SAMENA TRENDS

EXCLUSIVELY FOR SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

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MOBILE DATA: THE MOST IMPORTANT REVENUE GROWTH PROSPECT FOR TELCOS IN THE SAMENA REGION

BLACKBERRY'S HERITAGE IS BUILT ON CONSUMER AND BUSINESS LEADERS THAT VALUE PRODUCTIVITY AS THEIR TOP PRIORITY DURING THE DAY.

Nick Horton
Managing Director, MENA
BlackBerry

EDITORIAL

Mobile content to drive telecoms revenues in the SAMENA Region

The emergence of diverse technological innovations in the telecom sector globally has accentuated the continual growing demands of the technology savvy consumer base that exist world over. Hence the provisioning of value added services, and over-the-topshas led to the increased demands, thereby shifting the onus back on the operators to continually invest in upgrading their infrastructure to be able to meet such massivegrowth in demands. Effective deployment strategies are essential to ensure the economic success of the demanded technology and dynamic market beat for successful penetration. The importance of such an approach is essential in the context of the SAMENA region. Over-the-top services are up-and-coming with more services becoming reliant on broadband including, education, healthcare, finance, weather forecasts, and above all, eGovernment services. With this, can we imagine what life would be without these services? With our ever-increasing dependency ICTs, our life today is more contingent to the broadband, for it plays an ever more vital role both in society and the global economy. Industries from entertainment to communications have flourished while organizations concerning emergency services and defense have been using ICTs more progressively than ever before.

Mobile content and OTT services in the SAMENA region could emerge as an imminent opportunity for telcos to generate more revenues. This tendency is expected mainly because of the region's large population of young people. What's more, quite few alternate entertainment choices are available, and the recent growth of online social networks, advanced mobile platforms, increasing number of smart phones, and mobile broadband deployments are setting aside the mobile games industry to begin to mushroom. Booz & Co.'s, recent forecasts reveals that MENA region's online gaming revenue could reach US$110 million in 2014; similarly, online music revenues are also expected to grow sharply at a CAGR of 60 percent, reaching US$33 million in 2014.

Even though, the potential for OTT applications and contenthas been there in the SAMENA region, particularly in the Middle East for quite some time but the infrastructure to support these services is insufficient in the region. Nonetheless, industry stake holders which includes, governments, operators, and vendors among others, have started to realize the significance of national broadband networks. Both, hardware and software vendors are taking more interest in mobile content and OTT applications than ever before. For example, Microsoft and Sony are watching at the mobile games industry with ever more expectation to be able to gain the maximum out of this emerging industry. Blackberry's BBM release for different platform witnessing a record 10 million downloaded in 24 hours is no exception. With strong push from such players, it appears that that there is strong potential in the mobile content industry for all the stake holders alike, most importantly for telcos, content developers, software/game developer, and hardware vendors. The availability and growth of mobile contentcan be further encouraged by deploying high speed broadband access networks.

With constantly evolving technologies, increasing consumer demand, emergence of cutting applications, the need for collaboration is growing. Hence, all the stakeholders of the telecoms & ICT industry need to work together to be able to ensure constant growth of telecomindustry. At the same time, having an operational and strategic focus on advanced marketing tactics is a crucial element for the success of telcos and the overall telecom industry together. Modern strategies that cater to the evolving needs of the telcos and best address the demands of the end-user are decisive today. The SAMENA Council, in this regard has been actively involved with the industry stakeholders and we recently had organized our CMO Day that played the role of a catalyst in the transformation of business models in such a way as to expand marketing capabilities across our stakeholders and take the telecommunications industry to a new level of smart real time marketing.

The transformation of telecommunications organizations with the impact of digitization is also leading to new challenges in value creation for the industry. In such an environment, innovative marketing can definitely play the role of a crucial enabler to help our industry move seamlessly into the digital future.

Yours truly,

Bocar A. BA
Chief Executive Officer
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

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EDITORIAL

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INDUSTRY LEADER'S VISION

Nick Horton is the Managing Director, Middle East and North Africa for BlackBerry, where he is responsible for BlackBerry's business across the region including corporate strategy, business development, marketing, and sales. Prior to this role, Nick held numerous roles within BlackBerry include Managing Director, Indochina; Vice President - SingTel Group; Senior Commercial Director, and Business Director.

BlackBerry

Nick Horton
Managing Director, MENA
BlackBerry

Q. Keeping in view the Fairfax bid of $4.7 billion, what possibilities do you see? In case of a successful deal, do you plan to revamp the marketing strategy?

A. Here in the Middle East we are proceeding with business as usual. BlackBerry® smartphones continue to be among the top 10 sold in the UAE as of August 2013, and according to data provided by research firm GfK, BlackBerry was also the #3 best-selling smartphone brand in the UAE and #2 in KSA in August this year.

In terms of our marketing strategy we are in a highly competitive and dynamic industry, and will continue to support our new product launches with new and additional marketing investments as we continue to establish the BlackBerry 10® platform.

Q. Emerging products from Apple and other Android-phones are giving BlackBerry a tough competition, why customers should wait for the new device line and operating system in future?

A. BlackBerry's heritage is built on consumer and business leaders that value productivity as their top priority during the day. Our fans are proud power users who are always on the go, always thinking and always moving. They work hard. They make decisions. This audience is at the heart of what has made BlackBerry a success.

BlackBerry customers are accustomed to the best security, productivity and mobile connectivity, and through BlackBerry 10 we are singularly focused on building the most advanced secure mobile computing ecosystem to enable greater connectivity between people, mobile devices, intelligent machines, networks and smart products.

What's more we are focused on delivering this not only on BlackBerry, but on iOS, Android and in new vertical markets looking to leverage mobile computing, securely.

We built this space and developed the most innovative secure platform available. We are committed to ensuring this value continues to be delivered to our stakeholders.

Q. Given that Apple already had a name in the game with iTunes and iPod to build a foundation for the iPhone, how does BlackBerry plan to build brand familiarity with younger people? Or you think it is a misconception?

A. The misconception lies in the idea that BlackBerry doesn't have brand familiarity amongst young people. BlackBerry has a very strong presence in the smartphone marketplace. Here in the Middle East young people aspire to have to a BlackBerry and recognize the brand as a pioneer in mobile connectivity. BBM for instance, the original mobile instant messaging service continues to be one of the most widely used, because people love the BBM experience. This was evident with the recent launch of BBM for Android and iOS which saw over 10 million downloads in the first 24 hours alone – a staggering number. Other functions have also been added to the BBM service including voice and video which takes the BBM experience to another level.

At the same time we are rolling out new services including BBM Channels a soon-to-be-launched platform that allows brands, artists, businesses and communities to connect to consumers and groups in real-time.

We also continue to expand the BlackBerry 10 app ecosystem following its launch with the most apps available of any mobile ecosystem at platform launch. We started with 70,000 global BlackBerry 10 apps, and today are in excess of 120,000. We also had a 112% growth in registered developers in the past year, and continue to support the growth of our developer community.

Q. How do you differentiate BlackBerry customers from those of your competitors'? What appeals them to buy BlackBerry?

A. BlackBerry users change business, markets and the world they live in, and they're loyal, with 98% of all regional BlackBerry users using BBM. This loyalty is reciprocated through BlackBerry's commitment to the Middle East, making it one of the first to market for the BlackBerry 10 range, with the Q5, Q10, Z10 and Z30. We also opened our flagship BlackBerry store at the Dubai Mall.

BlackBerry customers are also early adopters of the latest smartphone trends, and we remain committed to working with them and our partners to deliver the best user experience. Now more than ever, we want to ensure our users gain access to the technologies, features and applications that will allow them to work more efficiently and reinforce their devotion.

Q. Why the rollout of new BlackBerry iOS was delayed? What were the major reasons and how soon it is expected to be released?

A. BBM for cross platform is now available for everyone to download. The team is constantly focused on providing BBM users with the best user experience – the phenomenal instant popularity of the app is a clear indication of its strength. Please follow @BBM on Twitter for the latest updates.

Q. WhatsApp and Skype now have over 200 million and 280 million users respectively, how do look at the ever-growing competition among over the top applications and how are you competing in this challenging market?

A. We are confident that BBM can grow its position as a leading mobile instant messaging service, this is backed up by our very steep expectations on downloads of multi-platform BBM by making it accessible to iOS and Android users for free. Now all smartphone users will be able to connect with their friends and family through the most secure platform.

On the larger ecosystem story – our developer community is growing and we are engaged in various ways throughout the region to accelerate this growth. We are also holding BlackBerry Jam events for budding developers across the region with our latest event taking place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia just this past month, which attracted over 75 young budding developers.

Q. How do you think BBM is different from applications such as Viber, Tango, WhatsApp, Skype etc.?

A. BBM is an engaging messaging service that is simple to use, easy to personalize and has an immediacy that is necessary for mobile communications. It is trusted and private and allows users to control their personal information.

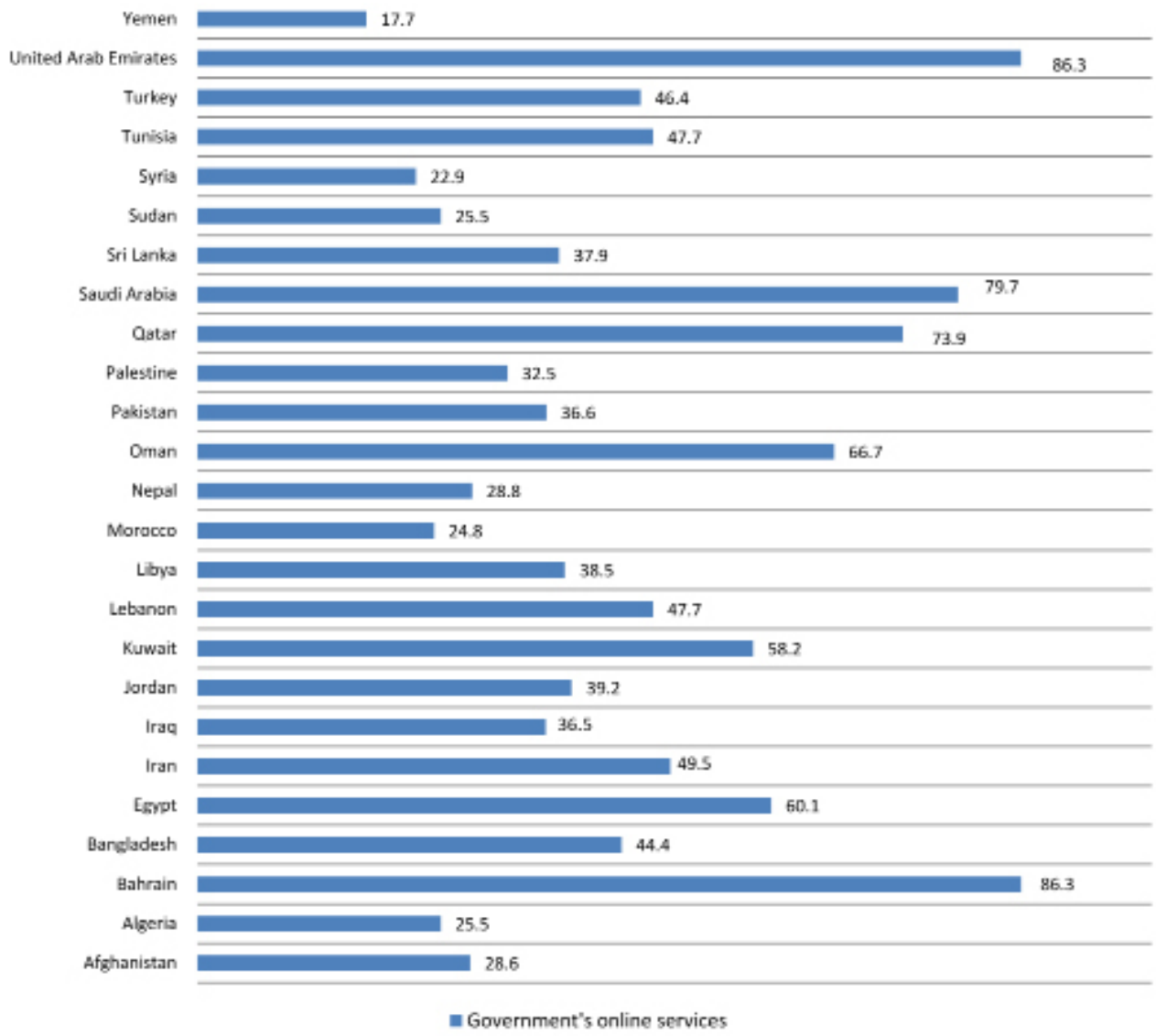
BBM is immediate and reliable with real-time confirmations when messages are delivered and read. Users can change avatars, updates statuses and customize profiles, and take advantage of BBM Groups to connect with up to 30 people and share files, photos, calendar and engage in group chats.

One key focus for BBM from the very start eight years ago was privacy. The PIN infrastructure we use allows users to add contacts without sharing personal information. Our contact authentication process also requires that contacts both agree to be added, giving extra control to BBM users.

Q. Is BlackBerry considering to work on any other innovative services i.e. BBM to gain a competitive edge?

A. We are focused on launching BBM successfully.

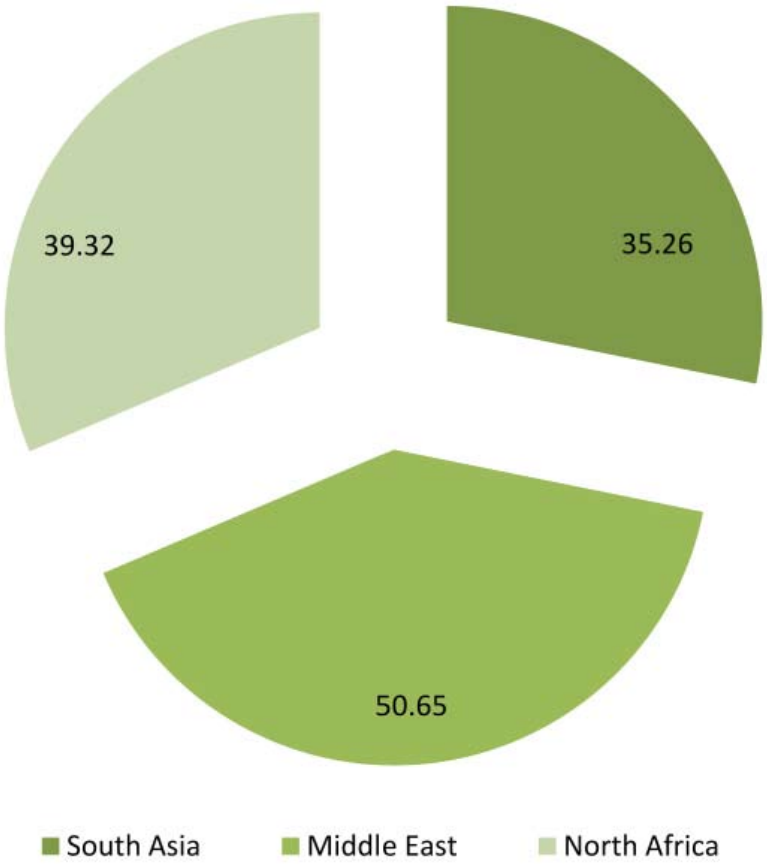
SAMENA Region: Government's Online Services Score
Comparision of 25 Countries within the SAMENA Region



Research Note: Within the SAMENA region, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are the top 3 countries in terms of "government's online score". Morocco, Syria and Sudan on the other hand have the lowest score in the SAMENA region.'

Image Source: SAMENA Telecommunications Council
Data Source: The Global Innovation Index 2013 by INSEAD

SAMENA Region: Government's Online Services Score
South ASia - Middle East - Nort Africa Compared



Research Note: Middle East is the most advanced region in terms of average score for "government's online services" score, followed by North Africa. South Asia, a home to the region's most populous markets including Pakistan and Bangladesh tend to be the least developed markets in terms of "government's online services" clearly highlighting the digital divide. Furthermore, Bangladesh (placed at 13 within the SAMENA region) is the highest ranked country within South Asia whereas Afghanistan (placed at 21 within the SAMENA region) has the lowest score.

Within the Middle East Bahrain (placed at 1 within the SAMENA region) is the highest ranked country whereas Yemen (placed at 25within the SAMENA region) has the least score. Within North Africa, Egypt (placed at 7within the SAMENA region) has the highest score whereas Morocco (placed at 24 within the SAMENA region) has the lowest score.

Image Source: SAMENA Telecommunications Council
Data Source: The Global Innovation Index 2013 by INSEAD

REGIONAL & MEMBERS NEWS

ICT Fund set to reveal new ICT Projects and initiatives in UAE Education sector at Gitex Technology Week 2013

ICT Fund, an initiative by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) UAE, which supports the national ICT sector through financing innovative projects in the UAE, has announced its participation in this year's Gitex Technology Week starting on October 20, 2013. At the event, ICT fund is set to announce details on a range of projects that support ICT research and development in the UAE. ICT Fund's participation in GITEX 2013 is different from previous years. The ICT Fund has been attracting dozens of innovative and creative ICT projects in which they can support and finance. The target goals of the ICT Fund are to develop the ICT industry, foster R&D, encourage capacity building and enhance education and training in the field of ICT. In addition, the ICT Fund will share updates on new projects it is supporting within the Arabic digital content initiative. The ICT Fund has also dedicated AED 25 million over the next five years to support the "Arabic Digital Content" initiative. The initiative was launched recently by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

Bangladesh moves ahead in technology

Bangladesh recently made a significant leap towards a mobile digital future. Nationwide 3G will extend the power and the opportunities of the Internet to millions of Bangladeshis. Just like mobile connectivity is for everyone, Internet is for all.Imagine a Bangladesh where a teenager in Natore can surf Wikipedia or stream CNN to get updated information for a school assignment. A Bangladesh where youth in rural villages can download the latest Harry Potter novel as soon as it is published online, or make Facebook friends in Serbia, Ghana or Mexico. Imagine a Bangladesh where a chronically ill patient in Baliadangi can avail instant advice from specialists in Dhaka. Or where a farmer in Jessore can get agricultural advice in his hands every day, and have instant access to profits, savings and insurance through a trusted banking system. Some of these are already reality, some will soon be realized. All of them -- and much more -- will be possible in a digital Bangladesh.Today, about 110 million people in Bangladesh have a mobile connection. Dhaka is one of the fastest growing cities in the world on Facebook and internet traffic is growing by the day. The 3G auction held recently marks an important milestone in the mobile era, and is a leap towards the country's ambitious plans for a "Digital Bangladesh".

