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EXCLUSIVELY TO SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

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EMERGENCE OF CLOUD COMPUTING

"Role of Enabling Technologies"

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EDITORIAL

The Year of the Internet?

The year 2012 is proving to be very significant for the ICT world. It has drawn our attention to some very rare opportunities that exist for the industry stakeholders to have strong voice on the fate of the poster child of the ICT services, the Internet.

Post 1996, the Internet environment has not had a period of time where so much activity transpired with so much vehemence as it is now in 2012. The perception of what may be at risk and the conceptions as to how it all may eventually play out are being understood. That is, in this day and age, some things get hyped up and perceived to bear greater impact than may actually be possible. Thus, dialogue amongst all constituents becomes the only way to separate conjecture from perceived reality.

One of the new engines of growth of the Internet is the concept of cloud computing, which utterly shifts computing from the product space to the service space. Already, much is being done on cloud computing. On March 14th, ITU-T's Focus Group on Cloud Computing completed its preliminary study on cloud computing standardization ecosystem. The two new cloud service categories identified in the report include communication and network as a service (CaaS and NaaS). In addition, cloud ecosystem and a first ICT cloud reference architecture are also defined. Furthermore, Internet organizations including the ICANN, RIRs, IETF, ISOC and W3C all are working toward creating a new Internet environment, which may see even further transformation or alteration (for example, in the form of the much-talked-about ITRs) at the end of the current year.

The ITU itself is now working extensively with Internet interest groups, including the ICANN, ISOC and others, to move forward with critical issues surrounding the Internet. Such active involvement of the key stakeholders in such critical issues, which directly impact both the telecom operators as well as the end-user, is precisely what SAMENA Council is also contributing to.

The growth of cloud computing has many operators planning and strategizing as to how its value can be reaped. Some industry estimates value the Cloud at US$150 billion or higher by 2013, with an overall CAGR forecasted by Gartner to exceed 26%. In some areas, such as infrastructure services, the CAGR is predicted to be even higher, at more than 30%. This represents a sizable shift of services to cloud service providers, leaving privately managed IT platforms to a virtual network environment. At the same time, the industry has worked hard to counter issues such as security, compliance to regulation, a perception of the loss of control by users as well as privacy issues involving the Internet, along with potential organizational barriers where the perception of outsourcing may pose potential threats to existing corporate structure and jobs.

The network operators now have opportunities, which are complex but huge in scope and are now being discussed extensively across regions. Such discussions are revolving around the statistical fact that content and application services have driven network usage factors at exponential rates and where revenues have not followed at a commensurate rate.

The Cloud appears to have the potential to offset some of the revenue challenges, for the ACP's (application and content providers) are now able to create greater output in partnership with the operators. Network operators have built in benefits, such as historically trusted relationships with the client, reliable and scalable operations, service level agreements that are truly credible and meaningful, and their evolved ability to be vendor agnostic, while providing global reach and fostering commitment to excellence. New, interesting barometers of success are being created and implemented, such as Quality of Experience, which truly enables service providers to connect with the end-user and achieve enhanced customer satisfaction levels.

The Internet is of strategic importance to all the stakeholders, which is both enabled and used by the network operators to exercise their key role in ensuring the future growth of the ICT services. With the emergence of Cloud-based computing and the preferential shift to the service space, the need and the inevitability of close cooperation among all the stakeholders are upon us. All the stakeholders in the industry need to work together this year, as they are for example on the ITRs (International Telecommunications Regulations). The value of the Internet must be assessed not only in today's environment, but also in the context of future developments, technology and behavioral shifts, and thus also in the context of required policy shifts.

The implications and the impact of the Cloud, and how it is constructed and utilized, will be extremely far-reaching for all of us.

Truly Yours,

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TOP REGIONAL & MEMBER NEWS

RIM Wins 2011 Latin America Frost & Sullivan Award

Frost & Sullivan recognizes BlackBerry maker Research in Motion with the 2011 Latin America Frost & Sullivan Award for Competitive Strategy Leadership. The Latin American smart phones market registered sales of 25.8 million units in 2011, representing a 73.5 percent growth rate over 2010. Currently, RIM is the company with the best competitive strategy and capabilities to make the most of the immense opportunities in the MDM market. RIM's robust competitive strategy leverages its strong client base and brand awareness in the enterprise segment to up sell end-to-end mobile solutions, including leading-edge and highly effective MDM capabilities. RIM is truly a pioneer in terms of MDM and has been delivering top-of-the-line MDM solutions all over the world since 1999. Due to its strong presence in the MDM markets, RIM is recognized as a leading brand in Latin America among small, medium, and large organizations.

Etisalat and Alcatel-Lucent Make the First 4G LTE Mobile Broadband Connection

Etisalat has successfully completed together with Alcatel-Lucent (Euronext Paris and NYSE: ALU), a technology trial with the groundbreaking light Radio™ portfolio highlighting how it can meet fast-growing customer demand for high-bandwidth mobile broadband services. Etisalat lately had invested US$1.63 billion (AED 6 billion) to enhance the network infrastructure and the development of fiber optic networks and access the central system of "LTE". This move has resulted in the launch of the first investment and real experience in fourth-generation network system in the U.A.E. Etisalat created thousand main stations, and extends "LTE" services through the major cities to cover 80 percent of the population. The network and large-scale mobile services is the first of its kind in the UAE have been achieved through a range of products of the light Radio from Alcatel – Lucent. Alcatel-Lucent showcased the capabilities of its new light Radio Metro Radio Outdoor (MRO) product at Etisalat's headquarters in Abu Dhabi, making the lightning-fast data connection over Etisalat's commercial 4G LTE network, also powered by Alcatel-Lucent.

STC Launches New "Jood" Savings Packages

STC launched new Jood savings packages (Jood1, Jood2, Jood3 and Jood4), by enriching its contents with new amazing features to enable customers to get various internet speeds to suit their needs and expectations, thus, enable family members to enjoy all exclusive services, solely provided to by STC against a bill from only one source and fixed monthly paid fee, in addition to take the advantage of all other features of the package, such as limitless local as well as domestic destined calls and reduced-charged international calls. A customer can acquire any of Jood Keys package which enable him to take advantage of free mobile calls, other operators' service, displaying caller' number, waiting calls and transfer of calls. There are also the advantages of surfing it, outdoors, and applying all current and future applications, getting collectively played games with a high quality and dual speeds up to 200MG for the packages, enabling customers to several options to match their needs, in addition to competitive prices, the lowest in the Saudi market.

PTCL Announces EVO Recharge Offer

The Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has launched an attractive win back initiative for EVO customers who can now recharge their EVO account and enjoy a full month's usage absolutely free. The exciting win-back offer allows all EVO customers who have not recharged their pre-paid device or not paid their EVO post-paid bills since November 1, 2011, can now recharge and get 100% free balance for one full subsequent month equivalent to the card loading/bill payment. This offer is valid for both pre- and post-paid EVO Nitro, EVO Wi-Fi Cloud and EVO Tab customers. Furthermore, post-paid customers are also exempted from previous outstanding dues by paying current month's bill, in addition to enjoying a second month totally free of charge.

Impressive Performance by MTN Group

Despite the implementation of compulsory SIM card-registration in most of its operations, and intense competition, MTN Group has experienced an impressive increase in subscriber numbers.MTN Group released results for the year-ended 31 December 2011, reporting a 16.2 percent growth in group subscriber numbers to 164.5 million, and a 6.3 percent increase in revenues to US$ 16.15 billion (R121.884 billion). The group's adjusted headline earnings per share increased 43.2 percent to 1,070 cents. However, the company has a lot of work ahead because most of these new subscribers are multiple SIM card holders. They are, therefore more likely to become inactive subscribers in the following months. MTN SA has witnessed a dramatic growth rate in terms of data revenues, which increased up to 27.7 percent. Their 3G network expansion, across the country, is a positive indication that the company has shifted their focus to data services, as voice service revenues have been declining year-on-year.

Etisalat Crowned With Three Top International Prestigious GSMA Awards

Etisalat has won three of the sector's most prestigious international awards at Mobile World Congress. Etisalat received two GSMA Global Mobile Awards in the 'Best Mobile Health Innovation' and 'mWomen Best Mobile Product' categories for its mobile health innovation. Etisalat Mobile Baby that is helping to combat maternal mortality in developing countries. Etisalat also won the 'Best Mobile Money Innovation' award for its Etisalat Commerce platform that is helping to make financial services accessible to millions of people across the region. Developed in partnership with Qualcomm, D-Tree International and Great Connection, Etisalat Mobile Baby is a complete mHealth ecosystem that brings together medical healthcare professionals, NGOs, pharmaceutical and insurance companies, and federal and state government to deliver affordable healthcare for all powered by mobile connectivity.

ZTE Optical Smart Access Platform Tops Global GPON Ranking

ZTE's optical smart access platform 'ZTE ZXA10 C300,' has bagged the top ranking in current analysis recent product performance evaluation report of the GPON market. The ZXA10 C300 platform supports standards-based GPON and EPON, as well as point-to-point (P2P)/active Ethernet FTTP and 10G EPON/GPON. The platform can be used across a variety of FTTx access network architectures such as FTTH, FTTC, FTTO, FTTB, FTTB+LAN and FTTB+DSL. It supports up to 800 Gbps switching and matrix capacities, and up to 3.2 terabits backplane capacity. Offering up to 40 Gbps of bandwidth per subscriber slot, the ZXA10 C300 can help operators supporting more bandwidth-hungry services like high definition video. General Manager of fixed-line, ZTE said that this is an acknowledgment of our continuous R&D efforts in developing innovative platforms that offer high performance levels and reduced total cost of ownership, thus matching broadband provider business models,"

Gulf Bridge International (GBI) Cable Ready for Service

Gulf Bridge International (GBI) and its technology partner TE SubCom have announced that the GBI undersea cable system is now ready for service, providing high speed submarine fiber connectivity between Qatar, the UAE, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia, with onward connectivity to India and Europe. Additional connectivity is set to be added to the system in the coming months, according to the company's press release. Ahmed Mekky, CEO of GBI, said: 'Our high capacity system addresses increasing demand and will foster economic and social growth throughout all Gulf countries.' The GBI cable system with an initial capacity of 5.18Tbps, is designed to enable future network expansion and is configured in a self-healing ring with the aim of maximizing service quality. Debra Brask, Managing director, TE SubCom, noted that the project was constructed with the firm's proprietary undersea OADM switching technology, designed to enhance network resiliency and flexibility.

Baha Allawati is a Sr. Manager looking after the international Roaming and heading the carrier & Roaming services for Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel). He previous held a Sr. Manager position of National and International accounts where he managed the relationship with the various National and International operators and carriers including two Mobile resellers in Oman. He also served as a Sr. Project Manager for Omantel where he program managed a portfolio of multimillion dollars Telecom and IT projects from Mobile to SDH/DWDM and fiber optic cable deployment. Prior to joining Omantel, he spent more than 4 years with Iris Wireless – USA in positions of Assistant Project Manager where he deployed SMS and MMS interworking solutions as well as being a Sr. Network and Security Engineer in managing and deploying the entire network infrastructure for Iris Wireless. During his studies in the USA, he network consulted along with Andrew W Dozier & Associates and assisted into implementing telecom solutions for Banks, SOHOs and small clinics, and contributed into building a network lab course for Vanderbilt University. Mr. Allawati has more than 13 years of experience in the IT and Telecom sector and holds a BS in Electrical and Electronics Engineering with the emphasis on Telecom and IT and a Minor in Math from Vanderbilt University - USA, , MS in Networking Security from Vanderbilt University – USA and a Master's Certificate degree in Project management from George Washington University. He is also in the final phase of completing a leadership program from Manchester Business School.

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Q. First of all, we welcome you as the new Chairman of SIRG at SAMENA Council. Please share your thoughts on being elected as the Chairman of SIRG.

A. Thank you very much for the kind welcome. I would like to take this opportunity and thank all the SIRG members for having their trust in electing myself and Obaid as the chairman and vice chairman respectively, as well as being proactive on the election process. The journey is just starting and their engagement is eminent to take SIRG to the next level of success. I would like to also thank Munif Al-Mutairi and Ibrahim Harb for their previous term and their dedication on building up the SIRG committee.

Q. Keeping in view the role of SAMENA, and the significance of SIRG in the regional telecoms landscape, what is your vision of the Group's future activities?

A. SAMENA is playing an important role in the telecom sector today addressing the various challenges faced by the operators and the industry. It is representing a unified voice of the operators in the region and fosters the dialogue with the regulators, policy makers, vendors, suppliers and the OTTPs. Currently it is evaluating some of the top hot topics such as ITRs, net-neutrality, digital dividend, roaming regulations and many others. Collaboration between operators, regulators and vendors is very important within the roaming sector as it is directly impacting our customers' experience. We within SIRG will take a proactive role in driving those discussions forward and as such drive towards common goals.

Within SIRG we will also have our unique challenges that need to be addressed and will require our focus in the coming term. One important topic that will reinforce the strength of group and alliance collaboration is the "SAMENA Unified Roaming Rate" initiative, which would provide common roaming tariff that will boost usage throughout the region, shows the adaptation of fair roaming tariffs to the regulators and set's a role-model for other markets and regions. We will also be working on expanding our mandate to include wholesale voice and focus on growing the SIRG membership and expand the level of engagement of the operators that are not currently part of SAMENA.

Q. How do you look at the roaming situation in the regional markets? What steps should be taken in order to address the issues?

A. There are obvious challenges such as technical, commercial and regulatory that affect the overall industry and as such also roaming is affected. Lower margins, subsidization of the voice, the rise of data all put into motion by the rise of OTP and new innovative apps that use the internet as means of communications. The core of the issues is not unique to the region, as they similar to the ones faced by other markets around the world. There is much we can learn from other markets that have experienced those issues already and driven their own models. Such experience will be addressed in the most appropriate way by providing value propositions to our customers as well create close collaboration among stakeholders to enable a sustainable situation for all players.

Q. With the progress of broadband, gradual growth of the content industry, and the emergence of mobile apps, what are your thoughts about digitization being a key driver of sustainable economic growth across the SAMENA region?

A. Mobile broadband is surging in consumer demand. There has been a dramatic increase in the use of smart phones and other wireless devices across the world and the SAMENA region in specific. The use of the Internet has dramatically grown in the past decade and has become an integral part of our lives and economies. Clearly our customers love the convenience and the mobility enabled by wireless broadband, and there's no question that mobile technology creates jobs and builds long-term prosperity. Various studies are done in this area showing a direct link between broadband penetration and economic growth. In 2010 a study conducted by the Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich found that a 10% growth in broadband penetration can raise annual economic growth per person by up to 1.5%. Another World Bank study of 120 nations between 1980 and 2006 found that each 10% point increase in broadband penetration adds 1.3% to a country's gross domestic product.

Despite the fact that some of these studies were done few years back, the growth pattern remains the same if not more. Countries are now investing heavily into the ICT sector including broadband, and hence such investment stimulates the innovation of ideas, applications, businesses and ultimately the economies in those countries.

Q. How do you see the SAMENA Council role in fostering consensus-building and collaboration on roaming issues in the region?

A. The "SAMENA Unified Roaming Rate' is an excellent example that will foster consensus building and collaboration in our region. Also the transformation of the roaming market with emerging technologies, the rise of data roaming and the capacity squeeze faced by most operators will require an industry discussion. The SAMENA counsel is such a unique platform as it unites operators, vendors and regulators into an open discussion on important industry topics with the involvement of the C-Levels of this industry. Understanding the viewpoints of those stakeholders and having the dedication supported by these C-level executives helps to foster consensus building and will certainly help all of us to grow and mature our industry.

Q. How would you see the future of telecom markets in terms of competition? Do you agree that regional markets will experience tough competition, resulting in improved QOS and reduced tariffs?

A. Technology is improving by the day and vendors are offering similar platforms and system for the operators to buy. And with the touch of regulations across the various regions, the telecom market is becoming more and more competitive. In line with that, the region is showing a great deal of merger and acquisitions as well as alliances. All of which are introducing tough competition with their offering. Operators are more focused on addressing customer's price sensitivity issue, and hence prices are driven down. The margins on the other hand in the telecom industry are becoming thinner by the day while customer's expectations are rising exponentially. Such situation leads the operators into one path which is to optimize their operational cost and focus on improving the customer's experience and loyalty by maximizing their effort on the offered QoS while maintaining a healthy tariff level.

Q. How are alternative technologies such as illegal internet telephony affecting negatively on the roaming revenues and what steps should be taken to rectify this situation?

A. Obviously the use of alternative technologies to bypass traditional voice communication all have their negative effect on the voice revenues, but will slightly enhance the data volumes and revenues. Various networks deal with VOIP in different manners, some are legal and allowed, and other are blocking the use of VOIP apps in their network or while roaming. This could be due to commercial, regulatory or other reasons.

In the case of legally allowed environment, then appropriate legal and commercial measurements should be taken to protect the business but stimulate the consumer behavior. Innovation and outside the box thinking shall be applied and considered and the adopted solution will vary from small companies to the various groups. In all cases, close corporation between the home and the visited networks will need to take place in order to achieve the above goals.

Q. How do you look at the relation between interconnect charges and international roaming rates, and their impact on the overall market?

