

# SAMENA TRENDS

EXCLUSIVELY FOR SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

A SAMENA Telecommunications Council Newsletter

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A portrait of Marwan Hayek, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, wearing a dark gray suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a dark patterned tie. He is resting his chin on his right hand, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. In the bottom left corner, a portion of a red object, possibly a microphone or a bag, is visible.

## Mobile Banking in Emerging Markets

**Marwan Hayek**  
Chairman & CEO  
Alfa Telecom



# EDITORIAL

## Advent of Mobile Banking in Emerging Markets

The emergence of next generation telecommunication systems together with the persistent innovation in mobile phone services is revolutionizing the global banking and finance sector. Mobiles phone services offer new prospects for banks to provide added convenience to their existing customers especially in developed countries, and reach a large population of unbanked customers in emerging markets. Telecom operators, at the same time, have started offering mobile financial services in collaboration with Banks.

Mobile banking is designed to meet the need of customers and to make life easier in the day-to-day business. In the SAMENA region and Africa, where general figures suggest that less than 10 percent of the population have access to bank account and more than 60 percent have a mobile phones. This signify a good opportunity for cellular operators in the region to promote mobile financial services including m-payment services, mobile money transfers, utility bill payments and other day-to-day financial services. This will result in convenience for masses as well as additional new revenue streams for the telecom operators. Emerging markets seems to have a great affinity for mobile banking and allied services. Mobile payment service is evolving in the SAMENA region, particularly within the Middle East where mobile phone users have started using mobile phone as a source of payments.

This convergence, however, is resulting in certain challenges for the operators' community in the emerging markets, for they are new to the mobile financial industry as well as the lack of special regulatory frameworks. The Internet has changed the way we search for information and shop for products. This has transformed many Industries ranging from music, travel, advertising and retail. Now mobile technology is poised to have an even more far-reaching effect on the banking and payment industry

across the world. By 2015, over 900 million users are anticipated to transact 1 trillion USD in the global mobile payment market. Due to significant country-specific differences in banking regulations, income distribution, customer needs, and mobile usage, this revolution is going to be complex as multiple players jostle for position. While any bank or new player will need to examine its own country or market in detail, some common ideas are evolving in the developed and emerging markets.

Mobile operators worldwide are looking for ways to establish themselves in the mobile finance segment, that to date has been largely dominated by financial institutions. According to a survey by Accenture, consumers in Asia are the most enthusiastic about mobile financial services. Overall, 69 percent of survey respondents in Asia indicated they favored using mobile phones for most payments. Similarly, Africa has been one of the most active markets of mobile banking and payment offerings, taking advantage of the lack of banking and Internet infrastructure and high penetration of mobile services.

Mobile phone service is transforming the banking and payment industry by providing added convenience to existing bank customers in developed markets, and by offering new services to the unbanked masses in emerging markets. Within the SAMENA region, so far, the notion of mobile banking has proved to be an attracted service, for several new players ranging from telecom operators, startup-ups, banks, and start-ups to technology & infrastructure vendors, as well as other stakeholders of the value chain, each trying to succeed in this new world.

Yours truly,

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

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## EDITORIAL



## FAIRY TALES DO NOT EXIST

Turning their journey  
into a safe life

Through "Alfa 4-life" program, we are helping children in communication needs in different parts of the country receive special care and build skills that enable them to interact in the society they live in, in order to achieve their full citizenship.

"Alfa 4-Life" is one of our ways of making a difference and a positive change in our society. It stems from our core values and commitment as a Responsible Corporate Citizen.

Since 2006, "Alfa 4-life" supports Lebanese NGOs, among them: SOS Children's Village, SESOBEL, Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf (FAID), Lebanese Autism Society (LAS), Acsauvel and the Lebanese School for the Blind and Deaf (LSBD).

Alfa launches on a yearly basis an SMS fundraising campaign on the short code 1004, enabling its subscribers to donate to the NGOs it supports.

# OPERATOR LEADER'S VISION



**Marwan Hayek**  
Chairman & CEO  
**Alfa Telecom**

Marwan Hayek took the helm of Alfa, the first Lebanese mobile operator managed by Orascom Telecom, as its Chairman and CEO, since the beginning of 2010.

Marwan Hayek is an experienced telecom executive with more than 18 years of field and operations experience. Mr. Hayek started his career with France Telecom in Lebanon – Cellis, known currently as Alfa, where he was part of the initial team that built the first GSM network in Lebanon, before joining later on the Orascom Telecom Holding family back in 1999. Since 1999, Hayek has held several assignments within the Orascom Telecom Group's subsidiaries and its Holding, the latest before his current appointment was in September 2007, where he joined Mobinil - Egypt that has more than 30 million subscribers, as VP Technology in charge of both network and IT infrastructure. With the winning of the Management agreement of Alfa by Orascom Telecom, in February 2009, and in addition to his position at Mobinil, Hayek was appointed on the Board of MIC1-Lebanon and Orascom Telecom Lebanon. Prior to Mobinil, Hayek was the CTO of Mobilink-Pakistan (an Orascom Telecom subsidiary) since June 2003. Mr. Hayek holds a Master's degree in Telecommunications and Electrical Engineering from the "Faculte Polytechnique de Mons" in Belgium. He had attended and participated in several technical, IT and Management trainings including but not limited to CCL, MEIRC, HEC, INSEAD, MIT & Harvard. In June 2011, Mr. Hayek was awarded the "Pan Arab Telecommunications Man of the Year" title by the Pan Arab Web Awards academy for his contributions to the telecom sector's development in Lebanon and the Arab region. Mr. Hayek has also received the "Visionary Entrepreneur Award" at the Business Forum 2012 and in the same year he has been awarded the "Golden Order of Merit for Leadership" from the Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO) and Tatweej Academy in honor of his achievements in the sector.



**Q.** In the regional market, what are in your opinion the key Value Added Services (VASs) that are driving the bandwidth demand and which major services are significant for generating revenue streams?

**A.** Social networks are the main drivers for data uptake. Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and other sites, are the main reason that drive mobile users to subscribe to data. Operators should design offers in partnership with leading OTT players or alone for “very local” applications/content to leverage this trend in consumers usage and increase their revenues. Cloud services and Operator billing are other examples of services that constitute new streams of revenues for mobile operators if implemented in collaboration with successful partners (solution providers for cloud services and merchant and aggregators for operator billing).

**Q.** How has mobile consumption changed in Lebanon over the years and what products and services have you tailored to keep up with the pace?

**A.** Lebanon is no exception to the worldwide trend in mobile consumption. Users’ behaviors is changing and evolving in the same way in most parts of the globe; voice, that was (and still is) the main driver to our business, is steadily losing ground to the benefit of data usage in all its forms (internet browsing, social networking, chatting, Machine 2 Machine, etc...). The chart below shows the SMS trend over the past 2 years until Nov 2013 which shows a clear declining trend favoring other chatting applications.



Today, 70% of the time we spend using our phone, is for gaming, applications, messaging, browsing the internet, etc. while 30% only is dedicated to voice.

To respond to the growing need for data over mobile, we have created data plans that allow users to stay connected on the go; this involves data plans that answer the needs of all segments whether individuals or corporations, starting with offerings from 100MB to 7GB (3G+ Mobile internet bundles) and reaching 100GB with 4G-LTE bundles. We are also focusing on making Alfa part of the current revolution in the telecommunication environment and

cross-technology convergence; we have developed and developing partnerships with OTT players as mentioned before, in addition to mobile payments, M2M, and operator billing among others, are part of this endeavor.

**Q.** 2013 was a busy year for Alfa. How do evaluate it?

**A.** Despite political and economic instability in the country and in the region, which eventually reflect on Lebanon, and translate in a decrease in usage and a decrease in sales, we managed to grow our top lines and our customer base to over 1.85 million subscribers today. As a comparison, Alfa had 0.6 million subscribers in 2009, when we as Orascom Telecom, Media and Technology took over the management of the network on behalf of the Lebanese government.

Alfa’s operations have been centered on innovation over the past years. Our leadership in launching data services, first 3G+ back in October 2011 and 4G LTE on dongles and tablets in May 2013 and then on mobile handsets with voice capability in August 2013, helped in boosting revenues and data users’ penetration reaching more than 50% of our customer base. Data subscribers stand today at one million, a five times surge since 3G+ was launched.

In 2013, we launched 17 services catering for youth, security forces, data users and others. The launch of LTE did put Alfa among the leading operators in the region; however the uptake and penetration is still limited due to the scarcity of 4G enabled handsets in the market. Partnering with leading OTT players such as “Whatsapp” was a huge success where the uptake in one month was double our forecast for year one of launch.

We have also further extended our network coverage and outreach. Today, we have more than 1200 2G physical sites covering 99% of Lebanon’s populated areas. Moreover, we were able to install around 1050 3G+ sites to date since end of 2011, and we have strengthened the 3G+ indoor coverage by deploying a complete 900MHz layer. 4G LTE deployment is also taking place in parallel to cover around 40% of the population in 2014.

To share with you some numbers, mobile penetration in Lebanon stands at around 90% today, whereas in many countries of the region it is reaching 120% to 150%. This shows that there is still room for growth in the Lebanese market.

Finally, I would like to mention that in addition to our role in bringing telecommunication services, we are very active in the Corporate Social Responsibility field. In 2013, we have deepened our CSR commitment and through working with independent NGOs, we further extended our support for children and people with special needs, and have launched several initiatives as part of our CSR Program “Alfa 4-life,” that aim at helping their integration in society as active citizens. We take pride in being selected for first time in Lebanon as the “CSR Company” of the year 2013, by London’s New Economy magazine in a list that had top companies worldwide selected as winners.

**Q.** Could you kindly give us some details on your 4G LTE deployment in Lebanon and the different 4G LTE offerings you have in the market?

**A.** We have embarked on an aggressive 4G LTE deployment plan and we are constantly expanding our network coverage. Today, our 4G LTE network covers 40% of the population in the country. So far, we have installed more than 200 4G LTE sites operating in both 800MHz and 1800MHz bands. These sites cover the capital Beirut, Greater Beirut, and main cities including: Tripoli, Jounieh, Saida, Tyre, Aley, Batroun, Zahleh, and part of Kesserwan region (Faraya Faqra), etc...

4G LTE speeds currently achieved in the local market reach up to 30-40 Mbps, a huge leap in the Lebanese market compared to two years ago.

Below you may find the latest 4G LTE coverage map until today:

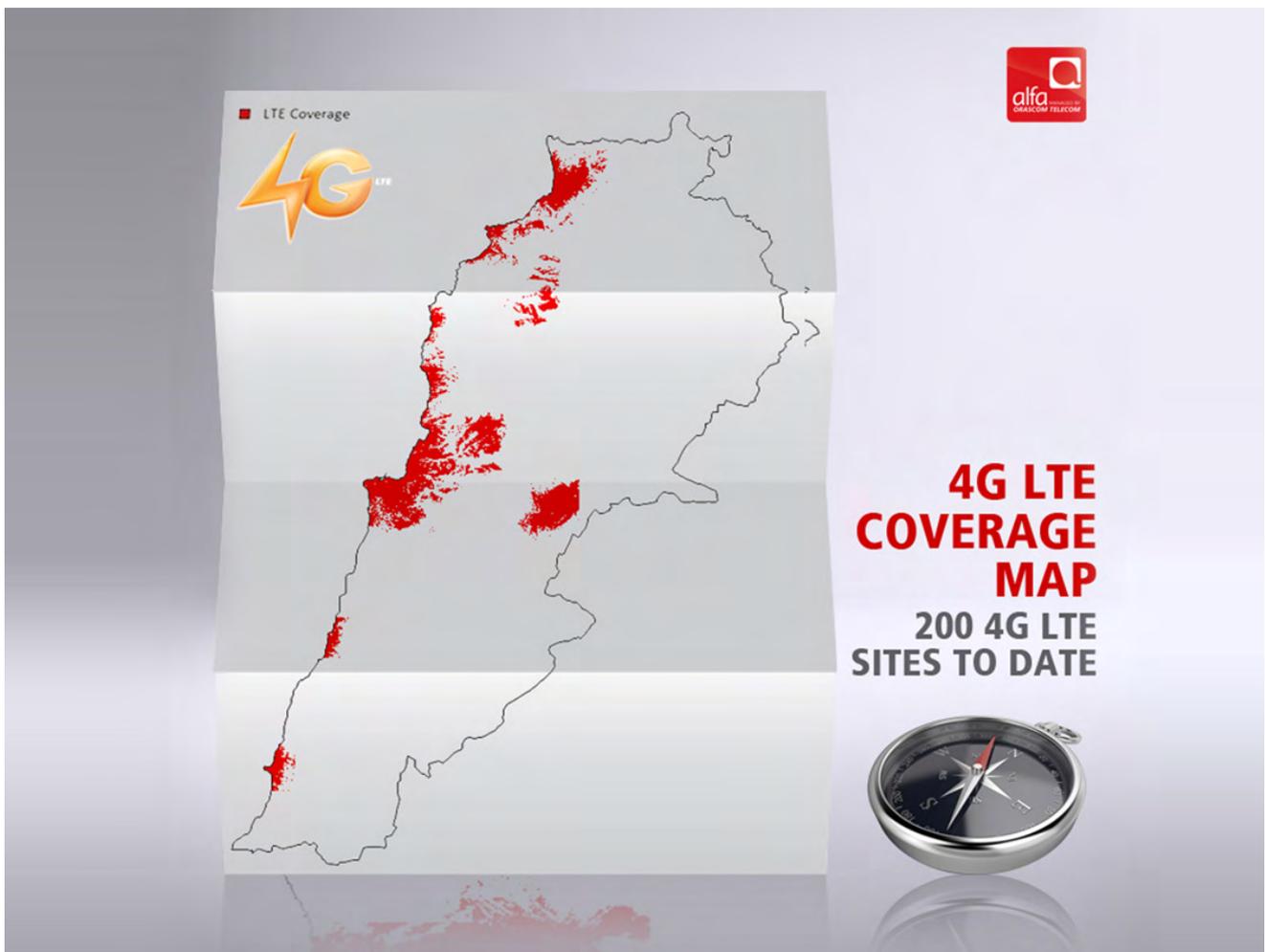
It is worth mentioning that our data plans are technology agnostic and operate indifferently on 3G+ or LTE, in other words every data subscriber to Alfa's network is a potential LTE user; these plans range from 750 MB to 100 GB that can be used through mobile internet (i.e. on handsets) or mobile broadband (tablets, dongles, routers). We also have other lower plans in terms of size, but those are exclusive to 3G.

**Q.** What is the vision of Alfa and how are the company's different operations, business units, services and customer relations aligned in that regard?

**A.** As a leading mobile operator in Lebanon, we are committed to always remain a step ahead in everything we do. We are much focused on technology innovation and we have been, as I mentioned before, the first operator in Lebanon to take the network from 2G then 3G+ then to 4G LTE while partnering with the best in class telecom suppliers such as Ericsson and NSN.

We believe in our resources and seek to offer a dynamic work environment for our employees, where they can excel and are inspired to give the best they can. In that regard, I would like to point out to the fact that we have recently become the first corporation in Lebanon to partner with INSEAD leading academic institution for a program in Lebanon that focused on innovation and leadership.

We do also believe in the active role women can play in driving social change. To share with you some numbers, today, women constitute around 45% of the workforce in Alfa, and they hold top and managerial positions.



Furthermore, I'd like to mention that we are very committed towards our society and our goal is to Install Alfa as THE example of a socially responsible Corporate Citizen through all the CSR initiatives we undertake as part of our CSR program "Alfa 4-Life" that aim at supporting people with special needs. I would like to take as an example the success story of Ali Tlais, a young Lebanese artist with autism from the Lebanese Autism Society whom we have been supporting since 2010. We are proud to have believed in Ali's talent and accompanied him throughout his artistic journey, nurturing, educating and exposing his artworks to the world in national and international exhibitions. Today, Ali has a proven record as an international artist and he is a real example of an autistic artist able to sustain himself, his family as well as the NGO that supports him. He is now considered an ambassador of his association. He became a success story, not only on the financial level, but on the personal level as well.

**Q. Would you please share with us some insights and trends specific to the Lebanese telecom sector and its customers?**

**A.** Lebanese customers are hungry for technology; they rely Lebanese customers are hungry for technology; they rely on it more and more, data usage and consumption on the fixed and mobile networks are the proof to that. We went from a total data traffic of 98 TB in Dec 2012 to 203 TB the same month in 2013! The penetration of smartphones of our network is equivalent to the one witnessed in the US at 60%. People want more applications and more services and most importantly lower prices. The Lebanese consumer is very picky and very demanding when it comes to quality of services.

**Q. With the ever-rising mobile banking demand, what steps should be taken to tackle this challenge? How do you look at the significance of mobile banking in SAMENA region? How telecom operators can embark on this opportunity?**

**A.** Mobile banking is a broad topic that has been on every operator's strategic plan and roadmap for the last ten years, however very few launches have been successful. Each country or region has its own hurdles. In Lebanon, mainly the regulations are not updated and hence any activity in relation to financial transaction should be under the control and ownership of regulated financial institutions such as banks. Partnering with banks solves the regulatory issue, however another barrier lies in the technology to be used such as NFC. Also, partnering with banks means fees for any mobile banking service will be high and that the unbanked portion of the population will be hardly reached. Despite all the above, mobile operators should still see the potential of mobile banking services and keep looking at designing and implementing features and services that answer customers' needs and make all stakeholders winners.

