

### **Issues arising out of the AGM OF IPTV India Forum and Recommendations of the roundtable conference on “Mobile TV – Enhancement of Choice”**

The AGM broadly highlighted the developments during 2008-09. It stressed the efforts of Govt. in finalizing the IPTV Policy guidelines as a result of which many operators have started providing the service. However it was noted that while it did provide an additional choice to the subscribers, proliferation of IPTV was rather limited. Perhaps one reason was that the revenue sharing arrangements between the operator, content provider and the aggregator could be a bottleneck and may require to be looked into. In this context it was also suggested that for facilitating delivery of new services there was need to look into technological issues relating to convergence of information, communication and entertainment technologies. Many countries have facilitated convergence by having one common regulatory regime for all the three sectors. There was an attempt to facilitate a converged regulatory regime in India through the Communication Convergence Bill (2000). This may be an appropriate time to revisit that bill. It may also be appropriate to revisit issues like unbundling the local loop and resale of bandwidth.

As regards Mobile TV it was recognized that policy guidelines in this regard would need to be finalized quickly. In this context the need for technological neutrality was recognized (as followed in the telecom sector). However it was also emphasized that alternative business models for Mobile TV in India NEED TO BE examined and ESTABLISHED. It was recognized that equipments and technologies were readily available and services could be rolled out within one year if all the modalities, including spectrum allocation, could be finalized early so that Mobile TV could become a reality prior to the Commonwealth Games 2010, New Delhi.

The IPTV India Forum also organized a round table conference on “Mobile TV – Enhancement of Choice”, after the AGM. The conference was held on 29<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2009 at the ASSOCHAM House and was inaugurated by Shri Raghu Menon, Secretary, Information and Broadcasting and a interactive session chaired by Shri Uday Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The following members formed the other panelists:

- Dr. DPS Seth (President, IPTV Forum)
- Shri Mahesh Uppal (Director, Telecommunications & Computer Information Systems)
- Shri R R Prasad (Engineer-in-chief, Doordarshan)
- Shri TR Dua (Dy Director General, COAI)
- Shri Parag Kar (Sr. Director, Govt Affairs, Qualcomm India and South Asia)

The Chairman directed the panelists to discuss the topics such as the choice of technology for Mobile TV, Prasar Bharati’s infra-structure sharing, the readiness of the content industry and the operators’ perspective. The following recommendations were unanimously made in the light of the above issues:

- The mobile TV policy be technology neutral and its choice be left to the operators
- The technology developers must enable handsets that can support multiple technologies
- Prasar Bharati’s infra-structure needs to be made available for sharing by other operators

**The detailed discussion points are covered in the following paragraphs:**

### Technology for Mobile TV

There was a general consensus to establish a technology neutral policy. The panelists felt that the regulators and policy makers must not choose winners at the outset and let the market decide the winners. The policy makers play an enabling role to open the field to the interested stakeholders. This will lead to innovation and competition in the marketplace that will immensely benefit the consumers. It was also pointed out that mandating a single technology will expose the industry to huge risks. Several examples of technology neutrality helping the society at large were discussed and success in Telecom was attributed to the technology neutral policy. In fact NTP 1994 which had mandated only one mobile technology had to be revised in NTP 1999 to enable technology neutrality in all spheres. The Chairman brought up the issue of analog TV being used in China that uses existing programming and wanted the round table to discuss. Extensive discussion was held on the pros and cons and the consensus was that using analog TV militates against the concept of optimal utilization of spectrum and also inhibits the release of the digital dividend which is being pursued vigorously all over the world. This approach has resulted in not only optimization of spectrum utilization and improvement in the quality of TV transmission but has also released huge quantities of spectrum in the attractive 700 MHz band whose auction is fetching great sums of monies to various governments.

### Infra-structure sharing

The panel agreed that Prasar Bharati's infrastructure be made available for sharing. There was a debate on the mode of sharing. Initially, Prasar Bharati felt that the infrastructure sharing should be done on a revenue sharing basis. The industry, however, preferred the rental model which is proven and prevalent. The panelists cited several examples such as towers for FM transmitters, telecom towers where the rental model is already in place. The panel discussed several difficulties associated with the Revenue share model and later unanimously agreed that the rental model be used. It was further clarified that the infrastructure sharing should be on a cost plus basis. The panel concluded that the policy should establish reasonable rentals (cost based) so that the Mobile TV business becomes viable.

### Content

Some of the content developers provided their perspective on the challenges in using the existing content (linear television feeds) for Mobile TV. Whereas a significant amount of existing content can be used for Mobile TV, there will be a need for creating Mobile TV specific content and additional content forms. The Chairman observed that the new types of contents will be required for Mobile TV and that the content industry should be geared up to face this challenge.

### Business Case and Spectrum

COAI and AUSPI were of the opinion that there is a strong business case for Mobile TV and as the technologies are already a step ahead, we now quickly need policy support from the Govt. on the lines of the TRAI recommendations. It was the agreed view at the conference that there was a need for immediate identification of some slots in the 700 MHz band which could then be auctioned on the lines of FM spectrum auction. These two steps will enable early launch of Mobile TV services in India.

The Round Table Conference was attended by more than 70 professionals.