A. Interconnect charges and international roaming rates are greatly interlinked on the voice roaming. When mobile calls are originated at the visited network, the respective IOT charges for that service are built on top of the interconnect charges. Hence, operators that own their own international gateways have a greater leverage to offer competitive rates when offering discounts and sign PRAs. Such operators would also have a better control on the routing of roaming calls and hence control the quality and the service offered for the inbound roamers in their network.

Q. With the growing need for data services, how do you look at the future of data roaming internationally?

A. No one would disagree that demand for data service is rapidly increasing and so are the number of smart phones in our networks. People's expectation is that their phone should be connected around the clock. They want to make sure their tweets, FB updates, emails and so forth are delivered on time to them. SMS and voice calls are being subsidized by quick IMs. Nowadays, the first question asked by a person checking into a hotel is do you have Internet and can I make international calls from my room.

Data roaming prices were quiet high few years back, but they are drastically coming down. Operators are offering more and more data packages locally and while roaming that encourage travelers to keep the data connection ON while roaming. Hence, I believe data roaming volumes will continue to rise and take over the majority of the roaming services. On the other hand, wholesale and retail prices will continue to simplify and decline either by the choice of the operator, result of competition or the direction of the regulation.

Q. Do you think there is a need for a coordinated regulatory framework to effectively address roaming related issues in the region?

A. Every region has its own challenges, cost structure as well as usage trends and consumer behavior. Such challenges would set a scene that certain regulatory framework might work in some places but not necessary be successful across all regions and countries. Regulators and policy makers (in their own regions and countries) should keep those in mind and permit their operators to cruise in Auto pilot mode while ensuring that healthy competitions are maintained. Nowadays, operators' focus is customer's satisfaction in the first case, and hence competition itself will take care of ensuring comparable pricing structure is maintained by the operator for the roaming business.

Obaid Ur Rahman is currently heading the Carrier & Roaming Services function for The Qtel Group covering 17 markets. He has been instrumental in setting up the group function and formulating the business plan and related governance process. His key focus is to maximise margins by bringing synergies across the group while driving revenue and reducing the cost-base.

Prior to this, he was heading the group wholesale & interconnect function for Cable & Wireless International with a portfolio spanning 34 countries and revenues in excess of GBP1 billion. Additionally, he was also responsible for the international roaming portfolio for the company.

Obaid has co-led some key industry initiatives including but not limited to Near Real Time Roaming Data Exchange, IPX and Global Roaming Quality program, Additionally, he has been involved in various work-streams within GSM Association pertaining to Roaming and Product Development.

Obaid has more than 16 years of experience in the GSM industry - gathered whilst working in 4 very diverse and distinct regions i.e. Middle East, Asia, UK and the Caribbean. He holds an MBA degree with a major in Marketing.

Obaid Ur Rahman
Vice Chairman
SAMENA International Roaming Group

Group Head, International Carrier & Roaming Services
Qtel International - Qatar

Q. Please share your thoughts on being elected as the Vice Chairman of SIRG at SAMENA Council.

A. I feel privileged to be associated with SAMENA Council and now, I look forward to work closely with SAMENA members – and SIRG team in particular – to deliver strategic objectives for the roaming sector in the region.

Q. How do you look at the SIRG's role in the SAMENA region's ICT industry?

A. The roaming sector is one of the common areas where telcos, regulators and vendors collaborate regularly. SIRG shall potentially act as a change catalyst in the region and beyond, especially due to the diversity of its stakeholders and members. This diversity is a great asset enabling the Council to draw upon a range of experience and practices to understand and address industry challenges.

I see SIRG as being the unifying body to provide a coherent voice for the operators in the region. By bringing telcos, regulators and vendors at the same platform, I am sure we can collectively drive common goals that shall fuel the next phase of growth in roaming and in turn, for the telco sector in general.

Q. Being the Vice Chairman of SIRG, how do you look at fostering the SAMENA's vision in the region?

A. SAMENA Council has played a pivotal role in providing the right collaborative platform for highlighting and addressing industry challenges we currently face.

I envision that we shall be able to facilitate this process further through SIRG by:

- Identifying industry trends and encourage discussion on effects on the region and possible recommendations for actions
- Discuss direction and effects of roaming regulation and promote solutions that optimize benefit for the subscribers and operators in the region

Q. Keeping in view SIRG, how do you aim to support SAMENA's cooperation with policy circles in the region?

A. Engagement with both regional and national Governments and regulatory bodies is crucial. I will be championing high levels of co-operation and engagement with a range of policy bodies. I will ensure SIRG members are represented in all relevant debates and consultations so that SIRG is not only abreast of policy challenges but in a position to influence and shape them to suit our stakeholders.

Q. Please tell us about the concept of "SAMENA Unified Roaming Rate" for its members' operators?

A. The idea is to provide common rates across the whole geography that SAMENA members cover. The common rate would thus reinforce the coherence of the group as well as position SAMENA as a champion of innovation. It would enable members to boost traffic volumes and usage throughout the region and hence increase trade amongst members. Unified rates would demonstrate to regulators SAMENA is committed to fair roaming tariffs as well as set an example to other operators both within and outside SAMENA. Finally it would act as an incentive to greater participation and membership within the council.

Q. With margins and call volume growth falling, and competition from VoIP rising, do you see that the wholesale carriers have to regroup?

A. Absolutely! Our industry currently faces not only technological but commercial and regulatory challenges too. We certainly need to consolidate our scale in order to be more competitive but in conjunction to this, we also have to embrace disruptive technologies, harnessing them to ensure we maximize value from them and minimize revenue erosion. In addition to physical consolidation, best practice sharing is also vital for addressing such challenges.

Q. In your view what would be the key drivers for economic growth in the region?

A. The World Bank has demonstrated through its studies that every 10 percentage points in broadband penetration results in a 1.21% increase in GDP per capita growth in developed countries and 1.38% in developing countries. Furthermore, ensuring that broadband services as well as voice are available and affordable to users wherever they are in the region is crucial to the development of intra-regional trade and economic development.

Q. What are the challenges that operators are facing in spite of their ongoing investments and evolving role within the global ICT industry?

A. Within the roaming industry operators are coming under increasing threat from pricing and structural regulation. The European Union in particular is leading on a dramatic restructuring of the roaming market to reduce roaming prices to that of domestic rates. Evidence of strong elasticity of roaming is sparse and hence revenues are under threat. Cash and confidence to reinvest in new infrastructure, technologies and services as well as subsidies for connecting lower income users is therefore being eroded.

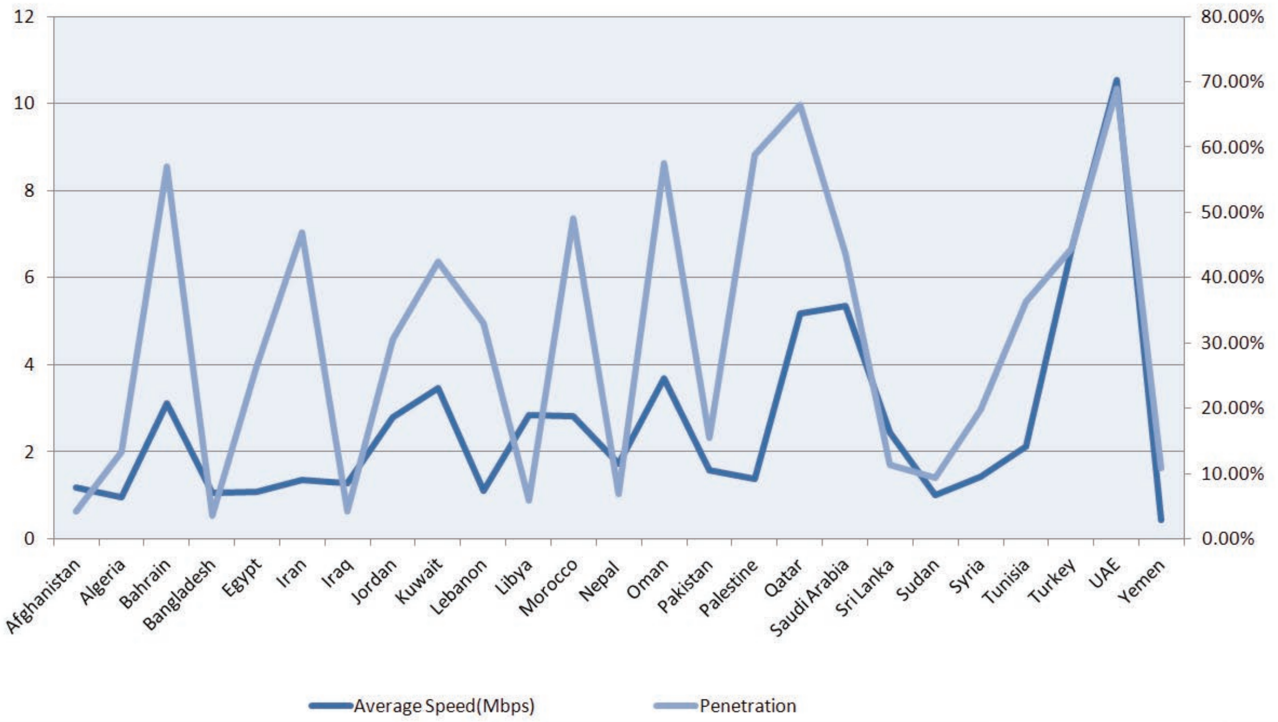
Q. How do you foresee the transformation of the roaming market with emerging technologies and rising need for data roaming?

A. With the rapid growth of data roaming and the capacity squeeze faced by most mobile operators, I believe the introduction of data roaming off-loading onto fixed technologies such as WiFi/femtocells will rise to greater prominence in the coming years. Initiatives are already under way to develop standards for interoperability and some operators have already announced WiFi offload offerings.

Q. How will be the roaming consumption and pricing models will evolve in the future?

A. I would expect further simplification of pricing models to prevail. As wholesale and retail rates decline and become more uniform, bundled pricing offers become more achievable. Simplifying and clarifying roaming prices increases user confidence and thus usage. Furthermore as consolidation in regional bodies/alliances and operator groups continues, more regional/zoned pricing can be expected. Decline of wholesale rates may also lead to more "all-you-can-eat" bundles particularly with offload technologies.

Average Internet Speed (Mbps) vs. Internet Penetration in SAMENA



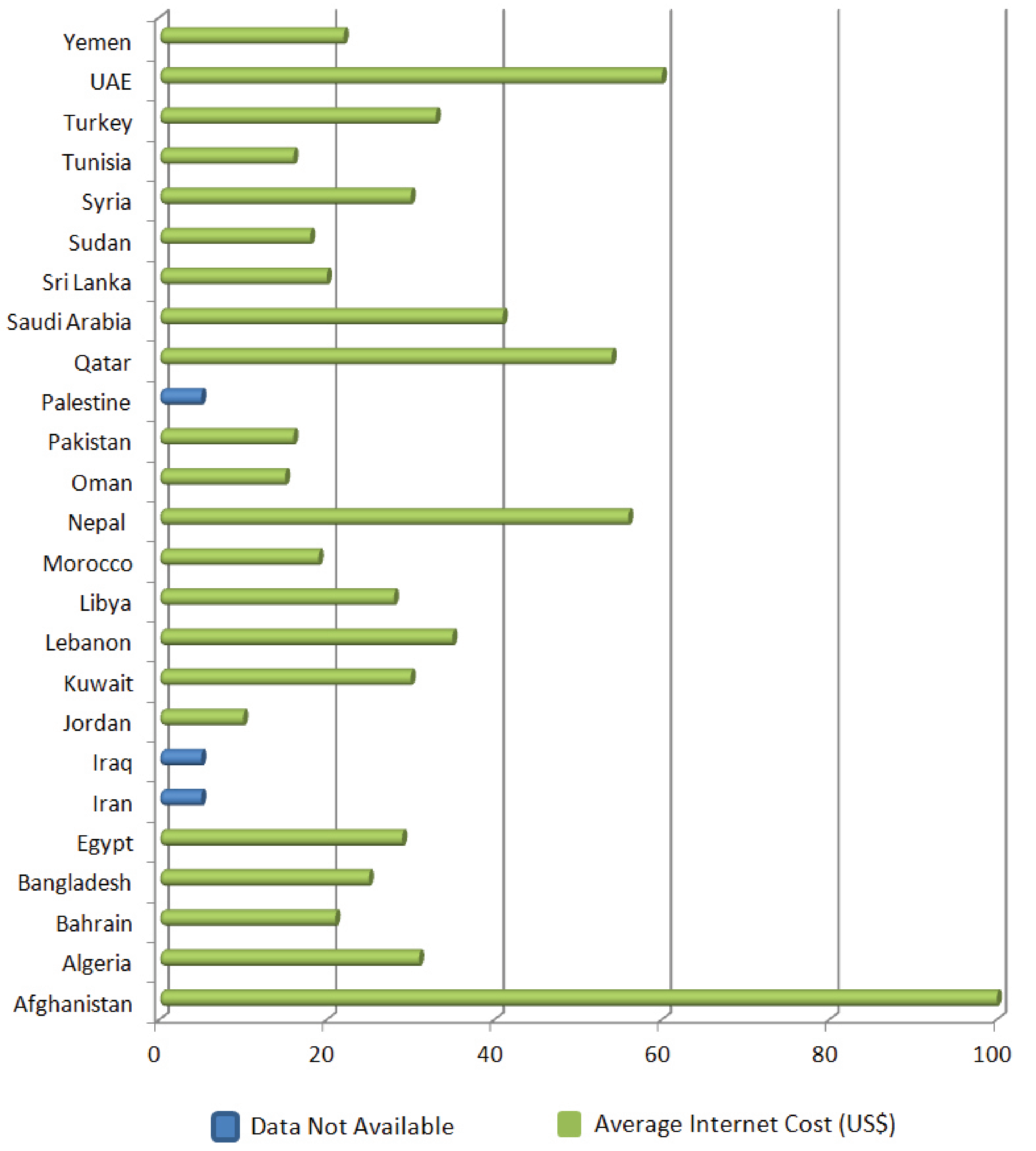
Research Note: Ranking done by SAMENA, based on data from different sources. Within the SAMENA region, in South Asia, Pakistan appears to have the largest Internet penetration. Sri Lanka is 2nd having the largest Internet penetration. In the Middle East UAE is at the top position in terms of population penetration. Qatar and Palestine are at the 2nd and 3rd position in this region. In North Africa, Morocco is at the top position whereas Tunisia and Egypt are at 2nd and 3rd position respectively.

In South Asia, Sri Lanka is at the top position in terms of Internet Speed (Mbps). In the Middle East, UAE is at the top position and in North Africa, Libya has the highest Internet speed (Mbps). This can be attributed to the fact that these counties have comparatively higher international bandwidth and that these markets have good competition. Additionally, another reason could be the comparatively reduced tariffs as a result of competition, and also the purchasing power of the end user. Another important factor appears to be the advanced infrastructure in majority of these markets (UAE, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt among others) have advanced infrastructure capable of supporting higher bandwidths.

