

India

Global carriers unite to form lobby group

According to India's Economic Times, five global telecom service providers providing non-voice long-distance enterprise services have formed an association "to espouse their interests in the Indian telecom industry."

Founding members include AT&T, BT, Cable & Wireless, Orange Business Services and Verizon Business. The body, the Association of Competitive Telecom Operators (ACTO), has Satya N Gupta from BT Global Services as president. It has been formed to represent and advocate before the Government and regulatory bodies on behalf of its members on issues related to market opening, emerging technologies and pro-competitive policies and reforms in the enterprise market segment.

Other office holders of ACTO are Naveen Tandon from AT&T Global Network Services India as vice-president, Rishi Chawla as general secretary from Cable & Wireless Networks; Priya Mahajan from Verizon Communications Indi as treasurer and Rajesh Ballal from Orange Business Services India. The forum has been registered under the Societies Registration Act by the Registrar of Societies, Government of NCT of Delhi.

Gupta said ACTO would strive to advocate open competition in the Indian market to promote sustainable investment in the long-distance telecommunications services sector.

Tata Comms completes IP eXchange trials

Tata Communications says it has successfully completed trials of its wireless IP interconnection technology as part of the GSM Association's program to develop the next generation of wireless services.

The Tata Communications trial verified its IP eXchange framework can interconnect wireless networks over IP, which is more efficient and flexible than the traditional time-division multiplexing technology, Tata Comms said.

Tata Communications' trials were part of the GSMA's IP eXchange (IPX) pre-commercial implementation project, which is verifying the design and operation of IPX networks through a series of trials designed to validate technical and commercial specifications.

Once adopted, IPX will act as a private global IP backbone, open to any telecommunications company adhering to the required standards. IPX will provide fixed and mobile service providers with a technical and commercial platform for the performance-based exchange of IP-based services.

In the trial, Tata Communications partnered with Canadian telecommunications company, Telus and Telekom Austria to successfully interconnect voice services using different signalling and transmission standards. "The trial demonstrated the flexibility of Tata Communications' newly-deployed NGN network by bridging voice over IP services using several very different standards...[and] that Tata Communications, with its unique global footprint and service capabilities, can commercialize IPX Voice Services," Tata Comms said.

Tata Comms to offer SugarCRM hosted CRM services

SugarCRM has announced a new partnership with Tata Communications under which Tata Comms will offer SugarCRM's on-demand CRM services to small, medium and large enterprises in India at an affordable cost.

SugarCRM claims to be the world's leading provider of commercial open source customer relationship management (CRM)

software. It is delivered over the web via the cloud or software-as-a-service (SaaS) model.

Tata Comms says that partnership will enable its customers to quickly gain access to a robust on-demand CRM service that reduces the risks and costs associated with proprietary on-demand solutions. Tata Communications will manage this service out of its data centres.

"The market for on-demand CRM in India is over Rs150 crore [Rs 1.5 billion] (\$US32 million) in 2009 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 50-60 percent for the next few years," said, Mr Alok Bardiya, vice president, partner and alliance strategy, Tata Communications. "With our world-class infrastructure and leadership in emerging markets, Tata Communications is uniquely positioned to serve this market need."

SugarCRM's products are used by more than 4,000 customers in 195 countries. SugarCRM's software includes features that are designed to improve sales force automation, marketing automation, customer support and reporting processes enabling superior products at an affordable cost.

Vietnam

Electricity of Vietnam gets into international services

The Electricity of Vietnam Group's (EVN) telecoms arm, EVN Telecom, has announced plans to take capacity on the Inter-Asia submarine cable system to provide international services into and out of Vietnam.

It has an extensive network within Vietnam made up of optic fibre strung along its high voltage electricity distribution lines.

According to a report in VietnamNetBridge English language news, EVN Telecom now boasts more than 40,000km of optical cable lines connecting 3.5 million subscribers in 63 cities and provinces nationwide. This year it aims to upgrade its network quality and improve customer care services, striving for a revenue of four trillion VND from public telecommunications and to increase the number of CDMA subscribers to 4.6 million.