ICT advancements spur Saudi workplace mobility

As many organizations race to adopt new mobility policies in the workplace, representatives from Saudi Arabia's government, healthcare, and education sectors came together in Jeddah to evaluate how new 'smart mobility' advancements can be used in organizations to improve employee productivity.The leadership roundtable--hosted by global ICT solutions provider Huawei – was organized as a prelude to this week's IDC Saudi Arabia CIO Summit 2013 which kicked off Tuesday at the InterContinental Hotel in Jeddah.Roundtable participants included Asfar Zaidi, Principal Consultant at Huawei Enterprise Middle East, as well as Paul Black, Director of Telecoms at IDC.Held under the theme of "Jumping on the Mobility Bandwagon Without Falling Off', Zaidi opened the discussions by reaffirming how the growing Bring Your Own Device (BOYD) culture is empowering employees to do more on-the-go through secure access to corporate information at anytime, anywhere, from any device."Huawei is committed to helping organizations in Saudi Arabia capitalize on opportunities brought about by ICT convergence without constraints of high costs and security challenges," said Tony Shi, General Manager of Huawei Enterprise in Saudi Arabia.

Mobile VAT and customs revenue up tenfold in Lebanon

The Telecoms and Finance ministries' recent initiative to curb widespread mobile handset smuggling – aiming to increase customs and VAT revenues by US$60 million – has been very fruitful so far, officials say. Rita Khairallah, project manager at the Telecoms Ministry, told The Daily Star that the project had seen impressive success. An assessment conducted by the ministry after the first three months of implementation showed that Customs and VAT revenues multiplied by more than 10 times, she said."The assessment for June, July and August showed that VAT and customs fees on mobile handsets have multiplied by 10 to 12 times, in comparison to the same months last year," she said, adding that exact figures would be announced by the Telecoms Ministry shortly.

Sri Lankan geological agency to upgrade ICT infrastructure

The Geological Survey and Mines Bureau (GSMB) of Sri Lanka is to upgrade its ICT infrastructure, facilitating reception of real-time seismic data and better support for disaster minimization efforts through dissemination of updated information.GSMB is the leading agency for systematically mapping the geology, and exploring and regulating mineral resources of Sri Lanka. It is also responsible for maintaining the national database on geo-science information.

Upgrading of ICT systems will support GSMB to enhance its research activities, allowing better environmental monitoring, disaster mitigation and geological understanding of the country. Modernization of ICT is especially important for disaster management, the Government says, since it can provide effective solutions to environmental damage caused by natural disasters.

Libya to tender for first private mobile license

Libya will launch a tender in 2014 for the award of the country's first private mobile phone license said the Communications Minister Usama Siala.The country's two publicly-owned providers have more than eight million subscribers, one of the highest penetration rates in Africa, but Libya has no private mobile telecoms operators."We are going to propose a mobile telephone license for the private sector in three to six months," Siala said in an interview with AFP."The ministry got the green light from the cabinet, from the prime minister and from the telecommunications committee of the General National Congress," the country's highest political authority, Siala said."We in the ministry would prefer the new operator to be foreign. But that will depend on a law on encouraging foreign investment that is being studied in the GNC," he added.

Mobile payment service set for launch in Egypt

National Bank of Egypt (NBE), one of the country's leading commercial banks, is to launch a mobile payments service in the country with two partners.The Phone Cash payment wallet is open to banked and unbanked customers who can use the service to send money, pay phone bills, load credit onto pre-paid phones, make donations, reserve airline tickets and make e-commerce transactions, among other capabilities.The operator is considering launching M-Pesa there.NBE's partner are Fawry, which enables users to pay bills through more than 20,000 payment points including banks, ATMs, post offices and shops, and Egyptian Banks Company, an IT provider to the banking sector.The Phone Cash wallet is built on MasterCard's recently launched Mobile Payment Gateway in Egypt.The wallet works independently of any mobile operator or handset. NBE says it is the first bank in the country and wider Middle East to offer such a service.

Sri Lanka Telecom broadband customers top 350,000

Broadband customers of Sri Lanka Telecom, the islands sole wireline operator, topped 350,000 by June 2013, the firm said amid an expansion of its fiber optic network capacity. Sri Lanka Telecom has been boosting its fibre-optic network using 57,000 new lines of which 20,000 had already been connected to new customers during the last six months. Broadband subscribers were up 19.6 percent to 357,000 by June 2013 from 301,032 in a year earlier, an official said.The company was building its fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) network where fibre optic cables are brought to a distribution point within two kilometers of a home.The firm has a large copper wire last mile network which can carry high speed data in the interim.The firm said under its i-Sri Lanka the firm wanted to provide 90 percent of their fixed access customers, speeds of up to 20Megabits per second."Such high Broadband performance delivery caters to the growing demand for home and office Wi-Fi, where multiple users can enjoy reliable uninterrupted broadband connectivity at home and office..." the firm said.Sri Lanka Telecom offers 'triple play' with voice, data and television through its PEOTv service.

PTCL extends reconnect offer for landline and broadband customers

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), the largest integrated ICT services provider has extended its 'reconnect campaign' offering its landline and broadband customers 50% discount in outstanding dues on reviving their landline and broadband connections. Customers who have disconnected their landline or broadband services before 31st Aug 2013 can avail this offer before 31st Oct 2013. Customers availing this offer will also be able to enjoy 50% discount on monthly broadband charges till March 2014, while no fee will be charged on reconnecting.As Pakistan's fastest and most affordable broadband service, PTCL's 'Broadband Pakistan' offers seamless internet experience, uninterrupted streaming and fastest downloading speeds. PTCL landline and broadband remains the backbone of the telecom and internet industry of Pakistan and is the largest voice and data network in the country. The landline service of the company also offers the most affordable rates, enabling customers to stay connected with their relatives and friends.

Etisalat Facilities Management sign MOU with Etihad Energy Services and Regulatory & Supervisory Bureau

Etisalat Facilities Management – eFM, an independent entity of the Etisalat legacy and a leader in the field of facilities management signed a MOU with Etihad Energy Services and Regulatory & Supervisory Bureau.Etihad Energy Services is created by Dubai Electricity and Water Authority specialized in performance contracting market and the Regulatory & Supervisory Bureau was established to lead regulatory practice in the gulf region to support Dubai's economic, social and environmental objectives. The MOU was signed by Waleed Suleiman, Vice Chairman, Etihad Energy Services, Ali Bin Abdullah Al Owais, Chairman, Dubai Regulatory & Supervisory Bureau and Mustafa Al Ateek, General Manager, eFM.The aim of the MOU is to boost cooperation between Etihad Energy Services and Etisalat Facilities Management in lowering energy consumption of the UAE. This partnership will ensure that eFM will follow the guidelines set by the Regulatory & Supervisory Bureau and Etihad Energy Services.

Huawei LTE leadership grows in first half 2013

Huaweihas recently gained recognition for its leadership of the global LTE market at varying levels by three leading research companies—ABI Research, Dell'Oro and Informa Telecoms and Media—which taken together affirm Huawei to be in a leading position for commercial LTE contracts, market revenue share and 3GPP standards establishment. Long Term Evolution (LTE) networks have become widely accepted by most regional operators as the future of mobile broadband due to its unparalleled capacity and connectivity speeds. According to the GSA's Evolution to LTE report released in August 2013, 443 operators are investing in LTE and there are 200 commercial LTE networks in operation at this time. Of these, Huawei has won 196 commercial LTE network contracts and deployed 93 commercial LTE networks worldwide. Mr. Shi Yaohong, President of Huawei Middle East, said: "We consider the consensus of such significant professionals to be a testament to our operator partners' endeavors as they continue open up increased market potential while and attracting end users with Huawei's No-Edge service experience."

Etisalat Metamorphosis 2013 honours 158 fresh Emiratigraduates

Etisalat, one of the largest telecom operators in the Middle East and Africa, organized 'Metamorphosis 2013', honoured 158 fresh Emirati Graduates from its Future Leaders program. Metamorphosis, a motivational event for its 800-strong UAE team was themed 'Together towards a New Horizon'. The event that drew the participation of the senior management at 'Etisalat', hosted US-based Gary Hamel, a renowned global expert in business strategy and author of several books on strategic management. The conference was inaugurated by Eissa Al Suwaidi, Chairman, Etisalat and Saleh Al Abdooli, CEO, Etisalat UAE in addition to senior personnel from the organisation. Speeches were delivered to discuss strategic planning, management of the corporation, importance of nourishing the leadership capabilities and highlighting Etisalat's role in supporting leadership qualities among its employees.

DigiGone approved for use on the Thuraya Satellite Network

DigiGone® announced that its innovative video communications system and software platform has been approved for use with Thuraya's IP terminals. A leading mobile satellite services operator, Thuraya is actively rolling out the DigiGone satellite communications solution across their distribution channels in all vertical markets.Optimized for narrowband satellite channels, DigiGone offers high-quality encrypted video and audio conferencing, video streaming, Voice over IP (VoIP), IM Chat and file transfer using a small fraction of the bandwidth needed for other commercial video telecommunication solutions. The DigiGone system can be customized, depending on users' bandwidth speed requirements and their choice of audio and video quality. The bandwidth can be raised or lowered by the user at any time during the call, to meet user requirements for image resolution.DigiGone is especially well suited for maritime applications and is certified to work with Thuraya's Maritime Broadband terminal. The system is currently being deployed on commercial ships for applications such as videoconferencing, security and ship-to-shore crew welfare calling. The software can be installed on most PCs, laptops, tablets or smartphones in just a few minutes.

STC provides the capability of watching movies and TV series outside the home via My InVision

STC offered Jood2 customers My InVision service that enables them access all InVision services online except live broadcast channels. The service can rent movies from Video On Demand "VOD" library and watch movies via online SVOD plan on the PC, IPhone, IPad, telephones or tablets that support android system. STC was keen to offer the service in the first month free of charge so that customers can use the service as a trial and enjoy the added value provided by My InVision OTT.It is worth mentioning that STC has reshaped the concept of visual content watching to a different attractive modern style that copes with the state of art sophisticated interactive services.

REGULATORY & POLICY NEWS

Three Belgian networks approved for radio spectrum auction

All three Belgian mobile networks have qualified for the country's forthcoming 800Mhz spectrum auction. With three applicants, there is now no chance of a new entrant into the market.Three licenses are available in total, each comprising 2 x 10 MHz, for a 20-year period. Each lot entails coverage obligations. One of the three licenses includes additional obligations as regards the coverage of a number of rural areas.The minimum price per license amounts to EUR 120 million, although the lack of a fourth bidder would suggest that the licenses will be sold for close to the reserve price when the auction starts.The auction will start on Tuesday, 12 November 2013.

Osiptel sets standards for coverage claims

Peru's telecoms watchdog Osiptel has implemented new measures to ensure that telcos cover at least 60% of any area in which they claim to have coverage. The new rules were first proposed in February in response to customer complaints that companies were marketing areas as 'covered', although their actual footprint in those locations was limited. Under the new regulations, operators must cover 30% of any province, district or town in which they operate within the next twelve months, increasing to 45% and 60% over the subsequent two years. Providers are also obliged to make coverage information available to the public, listing the information clearly on their web page and setting up a toll-free number for enquiries.

NCC to award fixed line licenses by early 2014

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) will begin the process of awarding regional licenses for the provision of fixed line and broadband services towards the end of the year or by early 2014, local newspaper The Punch cites NCC executive vice chairman Eugene Juwah as saying. The regulator is currently dividing the country into separate license regions, ahead of the launch of the bidding procedure. In October 2012 Juwah stated that the winning bidders of the regional concessions would be those requesting the lowest government subsidies to build the network.

NMHH reports cellular penetration at 116.9 percent at end-September

Hungary's telecoms regulator the National Media and Telecommunications Authority (NMHH) has said that the country was home to a total of 11.578 million registered SIM cards at the end of September 2013, up a net 76,146 connections from 11.501 million at 30 June, a cellular penetration rate of 116.9%. In terms of the number of SIMs actually generating traffic though (i.e. active users), the figure stood at 11.102 million by 30 September, up from 11.027 million three months earlier. The NMHH found that T-Mobile Hungary accounted for 46.06% of users (actually generating traffic) at end-September, ahead of Telenor, with 31.41%, and Vodafone in third with 22.54%.

BIPT approves all three bidders for 800MHz auction

With three companies having submitted applications to take part in the country's forthcoming auction of 800MHz spectrum, the Belgian Institute for Post and Telecommunications (BIPT) has now confirmed that it has approved all three would-be bidders. In announcing the development, the regulator has also now revealed the identities of those companies that will take part in the sale process, with those being Base Company, Belgacom and Mobistar.

Ofcom wants to quadruple 900MHz and 1800MHz mobile spectrum license fees

Communication industry regulator Ofcom has published a consultation about revising the license fees paid by UK mobile networks for the 900MHz and 1800MHz spectrum bands initially used for 2G and 3G services.In December 2010, the Government told Ofcom to revise these fees in line with current market values. In particular, Ofcom was required to consider the amounts paid in the recent 4G auction for 800MHz and 2.6GHz spectrum.As a result, Ofcom has calculated potential new license payments. It notes that the 'big four' mobile network operators currently pay a total of £24.8 million per year for 900MHz spectrum and £39.7 million for 1800 MHz spectrum.However, it believes they should be paying £138.5 million per year for the 900MHz frequencies and £170.4 million for 1800MHz.This would result in Vodafone and O2 each paying an extra £67.5 million per year, EE paying an extra £82.2 million and three paying an extra £27.4 million.The consultation closes on 19th December 2013, with new annual license fees expected to come into effect next year.

Nepalese watchdog to set guidelines for BTS design

National industry regulator Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) is preparing new guidelines concerning the design and build of base transceiver stations (BTS) in the country. Although the mountain nation's incumbents have been working continuously on the deployment of mobile towers across Nepal to expand service coverage and improve service quality, the NTA says it has contracted Consultancy and Hydro Research (CADS) to carry out a study on the assessment of safety of BTS nationwide. The CADS report is titled ´Development of Guideline for Analysis and Design of Telecommunication Tower, Earthquake/ Disaster Risk Assessment of BTS Towers and Vulnerability Assessment and Re-strengthening/ Retrofit for Vulnerable Tower´. Commenting on the development, NTA director Ananda Raj Khanal said: 'The consultant has prepared the detail draft report on various issues regarding safety. Once the NTA board allots the budget we will carry out a consultation workshop with various stakeholders, and will incorporate the feedback to finalize the guidelines.'

PTA opens consultation on the use of 2.6GHz frequency band

Iceland's telecoms watchdog the Post and Telecom Administration (PTA) has opened a public consultation on the prospective allocation of spectrum resources in the 2500MHz-2690MHz frequency band.According to a press release, the 23 channels, each with a bandwidth of 8MHz, are currently utilized for Multichannel Multipoint Distribution Service (MMDS) as follows:

- Vodafone Iceland (Fjarskipti hf.) is licensed to operate in the 2508MHz-2564MHz, 2572MHz-2644MHz and 2652MHz-2668MHz frequency bands until 27 June 2014;
- Broadcasting PLC: can operate in the 2564MHz-2572MHz frequency band until 27 June 2014; and
- The Christian Missionary Church hf. (Omega): has been authorized to use the 2668MHz-2676MHz frequency band until 27 June 2014.

MMDS, also known as wireless cable, can be used for general-purpose broadband networking, but is more commonly utilized as an alternative method of cable television broadcasting. The regulator, however, pointed out that Vodafone Iceland has requested an extension of its concession until 2020; the company has previously indicated that part of the 2.6GHz frequency band could be utilized for next generation access (NGA) broadband services, including 4G mobile services.

Banglalion, Qubee launching LTE following regulatory approval

Bangladeshi WiMAX operators Banglalion Communications and Augere Wireless Broadband (Qubee) have been given permission by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to upgrade their networks to faster TD-LTE services.Qubee will launch a trial LTE-based service this year after upgrading its network, its CEO Faisal Hyder said, as reported by the Daily Star. The BTRC disclosed that it initially granted approval for Qubee to upgrade to LTE at a meeting on 15 September, while the regulator published amendments to its licensing guideline on its website on 3 October, allowing all Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) licensees to provide LTE-based services. The Financial Express adds that the amendments to the BWA guidelines also keep open the option to issue more mobile WiMAX/LTE licenses in a bid to widen broadband internet connectivity across the country. Dhaka-based fixed-wireless WiMAX operator Ollo has already applied for the country's third BWA licence (which permits mobile WiMAX, and now LTE based services too), and is widely expected to succeed in its application as the regulator aims to introduce additional providers to the market to increase coverage and penetration, according to TeleGeography.

A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN THE SAMENA REGION

Active Consultations & Invitations for Feedback

Jordan

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) invites views and comments on the Public Consultation on "Top-Down Cost Accounting System for Dedicated Capacity and Narrowband Markets." TRC in 2010 took decisions in market analysis procedures thereby designating operators that enjoy significant market power (SMP). TRC levied remedies to be implemented in the Jordanian telecommunications market on these operators. The scope of this consultation is to present the draft regulatory decision by which TRC intends to set principles for providing top-down cost accounting system according to the market review decisions for the Wholesale Broadband Markets and the Wholesale Dedicated Capacity Markets. The cost accounting system shall be based on the accounting rules and reporting formats ("model principles") which will be set by the end of this consultation. TRC considers adopting top-down cost accounting principles ("model principles") as explained in this document. The aim of the consultation is to provide a basis for discussion and to consult the relevant issues with the industry. September 19, 2013 has been fixed for all operators and other stakeholders to provide their answers to the questions as well as comments and proposals to TRC. (August 2013) trc.gov.jo

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) invites views and comments on the Public Consultation on "Top-Down Cost Accounting System for Wholesale Broadband and Wholesale Dedicated Capacity Markets". The scope of this consultation is to present the draft regulatory decision by which TRC intends to set principles for providing top-down cost accounting system according to the market review decisions for the Wholesale Broadband Markets and the Wholesale Dedicated Capacity Markets. The cost accounting system shall be based on the accounting rules and reporting formats ("model principles") which will be set by the end of this consultation. TRC considers adopting top-down cost accounting principles ("model principles") as explained in this document. The aim of the consultation is to provide a basis for discussion and to consult the relevant issues with the industry. September 19, 2013 has been fixed for all operators and other stakeholders to provide their answers to the questions as well as comments and proposals to TRC. (August 2013) trc.gov.jo

Tunisia

The National Telecommunication Commission (INTT) invites views and comments on the Public Consultation on "The Draft Original Laws on the Right of Access to Information". The purpose of this consultation is to promote the principles of transparency and accountability in public sector, and to regain the confidence of citizens in public infrastructure through a series of measures, which represents a complete system for the actual implementation the right to access to information for the benefit of the user with the administration.
(September 4, 2013) www.intt.tn

The National Telecommunication Commission (INTT) as part of its program of action for the year 2013 under the tasks and duties conferred upon it by the Telecommunications Code and its implementing regulations, proposes to launch a consultation in selecting a firm specializing in the field of regulation and pricing of undersea cables to assist in the regulation of access to the head of the submarine cable. During this mission, the firm is required to attend the INT to appreciate the opportunity to regulate access to the head of submarine cable and to assess levels of access charges proposed by Tunisie Telecom under offers its Technical Interconnection and Tariff for 2013 and the decision to change the INT No. 67/2012 of 4 October 2012 on the complement of the Technical Offer Tariff and Interconnection of the National Telecommunications Company for 2012, relating to access to land landing station of the submarine cable (available on the website of the INT).
Indeed, the firm is required to:

- Expose the problem of regulation of submarine cables:
- indicate the advantages and disadvantages of regulating access to landing stations,
- Evaluate this practice based on a benchmark that highlights success stories
- Present different ways to access the landing station of the submarine cable
- Present best practices on pricing principles and the commercial terms relating to the provision of this service (bundled offer , detailed offer : backhaul, landing point with collocation, access to submarine cable access point international presence)
- Identify the elements and components of the costs of access to the head of submarine cable
- Specify for each element estimation method associated costs and propose a model costing to be implemented by public data and data estimated by the firm,
- Recommend INT rates to be adopted for the year 2013.