Data Source: Pando Networks, Net Index by Oakla, Arab Advisors Group, ITU Internet World Stats, Industry News

Image Source: SAMENA

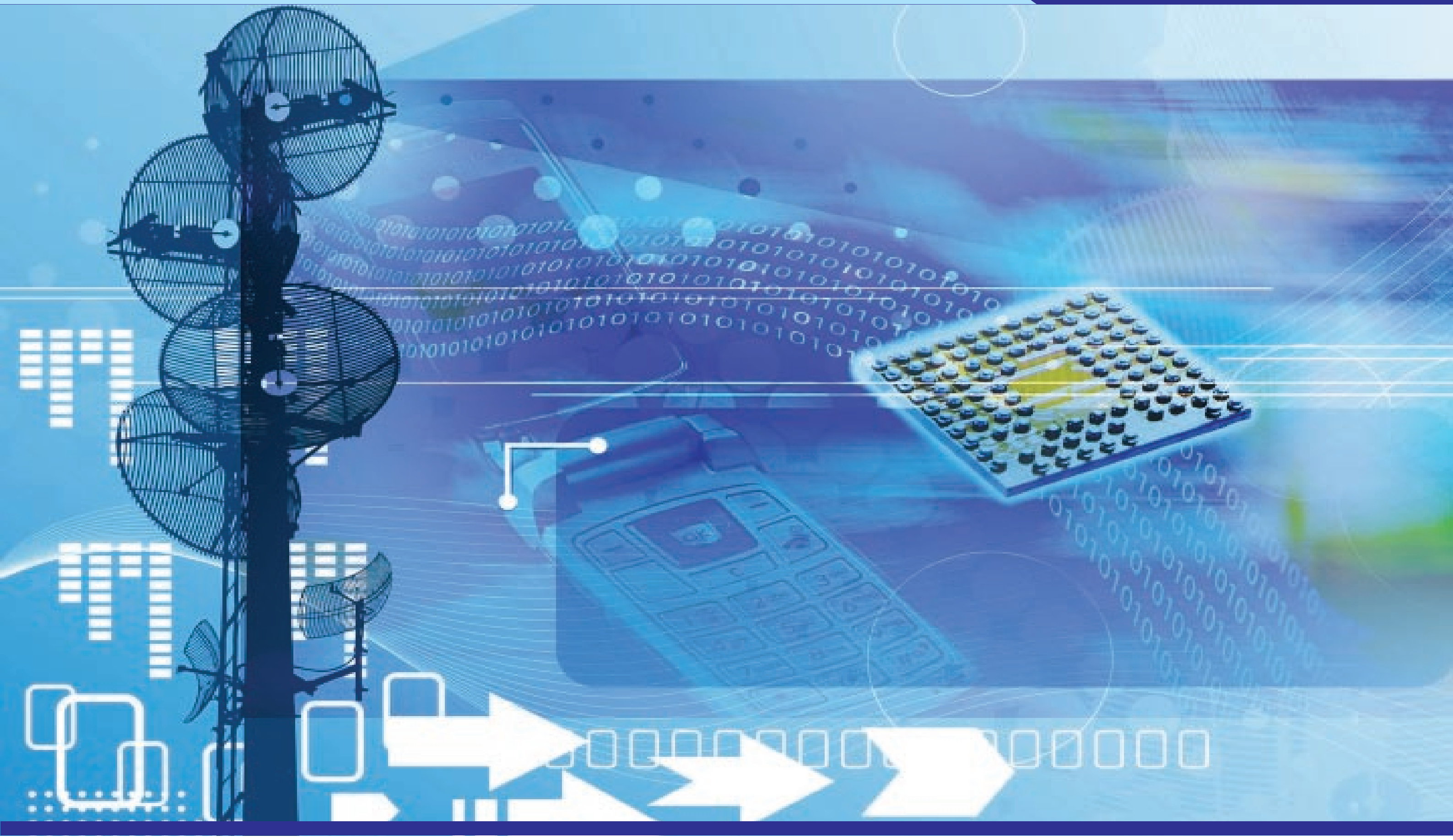
Average Cost of Internet (1 Mbps Per Month)



Research Note: Ranking done by SAMENA, based on data from different sources. Within the SAMENA region Afghanistan has the highest average Internet cost. Similarly, UAE has the second highest average Internet cost for I Mbps per month. Oman, Pakistan, and Sudan have respectively the lowest cost of internet in the SAMENA region, respectively. In addition to UAE and Afghanistan, a number of other countries with average Internet cost of over 40US$ includes, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Nepal. Similarly, in addition to Oman, Pakistan and Sudan, some other markets such as Jordan, Tunisia, Sri Lanka, and Morocco also have an average Internet cost of less than 20 US$ for one Mbps Internet connection per month.

Data Source: Net Index by Oakla, Arab Advisors Group, Industry News

Image Source: SAMENA



REGULATORY NEWS

TRA Invites Expressions of Interest in Unallocated 1900MHz-2170MHz

Bahrain's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued an invitation for expressions of interest in paired and non-paired radio spectrum within the band 1900MHz–2170MHz.The TRA proposes to offer unassigned spectrum in the band to the three existing licensed public mobile operators (Batelco, Zain and Viva). This spectrum amounts to a total of 55MHz comprising 15MHz of unpaired spectrum suitable for TDD applications and 40MHz of paired spectrum with a separation of 190MHz, suitable for FDD or TDD applications. It is intended that this spectrum will be included in a future tender for public mobile system licenses, which together with additional spectrum (yet to be announced) should be capable of facilitating advanced, post third generation mobile systems. Therefore the current planned release of un-assigned spectrum will be for a period of six months. The license may be renewed for further periods (currently of unspecified duration), expiring on the date that the future license award process commences, which will assign this spectrum to a successful bidder. This is envisaged to be within the period from Q4 2012 to mid-2013.

BTCL, Teletalk investigated over illegal VoIP

A committee of the Bangladesh government has found anomalies in international call management at two state-owned telecommunications firms. Bangladesh Telecommunications Company (BTCL) and Teletalk were investigated to find their involvement in illegal VoIP services. The report said that BTCL did not have analyzers installed to collect call data, which leaves room for revenue dodging and other irregularities, The Daily Star writes. BTCL has no billing platform for its interconnection exchange and cannot measure the actual call duration of calls, nor are they properly connected to the analyzer of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission. BTCL has three exchanges for international call termination but one of its exchanges often reboots, resulting in traffic data loss. The company has no maintenance agreement with its vendors so when it faces technical problems it cannot solve them, the report reads. At mobile operator Teletalk, the committee found evidence of abnormally long calls of 17 to 23 hours from five numbers. Some incoming international calls also raised questions. The committee also accused the companies of not properly cooperating with the investigation and said some data from the exchanges had been deleted. The committee made 13 recommendations to improve the situation.

IctQatar Issues Security Policies for Government Information Sharing

IctQatar has drawn up the Government Information Assurance Policy and the BlackBerry Security Policy. Both policies will confront security issues surrounding governance structure, risk management, third party security (outsourcing), security awareness and incident management. Khalid Al Hashimi, Executive Director of Cyber Security at IctQatar, said the new policies are essential because of the rapid increase in ICT use across the government sector with important government information being shared, stored and accessed in new ways. He added that the emerging technological trends has made government more efficient and responsive but appropriate action must be taken to ensure valuable information is protected and secured. IctQatar has focused on unauthorized disclosure, unauthorised modification and non-availability. The agency has brought out a manual to support implementation. The BlackBerry Security Policy sets out security standards for government agencies relating to installation, configuration and use of the BlackBerry. Its primary purpose is to enhance the security and confidentiality of government data and information that is shared¬ over the BlackBerry infrastructure much of which resides outside of Qatar.

Taiwan to Issue 4G licenses by 2015

Taiwan's National Communications Commission is planning to issue three 4G licenses valid for fifteen years within the next three years. "We will start reviewing applications for 4G licenses in the second half of next year and issue at least three licenses by 2015, one year ahead of the originally set goal of 2016," the Taiwan Today quotes NCC Minister S¬u Herng as saying. The move is in line with the country's cloud computing goals. Further, in response to criticism that the state has dragged its feet regarding the introduction of 4G licensing, NCC commissioner Chen Cheng-tsang has argued that the two-year period for issuing such concessions is reasonable, claiming: 'Right now we have to work with the Ministry of National Defense to free up a specific range of spectrums for 4G communications. After that we have to exchange opinions with experts to draw up relevant regulations. In addition, a review and auction process of at least nine months is absolutely necessary.'

Nepal's Regulator to Get Tough on Illegal VoIP Providers

Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) is preparing new regulations in a bid to crack down on operators using illegal call bypass centers for voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) telephony services. According to Himalayan News Service the authorized fixed telephony providers are losing significant revenues as a result of the practice in reaction to which NTA has started calculating the losses incurred and even arrested some individuals accused of offering VoIP services illegally. An NTA official is quoted as saying that the agency will now develop a procedure on how to recoup the amounts lost due to illegal VoIP activity and invited public opinion on the new regulation and a possible tariff of fines. In addition, the NTA is recommending that the government imposes a ban on the import of equipment used for VoIP operations, without the prior consent of the regulator.

Spanish Regulator Ordered to Avoid Delays to Cuts in MTR

The European Commission has suspended plans by the Spanish telecoms regulator (CMT) to postpone by a year the introduction of cheaper mobile termination rates (MTRs). The Spanish regulator had planned to delay cheaper rates until January 2014. According to the timetable outlined in the Commission's 2009 Termination Rates Recommendation, cost-oriented mobile termination rates should be applied across the EU by 31 December 2012. These MTRs should be set at a level equivalent to what it costs an efficient operator to terminate calls on his network. In many countries, including Spain, MTRs are currently much higher. The CMT has proposed to extend the transitional period for implementation by an additional year. The Commission disagrees with CMT's argument that a significant reduction of prices by December 2012 would have too negative an impact on the mobile industry in Spain. In the Commission's view the Spanish regulator has not shown that an extension to this deadline would be justified, in particular as the industry had since 2009 to adapt to the new MTR approach. The CMT now has three months to work with the Commission and the body of European telecoms regulators (BEREC) on a solution to this case.

Bahrain Slashes Roaming Tariffs across GCC by 75 Percent

Bahrain's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) said that it ordered mobile operators in the country to cut tariffs by 75 percent for international calls made to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries while roaming in the Gulf region. The TRA added that the move follows a decision of the Ministerial Committee of the GCC Council to slash maximum prices cap for all mobile companies within the region. It also said that at the current time, Bahraini consumers pay around US$2.61 per minute for calls made back to their country while roaming in some GCC nations, adding that the new 75 percent reduction would depend on the current prices of different countries and operators. It is worth noting that at the current time, the maximum rates will only involve voice calls made within and between GCC countries and not to data services such as mobile broadband or SMS.

Ofcom Confirms New Wholesale Fixed Line Charges

Ofcom has announced that it has formally set the new pricing structure. The new charges will take effect from 1 April 2012, and as per the new pricing regime the annual cost of a fully unbundled line will drop to GBP87.41 (USD138.16) per year, down from the current cost of GBP91.50. Looking forward, this fee will then decrease further in the following financial year (from 1 April 2013), with the reduction calculated using the formula of retail price index (RPI) -5.9 percent. A shared unbundled line, meanwhile, which currently costs GBP14.70 per year, will be reduced to GBP11.92 for FY2012/13, before falling further in the following fiscal year by RPI -15.9 percent. Rounding out the regulator's price revisions, Ofcom has also confirmed that the cost of wholesale line rental (WLR) would be reduced to GBP98.81 per annum from its current rate of GBP103.68 from March 2012, with a further reduction due in FY2013/14 using a formula of RPI -7.3percent.

A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN SAMENA REGION

Active Consultations & Invitations for Feedback

Bahrain

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued a public consultation on the potential regulation of wholesale international inbound calls. Wholesale international inbound calls are supplied by Licensed Operators in Bahrain to foreign telecommunications operators to enable the completion of international telephone calls to subscribers in Bahrain. In recent years, wholesale international charges for these services have been falling, reducing the cost for foreign operators to supply international calls into Bahrain. However, it appears that these cost reductions have not been passed through by other GCC operators into their retail call charges. As a result, end users in Bahrain have not benefited from lower costs of being called. The Authority therefore proposes to establish minimum price floors for wholesale international inbound services supplied by Licensed Operators in Bahrain to GCC operators. The Authority is inviting interested parties to provide submissions by February 23, 2012. (February 6, 2012) www.tra.org.bh.

Oman

The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) seeks the public opinion from all stakeholders through a consultation paper on 'Regulations on Outage Reporting and Reparation Requirements for Class one fixed and mobile telecom licensees'. The aim of these Regulations are to develop specific rules on reporting service outage like critical service outages, major service outages and minor service outages; such outages may affect both fixed and mobile services provided by Class one licensees. The Regulations also contains requirements for repairing faults within a specified period of time according to the type of outage as indicated in the Draft Regulations. March 18, 2012 has been fixed as the last date to receive the submissions. (February 22, 2012) www.tra.gov.om

Saudi Arabia

The Communication and Information Technology Commission (CITC) has launched a Public Consultation on the licensing process for Mobile Virtual Network Operators ("MVNO") and requested the stakeholders to participate in this process. Respondents are particularly invited to submit comments to the CITC on:

- The regulatory context and principles to be incorporated into the MVNO scheme in Saudi Arabia
- The proposed license for Mobile Virtual Network Operators ("MVNOs")
- The selection method proposed to select initial MVNO licensees; and
- The proposed Guidelines to assist the development of partnering agreements between MVNOs and mobile Facilities Based Host Providers ("Host FBPs").

The comments are to be submitted by April 2, 2012. (January 18, 2012) www.citc.gov.sa

RECENT POLICY & REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS SAMENA Country Updates

Afghanistan
Board Chairman: Mr. Abdul Wakil Shergul
[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)]
In order to facilitate rural ICT development and improve access to telecommunications services, MCIT has taken a decision to license its ITU-allotted satellite slot at 50 degrees east longitude, by virtue of an international competitive tender that will be conducted by the Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority (ATRA). ATRA's intention is to make this slot available via license agreement to support both private and public telecommunications services. Furthermore, the scope of this initiative is to provide only the space segment and associated control segment. Provisioning of earth terminals and associated terrestrial infrastructure (i.e., the ground segment) is not within the scope of this requirement. March 18, 2012 is the last date for submission of interest. (February 18, 2012) www.atra.gov.af

Afghanistan ended December 2011 with 17.56 million GSM subscribers, up from 17.36 million at end-June. The country also counted 134,092 CDMA users, down from 190,058 six months earlier, according to statistics from the ICT ministry. The number of landlines totaled 80,607, up from 75,323 and penetration of communic¬ations services stands at 66 percent, up from 65 percent in June. The number of telecommunications base stations totaled 4,428 in December while total investment stood at US$ 1.79 billion. (February 9, 2012) www.telecompaper.com

Algeria
Chairperson: Ms. Zohra Derdouri
[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]

Algeria's dominant state-owned communications provider Algerie Telecom is expanding its relationship with satellite operator Eutelsat under a new five-year contract. The deal will see the Algerians lease 47MHz of capacity on Eutelsat's Atlantic Bird 7 satellite, which offers coverage of the entire territory of Algeria. Algerie Telecom already uses five 36MHz transponders on Eutelsat's Atlantic Bird 3 platform. (February 9, 2012) www.telegeography.com

Bahrain
Chairman & General Director: Mr. Mohamed Bubashait
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) conducted a market research study in 2011 on 'Residential Consumer Survey Report' with the objective of better understanding the demand for telecommunications services in Bahrain. It also outlines numerous areas of progress in the telecommunications sector in Bahrain. The key objectives of this survey was to understand the usage and access to telecoms services, satisfaction of consumers with various services and their switching behavior and awareness of TRA and its role. (February 15, 2012) www.tra.org.bh

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), in coordination with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, has issued an instruction to all mobile operators to implement reduced tariffs for international calls made to GCC countries while roaming in GCC countries. This follows a decision of the Ministerial Committee of the GCC Council to introduce maximum prices cap for all mobile operators within the region. "This is a major step in the reduction of roaming prices for voice calls. Consumers will now benefit from lower rates when making calls back home and international calls while roaming. The maximum rates will only apply to voice calls made within and between GCC countries and not to data services (e.g. mobile broadband or SMS) at this point," TRA said in a statement. (February 13, 2012) www.zawya.com

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) said it proposes to establish minimum prices for wholesale international inbound services supplied by licensed operators in Bahrain to Gulf C-ooperation Council (GCC) operators. It said in a statement that it is holding a public consultation on the matter and is inviting comments by February 23. The TRA said that in recent years, wholesale international charges for these services have been falling, reducing the cost for foreign operators to supply international calls into Bahrain. However, it appears that these cost reductions have not been passed through by other GCC operators into their retail call charges. As a result, end users in Bahrain have not benefited from lower costs of being called, the TRA statement said. (February 7, 2012) www.telecompaper.com

Mobile phone subscribers in Bahrain reached about 1.7 million by the end of 2011, with a penetration rate of 133%, the telecoms regulator said. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority said in a report that since the introduction of number portability in mid July, about 22,000 numbers have been ported. At the end of 2011, there were approximately 290,000 internet subscribers in Bahrain, all of whom were broadband subscribers, an increase of 42% compared to 2010, the report added. Broadband penetration in Bahrain reached 23% last year, the TRA said, representing a total of 126,000 mobile broadband subscribers. Fixed lines totaled about 242,000 in Bahrain by the end of 2011, equating to a penetration of 19%. Mohamed Hamad Bubashait, the TRA's Director General said that the statistics provided in this report show the positive impact that the sector liberalization and the legal framework has had on the performance of the sector. This report demonstrates that the steps taken by TRA to promote and safeguard competition have delivered benefits to consumers. This has had a big impact on the growth in revenue, employees, subscribers, and the number of minutes, as well as reductions in prices paid by subscribers. (February 1, 2012) www.commsmea.com

Bangladesh
Chairman: Maj. Gen. Zia Ahmed
[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]

Bangladeshi mobile operators GrameenPhone, Banglalink, Robi and CityCell have refused to pay outstanding fees for their license renewals worth a combined BDT8.57 billion (US$101 million) until they receive certified copies of a High Court verdict on a related case contested by GrameenPhone and the Bangladesh Telecommunication

Regulatory Commission (BTRC). The four operators were issued the license renewal demands on November 10, 2011 and have since accrued additional late fees – which the BTRC says it has no authority to waive. GrameenPhone has submitted a query on the regulator's most recent demand for full payment of late fees, while Banglalink has requested a discussion with the BTRC over the financial issues. According to the High Court's decision of February 13, GrameenPhone must pay license renewal fees in their entirety – BDT3.96 billion including BDT1.47 billion in dues and late fees since 2010 – to the BTRC without any deductions, in order to receive a new operating concession. BTRC also last week sent letters to the other three mobile operators, telling them to pay respective outstanding totals of: BDT2.18 billion (Banglalink); BDT1.99 billion (Robi); and BDT442 million (CityCell). In November, the four operators paid a combined amount of BDT31.8 billion as part of the first installment of license renewal charges. However, they held back part of the money owed, and the case went to court, in the process accruing an additional 15% interest on the renewal fees in line with the telecoms law, the BTRC stated. The operators' original concessions officially expired on November 15, 2011, to be replaced by new licenses of 15-year duration with fees payable in four instilments ending in May 2013. (February 20, 2012) **The Daily Star**

