SAMENA TRENDS

EXCLUSIVELY TO SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

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A SAMENA Telecommunications Council Newsletter

Operators' Strategies / Advancements in Convergent World

Exclusive Interview

Peter Kaliaropoulos
Chief Executive Officer
Batelco Group

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EDITORIAL

Tis the initial days of the new year, where all stakeholders in the ICT and other industries are ready to roll out a successful and energetic 2011. Convergence can take many forms, not only on a technical basis. Every new year begins this way, especially for those whose fiscal new year begins in January along with the calendar year... Just a few days ago, SAMENA Telecommunications Council signed an Agreement with the Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organization (AICTO) headed by Ms. Khadija Hamouda Ghariani-General Secretary. AICTO is largely a telecommunications council that is sponsored by the Arab League, which is based in Tunisia, chaired by the Deputy Minister of ICT in Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Wohaibi. The organization is ICT issue driven and has a core curriculum that has mobile TV and e-commerce issues as their platform and we look forward to a strong working relationship with AICTO and their membership, which is principally the ministerial bodies of ICT in the Arab world.

During the aforementioned AICTO meeting, Dr. Hamadoun Toure, the Secretary General of the ITU was also in attendance. Dr. Toure during his presentation, stated his passion and the ITU's strong interests regarding the potential of the collaboration between private and public entities. I had the opportunity to speak at length with Dr. Toure and we discussed the potential of the private public partnership. He and I discussed the need for this dialogue and it was firmly asserted that both types of institutions should work toward the betterment of the industry and the environment that we work in. SAMENA as a member of the ITU, is going to work hard to support its member organizations in efforts with the ITU on a positive collaborative basis.

SAMENA Telecommunications Council partnership with European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO) is developing nicely. We as the SAMENA Telecommunications Council having Broadband Development as our general platform this year are working very diligently toward solid working position papers on issues such as UMTS 900, the Digital Dividend and other related topics of devout interest to our membership. Our content committee with its working groups, are also focusing on several issues where ETNO and its strong thriving membership are also working on the same. These working relationships bring strength to our cause and help us as well as our partners develop credible working plans and arrangements and outputs for our membership that are backed by many operators in a common cause. Throughout the late winter months and the spring season, the topic of content shall be evolved deliberately in concert with other regions of like minded interests, in order to provide direct results, visible on a global scale in June, in which SAMENA and its partners on the program shall be able to produce a credible and strong deliberative position on this all very important topic of content and its effect on operator networks, with regard to OTTPs.

This issue is really in many ways related heavily to Broadband and its applicability to the growth of the operator's networks but also their consumer interests, habits and work forms. As Dr. Karim Taga spoke at the AICTO meeting about the practical use of HSPA, UMTS and or other technologies for broadcasting multicast mobile TV, the convergence of broadband across multiple layered or hybrid technologies caught my interest. The convergence of mobile TV and how it is viewed, watched and absorbed by both broadcasters and viewers is occurring right before our eyes. The evolution of Youtube from a short view form of self submitted entertainment to a broadcaster friendly ecosystem (a very focused topic of SAMENA Telecommunications Council is the content ecosystem) has brought along other major video producers to the internet and thus, has further convoluted the integration and convergent mechanisms of the networks. Inside TRENDS, you will find some very interesting and very useful articles about this topic. There is no way that one single newsletter e-mag can answer nor solve or provide in one issue, the answer to this very cloudy topic, however at least SAMENA Telecommunications Council can shine the focus on this activity a bit to raise inquisitive questions and to provide a bit of insight.

Truly Yours,

Thomas Wilson
CEO & Managing Director
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

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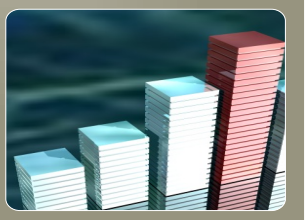
EDITORIAL



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TOP REGIONAL & MEMBER NEWS

PTCL Introduces "Business in a box" for SME Sector

PTCL has introduced "Business in a box" for the SME sector as part of its smart solutionshs offerings. Senior Manager Noman Ashraf said that PTCL's Business in a Box allows companies to cater their current and future business need. This gateway device provides broadband Internet connection sharing, firewall security, VPN connectivity, IP telephony, IP Camera surveillance audio/video streaming and wireless LAN connectivity in a very secure and faster manner. He further said that PTCL business in a box is not only limited to typical DSL, but also provides the functionality of WLAN access points, VoIP, IPSec, File server and Printer server in a single CPE. This gateway device also provides CPE WAN Management Protocol, which eases and reduces the management effort of the service providers.

Turk Telekom Upgrades VDSL2, ADSL2+ Speeds

Turk Telekom has started offering new Internet packages with speeds of up to 50 Mbps and 100 Mbps with VDSL2 technology and up to 16 Mbps with ADSL2+. Turk Telekom used Alcatel-Lucent's expertise in VDSL2 Bonding and Vectoring for laying the foundation for the deployment of further DSL innovations such as DSL Phantom Mode, which has been demonstrated earlier this year by Alcatel-Lucent's research arm Bell Labs. In the last four years, Turk Telekom has extended its fiber networks by 30 percent and reached a cable length of around 128,000 km. At the end of Q3, Turk Telekom had around 6.5 million ADSL lines.

Qtel Introduces Thuraya XT Satellite Phone

Qtel has launched Thuraya's latest mobile handset, Thuraya XT that is designed to withstand severe environments and the most extreme conditions. "Thuraya XT is the world's toughest satellite phone, capable of operating in freezing and sweltering temperatures, and robust enough to survive sandstorms and heavy snow fall. It is the first and only satellite handset with an IP54/IK03 durability rating and costs QR3,699" Qtel said. Thuraya's satellite service enables customers to make and receive calls in more than 100 countries around the world. The service is particularly useful for travelers and those looking to venture deep into desert regions.

Nawras Named "Brand of the Year 2010" By Superbrands

Nawras, a Qtel Group company, was thrilled to be named Brand of the Year 2010. The announcement was made during an exciting award ceremony hosted by Superbrands Oman. In the first such event to be held in the Sultanate, the line-up of the impressive Superbrands Oman title included several leading Omani and international brands that had been thoroughly evaluated for the title. Recognized as Superbrands, these brands feature in the 2009 -2010 Superbrands book. Accepting the award, Chief Executive Officer, Ross Cormack said, "Being chosen as a Superbrand is a fantastic honor and achievement for the whole Nawras family and we are thrilled and grateful."

Du Wins "Telecommunications Deployment of the Year" at ICT Achievement Awards 2010

du was honoured at CNME's prestigious ICT Achievement Awards 2010 under the "Telecommunications Deployment of the Year" category. The award, which was received by Faisal Aziz, from Technology Security Risk Management Department in du, on behalf of the company is an acknowledgement of du's cutting-edge 'End-to-End Security Strategy' program. "Winning this prestigious award is a great achievement for du and serves to prove our positioning as a top telecom service provider in the region. Awards that du has received in the past include UAE Superbrand 2010, Best Middle Eastern Local Currency Deal 2008 by UK's EuroWeek, two prestigious awards at UAE Web Awards 2008, Cristal MENA award in 2008 for its corporate brand launch campaign, 'Best Brand' at Telecoms World Awards Middle East 2007 for innovative branding and outstanding brand success, among others.

Cisco Brings TelePresence to Vietnam

Cisco has opened TelePresence rooms in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, the company's first such venture in Vietnam. The Cisco TelePresence System provides a boardroom-style table around three 65-inch plasma screens with room for six participants on each side. There is also a single-panel plasma screen system that Cisco says offers the same experience, "but with a smaller footprint." These high-definition screens enable participants to see life-size images of each other. The Cisco TelePresence Manager software integrates with enterprise groupware and with Cisco® Unified Communications Manager, so scheduling is as easy as sending a Microsoft Outlook calendar invitation. Calls are started with the touch of a button. Since the launch of Cisco TelePresence, over 800,000 meetings have been scheduled using this technology, saving more than US$737 million in travel costs and an estimated 397,788 metric tons of carbon emissions from saved travel.

Etisalat Named "Best Middle East Wholesale Provider" For Third Consecutive Year at Capacity Awards

Etisalat has been named the best wholesale provider of telecommunications services in the Middle East for the third consecutive year at the annual Capacity Awards ceremony. The ceremony, which was organized by Capacity Media, recognized Etisalat's leadership in providing "smart services" and for developing its portfolio beyond the provision of transit and interconnection. Ali Amiri, Executive Vice President, Carrier & Wholesale for Etisalat said: "This year Etisalat introduced its "Smart Hub" - the region's most important hub for wholesale connectivity, applications and content. This facility enables us to provide access to a more sophisticated range of services including our roaming hub, and today our platform allows other operators to establish a network of 600 roaming partners around the world with the minimum of effort."

BT and STC Partnership Brings Rich Portfolio of Networked IT Services to Saudi Arabia

Through a partnership with Saudi Telecom Company (STC), BT announced that it has made it easier and more cost effective for multinational companies in Saudi Arabia to connect to their international operations by launching a local Point of

Presence (PoP) of its global Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) network. The new PoP will be operated by STC in conjunction with its national and regional MPLS network. BT's MPLS platform is available in more than 170 countries around the world through BT and local licensed partners such as STC. As one of the largest global Internet Protocol (IP-based) networks, it underpins mission critical applications for leading global enterprises from a variety of industry sectors, including financial services, manufacturing, logistics, as well as oil & gas and pharmaceutical industry. STC's MPLS network is based on the latest state-of-art technology and is extremely reliable and diverse. It is available to enterprises throughout the Kingdom as well as outside via its numerous PoPs in the Middle East region.

Bangladesh Mobile Phone Users Cross 66 million

The mobile phone subscriber base in Bangladesh marked a 45 percent rise in 2010 with over 66 million users, latest official data shows. Bangladesh's growing mobile phone sector was marked with new brands, new laws and takeovers in 2010. Two mobile phone operators changed their brand names in the year while one saw a change of ownership and another is reportedly in negotiations. A high hope is there that the number of mobile phone users in the country will double within the next five years to 120 million. But implications of future amendments to telecom laws, uncertainties over 2G license renewal of four operators next year, 3G licensing as well as a continuation of the SIM tax have kept the operators on their toes.

Pakistan to Deploy Fiber Optic Cable to Connect With China

Pakistan will deploy cross border Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) system at a cost of Rs 3.7 billion between Pakistan and China for security of information, reported a local Daily, quoting official sources. Paper said that the need of this international fiber optic cable grew after security concerns from Pakistan and China, who fear the possibility of illegal monitoring of the communication activities by third parties, through already active undersea cables. The project was deliberated at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) under the chairmanship Pakistan's Finance Minister Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shakih.

SLT Receives Two Prestigious Awards For its 2009 Annual Report

Sri Lanka Telecom has received two prestigious awards for its 2009 Annual Report. They are the Gold award under the ICTA category of the Chartered Accountants Annual Report Awards 2009 and the award for the Best Presented Accounts under the Telecommunications Sector of the Annual Report Awards 2009 conducted by the South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA). The SLT statement said it won the SAFA award for the third consecutive year and the ICASL Award for the fourth consecutive year. The awards recognize excellence in preparation, content, format, presentation, financial accounts and timeliness.

