

A portrait of Dr. Nasser Marafih, a man with a mustache and glasses, wearing a white thobe and a ghutra. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a light gray with a repeating diamond pattern.

## The power of digitization: **Evolving landscape of telecoms & ICT sector**

**Dr. Nasser Marafih**  
Group CEO  
**Ooredoo**



# EDITORIAL

## The Power of Digitization: Evolving Landscape of Telecoms & ICT Sector

The global telecommunications milieu, as a whole, has been in quite a bit of a fix over the last few years. For the most part, the industry worked on an economic and gradual growth basis for nearly two decades. Driven by a mix of consumer demand and the emergence of new and innovative value added services, the world of telecoms & ICTs is evolving. This process, often termed as digitization or adoption of digital services at a large scale, has been transpiring since the arrival of the PC 60 years ago, but in the past several years the development in the ICT industry has resulted in rapid "mobile" transformation that has changed everyday life in an unprecedented way.

The regional ICT industry is on the threshold of a digital revolution, and SAEMNA Council with high-level discussions on regulations and policies, innovations and strategies, , between industry and government experts, has been providing industry stakeholders in the region with the opportunity to exchange ideas collaborate on industry issues and identify solutions with far-reaching benefits. The telecoms & ICT industry, at the same time, appears to gain momentum as there are now more than 820 million mobile users in the SAMENA region. Mobile phones, at the same time, are now increasingly being used more and more for services like mHealth, mBanking, mLearning, and mPayments, among others. All these trends have been the driving force behind digitization. To add to this, I would especially like to mention that earlier this month, we held our annual conference "Convergence" at Muscat, Oman and discussed a number of issues on the topic of "Digitization" as the key enabler for socio-economic growth in the SAMENA Region. We are excited about the future of "Digitization" in the SAMENA region and look forward to seeing strong representation and participation from the regional ICT community in SAMENA Council's initiatives and through provoking meetings.

In short, although the current level of digitization has already given us a world that's very different from the one we knew a decade ago, the new wave of next generation devices, platforms, and applications will further encourage the process of digitization. This clearly show that the trends to digitization will only accelerate, transforming the ways in which technology influence our everyday life. Ubiquitous broadband, cloud based services, social media, smart phones, and innovative applications are all changing the way we, work, study, socialize, communication and do business. Many of the services and technologies underlying the digitization phenomenon are not new; indeed, some have been there for quite some time. Taken together, however, they will create a degree of change comparable in scope to the great industrial revolutions of the past. The push to develop a fully digitized ecosystem, continue to exist world over with the amount of data generated annually has reached almost 35 trillion gigabytes.

Digitization is a subject area, with its own semantic and operational characteristics, that the SAMENA Council is working hard to develop its program around. The Council is mindful of the fact, and in absolute support of the predictions abound, that "Digitization" is pivotal for socio-economic growth.

Yours truly,

**Bocar A. BA**  
Chief Executive Officer  
**SAMENA Telecommunications Council**

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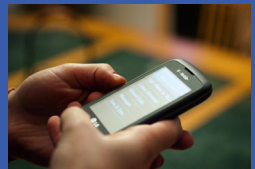
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## EDITORIAL





# OPERATOR LEADER'S VISION



**Dr. Nasser Marafih**  
Group CEO  
**Ooredoo**

Dr. Nasser Marafih is the Chief Executive Officer of the Ooredoo Group since 2006. He also served as Ooredoo Qatar CEO from 2002 until 2011.



Born in Doha, Qatar, Dr. Marafih holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, a Master of Science and a Ph.D in Communication Engineering, all from George Washington University, USA. Dr. Nasser started his career at Qtel in 1992 as expert advisor from the University of Qatar and was involved in the introduction of the first GSM service in the Middle East in February 1994. He joined Ooredoo Qatar in February 1994 as a Director for Strategic Planning & Development and led a number of strategic projects including the introduction of the Internet service in Qatar in 1996 and the privatization of Ooredoo Qatar from a government owned company to a publicly listed company in 1999. After his appointment as CEO in 2001, Dr. Nasser has spearheaded Ooredoo's global growth in recent years to expand to 17 operations in Middle East and Asia, including Ooredoo's acquisition of Wataniya Telecom, Ooredoo's strategic partnership with ST Telemedia in Singapore, as well as the company's purchase of a controlling stake in Indosat of Indonesia.

Dr. Marafih serves in as a board member in a number of the Ooredoo Group companies including: Indosat (Indonesia), Wataniya (Kuwait), Asiacell (Iraq), Nedjma (Algeria), Tunisiya (Tunis), Wataniya (Palestine) and wi-tribe (Philippines). In addition, Dr. Marafih serves as Chairman of the Board of the GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation and as a member of the Board of GSMA. He is also the chairman of the South Asia, Middle East, North Africa region's SAMENA Telecommunication Council.

**Q. The year 2013 has been a year of success for Ooredoo group. The license in Myanmar, a number of international awards and so on. How do you look at the year 2014 for Ooredoo group?**

**A.** 2013 was a remarkable year for Ooredoo. It was the year we transformed our global identity into "Ooredoo", and have since rebranded our operations in Qatar, Algeria and the Maldives, and launched Tunisiana Ooredoo in Tunisia, with more to follow in 2014.

It was also the year when we received global recognition for our efforts, being named "Best Mobile Operator of the Year" at the World Communication Awards, along with a host of other industry awards, including recognition from SAMENA and in the "Stevies" International Business Award.

Our focus on human growth has been supported by a range of initiatives aimed at enriching people's lives, particularly young people, women, entrepreneurs and people in rural communities across the Ooredoo footprint.

Ooredoo's support for closing the mobile gender gap and women's empowerment was recognised with a major award at the GSMA Mobile World Congress, when Asiacell's Almas service won the "GSMA mWomen Best Mobile Product or Service for Women in Emerging Markets." Working with the Cherie Blair Foundation, we have plans in place to Ooredoo and Cherie Blair Foundation for Women to partner with organisations in Myanmar to train 30,000 women as Ooredoo mobile retail agents, improving their economic opportunities in that rapidly-developing market.

As part of our wider support for young people, Ooredoo signed up as a founding partner of the ITU Global Youth Summit, held in San José, Costa Rica, in September 2013, to support the development of new ideas for helping young people find educational and employment support.

In the coming year, Ooredoo is set to extend the impact of its partnership with football superstar Lionel Messi and Messi Foundation.

Working with the Messi Foundation, Ooredoo is supporting mobile health clinics to provide medical aid for children in Indonesia, and the programme is set to grow into new markets in 2014. Equally, Ooredoo's partnership with Paris Saint-Germain will also reach out to more communities in 2014, with the community coaching programme rolling-out to more young people during the year.

Perhaps most importantly of all, Ooredoo is set to launch a next-generation network in its newest market of Myanmar during 2014, after securing one of two commercial licences this year. Ooredoo will offer a wide range of mobile communications services to improve the lives of Myanmar consumers and help businesses run more efficiently.

There has been a lot of key foundation work in 2013 to establish programmes that will genuinely benefit people across our market footprint, and contribute to human growth in these markets. In 2014, we will take these

commitments to the next level, actively striving to make a genuine difference in our customers' lives.

**Q. With presence in markets across MENA and Southeast Asia, do you plan to expand Ooredoo group's footprint to more markets in the time to come?**

**A.** Our strategy is focused on markets across the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia but we are also focused currently on maximizing returns from our current assets through driving organic growth. There is still scope for growth. Our view is that size is important; because it makes the partnerships possible to deliver the services our customers require, and because it offers the opportunities of scale that deliver real value.

If an opportunity presents itself, either an acquisition or a greenfield operation, we will judge it on its own merits.

**Q. What are your thoughts on infrastructure sharing for the operators? Do you think that's an opportunity for the operators' community to overcome the financial crunch, particularly declining ARPUs?**

**A.** Infrastructure-sharing is happening across our industry. We believe it needs to happen in more markets, in order to enable operators to optimise their investments and share infrastructure costs. This in turn enables us to make our services available and affordable for more customers, to increase access across our markets.

It is a model that Ooredoo has tried and tested across our markets, including Indonesia, where we share some of our cell towers and also deploy radio infrastructure in towers that belong to other companies. It is also an approach we are using to ensure the rapid roll-out of a next generation network for the people of Myanmar.

**Q. How challenging is the Myanmar operation going to be for Ooredoo group, for it apparently seems to be a green field infrastructure rollout?**

**A.** The Myanmar license is an incredible opportunity for both Ooredoo and the people of Myanmar as we will be bringing 3G technology from day one. With 3G, we have the potential to connect 60 million people to the Internet for the first time. The people are educated, entrepreneurial, ambitious and aspirational yet less than 10% of the 60 million people there currently use a mobile phone – this will be a real opportunity to enrich the lives of our customer.

There are challenges presented by a lack of infrastructure and developing business environment. But we are aware

and committed to the country and the business and we are building a great team – many of whom are local to make this happen. Ooredoo has experience in South East Asia, with our operation in Indonesia. We will leverage this experience to meet the challenges of Myanmar.

Ooredoo has pledged a long term investment of US\$15 billion which will significantly contribute to the leapfrog of Myanmar's telecommunications sector. We have committed to a very strong coverage of all regions and states, a dense distribution network in both urban and rural areas and a wide range of affordable services.

**Q. How do you look at the mergers and acquisition in the SAMENA region? What do you think will the year 2014 bring in terms of M&A?**

**A.** We believe the market will see further consolidation in 2014. There are obvious benefits in terms of economies of scale for larger companies, and we see it is increasingly difficult for small operators because their cost structure will not allow them to compete with big companies. We continue to watch the market for opportunities that fit Ooredoo's investment criteria. million people there currently use a mobile phone – this will be a real opportunity to enrich the lives of our customer.

**Q. How do you look at the regulation in the regional markets, particularly in the Middle East? What initiatives do you think needs to be taken to ensure a more promising environment?**

**A.** Regulators need to keep pace with the changing dynamics of our markets. The challenge for the industry in the coming years is to have proper dialogue with regulators and policy-makers to make sure that they don't exaggerate their spectrum license fees and taxes, based on the returns we saw previously. The market is leaner, more efficient now – and the regulators need to understand this is a fundamental change in the business model.

In addition, as the mobile data market continues to expand, we need to have coordinated action to manage the impact of the OTT players. These companies are benefiting from the infrastructure provided by operators, and we need to find a way to ensure that everyone is making the right contribution. Mobile technology could deliver a potential increase in GDP of over USD 57.5 billion in the Middle East and USD 50.5 billion in North Africa over the next ten to twelve years, but we need to make sure that there is fair compensation for the companies who build the networks that make this growth possible.



**Q. Please tell us about ooredoo group's investment in 4G/LTE? With this investment how do you see the potential in your operations in market like Kuwait for example?**

**A.** Delivering the best possible network – in terms of speed, reliability and accessibility – is fundamental to our vision of enriching people's lives. The stronger the network, the greater the range of opportunities for people to access employment, education and entertainment wherever they are.

To deliver this, we have taken the lead in delivering better networks across our footprint. Qatar is the only country in the MENA region that sits in the world top 10 for internet connectivity. We have rolled out 4G and fibre in 2013, and have seen a strong response to both.

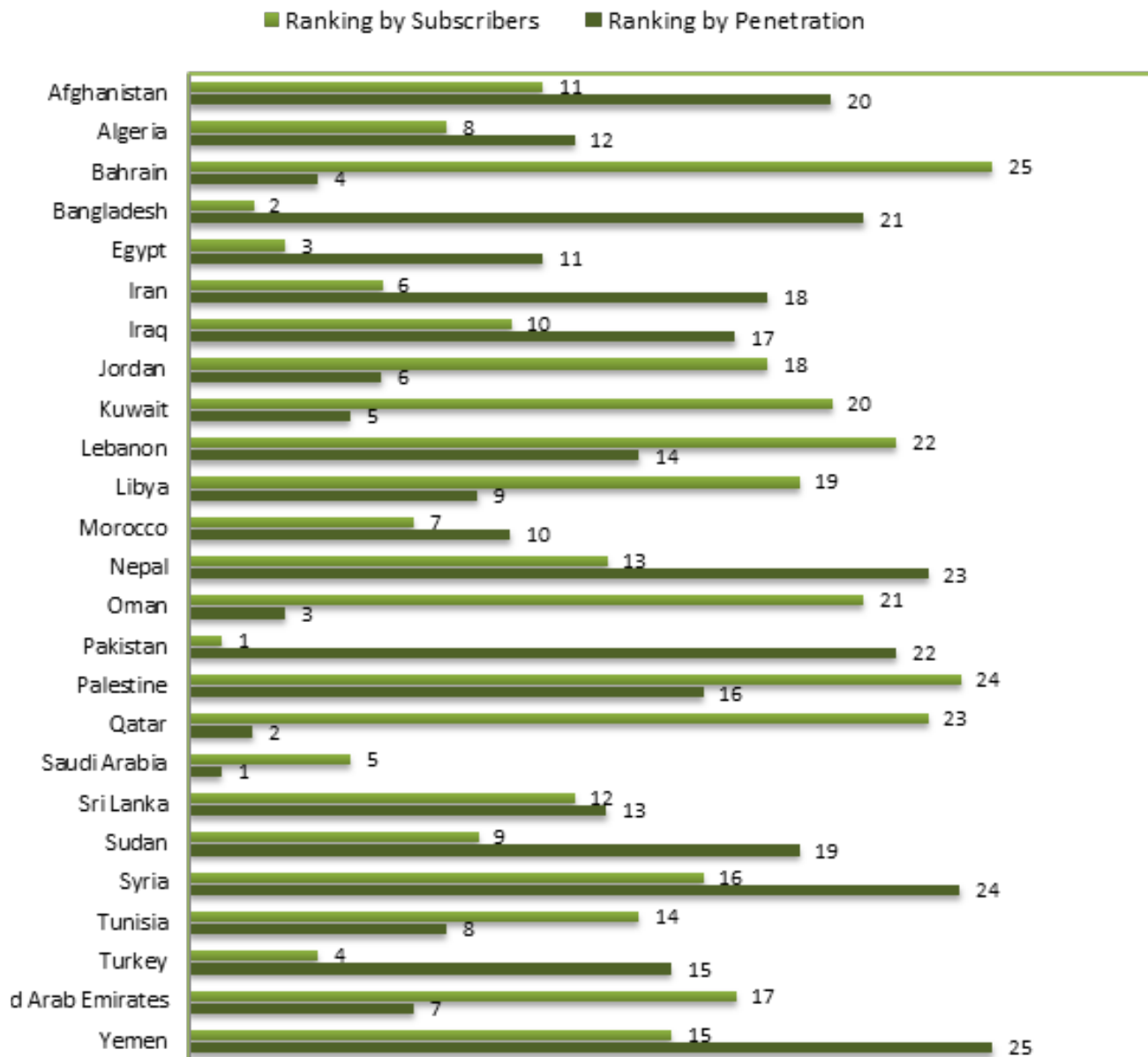
In Oman – 78% of the population now enjoy our 3G+ coverage and the proportion with 4G is increasing as we drive our turbocharging programme. Likewise, Kuwait has also seen a positive response to our 4G services – making Ooredoo the first company to deliver 4G in three GCC markets.

There are other improvements that we have made available. For example, we have been the first to roll out U900 in a number of markets (Indonesia, Oman and Kuwait). This brings the benefit of enhanced indoor coverage for mobile broadband – perfect for laptop/PC access as well as a more seamless mobile experience for smartphones.

In other markets, we are providing network upgrades and launching 3G services to support people and provide access to new ideas and new innovations. We were the first company to launch commercial 3G services in Algeria in 2013, achieved the nationwide roll-out of 3G in Tunisia during the year and we're primed to launch in Iraq, dependent on receiving regulatory clearance.

## SAMENA: Regional Rank Based on Penetration &amp; Number of Subscribers

## SAMENA: Regional Rank Based on Penetration &amp; Number of Subscribers



**Research Note:** The figure shows ranking of mobile subscribers within the SAMENA region based on the number of mobile subscribers as well as mobile penetration.

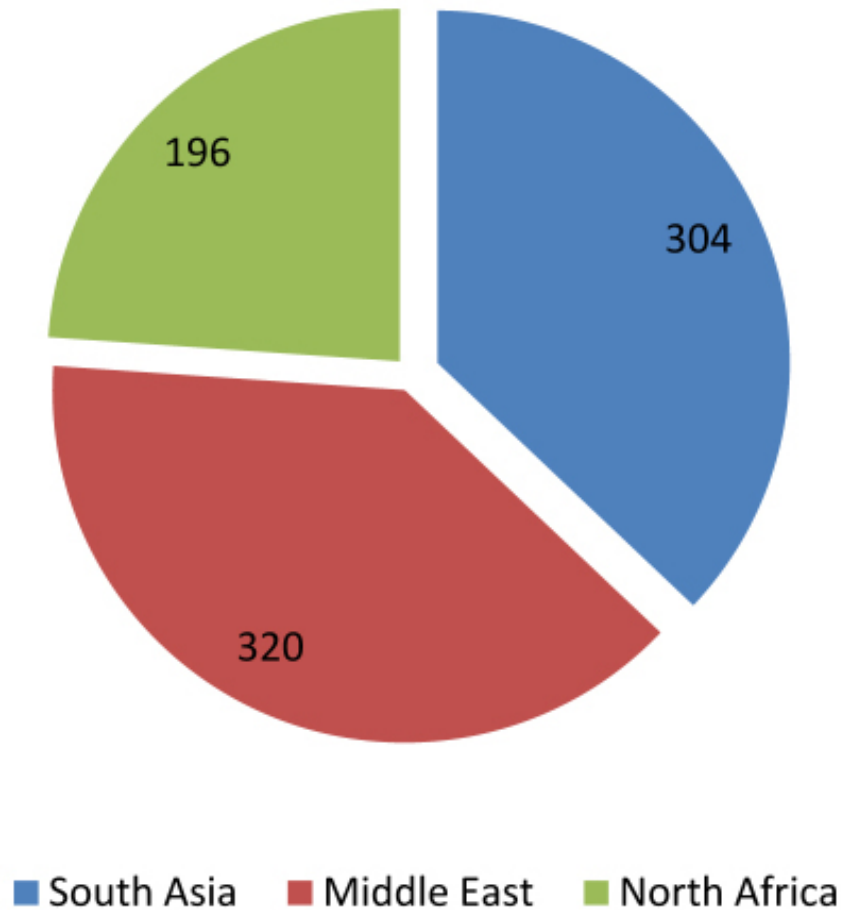
Pakistan has the highest number of mobile subscribers with 129 million followed by Bangladesh 111 million and Egypt having 96 million. Qatar has the lowest number of mobile subscribers 2.3 million followed by Palestine at 3.4 million and Qatar at 4.2 million.

In terms of mobile penetration, Saudi Arabia has the highest mobile penetration in the region at 210% followed by Qatar at 206% and Oman at 167%. Yemen has the lowest penetration of 55% followed by Syria's 61% and Nepal with 62%.

**Image Source:** SAMENA Telecommunications Council

**Data Source:** Industry News and Reports, NRAs, Operators websites.

## SAMENA Region: Mobile Subscribers (in million)



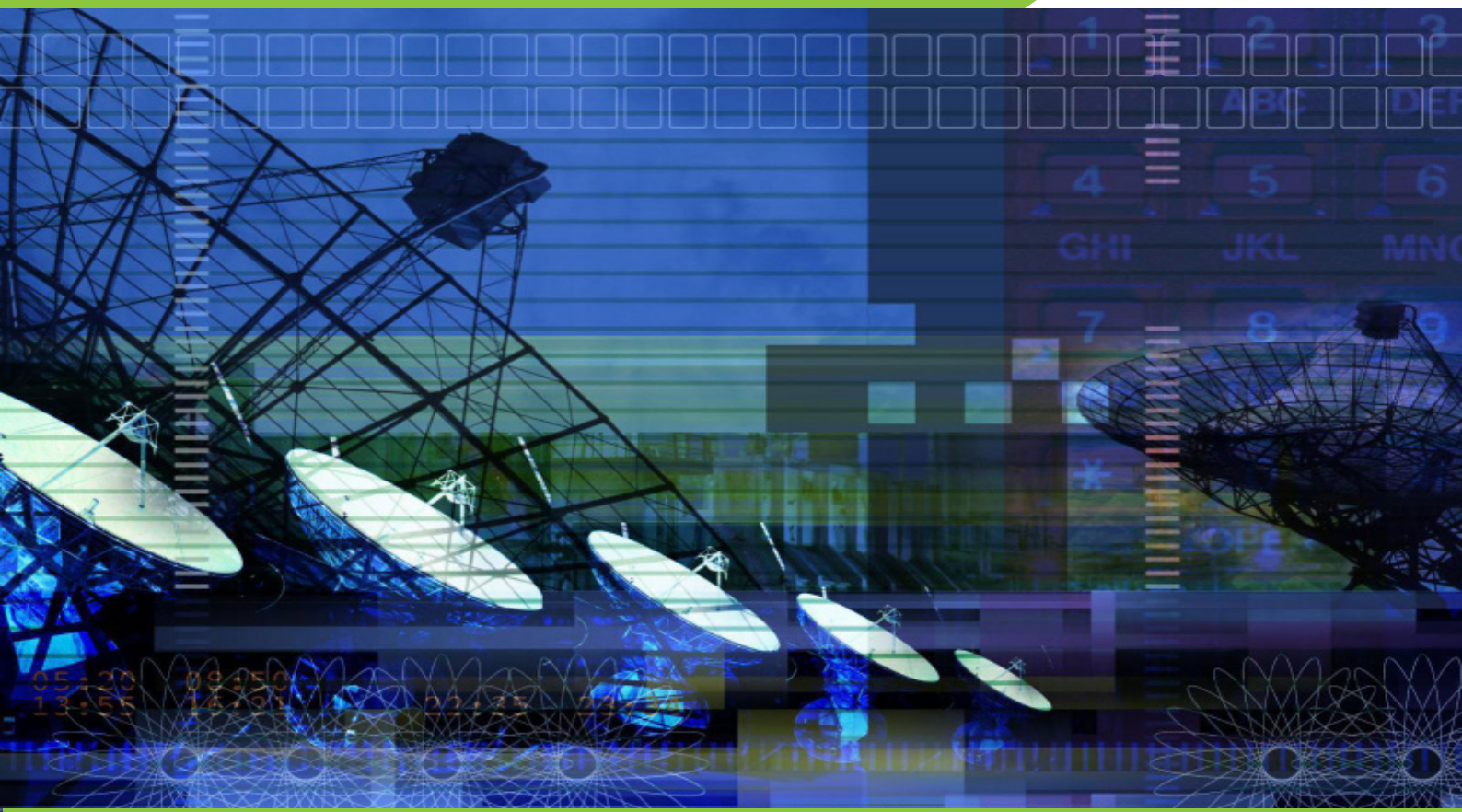
**Research Note:** A regional analysis of the SAMENA region shows that Middle East has the highest number of subscribers at 320 million followed by South Asia at 304 million and North Africa at 196 million.

