SAMENA TRENDS

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BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

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NETWORK SHARING, THE WAY FORWARD

Scott Gegenheimer
Chief Executive Officer
Zain Group

EDITORIAL

Network sharing, the way forward

Today, "connectivity" is a defining feature of life. Individuals and organizations worldwide connect, socialize, and communicate through the networks. Over the past 15 years, global Internet usage increased from 350 million to almost 2.5 billion today. As Internet usage continues to expand, "connectivity" and the networks will become increasingly woven into the fabric of everyday life world over. All this has been made possible as a result of innovative technologies and policies enabling service providers and governments to expand the availability of Internet to masses.

Network sharing allows for two or more service providers sharing their network infrastructure, with the plan that the individual CAPEX and OPEX will be reduced. The idea of network sharing revolves around the approach that the resources are optimally used in a way that all the parties involved are benefitted. With growing bandwidth demands, increasing competition, and price growth, telcos in the SAMENA region and beyond are constantly challenged and are under pressure to upgrade their infrastructure and roll out advanced technologies. To overcome such challenges, the telco community is adopting various strategies including network sharing. Information & Communication Technologies have been playing a decisive role in overall economic growth. Effective ICT policies are essential to ensure the economic progression and dynamic market nuance for successful penetration of ICTs. The outset of various technological innovations in the ICT sector globally has accentuated the continual growing demands of the masses world over.

In our "Telecom Leaders' Summit" last month, we saw that in UAE , we are going to see network sharing very soon. Both the operators have done trials for more than 100 customers in fixed line sector. The Summit was held under the theme "The Rise of the Broadband Economy – Shaping Excellence in Cooperation – Government, Telecom Operators, and Internet Players".

When we speak of broadband and its role in economic development, we think of futuristic national broadband networks with greater efficiency and impact on the overall "Digitization" wave. I believe that initiatives such as network sharing will help expedite the deployment of broadband access technologies and its proliferation to masses which will in turn accelerate economic progress, for it has already been evidenced in different parts of the world.

Yours truly,

Bocar A. BA
Chief Executive Officer
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

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EDITORIAL

OPERATOR LEADER'S VISION

Scott Gegenheimer
Chief Executive Officer
Zain Group

Mr. Gegenheimer was appointed CEO of Zain Group effective December 2, 2012. He holds a Bachelors of Science degree in Finance and Management from Northern Illinois University and an MBA from DePaul University in Chicago. Mr. Gegenheimer is a telecom veteran of over 25 years' experience, with a track record of impressive results, and a good portion of his time spent in Kuwait and other places in the region. He is a native of the US and prior to joining Zain Group spent the last decade in various senior management and leadership positions at regional operators, including in Kuwait. He has spent time working for technology heavyweights including Cisco Systems and Motorola, and has also enjoyed a stint in the financial services industry in the US.

Q. How Zain Group has established numerous strategic priorities and initiatives that are aimed at maintaining Zain's significance in the market that consequently have won you "CEO of the Year" award by TMT Finance MENA?

A. Zain is a multinational company with an established pedigree in the Middle East and Africa region, a rich 31-year history brimming with numerous competitive advantages in deploying state-of-the-art networks, offering tailored customer propositions and a high-quality user experience. When I joined the company in December 2012, I found an organization that had made significant strides in the telecommunications industry in the GCC, Levant and Sub-Saharan Africa and I was able to identify opportunities to extract more value and synergies from areas such as our network, technology, regional footprint, staff and our strong brand.

"Towards the end of 2013, we launched a corporate strategy to evolve our business from a predominantly mobile consumer play to an integrated consumer and enterprise play by 2017."

Towards the end of 2013, we launched a corporate strategy to evolve our business from a predominantly mobile consumer play to an integrated consumer and enterprise play by 2017. To achieve this, early in 2014, we adopted a 3-step transformational program with a focus on four key areas: Customer experience; operational efficiency and excellence; people development; and business growth. From a strategy execution standpoint, we intend to "Fix-the-basics", by instituting and standardizing operational excellence, cost optimization and a better way of doing things throughout our organisation. We also intend to "differentiate", by transforming our business to become more customer-centric, placing the customer at the heart of everything we do. And, finally, we plan to "diversify our business" by capitalizing on the opportunity to build a strong enterprise play and accelerating data monetization.

This new direction has been well received by all stakeholders and has already begun to produce positive results. We have begun to take steps to operationalize our corporate strategy and to ensure that the guiding principles are cascaded across our footprint.

For example, most recently earlier this month Zain Saudi Arabia announced the signing of network expansion and upgrade agreements worth SAR4.5 billion (US$1.2 billion) with five leading global technology companies. The agreements aim to enhance Zain Saudi's customer experience and to improve and expand Zain's network capacity, coverage and speed. Additionally in KSA, last year the team negotiated a seven-year deferment of dues to the Ministry of Finance; which is an arrangement that falls in line with the company's ambition to institutionalize cost optimization wherever possible.

"Our operation in Kuwait remains our most profitable and the investment in its nationwide 4G LTE is paying off as it continues to grow its customer base despite the introduction of number portability which normally affects the incumbent operator."

With respect to the development of our human capital, Zain Group has always been well regarded for the investment it commits to its staff, and our commitment to employees is only set to intensify. Recruiting and retaining top talent is crucial to our long-term success.

Our operation in Kuwait remains our most profitable and the investment in its nationwide 4G LTE is paying off as it continues to grow its customer base despite the introduction of number portability which normally affects the incumbent operator.

Despite the challenging environment in Iraq, the operation continues to witness healthy growth and we have invested heavily in expanding the network to the more affluent northern region of the country including Kurdistan. The operation is 3G ready once the authorities provide us the license and spectrum.

Jordan and Bahrain continue to grow their customer base, and with the currency impact situation in Sudan mostly behind us, we are confident of future growth in the huge and high potential market.

Q. Why Zain Group has increased its equity stake in Zain Bahrain to 63%?

A. Zain Bahrain has established itself as a strong and formidable operator in the Kingdom of Bahrain offering best-in-class integrated services (mobile and fixed wireless access). In the first quarter of 2014 the operation's customer base grew by 13% year-on-year and last year it launched 4G LTE, which is driving future growth. Data revenues grew 6% during the quarter with data revenue reflecting 29% of total revenues.

"Zain Bahrain is currently undergoing a process to list on the Bourse and, in the process, float 15% of its shareholding. "

Zain Group's move to acquire an additional 6.25% in Zain Bahrain to reach a total of 63% reinforces the confidence held by Zain Group's Board of Directors and senior executive management in respect to the current and future prospects of Zain Bahrain, together with its place in the evolving Bahraini telecom landscape.

Zain Bahrain is currently undergoing a process to list on the Bourse and, in the process, float 15% of its shareholding. Zain Group will continue to retain majority control of the Bahrain unit upon completion of the stock market listing.

The operation has a high caliber management team that knows the market well and with its recent nationwide 4G network upgrade, we are confident of the operations future potential.

Q. What do you want to achieve by having established joint innovation center in Middle East in collaboration with Huawei?

A. Over the years Zain has remained at the forefront of mobile broadband innovation, partnering with similarly minded leaders in the ICT field to push the boundaries of what is possible for its customers. Both Zain and Huawei enjoy a history of heightened customer satisfaction generated by successful research and development efforts. Through the new Joint Innovation Center, Zain's mobile customers can look forward to even better, faster, and more seamless communication experiences.

Zain and Huawei signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which we both outlined our ambitions for the creation of a joint innovation center and have since invested in the construction of the facilities, bringing together an elite team of global experts, engineers, and others to lead the center's development.

The center is set to enhance Zain's service offerings while helping the operator to realize additional revenues streams. The center includes various sections dedicated to smart consumer technology, new media services for the home, industry-specific ICT solutions, as well as offerings developed for enterprise customers such as telepresence and other virtualization platforms.

In line with the group's plan to become a regional trendsetter, we hope to replicate such innovation centers across our other operations in the future.

Q. What is the significance of mobile digital content for the telecom operators, particularly in the SAMENA region?

A. The investment in mobile broadband networks, and the subsequent take-up of digital services has been a recurring success story for Zain and other network operators for a number of years now. 2013 was no different. Across all our operations and as a Group as a whole, data reflects 15% of revenues growing 27% year on year up to March 31, 2014. In our home market of Kuwait, for example, for the same period, data revenues (excluding SMS & VAS) formed 31% of total revenues, reflecting an annual growth of 23%. Those are impressive numbers, and we see this trend repeated in other markets in which we have deployed 3G and 4G networks.

"Zain Jordan recently acquired a 4G license and hopefully we will launch LTE commercial services by end of 2014 or Q1, 2015 at the latest."

As an industry, we need to continue to investment in telecom and IT infrastructure. Zain Group's capital expenditure (CAPEX) for 2014 is expected to be in the vicinity of US$1 billion. As I alluded to earlier, we recently launched high-speed 4G LTE in Bahrain, which resulted in an almost instantaneous increase in the amount of data usage on our networks in the country. Bahrain joined our operations in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to introduce LTE, and we expect other markets to follow suit as local conditions permit. It is worthwhile noting that Zain Jordan recently acquired a 4G license and hopefully we will launch LTE commercial services by end of 2014 or Q1, 2015 at the latest. This will bring the As an industry, we need to continue to investment in telecom and IT infrastructure. Zain Group's capital expenditure (CAPEX) for 2014 is expected to be in the vicinity of US$1 billion. As I alluded to earlier, we recently launched high-speed 4G LTE in Bahrain, which resulted in an almost instantaneous increase in the amount of data usage on our networks in the country. Bahrain joined our operations in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to introduce LTE, and we expect other markets to follow suit as local conditions permit. It is worthwhile noting that Zain Jordan recently acquired a 4G license and hopefully we will launch LTE commercial services by end of 2014 or Q1, 2015 at the latest. This will bring the total number of markets in which we have LTE deployed to five, namely, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Lebanon and Jordan.

Q. What have been the major challenges that Zain Group has faced across its eight markets in the Middle East and Africa?

A. Amongst the most significant challenges remain the industry-wide test of maintaining or growing customer and revenue market share in hyper-competitive markets. To a large degree, Zain is overcoming these challenges, having been able to grow its customer base in the majority of our markets despite penetration rates that exceed 100% and in some countries over 170% (Bahrain) and 200% (Kuwait).

Over the past 12 months we added over 2 million customers, with Iraq being our leading operation by customer numbers serving over 16 million.

"We are also deploying direct operator billing solutions group-wide in a bid to ensure that we establish a strong foothold in the mobile payments ecosystem and to tap into the OTT revenue streams."

The unrelenting rise of over the top (OTT) players in the traditional telecom ecosystem continues to result in revenue leakage, though as network operators we need to look to combat this effect through initiatives of our own. In our case, we are re-examining opportunities to exploit the use of OTT services (communications, content, commerce) to complement traditional product bundles and offerings. We are also deploying direct operator billing solutions group-wide in a bid to ensure that we establish a strong foothold in the mobile payments ecosystem and to tap into the OTT revenue streams.

Foreign exchange uncertainty and the depreciation of local currencies against major ones is another challenge we face, though these are primarily driven by political and economic uncertainty in the local countries.

Q. With the growing competition in telecom sector, how are you planning to be the market leader in terms of quality of service (QoS)?

A. Operationally I believe Zain Group's performance has been solid in the last few years as we maintained market leadership by customer numbers in six out of our eight markets. Investing in our infrastructure, improving our customer experience management, being physically in the locations where our customers need and want us most, reinforcing the benefits of brand Zain; these are the types of things we have done and shall continue to do, and we believe this will ultimately result in our forward momentum as customer satisfaction rises and loyalty is maintained.

"I am a strong advocate of corporate sustainability and social responsibility and I am a firm believer in the continued focus by our operations on capacity building programs, environmental initiatives and community development efforts."

Q. Zain is very active in the CSR and social media arena. Please shed some light on your activities?

A. I am a strong advocate of corporate sustainability and social responsibility and I am a firm believer in the continued focus by our operations on capacity building programs, environmental initiatives and community development efforts. Several significant partnerships in this area have flourished such as those with Vodafone and Ericsson with tremendous impacts for the surrounding communities notably in South Sudan. Also we have a long association with The Amar Foundation in supporting education and health programs in Iraq. Annually Zain produces a Sustainability Report that showcases our commitments to the communities we serve and beyond.

> *"As leaders in the telecom sector we believe it is our responsibility to share our knowledge and experience with the wider world in order to shed light on the best ways to align activities in the mobile telecom sector with the larger socio-economic goals of our region."*

Coinciding with the celebration of Zain Group's 30th anniversary of operation, we published a study titled, "The Socio-Economic Impact of Mobile Telecommunication in the MENA Region that was developed in collaboration with PwC Middle East, underlying the role Zain plays as thought-leader and regional innovator, and Zain's eagerness to not only share its experience and insights with the wider community but most importantly to be an agent for change and development. The study illustrates that by tapping the potential of emerging mobile solutions in areas such as commerce, education and health, the mobile telecom sector can truly become a catalyst for growth and prosperity in the MENA region.

As leaders in the telecom sector we believe it is our responsibility to share our knowledge and experience with the wider world in order to shed light on the best ways to align activities in the mobile telecom sector with the larger socio-economic goals of our region. It is our expectation that this study will serve as a tool to inform and help policymakers leverage these insights in order to create an enabling environment for further growth and development, which will ultimately lead to more job creation, poverty alleviation and social equality. We do this in the belief that our ability to influence society in a positive way feeds directly into our own success as an organization. With over 46 million customers, the findings of this study is a step forward to better understand the communities we serve, and how we can further enrich their livelihoods.