**Q. How do you see the future of the Lebanon telecom and ICT sector for the next 5 years?**

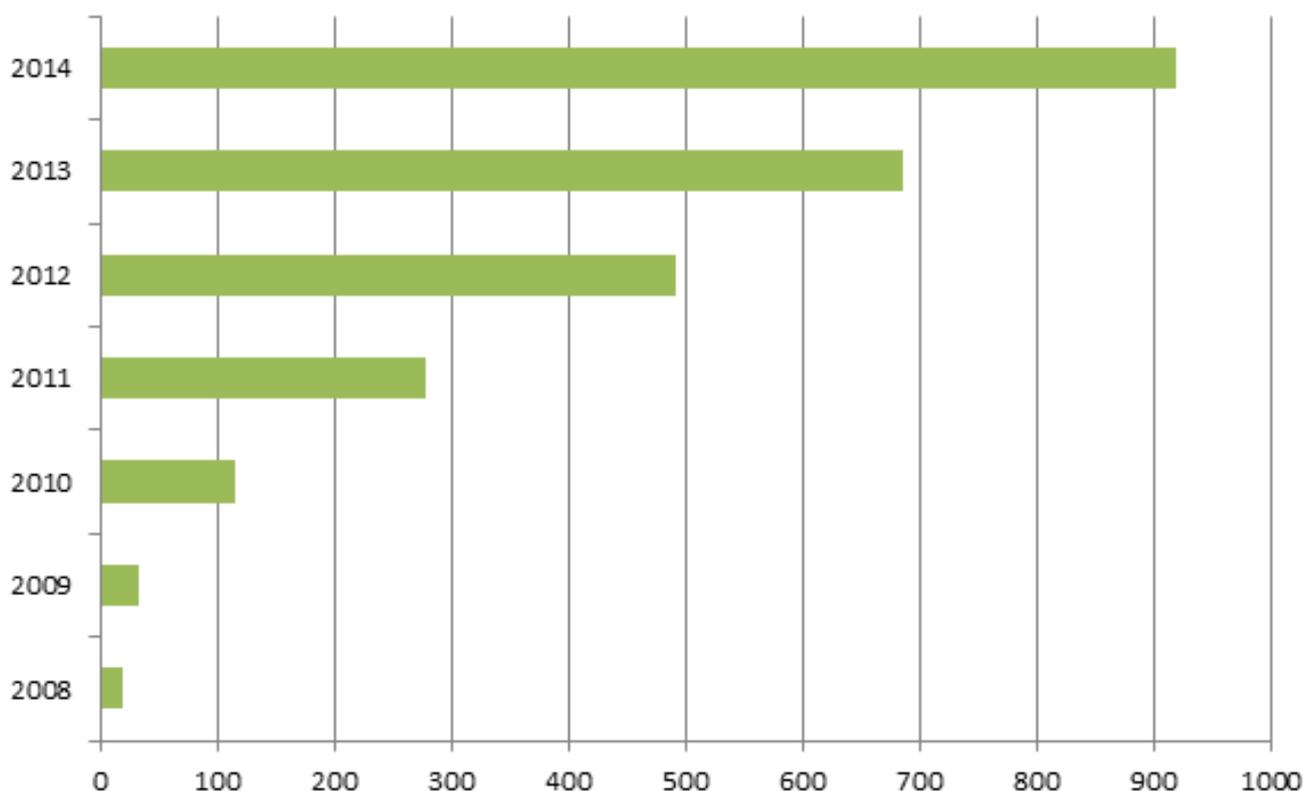
**A.** The average customer behavior and usage (relatively to the level of pricing and so on...) is very promising when compared to neighboring countries; we believe that Lebanon can quickly take back the leadership position in the region and regain its regional 'showcase' status if the appropriate regulatory and competitive conditions are provided. Nevertheless, it is important to note that we have achieved a huge leap in Lebanon esp. when it comes to internet speeds offered to data users. I would like to point out to the fact that this development has been highlighted by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) in one of its latest reports, where it has put Lebanon in 52nd position among 157 countries worldwide on the 2012 ICT Development Index (IDI) index stating that we are the country with the highest improvement on this index (IDI).

We do consider this as a milestone for the local telecom sector, that was the fruit of all the efforts and investments put on the network over the past two years under the guidance and tight supervision of Ministry of Telecommunications. We plan to keep this momentum ongoing; we have many helping factors: investments are available and the Ministry of Telecom in Lebanon is strongly willing to develop the sector, there is room for growth in the local market, there is abundance of talents and skilled resources, and we have the needed technologies and speeds that will allow for more innovation and creativity. In brief, we can say that the Lebanese mobile sector is on the right track and should be in the top seats in the next few years.

**Q. Finally, we would like to welcome to SAMENA Council as first operator joining our Council from Lebanon. How do you think being a member in SAMENA will benefit your organization?**

**A.** We are excited to have joined SAMENA Telecommunications Council as first operator from Lebanon. Being a member in SAMENA, is an interesting and enriching opportunity for us that will allow us to share growth and development across operators within the SAMENA region as well as further enhance our mutual cooperation. We are looking forward to this partnership.

## Mobile Banking and Related Financial Services - Users (Millions)



**Research Note:** While banks and telcos contemplate mobile banking as an added but important revenue source, governments want to use mobile banking as a tool to reduce the number of unbanked masses. Mobile banking is a global phenomenon with a number of countries in the SAMENA region witnessing substantial growth in terms of users of mobile banking and related financial services.

Mobile banking in particular is gaining popularity as financial institutions add innovative features to their digital platforms. Within the SAMENA region, the growing number of smart phone users tends to be one of the key enablers of mobile banking and is definitely a key revenue generator for telcos, as well as banks.

Nonetheless, mobile banking in the developing markets still needs to reach its critical mass before generating significant revenues. Industry experts believe there are several opportunities to accelerate revenue generation by extending the service offering such as Card payment or e-commerce.

**Data Source:** BERG Insight, SAMENA Telecommunications Council

**Image Source:** SAMENA Telecommunications Council



## MEMBERS NEWS

### Huawei strengthens Middle East consumer business with Senior Executive Appointment

Already one of the world's top three smartphone vendors, Huawei—a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider—has announced plans to enhance its regional presence in the consumer electronics market through the appointment of Mr. Sandeep Saihgal as Vice President - Middle East of Huawei's consumer business group, Huawei Device. In his new role, Saihgal is responsible for driving Huawei's go-to market strategy across the Middle East while expanding the brand's footprint into emerging markets. Working closely with Huawei's existing management team, Saihgal is also tasked with promoting regional alliances with key retail and distribution channel partners, as well as overall product marketing aimed at driving brand recognition for Huawei across all channels in the region.

A seasoned industry professional, Saihgal brings nearly 20 years of hands-on experience to Huawei primarily in the consumer electronics and ICT domain. Before joining Huawei, Saihgal served as the VP and Managing Director Middle East for Research in Motion (Blackberry).

In the Middle East, Huawei has made significant strides over the last year by also forging strategic alliances with leading telecom operators and distribution partners in UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman, underscoring the company's drive to increasing its overall visibility in the consumer space.

### Batelco and Huawei sign MoU at Bahrain International Airshow

Batelco, the Kingdom's leading integrated communications services provider and the official sponsor of Bahrain International Airshow (BIAS) 2014 and Huawei, a leading global information and communications technology solutions provider, have signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) on the sidelines of BIAS 2014.

Batelco Chairman Shaikh Hamad bin Abdulla Al Khalifa and Huawei VP Middle East Mr. Huang Ji signed the MoU which involves the delivery of 4G for Batelco's subsidiary SURE Telecom in Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man. This MOU is a follow up with an agreement signed by Shaikh Hamad and Huawei Middle East President Mr. Shi Yaohong, during the Bahrain-China Business Forum held recently in Beijing, China.

Under the agreement, Huawei will deliver and integrate 4G LTE base stations into SURE's network. The delivery of 4G will provide SURE's customers a superior mobile and fixed broadband experience, allowing them access to the world's most advanced broadband technology.

Shaikh Hamad said that Batelco very much appreciates the role that Huawei, as a leading communications technology solutions provider, plays in supporting the delivery of services for Batelco's customers, and the two companies now deepen their strategic alliance in developing future projects within Bahrain and across the globe.

## Etisalat receives Customer Care Excellence Award from Middle East Excellence Awards Institute

Etisalat received the prestigious ICT Development Customer Care Excellence Award during the 8th Middle East Government and Business Customer Care Excellence Awards for the second consecutive year from Middle East Excellence Awards Institute. The UAE's leading telecommunications service provider won the award for playing an extraordinary role in promoting enhanced smart customer service excellence in a competitive region. Hassan Hussein, Vice President, Customer Care, Etisalat UAE, received the award at a ceremony held in Burj Al Arab Hotel, Dubai, in the presence of several government officials, businessmen and representatives of economic institutions. The award ceremony brought an end to the 12th GCC Smart Government and Business Customer Care Excellence Conference being held in Dubai yesterday. The telecom operator has previously won this award for its customer care excellence. Etisalat is an innovative pacesetter in the adoption of new technologies through its strategic vision and unwavering support to government initiatives. The awards highlight, acknowledge and celebrate outstanding achievements in customer care service among regional government and business organizations in the Middle East.

## Huawei global sales revenue estimated to climb 11.6 percent in 2013 up to US\$39.4 Billion

Huawei, a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider, has announced its unaudited financial results for 2013 which indicate continued strong growth and sales momentum worldwide. Huawei's Chief Financial Officer Ms. Cathy Meng revealed that global sales revenue are estimated to reach between US\$39.22 billion - US\$39.44 billion in 2013, an increase of approximately 11.6 percent year-on-year in dollar equivalent. Ms. Meng also announced that Huawei's operating profit for 2013 is expected to be in the range \$4.7 billion to \$4.83 billion, with cash flow from operating activities and the company's asset to liability ratio remaining stable.

## PTCL introduces EVO Tab offer

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), the largest Information Communications Technology service provider in Pakistan, has introduced ten months free internet offer with every new EVO Tab device, enabling customers to experience the high-speed wireless broadband internet. PTCL EVO Tab comes with an upgraded Android 4.0.1 operating system, Dual Core 1.2 GHz processor and 1GB RAM offering great value for money, allowing customers to get the most out of their multimedia content on-the-go. With the largest data network in addition to widest coverage, PTCL broadband is empowering people across Pakistan to reach out to the world, enabling convenient access to knowledge and information nationwide. EVO Tab supports 3G EvDO and Wi-Fi for un-interrupted 'On-the-Go' connectivity, CDMA 1X for voice and SMS, and has a high capacity battery for up to 6 hours usage and 20 hours standby time.

## Etiihad Etisalat announces its annual consolidated financial results for the period ending on 31-12-2013

Revenues for the (12 months) period ended 31/12/2013 recorded 25,191 million riyals compared to 23,585 million riyals for the same period of the previous year, an increase of 7 percent. The revenues of the fourth quarter of 2013 amounted to 7,204 million riyals compared to 6,433 million riyals for the previous quarter, an increase of 12%, and compared to 6,755 million riyals for the fourth quarter of the previous year, an increase of 7%. The gross profit margin increased during the twelve months period to 51%, an increase that can be attributable to the improved quality and mix of revenues.

Revenues from business sector increased during the twelve-month period by 23% compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, backed by a remarkable rise in the revenues of Hosting and Managed Services, which constitute an integral part of the integrated ICT solutions; in addition to the increase in revenues from transmission and interconnection links.

## Etisalat customers redeem AED 200 Million in points through rewards program

Over AED 200 million worth of reward points have been redeemed by members of the Etisalat Rewards program since its inception in 2008. Currently, Etisalat Rewards program has over 1.23 million registered services subscribed to. With over 750,000 members registered for the program, it is the UAE's largest loyalty program in terms of member base. The program rewards its members on their total relationship with Etisalat by connecting all their accounts, thus earning points on all Etisalat services they use including Wasel prepaid, postpaid, landline and eLife.

Etisalat, the leading telecom operator in the UAE, launched the country's first telecom rewards program five years ago. Points can be redeemed against a host of services including free talk time, online shopping, Etiihad Guest miles, and daily deals for travel and other benefits. Partnerships with 75 brands, and 2 banks offering six co-branded credit cards, ensure that customers enjoy benefits across several service providers and earn reward points with partners. Another unique benefit for customers is the ability to buy individual and family insurance products through Etisalat's partnership with Union Insurance.

## STC offers its customers faster Internet with the QUICKnet MyFi 4G device.

STC now offers its customers the QUICKnet MyFi 4G device with a prepaid data SIM card and unlimited Internet for 3 months for only SR 750.

The QUICKnet MyFi device stands out with its small size and light weight, which makes it easy to carry around, with dual 4G network frequency support (1800 and 2300). In addition to providing high Internet speeds of up to 100

Mbps, the device can connect up to ten devices via Wifi and also features an OLED screen. QUICKnet MyFi supports the Windows and Mac operating systems as well as all mobile data transfer technologies, such as GSM & LTE, DC-HSPA, HSDPA, UTMS, EDGE and GPRS.

To meet the interests and needs of its customers, STC continuously designs services that offer customers a wide range of choices. Providing a wide coverage and vast infrastructure, STC aims to maintain its leadership by always offering the latest technologies. And so, it recently launched the advanced 4G LTE service for the first time in the Middle East and North Africa.

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.

## More than 500kg lost by du employees during Biggest Winner competition!

du is pleased to announce that, as a result of its Biggest Winner weight loss competition, 225 members of its staff are now collectively 510kg lighter – with Amr Mahmoud coming in at number one with an incredible 20.30kg loss in just 9 weeks! The Biggest Winner competition took place for the first time between 20 October-12 December 2013 as part of du’s employees’ wellness program, an employee-focused segment of the company’s nationwide Every Step Counts campaign.

A total of 225 employees – 168 men and 57 women – participated in the Biggest Winner competition, split into 45 teams of five competitors each. Their cumulative weight loss of 510kg was a result of scheduled training in du’s gyms, located in its Al Salam Tower headquarters and Dubai Academic City offices, under the guidance of trainers from Regime Fitness. The competition was split into individuals and teams, with Amr Mahmoud taking top honours in the latter category by losing 20.30kg. Waseem Dalloul came second with a 13kg loss, followed by Mohammed Elshehri, who lost 12.80kg.

du’s employees’ wellness program has several upcoming events to promote the importance of health and wellbeing. These include participation in the Dubai Standard Chartered Marathon 2014 in January and a Vertical Run in February

## Ooredoo’s “buzz” portal named as one of “Ten Best Intranets in the World”

Ooredoo’s “buzz” portal – the global intranet that connects employees in its operating companies in Asia, the Middle

East and North Africa – has been named one of the world’s top ten intranets in a new report by leading research firm, Nielsen Norman Group.

The buzz portal was honoured alongside intranets of a number of elite companies and organisations, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mayo Clinic and National Geographic.

Ooredoo’s buzz provides an essential tool for teams in different countries to share ideas, plan coordinated campaigns and contact experts in Ooredoo offices around the world. Since its launch in 2012, buzz has provided Ooredoo employees with a meeting place to talk to their international colleagues, as well as a key focal point for online resources.

Mohanna Nasser Al Nuaimi, Group Chief Human Resources Officer, Ooredoo, said: “We developed Ooredoo’s buzz portal because we know that technology has a huge role to play in enriching people’s working lives, and we wanted to ensure that Ooredoo employees have access to one of the very best intranets wherever they are in the world.”

## STC mobilizes professional taskforces for installation and testing household Wi-Fi signal coverage

STC provided solutions to increase Wi-Fi signal coverage inside the houses of household broadband customers and solve internal wiring problems in the customer premises. It mobilized professional teams for installation and testing of the service and installation of equipment at the customer premises enabling all family members benefit from the Wi-Fi coverage regardless of the household size.

Customers can obtain the service by calling 907 or 906 or visiting one of STC Customer Service Offices spread all over the kingdom. STC provides post –sale service for the customer’s modem.

## VIVA launches Bahrain’s widest 4G LTE Network

As the Kingdom’s market-leading innovator with the fastest and most reliable network, VIVA Bahrain has yet again broken new ground with the launch of its much anticipated 4G LTE service. The company’s state-of-the-art 4G network boasts speeds of up to 100 Mbps with the widest coverage across Bahrain, offering customers an exceptional experience and enabling them to enjoy real-time video, media streaming and downloading. Announcing the launch of 4G LTE services, Ulaiyan Al Wetaid, VIVA CEO said, “The launch of 4G LTE network is one of our biggest milestone achievements, aimed at providing our customers with the best broadband experience possible, and enabling them to stay connected like never before – uploading, downloading with superfast speeds.

Adding further, Mr. Wetaid said, “We were the first to introduce a 42Mbps HSPA+ network making it the fastest mobile broadband for home, business and mobile users alike. We have taken our time to launch 4G LTE to ensure that the quality of our network, the offer and above all, the

customer experience, exceeds the exemplary performance already offered by our 3G+ network." VIVA customers can take advantage of 4G LTE services for free from January 6th until the end of February 2014 after which the service is available as an add on for just BD 5.

## du launches Let's Talk, a new integrated live communication platform for the people of the UAE

du understands that the fast-paced evolution of the communications industry can be overwhelming for some; after all, new developments and technologies are frequently being introduced to make people's lives more convenient. To demystify the industry and help make sense of the world of communications, du has launched "Let's Talk", a new direct integrated communication platform that provides access to the company's senior management and communication experts during live broadcast sessions. The pioneering initiative is being inaugurated as part of du's efforts to further empower the people of the UAE with telecommunication knowledge.

## Mobily offers free Ranan Application in Apple Store and Google Play

Mobily is the first company in the Middle East to launch its latest innovative application, namely "Mobily Ranan Application" for free in Apple store and Google Play. Mobily declared that this application is specialized in answering ringtones and allow all customers tuning their special ringtones heard by the caller instead of the normal ringtone. The application allows the user the authority of full control over all ringtones in a new and innovative way.

Through this application the user becomes able to subscribe in Ranan service, and browse the latest and newest ringtones from all categories such as prayers, Islamic songs, poems, and funny ringtones as well as oriental or western ringtones. The user can also identify the most popular ringtones carried by the users of the service.

Mobily is working through "Ranan Service" to enrich the lives of its customers by providing added-value services enabling them to enjoy it and contribute as well to the increase of their religious and scientific knowledge through rich content added to this service.

## Nawras invites customers to enjoy PSG-Real Madrid match in Doha

Nawras, arranged for a 25 strong group of high value customers to attend the PSG-Real Madrid match in Doha where guests joined a sell-out crowd at the Khalifa International Stadium.

As part of the Ooredoo Group, Nawras went in support of Paris Saint-Germain who is sponsored by Ooredoo. Despite not winning (1-0 Real Madrid) the match was a great experience.

Nawras also organized a visit to Souq Waqif, Doha's outdoor market renowned for selling traditional garments, spices, handicrafts, and souvenirs. "Nawras always looks for

innovative ways to reward customers for their loyalty and we maintain a long-term belief in the power of sport to unite communities and nurture talent while encouraging creativity and boosting confidence," said Greg Young, Nawras CEO. "Simon Baldwin, Director - Consumer Marketing, Consumer Marketing said, "The match was a great way to feel part of Ooredoo and spend time with our loyal customers." Ooredoo is strategic sponsor of Paris Saint-Germain and major supporter of sport as a vehicle for social development across the group's footprint in the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia.

## STC launched the advanced 4G router for free

STC continues offering its customers the advanced 4G router for free within the QUICKnet package, which is available for only SR 1,600 and valid for 14 months. This offer is in line with STC's efforts to provide products and services that go with various packages and meet diverse needs.

This offer enables new QUICKnet data SIM card customers to get the advanced QUICKnet router with dual 4G network frequency support (1800 and 2300) which is also compatible with the 3G network. This offer is also part of previously launched services and packages that have various features and different subscription periods.

In line with STC's strategy to follow a customer-oriented approach, the company continuously strives to meet the needs of its customers. Thus, it always aims to develop services that fulfill its customers' wishes by offering them a wide range of services to choose from. And thanks to STC's vast infrastructure and wide coverage, the company recently launched 4G LTE for the first time in the Middle East and North Africa - introducing its customers to a whole new world of communication.

## du announces unique Try and Buy offer for the first time: Simply put, there has never been a better time for UAE businesses to opt for du's mobile plans

As simple as it may sound, the best things in life need not come at a steep price. Take du's Try and Buy offer - while purchasing either the Business Advantage 100 Plan or The Business 150 Plan, business customers now stand to benefit from 30 days trial with zero activation fees and no monthly charges. Undoubtedly this is a mobile plan that's a must-have for UAE businesses.

Announcing the launch, Fahad Al Hassawi, Chief Commercial Officer, du, said: "We have always stood out in the market for designing path-breaking plans which really meet the needs and aspirations of our customers. Simple to understand and straightforward whichever way you look at it, our Try and Buy offer is unique, unbeatable and empowering. Now, small or large businesses in the UAE can try out our powerful business plans without paying for the standard associated costs such as activation fees and monthly charges. With this win-win offer, we are confident that customers will never have to look elsewhere for other business plans."