Middle East has the highest numbers of countries (15) within SAMENA region and North Africa and South Asia have 5 each. Pakistan and Bangladesh alone have 241 million of the total 840 million subscribers in the SAMENA region which represents almost 30% of the entire mobile subscriber base.

**Image Source:** SAMENA Telecommunications Council

**Data Source:** Industry News and Reports, NRAs, Operators websites.





## MEMBERS NEWS

### Etisalat wins Best Overall Operator at Comms MEA Awards 2013

Etisalat, the leading telecom operator in the Middle East and Africa has won the prestigious industry award as the 'Overall Operator of the year' at CommsMEA Awards 2013.

The annual award was presented to the operator that has managed to stand out from all the rest, either in a specific field or across a number of disciplines. The judging criteria focused on numerous aspects of businesses, including growth, financials, innovation and quality of service. The 8th edition of the annual CommsMEA awards and acknowledges operators and individuals who have taken a leadership role in the region's fast growing and rapidly changing telecoms sector.

Saleh Al Abdooli, Etisalat CEO, said: "Etisalat has always been at the forefront of providing customers with the latest services and technologies. There is always an effort to provide a number of unique benefits to customers and businesses alike through the provision of an advanced and scalable network, reliability, and best customer service along with faster response time.

Roger Field, Editor, CommsMEA said: "Etisalat continued to achieve growth in its home market in the face of tough competition by launching a raft of offers to increase uptake of services, from IPTV packages to mobile broadband and business packages."

### Huawei highlights 'customer experience' as the key focus for next generation ICT Services at Zain Technology Conference 2013

As further investments are put behind intelligent information networks across the Middle East, Huawei—a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider—partnered with Zain Group—a pioneer mobile telecommunications provider in MENA—to identify the foremost technology innovations planned for the year ahead which aim to deliver an enhanced customer experience to subscribers across the region.

Welcoming a host of global and regional telecom experts, Huawei put forward an expanded agenda of keynote sessions during this year's conference. With a key focus on the importance of Customer Experience Management as the emerging theme for the ICT industry, the sessions emphasized high-quality mobile broadband infrastructure, modern business-enabling IT.

Following the success of the 2012 edition, this year's Zain Technology Conference was convened with the goal of bringing together Zain's global technology partners to outline their latest services in the telecommunications field with all Zain operating companies while at the same time recognizing opportunities of mutual interest between Zain's numerous suppliers and service providers.

## Nawras: Sahra Time is back! Youth customers can enjoy free data every day

As a result of overwhelming feedback from customers, Nawras has re-introduced the popular Sahra time for youth. With everybody wanting to be continually connected these days, Nawras is offering 1 GB of free data every day to youth customers, when they sign up to Sahra time. Shababiah customers can stay connected to their friends and enjoy their favorite apps for the next three months, with free mobile data to use between midnight and 12pm each day. Maha Al-Balushi, Nawras Proposition Manager – Youth Segment, said,

“We first introduced the promotion during Ramadhan and it was so popular that customers wanted Sahra Time to continue. This promotion was specially designed for our youth customers to stay connected and share their special moments with friends and family around the world through voice and data.” Shababiah is exclusively for customers between the ages of 16 and 25 years old, offering many benefits including bundled data and services for customers to enjoy fantastic low prices for SMS and calls.

## du supports TIE( Entrepreneurs to nurture UAE entrepreneurship

In further support of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the UAE, du has announced its position as a Gold Sponsor of (TiE)Entrepreneurs. Together with TiE, a prominent non-profit global community of successful Indian executives, du will nurture entrepreneurship and networking across the nation. TiE recently held a Quiz Night networking event at du's headquarters in Dubai Media City, attended by members of the society and people from the community. KS Parag, President, TiE Dubai, said: “TiE Dubai is proud to be associated with du as part of its goal in fostering entrepreneurship in the region. du, being an innovative telecommunication provider with a clear mandate of driving value to SMEs and enterprise businesses, shares the same vision as TiE.”

Hala Badri, Executive Vice President, Brand and Communications, du, said: “Since inception we have committed our efforts to supporting the UAE's entrepreneurs. By partnering with TiE Dubai as a Gold Sponsor, we are able to extend our reach by supporting events that bring entrepreneurs together with members of the business community. Networking opportunities such as this are vital for developing sustainable business relations that foster growth.”

## Intelsat contributes critical satellite capacity & communications infrastructure for humanitarian relief efforts in the Philippines

Intelsat, the world's leading provider of satellite services, provided an update on its satellite capacity and other critical connectivity being used in a number of restoration initiatives in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan. Immediately after the disaster occurred, Intelsat began working with customers and partners to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and satellite capacity were in place

to accelerate the restoration of vital communications for relief workers and businesses in the Philippines. Leveraging its flexible satellite infrastructure, Intelsat repointed a Ku-band beam on the Intelsat 8 satellite to bring urgently needed capacity to the Philippines, in addition to providing capacity on other satellites already serving the region. Intelsat is also providing an uplink via the IntelsatOneSM terrestrial network from the Kumsan, South Korea Teleport and a downlink in the Philippines. Intelsat has a long history of contributing ongoing satellite connectivity to social and humanitarian causes around the world, including the Mindset Network in South Africa, the Children's National Medical Center Telehealth Program in Morocco and Medical Missions for Children in Latin America and the Caribbean. Responding to natural disasters, Intelsat provided satellite connectivity for relief and rebuilding efforts in the wake of the earthquake in Haiti in 2010.

## Nawras launches customer experience training program for 400 employees

Nawras has recently launched their new customer experience training program, 'Mahara', to continue their focus on customer service as a key business driver. A partnering agreement was signed with the international consultancy 'B-business', to develop the course, which is being run for Customer Champions and Store Champions from November 2013 to January 2014. The program will provide practical and educational opportunities for over one-third of Nawras family members, to align personal and organizational successes and to continue to take the lead in listening to the 'voice of the customer' and customer service excellence.

Nawras is committed to developing talent, through an original career strategy and investment in people. B-business is an internationally-renowned organization, providing Learning and Development Interventions and Management and Human Resources Consultancy Projects to identify areas of improvement and enhance employee performance.

## Türk Telekom clinches leadership in Carbon Disclosure Project with its sustainability bid

Turkey's pioneer communication and convergence technologies company Türk Telekom is an industry leader for its drive to protect nature and contribute to the goal of a more livable world as it works toward digital transformation. The first and only company in the Turkish telecommunication industry to submit reports to CDP Turkey, Türk Telekom is engaged in numerous efforts in the field of environmental protection and sustainability.

According to the reports furnished to CDP Turkey, Türk Telekom prevented nearly 56,000 tons of carbon emissions by means of the renewable energy and energy efficiency projects it conducted in 2012. This quantity is equivalent to the average amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by roughly 2,100 hectares of black pine forest or about 4.5 million trees in one year. Taking stock in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, Türk Telekom saved nearly TL18.5 million in total by means of such undertakings. According to the results of the CDP Turkey 2012 Report, Türk Telekom achieved savings amounting to more than TL85 million by means of the projects it conducted.



## BT launches album streaming service on BT TV with universal music

BT TV customers will be able to play albums from top current artists as part of their TV subscription, following a pioneering deal with Universal Music. Hundreds of thousands of BT TV customers will be able to enjoy lots of the latest albums from the music company's headline stars. Existing TV Unlimited customers will have this Music bolt-on included in their subscription and new TV customers can add it for £3 a month. The new service is a boost to BT's existing Music service, which already offers around 2,500 music videos, karaoke and concerts.

Now customers can play a whole album in the background as they get on with their busy lives – but unlike other audio streaming services it is advert-free and included in the price of their TV subscription. Alex Green, director of BT TV, said: "We are really excited to have signed this contract with Universal Music and we are hopeful we can sign other deals with more labels in the near future. The enhanced Music offering is part of BT TV's recent efforts to ramp up its overall proposition. Last month the company announced new HD and Kids channels available over Infinity. BT also announced a deal with Curzon Home Cinema that allows customers to watch lots of films much earlier than usual, at the same time as their cinema release.

## du Managed Security Services accredited by ISO 27001 Global Standards

Delivering on its commitment towards building trust amongst its customers, du was recognized for raising the standard of its quality of work by being awarded the ISO/IEC 27001:2005 Certification, for its Managed Security Services (MSS), which are offered to the company's Enterprise and Small Business customers.

The ISO 27001:2005 Certificate is an international standard and framework for establishing an Information Security Management System (ISMS). The accreditation is endorsed by a globally recognized body, the UKAS Accreditation Institute, which underscores the strength and trust placed in du's Managed Security Services (MSS). It has to be noted that only a select few MSSPs around the world have undergone the rigorous process of certifying the entire design, implementation, delivery and operations lifecycle of their security services against the industry's de facto security standard. du's internal security experts built the company's Security Services in-house over the past 7 years, by establishing framework, people, processes and world-class technologies to protect against the constantly advancing security threats in our telecom environment, through their extensive experience and maturity.

## Mobily launches Managed SAP Service to support the business sector in KSA

In line with Mobily's commitment to continuously support business sector, the company has recently added "Managed SAP Service" to its existing portfolio of Business Cloud Solutions, a step that will contribute in raising business's operational efficiency and reducing the cost of

IT infrastructure. This newly released service is based on SAP platform. It will include management of the Operating system, Databases and SAP BASIS (the name of the technical functional mechanisms of the SAP application). Mobily will also provide comprehensive professional services helping customers set strategy, design, data migration, manage and operate their SAP cloud at every stage of their engagement.

Mobily CBO, Dr. Marwan Al Ahmadi, said: "Cloud computing has become an urgent necessity for the benefits it provides to the government and private sectors. It ensures a secure environment, high reliability and data management for institutions and companies within the Kingdom." SAP Managed Service, coupled with Enterprise Class Cloud services offers in collaboration with Virtustream™, is an advanced SAP infrastructure on the cloud. Managed SAP Service is hosted in Mobily data centers certified by the UPTIME Institute.

## Etisalat launches 'Business MiFi' Automotive Device and Data Bundles for Businesses on the move

Etisalat, the leading telecom operator in the Middle East and Africa, announced its 'Business MiFi' the first of a kind offering in the country allowing business customers from large enterprises to SMBs to enrich their clients with a connected drive experience on the move. Business MiFi proposition consist of mobile data and industry specific automotive dongle that create mobile WiFi network which enables up to five devices to connect to the internet simultaneously. Etisalat is launching Business MiFi to meet the need of automotive, hospitality, airlines, logistics and transportation sectors as the service offers flexibility and convenience to business professionals on the move by presenting an automotive device and mobile data packages that enables a single mobile broadband connection via 3G or LTE networks to multiple wireless/WiFi supported devices. John Lincoln, Senior Vice President, Business Marketing, Etisalat UAE, said: "Etisalat continues to innovate in its business offerings by providing the best connected experience to business customers. We understand that businesses need flexibility and convenience and therefore built these qualities into our Business MiFi offerings."

## PTCL extends partnership with DHA Karachi for provision of ICT services

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has inked an agreement for Integrated Communication Technology (ICT) services and infrastructure development with DHA City Karachi (DCK). The partnership is aimed towards developing DHA City Karachi as the first Smart City of Pakistan. Walid Irshaid, President and CEO PTCL while speaking at the occasion said that "We are pleased to extend cooperation and partnership with Defense Housing Authority. This strategic partnership is geared towards meeting the higher bandwidth and telecommunications needs of the first smart city in Pakistan". Administrator DHA Brig Muhammad Abdullah congratulated PTCL for becoming the partner of DHA in making the first Smart City project of the country. He said that the event was yet another landmark towards developing DHA City Karachi as a planned, sustainable and futuristic city of international stature.



## REGIONAL NEWS

### Telecom Egypt to supply services to Al-Futtaim Group

Telecom Egypt announced concluding a cooperation agreement with Al-Futtaim's Real Estate Group to supply the latter's project, "Cairo Festival City", with telecommunications, data transfer and "Triple Play" services, using advanced fiber optics technology. "Telecom Egypt seeks to meet its clients' needs in high-tech services at competitive prices," said Mohamed El Nawawy, the company's managing director and executive officer. El Nawawy mentioned that the use of fiber optic technology allows the company to provide the highest quality voice services and enables clients to access the highest internet speeds, which reach 10GB/s. Tamer Gad Allah, head of the business operations unit at Telecom Egypt, stated that this agreement would provide different packages of telecommunication services for the "Cairo Festival City" project. On the other side, Managing Director of Al-Futtaim's Real Estate Development Dr. Mohamed Al-Mekawy stated that the agreement reached with Telecom Egypt was based "on a careful market study to determine the largest and most efficient service providers, not only in Egypt, but on a regional level".

### Souq.com bags Digital Business of the Year at Arabian Business Startup Awards

The region's leading e-commerce portal and online megastore Souq.com recently won the 'Digital Business of the Year' category at the first ever Arabian Business Startup Awards.

The awards ceremony, which aims to recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements of the country's small business sector, took place recently at Dubai's Emirates Towers and featured the attendance of the UAE's finest entrepreneurs and Startups. The awards were selected by a judging panel, which created each shortlist based on a number of different factors including turnover, influence, growth, importance to the business ecosystem, and more. Ronaldo Mouchawar, CEO of souq.com, collected the Digital Business of the Year award on behalf of the company. Upon receiving the award, Ronaldo said: "It is a great honor to be recognized for our leadership in the digital business industry in the UAE, and we will strive to continue to innovate and provide our customers with the best e-commerce services in the Arab World."

### IT instrumental in growth and transformation of SMEs in Oman

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are slowly increasing their importance in Oman's economy and the information technology sector's role in this steady transformation cannot be discounted. A myth abounds that IT investments require purchases of hardware, software, modern networks and personnel with necessary skill sets to operate. The Information Technology Authority (ITA) has launched a number of IT-related infrastructure projects, with one core component being the ICT SME Development Program, a business development initiative designed to create a database of ICT-related SMEs in Oman.



"Among the main objectives of the program are the development of a proper database of SMEs in Oman and providing enough exposure to SMEs in order for them to get acquainted with the key names in the public and private sectors. Having a ready database of ICT-related SMEs will definitely secure the wider interest of the larger IT companies to start considering and utilizing ICT-related SME services in the categories of software, hardware, security and network," says Hassan Fida al Lawati, team leader of projects at ITA's digital society development division.

## Nepal Telecom introduces fresh tariff for public Wi-Fi services

Nepal Telecom (NT), the government-owned telecommunication service provider, has fixed a fresh tariff rate for its public Wi-Fi Internet services that it had been offering free of cost so far. As per the fresh tariff rate, the consumers will have to pay Rs 10 Nepalese currency (0.10 US\$) to use the Wi-Fi for an hour, according to the NT officials. As a trial, the telecom service provider had offered free Wi-Fi services to promote its Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMAX) technology from September this year in Kathmandu. The places where the NT had provided free internet service are, Tribhuvan International Airport, Bir Hospital, Teaching Hospital, Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square Dabali, Kathmandu Metropolitan City office, Gangalal Hospital, Central Investigation Bureau and the NT office. The NT previously had sought government's approval for introducing the tariff rate. Meanwhile, though the tariff will be imposed for the internet consumers in Kathmandu, the same will be applicable to the consumers from other parts of Nepal once the NT expands its services.

## WhatsApp-based mobile services in Pakistan

VimpelCom Ltd. a leading global provider of telecommunications services and holding company of Mobilink announced a partnership with WhatsApp Inc., the operator of WhatsApp application and services, to deliver consumer offers based on the WhatsApp application and services for VimpelCom customers around the world. The partnership with WhatsApp will enable Mobilink to provide enhanced internet communication services within its bundled tariff plans, and to drive mobile internet usage and revenues. Mobilink customers will enjoy innovative mobile messaging and social offers including full WhatsApp functionalities like group messaging, sharing pictures, video messages, voice messages, contacts and locations. Commenting on the announcement Moied Javeed, Director Marketing Mobilink, said: "Mobilink's partnership with WhatsApp is in line with Mobilink's consistent strategy of offering innovative solutions to our customers. We are confident that this platform will offer the best experience of mobile internet for our customers complementing their choice of using Pakistan's largest data network."

## Sri Lanka to launch mobile e-payment services

In a bid to extend electronic payment services to the unbanked population, the ICT Agency (ICTA) has revealed plans to integrate the country's largest mobile money service to the Lanka Gate – the eServices portal of the government of Sri Lanka. EzCash, a mobile money service operated by

Dialog Axiata PLC, allows citizens to perform a wide array of financial transactions without the requirement of opening up a bank account. Due to its popularity, more than a million customers signed up for the service less than six months after it was officially launched. "This is an important milestone for us as we pave the way towards financial inclusion", said Professor P. W. Epasinghe, Chairman of ICTA. "It is a known fact that mobile penetration in Sri Lanka is far greater than any other electronic medium. Therefore leveraging on mobile devices as a payment mechanism for government transactions would pave the way for citizens who do not have credit/debit cards, to obtain government services" he added.

## Tunisia and Microsoft discuss ICT partnership

In a statement, the President of the Republic of Tunisia revealed that the government and the American company Microsoft discussed the technology partnership that it plans to establish. After this meeting, the statement said it was agreed that the computer programs of the administration, ministries of education, higher education, vocational training and employment will be developed by Microsoft. Both parties agreed on the need to take advantage of these ICT programs in terms of digital economy, technology transfer and training for at least three years. For efficiency, the government and Microsoft have advocated the need to create a steering committee within the Ministry of ICT. It shall, in addition to ensuring an exemplary operation, identify new partnership opportunities with multinational technology.

## Amman tops regional peers in level of ICT services

Amman has the highest level of ICT services in the region, but the city was below the regional average in terms of ICT infrastructure, according to the Ericsson MENA City Index Report. Amman has the highest level of ICT services in the region, representing 4.6 per cent of the country's GDP against a regional average of 3.5 per cent, while 7 per cent of the population is employed within the technology sector against a regional average of 4 per cent, according to the report. "This is the right time for Jordan to do more towards enhancing ICT infrastructure amidst strong competition by other countries in the region," Tarek Saadi, president of the Ericsson in North Middle East Unit, said in a recent interview with The Jordan Times. Together with high levels of ICT presence within public sectors, Amman has demonstrated the ability to bring day-to-day benefits to the city across a variety of platforms. This includes online healthcare processes and procedures, as well as business incubators for start-ups within the ICT industry. A total of 69 indicators were used to measure the total triple-bottom-line benefits for each city, looking at the benefits on the city in question, on its citizens and on business. The indicators can be categorized into two dimensions: cities' ICT maturity and benefits from ICT investments from a social, economic and environmental point of view.



## REGULATORY & POLICY NEWS

### Milestone reached at mid-2013: Fixed broadband subs 28.4 million

Germany's telecoms regulator, the Federal Network Agency (FNA), has reported that the number of fixed broadband connections totaled 28.4 million at 30 June 2013, up from 28.0 million six months earlier and corresponding to a household penetration rate of around 71%. DSL connections accounted for 23.3 million of the mid-2013 total (unchanged from end-2012), while cable modem broadband subscribers grew from 4.4 million at 31 December 2012 to 4.8 million six months later. At the same date, fiber-to-the-building (FTTB) and fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) connections stood at around 184,000 and 56,000, respectively, while satellite broadband access totaled roughly 30,000. According to the FNA, alternative providers to the incumbent Deutsche Telekom (operating as Telekom Deutschland) claimed a 56% share of fixed broadband connections at mid-2013, an increase of around one percentage point from six months earlier. Mobile telephony subscribers reached 113.6 million as at 30 June 2013, corresponding to a population penetration of 141.0%.

### HAKOM aims to reduce mobile frequency charges by 30%

Croatia's telecoms regulator HAKOM announced that it intends to cut the fee for the use of mobile network frequencies by over 30% as part of plans for broader fee reductions, Seenews reported. HAKOM has launched a public consultation on the proposals.

### Senegal mobile market tops 12.721m at end-September as Espresso leapfrogs Tigo

Senegal's industry regulator the Telecommunications and Post Regulatory Authority (L'Autorite de Regulation des Telecommunications et des Postes, ARTP) has published its market observatory for the three months ending 30 September 2013, showing growth in the mobile sector eased to 0.47% in the period – compared with 3.72% growth in April-June – to reach 12.721 million. In terms of market share, Orange Senegal remains the dominant carrier with a market share of 58.34% at the end of September, equivalent to around 7.422 million users. In a surprise development though, erstwhile number three player, Sudatel Telecom (Espresso), leapfrogged second-placed Tigo Senegal to secure a 20.92% share of the market with 2.661 million subscribers, thanks to net additions of 44,190 connections in the period under review. The continued growth came on top of net new additions of 479,000 in March-June this year as Espresso closed in on Millicom International Cellular (MIC's) Tigo unit. By contrast, the MIC unit shed a net 43,131 lines in the third quarter for a total of 2.638, a market share of 20.74%. According to ARTP's figures, cellular penetration stood at 93.77% at end-September up from 93.60% in June. It also confirmed that pre-paid usage still dominates the Senegalese mobile market, accounting for 99.3% of all connections by the start of October.

## LTE expansion: Operators given year-end deadline to improve quality of service

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has reportedly warned telecoms operators to improve the quality of their services by 31 December 2013. According to local newspaper This Day, a number of companies – including the four GSM operators MTN Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, Etisalat Nigeria and Globacom Limited – have been informed that they will face fines or could be suspended from selling new SIM cards if they fail to meet key performance indicators (KPIs) by the deadline.