Jordan Ahli Bank partners with Zain Jordan to procure advanced networking services

Jordan Ahli Bank signed a partnership agreement with Zain Jordan to establish an MPLS network linking the bank's various branches around the Kingdom using high-speed fiber-optics and microwaves - a service that was launched by Zain last October for the first time in the Kingdom. The agreement was signed by Jordan Ahli Bank's CEO and General Manager, H.E. Mr. Marwan Awad and the CEO of Zain Jordan Dr. Abdul Malek Al Jaber. This initiative comes as part of Jordan Ahli Bank's ongoing efforts to revolutionize the local banking landscape by introducing new services developed under the highest standards. "We have an unwavering commitment to bolstering the level of our services by utilizing the latest technologies in the field of networking, which is considered the backbone of the banking industry and a key differentiator when it comes to customer satisfaction," commented Awad.

Mobily unveils eco-friendly SIM cards

Etihad Etisalat (Mobily) started deploying new bio-sourced SIMs for its subscribers, made with renewable and easily recyclable materials. Mobily's eco-friendly initiative proves that the company undertakes major efforts to reduce the environmental impact. This new eco-friendly SIM card is fully compliant with telecommunications standards and its card body is 100 percent biodegradable, two features that make it unique in the Gulf market. The innovation contributes to the reduction in environmental impact and provides high-standard technical properties at the same time. In addition to its innovative concept, Mobily made sure that this unique SIM also gets an attractive and recyclable wrapping.

Nokia Siemens Networks completes acquisition of IRIS Telecom

Nokia Siemens Networks announced that it has completed the closing of the agreement to acquire all shares of IRIS Telecom. IRIS is a telecom and engineering services firm headquartered in Istanbul Turkey.

The Share Purchase Agreement was signed to combine IRIS Telecom's strong multi-vendor network planning and optimization (NPO) business with Nokia Siemens Networks' global capabilities, and create one of the region's leading telecom services players. IRIS will continue to function as a separate legal entity with its head office in Istanbul, Turkey. Co-founder of IRIS, Mete Gokdemir will continue as the CEO of the company. Johan Bruce, also a co-founder of IRIS, will assume a new role as Executive Director.

Umniah provides Umax wireless broadband services to 80% of Jordan's population

Umniah announced that it now provides Umax wireless broadband services to 80% of the Kingdom's population during a meeting that was held at the company's headquarters and was attended by local media representatives.

This achievement is the result of Umniah's continuous WiMAX infrastructure enhancements and the ongoing expansion of its service coverage across the Kingdom, which corresponds with the National ICT Strategy's objectives, coincides with the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's (TRC) requirements, and responds to Umniah subscribers' needs.

The new milestone was completed in record time and earlier than the TRC's deadline by a year and a half due to Umniah's ambitious infrastructure and coverage expansion strategies.

Thuraya sponsors meeting on "Role of ICT in National Security and Disaster Recovery"

Mobile satellite operator Thuraya is hosting a dedicated conference session on the role of information and communication technology (ICT) solutions in managing national security and disaster recovery operations.

The session is part of the 10th Arab Telecom & Internet Forum (ATIF 2011) to be held in Beirut on 26 and 27 January 2011. Organized by Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group, the conference is under the patronage of the Lebanese Minister of Telecommunications Dr. Charbel Nahas.
The feature that gives ATIF 2011 more significance is that it coincides with the Executive Bureau Meeting of Arab Telecommunications and Information Ministers, to be held in Beirut during the same period and attended by high-level official delegations from all over the Arab world. As planned, the session on "Role of ICT in National Security and Disaster Recovery" will feature expert speakers from the national security, civil defense, telecom providers, NGOs and relief operations sectors.

Alcatel-Lucent launches GPON in Finland

Alcatel-Lucent launches Gigabit Passive Optical Network (GPON) services in Finland. The company has a strategic partnership with Finnish telecom service provider, SSP Yhtiöt Oy. Alcatel-Lucent is providing SSP with its GPON-based IP access platform, and its portfolio of customer premises equipment. SSP has opted for GPON technology – as it allows the service provider to reach its subscribers in a cost-effective and reliable way.

GPON's key benefits – as listed by the customer – include: operational cost savings due to its passive (maintenance-free) outside plant, shorter repair times when fiber cables are damaged, easier network design, and redundancy closer to the end-customer. This partnership is one of the first GPON deployments in Finland. This move will support the Finland's national broadband initiative, "100Mbps broadband for everyone - by 2015".

Zain Kuwait launches "AdZone"

Zain Kuwait, has launched AdZone, a service aimed at the advertising industry that will enhance Zain's burgeoning reputation as a leader in the field of mobile ads. AdZone is the first service of its kind in the Middle East, allowing customers to receive ads on their smartphones, relevant to and according to where they are geographically located at any one time.

"Zain has shown that it can harvest the rewards of the growth of technology," said director of Value Added Services, Nadia Al-Saif. "With the telecommunication industry becoming more dynamic, and with stream of endless modern applications, the customer is the first to benefit from the digital revolution." Al-Saif said that AdZone will introduce new concepts in the field of mobile advertising in the form of alarm messages, SMS, media, video clips and WAP according to where the customer is geographically located.

Operator Leader's Vision

Peter Kaliaropoulos
Chief Executive Officer
Batelco Group

Peter Kaliaropoulos joined Batelco in June 2005 and has led its transformation into a regional company now operating in seven countries. Peter has over 29 years of experience in the global telecoms & ICT industry. Prior to joining Batelco, he held various senior executive roles including MD SingTel Optus Business (Australia); COO/SVP StarHub (Singapore); CEO Clear (New Zealand); Director Sales & Service, BT Asia Pacific (Singapore & Australia); Director, BT Syncordia Asia Pacific; VP Sales & Marketing, Telstra (USA) and MD Mobile Sales & Distribution, Telstra (Australia). He has played a key role in the transformation and growth of a number of companies operating across various geographic locations.

In his varied roles, Peter has been responsible for driving customer-centric operating cultures, development of future leaders, optimizing productivity levels, implementing growth strategies, and leading M&A initiatives. He has also served as a Director on the Board of various IT&T companies in Singapore, USA, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East and India. Mr. Peter Kaliaropoulos holds a degree in Electrical Engineering as well as an MBA.

Tell us about your leadership and visionary roles as the Group CEO of the Kingdom's largest phone company.

I joined Batelco mid 2005 with a clear remit to maintain the company's leading position in Bahrain's telecommunications market in the face of competition and also to transform Batelco into a telecommunication company of reference within the MENA region, and even beyond.

I was fortunate enough to work with a group of people who all shared similar passion for ensuring "the customer" was key to our success. Our passion for customer-centric transformation, to ensure whatever we do has a tangible benefit for the end customer, allowed us to refocus Batelco on the basics: value, responsiveness, innovation, leading edge services and customer care.

We also focused on people and processes. We re-energised our team by promoting local talent, retiring some long term contributors and recruiting a few, experienced people, with overseas "competitive scars"... we introduced "leadership" and empowerment in our decision making. We also focused on benchmarking, KPIs and six-sigma process re-engineering to deliver a consistent level of experiences to our customers through our services... we also re-invigorated our identity via a very successful, employee led branding exercise.

Realising the strategic risk – small market subject to the most liberal regulatory reform – we also focused on growing shareholder value by diversifying operations so there would be no strong dependence on a single market. A strong executive management team aligned in vision and backed up by Batelco's Board of Directors, resulted in profitable growth for Batelco in Bahrain and overseas: we now operate in 7 geographies and are delighted that by the end of 2010, our customer base reached 9.25 million customers. We retained EBITDA margins greater than 40%, and paid over $900 million in dividends over the last 5 years; we also invested $850 m in various new ventures and paid off a $485m loan so today Batelco Group is debt free.

The right people, common vision, passion for the customer, operational focus, innovation and caring for the communities we operate in have helped Batelco grow and become a "boutique telco" surrounded by formidable competitors across the Middle East and Indian markets. Needless to add: we have a lot more to do !

Please tell us about Batelco's latest solutions and services?

We recently introduced Batelco Inet Security Suite, a product that can be installed on PCs or Laptops to protect the systems from threats such as viruses, Trojans, internet phishing attacks and also spam. At a very low cost and available to download direct from our e-Services site on batelco.com this service has been sought after by many Broadband customers.

From a business perspective we believe we offer an unbeatable range of solutions and services which includes solutions such as office-to-office MPLS IP-VPN, structured cabling, local area networks, campus area networks, wide area networks and unified communications for business customers.

We can deliver high availability internet access to provide guaranteed uptime that is achieved with a primary and secondary connection to the internet and also offer high available VPN solutions, achieved with ADSL2+ based integrated backup.

Demand for FTTX to carry next generation services such as video on demand and high speed data can be met by our solutions team for both enterprise customers and consumers. Additionally, to meet our aspiration to offer products on par with our international counterparts, Batelco is now capable of delivering IPTV services to new real estate developments.

We offer the most advanced portfolio of telecommunications products and services on a world-class NGN network infrastructure for both fixed and wireless service delivery.

What are the types of services that are getting positive response from the users relative to other types of services?

Batelco's mobility solutions, which include an impressive range of mobile packages with advanced features that ensure ease of communication for our customers, are received very positively by both consumers and business customers. Our Blackberry service is particularly popular as in today's digital networked economy people find it necessary to be constantly connected to their workplace. O-net Mobile Broadband, which provisions for internet 'on the go' is equally on the increase in popularity.

We have seen a significant increase in our Blackberry and O-net customer base with numbers doubling for both over the course of the past year.

Keeping in view recent M&As in the region, how soon do you foresee largest scale M&A happening in the telecom sectors of this region?

Well, it is happening as we speak! Etisalat and Zain, Vimplecom and Orascom... We operate in the infrastructure business with significant cross border synergies. As penetration grows in domestic markets it is inevitable that acquisitions will continue with some passion. Size does matter in our industry! Acquiring at the right price and, responsive and effective integration, are key success factors for future M&A in our region.

What are your current business activities in the market?

We predominantly operate companies offering mobile and fixed broadband services to the mass markets and integrated business solutions to large enterprises and Government organisations. We will continue to focus on delivering content to the end user whist collaborating at a small scale on the content creation space.

What major contributions have you made to Middle East/international market, which, consequently, inspired trend formation or technology adoption?

Bahrain has been used over the years as a great test market to introduce new services and then market them across the region and beyond. We were the first many years ago to introduce digital satellite services in the MENA region and most recently the first to complete a Kingdom-wide New digital generation network. However, such services are part of global trends. We work closely with our technology partners such as Ericsson, Huawei, ZTE and others to understand how best to deploy new technology and/or applications for the benefit of our customers.

What are the factors and strategies behind Batelco's recent revenue jump?

Our revenues have not grown in 2010 due to the impact of the 3rd mobile operator in Bahrain.

What are you aiming to achieve by the acquisition of Zain Saudi Arabia?

What acquisition in KSA?... I understand the ongoing speculation but it is just that. We have always stated that KSA is a significant telco market and Batelco is keen to offer more services in the market. We already have a presence through our investment in Atheeb which delivers, WiMAX based, broadband voice and data solutions to customers.

The mobile services market in KSA is attractive to many companies and should a share of Zain KSA become available, at the right price, Batelco and its partners will be delighted to work alongside other Zain KSA shareholders and management to create one of the most admired companies in KSA. It is premature to elaborate further at this stage.

