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TRANSMISSION MONTHLY

1. GOOGLE ADDS 6 INDIC LANGUAGES IN GMAIL ON THE FEATURE PHONE BROWSER

Google introduced six new Indic languages- Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Tamil, and Telugu, in Gmail on the feature phone browser. Users can go to the settings in Gmail and choose their preferred language.

2. TECHMTO SET UP \$100 MN LAB

The telecom department (DoT) has asked Tech Mahindra to set up a \$100-million (Rs 550 crore) test lab for ensuring that network gear used by mobile phone companies in India is free from bugs and malicious software used for spying.

Senior DoT officials recently visited Tech Mahindra's telecom devices testing lab in Noida, which is managed by its wholly-owned arm CanvasM. The Noida facility is the only devices test lab in India certified by London-based Global Certification Forum, the leading international agency for certifying telecom devices.

3. BSNL'S INTERNET CAPACITY DOWN DUE TO CUTS IN UNDERSEA CABLE

Telecom PSU BSNL today said its Internet capacity has dropped by 21 per cent due to multiple fiber cuts in three under-sea cable systems that connect the country with many parts of the world.

"Three major cables which are serving as the International Gateway Connectivity are affected because of the multiple fiber cuts," BSNL said in a statement.

4. APPLE APOLOGIZES TO CHINA IPHONE CONSUMERS

Apple has apologized to Chinese consumers for its iPhone warranty policies in China after state-owned media attacked its customer service in a two-week-long campaign.

Apple CEO Tim Cook took an unusual step and apologized on Monday in a statement posted on the company's Chinese website, saying the complaints had prompted "deep reflection" and urged the company to revamp its repair policies.

"We are aware that a lack of external communication ... led to the perception that Apple's attitude was arrogant and that we do not care and attach importance to consumer feedback," Cook said in the letter.

"We express our sincere apologies for any concerns or misunderstandings this gives consumers."

The apology follows weeks of criticism from Chinese media outlets of Apple's customer service and warranty policies.

5. RIL TO USE RCOM'S FIBER FOR INDIAN 4G

India's Reliance Industries (RIL), which is rolling out a nationwide 4G network, has signed a landmark 12 billion rupee (\$220.5 million) deal to share fiber with Reliance Communications.

RIL subsidiary Reliance Jio Infocomm has negotiated to use capacity on RCom's 120,000km fiber network as a backbone for its LTE network, the companies announced yesterday.

Under the deal, Reliance Communications (RCom) will also be allowed to access fiber infrastructure that Infocomm deploys in the future.

This marks the first business deal between Mukesh Ambani – who owns RIL – and his brother Anil – who owns RCom – since the siblings acrimoniously split up their deceased father's business empire eight years earlier.

As part of this split, the Ambani brothers signed a pact agreeing not to compete in each other's sectors. But this pact expired in 2010, and a month later RIL spent around \$1 billion to acquire Infotel Broadband and its nationwide 4G spectrum licenses.

Relations between the brothers have warmed since the split, and a telecom alliance between the pair has been expected for some time. In January, rumors circulated that RCom and RIL were in talks over a tower-sharing arrangement.

Yesterday's fiber announcement in fact indicates that the deal is the first step in a planned “comprehensive framework of business co-operation” between the two companies. This will include reciprocal sharing of assets including “intercity fiber, intra-city fiber [and] towers.”

6. CISCO ANNOUNCES INTENTION TO BUY UBIQUISYS FOR \$310 MILLION

Cisco today announced its intent to acquire privately held Ubiquisys, headquartered in Swindon, U.K. Ubiquisys is a leading provider of intelligent 3G and long-term evolution (LTE) small-cell technologies that provide seamless connectivity across mobile heterogeneous networks for service providers.

As mobile service providers around the world increase voice and data capacity to serve the rapidly growing use of Internet-enabled devices, offloading traffic to small cell networks is a cost-effective way to increase capacity and make better use of spectrum assets. Small cells deliver their signal over a shorter range, which allows mobile users to get a faster, more consistent voice and data experience. Ubiquisys' small-cell solution adds dynamic intelligence at the edge of the network, enabling service providers to better monetize and optimize their mobile networks.

7. KAPIL SIBAL APPROVES RS 104 CR PENALTY ON VODAFONE

Telecom Minister Kapil Sibal is learnt to have approved a recommendation by two internal committees of the Department of Telecom (DoT) for imposing a fine of about Rs 104 crore on Vodafone for allegedly violating the license conditions on routing of calls.

"It was approved on March 23," official sources said. The fine is based on the loss estimated by internal committees of DoT to the national exchequer due to violation of license norms by Vodafone between October 2002 and December 2003 in Delhi and Mumbai.

8. BSNL LAUNCHES FIRST WI-FI NETWORK MODULE FOR CARS IN INDORE

In a development which is probably the first of its kind in the country, BSNL's Indore division today launched a Wi-Fi technology module for cars which will enable people to use Internet while they are travelling.

A Wi-Fi technology module which costs around Rs 5000 to Rs 6000 was first installed on an experimental basis in the official car of BSNL Indore unit's General Manager G C Pandey.

9. KAPIL SIBAL SLAMS SUPREME COURT INTERVENTION IN TELECOM SECTOR.

Communications and information technology Minister Kapil Sibal took on the Supreme Court on Wednesday saying the intervention of the country's apex court had led to a massive de-growth of the telecom sector.

"Telecom was the golden goose which laid the golden egg. The Supreme Court ensured that the golden goose will not lay golden egg again for a little while," he stated at the annual general meeting and national conference of industry body CII.

Since 2010, all court verdicts with regard to the telecom industry did not benefit the sector in any way, the minister said. Between 2010 and 2013, with all the experiments, with all the court verdicts and the CAG pegging the notional loss to the exchequer at 1.76 lakh crore, after the resale of mobile permits, "all we got into our kitty was 1,000 crore," he said.

In a landmark judgment on February 2 last year, the Supreme Court annulled 122 mobile permits of nine telecom companies and ordered the government to auction airwaves vacated by the Telco's at market-determined prices.

In 2012, auction of 3G and BWA spectrum fetched the government more than 100,000 crore. The decision to auction 2G spectrum did not result in a windfall for the government and instead saw some players exiting the market.

"What is the result of this? The consumer tariffs have gone up. So the consumer has not benefitted. The sector is under debt of 2, 50,000 crore, so the sector has not benefitted, and the government has got 1,000 crore, so the government has not benefitted. I would like to know who has benefitted," he went on to ask.

10. VODAFONE, BHARTI AIRTEL AND IDEA CELLULAR BRING MILLIONS OF RURAL CUSTOMERS IN THEIR NET

GSM operators added nearly 5.7 million rural customers in January and February 2013, when financially stressed mobile phone companies tweaked distribution models and

unveiled customized plans in villages amid slowing sales in the metros. Vodafone, BhartiAirtel and Idea Cellular, which account for 67% of the sector's revenues, added 3.02 million, 2.95 million and 2.64 million rural customers respectively during the first two months of the year, as per data collated by the Cellular Operators Association of India, the industry body representing GSM operators.

Over the past six months, GSM operators have added 6.78 million rural customers, with the bulk signing up in January and February. Rural India had a total GSM customer base of a shade over 258 million on March 1. Vodafone, which won maximum rural customers in February, attributed the success to its new rural distribution model. "Our 'son of the soil' distribution model in the villages has paid off and helped us gain the trust of rural customers," said Vodafone India chief operating officer Sunil Sood, adding that mobile internet adoption had also been growing in the villages. Instead of using traditional marketing channels, Vodafone is distributing its products through people representing local panchayats with good contacts within a village, said a senior executive, who did not wish to be named.

11. RELIANCE GLOBALCOM INTEGRATES HAWK CABLE SYSTEM WITH NETWORK

Reliance Communications under-sea cable arm, Reliance Globalcom has integrated Hawk Cable System with its global network in a move that adds capacity and will benefit customers in India, middle east, Europe and the US.

"We are delighted with the seamless integration of the Hawk submarine cable system with Reliance Global Network... Our existing customer base of over 37,000 corporates in India and over 1,400 corporates in Europe and USA, along with over 200 carrier customers will benefit from this lowest latency network," Reliance Globalcom's President and CEO Punit Garg today said in a statement. Under-sea cable system is a vital link to facilitate internet and other telecom services across countries.

With this, the company has interconnected all its under-sea cable system which enhances "the capability of carrying 5 million HD quality interactive video channels simultaneously."

The Hawk Cable System was earlier providing connectivity between Yeroskipos in Cyprus and Marseille in France. India was connected to it through Flag cable system of company network.

Reliance Globalcom has now connected Hawk cable system with its global network through Alexandria in Egypt.

Reliance Globalcom Network connects India using the FEA cable system (Mumbai to London) and the Falconcable system (Mumbai to Suez in Egypt). Through the integration with the Falcon **BSE -4.69 %** cable system in Suez, Egypt, Hawk extends that connectivity to Europe. Hawk cable system was built by Reliance Globalcom last fiscal to initially set up Mediterranean Gateway and Hub at Cyprus.

