

Future Programs of Nepal Telecom

(Author's Photo)
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It has been the ninth years since Nepal Telecom transformed into a company but it is not clear on the roles that it has to play on the policy level. After transformed into a company, the King's direct rule continued for some time in that period. During this period also Nepal Telecom did not get clear leadership politically and policy-wise. The political transition still continues after the establishment of a democratic republic. With the existing political instability, the administrative leadership is in dilemma and it has not been able to provide any clear policy and dynamic leadership.

Amid this confusing situation and lack of clear policy, I believe that Nepal Telecom has been able to survive somehow in the competitive situation due to the dedication of the staff, their long vision and sentimental attachment. Having said that it might not be credible to say that all the staffs and managements are highly capable, honest, hard-working and dynamic; rather the development of the market status of Nepal Telecom compared to the other similar corporation can be taken positively amid the current political confusion, lack of morality in political leadership, lethargy in the governmental administrative area, incomplete government corporations and in the situation of peaceful transition. However, it was not easy to save the

company from the attack of political leadership and increasing financial irregularity. On this periphery, I have tried to keep my view on the policy level suggestions that we presented in the past and activities that could not take place on the implementation and policy level part.

Policy level suggestion that was given in the past and its implementation:

1. It was historical and important to transform Nepal Telecom into a company and moving ahead with maximum level of autonomy and using the autonomy, the company has reached this positive situation. Despite lack of clarity within the government level and internal conflicts and resistance from many trade unions and management staffs, we have become successful to bring timely positive changes on staff's financial condition, providing company's share to staffs, and raised their facility and moved in the direction of achieving company's goal. For this, we have become successful to make the participation of staff directly for policymaking. The involvement of employee in policy making body is described as an ice-break in the corporation sector in Nepal and is often positively discussed in different forums.
2. Due to our positive initiation in the board of directors of Nepal Telecom, we have become successful in the finalization and implementation of megaprojects, expansion of telephone network in every VDC across the country, expansion of new technology by introducing it, the direct international connection in the countries that have many Nepali migrant workers, including all types of technology leadership.

3. To provide a trustworthy connection through a massive expansion of the optical fiber network in Nepal the company has made agreement with Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA). The ADSS installation work with NEA has been done in Surkhet-Kohalpur, Butwal-Palpa, Pokhara-Baglung, Gaighat-Lahan, Tehrathum-Dharan while the additional work of optical fiber installation will be done in more than 1,500 km at the end of the current fiscal year. The credible optical fiber network will provide quality service in the future. By providing the service on a lease, Telecom can make its additional income source in the future.
4. A joint investment has been made in the Upper Tamakoshi hydropower project with Nepal Electricity Authority by mobilizing the liquidity to minimize the financial risk due to economic cycle in the future from where maximum profit can be earned. This investment will also help to reduce load shedding and provides quality service of Nepal Telecom in future. The coordination with NEA has also helped to expand the optical fiber network. With the Telecom staff also getting reserve share for employees in the hydropower projects they will also receive profit from it in future.
5. From around 4 years, we have been presenting a clear perspective that all the tower and optical network used on the telecom sector needs to be constructed in one place by a separate company. Two months ago, the government has made a policy-level decision from the cabinet for the formation of a company in telecom infrastructure sector. The essential initiative is being done with the Ministry of Finance for its implementation. The formation of this company will add a new milestone in Nepal. To date, never in history

has established a new company in coordination with the government company and private company. We should be happy about that as our thoughts are much dynamic and though late, the government has become ready to walk on it.

The telecom infrastructure company opened in coordination with a private company will have the following benefits:

1. While expanding telecom service, most of the time is consumed in tower installation and optical fiber network expansion. The major aim of Nepal Telecom is to provide PSTN, Cell Phone, and Data Connection in a short time to the customer. But we have felt that it is taking more time for the tower construction and optical fiber laying. So to speed the work to provide the new services to the customer of Nepal Telecom, the infrastructure company has to be established separately as a subsidiary company. By doing this, Nepal Telecom can the focus on telecom service expansion specially, in mobile phone and data.
2. If the tower infrastructure of Nepal Telecom and keeping tower infrastructure of other major telecom service provider at one place then everyone can use the infrastructure at less cost. This will decrease the administrative and operational cost and increase Nepal Telecom profit.
3. Observing the history of an infrastructure company in other countries, it is in itself is a profit-oriented company. So the new company will also provide maximum benefit to Nepal Telecom.

4. As the staff of Nepal Telecom also can invest share in the new company, the overall service expansion of the new company will speed up, the service quality will also improve, the customer will be benefited with a decrease in service price, profit of Nepal Telecom will increase, and employees of Nepal Telecom will also get profit/dividend so that everyone get benefitted.

6. Though the government has verbally agreed on the policy-level suggestion and initiation forwarded by us but has not been able to take it at the implementation level to introduce a strategic partner as its major work. The telecom sector is highly linked to technology. It is almost impossible to work on existing policy and compete with private telecom as the technology has been changing on a fast track. That is why we planned to invite a strategic partner in the Nepal Telecom. The work has not been forwarded due to the inactiveness of political and the government leaderships. There is no other alternative to keep Nepal Telecom in a leadership position beside that. As fast the political leaderships understand this matter, Nepal Telecom will be secured that fast.

Besides the above-mentioned points, we have also been giving small and medium suggestions to management and board and ministry. Some of them have been already implemented while some are in the process of implementation. Time is dynamic. The work and planning that had to be done at a particular time and situation in past get change as time pass. As new technology emerges every day and is being adopted, it needs to be adopted on time. In this context, an

additional discussion has been made on the policy level work and programs that Nepal Telecom needs to implement.

1. The future is moving towards optical fiber. The copper wire connection is declining due to two major reasons. Firstly, the copper wire is bulky and has frequent chances of theft which has created the problem in providing non-stop service. The second problem is that the future is on high-speed internet YouTube, Visual streaming, movie, etc. The stable and high speed data service can only be provided only with an optical fiber connection. So it is important to focus on providing optical fiber connectivity through fiber to the home (FTTH) in the coming days. If we become able to follow the target of FTTH within five years, it will be a turning point with increasing data with high demand for PSTN Line.
2. We have been forwarding the thought of a strategic partner for the last five years. But due to the lack of transparency and irresponsibility at a political and upper administrative level, the work to invite a strategic partner has not been able to move ahead. Only hoping for it will not work. What should be done if the thought of a strategic partner will not move ahead? If our major projects are hindered by government institutions on the name of corruption or transparency then the expansion of Nepal telecom gets stalemate. Because of private sector's mal interest to hinder the mega projects of Nepal Telecom, often political institution like parliamentarian committee or constitutional body like Commission for the investigation of abuse of authority, etc. has been abruptly stopping the tendering or implementing process. Therefore, recommending all projects options and

suggestions, I further strongly recommend inviting strategic partner in Nepal Telecom so that we can compete with any national or international telecom service provider.