## APEK confirms 4G bids due by February, auction in March

Slovenia's Agency for Post and Electronic Communications (APEK) has confirmed its timetable for conducting the country's upcoming 4G multi-band simultaneous license auction of 800MHz, 900MHz, 1800MHz, 2100MHz and 2600MHz spectrum. On APEK's website the watchdog reaffirmed that it will publish the call for tender this month – having missed a previously mooted date of 13 December whilst awaiting adoption of requisite legislation – ahead of a February 2014 deadline for accepting bids, and the auction to take place the month after – with 25 March the previously slated date for bidding to commence. Frequency licenses will be issued before the end of June 2014. TeleGeography's GlobalComms Database notes that in September 2013 Slovenia's national frequency allocation plan entered force allowing technology- and service-neutral operations in all relevant bands.

## Spanish fixed broadband connections up 5.8% in year to end-October 2013

Spain's Comision Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia (CNMC) has revealed that, with broadband accesses having risen by 106,838 in October 2013, the most since January 2010, total fixed broadband lines exceeded twelve million for the first time. According to the regulator, as at end-October 2013 there were a total of 12.104 million fixed broadband lines in operation, representing a year-on-year increase of 5.8%. Notably, the CNMC highlighted the fact that of the 106,838 lines added in October, almost a third (34,122 or 32%) were fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) connections; at the end of the period under review FTTH broadband lines in operation totaled 543,438, up 88.7% against end-October 2012. Further, according to the regulator's data, 74% of new broadband lines (79,244) were activated by alternative operators, while cable operators accounted for 13,053 of the new connections in the month. By comparison, fixed line incumbent Telefonica Espana (Movistar) added 14,541 broadband lines in October 2013. Fixed voice lines also rose for the second month in a row, thanks to gains in the residential sector, where 32,996 new connections helped offset a 2,204 drop in fixed lines in the business sector.

## 2G spectrum auction applicants list to be released on January 7

The Department of Telecom (DoT) will release the list of applicants in the 2G spectrum auction on January 7, while the final list of approved bidders will be published on January 16. Cutting down the proposed 60-day process to 42 days for

sale of telecom airwaves, the Department of Telecom issued the main document - Notice Inviting Application - to start spectrum auction from January 23. "The award of Spectrum in 1800MHz and 900MHz band shall be conducted as a single process. A common Notice has been issued only for the sake of convenience," The NIA said. The last date for submission of applications by interested companies is January 4. DoT will hold a pre-bid conference on December 20 and last date for companies to seek clarifications on rules stated in 'Notice Inviting Application' is December 28, the NIA said. As per the initial proposal, DoT had sought 60 days' time to start auction from the date cabinet decides on the spectrum base price and the NIA was to be issued after 15 days of the decision. The DoT has, however, issued the NIA within 3 days of the Cabinet putting its stamp on the minimum price for two sets of 2G spectrum- 1800 MHz band and 900 Mhz.

## Australian regulator proposes to control SMS termination costs

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission says that it plans to continue regulating the termination of calls on mobile phone networks, and is also proposing to regulate the termination of SMS messages for the first time. The ACCC is required to review the scope of its regulation of the mobile terminating access service (MTAS) before June 2014. The last review was conducted in 2009. The ACCC has regulated this service since 1997. The ACCC received information during its inquiry that suggests that regulation should be extended to SMS termination services. Mobile network operators control the delivery of SMS messages in the same way that they control the connection of calls. However, unlike the regulated termination charges for mobile calls, the wholesale charge for sending SMS between networks has remained unchanged for a number of years. "The ACCC is concerned that mobile network operators may be exercising monopoly power over access to their networks to keep wholesale SMS rates significantly above costs," ACCC Chairman Rod Sims said.

## MCMC gets remedy proposals from 2 cellular companies

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has received remedy proposals from two cellular companies wanting to rectify their plans following complaints regarding capacity and speed of their 3G services. Its chairman Datuk Mohamed Sharil Mohamed Tarmizi said the commission had issued warnings to less than five companies and had received replies from two companies involved in the wireless business. It was reported that the regulator had issued stern warnings to cellular companies that are providing 3G services on lower-than-agreed bandwidth, causing deterioration in the quality of 3G services. Mohamed Sharil said the number of people using smartphones had increased by between 30 per cent and 40 per cent year-on-year; therefore, the cellular companies should invest more to give better services to their customers. He said most of the 3G players are using the 900 megahertz (MHz) and 1,800MHz frequency bands to roll out 3G services instead of the primary 2,100MHz band meant for 3G.





## A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN THE SAMENA REGION

### Active Consultations & Invitations for Feedback

#### Oman

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) invites views and comments on the Public Consultation on "BULRIC Modeling". TRA seeks, through the public consultation, to provide an opportunity to all stakeholders to give their views and comments on the new legislation. The TRA encourages respondents to support all comments with relevant argument and if relevant; data, analysis, benchmarking studies and information based on the national situation, or on the experience of other countries, to support their comments. When providing comments, respondents are requested to indicate the question number or section number to which their comments correspond. The Authority has prepared specific questions for intending respondents to address. The TRA may give greater weight to comments supported by appropriate argument and, if relevant, evidence. [tra.gov.om](http://tra.gov.om)

#### Qatar

ictQATAR has issued a Public Consultation document on Telecommunications Consumer Protection Policy. The Policy outlines the telecommunications operators' existing and new consumer protection obligations, including a requirement to make available a simple summary of every retail offer, some minimum contractual terms which restrict an operator's ability to impose inappropriate terms on consumers, and new obligations to help customers with disabilities. The policy also includes a strengthened system for monitoring and enforcing compliance with the rules, and provision for a dispute resolution process that is independent of operators. [ict.gov.qa](http://ict.gov.qa)

ictQATAR has issued a Public Consultation document on National Numbering Plan Review. The document describes the key changes proposed by the Regulatory Authority like:

- Short Access Codes
- Freefone / value-added services
- Allocation block size
- Level 9 designation and allocation block size
- Quarantine Period
- Regulatory Fees on Numbers

The Regulatory Authority has also published a draft of the revised NNP Plan and it is attached with the consultation document. The National Numbering Plan (NNP) is intended to provide a long-term framework within which Qatar's telephone National Numbering Plan may continue to be developed for the benefit of all public telecommunications customers in the country. [ict.gov.qa](http://ict.gov.qa)





## COUNTRY-WISE POLICY & REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

### Afghanistan

**Board Chairman: Mr. Abdul Wakil Shergul**

[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)]

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to block the roaming facility of Afghan mobile users on Pakistan's wireless networks, citing security concerns. The court claimed to receive authentic reports that an 'enemy state' and its secret agencies held controlling shares in cellcos in neighboring Afghanistan, and that the use of Afghan SIMs on Pakistani networks represented a serious threat to the nation's security. The court ruled that roaming facilities with Afghanistan would be lifted after an agreement had been signed between the two governments. Even then, only post-paid users would be permitted to roam, and would be subject to strict identification and verification rules. The bench claimed that around one million Afghan SIMs were in use in the parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and were being used in criminal activities. The court also directed the police and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to take measures against wireless operators that were not enforcing SIM registration and activation protocols. For its part, the PTA may prove unable to follow up on the order. The watchdog has been inactive since the start of this year, when the three most senior officials at the regulator left office (one was ineligible for the position and was sacked, the other two reached the ends of their terms and resigned); subsequent government interference has kept the seats vacant. Afghanistan's four cellcos, Telecom Development Company Afghanistan (Roshan), MTN Afghanistan, Etisalat Afghanistan and Afghanistan Wireless Communications Company (AWCC), are majority

owned by the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (Switzerland), MTN Group (South Africa), Etisalat (UAE) and Telephone Systems International (US) respectively. (October 3, 2013) The International News

### Algeria

**Chairperson: Ms. Zohra Dourdour**

[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]

Algerian mobile operator Djazzy, a subsidiary of Orascom Telecom Algeria (OTA) has reportedly failed to obtain a re-conveyance from the Bank of Algeria, which is one of the key requirements behind the award of a 3G license in the country. The company reportedly failed to address an outstanding debt of US\$193 million in tax relief. If Djazzy fails to receive clearance from the bank, the country's watchdog the Autorite de Regulation de la Poste et des Telecoms (ARPT) could ban the cellco from receiving a final 3G license, unless otherwise advised by the government. Earlier this month the ARPT issued provisional 3G licenses to all three applicants – Mobilis, Nedjma and Djazzy – after evaluating their financial and technical proposals. Final licenses, incorporating the relevant coverage obligations, are expected to be granted after the payment of license fees, satisfaction of the conditions indicated in the tender documents and receipt of clearances and approvals from various state authorities. (October 23, 2013) Agence Ecofin

Algerian telecoms watchdog the ARPT has issued provisional 3G licenses to all three applicants Mobilis, Nedjma and Djazzy after evaluating their financial and technical proposals. Final licenses, incorporating the relevant coverage obligations, are expected to be granted after the payment of license

fees, satisfaction of the conditions indicated in the tender documents and receipt of clearances and approvals from various state authorities. Under the terms set out by the concessions, the operators will be given territorial exclusivity for a period not exceeding one year. (October 15, 2013) Agence Ecofin

The Conseil des participations de l'Etat (CPE), the agency managing the Algerian government's stake in state-owned business entities, is reportedly planning to sell the shares of ten nationalized companies, including telecoms service provider Algerie Telecom (Mobilis), to the public. The government wants to give a strong signal in favor of boosting the stock market and the creation of a market capital by the initial public offering (IPO) of a total of 40 state-owned companies by the end of 2015. (October 8, 2013) Algeria News

A bill on telecom was finally withdrawn from the study before the National People's Congress (NPC) who examined without adopting it in February. The text should amend and supplement the Act of August 5, 2000 took seven years of discussion to arrive on the table members. For Younis Gar expert in information technology and communication, "this is a first in history. We never saw a bill landed on the desk of the NPC, to be debated and challenged and removed. "In April, the" Regulatory Authority for Post and Telecommunications (ARPT) had expressed reservations about the bill because it would have spent a "weakening of the regulation." Indeed, the new text planned to remove certain powers to control such as the development of specifications for operators. For Lakhdar Benkhalef, MP and member of the parliamentary committee on transport, transmission and telecommunications, Algeria has still lagged behind "in the field of telecommunications." If passed, the bill would have allowed the implementation of portability, already applied in some countries in Africa and the Maghreb, have started before the national roaming, international, advocated Derdouri Zhora, Minister of ICT, the advent of unbundling which covers the opening of the local telephone network to competition and mobile virtual network. According to Farid Farah, ICT expert, the withdrawal of the bill "will exacerbate the delay of 3G." Faced with this threat, the Algerian Consumer Federation announced that it will call for a sit-in in front of the Ministry of Post and ICT on December 5, if 3G is not launched as planned. (October 7, 2013) agenceecofin.com

## Bahrain

### Chairman: Dr. Mohammed Al Amer

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Zain Bahrain has contracted Sweden's Ericsson for a 4G network transformation, including deployment of LTE technology across the existing network, plus pre-paid charging solutions, consulting and systems integration services. Ericsson will replace existing 2G and 3G radio network equipment while adding 4G functionality with the Ericsson RBS 6000 family of base stations. The vendor will also deploy Evolved Packet Core technology with triple-access SGSN-MME and Evolved Packet Gateway based on Ericsson SSR 8000 family of Smart Services Routers as well as MINI-LINK PT and SP for IP backhaul. As a part of the agreement, Zain will also implement Ericsson's Charging System for pre-paid subscribers as 'phase one' of the convergent charging and billing in one solution (CBIO). Zain Bahrain launched commercial LTE services in April this year, and last month was awarded additional frequencies for 4G expansion. (October 31, 2013) telegeography.com

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) issued the 5th edition of the ITU Measuring the Information Society (MIS) report. The report features two benchmarking tools to measure the development and performance of the information society: the ICT Development Index (IDI) and the ICT Price Basket (IPB). The 2012 IDI captures the level of ICT developments (relating to access and use of ICT and ICT skills) in 157 economies worldwide and compares progress made during the last year. Based on the report, Bahrain achieved the 8th highest increase in IDI value during 2012, with the ITU referring to Bahrain as one of the most dynamic countries based on the IDI 2012. Bahrain also ranked 3rd in the Arab region in 2012 and ranked 39 globally (which represents an improvement on 2011). Regarding the ICT Price Basket, Bahrain is also mentioned favorably in relation to the pricing of mobile broadband services. Bahrain ranked 11 out of 110 countries in terms of mobile broadband affordability, with mobile-broadband prices below 1 per cent of monthly GNI per capita. Commenting on the Report, TRA Chairman said that this is a great achievement for Bahrain on a Global level and we are happy to see that the telecommunication services are well penetrated and affordable in Bahrain. The availability of high-quality and cost-effective telecommunications services is one of the important indicators for attracting foreign investment into Bahrain. The result of this report and other indicators reports are evidence of how we are continuing to achieve the TRA's Vision of having 'A communications environment that enriches the social and commercial fabric of the Kingdom of Bahrain'. (October 24, 2013) tra.org.bh

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) is developing its own costing and pricing model for telecom services, revealed TRA during a seminar. Senior TRA officials, as well as specialists from Batelco, Zain, Viva, Etisalat, Kalaam, United Links, Elephant Talk, nue-tel, and the Bahrain Internet Exchange took part in the seminar that focused on Long Run Incremental Cost (LRIC). British consultancy BWCS' telecom expert Peter Cartwright said bottom-up LRIC models are used to establish efficient costs in telecoms price regulation. "The global economy is transitioning into a knowledge economy as an extension of the information society," Inception Consultancy managing director Ahmed Al Sari said. "Telecommunications is a means to access information and it is important for all stakeholders to be a part of the discussion." Two day seminar was organized by Inception Consultancy. (October 8, 2013) TradeArabia News Service

## Bangladesh

### Chairman: Sunil Kanti Bose

[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]

The number of mobile subscribers in Bangladesh reached more than 109 million in August with 12 million new users in the first eight months of this year, official data showed. According to Bangladesh's Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) the total number of mobile users in the country which has a population of more than 153 million -- reached 109.349 million in August. (October 9, 2013) Xinhua

Bangladeshi WiMAX operators Banglalion Communications and Augere Wireless Broadband (Qubee) have been given permission by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to upgrade their networks to faster TD-LTE services. Qubee will launch a trial LTE-based service this year after upgrading its network. The BTRC disclosed that it initially granted approval for Qubee to upgrade to LTE at a meeting on September 15, while the



regulator published amendments to its licensing guideline on its website on October 3, allowing all Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) licensees to provide LTE-based services. The amendments to the BWA guidelines also keep open the option to issue more mobile WiMAX/LTE licenses in a bid to widen broadband internet connectivity across the country. Dhaka-based fixed-wireless WiMAX operator Ollo has already applied for the country's third BWA license (which permits mobile WiMAX, and now LTE based services too), and is widely expected to succeed in its application as the regulator aims to introduce additional providers to the market to increase coverage and penetration. BTRC chairman Sunil Kanti Bose also confirmed that the regulator gave permission along with a no objection certificate (NOC) to Banglalion on October 3 after a formal request from the operator to provide LTE-based services. (October 8, 2013) Daily Star

## Egypt

**Executive President: Dr. Amr Badawi**

[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]

According to data released by the Egyptian government, the number of Egyptian internet users is estimated to have grown by around 15% to some 36 million in June this year, compared with 31.21 million during the same period last year. Mobile subscriptions reached 96.8 million during the same period of 2013, a 4.7% rise compared with the 92.4 recorded in June of the previous year. This brings the mobile penetration rate in the country to some 116%, up from 113% a year earlier. (October 30, 2013) amiinfo.com

The estimated number of Egyptian Internet users has grown by around 15%, reaching some 36 million in June this year, compared to 31.21 million during the same period last year, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. Out of a population of some 85 million (according to official figures by state-run statistics body CAPMAS), this brings internet penetration to 43% at the end of quarter two, compared to 38% the year before. Mobile subscriptions in Egypt reached 96.8 million during the same period of 2013, a 4.7% increase compared to the 92.4 recorded in June of the previous year. This brings the mobile penetration rate in the country to some 116%, compared to 113% a year earlier. The data confirmed Egypt's move away from landline services in favor of cellular phones, as fixed-line penetration declined to 8.5% in June, down from 10.7% the previous year, and mobile subscriptions accounted for 93% of total telephone service subscriptions in June 2013.

(October 29, 2013) english.ahram.org.eg

## Iran

**Minister of communication & Information Technology:**

[Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC)]

The Communications Minister of Iran has announced that the country's international bandwidth capacity is due to be increased to 100Gbps by December 4, 2013. The project is already underway, with the country adding 10Gbps to its existing 72Gbps capacity. Iran is connected to its neighbors in the Persian Gulf via the Kuwait-Iran and UAE-Iran undersea fiber-optic cable systems. In September 2013 the long-delayed Europe Persia Express Gateway (EPEG) fiber-optic system finally went live, connecting Western Europe to the Middle East. The cable originates in Frankfurt, Germany and traverses Eastern Europe, Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran and the Persian Gulf, before connecting to Muscat in Oman. The total length of the EPEG cable is around 10,000km, including roughly 9,500km of terrestrial cable. (October 21, 2013) Fars News

## Jordan

**Chairman of the Board of Commissioners/CEO: Mr. Mohammad Al Taani**

[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

ICT Minister has criticized the quality of service (QoS) provided by the nation's telcos and threatened to take measures to enforce higher standards of service. The minister described the current level of QoS as 'unacceptable', adding that 'We all suffer because of the [bad] quality at present. We do not want free calling minutes when every minute there is a disruption in the call.' Minister added that the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) will gradually put in place measures to force Umniah, Zain and Orange Jordan to improve service quality. The minister has come under fire for his comments, however, and they were described as 'Exaggerated and unscientific' by Umniah's marketing director, who also claimed that the dropped call rate in Jordan is the lowest in the region. Minister's comments on QoS in Jordan are out of step with the TRC's own reporting, which claims that the cellcos are well within accepted standards. According to the TRC's end-2012 report, Orange Jordan dropped 0.37% of calls, whilst Umniah and Zain dropped 0.33% and 0.31% respectively – the maximum accepted rate for dropped calls is 2%. Network availability was 99.85% for Orange, 99.88% for Zain and 99.99% for Umniah. Orange Jordan's chief financial officer, Raslan Deiranieh, dismissed Minister's accusations: 'The minister's comment is subjective. Services in Jordan are in line with best practices and international standards.' Ahmad Hanandeh, the CEO of Zain Jordan, added to the backlash, commenting that 'the government's remarks are provocative, illogical, merely personal opinion and are misleading to the public.'

(October 29, 2013) The Jordan Times

## Kuwait

**Minister of Communication: Salem Muthayeb Ahmed Al-Utheina**

[Ministry of Communication (MOC)]

Wataniya Telecom has published its financial results for the three months ended September 30, 2013, reporting 3.4% year-on-year drop in revenues to KWD184.456 million (US\$654.68 million) from KWD190.961 million in 3Q12. In the period under review, the company's net profit increased to KWD20.871 million, a 2.5% improvement on the KWD20.361 million reported in the corresponding quarter of 2012, although the net profit attributable to Wataniya decreased marginally by 1.2% to KWD15.3 million over the same period. Wataniya's EBITDA also dropped to KWD69.7 million, a 9.8% decrease from KWD77.3 million reported in 3Q12. Wataniya has also taken strides to improve its operational performance, and as a result the group reported that its consolidated customer base reached 19.7 million by end-September 2013, an annual increase of 4.3%, or 900,000 net additions. In its domestic market, Wataniya's customers decreased by 4.8% to 1.91 million, due to the fierce competition in the telecoms market. Elsewhere, the company experienced healthy growth.

(October 29, 2013) telegeography.com

Strong take-up of the latest ICT products and services are fuelling the future of Kuwait's business development, according to industry businesses, analysts and investors. Driven by high government spending and growing private sector consumption, Kuwait's IT market is projected to grow by 4.1% to KD 263 million in 2013, according to a report by Business Monitor International. Kuwait ranks No. 28 in the world in the percentage of individuals using the Internet at

79.2%, and No. 7 among developing countries, according to the ITU Broadband Commission report "The State of Broadband 2013". On par with the fellow GCC countries, 65.2% of Kuwait's households have Internet access, ranking an impressive No. 11 among the world's developing countries. Thanks to a largely youthful, tech savvy population, Kuwait's mobile penetration is nearly 215% as of June 2013, according to Business Monitor International. The 5th Arab Social Media Report by the Dubai School of Government also reports that Kuwait all Arab countries on Twitter with a penetration rate of nearly 8 percent. Fully attuned to these trends, Kuwait's government is ploughing ahead with strategic ICT focus, providing e-government services on its Kuwait Government Online portal 24/7 in Arabic and English, according to the GCC eGovernment Committee. Recently, the Ministry of Communications launched the Mobile Number Portability, enabling customers to retain their mobile number when switching operators, and the National Assembly also passed a draft law to establish an independent telecommunications commission to oversee the country's mobile, landline, and broadband sectors. Kuwait's thriving ICT profile and capabilities are strongly evidenced by its increasingly prominent presence at GITEX Technology Week. (October 10, 2013) Arab Times

### Lebanon

**Acting Chairman & CEO: Dr. Imad Hoballah**

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Lebanon's Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT) has extended once more the contracts of Kuwait's Zain Group and Egyptian-backed Orascom Telecom Lebanon to manage the two state-owned mobile operators, Touch and Alfa respectively, until the end of December to allow further time for a new Cabinet of Ministers (CoM) to be formed and approve an open tender for new multi-year contracts. The political impasse led to earlier temporary contract extensions given to Zain and the Lebanese branch of Orascom Telecom Media & Technology (owned by Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris) to the end of June and subsequently to the end of September. (October 3, 2013) telegeography.com

### Libya

**Minister: Ossama Sayata**

[(Ministry of Telecommunications & Informatics)]

Libyan authorities are to grant operating license to a third mobile telephone company according to the Libyan local media, quoting the Telecommunications Minister. The minister was quoted as saying that the license will be granted to a privately-owned Libyan or foreign company or a Libyan-foreign operator, adding that the winning company will be made known between three and six months. PANA reports that the minister had recently indicated that the measure followed an agreement reached between the government and the Telecommunications commission of the Libyan Parliament under which a third license will be issued to a privately-owned operator early next year. The two first operating licenses were granted to two government-owned companies al-Madar, established in 1977, and Libyana, launched in 2004. The two companies have 10 million subscribers, the local media indicated.