Regarding social media which I'm an avid follower and supporter of, we recognize the importance it plays in many areas of our business. All our operations are very active in this area and we have over 5 million fans across the many channels. Today we are using social media as a platform to launch CSR and Ramadan programs. Our recent 'Drive Zain' social media campaign attracted millions of viewers on our YouTube channel.

> *"The recent SAMENA Leaders event held in Dubai was a worthwhile gathering of regional industry leaders, which helped us all focus on the priorities our industry faces at this point in time. I was impressed by the quality of the participants, and the frank, insightful exchanges that occurred during the gathering."*

Q. How was your experience participating in "Leaders' Summit 2014"? How do you think industry leaders have contributed in potential reshaping the strategic roadmap in the region?

A. The recent SAMENA Leaders event held in Dubai was a worthwhile gathering of regional industry leaders, which helped us all focus on the priorities our industry faces at this point in time. I was impressed by the quality of the participants, and the frank, insightful exchanges that occurred during the gathering.

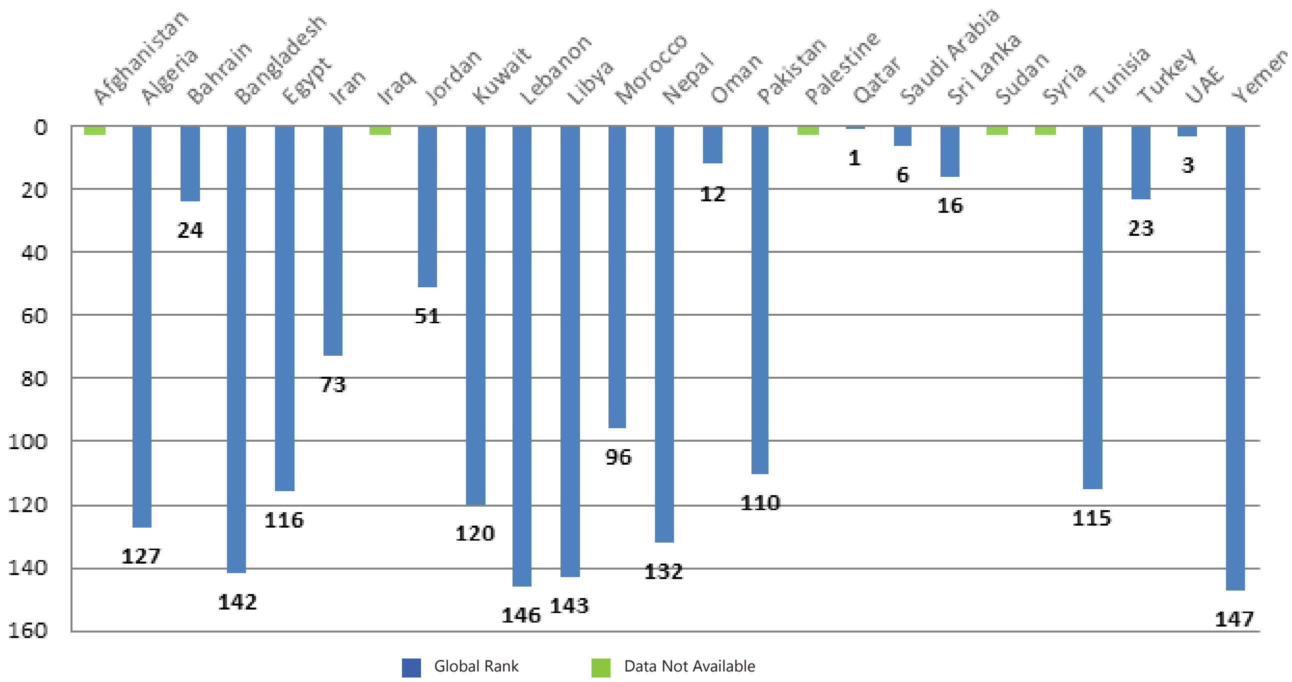
Mobile broadband remains a key growth area for network operators across the world, and we in this region are no different. It was valuable to hear what my fellow panelists had to say regarding the evolution of this important area, and take away perspectives on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. All-in-all, this was a well-organized, engaging, and useful event with the correct caliber of participants, and I would not hesitate to participate again in the future.

Q. How do you think operators can collaborate with SAMENA Council to tackle the industry's key challenges in the region? How can events like "Leaders' Summit" act as a catalyst?

A. The frank exchange of views between industry leaders is always going to be a positive thing, as I believe though we may be competitors in some markets, ultimately we are peers facing similar challenges and having to formulate similar solutions. Recent calls by some operators, for example, for regional network providers to come together and collaborate on a pan-regional content platform are a positive move, which if implemented would be to the benefit of all players.

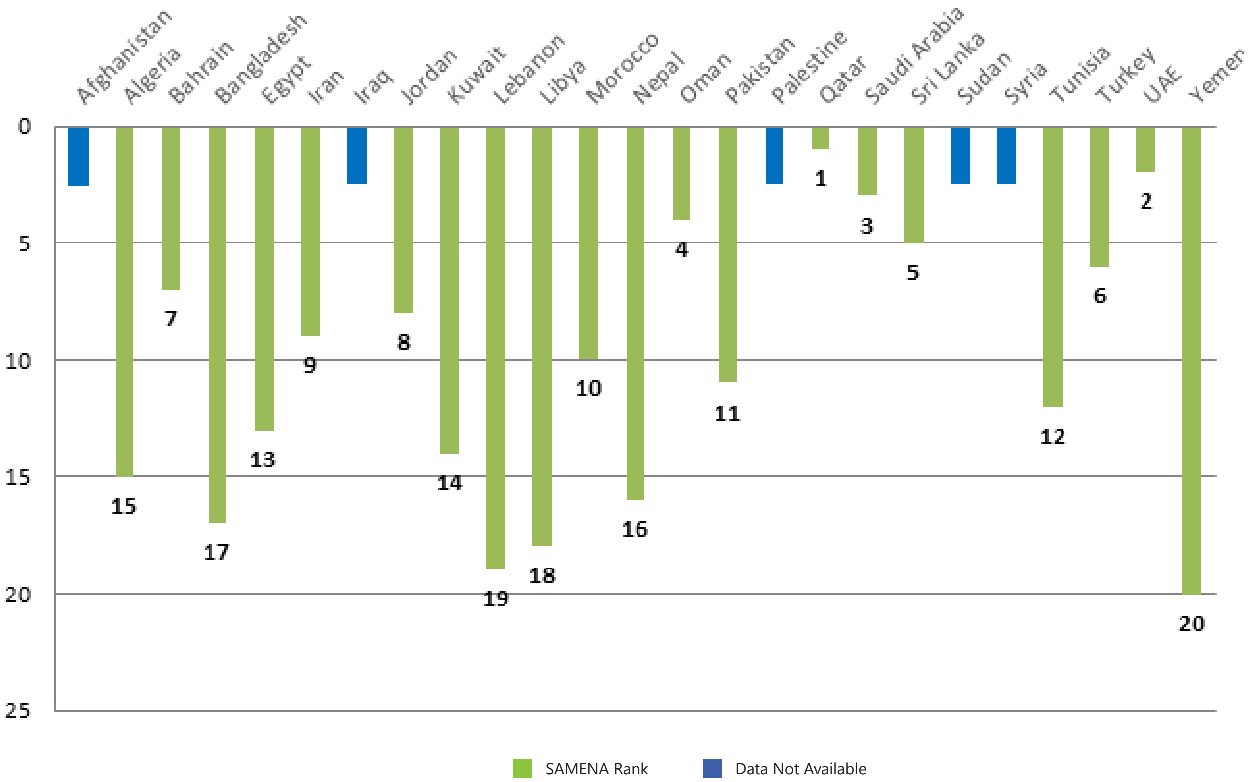
REGIONAL PERFORMANCE

Government Procurement of Advanced Technology Products (Global Rank of SAMENA Countries)



Total countries: 148
Rank 1: Qatar
Data Source: World Economic Form Global Competitiveness Report 2013
Image Source: SAMENA Council

Government Procurement of Advanced Technology Products (Regional Rank of SAMENA Countries)



Research Note: Ranking done by SAMENA Council based on data from The World Economic Forum. Within the SAMENA region, the Qatar is at number 1 in terms of government procurement of advanced technology products. All of the top 4 countries in the SAMENA region are from the Middle East. Sri Lanka is the only country from the rest of the SAMENA region in the top five in terms of South Asia which ranked on 5th in top shier of the SAMENA region with well-developed business friendly and challenging environment on government procurement of government procurement of advanced technology products. Similarly, Morocco is the only country from North Africa which lies in top 10 and is ranked number 7 in the SAMENA region.

Data Source: World Economic Form Global Competitiveness Report 2013
Image Source: SAMENA Council

MEMBERS NEWS

Zain KSA and Huawei to strengthen relationship through new strategic partnership

Aiming to further advance its network infrastructure, managed services, and applications in Saudi Arabia, Zain KSA—the leading telecommunications provider in the country—and Huawei—a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider—announced today new "Reload Contract" agreement.

Under the new agreement, Huawei will work closely with Zain KSA to improve its technologies and extend its customer service offering for its Saudi users. The contract includes Zain's network new FTK, expansion, modernization and managed services, which includes the provisions of all related products and services for Zain's network in KSA. Commenting on the new agreement, James Wu, President of Carrier BG, Middle East Region at Huawei said: "This collaboration between Huawei and Zain has been part of a long-term strategic play to create a more robust framework for Zain's Saudi telecom network. Eng. Sultan Abdulaziz Al-Deghaither, Zain KSA's acting Chief Technical Officer, said: "we are committed to our strive to better serve our customers, providing them with the best telecom experience possible, and we will continue our large investments in our network.

Zain KSA and Huawei have collaborated on numerous projects to transform and modernize Saudi Arabia's telecommunications infrastructure. Both companies first partnered in early 2011 in order to modernize Zain KSA's network, with the objectives of improving the network's competitiveness and ensuring it was future-proof.

Mowasalat ties up with Ooredoo for Karwa Smartcard top-up

Ooredoo and Mowasalat announced a new partnership agreement which will enable all Karwa Smartcard users to top up their cards via Ooredoo's Self Service Machines (SSM).

The agreement, which will give Karwa users a more effective and accessible way to pay for their travel costs, is the latest service update in a series of SSM improvements, as Ooredoo offers more options for customers to keep up-to-date with their daily services. Using Ooredoo's Self-Service Machines, Karwa Smartcard customers can now top up their Smartcards in denominations from QR10 up to QR500 through SSM machines that are placed in strategic locations. Brian Speldewinde, assistant director, Indirect Channels, Ooredoo, said: "Our new partnership with Mowasalat will help a large population of people on a day-to-day basis. Self Service Machines were launched to give our customers an easy and effective way to top-up, but as we've grown we've focused on introducing innovative and helpful services such as this for our customer's convenience."

Etisalat & Huawei conducted MENA First 400G Transport Network Solution Trial to Increase Service Bandwidth

Etisalat UAE— a Leading Telecom service provider together with Huawei—a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider—have announced the successful trial of a new OSN9800 U16 & 400G optical transport network technology in UAE which can be used in the future to expand Etisalat's network capacity in order to meet the increasing bandwidth requirements from local customers.

The latest trial is the first time that the Huawei's flagship OptiX OSN 9800 U16 solution has been tested worldwide and is the first time in MENA region a commercially available OTN-based 400G line board has been tested. This 400G link, which was deployed within Etisalat operational fiber network environment, is over 170km. In addition to opening up more bandwidth for telecom services, the technology enables operators to more efficiently carry both fixed and mobile broadband services to their customers, such as IPTV content and LTE-Advanced mobile connectivity.

Nawras customer wins gold with 'Join and Win' grand prize

The Nawras Join and Win promotion came to an exciting end as Mohsin Ahmed Saleh won the grand prize of 1kg of solid gold. Mohsin was presented with his prize by Said Safrar, Chief Customer Experience Officer, at a ceremony held at the Nawras Campus in Muscat.

Mohsin said, "I'm really proud to have won the grand prize, this is a great start to Ramadhan for myself and my family and something we could never believe would happen. With Nawras I always feel like a winner because of the great value services that allow me to stay connected for longer, but today is a very special day and I cannot quite believe this has happened to me!" Said commented, "Join and Win was launched in April this year, successfully capturing the imagination of hundred thousands of customers who entered the draw over the last two months. We always look to add value with our services and want to reward our customers with innovative promotions that enhance customers' experience."

Nawras offers a wide range of prepaid and postpaid plans to suit the varied needs of all customers. More information on the full range of Nawras products and services can be found online by visiting www.nawras.om or in store at any of the 29 locations across the Sultanate.

Mobily launches cloud computing offer for SMEs

Mobily launched a new cloud computing offer for small and medium-sized business sector in accordance with the distinctive bundles and prices that meet the growing demand for this service and target all business customers in the Kingdom.

Mobily launches this offer as part of the strategic alliance with Virtustream ™, to gives businesses and organizations the ability to deal with all kinds of applications. This service is divided into three categories: Silver category include 8 GB of RAM, 2.2 GHz with a storage capacity of 200 GB and cost 2699 Saudi riyals per month; the Gold category which include 16 GB of RAM, 4.1 GHz with a storage capacity of 500 GB and cost 5149 Saudi riyals per month while the Platinum category includes 32 GB of RAM, 8.2 GHz with a storage capacity of 1000 GB and cost 9999 Saudi riyals per month.

du and Dubai Media Incorporated join hands to spread social responsibility awareness in Ramadan

In the spirit of giving and joining hands in the Holy Month of Ramadan, du has signed a partnership agreement with Dubai Media Incorporated (DMI) to spread awareness amongst the UAE community of the different humanitarian initiatives that the company is undertaking. Through this partnership, du aims to spread the message of community giving, and the benefits that can be enjoyed by all through social solidarity at this special time of year.