12. TATA COMMUNICATIONS SELLS CHENNAI LAND FOR RS 192.3 CR

Tata Communications today said it has sold a piece of land in Chennai for over Rs 192 crore in line with its objective of monetizing non-core assets. In a filing to the BSE, Tata Communications said "the company has completed a sale transaction of the land parcel and building situated at Nungambakkam, Chennai, for a transaction value of Rs 192.3 crore. The above transaction is in line with the company's objective of monetizing its non-core assets."

This land parcel and building was earlier being used as a staff housing colony. The company has received the payment of entire amount of Rs 192.3 crore, the filing added. Shares of Tata Communications traded on BSE closed 1.5 per cent down at Rs 225.85 in a weak stock market today.

Last year in December, Tata Communications Managing Director and Group Chief Executive Vinod Kumar said the company will focus on cost reduction and cost rebalancing across the portfolio due to uncertain global economic outlook. "With associated issues such as surplus land and government equities, our hands are tied to some extent on how we can financially structure the company for optimal results. That is a challenge and, hopefully, it will get resolved in the coming quarter," he had said.

The Tata Group firm had reported a net loss of Rs 201 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2012 against a Rs 153.06 crore in the same period a year ago due to rise in expenditure.

Its consolidated income from operations during the third quarter of 2012-13 fiscal rose by 23 per cent to Rs 4,434.11 crore from Rs 3,604.1 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal.

13. BHARTIAIRTEL ASKED TO STOP 3G ROAMING PACTS BY DELHI HIGH COURT

A panel of judges of the Delhi High Court has quashed an earlier order of the court preventing the government from discontinuing Bharti Airtel's 3G services in regions where it does not have permits for these operations. "BhartiAirtel will have to stop services immediately as the 3G roaming pacts were illegal and against the terms and conditions of the license contract," Maneesha Dhir, the lawyer representing the telecom department (DoT), told ET.

Bharti is expected to approach the Supreme Court, but will have to shut down 3G services in seven regions if SC fails to provide relief. The high court was acting on a plea by Reliance Communications **BSE 1.75 %**(RCOM), which said Bharti's move to provide pan-India 3G data services was impacting its business, triggering a fresh round of corporate wars in the controversy-ridden sector.

RCOM had argued that a judge of the Delhi High Court had 'wrongly stayed' the telecom department's order stopping the Sunil Mittal-promoted telco from offering 3G services outside its licensed zones.

Dhir, the government's legal representative, also said Bharti would have to cough up Rs 350 crore for offering high-end data services in seven regions where it does not have 3G frequencies, but added that the deadline for this payment would be known when the court's orders are made public. The company had about 7 million 3G users as of December 2012, but it is not known how many of them belong to the seven regions, which also include Kolkata, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana, UP, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, where it does not own 3G airwaves.

14. IDEA CELLULAR, AIRCEL, OTHER INVESTING IN WI-FI SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE MOBILE BROADBAND COVERAGE

Mobile phone companies are investing in low-cost Wi-Fi systems to improve mobile broadband coverage in heavy data consumption zones. A few may be trying to attract fixed-line users by getting them hooked through the Wi-Fi route. Idea Cellular is testing a five-city Wi-Fi network that will soon go commercial while Aircel will roll out 600 Wi-Fi outlets in six cities that are considered to be India's biggest data markets, top company executives with direct knowledge said. Vodafone India too is believed to be in talks with Wi-Fi gear suppliers like Nokia Siemens Networks (NSN) and Cisco to improve mobile broadband coverage in under-served indoor public areas. More companies are likely to jump onto the bandwagon.

A top executive at NSN, one of the device suppliers to Idea Cellular, claimed telcos with Wi-Fi access are ideally placed to transform mobile broadband experience by harnessing the "superior data handling capability of a Wi-Fi network". Sector analysts see cost-efficiencies for mobile operators adopting Wi-Fi due to lower deployment costs coupled with the fact that nearly all smartphones and tablets support Wi-Fi. They also believe a Wi-Fi back-up in congested telecom zones can be a strategic tool for telcos, especially in managing huge chunks of data hitting their mobile networks. Another NSN executive said mobile operators are also increasingly embracing Wi-Fi strategies to attract fixed-line users onto the mobile broadband platform by initially "getting them hooked to data through the Wi-Fi route".

"Wi-Fi offload will be a very suitable tool to manage the surging mobile broadband demand especially in India where smartphones and tablets sales are growing while 3G has limited play and coverage. Since Wi-Fi discovery and connectivity is seamless under most conditions, the user experience is not hampered," says Katyayan Gupta, enterprise mobility analyst (Asia-Pacific) at Forrester Research. A top executive at Idea Cellular said the company is testing its Wi-Fi networks in key data markets like Hyderabad, Cochin, Ahmadabad, Pune and Vizag, but is yet to take a call on the commercial launch date and tariffs.

Senior executives at Aircel, said the telco is "reconstructing its Wi-Fi business" to reduce the data traffic load on its radio networks. "The advent of Wi-Fi access services will take the load off our GSM infrastructure and reduce data access costs," said a company spokeswoman, claiming that consumers would get more bang for the buck as data download speeds would increase substantially.

Aircel also planned to bundle Wi-Fi consumption, directly into its data tariff plans, said the spokesperson. This means, Aircel Smartphone users would in the near future buy

one data pack and use it across the 2G, 3G and Wi-Fi platforms. Vodafone India did not reply to ET's specific queries on its Wi-Fi networks strategy or device procurement plans. Mritunjay Kapur, MD of Protiviti Consulting, agrees that backup Wi-Fi networks are a cost-effective way to provide limited mobility broadband services.

15. CHINA MOBILE, VODAFONE TEAM FOR MYANMAR PUSH

China Mobile and Vodafone have announced plans to form a consortium to jointly apply for a mobile operating license in the Myanmar market.

The world's two largest mobile operator groups by subscribers said they will together seek a 15-year license to build and operate a mobile network in the newly-liberalized nation.

China Mobile and Vodafone have submitted a pre-qualification application with Myanmar authorities. The application period ended on April 4.

The two operators have been collaborating in some form since 2000. Their combined might will give them an advantage in the auction process.

But it will likely be a tough competition – the Myanmar government only aims to issue two telecom licenses, and numerous operator groups have expressed an interest in bidding.

16. IKAZ LAUNCHES 'TAP & PAY' READER TO ENABLE CASHLESS TRANSACTIONS BASED ON NFC

Mobile payment solution provider iKaz has launched a new 'Tap & Pay' reader to enable cashless transactions based on NFC (Near Field Communication) technology. iKaz aims to make enable faster, convenient and secure mobile payments using NFC.

iKaz's 'Tap & Pay' reader can be plugged into any mobile phone to convert it into a mobile POS (point of sale) device and is priced at INR 1000. In order to engage the consumer ecosystem, iKaz offers consumers an NFC Sticker priced at less than INR 75 that converts any mobile phone into an NFC-enabled phone. This will allow consumers to make payments with just a simple tap on the merchants NFC reader.

17. I-T DEPARTMENT SLAPS RS 3900 CRORE TAX ORDER ON A V BIRLA GROUP COMPANIES

In what could be the first attempt by the income-tax department to bring corporate demergers under the tax net, two Aditya Birla group companies—Idea Cellular and Aditya Birla Telecom — have been asked to pay Rs3,900 crore in taxes for the demerger of the telecom business that took place in 2009.

"The I-T department is treating the transfer of license, assets and liabilities from Aditya Birla Telecom Ltd to Idea Cellular as a slump sale, which is subject to capital gains tax," a person close to the development told ET NOW, which was the first to report the development. Idea Cellular has been issued a tax demand order of Rs1,500 crore on business income arising out of the transfer of telecom licenses and other assets

from Aditya Birla Telecom as part of the demerger, while ABTL, which is a subsidiary of Idea Cellular, has been served with a tax demand of Rs2,400 crore. Idea confirmed that it had received the tax orders, but said the demands are not justified. "They are inconsistent with established tax laws and past precedents. The company believes the demands are unjustified and based on an erroneous interpretation of the current tax laws and the facts of the case," the telco said, adding that it will challenge the orders.

18. VODAFONE, IDEA ASKED TO STOP UNAUTHORISED 3G SERVICE

The telecom department (DoT) on Friday asked the Indian arm of Vodafone and Idea Cellular to stop offering 3G services outside their licensed zones within three days, and slapped fines of Rs550 crore and Rs 300 crore, respectively, on these companies. With this the Centre has extended its crackdown on mobile operators offering these high-end data services in areas where they do not have permits to provide these facilities. In a related development, the Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea by Bharti Airtel to immediately hear its appeal against the Delhi High Court order on Thursday which virtually prevents the company from providing 3G services in seven circles.

A bench of the apex court headed by justice RM Lodha will hear Bharti Airtel's plea against the High Court decision on Monday, the court said during an urgent out-of-turn mentioning. With the apex court failing to give it relief, DoT has ordered Bharti to shut down 3G services within 24 hours in circles where it does not have its own frequencies to offer these.

