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# On the way: Cable TV without any wire

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In what may become a revolution in entertainment, accessing television via cable, IPTV or interactive DTH services is soon going to be via wireless, on the lines of a wi-fi internet connectivity.

This means digital cable TV consumers, who access cable via a set top box (STB), will be able to move their TV sets in the house or go for a second or third set without having to pay extra for the physical add-on connections or messy cable wiring.

Currently, any additional digital cable connection comes

with additional installation costs (Rs 150-300). Consumers also have to pay for the extra STB (Rs 1,500-2,000), plus the cost of subscription packages.

Aksh Optifibre has already rolled out wireless STBs (hardware essential for accessing IPTV, digital cable or DTH services) for its Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) services. Aksh provides its IPTV services bundled with the telecom services of MTNL and BSNL across several states and metros like Delhi and Mumbai.

"We are soon going to see a commercial rollout of wireless STBs for our IPTV services. This will enable consumers to access IPTV services in any part

of their home without having to physically make wire connections from the STB to the TV sets," says Kailash Choudhary, MD, Aksh.

**Aksh Optifibre has already rolled out wireless STBs for accessing IPTV**

But, this technology will be costly. Aksh has priced the wireless STBs at Rs 6,000 per unit, almost three times the cost of a normal box for accessing digital cable or a DTH, IPTV service.

Even cable TV homes are undergoing a change, as a Noida-based STB manufacturer, Logic Eastern, has rolled out a wireless cable box for consumers to enhance the interactive services. "We have already rolled out 61,000 such boxes that do not require wire connectivity. It works on a 'mesh network' technology, wherein the interactive services can work without having wire line connectivity," says Vineet Wadhwa, its chief technology officer.

Industry sources say some leading DTH operators are also conducting trials of a wireless technology for their value added services like banking transactions or booking tickets via the

DTH interactive services.

Similar technologies are very successful in western markets like Britain, France, Germany, the US and Canada. "BskyB in the UK is already providing a similar wireless technology for cable homes. It is very successful," says Wadhwa.

While the DTH service or digital cable under HITS technology is a wireless service, with the satellite signals directly received by the dish antenna installed at the subscribers' premises, the last mile connectivity - from dish antenna to the STB and then to the TV set - is via a wire. This may change soon, specially for the value added service-offerings given by DTH

players, says a technical expert.

"However, all such technologies are expensive. They have been used as a differentiator by the various operators, but it can't become a mass product till the costs are brought down significantly," says a technical expert on cable, IPTV and DTH technologies.

Aksh Optifibre is also working on marrying the technology -- IPTV, box and television sets. "We are currently testing an integrated television set in which IPTV has been integrated so that consumers do not need any extra box or messy wiring. This will be launched by March 2010," says Choudhary.