(October 3, 2013) africanmanager.com

### Morocco

**Director General: M. Azdine El MountassirBillah**

[Agence Nationale de Reglementation des Telecommunications (ANRT)]

Maroc Telecom has published its financial results for the nine months ended September 30, 2013, reporting a 6.9% year-on-year increase in net profit to MAD8.654 billion (US\$1.062 billion), up from MAD8.097 billion reported in 3Q12. The group's revenue for the nine month period, however, declined by 4.7% to MAD21.467 billion, due to lower revenues in its domestic market, partially compensated by 9.5% annual growth in the company's international operations over the same period. Maroc Telecom's EBITDA also decreased by 1.1% to MAD12.383 billion; the slump was attributed to a 6.9% decline in EBITDA in Morocco. In operational terms, Maroc Telecom reported healthy annualized growth of 8.8% for its consolidated customer base, with the total number of customers approaching 36 million mark at end-September 2013. In Morocco, wireless customers increased by 1.6% to 18.31 million, with more than 262,000 net acquisitions during the third quarter; the wireline customer base grew by 8.0% to 1.35 million users, while broadband customers increased by 21.8% y-o-y to 790,000.

(October 31, 2013) telegeography.com

### Nepal

**Chairman: Mr. Digambar Jha**

[Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTR)]

The Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA) is currently reviewing the country's existing telephone numbering plan, as it looks at positive ways to drive growth and development of the nation's telecoms industry. Under the terms of the new National Numbering Plan (NNP), all telephone lines in the mountain country, including landlines, are set to have ten digits, up from nine currently. All mobile phone numbers however, will have a two-digit operator code. Under the current single-digit regime, Nepal is limited to roughly ten million lines per number, but with double-digit codes, operators will be able to distribute more lines.

(October 29, 2013) MyRepublica

The Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) says that the nation's telcos have collectively made advance payments of NPR1.48 billion (US\$15.1 million) in frequency fees to the government, under the country's new spectrum usage policy. The fees relate to the use of radiowave spectrum for 2G and 3G (mobile), WiMAX, very small aperture terminal (VSAT) and satellite telephone services, under the remit of the Telecommunications Radio Frequency Distribution and Pricing Policy (2012), which was finally adopted last year. According to NTA state-owned Nepal Telecom (NT) paid NPR746.4 million and privately owned cellco Spice Nepal Private (Ncell) paid NPR441.7 million. The former has been using its maximum frequency allocation for mobile services in the 800MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands, while Ncell has reportedly been using additional spectrum in the 90MHz and 1800MHz bands for its GSM services. Furthermore, the pair each paid the NTA NPR240 million for usage of 2×10MHz of spectrum for 3G services, while NT (the sole firm offering WiMAX on a commercial basis) paid NPR120 million in frequency fees for this wireless broadband service. Additionally, United Telecom Limited (UTL) handed over NPR45 million, Smart Telecom NPR126 million and Nepal Satellite Telecom (NST) NPR124.4 million, NST has been using an additional 9MHz of frequency, which it has been allocated by the government. However, CG Communications (formerly known as STM Telecom Sanchar)



reportedly failed to pay its fee of NPR19.2 million, and now faces a fine equivalent to 2% of the fees due, and could see its spectrum rights revoked if it fails to pay within six months. (October 28, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

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

(October 8, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Oman

### Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Hamed Al-Rawahi

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Oman has appointed the Gulf state's top lender Bank Muscat to arrange a secondary share sale of a 19% stake in state's telecommunications operator. The government plans to sell the stake, which is expected to raise around US\$600 million, to help boost its non-oil income and fund rising public spending. "Ministry of Finance has decided to appoint Bank Muscat as the financial advisor for selling 27% of its shares in Oman Telecommunication Company, equivalent to 19% of the company's share capital," Omantel said in a bourse statement. (October 29, 2013) [reuters.com](#)

As competition in the telecom service market increases, the Licensees tend to focus more on increasing their competitiveness and customer acquisition. Lately, more tariff bundles and packages have appeared making it difficult for the beneficiaries to compare them to others or understand them. To this end, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) issued Tariff Transparency Guidelines ("the Guidelines") to ensure that all the required tariff information is available for beneficiaries to assist them make informed decisions of what service or plan to subscribe for according to their personal preferences and usage patterns. The Guidelines also enable the beneficiaries to compare their billed usage against the published prices and the services provided. The Guidelines details how to publish the tariff and service details for the services offered by the telecommunications companies operating in the Sultanate. The Guidelines imposes number of conditions on the Licensees to ensure the availability of comprehensive, accurate and updated information that is accessible to all and easy to understand. The Guidelines also impose a number of requirements on the Licensees, of which the most important are taking into consideration the accessibility of the information to their beneficiaries with special needs, the disclosure of all terms and conditions of any service or promotional activity involving a competition and free prizes and not giving the public any information or false expectations about the probability of winning the

competition or prize as well as applying a clear mechanism to identify on net and of off-net calls. The Guidelines also points out the importance of clarifying the minimum call charges, peak times, discount schemes, on-net and off-net calls, extra minutes and credit, subscription plans of calls, minutes or data volume and validity period for credit and all the restrictions and conditions which are applicable to the service offered, as well as have them published and available to the beneficiaries to review at any time through the website, call centers etc., the Licensees also have to provide the beneficiaries with the mechanism to check their 'free' voice, SMS/MMS, or data usage. The beneficiaries also have to be notified before automatically renewing their subscription for any subscription based service prior to the expiration of the subscription, in case they are not willing to renew a particular bundle or service and to give them enough notice period to decide whether they wish to continue with the service or not. The mechanism to unsubscribe from the service has to also be available to the beneficiary. As for Services Supplied on a Free Trial Basis, the Licensee is prohibited from charging the beneficiary for using a service that is provided for free. The Guidelines requires the Licensee to provide an easy mechanism to enable the beneficiary to monitor the consumption of voice minutes, SMS/MMS and data services, and to refrain from increasing the service tariff before 30 working days of notifying the beneficiary which requires the Authority's approval. Any breach to the Guidelines will be investigated by the TRA and a decision will be made to determine the violation and the extent of damage made to the beneficiary and market. Before issuing these Guidelines, a draft was put up for public consultation as per the usual regulatory procedures for issuing regulatory documents by the Authority. (October 21, 2013) [tra.gov.om](#)

## Pakistan

### Chairman: Dr. Syed Ismail Shah

[Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)]

The government will ensure transparency in the bidding of the upcoming spectrum auction of next generation mobile services in Pakistan, said the Minister of State for IT and Telecom. During her visit to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority headquarters she said the ministry has issued the spectrum auction policy and PTA must ensure a timely and successful auction, said a press statement. Chairman PTA apprised the minister of various aspects of spectrum auction in Pakistan. The minister was informed that PTA was making necessary arrangement for the spectrum auction in accordance with the policy directive. The authority has constituted a team of senior officers to finalize the auction process, said the statement. The minister was informed that an advertisement was also published in international and national media to hire consultant(s) of international repute, it said. The next generation services will enable cell phone subscribers to transmit and receive high speed data through their mobile phones, said the statement. High speed data means possibility of video calls, internet browsing, downloading at a much higher speed, and usage of data intensive applications. Secretary IT, Chairman PTA, Member Finance PTA, and senior officers of the IT ministry and PTA were present on the occasion, said the press statement.

(October 25, 2013) [thenews.com.pk](#)

The members of the Competition Consultative Group (CCG) fully supported the stance of the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) against setting up of International Clearing House (ICH) by the telecom regulator Pakistan Telecom Authority (PTA). The CCG raised concerns over setting up

of International Clearing House by PTA. In the CCG meeting Chairman Consumer Association of Pakistan was of the view that the establishment of the ICH is directly linked to the consumer protection. The association would try its level best to file a petition in the court against the establishment of the ICH by the PTA. The consumer associations should place the issue before the judicial fora and try to obtain stay order against the move from the court. He further said that if the decision to establish ICH was not shelved by PTA, the consumer groups would take the matter to court. He fully supported CCP's stand on ICH. The telecom consultant of the CCP pointed out that the aspect of short-term revenue gathering is behind the establishment of the ICH. The whole issue has to be examined taking into account the benefits in the long run. The agenda of the CCG meeting was primarily to brief the participants on CCP's recent initiatives and actions, which included inviting feedback on the proposed establishment of International Clearing House (ICH) on the policy directives issued by the Ministry of Information Technology (MoIT) and the drawbacks to competition concerns as pointed out by CCP in its Policy Notice issued on August 28, 2012. The CCP Chairperson while briefing the participants on the issue of ICH highlighted the CCP concerns, stating the advances that the telecom industry has witnessed as a result of deregulation; growth in volumes, low rates to consumer and more choices as well as better quality of services seems to be negated. The proposed establishment of ICH, she added was not only against Telecom Deregulation Policy 2003, Competition Act, 2010 but also contravene Pakistan's international obligation under General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS). The participants of the Competition Consultative Group unanimously supported CCP's stance in this regard, notable among them was former PTCL's CEO at the time of privatization who stated that "the proposed ICH does not address the core issue of grey traffic. He mentioned that establishment of ICH will increase the arbitrage in the international market (especially from UK and North America, the major call termination markets) and would thus encourage the grey market and the use of VoIP. The setup may improve the revenue of the major telecom players in the short term but may not benefit industry at large and consumers in the long run. He emphasized that this allows quota system to be promoted and the casualties will be merit, entrepreneurship, quality of service and incentive to growth, whereas, this policy will help bigger telecom players more than the smaller LDIs. Dr. Huma Bukhari, the Chairperson of Consumer Association of Pakistan, said that the creation of ICH was an issue of consumers concern and CCP should be fully supportive of its efforts to protect consumers' interest. She said CCP's mandate to promote and protect competition should be respected by all entities including the sector regulators as this practice could spill over to other sectors. She further said the ICH arrangement appeared to be a cartelistic, which is anti-competitive and may harm consumers' interest. The participants of CCG were apprised of the upcoming peer review of the Commission by the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to be carried out by a team led by Mr. Bill Kovacic, former Commissioner in the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC), who is currently professor at George Washington University. The Voluntary Peer Review is impartial and rigorous in nature and is undertaken by competition policy experts from both developed and developing world, having practical experience in implementing competition laws in consultation with UNCTAD staff. This peer review has been volunteered by CCP and the evaluation will

be shared at the next meeting of UNCTAD expected to be held in July next year and to be presented before 152 countries. The UNCTAD Voluntary Peer Review on Competition Policy provides a unique opportunity to review the substantive content of national competition laws and their implementation, to assess the impact of decisions and to examine and draw lessons from concrete experiences of countries implementing competition policies.

(October 21, 2013) breccorder.com

Pakistan's PM has approved plans to restart the nation's long-delayed sale of frequencies for 3G services. The announcement follows appointment of two officials to the most senior positions at sector regulator the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) at the start of this month. The posts of Member Technical, Member Financial and Chairman had been left vacant since January this year following the sacking of the chairman and the retirement of other two chiefs that month, leaving the watchdog unable to operate effectively. With the PTA operational once more, the government has issued a policy directive, instructing the regulator to allocate the spectrum on a technology neutral basis, in a transparent manner and in the shortest timeframe possible. To that end, the PTA has launched a tender for a consultant to advice on the sale. The deadline for the consultancy tender is November 12. The most recent attempt to offer up the frequencies, in 1H 2012, was derailed over suspicions of foul play in the consultant selection process. The government expects the spectrum sale to generate between US\$1 billion and US\$1.5 billion for state coffers. (October 10, 2013) telegeography.com

Ministry of IT has issued policy directive regarding "Spectrum Auction for Next Generation Mobile Services in Pakistan" to PTA on October 7, 2013, said a statement issued by Ministry. Policy Directive was approved by Prime Minister himself. The policy directive pertains to auction of spectrum for next generation mobile services in Pakistan (including 3G and advanced generations). PTA is entrusted to carry out the auction in the most transparent manner in the shortest possible time. In this regard, PTA will hire the services of a consultant. According to the directive, the allocation of the spectrum will be technology neutral and auction will be open for new entrants as well. Also, auction winners will encourage and facilitate local manufacturing, transfer of technology and research and innovation in telecom sector of Pakistan. PTA has informed that auction will be complete by end February 2014. As per policy directive, government has made it mandatory for existing cellular operators to share infrastructure on a cost-sharing basis with new entrants as well as among themselves. The PTA will prepare guidelines in this regard. It may be recalled that a similar framework is already in place but is seldom practiced. According to the policy directives, the consultant to be hired by PTA in next couple of months will identify the number and size of the block to be auctioned considering the market situation. The Frequency Allocation Board has identified 30 MHz paired spectrum in 1.9GHz/2.1GHz band for auction. The new license will be technology neutral and useable for technologies standardized for 3G and advanced generation mobile services. The license will be offered for a period of 15 years. (October 8, 2013) propakistan.pk

First meeting of the Advisory Committee for the auction of spectrum for the next generation of mobile services in Pakistan was held under the chairmanships of the Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. During the

meeting, Ministry of Information Technology submitted the recommendations regarding the policy directive to introduce next generation mobile services in Pakistan. After due consideration the committee finalized the recommendations for approval of the Prime Minister. Minister for Science and Technology Zahid Hamid, Minister of State for Information Technology Ms. Anusha Rehman and senior officials of Ministry of Information Technology, Frequency Allocation Board (FAB) and Chairman PTA Syed Ismail Shah were present on the occasion. Meanwhile, in another meeting, the Committee on Grey Traffic was held under the chairmanship of Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar to review the arrangements made by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to intercept Grey Trafficking. The Committee also discussed rule setting and determination of illegal traffic. The Committee also decided to undertake close study of approvals granted in the past to ensure that none are engaged in illegal/ authorized trafficking. The Committee also decided to setup a call center for facilitating registering of complaints against Grey Traffic. The Committee decided to start a public awareness campaign so that the people are sensitized and their cooperation is solicited to counter Grey Trafficking. (October 4, 2013) nation.com.pk

To move ahead with the auction of multibillion dollar 3G technology, the government has prepared a draft of policy directive by suggesting entry of existing as well as new players, technology transfer, and others measures – which will be tabled before the advisory committee for approval. The Minister of State for Information Technology Ms. Anusha Rehman briefed the Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and apprised parliamentarians that the advisory committee headed by the Finance Minister was the competent forum having larger representation of all stakeholders to approve policy directives for moving towards auction of 3G technologies in Pakistan. “After the issuance of policy directive by the IT ministry, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) will appoint consultant of international repute to come up with best mode of 3G auction,” she said and added that if asked by the consultant for bringing any changes in the policy directives the ministry would be ready to review it with open mind. The draft of policy directive, she said, was prepared by studying experiences of different countries such as Bangladesh and UK to ensure best international practices presentable before the advisory committee. Now the committee will take decision by evolving consensus over the policy, she said. Once all stakeholders agree on the policy, it would be issued over the next few days as soon as the committee holds its meeting for granting its nod. The draft policy directive has suggested spectrum auction by allowing existing and new entrants, transfer of technology, green infrastructure and site sharing mechanism for moving towards the desired objectives. “It would be a national cause to avoid any controversy over this issue as this country needs progressing towards new era of technology to meet with the requirement of 21st century,” she told this scribe after the meeting. After issuance of the policy directive, she said that it would be the domain of the PTA to conduct auction of spectrum of this new technology – which should now be brought into Pakistan for achieving better and prosperous future. (October 3, 2013) thenews.com.pk

## Qatar

### Executive Director: Mr. Greame Gordon

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

Qatari group Ooredoo has reported that in the first nine months of 2013 its consolidated revenue grew by 2.6% year-on-year to QAR25.65 billion (US\$7.04 billion), up from QAR25.0 billion in 9M12. As at September 30, 2013, the group's consolidated customer base stood at 89.6 million (September 2012: 89.2 million), representing year-on-year growth of 0.4%. Group EBITDA in the nine-month period decreased by 3.2% year-on-year to stand at QAR11.29 billion (9M12: QAR11.67 billion). EBITDA margin at the end of Q3 2013 was 44% (down from 47% twelve months earlier). Net profit attributable to Ooredoo shareholders was QAR2.069 billion in January-September 2013, representing a 4% year-on-year decrease from QAR2.156 billion in the same period of 2012; net profit was largely impacted by a QAR466 million foreign exchange loss for the third quarter of 2013. In Qatar, Ooredoo's mobile, fixed line and broadband customer base stood at 2.8 million at the end of the third quarter, up from 2.4 million a year earlier. According to its financial statement, in the nine months ended September 30, 2013 Ooredoo Qatar posted revenues of QAR4.860 billion, up by 4.6% year-on-year from QAR4.645 billion in 9M12, while domestic profit before tax fell by 5.5% to QAR1.108 billion, down from QAR1.173 billion in the first nine months of 2012. Ooredoo also reported that Qatar-only EBITDA decreased by 3.5% year-on-year to QAR2.37 billion in January-September 2013. In other group divisions, as at September 30, 2013, Ooredoo's Indonesian subsidiary Indosat's consolidated customer base stood at 53.8 million (down from 55.7 million one year earlier), while revenue in 9M 2013 increased slightly, by 0.2% year-on-year to QAR6.46 billion (9M 2012: QAR6.44 billion). Indosat's EBITDA decreased by 4.9% year-on-year to QAR3.06 billion in 9M13 (9M12: QAR3.2 billion). In the first three quarters of 2013 the group's Iraqi cellular unit Asiacell posted revenue of QAR5.31 billion (up from QAR5.04 billion a year earlier), representing year-on-year growth of 5.3%. Asiacell's EBITDA in 9M 2013 increased to QAR2.8 billion from QAR2.71 billion in the year-ago period. (October 31, 2013) telegeography.com

Qatari telecoms group Ooredoo is considering a secondary stock market listing in London with the aim of diversifying its investor base and improving the liquidity of its shares, according to a report by. Citing bankers familiar with the matter, the article said that Ooredoo has sent out a request for proposals to banks to study the merits of such a move. Majority state-owned Ooredoo has around 21% of its shares in free float, listed primarily on the Doha Securities Market (since 1998). It is also listed on the Abu Dhabi Securities Market (2002) and has a global depositary receipt (GDR) listing on the London bourse (1999), while in February 2009 it delisted from the Bahrain Stock Exchange (listed 2001) due to low trading volumes. (October 3, 2013) Dow Jones Newswires

## Sri Lanka

### Director General: Mr. Anusha Palpita

[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

Sri Lanka's telecom sector experiencing a pause in its development trajectory, says a recently released report. Following the end of the war in 2009, there were positive signs of a general improvement by 2012/2013 in the country's social and economic well-being and the telecom sector in particular is starting to build a fresh



momentum, according to the report. Pointing out that Sri Lanka's US\$65 billion economy has been reporting strong economic growth of around 7% in 2012 with a record low unemployment rate, the report says that the generally improving market environment has made the country's telecom sector well positioned for continuing vigorous growth. According to the report, the already modern and progressive telecommunications sector is certainly high on the list of priorities for further expansion and development, also fitting well with the government's wider agenda for national development. Sri Lanka has made a good start on expansion and provision of infrastructure that is capable of providing a sophisticated level of telecommunications service to the population throughout the whole country, especially extending infrastructure into the Northern and Eastern provinces giving a high priority for conflict-affected region. However, much still needs to be done to complete the build-out of the necessary national infrastructure, the report says. According to the market report, after a five-year period of strong growth the fixed-line subscriber market has flattened out and then entered into a decline and considerable uncertainty hangs over this segment of the telecom market. The widespread application of the Wireless Local Loop (WLL) platform has been one positive element in a struggling sector, it notes. There was a large concentration of fixed services in the capital Colombo which has a penetration of 35%. In the meantime, the country's mobile telephone services have continued on a positive growth path with the mobile phone quickly becoming a popular and essential service as an effective and efficient alternative to the fixed-line networks. The Sri Lankan mobile market was still growing at an annual rate of around 50% in 2009 in as it headed towards the 60% penetration mark. However, since then subscriber growth has moderated to less than 10% per annum. The four competing mobile operators in Sri Lanka - Dialog Axiata, Mobitel, Etisalat Sri Lanka and Hutchison Lanka - have been joined by a fifth operator, Bharti Airtel Lanka, adding vigor to an already highly competitive market, the report noted. Sri Lanka's mobile market was set to pass 100% subscriber penetration milestone in 2013 with mobile subscriber numbers increasing fourfold in just six years. The Research and Markets report says the development of the internet remains of particular concern for Sri Lanka. "In a country whose population is increasingly undeniably internet savvy and the government rhetoric positively supporting the nation going online, the estimated user penetration remained relatively low coming into 2013," the report noted. Despite signs of an enthusiastic user market, coverage and accessibility have continued to be limited and the sophistication of the available services generally low, it further adds. The level of broadband access has also been of particular concern. By 2012/2013, however, fixed broadband internet services were being supplemented by a rapidly expanding mobile broadband segment.

(October 29, 2013) colombopage.com

## Tunisia

**President: Mr. Hassoumi Zitoun**

[National Telecommunication Commission (INTT)]

The sale of Dubai-based Emirates International Telecommunications' (EIT's) 35% stake in Tunisie Telecom (TT), which is majority owned by the Tunisian state, has been delayed by the nation's political turmoil. The sale process is ongoing, but is expected to take several months, EIT's chief executive Deepak Padmanabhan said, adding that: 'The government has been so far supportive but it is the overall political climate that is the challenge.' Tunisia is in the

midst of its worst political crisis since the overthrow of Ben Ali during the 2011 'Arab Spring', after the assassinations of two left-wing politicians early this year triggered a string of street protests. EIT paid US\$2.25 billion for its stake in TT in 2006, but its holding was valued at just US\$650 million by JP Morgan this July. Thirteen companies have expressed an interest in purchasing the stake, including Turkcell, Libya's LAP Green Networks and South Korea's KT Corp.