September 30, 2013 has been fixed as the last date to submit the Bids. (September 11, 2013) www.intt.tn

COUNTRY-WISE POLICY & REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

Algeria

Chairperson: Ms. Zohra Derdouri

[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]

The Regulatory Authority for Post and Telecommunications (ARPT) held a public bid opening for the award of 3G licenses in Algeria on September 15, 2013, in the presence of Zohra Derdouri, the new Minister of Post and Information Technology and Communication, and representatives of the three mobile operators. According to the article, the bids submitted by the three mobile operators – Mobilis, Nedjma and Djezzy – have all been accepted by the watchdog. The next stage of the bidding process includes the evaluation of the submitted proposals; the companies eligible to obtain 3G license will be announced on October 15. All successful bidders are required to provide 3G services in the towns of Algiers, Constantine, Oran and Ouargla by December 1, 2013. The ARPT launched a tender for the authorization of 3G mobile networks on August 1, 2013; the Algerian government previously postponed the long-awaited auction in order to complete the acquisition of local mobile operator Djezzy. (September 17, 2013) Daily Algerie Focus

Bahrain

Chairman: Dr. Mohammed Al Amer

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Bahrain's telecoms regulator, the TRA has announced that it has handed over LTE spectrum licenses to the country's three mobile network operators. The TRA's Chairman, Dr. Al Amer handed the licenses to Batelco, Zain and Viva at its headquarters. The license permits the use of LTE services over all three main frequency blocks currently used by the mobile networks, 900Mhz; 1800Mhz and 2.1Ghz. The regulator also confirmed that it has provided the necessary authorizations for Menatelecom to migrate its fixed-wireless service to LTE as well. (September 20, 2013) cellular-news.com

Bangladesh

Chairman: Sunil Kanti Bose

[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]

Grameenphone, Robi and Airtel received the licenses and NOCs but Banglalink was only given the NOC as it is yet to pay the spectrum fees. BTRC Chairman handed over the 15-year licenses to Airtel, Grameenphone and Robi in a ceremony at the regulator's office. After the presentation, he said the BTRC would give a directive on the quality of services immediately and everybody would be expected to maintain it. Grameenphone, the leader in Bangladesh's mobile market, and Robi both made full payments according to the guidelines, while Airtel paid Tk5.25bn just after the licensing award ceremony. Grameenphone acquired 10MHz of 3G spectrum for US$21m per MHz. RobiAxiata, Airtel and Banglalink obtained 5MHz of spectrum each. State-run operator Teletalk received 10MHz of spectrum by default for US$21m. The country's oldest operator Citycell did not apply for the auction since it had not paid the earnest sum of US$20m. (September 13, 2013) dhakatribune.com

Bangladesh's long delayed 3G license auction finally got under way with four mobile networks bidding for the available radio spectrum. By the end of bidding, the government had raised US$525 million from the mobile networks, and can expect to end up with US$735 million once the state-owned network's contribution is included. The largest mobile network, Grameenphone bid US$210 million for 10MHz of spectrum.

The other three bidders, Banglalink, Robi and Airtel each paid US$105 million for 5MHz of spectrum each. Citycell was refused permission to enter the auction after it missed the deadline to pay a deposit to the regulator. The state-owned Teletalk will have to pay $210 million for the 10 MHz of spectrum it was allocated last year -- matching the rates paid by the private networks. However, the auction has been seen as a bit of a disappointment, as the government was left with 15MHz of spectrum unsold at the end of the process. The regulator, the BTRC said that it will decide later what it will do with that unallocated block. There had been hopes that the auction would raise over US$1 billion for the government if the networks competed furiously for the spectrum, which in the end they did not. The ongoing tax disputes and the regulatory uncertainty may have acted as a damper on their willingness to bid high for spectrum that could be worth less in the future if the regulatory regime continues to remain hostile. (September 8, 2013) cellular-news.com

Egypt
Executive President: Dr. AmrBadawi
[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]

Egyptian fixed line incumbent Telecom Egypt (TE) has reportedly revealed that it expects to launch mobile voice services within the next three weeks, according to Ventures Africa. Citing TE CEO Mohamed Al-Nawawy, the report claims that the operator is aiming to sign up around 1.5 million customers in the first phase of its launch as a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO), though it was not clarified how long that phase would last. Meanwhile, the executive was also said to have confirmed that TE will offer services at some 2,000 outlets across the country. In July 2013 Telecom Egypt was said to be in talks with mobile operators about potential wholesale deals which would allow it to launch as a virtual operator. At that date Al-Nawawy was cited in the local press as saying that TE was discussing details of possible wholesale deals while it awaited the allocation of a license to allow it to launch as a mobile reseller. Further, the executive also noted that his company had increased the frequency of its regular meetings with the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) in order to discuss the possibility of obtaining a new integrated license for fixed and mobile services. (September 6, 2013) telegeography.com

Iran
Minister of communication & Information Technology:
[Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC)]

The Iranian government has reportedly unblocked access to social media websites like Facebook and Twitter on September 16, 2013, after four years of censorship. However, no official statement from the Iranian government on the loosening of restrictions has been published thus far. In January 2013 the government of Iran confirmed that it was working on the development of new smart filtering software which would enable internet users in the country to gain limited access to currently banned social networking sites. Police chief said at the time that Smart control of social networks is better than filtering them completely. The government introduced a national intranet service which contains only approved content in the summer of 2009, while the conventional World Wide Web was heavily restricted to remove content which was considered as 'un-Islamic'. (September 17, 2013) Reuters

Iraq
CEO: Dr. Buhan Shawi
[Communication & Media Commission (CMC)]

The Iraqi authorities are believed to be close to making an announcement regarding the anticipated launch of a 3G auction in the country, which is likely to herald the introduction of a new entrant into the market. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has been advising the government on the process since February this year, and a formal tender is now said to be 'imminent'. Iraq is currently home to three national mobile network operators: Zain, Asiacell and Korek Telecom, while the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region is also covered by Mobitel and Regional Telecom. The Kurdistan Region boasts its own independent regulator, the Ministry of Communications (MoC KRG), and its activities fall outside of the remit of the Communications and Media Commission.

(September 23, 2013) TMT Finance

Jordan
Chairman of the Board of Commissioners/CEO: Mr. Mohammad Al Taani
[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) has published a Green Paper analyzing the impact of convergent services in Jordan's telecoms sector, and proposing new regulatory measures to tackle the challenges it poses. The TRC notes that distribution of competencies and jurisdictions between itself and sister-regulator the Audiovisual Commission (AVC) has left a regulatory vacuum: the AVC regulates content delivered over terrestrial frequencies but has no authority if the content is delivered via satellite, cable or IP. The TRC meanwhile regulates the provision of data services over telecoms networks, but has no authority regarding content. According to the TRC, the separation between the two sets of regulations 'is simply leaving convergent services to market forces and thus compromising the realization of a level playing field.' Potential solutions proposed by the regulator include the imposition of a completely new set of rules – which the TRC said would create legal certainty but might be too distant from the needs of the market – the merging of the two bodies, or the expansion of the AVC's remit to include content delivered through any means of distribution. Comments and suggestions from this initial paper will be taken into account before a modified paper is presented to the public on 19 September. Technical committees to implement the changes will be established by December and the regulations are expected to be in place by June 2014. (September 9, 2013) telegeography.com

Kuwait
Minister of Communication: Salem Mutheyeb Ahmed Al-Utheina
[Ministry of Communication (MOC)]

Leading telecommunication companies from Kuwait met to discuss issues related to the regulatory trends and case studies in the region recently. The South Asia, Middle East, North Africa region's SAMENA Telecommunication Council in partnership with VIVA Kuwait, held its Regulatory Summit titled 'Regulation 4.0' with the main theme of 'Toward a Healthy Sustainable Regulatory Environment for All Stakeholders'. The discussed issues included: regulatory trends and case studies from the SAMENA region; efficient implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks digitization; opportunity to foster growth; public and private sectors partnership and an approach to accelerate broadband development. The key aspect of Regulation 4.0, therefore, is a more dynamic regulatory framework which is based on creating a more flexible environment; promoting an integrated market; granting access and designing clear net neutrality rules; shifting the focus of national regulators towards new challenges (such as quality monitoring); establishing dynamic efficiency as the center-pieces of regulatory policies; strengthening technological neutrality as a basic principle.

Kuwait's Minister of Communications said that there is an urgent need to create a true solid partnership between the public and private sector as the private one has improved its major and important role in providing a quality services especially in what concerns telecommunication technologies. The Government strives to provide an attractive environment to encourage investments in the telecommunication industry as being one of the fundamental basis that indicates the level of technology and development any country obtains. SAMENA Council CEO Bocar BA, told that the summit's main goal is to find new approaches, which improve investment activities and provide more flexibility while maintaining and even fostering competition. (September 5, 2013) TradeArabia News Service

Lebanon

Acting Chairman & CEO: Dr. Imad Hoballah

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Lebanon's telecoms revenues have seen a moderate decline this year amid a slowing economy and customers shifting away from text and calls to free messaging and Voice over Internet Protocol applications. "So far this year, there is a small decline in revenues of no more than 3%," caretaker Telecoms Minister Nicolas Sehnaoui told in an interview. Finance Ministry figures released last week show financial transfers from the Telecoms Ministry to the Treasury declined 14.35% in the first five months of the year to US$510 million – nearly US$85 million lower than reported in same period last year. Still, at around 12% of all financial receipts by the Lebanese Treasury, telecoms revenues are one of the largest sources of state income. But Sehnaoui said the figure was not indicator of a sharp decline in revenues. Lebanon's two state-owned but privately managed mobile operators have been investing in extending 3G coverage and both have launched 4G services in Beirut earlier this year. Asked if customers shifting to VoIP and free mobile messaging applications were harming revenues, Sehnaoui said that while voice revenues had decreased over last year they were compensated to a large extent by a surge in data revenues. The minister said that the two telecoms operators had been carefully tailoring data plans to avoid any sharp declines in profits such as happened in other countries. But the state monopoly over the sector continues to be highlighted as a major obstacle for growth. "[The Lebanese government's] tight control over the Lebanese telecommunications sector is holding back investments and innovation, while the lack of competition in the mobile and broadband segments is restraining growth," a Byblos Bank newsletter quoted a report by Business Monitor International as saying. The report said the number of mobile phone subscriptions was projected to reach 4.4 million by the end of the year, up 10% from 4 million subscriptions in 2012. By the end of the year mobile phone penetration in Lebanon will exceed 100%, the report added, forecasting a gradual increase to 110.1 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2017. Yet 3G services in Lebanon via handsets, tablets and other 3G-enabled devices will see a whopping increase of 50% from 1.1 million in 2012, the report said. Even with the moderate decline in direct revenues, the minister said there would be an overall increase in income from the sector. A new initiative to curb mobile smuggling is expected to add at least $60 million by the end of the year. In May, the government started utilizing the International Mobile Station Equipment Identity, a unique number assigned by manufacturers to every handset, to curb smuggling. Asked if the influx of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees was increasing telecoms demand, Sehnaoui said that according to a study conducted by his ministry, only one in ten refugees was subscribing. "This means that there might be around 100,000 new subscriptions but the impact on revenues is very low, because most of them are low budget users," he said. (September 10, 2013) The Daily Star

Libya

Minister: Osama Siala

[(Ministry of Telecommunications & Informatics)]

Libya will launch a tender in 2014 for the award of the country's first private mobile phone license said the Communications Minister. The country's two publicly-owned providers have more than eight million subscribers, one of the highest penetration rates in Africa, but Libya has no private mobile telecoms operators. The ministry got the green light from the cabinet, from the prime minister and from the telecommunications committee of the General National Congress, the country's highest political authority. We in the ministry would prefer the new operator to be foreign. But that will depend on a law on encouraging foreign investment that is being studied in the GNC, minister added. "According to the legal framework that will be adopted, we will decide if the candidates need to be foreign, Libyan, or in a joint-venture," he said. (September 26, 2013) bizcommunity.com

Libya plans to list state-owned Libyana in 2014. The Libyan Post, Telecommunication and Information Technology Company (LPTIC) own the country's two mobile operators, Al Madar and Libyana, as well as Libya's main internet provider. Libyana, which has annual revenue in excess of US$ 1 billion, has about 70% of the market. LPTIC chairman Faisal Gergarb said it wants to carry out an IPO in Tripoli in 2014, adding that the time frame is the second quarter. Gergarb said it depends on whether the stock exchange is ready and on Libyana as well. He did not give further details. Gergab also said LPTIC plans to use Al Madar as a platform to invest internationally. The two operators have some 10 million subscribers, he added. Libya's telecoms ministry has already announced plans to launch a tender next year to award the country's first private mobile phone license.
(September 20, 2013) africatelecomit.com

Morocco

Director General: M. Azdine El MountassirBillah

[Agence Nationale de Reglementation des Telecommunications (ANRT)]

Minister of Foreign Affairs has announced that UAE-based telecoms group Etisalat's long awaited acquisition of Maroc Telecom, a subsidiary of French media conglomerate Vivendi, will be finalized in one or two months. However, the government official did not provide any further details on the deal. In July 2013 Vivendi entered into exclusive negotiations with Etisalat for the sale of the controlling stake in Morocco's leading telco, valued at EUR4.2 billion (US$5.54 billion) at the time. Vivendi Universal holds 53% of Maroc Telecom via its wholly owned subsidiary Societe de Participation dans les Telecommunications. Meanwhile, 30% of the company is owned by the local government and the remainder of the shares are floated on the local bourse. (September 12, 2013) Reuters

Telecommunications regulator ANRT has announced that it has authorized the country's three mobile phone operators to deploy Wi-Fi hotspots for "the purpose of spreading broadband Internet use across the Kingdom." The move has been praised by experts who believe Morocco's growth and economic future depends largely on how quickly and adequately it can build its Internet and broadband base. Morocco's mobile penetration stands at over 100 percent and demand for bandwidth continues to grow. ANRT Director Azdine El Mountassir Billah has announced that LTE will not be launched commercially before end-2014 or start-2015. When he addressed this topic in May, the regulator said the auction process "would begin before the end of 2013, so that the license winners would be known for the start of the next

year." It is unknown if this process will be followed or if this would mean a delay in the LTE rollout. Either way, IT experts believe that the LTE will help push the country forward and into the Internet age for all Moroccans and not only those in larger cities. (September 9, 2013) itnewsafrica.com

Telecoms regulator ANRT has announced that 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology will be available in the country by early-2015. The executive revealed that the 4G auction should be completed by the end of 2013, and the successful bidders will be announced in early 2014. LTE-suitable spectrum was to be awarded to Moroccan cellcos in a process starting in autumn 2012, with an auction set to take place in early 2013, potentially allowing the entry of a fourth player. The licensing plan was designed to allow the launch of 4G services (and potentially a new operator) by the end of 2013. However, it was not until May 2013 that Morocco's telecoms watchdog actually announced its plans to launch an auction for the 4G frequency resources. (September 6, 2013) Agence Ecofin

Nepal
Chairman: Mr. Digambar Jha
[Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTR)]

Nepal's government is a step closer to issuing unified licenses that would permit all telecoms providers to offer GSM based mobile services after the country's Supreme Court scrapped the cases it was due to hear opposing the unified licenses. A total of seven cases had been filed with the Court opposing the licenses, but have now all been rejected. "The decision has opened the door for big investment in the telecom sector and its further development," said acting chief of the telecoms regulator, the NTA. At the moment, there are two mobile networks, Nepal Telecom and Ncell. Three other companies have applied for the unified licenses, Smart Telecom, United Telecom and CG Communications. Applicants for a unified license will have to pay Rs 357.5 million for the license and a further Rs 20.13 billion over the next 10 years on installment basis. In addition, there is a 4% royalty, 2 percent Rural Telecommunication Development Fund and frequency fees to the government. The ruling also opens the opportunity to offer 3G and LTE licenses. (September 23, 2013) cellular-news.com

A study carried out by a team led by Gyanendra Man Baidhya, telecom expert on national numbering, had recommended to the NTA to implement a new numbering system with 10-digit numbers. Meanwhile, the new system will also pave the way for new operators to get operator codes for mobile services in a standardized way. Nepal's six telecom companies—Ncell, NT, Smart Telecom, UTL, Nepal Satellite Telecom and CG Communications—can potentially serve more than 50 million subscribers under the existing numbering system. "After full implementation of the NNP, there will be a number capacity for over 200 million potential users, which means we will not run out of phone numbers for the next 30 years," said an NTA official. The study report, which was submitted to the NTA recently, has also urged the government to charge a certain fee from operators for each phone number they maintain in their system. Pursuant to the report's recommendations, the NTA is preparing to carry out a study and fix the charges for phone lines after separating them into commercial and non-commercial. The idea was to best utilize scarce numbering and discourage operators from hoarding numbers. Bangladesh and Pakistan have been charging per subscriber fees from their operators annually. The NTA said it would start collecting feedback on the NNP to finalize it and ask the board for its approval. The NTA Confronted by a swelling number of operators and demand for telephone lines, the NTA had been planning to implement the new national numbering system for the last two years. NTA officials said there would be some major changes to normal landlines and short codes provided for commercial purposes. (September 6, 2013) ekantipur.com

