



(From L) Bharti Airtel global CIO Harmeen Mehta, Vodafone India director (regulatory, external affairs and CSR) P Balaji, IT secretary Aruna Sundararajan, ETNOW moderator, industry veteran Sandip Das and Lava International CMD Hari Om Rai PHOTOS BY ASHWANI NAGPAL & PREM SINGH

Friendly Rivalry Aruna Sundararajan admits consolidation and data are triggering cut-throat competition, but calls for some collaboration

Ready to Refine Policies to Meet Sector Needs: IT Secy

Our Bureau

New Delhi: Admitting that the telecom industry is going through a tough phase, with consolidation driven by fierce competition and rise of data over voice, Aruna Sundararajan, secretary, ministry of electronics and information technology, said the government is open to "tweaking and refining" its policies to "address challenges". Sundararajan was speaking at the Economic Times India Mobile Congress in New Delhi on Friday. "We do recognise that the telecom industry is facing a set of challenges - there is a consolidation happening due to the fiercely competitive environment and data is becoming the new currency," said Sundararajan, adding one needs to ensure that the existing players continue to grow without shutting the door on new technologies.

She requested the players to compete, but at the same time collaborate with each other. "That's the name of the game. Despite the fact that there are 110 crore mobiles in India, there is large enough room for everyone to grow."

While addressing a panel discussion on new business drivers and challengers, P Balaji, director - regulatory, external affairs & CSR,

Vodafone India, said that a lot of growth is yet to take place and there has to be a good "balance" between new services and existing ones.

"There has to be a good balance for consumers to have new services and the industry to continue to invest in things which will have shareholder return," he said.

Congratulating the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) for coming out with a paper on the ease of doing business, Sundararajan said that her ministry would also like to discuss with the telecom industry on how to enable the ease of doing business in manufacturing. "We have to manufacture not just for India but for the global markets as well," she said.



Driving home the point that the country needs to solve the connectivity challenge, Sundararajan said that India has only 30,000-32,000 WiFi hotspots when there's a need for 8 million such hotspots in the country. "Government policies have

to be tailored to enable large number of WiFi hotspots. We will look forward to the industry's inputs," she said.

ET had reported in January that the government is embarking on a project to provide free WiFi hotspots at more than 1,000 gram panchayats to provide last-mile connectivity in far-flung areas, which is seen as the biggest impediment towards a digital economy.

Apart from providing internet connectivity for mass use, the programme seeks to enable delivery of services such as health and education. Called Digital Village, the pilot project will initially be rolled out in as many as 1,050 gram panchayats.

Sundararajan also said that the key driver of adoption of Internet in the country will be the local language content. The ministry of IT is working on a project to enable mobile application incubators and around 12 of them will be coming up over the next 12 months.

Talking about the "disruption" which has been caused by the November 8 demonitisation exercise and the move towards the digital economy thereafter, Sundararajan said that there's no other industry other than telecom which touches a billion lives, and therefore it is best suited to take forward the digital agenda.

Trai Chief Calls for Boosting Data Connectivity Profile

RS Sharma says making data affordable is a key concern for telecom sector regulator

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The telecom regulator has called for aggressively boosting India's data connectivity profile as the country lags way behind many South Asian countries on this score.

"Indian telcos have delivered ubiquitous voice connectivity at affordable rates, but data connectivity remains a pain-point with the country ranked at 138 among the 175-odd countries, which is even below many African countries and island nations," Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) chairman R S Sharma said at the ET Telecom India Mobile Congress on Friday.

In the South Asian region, he said, India's data connectivity ranking is even below Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Singapore, and way below the 46% of average data connectivity level worldwide.

Accordingly, the sector regulator, he said, has been proactively making suggestions to the government to make data affordable, especially as it believes that relying solely on wireless connectivity would be unwise. "Beefing up the country's digital data connectivity



The sector regulator, he said, has already recommended deployment of cable TV infrastructure for beefing up broadband, especially since 100 million homes already have cable connections. More recently, it has advocated freeing up new spectrum bands to ring in affordable WiFi services in public places, and in turn, boost broadband penetration. Furthermore, Sharma said the Department of Electronics & IT (DeitY) and the telecom department (DoT) were jointly initiating "a pilot program to offer affordable WiFi connectivity with free localised content".