(October 24, 2013) Reuters

## United Arab Emirates

**Director General: Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim**

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has announced that the long-awaited introduction of mobile number portability (MNP) in the United Arab Emirates will finally take place by the end of the year. 'An essential element in the health of the UAE's mobile market is the ability of consumers to choose between competing providers,' the TRA's Director General said in a statement, adding: 'MNP will immediately increase competition in the ICT market, expedite the switching process, and do so in a way that directly benefits the consumer.' Having already made the necessary technical procedural adjustments, the country's two mobile licensees, Etisalat and Du, have been instructed by the regulator to enable portability by December. The introduction of MNP in the UAE has encountered numerous delays, the most recent of which saw the TRA suspend the launch of the service indefinitely in September 2011, with the regulator citing technical issues as the reason behind the move. (October 22, 2013) telegeography.com

The UAE had 14.9 million mobile phone users at the end of July, more than seven times the number of landline subscribers and one of the world's highest ratios. The number of GSM subscribers slipped month-to-month by around 14,900 to 14.93 million at the end of July, maintaining a high penetration ratio of nearly 180 per cent for a population of about 8.2 million. Figures by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) showed the number of internet users rose by 7,000 in July to end the month at 1.013 million. Landline subscribers also increased by about 9,000 to exceed two million at the end of that month. The UAE has one of the world's highest mobile phone penetration ratios relative to its population given its high per capita income, advanced GSM services, open market and a general trend by users to own more than one number. (October 2, 2013) zawya.com





## REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SAMENA REGION

### GCC

Governments across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are ramping up their e-government services in order to meet the demands of constituents, according to industry experts. Across the region, e-government has taken off in a big way in recent years, with the GCC eGov Committee highlighting initiatives such as the UAE's "Government Portal" and Dubai's "Smart Government", The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's "Yesser", Qatar's "Hukoomi", Oman's "Omanuna", Kuwait's "Kuwait Government Portal", and Bahrain's "eGovernment Portal". According to the United Nations "2012 Global E-Government Survey", UAE recently witnessed the highest jump in the world e-government development ranking from No. 49 in 2010 to No. 28 in 2012. Dubai's "Smart Government" is one of the country's many e-government success stories, having earned a United Nations Public Service Award earlier this year. ePay transactions grew from 1.89 million in 2010 to 3.32 million in 2012, and mPay transactions from 19,433 in 2010 to 36,325 in 2012, according to government statistics. With users increasingly being able to access information on their own, Ask Dubai calls dropped from 206,266 in 2010 to 172,018 in 2012, and Ask Dubai emails are down from 5,399 in 2010 to 1,601 in 2012. Fady Kassatly, a specialist on technology in the public sector for consulting firm Booz & Co., said: "E-Government allows the delivery of services in a much more efficient way than traditional government offices and government service counters. It has been at the forefront of every government agenda in the GCC, and the UAE in particular over the last decade." The region now set to expand on its e-government credentials to embrace mobile in a big way, with the Government of Dubai again

leading the charge. In May, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, announced the launch of the Middle East's first mGovernment service, joining a select group of countries actively pioneering greater government interaction via mobile platforms. The service is set to be fully accessible across all government departments in the country within 24 months. Dubai's wholehearted embrace of all things mobile comes as no surprise. According to a recent survey by Google, the UAE has a Smartphone penetration of 62%, one of the highest in the world. The figure is set to rise to 71% by 2016, whereas overall mobile penetration is said to exceed 230%. On average, the GCC's mobile penetration rates are estimated at 180%, higher than that of Russia at 160%, US at 108% and China at 78%. "Since Dubai's m-government announcement, there has been an unprecedented momentum created across all government levels in the UAE to support this vision. This has not only affected the UAE government, but other governments in the region are also very seriously evaluating the mobile channel to offer their government services," Kassatly said. Mukesh Chulani, who studies e-government in the Middle East and Africa at the IT research firm IDC, agreed. "In the MENA region, governments need to sync process, people and policies to form a connection with citizens," he said. "A major focus is on building awareness, and mobile is the best way for citizens to interact with governments. Mobile is not a passing trend." The growing influence of e-government and the shift to mobile will be top of the agenda at this year's GITEX Technology Week. Featuring ministries, regulatory authorities, free zones and CERTs, GITEX Technology Week's Government Sector commands the highest government participation of any trade event in the region. This year will

be the event's biggest yet, with government participation up 25 percent compared to 2012. (October 7, 2013) [zawya.com](#)

## OVUM

The golden age of telecoms growth and prosperity is waning, according to Ovum. New research from the global analyst firm predicts that global connections will grow by a CAGR of less than 4% between 2012 and 2018, while global revenues will grow at less than half that rate. As growth slows and ARPU continues to decline, operators will need to find new ways to serve customers more profitably, not just focus on increasing subscriber numbers, says Ovum. According to Ovum's figures global mobile connections will grow from 6.5 billion in 2012 to reach 8.1 billion by 2018, while annual mobile service revenues will rise from US\$968bn to US\$1.1tn. However, global service revenues will contract in 2018 for the first time in the history of the mobile industry, declining from 2017 levels by 1% or US\$7.8bn. As such, over the next five years, innovation in services, tariffs, business models, network operations, and partnerships will be key revenue-generating strategies. Sara Kaufman, analyst for Industry, Communications and Broadband at Ovum and author of the report, said, "Growth will continue to slow in most markets around the world. When you compare connection and revenue CAGRs, it is clear that mobile operators are facing a new reality: they must do much more with much less. Consolidation will help to alleviate some market pressures and is inevitable in many markets. But the need for revenue stabilization is becoming paramount for a sustainable future." According to Kaufman, operators in developed markets face particularly challenging times. Connections in Western Europe will grow by a CAGR of less than 1%, while revenues will decline at a CAGR of 1.48%. Several other developed markets will see year-on-year revenue declines in 2018, including the US, which will begin to show signs of its maturity. Much of the revenue decline will be driven by falling ARPU, which will continue to decline across all markets by a 2.7% global CAGR between 2012 and 2018. The greatest decline will be in the Middle East, where ARPU will fall by a 2.5% CAGR. However, Kaufman noted, "ARPU cannot fall indefinitely. In markets with very low ARPU, it will reach a floor and then stabilize." Despite the global trend, some growth opportunities will still exist, particularly in Africa, where revenues are expected to grow at a CAGR of 4.2% throughout the forecast. No other region in the world will see revenue growth at a CAGR above 3% during the forecast period. Select markets in Asia-Pacific and South & Central America will also drive growth over the next five years. Africa will also have the fastest-growing connections, increasing at a CAGR of 5.6% between 2012 and 2018, and ending the period with just over 1 billion connections. Growth in Asia-Pacific will slow, but this region will remain the biggest contributor of new connections, driven largely by China, India and Indonesia. Connections in this region will total 4.2 billion in 2018 and will account for 57% of net additions globally through the forecast period.

(October 11, 2013) [ovum.com](#)

## United States

The Federal Communications Commission is taking the next step in insuring interoperability across the lower 700 MHz band, having approved a report and order on the controversial subject. In a statement this afternoon, the FCC said terms of the order "serve the public interest by encouraging efficient use of spectrum and enabling consumers to enjoy the

benefits of greater competition." "The standards developed by several wireless providers, along with the Competitive Carriers Association, will also give consumers more choice in using their devices with large and small carriers alike and will promote widespread deployment of mobile broadband services, especially in rural areas," the FCC noted. The order will address interference concerns from the D- and E-Block licenses impeding on operations in the lower A-Block that a number of rural carriers currently control. The issue was pushed to the forefront by the establishment of the Band Class 17 standard that included spectrum licenses in the lower B- and C-Blocks, but did not include the lower A-Block. AT&T was a major proponent of Band Class 17 noting that interference concerns in the lower A-Block could cause service issues for customers if that band was included in the standard. A separate standard – Band Class 12 – was set up to include the lower A-, B- and C-Blocks. AT&T last month it would be willing to work the FCC and current lower 700 MHz license holders on a solution to disputed interference concerns. In a filing with the FCC, AT&T said it "is committed to supporting lower 700 MHz interoperability for all paired spectrum in the lower 700 MHz band if certain conditions are met." Those conditions included harmonization on rules governing maximum signal power for spectrum in the E-Block; and the eventual implementation of network technology allowing for support of both Band Class 12 and Band Class 17. The FCC in its latest statement said it would take AT&T up on that offer. "The order also proposes to modify AT&T's B- and C-Block licenses to incorporate the commitments of AT&T and makes changes in construction requirements and deadlines for various E-Block licensees in the Lower 700 MHz band," the FCC stated. Dish Network, which is a substantial holder of 700 MHz E-Block spectrum licenses, came out in favor of the FCC move. "We applaud the FCC, under Chairwoman Clyburn's leadership, for their extraordinary efforts in bringing the industry together to reach a consensus on interoperability, which is reflected in today's order," the company noted in a statement. "Dish worked cooperatively with the commission to help achieve the important benefits of interoperability and to unlock additional mobile broadband spectrum for the benefit of all Americans." Interoperability in the lower 700 MHz spectrum bands revolves around interference concerns between television transmissions operating in channel 51 adjacent to the A-Block uplink channel and from the unpaired E-Block slice of 700 MHz spectrum operating adjacent to the A-Block downlink channel. AT&T has contended that this interference impacts use of the A-Block license and thus pushed to have the Band Class 17 standard approved that includes just the lower B- and C-Block 700 MHz licenses. Opponents to AT&T's plans have noted that interference is not an issue and that the lower A-Block licenses should be included with the B- and C-Block to form Band Class 17. This group includes a number of wireless carriers that acquired A-Block spectrum licenses in 2008, but have been unable to tap into a larger ecosystem to acquire equipment at lower prices as well as have been unable to tap into potential nationwide roaming agreements. (October 28, 2013) [rcrwireless.com](#)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has confirmed that it has delayed the start of the 1900MHz H block spectrum auction by eight days, as a result of the 16-day government shutdown earlier this month. The auction was scheduled to commence on January 14, 2014, but will now begin on January 22 instead. In a public notice the watchdog confirmed: 'These schedule changes are necessary to give potential bidders and commission staff additional



time for planning and preparation'. The auction represents the regulator's first major spectrum sale since 2008. The bidding process, which is designated as 'Auction 96', will comprise frequencies in the 1915MHz-1920MHz (Lower H block) and 1995MHz-2000MHz (Upper H block) bands. The spectrum will be auctioned in 176 individual Economic Areas across the country. (October 23, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Canada

Industry Canada has published the list of provisionally qualified bidders for the country's upcoming 700MHz 4G mobile license auction scheduled for January 2014. However, a deadline for receipt of the remaining 95% of pre-auction financial deposits is on October 29, and the publication of the final list of qualified bidders will be on November 8. Auction bidding opens on January 14. Provisionally qualified 14 are: Rogers, Telus and Bell Mobility (the three nationwide mobile incumbents); provincial operators MTS and SaskTel; cablecos (with regional mobile divisions) Videotron and Eastlink (registered as Bragg Communications); cellco Wind Mobile (registered as Globalive Wireless Management Corp); TBayTel (a local full-service telecoms operator in Thunder Bay, Ontario); Novus Wireless (an associate of British Columbian fiber triple-play operator Novus Entertainment); communications equipment vendor Vecima Networks (parent of Saskatchewan fixed-wireless internet provider YourLink); 1770129 Alberta Inc (owner of Corridor Communication, a minority shareholder in Albertan rural internet provider Forty Mile Gas Co-op under the CCI Wireless brand); Feenix Wireless (100%-owned by Mobilicity's chairman John Bitove, whose Obelisk investment firm owns a majority voting share and minority equity share in the financially stricken cellco); and private equity firm Catalyst Capital Group (owner of roughly 30% of Mobilicity's senior secured debt). (October 23, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Mexico

Government is said to have agreed to a deal with those companies holding spectrum in the 2.5GHz band under which it will recover a significant portion of such frequencies. The state has struck an agreement with concession holders, including MVS Comunicaciones, which holds a significant portion of the disputed spectrum, to reclaim 68% of the available space in the 2.5GHz band. In August 2012 it was revealed that expiring licenses for spectrum in the 2.5GHz band would not be renewed, with the Mexican government at that date saying that it would seek to reclaim existing concessions in order to allow the frequencies to be refarmed for the deployment of 4G technology. With eleven operators holding a total of 68 concessions in the 2.5 GHz band, the largest loser from the decision looked to be MVS Comunicaciones, which had been embroiled in a long-running dispute with the state over its licenses. As far back as October 2009 regulator COFETEL had begun mulling plans to offer spectrum in the 2.5GHz band, stating that 190MHz in the 2.5GHz band held by MVS could be freed up if it did not renew the operator's licenses for that specific frequency. Amid claims by the regulator that the telco was not making full use of the spectrum, MVS countered that it would seek to oppose any such move. It is understood that nine of the eleven license holders, including MVS, have voluntarily given up at least a portion of their spectrum holdings, while the Secretario de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT) is said to have confirmed that the concessions for the remaining 60MHz of spectrum that was not being returned had been extended for 15 years. Meanwhile, in the wake of the

development the ministry has said that the Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones (Ifetel), the new telecoms regulator created by the country's recent major telecoms reforms, will be able to auction off the recovered spectrum immediately, should it want to. Commenting on the matter, the SCT was cited as saying: 'Recovering this spectrum for the nation strengthens the state's ability to achieve greater broadband service coverage.' (October 15, 2013) [Reuters](#)

## El Salvador

The antitrust body Superintendencia de Competencia (SC) has asked the telecoms regulator to suspend the upcoming auction of nationwide licenses for spectrum in the 1900MHz and 1700MHz/2100MHz frequency bands. Under the rules of the tender, the spectrum will be awarded to the highest bidder, regardless of how much spectrum the company already has, or its current market share. According to the SC, these rules put potential new players at a disadvantage as they face barriers to market entry, thus inhibiting the development of competition in the market. Earlier this month Superintendencia General de Electricidad y Telecom (SIGET) announced that a total of 20MHz in the 1855 MHz-1935 MHz range would be sold off on November 5, alongside a further 20MHz in the 1765 MHz-2165 MHz band. The regulator set a minimum bid price of approximately US\$13.995 million for each of the two 20MHz blocks. (October 21, 2013) [TeleSemana](#)

Telecoms regulator SIGET has published details of the upcoming auction of nationwide licenses for mobile spectrum in the 1900MHz and 1700MHz/2100MHz frequency bands. A total of 20MHz in the 1855MHz-1935MHz range will be sold off, alongside a further 20MHz in the 1765MHz-2165MHz band. Parties interested in participating in the auction are required to register between October 14 and November 1, with bidding due to open on November 5. The regulator has set a minimum bid price of approximately US\$13.995 million for each of the two 20MHz blocks. El Salvador is currently home to five mobile network operators, namely: Telemovil, which operates under the Tigo brand of its international parent Millicom International Cellular (MIC); America Movil-owned CTE Telecom Personal (Claro); Telefonica Moviles (Movistar), the local unit of Spain's Telefonica; Digicel; and integrated Digital Enhanced Network (iDEN) operator Intelfon (RED). (October 10, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Chile

Telecoms regulator SUBTEL has announced a tender for frequencies in the 713MHz-748MHz and 768MHz-803MHz ranges, for the provision of a public data transmission network. Bidding documents will be available from the regulator from October 16 until January 3, 2014, when it will start accepting proposals. (October 4, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Mexico

Mexico's newly created telecommunications regulator is determined to take the measures needed to curb the power of dominant players, its head said, potentially opening the door to tighter regulation of big companies. A constitutional change passed in April gave Mexican regulators the power to declare a company "dominant" in its industry if it has more than a 50% market share. Once that step is taken, the law allows regulators to improve competition by more drastic steps, including tighter regulation or ordering the dominant company to slim down by selling assets. IFETEL was created as an autonomous regulator in a bid



for increased competition in telecommunications, where America Movil has around 70% of the telephone market, and Grupo Televisa has around 70% of the television broadcast market and is the largest cable and satellite TV operator. The telecommunications overhaul also calls for IFETEL to tender two nationwide digital television broadcast networks from which incumbents Televisa and TV Azteca would be excluded, and for the creation of a state-owned telecommunications network that would act as a carrier-of-carriers for telephone operators. (October 29, 2013) [stream.wsj.com](#)

## Paraguay

Telecom watchdog CONATEL has indicated that it is looking to auction off advanced wireless services (AWS) spectrum in the 1700MHz and 2100MHz frequency bands as early as the first half of 2014, as it seeks to encourage competition within the mobile sector. CONATEL President Eduardo Gonzalez noted that they have some international operators who have made an expression of interest in that band. It is important to generate maximum competition in both the access and the service. While he warned that the watchdog would not proceed in haste, Gonzalez expects the tender to take place during 1H14. (October 11, 2013) [TeleSemana](#)

## Jamaica

Jamaica's auction of spectrum in the 700MHz band has ended in failure, with no bids submitted by the deadline despite widespread international interest in the concession. Leading up the tender, 24 individuals and companies from ten countries including India, China, Canada, the US and Russia had expressed an interest in acquiring the license. Phillip Paulwell, Minister of science, technology, energy and mining said that they view this as a minor setback. The government's resolve is undaunted as it relates to the preservation of competition in the telecommunications market, and for creating a knowledge-based society. Jamaica's Spectrum Management Authority (SMA) offered up two 2x12MHz licenses, Band 13 (746MHz-758MHz, 776MHz-788MHz) and Band 17 (704MHz-716MHz, 734MHz-746MHz), with reserve prices of US\$40 million and US\$45 million respectively. SMA sweetened the deal for new entrants by throwing in a 15-year license for 2x5MHz in the 1800MHz or 1900MHz range that is exempt from spectrum fees. (October 14, 2013) [The Jamaica Observer](#)

## Chile

Telecoms regulator SUBTEL has launched an investigation into the use of spectrum by the nation's wireless providers which could lead to the revocation of operating licenses. Telecoms secretary Jorge Atton commented that there was 'an obvious concern about the use of spectrum in Chile', noting that of the two new operators introduced to the market to stimulate competition, VTR and Nextel, the former was planning to ditch its network in favor of expanding its mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) agreements, whilst the latter was being considered by its US parent for sale. The audit is expected to be ready by the end of the week, and from this SUBTEL 'will determine, from a legal standpoint, what the paths that must be followed to ensure effective use of the spectrum.' Atton added that the regulator might move for the removal of concessions, saying that 'the state cannot [continue to] provide a commodity that is scarce to companies that are utilizing it poorly.' Nextel has responded by criticizing the regulator for calling into question the company's operations, accusing the watchdog of causing

'profound harm' to the cellco, damaging its reputation and competitiveness. The company went on to clarify that it has 'fully complied with all of the parameters set by the authority' regarding its spectrum usage, and expects the analysis to demonstrate this. (October 16, 2013) [La Tercera](#)

## Peru

Spanish-backed full service provider Movistar Peru has been allocated the Block A spectrum in the 1700MHz/2100MHz range that it won via auction in July this year. The cellco has pledged to roll out Long Term Evolution (LTE) services to 234 district capitals and main towns. Under the terms of its concession, Movistar must launch services within one year, and its network must cover 114 district capitals within the first two years. (October 14, 2013) [TeleSemana](#)

## Brazil

Telecoms regulator ANATEL could force Telecom Italia (TI) to divest its Brazilian mobile operator TIM Participacoes (TIM Brasil) if Spanish telco Telefonica completes the acquisition of 100% of Telco the controlling shareholder in TI. Last week, Telefonica confirmed it had struck a deal worth around EUR860 million (US\$1.16 billion) to increase its stake in Telco. (October 7, 2013) [Reuters](#)

## Honduras

The telecoms regulator CONATEL has awarded Long Term Evolution (LTE)-suitable spectrum in the 1700MHz and 2100MHz frequency bands to international telecoms companies America Movil and Millicom, operating in the country under the Claro and Tigo brands, respectively. The bidding stage of the CNT-CP003/2013 auction was concluded on 1 October, in the presence of CONATEL officials and representatives of the bidders. The first block to be auctioned (Block B2), comprising of 2x20MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 1730MHz-1750MHz and 2130MHz-2150MHz bands, attracted two bids; Claro offered US\$12.050 million, while Tigo's financial proposal amounted to USD12.025 million. Subsequently, the auctioned frequency band was awarded to Claro. Block B1, which comprised of 2x20MHz paired blocks in the 1710MHz-1730MHz and 2110MHz-2130MHz bands was granted to Tigo, as the company was the only bidder for the concession; the cellco paid US\$12.055 million for the authorization. Block B3, previously announced as available in a public consultation dated July 22, 2013, was granted to state-owned telco Hondutel for use after its anticipated privatization, as ordered by the president, Porfirio Lobo Sosa. B3 comprises of 2x20MHz paired blocks in the 1750MHz-1770MHz and 2150MHz-2170MHz bands.

