's leading messaging company, has opened an office in Pakistan and has named Salman Nayyar as country manager for Pakistan.

According to Acision, Nayyar will take responsibility for business development and sales in Pakistan, "continuing to build on Acision's 66 percent market share in Pakistan." Acision has opened its Pakistan office in the central business hub, Islamabad.

Nayyar joins Acision from Nortel, where he was channel account manager, running the sales side of enterprise business via channel partners. Prior to Nortel, he held management positions at Alcatel, Orient Petroleum and Cerebrus Solutions.

Pan Asia

ICANN gears up to secure domain name system

ICANN has prepared a document describing the path to operational readiness for implementing a domain name system (DNS) security technology called DNSSEC that has been developed by the Internet community over several years.

DNSSEC is designed to protect Internet servers from domain name system attacks, such as DNS cache poisoning, by malicious users. It is a set of DNS extensions which provide origin authentication of DNS data, data integrity, and authenticated denial of existence.

ICANN stresses that the document is not a roadmap for DNSSEC deployment. Rather it "articulates ICANN's initiatives toward operational readiness for DNSSEC signing; and helps determine the right structures so ICANN is prepared to digitally sign the root using DNSSEC technology by late 2008 as directed in the July 2008 – June 2011 ICANN Strategic Plan.'

ICANN says that the roadmap for DNSSEC deployment will be developed by community consultation process and will require relevant approvals through ICANN's IANA functions contract with the US Department of Commerce. A public forum has been established at <http://forum.icann.org/> and ICANN is seeking input from the Internet community

Last week The Public Interest Registry, which manages the .org gTLD - the Internet's third largest non-country specific top-level domain with more than six million registered domain names announced that the ICANN board had agreed to its request to implement DNSSEC and that, as the first generic top level domain authorised to implement DNSSEC, it was preparing an education and adoption plan within the Internet infrastructure community.

FTTH councils report on global uptake

The FTTH councils of Asia- Pacific, Europe and North America have released their latest half-yearly ranking of FTTH penetration by country.

According to the councils, "Asia consolidated its position as the global leader in the march toward next-generation broadband while the United States and Europe also continued to experience robust growth in FTTH."

The ranking tracks the level of FTTH market penetration in economies where more than one percent of households are connected directly to fibre networks. In all, 14 economies met this threshold.

South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan now occupy the top four positions in the ranking, and the Asian region accounts for more than 27 million of the world's estimated 32 million fibre to the home connections. South Korea now has nearly 37 percent of its households connected to fibre, with Hong Kong at 27 percent, Japan at 24 percent and Taiwan at 7.7 percent. The People's Republic of China ranked 11th in terms of market penetration. However, growth to 7.5 million connections means that China is now second only to Japan in the number of households with FTTH.

"This is an exciting time for FTTH broadband in Asia. FTTH has overtaken DSL in South Korea and will soon do the same in Japan," said Shoichi Hanatani, president of the FTTH Council Asia Pacific. "Here in the Asia-Pac region, we are witnessing the end of a hundred years of telecom history as copper loops are quickly being replaced by optical fibre access networks."

The US ranked third in the total number of FTTH households at 3.3 million, and 10th by percentage with 2.9 percent penetration. It continues to experience the highest rate of growth of any economy, doubling the number of connections year over year. This is due largely to an aggressive FTTH deployment by market leader Verizon and ongoing FTTH build out by more than 600 smaller providers across the country.

Technology

Ericsson ranked top IMS vendor

ABI Research has ranked Ericsson at the top of the its IMS Vendor Matrix for the second year running.

Alcatel-Lucent and Nokia Siemens Networks claimed the second and third spots with Alcatel-Lucent showing a stellar rise from being sixth in the previous matrix. Nokia Siemens held its previous position. "Ericsson led the overall rankings because the company has the most IMS contracts – 50 commercial IMS contracts – while its competitors had 30 or fewer," said ABI senior analyst Nadine Manjaro. "Many of its customers are Tier 1 operators, the company provides a comprehensive suite of products, and it invested over \$US4.8 billion in research and development in 2007." The other positions, from four to 10 were: Motorola; Huawei; Cisco; Nortel; Acme Packet; Thomson and Tekelec.

Vendors are assessed on parameters of 'innovation' and 'implementation' across several criteria. For innovation: R&D budgets, the number of their IMS industry partnerships; their support of wireline and wireless networks; and the number of innovative services. Under implementation: how well each vendor is equipped to supply a complete system; its announced orders or trials; its abilities as a system integrator; the number of tier 1 operators that are customers; the number of elements provided; and the number of applications provided or supported.

Nokia & Qualcomm bury the hatchet

Nokia and Qualcomm have settled all litigation between them over intellectual property rights in GSM, EDGE, CDMA, WCDMA, HSDPA, OFDM, WiMax, LTE and other technologies, and Nokia has withdrawn its complaint to the European Commission.

Under the terms of a 15 year agreement, Nokia has been granted a license to use all Qualcomm patents in Nokia mobile devices and Nokia Siemens Networks infrastructure equipment and Nokia has agreed not to use any of its patents directly against Qualcomm, enabling Qualcomm to integrate Nokia technology into Qualcomm's chipsets. The financial structure of the settlement includes an up-front payment and on-going royalties payable to Qualcomm. Nokia has agreed to assign ownership of a number of patents to Qualcomm, including patents declared as essential to WCDMA, GSM and OFDMA.