

Axiata to commercialise Open RAN for network leadership across emerging Asia



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First and only Open RAN commercial pilots in Sri Lanka and Malaysia

First Open RAN solution commercially deployed with satellite backhaul

First commercial deployment of TIP's Evenstar Split 7.2. Radio Unit (RU) architecture

- Network modernisation gains traction as Axiata positions for network leadership across its footprint, with the commercial deployment of 2G and 4G single RAN Open RAN matching the performance of incumbents in brown field environment
- Key strategic partnerships formed with world-class network solutions providers, Mavenir, Parallel Wireless and global IT giant Infosys lead to successful Open RAN commercial pilots in Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA - Media OutReach - 28 June 2021 - Axiata Group Berhad ("Axiata" or "the Group") has embarked on an ambitious network transformation program, leveraging Open Radio Access Networks (Open RAN) as a key technology for mobile networks designed to narrow the digital divide and enhance rural connectivity across Asia.

Eyeing large scale commercial deployments by year end, the Group has successfully conducted Open RAN commercial field pilots in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka through strategic partnerships with leading global network solutions providers Mavenir and Parallel Wireless and supported by Infosys as systems integrator (SI).

Through its strategic partnership with Mavenir, the industry's end to end network software provider, Axiata has deployed the MAVair Open vRAN solution including all G Open RAN, Packet Core and Mobile Network applications at selected sites, in Malaysia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. To simulate non-ideal backhaul conditions, especially for rural areas, the sites selected are connected with non-ideal backhaul (microwave links), and in some cases satellite, making this the first satellite backhaul powered Open vRAN sites in the world.

During the testing phase, Axiata was also able to achieve the first live commercial service integration of the Telecom Infra Project (TIP)'s Evenstar 4G Radio through Mavenir's MAVair O-RAN based solution for Open RAN. Axiata is a participant of the TIP initiative in which a global community of companies and organisations are working together to accelerate the development and deployment of open, disaggregated and standards-based technology solutions that deliver high quality, low cost connectivity.

Axiata's commercial pilot also encompassed a collaboration with Parallel Wireless, the US-based Open RAN company delivering all G, cloud-native Open RAN solutions. Axiata successfully demonstrated commercial deployment of 2G and 4G Open RAN connectivity within its network in Sri Lanka which is operated by Dialog Axiata.

Parallel Wireless's solutions enabled 2G and 4G technology to be installed on the same radio units, with baseband deployed on a x86 commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) platform, and all other applications deployed on Axiata's OpenStack cloud infrastructure. The field trials now elevated to commercial availability, included 3-Sector, 4-Sector and 6-Sector sites, and demonstrated high quality network performance.

End user experience was demonstrated to be seamless and, in some cases, superior in terms of mobile broadband experience including next generation voice services. Commercial deployment encompassed rural, sub-urban and urban environments.

The paradigm shift in telco networks towards Open RAN requires system integration capabilities to bring together the ecosystem of disaggregated components using standardised open interfaces on general purpose hardware and ensuring interoperability in a carrier grade environment. Axiata was supported by Infosys in executing multi-faceted system integrations required to demonstrate the comprehensive coverage of Open RAN configuration options.

Thomas Hundt, Axiata's Group Executive Vice President – Technology said, "Open RAN is the future for mobile networks, and it will be critical for 4G expansions as well as the 5G evolution that Axiata's markets will soon embrace. Aligning with our vision to become The Next Generation Digital Champion, the benefits from open networks will enable Axiata to better serve rising connectivity needs across the region, especially in rural and underserved areas, whilst ensuring sustainable value creation for our stakeholders."

"Together with our partners Mavenir, Parallel Networks and Infosys, and in line with the global connectivity push under the Telecom Infrastructure Project, Axiata is committed towards embracing fully automated infrastructure to boost the open networks ecosystem in Asia. Our successful trials in Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia prove that Open RAN solutions enable greater operational and cost efficiencies using advanced technologies, whilst also meeting the needs of our digital inclusion efforts across the region. We look forward to taking the next step towards commercialization in our pursuit of catalyzing game-changing advancements across emerging Asia," he said.

Pardeep Kohli, Mavenir President and CEO said, "Mavenir is delighted to work with Axiata on their radio network transformation initiative and to achieve excellent results in the live everyday environment, proving the extreme flexibility of Open vRAN. The collaboration will transform existing networks into a dynamic, agile and cloud-native based platform where Mavenir and Axiata will build the Networks of the Future."

Keith Johnson, President of Parallel Wireless said, "We are honored to partner with Axiata, replacing their incumbent vendors equipment with our leading-edge Open RAN Solution to enable 2G and 4G broadband services in Sri Lanka and other Axiata subsidiaries. We are thrilled that the trials are successful, and we look forward to the commercial deployments in 2021."

Anand Swaminathan, EVP & Global Industry Leader, Communications, Media & Technology Infosys said, "Open RAN is transforming the wireless architecture and is enabling Telecom operators to be more competitive and innovative, while providing them flexibility in RAN component suppliers' ecosystem. The successful completion of the field trial on live network was a major milestone for accelerating the scaled deployment of virtual and Open RAN networks. Infosys is excited to be the SI partner to Axiata in this transformational journey and is committed to stand together to achieve many more milestones in the near future."

About Axiata

As one of the leading telecommunications groups in Asia in pursuit of its vision to be The Next Generation Digital Champion by 2024, Axiata has transformed itself from a holding entity with a portfolio of pure-play mobile assets into a Triple Core Strategy driven business focusing on Digital Telco, Digital Businesses and Infrastructure.

Within ASEAN and South Asia, the Group has controlling stakes in market-leading mobile and fixed operators in the region including 'Celcom' in Malaysia, 'XL' in Indonesia, 'Dialog' in Sri Lanka, 'Robi' in Bangladesh, 'Smart' in Cambodia and 'Ncell' in Nepal. Axiata is actively spearheading efforts to transform its mobile-centric operations into digital converged companies.

Axiata Digital, the digital services arm of Axiata is focused on two digital business verticals namely Digital Financial Services ('Boost', 'Aspirasi') and Digital Analytics & AI ('ADA').

'edotco', the Group's infrastructure company, operates in eight countries to deliver telecommunications infrastructure services, amassing approximately 32,800 towers. Presently the 16th largest independent tower companies globally, it aims to be one of the top regional telecommunications tower companies and is committed to responsible and sustainable business operations.

As a committed and long-term investor, and in line with its sustainability goals, the Group actively supports and drives young talent development; disaster response and recovery; as well as green initiatives. Axiata's broader goal of Advancing Asia aims to piece together the best in the region in terms of innovation, connectivity and talent.

#Axiata

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