Responding to a query on high spectrum costs in India, Sharma said the regulator had advocated a "pay-as-you-go model" for spectrum payouts to ease fiscal pains for telcos.

"I don't have an immediate formula to reduce the price of spectrum, but we suggested the deferred payments model to reduce cost pressure on telcos," said the Trai chairman.

Infrastructure is not an intractable problem, and there must be scope for every technology to exist and operate," said Sharma.

Asserting that the national broadband project BharatNet would see significant acceleration in the coming months, Sharma said the project could play a key role in boosting India's overall data connectivity profile if implemented through the public-private partnership (PPP) model as suggested by Trai.

Industry Corridors Abuzz with 5G

VIRTUAL REALITY Phone makers say the country is at the cusp of another digital revolution

Our Bureau

New Delhi: India is yet to complete its 4G rollout across the country, but telecom operators and industry players are already thinking of the next wave - 5G. The telecom phone makers said the country is at the cusp of another digital revolution, and the industry is gearing up for the 5G network rollout. Chandan Kumar, director-marketing and integrated solutions for Huawei India, said that apps are being developed keeping the next phase of technology in mind.

5G will bring the consumer into the realms of virtual reality; automated cars and even surgeries can be performed online, said industry chiefs at the ET Telecom India Mobile Congress. "For all this, speed and quality will be the key and one needs to have investment from operators as well," said Sameer Dave, CTO of Aircel.

But it was also agreed that the rollout of new bands will not ring the death knell of 3G. They said that even though 5G will become a reality, one can't discount the role 3G plays even now. Operators have invested \$18 billion on 3G, and is still integral to many parts of India.

Dave said one will continue to work on both 2G and 3G in India because no matter what the data requirements are, one uses voice as a feature lot more and it will continue to be valuable.

The telecom industry is going through a consolidation phase, and industry leaders discussed its impact on the telecom sector. They agreed that there will be redundancies, a bit of a slowdown initially, but it will eventually benefit the industry as it will learn to monetise and make the operators provide the best customer experience. The industry leaders also reckoned that WiFi can coexist with 4G and the focus should be on last-mile connectivity with WiFi being critical for the same. The industry heads also detailed out how WiFi can be made a game-changer and the technological advancements they are experimenting with.

Munish Seth, regional head APAC, Connectivity Solutions of Facebook, said fibre needs to strengthen for better connectivity despite 4G. "We expect people to come to public hotspots, consume and go back. We have to create social value here. The technology has to be low cost. Soon, we should be making this commercial," said Seth.

There was a mention of how 4G will become the backbone of connectivity. Shubhajit Sen, CMO, Micromax, said, "It took some three years for 3G devices to capture the market, but eight months for 4G devices to cover 70-75% of the market."



EY global telecom leader Prashant Singhal at the event

Technology looks far away, but it will come faster than anticipated."

The panel also discussed the importance of compatibility between India and Bharat. "We have to create content for public. As we are trying to provide on the supply side, we have to look into the demand side as well. People need broadband for entertainment too," said Sudhir Gupta, secretary of TRAI.

Escalating the Battle for Bengal

Saturday Feature

With its record victory in the Uttar Pradesh assembly election, the Bharatiya Janata Party is poised to push forward in West Bengal, one of the states in the country that the party has been unable to breach on its own.

In the aftermath of the assembly election results announced on March 11, both the BJP and the ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal are waiting and watching to see who strikes first. The state is a prime example of tit-for-tat politics, of cases and counter-cases filed swiftly against each other.

The indications are that the BJP will now use its power and clout to fast forward investigations into scams uncovered in the state. The BJP state and central leadership are waiting to see what progress is made in the Rose Valley and Saradha financial scams - even prodding central investigative agencies into action. Two Trinamool Congress MPs, including the Lok Sabha parliamentary party leader, Sudip Bandyopadhyay, are already in custody in connection with the scams.

The Calcutta High Court ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation on Friday to conduct a preliminary enquiry into the Narada sting operation case, which showed TMC ministers allegedly accepting bribes, and to submit its report in 72 hours. On the other side, chief minister Mamata Banerjee's TMC has been meticulously preparing its moves. According to the state administration and BJP members, as many as 12 national and state BJP leaders have been booked in criminal cases. More arrests may follow, likely beginning with a child-trafficking case in which the name of BJP MP Rupa Ganguly surfaced.