Oman
Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Hamed Al-Rawahi
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The number of fixed-phone service subscribers in the sultanate rose 11% to 337,933 at the end of July this year from 304,545 at the end of last year. Statistics issued by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show that the number of billed fixed-phone service subscribers jumped to 258,502 at the end of July from 225,922 at the end of 2012. The prepaid fixed phone service (Sahl) subscriber base increased to 25,520 from 26,065. The number of public phones all over the sultanate stood at 6,801. The number of integrated services digital networks (ISDNs) stood at 45,282 compared with 43,888 at the end of last year. NCSI data showed that the number of fixed-line subscribers in the Muscat governorate stood at 161,562 at the end of July 2013, which was followed by the governorates of South and North Batinah (38,607), Dhofar (25,073), Dakhiliyah (21,271), South and North Sharqiyah (18,485), Dhahirah (8,127), Buraimi (6,965), Musandam (3,256) and Al Wusta (676). The billed and prepaid GSM service subscriber base rose 3.3% to 5.45mn at the end of July from 5.28mn by the end of 2012. Billed GSM service numbers jumped 5.3% to 489,370 from 464,670, while the prepaid GSM service added 3.1% users to 4.96mn. The number of subscribers of the phone Internet service fell 21.3% to 4,780. (September 17, 2013) zawya.com

The government of Oman is to sell off a 19% stake in the country's former monopoly PTO Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) via a public sale. The state will offload 27% of its shares equivalent to 19% of Omantel's share capital to Omani institutional and individual investors, with the stake valued at around OMR221 million (US$574 million). The government currently has a 70% interest in Omantel, so the sale will reduce state ownership to 51%; 30% of the telco is already publicly owned. In July 2008 the Omani government announced a plan to sell a 25% stake in Omantel, aimed at boosting the firm's competitive position, but the sale was later cancelled due to market volatility and economic conditions. Omantel controls around 60% of Oman's cellular and broadband markets, but is still virtually unchallenged in the fixed line arena where it accounts for more than 96% of all lines in service. (September 17, 2013) Bloomberg

The government of Oman is aiming to increase access to broadband services to at least 60% of the Sultanate by 2017. According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, government departments, universities, industrial estates and commercial complexes will have access to broadband download speeds of 1Gbps under the plans, while Oman is also aiming to cover 80% of urban areas with download speeds of between 20Mbps and 100Mbps. According to the latest statistics from the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) Oman was home to 122,124 fixed broadband subscribers at the end of March 2013, up 7.8% from 113,324 three months earlier and translating to a household penetration rate of around 30%, while mobile broadband customers totaled 1.89 million, an increase of 15.4% quarter-on-quarter. (September 10, 2013) Oman Daily Observer

Pakistan
Chairman: Dr. Syed Ismail Shah
[Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)]

The government of Pakistan appointed Dr. Syed Ismail Shah

as Member Technical of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and also gave him the additional charge of the PTA Chairman until further orders, according to a notification issued by the Establishment Division. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority has been without a Chairman and Members for the last few months. Recently, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had directed the government to appoint a PTA Chairman and its Members and also to auction 3G licenses. Other members who have been appointed included Mr. Tariq Sultan as Member Finance and former Justice Mr. Muhammad Raza Khan Secretary, Law, Justice and Human Rights Division has been assigned the charge of Member Compliance and Enforcement of Pakistan Telecommunication in addition to his own duties. Sources said that the Prime Minister's special commission for the appointments on these government posts has shortlisted these officials for the posts. Meanwhile, the telecom sector players have welcomed the government's decision to appoint Dr. Ismail Shah and Tariq Sultan and said that the incumbents have been considered people of high integrity. Experts expressed the hope that now the issues related to the sector will be resolved as these members are thorough professionals and are expert in their fields. The sector is also positive that Dr. Shah will play a crucial role in devising a comprehensive telecom policy for promoting latest technology such as 3G with his professional, research and academic expertise and soon the issue of 3G licenses will be resolved and the auction will be carried out in a transparent manner. Shah was also the member of Telecom Ministry of Information Technology (MoIT) and was removed by the IT Secretary Farooq Awan; however, the Islamabad High Court had restored him. Later, the Lahore High Court dismissed the appointment of Awan as the PTA chairman after the court declared his appointment to have been made on a political basis and unconstitutional.
(September 27, 2013) thenews.com.pk

Fixed line incumbent Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL) is set to invest in a fourth submarine cable system as part of a consortium alongside as-yet unnamed leading operators in the region, the company announced in a press release. The cable will span from the Far East to Europe, with landing stations in the Middle East. PTCL expects to sign final agreements before the end of the year, with the cable due to be operational by Q4 2015. The telco said that the cable would add 'terrabits of bandwidth in its international capacity' as well as 'building redundancy to its existing international infrastructure on [the] eastern and western sides of the Arabian sea. (September 9, 2013) telegeography.com

Qatar

Executive Director: Mr. Greame Gordon

[The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR)]

The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) is striving to improve competition. Qatar possesses a well developed telecoms market that enjoys high fixed line and mobile penetration. A rapidly growing population due to Qatar's infrastructure building boom has presented a considerable growth opportunity for Qatar's two telcos, Ooredoo (Qtel) and Vodafone Qatar. Qatar's communications regulator, ictQATAR, has been increasingly active in creating an environment conducive to competition, imposing obligations on Ooredoo to offer equal access to competitors to its network ducts, dark fibers and collocation spaces as well as offering network interconnection and wholesale transmission services. Broadband penetration is among the highest in the region, with services available via ADSL, Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH), wireless and mobile. Recognizing the inherent opportunities in faster communications, Qatar has embarked on developing a national fiber-based access network, known as QNBN. Services are offered on a wholesale basis, with plans to extend 100Mb/s services to 95% of homes by 2015. Recognizing the potential of applying ICT to improve both social and economic development, Qatar has taken steps to develop a knowledge-based society as part of its wider socioeconomic development goals as stated in National Development Strategy document Qatar National Vision 2030. Strategies and specific initiatives have been launched in the areas of e-commerce, e-government, e-health, e-education and smart grids. Mobile services are offered by a duopoly comprised of Ooredoo and Vodafone Qatar. Since launching services Vodafone Qatar has managed to grab a third of the market, with its share likely to increase due to introduction of mobile number portability. Both Ooredoo and Vodafone Qatar have launched mobile broadband services underpinned by 3G or LTE networks. Adoption of such services provides a new revenue growth opportunity as the mobile voice market comes under increased competition. (September 2013) budde.com.au

Saudi Arabia

Governor: Eng. Abdullah A. Al Darrab

[Communication & Information Technology Commission (CITC)]

Saudi Telecom Company (STC) has revealed that its 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) network now covers 76.1% of the Kingdom's population. The network, which was launched in September 2011, now comprises more than 7,000 base stations, and the operator is continuing to expand its footprint with a view to reaching its target of 90% coverage by end-2014. STC claims it currently handles over 90% of all data traffic in Saudi Arabia over its fixed and wireless networks which connect to various international submarine cables such as SEA-ME-WE-3, SEA-ME-WE-4 and FLAG.

(September 24, 2013) telecompaper.com

The Saudi stock market recorded mild losses (-0.4%) trimming back the 8,000-mark. Saudi Arabia's benchmark stock index (TASI) closed lower to 7,998.21, shedding 32.37 points for the entire day. After falling over fifty points during the session it bottomed out at 7,979.4 points level and started to rise again but ended below the break-even line. On year-to-date basis, the TASI's yield reached 17.6%. All market cap indices finished to the downside, with large cap falling over 0.6%. Etihad Etisalat Co. (Mobily), Samba Financial Group and market leader SABIC (Saudi Basic Industries Corp.) performed worst among large caps, dipping by 2.03%, 1.41% and 1.03% respectively. Again four out of Tadawul's 15 sectors witnessed a positive change, accumulating 35.5 points merely. Rest of the 11 sectors closed in the downward district, paring an aggregate of 420 points. Telecommunication & Information Technology switched its position from top performer of previous day to the worst performing sector of the day, declining by 1.14% to 2,494.90.

(September 19, 2013) arabnews.com

Economists confirm that e-commerce in Saudi Arabia is experiencing a high growth, estimating its value at SR15 billion per year. The size of the market is expected to increase at high rates in the coming years due to the eradication of trading obstacles, creating an ideal solution for buying low priced items and with minimal effort. The Kingdom is progressing fastest among all the Arab countries in the field of e-commerce as witnessed by the significant expansion in this area during the past two years, according to sources. The progress is due to the support of development in communications technology, and has allowed the acquiring of various goods at lower prices compared to what exists in

the market. However, a number of risks and challenges are associated with shopping online, namely the possibility of the leakage credit card information abroad, the incompatibility of expectations and the product received, and the new nature of this type of shopping. The high price of Internet connections in the Kingdom, as compared to the other developed countries, is also a problem. Fadl bin Saad Al-Buainain, an economic expert, estimated the volume of e-Commerce trade in Saudi Arabia to be more than SR15 billion annually, adding that the Kingdom is advancing with all Arab countries in this area, and ranks first among Arab countries in terms of e-procurement practices. Albuainain indicated that e-commerce in Saudi Arabia has witnessed significant growth over the past two years as a result of support in the development of technology and of direct communications with global retailers. Such expansions, he confirmed, will allow for the purchase of international brands, mostly apparel and electronic devices. Price is the main factor and that is motivating citizens toward e-procurement instead of buying locally. Regarding the risks associated with shopping online, these risks are reduced when dealing with the known international companies, he said. The cost of providing fiber optic service to homes in the Kingdom is double the cost in a country like the United States of America. He also stressed the importance of issuing laws and regulations to protect both the seller and customers on the Internet, which could resemble similar laws in other countries with slight modifications to fit the Saudi market. (September 2, 2013) zawya.com

Sri Lanka
Director General: Mr. Anusha Palpita
[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

The Sri Lankan Cabinet has approved the launch of Phase 2 of its e-Sri Lanka Development Initiative, subject to stipulations laid down by the General Treasury. The e-Sri Lanka project is an ICT development strategy implemented by the ICT Agency (ICTA) of Sri Lanka with the primary objective of leveraging ICT to development the national economy, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life. It consists of six programs which include ICT Policy, Leadership and Institutional Development, Information Infrastructure, Re-engineering Government, Human Resource Development, ICT Investment and Private Sector Development, and e-Society. Launched in 2004 in collaboration with World Bank and costing US$ 83 million, Phase 1 of the project is scheduled to close in December 2013. According to the latest project development indicators by the World Bank, the number of citizens and businesses who have access to and use online public services rose from zero to 5.8 million as of September 2011. 80% of target areas had improved access to and used ICT as of March 2011. Phase 2 of the project is to be implemented over five to six years, starting in the first quarter of 2014.
(September 16, 2013) futuregov.asia

Tunisia
President: Mr. Hassoumi Zitoune
[National Telecommunication Commission (INTT)]

South Korea based Korea Telecom (KT) has confirmed that it is considering bidding for a stake in a North African mobile network operator. In a stock market filing, KT Corp said that it is reviewing a possible purchase of a stake in Tunisia based Tunisie Telecom. A 35% stake in the state-controlled company is being sold by its Dubai owners, who look likely to book a significant loss on the investment. They paid US$2.25 billion for the stake in 2006, but it is now estimated to be worth around US$650 million. "The talks are still in the early stage and nothing has been decided yet," it said, adding that it is also seeking to expand its presence in other African countries. The company recently dropped out of bidding for a controlling stake in the Morocco based Maroc Telecom. The Tunisian government has previously said that it would like to see the company listed on the local stock market, although those plans were put on hold by the ousting of the previous President by a popular uprising. (September 17, 2013) cellular-news.com

United Arab Emirates
Director General: Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) hosted an awareness workshop on the threats and negative economic impact that counterfeit devices pose to the UAE. As part of its on-going efforts to safeguard the communications environment in the UAE, the workshop aims to raise awareness around the importance of using approved and high quality communication devices while introducing participants to the range of counterfeit devices available in the market today and the dangers these devices pose to the growth of the UAEs telecommunications industry. Commenting on the event, Ahmed Al Shamsi, Manager Type Approval in the TRA said, "The TRA is committed to educating both government departments and the general public on the risks involved in the use and spread of counterfeit devices that include commercial impact; trademark protection; health risks and risks to user data and privacy. The TRA shares a strong bond with other government departments in the UAE who are all committed to ensuring a safe communications environment in the country." "By organizing this workshop, we aim to create further awareness amongst economic departments, so that we can work together to combat the commercial negativity that threatens the safety and security of the community. The workshop will also support the economic departments in its effort to limit the spread of counterfeit devices and guarantee trademark protection". (September 16, 2013) zawya.com

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has implemented the fifth and penultimate phase of its SIM re-registration campaign 'My Number, My Identity', which was launched in July 2012 and is scheduled to end at the start of 2014. The 18-month initiative is being implemented in collaboration with the country's two licensed telecoms operators, Etisalat and Du, to increase awareness of new registration procedures for mobile services and requires subscribers to update their personal data and ensure that their SIM cards are registered under their name to prevent misuse. 'My Number, My Identity' is divided into six stages, each of which targets a different group of subscribers; during the remaining two phases, around four million customers will be required to re-register their details. 'The campaign focuses on the procedures that will be taken by the TRA to ensure the transparency in dealing with mobile subscribers and protecting their privacy if misuse occurs by users who use mobile services not registered under their names,' noted TRA Director General adding: 'According to the latest statistics registered during the month of August 2013, more than twelve million subscribers have registered and updated their data packages.' He revealed that Etisalat and Du have together suspended the service of around three million subscribers during the last few phases of the campaign, and said that the two operators have also started to gradually disconnect customers who were targeted during the earlier stages. (September 2, 2013) telegeography.com

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SAMENA REGION

ITU

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) working in partnership with the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) has announced that frequency coordination negotiations have succeeded in setting up the mechanism to deploy digital television in 47 sub-Saharan African countries, with the by-product of freeing up the 700MHz and 800MHz spectrum bands for 4G LTE mobile broadband networks. The consolidation of national plans to implement the analogue-to-digital TV switchover in the African region is in conformity with the deadlines of June 2015 (for UHF) and June 2020 (for VHF in 33 countries) set in 2006 by the ITU's Regional Radiocommunication Conference (RRC-06), which adopted the GE06 TV Plan. The ITU's press release states that the frequency coordination agreement puts Africa in a position to allocate bandwidth freed up by the transition to digital TV – the 'digital dividend' – to mobile services for both the 700MHz and 800MHz bands from 2015. Decisions of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2012 (WRC-12) to facilitate availability of the digital dividend to mobile services will be effective with some technical refinements immediately after the next World Radiocommunication Conference in 2015 (WRC-15), the release added. Francois Rancy, Director of the ITU Radiocommunication Bureau, announced that sub-Saharan African countries have begun submitting official modifications to the aforementioned GE06 Plan following the final frequency coordination meeting held in Nairobi, July 17-19, 2013 and the deadline of August 31 set for notifications. Rancy said: 'The objective was to enable African countries to allocate the digital dividend to mobile services in the band 694MHz-862MHz, as a regionally harmonized implementation of the decisions taken at WRC-12. This objective was reached by re-planning the spectrum requirements of television broadcasting in the 470MHz-694MHz frequency band.'
(September 10, 2013) telegeography.com

SAMENA

The SAMENA Telecommunication Council in partnership with VIVA Kuwait held its Regulatory Summit in presence of His Excellency, Mr. Issa Al Kandari - the Minister of Communications in Kuwait. The summit took place at The Regency Hotel Kuwait and was attended by a variety of panels, media and telecommunication industry stakeholders. Leading telecommunication companies from Kuwait met to discuss Regulation 4.0 which held a main theme of "Toward a Healthy Sustainable Regulatory Environment for All Stakeholders". The discussed issues included: regulatory trends and case studies from the SAMENA region; efficient implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks digitization; opportunity to foster growth; public and private sectors partnership and an approach to accelerate broadband development. The key aspect of Regulation 4.0, therefore, is a more dynamic regulatory framework which is based on creating a more flexible environment; promoting an integrated market; granting access and designing clear net neutrality rules; shifting the focus of national regulators towards new challenges (such as quality monitoring); establishing dynamic efficiency as the centre-pieces of regulatory policies; strengthening technological neutrality as a basic principle. His Excellency, Issa Al Kandari the Minister of Communications said, "There is an urgent need to create a true solid partnership between the public and private sector as the private one has improved its major and important

role in providing a quality services especially in what concerns telecommunication technologies" he added: "The Government strives to provide an attractive environment to encourage investments in the telecommunication industry as being one of the fundamental basis that indicates the level of technology and development any country obtains". The CEO of SAMENA Council, Mr. Bocar BA, said "SAMENA region is a great market for the telecommunication industry where there are many opportunities for development but yet there are still many challenges. The summit's main goal is to find new approaches, which improve investment activities and provide more flexibility while maintaining and even fostering competition." VIVA's Chief Executive Officer Eng. Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Badran, said: "This event aims to develop the communication industry in the SAMENA region. It has been proven worldwide that a proactive regulatory environment is essential for the growth of information & communication technology and its applications, and for the development of an information society in any country." The successful Kuwait Regulatory Summit will have been one of the key stepping stones in the development of telecommunication and the progress of Kuwait. (September 5, 2013) samenacouncil.org

GCC

Implementation of the second phase of international roaming rates applied among GCC countries will be discussed by the GCC Roaming Committee at a meeting in Manama. It includes roaming cost for receiving smart phone services (data transmitted over the Internet) - which have been very popular in GCC countries over the past two years - in addition to unification of intra-GCC roaming charges. The move will help resolve problems facing consumers in Bahrain and other GCC countries, particularly with the spread of recently introduced smart devices that automatically update data while roaming, resulting in inflated monthly mobile bills, a Telecommunications Regulatory Authority source told our sister paper Akhbar Al Khaleej. He said the committee will designate an international consultancy firm to conduct a six- to nine-month study on the second phase of international roaming rate regulation after the success of the first phase that included unification of the cost of receiving calls while roaming in GCC countries. The study will regulate roaming charges for the end-user and unify the billing system on the basis of per second billing instead of the per minute billing, says the source. He said Bahrain will play a pivotal role in this regard thanks to its outstanding experts in the field of communication and Information Technology as well as its success in implementing the first phase since February 2012. The GCC ministerial committee of Posts, Communication and Information Technology chaired by Minister of State for Communications Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa held a meeting in Manama on Wednesday.
(September 9, 2013) tradearabia.com

United States

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has approved AT&T Mobility's proposed US$780 million purchase of Atlantic Tele-Network Inc's (ATNI's) retail wireless business, which operates under the 'Alltel' brand. Previously, in August this year the watchdog halted its review into the transaction 175 days into the 180-day process, after concerns over AT&T's transition strategy for Alltel's pre-paid subscribers. While acknowledging that the deals will 'likely cause some competitive and other public interest harms in several local markets', the FCC noted that AT&T has accepted a number of conditions, including the maintenance of Alltel's CDMA2000 EV-DO network until at least June 2015. Further, AT&T is committed to covering Alltel's entire CDMA network footprint with HSPA+ technology within 15 months of the transaction closing. Meanwhile, 75% of Alltel's users will be granted access to Long Term Evolution (LTE) services on AT&T's network within 18 months of closing, rising to 85% within 36. Through the deal AT&T will acquire 10MHz to 57MHz of spectrum in 162 counties in 30 Cellular Market Areas (CMA) across Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, and Washington, as well as Allied's retail operations located in mostly rural parts of Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, North Carolina, Ohio and South Carolina. The smaller company claimed s subscriber base of 590,728 at 30 June 2013. (September 23, 2013) telegeography.com