What is your assessment on the mobile content trends in the SAMENA region?

We are at the very embryonic stage. We need further focus and investment in local content creation to complement content created in overseas markets. Social networking on mobile platforms within an Arabic context, language, local games, music, art, micro payments and many other applications have yet to take off... it is an opportunity for telcos but success will depend on how we manage such a creative side of our business. We are not very good at it... telcos have a heritage deeply immersed in managing infrastructure and engineers... content creation and software programmers require new leadership skills from our industry.

How are you complying with your Regulatory Authority's initiative "Safe Surf"?

As mentioned in the response to question 2, we recently launched our Inet Security Suite. This new product is being delivered as part of Batelco's responsibility toward its Internet customers in providing a hassle free and safe Internet environment in line with the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority's recent initiative (SafeSurf) and being part of the Memorandum of Understanding that Batelco participated in and signed in April 2010. In additional to fighting the onslaught of cyber threats, it also provides an advanced parental control feature which ensures maximum child and family safety on the Internet.

What are Batelco's other subsidiaries and how are they competing in their markets?

Batelco's joint venture operations include Umniah Jordan, Qualitynet (Kuwait), Atheeb in Saudi Arabia, Sabafon in Yemen, Batelco Egypt and S Tel our Indian operation. All our key subsidiaries and affiliates have shown impressive increases in subscriber numbers year on year at the end of 2010. Umniah reported 2.1 million mobile customers for 2010, an increase in subscribers of 31% over December 2009 while Sabafon's mobile customer base increased by 40% to 3.5 million.

Its still early days for S Tel – we have just complete our first full year of operation and it will take another 4 years to break even. However, we are buoyed by the uptake of S Tel's products and services and the customer base continues to grow rapidly. At the end of 2010 S Tel had 2.3 million customers a massive 41% increase over Q3 2010 and a very positive figure for a company that is not yet 18 months in operation.

What are your thoughts about region wide unified international roaming trends?

It's a matter of time... we already offer one price data roaming across the GCC. Our Unified High Speed Data Roaming charge of only 600 fils per megabyte across the GCC states and a number of major Arab countries has been very well received particularly by our business customers.

What are the most significant business/technology trends and shifts that you foresee emerging within the SAMENA region?

LTE and Cloud Computing..convenience from mobility requires the introduction of faster and faster delivery of content... LTE shows promise assuming spectrum and infrastructure are carefully priced to facilitate accelerated delivery of such services.

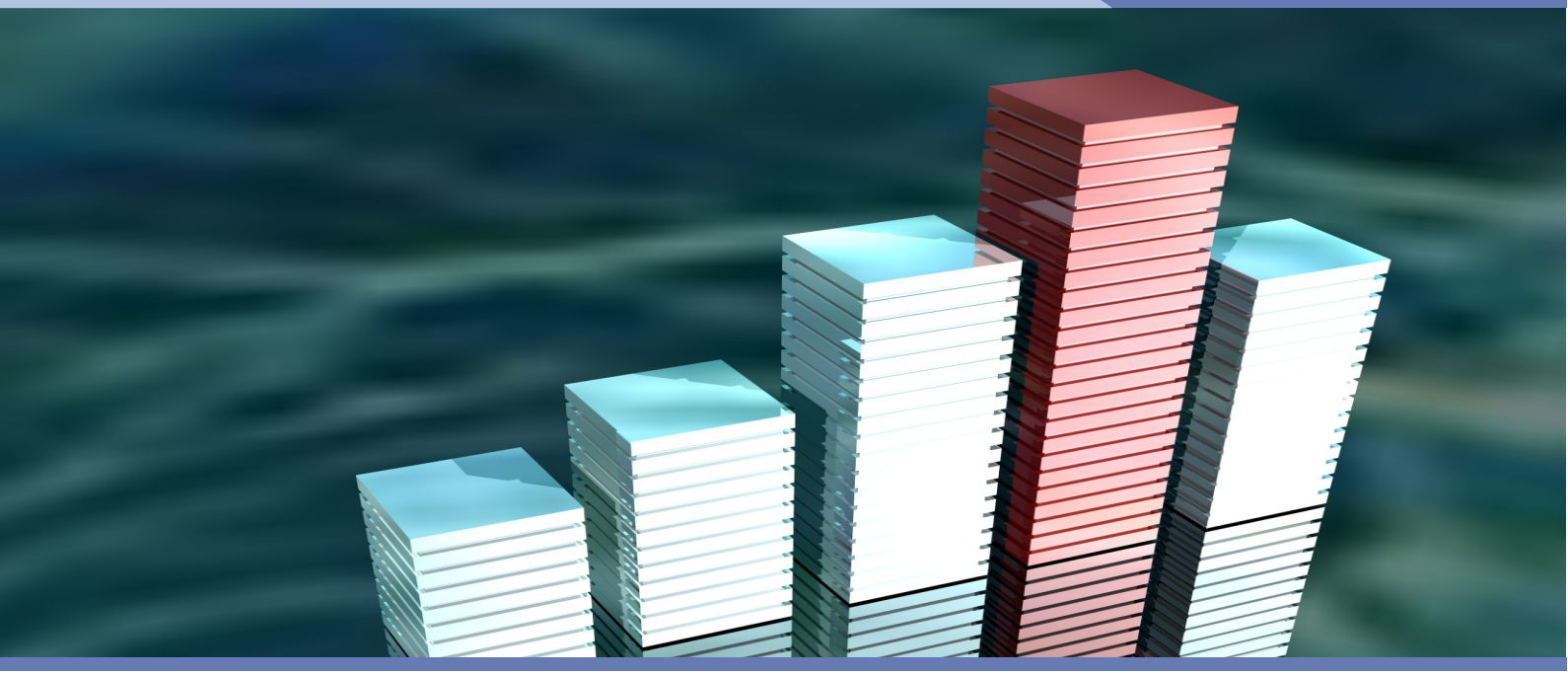
At the SME and Corporate space, cloud computing "soon" will become a more relevant technology. Of course it does also depend on very reliable, affordable and "thick pipes"... A customer perception-shift, that benefits can be derived from a "shared" cloud versus "my own" server, will also help...

How do you look at your competitors in terms of broadband market?

We always see competitors as an opportunity!. ....Opportunity to learn from them, opportunity to outperform them based on innovation and customer care and ...an opportunity to win-back customers ! Nothing is better for our company culture than a very strong competitive ethos.

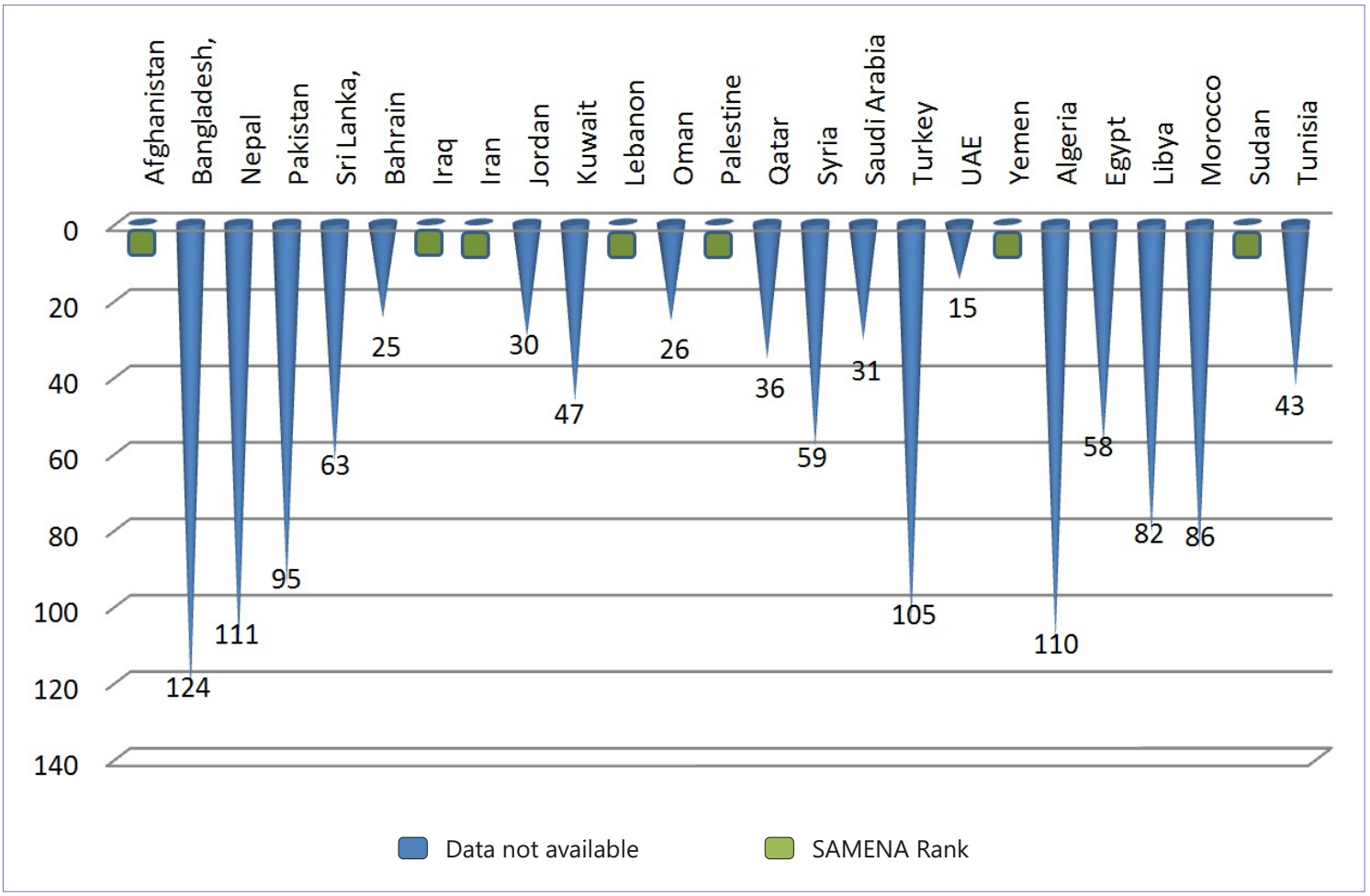
What are your thoughts on SAMENA Council as a learning platform?

I have been impressed by the opportunities presented by the Council in providing a forum to foster collaboration and cooperation between members of the telecommunications industry across the region. Samena's events offer an invaluable scope for knowledge sharing between key personnel from many different telcos which can lead to effective solutions to issues that are crucial to its members and our customers.



INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION (GLOBAL RANK OF SAMENA COUNTRIES)

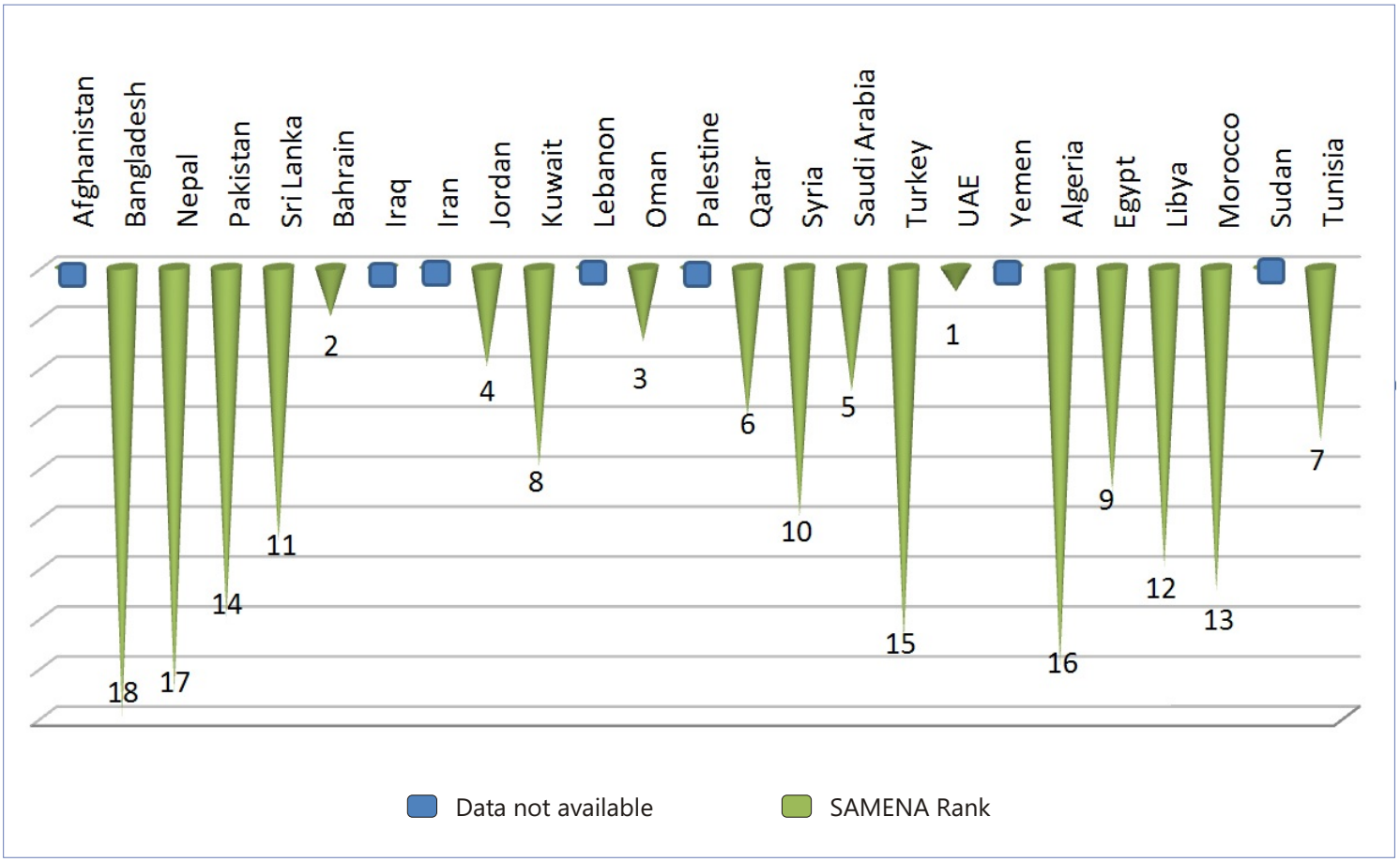
How would you rate intellectual property protectioin, including inti-counterfeiting measures, in your country?



Data Source: The Global Information Technology Report 2009-2010 by World Economic Forum & INSEAD
Image Source: SAMENA

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION (SAMENA RANKING)

How would you rate intellectual property protectioin,
including inti-counterfeiting measures, in your country?



Data Source: The Global Information Technology Report 2009-2010 by World Economic Forum & INSEAD
Image Source: SAMENA
Research Note: Ranking done by SAMENA based on data from The World Economic Forum. Within the SAMENA region, the UAE appears to be at number 1 in the SAMENA region in terms of Intellectual Property protection. Noticeably, there are gaps in terms of region's synchronization of its IP laws with those of the greater international community. During the past few years Gulf countries have been quite active in terms of IP. This trend is evident from the given figure showing that the top 5 countries in terms of Intellectual Property protection are from Gulf. Traditionally, IP has not been protected in a good way in developing countries as it has been in the developed nations. Some of the biggest markets in the SAMENA region such as Bangladesh, Algeria, Turkey, and Pakistan, appears to be struggling with the IP protection and are at number 18, 16, 15, and 14 respectively. For the uplift of innovation, research, and development, countries provide Intellectual Property protection giving the opportunity to IP owners to get the maximum benefit off their IP.

REGULATORY NEWS

Sri Lanka Delays Move to Restrict Mobile SIM Ownership

Sri Lanka is to delay a move to restrict the number of mobile phone SIM cards individuals can own after requests for more time from mobile phone companies, a senior Telecommunications Regulatory Commission official said. TRC director-general Anusha Pelpita said that under the new rule the number of registered SIM cards an individual can have from one operator would be five. Currently there are no restrictions on use of SIMs. The government has said it wants to limit SIM ownership and also require all mobile phone users to register to prevent the use of mobile phones for terrorism or crime.

Over 99% of UAE Population Own Mobiles, TRA Study

Over 99% of individuals in the UAE have mobile phones, while only 46% of households have fixed line phones, according to a recent survey by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) that examined the usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services in the UAE. The survey states that 63% households have internet access among which 88% have broadband connection. It also shows that a majority of broadband users subscribe to lower speed packages.

FCC votes in favor of net neutrality regulations

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has approved a measure that would regulate the services rendered by phone and cable companies. The FCC voted 3-2 in favor of a plan that would essentially allow the government to monitor the Web by prohibiting Internet or cable providers from discriminating against rival content or services. The three Democrats on the committee supported the measure, while the two Republicans opposed it.

Ofcom Gives Go-Ahead to Product Placement on UK TV

Commercial broadcasters are to be permitted to incorporate products into their shows from the start of March 2011, Ofcom has confirmed. While product placement is already commonplace in a number of countries, not least in the United States, where businesses pay big money for their products to appear in prominent positions on shows such as American Idol, to date, regulators have resisted allowing the UK to follow suit. However, under new guidelines published by Ofcom, producers working at commercial stations will be able to incorporate certain products into their shows, though at all times they will be required to make it clear to viewers that this is happening, notably by screening a soon-to-be-unveiled logo before and during shows containing product placement.

UAE TRA Wins Middle East CIO 20 Awards

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), represented by the National Computer Emergency Response Team (aeCERT), one of the TRA initiatives, has been awarded with the Middle East CIO 20 Awards for the most innovative projects in 2010 for the development and successful implementation of the HoneyPHARM system. The Middle East CIO 20 Awards honor the top 20 organizations that are using information technology in innovative ways to deliver business value, whether by creating competitive advantage, optimizing business processes, enabling growth or improving relationships with customers.

Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim, TRA Director General said: "TRA was always keen to encourage innovation and quality, relying on them as pillars of our success. We are very grateful to the entire team for helping us achieve this industry award." In order to allow the distributed honeypots to send all what they captured to a central repository to conduct the required study and analysis, the HoneyPHARM system has been developed.

PTA Devises Mechanism to Monitor Cellular Operators' QoS

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has devised formulae to measure Quality of Services (QoS) of cellular operators' telephony services in countrywide testing surveys. The authority has taken steps to ensure the best cellular phone services in the country, witnessing the escalating traffic of voices and data on the network of different operators. The authority has framed draft of "Cellular Mobile Network Quality of Service Regulations 2010" aimed at taking on board all the relevant stakeholders particularly cellular operators, infrastructure support vendors and consumer right associations with constructive feedback. The proposed regulations shall apply to all cellular mobile communication service providers for the purpose of identifying the minimum quality of service standards and associated measurement, reporting and record keeping tasks except packet switched or GPRS/EDGE services.

NTA says newcomers cannot be licensed for 3G

Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) says new telecoms operators wishing to set up shop in the country will not be able to offer 3G mobile services because it lacks spectrum bandwidth as all available frequencies are currently occupied by Nepal Telecom (NT) and Spice Nepal Private Ltd (Ncell). Speaking at the latest meeting of the Public Accounts Committee, NTA chairman Bhesraj Kandel confirmed that the only way for operators to get 3G spectrum would be if the existing spectrum was reallocated.

Brazil to allocate 450 MHz spectrum to reduce digital divide

The CDMA Development Group (CDG) has welcomed the new regulations of channelization and conditions of use of spectrum in the 450 MHz band recently issued by Brazilian telecoms regulator Anatel. Under the new regulations, the 450-470 MHz band will be cleared and allocated to deliver fixed and mobile services, including the full range of international mobile telecommunications services nationwide in Brazil. The spectrum will be allocated on a primary (non-exclusive) basis for mobile services (SMP), fixed telephone services (STFC), as well as multimedia communication services (SCM). The 450 MHz spectrum is thus expected to be more effectively used to deliver fixed and mobile telephony and broadband data services to Brazil's rural and urban regions, helping to bridge the country's digital divide.

OPERATORS' STRATEGIES AND THE EVOLVING REGULATORY LANDSCAPE IN THE CONVERGENT WORLD

SAMENA region has a diverse telecommunications ecosystem both in terms of fixed, fixed wireless, mobile, broadband, and converged services. Next generation mobile technologies such as LTE and mobile WiMAX are viewed as the future broadband access technologies. Both these technologies will coexist in the market and are expected to have significant share of the overall broadband market. Today, in the world of telecommunications, the fittest does not merely depend upon, which operators or service is technologically advanced but there are many grounds, based on which operators continue to survive and re-orient keeping in view their strategies and effective business models. This struggle for survival is also adhered t, the time to market, regulatory requirements, spectrum availability, the market potential and above all optimized OPEX as well as CAPEX.

The inevitable evolution of telecommunications industry has lead to a vital increase in global convergence and hence been extremely beneficial with respect to the burgeoning of the innovative strategies in the evolving regulatory landscape. Although, SAMENA region is very rich in terms of technologies, and capable of supporting advanced applications but the lake of congenial policies to drive broadband, convergence and innovation has always been there. The region now has markets where EDGE, FTTx, DSL, HSPA, EvDO and WiMAX networks exists what needs to be done is to emphasize more on convergence and provide more content backed of effective regulatory measure.

Though, it is clear that operators' community needs to focus more on the need for innovative strategies, the region-wide need for digital content, broadband, roaming service, more importantly regulatory support, can not disdain the mounting significance of high-end, localized content across the SAMENA markets. The region's telecoms markets are undergoing remarkable progression; broadband proliferation is progressively becoming the nexus of mobile content and applications. Growth in the mobile sector is especially corroborated in the Middle East showing a strong demand for convergence and introducing challenges that the operators community must address in the shape of novel strategies and more attractive business models to accomplish comprehensive triumph in this demanding region. The emergence of diverse technological innovations in the telecom sector globally has only stressed the continual growing demands of the technology savvy consumer base that exists world over. Hence the provisioning of improving technology only leads to increased demands, there by shifting the dependability back on the operators to continually grow and provide to the emerging demands. Effective deployment strategies are essential to ensure the economic success of the demanded technology and dynamic market beat for successful penetration. Thus the importance of such an approach is essential in the context of the SAMENA region.

