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**Cable operators facing set-top box shortage as digitisation
deadline approaches near**

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NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: Five months before time runs out for homes across India's top four metros to switch to digital transmission to continue watching cable television, operators are battling short supply of set-top boxes as well as ignorance among consumers.

More than 60,000 set-top boxes need to be installed every day to enable an estimated 10 million homes across Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata to meet the deadline mandated by the government.

But with India going digital at the same time as Brazil, Russia, China and South Korea, among other countries, set-top box makers are finding it difficult to meet delivery deadlines. This is the case even as most leading manufacturers, based in China, have ramped up production manifold.

"Most consumers don't even know that they won't be able to watch TV with the same cable after the June 30 deadline and that a digital set-top box is a must," says Anthony Brian D'Souza, a Mumbai-based cable operator.

Direct-to-home or DTH operators, who use satellite and dish antennae, are therefore well placed to grab the business from cable operators. Nearly 80% of the 70,000 odd cable operators are believed to be independent players, who are also finding it difficult to absorb the rise in the cost of imported set-top boxes due to rupee depreciation.

"This is a great opportunity and we are well poised to make the most of cable digitalisation," says Dish TV's managing director Jawahar Goel, "The DTH industry will be able to grab 30%-70% of the analog cable homes across various phases depending on the locations."

Tata Sky has also geared up to cash in on the opportunity. "Our billing and CRM systems handle millions of customers. These have been further scaled up to ensure error free service to many more millions of new subscribers who will join us in next few months," says chief executive officer and managing director Harit Nagpal. The company can install fresh connections within a day of receiving the order, he says.

Big multi-system operators like Den Networks and Hathaway Cable & Datacom, which have too much on their plate upgrading their subscribers, might find it difficult to add too many new subscribers.

Den Networks has hired Ernst & Young to conduct seminars and train its partners and affiliate local cable operators. "Local cable operators will help us upgrade our existing consumer base on the ground and will play an important part in the process," says Sameer Manchanda, CMD of Den Networks. He says the company will focus on upgrading its current subscribers in the four metros.

While the industry expects a majority of independent operators to align with the bigger players, many of them may find the switch hard to survive. "The large investments expected from cable operators for setting up the infrastructure in such a short span of time and competition from DTH players could create unemployment among smaller cable operators," says Roop Sharma, president Cable Operators Federation of India, the largest association of independent cable operators in the country.

Sharma, however, says even the bigger players might find it hard to prove equal to the challenge. "Digitalisation is a mammoth task and there are concerns whether the deadline for the four metros will be achieved," he says.

An independent cable operator says many affiliate partners of the bigger players are showing a huge resistance to digitisation at the moment. "If someone in the cable fraternity keeps holding out till the last moment in the hope that digitalisation will not happen, he will only be making it easier for DTH players to garner incremental market share at the cost of the cable industry," says K Jayaraman, chief executive officer of Hathway Cable & Datacom.

“BIG CBS SPARK Punjabi...strikes a chord with Punjabi male viewers in the launch week”

Mumbai: According to the TAM reports of week 3, 2012 (TAM India: CS4+ Males, Punjab 1 Mn+) BIG CBS Spark Punjabi, has acquired the top position amongst competing channels with shows such as Jerry Springer (Jerry Di Adaalat), Hawaii Five-O (Veer Hawaii De), America’s Next Top Model (Amreeka Di Next Top Model), Masked Warriors – an international wrestling format (Zabardast Kushti), amongst others, all dubbed in Punjabi.

The channel, which also features a judicious mix of Punjabi music, international dubbed movies and local programming in Punjabi, has resonated well with this specific audience. BIG CBS Spark Punjabi, which is a category creator from the Reliance Broadcast Network Limited and CBS Studios International JV is positioned as the first International Punjabi Channel.