Three of DMI's TV channels will be involved in showcasing du's community activities throughout the Holy Month: Noor Dubai, Sama Dubai, and Dubai TV. DMI will produce a special documentary for the Holy Month of Ramadan, which will highlight the importance of social responsibility in the UAE. A special focus will be placed on du's Iftar tables, that du is organising for the 7th consecutive year.

The documentary will highlight 25 Emirati ladies preparing the food that will be distributed at the company's Iftar tables in three locations. These are: Nad Alqusaus Mosque in Dubai; Hissa Bin Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi, and Alfisht Mosque in Sharjah. du is sponsoring these ladies through the Khalifa Fund's Iftar Sa'em project.

STC number 1 telecom company in the Arab world

STC ranked number one telecom company in the Arab world and the second strongest organization on "Forbes Middle East 500 top company" list for 2014 using financial performance as of December 2012 as a reference point. Four measures were taken into account: sales, profits, assets and the market value. The Group made 1.2% increase in revenues and 36% increase in net income a result that reflects the solid finanacial position of the Group and its capability of growing its revenues locally and the success of acquisition deals made by the Group.

STC has played a positive and crucial role in establishment and development of an advanced local telecom industry in addition to its timely response and its active interation with the changes in this industry and harnessing them in promoting its exposure in both the local and international arenas with full focus on the service of customers and invetigation and meeting their needs with the highest quality standards.

Ooredoo in free data Ramadan 'bonanza'

Ooredoo has launched a special offer as part of its #DaysOfJoy campaign this Ramadan, where new Hala Smart and Shahry Smart customers get 10 times the regular amount of data allowance for free.

All new Hala Smart customers will get 10 times the usual data allowance for their selected pack for free, for the first four weeks. Hala customers need to simply renew consecutively during the month to be eligible, while Shahry Smart customers will get 10 times their Shahry Smart bundle data allowance for 30 days. The one-time offer has been brought to customers during the Holy Month to share in the spirit of joy and giving, and will be available throughout Ramadan, Eid and beyond. The promotion aims to encourage customers to stay in touch with their loved ones and the community and to wish them Ramadan Mubarak through their favourite social media.

As part of its campaign for the Holy Month, Ooredoo has also launched the 'Alrabaa' website. The group of friends who embody the traditions of Qatar is back for the Holy Month, to bring kindness and joy to many with their "box of surprises" for people across Qatar. The website will show updates on Alrabaa activities during the month, and will display photos and videos, capturing their positive actions in the community.

Dr.Amer Al Rawas recognized as best transformation leader

Dr.Amer bin Awad Al Rawas ,CEO of Omantel was recognized as the best transformation leader by Alam al Iqtisad Wa al Aamal (AIWA) magazine. The awards, covering a range of categories, were distributed in a special gala that was dedicated for recognizing the Omani's best performing companies and individuals in 2013.

The Award comes in recognition of Dr. Amer efforts and achievements to integrate the mobile and business operations of Omantel and creating a single unified culture for the business which led to enhancement of the customer experience as well as maintaining Omantel leadership of the telecom market in the Sultanate.

The recognition comes also as a result of Dr. Amer relentless efforts to embed sustainability in Omantel operations in addition to the Company's economic, social and environmental contributions.

Commenting on the winning, Dr. Amer Al Rawas said "The winning of this Award puts extra responsibility on us to maintain the high of performance in order to meet the expectations of different stakeholders. As we look back into the achievement made, we remain ambitious and ready for the next phase of Omantel journey into excellence by ensuring a sustainable growth for Omantel therefore meeting the expectations of our stakeholders. Our focus will be to further embed sustainability into every part of our operations, a journey that started two years back", Dr. Amer concluded.

PTCL rewards customers' loyalty

Pakistan Telecommunications Company Limited (PTCL) has initiated a customer loyalty program to acknowledge the company's most loyal customers. The loyalty program aims at recognizing customers and appreciating who have been with PTCL for more than 30 years.

A ceremony to acknowledge customers who have been associated with PTCL and enjoying the company's services for more than 30 years was held here in Islamabad. Customers were presented with Life Time Relationship awards. The company has also provided One Year complimentary usage of Broadband services and One year complimentary usage of Smart TV services to appreciate long term loyalty of these customers with PTCL.

"Our customers are the core of our business and we always try to find innovative ways to reward them", said Jamil Khwaja Chief Customer Care Officer (CCCO) PTCL. "Through this loyalty program, PTCL expresses its gratitude for the trust that customers have placed on the PTCL services".

Nawras first in Oman to offer smartphone trade-in programme with 'Smart Swap'

Nawras is giving customers the chance to trade-in their out-dated smartphones as part of Oman's first ever trade-in program. The service, in partnership with Redeem, a leading electronics recycling company, will allow customers to swap their device in exchange for discounts on the latest smartphones for Shahry customers, or make postpaid bill payments or add credit to their prepaid account.

Feras Al-Sheikh, Nawras Director – Consumer Sales, said, "Customers want to use the latest technology and each time they change their device they are usually left with their old handset. We are the first operator in Oman to launch a trade-in program and offer a great deal to customers by giving them the value of their existing handsets against the latest devices."

The service, known as 'Baddel', will be launched in the two largest Nawras stores in Qurum City Centre and Muscat Grand Mall from 25 June for 90 days.

Omantel enhances the Self-care Portal

In a move to improve the corporate customer experience, Omantel announced the enhancement of its self-care portal in order to serve and assist corporate customers to self-manage and make necessary changes to their accounts.

Eng. Adil Al Awadhi, Manager of Communication Solutions at the Corporate Business Unit said: "We strive to offer our customers state-of-the-art communication services backed with innovative solution and value-added services. The new enhancement will enable our corporate customers to self-manage their communication services with high level of security and confidentiality".

"The new revamped portal offers many useful services such as adding a new postpaid line and/or new data SIM under an account, SIM replacement, adding Sawa SIM card which allows customers to create dual SIM Cards, as well as adding, upgrading, or changing Mobile data plans." Moreover, Omantel new Self-Care Portal offers many additional services such as adding or removing international calls and roaming services, ability to change the mobile credit limit, adding - removing or changing Blackberry packages in addition to resetting of corporate ADSL account password."

GBI's network extends to datamena

GBI, a leading service provider that owns and operates a major subsea cable network in the Middle East has forged a partnership with datamena, carrier neutral data centre and connectivity platform based in the UAE, that will extend GBI's network from the du's landing station in Fujairah to the datamena data-center in Dubai.

The extension of the GBI network will enable all datamena customers to benefit from seamless end-to-end connectivity within the GBI network in Europe, Asia the Middle East and Africa, and will further enhance their datamena experience. The collaboration is between GBI, providers of carrier neutral network connecting the region to the world, and datamena, serving the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region.

GBI is increasingly becoming the major carrier for telecom operators and governments throughout the Middle East, Africa, Europe and Asia offering capacity on the first ever network built with redundancy configurations in the Gulf region ensuring the end-user connectivity anywhere and at all times.

Etisalat's Flous now available to subscribers in Gabon

Etisalat Group, the leading telecoms operator in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, has announced the launch of its award winning mobile phone-based commerce service 'Flous' in Gabon.

"This launch represents our most recent innovation, pushing the boundaries of mobile communications by bringing banking to the unbanked in many of our global markets," said Khalifa Al Shamsi, Chief Digital Services Officer at Etisalat Group. "For any market in the world, the combination of services we are providing would be exciting; when this is in the African context, the implications are especially profound." "The launch of Flous in Gabon marks the latest milestone in our endeavour to provide market-relevant, transformational mobile financial services across our global markets," he said.

Flous, which translates to 'money' in several languages, is a solution that enables customers to use their mobile phones as digital wallets. With Flous, customers can pay for bills, goods and services, transfer money to and receive from friends and family, withdraw and deposit cash, top-up mobile phones, and manage bank accounts.

Enterprise Systems and Huawei launch online technical assistance center

In partnership with its distributor Enterprise Systems, Huawei, a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider, announced the launch of a 'Technical Assistance Center', which offers a fast and easy online portal to help end-users with ICT queries.
The portal connects partners and end-users with technical support queries to a qualified engineer that can identify and resolve ICT issues quickly and efficiently, improving the standard of ICT services that Enterprise Systems can offer its customers across the region.

The online system, run through Enterprise Systems' website, was launched with the understanding that end-users need a first & second line of technical support from a team who have the skills and expertise around Huawei's products and solutions and were dedicated to resolving queries as quickly as possible.

Mobily launches the first Cloud Partnership Program in the MEA, to accelerate transformation as the leading ICT provider in KSA

Mobily launched the first Cloud Partnership Program in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) called Mobily Cloud Partnership Program (MCPP) during an event that was held in the Al Faisaliah Hotel in Riyadh. During the event, number of MCPP partners was announced.
Mobily Cloud Partnership Program is the framework for collaboration between Mobily and its partners, offering a wide range of benefits, trainings, certification and rewards.
The objective of the program is to collaborate with leading IT solution and consulting players to participate together in the very fast growing Cloud Services Market. The Program allows Partners to combine their solutions and value added professional services with Mobily Cloud Offerings to attract new customers, grow sales and deliver the best customer experience.

du wins Grand Prix at inaugural Transform Awards MENA

du, the fastest-growing telecommunications company in the region, was awarded the Grand Prix at the inaugural Transform Awards MENA, held on 2 June in Dubai. The Transform Awards recognise excellence in new brand creation, rebranding and ongoing brand development.

The company was lauded by the jury of the London-based Awards for its commitment to, and success in brand-building. Additionally, du won Gold in the 'Best Brand Evolution' category. One of the judges went on record saying "this submission driven by the client's commitment to doing things better has some standout work... an undeniably successful commitment to the role of branding and the results are outstanding." The Awards were accepted on behalf of du by Ashish Banerjee, Vice President, Brand Development; Manar Al Majedi, Senior Executive, Brand Management, and Reem Al Khaja, Senior Executive, Brand Management.

Hala Badri, Executive Vice President, Brand and Communications, du, said: "Over the last 5 years we have run a carefully thought-out and managed brand development programme. These awards recognise the value of our efforts, company-wide. We would like to thank the Transform Awards jury for this recognition."

PTCL holds annual sales conference 2014

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) held its day long annual sales conference 2014 at a local hotel here in Islamabad.

Comprising of various interactive and creative sessions, the conference gave an opportunity to the participants for knowledge sharing and discussed in detail different initiatives & promotions regarding existing and new products & services at regional and national level. Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) PTCL, Furqan Qureshi led the conference by sharing valuable insights which was also attended by CBDO, Muhammad Nasrullah; CFO, Muhammad Nehmatullah; CHRO, Syed Mazhar Hussain along with other senior officials of the company representing Commercial and Regional level management.

The conference was aimed at providing insight to PTCL's countrywide sales management teams comprising consumer sales, direct and indirect sales, corporate sales, contact centers, one-stop shops, wire-line and wireless departments. Sales and exceptional performances were acknowledged and Sales Champions from different regions were awarded for achieving excellent results.

Etisalat exclusively offers Huawei Smartphone and Tablet, both FREE with smartphone plans

Etisalat's new Huawei smartphone deal gives customers double the joy, offering for the first time in the UAE, two free devices – Huawei Ascend P7 smartphone and Huawei MediaPad X1 tablet – bundled with a choice of Etisalat's smartphone post-paid plans. The devices are available across Etisalat's Business and Service Centers and key retail outlets in the UAE.

Huawei's flagship model, Ascend P7, remains compact with a 5-inch full-HD display. Underneath the surface, the smartphone is powered by a 1.8GHz HiSilicon Kirin 910T quad-core processor. It runs on the latest Android version — 4.4.2 KitKat — and features Huawei's Emotion 2.3 user interface. The 13-megapixel camera can be activated within 1.2 seconds from standby mode by pressing the volume down button, which means that users do not have to manually unlock the phone to use the camera.

Both prepaid and post-paid customers can choose to buy standalone devices, Huawei Ascend P7 or Huawei MediaPad X1 for AED1,699 and AED1,399 respectively. The standalone devices offer comes with 1GB free data allowance for the first month and for AED99 per month thereafter.

More than 500,000 lines joint ' Makasib ' loyalty program from Omantel in less than six months

Omantel 'Makasib' Loyalty Program met resounding success since its launch last November with the number of lines crossing 500,000 in less than six months. With "Makasib" Program, customers has the opportunity to benefit from a wide range of rewards by exchange points with usage of any Omantel mobile, fixed line, or Internet

Commenting on the success of the Program, Usama Ahmed Al Rawas, Loyalty and Communications Manager at Omantel Consumer Unit said ' Since its launch, Makasib Loyalty Program has earned customers' trust due to the real value and the different experience provided to them. The program contributed to enhancing our customers experience and we are happy to see the large number of lines who jointed ' Makasib' Program over this short period.

Etisalat concludes its Employee Wellness Program

Healthy employees make healthy businesses, a philosophy that Etisalat endorses and practices through its Employee Wellness Program, conducted across its UAE offices. The telco major recently concluded its month-long Employee Wellness Program, held for the third consecutive year.

Global studies show that participating in health promotion programs can help improve productivity levels among employees. A recent report by the HR Compensation and Benefits Forum that is based on a survey among 160 organizations in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, reported more than half the firms adopting "some form" of wellness plan.