The Federal Communications Commission will be auctioning off a slice of national spectrum for the first time in 5 years on January 14, 2014. The block known as PCH H and in the 1900MHz band will be opening up at a minimum bid of $1.56 billion. The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act passed in 2012 mandated that block of spectrum be auctioned off in order to contribute funding to a program to build an LTE network for police, fire officials and other first responders. Android Central speculates that companies Sprint and Dish may show interest in the auction because they own slices of adjacent spectrum.
(September 16, 2013) sys-con.com

USA based AT&T says that it has completed its acquisition of wireless spectrum in the lower 700 MHz band B block from Verizon Wireless. The acquired licenses cover 42 million people in 18 states. AT&T said that the spectrum would support is deployment of LTE network, which currently covers more than 225 million people, with plans to reach nearly 270 million people by the end of 2013, and to substantially complete the build by summer 2014. AT&T's plans to deploy 4G LTE include the areas covered by this spectrum. In exchange for the 700 MHz spectrum, AT&T paid $1.9 billion in cash and transferred Advanced Wireless Services (AWS) spectrum licenses in Phoenix, Ariz.; Los Angeles and Fresno, Calif.; Albuquerque, N.M.; and Portland, Ore. (September 11, 2013) cellular-news.com

Canada

Some 15 companies have tendered applications to bid for 700MHz spectrum in an auction scheduled for January 2014, said Canada's government this week. The list of prospective bidders includes the country's three incumbent operators as well as new entrant Wind Mobile. However, the list of candidates includes no foreign entities despite long-running speculation that Verizon Wireless was looking to enter the Canadian market through a potential takeover of a small operator and likely participation in the frequency sale. Last week, Verizon Wireless was reported to have ruled itself out of bidding, along with smaller US rivals Sprint and T-Mobile US. Although AT&T had remained coy on the subject of its interest in Canadian spectrum, this week's government announcement confirms that no US operators will participate in the frequency auction. The news will come as relief to Rogers, Bell Canada and Telus Canada's big three operators which had complained that frequency-auction rules were designed to favor new entrants from south of the border. Canadian authorities have been quick to defend their policies as pro-competitive amid complaints about the dominance of the incumbent operators. "Well before this summer's public debate on wireless policy, our government

introduced a number of measures to create more choice in Canada's wireless market and to defend consumers," said James Moore, Canada's Industry Minister. "As a result, prices have come down, the number of jobs in the wireless sector has increased and consumers have more choices. This trend will continue as a result of January's auction." Besides the telecoms incumbents, the list of bidders includes a number of telecoms and TV players but not Mobilicity, the new entrant that was cited as a potential takeover target for Verizon Wireless. However, it does feature a player called Feenix Wireless. Canadian authorities expect the auction to aid the deployment of high-speed mobile networks and have said that proceedings will begin on January 14 2014. (September 23, 2013) telecomengine.com

Mexico

Communications regulator says that it has secured an agreement with companies holding large unused chunks of radio spectrum that could see them resold for use by mobile broadband services. A ministry spokesman told that a "general" agreement had been reached, but there are details that still need to be worked out. As part of a wider program, the government announced last year that it would not renew any of the expiring 2.5GHz radio spectrum licenses and would claw back the spectrum with the leases expired. The most significantly affected company is MVS Comunicaciones, which has 190MHz of spectrum in the affected block. MVS holds 42 of the available 68 concessions in the spectrum band. MVS took legal action to appeal the decision, and earlier this year won its appeal. Since then the government has been seeking a negotiated compromise. Local media reports suggest that the compromise deal would see the government reclaiming two-thirds of the spectrum, although that hasn't been confirmed. The move is part of a wider reform of the local telecoms market to introduce more competition and erode the dominance of America Movil in the country. (September 13, 2013) Reuters

The Senate has given its approval to the seven nominees that will head up the country's new telecoms regulator created as part of legislation designed to enhance competition in the Mexican telecoms sector. Gabriel Oswaldo Contreras will head up the new watchdog, which is known as Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones (IFETEL), having previously worked as a legislative adviser within the president's legal office; he will serve until 2020. Meanwhile, the Senate is also understood to have ratified six of the seven nominees selected to oversee the country's newly created competition authority, Comision Federal de Competencia Economica (CFCE). IFETEL will have the power to order those companies adjudged to dominate their market to sell off assets, while it will also be able to limit companies from seeking to stall competition through continued litigation, with special courts expected to deal with regulatory disputes, and prohibit companies from blocking regulatory decisions through legal means while they are being challenged in court. The new regulatory body is expected to be in full operation by the end of this year, while its first rulings are likely to be issued in the first half of 2014; as per the new legislation, IFETEL has six months from the date it is set up to determine which companies are dominant in their respective markets, and to take necessary measures to guarantee competitive conditions. (September 11, 2013) Reuters

Brazil

The telecoms regulator ANATEL is set to allocate spectrum in the 2.5GHz to 2.69GHz band to small and medium-sized internet service providers (ISPs), of which several thousand are operational. The tender for the spectrum will take place on a city-by-city basis. In mid-2012 the regulator awarded frequencies from this band to mobile operators for the provision of Long Term Evolution (LTE) services, and it is now proposing to award as yet unallocated portions of the band to local ISPs. (September 26, 2013) BNamericas

The telecoms regulator ANATEL has revealed that Telefonica subsidiary Vivo was the fastest growing 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) network operator in July, with its user base up 42% to 116,019. The second largest LTE provider, TIM Brasil, saw its own subscriber total jump 85.3% to 66,178, while America Movil unit Claro reported growth of 25% to reach 44,178 customers at end-July. ANATEL said there were 257,214 LTE users in Brazil at July 31, with more than 93,800 of these located in the state of Sao Paulo.
(September 2, 2013) telegeography.com

Chile

Telecoms regulator SUBTEL has launched a tender for the deployment of 1,364 Wi-Fi hotspots in 341 locations across Chile. SUBTEL will allocate funds up to a maximum of CLP7.845 billion (US$15.4 million) for the project, financed by the Telecommunications Development Fund (FDT) and regional governments. The tender is for the second phase of the project, the first phase featured the deployment of 250 hotspots in areas of Los Rios, Los Lagos and Aysen. SUBTEL set the deadline for applications as 5 November 2013. (September 6, 2013) telegeography.com

Honduras

Telecoms regulator Comision Nacional de Telecomunicaciones (CONATEL) has given prospective bidders an extra week to enter its auction of 4G-capable Advanced Wireless Services (AWS) spectrum in the 1700MHz and 2100MHz bands. The tender was originally scheduled to close on September 23, but the closing date has been pushed back by seven days, with certificates of prequalification and registration of bidders to be delivered by Thursday September 26. According to CONATEL President ten companies have shown interest in the AWS band, including Tigo, Claro, Telefonica and WirelessKeyView. The results of the auction will be announced on October 24. (September 24, 2013) telegeography.com

Peru

Telecoms regulator OSIPTEL has announced that it has approved rules regarding access of electronic money issuers to telecommunications networks, paving the way for the launch of mobile financial services (MFS). The new Standard Relating to Access of Electronic Money Issuers to Telecommunications Services will allow financial services to be offered over telecoms networks. According to OSIPTEL, the new legislation will ensure a level playing field for the provision of electronic financial services: OSIPTEL has the power to monitor deals between financial service providers and network operators and the authority to intervene to set prices and terms, should the companies concerned fail to reach a mutually acceptable agreement within 60 days.
(September 17, 2013) telegeography.com

Ecuador

National Telecommunications Council (CONATEL) has initiated a process for amending the country's Rules of Provision of Value Added Service, in order to establish a new regulatory framework that facilitates significant broadband internet service coverage expansion in areas nationwide, while reducing access costs and permitting technological neutrality for internet access methods employed by operators. The process of regulatory amendment was announced on the regulator's website in compliance with Article 89 of the General Regulation of the Special Telecommunications Act. CONATEL added that the process is aimed at supporting the government's goal of reducing the national digital divide regarding access to internet services, serving an 'urgent need to expand services to all citizens in different regions, in order to promote technology education and digital knowledge.' (September 9, 2013) telegeography.com

Costa Rica

Telecoms regulator SUTEL has approved an increase in price caps for tariffs for fixed voice services, including voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) offerings, following a request from incumbent Grupo Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad (Grupo ICE). The watchdog has approved an increase in the maximum basic rate for fixed services from CRC1,850 to CRC3,339 (US$3.63 to US$6.55), removing the requirement to include a set number of minutes (previously set at 160 minutes). The tariff ceiling for fixed to fixed calls also rose fromCRC4.1 per minute to CRC7.6 per minute, whilst fixed to mobile tariffs will be reduced to CRC21.9 per minute from CRC30 per minute. ICE had requested that basic rates and fixed to fixed prices be increased further, toCRC4,150 and CRC11 respectively, but these were rejected by SUTEL. Walther Herrera, director general of markets for the watchdog, commented on the amendments: 'The fixed rate has been the same since 2004 and after a thorough analysis we believe that this tariff restructuring was necessary for the market and the user. To clarify, these rates are maximum prices and that operators can charge less according to their business strategy. This tariff restructuring was made taking into account international best practices, to promote competition in the market.' (September 23, 2013) telegeography.com

Argentine

The government has allocated ARS8.186 billion (US$1.42 billion) for the telecoms market under its draft budget for 2014. The funds will be invested in the expansion of digital TV, broadband internet and satellite communications services across the country, as well as the ongoing implementation of the government's 'Argentina Conectada' plan. The program involves the rollout of a national fiber-optic backbone network by state-owned company Arsat, which is also planning to enter the mobile telephony market under the brand 'Libre.ar'. (September 24, 2013) Daily El Cronista

European Union

European Commission will present plans to reform the region's telecoms industry which they believe will underpin a single market for companies and consumers, which it describes as the most ambitious plan for the sector since the dismantling of the public monopolies 26 years ago. The European telecoms sector has been hamstrung by the large number of companies in highly competitive national markets and heavy regulations that have exacerbated a long term fall in revenues. There are more than 100 mobile operators across the EU, whereas in the United States there are only four and three in China. The fall in revenues has meant that investment in next generation networks has suffered, with telecoms operators in Europe investing €3.5bn less in 2012 than in 2008 even as demand across networks grew fourfold. Neelie Kroes, the digital agenda commissioner responsible for the package, said that the regulations would help put European companies on a level footing with international rivals by creating a single market. Ms. Kroes said: "Further substantial progress towards a European single market for telecoms is essential for Europe's strategic interests and economic progress." A recent study showed that the EU's gross domestic product could grow by up to €110bn a year if the internal market for electronic communications were completed. However, executives in the telecoms industry had a mixed response to the plans, which they say have been watered down to meet the tight legislative timeframe before elections next year and following criticism from companies and commissioners during the drafting process. ETNO, which represents the interests of the large telecoms groups, welcomed parts of the proposals but said that they would not overall create the momentum required to achieve the digital agenda targets and to contribute to Europe's economic growth. Industry executives complain that the proposals do not address the more fundamental problems in the fragmented market by helping consolidation or boosting investment, with the potential for local regulators still to block the plans at a domestic level. The centerpiece of the proposals is the slashing of roaming charges, which have been a profitable source of revenues for mobile operators. Plans have been changed during drafting given initial proposals would have caused damage to the domestic owners of telecoms networks. Instead, the commission will revert to plans for a wholesale price cut of two-thirds for mobile data in July 2014, and end all charges for incoming roaming calls, with alternative plans to allow companies to sign collective agreements to offer plans that apply across Europe but priced at the domestic rate. The commission has also put forward plans to prevent the blocking and curtailing of internet content under so-called "net neutrality" legislation. Ms. Kroes has also laid down regulations to help the industry, such as preventing cuts to pricing offered to rivals for access to existing copper telecoms networks and raising prices for next generation fiber broadband. The plans will also free access to spectrum needed to broadcast mobile signal across the region and create a single "passport" for business across member states. However there are still complaints that a set of proposals designed to create a single European market do not do more free the sector to consolidate in and across borders. (September 13, 2013) ft.com

Europe will ban mobile phone networks from charging customers more to use their phones abroad, according a leaked draft of legislation which the European commission will publish next week. Neelie Kroes, the commission vice-president who speaks on digital affairs, is bent on ending the unpopular roaming fees, which have left many holidaymakers with huge bills on their return home. Her proposals have faced fierce opposition from the largest networks, including Vodafone, Orange and Telefónica, which say the end of roaming within Europe could cost them €7bn (£5.9bn). Networks will be left with little choice but to offer a flat rate to customers at home or abroad for calls, texts and internet connections across Europe, according to a draft document seen by the Guardian. This will be achieved using airline-style alliances in countries where operators do not own a network. The alliances will have to cover at least 85%

of the European population and 21 member states. Kroes has described roaming charges as a "cash cow" for operators and "a disproportionate irritant for travelers". She aims to boost Europe's digital competitiveness with proposals for a single telecoms market which are scheduled to be endorsed by the commission on September 11. Member states will meet next month to discuss the plan, which will also need approval by the European parliament. A recent draft of the 93-page document promises to "guarantee common high levels of consumer protection across the union, including measures to gradually end mobile roaming surcharges". As well as tackling call costs, the commission will use a swath of measures to create a single telecoms market, while stopping short of creating a single European telecoms regulator. There had been suggestions that powers could be taken away from national watchdogs such as OFCOM and handed to Brussels. Other new measure include open internet safeguards to stop broadband companies blocking legal but competing websites and services such as Skype, and plans to harmonize mobile spectrum sales across the region. This is intended to avoid a repeat of the piecemeal 4G allocation. The commission began forcing operators to cut roaming costs last year. Many charge customers extra even when they are using a local network owned by the same company as their domestic network. While Europeans cannot unknowingly run up a bill larger than €50 (£42) while abroad, roaming charges are still many times higher than domestic call costs and will remain so without further legislation. Kroes is proposing that companies which phase out roaming from July 2014 will face lighter-touch regulation. The draft rules state: "When parties to collective roaming agreements offer to all their customers by default roaming tariffs at the level of domestic tariffs, the obligation of domestic providers to enable their customers to access voice, SMS and data roaming services of any alternative roaming provider should not apply." In the past, price caps have been used to bring down the coast of calling abroad. The last of these come into force in 2014, and after fierce resistance from the larger operators, Kroes is not proposing any more price reductions. Instead, she is hoping to force change by using incentives. (September 6, 2013) theguardian.com

United Kingdom

Telecoms regulator OFCOM said it is likely to allocate another 190 MHz of spectrum for 4G services. The U.K.'s Ministry of Defense has handed the process of selling frequencies it controls in the 2.3-GHz and 3.4-GHz bands to the telco watchdog. The MoD owns 40 MHz of 2.3-GHz spectrum and 150-MHz of 3.4-GHz spectrum."These bands are in the process of being harmonized across Europe for mobile broadband, and are therefore likely to be used for 4G services," said OFCOM, in a statement. The regulator said it will soon seek expressions of interest from potential users of the frequencies. "Having already completed a number of successful spectrum releases, including the recent 4G auction, OFCOM has significant experience and expertise in this area and is well positioned to manage the process," OFCOM said. OFCOM is forecasting an 80-fold increase in demand for mobile data capacity by 2030 and to that end it has been working hard to free up more spectrum. In July it gave the green light for operators to refarm their 900-MHz, 1800-MHz, and 2.6-GHz spectrum for 4G services. Meanwhile, in August, OFCOM launched a consultation to garner opinion on a proposal to allow spectrum sharing. "A significant increase in the amount of mobile broadband spectrum will be needed" to meet demand, OFCOM said at the time. (September 13, 2013) totaltele.com

Ireland

Telecoms regulator the Commission for Communications Regulation (COMREG) is taking former monopoly Eircom to task over the telco's plan to move some of its mobile customers to online billing. The watchdog has warned it that it that its decision to introduce the new billing method violated its obligations to notify the customers involved ahead of the change in their contracts. The incumbent now has three weeks to answer COMREG's breach notice, or it may face enforcement action. From August 12 this year Eircom began the process of moving some 207,000 Meteor Mobile and eMobile customers to e-billing – a decision that sparked immediate criticism from consumer groups. Although the users involved received three separate notifications of the change in their billing, under local telecoms rules Meteor Mobile should have given its customers the option to either opt out or reject the contract change. Meteor is required to notify subscribers of proposed modifications to contractual conditions and to advise subscribers of their right to withdraw without penalty from the contract if they do not accept the proposed change.' (September 12, 2013) telegeography.com

Spain

Telecoms regulator CMT has announced that July 2013 saw the highest number of customers use mobile number portability (MNP) to switch provider since the service was introduced. According to figures produced by the watchdog, in July 2013 a total of 638,948 numbers were ported from one operator to another, beating the previous monthly record of 636,616, which was set in January 2013. Further, the CMT noted that the July 2013 figure represented a 47.9% increase on the number of ports recorded in the same period a year earlier. Citing strong competition in the sector as one of the drivers behind the increase in customers switching, the CMT also noted that for the third consecutive month mobile accesses had increased, with 169,856 lines added in July 2013. Continued uptake of post-paid subscriptions, which rose by 236,123 in the month under review, more than offset a decline in pre-paid customers (down by 38,304 in the month) and data cards (down by 27,963). Meanwhile, the market's two largest cellcos by subscribers – Telefonica Espana (Movistar) and Vodafone Spain – both saw user numbers fall in July 2013, down 127,061 and 44,948 respectively, with the regulator noting that mobile virtual network operators (MVNOs) saw combined additions of 230,336 mobile customers in the month, with Orange Espana and Yoigo adding 69,264 and 42,265 subscribers, respectively. (September 23, 2013) telegeography.com

Poland

The Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (UOKiK) has issued a fine of PLN8.22 million (US$2.61 million) to wireless operator P4 for failing to comply with its previous order regarding consumer rights. In February 2012 the authority investigated allegations that faulty wording of a clause in the cellco's contracts limited customers from seeking compensation for damages caused by the lack of telecommunications services. Under Poland's Telecommunications Law, operators are required to stipulate in the contract the responsibility for non-performance or improper performance and explain the amount of compensation available and the rules and terms for making claims. Following the study, the UOKiK ordered that P4, which offers services under the 'Play' brand name, remove the illegal clause within five months. P4 failed to comply

with the orders of the competition authority and has been fined for infringing consumer interest rules.
(September 17, 2013) telegeography.com