Our customers have the full freedom to change their mind, so we have ensured there are no foreclosure (early termination) fees on termination before 30 days.

## Etisalat leads in widest 3G and 4G networks in UAE

Etisalat, the leading telecom operator in UAE today announced the widest coverage of its network comprising of 3G and 4G technologies in the country. The operator upgraded its telecom network in 2013 to provide the best indoor coverage in the country by increasing the number of indoor base stations to 6000. Saeed Al Zarouni, Senior Vice President Business Planning and Technology Evolution said: "Etisalat always strives to provide the highest level of service enabling customers to utilize all services over the network. Recent studies conducted by Etisalat indicate that more than 65 per cent of mobile calls are made within buildings and premises. "Therefore we have continuously enhanced indoor coverage despite the fact that we already lead in providing best indoor coverage with high quality service and download speeds, according to the recent report from the TRA. Etisalat is working to increase the number of base stations over 7500 by the end of the year with an aim to provide best telecom services in the country."

Additionally, it successfully upgraded its 3G network with speeds touching 84Mbps from the previous 42Mbps providing the best quality voice and data transmission in UAE. The current 3G network covers 99.8 per cent of the country with more than 6000 base stations.

## PTCL holds workshop to nurture the youth

Pakistan Telecommunications Company Limited (PTCL) has held an innovative program for children of PTCL employees, aimed towards nurturing the children to be more responsible, creative and tolerant of differences.

The objective of the day long program was to increase the ability of the children to think for themselves, take initiatives, get along with others and solve problems by recognizing the potentials that they are gifted with. Syed Mazhar Hussain, PTCL Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) while speaking at the occasion said that, "We at PTCL believe that not only the employees but their families are also an integral part of the PTCL family. The workshop was designed to enable children to learn essential life skills and characteristics to drive their lives and thrive in a more effective manner".

The children were awarded certificates and souvenirs by Syed Mazhar Hussain CHRO, and also enjoyed the highly interactive program arranged by the PTCL training department for their learning.

## STC connects more than 830 thousand locations with FTTH network

STC has expanded FTTH network to be able to connect more than 830 thousand locations with the FTTH network which is more than 18000 kilometer long across the kingdom within its continuous efforts to execute the strategic extension phase of its network to link all sectors and facilities including households and residential buildings via the most recent telecom technologies that meets customer needs.

STC has provided the fiber optic service at high speeds of 200 MB/s to take customers to a new era in all broadband applications. The demand on high speed Jood services has shown lately a tremendous increase greatly compared to the last years especially after the spread of interactive applications and e-games and social media channels and other high tech projects that require high reliability digital structure. In this respect, STC in moving towards launching a new broadband era by deploying a the biggest fiber optic networks in the region on which Jood service largely depends in order to strengthen the shift of the telecom sector towards fiber optic supported broadband services.

## PTCL inks agreement to build one of the largest Submarine Cable System

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), the largest ICT service provider in Pakistan, is investing in one of the largest international submarine cable consortium system, in collaboration with the leading telecom operators of the world.

The undersea cable system encompasses a multimillion dollar investment and will enable Pakistan to meet its future information communications needs. Sayyed Muhammad Imran Ali, PTCL Executive Vice President (EVP) International Business Relations and Essa Khalifa Alsuwaidi, PTCL Executive Vice President (EVP) International Investments & Capacity Sales represented PTCL at the signing ceremony.

The new cable system, Asia Africa Europe (AAE-1), will be adding terabits of bandwidth to PTCL's international capacity, besides building redundancy to its existing international infrastructure on eastern and western side of the Arabian Sea.

Spanning approximately 25,000 KMs, the AAE-1 submarine cable will be one of the first cable systems connecting Hong Kong, Singapore, Middle East, Africa and Europe, and provide an alternative low latency route between Pakistan and rest of the world.

## Huawei and Arsenal announce global partnership

Huawei, the leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider, and Arsenal Football Club announced a new partnership, which will see the telecommunications specialist become the Official Smartphone Partner of the north London club on a global basis.

Huawei and Arsenal announced the global deal, which lasts until the end of season 2015/16 at the Arsenal Training Centre in Colney, Hertfordshire, with members of the first team including, Aaron Ramsey, Lukas Podolski and Mesut Özil along with manager Arsène Wenger. The partnership will be officially unveiled to supporters at the Emirates Stadium in London before the Premier League clash with Fulham Football Club on Saturday, January 18, 2014. The deal brings together two high performing organizations with a global presence; Huawei, a global technology and communications market leader, and Arsenal FC, one of the world's biggest football clubs. The partnership will see global collaboration between the two brands, with Arsenal FC's officials and players taking part in Huawei's communication and promotional activities both in the UK and overseas.



## REGIONAL NEWS

### Sri Lanka Telecom boosts broadband data volumes

Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT) has increased broadband data volumes for a range of its broadband packages without increasing prices. The Web Starter package has been doubled to 10 GB, the Web Pal package has been boosted with 5 GB to 13 GB, while the Web Family package now has 35 GB, up from 25 GB earlier. The Web Surfer package has been boosted with 15 GB to a total of 50 GB, Web Pro was increased by 25 GB to 85 GB, and the Web Master package now offers 155 GB instead of 120 GB. The Web Champ package now offers 230 GB, up from 185 GB, and Web Life has 75 GB extra at 375 GB.

### Pakistan: Telecom contribution to national kitty reaches Rs124 billion

The growing cellular subscribers, increased traffic and higher taxes have encouraged telecom sector contribution to national exchequer, touching Rs124 billion mark during fiscal year 2012-13. Though the year 2012-13 saw lesser contribution from telecom sector as compared to Rs133.41 billion deposited in 2011-12, the sector can be termed as one of the highest contributors, putting Rs119 billion per year in the national kitty on average for the last five years. A latest data of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) revealed that General Sales Tax (GST) forms the major part of the contribution with Rs57.78 billion collected by Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) from telecom sector.

### Jordanians sent 2.1 million SMSs to inquire about gov't services in 2013'

Although the number of SMSs Jordanians sent in 2013 to inquire about public services via the e-government program almost doubled, several citizens called for more efforts to promote the services. "I didn't know we could send text messages to inquire about government services. I guess I could use the services to check the weather forecast or if I have any traffic tickets," Ehab Naieem, a 30-year old employee at a wholesale store in Amman, told The Jordan Times. Ibrahim Adel, who works at an accessories store, also said he was unaware of the services, but does not need to use them. "If I want to know about weather, I check the Internet on my mobile, and I don't have a car, so I don't have to worry about traffic tickets," the 24-year-old said. "Sometimes I receive SMSs informing me that I can check the weather or taxes by sending a message to certain numbers, but I delete them immediately." Hussam Ahmad, a 34-year-old teacher, said he regularly uses the services to check his traffic tickets, but complained that he sometimes does not receive a response to his inquiries.

### Venture capitalists' heaven: The Middle East digital sector

Venture capital investors in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region have their eyes set on the digital sector with almost half of all such investments going to this sector, a report said. Most ventures happened in Tunisia, Morocco and Lebanon, who currently lead the region in

terms of quantity of VC investments. Numerous promising initiatives are being launched in the region to back the steadfast growth of early-stage tech and e-commerce ventures, said the report released by ArabNet. One notable example is Berytech, which announced that US\$30 million will be invested in startups and SMEs starting 2014 with a focus on the creative industries and value-added sectors. Another example is Aramex's founder and vice chairman, Fadi Ghandour, who is raising a US\$75 million to US\$100 million fund to push forward the growth of early-stage tech and e-commerce ventures within the MENA. This fund will provide tech firms with US\$1 million - US\$3 million funds for each venture.

## Finance Ministry approves formation of new telecoms department

Bangladesh is proceeding with the previously announced plan to form a separate Department of Telecommunication (DoT) to operate under the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MoPT), which according to officials quoted by the Financial Express, will serve to 'eliminate confusion' regarding the status of the telecommunication cadre personnel in the bureaucracy [who have been] working with the Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) since [the incumbent telco's establishment in its current form in] 2008'. The newspaper reports that the Finance Ministry has approved the appointment of 11,000 job posts at the new DoT including 255 permanent posts. Some of the current BTCL workforce will join the DoT, according to a MoPT official. The plan to launch the new department must now be approved by the Prime Minister.

## UAE: Complete e-services by Ministry of Interior by year-end

The ministry's Smartphone platform provides an integrated comprehensive link to the ministry's website through the Unified Login mechanism (username and password) to obtain services from any channel of electronic communication, said Major General Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al Raisi, Director General of Central Operations at Abu Dhabi Police. Users can register once using the Single Sign-On property directly on the website or through smart phones, and gain access to all ministry's services. Al Raisi underscored the importance of this e-transformation commensurate with the developments taking place in the Information Technology (IT) industry, so as to enable easy access of community members to these services wherever they are. He said a Smart Application Center was established at the Ministry of Interior to handle all electronic procedures pertaining to these services, and respond to customers' inquiries. This center is operated by a highly qualified team of Emirati citizens.

## Media Network to use Vodafone's SMS Connect

Vodafone Qatar and Media Network have extended their partnership to include SMS Connect which will enable businesses in Qatar to communicate with their customers using text messages. Media Network have been using Vodafone's mobility services for one year and in May 2013 began using Vodafone's Machine to Machine (M2M) solution to track the location of all of their company vehicles. These innovations have helped Media Network to increase their operational efficiency and improve performance right across

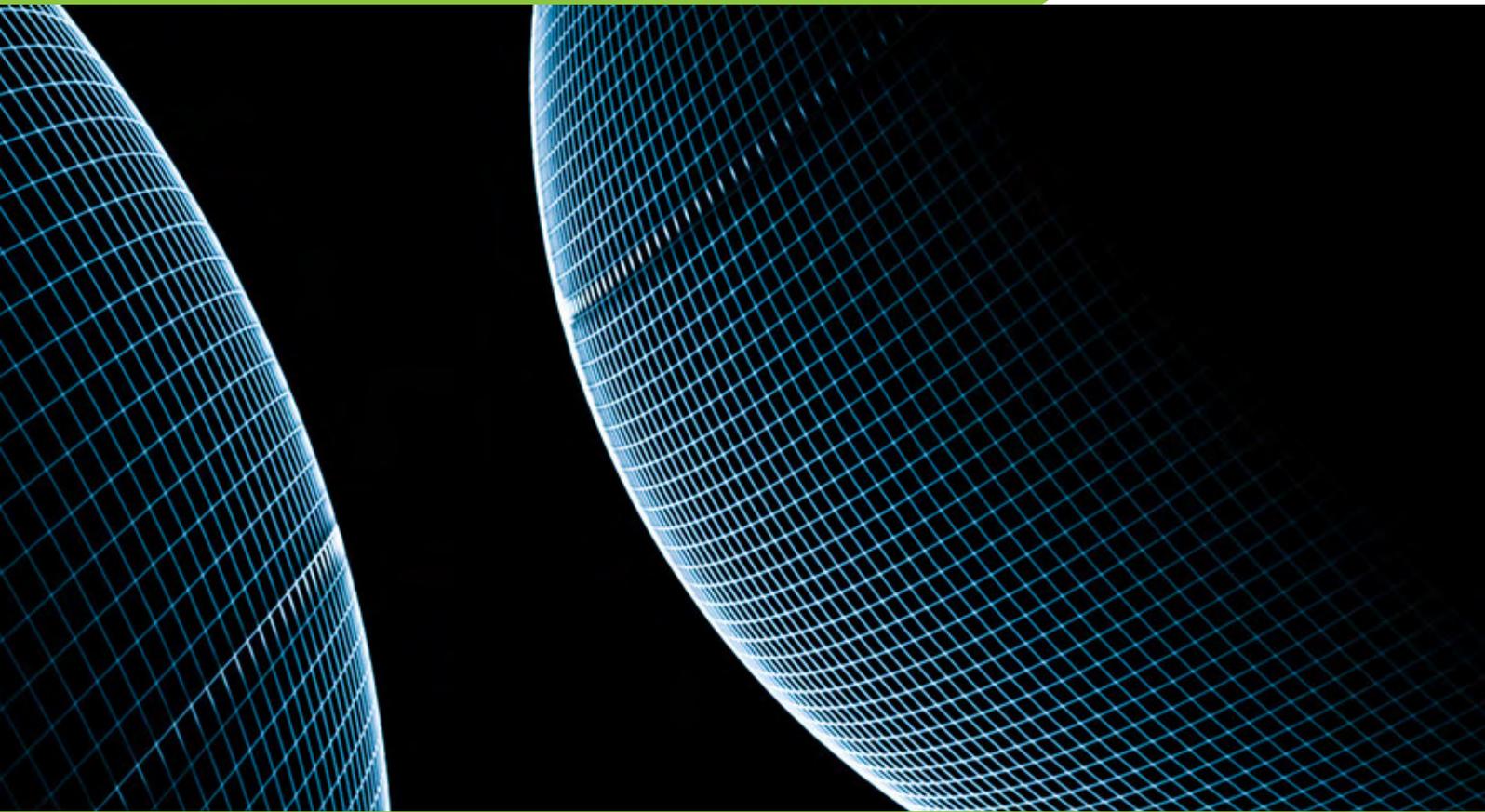
their company. "We are proud that Media Network relies on Vodafone for their telecommunications needs - mobile network, M2M and now SMS connect. We are committed to ensuring that Vodafone's growing range of business services coupled with our local and global expertise serves the needs of businesses in Qatar," said Mohamed al-Yami, director of external affairs, Vodafone Qatar. "Innovation lies at the heart of both Vodafone and Media Network so partnering with Vodafone was a natural fit for us," said Nael Jammoul, CEO of Media Network. Abdullah Johar, owner of Media Network, was also present on the occasion.

## Kenya: CCK to meet with telecom operators over quality of services

The Communications Commission of Kenya met the four operators to discuss various issues including the recently released Quality of Service report that saw all MNOs fail to comply. In the past year, various compliance percentages were enhanced by CCK in consideration of expected increased investment and improvement in services by the operators. Five of the eight parameters were enhanced including completed calls from 90 - 95 per cent; call block rate from 10 to 5 per cent; call set up success rate from 90 to 95 per cent as well as handover success rate (from 80 to 85 per cent) and speech quality among others. The meeting will be attended by ICT Cabinet Secretary, Dr Fred Matiangi as well as CCK Director General, Francis Wangusi. Stakeholders will expect the government to give a way forward on the penalties to be imposed on the operators with the new penalties expected to come into force next year following the passing of the amended Kenya Information and Communications Act. Under the new Act, telcos will pay 0.2 per cent of gross annual turnover from the current Kshs 500,000 for non performing networks. The meeting is also expected to discuss other long-standing issues like the mobile calling rates and SIM card registration. Airtel Kenya lauds CCK on quality scorecard.

## White spaces pilot launched in Namibia

Namibia's MyDigitalBridge Foundation, in partnership with the Millennium Challenge Account Namibia, and with the support of Microsoft and the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia, has launched a pilot project called Citizen Connect, designed to bring broadband access to the people of Namibia. The pilot uses white spaces technology to deliver high-speed and affordable internet access through unused television frequency, providing critical access to technology in remote and disadvantaged areas. MyDigitalBridge is a Namibian not-for-profit organization whose mission is to enrich the lives of marginalized communities through equitable access to technology. The Millennium Challenge Account Namibia (MCA-N) is a development program funded by the United States government to help reduce poverty through economic growth. This collaboration was created between MyDigitalBridge, MCA-N, and the Microsoft 4Afrika Initiative, was launched today to help improve Africa's global competitiveness.



## REGULATORY & POLICY NEWS

### Egypt regulator gives go-ahead for unified licenses

Operators in Egypt moved one step closer to offering fixed and mobile services after the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) agreed to issue the country's first unified licenses.

In a statement, NTRA said unified licenses were an "optimal regulatory solution" and would "pave the way for the attainment of the growth and the balance required for the telecom market in Egypt". NTRA will now refer the details of its decision to the cabinet's economic committee, which, in turn, will forward it on to the cabinet for ratification and final approval. No timetable has been given for the license awards and who will receive them. The award of a unified license will allow Telecom Egypt, the country's largest fixed-line operator, to offer its own branded mobile services for the first time.

In light of the new licenses, there has been speculation about the ownership of Vodafone Egypt, the country's largest mobile operator in which Telecom Egypt holds a 45 per cent stake.

### Pakistan: Reopening of YouTube possible after auction of 3G spectrum

The re-opening of social website "YouTube" is not possible before the auction of spectrum for next generation mobile services in Pakistan, which is expected in the first week of March 2014, it is learnt.

Minister of State for Information Technology, Anusha Rahman under the supervision of Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Dr. Syed Ismail Shah formed a three-member committee comprising member legal and member IT of the ministry to analyze, how Youtube is being operated in other Muslim countries. Further the committee would help in legislation over the issue to control blasphemous contents on internet including Youtube, to be made applicable through an ordinance. Senior officials revealed that the management of Google/ Youtube has shown willingness to localize Youtube in Pakistan provided the third party indemnity may be given to such web platforms. In this regard, the PTA is in process of finalizing such provisions, which then the MoIT will process as enact in the shape of an ordinance, however blocking of immoral material on internet is impossible including Youtube.

### New ictQATAR guidelines for telecom operators

The telecom regulatory authority (ictQATAR) under the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology has issued a set of new guidelines for the telecom service providers in the country on advertising, sales and information transparency in its Telecommunications Consumer Protection Policy that was released yesterday.

The guidelines include requirements that a service provider shall not make misleading representations in advertising or promotions and ensure that customers are not misled about who is actually providing the telecommunications

products and services. It also says that the operators must ensure content about its products and services is truthful, accurate and not misleading or confusing to a reasonable customer. As per the new policy, the operators are liable for breaches of the license by a third party provider and adhere to the general principles of behaviour with respect to advertising and promotional activity. It specifies that the service provider shall be honest and truthful, clearly disclose all necessary information to the customer before, during, and after the point of sale and not take advantage of a customer's lack of experience or knowledge.

## TRA completes 2013 mobile networks benchmarking survey in UAE

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) announced the completion of the 2013 'Mobile Networks Benchmarking Survey' for services provided by UAE operators. The survey was conducted in line with the TRA's commitment to the provision of quality services and ensuring operators' adhere to the terms and conditions of their licenses.

The annual survey measures the level of services offered by mobile networks as a means to ensure that each operator meets strict performance requirements. The benchmarking program was carried out through driving tests for more than 13,000 kilometers across the UAE. The program also included extensive voice and data testing as well as indoor venue testing.

Commenting on the completion of the survey, H.E. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim said: "The survey is carried out by a highly skilled workforce in order to reach results that truly reflect the status of mobile networks and services provided. We take these surveys seriously because they are the main elements that guarantee improving the quality of services in the UAE, helping us to achieve one of our strategic goals reflected in reaching a leading status in this sector regionally and globally."

## PTA allows all CMOs to use 3G spectrum on test basis

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has so far decided to grant permission to all Cellular Mobile Operators (CMOs) to use 3G spectrums on test basis and also wrote a letter to Frequency Allocation Board in this regard.