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has asked four mobile operators to deposit a combined amount of Tk 857.46 crore in 10 days to renew their licenses. BTRC sent letters to the mobile operators -- Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi and Citycell, said Shahiduzzaman, director general of the commission. "BTRC will start the renewal process as soon as the operators pay the money," he said. Grameenphone will have to pay Tk 396.2 crore, including Tk 146.82 crore in dues and late fees since 2010, Shahiduzzaman said. Banglalink will have to pay Tk 217.54 crore, Robi Tk 199.49 crore and Citycell Tk 44.23 crore for license renewal. In November, the four operators paid a combined amount of Tk 3,177 crore as part of the first installment of license renewal charges. The telecom operators were supposed to pay their renewal charges on November 10, 2011, Zia Ahmed, chairman of BTRC, said on Thursday. "But they did not do so and went to court," he added. So, the operators will have to pay an additional 15 percent interest on the renewal charges in line with the telecoms law, Ahmed said. Also, the 15 percent VAT deducted at source since 2010 and paid to the National Board of Revenue, must be returned to BTRC by the telecom operators, he said. Officials of the companies refused to comment on the issue as they received the letters after office hours. The telecom operators used to make payments to BTRC after deducting 15 percent as VAT to pay to NBR. The High Court on Monday handed down a verdict asking Grameenphone to pay the full amount to BTRC and an additional 15 percent to NBR as VAT. But the operators will receive a rebate on VAT. (February 16, 2012) **www.thedailystar.net**

Grameenphone has been told that its GSM license will be renewed, once it pays a Tk 2.4 billion (US$28 million) license fee. The company had been battling the regulator over the claims in an audit that it had underpaid previous license fees to the regulator, and the GSM license renewal was delayed pending the dispute's resolution. The regulator lost the court action over a claim for an extra Tk 2.36 billion in fees for 7.4 MHz spectrum levied in 2008. "Grameenphone's license will be renewed once it pays Tk 2.3973 billion after getting the copy of the High Court verdict," BTRC chairman Zia Ahmed told reporters. However, the BTRC won another aspect of the case and will be applying VAT at 15% to the license fees. (February 14, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

In the last three years, the telecom regulator has closed around a million SIMs and 30,000 IP addresses to tackle illegal VoIP activities. Telecommunications minister told parliament that Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission had also cancelled the licenses of 21 operators, raided 78 illegal establishments and filed 38 cases. The minister said that more licenses for international gateway, interconnection exchange, international internet gateway and VSP licenses were being issued. The minister said there were 85.4 million registered mobile phone users in the country at present. He said BTRC was formulating a draft Quality of Service Regulation with support from International Telecommunication Union, in order to ensure the minimum standard of consumer services. In reply to another question, Minister said Teletalk, the state-owned telco, was introducing 3G technology and expanding 2.5G network with Tk 1.9 billion Chinese assistance. He added that under the National Broadband Policy 2009, ITC, WiMAX, IPTSP and VTS licenses were already being issued. Soon, NIX licenses would also be given, he added. "The government has earned Tk 170 billion from this sector from Jan 2002 to Jan 2012," he said. (February 1, 2012) **http://bdnews24.com**

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

According to official figures, the number of mobile phone subscriptions in Egypt grew by 22% to 81.7 million users in the year to November. The number of mobile phone subscriptions in October was 80.9 million. In November 2010, Egypt's three mobile operators, Etisalat Egypt, MobiNil and the Egyptian unit of Vodafone, had 66.87 million subscriptions. (February 13, 2012) **www.ameinfo.com**

The National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA) has announced that March 23, 2012 will be the date of the operation cessation of the old Numbering scheme (10 digits). In case the call is made as per the old numbering scheme, the caller will not be able to make and terminate his call. Instead he will get a voice alert that alerts and warns him of an error in the call connection and the necessity of correcting it by adding another digit and try again to make the call. (February 8, 2012) **http://mcit.gov.eg**

Jordan
Chairman & CEO: Mr. Fadi Kawar
[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

Jordan Telecom Group, the country's sole fixed-line operator, said 2011 net profits fell 5.6% to 89.8 million dinars (US$126.6 million) as operating costs rose and investment income fell. The telecom group, in which France Telecom owns a 51% stake, said revenues of its integrated mobile, internet and fixed-line business rose 2.4% to 411.8 million dinars in 2011. Jordan Telecom saw growth in broadband 3G services boosting the 2011 bottom line in a sector which has seen a fierce turf war among three operators and is hit by sluggish economic growth Jordan Telecom's CFO said most of the growth was driven by the fast growing broadband internet services which rose a healthy 20 to 25%

last year compared to 2011. "This is the first time in three years we see a growth in revenues after stable growth and this performance was despite competition pressure in the market and the economic slowdown," CFO told Reuters. The group's total subscriber base, which includes fixed lines, grew by 17.7% reaching 3.55 million subscribers at end of December 2011 compared to 3 million at end of 2010, the firm said. But operating expenses went up 8.7% over the year to 248 million dinars at the end of December 2011 due to higher costs of marketing 3G services, while the company earned lower interest on its bank deposits of around 280 million dinars. The firm's mobile subsidiary Orange has over 34% market penetration. Kuwaiti telecoms operator Zain is the largest mobile operator in Jordan with around 2.7 million subscribers and a market share of around 37% in a market with almost 100% penetration. (February 6, 2012) **www.reuters.com**

Kuwait
Minister of Communication: Dr. Mohammed Al-Baseeri
[Ministry of Communication (MOC)]

Kuwaiti mobile market will reach 192.7% increase by 2016, BMI said in its Kuwait Telecommunications Report Q1 2012. BMI noted that the Kuwaiti mobile market recorded net additions of about 327,000 subscribers during 9M11 compared to 306,000 during the same period in 2010. This suggests the market is capable of steady growth over the next five years despite a high penetration rate. There is no change to BMI's short-term mobile forecast this quarter. BMI maintained its growth expectations for the fixed-line and Internet sectors as there was no new data from the MoC at the time of writing. However, BMI cautioned that a combination of continued disconnection of fixed lines because of unpaid bills and increasing fixed-to-mobile substitution poses downside risks to its fixed-line forecast. For the Internet sector, BMI forecast mobile broadband access through 3G and now LTE networks to remain the major growth driver for broadband connections. The lingering dispute between the MoC and the country's leading ISPs regarding internet tariffs will also remain a major hindrance to growth in the fixed-line broadband sector. There were reports in 2011 that the government will aim to establish an independent telecoms regulator by 2012. While there is no official confirmation yet to suggest this, BMI maintained the view that the establishment of an independent regulator and the liberalization of the fixed-line market are two key factors that should help the fixed-line sector achieve its full growth potential. BMI revised its mobile ARPU forecasts to reflect competition dynamics in the mobile market. Based on market data published by Zain and Wataniya, BMI said there were net additions of 81,000 subscribers in Q311 or growth of 1.7 percent q-o-q to reach 4.777 million subscribers. (February 19, 2012) **The Saudi Gazette 2012**

Lebanon
Acting Chairman & CEO: Dr. Imad Hoballah
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) hosted ninth AREGNET Plenary meeting in Beirut. Heads of the National Regulatory Authorities and officials from 21 Arab countries participated. The opening ceremony included speeches by the AREGNET Chairman, Dr. Imad Hoballah, and the AREGNET Permanent Secretary General, Dr. Mhamed Toufik Bessaii. Dr. Hoballah detailed the TRA efforts deployed to contribute in the definition of the Network's strategic goals that will allow the telecommunications sector advancement in the Arab countries and pointed out the TRA achievements in proposing three AREGNET projects evolving around cloud computing, children online protection and telecommunications market assessment. He also mentioned that the TRA was actively involved in various major projects within the Network such as the revamping of the AREGNET website and the participation in the roundtable about the AREGNET representation in the Arab telecommunications Ministers meeting. Dr. Mhamed Toufik Bessaii detailed the various recommendations presented by the AREGNET members in regard of the development of the strategic plan and especially those of KSA, Oman and UAE. The meeting was mostly dedicated to discuss the AREGNET strategic goals and plans for the upcoming few years, and review the progress of AREGNET projects. Meeting also included an awareness session about the Arab Connect Summit. Connect Arab Summit is part of ITU's "Connect the World" series, which is an ambitious initiative aimed at connecting the "unconnected" by the year 2015 and, is jointly organized by ITU and the Arab League and hosted by ICT Qatar in March 2012. (February 21, 2012) www.tra.gov.lb

Morocco
Director General: Mr. M. Azdine El Mountassir Billah
[Agence Nationale de Reglementation des Telecommunications (ANRT)]

Maroc Telecom has released its financial results for the year ended December 31, 2011, with revenues falling by 2.5% to MAD30.84 billion (US$3.61 billion) and net income down 14.8% at MAD8.12 billion. The firm attributed the declines to 'the unfavorable regulatory environment and intense competition', but said the results were in line with targets after concentrating its efforts in 2011 on offering 'lower prices, innovation, and network quality'. Group customers were up 12% year-on-year to 29 million, across all operations. The domestic mobile business saw subscriber numbers increase 1.4% to 17.13 million, while there was a 0.8% rise in fixed line customers in Morocco to 1.24 million. The domestic broadband internet customer base rose from 497,000 to 591,000 during 2011. Internationally, Maroc Telecom's activities generated revenues of MAD6.07 billion, up 8.9% year-on-year, with mobile subscriptions in Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Gabon and Mali growing 41%. (February 27, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

The Moroccan postal service Poste Maroc is reportedly planning to launch as a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) within the next few months. The Poste Maroc has held discussions with the country's telecoms regulator ANRT over the award of an MVNO license, while it has also contacted local cellular operators Maroc Telecom, Meditelecom and Wana Corporate for wholesale service pricing. Morocco currently has around 37 million mobile users across its three mobile networks. (February 22, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

A new annual report published by Morocco's telecom regulator ANRT says the country saw telecommunication service prices drop by 34% between 2008 and 2011. "Mobile service prices, including pre- and post-paid, came down by nearly 37% over four years, following a series of successive price cuts, notably since 2010," the study revealed. It also added that the country's service users saw "perennial double and triple top-up credits from some operators, the alignment of off-net prices to on-net prices, per-second billing and lower international call tariffs." ANRT continued to report that fixed voice calls saw a 24% price drop during the reported years, "mostly due to a regular fall in international tariffs, higher top-up bonuses on capped services, and the offers of new generation fixed network operators."The report continued to point out that ADSL broadband prices also saw a marked decrease, of around 55%, and bandwidth continued to climb. "The business broadband segment saw its prices fall by 56% and the business fixed voice segment by around 45% over the same period," it added. (February 16, 2012) **http://bikyamasr.com**

Morocco's IT sector is growing at a double-digit pace. Internet access has expanded by three-quarters in 2011, while the mobile phone market increased by more than 14%, according to the National Telecoms Regulation Agency (ANRT). The kingdom boasts a total of 36.5 million mobile phone subscribers, representing a penetration rate of just over 113%. The market, however, is still dominated by pre-paid packages. There are only 1.5 million subscribers for post-paid deals, according to the ANRT. The Internet sector has expanded thanks to the growth of 3G. Out of 3 million internet subscribers, more than 2.5 million have 3G access. Meanwhile, high-speed connection accounts for just 18% of the market. The trend is taking a toll on the landline market, which shrank by 4.8% last year. Another telling sign of the market's development is e-commerce. There are now over 200 online retail sites affiliated with the Maroc Telecommerce platform. According to the Centre for Interbank Payment Systems (CMI), Moroccan e-commerce turnover rose to over 513 million dirhams last year, a 72% increase from 2010. More and more people opt for using credit cards. More than 6.7 million cards are held by Moroccans, which represents a 10% increase from 2010. Finally, another area that witnessed an upward trend is bandwidth consumption. It grew by almost 66% within one year. Industry insiders predict that 2012 will see continued double-digit growth, in particular due to competition between the three telecoms operators and the ANRT forecasts.(February 6, 2012) **magharebia.com 2012**

Nepal
Chairman: Mr. Bhesh Raj Kanel
[Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTR)]

Having been given the green light by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), Nepalese fixed and mobile operator Nepal Telecom (NT) is preparing a tender process for the supply of ten million GSM mobile lines. It is understood that following a delay to allow the CIAA to investigate the project, the operator is poised to issue a letter of intent (LOI) to Chinese gear manufacturer Huawei Technologies to resume the procurement process. 'The project has already been postponed four months because of the CIAA probe; so we are trying to speed things up from our side so that the implementation could be completed on schedule,' the NT source said. The telco's ambitious plan covers the deployment of both 2G and 3G lines until 2015. (February 14, 2012) **MyRepublica**

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

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) on announced the ceiling on roaming calls in GCC countries, bringing them down to 106bz/min for calls made within the country visited and 255bz/min for those made to GCC countries. Implementation of the caps was spread over two years after the International Roaming Working Group's recommendations were approved by the GCC Telecommunications Ministerial Committee in June 2010. Phase I of this regulation was implemented in 2010, when the price caps were set at 138bz/min within the visited country and 344bz/min for calls to any GCC country - reductions of up to 71% and 45% respectively. Phase II, which began in September 2011, has reduced the ceiling further to the current levels. The TRA has said that operators were free to compete by setting prices below the regulatory caps and provide more attractive prices to the consumers. The working group is now studying SMS, MMS and data roaming charges to develop an appropriate price cap regulation for the same. TRA has been working closely with its counterparts in the Gulf and the licensed mobile operators in the sultanate to ensure successful implementation of the price caps. The regulation is now successfully implemented and consumers who travel within the GCC may now enjoy the reduced roaming prices. (February 7, 2012) **Muscat Daily 2012**

Pakistan
Chairman: Dr. Mohammad Yaseen
[Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)]

The Prime Minister has made assurances that the government will ensure fair competition and transparency in the upcoming auction of 3G concessions in response to accusations that the tender would be 'anti-competitive.' The government is planning to auction the defunct Instaphone license and three 3G authorizations on March 27 and March 29 respectively. If a new entrant purchases the Instaphone license, they will then be eligible to bid for the 3G licenses, though it would not be allowed to launch services until March 2013. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Information Technology has questioned the process, however, saying that it is strongly skewed in favor of existing operators. Responding to the criticism, the chairman of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) also defended the auction, saying that 'it was the only option': if the government had not restricted the entry of new players, it would transgress a previous agreement with Etisalat, and would face litigation. (February 24, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has base prices of US$25,000 to US$27.4 million for frequency bands of 1.9MHz and 3.5MHz separately that are to be awarded to different existing telecom operators in 14 different telecom regions. The authority will award available spectrum to existing Fixed Local Loop (FLL), Wireless Local Loop (WLL) and Class Value-Added Services (CVAS) licensees through telecom region-wise auction process to be held on May 3, Information Memorandum (IM) issued by PTA said on Thursday. PTA has fixed annual spectrum charges from US$10,000 to US$75,000 for different telecom regions depending on capacity and potential areas of business. The award of spectrums is carried out for improving services of telecommunication sector with the broader objective of increasing investment and competition. According to the terms and conditions, a nationwide license holder can bid separately for spectrum in the 14 telecom regions or less, while on the provincial level license holder can bid for all telecom regions within the licensed province or less. The license will be valid for up to 15 years. Interested companies may apply for available block(s) in 1.9GHz and in 3.5GHz for their operating telecom regions. If a CVAS licensee applies for a block in more than one designated band(s) in a telecom region, the applicant must submit business plan, financial plan, technical plan and rollout information in respect of each such band. The bidding company can bid for any or all block(s) in any or all telecom region(s) simultaneously, against the submitted the bid earnest money. A bidder will not be allowed to bid twice for the same block in a given region in any one round. After each round, the bid amount will be announced and the highest bidder's details will be recorded (manually or electronically) before the next round. The successful bidding companies shall deposit 50% of the auction winning price after adjustment of the bid earnest money within 30 working days. The remaining 50% of the price shall be deposited in 10 equal installments over the next 10 years. The license/spectrum shall only be issued after 50% payment of the auction winning price is made within 30 working days from the auction date in dollars, PTA's IM stated. (February 17, 2012) **www.dailytimes.com.pk**

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has planned to organize international events in different countries as part of its efforts for attracting global telecom giant in the bidding process of 3G/4G license scheduled to be held on March 28-29. The authority is likely to organize mega events for investors and telecom operators in Singapore and Dubai in the upcoming weeks, as arrangements have been done in this regard with proper allocation of money and support of the government. It will hold in Barcelona on the occasion of Mobile World Congress—the biggest event of telecom sector in the world, official sources in the authority said and added Pakistan's representatives will give detail presentation about the potential of telecom sector and its investment opportunity in different program of World Mobile, while a separate pavilion for investors facilitation and knowledge will be set up. The event is most important for the authority for organizing one-o-one meeting with officials of leading telecom operators, an official closed to the matter said. We are working hard to ensure to attract 10-12 number of big telecom operators in the license auction in addition to existing players of the local telecom sector who in the majority have shown their keen interest to be the part of the process, he said on the condition of anonymity. The telecom regulator is carrying out its utmost efforts to approach leading telecom operators for ensuring their participation in the upcoming bids of license auction for 3G/4G/LTE. PTA has sent Information Memorandum (IM) to foreign telecom operators for sharing them policies of the country, economy and business situation of the telecom sector. The auction of 3G/4G/LTE license will likely to generate million dollar FDI to the national kitty. The event is being considered as most important for telecom sector and country's economy, facing tough fiscal pressure on the lack of earning resources. (February 9, 2012) **www.thenewstribe.com**