> *Today, in the world of telecommunications, the fittest does not merely depend upon, which operators or service is technologically advanced but there are many grounds, based on which operators continue to survive and re-orient keeping in view their strategies and effective business models.*

Mobile broadband markedly is vital part of the next technology wave that will drive growth and improve productivity as well as the ARPU levels of operators. According to a recent research report by Informa, the future growth of broadband in Africa and the Middle East will be driven by mobile broadband, with the subscriber total increasing at a CAGR of 34% to reach around 38 million by 2014, slightly faster than the global average. In SAMENA region, WiMAX is already being used in various markets as cost effective wireless broadband access and backhaul technology. LTE appears to begin to rollout, it is likely that WiMAX, LTE and other wireless broadband technologies will be used extensively for broadband access to cope with bandwidth hungry application. According to a report by ABI Research consumer services revenue from 4G is expected to increase to US$70 billion by 2014. It appears that the telecom industry will be largely driven through next generation wireless technologies in the region. In the meantime a number of value added services are expected to add to the growing revenue of next generation service providers. Industry analysts agree that operators will come with new strategies to offer more "smart services". Gaming and P2P video sharing services are expected to be the most popular value added services.

Studying the existing market and its trend is the key towards ensuring regional performance and growth. According to a research study by Value Partners, "Population of the Arab Middle East is young and growing fast, many of them with high incomes. In the GCC almost 70 per cent of the population is under 30. Youngsters tend to be enthusiastic consumers of all types of digital media, and are said to form 75 per cent of all internet traffic in the GCC. We are witnessing a rapid deployment of mobile broadband technologies in these countries – with many of the key players in the region having already launched their mobile broadband offerings. We are seeing continual success in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and higher take-up in Bahrain, Qatar and Oman".

Moving to the next-generation networks is sometimes streamlined by technological neutrality and friendly regulatory policies. Partially available in some markets technological neutrality has somehow helped operators but is not yet a reality in regional markets. The question that regulators across the region have to reconsider is that, whether technological neutrality is a friendly practice and will it help ensure the availability of broadband to the end-user or not?

One of the newest regulatory trends in the region is international roaming rates. International roaming charges and mobile termination rates have finally begun to drop, both regionally and globally mainly due to growing competition and the introduction of regulations/price capping. As mobile operators search for new revenue streams, attention is turning to increasing mobile customer's usage of international roaming including mobile data roaming services. Countries in the Middle East have shown great interest towards international roaming, especially with in the region. For example only STC has signed more than 1,000 agreements entailing services that include post-paid, prepaid, Internet, 3G, MMS and international video call roaming.

Equally important is the issue that the infrastructure shouldn't limit the operators to stick to a single technology and hence should be dynamic in nature. This is where convergence has to play its role, and luckily the telecom markets around the region are pro-dynamic. The perfect infrastructure is one that is designed for offering capability

> *International roaming charges and mobile termination rates have finally begun to drop, both regionally and globally mainly due to growing competition and the introduction of regulations/price capping.*

to allow NGN upgrades, reliability and flexibility. In order to enable such networks, operators need a supple infrastructure that can operate efficiently and be managed economically in an optimal way.

It is encouraging to see unified roaming plans in the region with the indication that the industry is on track to address the significance of international roaming rates. SAMENA region is set to become an important hotspot in terms of international roaming revenues for mobile operators within the next few years. This trend appears to be driven mainly by the strong growth in the region's subscriber base, the growing competition, and increased inbound and outbound travel between Europe and different countries of the regions and also within SAMENA countries.

Spectrum, the next big thing in MENA region's regulatory arena has been one of the major challenges for regulatory bodies. Regulatory bodies are not inherently subjected to spectrum management in every country; hence it needs to be managed effectively to maximize benefits to users by ensuring that effective competition is introduced into the market to ensure enhancement of quality and service levels.

> *Spectrum needs to be managed effectively to maximize benefits to users by ensuring that effective competition is introduced into the market to ensure enhancement of quality and service levels*

Although, wireless broadband technologies may not require a great deal of bandwidth in the beginning, but if it is growing at a considerable rate (as has been experienced in some regional markets) then the regulatory bodies needs

to ensure in advance that enough spectrum is already allocated or that there is additional spectrum which when required can be made available to operators.

> *Regulatory bodies also have to take into account trends in the convergent world and ensure a competitive business environment among operators and service providers for the effective development of technology*

Regulatory policies and operators strategies need to accentuate the overall development of the sector and to elicit development as well as progress. However, regulatory bodies also have to take into account transition trends in the convergent world and ensure a competitive business environment among operators and service providers for the effective development of technology. Continual progression of technologies such as broadband and mobile has lead to an alarming increase in global convergence and hence been extremely beneficial with respect to the development of the ICT sector. However, this has also opened up the doors to challenging issues such as data security issues, convergent billing, revenue assurance, and the IP protection. Taking measures to subside such threats and ensuring security and integrity of data is highlighted as one of the major regulatory concerns.

Despite so much ongoing focus, new investments, adoption of transmission and access technologies, the overall broadband penetration is still below the global average. This makes a huge potential for mobile broadband service providers, be it WiMAX, LTE or any other technology. These technology trends are important to understand in the context of regulatory thrusts that includes the digital dividend and the issues of "network neutrality." In both cases, regulators need to reflect rules that are nifty, and innovative so as to avoid the imperfection.

Market Research Team, SAMENA Telecommunications Council

A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN SAMENA REGION

The towering demand for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services in the Middle East is building the region an eye-catching proposition for the expansion of high speed broadband access market. The NTAs and governments across the region are espousing policies to encourage the uptake of broadband technology. The dynamic expansion in the Middle East has created many opportunities for the sectoral players looking to access new markets. Difference in the speed with which this is happening has led to broad dissimilarity in broadband penetration rates from state to state. The proliferation of Telecom and broadband industry has proven as one of the fastest growing industry over the last decade in SAMENA region. The growth in the sector has given birth to enormous requirement of service provisioning and new investors to step forward and invest. With the obvious boost in data usage, telecom operators today are distinguishing the growing implication and significance of fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) as a critical component in setting up a vigorous telecommunications infrastructure.

Country-wise Regulatory activities:

Afghanistan

During the month the Regulator remained mostly busy in deliberating the issue of deploying 3G or 4G with its four cellular mobile operators and sorting out the issue relating to allocation of spectrum for the next generation services. The regulator showed its resolution to start commercial 3G services in Afghanistan by the end of 2011. It is worth mentioning here that the regulator recently posted a tender for a consultant to provide technical assistance for the valuation of frequencies to be licensed to mobile operators for 3G and WiMAX. The role would include an assessment of the readiness of the Afghanistan telecom marketplace for the introduction of 3G services; and recommendations for appropriate licensing fees for 3G spectrum and for WiMAX spectrum. The war torn nation's telecoms industry has come a long way since 2002, when there was no mobile service, and is now approaching 60% mobile coverage.

Algeria

The Algerian government and Orascom Telecom Holding (OTH) are still locked in the issue of nationalization of Djezzy. OTH Chief Executive urged the Algerian government to resolve the deadlock over a dispute that is threatening the telecom group's planned US$6.5 billion deal to sell assets to Russia's VimpelCom Ltd. If the dispute isn't resolved soon, OTH plans to turn to arbitration in the second quarter of 2011 which could drag on for between two to four years.

Bahrain

The Regulator issued a detailed document on the achievement of the telecom sector in Bahrain during the year 2009. . The document touched the topics like: key market trends, services offered by the active operators, main telecom indicators, revenues in the telecom sector,

employment in the telecom sector, average monthly national outgoing minutes per subscriber, ARPU for fixed, mobile and broadband, mobile traffic, roaming traffic, price elasticity, proportion of broadband subscribers by access speed and price bench marking etc. The regular also hosted its annual End of Year review with senior representatives of the telecommunications licensed operators. The review looked at the highlights of the year and discussed the work plan for the coming 12 months. The meeting concluded with an open dialogue during which TRA discussed with the attendees how the regulatory framework can best be used to enhance the development of sustainable competition in the Kingdom's telecommunications markets.

Bangladesh

The Regulator showed its intention to appoint an international consulting firm for selecting qualified operators to award 3G cellular mobile telecommunication license(s). The consultancy services shall include matters relating to organize the awarding process, interact with stake holders, hold a public consultation if required, frequency coordination & assignment, preparation of business plan, identify appropriate procedure of financing, market study and other relevant issues which may come during the exercise. The consultant will prepare a complete licensing guideline along with corresponding technical specifications, spectrum pricing, roll-out plan, and develop an operating and monitoring system for successful implementation, create competition, human resource development, and assistance in launching 3G services in Bangladesh. In another development the regulator issued a latest figure, by virtue of which the total number of mobile phone subscribers in Bangladesh rose to 66.62 million in November, from 65.57 million in October.

Egypt

The Egyptian regulatory environment is tainted by the brawl between OTH and Algerian government. The Orascom-Vimpelcom US$6.6bn merger likely to go ahead with or without Algerian unit Djezzy. Weather Investment, which owns 51.7% of Egypt's Orascom Telecom Holding, is becoming more eager to merge with Russia's Vimpelcom despite tensions with the Algerian government. The deal is worth US$6.6bn.

Jordan

During the month the Jordanian Regulator issued 'Regulatory Decision on the Dedicated Capacity Market Review. These Regulatory Decision sets out the TRC's findings on the issues like: The definition of relevant markets in relation to the supply of dedicated capacity, VPN & Frame Relay services. The identification of relevant markets susceptible to ex ante regulation is also characterized by a lack of effective competition, and the designation of Dominant Licensees on these markets. The prescription of ex ante regulations appropriate to remedy the competition problems related to dominance.

Kuwait

During the reporting month Kuwait's commercial court ruled that due diligence can proceed on Etisalat's planned purchase of 46% of Kuwait-based telecoms firm Zain Group, denying a minority shareholder's attempt to halt the transaction. Al-Fawares Holding Company, which owns 4.5% of Zain, sued the company and its second-largest shareholder, Al-Khair National, as well as National Investments Company, the firm charged with selling the stake, in early December to prevent Etisalat from gaining access to Zain's data. In another development the Ministry of Communications (MoC) signed a contract with a leading global communications company to install a new undersea cable which will provide faster, more efficient telecom communications between Kuwait and three other Gulf nations.

Lebanon

According to statistics released by the Telecommunications Ministry the total number of mobile-phone subscribers reached 2,752,580 as at end-September 2010, up by 15.1% year-to-date and 20.7% from the corresponding period of 2009. MTC Touch accounting for 54.5% percent of the total market as at end-September 2010, saw its number of subscribers rise by a yearly 16.1%, while the other mobile operator Alfa, managed by Orascom Telecom, witnessed a 26.7% rise in its number of subscribers, crossing 1-million subscriptions throughout the year. Even though prices per minute are higher for prepaid cards, the latter accounts for 83.1% of the total number of active lines, growing by a yearly 22.5%, compared to a rise of only 12.9% for postpaid subscriptions.

Libya

The Libyan government is planning to float the state-owned Libyan mobile phone operators Al Madar Telecomm and Libyana on the North African country's stock exchange by the end of April 2011. It is estimated that probably about 2% to 5% - that is the maximum that will be floated'. In October, Chairman of the Bourse indicated that the two companies would each list 30% stakes on the local stock exchange in early 2011.

