

Suntel - A Ray of Sunshine in Telecommunication

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On September 22nd, Telia Lanka Pvt. Ltd., the joint venture between the Swedish telecom giant, Telia AB, and their two Sri Lankan partners, the Metropolitan Group and the National Development Bank (NDB), who recently signed their “Flagship Company” agreement with the BOI, launched their new name *Suntel*. Suntel is the brand name of the service provided by the company, and will shortly also be the name of the company itself.



The company is granted a licence to build and operate a Wireless Local Loop (WLL) telecommunication network in Sri Lanka, and with a five year duty exemption their initial investment will exceed US\$100 million.

The Suntel Network will eventually cover the whole country with a high degree of service to its customers. The development of the network has already started and the service launch is intended to take place before the end of the year. Initially, the services will be available in Central Colombo, but soon thereafter also in Greater Colombo and other major cities.

To begin with, there will be a main switch in Colombo with interconnection to Sri

Lanka Telecom and all the other operators. The network will be built with the latest Wireless Local Loop technology, called DECT, and it will be the first one in the world with this capacity.

From a customer's point of view the DECT system is connected with an "ordinary" telephone, plugged into the wall. The telephone is then connected to a radio access box and via radio transmission to a base station. The base station is then connected to a switch, either with a radio-link system or via an optical fibre network. The switches will be placed at different central sites all over the country.

Jan Campbell, the Managing Director of Suntel, has stated that "with a telecommunication penetration of only 1% in Sri Lanka, there is a strong need for new telephone connections. With a growing economy, the telecommunication needs will increase even faster. By using the telecom operator competence from the majority owner, Telia AB, in combination with the strength of the local partners, the Metropolitan Group and the National Development Bank Suntel will provide a superior capability in telecommunication. Suntel is fully committed to satisfying Sri Lanka's communication needs. With the WLL technology the "time to market" will be reduced dramatically and residential and business customers will be offered new connections with short delivery times and the highest quality in installation, equipment and service.

According to the Technical Director, Torsten Tubelius, the Network will be designed to have a high degree of service quality. "Not only will there be short delivery times for installation, but this network will also have low congestion and a high call completion rate. A service organisation is being set up that can operate with fault repairs on short notice and there will be an Operational and Maintenance Centre (OMC) from where the network will be supervised 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with qualified local personnel Tubelius said.

For the supervision of the network there will be support systems that can detect faults in the different network components, e.g. in the switches, radio-links or base stations so that there are possibilities to correct the faults, sometimes even before the customers have noticed that there has been any fault.

Through the advertising campaigns already carried out, the key values 'Efficient', 'Responsive' and 'Friendly' have been used to show the very high standards that will be the hallmark of the new company. The Marketing Director of Suntel, Carl Westberg, has explained that Suntel is eager to find out about their customers

requirements. Suntel will do their utmost to satisfy those requirements, do it efficiently, and always with a smile. Through their Customer Services and Field Support Department, customers will be able to rectify faults, pay bills etc. New telephone sets, faxes and other telecommunication equipment can also be bought from this unit.”