19. RELIANCE TEAM APPOINTS SANJAY MASHRUWALA AS MANAGING DIRECTOR OF RELIANCE JIO

Reliance Industries (RIL) has appointed Sanjay Mashruwala, a 30-year company veteran but hardly known in the telecom industry, as managing director of its fourth-generation (4G) mobility venture Reliance Jio, an executive with direct knowledge of the development said. An internal mail announcing Mashruwala's appointment was sent to employees last week, the executive said. India's most valuable private sector company has also hired Vodafone's former customer services head, Madhumati Lele, who is set to be the first woman executive in the Mukesh Ambani-promoted telco's leadership team.

Sandip Das, currently CEO of Malaysia's Maxis Communications, is set to join at a top leadership position in Reliance Jio next month. Most members in the core team of its mobility venture, which is being spearheaded by Manoj Modi, a close aide of Ambani, were part of the group's first telecom foray more than a decade ago. The other key members of the team include its operational head Mathew Oomen, who held several key positions in Reliance Infocomm and Flag Telecom before becoming the chief technology officer at US-based telecom operator Sprint-Nextel.

Oomen is working with Kiran Thomas, an assistant vice-president at RIL, who had earlier looked after the group's retail business. Also in the top team are former OnMobile CEO Arvind Rao, who has joined Reliance Jio as its innovation head, and Sumit Chowdhury, who was vice-president and partner at IBM and was poached by RIL last year as its chief

information officer to oversee the technology and product platforms. Prior to his stint at IBM, Chowdhury had worked for Reliance Communications (RCOM). With the top management in place, Reliance Jio, which recently announced a network-sharing deal with Mukesh's younger brother Anil's RCOM, is expected to launch its much-awaited 4G offerings later this year. The RIL spokesperson did not reply to a detailed query from ET on its leadership team and their responsibilities at Reliance Jio. The launch is being tracked eagerly by competition and market watchers as the company is expected to shake up the telecom market, in the manner its low cost voice services disrupted the market at the turn of the century. Mashruwala has played a key role in RIL's petrochemical business, and was also involved in building a nation-wide fiber optic network in record time a decade ago when the unified group launched mobile services. RIL has finalized a two-pronged strategy comprising wireless mobility as well as offering high-speed broadband, TV and other services to homes through fiber network, on the lines of Google's Fiber Project.

20. SISTEMA CUTS INVESTMENT OUTLOOK, EYES BREAK-EVEN IN INDIA

Sistema Shyam Teleservices (MTS India) is all geared up with newly streamlined operations in the country, supported by \$415 million investment from the parent company this year. After being forced to trim down operations from 22 circles to 9 circles in the country, the company's focus will be to achieve break-even by the end of 2014.

Post the declaration of the fourth quarter results, the company said that the West Bengal circle reached the break-even point during the quarter.

Sistema's Chief Executive Mikhail Shamolin also stated that the company would not be doing any major investment in the Indian business until it brings them to the break-even point. The company expects to break-even in six circles by mid-2014.

Meanwhile, Sistema is said to have cut down its investment outlook for the Indian operations from \$415 million in 2013 to \$250 million a year in 2014 and 2015.

For the fourth quarter, the company's revenues plunged by 3 percent to INR 3,902 million (\$72 million), however, its full year revenues increased by 31 percent to INR 16,192 million (\$303 million).

Uninor, which was also impacted by the license cancellations and forced to spruce operations in India, also set a goal of achieving breaking even by the end of 2013 in the six circles where it won spectrum in the November auction. Uninor's operations in Uttar Pradesh East circle achieved break-even and became profitable last year.

Both these telcos would be striving to make their Indian operations completely profitable before doing any further expansion in the country.

21. TELECOM EGOM MAY SEEK TRAI'S VIEW ON SPECTRUM PRICING

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has placed an option before the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) on telecom. Either seek a fresh opinion from the

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on the price of spectrum or revise the price downwards on its own. Alternatively, the EGoM could decide to keep the base price unchanged, according to a DoT communication.

Once the EGoM takes a decision, its recommendations will be sent to the Cabinet for approval. On its part, DoT will seek necessary direction from the Cabinet on one-time charges for the spectrum currently held by the operators.

The EGoM, when it meets, will also give guidelines on whether the entire quantity of the remaining spectrum in 800 MHz band should be auctioned and whether auction for the 900 MHz band needs to be conducted together with auction of 1,800 MHz band. According to the DoT communication, it takes about 50 days to complete an auction, based on the past two rounds of auctions. It has asked the EGoM to decide the timeline for the next round of auction accordingly. In an earlier communication, DoT had indicated it would hold the next auction in May or June.

22. MORE THAN 6 MILLION DOMAIN NAMES ADDED TO INTERNET IN Q4 2012 – VERISIGN

According to the latest Domain Name Industry Brief by VeriSign, Inc., more than six million domain names were added to the Internet in the fourth quarter of 2012, bringing the total number of registered domain names to more than 252 million worldwide across all top-level domains (TLDs) as of Dec. 31, 2012.

The increase of 6.1 million domain names globally equates to a growth rate of 2.5 percent over the third quarter of 2012, and marks the eighth straight quarter with greater than 2 percent growth. Worldwide registrations have grown by 26.6 million, or 11.8 percent, year over year.

As per the report, the .com and .net TLDs experienced aggregate growth in the fourth quarter of 2012, reaching a combined total of approximately 121.1 million domain names in the adjusted zone for .com and .net. This represents a 6.4 percent increase year over year. As of Dec. 31, 2012, the base of registered names in .com equaled 106.2 million names, while .net equaled 14.9 million names.

The report revealed that new .com and .net registrations totaled 8.0 million during the fourth quarter of 2012. In the fourth quarter of 2011, new .com and .net registrations totaled 7.9 million. The .com and .net renewal rate for the fourth quarter of 2012 was 72.9 percent, up slightly from 72.5 percent for the third quarter of 2012.

23. TATA COMMUNICATIONS BAGS \$20 MILLION DEAL FROM MOTT MACDONALD.

Tata Communications Ltd (TCL) has bagged a USD 20 million deal for 5 years from consultancy Mott MacDonald for redesigning its telecom infrastructure and related services.

"Tata Communications...has been selected by Mott MacDonald as its telecommunications partner for the next five year in a deal worth over USD 20 million," TCL said in a statement. TCL will redesign Wide Area Network, meant for use by employees within an organization, and infrastructure for global unified communications

to enable Mott's to centralize software and other technical applications such as document management system into cloud computing environment. "With over 168 offices around the world and projects in 140 countries, Mott MacDonald can bring together and access an enormous wealth of talent, insight and information. Investing in this project will provide us with ease of access needed to keep us at the top of our industry," Mott MacDonald's Global IT Director, Darren Russel said. This project will further enhance collaboration between 15,000 employees of Mott across 50 countries. "It is a major undertaking that will use all of our experience in delivering centralized IP (Internet protocol) voice and data services worldwide," TCL Europe's Managing Director Claude Sassoulas said.

24.'INDIA SITTING ON OVER \$4 BILLION UNUSED UNIVERSAL SERVICES FUND'

Global mobile industry body GSMA today said India is sitting on unutilized fund of over \$ 4 billion collected from telecom operators and the system needs to be re-valuated as it has been ineffective. "In India, the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) continues to impose approximately a five per cent levy on operator revenues, despite the fact that it contains over USD 4 billion of accumulated funds. "India is not alone as regards the collection of substantial amounts of money from the mobile industry, for example in Cote D'Ivoire and Paraguay, the USF represents in excess of 0.6 per cent of the countries' GDP," a report prepared by Ladcomm for GSM Association said.

Globally, there are USD 11 billion universal services funds lying unused with authorities in various countries, it said. "Our research shows that, despite the fact that there is an ever-increasing amount of money sitting unused in these funds, governments continue to collect still more from the mobile operators, India levies 5 per cent tax on mobile operators for collecting USF perhaps which is highest in the world," GSMA Head of Public Policy Gabriel Solomon said here. "At the moment that's not evident. One of the key reason is 5 per cent of each rupee earned is going to USOF and its not going to be returned back to the industry. This is a missed opportunity. It is something that is taken from the industry that could otherwise be used to make an investment case," Solomon said.

As per the Indian Telegraph Act 1885 (as amended in 2003 and 2006), Universal Service Obligation is defined as access to telegraph service to people in rural and remote areas at affordable and reasonable prices. The report, however, appreciates India's USOF for having high level of transparency from a financial reporting perspective along with Colombia.

25. MONTEK SINGH AHLUWALIA FAVOURS LOWER RESERVE PRICE FOR SPECTRUM

Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia today said the benchmark price for spectrum auction is "unrealistic" and favored lowering of reserve price as the previous two attempts to sell airwaves were "unsuccessful". "Spectrum is a national resource. We had two unsuccessful attempts to auction it. It's quite clear that reserve price is too high.

"What actually I suggested is that we have a choice, we can arbitrarily lower the reserve price or we can refer the matter back to (regulator) Trai. My personal view is that it's better to get a recommendation from Trai ...the benchmark is some unrealistic price and it won't lead to a solution." he said at launch of European Business Group position paper.