(October 3, 2013) [El Herald](#)

## European Union

The European Commission has suspended a proposal from the Czech telecoms regulator (CTU) concerning regulatory remedies for the fixed termination markets as it has serious concerns on the scope of the proposed access obligation with regard to alternative network operators. In its proposal, the CTU imposes a new price regulation on fixed alternative operators, but without imposing on them a corresponding access obligation. The Commission is particularly worried that these operators might then be able to circumvent the price regulation by refusing to provide access to their competitors. That could lead to consumers being prevented

from making calls to the networks of alternative operators. Neelie Kroes, European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Agenda, said: "Consumers should not find themselves at risk of being unable to make calls where they wish. That is why, where we have a monopoly situation like in fixed termination markets, we need to guarantee access to the networks for all operators, alternative operators included." Under the EU telecom rules, the access obligation requires an operator to interconnect its network with that of any other operator. CTU's proposal suggests that only the incumbent will face such an obligation, but not the alternative network operators. However, all operators have been found to hold significant market power in their respective markets. The Czech regulator now has three months to work with the European Commission and the Body of European telecoms regulators (BEREC) to find a solution to this case. In the meantime, implementation of the proposal is suspended. (October 1, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

## United Kingdom

UK telecoms regulator OFCOM has invited stakeholders to express their interest in acquiring spectrum that is being released for civil use by the Ministry of Defense (MoD). Last month the MoD revealed it was preparing to release a total of 190MHz of spectrum, 40MHz of which is in the 2.3GHz band, with a further 150MHz above 3.4GHz, to OFCOM. With all of the frequencies suitable for mobile broadband uses, the ministry had initially planned to auction some of its radio spectrum in what would have been the first direct sale of its kind by a government department. However, it turned over the responsibility for making the sale arrangements to the telecoms regulator having said that the latter had 'significant experience and expertise in this area and is well positioned to manage the process'. OFCOM has said that, in its initial view, the spectrum on offer is likely to be attractive to companies wishing to deliver 4G wireless broadband services, and it has claimed that releasing the frequencies for 4G mobile broadband could potentially lead to improved 4G competition and capacity. However, the watchdog has said it is also interested in alternative views about how the spectrum could be used. OFCOM says it will use the information received from stakeholders to help design 'the most appropriate means for awarding the spectrum, which may be by auction', and it expects the spectrum to be awarded in the 2015-16 financial year. Responses to the consultation must be submitted by November 27, 2013. Commenting on the plans to make the frequencies available for commercial use, OFCOM chief executive Ed Richards stated: 'This is a very significant next step forward in OFCOM's long-term strategy for managing spectrum ... 4G is likely to open up a new wave of wireless innovation that will deliver considerable benefits to society and the UK's digital economy. However, this development will also place huge demands on the UK's wireless infrastructure. Releasing MoD spectrum onto the commercial marketplace is an important step in helping to meet this extraordinary demand.' (October 21, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

Mobile network operators may face a four-fold hike in license fees to rent the radio spectrum in Britain, under plans unveiled by telecoms industry regulator OFCOM. OFCOM said the proposed new fees for certain spectrum bands used by mobile network operators for voice calls as well as third and fourth-generation mobile data signals reflected market value based on other countries. The proposals come after Britain earlier this year raised a less-than-expected

2.34 billion pounds in a 4G spectrum auction for airwaves to carry high-speed mobile Internet traffic. Currently Vodafone, Telefonica's O2, EE - a joint venture of Deutsche Telekom AG and Orange, and Hutchison's H3G pay about 64.5 million pounds in total for using the 900 MHz and 1800 MHz spectrum bands. This would increase to about 309 million pounds under the proposed changes. "Spectrum is a valuable and finite national resource, and charging for it can incentivize the optimal use of frequencies," OFCOM said in a statement. The government had asked OFCOM to recalculate the fees to reflect "full market value" and OFCOM said the new rules were expected to take effect next year after a consultation period that ends in December. (October 11, 2013) [iii.co.uk](#)

Communication industry regulator OFCOM has published a consultation about revising the license fees paid by UK mobile networks for the 900MHz and 1800MHz spectrum bands initially used for 2G and 3G services. In December 2010, the Government told OFCOM to revise these fees in line with current market values. In particular, OFCOM was required to consider the amounts paid in the recent 4G auction for 800MHz and 2.6GHz spectrum. As a result, OFCOM has calculated potential new license payments. It notes that the 'big four' mobile network operators currently pay a total of £24.8 million per year for 900MHz spectrum and £39.7 million for 1800 MHz spectrum. However, it believes they should be paying £138.5 million per year for the 900MHz frequencies and £170.4 million for 1800MHz. This would result in Vodafone and O2 each paying an extra £67.5 million per year, EE paying an extra £82.2 million and Three paying an extra £27.4 million. The consultation closes on 19th December 2013, with new annual license fees expected to come into effect next year. (October 10, 2013) [thefonecast.com](#)

With OFCOM having initially announced its intention for a pilot of 'white space' technology in April 2013, the UK telecom regulator has now unveiled the identities of those companies that will take part in the project. Over the course of the next six months OFCOM has confirmed that around 20 public and private organizations will be participating in the pilot by running trials to test a variety of innovative applications ranging from sensors that monitor the behavior of cities, to dynamic information for road users and rural broadband in hard to reach places. Among the more notable companies taking part in the pilot, British fixed line incumbent BT will work with technology specialist Neul2 and the Department for Transport to test the potential enhancement of traffic information, using white spaces to transmit data on traffic congestion and varying traffic conditions to as part of a wider project along the A14 between Felixstowe and Cambridge. Microsoft, meanwhile, is planning to test how white spaces can provide people with access to free Wi-Fi in Glasgow, which is said to have the lowest level of broadband take-up of all UK cities. Also highlighted by OFCOM, internet service provider (ISP) Click4internet will work with technology partners KTS and SineCom to use white spaces to test rural broadband in locations obscured by thick foliage or challenging topography; it will carry out its tests in Hampshire, West Sussex, Dorset and the Isle of Wight. Commenting on the plans, OFCOM chief executive Steve Richards was cited as saying: 'Access to spectrum is fundamental to the future success of the UK's digital economy, providing the infrastructure that underpins all wireless communications ... The upcoming white space pilot is a very exciting development, which has attracted

an impressive line-up of participants, ranging from global tech giants to innovative UK start-ups. This is an excellent opportunity for the UK to help lead in the world of spectrum and one that could deliver huge benefits to society.’

(October 3, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Spain

The European Commission has formally asked the Spanish telecoms regulator (CNMC) to withdraw or amend its proposal setting the regulated prices which the dominant operator, Telefonica, can charge other operators who want to sell broadband services based on Telefonica's network. The Commission first warned CMT (the predecessor of the current CNMC) in June that its plan may not be compatible with EU telecoms rules, could be detrimental to competition and would not incentivize investment in high speed broadband. In particular the Commission is concerned that the Spanish regulator's proposed price setting model would lead to regulated prices up to 50% above cost-efficient levels. Moreover, the wholesale broadband access product is the only regulated offer on Telefonica's fiber network and the Spanish regulator does not plan to impose other competition safeguards such as stricter non-discrimination rules. At the end of a three month in-depth investigation, the Commission has concluded that CNMC's measure still lacks transparency and contains an element of arbitrariness, as CNMC failed to justify in detail the price levels set. BEREC, the body of European Telecoms Regulators, has also expressed support for majority of the Commission's concerns. The Commission now requires the Spanish regulator to withdraw or amend its proposal in order to bring it in line with EU telecoms rules. Should CNMC fail to follow the Commission's recommendation, the Commission will consider any appropriate legal steps. European Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes said: "Price stability and transparency of price-setting mechanisms within each Member State are indispensable to set the right conditions for competition and investment in the telecoms sector. Despite variations in national circumstances, we must also ensure further regulatory coherence to promote a single market for telecommunications". Any new measure should also take account of the Commission's Recommendation on non-discrimination and costing methodologies to promote competition and enhance the broadband investment environment. This provides regulators with clear guidance as to the costs calculation to follow when setting regulated access prices. This is the ninth time that the Commission has issued a recommendation under Article 7a of the Telecoms Directive. . (October 28, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Austria

Industry experts have attacked the recent Austrian LTE spectrum auction process, arguing that the outcome took too much money out of the market and threatens competition in the Austrian mobile sector. That incumbent Telekom Austria was able to acquire half of the entire spectrum made available could be particularly detrimental. TA announced that it had won four blocks of 800MHz spectrum, three blocks at 900MHz and seven at 1800MHz, giving it a 2 x 140MHz allocation in total for a price of €1.03bn. But second placed T-Mobile took only 2 x 45MHz and 3 Austria just 2 x 25MHz. The auction raised more than €2bn overall, a good deal more than the Austrian government had set as an acceptable minimum—€526m. The Austrian regulator's original intention to bring in a new player could never have been met, he said, suggesting that the high price might

prove a barrier to network investment. Meanwhile Stefan Zehle, CEO of Coleago Consulting, which specializes in spectrum policy, said that demand for 1800MHz spectrum in Europe means that "governments can hold a gun to operators' heads and demand almost any price." Telekom Austria now holds 53.8% of the sub-1GHz spectrum in the market, despite having a market share of less than 40%, he said. He also suggested that Hutchison's 3 had been victim to inconsistencies in Austrian spectrum policy. The third placed operator faced constraints on its investment due to having the weakest cash flow, he said. "The design of the Austrian auction and the absence of effective caps on sub 1GHz spectrum holdings suggest that the Austrian government is not particularly concerned about the effects of spectrum concentration on competition. On the other hand, the spectrum divestiture conditions imposed on Hutchison to clear its acquisition of One Austria [Orange], suggests a very different view of spectrum concentration is applied when it comes to approving in-market consolidation." Nordström concurred, saying: "It's important to make sure that the operators are on a level playing field in terms of access to lower and higher bands. Nothing has been done to safeguard the continued existence of competition." While Telekom Austria said that it had acquired "unique strategic advantages" as a result of the auction, 3 Austria's CEO Jan Trionow described it as a "disaster for the industry."

(October 23, 2013) [telecoms.com](#)

Austria's three mobile networks have collectively paid just over EUR2 billion (US\$2.7 billion) for radio spectrum in the country's just concluded auction. A total of 28 frequency packages, each consisting of 2x5 MHz, were awarded to the bidders as follows: A1 Telekom acquired 14 packages for approximately EUR 1.03 billion; T-Mobile acquired nine packages for approx. EUR 654 million and Hutchison successfully bid for five packages, paying approx. EUR 330 million. The total frequency blocks auctioned off were as follows: six in the 800 MHz band, seven in the 900 MHz band and 15 in the 1800 MHz band. The frequency assignment procedure will be completed with legal effect when the official decisions are issued in the course of November. Although the auction permitted a new entrant to bid, none decided to do so. Each of the parties awarded frequencies will be under obligation to ensure that, by means of the frequency spectrum allocated to that operator, a defined level of mobile broadband coverage is provided by a stipulated date. For the 800 MHz frequency band, the auction rules already additionally specified a certain number of municipalities to be supplied service, with the aim of moving forward the expansion of broadband service to poorly covered rural areas. Penalty regulations apply where coverage obligations are not met. Usage rights for the 900 and 1800 MHz bands are currently held for a defined term, so that these frequency blocks will only become available for use at a later stage. The allocation of frequency blocks in the 800 MHz band runs until 31 December 2029, while the allocation in the 900 and 1800 MHz bands ends as of December 31, 2034. (October 22, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

Bidding in Austria's radio spectrum auction has neared EUR2 billion (US\$2.7 billion), roughly four times the reserve price. The auction started just under a month ago, and the details are being kept confidential until the auction has concluded. However, estimates suggest that the auction could be close to EUR2 billion for the government, and a source close to the process confirmed that the bidding is heading in that direction. Other sources told that a fourth bidder has not



emerged in the process, so the high bids are not likely to see increased competition in the market. Once the auction is completed, the prices will be recalculated based on the spectrum blocks allocated and the price paid will be roughly equivalent to the second-best offer received.

(October 2, 2013) Reuters

## New Zealand

New Zealand Communications and Information Technology Minister Amy Adams has announced that 2degrees, Telecom Mobile and Vodafone New Zealand have each acquired management rights to spectrum in the 700MHz band following the government's recent frequency auction. Telecom and Vodafone each successfully bid NZD66 million (US\$54.5 million) for 2x15MHz blocks, while 2degrees agreed to buy 2x10MHz spectrum blocks, paying NZD44. The outcome leaves one 2x5MHz block of spectrum unsold; the government expects to make a decision about the unsold spectrum block in the coming weeks. With this in mind, the authorities are considering relaxing the initial 2x15MHz bidding limit to 2x20MHz, enabling Telecom and Vodafone to compete for the remaining block of spectrum in a supplementary allocation round. Ms. Adams commented: 'Overall, this is a successful outcome for the auction that bodes well for the future of competitive 4G mobile services in New Zealand. While 2degrees has bid for slightly less spectrum than Telecom and Vodafone, internationally we have seen that 2x10MHz is sufficient to run a viable 4G network and provide much faster data speeds to mobile customers. Examples of 4G mobile networks with 2x10MHz of comparable spectrum can be found in Australia, the United Kingdom, South Korea and many European countries'.

(October 31, 2013) telegeography.com

## Belgium

All three Belgian mobile networks have qualified for the country's forthcoming 800MHz spectrum auction. With three applicants, there is now no chance of a new entrant into the market. Three licenses are available in total, each comprising 2 x 10 MHz, for a 20-year period. Each lot entails coverage obligations. One of the three licenses includes additional obligations as regards the coverage of a number of rural areas. The minimum price per license amounts to EUR 120 million, although the lack of a fourth bidder would suggest that the licenses will be sold for close to the reserve price when the auction starts. The auction will start on November 12, 2013. (October 9, 2013) cellular-news.com

## Finland

Having revised the auction rules for its long-running sale of 800MHz frequencies in September 2013 with a view to speeding up the process, Finland's Ministry of Transport and Communications (MoTC) has now announced the winners. With the auction having concluded, following nine months of bidding, the MoTC has confirmed that in total the sale will generate EUR108.1 million (US\$146 million) for state coffers, with DNA Finland, Elisa and TeliaSonera Finland named as the three companies to walk away with spectrum. With all three operators laying claim to 2x10MHz in the 800MHz band, TeliaSonera will pay the most for its new frequencies, having agreed to shell out EUR22.20 million for 'Frequency Pair 3' and EUR18.90 million for 'Frequency Pair 4'. DNA meanwhile will pay a total of EUR33.57 million for Frequency Pairs '1' and '2' (EUR16.9 million and EUR16.7 million, respectively), and rounding out the winners, Elisa bid EUR16.7 million apiece for 'Frequency Pair 5' and

'Frequency Pair 6'. The MoTC has confirmed that the new concessions will be valid for period of 20 years, with the licenses covering the whole of Finland, excluding the region of Åland. Operators will be able to utilize the new frequency blocks from January 1, 2014, and each license holder is required to launch operations within two years of the start of the concession period. Further, as per the requirements of the licenses, mobile communications networks must be constructed covering 95% of the population in mainland Finland within three years of the start of the license period, and between 97% and 99% within five years of the start of the license period. (October 31, 2013) telegeography.com

## Norway

The Norwegian Post & Telecoms Authority (NPT) has confirmed that, in line with its previously announced timetable, it has opened registration for would-be bidders for its auction of spectrum in the 800MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands. Those parties seeking to take part in the sale process have until November 15 to apply, and the auction itself will get underway on December 2, with result expected to be announced on December 10. In August 2013 the NPT launched a consultation on the sale process, as part of which it said it would seek feedback on the proposed terms and conditions of draft licenses, with a deadline for responses set as September 30, 2013. Reiterating a March 2013 press release in which the Ministry of Transport & Communications (MoTC) called for 100% of Norwegian households to have access to a basic broadband service within the next couple of years, the NPT claimed that spectrum in the 800MHz band was 'key to fulfilling this objective as spectrum in this frequency band has superior coverage reach and is therefore ideal for coverage in rural areas'. As a result of this, the watchdog confirmed that one of the 800MHz concessions will include a coverage obligation; the winner of the license will be required to offer a service with a minimum average access speed of 2Mbps within five years of its award. Prior to the launch of the consultation, in March 2013 the MoTC said that, with an eye on ensuring competition in the sector, a cap of 2x10MHz would be implemented for the sale of 800MHz frequencies, although this will only apply to those operators which already have significant mobile spectrum holdings. With frequencies in the 900MHz and 1800MHz bands to be auctioned simultaneously with the 800MHz spectrum, a cap of 2x20MHz will apply to the 1800MHz block, while in the 900MHz band there will be a cap of 2x15MHz.

(October 30, 2013) telegeography.com

## Iceland

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

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

The regulator, however, pointed out that Vodafone Iceland

has requested an extension of its concession until 2020; the company has previously indicated that part of the 2.6GHz frequency band could be utilized for next generation access (NGA) broadband services, including 4G mobile services. The published consultation document also outlines the historical use of the frequency band and the European Union (EU) legislation on the topic. The PTA invites all interested parties to submit their comments on the topic by October 31, 2013. (October 8, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Croatia

Telecoms regulator HAKOM has opened the bids for the remaining 20MHz of digital dividend spectrum that it has to allocate. Two frequency blocks, 2x5 MHz each, were offered at the auction for LTE services. For Block A (801-806/842-847 MHz), VIPnet offered HRK 110 million while Hrvatski Telekom offered HRK 105 million. Only Hrvatski Telekom submitted a bid for Block B (806-811/847-852 MHz), of HRK 105.7 million. The regulator said that its final decision on the award of licenses is expected in the first half of November, after the analysis and verification of the tender documentation is carried out. The highest offered price at the auction was the criterion for the bid selection per frequency block. In addition to the one-off fee, operators could also opt between paying the total amount of annual fees for the use of radio frequency immediately, or in equal annual installments, until the license expiry in 2024. VIPnet opted for the total payment of the annual fees for the use of the radio frequency spectrum in the amount of HRK 65 million, while HT would pay HRK 8 million over the next 11 years. In the event of the allocation of block A to VIPnet and block B to Hrvatski Telekom, which can be expected at the beginning of next month, the state budget would gain revenue of almost HRK 290 million. (October 29, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Hungary

Telecom regulator the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) has launched a call for the sale of a ten-year contract for its remaining mobile frequencies in the 450MHz range. The winner of ten-year license will have to provide digital public services using the spectrum, and will have to develop digital public services capable of connecting rural public administration centers to the country's nationwide digital network. The blocks of spectrum are seen as ideal for the deployment of smart metering systems or for machine-to-machine (M2M) communication services. (October 30, 2013) [Dow Jones Newswires](#)

Telecom regulator the National Media and Telecommunications Authority (NMHH) has published its latest 'flash report' on the country's mobile internet market, noting that there were a total of over 3.824 million mobile internet users at 30 September 2013, up from 3.343 million at 31 March and 3.179 million at the start of the year. Of these, over 2.989 million were designated as 'active' (i.e. subscriptions with data transfer), compared to 2.504 million at end-March and 2.399 million at end-2012. Further, the watchdog reported that mobile internet users transferred 2.528 million GB of data last month, up slightly from 2.520 million GB in March, but down from 2.587 million gigabytes in December 2012. The average amount of data transferred per user was 0.87GB, down from 1.08GB in December. In terms of total mobile internet subscribers, T-Mobile Hungary continues to lead the pack with a market share of 45.10% (1.725 million), down from 45.55% (1.522 million) in March, while second spot was taken by Telenor Hungary

with 29.64% (1.134 million), up from 28.51% (952,823), and Vodafone Hungary with 25.26% (966,147), slightly down from 25.95% (867,308) six months earlier.

(October 17, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

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

(October 10, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Lithuania

The Communications Regulatory Authority (RRT) has announced the results of an auction for so-called 'digital dividend' spectrum licenses in the 791MHz-821MHz and 832MHz-862MHz frequency bands. One lot of 2x10MHz and four lots of 2x5MHz spectrum went under the hammer; Bite Lithuania was announced as the winner of 2x10MHz in the 791MHz-801MHz and 832MHz-842MHz frequency band (Block No. 1/2) with a bid of LTL1.01 million (US\$390,500), while Omnitel secured 2x5MHz in the 801MHz-806MHz and 842MHz-847MHz band (Block No. 3) and a further 2x5MHz in the 806MHz-811MHz and 847MHz-852MHz band (Block No. 4) for LTL2.55 million each, paying a total fee of LTL5.1 million. Tele2 rounded out the winners, walking away with licenses for spectrum in the 811MHz-816MHz and 852MHz-857MHz range (Block No. 5) and the 816MHz-821MHz and 857MHz-862MHz band (Block No. 6) after bidding LTL1.00 million for each block (paying a total of LTL2 million). As a condition of the 'Block No. 1/2' license, Bite must be able to provide high speed broadband services at maximum download speeds of up to 2Mbps to 30% of sub-districts within three years and 80% within five years; by 2020 the licensee is obligated to provide coverage of 4Mbps data transmission speeds to 95% of Lithuanian households.

(October 14, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Czech Republic

Czech national regulator the Czech Telecommunication Office (CTU) announced that it has approved all five bidders' applications to take part in the upcoming auction of next generation mobile frequency licenses in the country. The CTU, which is looking to relaunch the sale of 4G-suitable spectrum on November 11, said it has approved the bids of the three incumbents Telefonica O2 CR, T-Mobile Czech Republic and Vodafone Czech Republic as well as two from would-be new entrants, Revolution Mobile AS, a former unit of Czech financial group PPF; and unknown quantity, Czech-owned Sazka Telecommunications (formerly known as Tasciane AS). The revised auction of Long Term Evolution (LTE) licenses is expected to raise up to CZK8.72 billion (US\$457 million) for the government, which is striving to boost competition and services in the local market. The first attempt to allocate 4G licenses was called off in March this year after the reserve price climbed so high it was feared that it would risk inflating the price of the services and delaying launch. The terms and conditions of the revamped tender also mandates reserving a spectrum block

in the 800MHz and 1800MHz bands for a new entrant to help boost competitiveness in the market. The 4G mobile frequencies auction faces challenges against some of the conditions set out by the CTU, including the stipulation to reserve frequencies for a new entrant which has angered the incumbents. (October 15, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

The telecoms regulator CTU says that it has received five applications for its forthcoming radio spectrum auction. The regulator is taking a second attempt at auctioning off spectrum in the 800MHz, 1800MHz and 2.6GHz bands after an earlier auction was cancelled. CTO from beginning declares that the aim of the auction is in addition to creating the conditions for the entry of a fourth operator nationwide the development of high-speed mobile internet, including improvement of coverage provided by developing criteria. Auction of frequencies has the potential for the next 15 years to fundamentally change the mobile market with sufficient infrastructure competition. Ultimately, the auction will also create conditions for higher quality mobile services. For a new entrant to the market is restricted block 2 × 10 MHz in the 800 MHz and block 2 × 15.8 MHz in the 1800 MHz band. The CTU said that the process of auction will begin on the November 11, 2013. (October 1, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Cyprus

The Republic of Cyprus's Department of Electronic Communications has cancelled the tender for communication network licenses using the 2600MHz frequency band, as no requests for participation in the auction had been received. The Ministry set a deadline of September 12, 2013 for interested parties to submit their applications, which was later extended to September 25, 2013; the Ministry also announced a starting price of EUR2.7 million (US\$3.53 million) for a Category A license, and EUR2 million for a Category B concession. Under the terms set out by the document, the spectrum available for use was listed as follows:

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

The Ministry indicated at the time that there were three available FDD concessions in the 2500MHz-2520MHz/2620MHz-2640MHz, 2525MHz/ 2545MHz/ 2645MHz-2665MHz and 2550MHz-2570MHz/ 2670MHz-2690MHz paired spectrum bands. (October 14, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

Cyprus' largest alternative fixed line telco PrimeTel, which is controlled by holding company TeleDev East, has been revealed as the only company to submit a bid in the auction for the country's third mobile license, which will incorporate the 900MHz/1800MHz/2100MHz frequency bands. The Financial Mirror reports that the Cypriot government will now negotiate with PrimeTel over the authorization of the concession, the cost of which was set at EUR12.3 million (US\$16.69 million). The Ministry announced the launch of the auction in early June 2013, with a deadline of September 24, 2013 for interested parties to submit their applications and a security of EUR700,000 (US\$915,500). Under the terms set out by the document, the spectrum available for use was listed as follows:

- 2×10MHz blocks in the 900MHz band;
- 2×24.8MHz blocks in the 1800MHz band; and

- 2×15MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 2100MHz band.

