

Huge WiMAX network will reach 200 million

India's state-owned and largest telecoms company, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL), says that it will deploy one of the country's largest mobile WiMAX networks. It will cover three of India's fastest-growing telecom regions: Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa, and Andhra Pradesh.

The deployment will use infrastructure from San Francisco-

based company SOMA Networks to provide broadband data and voice services to more than 200 million people. According to the vendor, this represents a major step forward in realising the Indian government's "Vision 2010" mandate to make broadband services ubiquitous and turn the nation into a global information technology force.

BSNL selected SOMA Networks after extensive field trials in urban, suburban and rural areas. SOMA's mobile WiMAX solution is based on the 802.16e-2005 standard and is said to provide "extended range" with support for "high subscriber density per sector".

WiMAX is seen as a DSL replacement technology according to BSNL chairman, Kuldeep

Goyal. The aim is to target areas where the telco does not already provide DSL and for this year BSNL says it plans to rollout WiMAX in 70 cities. Goyal has been reported to say: "We are aiming for 50,000 connections in each state in 2008 and 500,000 in each state by 2010."

TATA launches world's biggest WiMAX network - see p23

Pakistan operators conduct "world's first" exchange of voice SMS across networks and vendors

Mobile operators Ufone and Telenor Pakistan have demonstrated what is claimed to be the world's first exchange of voice SMS messages between diverse carriers using different voice SMS systems.

Kirusa and Mobile Arts developed the software that allowed the interoperability between the two cellcos. As part of the demonstration, a voice message was sent from the Kirusa voice SMS solution in Ufone to the Mobile Arts solution in Telenor Pakistan. The Telenor Pakistan subscriber was then able to receive, listen to, and reply to the message with the same user interface and pricing as if the message had been sent by a Telenor Pakistan subscriber.

➤ The "historic" event saw subscribers from different operators successfully exchange voice messages



Following successful voice messaging trials, the two mobile operators are now set to launch the world's first interoperable voice messaging services later this year. The first ever trials of voice SMS interoperability were based on the technical specification drawn up by the GSM Association (GSMA). Its initiative allows mobile subscribers to

receive and reply to voice SMS messages from their contacts, using what is described as an "easy and consistent user interface", irrespective of the mobile carrier of the sender. Vendors would need to adhere to the GSMA standard to provide such interoperability, which is expected to help augment potential revenues for mobile carriers.

Taliban blows up telephone towers

Attacks on Afghani telecoms towers have led to cellco's shutting down services at night as per Taliban demands, angering 250,000 customers including the Taliban themselves.

Threats were made to cellular operators in February, demanding that signals be stopped at night due to the Taliban's belief that they were being used by US and NATO to track and administer pinpoint attacks on them. The Taliban has "decided to give a three-day deadline to all mobile phone companies to stop their signals from 5pm to 3am in order to stop the enemies from getting intelligence through mobile phones and to stop Taliban and civilian casualties," Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told The Associated Press by telephone from an undisclosed location.

The country's four major mobile companies (Areeba, AWCC, Etisalat, and Roshan), who all declined to comment, began cutting night-time service after 10 towers were attacked, causing almost USD2m damage.

Reportedly the cutoff has been very unpopular with the country's residents where cellular is used as the main source of telephony due to limited fixed-line networks. Allegedly even Taliban fighters have been requesting the towers be switched back on.

In a later phone interview, Mujahid suggested that the cut-off timings may be changed due to the inconvenience that is being caused.

Sri Lanka's #1 extends 3G backhaul

Sri Lanka's biggest mobile operator, Dialog Telekom, has signed a multimillion-dollar radio backhaul contract with Harris Stratex Networks (HSN).

The wireless transmission solutions provider will supply its *Eclipse* microwave nodal wireless transmission equipment under an extension to a

deal between the two which has already seen the cellco using *Eclipse* equipment for the last three years.

According to HSN, the *Eclipse* platform's support for its own Super-PDH technology and the industry-standard XPIC means that Dialog will be able to make maximum possible use of its available radio

spectrum to get up to two and a half times a 'typical' payload transported over a single channel.

"With this expansion, many more areas in our networks will benefit from better coverage, along with superior quality of service," comments Dialog Telekom group CTO, Rosman Mat Ali.