

4G Expansion to Take Tower Cos to New Heights

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New Delhi: Telecom service providers are set to roll out high-speed data fourth-generation (4G) networks, leading to an increase in tenancy ratio of mobile towers, Tower and Infrastructure Providers Association director general Tilak Raj Dua said.

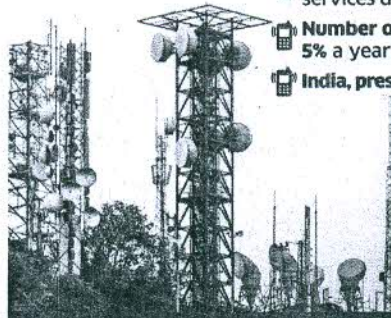
"The recent spectrum wins will accelerate the deployment of 4G services across India and the growth of data consumption will lead to an increase in tower tenancy ratio," Dua told ET.

Tenancy ratio is the number of telecom operators that have put up their antennae and other active infrastructure on an existing mobile tower on a sharing basis.

According to a joint study by KPMG and Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry, tenancy ratio of mobile towers is set to increase to 2.9 by March 2020 from 1.95 in March 2015. India has an estimated 4.5 lakh telecom towers at present. Dua said the number of mobile towers is likely to grow 5% a year over the next four-five years.

Operators including market leader Bharti Airtel, Vodafone India, Idea Cellular and Reliance Jio Infocomm have acquired data frequencies to tap into the lucrative mobile broadband market.

The 4G Bandwagon



- Recent spectrum wins will speed up the 4G services deployment across the country
- Number of telecom towers to increase by 5% a year over the next 4-5 years
- India, presently, has 4.5 lakh telecom towers
- Data consumption could increase twelve-fold by 2020 as tariffs fall due to intense competition
- With 55% data coverage, aggressive deployment anticipated in the next two-three years

Telecom tower companies are buoyant as 4G networks are expanding with rapid growth of data services amid falling tariffs, due to intense competition and introduction of affordable smartphones. Data consumption could grow twelvefold by 2020, according to analysts.

Dua said that with data coverage at 55% at present, the industry anticipates "aggressive" deployments in the next two-three years, attributing tower infrastructure growth in part to rivalry between the incumbent telcos and the foray of Mukesh Amba-

ni's Reliance Jio Infocomm.

"It is expected that the incumbents will spend more on network deployment to compete with rivals, maintain quality of service (QoS) and connect the unconnected hinterlands," Dua said.

Indus Towers, a joint venture between Bharti Infratel, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular, tops the tower market with 31% share, followed by state-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (18.2%) and Bharti Infratel (9.8%), as per New York-headquartered consulting firm Deloitte.

Inbound Tourists will Have Difficult Trip

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New Delhi: The government's move to ban currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 and associated curbs on ATM and bank functioning will cause chaos in the travel and tourism industry and inconvenience inbound tourists, industry experts said.

"It is a very big step for the economy but has taken everyone off guard. The move is likely to cause a huge amount of uncertainty and will disrupt transactions, especially for smaller hotels, restaur-

rants and food & beverage operations, which accept cash payments," said Aashish Gupta, consultant CEO of the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality.

"While the move is laudable and will facilitate electronic payments, it is inconvenient for tourists holidaying in the country who might be carrying local currency," said Sharat Dhall, president of travel portal Yatra.com.

The two denominations of currency notes will continue to be ac-

cepted in some places until November 11. These include booking counters for railway tickets and government buses, airline ticket counters and automobile fuel stations operated by state-owned oil companies.

The measures will create problems for the travel industry. "The move is likely to cause some degree of chaos in the unorganised hotel space, especially standalone hotels and banquet businesses, which accept a lot of cash payments," said Achin Khanna, man-

aging director of consulting and valuation practice at HVS.

Luxury brands, already reeling under slowing sales and tighter income tax regulations, may face additional problems initially because cash transactions are common in some regions, although industry officials welcomed the move. Pratik Dalmia, chairman of Assocham's National Council on Luxury and Lifestyle, called it a significant initiative taken by the government. "We will have to see how it unfolds in the short term, but it is definitely positive in the long run."



SMOG SCARE

Firms face 5-10 pc staff crunch



In the backdrop of alarming pollution levels choking Delhi-NCR, a growing number of employees have been calling in sick, leading to a 5-10 per cent staff crunch across firms operating in the region, according to a report.

A survey conducted by Assocham over the past one week has revealed that the persistent smog across Delhi-NCR has started taking a toll on employees' health and is hampering their ability to do their duties efficiently.

Moreover, it warned that the phenomenon is likely to hurt Brand India and impact the country's tourism.

"Environment and air pol-

lution related issues might hurt Brand India and hit sectors like tourism and outdoor recreation as people tend to stay away from polluted areas," Assocham Secretary General D S Rawat said.

The social development arm of the industry chamber interacted with human resource professionals in about 150 companies operating in and around Delhi to evaluate the impact of air pollution.

Persistent cough, burning eyes, itchy throat and respiratory/lung-related problems like asthma and bronchitis are the main reasons as to

why many employees are not turning up for work, said several HR representatives.

Many private firms are also allowing their employees to work from home while recuperating from their illness, the survey noted.