26. 2G SPECTRUM CASE: SUNIL MITTAL, RAVI RUIA APPEAR IN DELHI COURT

Bharti CMD Sunil Mittal and Essar group promoter Ravi Ruia, who have been summoned as accused in the additional 2G spectrum allocation case, today appeared in a Delhi court which posted the matter for further proceedings on April 16. Mittal's counsel placed before special CBI judge O P Saini the order passed by the Supreme Court postponing till April 16 the proceedings in the case. Besides Mittal and Ruia, former Telecom Secretary Shyamal Ghosh, who was summoned by the special CBI judge, also appeared in pursuance to the summons issued against him.

The court, after going through the apex court's order on separate petitions filed by Mittal and Ruia, listed the matter on April 16 for further proceedings. The apex court will hear their pleas on April 15.

27. BHARTI, IDEA, VODAFONE CAN'T ADD NEW 3G CUSTOMERS TILL FINAL ORDER: SC

In what may be a big blow to major telecom operators in the country, the Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that BhartiAirtel, Idea and Vodafone cannot add new 3G customers till further notice. The court has allowed Vodafone and Idea to be party to the 3G roaming case.

While existing customers can still avail the current services, no new customers can be added by BhartiAirtel in seven circles, the court ruled. The court will announce its final verdict in the 3G spectrum matter on May 9.

28. VODAFONE TO HELP MAHINDRA REVA WITH M2M SERVICES FOR ITS ELECTRIC CAR

Vodafone and Mahindra Revahas inked a partnership which will empower Mahindra's newly launched electric car with machine-to-machine (M2M) communication services. This technology will help users to remotely lock their car, control air conditioning as well as get emergency boost charge for their vehicle.

"Using an app on their smartphones, users can know how much battery is left, schedule pre-heating or pre-cooling, lock/unlock car door, find the nearest charging station as well as get an emergency boost charge to go an extra 8-10 kms," Mahindra Reva Electric Vehicles Chief of Strategy and Technology Chetan Maini said.

29. TELECOM NEW ZEALAND AND HUAWEI JOIN HANDS TO ROLL OUT 4G NETWORKS.

Telecom New Zealand has tied up with Chinese solution provider, Huawei to roll out 4G mobile network.

“The announcement is a significant milestone for Huawei in New Zealand, and is a strong sign of the confidence in Huawei’s technology and its position as the market leader in 4G LTE globally” said Arthur Zhang, CEO of Huawei New Zealand. “Huawei is committed to bringing world leading technologies to our partners in New Zealand and we are excited by the opportunities provided by the relationship with Telecom” he added.

Huawei will be responsible to help Telecom to deliver the best customer experience.

Telecom New Zealand Chief Technology Officer David Havercroft says, “Huawei’s selection was based on two main factors. The first is that they have extensive experience, having built 73 LTE networks in 42 countries. The second is that they are truly pushing the boundaries of LTE technology.

“Over the past 3 months we have been trialing Huawei’s 4G LTE technology in Auckland and Rotorua. Our testing has encompassed some very exciting new developments like ‘carrier aggregation’. Carrier aggregation allows us to use two different spectrums simultaneously, and in our trials it produced maximum peak speeds of up to 250Mbps.

“While such technology is some way from launching commercially, it is very exciting to be working with a technology partner who has this level of capability, and a massive commitment to research and development that we can bring to New Zealand.” MrHavercroft says.

30. RELIANCE JIO MAY HIRE RCOM’S 32,000 TOWERS FOR 4G SERVICES

Reliance JioInfocomm and Reliance Infratel is expected to sign another agreement (after a Rs 1200 crore deal to share optic fiber) to lease later’s towers on an annual rent of Rs 1,000 – 1,200 crore. Reliance Infratel is the subsidiary of Reliance Communications. Mukesh Ambani led Reliance Jio will hire 32,000 out of 45,000 towers under Reliance Infratel.

31. NTT STILL WORLD’S TOP-EARNING OPERATOR

NTT maintained its position as the world’s top revenue generating telco in 2012, and also lead the way in terms of capex, a forthcoming report by Infonetics shows.

The report puts AT&T second, and Verizon third in terms of revenue generation in 2012, with China Mobile second in capex, and AT&T third. While NTT tops the revenue chart overall, the report places China Mobile at the top of the list of independent wireless operators, with close to \$89 billion (€67.8 billion) worth of sales in 2012.

Maria Zeppetella, market analyst manager with the firm and lead author of the study, says NTT also took the lead in terms of operating expenses in 2012, and that Telefonica “leads among European operators in terms of capex, revenue and opex.”

The report is based on Infonetics quarterly analysis of the results of 160 incumbent and independent wireless, satellite, and cable operators in North America, EMEA, Asia Pacific, and the Caribbean and Latin America.

Other findings include Comcast being the only pure cable operator in the top ten revenue generators; three Chinese operators in the top six in terms of spending; and that LTE subscriber growth is the fastest of all other technologies.

32. VERIZON, NEC CLAIM FIBER SPEED RECORDS

Verizon and NEC said they have successfully sent the highest-capacity transmissions for regional and long-haul distances over field fiber.

The two companies said tests showed that by expanding from one band to two bands, the C-band and the L-band, the two firms were able to transmit 40.5 terabits per second for a long-haul distance of more than 1,800 kilometers (1,118 miles) and 54.2 Tb/s over a regional distance of more than 630 kilometers (391 miles), using Verizon’s fiber loop outside Dallas.

The achievement was accomplished by tightly packing optical channels in the two bands of the optical fiber spectrum, the two firms added.

Verizon and NEC also claimed to have set an industry record for the third consecutive year. The results of the latest trial, performed in late 2012, were accepted and presented as a post-deadline paper at the OFC/NFOEC Conference and Expo last month in Anaheim, California.

33. OVER-THE-TOP VIDEO REVENUE TO CROSS \$20 BILLION BY 2015 – ABI RESEARCH

According to a recent report by ABI Research, companies like Netflix, Hulu, Apple, and Amazon helped drive the over-the-top (OTT) video market past \$8 billion in 2012. The three largest markets—North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific—experienced YoY growth in excess of 50% in 2012. The continued spread of connected CE and increasingly mobile devices, like tablets, are expected to push the market past \$20 billion by 2015.

34. AIRTEL SHORTLISTED FOR MYANMAR TELECOM LICENCES

BhartiAirtel-led consortium is among the 12 applicants shortlisted by Myanmar government to bid for two nationwide telecom licenses.

Securing a license in Myanmar will help the Indian telecom major expand presence in the sub-continent at a time when the company is seeing decline in profits and the home

market is reeling under regulatory uncertainty. Vodafone and China Mobile consortium, Telenor, SingTel are among others who have been shortlisted by Myanmar.

35. GUJARAT SIGNS MOU WITH DOT, CENTRE & BBNL FOR OPTICAL FIBER NETWORK CONNECTIVITY

A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Department of Telecommunication, Government of India, Bharat Broadband Network Ltd (BBNL) and Gujarat government has been signed to establish an Optical Fiber based network for Broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats for Universal Services to rural population of State.

Under the scheme of eGram Vishwagram Project, total 13,685 eGram centers were established in Village Panchayats and eGram Centers have been equipped with VSAT Broadband connected PCs and being provided the e-service to rural citizens. After setting up of Optical Fiber network project, all villages will become totally eVillages. On Friday, the MoU was signed in the presence of Union Minister for Communication and IT, Mr. Kapil Sibal at Delhi. Under this project, all villages of State will be covered under National Optical Fiber Network. The MoU was signed on behalf of Gujarat Government by Shri S. B. Chaudhari, Deputy Secretary from Panchayat, Rural Hosing and Rural Development Department.

According to state government press statement, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi initiated this reform by dedicating the widest village connectivity network of Asia in 2009 through the project, E-Gram, Vishwa Gram. This bridged the digital divide between the rural and urban areas and providing E-services to 13,685 Gram Panchayats, claims the government press statement. The initiatives allow the rural masses to access the information, public services including those of education, health and financial inclusion.

36. UNINOR HIRES AUTOWALLASAS SALES AGENTS

Uninor, the Indian arm of Norway-based operator, has come up with an exciting idea to boost its sales. In an effort to augment its market presence, the company has decided to appoint auto drivers as its sales representatives in the Maharashtra region. According to a news report in Hindu Business Line, the new agents will provide services near the airport, railway station and bus depots in the city. The move is logical for Uninor, as it only has 2G licenses and does not offer 3G or 4G services. Hence, the company's major subscribers come from low-to-mid income group—many of whom travel extensively from autos, trains and public transport

37. MTS INDIA PLANS 4G NETWORKS TO MONETIZE DATA GROWTH.

Sistema Shyam Networks (MTS India) has full-size plans for the 4G ecosystem in the country and says it is prepared to make its operations profitable going ahead with watchful approach.

The company says that it will be shelling out around \$200 million (about Rs 1,093 crore) to start 4G services in India, starting from next year. Sistema has estimated that the 4G services network will cost it around \$300 million, and its existing infrastructure will provide support worth \$100 million.