Etisalat Wellness program is part of Etisalat's employee engagement strategy, aimed to foster positive mental health, improve physical well-being and lifestyles, develop stress management and money management skills and help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance.

PTCL participates in 4th Policy Control & Network Security Conference

Pakistan Telecommunications Company Limited has participated in 4th Policy Control & Network Security Conference in Berlin, Germany.

Ather A. Baig, PTCL senior engineer (IP Operations Core) and an expert in IP technologies represented the company at the conference. Ather gave a presentation on IP Gateway Security and briefed the participants about PTCL's contribution towards ICT development in Pakistan and how the company's core infrastructure and services are supporting the economy and improving the socio-economic landscape of the country.

Audiences were also briefed about the evolving IP gateway terminology and technology, IP gateway Security aspects and the best practices adopted by PTCL. Ather also talked about the DoS/DDoS threat to IP gateways and the mitigation techniques. The conference was attended by internationally recognized industry experts & transformational players. Besides PTCL, world's leading and prominent organizations participated in this international event.

REGIONAL NEWS

Sri Lanka telecoms Dialog Axiata and Mobitel to start GSMA Mobile Connect service

Sri Lanka telecom operators Dialog Axiata and Mobitel are set to start a beta trial of the GSMA Mobile Connect service allowing consumers to access digital services by using their phones for authentication.

Sri Lanka is the first telecom market to implement the Mobile Connect in the world. Etisalat Group is expected to launch Mobile Connect services in the third quarter of 2014. Orange will provide Mobile Connect-based solutions across Europe and Africa and the Middle East by 2015.

Ooredoo is aiming to provide similar services in South East Asia in 2015. Telecom industry body GSMA said the service will be launched this month in association with select Sri Lankan online service providers including Kapruka, MyDeal and WoW. GSMA said SIM technology providers Gemalto, Giesecke & Devrient, Morpho, Oberthur Technologies, and VALID are working with the GSMA and mobile operators to develop authentication applets to accelerate the deployment of Mobile Connect services.

MEA mobile subscriptions to grow to 1.9 billion by 2019

Mobile penetration in the Middle East is currently at 107 percent, with 365 million mobile subscriptions.

The report further revealed that by 2019 about 50 percent of handset subscriptions in the Middle East and Africa will be for smartphones, which will drive data traffic growth. It said there is an expected 11-fold increase in data traffic in the Central Europe, Middle East and Africa region between 2013 and 2019, second only to growth anticipated in the Asia Pacific region.

The report said there are 288 LTE networks commercially launched in 104 countries. This number continues to grow and it is expected that more than 65 percent of the world's population will be covered by LTE in 2019. It also pointed out that Machine-to-Machine (M2M) transformation is now evident for the first time as the global number of active cellular M2M devices will increase 3-4 times by 2019, from 200 million at the end of 2013. In two years' time, in 2016, the number of smartphone subscriptions will exceed those for basic phones and by 2019 the number of smartphone subscriptions is expected to reach 5.6 billion. In Europe, the number of smartphone subscriptions will reach about 765 million in 2019 and thereby exceed the population number.

UAE banks unite for Mobile Wallet project

A group of nine banks in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have formally launched the country's new Mobile Wallet project, which is part of the wider Smart Government initiative. The UAE Banks Federation (UBF) expects the service to be available to end users next year, allowing residents to pay for over 90 government services via their mobile handset. The project also incorporates the facility for smartphones and other digital devices to be used for cashless payments in UAE retail outlets, as well as a means to store and transfer money for those such as migrant workers without traditional bank accounts, Gulf News reports. 'The Mobile Wallet supports a critical national goal. The UAE will be potentially the first country in the world where the whole banking sector supports such a programme, which will impact everyone's daily lives in one way or another,' said Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair, chairman of the UBF.

Morocco projected to rank third in internet penetration by 2017 in MENA region

According to a study conducted by MADAR Research & Development, by 2017 Morocco will occupy third place in the Arab world in terms of Internet penetration and accessibility.

Morocco's projected penetration rate of 72.4% is anticipated to lag only behind Bahrain (87.4%), and Kuwait (73.7%). In comparison, the Internet penetration rate in Morocco as of 2012 was the sixth highest among Arab countries, at 47.4%, ranking behind Bahrain (65.7%), Kuwait (59.3%), UAE (57.2%), Qatar (54.9%), and Saudi Arabia (53.4%).

The study calculated the Index by adding up the values of the ICT parameters and dividing the sum by the country's population figure.

Qatar's ICT market to reach US$6.8 billion by 2016, says minister

Qatar's Information & Communications Technology (ICT) sector is projected to grow 10% annually to reach QAR24.7 billion (US$6.8 billion) by 2016, the Minister of ICT Hessa Sultan Al Jaber told the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva this week as part of her policy statement on Qatar's ongoing transformation plan. As reported by Zawya.com, in her speech the minister highlighted the Gulf state's recent progress: 'Driven by Qatar's National ICT Plan 2015 and Qatar National Vision 2030, today Qatar ranks 23rd among 148 countries in the 2014 World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index and fourth in the world in government usage of ICT in that same report ... We opened up the telecommunications market and made the decision to invest heavily in building and securing a world-class infrastructure with the capacity and speeds to set Qatar apart in the region and around the world.'

Souq.com helps Egyptian start-ups

E-commerce giant Souq.com has launched the second round of its start-up programme in Egypt, designed to help tech entrepreneurs meet the demands of the country's fast-growing e-commerce consumer base.

The company's Egyptian branch revealed that 86 young entrepreneurs will join its E-Commerce Entrepreneurship Program in August to learn how to launch their own ventures. Organized in partnership with Education for Employment Egypt (EFE Egypt) and supported by the US-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the eight-week course follows the graduation of its inaugural class of entrepreneurs.

The first round of the program proved successful, with three new e-commerce start-ups launching as a result. As part of its wider E-commerce Development Project, Souq.com Egypt will also establish Marketplace Incubator, which will offer development programmes and access to expert mentorship for its participants.

Robi Axiata launches HD Voice; aims to outsource 80% of passive infrastructure to parent

Bangladeshi cellco Robi Axiata has introduced high definition (HD) voice service across its 3.5G network – claiming a first in Bangladesh – for enhanced communications quality between HD Voice-capable handset users, the Dhaka Tribune reports. Robi elaborated on its 'country first' claim by adding that it is the first mobile operator in Bangladesh to be accredited by international association GSMA as providing HD Voice standard services, alongside 109 mobile operators globally.

Robi is aiming to transfer 80% ownership in its passive network infrastructure assets to a subsidiary of its Malaysian parent Axiata Group. As reported by the Daily Star, Robi seeks permission from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to transfer 80% equity in its subsidiary Edotco Bangladesh to Malaysia's Edotco Group, which is fully owned by Axiata Group. The passive network infrastructure includes wireless towers, buildings, batteries, power and cooling systems.

KSA one of 3 countries with fastest growing IP traffic globally

Saudi Arabia is among the top 3 countries in the world with the fastest growing Internet Protocol (IP) traffic alongside India and Indonesia, the latest Cisco Visual Networking Index Global Forecast and Service Adoption for 2013 to 2018 revealed.

The study showed that global IP traffic will increase nearly three-fold over the next four years due to more Internet users and devices, faster broadband speeds and more video viewing. Moreover, it said the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region continues to be the fastest-growing IP traffic region during 2013-2018 with five-fold growth and a 38 percent CAGR.

In Middle East and Africa IP traffic will grow 5-fold to 2018, a compound annual growth rate of 38 percent. Internet traffic will grow 5.5-fold from 2013 to 2018, a compound annual growth rate of 41 percent. IP video traffic will grow 7-fold from 2013 to 2018, a compound annual growth rate of 48 percent. Internet video traffic will grow 8-fold from 2013 to 2018, a compound annual growth rate of 50 percent.

The study further said the composition of IP traffic will shift dramatically in the coming years. By 2018, the majority of traffic will originate from devices other than personal computers (PCs) for the first time.

REGULATORY & POLICY UPDATES

TRAI starts working on guidelines for modern telecom networks

According to the official statement, "Traditional telecommunication systems are migrating towards more powerful and viable internet protocol based telecommunication systems. Migration...will result in co-existence of legacy network along with IP based network. In view of these, TRAI has brought out a consultation paper on Migration to IP based networks." The statement further said, "The new IP based network as well as its co-existence with legacy network will give rise to several operational, interconnection and quality of service issues which needs to be addressed for the successful migration to IP based networks." Network of all telecom companies are interconnected which is vital for completion of calls or sharing of messages through mobile or landline phones.

Science Ministry to cut household telecom costs

South Korea's Science Ministry said it will have mobile carriers slash their enrollment fees and smartphone prices and offer more diverse service plans to help lower telecommunications costs for households. In measures that precede detailed policy guidelines due in November, the Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning said it will first slash the enrollment fee of carrier service by 50 percent in the third quarter, and also cut the price of universal subscriber identity modules by 10 percent. The ministry will also have the country's three carriers — SK Telecom Co., KT Corp., and LG Uplus Corp. — provide pre-paid long-term evolution service in the near future as well as more service plan choices for the elderly and handicapped. Local MVNOs (mobile virtual network operators) will also release LTE and third-generation network services which are up to 50 percent cheaper than existing service plans by July, the ministry said.

Japanese government plans to remove SIM locks for phones

The Japanese Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry has plans to remove the SIM locks for mobile phones that are currently in place which prevent customers from using another SIM card on their devices. This is based on a report from Jiji Press, in which sources that say that the ministry will present the plan at a panel with details to follow by the end of the current fiscal year. The report further states that the ministry is currently dissatisfied with the existing guidelines, which allow for a non-obligatory removal of the locks, but have little effect. A "drastic review" of the guidelines has been planned. Japan uses a subscription model, where subscribers can purchase heavily discounted phones and tablets with a contract tie in. Depending on the plan, the subsidy is recovered through a higher monthly plan, and operators lock the customer in by ensuring that the handsets are SIM locked, preventing them from switching carriers. This can be quite a hassle for Japanese tourists, as they will be unable to purchase a local SIM card for access to cheaper calls and data, forced to use expensive roaming services.

E-government, m-government Readiness Index out

In collaboration with the UAE Prime Minister's Office at the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has launched the 'e-government and m-government Readiness Index'. Aimed at measuring the progress made in the transition to electronic government service delivery and the sophistication of the services now available in the UAE, the launch represents the next phase in the national project to meet the e-government and m-government targets set by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. With the Readiness Index in place, all concerned parties will be supported in the assessment of the quality of the services being offered and in getting the feedback of service users. "Progress made in rolling out e-government services represents a critical stepping stone in our ability to successfully complete the transformation to m-government services – encompassing all UAE government entities at both local and federal levels. The launch of the Readiness Index is a reflection of the project's commitment to excellence, safeguarding quality right throughout the transformation process and ultimately, ensuring that the best possible service experience for the end user," said Hamad Obaid Al Mansoori, Director-General of The UAE m-government Initiative.

NPT confirms 171 applications for broadband subsidies

The Norwegian Post and Telecommunications Authority (NPT) has received a total of 171 applications for broadband subsidies for a combined value of NOK713 million (USD113 million). With the total budget of the broadband projects said to stand at more than NOK1.3 billion, the regulator noted that the requested subsidies represented more than half of the total costs, though it did say the proportion of subsidy funding varied from application to application. The regulator has said it will now process all applications before deciding how to allocate the NOK160 million it has available for 2014. In total 16 counties have applied for funding under the subsidy scheme, with the most applications – 28 – having come from Vest-Agder, while the NPT said that authorities in Nordland had called for the largest amount of funding total of more than NOK131 million.

Federal grant aims to speed up broadband in Kentucky schools

Kentucky is poised to receive federal grant money to improve broadband speeds in public schools. The Federal Communication Commission's E-rate program already provides more than $2 billion annually to schools across the U.S. to modernize Internet accessibility. Now that the FCC has pledged an additional $2 billion for the next two years, Kentucky educators are poised to get a $22 million slice of that pie. Expanded broadband access will address complaints over sluggish Internet speeds in schools across the state, says Amanda Ellis, an associate commissioner with the state's Office of Next Generation Learners. "The biggest complaints that we have is 'we can't pull things up; we have the equipment and it runs too slow; our kids can't get online to talk to people about college and career readiness and making connections.' So this is an equity piece that goes across the board for everyone," Ellis says.

