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RCom unveils DTH roadmap

New Delhi: TV viewers fed up with bad signal reception are set to get more choice, with Anil Ambani group company Reliance Communication (RCom) on Sunday announcing the roadmap to launch competitively priced direct-to-home (DTH) services across 4,000 towns in the next few weeks.

The company has already completed trial runs across 2,400 towns under the brand Big TV DTH. The service is currently available for customers of other DTH operators for just Rs 1,000, compared to nearly Rs 4,000 charged by existing DTH operators. The company claims that as of April this year, it had a subscriber base of 40,000. RCom, however, is offering the service at a monthly price of Rs 325, which includes Rs 100 worth free "pay per view" content, and is hoping to make a dent in the customer base of existing operators with aggressive pricing strategies.

Asked about the commercial launch of services, a company spokesperson declined to comment and give any specific date for starting Big TV DTH, but said: "The DTH of-



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fering under the Big TV will be launched during the course of coming few weeks."

Company sources said RCom is deploying state-of-the-art MPEG4 technology compared to MPEG2 technology used by Tata Sky, Dish TV and DD Direct. This will enable Big TV to offer over 240 channels versus the 160 channels that can be offered on MPEG2 platform. In a scenario where a broadcaster has to offer equal terms to all DTH operators, RCom's ability to carry 33% more channels will lend it a strategic edge.

While at the entry level, the company is likely to come out with aggressive pricing strategies, the monthly charges are likely to remain at similar levels but the company aims to provide better services and offerings at the same price charged by competitors. AGENCIES