

## Policy and Regulation

- ❖ The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has **allowed telecom operators to deploy their switching equipment anywhere in the country instead of restricting them to circles through an amendment in the unified licence conditions**. However, this will be subject to interconnect points being located and operated in the respective service areas and meeting security conditions as mentioned in the licence agreement.
- ❖ **DoT is working on stricter rules that would make the tampering of International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) number a punishable offence with up to three years of imprisonment**. The proposed rules are being framed in combination of section 7 and section 25 of the Indian Telegraph Act. The rules would help curb issues pertaining to fake IMEI numbers and ease the process of tracking lost mobile phones.
- ❖ The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India** has **extended the deadline for submitting comments and counter-comments on the consultation paper on data speed under wireless broadband plans**. The deadline for submitting comments has been extended from June 29, 2017 to July 20, 2017, while that of submitting counter-comments has been extended from July 13, 2017 to August 3, 2017, respectively.
- ❖ The **inter-ministerial group (IMG)** formed to **analyse the deteriorating financial health of the telecom sector is reportedly planning to submit its policy recommendations to the Telecom Commission in July 2017**. The IMG reportedly does not require any external meetings now. Further, there would only be internal meetings and examinations by various divisions of the DoT.
- ❖ State-run telecom operator **Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL)** has **requested the government to extend the validity of its mobile licence for the Delhi and Mumbai circle by two more years (till 2021) at no extra cost**. MTNL's licence for the two telecom circles is currently valid till 2019. However, as per the operator, its mobile licence for the two service areas remained underused during the first four years of the permit's lifespan owing to appreciable time taken for the settlement of the litigation pertaining to the grant of licence and spectrum allotted around 2.5 years after grant of the licence.
- ❖ In a bid to meet its debt servicing obligations, **Reliance Communications (RCOM)** has **reportedly approached the telecom ministry to surrender a part of its spectrum holdings in the 1,800 MHz frequency band**. In its letter to the ministry, RCOM has sought permission to surrender around 0.6 MHz spectrum in the Mumbai, Karnataka, Haryana and Punjab telecom circles. The operator has recently paid the first instalment for the purchase of spectrum in the Mumbai circle. However, the instalments for spectrum in the other three circles start in 2018.

## Internet and Broadband

- ❖ The **Telangana government** has **decided to establish a special purpose vehicle named T-Fibre for the implementation of the Telangana Fibre Grid project, which seeks to provide reliable high-speed broadband connectivity to every household in the state**. According to the government, T-Fibre will be incorporated as a private limited company under the Companies Act, 2013. Meanwhile, the central government has also agreed to partly finance the fibre grid project under the BharatNet programme.
- ❖ **Bharti Airtel** is **planning to launch commercial voice over long term evolution (VoLTE) services by September 2017**. The operator is currently undertaking trials for VoLTE in select cities including Mumbai. Meanwhile, Airtel is also planning to expand its 4G footprint to all the cities and towns by March 2018.

## Vendors

❖ **RCOM's subsidiary Global Cloud Xchange (GCX) has partnered with data centre provider Sovereign Business Integration Group to offer global connectivity to enterprises.** Under the partnership, the companies will allow enterprises to co-locate and host their IT infrastructure securely at Sovereign's facility and gain access to the GCX connectivity, cloud and managed network services.

❖ **Sterlite Tech has bagged the contract to serve as the master systems integrator for the Kakinada Smart City project in Andhra Pradesh.** Under the contract, Sterlite will design, build and manage systems for the Kakinada smart city for the next six years.

## Infrastructure

❖ **Reliance Jio Infocomm Limited (RJIL) has partnered with telecom operators from Europe, the Middle East and Asia to launch the Asia-Africa-Europe (AAE-1) submarine cable system.** RJIL would be responsible for the network operations and management of the cable system in Mumbai. As per RJIL, the AAE-1 is the longest 100Gbps technology based submarine system, which will stretch over 25,000 km from Marseille, France to Hong Kong.

❖ **In a bid to monetise its real-estate assets, state-run telecom operator Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has decided to lease out nearly 100 apartments within five corporations in Kerala.** However, as per the operator, these buildings would not be leased out to private individuals and firms.

## Finance

❖ **Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) is planning to raise Rs 250 billion through private placement of redeemable non-convertible debentures.** The proceeds from the same will be used to fund the expansion of its telecom venture RJIL. Earlier in April 2017, RIL had proposed to increase its capital expenditure on RJIL by Rs 180 billion in the April-June 2017 quarter, adding to the Rs 1.79 trillion investment that it had already put into the venture so far.

❖ **Tata Teleservices Limited (TTSL) has approached a lender consortium led by the State Bank of India for restructuring its outstanding debt of Rs 320 billion.** TTSL has reportedly sought an extended maturity of 20 years for repayments, and a request for a fresh loan of Rs 50 billion for its operational and capital expenditure needs.

❖ **MTNL is planning to repay a debt of around Rs 1.25 billion it owes to a public-sector bank before the deadline of June 30, 2017.** Further, the operator does not see the financing of this debt as a challenge. In addition, MTNL has said that a long-term loan of Rs 4.95 billion would also have to be repaid during the current financial year. However, the operator is confident of meeting its obligations in this regard.

## Miscellaneous

❖ **RJIL has partnered with the Retailers Association of India for introducing a secure mobile-first tax compliance solution for implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) by retailers.** Jio-GST solution will assist retailers to maintain records, file tax returns and comply with provisions of the GST law.

❖ **The Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) has requested the government to drop the proposal of mandatory local testing of telecom equipment used in India post certification from third party global bodies.** According to COAI, the proposed move will create potential supply chain disruptions, thereby increasing the cost of telecom services.