In Q1 Of 2009 it aims to provide service over the Inter Asia cable system into Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, the US and Europe through three gateways, in Mong Cai, Lang Son and Moc Bai.

Hong Kong

CSL selects Brightstar for cellphone distribution

Global cellphone distribution company, Brightstar, has been awarded an exclusive supply chain services contract with Hong Kong mobile operator CSL.

Through the agreement, Brightstar will assist CSL to implement a new, end-to-end supply chain service platform to all of CSL's segments and channels. CSL will work with Brightstar to enhance supply chain efficiencies to its core brands, 1010 and one2free, and supporting its multi-branded strategy across different customer segments.

Brightstar says it was selected by CSL 'for its ability to deliver real-time inventory transparency throughout CSL's operations and various channels in the region.' Services to be provided by Brightstar will include fulfilment and operations management of the CSL warehouse facility; retail replenishment to ensure proper placement of inventory throughout CSL's channels; specialised device management services including new handset ranging processes; and product lifecycle management tools to enhance mobile device contribution margin.

However, CSL CEO, Tarek Robbiati said that CSL would continue to procure handsets directly from handset manufacturers for the foreseeable future. "This supply chain partnership agreement with Brightstar forms an essential part of CSL's multi-brand strategy. It improves our competitiveness and ability to quickly respond to market changes in the fast-moving and most competitive mobile market in Hong Kong.

China

Telefónica increases role in China

Xinhua reports that Spain's Telefónica has signed a framework cooperation agreement on 3G business with China Unicom.

According to Xinhua the agreement is aimed at enhancing their cooperation on mobile communications, WCDMA service, broadband application, international business, marketing, and telecom services catering to enterprise clients.

Currently, Telefónica is the biggest private shareholder the Hong Kong-listed China

Netcom with a 5.38 percent stake. China Netcom has since merged with China Unicom and the merged entity as recently awarded a 3G licence and is planning to roll out SCDMA services.

Japan

NEC forecast losses, sheds staff *Japan's electronics giant NEC has dramatically downgraded its full year profit forecast, for the year to 31 March 2009 and announced plans to shed 20,000 staff around the world.*

At 31 October 2008 the company was forecasting net sales for the full year of ¥4.6 billion operating income of ¥120b, and net income of ¥15b. It has now changed these forecasts to an income of ¥4.2b, operating loss of ¥30b and net loss of ¥290b.

Of the ¥150b difference in operating income electron devices is estimated to account for ¥77b, IT and networking ¥17b and mobile/personal solutions ¥17b.

In response to its new forecasts, the company has announced plans to cut ¥80b of overhead costs in the next two years, ¥30b in production costs, ¥20b in R&D costs and ¥10b in other costs. This will result in the loss of 9000 jobs outside Japan and 500 in Japan, the latter through early retirement. A further 10,000 jobs will go at outsourced work forces, through reductions at poorly performing group companies and reduced outsourcing through increased in-house development.

The company will exit some unprofitable business areas, including LCDs and related business and will focus on "concentration towards an information linked society friendly to people and the earth." This will include the new core areas of environment and energy business. The company is promising "Drastic measures" for its overseas PC business.

NEC said that "severe external environment continues or worsen and that the next financial year would "pose unprecedented challenges for NEC."

UQ Comms to launch of mobile WiMAX in Japan

UQ Communications is to roll out a mobile WiMAX trial network this month to three Japanese cities. Subscribers

will be able to access network free of charge during promotion period.

UQ Communications is a joint venture established by KDDI, Intel Capital, East Japan Railway Company, Kyocera, Daiwa Securities Group and The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ. The mobile WiMAX network will use 30MHz of spectrum in the 2.5GHz band. UQ's WiMax service will be available to users in Tokyo, Yokohama and Kawasaki for free starting on February 26.

"We will start a test service, which covers the 23 wards of Tokyo, in February 2009," said Takashi Tanaka, president of UQ Communications. "We will also start our service in Nagoya as well as the Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe area in the early summer of 2009."