FDD-LTE 4G licenses could get China Telecom back in the race

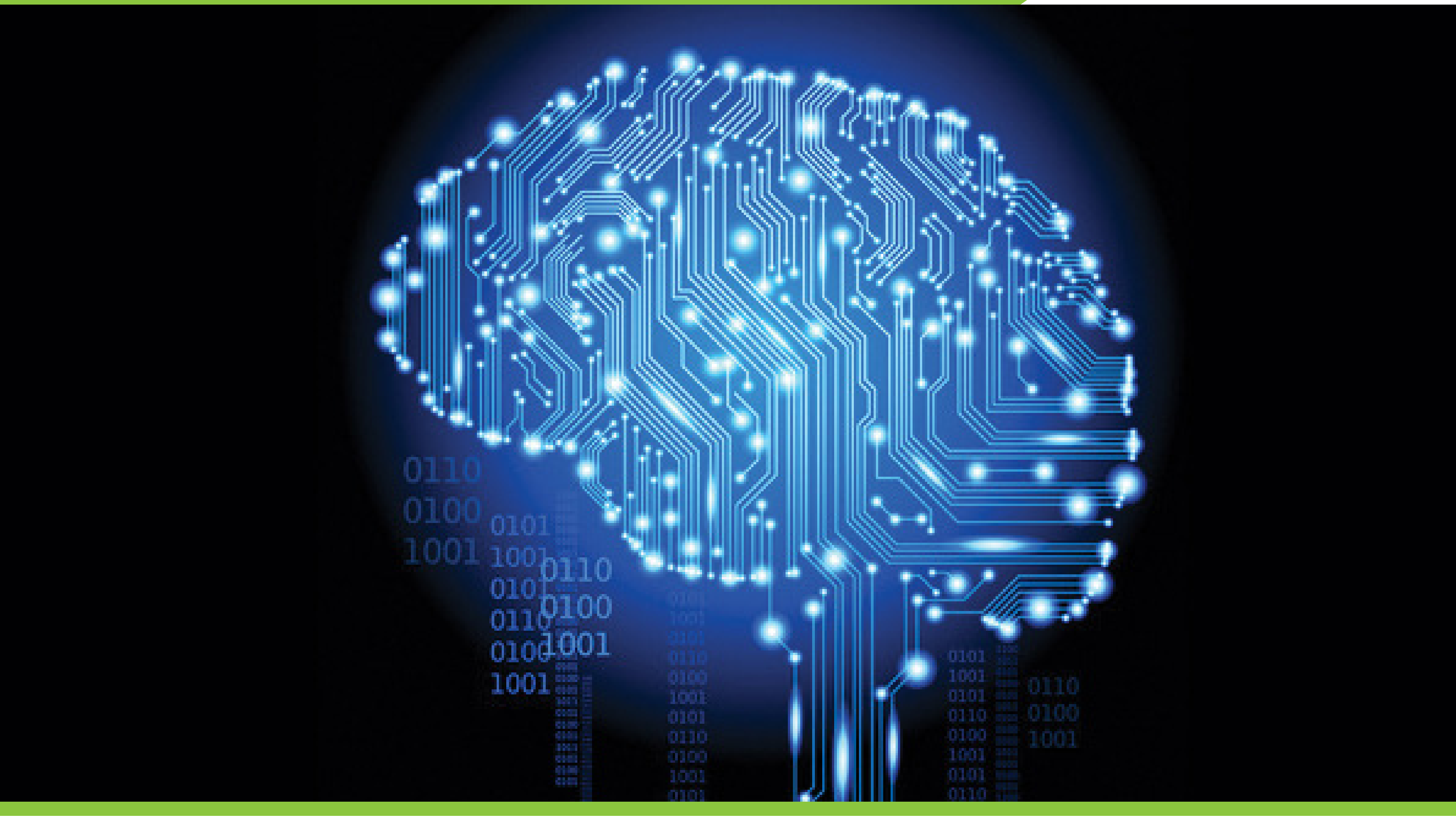
The Chinese government has awarded China Telecom a trial license for setting up its 4G network on the FDD-LTE technology standard in the country, according to a recent media report. The report also states that the company is likely to receive the official FDD-LTE license by early 2015. Although the carrier has yet to confirm the news, this is a significant development because an FDD-LTE 4G network could help the company revive its declining user base, compete against market leader China Mobile and second largest carrier China Unicom, and regain its lost share in the Chinese wireless market. China Telecom, the third largest wireless carrier in China, has been struggling with subscriber additions since December, when China Mobile launched its 4G service on the TD-LTE standard and formalized the iPhone deal with Apple. Increased competition in the 3G market, aggressive 4G network expansion by China Mobile and incompatibility issues of the carrier's existing WCDMA 3G technology with the TD-LTE 4G standard (the only 4G standard currently in-use in China) seem to be weighing on China Telecom's performance.

Public pressure delays vote on Mexican telecoms law

Earlier this year, digital rights activist were concerned that a comprehensive telecoms reform bill would slip through Mexico's congress unnoticed. However, this bill quickly became one of the most talked about and controversial issues among Mexican internet users. Online protests and street demonstrations, including a massive human chain in Mexico City, raised public awareness to the threats hidden within this bill, and have had an impact: the Senate's vote was expected for late April, yet public pressure against the bill postponed the debate to a special session of Congress expected sometime during the next few weeks. The bill expands government surveillance powers in nearly every direction, and even allows widespread network discrimination. As it stands, the bill must be amended. R3D, Access, Derechos Digitales, and other partners have campaigned and written to Mexico's Congress warning of the bill's many problems.

Moroccan telecom regulator opening ADSL market

Moroccan telecom regulator, ANRT, has decided to open up the ADSL market within the country of Morocco in North Africa. While this move will ultimately allow telecom service providers to establish a formidable position within the country, it does however affect Maroc Telecom's position. Maroc Telecom's has a monopoly at present, and according to telecompaper.com, the operator still disagrees with three measures; providing colocation of third-party operators' equipment in its existing cabinets, installing multi-operator cabinets for part of their future nodes and establishing an active wholesale offer for third-party operators under a virtual unbundled local access model. Moroccan telecom regulator, ANRT, has given Maroc Telecom until 1 August to make a wholesale offer to alternative operators Meditel and Inwi, and to provide a technical and tariff wholesale offer for passive access to its fixed local loop. Inwi could launch its ADSL service at the end of the year; however, Inwi has yet to announce its intention to join the ADSL market.



A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN SAMENA REGION

Afghanistan
Board Chairman: Mr. Abdul Wakil Shergul
[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)]
The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the supply and installation of equipment for the National Internet Exchange of Afghanistan (NIXA), including the National Internet Registry of Afghanistan (NIRA). The tender covers the provision of the relevant hardware and software, as well the training of MCIT staff. The MCIT will select the provider under the Quality and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS) model, and has set a deadline of July 28 for proposals. In its RFP the MCIT noted that at present every internet service provider (ISP) is using its own gateway, meaning that all traffic is currently being routed globally. By establishing a local internet exchange point (IXP), ISPs will be able to route local traffic within the country. (June 19, 2014) telegeography.com

Algeria
Chairperson: Mr. Toufik Bessai
[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]
The CEO of Algerian cellco Djezzy GSM, has reportedly revealed that the company will deploy commercial 3G services 'during the month of Ramadan', with the launch expected to take place on 27 June. The company 'is working to cover a minimum of 19 wilayas [provinces], but the deployment of the service will [initially] involve six wilayas' – the minimum number of provinces required by the Autorite de Regulation de la Poste et des Telecoms (ARPT). In October 2013 the ARPT issued 3G concessions to Mobilis, Nedjma and Djezzy. Djezzy GSM received 2×15MHz paired blocks in the 1960MHz-1975MHz and 2150MHz-2165MHz bands. Under the terms set out by its license, the company must provide 3G services in Ain Defla, Algiers, Bechar, Blida, Boumerdes, Constantine, Djelfa, El Oued, Mostaganem, Oran, Ouargla, Setif, Skikda and Tizi-Ouzou by the end of 2014. (June 4, 2014) Agence Ecofin

Bahrain
Chairman: Dr. Mohammed Al Amer
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]
The Bahrain Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) won top honors at the 2014 Asia Communications Award Ceremony held in Singapore recently. TRA Bahrain was named winner in the "Best Regulatory Initiative" category amid stiff competition from across the Asian continent from regulators including Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia. Commenting on the win, TRA stated that it is a testimony of international recognition for the Authority's achievements in the Kingdom. We are overjoyed, and consider this as a direct result of our efforts, placing us as an example for our counterparts across the globe. It is a proud moment for us to see that the highly trained professionals that drive the success in the TRA on a daily basis witness the fruits of their labor. This award is a great honor and stands as irrefutable evidence of the caliber of people we have with us. Head of corporate branding Basil Al-Arrayed said: "The continued vision of our leadership

drives us as a regulator to set new benchmarks and surpass them. The TRA always strives to excel in its contributions and today, that statement has once again been proven." The Asia Communication Awards recognize outstanding performance and innovation from the leading carriers, service providers and vendors that are based in Asia. The winners are determined based on written submissions and the deliberations of an impartial and recognizably expert panel of judges as well as industrial online voting.
(June 28, 2014) TradeArabia News Service

The High Court of Justice (Commercial Court) in London upheld a damages claim from Bahrain's Batelco against its former Indian mobile investment partner Siva Ltd. The judgment awards Batelco total damages of US$211.1 million, following a dispute which arose after Indian cellular joint venture STel had its operating license cancelled by India's Supreme Court in February 2012. In 4Q11 Batelco Millennium India Company (BMIC) agreed to sell its 42.7% STel stake for US$174.5 million back to Sky City Foundation Ltd (a hedge fund that was part of a consortium that also sold a 51% stake in STel to Siva Ltd in 2009), but by the deal's deadline of end-October 2012 no payment was forthcoming, and the following month BMIC commenced litigation in the UK against Siva Ltd and its founder Chinnakannan Sivasankaran for the recovery of US$184.8 million. This claim was upheld by a London judge, plus an additional US$30,000 per day since the original dispute began. (June 13, 2014) The Mumbai Mirror

Bangladesh
Chairman: Sunil Kanti Bose
[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]

Bangladesh has carried out the long-planned issuing of new National Internet Exchange (NIX) licenses, which are aimed at reducing latency in domestic IP traffic, saving international bandwidth and foreign currency, facilitating local content development and encouraging local web hosting. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) confirmed that it awarded two NIX concessions to Bangladesh Internet Exchange Trust and Novocom. In June 2012 the BTRC invited applications for the NIX operating licenses, which enable the routing of domestic internet traffic including domestic voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) traffic. The commission indicated it aimed to award an unrestricted number of 15-year NIX concessions under an open licensing procedure. The new NIX licenses allow operators to build, own and operate NIX systems in Bangladesh, with the country's existing NIX service providers permitted to obtain a new license contingent on certain criteria, including being certified by at least ten internet service providers (ISPs) that currently have peering connectivity with the operator. Entities that had had their concessions cancelled within the last five years were prevented from applying. (June 20, 2014) telegeography.com

Egypt
Executive President: Eng. Hesham El Alaily
[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]

Egypt has the potential to become a regional and global digital communications hub, the chief executive of Egypt's telecoms regulator, the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA), told as the country prepares to offer unified telecoms licenses at the end of this month. "If we set up local data centers in Egypt we would be able to carry out a number of applications through which we would be able to allow [companies] to use Egypt [for data storage], instead of the United States or Europe or Australia," said Hisham El-Hayali. "This will also give users added value in terms of communications, download speeds and storage space." A number of underwater Internet cables currently run through Egypt's territory, including the TE-North, owned by national telephone operator, Telecom Egypt, and the EIG cable connecting Europe and India. "In terms of underwater cables, Egypt connects [Asia], Europe and Africa. Trade routes used to run through Egypt via camels, and then ships, and today through fiber optic cables. Egypt's location is very important in terms of underwater cables, or in terms of [digital] cables," Hayali said. He added: "All this can transform Egypt into a global digital communications hub." According to a Cisco report, the Middle East and Africa are set to drive global Internet and mobile data traffic during the next five years, experiencing a 38 pecent CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) in Internet traffic and a 70 percent CAGR in cellular Internet data traffic until 2018. "Egypt can account for the lion's share of this traffic, especially in light of its geographic location and capabilities," Hayali said, referring to the report. Hayali stressed, however, this would require setting up necessary infrastructure and legislation, which Egypt currently lacks. "This [plan] does not just comprise cables only but also requires amending necessary legislation," he said. "We are working on this, whether in terms of amending the country's current communications law or a law to secure networks, or activating the clauses specific to intellectual property rights." This comes as Egypt prepares to grant its first unified telecoms licenses at the end of June. A license will be granted—at a cost of 2.5 billion Egyptian pounds (359 million US dollars)—to the country's sole fixed-line telephone services operator, Telecom Egypt (TE), allowing it to provide the full roster of communications services comprising landline and cellular telephony, as well as Internet services. TE already operates as an Internet Service Provider through its subsidiary, TE Data. It wants to transform itself from a [mere investor] into an operator." The new law governing the license requires TE to exit its investment in Vodafone a year after the license is granted. As a result of the legislation, the 'big three' cellular operators will now, conversely, be able to offer landline services using TE's existing landline network. All three already offer integrated cellular–Internet services to their customers. Speaking of TE's motivation for offering a fully-integrated communications service, Hayali said that the company had "fears" regarding the profit margins it derives from landline services and the demand for them in light of decreasing use in landline services and the popularity of cellular phones, "so it wants to enter into the cellular market. Conversely, the cellular companies wish to offer fixed-line telephone services." This comes as Egyptians are increasingly making use of cellphones instead of fixed-line services. Cellphone penetration in Egypt passed the 100-percent mark in 2012 and reached 118.2 percent at the end of 2013, according to the latest figures provided by Egypt's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. Currently 93 million cellphones are in use among the country's 87 million-strong population. Hayali said the new legislation allowing unified licenses was part of a general 'road map' to overhaul the communications sector in the country, which included establishing a national body to oversee the development of the sector which, he said, was in need of development. "We need large investments in this regard, because it is the 'spine' on which we will build all future developments in the [information technology and telecommunications] sector, so we can attain what is known as the 'digital economy' and the

'digital society.'" He added: "If we don't have the necessary infrastructure in place we will not be able to achieve this goal. Today, this infrastructure is in the hands of TE, and TE wishes to offer cellular services as well. But one company alone—whether financial or technical—cannot possibly work in all these different directions [without assistance]."
(June 18, 2014) aawsat.net

