

5G DEPLOYMENT TO START IN AUG.-SEPT.: VAISHNAW

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Initiating call: The Centre will auction Rs. 4.3 lakh crore of airwaves for offering 5G services. C. Venkatachalapathy VENKATACHALAPATHY C

Telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Saturday said 5G deployment would commence in 20-25 cities and towns by the year end, and indicated that India, with its current data prices significantly lower than the global average, would continue to set rate benchmarks as new services were rolled out.

The 5G deployment would start from August-September, Mr. Vaishnaw said.

The minister said India was developing 4G and 5G stacks, and was set to bolster its position as a trusted source for the world, in digital networks.

To address the issue of unsolicited calls, an “important” regulation was in the works, which would enable KYC-identity name of a caller to be displayed, when someone calls, the minister said, speaking at the ‘TV9 What India Thinks Today Global Summit’.

On 5G services, he said: “I can say with confidence that 5G deployment will start in at least 20-25 cities and towns by year end.”

Asked about the pricing for 5G services, Mr. Vaishnaw observed that even today data rates in India were at about \$2, against the global average of \$25.

“We are already the lowest in the world, at least by a factor of 10X... we are cheaper than the world, that same trend will be in other areas too,” he said. As India prepares to usher in 5G services, it has also developed 4G and 5G technology stacks.

‘Technology lead in 6G’

Outlining India’s resolve to match global strides in 4G and 5G, and to take the technology lead in 6G, the Minister said the world had taken note of the country’s progress, and shown serious interest in the indigenous technologies being developed.

“The telecom network supporting mobile phones has to be a trusted network. India’s name is on the top of the list of trusted network providers. When India develops a technology, entire world is interested in it,” he asserted.

5G services are expected to usher in high speeds — about 10 times faster than 4G — and spawn new-age offerings and business models.

The government will auction about Rs. 4.3 lakh crore worth of airwaves capable of offering fifth-generation or 5G telecom services, including ultra-high-speed Internet, and has also given its nod for setting up of captive 5G networks by tech firms.

As much as 72 GHz of spectrum will be put on the block during the 5G auction, set to commence on July 26.

On the issue of unsolicited calls, Mr. Vaishnav said a new regulation in the offing would enable KYC name (as given in the mobile SIM application) to be displayed, when someone makes a call. The consultation process on this was currently underway.

“Once industry stakeholder consultation is completed, this will be implemented all over the country,” the Minister said.

To a question on the slow download speeds experienced by customers, the minister pointed out that India’s average data consumption at 18 GB per month, exceeds the global average of 11 GB per month.

“India’s data consumption is more than what is seen in highly-developed nations. More investments are needed in infrastructure. Massive investments in infrastructure are important in the backdrop of data rates, calls drops, call quality,” he said.

The telecom sector reforms announced in September had brought stability to the industry, the Minister asserted.

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