It said particulate matter, which can seep into buildings through windows and vents, is the most harmful for office workers as it can enter the blood stream and central nervous system, affecting concentration and mental performance.

Rawat said that companies should offer employees flexible working hours to cope with the problem. — PTI

Smog lifts, threat to health of economy, future generations stays

SUDESHNA BANERJEE

New Delhi

EVEN as smog has lifted off Delhi, the air quality is still noxious and poisonous. It is still a gas chamber and everybody is getting affected.

Children and elderly people are worst hit. As per Assocham report, 10 per cent of the national capital's workforce had called in sick due to respiratory problems.

Over the weekend, the Delhi government shut schools for three days and put a five-day ban on construction and demolition. A circular was sent out asking children not to play outdoors. Doctors fear that it could become worse in days to come.

Eminent cardiovascular and cardiothoracic surgeon Naresh Trehan is concerned about the grimness of the situation. Children are worst affected. The number of cases with respiratory disor-

ders has doubled in the past few days. Even healthy people are coming in with pneumonia patches and children who never had respiratory disorders are coming in with bronchial spasms", he said.

"The suspended particle matter as they say PM10 or PM2.5 is a matter of concern and are irritants causing asthma. But what's more serious is the presence of toxic sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide that have neurological impact on children. These poisonous gases affect the growth of brain. If we choose to turn a blind eye to this situation, we may have a generation growing up with neurological deformities, created by us", he remarked. PM10 or respirable particulate matter equal to or less than 10 microns, can cause coughing, wheezing, asthma attacks and bronchitis. The levels of PM2.5



THE WORST
ITO: 574, 9 pm
Birla Mandir: 997, 3 pm
IGI Airport: 870, 9 pm
US Embassy: 996, 9 pm
Anand Vihar: 999, 9 pm
Microgram per cubic metre
Source: US Embassy

(tiner and more easily inhaled particulate matter), is a more dangerous pollutant.

A political blame game of sorts on has begun. The Delhi government has blamed the Centre and other states for the bio-waste and has flayed Punjab and Haryana where farmers burn crop residues, which add to the grimness of the situation.

Experts point to the convergence of factors like rise in vehicular pollution, Diwali, construction activities, burning of bio-waste, huge

garbage accumulation and industrial waste for choking the national capital.

To bring the situation under control, the National Green Tribunal on Tuesday banned all construction activities in NCR for 10 days.

But environmentalists itemised all construction activities. "The dilemma is still there. We cry foul when there is inactivity in the air and a layer of smog engulfing NCR. The moment we get a clear sky we forget it all", said green activist Yaminderh Jha.



THE STORY NOW
ITO: 778, 7 pm
Anand Vihar: 988, 7 pm
Birla Mandir: 198, 7 pm
Embassy Of United States: 208, 7 pm
Microgram per cubic metre
Source: US Embassy

It's not that no one warned about the impending crisis. Last month, the Met department had cautioned about an anticyclone-like situation in Delhi from October 29 to November 7. In simple terms, it meant the air quality in the city will be heavy due to lack of wind circula-

tion and hence the suspended particles will not be able to disperse off.

Polish Meteorologist from the centre for science and environment said the situation was created. "If IMD had cautioned about an anticyclone-like situation, it means, the wind speed would

drop drastically and pollutants from crop fire, Diwali crackers and dump yard fire would not get dispersed from Delhi. Why no action was taken?"

Hearing a plea by the environment pollution (prevention and control) authority, which had sought that a health emergency be declared in NCR, the Supreme Court has questioned the Centre, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and UP governments on the contributory plan.

Green activist Vandana Shiva said pollution has become part of the Delhi life because of its unplanned limitless growth and over 400 per cent increase traffic in a decade.

WHO has declared Delhi the second most polluted city in the world. The World Bank in 2013 in its report said air pollution and other environmental degradation cost India \$80 billion per

year, about 5.7 per cent of the country's GDP.

The pollution is also affecting the future generations. The number of acute bronchitis spasms and precipitating asthma attacks has increased.

Rajiv Dang, director & HOD (GP), Max Gurugram, said people must take extra care to fight the situation. "Take regular steam inhalations, drink lots of liquids, take a healthy diet and avoid outdoor movements."

According to Trehan, a combined effort by the civil society and the government is required to control the situation. "Everybody needs to come together and work it out. It's an emergency. The mindset has to change. If we are bringing up children to this kind of hazardous environment, it will have an alarming impact, we all will, repent later," he said.

Pollution to cripple NCR economy; tourism to be hit: Assocham

New Delhi: The alarming post-Diwali pollution is likely to take a toll on the entire National Capital Region (NCR), crippling sectors like tourism, transport, automobile and real estate, according to a report. "While it may be difficult to hazard a figure of economic loss, since the exact period of dangerous levels of pollutants would depend on the weather conditions along with administrative measures, there is no doubt that several billions of dollars of fresh investment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) loss would occur," Assocham secretary General D.S. Rawat said. Besides, it would lead to a loss of confidence among the citizens, Rawat added. The industry chamber observed that in the immediate term, the tourism season could be the worst-hit with the Delhi and NCR pollution making global headlines and creating an impression that visitors should avoid these places. **PTI**
