Alcatel-Lucent builds Airtel's network backbone across Africa

Alcatel-Lucent is to assist Bharti Airtel meet rapidly growing demand for mobile broadband services in its African operations by supplying advanced new IP-based networking technology to support the delivery of new mobile broadband data and video services.

Rising smartphone ownership in Africa is driving demand for high-bandwidth mobile data services such as video calling and online gaming. To satisfy this demand and meet continued expansion, Alcatel-Lucent will evolve Airtel Africa's data transport and mobile backhaul networks using its IP/MPLS (IP/Multiprotocol Label Switching) technology.

Supporting mobile broadband services

This new backbone network will support all mobile broadband services to Airtel's 17 affiliates across Africa - serving 60 million customers - as well as a much more robust interconnection to global networks including the UK.

The single international network will offer a more simple structure to improve performance, reliability, capacity convergence and interoperable mechanisms for faster service recovery. The Airtel investment includes a common platform for Layer 2 and Layer 3 service provisioning to reduce the time of delivering the variety of service types. The result being faster internet speeds for mobile and Airtel business solutions, toll quality voice and extension of services from Airtel, ultimately leading to better customer experience and reduction in the cost of operations.

Eben Albertyn, CTO of Airtel Africa said "Alcatel-Lucent is helping us to fully utilize the advantages of IP/MPLS technology to economically and effectively handle high volumes of a variety of mobile broadband data and video services. The new network implementation not only provides a substantially improved quality of service for our current customers, it also does an excellent job of preparing Airtel Africa for future international expansion opportunities."

Daniel Jaeger, vice president of Alcatel-Lucent Africa added "Airtel Africa IP/MPLS network will carry all the international traffic (voice, internet, IT) of Airtel in Africa connecting it to the peering point in UK. Thanks to our best-in-class IP/MPLS mobile backhaul solution, we can help the seventeen operating companies that comprise Airtel Africa to innovate with their service offers to meet customers' needs with an even higher degree of reliability."