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Aircel to bolster 3G coverage

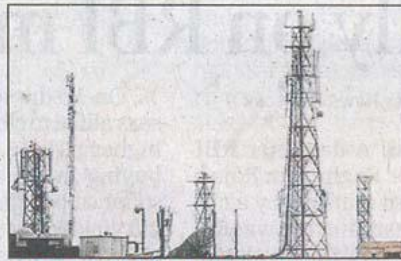
To Add 13K Sites Across India, Including 850 In City, Bengal

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: Amid the rising noise over call drops and subsequent aggressive network expansion by its rival mobile service providers like Bharti Airtel and Vodafone, Aircel has geared up to add 13,000 more signal emission sites (2G+3G) across the country which includes its plans to bolster Kolkata and rest of Bengal network with 850 more telecom towers by the end of 2015.

Of the 13,000 sites to be installed by 2015, as many as 5,300 will be 2G sites and the rest of it 3G. The 3G sites have been planned in Kolkata, West Bengal, Odisha, Chennai and Tamil Nadu circles while the 2G network expansion would be in Delhi, Bihar and Rajasthan circles.

Asked if this step is taken by Aircel following the mounting government pressure on telcos to address call drops issue, Sanjeev Garg, business head (Kolkata and Rest of West Bengal - RoWB), told mediapersons on Wednesday that expansion of (tower) sites will automatically address the issue and the company is in the constant process of upgrading its network in order to offer seamless connectiv-



MORE TOWERS, MORE RELIEF?

ity through its own 3G spectrum.

“The latest announcement is part of that process only. We are planning to add 350 sites in Kolkata and another 500 odd in the rest of Bengal circle at a capital expenditure of Rs 100 crore by 2015. Most of the planned towers would be 3G ones,” added Garg on the sidelines of the launch of the company’s new pre-Puja data pack offer for Kolkata and Bengal. The telecom major has offered special 3G data recharge pack of Rs 175 for the festive season with host of free benefits.

With the addition of the new sites, the mobile telecom operator would have 4,000 towers (2G + 3G) in Kolkata and around 3,800 in RoWB by 2015. “We have wit-

nessed a significant uptake in 3G subscriber growth. With this new offers, we are expecting a 50% growth in subscribers by December 2016,” Garg said. The telecom major has 75 lakh users—98% of its subscribers are on prepaid—in the state (Kolkata: 40 lakh and RoWB: 35 lakh). “The average revenue per user in Kolkata is in excess of Rs 150 while for the rest of the state it is Rs 120,” he said.

Nationwide, Aircel has reported a net wireless subscriber addition of 3.14 lakh from June 2015 to July 2015, a Trai report said. “We have witnessed a 100% year-on-year revenue jump from data business. The expansion will welcome more than two lakh customers to the Aircel family, enabling them to enjoy a data speed of up to 21 Mbps,” added Garg.

On the company’s 4G plans, Garg said, “On our existing network, we are already offering speeds up to 21 mbps. We are in the discussion mode for rolling out 4G network.”

The mobile service provider is also expanding its retail footprint across the country and aims to have more than 1,000 ‘Aircel Xpress Stores’ in its chain by the first quarter of 2016.