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## Aircel to focus on innovative products

*Telecom sector has been playing a crucial role in the country's economic growth. However, 2G scam has made a huge impact on the telecom*

*sector. Anupam Vasudev, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of Aircel Limited,*

*speaks about the current scenario of the telecom sector and his future plans.*

**Q:** Global rating agency Fitch has assigned negative outlook on the Indian telecommunication sector for the year 2013. What is your observation?

**Vasudev:** The Indian telecom industry which had earlier heavily relied on voice, is now witnessing a paradigm shift with data poised to be the next big wave of growth for mobile

operators in the country. Today, the country is on the cusp of data revolution and this growth in data usage can be attributed to the increase in adoption of smartphones, tablets and

### BUSINESS POINT

Surajit Khaund

innovative data plans. The growing dependence on data has also been triggered by the proliferation of social media and communication applications, especially because the nation's swelling tide of young people are "always-on-the-go". The year 2012 looks promising for Aircel, we have found alternate ways to face the severe margin pressures and to deal with high operational costs.

**Q:** What are your plans for 2013?

**Vasudev:** For Aircel, 2013 so far has been extremely rewarding. We started the year with building on our commitment to our CSR initiative 'Save Our Tigers' by unveiling the limited edition 'Save Our Tigers' calendar 2013. Then we took a giant leap in the voice market by dropping all roaming charges across Aircel networks with the industry first revolutionary product 'One Nation, One Rate'. Under our recent campaign 'Joy of Little Extra', Aircel offers products and services that give a little extra in value and delight for its subscribers, be it Extra SMS, Extra Talktime or Extra Data.

**Q:** Scams have made a huge impact on the Indian telecom sector. How would you handle the impact?

**Vasudev:** Yes, we have seen the impact of the scams on the telecom sector, but what is important is that we get through this phase and bounce back. The industry now has to move past the scams and focus on the growth of the telecom industry.

**Q:** What are the growth prospects of mobile Internet services in rural India?

**Vasudev:** Telecom industry has only 40% penetration in rural India, which indicates huge potential in this market. And with the voice saturation in urban India and decline in subscriber base, the operators are looking at this market with increased interest. In the past couple of years, mobile internet users in rural India have grown significantly. As of June 2012, this number grew 7.2 times to 3.6 million in the last two years. I believe that the entire ecosystem has contributed significantly to achieve these numbers. The handsets have become cheaper and even data plans are now more affordable.

**Q:** North-eastern region has been a major market for the telecom operators. What are your plans for the region?

**Vasudev:** Indeed, Assam and the North-east (two circles) are the major markets for telecom operators. Being one of the market leaders in Assam and the North-east, we already have an aggressive strategy for customers in this region. We believe in introducing innovative and best value for money products and services to redefine user experience. Being a 3G circle for Aircel, there is a huge focus on data in Assam and the North-east where we have launched a lot of innovative products, including 3G PI Smart, PocketBuddies, 3G Dongle Value Pack, PI Games etc.

Recently, as part of the acquisition strategy, Aircel launched 'Dongle Exchange Carnival' in Assam and North East where customers were given an opportunity to exchange their old dongles with Aircel 3G dongles. Recently, we launched our new brand campaign 'Joy of Little Extra' under which we launched an innovative product 'Extra Talk Time'. In near future, under this campaign, Aircel will continue to launch products and services that give a little extra in value and delight for its subscribers.

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