The MCW indicated that the 900MHz and 1800MHz frequencies are best suited for 2G GSM, 3G UMTS, 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) and WiMAX use. However, the regulator may allow the establishment and operation of communications networks not listed in the document, provided that such networks would not disrupt existing GSM transmissions. Under the terms set out by the license, PrimeTel is expected to establish and operate 3G and/or 4G networks covering 40% of the Republic's territory within three years from the date of license authorizations, and must reach 65% territorial coverage within five years from the date of their license. Sources familiar with the matter previously claimed that PrimeTel will develop its own network of transmitters in order to secure national coverage; the MVNO currently uses MTN's infrastructure, in accordance with a collaboration deal signed in January 2013. (October 9, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Zimbabwe

Telecoms regulator POTRAZ has sent notices to the mobile networks warning them that it wants to introduce Mobile Number Portability next year. The notice warned the networks that they need to consider support for MNP in their network upgrade plans over the next year. In the notice POTRAZ said: "The inability of subscribers to retain their respective mobile telephone numbers when they change service providers presents an obstacle to competition and an inconvenience to the customers." The expected launch of MNP in the country is still not clear though.

October 15, 2013) [TechZim](#)

## Nigeria

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) will begin the process of awarding regional licenses for the provision of fixed line and broadband services towards the end of the year or by early 2014. The regulator is currently dividing the country into separate license regions, ahead of the launch of the bidding procedure. In October 2012 NCC stated that the winning bidders of the regional concessions would be those requesting the lowest government subsidies to build the network. (October 8, 2013) [The Punch](#)

## Tanzania

The government is conducting a review of its 2003 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy, with a view to instituting new safety and security provisions designed to tackle the rising tide of cybercrime in the east African country. The move was confirmed by the permanent secretary of the ministry of communication, science and technology, Prof. Patrick Makungu, speaking in Dar es Salaam. According to Prof. Makungu, the government is reviewing the policy in order to assess the ethical impact of tightening internet usage to ensure governable and safe protection against cybercrime. 'Obviously the internet by its nature makes it almost impossible to be fully regulated, however, irresponsible and unethical behavior in the borderless world of the internet must somehow be managed,' he said. 'We need to step up our capacity building to ensure that the government and law enforcement organs stay ahead of apparent cyber threats and on the pulse of emerging ones,' he added. (October 21, 2013) [The Guardian](#)



## Thailand

The Ministry of Information & Communication Technology in Thailand has urged CAT Telecom to decide within the next year what it plans to do with a 24.5MHz block of spectrum held by Digital Total Access Communication (DTAC). The ministry is suggesting that CAT moves swiftly to utilize the spectrum 'in the best interest of the public'. DTAC, Thailand's number two mobile operator by subscribers and revenues, was founded in August 1989 and awarded a build-transfer-operate (BTO) contract by CAT Telecom the following November, giving it 2×50MHz in the 1800MHz frequency band, alongside 2×10MHz in the 850MHz range. The BTO contract was originally set to run for 15 years but extended in 1996 to run until the start of 2018. Under the agreement DTAC pays CAT 30% of revenues, a figure which was increased from 25% in September 2011, and 20% in September 2006. However, with half of the 1800MHz spectrum which is currently used for its existing 2G services now set to expire in five years, the ICT minister is reportedly supporting DTAC's proposal to use the bandwidth to provide 4G services in the country. The paper quotes the minister as saying: 'I agree with this proposal. It's better than doing nothing with it until the concession expires in five years'. Last month the number two cellco laid down three options for CAT Telecom to consider concerning the unused 24.5MHz of bandwidth. Firstly, that CAT allow it to upgrade to offer 4G over the bandwidth, under CAT's 2G license, meaning that it continue to share revenue with CAT for the duration of the BTO contract. Secondly, that the pair launch 4G services via a different 'wholesale/resale model similar to the one employed by CAT and True Move. And thirdly, that DTAC returns the unused bandwidth to the industry regulator, the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), as a precursor to a new 4G auction. The paper notes that such a plan would be in line with Frequency Allocation Act, which stipulates that 'spectra can only be allocated via an auction'. In this case, the unused bandwidth would be augmented to the 25MHz block already allocated for the auction. The chairman of the NBTC's telecoms committee says DTAC and CAT must move to resolve the situation in time to enable it to prepare for the forthcoming 4G auction, slated for September 2014. The watchdog is hoping to kick off the process in the last two weeks of September, with the winner(s) to be announced in October and licenses awarded in November. (October 29, 2013) The Bangkok Post

State-owned CAT Telecom is prepared to sue to the telecoms regulator for compensation over how it is required to provide an additional year of service to two of its concession operators. CAT Telecom had expected to take over the services provided by TrueMove and Digital Phone last month, but the regulator granted the two concessions a one-year extension, with conditions. CAT Telecom is now expected to sue the regulator for compensation -- expected to be in the region of Bt275 billion. The compensation figure is still to be decided upon, as there is the uncertainty as to how many of the concession's collective 17 million customers would have wanted to migrate to CAT anyway. In related news, the radio spectrum used by the two concessions is still likely to be resold next September, when their extended licenses expire, but the regulator may also now bundle in a block of 900 MHz spectrum into the same auction. The 900 MHz block is currently used by AIS, but that license will expire in March 2015. If the two blocks are sold together, then there will be 20MHz of both 900 MHz and 1800 MHz up for grabs.

(October 11, 2013) cellular-news.com

## Macau

Telecoms regulator DSRT has reported that the country's mobile user base edged up to 1.556 million by September 30, 2013, with less than 5,000 subscribers still using 2G services. Pre-paid 3G users account for the bulk of the connections (967,768), with a further 584,497 being post-paid 3G users. In terms of 2G customers, the DSRT reports a total of 4,574 post-paid accounts, and just 155 pre-paid users. Elsewhere, broadband subscribers reached 149,080, while dial-up customers dwindled to just 514. Meanwhile, fixed line customers in Macau dropped slightly to 158,504 by end-September, of which 102,425 were residential accounts. On June 4, 2015 all local 2G mobile services in Macau will be switched off, and only 3G (and future 4G) services will be provided to Macanese users, under a strategy agreed between the government, regulator and operators. In 2008 the state set a date originally July 2012 for local GSM services to cease, with only 2G roaming services for tourists to remain on offer from then onwards. However, the deadline has since been moved back several times.

(October 29, 2013) telegeography.com

## Taiwan

The National Communications Commission is reported to have revealed that six companies have acquired spectrum licenses following its auction of 4G frequencies. It is understood that the total value of the combined bids stood at TWD118.65 billion (US\$4.03 billion), well above the floor price of approximately TWD35.9 billion. In terms of those companies to have acquired concessions, existing telecoms operators Chunghwa Telecom, Taiwan Mobile, Far EasTone and Asia Pacific Telecom, were all named as having won new licenses. Meanwhile, local electronics contract manufacturing company Hon Hai Precision, which trades under the Foxconn banner, has also reportedly snagged a concession, while a mobile telecom company newly established by the Ting Hsin International Group rounded out the winners. The government was offering a total of 270MHz of spectrum in the 700MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands in the auction, but it has not been confirmed exactly how much spectrum, or in what band, each bidder has secured.

(October 31, 2013) Reuters

With the combined highest bids for the twelve frequency band units being offered in Taiwan's ongoing 4G spectrum auction having reached TWD104.76 billion (US\$3.54 billion), legislators are said to be concerned that the cost of the concessions could prompt higher customer-facing prices when commercial services are introduced. As such, with the total bid level having reached almost three times the floor price set by the National Communications Commission (NCC), the regulator has been directed to consider applying rollout requirements for the on-sale licenses. To that end, it has been recommended that 4G licensees should be obliged to roll out networks covering 50% of market areas within five years of receiving a concession, while maximum prices for 4G tariffs could be capped at the same level as 3G services. Further, legislators have also recommended that the NCC introduce regulations which would prevent licensees from procuring LTE infrastructure equipment produced by Chinese vendors such as Huawei Technologies and ZTE for the sake of national security. The highest temporary price bid for the C5 band unit (1755MHz-1770MHz for upload; 1850MHz-1865MHz for download) reached TWD24.935 billion at October 21, more than eight times above the floor price of TWD3.0 billion. Competition for the five 1800MHz band

units on offer has been far more intense than for the four 700MHz blocks and three 900MHz blocks. As such, the total bids for 1800MHz spectrum stood at TWD68.755 billion at October 21 (7.31 times the corresponding total floor price), while the total bids for the 700MHz band and 900MHz band were TWD28.295 billion and TWD7.705 billion, respectively. (October 22, 2013) The DigiTimes

The bid prices in the auction for Taiwanese 4G spectrum are soaring. Despite a total floor price set by the National Communications Commission (NCC) of TWD36 billion (US\$1.2 billion), bidding has reached TWD96 billion so far. The NCC notes that competition is greatest for spectrum in the 1800MHz band, where bids for five available blocks have collectively reached TWD65 billion, almost seven times the floor price. Bids for blocks in the 700MHz and 900MHz are currently four and three times the floor price respectively. The report notes that the share prices of bidding cellcos have weakened recently, as investors grow concerned at the risk of companies overpaying for the spectrum. (October 18, 2013) The DigiTimes

## China

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) is expected to assign blocks of 1800 MHz spectrum to China Telecom and 2.1GHz spectrum to China Unicom for their LTE networks, according to local media reports. China Mobile has also been allocated 190MHz of spectrum in the 2.6Ghz bands for its Chinese developed TDD based LTE network. The specific allocation that is expected to be offered are 1755-1785 MHz and 1850-1880 MHz to China Telecom and 1955-1980 MHz and 2145-2170 MHz to China Unicom. Both operators will be allowed to use the more popular FDD variant of the LTE technology, but are expected to be required to support TD based LTE on a roaming agreement with China Mobile. (October 15, 2013) CN-Comm

## Brunei

The Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry (AITI) of Brunei has launched a consultation on

the development of its 'Tariff Regulation Framework for the Telecommunications and Broadcasting Sectors in Brunei Darussalam' program. Stakeholders can provide feedback on the paper before October 11. Previously, on April 24 this year, the AITI appointed Detecon Asia Pacific (Detecon) to oversee the initiative. Phase one of the project has just concluded, with the main objective of information gathering ahead of an in-depth industry analysis. In unrelated news, the AITI has confirmed that it has signed an agreement with Alif Technologies for the design, deployment, and maintenance of a registry-registrar domain name system. The project is expected to be completed in March 2014, when AITI's subsidiary Brunei Network Information Centre (BNNIC) will become the .bn domain name registrar. Previously, in April 2012 the AITI awarded the consultancy to develop the Domain Name Management Framework of .bn to IDA International and Singapore Network Information Centre. (October 4, 2013) telegeography.com

## India

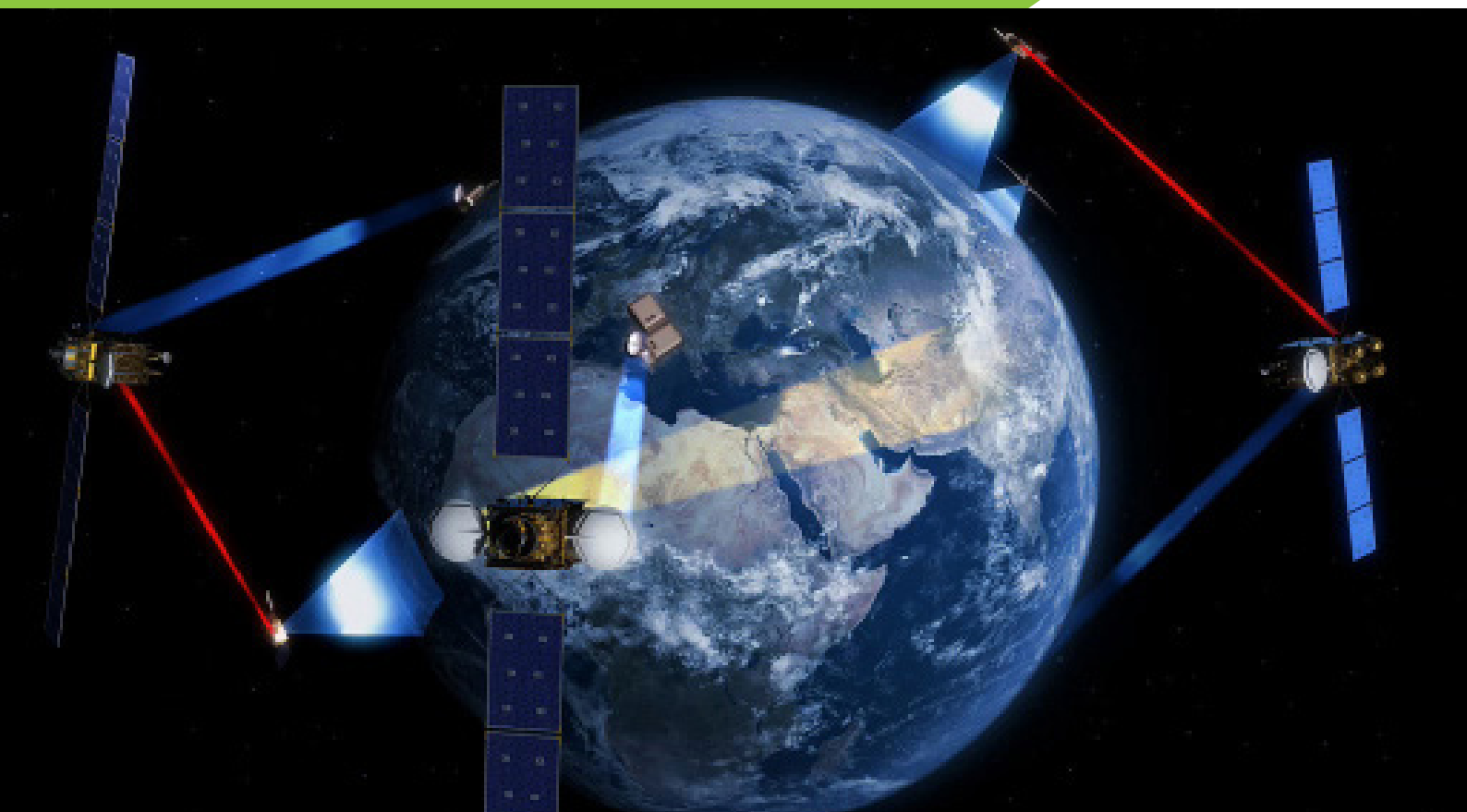
The Ministry of Defense (MoD) has agreed to free up frequencies in the 2100 MHz range by migrating to an alternative spectrum band. The move will allow the government to auction the much-needed spectrum to operators, either opening up the segment to new players, or allowing existing 3G providers to expand the reach of their operations. 3G licensing has been a bone of contention between operators and regulators recently, following the April 2013 ruling of the Supreme Court forbidding 3G roaming with the caveat that cellcos could continue to serve existing customers outside of their licensed operating areas. No single operator was able to win pan-India spectrum for 3G in 2010, and augmented their limited footprints via roaming agreements with rival cellcos. However, in December 2011 the government performed a volte-face on 3G roaming and declared the practice illegal, despite having green-lit such measures. The dispute rattled through various courts before reaching the Supreme Court, with the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) having failed to resolve the matter in July 2012, issuing a split decision verdict. (October 21, 2013) The Economic Times

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# SATELLITE NEWS

## Kacific Satellite plans Satellite for pacific markets

Kacific Broadband Satellites plans to launch a Ka-band High Throughput Satellite (HTS) to provide enhanced broadband to 40 million people in the Pacific, including the Pacific Islands, New Zealand, Eastern Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. It will operate up to 48 beams, each providing coverage of 700km diameter and up to 400Mbps (duplex) throughput. The company expects to commission its launch vehicle and payload in 2014 and to provide broadband services to the region by late 2016. Pacific island nations have two to seven times lower Internet penetration than continental nations with comparable GDP per-capita and adult literacy rates. According to the World Bank, the Pacific is significantly underserved in terms of broadband access. Estimated total potential demand for bandwidth is 44 Gbps. Today just 20 percent, or less than 10 Gbps, is supplied. Currently, 1 Mbps broadband services can cost more than US\$700 per month in some territories. Kacific is preparing to sell wholesale bandwidth that it anticipates telcos and ISPs will offer to end users at speeds of up to 10 Mbps, with price points as low as 5 percent of current costs. "This will be the world's most geographically dispersed broadband satellite footprint," says Kacific CEO Christian Patouraux. "Our aim is to create a high quality broadband network offering direct Internet access to around 99 percent of the government agencies, institutions, businesses and people within the total footprint area."

## Satellite connectivity for Free State

Maxwell Technology, a satellite-based Internet and data solutions provider, has extended its footprint to the Free State and will now provide satellite Internet to areas where broadband is unavailable, unreliable or too expensive. The company has also introduced a unique satellite-based connectivity solution, specifically aimed at consumers in the SME market. This solution is ideally suited for the agricultural and hospitality industries, both of which often operate from areas without broadband. Until now, satellite was not considered a viable or cost-effective option for Internet. However, advances in satellite technology have made it a very affordable solution for individuals and more importantly, for companies that want to ensure total business continuity under all circumstances. Maxwell technical director KallieCarlsen says satellites provide a flexible, universal, reliable and quickly deployable means to address a wide range of communications needs. "Satellite eliminates the constraints imposed by the largely wired world and its benefits go far beyond simple redundancy." The company has partnered with various service providers to deliver communications infrastructure and Internet services including Star Satellite in Welkom and Air Broadband in Bloemfontein. Within urban areas, satellite Internet can be used to provide primary connectivity to homes and small businesses where broadband is currently inaccessible. Satellite networks can be easily integrated to complement, augment or extend any communications network. They help overcome geographical barriers, terrestrial network limitations and other constraining infrastructure issues.



## SSL delivers ABS-2 satellite to Kourou launch base

Space Systems/Loral (SSL) has announced that the ABS-2 satellite, designed and built for ABS, has arrived at the European Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, where it will be launched aboard an Ariane 5 launch vehicle by Arianespace. The ABS-2 satellite is scheduled for launch in 2014. ABS-2 is a multi-mission C-, Ku- and Ka-band satellite, which is designed to provide multiple services including DTH and cable TV distribution, VSAT services, data networks, and telecommunications services across four continents. It will be positioned at 75 degrees East longitude, which is ABS' prime orbital location. The ABS-2 high-power satellite has a total of 89 active C-band, Ku-band, and Ka-band transponders across 10 different beams. The satellite includes six dedicated high-powered Ku-band beams for direct-to-home television services in the eastern hemisphere and provides high-powered C-band beams for Africa and Southeast Asia connectivity requirements. Its Ka-band beam is positioned over the Middle East and North African region where it will provide service for both commercial and military applications. ABS-2 is based on the SSL 1300 platform, and is designed to provide service for 15 years or more.

## Azerbaijan to tender 2nd telecom satellite in 2014

The tender for the construction of the second Azerbaijan telecommunications satellite is planned to start in January 2014, reports Trend citing Ali Abbasov, the Azerbaijan minister of ICT. Negotiations and research on the launch of the second Azerbaijan satellite have already been completed. Several producers will be invited to participate in the tender. The first Azerbaijan telecommunications satellite was launched earlier this year, in February. The satellite was designed for providing digital TV, data transmission, multi-service VSAT services and government connections.

## Brazil to secure telecommunications via new satellite

Brazil's state-owned telecom provider Telebras has signed a US\$560 million contract to deliver a satellite for secure communications. A statement said a joint venture between Telebras and Embraer would deliver the geostationary satellite for strategic communications by late 2016. Embraer said the satellite would ensure Brazil's "sovereignty over strategic communications in both the civilian and military areas". Visiona Tecnologia Espacial, a joint venture between Embraer and Telebras, will be responsible for integrating the Defense and Strategic Communications Geostationary Satellite (SGDC) system, Embraer said. "The SGDC system not only will meet the needs of Telebras' National Broadband Program and the strategic communications of the Brazilian armed forces, but it is also an opportunity for Brazil to ensure the sovereignty of its strategic communications in both the civilian and military areas," said Telebras President Caio Bonilha. French-Italian firm Thales Alenia Space (TAS) is to supply the satellite, while European satellite launch company Arianespace will launch it.

## SpaceX launches big commercial satellite

After two scrubbed launch attempts, SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket blasted off to send a commercial satellite where no SpaceX payload has gone before: 22,000 miles up, into geostationary orbit. An orbit that high allows a satellite to be "parked" over a stable point on Earth's surface — which is why it's favored for the kinds of military and telecom satellites that provide the richest market for commercial launch providers. The 6,918-pound (2,138-kilogram) SES-8 telecommunication satellite was sent up from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station's Launch Complex 40 on Tuesday right on time, at 5:41 p.m. ET. Tuesday's smooth countdown came in contrast to the previous launch attempts, on Nov. 25 and 28, when technical glitches frustrated SpaceX's efforts. The launch could be a "game changer" for the satellite industry, according to Martin Halliwell, chief technology officer for Luxembourg-based SES. "It's going to really shake the industry to its roots," he told reporters last month. SES reportedly paid less than US\$60 million for the launch, which is tens of millions of dollars less than the going rate for satellite launches heading for geostationary orbit. California-based SpaceX and its two-stage Falcon 9 rocket have already made their mark with a series of successful NASA-funded missions to resupply the International Space Station, which flies at an altitude of about 250 miles (400 kilometers).

## Russian rocket with British telecom satellite to be launched from Baikonur

A rocket Proton-M with the British telecommunications satellite Inmarsat-5F1 will be launched from the Russian spaceport Baikonur on Sunday, the press service of the Khrunichev State Space Research-and-Production Centre told reporters. "The launch of the telecommunications satellite Inmarsat-5F1 is scheduled at 16:12 Moscow time on Sunday, December 8, from the spaceport Baikonur," the press service reported. The telecommunications satellite Inmarsat-5F1 will be launched according to the already tested scheme of orbiting the satellite. The first three stages of the rocket Proton-M will put on the suborbital trajectory the upper stage rocket Briz-M carrying the telecommunications satellite Inmarsat-5F1. Then the upper stage rocket Briz-M will bring the satellite on the designated orbit. After that the telecommunications satellite Inmarsat-5F1 will shift to the geostationary orbit by means of its engine and will take the designated point of 63 east longitude. The British telecommunications satellite will separate from the upper stage rocket 15.5 hours after the launch.

## Internet Solutions chooses Avanti for capacity on Hylas 2 Satellite

Avanti signed a multiyear contract with Internet Solutions, a division of Dimension Data, for more than 56Mb of managed capacity on its Hylas 2 satellite. Avanti's fleet covers Africa, Europe and the Middle East, of which 83 percent of its capacity is used for telecommunications. Internet Solutions is providing enterprise services designed to deliver high speed and high availability connectivity for business applications. This new capacity enhances its overall capability, which includes a global Tier 1 network and presence in numerous countries in East and West Africa.