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

Lebanon's Higher Council for Privatization (HCP) has revived long-dormant plans to convert state-owned incumbent PSTN operator Ogero into a new company named Liban Telecom, to be licensed for a full range of fixed and mobile communications services, via merging the telco with two departments of the Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT). The formation of Liban Telecom – and its mobile licensing – is also a pre-requisite for proposals (currently suspended) to privatize the country's two mobile networks, Alfa and Touch. The 2002 Telecoms Act states that once formed, 40% of Liban Telecom will be sold to a strategic partner by international tender within two years of its creation, leaving the government to sell the remainder according to whatever terms and timetable it sees fit. When it is finally formed, Liban Telecom will be issued with a new 20-year license covering all fixed/mobile/internet/data services, nationwide core/metro/access network operations and international gateways. It will initially hold onto its exclusivity in the PSTN local and domestic long-distance (DLD) voice telephony sector. During a meeting headed by Prime Minister Tammam Salam, HCP reactivated Law 431 (the Telecoms Law) of 2002, following a proposal by Telecoms Minister Butros Harb, who argued that the establishment of Liban Telecom was essential for developing the telecoms sector and the economy in general, and the meeting attendees tasked HCP's secretariat to carry out the necessary legal, financial and structural studies for the creation of Liban Telecom as a joint-stock company (S.A.L). Guidelines to be discussed in the next Cabinet session include the proposed partnership between Lebanon's private and public sectors. HCP's meeting came one day after the visit of World Bank chief Jim Yong Kim, and followed a World Bank recommendation to privatize the main services sectors in Lebanon.
(June 9, 2014) The Daily Star

Lebanon's Internet service providers will have successfully completed the necessary upgrades to their infrastructure by the end of June, enabling them to boost the speed and quota for their existing customers as per the new data plans set by the Telecoms Ministry. Effective July 1, the entry level DSL plan, still priced at $16, will be upgraded to 2 Mbps with a 40 gigabyte cap, compared with the previous 1 Mbps and 4 gigabytes of data. For $50, subscribers will get the 2 Mbps with an unlimited download plan compared to a previous cap of 20 gigabytes. The 4 Mbps plan will see its price drop to $33, from $50, and have its usage increased to 50 gigabytes, from 25 gigabytes. The 6-8 Mbps plan will now cost $43 and include 60 gigabytes of data. The charge for exceeding the data limit on each plan will now be $1.3 per gigabyte, down from the current $4. "By June 20, ISPs will have completed all the necessary technical upgrades to upgrade the data plans of all their subscribers as per the Telecom Ministry's decision," said Maroun Chammas, chairman and general manager of IDM, a leading ISP in Lebanon. Chammas told The Daily Star that ISPs were in the final phase of upgrading their switch nodes, routers and servers along with other related technical improvements to their infrastructure to secure the required increase in connection speed. However, for Internet subscribers to actually enjoy the promised improvement in connection, the country's telecom regulatory authority Ogero will also have to complete its own upgrade of switch nodes at service points. "The Telecoms Ministry informed us that it sent a request to Ogero asking it to carry out the necessary upgrades before July 1 and we hope that all steps will be completed on time," Chammas said. Besides managing the necessary upgrades at services points, Ogero needs to increase the capacity for ISPs, Chammas said. A telecom expert who spoke on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star that Ogero could increase the capacity for ISPs without buying additional capacity on two submarine telecommunication cables, IMEWE (India-Middle East-Western Europe) and ALEXANDROS (Cyprus, Egypt and France). The failure to improve the Internet infrastructure and secure better speeds for subscribers under the new data plans would deal a big blow to ISPs in Lebanon, Chammas warned. "ISPs are counting on growth in the number of subscribers to offset losses due to lower monthly rates being offered to customers under the new data plans. "A failure to secure better speeds would thwart new subscribers and result in losses for ISPs," he said. Additional improvements to Lebanon's Internet infrastructure might be required in the future if connection speeds are to increase above 8 Mbps, another telecom expert who also spoke on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star. The source, who works for a multinational telecom firm with offices in Beirut, said the current link between households and service points which is made of copper can handle speeds of up to 8 Mbps, which under current data plans is sufficient. However, any increase above that speed would require the completion of the fiber-to-the-x (FTTX) project, including fiber to the home and fiber to the office components. Chammas said that so far only a few big firms, universities and hospitals were linked to the Internet through a fiber optic network. "We hope to live up to the expectations and provide customers with value added services." Average Internet speed in Lebanon currently stands at 2.5 Mbps, according to the international Household Download Index by U.S. broadband tester Ookla, which ranks the country 174th internationally.
(June 9, 2014) The Daily Star

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

Telecoms regulator, the Agence Nationale de Reglementation de Telecom (ANRT), has published a decision dated June 17, 2014, which establishes the rules governing local loop unbundling (LLU) in Morocco. The regulator is looking to level the playing field in the market, which is currently 99.5% dominated by incumbent fixed line operator Maroc Telecom. Under the new regulations, Maroc Telecom is required to provide co-location for third-party operators' equipment in its existing cabinets, install multi-operator cabinets for part of their future nodes and establish an active wholesale offer for third-party operators under a virtual unbundled local access (VULA) model. Further, the ANRT has given the former monopoly operator a deadline of August 1 to provide a wholesale offer to domestic alternative operators Meditel and Inwi, and to provide a technical and tariff wholesale offer for passive access to its fixed local loop.
(June 23, 2014) telegeography.com

Nepal
Acting Chairman: Mr. AnandaRaj Khanal
[Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTR)]

The Nepalese government has appointed a committee under the coordination of the Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) to prepare draft legislation which would pave the way for the auction of 4G wireless spectrum and the issue of a new unified license, the Himalayan Times reports. The country's two cellular operators, Nepal Telecom and Spice Nepal, have been asking for 4G frequencies for several years, while there are also long-standing plans to license a third player, but the government says 'legal hurdles' have so far delayed a spectrum auction. (June 18, 2014) telegeography.com

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

A move by Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA) to regulate online content by introducing licensing for 'Supply of Content' has been met with little support from telecom industry players. As a result, the authority has put the measure on hold and will wait for a national policy on content and content services. Respondents to the proposal and an independent expert had termed it as inconsistent with global approaches, premature, radical, difficult to implement and potentially controversial. Riyadh Abdul Aziz, an Internet law and technology expert, said that even though the proposal by TRA was not actually passed, that does not mean that censorship on the Internet in Oman will cease. ''It is impossible for censorship to be perfectly effective, because the nature of the Internet will always make it possible for alternative routes to the content to exist. The proposal by TRA is related to any web content provided under a contract, which will be impossible for TRA to achieve as any of the ISPs in Oman do not have the manpower or expertise to do this." In its final report on consultation concerning the proposal for a 'New Licensing Framework for Telecommunications in Oman', the authority wanted to license Supply of Content apart from overall Licensing Framework relating to licensing of telecommunications activities. TRA stated that in light of the divergent opinions offered by respondents in relation to licensing Supply of Content, the present intention of the authority is that it will await the outcome of an initiative to develop a national policy towards the provision of content and content services before developing its content licensing proposals further'. The proposal defined Supply of Content as provision of material to be comprised in signals conveyed by Electronic Communications Networks (ECNs), or the editorial control of the content of signals conveyed by such networks. The authority noted that under the Telecommunications Regulatory Act, it has regulatory authority and obligations related to the supply of material that is conveyed by ECNs. And currently, the authority had limited regulatory tools that may be deployed to meet its obligations. The authority felt that introducing licensing for the Supply of Content would place obligations on licensees to reasonably ensure that content, which is knowingly conveyed by them, is from licensed entities. Meanwhile, a majority of respondents to TRA's proposal - telecom and non-telecom companies - believed that additional regulations will only result in constricting the industry. One respondent said that it was inappropriate for the authority to have any regulatory oversight of content services whether in combination with telecommunications licensing or via separate regulation. The respondent believed that seemingly adequate regulation already exists within Oman for digital content regulation. The respondent considered that any additional regulation of new media and digital content is best left, for the time being, to other institutions and authorities in the sultanate that already exist for that purpose. ''Telecommunications players are already overburdened by a disproportionate degree of costly regulation relative to other industries," the respondent said. Another respondent suggested that experiments in leading with untested policies and initiatives in the politically sensitive area of content regulation are premature, likely to prove very difficult to implement and potentially highly controversial'. The respondent recommended that the authority not proceed with this component of the licensing reform proposals at present. A third respondent noted that content licensing proposals were inconsistent with international approaches and current enlightened wisdom'. One view was that the proposal was a veiled attempt to somehow make telecommunications service providers directly accountable or liable for information carried over their networks, specifically in relation to Internet services. (June 16, 2014) menafn.com

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

Pakistan's Ministry of Information Technology and Telecom (MoITT) has issued a directive to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to discontinue the controversial International Clearing House (ICH) scheme, under which all incoming international traffic was routed through a single gateway managed by the incumbent Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL). Effective from August 1, 2014, the policy directive establishing the ICH is withdrawn and the PTA's powers regarding the setting of the Approved Settlement Rate (ASR), including the Access Promotion Contribution (APC) are restored and the APC component is set at zero for the time being to help kick-start competition. The ICH policy was introduced in August 2012 as a means to fight grey traffic and thereby increase revenues for state coffers. The strategy was widely criticized for eliminating competition in the Long Distance International (LDI) segment, sparking a substantial increase in tariffs. Further, the officials responsible for the creation of the ICH policy have been accused of taking bribes in relation to the scheme. In its press release, the MoITT acknowledged that the ICH scheme exacerbated the issue of grey traffic rather than easing it, noting that it 'led to [an] exponential increase in call rates for overseas Pakistanis and high volumes of grey traffic...Due to this increase [in calling rates], net incoming calls were also reduced substantially and were converted either to over-the-top [OTT] services or to grey and illegal channels, which bypass [the] legitimate, licensed gateway.' Similarly, the ICH strategy increased revenues to LDI operators, but reduced the amount collected by the government. The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) had noted in early 2013 that the implementation of the ICH had led to a 70% drop in international voice traffic and a 31% decrease in taxes, but a 308% increase in revenues for LDI operators. The MoITT has partly conceded this failure, but claims to have taken a 'very bold step' in setting the APC at zero, as the government will 'take a significant financial hit in terms of revenues generated through this mechanism.' The MoITT expects the deregulation of the segment to foster a healthier, competitive market, which will in turn lead to a reduction in prices by around PKR6-PKR8 (US$0.06-US$0.08). (June 19, 2014) telegeography.com

Pakistan's major mobile operators were quick to snap up 3G spectrum in the country's long-awaited auction in April and are now rushing services to market. While the telcos reportedly lobbied for 4G spectrum to be included in the sale, only one of the four auction participants actually acquired 4G airwaves. And that begs the question, who will pick up the country's remaining block of 4G spectrum? "[The state] would still quite like interest from an overseas player," Colin Brooks, a partner at consultancy firm Value Partners, which worked with the Pakistan government on the auction process told recently. The government was keen to attract a foreign player into the market and earlier this year revealed it had held talks with Turkcell about entering the license contest. It also reserved spectrum in the 850-MHz band for a new entrant. "A couple of companies had a good look at that," Brooks said. In the end, no new entrant emerged, perhaps dissuaded by the fact that there are already five mobile operators in the market - Warid Telecom did not enter the spectrum auction – and ARPUs are extremely low; in its 2013 annual report the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) said monthly ARPUs in the country stood at 211 rupees (€1.56). In addition, the timescales surrounding the auction were very tight, Brooks explained. With the time pressure removed and a block of 1800-MHz spectrum (which in this case was designated for 4G) still up for grabs, it is possible that a foreign player would still be interested in Pakistan, but "some of the other challenges would still remain," Brooks warned. However, a new entrant would not necessarily have to come in as a greenfield operator. Warid Telecom is up for sale and has drawn interest from rival operators Ufone and Mobilink. But acquiring Warid would also be a way into the market for a foreign telco, should they be so inclined. And in that case, acquiring the remaining chunk of 4G spectrum would make sense. At the time of the auction the 4G spectrum was restricted to participants that also successfully bid for 10 MHz of 2100-MHz (3G) spectrum. China Mobile, which operates in Pakistan as Zong, paid US$210 million for 10 MHz in the 1800-MHz band and, with no other bidders coming forward, quickly declared itself as the country's first and only 4G operator. The only other bidder to fulfill the criteria was Mobilink, which also acquired 10 MHz of 2.1-GHz spectrum but chose not to take part in the 4G portion. "Some [Pakistani telcos] are happy just to get 3G services up and running," Brooks said, while some already have spectrum they could use for LTE once they have freed it up. Warid Telecom is one such company and has made an application to the regulator, he explained. But technically, any one of the country's mobile operators – or indeed an overseas player – could now step in for the remaining 4G spectrum at any time, since the auction rules no longer apply. The authorities are "giving some consideration to their options," regarding disposing of it, Brooks said. "It would have to be done sensibly and carefully." (June 16, 2014) totaltele.com

Around Rs. 12 billion would be invested in next three years to establish 500 telecentres and promotion of Information & Communication Technologies (ICT). Universal Services Fund (USF) would fund a mega program for setting-up of e-telecentres for which adequate provisions has been made in the budget. USF sources on Sunday said the telecentres would help improve public access to ICT services such as NADRA facilities, biometric verification devices for issuance of SIMs, e-facilitation in health, agriculture, commerce, governance and learning to generate local employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. They said the improved connectivity of remote areas program; the USF would also invest another Rs 2.8 billion where upon optic fiber cable was being aggressively laid to provide connectivity to outlying areas particularly in Balochistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and other parts of country. Additionally, the sources said Rs. 3.6 billion have been earmarked out of USF to be spent on Rural Telecommunications Program. They said all these efforts would result in rapid rollout of next generation ICT services in remote areas. The sources said the other initiative was Prime Minister's ICT Scholarship Program which aimed at providing the highest quality education opportunities at top universities to students belonging to rural and semi urban areas. This year, Rs 125 million had been allocated out of National ICT R&D Fund to provide 500 scholarships in a transparent manner, they added. (June 9, 2014) pakistantoday.com.pk