The company is a pure play CDMA operator and heavily relies upon data services for revenues. Its plans for 4G services will be in line with its strategy to fetch maximum revenues from the data growth in the country. Sistema's non-voice revenues already contribute more than one-third of the total revenues.

The company's President and CEO Vsevolod Rozanov said that its 4G services will largely cater tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

38. MOBILE PHONE COMPANIES CAN'T SHARE SPECTRUM WITHOUT PAYING ONE-TIME FEE: DOT

Mobile phone companies will not be allowed to share spectrum without paying the one-time airwaves levy, the telecom department has decided. This means all leading mobile phone companies, including BhartiAirtel, Reliance Communications, Vodafone, Idea Cellular and Aircel among others cannot share airwaves, as they have managed to obtain stays from different courts and stall the imposition of this one-time spectrum charge that came into effect from January 1, 2013.

The telecom department had imposed a one-time spectrum charge on airwaves held by existing mobile phone companies after the Union Cabinet had cleared the proposal in late 2012. Private operators have to shell out .18,000 crore towards this fee. The one-time fee has two components to it – mobile phone companies have to pay for all their 2G spectrum holdings beyond the 4.4 MHz prospectively for the remaining period of their licenses based on the prices discovered in the auctions that concluded in November 2012.

For CDMA operators, the charge has been applied prospectively for all airwaves beyond the 2.5 MHz mark in the 800 MHz band and is based on the reserve price of the March 2013 auctions for these frequencies. The second component is a retrospective fee on incumbent GSM operators such as Bharti, Vodafone, Idea and BSNL for all 'excess' second generation airwaves they hold beyond the 6.2 MHz mark from July 2008 to December 2012. These charges have been calculated by indexing the 2001 spectrum auction prices to the interest rates of State Bank of India. Spectrum-sharing will also be permitted only if both companies have airwaves in that particular frequency in the same region.

This will restrict telcos such as Bharti, Vodafone and Idea from offering 3G roaming services outside their licensed zones. These companies have signed up 3G customers across the country riding on bilateral roaming agreements that allow these firms to use each other's airwaves and offer high-end data services even in regions where they do not have third-generation spectrum. The telecom department has termed these pacts 'illegal' and had recently asked incumbent GSM operators to terminate their 3G roaming agreements. The matter is now in the Supreme Court, which in turn has told these

companies not to add 3G customers outside their licensed zones, until the next hearing of the case.

Spectrum-sharing riders will also prevent the likes of Telenor, Sistema and Videocon, which had lost their pan-India permits after the apex court ruling last year and have been able to win back permits only in few regions in the auctions, from launching mobile services across the country by riding on the airwaves of other mobile phone companies.

When operators share spectrum, both companies will have to pay usage charges on the total airwaves held jointly. Currently, operators share between 2% and 6% of their annual revenues based on the quantity of airwaves they hold. For instance, an operator that has only 4.4 MHz of airwaves in a circle shares 2% of its annual revenues towards spectrum usage charge.

39. TELECOM FIRMS CALL FOR DEBATE BEFORE IMPLEMENTING MOBILE NUMBER PORTABILITY

Leading mobile phone companies on the GSM platform - BhartiAirtel, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular have suggested the regulator conduct a detailed cost-benefit analysis before implementing mobile number portability (MNP) at a national level saying the demand for this service would be a fraction of India's total subscriber base.

The telcos have indicated that putting the service in place may not be commercially viable as high implementation costs will outweigh demand and add to the cost pressure even as hyper-competition and mounting debt negatively impacts profits in the sector.

MNP is a service offered by mobile phone companies wherein subscribers can change their carrier without changing their number, in case they are not satisfied with the service. At present, MNP is restricted to a telecom zone - a Delhi Airtel customer can port to Vodafone but within Delhi. The government intends to make the service national such that the Delhi Airtel customer can take a Vodafone Mumbai connection without changing his number.

"Inter-service area MNP volumes would be a mere fraction of the intra service area requests and demand will be a fraction of 1% of the subscriber base," said Vodafone India's senior vice president for regulatory affairs Sundeep Kathuria in response to a pre-consultation paper on national mobile number portability floated by telecom regulator Trai.

Nationwide MNP would require substantial upfront and ongoing costs while benefits of this implementation would accrue to far fewer subscribers than even intra circle MNP seekers.

40. EX-HUAWEI INDIA CTO SETHURAMAN TO HEAD SILICON VALLEY START-UP DEEYA ENERGY

Ex-Huawei India CTO and executive director A Sethuraman will head the Indian arm of Deeya Energy, a Silicon Valley-based start-up that develops low-cost energy storage systems for telecom tower companies.

Sethuraman, who quit Huawei India last month, assumed the reins as managing director of Deeya Energy India on Monday. He will report to J Kelly Truman, global president & chief executive of the Fremont-based parent company. Sethuraman is the second top executive from the Indian telecom space to join Deeya Energy in recent times. Earlier this year, ex-Alcatel Lucent South Asia head Ravi Sharma joined the US firm as director. Prior to his four-year stint with Huawei India, Sethuraman was also chief marketing officer & corporate strategy head at Alcatel-Lucent India.

Deeya Energy Inc is backed by five US venture capital firms -- NEA, Technology Partners, Draper Fisher Jurvetson, BlueRun Ventures and Element Partners -- and operates a plant in Gurgaon. It has 120 employees in India.

Besides maximizing sales of Deeya's energy storage solutions, Sethuraman's major mandate will be expanding the company's global footprint in key emerging markets across Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Middle East, in his additional capacity as global vice president (commercial operations).

41. JAPAN ISP LAUNCHES 2GBPS FIBER SERVICE

Sony-backed Japanese ISP So-net has launched what it is billing as the world's fastest consumer broadband service, offering downlink speeds of a blazing 2Gbps.

The GPON fiber network also offers uplink speeds of 1Gbps, *Engadget* reported. So-net is around 58% owned by Sony.

The max speed is double the 1Gbps Google is offering with its high-profile Google Fiber trial network in Kansas City, and at a lower cost: So-net is offering the service for 4,980 yen (\$51) per month on a two-year contract, compared to the \$70 per month for Google's fiber-only package.

So-net is charging an installation fee of 52,500 yen, but is currently waving this cost for customers applying for the service online.

The service is currently available in Tokyo and six surrounding districts - Chiba, Gunma, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Kanagawa and Saitama.

The service is so fast it exceeds the capacity of most consumer broadband adapters, but will be useful for multiple high-speed connections.

Japan is well known for being among the countries with the fastest average broadband speeds in the world.

42. VODAFONE INDIA LAUNCHES MOBILE WALLET

Vodafone India has announced the long-awaited launch of mobile wallet service M-Pesa with ICICI Bank.

The companies yesterday debuted the mobile transfer and payment service in Kolkata, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand. They plan to roll out the service India-wide, starting in the eastern parts of the country.

The mobile money service will allow customers to deposit and withdraw cash from designated outlets, transfer money to any mobile phone or bank account in India and make payments for mobile, utility and other bills.

M-Pesa was originally launched in Kenya by Safaricom, the mobile company managed by substantial shareholder Vodafone. It currently also operates in Tanzania, Afghanistan and South Africa.

Vodafone India first announced its intention to launch M-Pesa with ICICI bank in January 2011.

Late that year, the company launched a similar service with SDFC bank, dubbed M-Paisa, in the state of Rajasthan.

Rival BhartiAirtel offers mobile money service Airtel Money in India, and is expanding the service to its African operations.

43. GOVT MULLS PRE-2G SCAM METHODS TO ALLOT AIRWAVES AFTER AUCTION FAILURE, SC RULING

Administrative allotment of airwaves, the genesis of the 2G spectrum scam, may make a comeback. The failure of recent rounds of airwaves sales, as well as the Supreme Court ruling in September 2012 that auction cannot be the only method of allocating natural resources, has resulted in the telecom department (DoT) revisiting the issue of awarding airwaves outside the bidding process.

The DoT has set up a committee to frame a comprehensive new regime for allotment and pricing of spectrum, and its mandate includes examining if administrative allotment of spectrum can be adopted as a norm.

Administrative allotment involves awarding spectrum, the radio frequencies on which mobile signals travel, through any methodology apart from an outright sale through a bidding process. Interestingly, this panel, which will also include members from other ministries, has also been asked to examine if telcos can be awarded spectrum on an administered basis when they renew their permits. Currently, incumbent operators such as Bharti and Vodafone, whose permits come up for renewal in 2014 in the metros, have been asked to win back airwaves in these regions through a bidding process. The panel's mandate further states that it should also work out the pricing for airwaves, if administered allotment is used to award spectrum 'up to the prescribed limit at the time of license renewal'.

This development comes amidst the DoT's recent move to reject Vodafone's request for an extension of its permits in the metros. The department, while denying the company's request, had reasoned that the firm must participate in the auctions to be held later this year to access airwaves at market price because airwaves had been delinked from license in the new policy on spectrum allocation. The telecom department took a similar stance in the case of BhartiAirtel and Loop, which had made the same demands. The companies had argued that they were entitled to fair and reasonable extension of license as per mutually agreeable terms and that the telecom policy and licence agreement provided for continuity.