The initial service will use data cards. Notebook PCs incorporating mobile WiMAX network capability are expected to emerge in the summer of 2009. MID (mobile Internet devices) will become available after that." The free trials are scheduled to end June 30, 2009.

Philippines

Smart outsources network management to ECI Telecom *Smart Communications, the largest wireless services provider in the Philippines, has awarded ECI Telecom a two-year managed services contract for its nationwide transmission network.*

Under the agreement ECI will provide SMART with multi-vendor network management services for the operator's transmission network operations centre (NOC), including 24/7 network surveillance, fault management and maintenance.

The agreement follows a decade-long relationship between the two companies for the delivery of network equipment solutions, supporting Smart's nationwide transmission backbone. According to ECI, it is a strong proof-point of ECI's 1Net framework that "defines our focus on facilitating our customer's optimal transition to Next-Generation Networks."

ECI claims that 1Net is "based on the unique combination of innovative and multi-functional networking equipment extending from the access to the core of transport networks, fully integrated solutions and a full suite of professional managed services."

"This is an important project for ECI as the company continues to solidify its position as a full-fledged managed services provider. We offer Smart and all of our customers a path to optimise their operational capabilities, enabling them to deliver on time and on budget, while maintaining the highest service level," said Rafi Maor, CEO and president of ECI Telecom.

Australia

Pipe Network confirms submarine cable funding

Pipe Networks (ASX: PWK) says it has formalised key funding arrangements and a revised payment schedule for its submarine cable system linking Sydney and Guam, known as PPC-1, in particular with the PPC- 1 system supplier, Tyco Telecom.

Pipe CEO, Bevan Slattery, said: "the amended agreement recognises the financial security of Pipe International's pre-committed IRU agreements already in place and the quality of those counterparties."

The project came close to collapse late last year after bank financiers pulled out, but Pipe was able to reschedule a number of payments to align with customer receipts, and said that a key customer had agreed to bring forward a number of payments.

Pipe Networks updates guidance

Pipe Networks (ASX: PWK) has reiterated its net profit after tax (NPAT) guidance of approximately \$A11 million for 2008/09, representing growth of approximately 50 percent on the previous year. "This guidance is based on expected group NPAT for the half year to December 2008 being \$A5.25 million (62 percent increase over HY2007) on revenue now expected to exceed \$A23 million (47 percent increase over HY2007)," the company said in a statement.

Pan Asia

ITU reports on impact of the global crisis on IT

ITU is planning to release a report looking at the impact of the global financial crisis on the ICT industry.

The report *Confronting the Crisis: Its Impact on the ICT Industry*, will be released via a new dedicated website to co-incide with a speech by ITU secretary-general Dr

Hamadoun Touré at the global GSM congress in Barcelona. The report will examine the impact of the crisis on investment and financing, consumer demand, regulation and at how telcos are changing their strategies in response to the crisis.

It will also examine the impact of the crisis on various technologies, including mobile telephony, WiMAX and Long Term Evolution (LTE), broadband Internet and NGN and the satellite industry.

Input has been provided by experts from the World Bank, OECD and UNCTAD, and from a range of industry analyst firms including Informa, Analysys Mason, Deloitte & Touche, TMT Predictions, Point Topic and Maravedis. The GSMA and the WiMAX Forum also contributed insights on the outlook for the mobile and WiMAX industry respectively.

BT gets into Carbon neutral conferencing services

BT Conferencing has struck an agreement with CO2Neutral-Conferencing.com to provide carbon neutral conferencing services.

CO2NeutralConferencing.com will use BT's conferencing infrastructure and network to deliver its conferencing service in Asia Pacific. It claims that customers will be able to purchase low cost conferencing services that will be offset by carbon credits.

The company also provides business travel reduction consulting, which helps their customers put in place a strategy for audio, web, videoconferencing and unified communications and offers "CO2NeutralMILES" a corporate incentive scheme that rewards customers' employees for using technology rather than travelling in person for meetings.; and Carbon Reduction Reporting which provides an annual report detailing emissions saved by using conferencing.