Qatar
Executive Director: Ms. Christa Cramer
[The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR)]

The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) has issued two policies for government agencies aimed at better securing government information and assets. The Government Information Assurance Policy and the Blackberry Security Policy both address information assurance in regard to existing and emerging technologies, and include specifications on areas such as governance structure, risk management, third party security (outsourcing), security awareness and incident management. The Government Assurance Policy specifies high-level information classification methodology for all government entities in Qatar, which allows for appropriate values to be ascertained, risks to be determined and appropriate protections to be applied. The policy addresses three specific areas of threat: unauthorized disclosure, unauthorized modification and non-availability. Implementation of the policy across government entities will ensure compliance with the best international standards and keep the costs of information security to an appropriate level. A manual developed by ictQATAR to support implementation of the policy includes specifications on 25 domains, including both processes and technology specifications. The Blackberry Security Policy sets out security standards for government agencies in terms of installation, configuration and use of the Blackberry. Its primary purpose is to enhance the security and confidentiality of government data and information that is shared over the Blackberry infrastructure, much of which resides outside of Qatar. The policy also includes guidelines for what types of information can be shared through Blackberry services for individual government users. Both policies have been distributed to relevant government agencies and authorities for implementation and compliance. (February 20, 2012) **www.ictqatar.qa**

Saudi Arabia
Governor: Engineer Abdullah A. Al Darrab
[Communication & Information Technology Commission (CITC)]

The Kingdom has the highest number of mobile phone users than any other country in the world. A survey conducted under the umbrella of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development revealed that in the Kingdom there are 188 registered mobile phones for every 100 Saudis. The next is Macau in China, which for every 100 residents have 206 mobile phones. The survey prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development further stated that the number of people with Internet access has been increasing in Saudi Arabia, but it is still relatively low when compared to its neighboring Gulf countries. (February 23, 2012) **The Saudi Gazette 2012**

Saudi Arabia's IT market, the biggest in the in the Gulf region valued at US$3.8 billion in 2011, is forecast to rise to US$5.7 billion by 2016, Business Monitor International said in its "Saudi Arabia Information Technology Report Q1 2012". The Kingdom will continue to be a lucrative market for technology products and services over the forecast period as it invests to upgrade its IT and communications infrastructure, the report said. BMI predicts that per capita IT spend will reach US$181 by 2016, with PC penetration rising to more than 30% as youthful demographics and a growing population should drive demand, the report further said. Competition has intensified in the enterprise software market, where SAP and Oracle are the leaders. Increased public awareness of the Internet, the growth of broadband services, the decreasing cost of internet access and computers (both PCs and laptops), and a wider range of internet services have all been cited as reasons for the strong internet usage growth. The widespread deployment of wireless broadband networks by the three new national fixed-line consortia will help to drive increased broadband take-up. Although ADSL connections will play a crucial role in the development of the market, we predict much of the new growth over the next few years will come from wireless services such as WiMAX. Investment in broadband and government initiatives has seen an improvement in e-services development and utilization, which was reflected in the UN's most recent e-government rankings, in which Saudi Arabia raised 10 places. (February 19, 2012) **The Saudi Gazette 2012**

The head of Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) says the government plans to push ahead with a scheme to register all pre-paid mobile users. The regulator says that all pre-paid card registrations must be accompanied by the user's ID card number, ending anonymous use of pre-paid phones for criminal activities. The country's telcos are already working with the CITC on the implementation of the system, although it is not clear when the scheme will be launched to end users. (February 8, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

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

A two day Africa – Asia Regulatory Conference organized jointly by the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organization (CTO) and the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRC) was held in Sri Lanka on February 14-15, 2012. The Conference facilitated consultations between CTO members in Asia and Africa on critical emerging regulatory issues, including the Spectrum Management, Next Generation Networks (NGN), Mobile Broadband, Cyber Security and IPv6. These issues provide challenges as well as new opportunities to regulators and the operators. In view of the similarities in socio-economic development of the African and Asian members of the CTO, the Conference arrived at consensual outcomes that would define common approaches to meet the regulatory challenges and in turn ensure that the potentials of these new developments are harnessed for the benefit of the peoples of Africa and Asia. With a view to producing agreement on common approaches, the event fostered discussions and consultations set against the context of a number of addresses on specially selected topics by eminent speakers. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has extended its support to this pivotal event through its association with the TRC. Nineteen Commonwealth countries participated in Conference. The countries were: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and United Kingdom. The number of foreign delegates participated in the Conference were around 50. (February 20, 2012) **www.trc.gov.lk**

South Sudan
Under Secretary: Stephen Lugga JUMA
[Ministry of Telecommunications and Postal Services]

South Sudan has held talks with Israeli satellite firm Spacecom on cooperation. Officials from the Israeli government and Spacecom have held a series of talks on future cooperation with South Sudan's Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services in Israel. South Sudan is seeking to increase its connectivity options. Spacecom operates the AMOS fleet of satellites. Spacecom's AMOS-5 satellite, launched last month, is intended to be a prime carrier of African satellite communications traffic. Israel's Minister of Communications, said: "The State of Israel is looking forward to working alongside the new State of South Sudan to assist in the growth of its infrastructure for the future." (February 15, 2012) **www.biztechafrica.com**

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

Supreme Court has cancelled the ruling of lower court to force censorship of web content. A civil lawsuit was brought to the lower court, seeking a ban on websites with pornographic content, as the sites were deemed offensive to Muslims. However, the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) has fought for net neutrality and lauded the Supreme Court's decision, calling the move towards greater a censorship 'a step backwards.' ATI Chief Executive said: 'Under Ben Ali, the ATI was an instrument of political control and censorship. Today we are fighting for the neutrality of the internet, but they want to put the old cloak back on us.' (February 27, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

The National Telecommunications (INT) ordered an interim rate decrease of voice call termination on mobile networks of the three operators of public telecommunications networks in place. To foster the development of a healthy and fair competition on the telecommunications market, INT has further required mobile operators to offer retail rates consistent with rates for call termination. (February 20, 2012) **http://www.intt.tn**

The tripartite working group established under the decision of the regulator dated May 25, 2010 consisting of national regulator (INT) and operators Tunisie Telecom and Orange Tunisia activated the first fully unbundled test line for the experimental work of local loop unbundling at the pilot site. (February 16, 2012) **http://www.intt.tn**

Turkey
Chairman & CEO: Dr. Tayfun Acarer
[Information & Communication Technologies Authority (BTK)]

The Information & Communication Technologies Authority amended the numbering regulations. (February 20, 2012) **www.btk.gov.tr**

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

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has finalized number portability between the UAE's two telecom operators — etisalat and du — as part of a new strategy unveiled to the government. The strategy, which will be referred to the Cabinet for approval, aims to increase the speed and performance of internet networks to make them among the fastest in the world. It also seeks to enhance the competitive environment. TRA also showed a presentation on its new strategy to set up a Dh300 million fund for the information and communication technology (ICT) sector. (February 23, 2012) **Gulf News 2012**

The UAE has one of the costliest internet and telephone service in the world despite a series of charges cuts over the past few years, with its broadband fees exceeding those in Europe by a whopping US$1700 a month. "Telecommunications services in the UAE are far costlier than those in Europe," the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) said in a report. Internet charges in the UAE are also the highest in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) while the country offers one of the cheapest mobile phone services in the GCC and other Arab nations. Another report by the Arab Regulators Network (AREGNET), which groups 15 government telecom regulators in the region, found that fixed-line telephone services for business purposes in the UAE are "very costly" while residential telephone services are much less costly. The report noted that the UAE is among only four Arab countries that operate high-speed broadband services. (February 23, 2012) **www.zawya.com**

Etisalat has announced plans to leave India's telecoms market, adding to the ongoing reverberations of a recent Supreme Court decision cancelling 122 mobile licenses. The Abu Dhabi-based group said in a statement that the decision was taken "to avoid incurring further costs at this time of rapid change and continued uncertainty in the Indian telecommunications sector". The company, which had earlier this month already taken an US$827m writedown on its operations in the country, has said that it expects India's government "to fairly compensate investors" for the license losses. The moves makes Etisalat the second company affected by the ruling to announce its Indian departure, following similar moves this week by S TEL, a small operator allied with Batelco of Bahrain. India's Supreme Court cancelled licenses belonging to 10 mobile operators in early February following an investigation into corruption in the allocation of second-generation mobile licenses in 2008. Etisalat entered India following the 2008 licensing process, via the acquisition of a 45% stake in Swan Telecom for US$900m, later renamed Etisalat DB, as part of a joint venture with DB Realty, an Indian real estate company. Despite investing an estimated $1bn in its network by the end of 2011, the group had won only about 2m customers in India's ferociously competitive mobile market, a share of about 0.3%. (February 23, 2012) **The Financial Times**

Under the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority's (TRA) supervision, Etisalat and du signed a MoU on Resource Sharing during National Emergencies. This MoU is a part of the adjustment process with the National Emergency Plan for the Telecommunications Sector (NEP-T) which was delivered to the licensees (Etisalat and Du) on June 2011. The plan aims for the coordination on actions and procedures among licensees to guarantee the sharing of resources in case of emergencies. The MoU falls under the UAE Government Strategy 2011-2013 that aims to protect the homeland and enhance readiness for emergencies. The strategy recognizes the role that the telecom sector is playing to meet the UAE's interests and future prospects to establish a solid competitive economy and sustainable infrastructure, and guarantee the continuation of the telecom sector services during emergency cases. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim, TRA Director General, said, "Upon the launch of the NEP-T in June last year, we have set up a timetable for Etisalat and du in order for each entity to take on an adjustment process which will enable them to adapt to the plan's requirements. The plan includes a draft for the agreement between the two parties that requires them to address the articles as part of the adjustment process. (February 1, 2012) **www.wam.ae**

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SAMENA REGION

ITU

ITU Secretary-General Dr. Hamadoun Touré has launched a call to mobile operators worldwide to move quickly to deploy IMT-Advanced compliant mobile broadband networks, while at the same time urging governments to slash or even abolish onerous taxes on ICT equipment and services that could stifle the future growth of the mobile sector. "If we are to translate the 'mobile miracle' of the past decade to wireless broadband, we need to take full advantage of the faster speeds IMT-Advanced will bring, ushering in the next exciting wave of innovation through creative new applications and services," said Dr. Touré. ITU's recent Radiocommunication Assembly officially endorsed the two selected technologies that will form the basis of IMT-Advanced next generation high-speed cellular broadband. LTE-Advanced and WirelessMAN-Advanced both qualified as IMT-Advanced compliant, capable of supporting theoretical peak download speeds of 1Gbit/s while stationary and 100Mbit/s while in motion. "Consumers today expect to be connected to the Internet, to their social networks and to their data anywhere, anytime. As we enter the era of true mobile broadband, it is in everyone's interests that people are able to use their mobile devices intuitively and spontaneously, taking advantage of premium high-speed services like live video streaming and new apps we haven't yet dreamt of," said Dr Touré. "Operators who move fast to deploy IMT-Advanced technologies, and who price their services competitively, will reap the full benefit of the next wave of explosive growth." Dr. Touré also warned against unfair taxes levied on ICT goods and services by governments hoping to take advantage of the buoyant state of the technology sector. "It is encouraging to see a growing number of tax administrators recognize that ICT services are different from other services, because of their capacity to stimulate economic growth and social development. Governments who have committed to following best-practice ICT regulation are now reducing or even eliminating some sector-specific taxes. ITU would like to see all governments follow their lead," he said. WCIT-12 will review the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs), a global treaty last updated in 1988 whose purpose is to promote the development of telecommunication services and their most efficient operation. The current ITRs helped establish the framework for the market liberalization, privatization and technological revolution that transformed the industry over the past two decades. Some ITU members believe the treaty now needs to be updated to reflect today's new ICT landscape. "Back in 1988, the three key pillars underpinning telecoms were time, distance, and location. These have all become almost entirely irrelevant in terms of global telecoms services today. We need to be sure we have the right frameworks in place to nurture the broadband revolution that will define the coming decade," said Dr. Touré. The Internet is dependent on the ICT networks -- fiber, cable, mobile and satellite -- which underpin it. Dr. Touré warned of the risk of an increasing 'infrastructure gap', with data volumes already increasing much faster than the infrastructure needed to carry it. "We must keep the Internet open for business to sustain growth in today's massively inter-dependent global digital economy," he said. "True to ITU's long tradition of building global consensus on the issues that shape tomorrow's networks and services, we'll be looking for win-win outcomes that give our industry the strength and resilience to flourish for many years to come." (February 26, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

United States

In a filing to the USA's telecoms regulator, the Communications Workers of America has called for specific conditions on the application by Verizon Wireless to purchase additional spectrum from four cable providers. CWA says that it does not oppose the sale of spectrum, but to ensure competition, protect consumer choice, and promote job-creating investment, the FCC should set specific conditions on this application. Last December, Verizon announced a US$3.6 billion deal to buy radio spectrum, which comprises of 122 Advanced Wireless Services spectrum licenses from SpectrumCo, a joint venture between Comcast, Time Warner Cable, and Bright House Networks. A couple of weeks later, the company announced a US$315 million deal to buy spectrum from Cox Communications. Fitch Ratings noted at the time that the acquisition is expected to extend the adequacy of Verizon Wireless' spectrum position in a significant number of markets to beyond its previously stated date of approximately 2015. The union says that the proposed transaction, without conditions, would eliminate the historic competition between FiOS and cable company services through joint marketing arrangements. According to the union, millions of consumers in Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo and other cities in the Verizon footprint where the company has not yet built FiOS will never have access to the advanced fiber network. The CWA is calling for specific conditions on this transaction. First, consistent with past transactions, the FCC should require that Verizon continue to offer FiOS broadband Internet access service, expand its in-region deployment to cover at least 95 percent of residences and, following the merger, continue to deploy a set percentage of broadband to rural and low income areas, with timetables, data reporting and penalties for non-compliance. Second, the joint marketing arrangements should not be permitted to put other marketers of Verizon Wireless service at a disadvantage. Comparable conditions and terms for the marketing of Verizon Wireless service should be available to all wireline competitors in a market. This will even the playing field among competitors. (February 22, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

The US Congress has finally signed off on the public safety D Block frequency allocation, paving the way for private LTE networks to be deployed en masse by public safety agencies in the USA. This backs up key conclusions from a just published report from IMS Research that over three million LMR users will be using private LTE by 2021, spurred by activity in the United States. Over the last few days democratic senators, including Senator Jay Rockefeller, have announced that public safety organizations in the United States will get the much awaited allocation of D Block 700MHz spectrum but also that there will be $7 billion funding to support the build out of these private LTE networks. This announcement was described as "...a huge day for America" by Rockefeller as the bill finally goes to the house and senate for final approval. IMS Research forecasts this will not only have a dramatic impact on the US market but that this announcement will also push the rest of the world into action as the debate around the future of broadband LMR solutions continues. This will be seen as good news to LMR users as in a recent survey conducted to over 260 respondents from North America and Europe, it was indicated that nearly two thirds of public safety agencies preferred an LTE solution for their future data needs. D Block allocation and funding will now finally allow for this. Thomas Lynch, Mobile Radio Market Analyst at IMS Research states "This is good news for the industry just in time for the forthcoming IWCE show. We expect some significant announcements during the show and look forward to seeing the emergence of LTE as the preferred mobile wireless technology for public safety agencies". In the same survey, agencies using LMR systems also indicated that other private wireless technologies such as WiMAX and HSPA would be considered as solutions for the broadband wireless, but to a much lesser extent. However, IMS Research forecasts that this announcement will now further the case for LTE over these other solutions. (February 20, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

The Federal Communications Commission adopted an order making it easier to roll out mobile services in the 800MHz band. The proposal would revise the licensing model for the band from a site-based to a geographically-based approach, in line with other bands such as 700MHz, PCS and AWS. Specifically, the FCC proposes to issue geographic area "Overlay Licenses" authorizing build-out in all remaining unlicensed area and in any area vacated by existing incumbents through competitive bidding, in two stages. Stage I of the transition would include all markets that meet the FCC's proposed "Substantially Licensed" test. In this stage, site-based licensing would end in those markets, and the Overlay Licenses would be assigned via competitive bidding. The site-based regime would continue, however, in all other markets for a proposed seven-year period until Stage II of the transition. This proposal includes continued protection of incumbents from harmful inte¬rference throughout all stages of the transition. In addition, the FCC is eliminating some of the data reporting requirements for licensees. The proposals are open to public consultation before becoming definite. (February 16, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has announced that its first reverse auction to award Universal Service Funding (USF) support to wireless carriers building out into rural areas will take place on September 27, 2012. "Auction 901" will distribute up to $300 million in one-time payments from Mobility Fund Phase I, the Commission's new mechanism for incenting wireless providers to serve areas where no wireless service is available. The Commission also established February 24, 2012 as the deadline for comments on Auction 901 procedures. Reply comments are due on or before March 9, 2012. In order to participate in Auction 901 and receive Mobility Fund Phase I support, an applicant must demonstrate for the areas on which it wishes to bid that it has been designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC), and has access to the spectrum necessary to satisfy the applicable performance requirements. Tribal entities may participate in Auction 901 so long as they have an ETC application on file and meet the other requirements noted above. Parties seeking support will compete in Auction 901 by indicating the amount of support they need to meet the requirements of Mobility Fund Phase I in the eligible census blocks on which they bid. The Commission indicated that a single-round sealed bid auction format would be most appropriate for Mobility Fund Phase I. The Commission has explained that support will be awarded to maximize the number of road miles in eligible census blocks that can gain 3G or better mobile services under the Mobility Fund Phase I budget. According to FCC this will generally result in providing support to no more than one provider in a given area. Unlike [past] spectrum license auctions which involve license-by-license competition for a fixed inventory of licenses, this auction will award support only for the set of areas that will achieve the most newly covered road miles without exceeding the Mobility Fund Phase I budget based on the bids submitted. Thus, bidders will compete not only against other carriers that may be bidding for support in the same areas, but against carriers bidding for support in other areas nationwide. Successful bidders will be awarded support for an area at the price they bid. (February 13, 2012) **www.fcc.go**