"They could have booked me in other cases," Ganguly told ET by phone. "But this is the joke of eternity that I am being dragged into a child-trafficking case. This is absolute rubbish and we will take legal recourse."

The police charged Union minister Babul Supriya, a BJP MP from Anasol, in a case of outraging a woman's modesty, while the former vice president of the BJP's Bengal unit, Jay Prakash Majumdar, was arrested and later granted bail. At the block and district levels, criminal cases were filed against at least 150 BJP leaders and workers, said a senior BJP leader.

In the post-UP election scenario, the rivalry between TMC and BJP is poised to intensify in West Bengal. The near non-existence of the communist parties and the Congress has created a political vacuum that enabled the BJP to become the principal opposition party to the TMC in the state.

Following the Modi government's recent efforts to crack down on the corrupt - including demonetisation in November - the West Bengal chief minister responded swiftly by not just filling fresh cases against senior BJP leaders but also digging out old cases.



The BJP is taking on the TMC on three major issues - corruption, non-development and political violence

"They are filing politically motivated cases," said Siddharth Nath Singh, national secretary of BJP in charge of Bengal. "One can see that there is a huge difference between the cases filed against our functionaries in Bengal and the cases against Trinamool Congress leaders being investigated by the central investigating agencies."

Singh said the chit fund cases were not filed by the BJP - they were filed by the common people who were cheated. "Since the state police suppressed information and failed to act on the complaints, the Supreme Court directed the CBI to take up investigation. But here, Bengal chief minister is picking individuals and levelling criminal charges," he said.

The BJP is taking on the TMC on three major issues - corruption, non-development and political violence, he said.

Emboldened by its recent electoral success, the BJP is now eyeing West Bengal more seriously. Apart from Uttar Pradesh, the BJP came to power in Goa, Uttarakhand and Manipur.

West Bengal is a bastion that the BJP has not been able to break on its own. The party won two of the state's 42 parliamentary seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, getting 17% of the vote share. In comparison, the TMC bagged 34 seats with an almost 40% vote share.

To start with, the BJP has set its sights on "a good show" in the panchayat polls scheduled next year in West Bengal. It is banking on ideological parent organisation Rashtriya Swamsevaks

Sangh and fringe Hindu groups that are said to have helped increase the party's vote share in elections held after 2014.

The absence of a strong opposition in the state is in the BJP's favour. Over the past few elections in West Bengal, support for the Left Front, which ruled the state for 34 years until 2011, has dwindled and shifted in favour of the BJP.

In 2016, the BJP's vote share increased to 29% from about 16% in the by-election for the Coochbehar parliamentary seat in north Bengal and to about 16% from 7% in the Tamukh parliamentary constituency in south-western Bengal.

In the assembly election last year, in which Banerjee was returned to power, the BJP won three seats and its vote share increased to about 10% from 4% in 2011. The CPM's vote share dipped to about 20% last year from 30% five years earlier.

TMC leaders are confident of stemming the safe-rift tide before it sweeps Bengal.

"We do not think that BJP has gained extra power in this election," said Partha Chatterjee, secretary general of the TMC and a minister. "In two states, they have formed minority/coalition governments. So, it is too early to be worried. BJP did well because the opposition failed to present their issues and live up to the expectations of the electorate."

Chatterjee added that the BJP's victory was not one of its ideas and policies.

The BJP nonetheless is gearing up to increase its presence in West Bengal. It will start with a "Vijayatsav" (victory rally) on March 18.

"Organisationally, we are active. But Manipur and UP have given a moral boost. This will add a new impetus. We will try to channelise the energy of our block and booth-level workers in a positive way. We got an excellent result in Odisha where the BJP could make a dent in the Biju Janata Dal's citadel in the panchayat elections," said Singh.

Sadhguru, Isha Foundation

Flux is Freedom

Nothing in the outside world is certain, that's a fact. It's uncertain and that's what makes it challenging. Uncertainty means things are changing; in other words there is no limbo. If you are walking fast, every step is new terrain. This new terrain is what you are calling 'uncertainty' right now. For those seeking opportunity, uncertainty is the best time. Those who have a vision will make it a possibility; those who don't, will look at it as a problem. But, because you are in a constant state of compulsive reaction in your mind, you are seeking certainty.