Targeting the 15+ audience, the channel features the best of CBS content all dubbed in Punjabi, giving local audiences immediate access to world class entertainment. The channel is available across

Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh (PHCHP) region and is distributed on digital and analog platforms, with an extensive reach of over 6mn+ C&S households in the region.

According to the 3rd weeks, 2012 TAM report, BIG CBS Spark Punjabi with 39 GRPs has surpassed the channels like 9X Tashan, ETC Punjabi & MH1.

The show Kadi Te Has Bol Ve ranks no.1 in the comedy Genre with 2.36 TVR. Also, the 4:00pm Monday – Friday time band that airs Zabardast Kushti has been garnering the Best TVR of 2.36 in the sports genre. Prime Time shows like Amreeka Di Next Top Model, Jerry Di Adaalat etc have attributed to the channel's success thus identifying the entertainment preferences of its target viewers and providing fresh and engaging content.

With RBNL's existing leading radio brand 92.7 BIG FM, reaching 22 cities in the region and its OOH arm BIG Street's 3000+ ambient media options across the markets, BIG CBS Spark Punjabi will offer marketers an integrated media opportunity like none other in the region. The channel is being supported by an integrated marketing plan leveraging multi-media. Added to this will be the media muscle of the entire Reliance Group.

Walt Disney executive takes studio to Court

Indiantelevision.com

MUMBAI: A former executive vice president of Walt Disney Pictures Glen Lajeski has filed a lawsuit against the studio in state court alleging that his contract was breached when he was fired by the company last June. Lajeski was involved in movie music marketing at Walt Disney Pictures

Lajeski began his tenure with Disney in 1996 as vice president of music marketing. The suit says that during his time with the company, he spearheaded the success of the soundtrack for O Brother, Where Art Thou? and also worked on soundtracks for such films as Coyote Ugly, Pirates of the Caribbean and Armageddon.

Lajeski was ultimately promoted to the title of executive vice president, music/creative marketing. His most recent contract with the company began on 2 January, 2008.

The suit says that Lajeski was fired on or about June 15 "without specifying any cause for the termination and providing no opportunity to cure." It further goes on to say that the marketing personal's employment contract was not set to expire until 1 January, 2013.

Hindu wants to stay ahead of 'The Times'

Indiantelevision.com

MUMBAI: In a classic media ad war, The Hindu has hit indirectly against The Times of India to protect its turf in Chennai. With its 'Stay Ahead of The Times campaign', The Hindu has declared that it is a force in print journalism which may not be so easily put down by the popular trend of trivialising news.

The campaign, conceptualised by Ogilvy and Mather, broke on the back of the launch of Times of India's Kerala edition.

The 360 degree campaign aims at raising the issue of commercialisation and 'bollywoodisation' of print journalism today.

Speaking to Indiantelivision.com, The Hindu Group vice president advertising, Suresh Srinivasan said: "In a globalising knowledge-driven economy, it is vital that readers are well informed about the world at large. And yet, over the last few years, news from the media industry in India has increasingly focused on serving up a steady diet of trivia and shied away from the national and international issues that matter. It is the kind of news that equates to junk food and results in a steady dumbing down."

Srinivasan maintains that the aim of the campaign is to set the agenda for raising concern about the type of news disseminated by the media and the need to report news on issues that really matter.

The campaign kicked off with a tongue-in-cheek TVC. It has followed it up with an equally in your face print campaign with copies like “Also has pages 1,2,4,5,6,7..” and “Sense. Not Sensational”. The social media has been utilised as well with dedicated Facebook and Twitter accounts. Plans are on for an extensive outdoor campaign along with some on ground activations as well.

Srinivasan added, “The goal here is to start a debate and get the readers involved. Having been in the print media for so long, we decided to put into use the newspaper’s credibility and heritage in the business to voice this concern. Yes, there is a fun side to it, and it may seem we are answering a rival newspaper through this campaign, but there is no such intention to take on any competitor.” He goes on to add that the responses in the commercial are real answers and not rehearsed ones.