The India Round-Up

By Rahul Nehra, Honorary National Secretary, SCTE India

In the first of SCTE India's bulletins, it highlights changes and developments in cable/broadband markets in India as it transitions towards digital.

The first quarter of 2015 has been a period where the Indian media fraternity experienced consolidation, cemented positions, made interesting acquisitions and witnessed some potentially game-changing moves by operators, technologists and application providers.

Movers and shakers

It may be interesting to start this first India round-up with a marriage where e-tailing finally met broadcast as Flipcart moved into the broadcast space through a deal with DEN. Snapdeal.com, India's largest online marketplace, announced a 50:50 Joint Venture with DEN, India's biggest television distribution company, to launch a "TV Commerce" channel 'DEN Snapdeal TV shop', with the aim of creating a multi-nodal electronic shopping avenue for customers – potentially game changing...

The stage seems to be set for another quantum change in the industry as INCL HITS finally gets into the operational mode. Targeting ten million subscribers and choosing Thomson and Nagravison as technology partner, Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the Indian Digitization process appears to be ready for the big push with this venture. Not to be left behind, in the same space, NSTPL has also become aggressive in trying to leave its issues behind with a million STBs ready to be rolled out with Motorola and Surabhi Broadband in a new partnership.

India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and BIS have taken tangible and conclusive steps to ensure the three issues of STB quality, STB cost and *'Make in India - STB'* are suitably addressed. Budgetary reforms, coupled with greater

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compliance enforcement, have taken things in the right direction. However, for some reason, the operator uptake of STBs continues to be lukewarm for now but is expected to pick up over the coming quarters.

The TV VAS space is poised to drive governance, e-tailing and a new advertising model in a one-way and a two-way environment. The current middleware/VAS space, addressed by traditional giants such as Nagravison and CISCO, finally appears to be moving towards revenue for the operators.

'MSMS', a new multi-screen monetisation model, is set to be unleashed by a new multi-industry alliance led by High Street Riveria Entertainment through its partner, Novacom. Finally, we are beginning to see 'digital dividends' in the VAS space.

Digitisation, net neutrality and consolidation

A lurking uncertainty remains on the Phase 3 and Phase 4 implementations with a lukewarm response from operators in digitizing as well as the continuous challenges of investments, financing, technology, content, skills and an aggressive government drive towards implementation.

TDSAT appears to be working in overdrive and overtime, addressing issues ranging from content to operator compliance and DAS licensing. All the major MSOs, HITS providers and content providers have locked horns with each other, in some way or the other, over the past few months. However, to the credit of TDSAT, most issues stand resolved as new ones come on board.

TRAI stirred a hornet's nest by voicing a view which varied from the consumer and the industry on net-neutrality and on OTT licensing. With a few million representations, a stalled parliament and outrage on social media, the government has tried to bring a balance to this issue with a stated line that 'net neutrality' must be preserved. MSO consolidation continues with Hathway-GTPL moving into more areas - slowly but

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surely - and DEN STB penetration rising gradually. Digicable is making renewed efforts to emerge and is reported to be in discussions with key investors to take back its position in the Indian MSO landscape. Fastway continues its strong growth and it is reported that more than two million STBs have been deployed, making it a showcase network in the regional context. Another State MSO, Ortel, eyes the financial markets and is expected to be listed on the markets shortly.

IBF is confronting the Indian government with a strong representation for timely release of advertisers' payments from the government body of DAVP which seem to seriously add to the working capital woes of the broadcasters.

The government is looking at various ways of reaching the masses and has taken a few initiatives, such as adding channels on DD-DTH, encrypting DD-DTH, launching a Kisan channel under Doordarshan called DD-Kisan, engaging with Mobile TV and appointing a a new CEO to Lok Sabha TV.

As broadband speeds grow and reach more and more people, OTT players are redefining their strategies. NexGTV, Hello1 India, Apalya, Zenga, Singtel and Yup TV are ramping up customers and content rapidly. Content exclusivity and exclusive content for mobiles are finally being looked at aggressively by platform owners. The DTH operators have their own flavour of OTT platforms and now Star has decided to restrict its content to its own OTT platform. Reliance Jio is expected to be one of the most disruptive forces that will make use of the converged space to drive content and consumers with a range of services that are truly converged.

To sum up in this first edition of the India round-up, the total number of channels now numbers over eight hundred and some estimates say that the year will end at a thousand channels, making India the second largest content economy

SCTE India signs historic agreement

SCTE India has set the ball rolling in India with three key alliances that will set the stage for SCTE certified professionals to drive the India digital growth story, *writes Rahul Nehra (Honorary National Secretary, SCTE India).* The Electronic Skills Council of India recently signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with SCTE India specifying that they would work together towards creating a greater pool of SCTE-certified domain specialists in the fields of Cable and Broadband in India.

SCTE India also identified two partners in North India and South India, Novacom and Home Cable, which would act as training partners/affiliates to address the regional training and certification needs of the cable fraternity. The analogue technician in India would be provided with basic digital equipment simulated on the premises and training to equip him for the SCTE certification process.

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