Sources aware of the development told the media that the regulatory authority (PTA) in its letter to Frequency Allocation Board has recommended granting permission for use of 3G-spectrum frequency on conditional basis to all CMOs prior to the much-delayed spectrum auction for next generation. And, if the board awards frequency on conditional basis to the mobile operators then all CMOs would be able to use the 3G spectrum for technical test for one month.

"The Frequency Allocation Board will provide 3G frequency for one month test service to the mobile operators and they will test their equipments, and towers on new technology, "a senior official at Ministry of Telecommunication said on the condition of not to be named, adding, "however, mobile phone operators will not use the 3G spectrum service for commercial purposes."

## UAE: Portability of landline numbers soon according to TRA

The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) is contemplating to expand the competition it unleashed with the Mobile Number Portability (MNP) last month, to the landline segment. The authority launched the MNP in the last week of December, drawing interest from more than 5,000 subscribers of both the telecom operators to switch over, TRA Director-General Mohammed Nasser Al Ghanim said on Wednesday.

On expanding the portability to the landline segment, Al Ghanim said: "We have finished with mobile, hopefully we will get to the fixed line segment in 2014, and finish it as it is a long-standing project." The authority has completed the technical feasibility of the fixed line or the opening up of the fixed line. "So what's left is finalizing the prices," the director-general said.

## Ofcom approves satellite broadband use for ships, trains and planes

Passengers on boats, planes and trains could soon be accessing broadband speeds of 10Mbps after Ofcom approved the use of satellite broadband antennas on vehicles, after putting forward plans last August.

The decision will mean that rather than having to rely on mobile networks for smartphones, or dongles on laptops – which often provide patchy, low-speed experiences, especially in remote regions – passengers could have speeds that are 10 times faster and far more consistent. To encourage the use of such services Ofcom is making 4,128MHz of high-frequency spectrum available for this use. Ofcom hopes applications for the first ship-mounted satellite broadband services can be submitted by February and aircraft soon after, with services going live by the end of the year.

Philip Marnick, group director of spectrum at Ofcom, said the decision to allow satellite broadband use in this way would help more people remain online anywhere in the UK. "We want travelers to benefit from superfast broadband on the move at the kind of speeds they expect from their connection at home," he said. Ofcom said it had given the go-ahead to the use of satellites for broadband after it recognized that advances in satellite antennas for vehicles have made it possible to maintain a much more accurate signal than before.

## TRA establishes first Federal Electronic Network

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has divulged information about the progress made in establishing the first ever Electronic Federal Network (FedNET) in the United Arab Emirates.

FedNET will provide high speed connectivity and integration between the various e-Government systems of U.A.E. government departments. The network will connect all federal institutions in a way that raises efficiency and reduces costs. It will also help achieve a faster transition to smart government.



## COUNTRY-WISE POLICY & REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

### Afghanistan

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

[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)]

Afghanistan's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has announced that from 1 February 2014 state-backed operator Afghan Telecom (Aftel) will reduce wholesale bandwidth prices by 30%, whilst cutting the cost of residential broadband services by 20%. On the wholesale front, the monthly price for STM-1 (155Mbps) will drop from USD 20,000 to USD 14,000. Residential users meanwhile will see price cuts for DSL subscriptions ranging from 256kbps connections – which will drop to AFN1,000 (USD17.6) – to 2Mbps, which will be AFN2,000 per month cheaper at AFN8,000. Commenting on the development ICT Minister Amirzai Sangin said: 'Providing better and more advanced IT services to the people, at affordable rates is one of the goals of MCIT. We have put in lots of effort in this area and this tangible reduction in rate of internet is its clear result.' (Jan 21, 2014) telegeography.com

A media gathering was held in the Ministry of Communication and IT (MCIT) on 19 Jan 2014. Addressing the participants of the gathering Amirzai Sangin Minister of Communication and IT said that there has been a remarkable reduction in the rates of internet services over the years. The price of 1Mbps internet reduced from 5000USD in 2002 to 1500USD in 2010. Following the establishment of Optical fiber cable network, they announced the whole sale price of the mentioned bandwidth for 67USD, the Minister added. He further said that the internet price reduction indicates the remarkable development of telecom sector in Afghanistan. He added that further efforts are underway in developing

and providing universal access to Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), and services toward achieving the goals. Pointing out to the lowering internet whole sale rates of 155 Mbps STM1 from 20000 USD to 14000USD, Minister Sangin said that Afghan Telecom offers a 30% reduction in the rates of internet bandwidth for telecom companies and ISPs in the country. The Minister said that Afghan Telecom will start delivering high quality GSM and 3G service soon. The meeting ended with answering the questions of mass media representatives.

(January 25, 2014) ATRA

### Algeria

#### Chairperson: Ms. Zohra Derdouri

[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]

With a fixed-line penetration of around 8% and mobile penetration close to 100%, Algeria has one of the highest teledensities in Africa. The country's relatively well developed infrastructure includes a national fiber backbone and one of Africa's first FTTP deployments. Oil and gas reserves have made the nation one of the wealthiest on the continent. Competition in the fixed-line sector received a setback in 2008 when the second operator, Lacom (a joint venture between Egypt's Orascom Telecom and Telecom Egypt) exited the market after three years of operations, citing regulatory barriers that made it impossible to compete with Algerie Telecom. Shortly afterwards the delayed privatization of Algerie Telecom was called off and the licensing of third generation mobile spectrum was again put back. The number of fixed lines in service fell by 16% the following year but has since then recovered. To provide fixed connections, Algerie Telecom has made extensive use

of CDMA wireless technology which supports broadband and full mobility. In parallel with the access networks, the national and international fiber optic backbone is being upgraded to an IP-based next-generation network. The government has announced investments of €100 million into national fiber infrastructure to 2014. The licensing of 3G spectrum to the three mobile network operators in late 2013 will provide a strong stimulus to the development of mobile broadband services in coming years. In addition, commercial services based on LTE technology are expected to be available in early 2014. At the same time, Algeria Telecom has invested in expanding and upgrading its ADSL and WiMAX networks. ADSL prices are already among the lowest in Africa. This infrastructure is complemented by WiMAX wireless broadband infrastructure put in place by several ISPs. The liberalization of the market for VoIP services has also enabled ISPs to become players in the sector, which is placing greater pressure on fixed-line voice services. Algeria Telecom is investing in the expansion of its national fiber infrastructure, while the operator has also become a major shareholder in a four-company national fiber project. At close to 100% penetration, subscriber growth in Algeria's mobile market has begun to slow. Given the intensifying price competition between the three MNOs, Algeria Telecom's Mobilis, Orascom's Djazzy, and Wataniya's Nedjma, their focus has shifted to developing ARPU and investing in mobile data services. (Jan 21, 2014) sbwire.com

## Bangladesh

### Chairman: Sunil Kanti Bose

[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]

The telecom regulator has set standards to ensure mobile operators' quality of services in a bid to improve customer satisfaction for both voice and data services. The regulator will monitor the service quality on a regular basis and publish reports, depending on which the violators will be penalized. Under the initiative, the regulator will examine the operators' service response time, call drops, signal-to-noise ratio, cross-talk, echo, interruptions and loudness levels. The commission yesterday approved the guideline on the quality of service standards after consulting the operators, the process of which began in 2009, said Sunil Kanti Bose, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission. The guideline was prepared following the conditions noted in the telecom law and in the operators' license and was finalized after taking notes from the guidelines of other countries, Bose said. A team of the regulator will monitor the quality of services through different tests and see whether the operators are providing the data service they have promised. The quality of customer care will be evaluated to see if they are responding to customer complaints properly, Bose said. The guideline will soon be sent to the operators so that they can follow it, he said. The regulator has already purchased equipment to monitor the services and will purchase the equipment needed for preparing their reports, which they will submit to the regulator, a BTRC official said. Upon auditing, BTRC will publish the results of the service quality on its website, he said. The official said the regulator's evaluation will be thorough and will check the quality of services on the highways, railways and riverside. (Jan 3, 2014) thedailystar.net

Fixed line telephony subscribers in Bangladesh increased modestly in 2013, according to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), which reports that the total PSTN lines stood at 1,158,296 at the end

of December – the regulator's first report on the fixed line market in a couple of years. The watchdog's figures show that incumbent national telco Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) had 961,589 fixed voice subscribers at 31 December 2013 – which is apparently an increase from BTCL's reported total of '0.9 million' at the end of its financial year (30 June 2013) – and certainly shows net growth from BTCL's 935,760 lines it reported at end-June 2012. BTCL has only one remaining effective competitor in the fixed line market, wireless in the local loop (WiLL)-based Ranks Telecom (RanksTel), which the BTRC said had 187,557 active subscriber lines at end-December 2013. RanksTel was one of five WiLL operators closed down in March 2010 for alleged involvement in illegal international VoIP call termination, at which date it had around 300,000 subscribers, and it was not until June 2012 that RanksTel finally re-launched its services after re-registering 20,000 former customers. The third surviving fixed line provider, Banglaphone, has a small-scale local telephony base, reported by the BTRC at 5,450 at end-December 2013. WorldTel is the fourth and final PSTN local telephone operator included on the BTRC's list. WorldTel was shut down by the regulator alongside RanksTel in March 2010 but had its license returned in September 2011. Recently, local reports said WorldTel was either defunct or near-to-closing, but it reported a tiny fixed line user base of 3,700 at end-December 2013. (Jan 28, 2014) telegeography.com

## Egypt

### Executive President: Dr. Amr Badawi

[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]

Egyptian telecoms regulator the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) has reportedly confirmed that it has agreed to issue a unified license allowing a company to offer both fixed line and mobile networks, according to Reuters. With the watchdog having sent the details of its decision to the cabinet for final approval, it is expected that the move will allow fixed line incumbent Telecom Egypt (TE) to enter the mobile market. In a statement detailing the development, the NTRA was cited as saying: '(The decision) will achieve needed development and balance in Egypt's telecoms market. The details of the unified license have been sent to the cabinet's economic committee in preparation for it being presented for ratification and final approval by the cabinet.

(Jan 2, 2013) telegeography.com

## Jordan

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

[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

The government will announce the name of the investor with the winning bid to provide Fourth Generation telecom services. Process is in the final stages of studying two bids which are received from two companies. The committee in charge of deciding on the best bid has been meeting for the past three months to choose the best offer. The 4G service includes data transfer rates of up to 150 megabits per second. In June, the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) opened five new radio frequencies, including 4G services, to enable faster mobile Internet use and announced in October that it received two bids. The country's three telecom operators — Orange Jordan, Zain Jordan and Umniah — have opposed the introduction of 4G technology in Jordan, describing the move as "premature". They also said issuing a license to a fourth operator is unfeasible, arguing that it would harm the sector and reduce

the government's revenues, because "the Jordanian market is saturated". Mobile penetration in Jordan reached 155 per cent by the end of September 2013, with 10.227 million subscriptions, according to the TRC. Internet penetration stood at 72 per cent at the end of the third quarter of 2013, with 4.864 million users, according to figures posted on the TRC website. (Jan 6, 2014) [jordantimes.com](#)

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) is expected to initiate a study next month to measure the quality of telecom services in the country, according to its chief commissioner, Mohammad Taani. TRC hired a specialized company to conduct the study, which will cover 2nd and 3rd generation services, Taani told The Jordan Times. "The study is important because its findings will enable customers to know the quality of services available in the market and it will also help the TRC in taking some regulatory measures, if they are required," he added. After the study is completed, which is expected in 12-14 weeks, TRC will discuss its findings with telecom operators and publish the results. The study will also gauge the percentage of network coverage across the country, Taani said. In October last year, ICT Minister Azzam Sleit said the level of services provided by telecom operators is unsatisfactory, and that the authorities will start taking measures to force them to enhance quality. "The quality of telecom services should be improved. 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," the minister said at the time. Sleit also cast doubt over the accuracy of studies conducted by TRC in the past to measure the level of services offered by the three operators in the Kingdom. Mobile penetration in Jordan reached 155 per cent by the end of September 2013, with 10.227 million subscriptions. Internet penetration reached 72 per cent at the end of the third quarter last year, with 4.864 million users, according to figures posted on the TRC website. Internet subscriptions stood at 20.7 per cent with 1.382 million subscribers at the end of September 2013. The majority, or 1.064 million Internet subscribers, was mobile broadband subscribers, according to the figures.

(Jan 29, 2014) [zawya.com](#)

## Libya

### Minister: Ossama Sayata

[(Ministry of Telecommunications & Informatics)]

Libya has approached the ITU seeking assistance to establish world-class ICT facilities in the country. Heading the Libyan delegation, the Minister for Communications and Informatics, Mohamad Benrasali asked for ITU's assistance in preparing a document to modernize its ICT infrastructure in Libya to not only world class level, but to world-leading standards. Mr Benrasali indicated that the policy document would focus on establishing a regulatory framework to encourage investment in developing the Libyan ICT sector and that capacity building would be an integral part of the plan. Mr Benrasali also noted that the Libyan government is focusing on e-government as a sustainable tool for public service delivery and that the government's 'e-Libya initiative' is aimed at rejuvenating the administration. E-Libya initiatives include open government, e-government, e-commerce and e-education. The Libyan government has put together a timeframe of two years to reach its objectives of modernizing the ICT sector. ITU has committed to sending an assessment mission to Libya. The Libyan delegation also met with the Director of ITU's Radio communication Bureau Mr François Rancy and the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau

Mr Malcolm Johnson and discussed issues related to the critical areas of broadband development and spectrum management. (Jan 14, 2014) [ictafrica.info](#)

## Lebanon

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

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Lebanon's Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT) has extended the contract of Kuwait's Zain Group to manage state-owned mobile operator Touch Lebanon (MIC 2) for a further three months, until the end of March 2014. A political impasse in Lebanon has led to a series of temporary contract extensions, with the first one covering the period ended June 2013. According to TeleGeography's GlobalComms Database, MIC 2 was established in January 1995 under a build-transfer-operate (BTO) contract awarded by the government the previous year. Kuwaiti cellco Zain Group was awarded an initial four-year management contract to operate and develop MIC 2's network in June 2004. However, in order to extend its management contract beyond 2013 by up to five years, Zain must compete in an open tender, the terms of which were expected to be finalized by the MoT in April 2013 for Council of Ministers (CoM) approval; delays in the process have meant that temporary management contract extensions have been introduced in the interim. (Jan 3, 2014) [telegeography.com](#)

## Morocco

### Director General: M. Azdine El Mountassir Billah

[Agence Nationale de Reglementation des Telecommunications (ANRT)]

Azdine El Mountassir Billah, general director of telecoms watchdog Agence Nationale de Reglementation de Telecom (ANRT), has announced that Amendment Bill 121-12, revising and supplementing the Post and Telecommunications Act (Law No. 24-96), will be presented to the Government Council for approval, local news agency L'Economiste reports. According to the article, the executive has revealed that the new regulation gives more power to the telecoms watchdog, and if passed, the ANRT will be allowed to impose penalties on operators of up to 2% of their turnover before tax, in cases of infringement. The bill also addresses consumer protection, infrastructure sharing and the integration of optical fiber infrastructure in buildings, among other topics. Further, the Amendment Bill ultimately aims to create a national roaming system, which will allow subscribers to use the network of any operator available in the area in which they are located. (Jan 3, 2014) [telegeography.com](#)

## Nepal

### Chairman: Mr. Digambar Jha

[Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTR)]

The government of Nepal is considering a move to reduce the renewal price of state-backed operator Nepal Telecom's GSM mobile license, which is due to expire in May. Under current legislation the firm must pay INR20.13 billion (USD327.16 million) to extend its concession for a further five years. The operator has been asking industry regulator the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) to make a decision on the renewal price but the watchdog has yet to do so, local news site eKantipur reports. 'We have written to the NTA twice in the last one month asking it what we should do. However, we have not heard from them,' Nepal Telecom spokesperson Guna Keshari Pradhan said. The concession belonging to mobile market leader Ncell is set to expire at the end of August this year. (Jan 20, 2014) [telegeography.com](#)

The Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) has granted four new national internet service provider (ISP) authorizations, bringing the total number of licensed ISPs to 45. My Net and Lumbini Net were granted new permits, while Mega Broadcast and Otel Communications bought licenses from existing ISPs Everest Net and Zentech International respectively, local news portal eKantipur reports. My Net is based in Dharan while Lumbini Net is based in Tansen, Palpa. Separately, rural ISP licenses – which permit firms to provide access only in one village area – have been issued to Pico Soft in Pokhara and to Syangja Internet in Syangja. Nepal's internet market is dominated by state-backed operator Nepal Telecom. (Jan 20, 2014) Telegeography.com

Private operators Orient Digital Media and Subisu Cable Net are competing to launch Internet protocol television (IPTV) services in Nepal, according to local reports. The first license to operate an IPTV service in the South Asian country was issued to Orient Digital Media eight months ago, under the condition that the company launches the service within 18 months. Subisu hopes to receive approval soon from Nepal's Ministry of Information and Communications, and then launch its 15 channel IPTV service in March 2014.

(Jan 20, 2014) rapidtvnews.com

A taskforce has reportedly been formed to carry out a feasibility study regarding plans to deploy a free nationwide Wi-Fi network in Nepal, according to India's Economic Times, which cites a report by ekantipur.com. A panel headed by Mahesh Prasad Adhikari, a board member of the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA), is understood to have been given 30 days to complete the study, according to the country's Ministry of Information and Communications. Among the topics to be discussed by the panel are matters of funding for the project, as well as the technical requirements for the mooted network. (Jan 6, 2014) telegeography.com

## Pakistan

### Chairman: Dr. Syed Ismail Shah

[Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)]

Pakistan is planning to hold its long-delayed auction of 3G telecommunications licenses by March, hoping to raise \$2 billion with the sale, the government said. A statement said the decision was taken at a meeting of the Spectrum Auction License Committee, chaired by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in Islamabad. "Pakistan expects to earn an estimated US\$2 billion through the auction of three spectrum licenses," Dar was quoted as saying. In the current fiscal year, Pakistan had budgeted to raise \$1.2 billion through 3G licenses. Earlier, the minister had informed a delegation from Norwegian telecom conglomerate Telenor that the government was planning to auction the next generation spectrum licenses by March. Telenor, China Mobile and Pakistan-based Mobilink have already shown interest in bidding for the 3G licenses. Pakistan is battling to overcome macroeconomic problems through privatization of state-run enterprises and a spate of fiscal-tightening measures. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a \$6.7 billion loan package for Pakistan in September last year, subject to strict economic reforms, particularly in its troubled energy sector and tax system.