India had followed 'administered' methodology for awarding airwaves until early 2012, when the Supreme Court had quashed 122 mobile permits issued by former telecoms minister A Raja. The apex court ruled that the first-come-first-served policy that was used by Raja to award mobile permits that came bundled with airwaves was unconstitutional and directed the Centre to issue fresh licenses and spectrum through an auction process. The Comptroller and Auditor General in its report in 2010 had said that Raja's scam-tainted license allocation process in 2008 had caused a loss of Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the exchequer.

The government had filed a presidential reference against the apex court's February 2 orders, which had also said that all national resources should be disbursed through an auction process. The Supreme Court, in its reply, clarified that auctions were not the only method for allocating natural resources and added that maximizing revenues were secondary to serving the public good with regard to awarding allocating natural resources.

The country had followed another administered allotment till 2008, where additional second generation (2G) airwaves were awarded to mobile phone companies based on their customer base. India was the only country that had followed this controversial subscriber-linked spectrum allocation policy

44. LINKEDIN INTRODUCES REVAMPED MOBILE APP WITH NEW DESIGN & FEATURES

On Wednesday, LinkedIn introduced its revamped mobile app that aims to make it easier for its members to quickly discover and engage with the stream of information being shared across the website.

Announcing this, the blog stated, "Today, we're excited to unveil a brand new mobile phone experience, completely revamped with the general professional and everyday use case in mind. We want to make it easier for our members to quickly discover and engage with the rich professional insights being shared across LinkedIn to help them make smarter decisions from wherever they may be working. We've designed the new LinkedIn mobile phone app for every professional, with a richer and more engaging stream and more personalization features."

45. AIRCEL FOCUSES ON DATA SERVICES FOR REVENUE GROWTH

Indian telecom service provider Aircel is taking an aggressive route to capture major share in the growing data services market. Realizing that the growth from voice services have come down, the telco is betting on data services to drive its revenues. The company says that it has planned several initiatives to meet the objectives.

"Voice revenues have been saturated after reaching 80 to 85 percent of the total revenues. Now, we expect to see most of the revenue growth to come from data services," says Anupam Vasudev, Chief Marketing Officer of Aircel.

Aircel has rolled out a new 2G data plan—Pocket Internet 24—at less than INR 1 per day for the first time Internet users. The plan is initially available in North East, Jammu &

Kashmir, Orissa, Kolkata and Rest of West Bengal and it will be rolled-out nationally on April 24, 2013. Aircel's latest data plan is also available for its 3G users in circles where it offers 3G services.

Vasudev added that the company will roll out more tailored data plans for its customers across the country to increase data uptake.

1. Tata tele returns excess CDMA spectrum. Tata Teleservices has become the first company to surrender excess spectrum as it did not want to pay the price for airwaves beyond the mandated 2.5 MHz at market rates. The government has imposed a market price for companies that are holding spectrum beyond their contractual limit. For CDMA service providers, the pan-India price for CDMA spectrum is Rs. 9,000 crore.

"Tata Teleservices, under protest and without prejudice, has intimated its decision to the department of telecommunications (DoT) to surrender spectrum in the CDMA 800 MHz (band) beyond 2.5 MHz in all circles except Mumbai and Delhi," the company said in a statement.

"In these two metros, the company will retain one additional carrier (1.25 MHz) beyond 2.5 MHz for the balance period of licenses. The company is looking to deploy additional capex to offset the reduced spectrum availability."

Sources said the company paid Rs. 63 crore to DoT for excess spectrum in the two metros.

46. VODAFONE INDIA TO INVEST \$ 1 BILLION IN FY 14

Despite uncertainty on the spectrum issue, telecom major Vodafone India today said it remained committed to the Indian telecom market and would invest another \$ one billion in 2013-14.

"We are committed and will invest another \$ one billion in India in FY 14 for capacity building," Vodafone India MD & CEO Marten Pieters said on the sidelines of the M-Pesa launch.

He also said the world's biggest private mobile phone company would definitely bid for fresh 2G airwaves in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata in the next auction later this year if the government reduced "the reserve price to a level where it is economically feasible" to buy it and continue a business.

47. TELECOM FIRMS PRESS FOR REVIEW OF CELL TOWER RADIATION FINES

Mobile phone companies have asked the telecom department to defer fines on base stations that fail to meet radiation norms because of procedural lapses till such time as revised guidelines on penalties are issued.

Telecom lobby groups representing GSM and CDMA carriers say that the penalty for delay in compliance due to issues such as lack of proper paperwork and absence of certification documents should not be Rs 5 lakh-the fine fixed by the government for base stations where emission levels are higher than the limit set last year

48. MUKESHAMBANI'S RELIANCE JIOINFOCOMM GETS 10,000 NUMBERS TO TEST 4G SERVICES

Mukesh Ambani's Reliance JioInfocomm has been assigned the 10,000 mobile numbers it needs to test its 4G services on a non-chargeable basis, a person familiar with development said.

The Reliance Industries' unit has been given 4,000 numbers in Delhi and Mumbai each and 2,000 in Jamnagar. Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC), the technical arm of the department of telecommunications (DoT), has been excluded from the trial records, the person, who did not wish to be named, said.

DoT, however, has guarded the right to publish Reliance Jio's trial findings on its website in case it deems fit to do so in consumer interest, the same person said.

49. TELECOM SUBSCRIBER BASE DIPS A TAD TO 89.2 CR IN FEB

The country's telecom subscriber base declined marginally to 89.2 crore in February 2013 from 89.31 crore at the end of January, due to disconnection of inactive mobile numbers, according to data released by Trai.

"The number of telephone subscribers in India decreased to 892.02 million (89.2 crore) at the end of February, 2013 from 893.15 million (89.31 crore) at the end of January 2013, thereby showing a monthly growth rate of -0.13 per cent," Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said a report.

The subscriber base has seen steady decline since July 2012, which was driven by disconnection of inactive mobile numbers, it said.

Trai, however, said "the decline in the wireless subscriber base, which has been witnessed since July 2012 primarily due to disconnection of inactive mobile subscribers by the telecom service providers, has become gradually less."

The mobile subscriber base in the country declined by 0.11 per cent to 86.17 crore at the end of February 2013 from 86.26 crore in January 2013, the regulator said. The telecom subscriber base had touched an all-time high of 96.55 crore in June 2012.

50. VODAFONE PLANS TO SHIFT BACK-OFFICE WORK OF GERMAN ARM TO INDIA

Leading global mobile operator Vodafone plans to shift key businesses of its struggling German arm to its shared services unit in India to cut costs, executives aware of the development said.

Vodafone India Services Pvt Ltd (VISPL), the shared services subsidiary of Vodafone UK, may soon handle a host of back-office work for Vodafone Germany, including IT operations, network monitoring services, key administrative functions like book-keeping, and dealing with complaints, the executives said.

"Given the tough economic scene in Europe, our colleagues in Germany are looking to shift some jobs to India as work can be done in a more cost-efficient manner," a senior Vodafone Group executive told ET.

51. HUAWEI'S ENTERPRISE HEAD LEAVES INDIA

Huawei has decided to relocate its President for Enterprise India, Eric Yu, to Germany. According to the sources close to the developments, Yu has been awarded a new responsibility since the company wanted to restructure its India enterprise business plans.

Huawei had launched its enterprise business unit in 2011, under the leadership of Yu, who had been spearheading the company's Enterprise Business Division since its inception. The company has four business group including carrier business Group, enterprise business group, consumer business group and other business group.

The company's enterprise business is focused on providing solutions for IP, communications and technology and IT businesses and services.

The company had set an ambitious target of garnering 10 per cent market share in India's enterprise business by 2015. The Indian enterprise market is currently dominated by some of the established players such as Cisco Systems Inc, Hewlett-Packard, Juniper Networks and Microsoft Corp.

52. BSNL 2G PLANS MAY TAKE OFF COUNTRYWIDE AS ZTE AGREES TO SUPPLY GEAR EQUIPMENT

BSNL's countrywide 2G network expansion plans will finally take off as the Indian arm of China's ZTE Corp has agreed to meet the state-run telco's additional GSM network requirement for 4.22 million lines in the eastern and northeastern circles, aggregating Rs 1,220 crore, top BSNL executives, who didn't wish to be named, said.

ZTE India's decision comes after BSNL recently threatened to Ancash its Rs 159-crore performance bank guarantees (PBGs) following the Chinese vendor's failure to meet the state-run telco's eastern zone purchase requirements by January 31, 2013.

53. GOVERNMENT FORMS PANEL TO TAKE OFF BSNL AND MTNL, OKAYSRS 23K CRORE BAILOUT

The Centre has constituted a panel of ministers tasked with looking at ways to revitalize the two public sector mobile phone companies - BSNL and MTNL.

Currently, an empowered group of ministers (EGoM) headed by finance minister P Chidambaram looks into all spectrum-related issues for the telecom sector. It is not known if Chidambaram will head the new Group of Ministers (GoM) too. This panel will

take a call on the telecom department's demand that Cabinet approve Rs 23,000 crore bailout for BSNL and MTNL.