European Union

Two years ago, the European Union lowered the data roaming charges across its member countries, by limiting the expenditure limit to €50 (US$ 65.6)a month. The EU is now preparing to extend that reduction in price, to cover the whole world. The new proposal is actually a part of the EU's larger plan, of extending the current 5-year old cost limits on text, voice as well as data roaming charges - all the way through to the year 2022. The proposal has been scheduled to go to a European Parliament vote, some time before April this year. This is a short time before the existing limits expire, in July. It is almost certain that the cost reduction policy will continue in the years to come, although its proposed new limits have been subjected to severe criticism by various consumers as being too high. (February 17, 2012) **www.itproportal.com**

The European Commission has expressed serious doubts about a new proposal from the Dutch telecoms regulator (OPTA) regarding fixed and mobile termination rates which it says would negatively affect consumers in the Netherlands. In a previous filing in 2010, OPTA proposed to apply cost-oriented fixed and mobile termination rates, in line with the Commission's 2009 Recommendation under the EU telecoms legislation. Despite this, OPTA's decision was subsequently annulled in a national Tribunal ruling, which prescribed a different methodology that includes costs not directly related to call termination. Under OPTA's new proposal based on the national Tribunal's methodology, fixed and mobile termination rights would be twice as high as under the EU approach. In the letter sent to OPTA today, the Commission explains that the new rates in this proposal do not comply with the principles and objectives of EU telecoms rules which require Member States to promote competition and the interests of consumers in the EU, as well as the development of the Single Market. This is the first time that the Commission has used its new powers regarding national remedies under Article 7a of the Telecoms Directive in the Netherlands. The procedure must be concluded within 3 months. (February 13, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

United Kingdom

The UK Competition Commission has brought forward the deadline for when mobile operators will be forced to slash mobile termination rates (MTRs) for connecting calls from other networks or fixed lines. UK regulator OFCOM said in March 2011 that MTRs should be cut from just over 4p per minute in 2010 to less than 0.65p per minute by 2015. Operators Everything Everywhere and Vodafone lodged an appeal with the Competition Appeals Tribunal (CAT) against this decision with support from Telefonica O2. However, the appeal has backfired and the CAT has said that it believes OFCOM had not gone far enough, and ruled that the charges should be brought down by 2014, rather than 2015. Vodafone has criticized the decision to increase the speed at which mobile termination rates must fall, saying it will harm consumers. (February 16, 2012) **www.telecoms.com**

France

The French telecoms regulator, ARCEP has confirmed that it is planning to bring in France Telecom and Free Mobile for a meeting to discuss their roaming dispute. France Telecom was required to provide national roaming coverage to Free Mobile, but there have been claims that Free Mobile disabled part of its network after it secured the roaming service. France Telecom has also complained about the amount of traffic it is having to carry. Rival networks, Bouygues Telecom will also meet with the ARCEP board, while SFR met with the Authority on February 9. The regulator added that it will hold a press conference next month on mobile telephony, essentially to provide an initial assessment of the impact that Free Mobile's entry has had on the marketplace, and to go over some of the results of the new coverage measurements delivered by the different mobile operators. (February 20, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

Switzerland

The Federal Communication Commission (ComCom) has announced the results of the auction re-allocating frequencies on licenses due to expire, as well as currently unused spectrum. Orange Switzerland, Swisscom and Sunrise took part in the tender; In&Phone applied but did not meet the admission criteria. Conspicuous by its absence was Liberty Global subsidiary Cablecom, which has begun offering quad-play services through a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) agreement, and had been considered a likely contender. In total there were eleven categories, including the 800MHz 'digital dividend' frequencies due to become available in January next year, the existing 900MHz bands currently in use (though existing licenses expire at end-2013). Also up for grabs were the vacant 1800MHz and 2100MHz bands relinquished by the defunct Tele2 and 3G Mobile operations, as well as the current UMTS concessions due to run out at the end of 2016. Orange Switzerland spent CHF154.7 million (USD169.6 million) and scooped up 10MHz in the 900MHz range, 50MHz in the 1800MHz band and a further 40MHz in the 2.1GHz and 2.GHz bands. For the auction ComCom split the 2.1GHz and 2.6GHz frequencies into two categories, one for Frequency Division Duplex (FDD) and one for Time Division Duplex (TDD); the spectrum won by Orange in the aforementioned bands was all in the FDD category. Whilst Swisscom spent less than Orange, it acquired by far the most spectrum, spending CHF359.85 million on 30MHz in the 900MHz band, 60MHz in each of the 1800MHz and 2.1GHz (FDD) bands, 40MHz in the 2.6GHz (FDD) range and 45MHz in the 2.6GHz (TDD) band. Meanwhile Sunrise purchased concessions for 30MHz in the 900MHz band, 40MHz in the 1800MHz band, with a further 20MHz and 50MHz in the 2.1GHz (FDD) and 2.6GHz (FDD) ranges respectively. Sunrise's allocations cost CHF481.7 million. All three telcos also received use of 20MHz each in the 800MHz band.

In a press release, Sunrise commented that its success in the auction paved the way for it to upgrade its networks to Dual Carrier HSPA+ (DC-HSPA+), enabling higher downlink speeds of up to 84Mbps. Sunrise added that it would be forging ahead with its plans to roll out a 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) service. The cellco expects to begin testing the platform over the next few months, and will begin upgrading its base stations by the end of the year. (February 23, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

Finland

The Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (FICORA) has announced that it has paid the first tranche of state aid that will go towards the construction of superfast broadband infrastructure in sparsely-populated areas of the country. The regulator has confirmed that the first round of funding totaling EUR334,824 (US$443,983) has been handed to Suupohjan Seutuverkko Oy, a limited company owned by six Finnish local municipalities around the city of Kauhajoki. With the municipality of Karvia having paid an equal sum to that provided by FICORA, Suupohjan Seutuverkko will now roll out a fiber-optic network in the state, with the project planned in co-operation with the municipality of Karvia, the Regional Council of Satakunta and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The funding comes as part of the government's 'Broadband 2015' initiative, which aims to ensure that 99% of the population are no further than two kilometers from a 100Mbps fiber-optic or cable network broadband service by the end of 2015. Under the plans, those telcos rolling out new infrastructure will be required to cover at least 34% of the costs, with the remainder funded by the Finnish government (EUR66 million has been set aside for the 2009-15 period) and municipalities and the European Union's Rural Development Fund (EUR24.6 million for 2009-15). Once completed, the new networks will be owned and operated by the companies that deployed them. (February 9, 2012) **Www.telegeography.com**

Austria

The telecoms regulator, RT has announced that it is introducing a cap on the monthly tariff that can be charged for mobile data services. Starting from May 2012, there will be a cap of EUR60 per month on mobile data services. The regulator said that the introduction of the spending cap was motivated by an increase in complaints about "bill shock", where the average amount in dispute was EUR650 per person. The regulation will also apply to existing contracts. **(February 13, 2012) RTR**

Hungary

T-Mobile, Telenor Hungary and Vodafone Hungary filed an appeal against the national telecom regulator's recent award of mobile frequencies to a would-be new market entrant – a state-backed consortium of power utility MVM, postal services operator Magyar Posta and a unit of Hungary's development bank MFB. The appeal, which questions the consortium's right to participate in the auction as well as regulations on domestic roaming services for the new operator, means the start of the newcomer's network deployment could now be pushed back two months to April. On January 31 this year the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) closed out the tender for 900MHz when it sold a 10.8MHz block of spectrum to the three incumbents as well as to the MVM-led consortium. The newcomer won the 'A block', suitable for both internet and voice services, paying HUF10 billion (US$45.4 million), while the other three firms each secured spectrum from parts of the 'less valuable' 'B block', which is better suited to provide mobile internet access in rural parts of the country. Vodafone reportedly bid HUF15.7 billion, T-Mobile offered HUF10.9 billion and Telenor bid HUF7.3 billion, the watchdog said. (February 21, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

The telecom regulator NMHH confirmed it has received five applications from companies wishing to secure frequencies in the 26GHz band. The regulator says it will begin reviewing the bids from Magyar Telekom, Telenor, GTS Hungary, Hungarian Electricity Works (MVM) and Vodafone. The regulator announced the tender in November 2011, through which it is offering 26 blocks of spectrum in the 26GHz band – suitable for 3G and 4G mobile services. The frequency allocation will hopefully boost the efficiency with which network capacity is used in the country and provide added stimulus for operators to invest in new infrastructure and encourage new players into the mobile market. Further, the watchdog hopes the sale will help support its auction of spectrum in the 900MHz band, which is currently underway. (February 8, 2012) **RealDeal.hu**

Nigeria

The Communications Commission (NCC) will auction licenses for the remaining available slots in the 2.3GHz spectrum to increase broadband access, the newspaper Leadership reported online. The NCC is currently conducting an audit of all spectra within its jurisdiction. Vice chairman Eugene Juwah said the NCC is also looking at the 2.6GHz¬ frequency, although this is in the custody of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) rather than the NCC. He said improving broadband coverage will go hand in hand with the restoration of fixed telephony to complement the mobile networks in the country. (February 8, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Zambia

The government has decided not to grant a fourth mobile license until the issue of LAP Green's stake in Zamtel is resolved in court. Domestic company Unitel Communication, in partnership with Vodacom, had been awarded a license over five years ago to operate as Vodacom Zambia. The license issuance was suspended in 2010 when Zamtel was being sold to LAP Green Networks, in order to protect the Libyans from competition. When the new government took power last year, it decided to open up the fourth license agai¬n. Vodacom Zambia Chairman said he has written to President asking him to reverse the government's decision to delay the license allocation again. (February 8, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Australia

The Australian government has reached a license renewal price compromise that ends a dispute with the mobile operators. The deal follows the announcement of caps on the amount of spectrum operators can bid on in the upcoming digital dividend auction. The industry had sought to avoid having both processes running in parallel as this would mean large capital outlays at the same time. The first spectrum renewal payments of around AUD 1 billion are due from Telstra and Vodafone in June 2013, which is less than the companies feared last year, The Au¬stralian Financial Review writes citing unnamed sources. The government valued the 800 MHz spectrum at AUD 1.4 billion in December last year, which prompted strong reactions from Telstra and Vodafone. The AUD 1 billion is split roughly equally between Telstra and Vodafone and is for 800 MHz spectrum as well as some 1800 MHz spectrum. (February 10, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Australia's communications minister has reportedly set restrictions on the amount of spectrum operators will be able to acquire in the country's forthcoming auction of frequencies freed up as part of the digital dividend. Minister had directed the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to limit the amount of spectrum that telcos can bid on to 2×20MHz in the 700MHz spectrum band and 2×40MHz in the 2.5GHz spectrum band. It is understood that the restrictions have been introduced with a view to ensuring a level playing field when the sale is conducted, with the minister cited as saying: 'These limits are designed to ensure there is a choice of providers in the mobile sector for the advanced services that will be provided over the digital dividend spectrum.' (February 9, 2012) **ZDNet Australia**

Hong Kong

Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) has announced that on April 1, 2012 the Communications Authority Ordinance will come into effect, establishing combined telecoms and broadcasting regulator. The Office of the Communications Authority will be formed by merging OFTA and the Broadcasting Division of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority. OFTA also noted that it is targeting the auction of radio spectrum in the 2.5GHz/2.6GHz bands for the provision of 4G mobile telecoms services in the first quarter of 2013. (February 10, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

Taiwan

National Communications Commission is planning to issue three 4G licensees valid for fifteen years within the next three years. The applications for 4G licenses will be started reviewing in the second half of next year and at least three licenses ¬ issued by 2015, one year ahead of the originally set goal of 2016. The move is in line with the country's cloud computing goals. (February 13, 2012) **The Taiwan Today**

Thailand

National Broadcasting & Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) has approved a schedule for auctioning 2100MHz 3G mobile network operating licenses later this year. The chairman of the regulator's telecoms committee confirmed that a bidding auction for the long-awaited frequencies is planned for either September or October 2012. According to the timetable, an open invitation to bidders will be made in June, but firstly NBTC must draft a detailed auction plan, propose the starting price of the licenses and hold a public hearing on the plan in March-April. In May it intends to release the finalized auction rules. The telecoms committee must set up three working groups to examine the legal aspects of the auction, revise the draft rules for network infrastructure sharing and draw up regulations for the cellular network roaming reference fee, the report added. The NBTC is also examining existing regulations aimed at restricting foreign dominance of telecoms operators, with a view to revise clauses that apparently contradict Thailand's international trade commitments – previously thought to be amongst the factors putting off new foreign investment in the sector. A 3G auction advisor must also be chosen, and the watchdog is reported to be considering hiring US firm Nera Economic Consulting, which was previously used by the NBTC's predecessor, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) ahead of the country's aborted 2100MHz auction in 2010. The ill-fated 3G plan was suspended in September that year under a court action initiated when state-owned telco CAT Telecom challenged the NTC's authority to issue third-generation frequencies – the complaint was upheld under a legal clause requiring the formation of the NBTC as combined broadcasting and telecoms regulator with powers to allocate the 3G spectrum resources. (February 24, 2012) **The Nation**

The communications regulator is seeking a resolution to mobile concessions that begin to expire next year. The National Broadcasting and Te¬lecommunications Commission (NBTC) is holding talks with operators over the 1800MHz concessions and plans to establish a subcommittee to supervise the 1800MHz re-allocation. Mobile operators TrueMove and Digital Phone are concessionaires of CAT Telecom and their concession is due to expire in 2013, while the other concessions are due to expire in 2015 and 2018. Operators will be required to return their network assets to the concession owners under the build-transfer-operate concession agreements after the concessions expire. The concession owners, in turn, will return spectrum to the regulator for re-allocation. The regulator is planning to issue interim licenses and guidelines on customer migration in April. (February 10, 2012) **The Bangkok Post**

India

The cellcos affected by the Supreme Court's decision to revoke 122 2G licenses have demanded that the Telecoms Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) re-auction the concessions in two separate stages, one which excludes the incumbents and one to allow the incumbents to increase their frequency allocation. The only cellcos to break ranks were Idea Cellular and Tata Teleservices, which had licenses rescinded in seven and three circles respectively, and said that the upcoming 2G auction should be open to all players, including incumbents. The operators that have had their licenses cancelled are pushing to exclude entrenched operators from the auction, saying that the participation of the likes of Bharit Airtel and Vodafone would go 'beyond the scope' of the apex court's ruling. Bharti, however, mirrored the response, warning that restricting access to the spectrum auction was in fact contrary to the court's edict, and may lead to further litigation. Worse, by limiting the number of players involved, the TRAI would 'suppress the market value of the spectrum.' Amongst the compromises suggested are a two-stage bidding process, and the introduction of a 'right of first refusal' for providers in service areas in which they have already rolled out services. (February 19, 2012) **The Economic Times**

India's telecoms regulator, the TRAI, has issued draft guidelines for the way spectrum is to be allocated in the country, ahead of the 2G spectrum (re)auction due to be held later this year. The new policy aims to simplify licensing rules, encourage mergers and acquisition and provide greater transparency following India's 2G spectrum scandal which resulted in the recent cancellation of 122 licenses. Currently, licenses are awarded in India for each if the country's 22 separate circles, or service areas. The TRAI now intends to instead award licenses across the entire country, meaning operators will miss out from revenue from customers roaming as they travel across Indian states. However, licenses awarded to provide services will be sold separately to spectrum, potentially opening the market up for operators to trade 2G spectrum. However, the policy does not allow for spectrum sharing among those holding 3G spectrum and the related existing licenses. Companies which acquire spectrum will also be charged a uniform license fee of eight per cent based on their adjusted gross revenue over 2012-2013. The new guidelines will also allow increase the threshold of market share resulted from mergers from 30%, paving the way increased consolidation in the telecoms market. "Mergers up to 35% market share of the resultant entity will be allowed through a simple, quick procedure," Telecom Minister is reported as telling journalists in India. He added that the government would also consider cases of mergers that result in obtaining market share beyond 35% in certain circumstances, as long as it does not breach the 25% cap on GSM spectrum and 10MHz for CDMA spectrum holding. (February 17, 2012) **www.telecoms.com**

"Information contained herein has been obtained from sources, which we deem reliable. SAMENA Telecommunications Council is not liable for any misinformed decisions that the reader may reach by being solely reliant on information contained herein. Expert advice should be sought."