Certainty is a state of limbo. If there is certainty there is status quo, isn't it? Status quo in a business, political or social situation means nothing changes; nothing evolves. By seeking certainty, ultimately, you are pitching for stagnation. If things are stagnant, you will get bored. If things are happening rapidly, then you don't have the balance to handle it. So, the problem is not with uncertainty; the problem is your interiority has become uncertain. If we have to fix the whole world for you to be peaceful, that's never going to happen. What we have to do instead is fix your interiority. What do we mean by that? It means, if your interiority is not compulsive, you will handle every situation to the best of your ability. Maybe you can't handle it like somebody else, but you will handle it to the best of your ability, that's about it. You won't suffer every situation you come across simply because you are in a compulsive state of reaction.

FIXING YOUR INTERIORITY

Interiority is a dimension by itself. It cannot be crafted according to external situations - there is certainty in life right now, so I will have one kind of interiority; now there is uncertainty, so I will have another kind of interiority; people around me are sweet, so I'll have one kind of interiority; people are nasty, so I will have another kind of interiority - it doesn't work that way. It is not something you determine; it is something that is. So, how to keep it? Well, there is no way to keep it. If it is conscious, it won't be compulsive. See, you came here without any investment. And, you will leave without any capital in your hand. Whatever happens in-between, you are only on the profit side, because all that you have is the experience of life. The important thing is how you experience it. So, if your interiority is in a non-compulsive, conscious state, then you determine your experience. The situations, in many ways, you determine part of them, the world determines part of them. But how you experience life, that's one hundred per cent in your hands.

THE FORMULA TO CREATE A BLISSFUL CHEMISTRY WITHIN YOURSELF

If you think your work is important, the first thing you should do is work upon yourself, so that internally you are a stable being, no matter what the situation is externally. When you are running a large business or enterprise, it's not just about you. Often, there are another thousand people involved with you. So how you handle

a situation not only impacts your life, but another thousand lives. Once you grow, the challenges will naturally grow; there's no question about it. But if you want to get into a jockey's place where you want to handle the horse; if you want to handle a situation, no matter how large, the first thing you have to do is equip yourself. If I can teach you a way with which you can create a stable and blissful chemistry within yourself, your ability to deal with all the variety of ups and downs in life can be greatly, greatly enhanced. How? With yoga.

Yoga gives you this possibility that if you simply sit here, there is a little space between you and your body, there is a little space between you and your mind, and there is a little space between you and the world. Once you create this space within you; once you know what is you and what isn't; that is the end of suffering. When there is no fear of suffering, you will be able to look at everything with utmost clarity and address every issue to the best of your intelligence and capability. Situations will never overwhelm you.

112 WAYS TO REACH YOUR IMMEDIATE AND ULTIMATE WELL-BEING

But when I say yoga, I don't mean yoga in a studio in Mumbai or LA or on television. Yoga has to be approached in a comprehensive way. Yoga offers a systematic way of working upon your interiority by showing you 112 ways in which you can address your immediate and ultimate well-being. It is an entire science and technology. If you invest 30-40 minutes a day, we can ensure that in terms of vitality in your body and mind you will be at least 10 years younger in the next six months. And your ability to create and manage things will be such that what you can do in 8 hours very easily you will do it in 4-5 hours. If you are sleeping 8 hours a day, very easily you can bring it down to 5-6 hours a day without stressing the body. So, 40 minutes of investment will give you extra time, extra clarity, extra possibility, and definitely extra money.

In other words, yoga is the technology that lets you read the user's manual of the most sophisticated gadget - the human mechanism. If you know how to handle the human mechanism, then what about external situations? Well, someone you can handle, someone you can't. But as long as you know how to handle yourself, it is not really a problem. It may be a challenge, but it's not a problem. There are only situations and situations and situations in life. Only those who don't know how to handle them, label them as a 'problem'.

A clear mind will see everything for what it is. Don't think in terms of how to turn everything into something else. Learn how to see everything for what it is. For this you need clarity. If you need clarity, you need an unclouded mind, an unprejudiced mind, a mind which is not in a state of confusion, but in the lap of consciousness. That mind will see everything as it is. If you want to turn everything into an opportunity it's up to you, otherwise you can enjoy as it is. The greatest possibilities in life are its uncertainties.

