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different angle

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Sources: ComNews.ru, ITAR-TASS, Kommersant

❖ TTK Aiming At LTE

TTK intends to participate in spectrum auction in the 2.5-2.6 GHz band held by the State Commission for Radio Frequencies (SCRF).

Word on that was spread early August at a press conference devoted to the financial performance of TransTeleCom Company (TTK) by TTK President Artem Kudryavtsev. According to him, the company is looking into various options of expanding into wireless services.

TTK is counting on technical neutrality in the 3.5 GHz band and is to take part in the auction for spectrum in the 2.5-2.6 GHz band, which lies in the border and is suitable for developing both fixed and wireless broadband Internet access, and mobile broadband alike. As previously reported, TTK showed interest in the assets of Antares, but at this point TTK's board of directors is still contemplating the potential of the acquisition, said TTK

President. Antares holds frequencies in the 1900-1920 MHz range, which can be used not only for broadband, but also for voice services.

According to Gazprombank's leading analyst of telecom and media markets, TTK has already made some success on the way towards consolidation of regional fixed broadband market, by placing its stake on the regions. The company is among the top five leaders of fixed broadband with a 5 percent market share in subscribers.

Last year, TTK's retail subscriber base was 1.5 million users, up 44 percent from 2012. The company's retail project grew to encompass 226 towns. Technical coverage of TTK's access networks was up by 1.5 million households – to 6 million.. ❖

❖ First 3G in Crimea

The first Russian mobile 3G was launched in Crimea, however, the regulator didn't report which operator runs the pioneering network, and industry insiders were also at loss.

The news about the 3G launch was issued by the press service of Russian Ministry of Communications and Mass Media. A segment of 3G network was put into operation during the international youth forum Tavrida-2014 staged not far from the city of Sevastopol.

"The Prime Minister set the task of providing residents of the region with high-speed data services via cellular networks. Mobile Internet is the most popular supplementary service offered by mobile operators, so the

launch factored in the near-term prospects of 3G and 4G LTE segments' roll out", said Deputy Minister of Communications and Mass Media Dmitry Alkhazov.

However, a source in the Ministry told ComNews, that they have no official information as to which operator launched the new 3G network segment in Crimea. Spokespersons for VimpelCom and Mobile TeleSystems (MTS) weren't available for comment, and MegaFon communicated that the company doesn't have a home network in the Republic of Crimea and city of Sevastopol. ❖

❖ **LTE-A Tested**

Osnova Telecom conducted tests of TD-LTE-Advanced technology. Peak data rate achieved on a subscriber device was 226.1 Mbps.

The tests were conducted in Osnova Telecom’s Moscow lab on Huawei equipment. According to the operator, average data rate in the conditions of substantial network load reached 222.1 Mbps. A spokesperson for the operator said that the test results confirmed that Osnova’s network can migrate to LTE-Advanced (LTE-A) without major capital investment. The company intends to deploy the new technology both on the existing networks, and in the towns where Osnova’s infrastructure is still under construction.

Osnova is currently building LTE networks in 21 towns of Russia, and is all ready to launch in 19 more. The company’s press-secretary specified that they will unveil the geography and timelines for LTE-A deployment as soon as they set the exact date when the network will be put into commercial operation.

Russia’s second largest mobile operator MegaFon put into commercial operation a fragment of LTE-A network in the area within Moscow’s Garden Ring back in February 2014. Until the year-end, the operator intends to expand LTE-A coverage to the Moscow MKAD Ring Road. Earlier this year, MegaFon tested LTE-A networks at the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi.

In July, the third of the Big Three operators – VimpelCom – deployed Carrier Aggregation technology on its networks in the Moscow region in order to boost LTE data rates.

Russia’s largest mobile company Mobile TeleSystems (MTS) only tested LTE-A with Internet speed of up to 300 Mbps in Moscow last year.

❖ **Wi-Fi for Moscow students**

One of the Big Three mobile operators – VimpelCom (Beeline brand) and Moscow City Telephone Network (MGTS) won the auction for provision of free Wi-Fi services in Moscow universities and student residences, communicated Moscow City IT Department.

Under conditions of the open tender, wireless Internet access should be deployed in 37 Moscow-based higher education institutions and 145 student residences spanning 85,000 students. Wi-Fi access will be provided in the course of 3 years – until November 2016. Each access point will cater to up to 15 users.

Initial budget of the project was \$ 17.5 million, but it was reported that tendering procedures allowed to reduce this figure by \$1.5 million.

Earlier, the IT Department granted a total of \$2.7 million in subsidies for organization of Wi-Fi access to 10 higher education institutions, and 7 of them have already deployed services. Wi-Fi networks are now available to nearly 35,000 students, including the Moscow Aviation Institute, Bauman Moscow State Technical University, National University of Science and Technology (MISIS) and Moscow State University of Technology “Stankin”. Wi-Fi network were also launched in 58 student residences.

