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Editor: **Dr. Sanjay****Think A While**

India's telecom sector refuses to stop making news. High ambitions led to forces jumping into the fray. But when there is a crowd, you need to jostle your way out. And sometimes the way out is to hold your hands together so that you don't get lost in the crowd.

Yes, consolidation is the buzzword in the telecom sector. Talks of consolidation have been doing the rounds following a poor response to the spectrum sale last year which earned the govt only a fraction of the ₹.63 lakh crore it had envisaged. And then came Reliance Jio, which is expected to grow into a giant, dwarfing its competitors. It's distributing freebies in a manner that would be a dream for several political parties.

In an environment of such high-voltage competition, the \$23-bn Vodafone-Idea Cellular merger should come as no surprise. The merger would create India's largest telecom firm, dislodging Airtel from its 15-year reign at the top. The new entity would be the second largest globally after China Mobile.

Together Vodafone-Idea have 40 cr subscribers, which translates into 35 per cent customer share. That would leave Airtel a distant second with 26.8 cr customers. Revenue-wise, the new entity will have 41 per cent of the market while Airtel has 35.6 per cent.

The integration of the two companies will be no easy a challenge. Vodafone is a high-end brand while Idea has a more down-to-earth touch to it. The tariffs of the two companies are quite different. Besides, call quality will be an issue. The challenge will be to create a new identity for the merged firms so that they can stay ahead of Jio and Airtel. This merger will thus spell out the biggest players in the sector.

How good is this news for the people? As fewer players will be left in the fray, there will be less competition. Tariffs will thus start going northward and consumers will have a tougher time. As for the employees, consolidation may result in job losses as companies cut costs. Industry body COAI expects a 30 per cent reduction in jobs over the next few years.

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In this issue ...**UPELECTION****Impact on national politics**

4

SBIMERGER**A transition in banking sector**

5

CURRENT TOPICS

6

MATCH POINT

11

NEWSWATCH

13

**PRACTICE SETS
SBI PO (PT)**

29

SBI PO (Main)

61

NIACL Assistant (PT)

108

SSC-CGL (PT)

117

DESCRIPTIVE ENGLISH

126

SUCCESS STORY

128

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Badminton

All England Open

Lee Chong Wei of Malaysia has lifted the men's singles crown at the 2017 All England Open Badminton championship. In the final in Birmingham, the 34-year-old world number one defeated Shi Yuqi of China.

Top seed **Tai Tzu** won the women's singles title.

Indian duo win

Top-seeded Indian shuttler duo **Tarun Kona** and **Alwin Francis** won the men's doubles title at the 2017 Uganda International Series by defeating Aatish Lubah and Georges Julien Paul of Mauritius in Kampala.

Uganda International

The men's doubles pair of **Tarun Kona** and **Alwin Francis** emerged victorious at the 2017 Uganda International Series in Kampala, beating the second-seeded combine of Aatish Lubah and Georges Julien Paul of Mauritius.

Saina to represent Olympic Committee in BWF

Adding another feather in her cap, star shuttler **Saina Nehwal**, who was appointed a member of the International Olympic Committee's Athletes' Commission (AC) in 2016, would be representing the panel in the Badminton World Federation (BWF). In a rare honour for an Indian sportsperson, **Saina** was appointed as a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission soon after the Rio Olympics last year.

Cricket

Oppo wins sponsorship rights

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has announced that mobile-manufacturing company **Oppo Mobiles India Private Limited** will be the new team sponsor of the Indian cricket team from Apr 1, 2017 for a period of five years. The team sponsorship rights include the

title of official team sponsor and the right to display a commercial logo in the kits of the India men's, women's, A and Under-19 teams.

Vijay Hazare Trophy

Tamil Nadu became a five-time winner and spoilt Bengal's bid for the third time in the title clash of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2016-17.

Football

AIFF appoints head coach

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on 1 Mar appointed Portugal's **Luis Norton de Matos** as the head coach of the India U-17 World Cup team for the forthcoming FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017.

Golf

Indian Open

SSP Chawrasia clinched his fourth **European Tour** title on 12 Mar when he won the Indian Open for the second successive year with a seven-shot victory over Malaysia's **Gavin Green**. **SSP Chawrasia** clinched a seven-stroke win to become the second Indian golfer to defend the Indian Open title after **Jyoti Randhawa**.

Hockey

Best hockey players of 2016

Olympic silver medallist **John-John Dohmen** of Belgium and retiring Netherlands star **Naomi Van As** have been named the male and female Players of the Year for 2016, respectively, by the **International Hockey Federation (FIH)**. Britain's Olympic gold medallist **Maddie Hinch** was adjudged the female Goalkeeper of the Year while **David Harte** of Ireland was crowned the **best goalkeeper** in the world for the second year in a row among the men.

Maria Granatto from Argentina picked up the title of the female Rising Star of the Year.

Rugby

India defeats Pak

The Indian men's Rugby team defeated Pakistan to secure the 7th rank at the **Asia Men's Rugby Sevens Trophy**. The two-day championship was held in Doha, Qatar. **Philippines** won the Asia Men's Rugby Sevens Trophy and secured a place in the Asia Rugby Sevens Series.

Shooting

India finishes fifth at WC

India ended their campaign in the **International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun)** with five medals, including one Gold, two Silver and two Bronze. The home side finished at the fifth place in the medals tally behind table toppers China, Italy, Australia and Japan.

Tennis

Cuevas wins Brazil Open

Uruguay's **Pablo Cuevas** has won his third straight Brazil Open tennis title by defeating **Albert Ramos-Vinolas** of Spain in final.

Mexico Open

The unseeded American **Sam Querrey** has won the ATP Mexico Open hardcourt tennis tournament.

In the final at Acapulco in Mexico, **Querrey** stunned second-seeded **Rafael Nadal** in straight sets. The women's singles title was won by **Lesia Tsurenko** of Ukraine defeating **Kristina Mladenovic** of France.

Dubai Duty Free Tennis

Andy Murray defeated Spaniard **Fernando Verdasco** to win the men's singles title of the 2017 Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships.

Indo-Polish pair lose

India's **Rohan Bopanna** and his Polish partner **Marcin Matkowski** lost their men's doubles final match in the **Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships** to fourth-seeded duo of Romanian **Tecau Horia** and Dutchman **Roger Jean-Julien**.

Tsonga wins 2017 Open 13

The second-seeded **Jo-Wilfried Tsonga** defeated Frenchman **Lucas Pouille** to win the 2017 Open 13, which is a men's tennis tournament played on indoor hard courts.

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