(Jan 20, 2014) pakistanspressfoundation.org

## Qatar

### Minister ICT: H.E. Dr. Hessa Al-Jaber

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

A new policy to regulate advertising and marketing of products and services or promoting trade marks by companies through telecom service providers like Ooredoo and Vodafone Qatar and Qatar National Broadband Company (Qnbn) is on the anvil. New rules and regulations are expected to be in place in about three months and would bar the advertising platforms from carrying any advertisement that can mislead consumers. The platforms will need to provide detailed and correct information to consumers through the advertisements they carry. The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology is framing new regulations that would govern advertising, marketing of products and services through the aforesaid mediums, as also trade mark promotions. The latter will be required to prominently put their terms and conditions for their clients, along with fee slabs, on their websites. Service providers must also sign specific contracts with advertisers before carrying their messages for marketing or advertising or promoting their trade mark, payment modes and other necessary details. It would be illegal to carry misleading information through such advertisements as the policy will aim at protecting the consumer, Al Sharq reports. Qnbn is vital for Qatar's future development serving the wider digitization agenda of the country. The portfolio is intended for Qnbn customers, service providers and other entities as stated in the license granted to it by the authorities concerned. The basic product and service catalogue comprises GPON connections for homes and small businesses and point-to-point connections to larger enterprises. (Jan 24, 2014) zawya.com

The Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR) announced the release of its Telecommunications Consumer Protection Policy. The Policy brings together the existing obligations on service providers in one document, and also imposes a set of new obligations on operators to ensure that they compete fairly. The Policy includes a strengthened system for monitoring and enforcing compliance with the rules, and provision for a dispute resolution process that is independent of operators. "This Consumer Protection Policy will now form the basis for consumer protection work in telecommunications markets in Qatar," said Dr. Eiman Al-Ansari, Consumer and Government Affairs Manager, Regulatory Authority, ictQATAR. "We are delighted to have put in place these important rules after a long period of development." "ictQATAR already operates an independent complaints service, which consumers can contact if they are dissatisfied with the way their telecommunications operator has treated their complaint," added Dr. Eiman. "But the improvements made through the draft Policy will make it more effective and better able to ensure that operators are acting in the interests of consumers." The Policy was developed following a public consultation with the major users of telecommunications services in Qatar, and the draft Telecommunication Consumer Protection Policy was published for Public Consultation in September 2013. The Policy fully takes into account existing international and regional recognized standards for Telecommunication Consumer rights. The terms of the Policy require it to be reviewed not less than every two years. (Jan 5, 2014) ictQATAR

## Saudi Arabia

### Deputy Governor: Engineer Abdullah Al Darrab

[Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC)]

Saudi Arabia's mobile subscriber base has shrunk by around 10% in two years, in the wake of a widespread immigrant crackdown. CommsMEA reports that a number of stricter rules, including a reduction in quotas for pilgrims, and a more stringent pursuit of illegal workers, alongside tightened regulations on phone registration, have seen the number of mobile subscriptions in the Kingdom shrink to 51.0 million at the end of September 2013, down from 56.1 million reported in 3Q11. In June 2013 the CITC increased the penalty for companies and shops illegally distributing mobile SIM cards to SAR25 million from the SAR5 million previously charged for the felony, with the notion that the fine could be doubled if there was a recurrence of the offence. CITC spokesman Sultan Al-Malik said that individuals purchasing such SIM cards would be guilty of identity theft. Under the royal decree, local municipalities will be given the authority to impose the penalties on companies and shops, while expatriates accused of violating the ban will be referred to the police, the Labor Office and the Passport Department. (Jan 28, 2014) telegeography.com

## United Arab Emirates

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

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has divulged information about the progress made in establishing the first ever Electronic Federal Network (FedNET) in the United Arab Emirates. FedNET will provide high speed connectivity and integration between the various e-Government systems of U.A.E. government departments. The network will connect all federal institutions in a way that raises efficiency and reduces costs. It will also help achieve a faster transition to smart government. Upon official completion of the implementation process, FedNET will provide information technology services within a collaborative and secure environment in order to efficiently meet the needs of the public. "This project falls in line with the wider U.A.E. m-Government Initiative and seeks to create the necessary national infrastructure to enable the provision of all government services via mobile platforms. The project embodies the directives of our wise leadership, which has instructed all U.A.E. government entities to collaborate and enhance levels of service delivery. These efforts are also focused at making the best use of modern technological advancements to serve U.A.E. citizens, residents and visitors," said Hamad Obaid Al Mansoori, m-Government Director. The project is divided into two main phases. Firstly, building the networks technical center and secondly, rolling out the pilot exercise measuring connectivity. The TRA said, "Both these phases are expected to be accomplished during the last week of October this year, and, we look forward to finalizing the entire project of connecting the 42 federal entities by the end of July next year." FedNET is one of the initiatives falling under the m-Government transformation roadmap which focuses on establishing shared resources across various U.A.E. Government entities. In addition to FedNET, the project includes additional services including interconnectivity, digital identity, payment channels, cloud services, Trusted Service Manager and Mobile Innovation Centre. (Jan 22, 2014) zawya.com

The UAE's telecoms regulator says that it has completed its benchmarking tests of the country's two mobile networks to ensure they are compliant with their regulatory obligations.

The annual survey measures the level of services offered by mobile networks as a means to ensure that each operator meets performance requirements. The benchmarking program was carried out through driving tests for more than 13,000 kilometers across the UAE. The program also included voice and data testing as well as indoor venue testing. Commenting on the completion of the survey, H.E. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim said: "We take these surveys seriously because they are the main elements that guarantee improving the quality of services in the UAE, helping us to achieve one of our strategic goals reflected in reaching a leading status in this sector regionally and globally." The results were recorded and the process of discussing the results with operators in the UAE telecommunications sector is underway. (Jan 8, 2014) cellular-news.com

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) announced the launch of the first mGovernment Lab in the Arab region dedicated to verifying the quality and security of mGovernment applications. The Lab will also test whether applications submitted comply with international standards and best practice. This innovative initiative comes as part of the wider national effort to shift towards smart government in line with the vision of Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The mGovernment Lab is an innovative and unique regional project that ultimately, reinforces the UAE's leadership the field of mGovernment. The mGovernment lab contains state-of-the-art advanced operating systems designed specifically to testing smart applications. All the required software is in place and the specialist have already started testing operations for a variety of UAE government entities. Once completed, the lab will provide full security screening, load testing for applications and accounts for the government entities who wish to verify their applications remotely. Al Mansouri added that a number of government entities have already been briefed on the lab and its capabilities with a delegation of officials attending an mGovernment workshop at the TRA in December.

(Jan 26, 2014) zawya.com

In line with its ongoing efforts to provide authenticated and reliable sources of news and information to the public and in turn, guarantee the legitimacy of online government entity accounts, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has announced the launch of the new campaign designed to verify the official Twitter accounts of all UAE Government entities. "We recognize the importance of social media and its increasing role in the instantaneous provision of news and information to the public. The strengths of social media include flexibility and convenience of access thus, allowing everybody to participate in topical discussion and publish opinion. It is critical that government authorities and institutions have verified Twitter accounts to provide a publically trusted source of information," commented Hamad Obaid Al Mansoori, TRA Deputy Director General and mGovernment Director. "Social media experts working closely with us have been in constant communication with Twitter's website management team to ensure that all verified government entity Twitter accounts bear the blue verified badge on its profile," he added. The government entities who are wishing to verify their social media accounts can communicate with the TRA management via the following email address socialnet@tra.gov.ae. This step is considered the first of its kind in the region, according to TRA. (Jan 28, 2014) zawya.com



## REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SAMENA REGION

### Australia

Telco customers are increasingly satisfied with the service they are receiving, according to the latest Telecommunications National Customer Satisfaction Survey. The quarterly national survey, carried out for Communications Alliance by Roy Morgan Research, showed a small increase in the percentage of customers satisfied or very satisfied with the service they receive – up from 65 per cent to 66 per cent – but the same metric fell from 83 per cent to 81 per cent after including those customers who had a neutral view on overall service. The December 2013 survey is the fourth in an ongoing quarterly series designed to measure the overall experience of Australian telco customers – particularly in relation to key customer ‘touch points’ covered by the revised Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code. The enforceable Code was created by Communications Alliance, industry representatives and other stakeholders, and registered by the industry regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority late in 2012. The industry’s concerted improvement efforts, combined with the impact of the TCP Code, have already seen customer complaints to the industry ombudsman fall by more than 20 per cent. The latest survey found continuing improvement in customers’ satisfaction with the ease of contacting their telco provider (78 per cent) of respondents satisfied/neutral, up from 77 per cent in the previous quarter and up from 69 per cent in the first wave survey). However, satisfaction with the ease of understanding information on telecommunications bills fell slightly (85 per cent) satisfied/neutral, down from 86 per cent in the previous quarter, but up from 82 per cent in the first wave). Satisfaction with the complaint handling fell (64 per cent satisfied/neutral, down

from 72 per cent in the previous quarter and compared with 66 per cent in the first wave). Communications Alliance chief executive, John Stanton, the Alliance would monitor this metric closely and investigate whether any external factors such as service disruptions or seasonal effects had influenced the result. Results were also steady for the other touch-points, relating to satisfaction with the information received about products purchased; and awareness of spend management tools. Communications Alliance is the primary telecommunications industry body in Australia. Its membership is drawn from a wide cross-section of the communications industry, including carriers, carriage and internet service providers, content providers, search engines, equipment vendors, IT companies, consultants and business groups. (Jan 22, 2014) [arnnet.com.au](http://arnnet.com.au)

### Azerbaijan

Mobile number portability (MNP) will be fully introduced by Azerbaijan’s mobile network operators on 1 February, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies (MCIT) has announced on its website. The Ministry noted that the launch of MNP, which enables subscribers to retain their phone number if they switch provider, will strengthen competition in the market and lead to improved service quality. Azerbaijan’s mobile market is home to three GSM network operators: market leader Azercell, which had around 4.405 million subscribers at the end of 30 September 2013 (a market share of 46.4%), followed by Bakcell with around 30.2% of the market and Azerfon (Nar Mobile), which accounted for the remaining 23.3% of mobile customers. (Jan 28, 2014) [telegeography.com](http://telegeography.com)

## Belarus

The Belarusian mobile network operator, BelCel has been reportedly denied the renewal of its operating license after it missed network coverage obligations. The company is accused of missing its 90% coverage obligations, having reached just 77 percent during ministry checks. The semi-official BelTA news agency reported the news, citing the press service of the Belarusian Information Technologies and Communications Ministry. However, the mobile network said that 13 percent of its base stations are co-located with the state-owned Beltelecom and that its staff was denied access to them prior to the regulator's inspection.

(Jan 16, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Burkina Faso

Vietnamese telecoms group Viettel was the only applicant for Burkina Faso's fourth mobile license, according to APA citing government sources, as reported by StarAfrica.com. The West African nation is currently considering Viettel's application and is expected to make a decision on whether to award the ten-year 'global' license, which covers fixed and mobile telephony and internet services, to the military-run telecoms company in the next few months. In 2012 the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications and Posts (ARCEP) resumed the process to license a new fixed and mobile telecoms operator, following an unsuccessful auction two years earlier. In April 2013 the watchdog announced that it had re-launched the tender process for the concession; interested parties were initially required to submit bids by 10 July 2013, but this was subsequently extended to 24 July 2013, and since then no further developments on the procedure have been made public. If successful in its application, Viettel would join three network operators in the mobile sector: national fixed and mobile operator the Office National des Telecommunications (Onatel), in which Maroc Telecom holds a majority stake; Indian-owned Airtel Burkina Faso; and local operator Telecel Faso. At the end of September 2013 the trio had a combined mobile subscriber base of 11.19 million, translating to a population penetration of around 63%. (Jan 28, 2014) [StarAfrica.com](#)

## Canada

Wind Mobile is dropping out of the 700 MHz spectrum auction after failing to get financial support from its parent company, VimpelCom. The announcement, disclosed on the Industry Canada website, leaves mainly the big three telecom companies — Telus, Rogers and Bell — in the running for airwaves that will allow consumers to connect to a new generation of devices. From Wind Mobile's perspective, there will be no change in our day-to-day business as a result of this decision, the company said in a written statement. For its part, the government said Wind's withdrawal doesn't change the fact that auction will ultimately help consumers. "While we will not speculate on the results of the auction, we do know the outcome will be positive for consumers because high-quality spectrum will soon be available across Canada, providing Canadians with dependable, high-speed wireless services on the latest technologies," Industry Minister James Moore's press secretary Jake Enwright said in an emailed statement to CBC News. But others say the move deals a blow to the federal government's plan to introduce competition in the telecom marketplace and lower prices for consumers. (Jan 14, 2014) [cbc.ca](#)

## Brazil

The GSMA released findings of a new study from ATDI, which examines ways to mitigate interference between new LTE mobile signals and existing and planned television services. In October, Brazilian regulator ANATEL made the decision to allocate the Digital Dividend to mobile and adopt the Asia Pacific (APT) 700MHz band plan, which would free up the spectrum band for new LTE mobile services. Forecasts show that using the 700MHz band for mobile broadband will create substantial socio-economic benefits for Brazil, contributing an additional US \$1.4 billion to GDP, providing over 4,300 job opportunities and generating additional tax revenue of US \$1.3 billion by 2020. "Mobile operators want to work closely with ANATEL and the broadcast community to explore how their respective services can best coexist and ensure the optimum experience of LTE mobile services and television viewing for the people of Brazil," said Tom Phillips, Chief Regulatory Officer, GSMA. "Through rigorous modeling, the study shows that careful planning of spectrum usage can mitigate potential interference from mobile and broadcast services operating in close proximity to one another." The study focused on the cities of Brasilia, Campinas and Sao Paulo as these are likely to be some of the areas where potential interference with television and mobile reception could present the greatest issues. Potential interference problems should be less acute in other areas and therefore easier to mitigate. Compatibility with analogue television signals was also factored into the equation due to the anticipated long-term plans for digital switchover. As digital television in Brazil uses ISDB-T technology, this study also has relevance for other markets including Chile, Costa Rica and Ecuador where Digital Dividend spectrum has also been allocated for mobile. Although the study is not designed to prescribe a single, specific solution, it provides an objective viewpoint from which mobile operators and broadcasters can base any future decisions on mitigating interference between the mobile and television systems.

(Jan 17, 2014) [prnewswire.com](#)

## Cambodia

The Telecommunication Regulator of Cambodia (TRC) is seeking to revoke licenses held by telecoms companies that are not currently providing services, the Phnom Penh Post reports. According to a statement from the watchdog, all telecoms firms have been given a deadline of 28 February to inform the TRC of their current operations or face the revocation of their licenses. 'The TRC will withdraw the license of companies that have a license but are not operating and do not complete the form with updated information on time,' the statement says. The TRC was officially launched in September 2012 as an autonomous and independent regulatory authority charged with overseeing the telecoms industry. Last month the Council of Ministers overruled an unpopular move by the watchdog to re-impose minimum rates of USD0.045 per minute for on-net mobile calls and USD0.0595 per minute for calls to other networks, although wireless operators must instead submit operating cost calculations every six months to enable the regulator 'to monitor levels of fair competition.' (Jan 22, 2014) [telegeography.com](#)

## Chile

Chile's telecoms regulator Sub-Secretaria de Telecomunicaciones (Subtel) has received bids from the nation's three main cellcos for the trio of 700MHz licenses on offer. Claro and Movistar, the local units of regional heavyweights America Movil (AM) and Telefonica, and Chilean telco Entel submitted offers for the 4G spectrum. The concessions come with the obligation to roll out coverage to 1,281 rural towns, 503 educational institutions and 13 roads totaling more than 850km in length. Subtel added the licenses will require open access to mobile virtual network operators (MVNOs) and automatic roaming.

(Jan 21, 2014) [gypublication.com](#)

## European Union

The EU's Digital Commissioner Neelie Kroes is posing for fast results: a final report is delivered by July 2014. He suggested that Europe has to use spectrum more effectively if we would like to benefit from the newest TV and internet developments. That is why there should be a brand new consensus on a way to use broadcast spectrum, and that is why the coordination of broadband spectrum has been created to make a telecoms single market. The advice of the High Level group can facilitate the Commission develop, in cooperation with the Member States, a long strategic and regulative policy on the long run use of the complete UHF band (470-790 MHz), together with prospects for sharing components of the band. The cluster has been asked to appear at however Europe can access and use audiovisual content and information within the medium to long run and are available up with choices.

(Jan 22, 2014) [telecouputdates.com](#)

## Guyana

Radha Krishna Sharma, CEO of fixed line incumbent Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GT&T), has criticized the government's inaction regarding the distribution of 3G and 4G concessions, claiming that the operator has been pursuing additional spectrum for advanced mobile data services for the last four years. Speaking to press at a media event, Sharma said that GT&T had first applied to the government for the frequencies in 2010, when it noted that the inauguration of the Suriname/Guyana submarine cable would provide ample bandwidth to support the technology. According to Sharma, the proposal presented to the government included field test data, economic analysis and plans for a rollout, but was largely ignored by the state. The government was holding GT&T back from the 3G/4G sector to realize its own plans to re-enter the telecoms market as a full blown operator – a long standing concern of the incumbent. Pointing to the government's e-governance deployment, which prominently features state-owned 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) networks, Sharma called for spectrum policies to be transparent, market-based and designed to support national development.

(Jan 28, 2014) [Telegeography.com](#)

## Honduras

The Honduran National Congress has agreed to extend Tigo's recently awarded 4G LTE concession by seven years, from 2021 to 2028. In October 2013 Conatel awarded LTE-suitable spectrum to America Movil (AM) and Millicom International Cellular (MIC), operating in the country under the Claro and Tigo brands, respectively. Block B1, which comprised of 2x20MHz paired blocks in the 1710MHz-1730MHz and 2110MHz-2130MHz bands was awarded to

Tigo, as it was the only bidder for the concession; the cellco paid USD12.055 million for the spectrum. Under the terms set out by the licenses, the cellcos are required to establish and operate national 2G networks in 100% of Honduran municipalities within three years from authorization; their 3G networks must reach 25% territorial coverage in the same period, while the footprint of the 4G networks should cover 15% of the territory by 2016, corresponding to the country's major cities. Conatel's president Ricardo Cardona added that Claro and Tigo were obliged to deploy their respective LTE networks within a 15-18 month time-frame; both companies are required to offer the services in at least ten major cities.

(Jan 23, 2014) [Telegeography.com](#)

## Iceland

Icelandic telco Siminn became the third company to commercially launch Long term Evolution (LTE) services in the country, using 2x20MHz spectrum in the 1800MHz frequency band. According to the most recent "Evolution to LTE" report by the Global mobile Suppliers Association (GSA), the company will offer maximum download speeds of 100Mbps. In Iceland, Nova was the first company to roll out commercial 4G network technology last April covering Reykjavik. In July Fjarskipti followed suit and launched its network in Reykjavik and Borgarnes.

(Jan 16, 2014) [gypublication.com](#)

## India

The trade group representing India's GSM network operators has expressed concerns over a proposal that would require government bodies to only buy mobile services from the two state-owned networks. The move was suggested as a way of propping up the finances of the two struggling companies. The COAI said that "that any such move would be arbitrary, incorrect and unjustified and would be anti-competitive and against all principles of level playing field," If implemented, then Central Government Ministries/Central Government public sector undertakings and autonomous bodies would be required to give preferential access to the state-owned networks ahead of the private companies when tendering for phone services. The COAI said that the proposal not only causes a distorted marketplace, it could be unconstitutional.