Qatar

Minister: H.E. Dr. Hessa Al Jaber

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

A Cabinet draft decision has been approved to establish a joint committee for communications infrastructure work in Qatar. The committee is to comprise a regulatory authority official plus representatives from involved/concerned parties, and will reportedly address development and construction activities, measures to build mobile network towers, paths and channels for terrestrial communications, fiber-optic infrastructure and other communication facilities. (June 20, 2014) The Peninsular

Qatar's Information & Communications Technology (ICT) sector is projected to grow 10% annually to reachQAR24.7 billion (US$6.8 billion) by 2016, the Minister of ICT Hessa Sultan Al Jaber told the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva this week as part of her policy statement on Qatar's ongoing transformation plan. As reported by Zawya.com, in her speech the minister highlighted the Gulf state's recent progress: 'Driven by Qatar's National ICT Plan 2015 and Qatar National Vision 2030, today Qatar ranks 23rd among 148 countries in the 2014 World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index and fourth in the world in government usage of ICT in that same report ... We opened up the telecommunications market and made the decision to invest heavily in building and securing a world-class infrastructure with the capacity and speeds to set Qatar apart in the region and around the world.' (June 13, 2014) telegeography.com

Qatar, which has a high 170% mobile penetration ratio, still offers growth potential due to strong outlook on its economy and population expansion; while the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is all expected to be a 100mn mobile subscriber market by 2020, according to a study. Highlighting that mobile subscribers grew strongly by 3.5% quarter-to-quarter in the fourth quarter of 2013 to 3.81mn, Global Investment House said despite the high penetration rate of around 170%, "we believe the potential for growth still remains due to forecasted economic and population growth." Population growth is expected to exceed average GCC growth due to foreign work-force requirement, it said. Ooredoo's growth tapered off to 44,400 subscribers in the fourth quarter of 2013 compared to 75,600 in the previous quarter. Ooredoo had launched 4G services on April 16, 2013. Vodafone subscriber base increased the most in the fourth quarter of 2013. Strong increase in both post-paid and pre-paid segment was backed by strong population growth, Global said. "Ooredoo's market share came down significantly to 66.5% in the fourth quarter of 2013 compared to 67.7% in the third quarter of 2013 as Vodafone Qatar provided stiff competition particularly in the pre-paid segment," Global said. On the GCC, the report said the region is well on its way to become a 100mn mobile subscriber market by 2020. The GCC mobile subscribers have grown at 2008-12 compound annual growth of 10.4% driven by de-regulation, entrance of new players and economic growth, it said, adding mobile subscribers grew by an estimated 2.3% to 84.2mn in 2013. The growth in mobile subscribers has been between 6.5% and 20.1% in 2013 in all the GCC countries except for Saudi Arabia where stricter registration requirements, crackdown on illegal immigrants and cancellation of unidentified SIMS led to a decline in subscriber base. However, with the GCC mobile penetration at 177.0%, growth in mobile subscriber base is likely to mirror the population growth rate. "Qatar and the UAE are likely to experience the highest growth in population as they prepare for soccer World Cup 2022 and World Expo 2020 respectively," the report said. The GCC telecom profitability of listed companies increased by 9.8% in 2013 with four of the companies witnessing a decline, while eight others increasing profitability/ reduction in losses. Saudi Telecom Company was the largest driver of profitability growth in the sector with its profitability boosted by "significant" reduction in operating costs and strong profitability growth in its GCC operations (Saudi, Kuwait and Bahrain). Vodafone Qatar witnessed a sharp reduction in net losses on the back of strong subscriber and average revenue per user growth. Population in Qatar grew at an estimated 10% driven by influx of foreign workers for the preparations of the 2022 World Cup. The company is also increasing its share of the post-paid market after a delayed launch in June 2012. On the other side of the spectrum, Batelco saw the largest decline in profitability. Profitability was affected by "intense" competition in the Bahrain market. Meanwhile, Zain also saw a sharp decline in its profitability of 14.2% in 2013. The profitability was affected by sharp devaluation of the Sudanese currency. (June 9, 2014) Gulf Times

Saudi Arabia
Governor: Eng. Abdullah A. Al Darrab

[Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC)]|

The stock market regulator has ended a share trading suspension on Etihad Atheeb, according to a bourse filing. The Capital Market Authority (CMA) halted trading in the shares of the landline telecommunications operator on Thursday after the company failed to give sufficient details on a network sharing deal Saudi Telecom Co 7010.SE (STC). But the regulator has now lifted this suspension after Atheeb issued a statement providing the required information regarding the STC agreement, a statement said on Sunday. (June 8, 2014) gulfbusiness.com

The telecoms regulator Communications and IT Commission (CITC) has extended the deadline for applications for the country's third mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) license to July 7, 2014. According to a press release, the decision was taken after unnamed 'interested parties' requested an extension to the previous deadline. In April 2014 the CITC announced that it would re-tender the third MVNO license, after revoking the authorization provisionally granted to Dubai-based retailer Axiom Telecom. Axiom CEO Faisal al-Bannai revealed that his firm had been unable to submit all of the necessary documentation, prompting the cancellation. The development was a setback for Axiom's domestic host provider Zain Saudi Arabia, with the operator forced to watch as the country's two approved MVNOs prepared to launch on its rivals' platforms. Zain Saudi CEO Hassan Kabbani argued: 'All three MVNOs should start at the same time when all will be ready', although the regulator has argued that the launch of services by Virgin Mobile and Jawraa Group (Lebara) remains an independent issue. Meanwhile, in a related development, MVNO group Virgin Mobile Middle East & Africa (VMMEA) has announced that it concluded a USD15 million senior secured facility with the Bank of London and the Middle East (BLME), in order to fund its operations in Oman, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and South Africa. (June 3, 2014) telegeography.com

South Sudan
Director General: Ms. Rebecca Joushua

[Minster for Telecommunication & Postal Services]

Minister of Telecommunication and Postal Services, Rebecca Joshua, has said that the country aims to connect to an international fiber-optic cable system through Eritrea, Ethiopia or Kenya within the next year. During a speech at the opening of a new ministry building, the minister said the move would bring high speed internet to the country, adding that 'once installation is complete, all government ministries, departments and agencies from the national to the state level will have reliable internet communications.' She also revealed that the government is seeking to establish a National Communications Authority (NCA) to oversee the telecoms sector, adding that candidates are currently being recruited to lead the new regulator. At the same event, President Salva Kiir said the government is committed to 'ensuring the provision of universal and affordable services to all South Sudanese ... Our priorities in this regard is to devise a national optical fiber cable linking all the state capitals and other major towns ... The government has formed a national committee to speed up the process of designing and building the national backbone through the competitive selection of qualified global private sector partners.' Landlocked South Sudan currently has no connection to international fiber-optic cables, as previous efforts to extend beyond the border into Uganda were put on hold by the civil war; the country currently has to rely on slow and expensive satellite links for international bandwidth. (June 10, 2014) radioTamazuj.org

Rebecca Joshua, Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, says the South Sudanese government is aiming for the introduction of high speed internet in the country within a year. Internet communications are very poor in South Sudan because access via satellite internet providers is slower and more expensive compared to internet access in neighboring countries. During a speech at the opening of a new ministry building, she pointed out that South Sudan is "one of only two African countries to have not yet joined the global super highway through a sub-marine cable system." She said that they are attempting to connect to the coast through Eritrea, Ethiopia or Kenya within the next 12 months, or through Kenya via Uganda. Joshua also said that the government would establish a National Communications Authority (NCA) to regulate communications nationwide. She said they are currently recruiting candidates to lead the NCA and see it operationalised. The minister explained also that the government is looking to procure a bandwidth provider for its own operations: "Once installation is complete, all government ministries, departments and agencies from the national to the state level will have reliable internet communications." For his part, the President of South Sudan speaking on the same occasion linked the government's plans to a commitment made by African heads of state in Kigali in October 2007 to link all capital cities and major towns by broadband by the year 2012 and all rural communities by 2015. Salva Kiir said the government is committed to "ensuring the provision of universal and affordable services to all South Sudanese... Our priorities in this regard are to devise a national optical fiber cable linking all the state capitals and other major towns." "The government has formed a national committee to speed up the process of designing and building the national backbone through the competitive selection of qualified global private sector partners," he noted.

(June 5, 2014) radiotamazuj.org

Sudan
Director General: Dr. Izz Al Din Kamil Amin

[The National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC)]

Sudan's telecoms regulator has ordered the country's three mobile networks to cut off unregistered SIM cards, following several months of warnings that a suspension was imminent. The regulator said that "hundreds of thousands" of unregistered SIM cards had been cut off, although millions are said to be still unregistered. The three mobile networks, Zain, Al Sudani and MTN have been promoting the registration process from late last year, when it was reported that two million SIM cards were still unregistered. Of that, by June 2014, some 1.6 million responded. The country has around 25 million mobile phone users.

(June 2, 2014) cellular-news.com

Tunisia
President: Mr. Hassoumi Zitoune

[National Telecommunication Commission (INTT)]

The head of the National Telecommunications Commission (INT) has announced that new rules will come into force next week which will gradually unify tariffs for Tunisian wireless providers by 2015. INT aims to level the playing field by establishing a price floor for mobile services and reducing the difference between on- and off-net calls.

(June 13, 2014) BusinessNews

The Tunisian government has decided that state-backed telco Tunisie Telecom (TT) should retain its 51% stake in the Mauritanian mobile operator Mattel. In October 2013 it was confirmed that TT had hired BNP Paribas to oversee the hunt for a buyer for its majority holding in Mattel, but the telco revealed in January this year that it had called off the search after failing to attract sufficient interest. This strategy has now been backed up by the Tunisian government, which has a 65% stake in TT. Mattel lies in third place in Mauritania's mobile sector, with 18% of all subscribers at the end of March 2014. (June 9, 2014) Agence Ecofin

United Arab Emirates
Director General: Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has revealed statistics for the first quarter of 2014 on the nation's most popular mobile phone handsets, social networking platforms and applications websites. Investigating the current state of the market, the report reveals the market share of mobile phones in the UAE by manufacturer and model. According to the report, during the period between January 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014, 52% of handsets registered on the UAE's networks were Smartphones, a figure that increased by 10% during 2013 and 1% in the first quarter of 2014. In terms of Smartphone models, the iPhone 5 was the most commonly used Smartphone in the UAE comprising 2.8% of the total handsets registered on UAE networks. The report illustrates that the Samsung SIII was the second most popular Smartphone with 2.7% of the market share. The third most commonly used Smartphone is the iPhone 5s (2.5%), followed by iPhone 4S (2.1%), Galaxy S Duos (1.8%), Samsung S4 LTE (1.7%), iPhone 4 (1.6%), BlackBerry Bold 9900 (1.4%), Samsung Grand (1%); Samsung S4 (0.9%); and Samsung Note 3 (0.8%). In relation to Smartphones, the iPhone 5s reordered the highest increase in market share during the first quarter of 2014, replacing the iPhone 4s as the third most popular handset. The market shares of Galaxy S Duos and Samsung S4 LET also increased whereas the iPhone 4s and BlackBerry Bold 9900 fell. The report indicates that 50.2% of all handsets registered on UAE networks were manufactured by Nokia, although this figure has been declining over time. This was followed by Samsung (19.3%), Apple (9.1%), BlackBerry (8.2%), LG (0.9%), and HTC (0.7%). Unlike Nokia and Blackberry, Samsung and Apple recorded increases in their market shares in Q1 2014. However, in Q1 of 2014, Apple handsets replaced BlackBerry as being the third most popular mobile handsets used in UAE. In terms of specific handset models, the Nokia 101/1010 (3.6%) continued to be the most popular mobile handset in UAE in Q1. The Nokia 1280/1282 (3%) was the second most popular handset followed by the iPhone 5 (2.8%), both Nokia E5 and Samsung SIII at (2.7%), iPhone 5S (2.5%,) Nokia X1 (2.3%), iPhone 4S (2.1%), Galaxy S Duos (1.8%), Samsung S4 LTE (1.7%), iPhone 4 (1.6%), BlackBerry Bold 9900 (1.4%), Samsung Grand (1%), Samsung S4 (0.9%) and Samsung Note 3 (0.8%). The report also provides information on the most popular mobile operating systems used in the UAE. The use of Symbian is declining over time and the Android was the most commonly used operating system in the UAE as of Q1-2014. The market share of iOS is increasing while RIMs (the operating system for Blackberry) is decreasing. During the period from January 1, 2014 to March 31, 2014, users of Smartphones and fixed Internet services in the UAE visited various applications websites. Apple iTunes was by far the most commonly visited applications website, followed by Samsung Apps, Blackberry App World and Nokia OVI. The number of visits to BlackBerry and Nokia applications websites has been declining over time while the volume of visits to Apple iTunes and Samsung is progressively increasing. In terms of social media, UAE Smartphone and fixed Internet users made a total of 21.7 billion visits to social networking websites during the period January 1, 2014 to March 31, 2014. Visits to Facebook accounted for 86% of total visits to social networking sites, followed by Twitter with 12% of visits, then LinkedIn, Maktoob and MySpace. Commenting on the review, H.E. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim, Director General, TRA said, "The report illustrates a number of interesting trends emerging in the UAE's mobile handset market. It also demonstrates the dynamic nature of consumer patterns in relation to handset choices. "The findings derived from the TRA's latest piece of research reinforce the vibrancy of the UAE's mobile sector. The TRA is committed to producing research that accurately depicts the current state of the market which in turn, enables the UAE to track its progress and remain ahead of the global mobile industry curve." he added. (June 26, 2014) menafn.com

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SAMENA REGION

Argentina

The Supreme Court of Argentina has dismissed appeals brought by the government and a number of telephony licensees against a court decision that banned telecoms operators from providing broadcasting services, writes the Centro de Informacion Judicial (CIJ). Previously, the Argentina Cable Television Association and cable operators Cablevision, Multicanal and Telecentro initiated a lawsuit in response to reports that telephony service providers had begun offering video-on-demand (VoD) services. A court then ruled that under the terms of licenses granted to companies providing telephony services, the holder may not offer broadcasting services, but this was subsequently appealed by various telecoms companies and the government. The Supreme Court has now rejected these appeals against the decisions and ruled that Telefonica de Argentina and Telecom Argentina must stop providing pay-TV services through agreements with other companies.