New Zealand

Government has announced the details of its forthcoming radio spectrum auction, which is now set to take place at the end of next month. The auction is for blocks of 700MHz spectrum for use in 4G networks, and the reserve price for each of the nine lots of 5 MHz paired has been set at NZ$22 million. The government is also providing preferential terms for new entrants into the market. "In setting the reserve price, we have balanced generating a fair return on the sale of the spectrum rights with the significant investment required by mobile network operators to build the 4G network infrastructure," the ICT Minister, Ms. Amy Adams said. "The reserve price also takes into account the value to New Zealand of having 4G connectivity widely deployed." The Government said that it has spent $157 million clearing the 700MHz band to allow the spectrum to be used for 4G mobile networks. The auction terms will provide a deferred payment option for successful bidders over five years, subject to payment of a commercial interest rate. "Allowing staged payment will enable mobile network operators to invest immediately in building their 4G networks to increase their service to New Zealanders." The auction conditions also include requirements for mobile network operators to upgrade their existing rural cell sites to 4G capability within five years, and for successful bidders to continue expanding cellular coverage. Management rights for nine lots of 2x5 MHz in the 700 MHz range will be auctioned. The management rights will begin on 1 January 2014 and last for 18 years. Bidders will initially be limited to acquiring a maximum of three lots each. If some lots remain unsold after the initial auction round closes, the limit may be increased to four. Successful bidders who acquire three or more lots will be required to build a number of new cell sites in areas that do not currently have any mobile coverage. Bidders who acquire three lots must build at least five new cell sites each year, for five years. For any bidders who win four lots, the requirement increases to ten new cell sites each year for five years. The Government also wishes to ensure new or non-cellular operators are able to participate. For the 700 MHz auction, different implementation conditions have been set for successful bidders without an existing mobile network. These bidders will have five years to deploy services to at least 50 percent of New Zealanders. To ensure that rural communities also benefit from the new technology, existing cellular operators buying the 700 MHz spectrum will be required to upgrade at least 75 percent of their existing rural 2G and 3G cell sites to 4G capability using the 700 MHz spectrum within five years, up to a maximum of 300 cell sites. Bidders will be required to register and provide a deposit before the auction. The bidder registration is likely to open on September 11, 2013. (September 4, 2013) cellular-news.com

Belgium

The Belgian Institute for Post and Telecommunications (BIPT) has received three applications for the 800 MHz spectrum auction. The auction, scheduled to begin on November 12, will seek to sell three licenses of 2x10 MHz, each with a minimum price of EUR 120 million and a term of 20 years. Registration for the auction began on August 14 and an information evening was held on September 10. BIPT is now reviewing the applications and will announce the names of admitted companies on October 8. The candidates will likely include current operators Belgacom, Mobistar and Base. Telenet said earlier that it would not participate. The cable operator has a 3G license but has so far failed to build a network. All three lots will come with a rollout obligation. After six years, the winners must provide 4G coverage to 98% of the population. A newcomer will have nine years to reach the desired coverage and will also be able to cut national roaming agreements in order to use other networks. Existing 2G operators must after two years provide coverage to 30% of the Belgian population; reaching 70% after four years and 98% after six years. Licensee will also have to provide 98% coverage to residents of certain municipalities, within three years. (September 24, 2013) telecompaper.com

Finland

Telecoms regulator FICORA has stopped a radio spectrum auction that has been running since the start of the year. A total of 2x30 MHz of 800MHz spectrum is being auctioned in 2x5 MHz blocks. FICORA informed the Ministry of Transport and Communications that it will interrupt the 800MHz spectrum auction and will resume it after reviewing the auction rules. The auction for the 800 MHz spectrum began on January 24, 2013. At the time of the auction, they said that they didn't know how long it would take. So far it has taken nine months. (September 5, 2013) cellular-news.com

Norway

The Norwegian Post & Telecoms Authority (NPT) has announced that the timeframe for mobile number portability (MNP) will be revised from October 15, 2013. Noting that the service has proved important in ensuring a competitive mobile sector, the regulator has confirmed that as per the new requirements, operators will have eight hours to transfer a number to a customer's new provider once it has received the request, including two hours response time. With the changes coming on the back of discussions conducted by a working group, NPT director Torstein Olsen said that he was satisfied that the new timeframe would lower the barrier for switching providers, and should thus enhance competition further. MNP was introduced in 2001, and for more than ten years the timeframe for moving a number to another provider has remained the same.
(September 17, 2013) telegeography.com

The Norwegian Post & Telecoms Authority (NPT) has revealed the minimum bid levels for digital dividend spectrum in the 800MHz band, as well as for 900MHz and 1800MHz spectrum that will be made available, as it continues to consult on rules for the auction of such frequencies. With the regulator confirming that the initial bid price for a 2×5MHz block of spectrum in the 800MHz band will be NOK50 million (US$8.95 million), it also said that the 2×10MHz block in that same band which includes coverage obligations will cost at least NOK40 million. Meanwhile, 2×5MHz allocations in the 900MHz band and 1800MHz bands will begin at NOK50 million and NOK5 million, respectively. In announcing its decision regarding pricing the NPT noted that, while the consultation on the auction rules is still ongoing, the minimum price levels are not subject to discussion. Last month the NPT launched its consultation on the forthcoming sale process, as part of which it said it would seek feedback on the proposed terms and conditions of draft licenses, with a deadline for responses set as September 30, 2013. Reiterating a March 2013 press release in which the Ministry of Transport & Communications (MoTC) called for 100% of Norwegian households to have

access to a basic broadband service within the next couple of years, the NPT claimed that spectrum in the 800MHz band was 'key to fulfilling this objective as spectrum in this frequency band has superior coverage reach and is therefore ideal for coverage in rural areas'. As a result of this, the watchdog confirmed that one of the 800MHz concessions will include a coverage obligation; the winner of the license will be required to offer a service with a minimum average access speed of 2Mbps within five years of its award. Prior to the launch of the consultation, in March 2013 the MoTC said that, with an eye on ensuring competition in the sector, a cap of 2×10MHz would be implemented for the sale of 800MHz frequencies, although this will only apply to those operators which already have significant mobile spectrum holdings. With frequencies in the 900MHz and 1800MHz bands to be auctioned simultaneously with the 800MHz spectrum, a cap of 2×20MHz will apply to the 1800MHz block, while in the 900MHz band there will be a cap of 2×15MHz.
(September 10, 2013) telegeography.com

Slovenia

The Post and Electronic Communications Agency (APEK) has published a draft information memorandum, which specifies the conditions of the upcoming public auction for mobile licenses in the 800MHz, 900MHz, 1800MHz, 2100MHz and 2600MHz frequency bands, including proposed obligations of network coverage and design – including special coverage obligations in the 800MHz band – plus spectrum caps and reservations. The beginning of the license tendering procedure is scheduled for the end of this year, ahead of a competitive auction set for March 2014, in which APEK will offer the entirety of the available bands in the 800MHz (digital dividend), 900MHz, 1800MHz and 2600MHz ranges as well as all remaining unlicensed spectrum in the 2100MHz range, all under 15-year technology-neutral licenses. Regarding network coverage, for all 900MHz and 800MHz licensees: 40% population coverage is stipulated within three years, and 70% in five years. For 1800MHz and 2600MHz licensees, minimum population coverage targets are 25% in three years and 40% within five. In addition, a block of 800MHz frequencies carries the condition of providing 95% population coverage in three years with mobile broadband services capable of 10Mbps (outdoor coverage) data speeds (while an operator may use any combination of the spectrum bands assigned to it to achieve this target). Simultaneously, the operator assigned the aforementioned 800MHz block must also provide coverage of a specific list of (mainly rural) settlements. APEK stated that in the interests of a competitive market it has set the following individual spectrum caps: 2×30MHz in the 800MHz/900MHz bands; 2×15MHz in the 900MHz band, 2×30MHz in the 1800MHz band, 2×105MHz in FDD bands 800MHz, 900MHz, 1800MHz, 2100MHz and 2600MHz, including domestic operators' pre-existing rights to use 2100MHz FDD spectrum. Moreover, the Agency intends to reserve a maximum of two blocks of 2×5MHz in the 800MHz band, which will be available 'only to those bidders in an open competition for new entrants or existing operators with more than 15% market share of active mobile users.' Comments on APEK's published draft conditions will be accepted up to 4 November 2013, although at this advanced stage of the process the watchdog notes that it is not legally bound to consider contributions in its final conditions. A further memorandum including specific rules for conducting the auction will be published later, alongside a list of specified towns/settlements which must be covered by the holder of the specified 800MHz block license.
(September 23, 2013) telegeography.com

Hungary

Telecommunication regulator NMHH has extended until April 2022 the mobile frequency licenses of Telenor, Vodafone and Magyar Telekom. The licenses for the 1800 MHz frequency band were to have expired on 7 October 2014, while the licenses for the 900 MHz band would have expired on 8 October 2014 (Vodafone) and October 8, 2016 (Telenor and Magyar Telekom). The license renewal will cost the operators in total HUF 100 billion. The regulator plans to announce a tender for the remaining part of the 900 MHz frequency by the end of this year. Magyar Telekom said the extension of its licenses will cost HUF 38 billion, although it will pay only HUF 34 billion as the license for one of the spectrum blocks was shortened from 2027 to 2022. The company said its annual spectrum fees also will decrease by approximately HUF 3.8 billion between 2014 and 2022. Telenor said its extension costs HUF 27 billion, although part of this will be refunded as its license won in the 2012 auction was also shortened. As part of the agreement, the annual spectrum fees payable by Telenor Hungary will be reduced by approximately HUF 2 billion per annum. The NMHH and operators also signed an agreement with the aim of developing the digital economy in Hungary. The agreement will guarantee sustainable growth in the mobile market and ensure a reliable framework for the encouragement of further investments in the industry, the regulator said.
(September 8, 2013) telecompaper.com

Bulgaria

Telecoms regulator the Communications Regulation Commission (CRC) has opened a public consultation on the amendment of the telecoms fees collected by the regulator with Decision No. 673, dated September 5, 2013. Under the terms set by the draft document, the fee for authorization of the Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) services in the 3.6GHz frequency band will increase to BGN480 (US$325) for 1MHz (in Zone 1), while 1MHz in Zone 6 will be charged at BGN80,000. For concessions in the 900MHz and 1800MHz spectrum bands, the CRC proposes an increase to BGN100,000 for 1MHz, while the one-off administration fee collected is expected to reach BGN15,000. All interested parties are invited to submit their comments and recommendations in a 30 day-period from the publication of the Decision. (September 10, 2013) telegeography.com

Kosovo

The privatization of Kosovo's fixed line incumbent Post and Telecommunications Kosovo (PTK) was delayed again, after opposition parties boycotted the decision in the national assembly, leaving the government without a quorum. Opposition politicians said that they would not participate in the sale of the company as the process was non-transparent and illogical. Kosovo has sought to offload a 75% stake in the incumbent since late 2008, but has had little success. A previous attempt to divest a majority stake in the telco collapsed in mid-2011 when two of the company's senior officials were accused of corruption by the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX). More recently, in April this year the government agreed to sell the stake to a consortium consisting of Axos Capital and Najafi Companies for EUR227 million (US$307.11 million). (September 23, 2013) Telecompaper

Moldova

The National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (ANRCETI) has launched a tender for allocation of additional frequencies in the 1900MHz and 2100MHz frequency bands, suitable for 3G use. Under the terms set out by the document, the spectrum available for use is listed as follows:

- Block A: 2×14.8MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 1964.9MHz-1979.7MHz and 2154.9MHz-2169.7MHz frequency bands; and one 5MHz block (time division duplex, TDD) in the 1909.9MHz-1914.9MHz spectrum band, and
- Block B: 1×15MHz block (TDD) in the 2010MHz-2025MHz frequency band.

The ANRCETI indicated that the assigned frequencies will be authorized for 3G UMTS, and CDMA2000 use for a period of 15 years. The public auction is open to domestic and foreign companies; however, network operators already holding authorization for spectrum usage in the 1900MHz and 2100MHz frequency bands will not be allowed to participate in the tender. The regulator invited all interested parties to submit their applications for participation in the tender by November 1, along with all relevant documents and a security of EUR1 million (US$1.35 million). The license fee will be determined following the auction, with a starting price of EUR6.2 million for a Block A license and EUR2 million for the Block B concession. (September 19, 2013) telegeography.com

Cyprus

The Republic of Cyprus's Department of Electronic Communications, part of the Ministry of Communications and Works (MCW), has extended the application deadlines for participation in the auctions of mobile licenses using the 900MHz, 1800MHz and 2100MHz frequency bands (D1/2013) and concessions for the use of the 2600MHz frequency band (D2/2013) to September 24 and September 25, respectively. The Ministry announced the launch of the D1 auction in early June 2013, with initial deadline of July 24, 2013 for interested parties to submit their applications and a security of EUR700,000 (US$915,500). Under the terms set out by the draft document, the spectrum available for use was listed as follows:

- 2×10MHz blocks in the 900MHz band;
- 2×24.8MHz blocks in the 1800MHz band; and
- 2×15MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 2100MHz band.

The MCW indicated that the 900MHz and 1800MHz frequencies are best suited for 2G GSM, 3G UMTS, 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) and WiMAX use. However, the regulator may allow the establishment and operation of communications networks not listed in the document, provided that such networks would not disrupt existing GSM transmissions. In July 2013 the Ministry published the tender documents (D2/2013) for communication network licenses using the 2600MHz frequency band. Under the terms set out by the document, the available spectrum was announced as:

- Category A: 2×20MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 2600MHz band;
- Category B: 1×40MHz block (time division duplex, TDD) in the 2575MHz-2615MHz band

Successful bidders are required to establish and operate 4G networks covering 25% of the Republic's territory within three years from the date of license authorizations, and must reach 40% territorial coverage within five years from the date of their license. By 2019, the networks should have downlink transmission speeds of at least 30Mbps.
(September 10, 2013) telegeography.com

Mali

Mali's third mobile license, which was won by Alpha Telecom Mali, a joint venture between Monaco Telecom and local holding company Planor Afrique, could be rescinded amid claims of non-payment for the concession and allegations of irregularities in the award process. Despite the new licensee having made an initial payment of XOF33 billion (US$67.8 million) for its concession in February 2013, a second payment of XOF22 billion which was due by mid-May has yet to be paid. While the Malian government initially revealed it was planning to award a third wireless license in June 2008 as part of the country's structural reform program, little more was reported for three years, when in June 2011 the then minister of new technologies outlined plans to award a concession before the end of the year. Further delays followed, however, before it was finally revealed in the latter half of 2012 that Alpha Telecom Mali had emerged victorious in a tender that actually took place at the start of that year, with the winner's XOF55 billion bid beating out offers from both India's Bharti Airtel (XOF19.7 billion) and Vietnamese military-backed venture Viettel Corporation (XOF10.9 billion). (September 23, 2013) TMT Finance

Zimbabwe

Telecoms regulator the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), has published a draft National Frequency Allocation Plan on its website for public consultation. According to the watchdog, 'document was prepared in order to give guidance on how spectrum is used in Zimbabwe, but is not in itself a full record of actual utilization'. Under the terms set out in the draft document, the spectrum range (9KHz-3000GHz) is divided into a number of frequency bands; the document also specifies the general purpose and conditions under which the bands may be used in the country to support a wide range of public and private activities. POTRAZ has also stated that it might prepare channeling plans to provide information on the need for the efficient use of allocated frequency bands. All interested parties are invited to post their comments or enquiries on the draft document to the POTRAZ's Director General; however the watchdog did not announce a deadline for receiving recommendations on the topic.
(September 10, 2013) telegeography.com

Ghana

Telecoms regulator says that the number of mobile phone numbers ported to a different mobile network had exceeded 800,000 in the two years since MNP was launched. A total of 817,202 successfully completed ports were recorded, representing about 3% of the estimated 27million active mobile line in the country. The MNP service launched in July 2011, and in the first year a total of 370 thousand numbers was ported, with 447 thousand numbers ported in the second year. Since the second anniversary, the number of ported numbers has continued to rise, and is expected to exceed one million sometime next month. The regulator said that around three-quarters of customers who migrate

to another network are happy with their new provider, with the rest either moving to a third network, or back to their original provider. (September 4, 2013) cellular-news.com

Tanzania

ICT Ministry has blamed red tape at the World Bank for delays in plans to expand mobile phone coverage to over 200 rural villages. The Ministry is seeking Sh246 billion (US$152 million) to cover the cost of expanding the mobile network's coverage through their Universal Communication Services Access Fund (UCSAF). The government said that it is in talks with India to release the funds through the Ministry of Finance. A recent report by Business Monitor International (BMI) warned that growth in the country's mobile market remains slow for a country with penetration rate of less than 60% -- and put the blame on poor rural phone coverage. It's currently unclear as to why expanding coverage to 200 villages would cost over $150 million though.
(September 6, 2013) Daily News

Senegal

According to data published by the Senegalese telecoms regulator, the Agence de Regulation des Telecoms et Postes (ARTP) the total number of mobile phones in Senegal exceeded 12.661 million at the end of June 2013, up from 10.712 million at the end of June 2012, thanks to net additions of 454,184 in the second quarter. Mobile market leader Orange Senegal closed out the period under review with a total of 7.363 million connections, down from 7.404 million three months earlier, a market share of 58.15%. Second-placed Tigo Senegal reported a total of 2.681 million subscribers, compared to 2.663 million three months earlier – or 21.18% of the overall market – while third player Sudatel Telecom (Expresso) increased its user base sharply to 2.618 million from 2.139 million at end-March, for a 20.67% share. ARTP said that cellular penetration stood at 93.60% at mid-2013, up from 90.25% three months earlier.
(September 19, 2013) telegeography.com

Russia

Russia's State Radio Frequency Commission (SRFC) has reportedly authorized national operator Rostelecom to carry out Long Term Evolution (LTE) testing in the 450MHz band. The tests will be carried out by CDMA operator SkyLink, a subsidiary of Rostelecom. Elsewhere, Osnova Telecom, which was established in June 2009 by Ministry of Defense (MoD)-affiliated telecoms holding company Voentelecom, is reportedly poised to receive permits for 71 LTE base stations across 59 regions, after reaching an agreement with regulator Roskomnadzor. the approval was granted by the Moscow Arbitrage Court. Osnova plans to launch LTE services in 20 regions by the end of the year, after deploying its first networks in Smolensk and Yaroslavl in April this year. China's Huawei and French/US vendor Alcatel-Lucent are thought to have been awarded contracts to roll out the networks. Finally, Russian LTE operator Yota has selected Japan-based vendor NEC to supply what it claims are 'the first LTE microcell base stations in Russia'. Yota hopes to speed up its LTE deployments by using Multi-Operator Core Network (MOCN) technology, which enables multiple operators to provide services while sharing the same base station. Further, NEC's LTE base stations are equipped with a Heterogeneous Network (HetNet) function, which enables base stations with different radiuses of coverage to work in unison. (September 4, 2013) Digit.ru