Morocco

During the month after obtaining all regulatory approvals the France Telecom (FT) announced the signing of a final agreement to complete the purchase of a 40% equity and voting stake in Moroccan wireless operator Medi Telecom (Meditel) from its domestic owners Caisse de Depot et de Gestion group (via Fipar-Holding) and FinanceCom group (via Medium Finance). The stake will be consolidated into FT's accounts as from December 2 by the equity method, whilst the French group has also agreed to increase its share in Morocco's second-largest GSM operator to 49% on January 1, 2015, at which time it will fully consolidate Meditel into its accounts. FT announced the EUR640 million (US$845 million) deal on September 21, 2010, valuing the company at that date at EUR2.14 billion.

Nepal

During the month the Nepalese Regulator initiated studies on LTE and WiMAX rollouts in the country and several Operators have made clear their intentions to migrate to 4G and have submitted requests for LTE and WiMAX spectrum. However despite the swift award of 3G spectrum authorizations, to date there has been a slow uptake of advanced mobile data services.

Saudi Arabia

The Regulator issued a document on National Numbering Plan and has invited comments from public and stake holders by January 12, 2011. In another development according to a latest report issued by the Pyramid Research as the mobile market of Saudi Arabia heats up, the operators are looking to convergence in search of a competitive edge. Thanks to the regulator's consistent effort and determination to promote competition and development in the telecom sector, a market that was a monopoly in early 2005 now has four active players in the mobile sector and three licensees in the fixed sector. Pyramid expects the market to grow from US$11.3 billion in 2009 to US$14.3 billion in 2015, fueled mostly by growth in mobile data as all three GSM operators have launched 3G services. The next five years will see further price cuts on mobile voice services due to additional competition, but these cuts will be largely compensated for by a dramatic rise in mobile data usage and projected mobile data to grow at a 2010-2015 CAGR of 17 percent, to reach $2.9 billion in 2015. It is expected that the number of mobile subscriptions to grow at a CAGR of 4 percent, from about 42.5 million forecast in 2010 to more than 51.8 million in 2015.

Oman

The Regulator signed a customer satisfaction survey agreement with independent research consultants ADINC (Advertising International Co. LLC). ADINC will conduct the survey in collaboration with and technical expertise of TNS, a global leader in custom research. The objective of the nationwide customer satisfaction survey is to assess the current level of satisfaction for telecom services amongst different segments of the customer base in Oman. The Target Group of the survey would be, households using telecom services (Fixed Line/Mobile Services/Internet Services). A sample of 1,800 households will be surveyed. The survey will also target Business/Commercial Establishments using telecom services (Fixed Line/Mobile Services/Internet Services). The regulator is of the opinion that with the help of survey's results it will ensure and maintain availability of telecommunications services to the public and other users at reasonable prices and acceptable level of quality and in its view unless the consumers are afforded an opportunity to speak out their minds the finer aspects of effect of competition on prices and quality of services would remain unnoticed or hidden. Through this survey the regulator intends to identify the level of consumer satisfaction and the expectations of the consumers with the emerging range of services, its costs, and the likely socio-economic effect on the population.

Pakistan

The Regulator compiled a draft to seek industry's input to standardize quality of service for cellular voice and data services. The regulator is aiming to regulate these standards with the name of "Cellular Mobile Network Quality of Service (QoS) Regulations, 2010", to ultimately introduce a mechanism for identifying the minimum quality of service standards and associated measurement, reporting and record keeping tasks for mobile companies. According to the initial draft, it would be mandatory for all cellular companies to submit QoS compliance report to authority. It would be necessary for all cellular companies to meet minimum Quality of Service KPIs and benchmarks. Cellular companies would calculate their indicators and will have to report them to authority on monthly basis. As per the latest statistics for cellular subscribers issued by the regulator the cellular companies added 0.58 million subscribers in total, taking the total subscribers' count to 100.72 million. In its latest annual report due to harmonious regulatory environment the total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the telecom sector stood at US$1.13 billion in 2009-10 which is about US$508 million less than the previous fiscal year. Cellular mobile share in total stake remained about 80% as US$908 million were spent on infrastructural expansion in all region of Pakistan.

Qatar

The Regulator during the month issued two individual VSAT Licenses to QSAT Communications and RigNet Qatar for the provision of Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) networks and services in the State of Qatar. These two companies (in addition to CapRock Communications) were selected following a competitive license application process that regulator conducted earlier this year. CapRock will receive its license in the coming weeks when it has completed the license issuance requirements. The licenses authorize the operation of a VSAT network and the provision of VSAT services to Closed User Groups. However the operators will not be able to provide public telecommunications services to businesses or consumers.

Sri Lanka

The Regulator observed that rates of fixed broadband services provided by the service providers in the country are lower than the rates advertised by them. The regulator has established a fully equipped broadband monitoring unit and it commenced operations during the third quarter of 2010. Following the latest operations, the regulator released a set of broadband download speed test results conducted in September 2010. According to the results, fixed broadband services have been found to provide speeds far less than the advertised rates. The regulator selected both fixed wired and fixed wireless services for the test and had also recorded the international download speeds during peak hours. In another development the Telecommunication and Information Technology Minister said that mobile phone usage ratio in the country has

increased to 85% recording a rapid growth during the past seven years. He further said that the public demand for fixed lines has now diverged to mobile phones. Mobile phone usage ratio was 12.1% for 100 people in 2003. This has increased to 85% now. The ratio for fixed line telephones was 4.9% in 2003. This has increased to 16.78% at present.

Syria

During the reporting month the Syrian government invited bids for its third mobile phone license by the end of March, which will be followed by the financial auction starting April 11 to select the. The first phase of the licensing process was completed on October 29 by prequalifying five telcos for the license: Saudi Telecom, France Telecom, Turkcell, Emirates Telecommunications Corp., and Qatar Telecom, the paper reports. Syria will announce the establishment of its telecommunications regulatory authority by the end of the year or the beginning of 2011, the Syrian Communications and Technology Minister said. The liberalization of the Syrian telecom sector began two years ago, and earlier this year, a new telecom law was issued as part of the government's policy to open the market and create a partnership between the public and private sectors, he added.

Tunisia

The Regulator participated in the proceedings of the 8th annual meeting of the Francophone Networks of Regulators (FRATEL) held during December 8-9, 2010 in Burkina Faso in its capacity as President of the Network. The event, which attracted nearly 70 representatives from 15 Francophone members of the network controllers, had the theme "new regulatory issues raised by the inclusion of content" and focused in particular on management practices for traffic ensure quality and safety information services on fixed networks, the means to ensure that action operators and non-discriminatory on wireless networks and the means to guarantee access for all to services information. The opening ceremony was marked by the presence of many personalities whose impending Dr. Hamadoun Toure, Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Turkey

The Turkish court suspended a 53.46 million Turkish lira (US$34.3 million) tax fine on Turkey's largest mobile phone operator. In a statement, Turkcell said it had already paid TRY40.1 million of the fines, imposed on the company by the country's Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK), and it will seek reimbursement.

UAE

The Regulator released the results of an extensive survey examining the usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services in the UAE. The survey spanned multiple services including fixed telephony, mobile telephony and the Internet. The survey examined many factors, which cover different areas in the ICT sector such as the extent to which households and individuals in the UAE have access to ICT services and the extent to which households and individuals in the UAE use, in terms of time and spend. Furthermore the survey measures the ICT services that users are connected to and the extent to which users are satisfied with their ICT services. The Director General of TRA said that the survey results provide a realistic picture of the development achieved in ICT sector during the recent years. The latest international methods and technologies had been used while conducting the survey to ensure the maximum degree of credibility. The survey found that while over 99% of individuals in the UAE have mobile phones, only 46% of households have fixed line phones as many prefer the use of a mobile phone only. The survey also found that 63% of household have an Internet connection, of which 88% are broadband connections. The most popular Internet based activities undertaken in the UAE are emailing and visiting social networking sites. The survey revealed that consumers are generally satisfied with their ICT services; 93% are satisfied with their overall fixed line services, 86% with their overall mobile services, and 89% with their overall Internet services. The survey also examined the extent to which individuals in the UAE use social networking sites. It found that 55% of individuals have set up a profile on a social networking site. 97% of these profiles are on Facebook. 69% of users typically visit the social networking sites they have profiles on at least every two days. In another development the regulator has obtained the encryption key for BlackBerry services, including instant messaging, e-mail and Web browsing, following a deal with Research In Motion (RIM) last October. The deal allows authorities to break the encryption of and monitor Blackberry communications but only after a court order is issued, said Regional Channel & Alliance Manager of Symantec, part of "BGB" company that provides Blackberry communication data encryption services. "The agreement which allowed UAE's TRA to cancel a planned ban on Blackberry services in October allows the agency to obtain a way to decipher encryptions of e-mails and MSN instant messaging. He added that RIM finally understood and accepted UAE's justifications of why Blackberry communication services had to be monitored as they could be used in organized crimes or in terrorism activities.

TOP TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

Olive Telecom Launches All in One Modem

Olive Telecom has designed a modem on the new multi-connective Qualcomm MDM6600 chipset, which will support 3G in both GSM and CDMA networks. The company has already launched the modem in Russia with Sky Link. Arun Khanna, chairman, Olive Telecommunications, said, "It will be slightly costlier than the currently available CDMA dongles but pricing will depend on operators." Qualcomm MDM6600 combines all the core technologies of the third generation existing in the world. MDM6600 supports frequency ranges from 450 MHz to 2100 MHz, supports GSM / GPRS / EDGE, CDMA, HSDPA, HSPA (up to 14.4 Mbps) and EV-DO (to 14.7 Mbps) as well as the technology of satellite positioning GPS and GLONASS.

Novatel Wireless Boasts LTE Mi-Fi Router

Novatel Wireless has boasted its first LTE capable Mi-Fi hotspot device, and has announced that it will be available on the Verizon Wireless network. The device creates a local Wi-Fi hotspot for up to five users and uses the LTE network for the data traffic backhaul. According to Marni Walden, Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer for Verizon Wireless, with the popularity of the original Novatel Wireless Mi-Fi 2200 Intelligent Mobile Hotspot on the Verizon Wireless network, it made sense to introduce a Novatel Wireless device as the first 4G LTE Mi-Fi. The 4G LTE Mi-Fi 4510L is compatible with the Verizon Wireless 3G network and includes new features, such as integrated status display on the device showing battery life, roaming and connectivity information.

Novatel Wireless Showcases Six Embedded LTE Modules With OEM Partners and Verizon Wireless at CES

Novatel Wireless recently announced its work with six OEMs for embedded LTE modules that take advantage of the Verizon Wireless 4G LTE Mobile Broadband networks. Novatel Wireless' embedded 4G LTE Expedite™ E351 module has been integrated with a wide variety of mobile computing, mobile Internet and media platforms with six OEM partners, including Cisco, Consert, Dell, HP, SerComm and TouchTunes, to work on Verizon Wireless' 4G LTE network. At CES, Verizon Wireless will show how consumers and enterprises can take advantage of its 4G LTE network.

Grandstream Introduces Its Latest VoIP Multimedia Phone

The latest member of the Grandstream Networks GXV31xx sequence VoIP multimedia telephones was rolled out. The GXV3175 desktop IP multimedia telephone has a 7-inch touch screen LCD for video telephony that includes capabilities for superior image sharpness and HD audio quality. It also consists of a variety of business productivity, informal entertainment, and social networking applications embedded in the phone.