(Jan 13, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

Wireless provider Videocon Telecom has opted not to take part in the upcoming spectrum auction, choosing instead to concentrate on improving networks in its current circles and laying the groundwork for a future rollout of Long Term Evolution (LTE) in the 1800MHz band, the Economic Times quotes Videocon director and CEO Arvind Bali as saying. Videocon had considered purchasing additional spectrum to relieve congestion in Punjab but found there were no blocks of spectrum available in the areas needed. Similarly, the operator looked into a potential expansion into the Delhi circle, only to cancel the plans following an analysis of the business prospects, with Bali noting that: 'a vanilla 2G and 3G [service] on such an expensive spectrum would be challenging, since we also need to acquire customers as well, being a new player.' The CEO added that the cellco currently has spectrum in three circles – Uttar Pradesh East, Uttar Pradesh West and Bihar – where it has not yet deployed networks. On the cellco's plans for 4G the CEO explained that Videocon is planning to deploy Frequency Division Duplex (FDD)-LTE in the 1800MHz band, but is currently held back by the limitations of the ecosystem and its own spectrum holdings. The provider will wait until voice-over-LTE (VoLTE)

becomes available, enabling the use of voice and data over the same channel, and will dedicate 5MHz of spectrum to the new technology. (Jan 21, 2014) [telegeography.com](#)

## Ireland

The Irish telecoms regulator, ComReg has said that it received no bids for the blocks of 1800 MHz spectrum that it was auctioning off. Therefore, all Lots remained unsold in the Award Process. ComReg said that it retains its discretion regarding how it might treat the unsold Lots however the unsold spectrum will not be allocated for a reasonable period, and, in any event, will not be allocated for a period of at least another year. (Jan 8, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Kenya

Kenya's telecoms regulator has denied the numerous reports that it is in tension with the country's largest mobile network, Safaricom over the renewal of its operating license. There have been a number of reports that the CCK had threatened to block the license renewal over the mobile network's quality of service, which was backed up by a government minister. However, the CCK's Director General, Francis Wangusi has dismissed such reports and said that talks over the license renewal were proceeding amicably. There is "no tension" between the two sides he added. Safaircom disputed the reports into its network quality and called for independent studies to be carried out. The mobile network is also said to be unhappy with the size of the license renewal fee, which has been set at US\$27 million. (Jan 15, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Moldova

Moldova's telecoms regulator has revealed that just over 29,000 numbers were ported under the Number Portability scheme in the second half of last year. The mobile number portability facility was launched on the 1st July 2013, and landline portability followed in August. An average of 4,400 mobile numbers is ported to another network each month the moment, compared to just 540 landlines. According to the regulator's report, a total of 29 159 numbers were ported, of which 26,450 (90.7%) - mobile numbers and 2,709 (9.3%) - fixed numbers. Most mobile numbers - 6,302 - were ported in July, when the mobile number portability was launched. (Jan 14, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Mexico

Mexican fixed line incumbent Telefonos de Mexico (Telmex), a unit of Latin American telecoms giant America Movil, has rejected claims that it is divesting assets with a view to avoiding tougher regulation, Reuters reports. Amid suggestions that it plans to spin off a unit which holds assets including fiber-optic infrastructure and telephone poles, and in the wake of an order from a local judge to cease any disposals, the telco has denied that its corporate plans were designed to circumvent regulations. Commenting on the matter, an unnamed spokesperson for Telmex was cited as saying: 'Telmex is not undertaking any action to avoid regulation which it has already welcomed and which should benefit the whole telecommunications sector and consequently the consumer.' As per previously announced plans, Telmex revealed in July last year that shareholders had given the nod to spin off a new company made up of three units called Alquiladora de Casas, Compania de Telefonos y Bienes Raices and Renta de Equipo. While the company

says that these are real estate and leasing businesses, rival Bestphone, a unit of broadcast giant Grupo Televisa, has suggested that the assets are in fact vital to Telmex's network and claims the spin-off should have been reported to regulators. 'Bestphone is very concerned that the spin-offs are a ploy to avoid the telecom reform, in particular an effort to avoid important aspects such as interconnection (between phone companies), which would reduce costs to consumers' benefit,' a Bestphone spokesman noted.

(Jan 20, 2014) [Telegeography.com](#)

## Norway

The Norwegian Post & Telecoms Authority (NPT) has adopted a resolution for the country's broadband market under which it has ruled that fixed line incumbent Telenor still has significant market power (SMP). As such, the regulator's decision requires that the telco provide wholesale access to its fiber-optic network to its competitors, though the NPT noted that it will not impose price controls for such connectivity. The resolutions relate to two markets, those being: wholesale (physical) network infrastructure access (including shared or fully unbundled access) at a fixed location (Market 4); and wholesale broadband access (Market 5). In announcing the development, the NPT noted that its previous decisions regarding the markets in question had been made back in 2009. In its prior ruling the watchdog had concluded that regulation of Telenor's fiber infrastructure was not appropriate, in part because the network rollout was limited in scope at that date. However, with the market leader having since enhanced its fiber network significantly, both through its own network development and the acquisition of competitors, the NPT has argued that the introduction of obligations on Telenor are now needed. The NPT meanwhile said that it also believed access to Telenor's copper network remained important for competition purposes, especially in those areas where fiber has yet to be rolled out. To that end, the regulator confirmed that it is introducing price controls on copper-based broadband access, with the maximum price for copper local loop unbundled (LLU) connections to be reduced from NOK95 (USD14.64) per month to NOK85 per month from 1 March 2014. (Jan 22, 2014) [telegeography.com](#)

## New Zealand

Telecom New Zealand has won the bidding to secure the last remaining block of 2x5 MHz lot of 700 MHz radio spectrum that was left unsold from last year's auction. Telecom bid NZ\$83 million for this final lot, in addition to the total of NZ\$66 million for three lots in the initial auction round. The purchase of a fourth 2x5 MHz lot is conditional upon approval from the Commerce Commission. In the first round of the auction last October, Telecom and Vodafone each successfully bid for 2x15 MHz (three lots), while 2Degrees successfully bid for 2x10 MHz (two lots) leaving a single 2x5 MHz lot unsold from the available nine lots. The auction for this lot has proceeded at \$1 million increments for each bidding interval, starting from the \$22 million reserve price. Telecom said that the significant price premium over the reserve price reflects what it said would be the customer benefits that this additional fourth lot will provide to Telecom's mobile network in future years. A final assignment process, during which each successful bidder will bid for a location within the spectrum band, is still to be held.

(Jan 22, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Poland

Polish telecoms regulator the Office of Electronic Communications (UKE) is expected to grant fixed-wireless provider Sferia temporary, limited permissions for 800MHz frequency ranges in order to ensure continuity of services whilst the telco migrates its customers to a new platform, Telepolis writes. In late December 2013 Sferia agreed to a spectrum swap, changing its allocated frequencies in the 800MHz band to allow the government to more efficiently distribute spectrum from the digital dividend, airwaves in the 790MHz-862MHz range made available by the move from analogue to digital TV. Under the terms of the deal, the telco was obliged to relinquish its existing spectrum holdings immediately, but was prevented from utilizing the new frequencies until the government holds the auction for the remaining concessions in the 800MHz band. The measures are intended to prevent Sferia stealing a march on its wireless rivals by using the spectrum to launch a Long Term Evolution (LTE) network ahead of the sale. In order to ensure continuity of services, however, the government will issue temporary permissions to Sferia, each valid for 30 days, allowing the telco to use its existing transmission facilities, and only in areas where it will not cause disruption to other networks. In terms of its long-term plans, Sferia is holding talks with Polkomtel regarding launching as a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) over the cellco's infrastructure. Sferia would then migrate its current CDMA2000 customers to the new platform. (Jan 22, 2014) [telegeography.com](#)

## Romania

Romania's telecoms regulator, Ancom has opened a consultation on what to do with the left-over spectrum that was left unsold during a previous sale in 2012. The regulator said that it intends that the spectrum be allotted for the provision of mobile broadband services. Following the auction organised by ANCOM in 2012, one 2 x 5 MHz block in the 800 MHz band, in the sub-band pairs 791-796 MHz/832-837 MHz, and 8 blocks of 2 x 5 MHz in the 2600 MHz FDD band, in the sub-band pairs 2530-2570 MHz/2650-2690 MHz, remained vacant. "We will offer again, to the interested persons, the opportunity to win some valuable spectrum, which will enable them to offer the Romanian market increasingly demanded mobile communications services," stated the regulator's President, Cătălin Marinescu. (Jan 21, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Russia

NetByNet, the broadband unit owned by Russian mobile giant MegaFon, has reportedly been awarded a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) license covering Moscow and the surrounding region. Under the terms of the license, which was formally awarded on 26 December 2013, NetByNet is obliged to commence services no later than 26 December 2015. NetByNet intends to piggyback on its parent company's network, and will primarily target its existing broadband subscriber base. NetByNet, which has been owned by MegaFon since June 2011 – and now acts as a holding company for the mobile firm's disparate fixed line assets – currently boasts a presence in 87 cities across Moscow and the Moscow Region, the North-West Federal District, the Central Federal District, the Volga Federal District, the Southern Federal District and the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. (Jan 21, 2014) [Telegeography.com](#)

## Slovakia

Following the earlier announcement that four operators had won new 4G mobile frequency licenses in Slovakia, including the three incumbents and new entrant SWAN, the country's Office for Electronic Communications & Postal Services has posted additional details of the auction, including the prices paid by each company. SWAN paid EUR6.6 million (USD8.97 million) and Orange paid EUR56.14 million for their respective frequencies, while as previously reported by CommsUpdate, Slovak Telekom paid EUR60.85 million and Telefonica Slovakia (O2) paid EUR40.3 million. SWAN announced that it will be using its 2x15MHz in the 1800MHz band to build a high speed LTE network by the second half of this year – before a stipulated deadline of 8 July 2014 – with a focus on large cities. To achieve full coverage SWAN says it will use its right to national roaming, which is included in the license conditions. The regulator confirmed that the 4G licenses have the following initial validity: 800MHz and 2600MHz bands to 31 December 2028; and the 1800MHz band to 7 September 2026. (Jan 10, 2014) [Telegeography.com](#)

## South Korea

South Korea based Korea Mobile Internet (KMI) has again said that it will attempt to secure a mobile network license in the country's forthcoming radio spectrum auction. This would mark the company's fifth attempt to secure a license, after its previous four attempts were blocked by the regulator as the company lacked the necessary financial backing. KMI now plans to secure starting capital of W853bn and raise another W2tn by attracting foreign investors and executing an IPO. The regulator then plans to auction off 2.5 GHz spectrum for use as either LTE or Wibro technologies, with a considerably lower reserve price if used with Wibro services. KMI has always to date been a Wibro loyalist although it's future plans are still unclear. However, if it were able to secure the funding to bid for the spectrum as an LTE operator, it might also be able to secure national roaming with one of the three incumbent networks. That could presage the entry of a full fourth network into the market. (Jan 22, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Thailand

Thailand's telecoms regulator, the NBTC says that it does not expect the recent political problems in the country to disrupt its planned radio spectrum auction this coming September. The details for the auction along with the reserve price are due to be discussed by the telecoms panel next month. The regulator, in an attempt to avoid the controversy over its 3G license auction, has hired outside advisors from the ITU to help set the reserve prices and the regulatory conditions for the spectrum licenses. The auction is expected offer blocks in both the 1800 MHz and 1900 MHz spectrum bands which expire in September. The regulator is also considering an option to auction off a block of 900 MHz spectrum ahead of the existing license expiring. AIS holds the 17.5 MHz block of 900 MHz spectrum, but would be allowed to retain it until March 2015, after which it would be transferred to the auction winner. (Jan 20, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

Thailand's telecoms regulator, the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), has remained firm on its planned auction schedule for 4G licenses in the 1800MHz spectrum band this September, despite the recent

political turmoil in the country, the Bangkok Post reports. The newspaper quotes Settapong Malisuwan, vice-chairman of the NBTC, as confirming that the auction process rules, reserve prices and conditions will be considered by the watchdog's telecom panel next month.

(Jan 22, 2014) [Telegeography.com](#)

## Uganda

Ugandan mobile phone users are still able to use unregistered SIM cards, some five months after that was supposed to have been banned. The networks were supposed to block unregistered SIM cards from the end of last August. However, a local newspaper says that it has seen evidence that the blocking is not fully operational. According to an investigation by the New Vision newspaper, customers from three of the five mobile networks are able to make voice calls and text messages without registering their details with the networks. The newspaper did not reveal which three networks were still allowing unauthorized calls to be made. It had been estimated that around 1.5 million SIM Cards were cut off when the deadline for registration expired on the 31st August 2013. (Jan 17, 2014) [balancingact-africa.com](#)

## Ukraine

Smartcard vendor, Gemalto says that it has supplied its UpTeq Multi-tenant SIM embedded software and product to the Ukrainian mobile network, Kyivstar, supporting the country's first ever contactless payment via a mobile phone. Working in conjunction with Kyivstar, Alfa Bank's pilot paves the way for a full commercial launch of NFC mobile payments across the country. "Our goal is to continue developing mobile finance products at Kyivstar extensively in 2014," said Alexey Kireev, Head of New Business Department at Kyivstar. At present there are an estimated 22,000 contactless payment terminals in Ukraine. "By leveraging Gemalto's NFC technology, Kyivstar and Alfa Bank are pioneering a revolution in the way Ukrainians will pay for goods and services in the years ahead," added Philippe Cambriel, Gemalto President for Europe, Mediterranean and CIS. "With the booming in contactless equipment at the point of sale in the country, this is the perfect timing for mobile payment introduction." (Jan 22, 2014) [cellular-news.com](#)

## United Kingdom

UK telecoms regulator Ofcom has announced that it will authorize the use of earth stations – devices which can provide internet to passengers by connecting to a 'geostationary' satellite – on vehicles. Claiming that the decision will mean that airlines and other transport operators could, in the future, use satellite-based technology to offer customers broadband speeds up to ten-times faster than they currently experience, Ofcom said it would make available 'a relatively large amount of high-frequency spectrum for their use', which in turn it said would provide a considerable amount of data capacity. Devices that are mounted on land-based vehicles, such as trains, will reportedly be made exempt

from the need for a spectrum license, though earth stations mounted on aircraft or ships will require a concession. Ofcom has said it expects to be able to accept applications to license ship-mounted earth stations by February 2014, and has said it is working with the Civil Aviation Authority to make licensing for aircraft-mounted devices available in a similar timeframe. Meanwhile, regulations covering the exemption from licensing for land-based earth stations are expected to be in force by the summer of 2014. In line with these timeframes, the first commercial deployments of the technology on vehicles will likely begin later this year, the regulator noted. (Jan 22, 2014) [telegeography.com](#)

## United States

An appellate court panel delivered a major blow to the Federal Communications Commission's ability to prevent Internet service providers from favoring certain content providers, ruling that the FCC didn't have legal authority to impose the Net Neutrality conditions it enacted. In a complicated ruling in which one of the three judges partially agreed and partially dissented, the panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia affirmed that the FCC has authority to regulate the Internet but overturned the FCC's so-called Open Internet Order. The Court cited an FCC decision against classifying companies providing broadband Internet services as part of common carrier service like telephones and instead as an information service. *Tatel*. The decision came down in a case in which Verizon challenged the FCC order that would have limited Internet providers from giving one Internet content provider a fast lane to consumers' desktop and a rival, a slower lane, at least for wired Internet connections. Consumer groups and some Hollywood unions had contended that the fast track would give established web sites a major advantage and make it difficult for alternative sites to compete. While the decision was not surprising — judges on the case repeatedly were skeptical about the legality of FCC's regulatory schemes — it immediately drew concerns from backers of Net Neutrality.

(Jan 14, 2014) [thewrap.com](#)

## Zambia

Zambia's government has agreed to extend the deadline for SIM Card registration after facing the potential for half the country's mobile phones to be cut-off. The deadline was due to have expired at the end of last month, but has been extended to the end of January. The move comes after Minister of Communications and Transport; Yamfwa Mukanga repeatedly denied that he would permit any further extensions. He however said that he had been impressed with recent efforts by the telecoms regulator and the mobile networks to boost SIM Card registration. A consumer rights group, ZACA is concerned that a one-month extension may not be enough considering that nearly 5 million SIM Cards need registering. They called for the deadline to be pushed further back to the end of February at least.

(Jan 14, 2014) [balancingact-africa.com](#)

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



# SATELLITE NEWS

## Comtech Telecommunications gets US\$ 4.4 million contract for satellite system

Comtech Telecommunications Corp. said that its Orlando, Florida-based subsidiary, Comtech Systems, Inc., received a US\$4.4 million contract from the Brazilian Military for an upgrade to its satellite network. In commenting on this important award, Fred Kornberg, president and chief executive officer of Comtech Telecommunications Corp., said, "Our long-standing leadership positions in all facets of communications has firmly established Comtech as the choice for advanced satellite communication solutions. We look forward to continuing to work with the Brazilian Military on this and future opportunities." Comtech Systems, Inc. ([www.comtechsystems.com](http://www.comtechsystems.com)) specializes in system design, integration, supply and commissioning of turnkey communication systems including over-the-horizon microwave, line-of-sight microwave and satellite.

## Kazakh govt approves Kazsat-3 satellite launch date

The Kazakh government has approved the date for the launch of the Kazsat-3 satellite, reports Kazinform, citing a statement from the Kazkosmos national space agency. The satellite will be launched from the Baykonur cosmodrome no later than on 30 April of this year using Russian Proton-M spaceship. Kazsat will be located on the

geostationary orbit at 58.5 degrees East Longitude and will be used for providing broadband connection, Vsat, voice connection, data transmission, video-conferencing and other telecommunications services in Kazakhstan.

## SpaceX snags deal to launch Japanese telecom satellite

Fresh off back-to-back launches of commercial communications satellites, SpaceX has booked a Japanese payload for a Falcon 9 flight in late 2015 likely to be launched from Cape Canaveral. The launch contract award for JCSAT 14, a communications satellite owned by Tokyo-based SKY Perfect JSAT Corp., adds another mission to SpaceX's backlog, which stands at nearly 50 missions worth nearly US\$5 billion, according to a company press kit. Financial terms were not disclosed by SpaceX or SKY Perfect JSAT. The contract is the first new mission added to the Falcon 9 manifest since the rocket flew two successful flights to geostationary transfer orbit Dec. 3 and Jan. 6 with the SES 8 and Thaicom 6 communications satellites. Geostationary transfer orbit is the drop-off point for most telecom payloads. JCSAT 14 will be delivered to such an orbit when it launches in the second half of 2015. According to SpaceX's manifest published on the firm's website, JCSAT 14 would be the 10th geostationary transfer orbit mission on the Falcon 9's schedule.

## Boeing building telecom satellites to expand Mexico's networks

Boeing is building two high-power satellites for Mexico as part of the Latin American country's program of boosting information security and expanding networks to remote underdeveloped areas. The Boeing Co. said it completed the first of two 702HP geostationary satellites, named Centenario, for deployment by Mexico's new Mexsat end-to-end satellite communications system. Mexsat aims to provide enhanced social communications to consumers across Mexico while enhancing capability for military, civil and humanitarian needs. The world's 10th-largest oil producer, Mexico under President Enrique Peña Nieto is struggling to push ambitious targets for reduction in crime and poverty and Mexico's transformation into a balanced market economy. Extensive telecommunications industry reforms aim to cut domination of the sector by a handful of companies controlled by influential groups. How the satellite communications will be affected by the shake-up wasn't discussed in government pronouncements. But telecom watchdog Federal Telecommunications Institute served notice on major telecom operators it wants to see more competition and less dominance by companies owning up to 70 percent of market share.