Australia

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has decided to vary the Facilities Access Code (FAC) in order 'to ensure it continues to be a useful tool for industry members when negotiating access to the facilities of other carriers'. With the regulator having launched a review of the FAC in July last year, it confirmed that after considering submissions from industry players it had opted to make timeframes for accessing facilities a mandatory provision. 'A carrier will be required to comply with the timeframes in the Code when they receive a request for access to their facilities,' ACCC commissioner Cristina Cifuentes noted, adding: 'This will ensure all carriers are treated equally when they make a request.' The FAC was introduced in 1999 to encourage carriers to co-locate their mobile transmission towers and other facilities where possible, and it contains conditions that must be included in access agreements for facilities and sets out procedures and processes that must be followed when requests for access are made by one carrier to another. (September 23, 2013) telegeography.com

South Korea

South Korean mobile network operator KT Corp has emerged from the country's latest spectrum auction with new frequencies in the 1800MHz band adjacent to those it already hold and uses for its LTE network. The cellco will pay KRW900 billion (US$513 million) for its new 15MHz block of spectrum, which it will reportedly use to boost capacity on its existing fourth-generation infrastructure. With the Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning (MSIP) having approved KT's bid to use the spectrum for LTE-based services, the cellco was cited as saying in a statement: 'We welcome the decision by the ministry. Because KT has already been offering premium LTE services within the same 1800MHz bandwidth, the approval will help us be better positioned to offer advanced LTE services to our customers.' With regards to the pricing of its new concession, KT reportedly said that the KRW900 billion price tag was 'not too much'. On the back of its spectrum acquisition, KT has also now confirmed plans for the commercial introduction of LTE-Advanced (LTE-A) technology. The cellco will introduce LTE-A-based services this month, initially in the capital Seoul and its adjacent regions. It subsequently expects to expand to most major cities across the country by March 2014. Meanwhile, the market's largest operator in terms of mobile subscribers, SK Telecom (SKT), also laid claim to new spectrum in the 1800MHz band (a 35MHz block), having bid KRW1.05 trillion for a second tranche of frequencies that were made available via auction. However, the report cites SKT spokesperson as claiming that the firm will, in fact, only have to pay around KRW400 million for the bandwidth, after it handed back two blocks of spectrum; it was not specified which spectrum had been dropped. Rounding out the market, LG Uplus, South Korea's smallest network operator, bagged a 40MHz block of spectrum in the 2.6GHz band, paying KRW479 billion for its new frequencies. In outlining the outcome of the sale process, the MSIP noted that there had been some 50 rounds of bidding, with the minimum bidding price for the 1800MHz spectrum won by KT having been set at KRW289 billion, while it was KRW674 billion for the frequencies won by SKT. (September 2, 2013) Korea Times

Thailand

Telecoms regulator has said it cannot assist the country's second largest cellco by subscribers Digital Total Access Communication (DTAC) with a proposal to operate 4G LTE mobile broadband services using an existing portion of its 1800MHz spectrum issued under its 2G build-transfer-operate (BTO) concession with state-owned CAT Telecom. The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) pointed out that DTAC instead needs to gain permission from CAT to utilize the currently unused 25MHz block (out of a total 60MHz allocation of 1800MHz frequencies which expires in 2018) for LTE, as the watchdog has no authority to intervene in the matter. The alternative for DTAC is to return the 25MHz to the NBTC for re-auction under technology-neutral licenses alongside rivals' 1800MHz 2G spectrum which was freed up by the expiry of the BTO concessions of True Corp's True Move division and AIS' unit DPC this month, with a year transition period granted to migrate 2G 1800MHz users before the NBTC can begin the re-licensing process. True Corp has already launched 4G LTE services alongside its 3G W-CDMA/HSPA in the 2100MHz band (which theoretically DTAC and AIS could also do). (September 26, 2013) The Bangkok Post

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) will move to ensure telecommunications infrastructure funds comply with telecom law. A regulation to be introduced this month will require companies to hold a type-3 license showing they have their own network infrastructure if they want to manage such a fund. Chairman of the NBTC's telecom committee, said the proposed regulation is aimed at ensuring compliance with the Telecommunications Business Act. The rapidly growing number of infrastructure funds necessitates a greater degree of governance, he said. True Corporation was the first telecom to announce its own infrastructure fund, aimed at raising at least 70 billion baht. This was followed last month by Jasmine International, which announced plans to establish an infrastructure fund worth 50-70 billion baht. The two state telecoms TOT Plc and CAT Telecom have been told by the information and communication technology minister to conduct feasibility studies into setting up their own infrastructure fund. Mobile leader Advanced Info Service and second-ranked Total Access Communication are themselves closely monitoring the move by True, with plans to launch their own infrastructure funds if True's proves successful. Chairman said telecom infrastructure funds will be co-governed by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the NBTC. The securities authority will grant fund permission, while the telecom regulator will rule on fund management and operations. The new regulation is expected to be approved by the telecom committee this month, taking immediate effect, said Chairman. Telecom infrastructure funds are one of seven types of infrastructure fund. Chairman insisted only companies with a type-3 license will be allowed to manage and operate one. Licenses may be obtained from the NBTC. (September 12, 2013) bangkokpost.com

Hong Kong

A study commissioned by Hong Kong's four incumbent 3G networks claims that plans by the telecoms regulator to claw back some 3G spectrum for re-auction in 2016 would have a worse effect on services than the regulator expects. The Government has proposed to remove one-third of the 3G spectrum at 2.1GHz from each of the four incumbent 3G mobile operators for re-auctioning when the spectrum assignment period expires in 2016. The study carried out by UK based Plum Consulting claims that extent of the service degradation on 3G services would be 3 times greater than that estimated by the Government in their consultation paper. The report paints a dire picture of a future where the proposal risks a complete loss of voice service in the underground railway during busy periods, a significant decrease in data download speeds, difficulties and delays in accessing video applications via the Internet. While the 3G operators have provided input into OFCA's consultancy study, they says that they have not been allowed to view the final results or comment on the conclusions reached by the Government's consultant. The consultation is not due to be decided before October, but there are concerns that the regulator has already made a decision before the mobile networks have been able to submit their own proposals. Part of the rationale for the spectrum seizure is thought to be that the government is known to be keen to introduce a fifth mobile network into the market.
(September 6, 2013) cellular-news.com

Taiwan

National Communications Commission (NCC) has kicked off the bidding in its auction of LTE-suitable spectrum. Having approved all seven companies that had applied to take part in the sale process last month, the auction itself could now take as long as a month to be completed. At the start of July 2013 it was confirmed that the companies that would vie for LTE-suitable spectrum included all four of the country's 3G licensees Chunghwa Telecom, Taiwan Mobile, Far EasTone and Asia Pacific Telecom. The other three companies that will participate in the auction are: Foxconn Group subsidiary Ambit Microsystems; a mobile telecom company newly established by the Ting Hsin International Group; and another new company set up by the Shinkong Group. In total, the government is offering a total of 270MHz of spectrum in the 700MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands, and having outlined the starting prices for the 4G-suitable spectrum in May 2013, should the government sell all the frequencies at the lowest price, it will raise approximately TWD35.9 billion (US$1.2 billion) in total. (September 5, 2013) Digitimes

Mauritius

Telecoms regulator the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) has announced that a new eight-digit mobile numbering plan came into effect in the Republic of Mauritius on September 1, 2013. According to a press release, the digit '5' has been added as a prefix to all existing seven-digit mobile numbers in the country. Public consultations for the necessity to migrate to an eight-digit mobile plan in Mauritius initially started in July 2003. However, after a request from the incumbent Mauritius Telecom, the regulator decided that implementation of the numbering plan should be delayed to October 1, 2007, although the plan was postponed on several other occasions during the ensuing years. In 2012 a consensus was reached between the MICT and the ICTA for the migration to be undertaken by September 1, 2013. (September 2, 2013) telegeography.com

India

The government expects to conduct the next sale of wireless spectrum in January 2014. Following plans to cut the reserve price for spectrum put forward by the watchdog earlier this month, the government has set target earnings for the auction at INR110 billion (US$1.76 billion), just over

a quarter of the expected income from the November 2012 sale. (September 24, 2013) Reuters

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended cutting the reserve price of 900MHz and 1800MHz spectrum by more than 60% in some circles, in a bid to drive up participation in upcoming spectrum auctions. The recommendation suggests a reserve price of INR1.75 billion (US$26.99 million) per MHz of 1800MHz spectrum in the Delhi circle, compared to base costs of INR6.93 billion and INR4.85 billion in the November 2012 and March 2013 auctions respectively. Under the plans, 900MHz spectrum prices in the three metro circles would drop by even greater amounts, with the cost for airwaves in Delhi falling by 70%, compared to 72.4% in Mumbai and 56% in Kolkata. Whilst the lowering of auction prices for spectrum will be a boon to providers, the TRAI has stood by its controversial decision to refarm 1800MHz and 900MHz spectrum. Cellco's whose concessions for those bands are due to expire will be required to bid for them in auction to continue offering services, rather than simply renewing their existing authorizations through talks with the government, as prescribed by their licenses. The TRAI recommendations also suggest a flat rate of 3% of annual gross revenues for spectrum usage fees, rather than a value based on the amount of spectrum held by a provider. Spectrum trading will also be allowed under the watchdog's proposals, with a number of caveats. Operators will only be permitted to trade spectrum which has either been obtained through auction or for which the provider has paid the market value to the government and a transfer fee of 1% of the transaction amount or the market price of the spectrum (whichever is higher) will be imposed on the transferee. Finally, the TRAI has expanded on rollout obligations for licensees, instructing new providers to cover all villages with a population of 5,000 or more within five years of the allocation of spectrum, expanding to all settlements with a population of more than 2,000 within seven years. Existing cellcos licensed before 2008 have two/four years from April 1, 2014 to meet the two milestones, whilst those licensed after 2008 have five/seven years. (September 10, 2013) The Economic Times

Sector regulator the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) will meet with officials from Capital Global and Kaif Investment Ltd, the Mauritian shareholders of Loop Telecom and Loop Mobile, regarding a legal dispute over the cancellation of Loop Telecom's operating licenses by the Supreme Court in February 2012. The two companies have launched litigation against the Indian government, claiming that the Mauritian companies' investment in the telcos was protected by the bilateral investment protection treaty signed between India and Mauritius. Loop's backers have agreed to withdraw their case if the government settles the dispute either with them directly, or with Loop. (September 6, 2013) The Business Standard

Javaid Akhtar Malik
Director Regulatory Affairs
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

SATELLITE NEWS

Russian rocket successfully puts telecom satellite into orbit

Russia's first successful launch of a Proton-M carrier rocket has successfully put a European telecom satellite into orbit, a spokesman for the Russian Space Agency (Roscosmos) said. The six-ton Astra 2E, manufactured in France for the Luxembourg-based satellite operator SES S.A., will provide television and radio broadcasts, as well as mobile and Internet communications for users in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The launch of the Proton-M from the Baikonur space center in Kazakhstan was the first since a Proton-M rocket carrying three satellites for the Glonass positioning system, Russia's answer to GPS, crashed in a ball of flames seconds after blasting off.

Airtel launches integrated network for Africa

Bharti Airtel has announced the launch of its Africa Connect network aimed at enhancing Africa's connectivity with the rest of the world and adding to the data carriage capacity in the continent. Africa Connect is expected to contribute to growth of internet and data services in the continent. Africa Connect has an integrated fiber and satellite network with 42 points of presence (PoP) spread across 17 African countries. The network will offer a variety of integrated telecom applications and solutions. The suite of products in the area of global transmission and IP services include submarine capacity, global leased circuits, Ethernet and backhauls, global and regional IP transit, managed internet, bandwidth on demand for customers, a comprehensive suite of satellite and managed services portfolio to enterprises and carriers in the region. The network is supported by infrastructure built by other regional carriers.

Turkmen space satellite to broadcast to three continents

By late 2014, the national satellite of Turkmenistan will have three antennas and will cover parts of Europe, Africa and Asia, representative of the Space Agency under the President of Turkmenistan Jeren Annamanova. Within two weeks of the launch in late 2014, the satellite will begin operations. Specialists of the National Space Agency are now studying abroad and will control the satellite from a ground control center in Turkmenistan. The satellite will provide all types of communication services - television and radio broadcasting, Internet services, telephone communciations, video conferencing, distance learning, remote medicine and an information network. According to a contract signed in 2011 with the Turkmen government, the French Thales Alenia Space has started building the first national satellite of Turkmenistan. In turn, the Chinese industrial company Great Wall has entered into a contract with Thales, in which China will help Turkmenistan launch its first communications satellite. The launch is scheduled for 2014 from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center with the help of Changzheng - 3B series rocket carrier.

Telekom Austria picks Conax content security for DTH service

ICT services provider Telekom Austria Group has selected Conax Contego Plus to protect content on 'direct2home' B2B DTH satellite platform in Central and Eastern Europe. The 'direct2home' will allow broadcasters to deliver their content to new markets and it enables telecommunication operators to enter the pay TV business. The first telecommunication company to deploy the platform with Conax content security will be Telekom Austria Group's subsidiary Vipnet based in Croatia. Vipnet will offer DTH services alongside their CATV, IPTV and OTT business.

Movistar Chile to launch 4G, satellite internet by end-2013

Roberto Munoz, general manager of Telefonica Chile, said that the company will launch 4G, satellite internet services and the Movistar Play video service by the end of the year. For next year, the operator is planning the large-scale deployment of a mobile payment application with Banco Santander using NFC technology. For this year, the operator has earmarked USD 1.25 billion to boost its fixed and mobile networks and to double capacity. A similar amount should also be invested next year, too. According to the manager, the company has more than 500,000 homes connected by fiber.

Media Networks to provide satellite internet in Ku-Band to Peru's Ensatel

Media Networks has signed an agreement to provide its wholesale satellite Internet service in Ku-band, ISAT-KU, to Ensatel, a satellite Internet provider in the Peruvian Amazon. This new agreement consolidates Media Networks a leading wholesaler of ISAT-KU in Latin America, where the unit of Telefónica Digital B2B serves more than 20 operations with this technology, according to Carlos González, commercial manager, Media Networks South America. In the coming weeks, Media Networks will deploy its new wholesale offer of satellite Internet for homes, said González. "This is a service that is a pioneer in Latin America, the Ka-Band satellite Internet (ISAT-KA), a technology that makes it possible to make this service available to the residential segment in the region. The ISAT-KA is the perfect complement to traditional networks and has enormous potential for universal access to broadband in Latin America," he said.

VSatellite.net offers high speed satellite internet

VSatellite.net has announced that is going to offer Gen4 updated satellite internet technology to all counties in New Jersey with speeds up to 15Mb with unlimited local and long distance in the continental US as well as Canada. They believe the Internet in New Jersey should be available to everyone, everywhere, and to make that possible they are working with Gen4 satellite internet technology, which has an upper hand on DSL and Cable Internet, as it does not require any cables or telephone lines to operate. Even people living in those hard-to-get rural areas can now have access to fast internet and additional remarkable services that VSatellite offers.

Arianespace to launch Embratel-Star One D1

Brazilian operator Embratel-Star One and U.S. satellite manufacturer Space Systems/Loral have chosen Arianespace to launch the Embratel-Star One D1 satellite. Arianespace announced the signature of a launch contract for the Embratel-Star One D1 satellite for Brazilian operator Star One, a subsidiary of Embratel. Star One D1 will be launched by an Ariane 5 rocket from the Guiana Space Center, Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana, in 2016. Star One D1 is the 11th Embratel-Star One satellite to choose an Ariane launch, following six Brasilsat satellites and Star One C1, C2, C3 and C4. Embratel-Star One is the largest regional satellite services operator in Latin America.

SpaceX launches Canadian satellite from California

A SpaceX rocket carrying a Canadian satellite has launched from the California coast in a demonstration flight. The company says its new and improved Falcon 9 rocket lifted off from Vandenberg Air Force Base on Sunday morning. SpaceX previously launched an older version of the rocket five times from Florida. The next-generation rocket boasts upgraded engines designed to improve performance and carry heavier payloads. The rocket is carrying a satellite dubbed Cassiope, a project of the Canadian Space Agency and other partners. Once in orbit, it will track space weather.

High speed broadband bound for Libya

A new high speed satellite broadband service is set for launch in Libya through a combined initiative by Bentley Walker and Newtec, bringing with it the promise of mobile TV and other data-rich services. The North African country will be served via a Newtec IP broadband Hub installed at Avanti's gateway at Makarios Teleport in Cyprus, providing what the companies claim will be reliable Internet connection across challenging geographical areas. The system will utilise Avanti's HYLAS 2 Ka-band capacity, with Newtec VSAT terminals based on the MDM2200 IP satellite modems, designed for consumers and commercial customers. The two-way terminals support a range of IP-based services such as internet access and voice over IP, in addition to multicast-based services.

Eutelsat and SBS Net connect Montenegro's police via satellite

Eutelsat Communications and Satellite Broadband Service Network Montenegro (SBS Net) have completed an ultra-fast, secure satellite network connecting Montenegro's police headquarters with the country's six border control stations. The implementation is the first live VPN to use OneAccess' satellite router, which delivers high speed, enterprise-class VPN services via Eutelsat's next-generation Ka-Sat satellite. The new network delivers transmission speeds of up to 20Mbps download and 6Mbps upload and will enable the Police of Montenegro to benefit from the most advanced uses of an ultra-fast broadband VPN, including the rapid implementation of integrated backup and traffic offload solutions in highly secure environments.

ROAMING NEWS

Sticker cuts roaming charges

A prototype "smart" sticker when applied to a cellphone's SIM card can lower roaming charges up to 85%, according to creator KnowRoaming.The sticker includes some SIM technology to help manage calls. For a one-time charge, starting at $35 per phone, the sticker will automatically switch users to a local provider after they enter a country. Instead of paying the international rate, they'll pay local rates. The sticker is said to work on Apple (AAPL) iPhones as well as Google (GOOG) Android smartphones.

Reliance Communications to cut roaming tariff in Saudi Arabia by 84 percent

Telecom operator Reliance Communications has announced up to 84% discount on phone call charges for its postpaid GSM customers during international roaming to Saudi Arabia."This unique offer will help all postpaid GSM customers to save up to 84 per cent in international roaming charges during their stay in Saudi Arabia," RCom chief revenue officer Nilanjan Mukherjee said in a statement.The company has started new scheme Super Saudi Scheme for Rs 786 with validity of 30 days.RCom customers opting this scheme will be able to make call to India for Rs 24 a minute compared to standard rate of Rs 150 minute. The customer will have to pay Rs 24 per minute for each call he makes within Saudi Arabia or for any incoming call, as per the statement.The company has also slashes SMS rates from Rs 30 to Rs 10 under the scheme.