54. DOT SEEKS LAW MINISTRY'S NOD FOR REJECTING LICENCE EXTENSION.

The telecom department (DoT) has sought law ministry's endorsement of its move to reject license extensions of BhartiAirtel, Vodafone and Loop in the metros. The department, while denying these companies requests, had reasoned that they must participate in the auctions to be held later this year to access airwaves at market price because airwaves had been delinked from license in the new policy on spectrum allocation. But all three mobile phone companies had slammed the department's move and said that the decision was legally unsustainable.

55. SINGAPORE HOMES TO BE PREWIRED WITH FIBER

The Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) has mandated that new homes should be prewired with optical fiber.

The new Code of Practice for Info-communication Facilities in Buildings (COPIF) code requires that each new home is installed with an optical fiber termination point. Each living room and bedroom should be provided with Category 6 cabling capable of carrying data speeds of more than 1 Gbps.

It also called for the provision of rent-free Mobile Deployment Space (MDS) and new buildings and developments for enhanced mobile coverage in both existing and new developments. The MDS requirements will vary depending on the size of the developments or the mobile coverage area of the developments

56. SINGTEL HITS NATIONWIDE LTE COVERAGE

SingTel revealed it has achieved Singapore-wide mobile coverage with its LTE network, after spending S\$150 million (\$120.8 million) on the rollout in the past year. The operator said its network now provides dual-band nationwide street-level coverage for 95% of the island, and dedicated indoor coverage in around 550 buildings. SingTel has also started doubling the top speeds of the network in some commercial buildings to 150 Mbps, through the use of MIMO technology

57. SK TELECOM REACHES 10 MILLION LTE SUBSCRIBERS

SK Telecom this week revealed it has reached 10 million subscribers on its own LTE network, which launched in July 2011. It took SK Telecom over three years to reach 10 million subscribers on its 3G W-CDMA network, and just a year and nine months to hit the same milestone for LTE. LTE customers now account for 37% of SK Telecom's total subscriber base. The operator aims to reach 15 million LTE subscribers by end-2013. The LTE network covers 99% of the South Korean population. SK Telecom revealed this month that it plans to commence an upgrade to LTE-Advanced from September.

58. BHARTI AIRTEL TO BUY WARID TELECOM UGANDA

BhartiAirtel, the world's fourth largest mobile phone operator, said it had signed an agreement to buy rival Warid Telecom Uganda, in a move that will increase its customer base in Uganda by 60 per cent. The deal with Warid, the No.3 mobile phone company in Uganda, will add 2.8 million customers to take its total user base in the country to 7.4 million, Bharti said in a statement on Tuesday. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

59. RELIANCE JIO INKS PACT WITH BHARTI FOR CABLE NETWORK

Bharti Airtel will share part of its submarine cable network with Reliance Industries' telecom arm, a rare partnership between two firms not known for their camaraderie. The country's largest telco will provide Reliance Jio Infocomm data capacity on its undersea cable that links India and Singapore, enabling the Mukesh Ambani-owned venture to connect its proposed 4G network to the Asia-Pacific region. The old rivals also held out the intriguing possibility of greater cooperation in the future. "Bharti and Reliance Jio will continue to build on this strategic framework and consider other mutual areas of cooperation and development to leverage their respective assets towards offering their customers a much richer experience," said a statement issued by both the companies, without specifying what these areas could be.

60. TATA COMM PARTNERS MERCEDES AMG PETRONAS

Tata Communications today said it has partnered with Mercedes AMG Petronas, to deliver trackside connectivity for the team at all Formula One race locations. With the new partnership, Tata Communications becomes the 'Official Managed Connectivity Supplier' to the team, the company said in a statement. Tata Communications will work closely with the team to deliver high-speed, high quality and secure trackside connectivity, it said. This will enable the team to transfer vital real-time data from the Silver Arrow cars at any Grand Prix location to its headquarters in the UK, three times faster than at present, the statement said.

61. INDUS TOWERS SAYS 20% OF ITS SITES ARE DIESEL FREE

Telecom mast operator Indus Towers today said 20,000 of its sites across 15 circles or 20 per cent of its network is diesel free and it aims to make another 10,000 sites diesel free in the current fiscal. Indus Towers is a joint venture between telecom majors BhartiAirtel, Vodafone and Idea Cellular and the company has a portfolio of around 1.12 lakh towers in 16 circles.

"On 20,000 sites across 15 circles, there is no diesel use. Battery power is used as a backup on these sites," Indus Towers Chief Executive B S Shantharaju told reporters here. He added when the Green Sites project was launched, it was decided to run telecom network operations without using diesel as power backup and without compromising on the network uptime.

Shantharaju said as a result of the initiative, there has been a 15 per cent decline in diesel use in the last three years, while its operations have grown over 35 per cent during the same period. Apart from not using diesel at these sites, the company has also deployed other technological solutions, including temperature controlled telecom equipment, to allow heat transfer who reduces energy consumption and carbon emissions.

"Till date, Indus has 20,000 green sites and we will continue to increase this number. We, as a company, are committed to our Green Sites Project," Indus Towers COO Bimal Dayal said.

The company also has around 900 sites, which run on solar power. Asked how much sites will be added to the network of Indus Towers this year, Shantharaju said it depends on the demand from the operators. He added the company has a tenancy ratio of about 1.98. Tenancy ratio refers to the number of tenants (operators) who have put up their antennae and other active infrastructure on the towers.

62. ERICSSON'S INDIA NET SALES UP 13% AT RS 1,314 CR IN MARCH QUARTER

Telecom equipment maker Ericsson today reported 13 per cent rise in net sales to 1.61 billion Swedish Krona (about Rs 1,314 crore), or \$ 242.63 million, from its India operations for the quarter ended March, 2013. The Swedish firm said that regulatory uncertainty is leading to cautious spending.

63. BHARTIAIRTEL, VODAFONE, IDEA RIGGED 3G AUCTIONS: BSNL TO SUPREME COURT

State-owned mobile operator BSNL has alleged that during the third generation (3G) spectrum auctions held in 2010, BhartiAirtel, Vodafone and Idea had colluded 'in the bidding process to ensure that at least one company got 3Gairwaves in every circle in India'.

BSNL, in its submission to the Supreme Court, said the three operators had acted in concert and had bid strategically with a view to maximizing their combined coverage without having to compete against one another and also to secure the lowest possible prices from the government.

The public sector company's response comes as the Supreme Court had recently accepted its demand that it be made a party to the case related to the validity of the 3G roaming pacts between Bharti, Vodafone and Idea.

Earlier this month, the apex court allowed BhartiAirtel to continue providing 3G services in seven circles in which it does not have licenses, through interconnectivity pacts with other operators, but disallowed the company from enrolling new subscribers in these circles. At the same time, the court also asked all parties (telecom department, Reliance Communications and BSNL) to formally place their views on the subject before the court in four weeks, while listing the case for final hearing on May 9.

Uninor and Videocon adopts 'go-to-customer plan' to sell SIM cards, recharge vouchers. Uninor and Videocon, which won back licenses in spectrum auctions last year, are feeling the need to adapt and innovate in the overcrowded domestic telecom market, which, according to research firm Gartner, will touch Rs 1.2 lakh crore in revenue terms in 2013. These companies, along with Sistema Shyam's MTS, have restarted operations after the Supreme Court last year canceled the mobile permits of several telecom operators in the 2G spectrum allocation case. MTS secured licenses last month.

With a modest investment, Uninor has trained 30 auto-drivers to comply with regulations for enrolling new customers and retaining existing ones. The sales drive has been panned out to include milkmen and newspaper vendors in Hadapsar and Vishrantwadi localities in Pune. As part of the strategy, these new sales agents source the SIM cards and recharge vouchers from a local distributor who also processes and verifies new customer forms.

This go-to-customer strategy, an industry first, will be replicated across the state and eventually in all the six circles where Uninor operates - UP East, UP West, Bihar and Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa. "The response has been phenomenal. By being near the customers, our mobile retailers are two to three times efficient compared with regular retail channels, which translates to more business," said Uninor's chief marketing officer, Rajeev Sethi. Uninor's strategy is also helping boost incomes for these new agents. According to Sethi, the monthly income of the auto driver, for instance, goes up by Rs 2,500 with about 50-60 transactions a month. The driver ends up getting the same commission per transaction as a shop retailer selling Uninor's products, he added.

The telecom company now plans to launch 1,000 auto recharge vehicles in five or six cities across Maharashtra over the next six months. Videocon Mobile Services, on the other hand, is handing over the proverbial carrot instead of just dangling it - in Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana, the circles where the operator has permits, retailers and distributors will be awarded upfront with LED televisions and trips to exotic locales. The company has set aside 10 crore for this. There is a catch, though: the partner must commit to sell a certain number of SIM cards and recharges in these markets. "These are the people that we will deal with for the next 20 years, we have to establish trust," said Arvind Bali, chief executive of Videocon Mobile Services. The mobile services division of the \$20-billion Videocon Group is also tying up with local FMCG companies to expand its customer base.