Global Mobile to Launch WiMAX Phone Numbers

Global Mobile has obtained 100,000 WiMAX phone numbers from the National Communications Commission (NCC), the first among the six WiMAX operators in Taiwan, and will launch such numbers for sale to subscribers for voice communications. Global Mobile will offer free voice communications within its WiMAX networks, NT$3 and NT$1.2 per minute for voice calls from WiMAX numbers to 3G numbers and fixed-line local telephone numbers respectively, the company pointed out. To match the launch of WiMAX phone numbers, Global Mobile will seek Taiwan-based handset ODM makers for production of customized GSM/WiMAX dual-mode handsets for sale under its own brand, the company revealed.

NetOpt Launches Broadband Bonding Solution

NetOpt has announced that it has launched the affordable and award-winning Broadband bonding or WAN virtualization solutions to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. Mushroom Networks, the pioneer and inventor of the innovative broadband bonding technology will enable business of all sizes to aggregate multiple Internet access circuits such as multiple DSL lines, cable modems or E1 for faster and reliable access in a very cost-effective manner. Brisbane-based NetOpt, a value-add distributor of leading-edge niche services and solutions will offer Mushroom Networks products through systems integrators, resellers, ISP's and managed service provider partners. NetOpt will work closely with all partners in realizing the full potential of the Mushroom broadband bonding solution.

Astellia Unveils Monitoring solutions for LTE networks

Astellia's LTE Monitoring Solution is aimed at helping operators to make LTE a reality. According to Astellia, its LTE Monitoring Solution provides invaluable help to assess the network performances, benchmark equipment and terminals and carry out in-depth investigation of network behavior at this early stage of LTE's lifecycle. Astellia's LTE solution consists of features such as eRAN monitoring capabilities on S1 and X2 interfaces as well as User Plane analysis with PSM (Packet Service Monitoring). "As only a few LTE networks are commercially live, most operators today are running trials, pilots or limited deployments. For this reason we have put the focus on analysis capabilities, benchmarking and investigation for these first releases," says Bertrand Mizzi, Innovation Manager at Astellia.

LG Set to Unveil Mobile 3DTV

LG is set to unveil a new Mobile Digital TV with 3D capability in early 2011. Not much is known about it yet, except it runs on LG2161R MDTV chip with NRT (Non-Real Time) technology. The device will apparently be capable of broadcasting 3DTV while moving.

WiMAX to be huge market by 2015

Telecom operators and equipment makers gathered in Taipei to discuss WiMAX, a mobile technology that the experts say has the potential to generate production value of US$67 billion by 2015. The 2011 WiMAX forum kicked off its three-day run in Taipei, an event attended by a stellar line-up of operators, including Clearwire, Sprint, BSML, Packet ne, and UQ, and equipment makers such as Samsung, Motorola and Cisco. Taiwan was the host country for the same conference five years ago, when the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers confirmed the IEEE 802.16e standard that dictates how WiMAX should be run. WiMAX, or worldwide interoperability of microwave access, and LTE, or long-term evolution, are two competing technologies for 4G data transmission, which has gained popularity in an increasing number of places across the globe.

"ARE MIDDLE EAST TELCOS READY FOR THE FUTURE?"

Why New Business Models are Essential to Adapting to a Rapidly Changing Telecom Industry

Over the past decade, the telecom industry has enabled the digital transformation of entire industries, economies, and societies. The rapid uptake of mobile communications, the increasing access to broadband services, and, more recently, the development of smartphones and the widely popular mobile apps—all come thanks, in whole or in part, to the innovations and investments emanating from the telecom sector.

But the industry's growth is not without its challenges. Demand for high-speed services is so strong that operators must continue to invest to meet the demand and take advantage of the ongoing digitization of virtually every industry sector, be it healthcare, financial services, or media. Doing so requires massive investments, especially in fiber-based infrastructure, as well as ongoing efforts to innovate and acquire new capabilities. At the same time, however, operators' traditional sources of revenues are becoming more and more commoditized. Revenue growth in the Middle East is slowing down toward single digit figures in many markets, as mobile voice – once a growth catalyst – nears saturation levels. Following years of liberalization, Middle East telecom markets are nearly as competitive as those in Europe and North America. As a result, operator margins have started to contract, given intensified price competition and higher costs of acquisition and retention.
At the same time, three key trends threaten a fundamental shift to operators' business:

- Consumer Ubiquity: Consumers and businesses now expect access to information, communication, and entertainment anywhere, anytime. Customers are rewarding Apple, Google, and Facebook for delivering interesting applications and devices, and are staying loyal to those operators that can deliver coverage and speed. Operators that fail to stay relevant to users' needs find themselves left by the wayside.
- Technology Modularity: Customers will increasingly use a range of different networks to access the Internet. Applications and service offerings like on-demand movies and games will be based on systems that are independent of the networks through which they are accessed, letting a variety of non-industry rivals provide services directly to consumers – in many cases bypassing the owners and operators of the networks themselves.
- Industry Innovation: To date, operators have largely focused on growing and protecting their core business – developing and using large-scale networks – generally leaving small-scale innovation to start-ups and entrepreneurs. They now find themselves vulnerable to competition from Internet players, IT companies, device manufacturers, application providers and others, and need rapidly to regain the competitive edge in innovation.

Each of these trends has critical implications for the future of the industry, and Middle East operators must respond by selecting, designing, and building new business models and accompanying capabilities. Clearly, they must move away from the vertically integrated business models of the past, in which they built and owned the network and then stacked additional services on top. Given the complexity of the competitive landscape, they must focus on the strategy that best complements their strengths. We see four business models that operators can use to do so.

MODEL.1: **NETWORK GUARANTOR**

Network guarantors use their infrastructure to provide the fastest networks, with the highest capacity available, over the widest coverage areas. Cost efficiency and open access are the keys to success; network guarantors' primary customers are those companies that offer advanced services to their own customers. Network guarantors will be extremely efficient in planning and operating their networks, offering quality, network reliability, and high service levels.

The network guarantor model is particularly suited to incumbent operators or well established challengers that already run large-scale infrastructures, where their technological experience gives them a competitive advantage. Incumbents like STC, Etisalat, Telecom Egypt, Qtel, Omantel, and Batelco have already made great strides in developing the required network capabilities, with sizeable investments in next generation networks, fiber-based infrastructure, international bandwidth and connectivity.

MODEL. 2: **BUSINESS ENABLER**

This is a "double-sided" business model: On one side, operators provide their own customers with the broadband services they need; on the other side they host and support an increasing number of specialized service and application providers, providing them with access to target customer segments with services such as wholesale broadband, managed services, transaction and billing support, and platforms such as hosting and cloud computing. To make this model work, operators must build the right partnerships, offer open platforms and highly flexible service customization, and help aggregate access to their customer bases and service providers.

This is a complex, demanding business model that will challenge the skills of many regional operators; only the most innovative fixed and mobile operators will succeed with this model. We already see Middle East operators – Etisalat in the UAE, Mobily in Saudi Arabia - starting to explore this approach, announcing key partnerships to offer cloud computing and machine-to-machine (M2M) communications.

MODEL.3: **EXPERIENCE CREATOR**

Consumers' thirst for new applications and services already appears insatiable, while companies are looking for support in their efforts to digitize their businesses and bring the benefits of information and communication technology to their own customers. Experience creators will deliver ubiquitous connectivity, relevant applications, and fresh content—all packaged as a distinctive, appealing experience. This model requires Middle East operators to develop the capabilities to succeed in an area that has not in the past come naturally to them: The culture of innovation and the dedication to customers that are required could be difficult to develop but are absolutely critical for success as an experience creator. It will also require operators to partner more effectively with other member of the telecom ecosystem. We see small, specialized operators following this route: Operators such as du in the UAE, Mobily in Saudi Arabia, Orange Jordan, and Syriatel may be able to stay distinctive in this demanding, segment-specific business model. Some already offer attractive mobile content services and applications for both consumers and businesses, with plans to move further up the value chain delivering innovative new media platforms and customized industry-specific applications.

MODEL. 4:**GLOBALMULTIMARKETER**

Each of the three business models discussed above offers operators a way to compete in increasingly fragmented telecom markets. The fourth model - the global multimarketer – requires operators to create two or three of the above business models in a modular fashion and then deploy them as necessary for diverse customer segments in markets around the world. This model offers a path to become truly global entities, an ambition worthy of operators with large operating footprints, such as STC, Etisalat and Qtel. Thanks to their inherent strengths in branding, efficiencies, and reach, global operators are proving stronger than their local rivals: Already, more than 75 percent of telecom subscribers in regions such as Europe and the Middle East are owned by global operators.

CONCLUSION

For operators, the future is flatter and more competitive than today. Traditional integrated, vertical technologies and operating models are giving way to new technologies, services, and devices. This far more open environment will let all kinds of new competitors into the telecom arena, and will challenge today's operators to make bold choices about their future business models.

The most successful – and enduring – operators in the Middle East will embrace new business models and build the capabilities they need in this new world. But building those capabilities and business models will take time. The winners will be those operators that are first to understand the need to make this transformation, and then move fast.

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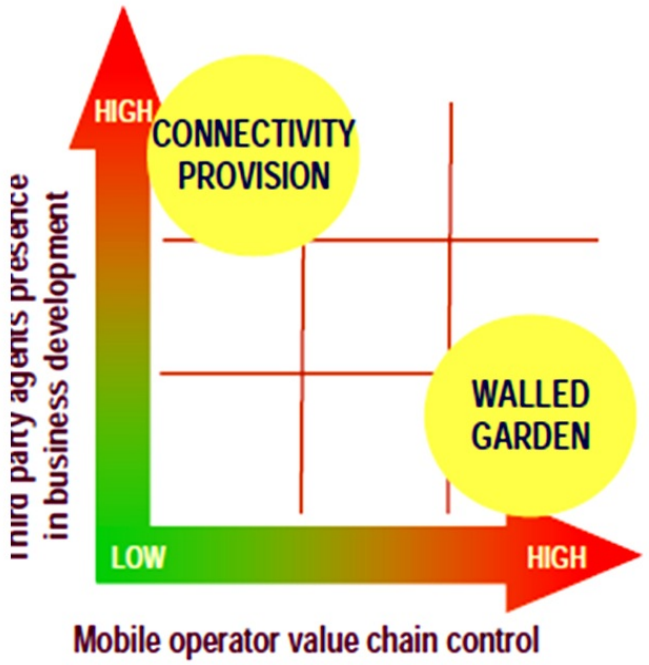
OPERATORS' STRATEGIES AND ADVANCEMENTS IN CONVERGENT WORLD

The recent years have observed the discussions and debates on NGN technology through which many factors have come to pass such as the role of the regulatory structure in today's aggressive market, the needs for sound investments, or the unprecedented demands for new applications or services. Yet more challenging situation is on the mobile grounds, where the needs for spectrum are getting more critical.

NGMN (Next Generation Mobile Network) has emerged as the potential raised area to offer smooth migration of broadband through an integrated network that supports the commercial launch of new mobile services from existing infrastructures. NGMN can certainly be glimpsed as universal concept for all sorts of mobile communications, a further step from B3G (WiMAX, LTE, etc.)