CellOne announces new US roaming plan

CellOne has introduced a new add-on roaming plan, which it says offers the lowest roaming rates for travellers visiting the US.The USA 25 Roaming Plan is priced at $25 a month. Travellers roaming in the US will get access to substantially lower rates vs. the traditional pay per use option, CellOne said. "With calling rates at only $0.25/min and data at $0.25/MB, CellOne has the lowest roaming rates to the USA including their data at 50% less than their competitor, the provider added.Once the USA 25 Roaming Plan is activated, you can travel to and from the United States within that same calendar month as many times as you like. You will only be charged the flat rate once.Frank Amaral, CellOne CEO said: "Giving customers options to choose which plan suits their needs is the driving force of this new offering."People have adapted their mobile usage when overseas as they try to minimise roaming charges. This new feature allows them to stay connected at affordable rates that in some cases are on par with local rates."

RCom offers roaming discount

Telecom operator Reliance Communications announced up to 84% discount on phone call charges for its post-paid GSM customers during international roaming to Saudi Arabia."This unique offer will help all post-paid GSM customers to save up to 84% in international roaming charges during their stay in Saudi Arabia," RCom Chief Revenue Officer Nilanjan Mukherjee said in a statement.The company has started new scheme Super Saudi Scheme for Rs 786 with validity of 30

days.RCom customers utilizing this scheme will be able to make call to India for Rs 24 a minute compared to standard rate of Rs 150 minute. The customer will have to pay Rs 24 per minute for each call he makes within Saudi Arabia or for any incoming call, as per the statement.The company has also slashes SMS rates from Rs 30 to Rs 10 under the scheme.

AIS introduces new approach for roaming fees

Advanced Info Service (AIS) is introducing an unlimited mobile chat package to ease consumer fears over exorbitant international roaming fees when using their phone overseas. The country's largest mobile operator said its tariff plans are designed to discourage people from having to temporarily switch mobile operators by purchasing a local SIM card to avoid hefty phone bills.TitipongKhiewpaisal, senior vice-president for consumer marketing and sales, said AIS's chat tariff plans offer unlimited access to texts or messaging services like Line, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger for 199 baht per day in New Zealand and Singapore. The unlimited chat service will be expanded to more countries this year.AIS is the first operator offering an unlimited chat service, he said.MrTitipong said AIS also provides a variety of roaming packages, some saving up to 97% from previous plans.The company has international roaming (IR) networks covering 160 countries worldwide, serving 3.1 million customers.

T-Mobile USA to eliminate international data fees

T-Mobile is eliminating fees for using data and texting services in more than 100 countries and capping charges for international voice calls.Starting Oct. 31, customers of T-Mobile's flagship Simple Choice plan won't have to worry about getting hit with so-called roaming fees if they fail to sign up for an international plan before they travel abroad. Those fees can reach hundreds or thousands of dollars for a trip, even to neighboring Canada or Mexico.T-Mobile, the No. 4 U.S. cellphone carrier, has been trying to differentiate itself from bigger rivals by shattering longstanding industry practices and calling itself the "Un-carrier."The company began in March by dropping conventional two-year service contracts in favor of selling phones with installment plans. In July, it introduced a program that lets people upgrade phones more frequently - up to twice a year. AT&T, Verizon and Sprint have since followed with their own frequent-upgrade plans.At the time of the phone-upgrade announcement, CEO John Legere said a third major change was coming - the one T-Mobile announced.

Vinaphone cuts international roaming charges

The Vietnam Telecom Services Company (Vinaphone) has announced new rates for international roaming services as of October with big reductions in voice call and data transmission charges. The reductions are the result of the company's efforts to boost cooperation with Foreign Service suppliers, Vinaphone Deputy Director Ho DucThang said.Charges of voice calls from 55 countries to Vietnam have been reduced remarkably, with the largest cut of 62 percent applied to calls made from Central Asian countries, like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. At the same time, fees for receiving calls from Vietnam decrease by 44 percent for 29 countries.Sending text messages to Vietnam are also cheaper in 104 countries.In addition, the charges for voice calls from Japan, Thailand, China, the Republic of Korea and Singapore to Vietnam or to a third country have been reduced by as much as 53 percent compared to the previous levels as these countries are popular destinations for Vietnamese people. Vinaphone also lowered the charge on internet use for its customers when travelling in 29 countries, with the highest cut of 40 percent being applied in China and Japan.

RCom slashes price of Soudi Arabia roaming pack

Reliance Communications announced the launch of an international roaming Super Saudi Pack for its post-paid GSM customers. This international roaming pack is available for Rs 786 and, as per RCom allows Reliance customers to save up to 84 per cent on voice calls. The pack also enables Reliance customers to save 98 per cent on data usage by paying a charge of only Rs 0.24 per 10 KB while on international roaming.Commenting on this launch, Nilanjan Mukherjee, chief revenue officer, Reliance Communications, said, "With the launch of the Super Saudi Pack, RCOM has added a new dimension to its offerings for retail customers during this auspicious period. This unique offer will help all post-paid GSM customers to save up to 84% in international roaming charges during their stay in Saudi Arabia. This exclusive pack will allow Reliance customers to stay in touch with families and friends while they are travelling, without worrying about high international roaming charges."The Super Saudi Pack can be purchased any time through the year, with a validity of 30 days.

WOW widens network reach with interconnect deal

Wide Open West (WOW) recently signed a bilateral interconnect agreement with Global Capacity that expanded the reach of its network footprint.WOW's interconnect deal with Global Capacity's One Marketplace Chicago point of presence (PoP) connected its on-net assets to a wider national and global market. WOW can also more effectively deliver its higher bandwidth private line and Ethernet services. Global Capacity's One Marketplace provides automated pricing and streamlined service delivery as well as transparent visibility into on-net buildings and service availability for networks. Global Capacity said One Marketplace's visibility also armed WOW with real-time industry intelligence on market price, demand and supply, enabling WOW to decrease its overall time to market and sell its services more competitively. "Global Capacity is a valuable cornerstone partner that understands the wholesale and business model while realizing the intrinsic value of our mutual partnership," said WOW's Brad Cheedle, senior vice president, business services. "With an interconnection to One Marketplace, WOW is able to validate the buildings within our network footprint and increase the on-net inventory accessibility for Global Capacity's customers through our 150,000 buildings."

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

FTTH Council selects new C Spire FTTH initiative

C Spire's ultra-high speed 1 Gbps Fiber to the Home initiative in Mississippi has been selected as the first North American "Gimme Fiber Day" Award winner by the Fiber to the Home Council Americas (FTTH Council). The announcement was made today at the FTTH Council Americas 2013 Annual Conference and Expo in Tampa, Florida and follows C Spire's "Get Fiber First" call-to-action last week, which gives cities, towns and communities the opportunity to compete for 100 times faster Internet speeds to thousands of homes throughout Mississippi. The inaugural award will be part of an annual event and celebration to honor the achievements of Professor Charles Kao, who pioneered the use and development of fiber optics in telecommunications, and showcase how fiber optics have positively impacted communities around the world and what policymakers can do to accelerate its deployment and adoption. To commemorate the day in North America, C Spire executives and FTTH Council officials are planning a November 4th event in Ridgeland, Mississippi to showcase the company's Fiber to the Home initiative and the positive impact of fiber networks on education, healthcare, civic life, government services and economic growth. During the event, C Spire will announce the initial communities who are finalists for gigabit connectivity.

VoIP's appeal extends to Nigeria

The global appeal of VoIP has once again been emphasised by the fact it is proving to be such a hit in Nigeria. It has been suggested that the emergence and considerable success of VoIP is good news both for IP telecommunications and fixed-line solutions. Vernon Van Rooyen, executive head of network operations at Nigerian Telecommunications said that there is a market for all types of telecommunications in the African country. He explained there are huge businesses in the nation's banking, oil and gas and telecoms industries that need links between their many employees over numerous sites. Forbes Magazine has previously suggested the VoIP market has a total value of $15 billion (£9.24 billion), even without taking into account some major companies operating within it.

Danal launches fingerprint mobile payments system

South Korean mobile payment service provider Danal has launched a fingerprint-based mobile payment system with Crucialtec, a fingerprint technology developer. The payment system will be applied to the Vega LTE-A smartphone from local handset maker Pantech. Users of the phone can download the BarTong app which will allow them to use their smartphone to pay. Instead of entering a password, users scan their fingerprint with the smartphone, the Korea Herald reports. Danal plans to launch the BarTong service in overseas markets such as the US and China as well.

FreedomPoP launches free' VoIP phone service

FreedomPop on its one year anniversary launched its beta of the world's first completely free mobile service with free voice, text and data. The company will give users a guaranteed 500 MBs of data, 500 text messages, and 200 anytime voice minutes free every month for life. FreedomPop will also offer heavier users unlimited voice and unlimited texting for just $10.99 per month with no contracts or commitments – 80 to 90 percent less than similar plans offered by large carriers, saving consumers over $1,000 per year. The FreedomPop Phone service will initially be available on the HTC Evo Design smartphone, which will sell for at a 65 percent discount for just $99. Later this year, additional popular Android handsets will be offered.

Calix gear used by gigabit FTTH communities in 14 states

Calix Inc. says that more than 15 of its service provider customers have announced gigabit residential services in 14 different states, stepping to meet the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Gigabit Communities Challenge. Issued in January 2013, the FCC's Gigabit Communities Challenge called for at least one gigabit community in all 50 states by 2015 (which the FTTH Council Americas has asked the commission to extend further -- see "FTTH Council unveils Gigabit Communities Race to the Top proposal"). Calix says its FTTH technology is being used in fiber-optic networks to support gigabit services in Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia. In addition, Calix customer O-NET has brought the first residential gigabit network to Canada in Olds, Alberta, and is being used by CenturyLink in that carrier's gigabit services pilot in Nebraska (see "CenturyLink uses Calix systems in Omaha gigabit FTTH pilot").

China Mobile picks 9 vendors for 4G network rollout

China Mobile has awarded nine contracts for the rollout of a 4G mobile network, with most going to domestic telecommunications equipment makers. Meanwhile, Ericsson, Alcatel-Lucent, and Nokia Solutions and Networks (NSN) have also secured contracts. Alcatel-Lucent said it had picked up about 11 percent of China Mobile's plan to build more than 207,000 TD-LTE base stations in China by the end of the year as part of its Phase I 4G network. The Financial Times reports that NSN and Ericsson won a similar share of the work as Alcatel-Lucent. China Mobile also selected six domestic vendors: Huawei, ZTE, Datang Mobile, FibreHome Technologies, Potevio, and New Postcom Equipment Company. An unnamed source told the paper that ZTE and Huawei won the lion's share of the contracts.

TELUS launches Link, the LTE-powered push-to-talk network

TELUS has launched a successor to its storied Mike push-to-talk network, dubbed TELUS Link. The new service is compatible with the company's HSPA+ and LTE networks, and will work with select WiFi networks as well when it launches. Link is ostensibly compatible with all operating systems, including iOS, Android, and BlackBerry 7 devices, with BB10 support coming soon. The evolution of the IDEN-based Mike network will allow its small existing customer base to transition over to Link for $15/month for unlimited talk, and will provide better roaming support in the United States under new HSPA-based agreements. TELUS still plans to support Mike for at least two more years, but will likely shut it down once its entire legacy PTT customers have transitioned over to Link.

Base launches LTE in Belgium

Base became Belgium's second LTE operator, rolling out its new network in 15 cities. The mobile operator announced the launch at a press conference.The telco listed the 15 cities in which 4G services will be available, including Bruges, Liège and Ostende. It pledged to extend services to the capital, Brussels, at a later date. Mobile operators have been unable to launch LTE services in Brussels due to the city's strict rules on radiation from mobile masts. However, late last week it emerged that authorities had worked out the problem and 4G is now set to arrive in the capital from next year. Proximus, the mobile arm of incumbent Belgacom, launched LTE services in November last year. Meanwhile, Mobistar, which has been testing its 4G network for some time, said it will accelerate deployment in the latter part of this year and will launch commercially at the start of 2014.

SIM to provide 3G service on TOT network

Handset distributor Samart I-Mobile is expected to sign a new MVNO (mobile virtual network operator) deal with TOT this week to provide third-generation cellular service on the agency's network, said Watchai Vilailuck, president of Samart Corp, SIM's parent. Under the new 12-year MVNO contract, SIM will keep 54 per cent of the revenue from the 3G service and the rest will go to TOT. SIM expects to have about 600,000 users by the end of this year, up from about 284,000 currently. SIM has the right to provide the 3G service to a maximum of 2.8 million users initially but can expand that number depending on capacity and demand. TOT recruited five MVNO partners, including SIM, several years ago and is now in the process of granting new longer-term contracts. Currently, TOT has 5,000 base stations for its 2.1-gigahertz 3G network in the first phase of its network expansion. It is scheduled to have all 5,320 sites of the first phase installed by month.

Indosat launches UMTS 900 MHz service in Bali

Indonesian telecommunications provider Indosat has launched a UMTS 900 MHz network in Bali. The operator offers data services of up to 42 Mbps under the "Super Internet" brand, the Jakarta Post writes. Indosat said that the lower 900 MHz spectrum provides a better signal, improving the quality of service and indoor signals. The company is improving its mobile sites across Indonesia with some 5,000 to 6,000 BTS scheduled for improvements. "Bali is the first area where we have completed our network improvements, due to the higher need for a data service, as well as its position as the foreign tourist hub," Sharif Mahfoedz, the company's division head for data service, said.

WOULD I LIE TO YOU?
THE NEED FOR INDEPENDENT SECURITY CERTIFICATIONS

Nader Henein
Regional Director of Product Security

BlackBerry Middle East and Africa

Companies have long tried to repackage the way they deliver their message on security so that it doesn't sound like a sales pitch. One tactic is to deploy employees in roles such as advisor, evangelist or consultant to win over new customers with the company's security message. But the simple fact is that there is no reason why you should gamble the security and future of your organization on the promises of an employee tasked with portraying their product in the best possible light. I myself work within the Advisory team of BlackBerry Security at Research In Motion (RIM), and before speaking at an event or to a customer I make a point of saying, "Please, don't take my word for it: due diligence is key."

Let's look at the typical scenario. Mr. John Doe shows up at the office of your CTO, on time, wearing a freshly pressed suit with a stack of crisp business cards, his title boasting impressive accolades such as "Senior Architect" and "CIISP."He's an older gentleman who demands respect and exudes wisdom. Still, is there any reason to trust him with the keys to the kingdom?

For more than a decade, RIM has worked very hard to build a product at the forefront of mobile security. We have dedicated hundreds of thousands of man hours in architecture,

development and testing, the result of which is a solution widely regarded as the gold standard of mobile security.

"Trust should never enter into the equation, and therein lies the need for independent third-party accreditation of products that make security claims."

But still, how do clients concerned about the security of their network and their data, differentiate the truth in the previous paragraph from a well crafted marketing message? Quite simply, they shouldn't have to. Trust should never enter into the equation, and therein lies the need for independent third-party accreditation of products that make security claims. Traditionally, security assessments for certification are conducted by well-resourced, government certified labs to thoroughly test claims made by vendors about their products.

Within BlackBerry Security, we have a growing team dedicated to security certifications. They work tirelessly with labs in Canada, the US, the UK, Germany, China and many more on various government and industry certifications to effectively remove the need for unsupported trust in the vendor from the equation. This is not a one-off process. We certify all major versions of our smartphones and BlackBerry Enterprise Server software to receive third-party validation that data is secure as it travels between the device and server and when it is stored on either end.

"The process of certification is expensive and lengthy. It requires, among other things, code reviews, penetration testing, and a close working relationship with the certification labs."

The process of certification is expensive and lengthy. It requires, among other things, code reviews, penetration testing, and a close working relationship with the certification labs. We impart substantial intellectual property to these labs so they can complete their task.

So how does this affect you and the decisions you make? First of all, the next time Mr. John Doe comes to visit and makes a claim about the security provided by his product, ask him who has certified these claims, when was the last time they did an independent code review and if the current version was included. If his company started but did not complete the process of certifying their product, that may indicate an undisclosed security flaw.

Only a handful of labs across the globe have the capacity and expertise to certify a complex product with millions of lines of code. If your organization supports a policy that gives preference to products that have passed certain internationally accepted certifications, you can leverage a substantial amount of work conducted by impartial experts to ultimately maintain a consistent security posture throughout the lifecycle of your data, from server, to laptop, to smartphone.

THERE'S AN OSTRICH IN THE ROOM! DANGERS OF THE CHECKBOX MENTALITY

Nader Henein
Regional Director of Product Security

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With the increasing number of mobile devices and operating systems on offer, many administrators and SMEs in large companies have been overwhelmed by employee and executive requests to support the latest gadget. With mounting pressure to enable business productivity on personal devices, a less than diligent approach to security may be taken, where, provided that a list of check boxes is ticked, products are integrated into the corporate infrastructure. Every security professional knows that the devil is most definitely in the details.

The commonly accepted myth that ostriches thrust their heads into holes in the ground if they sense danger provides a useful analogy for how some organizations still handle security risks in the mobile space. For example, if there is a "Turn on Encryption" option in an MDM (Mobile Device Management) tool and the IT department has an encryption requirement, do they first confirm that it covers the data on the device and adheres to their security policies? Or do they turn the option on blindly and hope for the best? In any industry there are two forms of data: custodial information that you hold on behalf of your customers, and intellectual property, which is information your company produces that puts it ahead of the competition. Intellectual property could be a production technique or a commercial plan for the next quarter. Why are we talking about types of data? Because as you allow employees to put either type of data on their mobile devices, you are required to encrypt it. This requirement is due to regulatory rules in the case of most custodial information, and due to the criticality of the data to the organization's revenue in the case of intellectual property. So that encryption option on your MDM tool is very important, and what is more important is that when your IT department turns it on, it actually includes the data you are trying to safeguard and does so to an acceptable standard on all of the devices it manages.

With so many mobile operating systems running on devices with varying capabilities, do they all apply commands in the same way? Since I work for a mobile device vendor, I will not answer this question as I will almost immediately be accused of bias. Nevertheless, this is a question that every security auditor needs to address. It is important to note that this

is not an MDM issue; it's device centric. An MDM tool can't force a device to apply full disk encryption if the manufacturer of the device OS did not implement this function.

Having a checklist for mobile security is a good thing, but it should be a bit more detailed and catered to your needs. Everyone needs encryption, but do you need it across the entire device, or just on a specific part? Everyone needs a cross platform MDM, but does it need to cover all eight popular mobile operating systems or just the three you have in your organization? The fact is, checklists have to be requirement driven and sufficiently detailed to force the individual enforcing them to look a bit deeper into each line item. Pressing a button and praying for the best is ignoring the "Ostrich in the Room". Securing a mobile deployment may not be as easy as it was before, but it's far from impossible.

"In any industry there are two forms of data: custodial information that you hold on behalf of your customers, and intellectual property, which is information your company produces that puts it ahead of the competition."

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