Videocon and Uninor's strategies are a sharp contrast to those of incumbent operators who have cut dealer commissions and reduced spends on acquiring new customers. BhartiAirtel, Idea Cellular, Vodafone, Tata Teleservices and Aircel have withdrawn freebies and slashed talk-time on pre-paid discount vouchers in order to increase sales and margins.

64. SAMSUNG LAUNCHES GALAXY S4 IN INDIA AT RS 41,500

The long awaited Smartphone by Samsung, Galaxy S4 has been launched in India. It has a price tag of Rs 41,500 for the 16GB variant.

Samsung Galaxy S4 will be available from Saturday, April 27, from 12 noon to 4 p.m. from Samsung premium brand stores in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad, as well as the Samsung India online store, with some special offers from the company. It will be available in other stores post 4 p.m.

Samsung is extending its EMI offer to Galaxy S4 as well.

The phone has a 5-inch full-HD screen with a resolution of 1080×1920 pixels, and pixel density of 441ppi. It is powered by 1.6GHz Exynosocta-core processor and comes with 2GB of RAM.

Samsung has no plans to launch the 32GB and 64GB variants of the S4 in India as it believe the microSD card slot for expanding the storage will suffice. The handset comes with a 13-megapixels rear camera and a 2-megapixel one on the front. The Galaxy S4 also offers more camera features including dual-shot, employing the use of both front and back camera, an eraser shot mode to remove people from photos, and a Cinema gram like feature called Cinema Photo, among several other tricks.

However, the phone has a noticeable omission in the form of missing FM radio.

65. CHINA TELECOM Q1 PROFIT GROWS 10%

China Telecom revealed its Q1 profit increased 10% to 4.69 billion yuan (\$760.7 million), as strong mobile service and handset revenue growth compensated for rising costs.

The last of China's three network operators to report its quarterly results fell in between China Unicom's 89% profit growth and the mere 0.3% recorded by China Mobile.

China Telecom's revenue increased 14.6% year-on-year to 77.82 billion yuan, the results show. Excluding terminal sales, revenue was up 10.1% to 68.58 billion yuan.

Total revenue from handset and other terminal sales grew 63.7% to 9.23 billion yuan, likely due to the country's flourishing Smartphone market

66. AIRTEL TO BUY OPTICAL GEAR FROM CIENA

BhartiAirtel will buy optical network gear from US-based Ciena Communications to ramp up capacity of its 2i undersea cable network linking India and Singapore, top executives aware of the matter told ET. The move comes on the heels of Bharti Airtel's plans to offer data connectivity to Reliance Industries' telecom arm, Reliance Jio Infocomm for 4G services, by leveraging its submarine cable system.

67. FREE ROAMING WON'T IMPACT TELCOS: RCOM

Reliance Communications has countered the contention of rivals Bharti Airtel and Vodafone that introduction of free roaming services will hit mobile phone operators' revenues, saying the growth in business will help recoup any losses. In a submission to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai), the Anil Ambani-led company said free roaming will help expand the overall market significantly. "The growth of business would be rewarding for service providers as can be seen and confirmed from the international experience," RCom said.

68. BSB INVESTS \$7M IN FREE MESSAGING APP 'HIKE'

BSB has announced a \$7 million fresh investment in hike, its free messaging app. 'hike' is a free mobile messaging app that crossed the 5 million users in just four months after its launch on 12/12/12. This makes 'hike' one of the fastest growing free mobile apps globally.

Mike Kayamori, Director, BSB said "The traction for hike has been phenomenal, especially in such a competitive market. This new round of investment is an endorsement, of the great work put in by the entire team. We are really excited to be a part of the journey where we continue to enrich people's core communication experience!"

69. RCOM TO USE AIRCEL'S NETWORK

Reliance Communications has recently launched a growth plan by sharing agreements with competitors in zones where it does not have network. The Anil Ambani company has inked its first tie up with Aircel, and plans to add a total of 10,000 base stations as part of such agreements.

The company, through these pacts, can cut capital expenditure of around Rs 1,200 crore, said the company's wireless operations' chief Gurdeep Singh. But each time a subscriber uses the network under these agreements, RCOM will have to pay the operator with whom it has a tie up, and will incur a loss if the user's calling rate offers a better plan than the negotiated price between the operators.

70. TELECOM COMMISSION TO SEEK NOD FOR BSNL'S FORAY IN NAXALITE HOTBEDS

The Telecom Commission, the highest decision-making body in the communications ministry, will shortly seek Cabinet nod for state-run BSNL to roll out mobile networks in India's naxal-infested pockets across nine states. The project, aimed to bring left wing ultras in the mobile loop, is initially estimated to cost 3,046 crore and may rise to 5,000 crore

71. AIRTEL'S DATA ARPU SURGES WITH 8.4 MN 3G SUBS

BhartiAirtel has posted surge in its data ARPU at INR 55 for the fourth quarter of 2013, as compared to INR 43 for the same quarter of 2012.

Given the surge in data uptake on its network, the company's data customer base is now 23.1 percent of the total customer base, increased from 21.8 percent of the total customer base in the fourth quarter of 2012. The company's total customer base now stands at 18.8 million.

The company has 8.4 million 3G data customers nationally, out of which 6.4 million are active 3G data users, according to the results announced today.

On yearly basis, the telco's data traffic and 3G data customers in India increased by over 135 percent. During the quarter, the company's total ARPU increased by INR 8 to INR 193 from INR 185 in the third quarter of 2013. Voice ARPUs reached INR 159 in Q4 FY12, from INR 153 in Q3 FY13.

The company's non-voice revenues showed a marginal improvement. It now stands at 17.4 percent of the total mobile revenues. The company's messaging and VAS revenue share declined to 9.1 percent of the total revenues from 9.9 percent in the previous quarter.

The share of messaging and VAS revenue has been declining quarter-over-quarter.

Bharti Airtel's India mobile revenues increased to INR 101,977 million during the quarter, as compared to INR 95,575 million for the same period in the previous year. The company's profit from the mobile services segment yearly declined to INR 17,962 million in Q4 FY13, as compare to INR 21,145 million in Q4 FY12.

72. VODAFONE OVERTAKES AIRTEL TO BECOME INDIA'S LEADING MOBILE PHONE COMPANY IN RURAL INDIA

Vodafone has for the first time overtaken BhartiAirtel to become India's leading mobile phone company in rural India, according to the latest rural subscriber numbers collated by Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the industry body representing GSM operators.

The Indian arm of Vodafone, which recently tweaked its distribution model to boost sales in the villages, now has the biggest rural customer base at 82.24 million, a shade above BhartiAirtel, whose total rural customer base is for the first time a tad lower at 82.16 million.

73. RELIANCE JIO, VODAFONE JOIN CONSORTIUM TO BUILD UNDERSEA CABLE NETWORK

Reliance Industries' telecom arm, Reliance Jio Infocomm, has teamed up with UK's Vodafone Group Plc and a clutch of leading global carriers to build a subsea cable network linking Southeast Asia and Middle East.

This is the second cable deal for RIL which had recently reached an agreement with BhartiAirtel for bandwidth on the latter's i2i submarine cable system that connects Chennai to Singapore. Reliance Jio is also the only telecom operator from India to participate in the submarine cable system consortium. Involvement in building the proposed submarine cable system is strategic to Reliance Jio Infocomm's long-term broadband ambitions even as it prepares to launch fourth-generation (4G) services later this year.

74. UNINOR CLAIMS 36% JUMP IN RECHARGE BUSINESS IN UTTAR PRADESH AFTER NEW PROMOS

Telecom operator Uninor is re-branding its sabse sasta tariff tagline after customers in the Hindi heartland of Uttar Pradesh cheered a pilot run of two recent promos that use rustic expressions of challenge.

The Indian arm of Norway's Telenor claims its recharge business jumped 36% in six towns in the UP-West circle where the company recently placed advertisements saying issey sasta toh moochein mundwana (if anyone offers lower calls rates, I'll shave off my moustache) and issey sasta toh golgappey bund (will stop eating pani-puris if anyone offers lower call rates).

The two promos—placed outside a barbershop and next to a 'chaat' outlet, respectively—drove up footfalls in some 100 points-of-sale by 20% and retailer participation by 6%, the company said. The new taglines, created by advertising agency Leo Burnett, underscore Uninor's low tariff brand promise and carry forward the company's existing tagline sabse sasta.

75. BHARTIAIRTEL TO SELL 5% STAKE QATAR FOUNDATION

BhartiAirtel will sell a 5% stake to Doha-based Qatar Foundation Endowment for Rs 6,796 crore (\$1.26 billion) to bolster finances weighed down by Rs 63,689 crore (\$11.7 billion) of debt. This is the second big-ticket deal involving a Gulf-based investor in as many weeks.

The country's biggest telco will issue 199.9 million new shares to Qatar Foundation Endowment, which is funded by the Gulf state's royal family, at Rs 340 per share, a 7% premium to its closing price on Thursday. The deal, which values Bharti at Rs 1,35,920 crore (\$25.2 billion), could be one of the country's largest private equity transactions ever, if the definition of private equity is extended to include sovereign wealth funds and endowments.

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