

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER'S REVIEW



2018 has been a turning point for SLT. The execution of our 5-year strategic plan for the digital transformation of SLT has seen a lot of action being taken, resulting in some significant changes. The entire structure of our Management has been overhauled to make SLT more proactive in an industry that is seeing incumbent telecom operators such as ourselves having to adapt to new circumstances. We find ourselves in a time where the fundamental technology of our industry is rapidly changing, and investment is required to ensure that we can keep up with the country's growing requirements. As the National ICT Solutions provider, we must address the demand for data and speeds, as well as boost the penetration rate of the Internet in the country.

An issue that most incumbent telecom operators around the world currently face is having to address their ageing infrastructure in the face of an evolving customer and market. As a developing nation, Sri Lanka's technology is on par with developed countries, but the country lacks the geographical distribution of network infrastructure that advanced countries have. For SLT, this has been an opportunity to implement fibre connectivity especially in undeveloped and developing areas of the country, as the only operator who has given legal rights. Whereas other players in the developed countries who had bad copper network coverage are 100% looking to superfast copper technologies to utilise their existing copper networks. Therefore, the past few years have seen that SLT has been laid over 45,000 kms of fibre infrastructure in the country. Since we have been able to provide reliable and unique products that are unmatched in the region, this fibre network has given us a competitive advantage over our competitors, who are generally cellular technology-based.

Today, our customers can avail of SLT FTTH service in many areas and enjoy 100 Mbps download speeds, upgradable to 1G unmatched by any other service provider. We have several business partners with whom we have established agreements to extend our fibre connectivity; the Colombo City Centre Residencies, the upcoming Port City, Phases 3 and 4 of Havelock City, and several other condominium projects will be supercharged by SLT's cutting-edge FTTH network. But beyond that, our fibre connectivity provides a framework and a platform which unlocks a plethora of opportunities for providing useful services to our customers.

We have invested heavily in our network infrastructure, but by itself, that does not mean much. That is why now we have recognised and redeployed entire architecture of the network while investing the development of

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new technology and platforms. Going forward, we will have to grow and transform our business by driving digital services through our platforms. Our fibre connectivity enables us to bring IoT services, fintech services, IPTV services, cloud services, data analytics, data centre services, smart feature and more to our home, business, Enterprise and Government customers. Customers today can already avail of our PEO TV platform, and we intend to use it to introduce over-the-top (OTT) services that they can take advantage of. In fact, accessibility to our OTT services will be a key differentiator for us – any smart device will be able to access them, even through our island-wide Wi-Fi connectivity, and our availability will be virtually infinite. We will look to establish business partnerships to develop applications that take advantage of our infrastructure and platforms as we continue on our digital journey. Eventually our converged network and Technology platforms layer and application layer will represent entire product portfolio to present the features in an automated

environment where customer will use self-care portals to configure their own requirement.

We launched the “National Data Centre” in 2018, another initiative powered by our fibre backbone. The Tier III Data Centre is the first of its kind in the country, providing secure and reliable data hosting and cloud computing services. Our data centres are supported by our global connectivity; SLT is connected to the world via five submarine cable systems, including the SEA-ME-WE 5 cable which has a full cable landing station in Matara with the capability of connecting to the East and West cable segments at 24 Tbps each. The Galle Submarine Cable Depot, will be launched in 2019, our joint venture with Singapore-based Indian Ocean Cable Ship Pvt Ltd is another milestone in our global network strategy. With a cable ship on standby in Galle to attend to submarine cable repairs in the region, the Cable Depot will help to dramatically reduce service restoration times in the event of an international cable failure. Just over a decade ago, a failure would have isolated the country for a few days, but today we have several backup systems in place and with the ability to deploy the repair ship, Sri Lanka's international connectivity has significantly improved and become more reliable. The Cable Depot also highlights SLT's moves to expand our global presence: SLT signed the South East Asia and Indian Ocean Cable Maintenance Agreement (SEAIOCMA) in 2018 that will see the Cable Depot provide warehousing facilities for over 40 regional submarine cable operators for a period of five years.

Our internal structural changes are also being focused around our new reality, our transformation into a Digital Service Provider (DSP). Whereas our IT efforts used to focus on internal support, we will now refocus our very capable resources into efforts to support our customers. Addressing the needs of our customers in various industries – tourism, healthcare, education, etc. – through bespoke software solutions

and our platforms will become a major strategic focus. To this extent, we have ushered in a DevOps culture through platforms like ECO BRIDGE that will encourage and support our staff in developing innovative new products, including software solutions to address internal and external requirements.

The customer experience is also vital to our digital journey. We understand that you cannot have delighted customers if you don't have delighted employees; therefore, we are focusing on empowering our employees to be able to serve our customers better. Whereas previously our various operations used to operate in their own soils, we have now adopted a converged approach driven by customer satisfaction wherein everyone collaborates with each other to achieve the desired outcomes. For instance, our 1212 Contact Centre operations are geared towards addressing customer issues within their first call. Further our Network Operation Centre will be uplifted to Service Operation Centre (SoC) to focus on customer experience. We will continue to build a working environment where our employees are empowered to provide exemplary service to our customers. These efforts will go a long way to establishing lasting relationships with our customers and ensuring that we continue to deliver innovative, high quality services and experiences for years to come.



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