## Australian satellite operator secures US\$ 160 million Jabiru-1 agreement

Australian satellite operator NewSat has secured Jabiru-1 contract. The contract with a publicly listed South West Asian telecommunications company is for the supply of US\$ 160.47 million of Jabiru-1 satellite transmission capacity for cellular backhaul and enterprise services over Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Middle East over a fifteen year term. The contract replaces a mutually terminated US\$ 134 million contract announced in August 2011. The Jabiru-1 satellite is scheduled for launch in 2015 and binding pre-launch contracts for this satellite now total US\$ 644 million.

## Global Eagle plans expansion of in-flight connectivity across South Asia

In-flight connectivity continues to become a more regular offering around the world. Global Eagle Entertainment's recent contract extension with Russian airline UTair is an example of this growth. Furthermore, Global Eagle is planning to continue expanding across Asia and hopes to gain a competitive edge over other connectivity options. "We've been committed to this region now for the better part of two years," John Guidon, CTO and co-founder of Global Eagle's connectivity brand, Row 44, told Via Satellite. "We provide continuous coverage across all of Russia, all the way to the East Pacific Coast. And that's overlapping with our European coverage. I think this is a big part of what made us competitive, and the fact that we are extending further and further into Asia with our partners in Asia, so we can provide not just coverage inside Russia but to Asian destinations outside Russia." Through Row 44, Global Eagle connected around 100 new aircraft in 2013, according to Guidon. This brings the company's total number of connected aircraft to 518. With an existing network stretching across North America, along with much of Europe, parts of the Middle East and the greater share of Northern Asia, Global Eagle is now pushing to expand its coverage further south.

## Panasonic, China Telecom satellite partner for in-flight connectivity

Panasonic Avionics and China Telecom Satellite Communications Limited signed a definitive agreement to develop in-flight connectivity solutions for Chinese airlines. The agreement will provide 39 Panasonic customer airlines flying into and over China with in-flight broadband connectivity and will launch a teleport run by China Telecom Satellite in Beijing to service Panasonic's aeronautical broadband service.

Panasonic's eXConnect system uses a Ku-band aeronautical satellite network to provide the broadband, for use limited to email and social media updates. The two companies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) six months ago and have now completed the cooperation agreement. The teleport commercial service and in-flight connectivity launch are pending the People's Republic of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology approvals.

## RSCC's expansion plan back on track with Express-AM5 launch

Russia's Proton-M Breeze-M rocket on Dec. 27 successfully placed the transponder-packed Express-AM5 telecommunications satellite into orbit in a key milestone for the Russian Satellite Communications Co. (RSCC), whose near-term growth plans have been slowed by rocket and satellite issues. Russia's space agency, Roscosmos, and Proton's builder, the Khrunichev Space Center of Moscow, said in separate statements that the rocket's Breeze-M upper stage released the Express-AM5 into the planned transfer orbit some five hours and 12 minutes after liftoff from Russia's Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. The satellite's launch was insured for 7.08 billion Russian rubles, or \$217 million. Express-AM5, which weighed 3,400 kilograms at launch, is based on the Express-2000 platform built by ISS Reshetnev of Krasnoyarsk, Russia. The payload, built by MDA Corp. of Canada, consists of 30 C-band, 40 Ku-band, 12 Ka-band and two L-band transponders.

## Iran to send telecoms satellite into orbit by 2018

"Based on the [country's] Strategic Plan, Iran is scheduled to put its telecommunications satellite into [geostationary Earth orbit] GEO by 2018," Head of the Iranian Space Research Center (ISRC) Hassan Karimi said. Among the priorities of Iran's scientific road map has been to develop the technology to send humans into space and put satellites into orbit, he said. Iran successfully launched its first home-made data-processing satellite Omid (Hope) into orbit in 2009. As part of a plan to develop its space program, Iran also successfully put into orbit its second satellite, dubbed Rassad (Observation in June 2011. Rassad's mission was to take images of the Earth and transmit them along with telemetry information to ground stations. Iran also sent its domestically-developed Navid-e Elm-o Sanat (Harbinger of Science and Industry) satellite into orbit in February 2012. The records made by the telecom, measurement and scientific satellite could be used in a wide range of fields.



## ROAMING NEWS

### Telecom Adds Indonesia, Thailand to flat rate data roaming

Telecom announced some changes to its pricing for international data roaming when customers use their smartphones and other mobile devices while travelling overseas. The popular US\$10 flat daily rate has been extended to two new destinations – Indonesia and Thailand, and voice calling from these destinations will decrease from US\$3.49 a minute to US\$2.49 a minute. Indonesia is becoming increasingly important in terms of economic ties and now ranks as New Zealand's ninth biggest export market, while Thailand is a popular holiday destination for many New Zealanders as well as being 15th in the export market rankings. Telecom's innovative flat rate pricing gives customers the freedom to use data on their mobile phones as they would in New Zealand, while having peace of mind around what this will cost them. Collectively, these markets represent more than 96% of international data roaming traffic by volume.

### Maxis begins offering pre-paid 4G tariffs

Malaysian mobile network operator Maxis has announced the launch of pre-paid 4G services under its 'Hotlink' brand name. The telco revealed that customers looking to take advantage of the higher speeds offered by its LTE network will need to purchase a Hotlink SIM pack for MYR8.80 (US\$2.70) and do a 4G SIM swap at any Maxis Centre

nationwide. Following that, subscribers can either opt for a 1GB or 3GB monthly mobile internet pass, which cost MYR30 and MYR68, respectively. As part of a launch offer, meanwhile, customers will receive 50% more data allowance when purchasing a monthly pass between now and 28 February 2014.

### BICS enables LTE roaming in 44 countries

Wholesale carrier services provider BICS announced that it is offering LTE roaming services with over 70 operators, spanning 44 countries. Company expects another year of strong growth, following the year it established the live LTE roaming relations between operators in Asia, North America, Europe and Africa. Using BICS's IPX platform, including LTE signaling, service providers can exchange any IP traffic (voice, video, messaging and data) bilaterally with any IPX destination, through one single interconnection with an end-to-end management of quality. Last year BICS enabled LTE roaming internationally over IPX between Europe and Asia through Swiss provider Swisscom and SK Telecom of South Korea in June. During September, BICS's IPX platform started offering LTE roaming on the networks of Canadian operator Rogers, Swisscom and SK Telecom. In October, IPX enabled the LTE roaming call from Africa to Europe between Angolan operator Unitel and Belgian MNO Proximus. In November 2013 BICS was awarded the 'Best LTE Roaming Product' award at the LTE North America Awards in Dallas for its IPX platform.

## T-Mobile to cover termination fees for new users

T-Mobile US, the country's No. 4 carrier, announced that it would cover the termination fees for individuals as well as up to five lines per family for consumers who leave their carrier. Customers can receive up to US\$650 in credit after trading in their phone. It is the latest in a series of moves the company has made to gain customers, helping T-Mobile stand out among competitors whose offerings have largely remained the same — two-year contracts, complex family plans and stiff early-termination fees. The industry is "just broken," John Legere, T-Mobile's chief executive, said at a news conference. He added: "What we are going to do is force the industry to get healthier." So far, T-Mobile has found some success, and it has the other carriers in somewhat of a defensive crouch. In August, T-Mobile achieved its highest customer growth numbers in four years, and its momentum continued through the rest of the year. Clearly, AT&T views T-Mobile as a threat. In the face of rumors that T-Mobile would offer to cover termination fees, AT&T said last week that it would give credit specifically to T-Mobile customers who switched.

## Orange inks roaming agreement with MPT

The France-based telecom giant Orange has extended its roaming service to Myanmar after signing an agreement with Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications (MPT), an MPT official told The Myanmar Times on January 2. The agreement enables visitors to make calls with foreign SIM cards, and also allows phones with MPT SIM cards to work in other countries, said U Aung Maw, MPT managing director. "We have signed an agreement with Orange Telecom and have already started this roaming service to foreign countries since the Southeast Asian Games. Orange will extend the roaming service to more countries. It is likely to have roaming service worldwide," U Aung Maw said. Profits from the December 20 deal will be shared between Orange and Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications, he added. The first stage of the agreement allows reciprocal roaming opportunities with 64 operators from 33 countries, including ASEAN nations.

## EU region has lowest average LTE 4G post pay tariffs globally

TCL (Tariff Consultancy Ltd), the experts in telecoms pricing worldwide, has published the latest edition of the 27TCL Global LTE Pricing Tariff Tracker subscription service, which shows the impact of new LTE (4G) network launches for the last three-month period to the end of December 2013 (Q4-13) on pricing. Over the last quarter TCL has included updated LTE pricing from 130 operators in more than 70 countries worldwide - with particular growth in new services seen from the South American region. Eight South American operators have launched commercial LTE (4G) services in five countries including - Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Uruguay. In more established markets, LTE operators are also reducing the price for existing LTE services - particularly in France, where LTE services are being charged at the same level as 3G data. Additionally a number of operators offer selective price discounts or bundles as part of a LTE promotion.

## PTA directs mobile operators to stop call setup charges

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has issued instructions to all Cellular Mobile Operator (CMOs) to immediately stop call set-up fee recently imposed by them. PTA has issued these directions in the light of provision of Telecom Re organization Act and Consumer Protection Regulations 2009. PTA has accordingly directed all CMOs to implement the order without causing any discomfort to the mobile phone subscribers. It may be recalled that mobile operators have imposed call-setup charges of Rs. 0.10+ tax on each call last week and posted notice on their website about imposition of new charges. PTA's step is aimed at safeguarding customers' interests. PTA has asked the operators to immediately stop these charges and furnish compliance report to it.

## Cheap incoming while roaming on MegaFon Russia network

Orange customers will use the roaming service on MegaFon Russia network at new rates; in particular, a unique 29 AMD/min rate will be applied for all incoming calls, independently from the network from which the call was generated. The 29 AMD/MB rate will be applied for GPRS as well. 59AMD/min rate will be applied for calls to all Russian networks and to customers of Orange Armenia, as well as for SMSs, 120 AMD/min rate will be applied for calls to customers of other Armenian networks and to Karabakh, and 500 AMD/min rate for calls to CIS countries. Other international calls will be charged at 1500 AMD/min rate, the company's press service reported.

## Myanmar allows international GSM mobile phone coverage

Myanmar telecommunication authorities have allowed GSM and WCDMA mobile phone coverage from foreign countries. GSM/WCDMA subscribers from 64 operators from 33 countries including ASEAN countries can get access to the communication services in Myanmar, said the 7-Day News. Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) and Orange Company of France signed the International Roaming Services Agreement on Dec. 20. The Orange Company is trying to expand mobile phone coverage in over 100 foreign countries in the future. The international roaming service for Myanmar GSM/WCDMA users are on trial run in foreign countries, the report said. In October this year, Myanmar enacted the Communications Law in the development of communication technology. Meanwhile, mobile phone users have reached over 5 million in the country. There are over 8.7 million households in the country and the current mobile phone users' density is one mobile phone per 1.7 household, according to the statistics released by the ministry.



## TECHNOLOGY NEWS

### Broadband initiative bringing kiosks to parish AgCenter

The Louisiana initiative to improve Internet coverage in the state is providing public access computer kiosks in Washington and other parishes where broadband Internet is underused or unavailable.

As part of the initiative, a public-use, touch-screen computer kiosk was recently installed in the LSU AgCenter Extension Service office in Franklinton. Connect My Louisiana, a four-year project conducted through a partnership between the Louisiana Division of Administration's Office of Technology and the LSU AgCenter, develops and disseminates educational content to show the benefits of adopting broadband technology in business, education, health care and other aspects of economic activity, said LSU AgCenter Connect My Louisiana coordinator Valerie Vincent. The main activity of the project has been providing consumers, business owners, local government representatives and other public and private organizations with access to educational resources that promote greater broadband Internet adoption.

The LSU AgCenter also is preparing people to take advantage of the Internet through Connect My Louisiana.

### Ventus Wireless unveils 4G LTE compact antennas for wireless routers

Ventus Wireless has added two new 4G LTE wireless antennas to its product line of cellular wireless networking hardware. The Compact Dual Antenna (CDA) supports Ventus single module 4G LTE routers, and the Compact Quad Antenna (CQA) represents what the company said is "the industry's first antenna with support for dual module 4G LTE routers."

"The Compact Antennas have performed exceedingly well in the field. They pack a lot of power into a small package, said Chris Miller, director of electrical engineering and product development for Norwalk, Conn.-based Ventus Wireless. Developed specifically to support Ventus Wireless routers, the 4G LTE CDA and CQA provide powerful performance and flexibility with a small footprint.

### Rollout WBA 500/500 Mbps to existing FTTH areas

Since mid-2013, KPN is rolling over standard Gigabit Fiber (GoF) technology in new FTTH areas, making the speed WBA 500/500 Mbps can offer customers. KPN also started in 2014 with the deployment of WBA 500/500 Mbps FTTH in existing areas. The planning of this deployment can be found on the website of KPN Wholesale. In existing FTTH areas KPN now offers a maximum speed of internet WBA 100/100

Mbps Ethernet technology over Fiber (EoF). In 2012, KPN piloted in three existing FTTH areas (IJburg, Nunspeet and Wells) with the offer of the speed 500/500 Mbps. Gigabit over Fiber (GoF) technology KPN makes these speeds. In the pilot, KPN has also looked at the evolution of the migrations between the different technologies.

## IPitomy announces interoperability of its VoIP IP PBX System with Metropolis

IPitomy and Metropolis Technologies announced that they have successfully completed interoperability testing between Metropolis' OfficeWatch, ProfitWatch, and XT solutions with the IPitomy IP PBX platform.

"We are excited to announce this collaboration with IPitomy and to provide their resellers and customers additional value and choice," declares Sharon Harry, Director of Marketing for Metropolis Technologies. "Now IPitomy customers can benefit from the cost saving and productivity increasing features OfficeWatch, ProfitWatch, and XT provide to manage their employees and their communications network." Metropolis' call reporting, telemanagement and call accounting solutions allow IPitomy users to identify trends in their voice network with enhanced call reporting, toll fraud detection, alarm notifications, and productivity tools to track information by user, department, division or hunt group. Dynamic call costing, guest call bill back, and expense management are also key solution features, as IPitomy continues to gain popularity in the hospitality market.

"Metropolis's scalable call reporting solutions compliment IPitomy products and enhance the performance, capabilities, and visibility of their IPitomy network," explains Nick Branica, President and CEO of IPitomy.

## Audiovox mobile TV to support Kindle Fire

In a telling expansion of its business, Audiovox mobiletv, the Dyle-enabled wireless mobile TV receiver, has been made compatible with Kindle HD Fire tablets. The new compatibility, made possible through a chipset from mobile TV pioneer Siano, complements existing iOS and Android smartphones and tablet availability for the free live TV service. Dyle comprises a joint venture of 12 major broadcast groups, available in 38 US markets, reaching 57% of the country. Content delivered includes live broadcast TV such as local and national news, sports and entertainment programming to mobile devices. Audiovox mobiletv includes a program guide, pause and rewind features, and an internal battery providing up to four hours of television viewing.

"The ability to add Amazon Kindle Fire users expands the growing list of consumers who want the live TV experience at their fingertips and provides our retail partners with another compelling reason to support the product," explained Audiovox president Tom Malone.

## NTT Docomo Inc: Researchers submit patent application

A patent application by the inventor Aoyama, Yasuhiro (Tokyo, JP), filed on March 9, 2012, was made available online on December 26, 2013.

The patent's assignee is NTT Docomo, Inc. News sources obtained the following quote from the background information supplied by the inventors: "Heretofore, implementation utilizing a built-in memory adjacent to the CPU has been commonly used as an approach to increase the communication speed in communication devices (e.g., Patent Literature 1). This approach can increase the communication speed by storing a specific communication control program or processing data desired to be processed at a higher speed in a built-in memory adjacent to the CPU and thus minimizing the time loss associated with memory access. "In addition, along with advancements in functionality of communication devices in recent years, communication devices each capable of supporting a plurality of communication systems such as wireless LAN, GSM, UMTS, and LTE have become common. In such communication devices with advanced functionality, the number of programs and the amount of data to be stored in a built-in memory increase as the number of supporting communication systems increases."

## Sony plans IPTV service

Sony is to launch a cloud-based TV streaming service in the US later this year, allowing users to watch live TV and VoD content on its TVs and PlayStation games consoles.

Sony Computer Entertainment CEO Andrew House, speaking at CES in Las Vegas, said that the currently unnamed service will stream live and recorded programming to TVs, game consoles and mobile devices. Sony has also revealed PlayStation Now, which will allow users to stream games from the PlayStation library across multiple devices, similar to the way they currently stream TV, movies, and music. At the moment, only the PS4, PS3 and 2014 Bravia TV models will be able to make use of the service when it becomes available in the US this summer, following a Beta launch at the end of the month.

## Facebook to soon rollout 'FB Paper' to deliver news on mobile

Facebook is reportedly all set to roll out its digital social newspaper for its members to access on their mobile devices.

The digital newspaper of sorts has been named 'Paper', and is scheduled for delivery before the end of January. According to Cnet, 'Paper' has been developed specifically for the mobile platform and will aggregate content from a variety of sources including status updates from Facebook and articles from partner media companies, just like Flipboard. The social networking giant recently attempted to alter the way it is consumed by its users and in a bid to deliver 'more relevant' content, the website tweaked its News Feed feature to show up more news articles over memes.

However, the company has declined to comment on the speculation but the plans for making Facebook a 'customized newspaper' have been announced by its CEO Mark Zuckerberg .

## Hubee provides FTV's VOD, catch-up TV portal on Freebox

Hubee has been selected by France Télévisions to provide OTT IPTV technologies to the francetv pluzz catch-up TV portal on Free STB. This portal supplies content from five TV channels (France 2, France 3, France 4, France 5 and France Ô) and nine overseas channels from the French public broadcaster. The Hubee IPTV solution has been deployed to simplify access to all multimedia information, providing easy management of the portal.

A specialist in on-demand TV, Hubee has built new applications and services, enabling it to highlight on its homepage the most viewed and most tweeted content, which is also arranged by product, season, theme and episode. France Televisions has also extended its catch-up TV service with the VOD service Pluzz VAD and chosen Hubee as its benchmark technical partner for VOD.

The initial catalogue comprises some 3,000 programs covering a number of different genres.Pluzz VAD plans to ramp up its offering with significant content updates with more than 200 programs and other shows coming online each month.

## IBM Commits US\$1.2 Billion to expand global cloud footprint

IBM has announced plans to commit over US\$1.2 billion to significantly expand its global cloud footprint with additional centers planned for the Middle East region by 2015.

By some estimates, the global cloud market is set to grow to US\$200 billion by 2020; driven largely by businesses and government agencies deploying cloud services to develop products, market, and manage their supply chains in transforming their business practices.

IBM's latest investment includes a network of cloud centers designed to bring organizations greater flexibility, transparency and control over how they manage their data, run their business and deploy their IT operations. This year IBM plans to deliver cloud services from 40 data centers worldwide in 15 countries and five continents globally. IBM will open 15 new centers worldwide adding to the existing

global footprint of 13 global data centers from SoftLayer and 12 from IBM. Among the newest data centers to launch are China, Washington D.C., Hong Kong, London, and India.

## MTNL plans Wi-Fi at 8Mbps speed beyond home location

MTNL executive director Peeyush Agarwal said: "We are planning to provide our customers Wi-Fi services at indoor locations such airports, cafes, food courts, apart from their homes. We will be offering 8Mbps speed."