Javaid Akhtar Malik
Director Regulatory Affairs
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

Policy Dimensions to the Cloud

Flexibility, cost-effectiveness, greater security, enhanced cross-stakeholder collaboration, and improved end-user experience, are some of the promises that the Internet's next phase holds for us all.

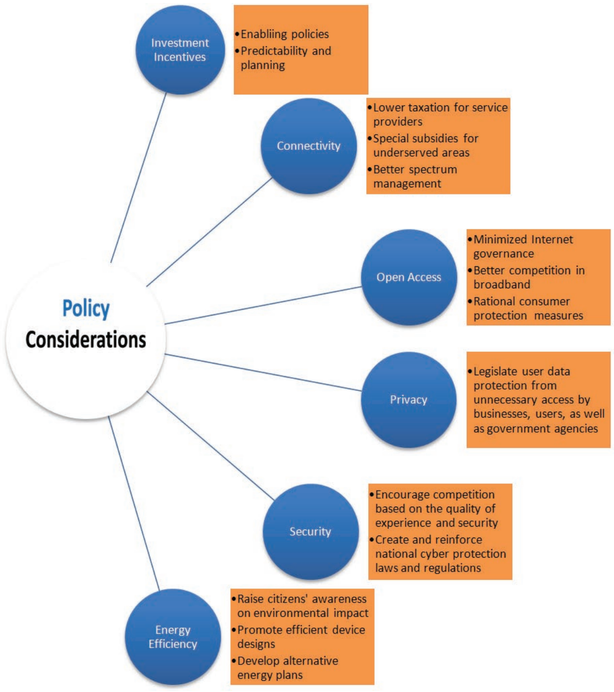
Web services, Web 2.0, the Grid, Software-as-a-Service, Platform-as-a-Service, and Infrastructure-as-a Service all are reflective of the shift in computing that is gradually taking place within the existing realm of Information Communication Technology services. This shift is centered on the notion of Cloud computing, whereby the Internet is accessed and tapped via a cloud—a composite manifestation of software, data, and services accessible by but not residing in personal computers. A Forrester Research analysis predicts global cloud computing to reach US$241 billion in 2020; a figure six times larger than was predicted for 2010.

> "How the Cloud will be engineered in an already complex ICT world and what form and shape it will take-especially with so many dimensions to it, including but not limited to technical implementation, standardization, legal aspects, socio-economic ramifications, and policy framing-are fundamental questions that the industry is seeking answers to across its multi-stakeholder tiers"

How the Cloud will be engineered in an already complex ICT world and what form and shape it will take—especially with so many dimensions to it, including but not limited to technical implementation, standardization, legal aspects, socio-economic ramifications, and policy framing—are fundamental questions that the industry is seeking answers to across its multi-stakeholder tiers.

A few things we do know, however.

Computing, once enabled only by standalone PCs, has shifted toward greater reliance on the Web, which has yielded to the proliferation of a myriad of end-user applications and services, no longer requiring installation or storage in end-user devices. Such technological facilitation in human communication, independence, choice, and flexibility, in turn, have catalyzed the creation of a very complex system of information access and consumption.



With that has come a complex requirement for framing policies that protect and preserve the integrity of the Internet; the privacy of the end-user; and the sustainability of investments, required to implement, use, and manage the Cloud.

Policy issues relating to the Cloud are inclusive of but are more expansive than the issues that relate to the Internet. There are some key policy considerations for the Cloud. Whereas the Internet requires access, privacy, and intellectual property protection measures, among other requirements, the Cloud's requirements elevate themselves to greater complexity and scale. That is, because the Cloud is the global connector of cross-border users, its policy aspects are also global and require cross-border jurisdictional coordination. Such multi-jurisdictional dimension to the Cloud, per se, is what lends it the complexity that requires collaboration on policy issues, never discussed before in the Internet domain.

The role that the governments may adopt or be led into assuming should not necessarily rest upon intrusive or restrictive policy-making. In fact, it should rest upon the will to facilitate, backed by the understanding that the Internet's next phase-shift needs to take its own course, free from any government mandates. What this means is that the development and the sustainability of the Cloud, or of the Internet itself —apart from being functions of the constituent technological, standardization, infrastructure investment, application development, and marketing elements—are fundamentally dependent on government mindsets and policies. It is in the hands of the governments to promote or hinder the growth of the Cloud.

When delved into assessing and evaluating governments' preferences that can significantly make or break the Cloud, our assessments may quickly converge to the following conclusions:

- Governments that are intent on building digital economies are prone to facilitating, or perhaps demanding, the creation of the Cloud, and thus incentivizing its infrastructure development.
- Economies that are aiming to depend on knowledge-creation more so than they are on inherent, albeit gradually depleting national resources, may not excel in the future without transitioning into the Cloud space.
- National digital agendas, revolving around making broadband proliferation an ultimate national goal over the next decade, can meet long-term fruition only if substantial means toward realizing and utilizing Cloud computing are created. Doing so would wind national entrepreneurship, scholarship, and research and development; all of which will have a measureable impact on the economic progress.

Given financial pressures on the governments, national security concerns, and capacity building goals, some governments have initiated steps to manage ICT growth—and its consequential effects—through perceivably intrusive coalition approaches. Such cases of proposed management of ICT growth patterns are evident in the ongoing preparatory work toward reviewing the International Telecoms Regulations (ITRs) treaty. The outcomes of the ITRs review process and their future ramifications shall become apparent to us all in December this year.

Restrictive management of ICT growth patterns may not go in favor of the development of the Cloud, which requires adopting policies that promote investment in next-generation broadband networks, including in optical-fiber networks. It is thus highly important that government perspectives on the benefits of the Cloud are achieved.

> "What governments can do is encourage multiple investment groups, including telecommunications operators, to operate with a free market spirit and embrace the disruptive technology that is the Cloud"

At a macro-level, the Cloud will enable multiple government bodies to function well together and cooperate with minimal operational delays, costs, and reduce the impact of impediments to the implementation of effective policies. Furthermore, the Cloud infrastructure will drastically reduce or eliminate system management costs, and also provide the inherent advantage to governments of not being dependent on a select few technology and product providers. In essence, the entire online and computing experience will shift from "product space" to "service space."

Izhar Ahmad
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TOP TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

Everything Everywhere Targets 4G in 2012; DC-HSPA+ in

The UK's largest mobile network operator Everything Everywhere has revealed that it is preparing to conduct the UK's first trials of LTE technology operating over spectrum in the 1800MHz band, with the pilot due to take place in Bristol from April 2012. According to the cellco the project will provide it with important information regarding the performance of the 4G technology over its existing spectrum in both urban and suburban areas. The Bristol trial will complement the operator's live customer trial of 4G technology over 800MHz spectrums in rural Cornwall, which it launched in September 2011 and recently extended to July 2012. It claims that project has already 'demonstrated that 800MHz is optimal for the rollout of 4G LTE in rural areas. Everything Everywhere receiving the relevant licenses from the UK telecoms regulator, in the meantime it has also outlined more immediate network improvements designed to enhance the speeds available to its customers. It claims that the nationwide rollout of HSPA+ technology has already reached 60 percent of the network, with the deployment now expected to be completed in 3Q 2012.

Vodafone Set to Test LTE in Football Stadiums

Vodafone Italy is expected to launch a series of trials of its under-deployment Long Term Evolution (LTE) network at the nation's football stadia, starting with Torino's Stadio Olimpico. Maximum downlink transmission speeds of 100Mbps have been promised to users of the free trial service. In November 2011, director of Strategy and New Business at Vodafone Italy confirmed that his company intended to commence its EUR1 billion (USD1.38 billion) rollout in 2012, with a 'massive launch' to follow in 2013. According to Italian press, Vodafone's chief rival Telecom Italia Mobile (TIM) announced the launch of public LTE trials, also in Turin. Members of the public are able to trial LTE USB dongles, which support mobile broadband speeds of up to 100Mbps (downstream) and 50Mbps (upstream), at special demo stations at TIM's point of sale in Turin. Ministry of Economic Development also confirmed that the country's spectrum auction finally closed, with the four mobile network operators – TIM, Vodafone Italy, Wind Italy and 3 Italia submitting combined bids worth in excess of EUR3.9 billion.

UK Broadband Switches on TD-LTE Network in London

UK Broadband, holder of 4G spectrum, has switched on its first LTE system in London, using TD-LTE technology from Huawei. UK Broadband claims that this is the first TD-LTE 3.5GHz deployment in the world and the first commercial 4G deployment in the UK. It will operate a wholesale model, working with partn¬ers to offer commercial services from May to businesses, consumers and the public sector. The network will initially cover the Southbank and Borough areas of Southwark. The network will use UK Broadband's 124MHz of spectrum in LTE bands 42 and 43 (3.5GHz and 3.6GHz). The first devices, jointly developed by UK Broadband and Huawei, include indoor and outdoor units for high-speed wireless broadband to homes and businesses within the coverage area. Multi-mode mobile devices supporting TD-LTE, FD-LTE and 3G will be available from September.

Franklin Introduces Series of LTE Modems

US developer of wireless broad¬band communications devices Franklin Wireless has introduced S700 and S800 Series of stand-alone modems that operate over LTE networks. With a worldwide release planned for the second quarter, the S700 Series and S800 Series support FDD LTE and TDD LTE networks, respectively. This series of devices represents a service to enable OEMs and others to integrate mobile connectivity into their products. The S700 and S800 Series of stand-alone modems will include several variations including dual-mode LTE/CDMA and dual-mode LTE/UMTS (WCDMA) versions and will be powered by Franklin's M700 and M800 Series of embedded modules. The S700 and S800 Series of stand-alone modems will support Windows 7, Vista, XP, Mac OS X 10.5 or higher and Linux.

Netgear, Sierra Develop 3G Mobile Broadband Voice Router

Global networking equipment manufacturer Netgear has developed the Netgear MVBR1210C HSPA+ Mobile Broadband Voice Router, which is now ready for immediate deployment in operator networks. The Netgear MVBR1210C HSPA+ Mobile Broadband Voice Router was developed with Canada-based mobile and wireless modem manufacturer Sierra Wireless. The Netgear MVBR1210C extends mobile voice service via its wired voice port, allowing mobile operators to deliver voice and data service offering to co¬nsumers by eliminating the need for fixed line voice service. In addition to voice, the Netgear MVBR1210C delivers broadband access at speeds up to 21 Mbps downstream and 5.7 Mbps upstream, rivaling fixed broadband access performance. The Netgear MVBR1201C integrates a secondary Ethernet WAN to provide failover and back-up for network access. For LAN connectivity, there are four Ethernet ports and high speed N300 802.11n Wi-Fi. The Netgear MVBR1210C, which powers an in-home triple play network and incorporates Sierra Wireless 3G mobile broadband technologies.

TELUS to Invest US$3 Billion to Extend LTE Network

TELUS has announced new plans to invest US$3 billion in advanced technology and new facilities over the next three years in British Columbia. Operator has already invested more than US$26 billion in technology and operations in the province since 2000. With US$3 billion investment, TELUS will extend its new 4G LTE wireless network from Vancouver to more than four million British Columbians in 20 communities this year alone close to 90 percent of the province's population. TELUS will also extend service to Burnaby, Delta, North Vancouver, Richmond, Coquitlam, Langley, Maple Ridge, Surrey/White Rock, Hope, Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Victoria, Whistler, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton, Vernon, Prince George, and Dawson Creek, with more to come over the next few years if TELUS is able to secure the necessary wireless spectrum through Industry Canada's upcoming spectrum auctions. According to the operator, TELUS will invest $350 million so that 97 percent of all British Columbians have access to high speed internet.

GCT Collaborates With Nvidia to Offer LTE Reference Platform

Mobile WiMAX systems supplier GCT Semiconductor is collaborating with chipmakers Nvidia to deliver a LTE reference platform in a service suited for smartphones and tablets. The platform is comprised of the Nvidia Tegra 3 processor and¬ GCT's LTE single-chip, GDM7240. It represents a reference design for OEMs, which includes LTE and 2G/3G connectivity with multimedia browsing and graphics speeds. The quad-core mobile processor for tablets and super phones, Tegra 3 delivers up to five times the performance. Tegra 3 features a patent-pending Variable SMP (vSMP) architecture with a fifth lower-power 'companion' core, a PC-class CPU and three times faster GPU with stereo 3D support to deliver a combination of extended battery life. GDM7240 is an advanced LTE single-chip service that is suited to meet the demand for data speed, mobility, enhanced applications and global roaming.

Astellia to Sign 3G Extension Contract with Nextel

Network performance monitoring services provider Astellia has been awarded a multi-million dollar contract with integrated mobile communication services provider Nii Holdings, which operates under the Nextel brand, to extend its existing 2G monitoring service to the upcoming 3G networks in Brazil and Mexico. Under the agreement, Nextel Brazil and Nextel Mexico will deploy and use Astellia's probe-based service throughout their enhanced mobile networks. As for the other 3G networks already deployed in Peru and Chile, the Astellia service will provide Nextel with an understanding of the dependency among network equipment, subscribers, mobile devices, voice and data services. Optimization and engineering teams will be able to isolate issues affecting customer experience and identify root causes.

Emergence of Cloud Computing and Its Impact on Industry

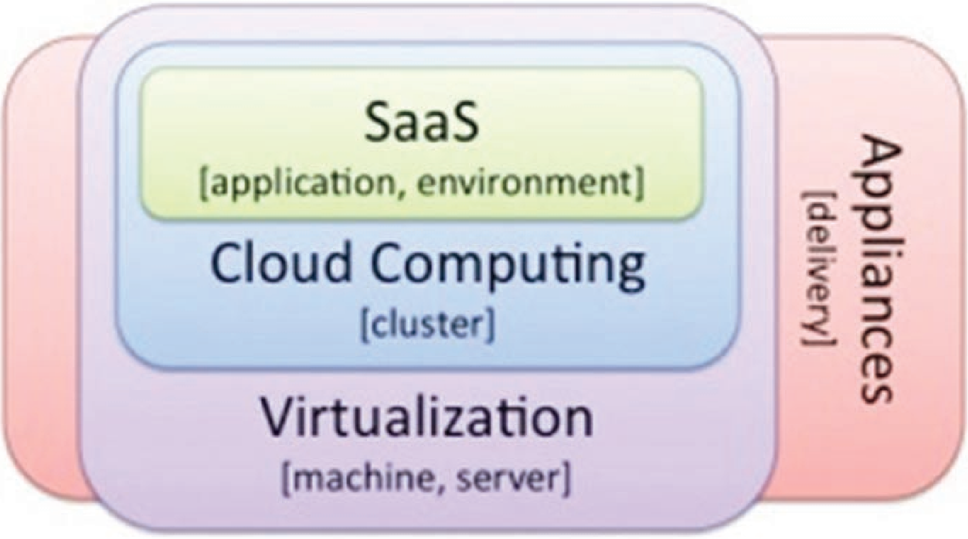
The adoption of virtualization and cloud-based services and technology along with recent advancement in global technology has started offering solutions that require less capital with reduced operational cost. Given the declining trends in average revenues and in the midst of growing CAPEX and OPEX, cloud adaption is set to increase because it requires less capital and operational expenditure. Telcos are in its quest since it is the time of opportunity for service operators at a time when companies are finding way to minimize the impact of financial crises. Today, operators are better positioned to address many of the concerns related to cloud services on their networks. Operators can now offer improved quality of service (QoS) with advanced security and high speed connectivity to and from the data centers. Additionally, their customer connectivity offerings can be quite adaptable in terms of bandwidth offerings.

> "huge activity would be seen in terms of cloud services in the year 2012"

Industry experts predict that huge activity would be seen in terms of cloud services in the year 2012. Forrester Research predicts the cloud sector will produce US$61 billion in revenues by the end of 2012. Similarly, Gartner's forecasts are even more optimistic with US$89 billion revenues from cloud services by end of this year and US$177 billion by 2015.

Over the next few years the use of cloud computing is likely to increase significantly with the emergence of software as a service (SaaS) in different industries. Businesses are preparing to scale up their IT infrastructure which is resulting considerable growth in the CAPEX increase. Growing demand for broadband has resulted in the need for advanced technologies which in turn demands greater investments in infrastructure rollouts by telcos. The economic downturn has put even more pressure on organizations for reducing the IT running costs and transferring the capital cost into the operating cost. The cloud computing encompasses a number of different technologies. SaaS is by far the most popular type of cloud computing being in use these days.

Constructive drivers are stimulating the Cloud Increased ROI, lesser open investment and faster returns. A major aspect of Cloud computing is its pay as you go pricing model, in which IT is provided as a service that is charged based on its consumption via either a subscription model or utilization-based alternative, similar to utilities or telecom. The pay-as-you-go model lowers initial IT CAPEX investments for consumers (both in hardware or software) by changing these expenses to vendors who can extend them across their customer base. Certainly, as an alternative of paying for hardware and licenses upfront, and to hang around for the customization of an on premise solution, Cloud customers pay an intervallic subscription fee with minimal upfront costs covering a shortened deployment effort; it also helps in driving payback and perks up ROI coupled with high efficiency and flexibility of Cloud deployments. Hence there is no risk of IT deployments while transporting



them to Cloud providers therefore IT procurement process is rationalized.