CO2NeutralConferencing.com claims to have internal procedures that keep its carbon footprint to a minimum which include a work from home scheme for all employees, using green energy to power their facilities, very strict travel policy. For the remaining small footprint, "[we] buy the best carbon credits in the industry and have become NoCO2 certified."

BT AsiaPac becomes Avaya platinum partner

BT has been accredited as an Avaya platinum channel partner in Asia Pacific, in addition to BT's Avaya global gold status. BT says it has committed to achieving platinum status globally within the next few months.

BT Asia Pacific has engineers and consultants in Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, and India and demonstration facilities in India and Singapore. It has more than 250 network customers supported on the Avaya MultiVantage enterprise IP telephony platform.

Technology

"Incredible economies of scale" from LTE

A senior AT&T executive is predicting that LTE will be adopted by more than 80 percent of the world's telcos thanks to the "incredible economies of scale" it will bring to both the GSM community and the CDMA community.

Hank Kafka, vice president, network architecture, AT&T, in paper presented to a conference last month quoted forecasts showing a rapid ramp up LTE uses from 32m in 2013 (according to ABI Research) to 440m by 2015, (according to Analysys Mason).

He also cites Analysys research, from 2007, estimating that the cost per megabyte of downlink capacity for an LTE network operating over paired 5MHz bands with theoretical maximum through put of 20Mbps, 4Mbps average, would be as low as Euro0.1 (\$A0.20) one third the cost of an HSPA network operating in the same bandwidth with a theoretical maximum of 14Mbps.

According to Kafka, the low cost base will be essential to enable carriers to meet growing demand for mobile data

Kafka combined forecasts from Ovum Strategy Analytics and Ericsson to predict 2 billion broadband subscribers by 2012, two thirds on mobile networks. At present mobiles account for less than one third of 700 million broadband subscriptions globally.

Twenty telcos now committed to LTE

AT&T, he said, was planning LTE trials in 2010 and initial deployment in 2011.

Latest figures from the Global Mobile Suppliers Association (GSA) show that more than 20 network operators around the world have committed to LTE deployment worldwide.

The list includes NTT DoCoMo, Verizon Wireless, Vodafone, China Mobile, AT&T Mobility, Telstra, Telecom New Zealand, Telecom Italia, China Telecom, TeliaSonera, KDDI, SK Telecom, KTF, France Telecom/Orange, T-Mobile, Telus, Bell Canada, SmarTone-Vodafone, Piltel and Aircell. GSA adds that "infrastructure vendors are now shipping LTE solutions, and the first commercial systems are expected to launch by end 2009."

Earlier this year a number of vendors and operators set up the LTE/SAE Trial Initiative to demonstrate the potential of LTE/SAE through joint tests, including radio performance, interoperability, field tests and full customer trials.

The results of these trial will feed into technology developments and standardisation, and help define/validate network launch plans, and also help to validate the emerging LTE ecosystem, including devices and applications. According to the organisation, the results confirm that LTE is delivering on or exceeding expectations.

LTE promises to deliver download speeds in excess of 100Mbps over 3G cellular networks, but according to the GSA, its predecessor technology, HSPA could come close to these speeds.

The GSA notes that "On December 24, 2008, Telstra successfully completed activation of HSPA+ technology on the Next G mobile broadband network nationwide, with a HSPA+ data rate of 21Mbps and a current uplink data rate of 1.92Mbps.

Telstra has already flagged its intention to go to 42Mbps with HSPA+, but GSA says even higher speeds are possible. "Further evolution of HSPA is planned by 3GPP, which may utilise combinations of multi-carrier and MIMO technologies to reach 84Mbps peak on the downlink, and 23Mbps peak uplink.

GSA says there are now 171 commercial HSPA networks 70 percent of which support a peak downlink speed of 3.6Mbps. The figures come from the GSA's latest GSM/3G Network Update, available from www.gsacom.com.