The unprecedented growth in data traffic, government initiatives such as the BharatNet, and the cable TV digitisation projects have fuelled the demand for optical fibre cable in the past few years. Meanwhile, FTTX is also emerging as a viable alternative to wireless technologies for delivering broadband in the last mile. CommScope, a leading provider of fibre and radio frequency-based products and solutions is optimistic about driving business growth by leveraging these opportunities. Navin Vohra, Vice-President, Service Provider Sales, Asia Pacific, CommScope, talks about the current trends in the Indian fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) market, key offerings of the company and challenges faced...

What have been the key trends in the FTTH market in India over the past few years?

Governments across Asia are making investments in high capacity networks. They see fibre as the infrastructure of the 21st century. In a recent CommScope survey, 71 per cent of the respondents expected to migrate the majority of their networks to FTTH by 2025.

In India, various next generation technologies such as long term evolution, which require seamless connectivity for continuous operations, significant rise in data traffic, and proliferation of internet-driven applications like high definition television (HDTV) and video-on-demand are expected to drive the market for optical fibre cables. The market is likely to grow at a compound annual growth rate of over 13 per cent during 2016-21.

What has been the impact of the roll-out of 4G services on the FTTH segment?

FTTH networks have an extensive footprint that is perfect for supporting fast-growing mobile applications such as distributed antenna system, small cells and Wi-Fi backhaul and/or centralised radio area network fronthaul.

Apart from 4G, fibre will play a crucial role in the development of 5G services. Fibre will inevitably be pushed further into different networks in order to respond to the ever-growing demand for bandwidth. Through a recent CommScope survey, we believe that multi-play

operators will merge their fibre networks to cover both FTTH and fibre backhaul for 5G.

What are the key offerings of CommScope in the Indian market? How has the company performed in the last few years?

Some of the products offered by CommScope in the Indian market include:

• FACT Optical Distribution Frame – It enables faster and easier installation of fibre in a high density environment.

• Powered Fibre Cable System – It simultaneously powers and communicates with small cells, Wi-Fi hotspots, HD cameras and other network access devices, eliminating the need for a local power source.

• Passive Course/Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing - It enables operators to converge multiple applications onto a single network.

• Hardened connectivity connectors and rapid fibre panels – These simplify the installation and reduce time a technician spends to connect a subscriber to the last mile in the network.

Our innovative fibre solutions can help operators save significant time and money, as field labour costs are a substantial portion of overall network deployment costs. We are also working with our service provider customers on new technologies such as 5G. With the continued densification of wireless networks expected for 5G, we have expanded our indoor small cell and outdoor metro cell solutions, while evolving our distributed antenna system DAS solutions. We are also a part of many of the industry groups developing and testing network solutions for 5G, further demonstrating our expertise and commitment to innovation.

What opportunities have emerged for the FTTH market from the government's Digital India and BharatNet initiatives? How does CommScope plan to leverage the same?

The Digital India initiative seeks to provide high speed broadband through optical fibre in gram panchayats across the country. For the initiative to succeed, 400 million km of fibre needs to be deployed.

CommScope is rolling out ultra-fast fibre networks to customers across Asia. After the acquisition of TE Connectivity's broadband network solutions (BNS) business, CommScope is well positioned to address bandwidth needs through a convergence of network technology, including outdoor cellular infrastructure, small cells, distributed antenna systems, fibre optic connectivity and data centre infrastructure. We are investing $200 million annually in research and development.

How are you gearing up for 5G?

We are working with our service provider customers on new technologies such as 5G. With the continued densification of wireless networks expected for 5G, we have expanded our indoor small cell and outdoor metro cell solutions, while evolving our distributed antenna system (DAS) solutions. We are also a part of many of the industry groups developing and testing network solutions for 5G, further demonstrating our expertise and commitment to innovation.

What are the challenges before CommScope? How does the company plan to address these?

The number of connected devices per person globally is expected to nearly double in five years, with the average person having more than six such devices in 2020. Data use on these devices has increased and is expected to continue to rise at exponential rates (about six times over the next five years). This rapid rate of growth and adoption of new devices make network latency (response time) a far greater concern.

With bandwidth needs of communications networks continuing to grow, it is clear that we must continue to progress and innovate. We are focusing on innovation to improve our network latency and reducing deployment time for service providers.

What strategies can be adopted to increase fibre deployment in rural areas?

High speed fibre broadband and cellular connectivity support economic growth. It also leads to an improved quality of life for everyone. Rural areas need more bandwidth. The challenge lies in how to serve them. Companies that offer easy-to-install and reliable fibre element options are in a better position to meet these challenges. Choosing the right network architecture can make rural broadband deployment easy and profitable.

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