# ROAMING NEWS

## AT&T signs LTE roaming agreement with EE in the UK

AT&T and EE have announced the first international roaming deal that will allow the former's customers to hop on the latter's LTE network when travelling abroad. EE controls the biggest 4G LTE market in the UK, with more than 160 markets being drenched in coverage (and more being added as the months tick by). EE also took this time to mention a couple of different juicy specifics: This won't be the last deal they'll strike with AT&T, as we'll be seeing more from the duo early next year. EE customers traveling abroad will have options for global LTE roaming, though no further details were given. We wouldn't be surprised to see AT&T return the favor for EE customers traveling to the United States, but we'll have to wait for further word from either of these companies before we figure out what, exactly, is going to happen. EE also made it sound as if AT&T won't be the only player that'll be doing business with. We don't yet have a solid time frame for the fruits of this agreement to go live, but we're sure either EE or AT&T will clue us in whenever the time is right. It's starting to sound like those who frequent international land will want to keep AT&T in mind as a top option.

## CRTC to take closer look at wholesale roaming rates, terms and conditions in Canada

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) announced that it will take a closer

look at wholesale wireless roaming arrangements in Canada. The first step is a proceeding launched today to examine whether wireless service providers are placing their Canadian competitors at an unfair competitive disadvantage. Based on information obtained by the CRTC, some of the large providers are charging, or proposing to charge, their smaller Canadian competitors significantly higher wholesale roaming rates than those charged to U.S.-based wireless companies. Wholesale rates are different from, but can impact, the retail rates companies charge to their customers. "We are concerned that some wireless companies may be making it unfairly difficult for Canadian providers that do not operate a national network to compete in the marketplace," said Jean-Pierre Blais, Chairman of the CRTC. "We have the authority to ensure that companies do not give themselves an unfair competitive advantage. This includes charging wholesale wireless roaming rates that are unjustly discriminatory or by insisting on unduly restrictive terms and conditions. If we find that this is happening in the market, we will act to rectify the situation."

## Conditions of cutting international roaming rates unveiled

The conditions of reducing the international roaming tariffs, being discussed actively by Azerbaijan and Russia, have been named. One of the Azerbaijani specialists in the field of mobile communication has stated that Azerbaijan and Russia are negotiating two conditions for lowering roaming tariffs. "The most important of them is a change in the groups of countries, and billing for international roaming is based on their gradation. If the target countries relate to

the same group, then the rates between them will be lower than between countries outside this group. The second condition is the establishment of direct links between the two countries' operators, which can fix lower tariffs on bilateral basis," the expert said. He added that work on tariff cuts is carried out on these two directions as well.

## KT to provide the world's largest roaming coverage

KT provides the widest roaming coverage in the domestic telecommunications carriers for the convenience of international roaming users expanding to 115 countries, the eight countries of LTE roaming was revealed three days in voice roaming services of 225 countries in the country most widely roaming coverage in the domestic telecommunications carriers. First, South America, Africa and 115 other countries are added allowing KT customers to use unlimited service of roaming data when traveling around the world. In addition, it is expected that the quality of roaming services is improved and made available to data roaming services to strengthen the cooperation of operators to be able to use customers to select at least two telecom operators of local when you connect the wireless Internet access in a wider area abroad. Services of data roaming unlimited end date later by introducing a specified system the unit of 24 hours in the country's first customers are available in most countries around the world feel free to contact us within 24 hours after application, customer-specified, data roaming is blocked automatically.

## No more roaming charges: Pan-India mobile portability likely by March 2014

You can expect All-India mobile number portability (MNP) in a little over three months. This means that the next time you shift residence to another city, such as Kolkata or Delhi, you can retain the same mobile number as a "local number" and save on the expensive roaming charges. "A couple of months ago, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had made recommendations to the department of telecommunication (DoT) in Delhi to implement national MNP within six months. We expect people to get mobile number portability across the country by March 2014," said Madan Mohan, TRAI regional advisor, during a consumer outreach program in Mumbai. At present, mobile number portability is applicable only within a particular circle. For example, a Mumbaier is part of the Mumbai circle and can get mobile number portability [the freedom to retain the same number despite changing a service provider] only within this circle. But when a Mumbaier is in another city/town, his or her mobile phone attracts national roaming charges. "When the national MNP comes into effect, one can register his mobile phone as a local number anywhere in the country," said Mohan. This will benefit lakhs of consumers, especially those with transferable job.

## Swedish flat-rate mobile roaming first in the EU

A Swedish company leapt first from the starting blocks with a new flat-rate EU roaming mobile subscription, making the operator the first to offer such a product. The European commission hopes soon to impose legal limits on roaming fees. Whopping roaming charges could be a thing

of the past as Swedish telecom operator Comviq became the first company to launch an EU flat rate. "Our statistics show that seven out of ten Swedes turn their data roaming off completely while travelling," Magnus Larsson, head of Swedish mobile operator Comviq, told The Local. "They're afraid of using their phones abroad." Ryan Heath, spokesman for the European Commission's digital commissioner Neelie Kroes, welcomed the move. The European Commission has been trying to get the big operators to lower roaming costs. At several times the rate of domestic calls, many mobile users across the union have woken up to heavy phone bills upon returning home.

## Consumers reminded to beware of unexpected mobile data roaming service charges

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) reminded consumers to be cautious about the use of mobile data services while they are roaming outside Hong Kong during the upcoming festive season. "With the increasing popularity of 3G/4G mobile devices and services in recent years, consumers may use mobile data roaming services when travelling abroad. Irrespective of the types of mobile devices (such as smartphones, tablets, handheld computers or USB dongles) they use for web browsing or usage of software applications, consumers should be reminded that charges for mobile data roaming services are much higher than those for local mobile data services. Rapid downloading of large files may also cause an unexpectedly large volume of data consumption and result in a hefty bill or 'mobile bill shock'," a spokesman for OFCA said. For consumers' peace of mind and to avoid incurring unexpectedly high mobile data charges while travelling outside Hong Kong, OFCA advises consumers to consider adopting the following measures to prevent "bill shock":

## CRTC seeks 'fair and competitive' wireless market for Canadian consumers especially for roaming

The federal telecom regulator wants to ensure Canadians benefit from a "fair and competitive" market for wireless services because smartphones are fast becoming indispensable for both consumers and businesses. Although the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission has no intention of regulating consumer prices for cellular services, it is taking note of the market's growing importance. Smartphones are already used by the vast majority of Canadians who subscribe to mobile services and are poised to become ubiquitous as prices fall over the coming years. "We know that both for business and for individual Canadians these are tools, not only they use for their friends and family, but they're also extensions of their personalities and their lives. This is how they organize their lives," CRTC chairman Jean-Pierre Blais said in a telephone interview this week.





# TECHNOLOGY NEWS

## Orange Slovakia increases UMTS 900 coverage

Orange Slovakia has deployed all 90 transmitters supporting UMTS 900 technology and opened those that have provided GSM only so far for UMTS, too. Mobile broadband at 21 Mbps is thus now available in locations where it will not be accessible previously. The 3G network is thus available to 85 percent of the population. Orange Slovakia already provided UMTS 900 coverage to 221 municipalities and over the previous month, 108 municipalities have been added. Orange operates the largest mobile broadband network in Slovakia under the HSPA+ standard, currently supporting speed up to 42.2 Mbps. HSPA+ covers now 137 cities and 901 municipalities.

## VivaCell-MTS installs new 3G and 2G base stations in Armenia

As a part of network expansion and modernization project, VivaCell-MTS has recently installed another 60 new base stations in Armenia (30 3G stations and 30 2G stations). 2 base stations were installed in the administrative district Avan, 4 in the administrative district Shengavit, 4 in administrative district Nork Marash, 6 in administrative district Ajapnyak, 14 base stations in Sis, Araksavan, Nor Kharberd, Hovtashat, Zangakatun, Arevabuyr, Arbat villages, and 2 base stations in Masis town of Ararat province, 14 base stations in Nor Artagers, Argavand, Ervandashat, Margara, Mrgashat, Alashkert and Karakert villages, and 2 in Echmiadzin city of

Armavir province, 4 base stations in Shaqi and Lor villages of Syunik region, 2 base stations in Dilijan, Tavush province, 2 base stations in Horbategh, Vayots Dzor province, 2 base stations in Balahovit, Kotayk province, and 2 base stations in Nor Amanos village of Aragatsotn province. With the installation of new base station in Karakert village of Armavir, Nor Amanos village of Aragatsotn, Lor village of Syunik, Horbategh village of Vayots Dzor, and Zangakatun village of Ararat province 2G and 3G-based higher quality voice and internet services became available to the population of those villages. The rest of the base stations have been installed for increasing the capacity of the network.

## Prospects for VoIP market remain good

The arrival of VoIP has revolutionized the way businesses make phone calls in recent years and many firms could no longer do without the technology. VoIP allows organizations to make cheap calls that save them plenty of money in comparison to using landlines, while it is also remarkably reliable, clear and mobile, all of which are key qualities to a forward-thinking company. Visiongain has published its guide to the current market and its view on the future of the system, explaining VoIP is once again poised for growth in 2013. It noted the widespread adoption of integrated social media-based VoIP solutions has been the basis of another great year for the market. It is predicted that global VoIP revenues in 2013 will hit \$75.8 billion (£46.48 billion), emphasizing just how popular the technology is. Another key

factor in the rise of VoIP is the emergence of key infrastructure improvements such as 4G. This will transform the quality of telecommunications made over the internet and make VoIP a mainstream option in the years to come. In particular, the system will become increasingly popular with mobile users, as consumers and businesses realize they can use IP links to make calls rather than continue to rely on their operators and pay the charges they impose. Companies all over the world are said to be realizing exactly what improvements they can make by moving to a simplified setup that allows them to easily manage their voice and data network. There are a number of top providers of VoIP equipment that make it easier than ever to move into this area.

## Zaark partners with SAS on VoIP solution

Zaark said it has signed a partnership agreement with Scandinavian Airlines to supply SAS with a branded white label mobile VoIP solution enabling EuroBonus members to make free- and low cost local- and international calls. The solution will be named EuroBonus Connect and is targeted for release early 2014.

## Azteca ready to launch TV via FTTH

Colombia's Azteca Comunicaciones is almost ready to launch an online TV service through its fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) network. According to Alexandra Reyes, the company's president, who was interviewed by La República, the platform will be operational by Q2 or Q3 2014. The subsidiary of Mexico-based Grupo Salinas has been deploying an FTTH network in Colombia since 2011, aiming to connect over 700 towns with high speed Internet, for which around \$635 million was invested. The network is not finished, but according to Reyes it is coming along well, with around 70% of the network already built with 550 towns already connected to it. The project comes within the public program Vive Digital, which aims to improve the country's digital communication networks. The Government is supporting the initiative in order to connect some of Colombia's remote areas and less populated regions. As in many other areas of Latin America, the geographical difficulties are also present in this project. Azteca Comunicaciones has been using the existing electrical infrastructure in order to be faster, but it has also built an extensive network itself through the mountainous zones of the country. The IPTV service is already working in beta in 60 towns, and the company plans to launch it commercially in summer 2014. The network is already being used by some of the country's largest operators, such as Claro, Telefónica and Tigo, to offer both Internet and TV services.

## FTTH to the fore as Spanish broadband surpasses 12MN connections

Spain's telecom market is again showing signs of growth, with broadband connections surpassing the 12 million barriers for the first time. The milestone was reached in October, which proved the most successful month since January 2010, with almost 107,000 new Internet lines. The increase represents 5.8% growth compared with the same period last year. The new fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) infrastructures, which different operators have been deploying during the year, have been the beneficiaries of such growth. FTTH has grown more than 88% compared with October 2012, and

already represents more than 500,000 lines. As well as the new networks, the smaller operators have been gathering many of the new contracts. While Telefónica added 14,000 lines and the cable operators 13,000, the so-called alternative operators (such as Jazztel or Orange) make up 79,000 of new lines. The figures show a drop in the number of mobile lines, with 102,000 fewer lines. Telefónica's Movistar is the most affected, with 164,000 fewer mobile lines, while the virtual operator show growth and gather 210,000 new clients. The last quarter is showing great figures for the telecom and TV market in Spain (the ads business is also on the increase and the online and over-the-top operators are growing). Although it is still too soon to talk about recovery, it seems certain that the market has started to reverse the drop in numbers.

## Eircom Expands FTTH Footprint

Eircom announced an increase to its planned national fiber footprint from 1.2 million homes and businesses to 1.4 million homes and businesses across Ireland. This means that by July 2016, 70% of the country will have access to fiber broadband speeds of up to 100Mbps – a crucial development in making high speed broadband more widely available to many regions across Ireland. Eircom's fiber rollout program is currently ahead of schedule and the company is on track to pass 700,000 premises by the end of the year. Today's announcement means that an additional 562 communities across all 26 counties will be able to avail of Eircom's superfast eFiber service. This is a major extension of fibre broadband to a large number of provincial towns. A challenge remains to deliver high speed broadband to premises currently outside this planned extended fibre rollout, or those homes and businesses that are too distant from exchanges to be served. Eircom welcomes the National Broadband Plan by Government, which intends to address the challenge of delivering high speed broadband service to all remaining premises.

## Telkom 100Mbps FTTH to launch next year

Telkom has earmarked the end of 2014 as a date for the commercial launch of fibre to the home, with the trial of a 100Mbps offering "proceeding well". In March 2012, information emerged that Telkom was set to roll out fibre to the home (FTTH) services in selected areas of Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Cape Town as part of a proof of concept for FTTH. The group said that technical trials were underway in two business parks, three gated communities, and a 'leafy suburb'. The home trials were running in La Pama in Durban; Plantations in Durban; and Somerset in Gauteng. In June, Telkom CEO Siphomaseko said the group's 100Mbps fiber to the home (FTTH) pilot was producing "enormous speeds", with a financially viable business case possible. "Fiber is a key enabler of Telkom's strategic broadband plans and the company is therefore pleased that the 100Mbps Fiber to the Home trial is proceeding well, with the 45 participating clients," Telkom told BusinessTech. The company has also availed an interest register on its website for all customers to record their interest for future fibre services and products. The information gleaned from the trial and interest register will inform the pricing and availability of Fiber to the Home products and services. "Telkom is working towards commercial launch of Fibre to the Home before the end of 2014," the telco said.



# Convergence to Oman 2013

**“The Power of Digitization”**  
Key enabler for socio-economic growth  
in the SAMENA Region

## SAMENA AWARDS 2013

4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2013

Al Bustan Palace, A Ritz-Carlton Hotel  
Muscat - Oman



SAMENA's annual conference "Convergence" was held at Muscat Oman on December 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and discussed a number of issues revolving around the theme of the event, "The Power of Digitization" - Key enabler for socio-economic growth in the SAMENA Region".

SAMENA Council's annual conference convened industry leaders, drawing industry focus on the issue of digitization as the key enabler for socio-economic growth in the SAMENA region. Highlighting the regional telecoms & ICT industry's growing desire and the power of digitization, "Convergence to

Oman" highlighted the Council's sensitivity to the importance of the industry convergence, gathering industry experts and market leaders to discuss "The Power of Digitization".

The Conference was organized with support from Omantel and Blackberry among others. Industry leaders including CEO Omantel – Dr. Amer bin Awadh Al-Rawas, CEO Nawras – Mr. Greg Young, Chairman TRA Oman – Dr. Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Rumhi, and keynote speakers from around the region and







beyond shared business insights, market experiences, growth prospects, and discussed the role of digitization in driving economic growth. Speakers discussed the significance of collaboration and knowledge sharing, and innovation in driving economic growth through digitization. C-level executives and other leaders and experts from leading telecoms & ICT organizations were also present at the occasion.

Speakers from ITU, GSMA, TRA Oman, Omantel, Turk Telecom, VIVA Kuwait, Nawras, Ooredoo, Etisalat, Orange, Mobily, STC, du, Huawei, Blackberry, NSN, Booz, DLA, and Alkhet Consulting and led a comprehensive discussion, covering subject matter concerning; Convergence of Regulation / NexGen ICT Policies, International Roaming Rates, Building an efficient strategic M2M Ecosystem, Cyber Security, Spectrum Harmonization and Internet Governance.

The first day of "Convergence to Oman" discussed the ongoing digitization wave in light of the policy and regulation and emphasized on the need for collaboration to create knowledge intensive pool to allow the industry to develop a more informed and innovative direction complimenting the competition. The various panels discussed about the motivation for digitization within the SAMENA region, the challenges being faced and the possible ways to overcome these challenges.



## The two-day event ended with though provoking discussions on the following topics:

- Convergence of regulations / next-generation ICT policies: Cornerstone of digital ecosystem
- International roaming rates: Regional exchange and agreements to achieve quality excellence and maximize efficiency
- Building an efficient strategic M2M ecosystem
- Cyber security: Role of governments and operators in ensuring secure and stable ICT network, services and applications



Mr. Bocar BA, CEO of the SAMENA Council, in his welcome speech reiterated the impact of the digitization wave in the SAMENA region and highlighted the role of the Council as a global advocate of ensuring sustainability of the industry and accelerating digitization as a best means to ensuring sustainable growth in emerging digital economies. Dr. Amer Rawas, CEO OmanTel, also welcomes the guests and thanked the SAMENA Council for convening such an important meeting and for providing a platform to discuss the future of digitization in the SAMENA region.







governments and that 98% of all regional BlackBerry users use BBM”.

Mr. Andrea Faggiano. Principal at Arthur D Little, presented “The State of the Digital Eco-System -Creating a sense of urgency” Talking about the evolution of the Internet and the Content Stakeholders Cooperation Sustainable Internet Business Model Value Chain, he said that the evolution of the Internet has resulted in disruptions to several parties, not only telecom. Mr. Andre Popov, Partner - Peppers

- Spectrum harmonization: Wider coverage - cost efficiency – affordable handsets
- Content stakeholders cooperation - Sustainable internet business model value chain
- Infrastructure sharing for broadband development: Limits duplication and gears investment toward underserved areas
- Satellite broadband reach the unreachable: High-speed - always-on - bi-directional
- Emergence of cloud services: Impact on operators’ business model
- Internet governance: Enabling a truly multi stakeholder dialogue for an interoperable internet

The event was held with kind support from Omantel, BlackBerry, and VIVA Bahrain, among others. CEOs and other Industry leaders from around the region and beyond shared



and Rogers Group, talking about the emergence of cloud services and its impact on operators’ business model, said that “Clients using the cloud benefit from the low cost operating model that does not require hardware and investment costs and that difficulty for cloud technology implementation stems from safety issues on internal data.” George Salama, Senior Manager, Public Policy SAMENA Council, moderated the panel on Internet governance and enabling a truly multi stakeholder dialogue for an interoperable Internet.

Delving on the fact that ICT is transforming all industries and that telecom companies can become enablers of Digital Economy, the speakers were unanimous in accepting the critical need for telecom



vital business insights, policy & regulations knowledge, market experiences, and SAMENA region’s potential. Mr. Noel Kirkaldy, Head of Technology at NSN and Spectrum Harmonization Advisor to SAMENA Council, talked about the spectrum landscape in the SAMENA region and highlighted the importance of Spectrum Harmonization in the region.

Mr. Nick Horton, Managing Director, MENA at BlackBerry, said “we continue to be competitive in the Middle East with a leading position in most markets including #2 smartphone brand in KSA and #3 in UAE. Additionally, nearly 250 Middle East enterprise customers have already upgraded to BES 10. Nick also said “we have strong partnerships with carriers, retailers and



operators to create and build innovation, and change their



- Best Innovative Customer Services in the SAMENA Region: Viva Bahrain
- Best B2B Proposition in the SAMENA Region: Orange Jordan

Category for individual awards had the following industry leaders as the winners for the year 2013:



business models, in order to provide the best and most valuable service to customers. The panelists drew the attention of the audience to the need of building better infrastructure, looking at customer usage and adding value, and providing customers what they really need.

SAMENA Councils' Annual Awards ceremony for the year 2013 was also held during "Convergence to Oman", recognizing industry leadership and excellence in the telecommunication sectors of the South Asia – Middle East – North Africa (SAMENA) region. The prestigious SAMENA Awards were bestowed upon the most deserving telecom organizations and professionals, assessed after a meticulous performance-based evaluation.

Awards were given to institutions and individuals across five categories: Telecom Operator Awards, Vendor/Manufacturer Awards, Regulator Awards, Satellite Providers Awards and Individual Awards. The candidates for the 2013 awards were selected by the Awards Committee made up of leading professionals drawn from across the telecommunications industry as well as the general public.

Bocar BA, CEO SAMENA Council said, "It gives me great pleasure to recognize these outstanding individuals and institutions for their visionary leadership and astute decision-making within the SAMENA region at our 2013 Awards ceremony. With the telecom industry at the vanguard of cutting edge technology and actively supporting economic development throughout the region, these worthy winners are an inspiration for all of us within the industry in their common aspiration for excellence and true innovation."

**Operators' category had the following winners:**

- Best Converged Operator in the SAMENA region: Zain Jordan
- Best Fixed Services in the SAMENA Region: Omantel
- Best Mobile Services in the SAMENA Region: Mobily
- Best Content Provider in the SAMENA Region: Avea
- Best Wireless Broadband In the SAMENA Region: Viva Kuwait
- Best innovative Service in SAMENA Region: Ooredoo
- Best M&A Deal in the SAMENA Region: Etisalat

- Best Telecom Leader in the SAMENA Region: HE Abdullah Al Thani – Chairman – Ooredoo
- Best Pioneer Leader in the SAMENA Region: Dr. Amer Rawas – CEO – Omantel
- Best Telecom Regulator Leader in the SAMENA Region: Dr. Mohamed Al Amer – Chairman - TRA Bahrain

Category for the best technology provider, best satellite service providers and most progressive telecom regulator the following industry leaders as the winners for the year 2013:

- Best Technology Provider in the SAMENA Region – Qualcomm
- Best Satellite Services – Yahsat
- received the Regulatory Award for the
- Most Progressive Telecom Regulator in the SAMENA Region- Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) from Saudi Arabia.

SAMENA successfully managed to cover a variety of issues over the course of the two days and encouraged stake holders to join forces towards collaboration and consensus building. More than 70 participants coming from a number of organizations in the SAMENA region and other parts of the world witnessed the event.





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