The MTNL customer will have to use a line-bonding modem to avail of this service. Mobile users already using the MTNL Wi-Fi services on mobile devices will be charged an additional Rs. 50-100 apart from their existing monthly rental, PTI reported. MTNL, which operates in Mumbai and Delhi, has tied up with city's new terminal T2 to provide this Wi-Fi service and is in talks with rest of the two airports for the same. The loss making telecom service provider said MTNL will be targeting the Mumbai and New Delhi airports and all the food courts and malls for this service. MTNL customers who use Wi-Fi on multiple devices like laptop, mobile, personal computers and tabs at home, will also have access to internet on such locations.

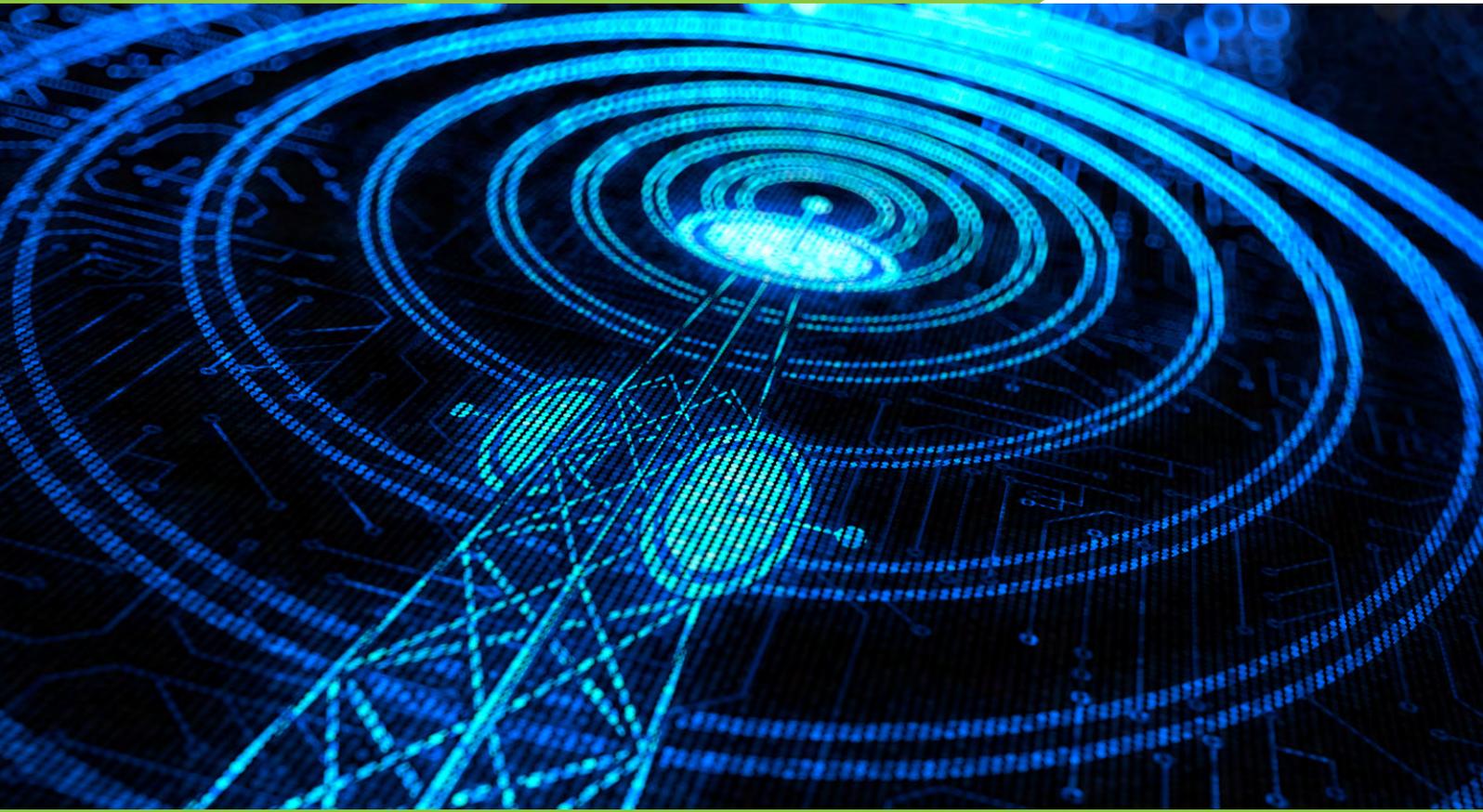
A customer will have to register himself at such places, and just by using his unique login ID and password can have access to internet there.

## Facebook now let all advertisers target people who visited their site or used their mobile app

Facebook launched new features to help marketers reach people across devices and encourage them to take action. Custom Audiences now allows businesses to deliver targeted messages to people who have visited their website or mobile app, and certain News Feed ads have gained the option to feature enhanced call-to-action buttons.

Facebook first announced the new Custom Audiences feature in October, although it was limited to a number of test partners. The company promised to roll it out globally "in the coming months" and three months later, it is delivering. Facebook is once again pulling the information located on other properties where its plugins reside back to its main service, to the benefit of revenue-generating advertisers. Since the company takes a cut, it is essentially growing its bottom line.





## How telecom operators can take control of technology integration

Telecom companies are trying to respond to the digital revolution and growing customer demand and sophistication with more focus on providing an excellent customer experience. The challenges to achieving this are substantial and include the fast-changing environment, increasing technological complexity, and associated cost pressures. One of the best ways forward that addresses all of these issues is to embrace technological integration by bringing together business support systems (BSS) applications and operations support systems (OSS) applications. Integrating these technologies can make operations more efficient and improve technology synergies—it is also inevitable.

“ The growing use of digital applications has had several consequences that telecom companies often struggle with. ”

Such a transformation, however, is about more than technology. It also has implications for how telecom companies are organized. BSS–OSS integration therefore demands that telecom companies build technological and

organizational capabilities to be fully in control of this complex process and ensure its success. Operators will need to take a holistic and selective approach to BSS–OSS integration that is aligned with their commercial strategy, and reject a narrow, technology-only focus.

The growing use of digital applications has had several consequences that telecom companies often struggle with: increased user sophistication and so more demanding customers; a resulting greater focus on customer experience, including an emphasis on providing a seamlessly integrated complex array of offered services; and an explosion in the volume of data traffic. Telecom companies are generally thought to possess the capacity to handle this volume. However, they must do more than deal with this surge in traffic. They must respond to increasing user sophistication and unprecedented sensitivity of applications to data

“ Operators will need to take a holistic and selective approach to BSS–OSS integration that is aligned with their commercial strategy. ”

quality, which results in the need for them to build the analytical capabilities to deliver innovative services and an excellent customer experience.

These trends mean that telecom companies have no choice but to rethink the long-standing divide between BSS (previously managed by the IT department) and OSS (previously managed by the network department) at both the technological and organizational levels. The need to manage burgeoning data demand in a cost-efficient manner, the complexity of the systems involved, and evolving technology infrastructure also militate for integration. Equally, there are sound commercial reasons for merging BSS and OSS. Combining these systems can help companies increase their efficiency and agility, which is critical for operators seeking to cut the fat and build muscle that will lead to growth.

*“ Support systems must now undergo vertical integration because customers now expect near real time delivery of digital services.”*

BSS–OSS integration should happen at two levels: horizontally and vertically. Chief Technology Officers and Chief Information Officers have been implementing the horizontal integration for a while by pursuing support system transformations that allow the efficient delivery of converged services (telephone, video, and data) that meet high customer expectations. These transformations involved separate integration improvements within the BSS and OSS domains. Support systems must now undergo vertical integration because customers now expect near real time delivery of digital services and they are more and more demanding an excellent customer experience.

A well-integrated BSS–OSS stack would make possible several additional benefits to complement the current process of horizontal integration. For example, the vertical integration of BSS and OSS offers operators the capability to fully automate delivery and maintenance of services, from customer touch points to the configuration of network elements. Investing beyond the horizontal integration to vertical integration, therefore, reduces the complexity and costs of technology, and enables a superior customer experience. Integration of BSS and OSS systems leads to increased efficiency, automated service delivery, improved quality of customer experience, and next-generation billing. Bridging this divide, however, involves crossing substantial internal obstacles, many of which are technical in nature. Telecom companies have maintained a fragmented systems architecture consisting of legacy equipment and thousands of proprietary vendor systems for both BSS and OSS. All these systems involve substantial support costs and have limited potential for integration because they were developed before the evolution of industry-wide standards. The migration of such systems will be financially onerous and presents a high risk of failure as not all of these systems are fully supported or documented.

In addition, telecom companies have to deal with the difficulties related to data inconsistencies and migration. A significant number of BSS–OSS transformation programs fail during the data migration stages because data cleansing either takes too much time, proves to be too expensive, or is not properly completed—resulting in problems after the formal switchover. Migration issues become more complicated when telecom operators consider the integration of available market solutions that may complement existing systems. These solutions may be marketed as completed and ready to use, but often they are not.

*“ Operators also need to be convinced of the value of IT in advancing corporate strategy if they are to commit to the investment required for BSS–OSS integration.”*

Other notable challenges to BSS–OSS integration involve organizational change. Such transformations combine several development and maintenance activities in one organization. As a result, individuals may become resistant to change as they fear losing their organizational influence or job security. Moreover, the usual executive mind-set may block integration because it views technology as a target for cost savings rather than a vehicle for growth. Operators also need to be convinced of the value of IT in advancing corporate strategy if they are to commit to the investment required for BSS–OSS integration.

All these challenges can be addressed through a structured approach that holistically addresses organizational and technology issues while selectively focusing on building operators' specific strengths. This means prioritizing those areas where maximum benefit can be realized from integration. Such well-planned and selective BSS–OSS integration programs will allow telecom operators to better address their particular customer needs and will free up funds to invest in their strategic priorities—and thus better position operators for growth.

**Hilal Halaoui, Partner  
Dany Sammour, Principal  
Hani Zein Associate**

**Booz & Company.**



## Riding Digitization into a new industrial age

*Human history and civilization's advancement are in large part a history of scientific and technological development. Numerous ICT technologies over the past half century have shattered the limits of time and space, bringing the human civilization into an unprecedented new frontier. However, this is only the start of a greater information revolution.*

*We are at the door to the next wave of digital society with Mr. Ihab Ghattas, Assistant President of Huawei Middle East, talking to SAMENA Council ahead of this year's Mobile World Congress about what to expect on the journey ahead.*

### NTT Docomo Inc: Researchers submit patent application

The essence of the mobile broadband is being connected anytime, anywhere. Being an infrastructure element just like the power grid, the Internet has greatly boosted social productivity and reduced cost. However, the value of access is far more than providing connectivity. Broadband represents a brand new mindset, with the core being "all connected at zero distance" among people, enterprises and their customers, and business partners.

As a result, more enterprises will be restructuring their business mindset with a greater focus on ICT. This extends to an organization's marketing, R&D, operation, and service models, with each of these based on new digital services rather than simply overlaying IT on top of traditional business models.

### Beyond value delivery into value creation

At the core any business mainly comprises of value creation and value delivery. Value delivery is what we often refer to as information flow, capital flow and logistics flow. All the three have been "smoothed out" through the boom of e-commerce platforms, with broadband access really transforming the value delivery process. The digital and physical worlds are more closely integrated, reducing or even eliminating many intermediate processes.

Today we see ICT connectivity starting to have a deeper impact on value creation—especially in the R&D and manufacturing fields. Looking at the R&D model, we already see a movement towards greater user participation and crowd sourcing activities. This evolution has a technical dimension as well, seen in the case of Tesla redefining automobiles using IT and the Internet. The manufacturing field is also being clearly transformed. After the steam engine, electricity, and IT, the Internet is driving the fourth Industrial Revolution, or what we call "Industry 4.0", enabling the integration of efficient mass production with the diversity of individualized manual workshops.

## New information monopolies and asymmetry

Modern ICT infrastructure makes information dissemination and access impossibly easy. It breaks the traditional monopoly of knowledge and information by certain industries and enterprises, who will find it hard to grab the high value they used to enjoy.

But every coin has two sides. While shattering this old paradigm, greater connectivity has also created new monopolies and asymmetry of information at a higher level. Today's Internet giants collect massive user and transaction data, and leverage big data analytics to fully explore user behaviors, creating new information asymmetry and monopolies over the other enterprises and service providers.

## Fully engaging consumer's pooled wisdom

With the traditional information monopoly shattered and information transparency increasing in general, the modern consumer is gaining exponentially more power over their purchasing decisions. Enterprises must go further than just responding to and meeting customer needs. A higher level of user-centricity is required that involves consumers in every business process, from requirement collection, product ideation and design, R&D, marketing, and after-sales services. This is not simply the building of online communities and user forums; it involves the transformation of management with real-time analytics powered by IT architecture. Only by leveraging users' collective wisdom can enterprises prosper together with their customers.

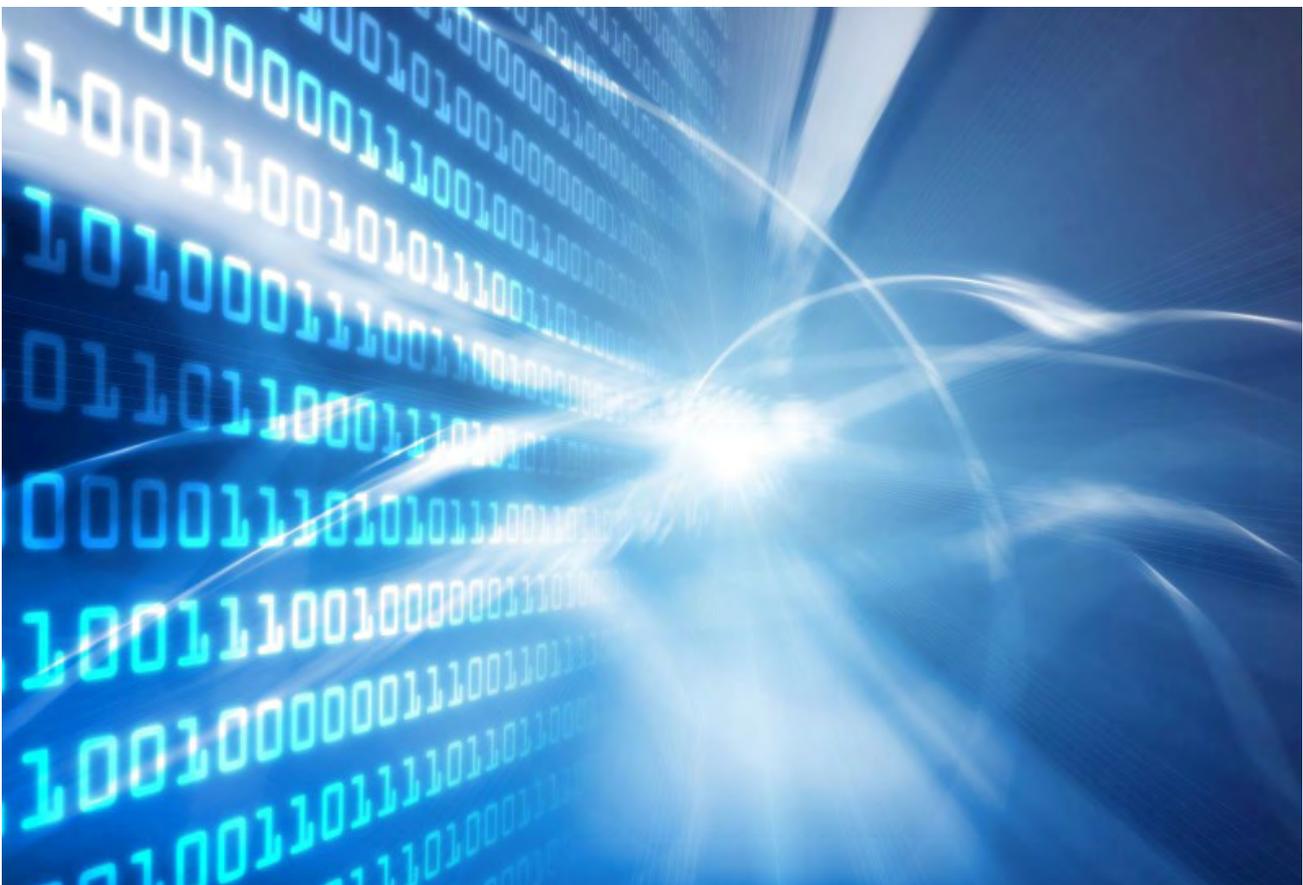
## Maturation of software-defined, scale-out IT models

Facing such a huge amount of information and data traffic, ICT infrastructure must be more agile and scalable, which renders the traditional hardware-based architecture and pre-planned construction model outdated. This is exactly where software-defined and scale-out computing models come in.

The "software" definition refers not only to the IT domain, such as software-defined storage and software-defined DC, but also to the network domain, including software-defined networking (SDN) and network function virtualization (NFV). It realizes more flexible architectures via software on the basis of programmable hardware.

As for the scale-out computing model, it is permeating everywhere; from underlying multi-core chips to distributed storage, parallel computing and fully distributed network architecture. Different from the scale-up model, which is confined by material and processing constraints, scale-out allows for huge capacity and low cost.

**Huawei, Middle East**





## Beyond Connectivity 2014

18th & 19th March, 2014 - Kuwait

### The Internet of Things: Door to Digitization

This year, the Beyond Connectivity annual conference theme is "The Internet of Things: Door to Digitization."

Over the past few years, the emergence of next generation technologies has resulted in more objects gaining the ability to communicate. The resulting information networks promise to create new business models, improve business processes, and reduce costs and risks. Growth in the mobile sector is especially corroborated in the SAMENA region showing a strong demand for convergence that will ultimately result in Digitization.

In an extremely competitive industry it's important to take the lead and collaborate to allow the industry to transcend innovation to the next evolutionary pedestal. It is crucial to widen the horizons to look at the collective picture to ensure that all spheres of the industry are analyzed, explored and tapped to identify a road map for progression. The recent trends in the industry are explicating the importance of integration of various technological strands to deliver innovative services to be able to nurture the nuance of Digitization. The need of the hour is to collaborate to create a knowledge intensive pool to allow the industry to develop a more informed and innovative direction complimenting the competition and at the same time supporting Digitization.

**Beyond Connectivity** will be held on March 18th – 19th in Kuwait and will vindicate SAMENA Council's contemplation to the importance of Digitization amidst the emergence of the Internet of Things. It will implicate the importance of 'IoT as a door to Digitization that will lead to new revenue streams for the telecom operators as well as technology providers.

**Beyond Connectivity** will discuss the topics which include but are not limited to the following:

- M2M trends in the SAMENA Region and its role in digitization
- The CAPEX-OPEX challenge: Adoption of Tax reduction policies
- Cloud Computing: The Wave of the Future vs Security Concerns
- Emergence of new business models: Review potential opportunities with OTTs
- Mobile Broadband development: Strategies for infrastructure sharing
- Spectrum harmonization and allocation: Economical efficiency viewpoint
- Mobile based services - mHealth, mBanking, mCommerce, and mEntertainment
- Internet governance and Net Neutrality: A regional perspective



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