Today, telecom operators are relying on large scale advanced computing architecture processing huge data and running a number of applications develop, manage, and deliver these services. These services can reduce internal computing resource needs. This ultimately leads to considerably reduced infrastructure investments as well as maintenance cost thus leading to increased revenues.

Telcos appears to have started thinking of SaaS architecture as a way to cut IT infrastructure costs and to use this approach as a starting place for more profits. In the meantime, vendors are also taking into consideration SaaS architecture compliance for their products. Nonetheless, so far no major software vendor from telecom industry has shifted to SaaS architecture but the move to SaaS appears to be inevitable for the industry. According to industry forecasts, globally SaaS revenue will show considerable increase within the next few years.

> "New accomplished and resourceful Cloud solutions are emerging increasingly"

Gartner forecasts that the SaaS market to exhibit a steady growth through 2013 when revenue will total over US$14 billion for the enterprise application markets.

New accomplished and resourceful Cloud solutions are emerging increasingly, but a lot of them still lack the depth, strength and integration abilities of their "on premise" corresponding solutions.

However, prospective purchasers can alleviate these maturity hazards. First, businesses should know that Cloud functionality is rapidly catching up with that of similar on premise offerings. Next, with the existence of foremost industry players such as Google, HP, IBM, and Amazon, the entrance of established vendors such as SAP, Oracle and Microsoft into the Cloud, and the momentous development of dynamic players like salesforce.com and Netsuite, purchasers can turn to renowned names in cases of doubt. The impact of Cloud computing on IT companies is at the moment possibly the least understood inhibitor to its progress. Main IT investments have been accomplished for quite a few decades in setting up IT companies and putting in place hardware and software. Provided the level and density of these investments, and the frequently unstructured mode in which IT companies have matured, the widespread frame of mind amongst CIOs and CTOs is still one of implementing technologies and convincing themselves and the organization that they work, instead being a driving force of change by aggregating services leveraging technology and information. Cloud computing will transform the environment of IT management, changing the focal point from broadband operational repairs and maintenance towards IT visioning, service provisioning, and relationship. It will consequently required to be escorted by a mind reallocation within IT firms to be flourishing, with businesses requiring to bring together fast moving requirements and a large number of more abstracted vendor solutions. In other words, as the rate of transformation rises, internal control of changes will reduce. This will lead to extra stress on the on the whole integration and consistency of solutions entailing a malleable internal IT architecture proficient in upholding overall stability.

Bocar A. BA.
President
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

SATELLITE NEWS

Newtec and SES Broadband Services Successfully Complete Ka-Band Test

Satellite specialist Newtec has successfully tested its new high speed Ka-band technology for satellite broadband service SES Broadband (previously called Astra2Connect). Newtec has shipped well over 100,000 Ku-band Sat3Play terminals for SES Broadband and is now providing the next generation Ka-band terminals for SES Broadband evolution, featuring download speeds beyond 10 Mbps. The test was completed with next generation Ka-band Sat3Play terminals and related hub infrastructure. The new technology was tested on the Astra 1L Ka-band capacity at 19.2 degrees east. During testing, Newtec installed a Sat3Play hub at SES Broadband Services' premises in Luxembourg, provided several Ka-band terminals working on Astra-1L Ka-band frequencies, and also provided the ability to remotely operate the hub. SES Broadband currently offers download speeds of up to 10 Mbps and delivers broadband internet and voice over IP (VoIP) services to private households and small businesses. SES will further increase the performance of its service by using additional multiple spot beam Ka-band capacity that will become available onboard its Astra 2F, 2E and 2G spacecraft, with the first spacecraft, Astra 2F, scheduled for launch later in 2012. At Satellite 2012, Newtec is presenting this new High Speed Ku/Ka-band Sat3Play terminal, including a new modem and a new Ka-band interactive LNB unit.

Newsat Secures Additional Orbital Slots

Australian satellite company NewSat has entered into an agreement with AP Kypros Satellite for an additional orbital slot and expanded frequencies in existing slots. The agreement for the eighth orbital slot adds five additional orbital filings and rights to future filings in certain regions as they are made available. The additional orbital slot, and the expansion of frequencies in the existing seven orbital slots, enables more satellites to be launched and operated, along with the provision of larger more flexible satellites. NewSat will pay a consideration in the form of cash and shares in two installments, with the first installment being made on execution of the agreement and the second as required regulatory approvals are received. The agreement is subject to regulatory approval.

Intelsat, GlobeCast Launch New Dawn MCPC Platform in Africa

Intelsat and GlobeCast have announced the launch of the Intelsat New Dawn Ku-band Multi-Channel per Carrier (MCPC) media platform for Africa. As part of the IntelsatONESM terrestrial network, the platform provides a cost-effective solution for both regional and international programmers wishing to expand their distribution to cable and Direct-to-Home (DTH) services across sub-Saharan Africa. Intelsat is a leading video provider in Africa, offering more than 800 television channels to the continent.

GlobeCast will provide ground and uplink services for the platform from its facility in Johannesburg, South Africa. Customers can contribute content to the platform from anywhere in the world, either via Intelsat's global satellite fleet and the IntelsatONE network, or through the five-continent GlobeCast Backbone Network.

Yahsat Launches VSAT Service

Al Yah Satellite Communications Company (Yahsat) has launched a new VSAT service based on the iDirect Evolution Platform. The VSAT service, based on the iDirect Evolution Platform and Cisco's unified communication system, is launching on the opening day of Cabsat, the Middle East digital media and satellite expo. Yahsat is exhibiting during the show, which runs between 28 February and 1 March in Dubai. The introduction of the new managed VSAT service strengthens its turnkey satellite solutions for market segments including government, defence, energy, healthcare and financial services. With the launch of the VSAT service from iDirect, YahService will be able to satisfy the growing customer demand to offer cloud services, including voice, video and data applications across Africa and the Middle East.

ITC Picks iDirect to Enhance VSAT Services

Saudi Arabia's Integrated Telecom Company (ITC) has announced that it has enhanced its enterprise VSAT services with iDirect's 'Evolution' platform, which is expected to help it meet its strategic growth targets. By integrating MPLS with VSAT, ITC enables its enterprise customers to manage remote extensions of their corporate network to rural areas on one MPLS network. For the banking sector, that means connecting remote branches and ATMs to corporate headquarters more efficiently, lowering operating costs and increasing productivity. ITC has purchased an iDirect Universal 15000 Series satellite hub, which has been integrated with iDirect's iDX 3.0 software to support demand in the banking sector. In choosing iDirect, ITC specifically focused on iDirect's Group Quality of Service (GQoS) feature, which provides a better end-customer experience by enabling sophisticated bandwidth allocation and prioritization.

NewSat Leases Jabiru-2 Capacity from Measat

Australian satellite operator NewSat has finalized an agreement with Measat Satellite Systems for the lease of satellite capacity for Jabiru-2. The final agreement provides NewSat with multiple transponders of capacity covering Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, and high demand regions in and around Australia, including Pilbara, Kimberly, North West Shelf, and Timor Gap for the fifteen year life of the satellite. The transponders to be provided will have 216 MHz Ku band capacity, which is huge enough to generate nearly $110 million in revenues in 15 years. Launching in 2013, Jabiru-2's Ku-band capacity will provide oil, gas, and mining and government customers with business-grade internet, voice, data, and video communication services. Earlier this year, Measat secured USD 180 million of capacity on the Jabiru-1 satellite.

GlobeCast Launches Russian Channel on Eutelsat Hot Bird

Content management and delivery company GlobeCast has launched the Russian channel CTC-International on Eutelsat's Hot Bird 8 satellite. This move increases the channel's broadcast footprint to reach over 120 million homes in Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. CTC-International is a Russian-language family entertainment channel, whose programming grid consists of a combination of parent CTC Media's channels including CTC, Domashny, and Peretz. GlobeCast is providing CTC-International all the technical services required for delivery; including Free to Air (FTA) transmission service on its MCPC distribution platform, signal processing, multiplexing, uplink, and space capacity on Eutelsat's Hot Bird 8. The CTC-International channel targets Russian-speaking audiences in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Middle East.

China Aims to Launch 100 Satellites by 2015

China has unrolled a plan to fill the sky with its satellites, launching a total of 100 by 2015. It will also carry out the first manned space rendezvous with the Shenzhou-9 spacecraft this year. The plan is to stay ahead of the United States launching an average of 20 satellites a year. China crossed the US tally of 18 satellite launches in 2011 by sending out 20 of them last year. But Russia continued to lead the world by launching 36 satellites in 2011. China conducted its first space docking experiment last year to build a space station of its own by 2020. The new space missions included launching the third lunar probe, Chang'e-3 next year and conduct a moon landing and lunar explorations. China launched the Change-1 in 2007 and the Chang'e-2 2010.

ITRs Watch

Securing the Future Benefits of Technology

The UN's specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs), the International Telecom Union (ITU), will hold a World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12) in December. The aim of the conference is to review the global treaty widely credited for creating the basis of today's connected world, thus the international regulatory framework governing all ICT technologies. The treaty under review is known as the International Telecommunication Regulations, or ITRs. It provides governments and industries across the globe with the necessary frameworks for bringing variety and competition to their telecommunications and ICT markets. The WCIT-12, which is being convened at the request of 193 member states, will discuss or address critical issues such as cybersecurity, secured sharing of information and expertise, more effective early warning systems to mitigate cyberrisks, and developing effective resilience across society. WCIT-12 will express the common will of ITU's major stakeholders, its government and private sector membership and we'll continue to ask for input and feedback.

UN Agency Seeks to Quell Fears over Its Plans for the Internet

A conference to discuss the preliminaries of renegotiating a 1988 treaty was held by the United Nations' International Telecommunications Union (ITU) in Geneva, Switzerland. The 1988 treaty was originally titled as International Telecommunication Regulations, or ITRs. The offending portion of that 1988 treaty, for Internet freedom lovers, is Art. 9.1b which deals with cyber security and infrastructure protections. The section obligates countries to "avoid technical harm to the operation of the telecommunication facilities of third countries" for internets spanning national boundaries. According to the ITU, "Such obligations potentially include setting and adopting standards, monitoring traffic flows, cooperation among parties, establishing implementing national laws, and instituting enforcement mechanisms." Robert McDowell, a commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission, warns that Brazil, Russia, India, and China are trying to seize the moment to place cyber security and data privacy under United Nations control. He further warns that this would be a dangerous step toward severe censorship and has the potential to destroy Web innovation and a part of our economy. McDowell believes some of these countries' motivation for regulation includes the promise of money for state-owned phone companies that would be able to charge a fee on a "per-click basis for certain web destinations." The UN's ITU is working on renegotiating the 1988 ITR treaty. The conference set for Dubai in December of 2012 will most likely see these new UN "harmonization" and "standards" for the Internet adopted by the ITU.

ROAMING NEWS

Starhub Signs Roaming Agreement with Vodafone

Singaporean operator StarHub has signed a deal with Vodafone, which will see its customers use mobile data services at more attractive rates when roaming to major European countries, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa. With the new preferred rates, customers pay US$25 for the first 20Mb of international data used on any particular day. Beyond this usage within the same day, roaming data access costs US$3/Mb. The operator claims that most customers will find 20Mb a sufficient amount of mobile data to use in a day when overseas. To take advantage of the savings, customers simply connect their mobile devices to Vodafone's high-quality network in any of the 14 available overseas destinations. The data-roaming rates are offered to travellers whilst in Albania, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, Turkey, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. All StarHub Mobile post-paid customers with international roaming service will automatically enjoy the preferred rates when they roam on the selected Vodafone networks. They are not required to activate the service prior to use. Customers can also opt to be charged on a daily basis as and when it is needed.

Geocell Lowers Fees for Roaming in Vodafone Egypt Network

Georgian mobile operator Geocell has introduced a discount on roaming services in Egypt. This discount is for both the prepaid as well as the postpaid subscribers. Under this discount, subscribers of the prepaid Lailal network would be able to make outgoing calls for GEL 2.50 (US$ 1.49) per minute. They would be charged GEL 1.50 (US$ 0.89) per minute for the incoming calls whereas charges of GEL 0.40 (US$ 0.23) would be applied per each SMS. Postpaid subscribers of Geocell would be able to make outgoing calls for EUR 2 (US$ 2.6) per minute. They would charges of UR 0.26 (US$ 0.35) applied per each SMS. Data charges of EUR 2.5 (US$ 2.89) per 1MB will be applied to postpaid subscribers who utilize Vodafone Egypt network while roaming.

Mobile Fair Takes Aim at Roaming Charges

The world's biggest mobile fair, Mobile World Conference (MWC) urged operators to convert "silent roamers" or travelers who stop using their phones once abroad for fear of a massive bill. If unlocked, the market could be worth a massive 1.5 billion Euros (US$1.99 billion) in Europe alone. Telecommunications operators apply a roaming surcharge when a mobile telephone is used abroad. The bill could therefore be enormously high if a user keeps a smart phone constantly connected to the internet while overseas. According to Syniverse, out of 75 million people who travel to another country in a month, close to 70 percent never use the data service and half make no calls at all. Analyst firm Greenwich Consulting estimates that data roaming alone is an untapped 1.5 billion Euros (US$ 1.99 billion) business in Europe alone.

Orange Launches New Initiatives for Reduced Roaming Charges

Orange has announced a series of new roaming initiatives aimed at delivering a simpler, more transparent and cost-effective roaming experience for customers. The initiatives include a new 'combined' voice, SMS and mobile data roaming offer, a new roaming app and a roaming cap and text alert when roaming outside the EU. These initiatives are underpinned by a new Orange Travel 'Customer Experience Charter', laying down its commitment to customers to deliver transparency, responsive customer support and reliable networks when roaming. The initiatives will cover Orange's key European markets and will be implemented throughout 2012. Orange's latest 'combined' roaming bundle sees a new type of offer in the market, incorporating voice, SMS and data into one affordable and easy to understand tariff. The offers will be available on a daily, weekly or even 30-day basis, tailored to each market.

Vimpelcom Slashes International Roaming Rates

VimpelCom Ltd. (VIP) has cut international roaming charges for mobile communications for as much as 96 percent. It is the last of Russia's three biggest mobile operators to lower fees. Vimpelcom has announced that it has cut international roaming charges in a total of 62 countries, with a range of new tariffs now offered under the 'MultiPass' brand. The cellular company claims that the price of using mobile internet services in Europe and South East Asia has decreased by 25 times, with tariffs now up to ten times cheaper in CIS nations. Incoming calls are now priced at RUB5 (US$0.17) per minute, with outgoing calls costing RUB15 (US$ 0.51) per minute. Outgoing SMS cost RUB3.95 (US$ 0.13), whilst 1MB of data now costs RUB30.21(US$ 30.21) which used to be charged as much as RUB768 (US$ 25.9) previously. All new tariffs applied retroactively from 1 March 2012.

EU Cuts Cost Of Phone Calls While Roaming

European Union lawmakers voted for steeper cuts to mobile phone roaming charges today in a move that defied calls by the chief executives of Vodafone and France Telecom for a moratorium on revenue-hitting telecoms regulation. Politicians from the European Parliament agreed to lower the cost of making phone calls when abroad by up to two-thirds within two years, going further than a proposal initially floated by the European Commission last summer. Now the EU Commission and Parliament must thrash out a final plan with 27 EU governments to approve the new caps before June, when current roaming regulation expires. The move marks the start of a third round of regulation from the EU to cut charges when people make calls from outside their home country. These additional costs have long been opposed by consumer groups.

Roamware Launches Carrier Services Cloud Offering

Roamware, a provider of mobile operator service solutions, announced the launch of a Carrier Services Cloud that offers capabilities including roaming & local services, fraud prevention, management and customer experience management (CEM) and others. The company also launched new products including version 7.0 of its NTR traffic steering product. Roamware also announced Roamware Mobile Horizon, a 5-phase roadmap for mobile operator services through 2020. The 5-phase roadmap for the industry details future Virtual Service Exchanges based on open platforms, and Roamware's 5-phase technology roadmap aligns to this with a Mobile Open Service Interface that will allow developers to participate in new service offerings. The result will be greater operator service value, and a linkage between the infrastructure and applications that today simply operate over-the-top.

Telecom New Zealand Launches Data Roaming Tools

Telecom New Zealand has introduced a range of new international roaming tools for its customers to manage charges while on roaming. For Android users, the company has unveiled the Data Smart Caps tool, which will also be available for iPhones shortly. The tool provides updates on international mobile data usag¬e by sending customers an SMS at up to five chosen dollar amount or volume amount thresholds. Unlimited data value can also be requested. When a customer reaches the Data Smart Cap threshold, their international mobile data usage will be stopped and they will receive an SMS alert message. The customer can then choose to increase their threshold to continue using international mobile data. Furthermore, customers can also download a new mobile app called XT Telecom Roaming which allows customers to check roaming rates, country codes, and troubleshoot any roaming queries while not impacting their data usage.

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