The idea for this application is to provide a stand for advancement by moving ahead with one integrated network for the flawless establishment of mobile broadband services. The foremost purpose of NGMN coalition is the commercial launch of new experience in the world of mobile communications, where the indemnity of sustainable investment, espousal of new and innovative services so that all members of mobile ecosystem would have the opportunity to extract the best out of it. From technology point of view, according to mobile telecom operators industry NGMN comprises of the spectral efficiency, simplicity, integrated network, reliability, seamless mobility and security.



Mobile content business models from the mobile operators' perspective
Source: http://www.vernimmen.net/

The broadband revolt is vitally changing the landscape in the telecom industry. By having a close look at broadband industry from mobile business perspective and from the eye of an operator, broadband is by far distinguished as one of the primary sources of their business as opposed to a fixed broadband by having control over a diversified set of elements covered in its value chain process.

Mobile players are who are focusing more on Value Added Services rather than broadband are generally not considered being broadband players and this is the point that leads the operators to think about the "content". The increasing demand and pressures from the customers to enjoy the wide variety and unhampered choice of applications and content is certainly in process of reshaping the entire mobile industry.

Smart phones appear to provide a good business case of operators keeping in view the burgeoning content industry. So for, Android and iPhone have provided a good case for telecoms in terms of effectively provisioning the content and applications. Industry overview shows that Android will provide a better business case for operators keeping in view the attractive feature of this platform. However, this does not mean that other smart phone will be out. In fact the potential for smart phone is so huge and promising that all the major platforms will have their share of pie and will co-exist.

With the emerging trends and growing competition it is not difficult to understand that in the near future SAMENA region's will continue to be driven by a constant need to fulfill customer demands. This includes demand on different levels of society, from mobile infotainment to location based services and, from localized content to European "Paris in a Day!" tours. With the availability of high speed broadband networks this is no difficult today. Network operators are, and will be, evermore driven by the demand for content in general and local content in specific. Moving on with globalization and getting familiar with the needs to homogenize and standardize, operators have to be more adoptive and proactive in its strategy. Over the time the overall telecom landscape has been evolving and allowing new technologies to prosper and new business models to be introduced. OPEX optimization and declining ARPU have been the most challenging issues operators are facing. Today, broadband being the driver of the content industry is considered to be a good driver for revenues and thus need more attention. Broadband is one such service that plays a key role for fixed line operators because their value added services such as IPTV and VoD are all contingent to broadband. Similarly, mobile operators are also considering broadband as a key prospect for revenues generation and increasing their ARPU (Average Revenue Per User) as well as APPU (Average Profit Per User) by offering innovative mobile content. Increasing competition among the telecom operators in the region has urged the service providers to offer converged services and has promoted FMC strategies.

Smartphone Market Trends

In terms of strategy, operators needs keep an eye on the future outlook for they are to face strong competition ahead. The region has the immense potential for telecom business particularly in the broadband and content sector. Similarly, the region is also in a good position to offer more in terms of convergence. Provided the friendly regulatory measure, there may be a flourishing content and broadband industry in the region. With the evolution of telecom networks, the introduction of modern access technologies, emergence of the content industry and the separation of network and service offerings on the mount, operators are devising optimum strategies such as friends and family packages, convergent billing, customer self care, effective market segmentation among others. Competing operators are discovering the potential infrastructure synergies that would help reduce the CAPEX and offer better service in a cost effective manner. Convergence offers a great deal of opportunity for operators enabling them to invigorate its strategies and reorient their selves to be able to effectively leverage the market.

The major challenge in the near future for the operators will be to build the proper business model to address the arrival of the over the tops and set the right strategies for the future needs of the customer. I will address it more specifically in the upcoming issues.

Bocar A. BA, President
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

SATELLITE NEWS

Ariane 5 Lifts Off Two Telecom Satellites in French Guiana

Ariane 5 lifted off two telecommunication satellites, Hispasat 1E and Koreasat 6 into geostationary transfer orbit from the launch zone in Kourou, in French Guiana. Hispasat 1E on the upper position is expected to serve Spanish operator Hispasat on television and value-added broadband services in mobile, land and maritime environments. It was separated first over 27 minutes after the liftoff. Built by Space Systems/Loral with a life span of 15 years, Hispasat 1E weighs approximately 5,320 kilograms and will be orbiting at 30 degrees west. Koreasat 6, built by US Orbital Sciences Corporation and Thales Alenia Space of France for South Korea's KT Corporation, is to provide broadcasting and communications services across South Korea.

Eutelsat Launches High-Capacity Satellite for Broadband

The Ka-band satellite — known as KA-SAT — launched on 26 December has a capacity of up to 70 Gbps. KA-SAT has been designed by Eutelsat to provide broadband coverage for Europe, northern Africa and some parts of the Far East and is expected to be fully operational for residential broadband subscribers from late in the second quarter of 2011. "By combining a satellite equipped with more than 80 spotbeams and a network of ground stations, this new program will deliver more capacity than any other satellite program deployed worldwide," Michel de Rosen, Eutelsat chief executive, said. "These new resources will in particular benefit internet service providers, enabling them to extend broadband to consumers and enterprises in areas unserved by terrestrial networks."

Connect Telecom Signs Major Deal for Mobile Satellite Handhelds With Thuraya

Connect Telecom, the international mobile and satellite telecom distributor, has procured a large quantity of Thuraya's handhelds, including both the smartest satellite phone "SG-2520" and the toughest satellite phone "XT". With its established and active distribution outlets in UAE, Middle East and Hong Kong, Connect Telecom is building a greater role and reputation as a main provider of mobile satellite services and products in the region. "Connect Telecom has good access to government and vertical markets which represents Thuraya's target customers in line with our new strategy," said Mr. Muiz A. Saad, Executive Manager Marketing & Sales for Europe, Middle East and Africa. He said, "Thuraya's reach and successful penetration to vertical markets is enabled by service providers with access to those lucrative markets, such as Connect Telecom, and our quality solutions, such as the XT phone that has been designed to work reliably even in the harshest conditions."

Pakistan to Launch Communications Satellite This Year

Pakistan will launch its first indigenously developed communications satellite on August 14, 2011, from a facility in China and its life span will be 15 years. According to sources in Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), the satellite would be launched at a longitude of 38 degrees in geostationary orbit on the equatorial plane at an altitude of 36,000km above the earth's surface. Paksat-1R will carry a communications payload to facilitate the introduction of a range of new services, including broadband internet, digital TV distribution/broadcasting, remote/rural telephony, emergency communications, tele-education and tele-medicine.

Frequency Electronics announces government contract for secure communications satellite

Frequency Electronics has been awarded a follow-on contract of approximately US$12 million for a U.S. Government high capacity, secure communications satellite program. This additional award to an existing multi-year contract brings the total contract value to over US$20 million. The system to be supplied under this follow-on contract was previously developed and delivered by Frequency and subsequently launched in earlier phases of the program. Frequency will deliver the master timing system and frequency reference source for the entire satellite. The system consists of redundant quartz oscillators, rubidium atomic clocks, frequency synthesizers and DC to DC converters.

Russia's Proton-M orbits European KA-SAT communications satellite

Russia's Proton-M carrier rocket, which was launched from the Baikonur spaceport Moscow , has successfully orbited Europe's first new generation communications satellite KA-SAT, a spokesman for the Khrunichev State Research and Production Space Center told Itar-Tass. According to Alexander Bobrenev, the KA-SAT satellite separated from the Briz-M upper stage rocket at 10:03 a.m. Moscow time. The satellite will be put on the geostationary orbit at a point of nine degrees of eastern longitude. The KA-SAT communication satellite was manufactured by the French company Astrium under the order from the European satellite communication operator Eutelsat. The satellite is designed for the high-speed Internet connection in isolated districts of Europe and the Mediterranean region, where ground optical fiber cables are not laid down yet. The service life of the satellite exceeds 15 years.

ROAMING NEWS

Global Cellular Revolutionizes the Mobile Industry by Eliminating International Roaming Charges

By allowing their customers to rent international owned cell lines, Global Cellular cuts out the international roaming charges tourists would otherwise pay. Global Cellular announced its newest product recently, the GlobalSIM. Essentially the GlobalSIM allows travelers to take a prepaid SIM card in their unlocked cell phone and make calls from almost any location in the world. "We are providing a SIM card that works in over 175 countries where in 80 of them the incoming calls are absolutely free. "People no longer have to buy temporary SIM cards that become irrelevant after time. They pay a small one time purchase fee and keep the line for life." Dani Drutman, VP Product Development said. HE added that that they have sold thousands of the product already, "We have spent a lot of time and research on this product and are ecstatic with the results."

China Unicom Launches One Card-Multi Numbers Business

China Unicom has launched a "one card for multiplied number" business in Taiwan and Macao, with monthly charge of CNY 20 on average. Users can select two phone numbers, a major and a minor phone numbers when applying for the new business, which are charged based on minutes separately. If the major number is used when roaming in Taiwan and Macao, and the call fare will be charged according to the original Taiwan and Macao roaming charging standard. If the minor number is used when roaming in Taiwan cooperation partner's network of China Unicom, the call fare will be CNY 0.45 a minute when calling a local number, CNY 0.85 a minute when calling a phone number in Mainland China, and CNY 0.45 a minute when being called. The new business is designed to be mainly for users, who often travel between Taiwan, Macao, and Mainland China.

Draft "International Mobile Roaming Code" Released For Public Consultation in New Zealand

New Zealand's telecommunications industry is taking steps to improve consumer confidence in International Mobile Roaming (IMR) services - particularly in relation to providing more transparency on IMR pricing, and on how best to use IMR services. The Telecommunications Carriers' Forum is taking a lead role with this: in consultation with the industry, Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Ministry of Economic Development, a code has been drafted specifying minimum standards for the information available to consumers of 'outbound' IMR services. It also presents guidelines for service providers on the options provided to customers for helping them to better manage their IMR charges.

Sprint Agrees 4G Roaming Deals in Jamaica, Taiwan

Sprint has announced that it has signed a pair of international 4G roaming agreements with Digicel in Jamaica and Global Mobile in Taiwan. Any Sprint devices that operate with a Sprint "SmartViewSM Connection Manager" will automatically detect the Digicel and Global Mobile networks in Jamaica and Taiwan respectively, giving customers the option to connect and roam in those countries. Services will be available through an unlimited "24-hour Day-pass", although pricing and launch details have yet to be determined. Matt Carter, president of Sprint 4G commented: "With these agreements, Sprint is kicking down the door to 4G international roaming and taking a first step toward allowing people to enjoy 4G service wherever they are around the globe."

EU to Slash Continental Mobile Roaming Charges

The EU is planning to force mobile phone companies to cut their excessive roaming charges for calls made overseas with a domestic mobile phone operator in the home country. For years, UK citizens visiting other EU countries on business or holiday have been charged excessive fees for calls or texts, with UK-based mobile phone operators' charges the worst offenders. Although the gap between UK and overseas roaming charges has decreased over the last few years due to EU law changes, the European Commission has now stated it requires the tariffs to be equal. According to EU Commissioner Neelie Kroes, the gap between domestic charges and roaming rates abroad is "unjustifiably high", adding she wants to see equal rates by 2015. The Commission is also committed to reducing the cost of internet usage for smartphone users, including the downloading of data when in Europe.

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