◆ Putin Withheld TV Frequencies

The government took the side of broadcasters in their dispute with mobile operators. Russia's President Vladimir Putin prohibited reallocation of frequencies issued to the TV networks without broadcasters' consent, thus putting a lid on the initiative to grant a part of the digital dividend of the TV spectrum to MTS, MegaFon, VimpelCom and Rostelecom for the development of LTE.

Vladimir Putin's decree prohibiting reallocation of spectrum bands issued for terrestrial television "for other purposes" without the consent of broadcasters was promulgated and took effect on August 11. Thus the President resolved the dispute for the so called 'digital dividend' – frequencies released in the course of broadcasters' migration to the digital format, which mobile operators tried to claim.

Full-scale migration to digital broadcasting in Russia is to be completed in 2019. State-owned Russian Television and Radio Broadcasting Network is responsible for building the terrestrial infrastructure. Frequencies, released over the switch from analog to digital TV broadcasting, were claimed by mobile operators. Back in 2011, State Commission for Radio Frequencies pronounced the band in question (694-790 MHz) as promising for the development of LTE networks. In 2012, MTS, MegaFon, VimpelCom and Rostelecom won tenders for LTE frequencies. Ministry of Communications and Mass Media suggested that the 720-750 MHz and 761-791 MHz bands be distributed among them as soon as they become free from analog TV. A source familiar with TV frequencies' allocation explained, that about 20 percent of frequency allocations for multiplexes (digital TV packages) are in the 694-790 MHz band. ◆

◆ Free Wi-Fi Without I.D.

Ministry of Communications and Mass Media finally explained, in which cases users willing to access public Wi-Fi network would need to submit their identity details through a special form or SMS, and when they would have to show their passport. However, industry experts believe that the new rules on public Internet access are still unclear.

The press-service of Ministry of Communications and Mass Media explained the central provisions of the governmental decree, which was enforced as part of the package of the so called antiterrorist draft laws adopted this April. According to the decree, users of Wi-Fi Internet in

public places in Moscow and other cities (the document uses the term 'public access point' (PAP)) will have to provide their identity details to service provider, if they want to go online.

The provider is required to keep information about the user of PAP, including name, last name, patronymic, I.D. details and information about the duration and volume of services during 6 months. Under the services contract, clients of the provider will have to submit the register of persons using the connection, and their passport details. ◆

◆ Ministry Of Communications And Mass Media Going Into The Arctic

Ministry of Communications and Mass Media began working on the project which will bring satellite coverage over the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. The Ministry intends to complete the project by 2025, said Deputy Minister of Communications Dmitry Alkhazov at the International Conference “Actual problems of sustainable development and security in the Arctic”. According to him, four satellites will have to be put into orbit (where one would be spare) in order to bring satellite communications to the territories beyond 80° North latitude.

“Russia’s existing space crafts provide satellite communications up to 80° latitude, and so far it has been enough. However, in the future, the coverage may need to be extended with an eye to the economic development of the Arctic”, explained Alkhazov.

Russian Ministry of Communications and Mass Media intends to kick the project off in 2019, and have it completed by 2025.

CEO of SetTelecom Group (AltegroSky brand) Sergey Pekhterev doesn’t see any fundamental barriers to this project, except for one, which emerged this year as a result of the sanctions – the payload for the new satellites. “Beginning from 2000s, almost the entire payload of Russian communications satellites has been imported, and it is a ‘dual-use’ product. As for all the rest, Russia, and space craft manufacturer ISS-Reshetnev have everything needed to build “Molniya” satellites of the 21st century. Sergey Pekhterev pointed to the fact that in 1970s the Soviet communication satellites Molniya operated precisely on highly elliptical orbits. According to Pekhterev, there is more than enough time until 2025 to design and manufacture such space crafts, provided, there won’t be any problems with financing or another force majeure. ◆

◆ LTE Gadget Boom In Ingermanland

Russia’s largest mobile operator Mobile TeleSystems (MTS) reported growing popularity of mobile gadgets supporting 4G LTE in the North-West of Russia. LTE smartphones sold in MTS’ own retail chain in the second quarter 2014 have more than quadrupled compared with the same period last year. The first LTE network of MTS in the North-Western region was deployed in November 2013.

Operator’s press service communicated that St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region account for half of LTE smartphones sold by MTS over

this period. The highest growth in demand for LTE smartphones was registered in the Komi Republic, Arkhangelsk and Kaliningrad region, which posted a nearly tenfold increase in LTE smartphone sales compared with the same period last year. Over the past year, average price for a 4G smartphone reduced by almost 20 percent. ◆

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