(June 5, 2014) telegeography.com

Brazil

The top brass of Brazilian communications regulation gathered at the Institute of Directors in central London today for the latest leg in the 700MHz 4G auction road show; with the apparent aim of opening up the process to new bidders outside of the four national incumbents. A likely consequence of new bidders entering the process would be an increase in the total revenues generated for the Brazilian state, which presumably would not be unwelcome. The presentation was opened by the Brazilian Minister of Communications – Paulo Bernardo – who was keen to stress how much progress Brazil has made in general in recent years, both socially and economically. He pointed to improvements in the GINI coefficient, which measures income equality, something Brazil doesn't have a great reputation for, and increases in infrastructure investment. Next up was João Batista de Rezende, President of ANATEL, the Brazilian telecoms agency/regulator. He recapped that Brazil has already had a 2.5GHz auction as that spectrum was more readily available, but that there were distinct advantages to 700MHz, including range. The 700MHz band is the result of the 'digital divident' from switching off the analogue TV signal, and the winners of the auction, which will be held in August, will also be responsible for the "clean up" of whatever legacy radio flotsam is still floating around. Batista de Rezende said he expects national access to 3G to overtake that of 2G at around the time of the auction, and was keen to stress what a good commercial opportunity this auction presents. Having said that, he also stressed that there will be some advantages to those companies that have already won 2.5GHz spectrum, including the possible conclusion of some of the coverage responsibilities they signed up to merely by doubling-down on spectrum. Brazil has four main telco players: Vivo, TIM, Claro and Oi (which has got to be the best name we've seen for a telecommunications company). Only four chunks of spectrum are on offer: 10MHz for uplink and 10MHz for downlink, although one of those chinks may be geographically spit as indicated in the diagram below. So if new players enter the bidding process and win, then one or more of the Brazilian incumbents will be left with no 700MHz allocation. It's good to see how much effort Brazil is making to open up its market and to reduce some of the tax and regulatory burden on doing business there. Brazil is by far the largest market in a Latin America region that is one of the fastest growing smartphone markets in the

world. By opening up this bidding process Brazil is sending out a positive business message and, by pure coincidence, potentially increasing its revenue from the auction.
(June 26, 2014) telecoms.com

At end-April 2014, Brazil's mobile operators had collectively rolled out 3G (W-CDMA) services to 91.5% of the population covering a total of 3,692 towns and cities. The figures mark a marginal improvement from 90.6% coverage in 3,554 towns/cities reported at the start of this year, and the coverage figure of 87.9% (3,293 municipalities) it recorded at end-2012. Mobile market leader Telefonica (Vivo) continues to lead the pack by a fair margin, with coverage of 86.8% of Brazilians (3,142 cities) at end-April, ahead of America Movil-owned Claro Brasil with 1,730 municipalities served (76.3%). Third place is taken by Oi SA with coverage of 1,033 cities (79.3%) and the fourth spot is held by TIM Brasil (1,001 cities, 70.4%). NII Holdings' Nextel Brasil meanwhile has upped its 3G coverage significantly in the past twelve months, reaching 407 municipalities (46.9%) by end-April, up from just 91 cities and 13.4% three months earlier.
(June 5, 2014) Research House Teleco

China

China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) has finally awarded FDD-based 4G licenses to smaller carriers China Telecom and China Unicom. The pair, which trail China Mobile, have both received FDD-LTE licenses, giving them the opportunity to deploy more universally compatible FDD-LTE technology. However, officially, the licenses are awarded on the basis that both companies use them to trial FDD-TDD LTE integration in 16 cities around the country. All three carriers, China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom, were granted TD-LTE licenses at the end of last year and China Mobile, which operates a 3G network based on TD-SCDMA has already launched LTE services. But both Unicom and Telecom had pressured the MIIT to use the more globally compatible FDD-LTE technology to make them more competitive. It is understood that some 4G network development is under way. Kit vendor Alcatel-Lucent announced a deal to supply access technology for China Telecom at the end of last year. But it's China Mobile that is really steaming ahead with 4G deployments. It's known that around half of China Mobile's LTE infrastructure contracts have been won by local suppliers Huawei and ZTE, while Ericsson, Alcatel Lucent and Nokia have picked up around ten per cent of the business each with their Chinese competitors bagging 25 per cent apiece. The combined value of China Mobile's LTE contracts is thought to be in the region of $3.2bn. China Mobile is also making headway on TDD and FDD integration. In November, China Mobile teamed up with Huawei to demonstrate the world's first international VoLTE HD voice and video calls between a TDD LTE network and a FDD LTE network. The demonstration was conducted over China Mobile's VoLTE trial networks in Chengdu and Hangzhou, and a VoLTE network in South Korea. Li Zhengmao, China Mobile's vice president, held a meeting to demonstrate the call, as China Mobile stepped up its efforts to accelerate VoLTE commercialization and TD-LTE internationalization. (June 30, 2014) telecoms.com

Chinese telecoms regulator the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) is preparing to allocate a third batch of mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) licenses. Seven to eight new companies are being considered for the new licenses, including 21Vianet, SeeCom Technology, Yinsheng E-Pay, China Postal and Telecommunications Appliances Corp (China PTAC) and Dr. Peng Telecom and Media Group. The MVNO concessions are expected to be handed out within the next two months.
(June 16, 2014) Marbridge Daily

Colombia

Ministry of Information Technology and Communication (MinTIC) and National Spectrum Agency (ANE) have identified 1,440MHz of spectrum that could potentially be made available for mobile telecommunications services over the next four years, although only 400MHz were in frequency bands that have been identified by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) as suitable for mobile services. The remaining 1,040MHz are in bands currently being studied by the ITU for feasibility, and the body is expected to present the results of its analysis at the ITU Radio Conference in 2015. MinTIC and ANE had launched an investigation into the potential of the remaining available airwaves with a view to ensuring that there is sufficient spectrum to meet the rising demand for data services over the next four years and that the regulatory agencies can effectively manage the resource. Commenting on the results of the study, senior ANE official Luis Eduardo Pena said: 'With this project the ICT Ministry and ANE have taken a step forward in the planning of radio spectrum for the next decade, seeking to ensure that the country has spectrum available to support the expected growth of mobile communications services in the country.'
(June 27, 2014) telegeography.com

Crotia

The newly restructured Croatian telecoms regulator announced its relaunch as the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries, on the same day that amendments to the Electronic Communications Act and the new Regulation of the Rail Services Market entered into force creating a single national authority for the regulation of electronic communications, postal and rail services. The government adopted amendments on April 3, 2014 to merge the Croatian Postal & Electronic Communications Agency (HAKOM) with the Agency for the Regulation of Railway Services (ARTZU), as part of wider government fiscal consolidation measures. Parliament adopted the legal amendment to merge the two regulators in late-May, forming the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries – although the multi-sector regulator has retained the HAKOM abbreviation because of the name recognition factor. (June 20, 2014) telegeography.com

France

French competition authority, the Autorite de la Concurrence, has fined Societe Francaise du Radiotelephone (SFR) over abusive pricing practices in the French overseas territories of Reunion and Mayotte, where the company operates as Societe Reunionnaise de Radiotelephone (SRR) and SFR Mayotte, respectively. Following an investigation of complaints by rivals Orange and Outremer Telecom, the watchdog has imposed a fine of EUR45.9 million (US$62.1 million) on SFR, which has been found guilty of 'price gouging' in relation to the fees applied to on-net and off-net calls. (June 16, 2014) telegeography.com

Germany

The European Commission (EC) has given Germany's telecoms regulator the Federal Network Agency (FNA) three months to increase mobile termination rates. In April the EC issued a first warning to the German watchdog over its plans to raise the fees, which the Commission says will lead to rates more than 80% higher than in other member states, but the FNA failed to address its concerns. The EC says Germany's current plans would clash with the aim of fostering competition among operators and creating a telecoms single market, as calls across networks can only be connected by the operator on the receiving end, meaning that operator has a de facto monopoly on prices. The FNA has three months to convince the EC that it will amend its tariffs and if it fails to do so, the body will follow up with a more formal warning, which could ultimately lead to court proceedings and fines. (June 23, 2014) Reuters

Ghana

Telecoms regulator the National Communications Authority (NCA) has barred domestic cellco Vodafone from signing up new subscribers until July 31, 2014, in lieu of the recent disruptions to its networks across the country. The company is also banned from introducing new services, promotions and offers until the NCA conducts tests to determine whether the Quality of Service (QoS) of its fixed and mobile networks has improved. Further, the watchdog has requested that the operator submit its proposed Consumer Compensation Plan for approval. In the period June 2-3, 2014 Vodafone experienced a nationwide network outage, which affected its landline and mobile platforms. Subsequently, the company issued an apology to its subscribers, in which it announced that it had identified the cause of the problem and had resolved the issue. (June 11, 2014) telegeography.com

Greece

The telecoms regulator, Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission (EETT), has launched a public consultation on the proposed rules for an upcoming 4G mobile license auction in the 800MHz (digital dividend) and 2600MHz frequency bands, seeking comments on individual spectrum caps in both bands as well as general licensing procedures. A notice on EETT's website announced that the consultation period runs for a month until June 30, 2014, and the consultation document is available on the site.
(June 3, 2014) telegeography.com

Greece's telecoms regulator has announced a public consultation on plans for a radio spectrum auction. The Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission (EETT) said that the consultation covers the necessity of the limitation of the number of rights of use of radio spectrum at 800 and 2600 MHz bands and the licensing procedure. The consultation has started, and ends on June 30, 2014.
(June 2, 2014) cellular-news.com

GSMA

Following Telecoms Council meeting, the GSMA has called on European governments and the new European Parliament to urge the European Commission to accelerate work on a broader reform of the EU's regulatory framework for electronic communications. The GSMA said that it believes this should focus on more harmonization across Member States, the elimination of outdated and unnecessary layers of regulation and the application of consistent rules irrespective of the technology being used, who is providing the service, or where individuals are located. According to the GSMA, the European Parliament's proposals to restrict traffic management to a very narrow set of circumstances would constrain the development of new services, limit consumer choice and restrict the way operators need to ensure the Internet continues to work for everybody. "We urge Member States to work with the Parliament and the Commission to agree provisions on the open Internet that work for consumers, businesses and the whole European economy," said Anne Bouverot, Director General, GSMA. "With regard to traffic management and specialized services, it is important to establish high level and future proof principles rather than develop detailed and prescriptive rules that limit innovation, curb commercial flexibility and consign consumers and potential developers of new services to the same, regulated Internet experience." The GSMA would also encourage Member States to constructively explore the Commission's proposals on further harmonization and coordination of spectrum policy, which would make a significant contribution to addressing today's fragmented and inconsistent approach across the European Union. Broad and bold reform is needed with a focus on the timely release of new capacity that is harmonized across the single market and allocated with the objective of driving long-term growth and investment. A concerted push to harmonies and coordinate aspects of spectrum policy can provide more certainty, as operators plan medium to long-term network deployments. The current process addresses critical issues but it must also be noted that it has to be integrated with existing reviews and legislation. For example, the GSMA believes it is important that Member States challenge the rationale of changing the current roaming Regulation before its review date in 2016. The GSMA supports regulatory certainty and market-driven solutions for roaming and believes the impact and implications of further regulatory change at this stage should be fully assessed. "The immediate priority is to ensure that the proposed Telecoms Single Market Regulation on the open Internet, spectrum and roaming is adjusted in the interests of Europe's citizens, its businesses and growth across the region," continued Bouverot. "However we must not lose sight of the need to prepare further ambitious and bold policy and regulatory reform to maximize the telecoms industry's contribution to Europe's economy and society."
(June 6, 2014) cellular-news.com)

Hungary

Four Hungarian firms DIGI Telecommunications, Magyar Telekom, Telenor Hungary and Vodafone Hungary have submitted applications to bid for additional mobile broadband frequencies ahead of the June 16, 2014 deadline set by the national industry regulator, the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH). Details of the tender process were first announced on May 22 this year. The NMHH now has 15 days to assess the individual applications in order to qualify them to move to the bidding phase. The tender documents will be opened on 17 June, with bidders fighting for rights to use unused parts of the 800MHz, 900MHz, 1800MHz and 2600MHz frequency bands – along with part of the higher, 26GHz band – which the watchdog hopes will raise at least HUF104 billion (US$468.7 million) for government coffers. The winners will be able to use the frequencies until 2034; the NMHH had previously indicated the concessions would only be valid (initially) for 15 years. (June 18, 2014) telegeography.com

Iceland

Telecoms watchdog the Post and Telecom Administration (PTA) has extended Vodafone's (Fjarskipti's) concession to operate Multichannel Multipoint Distribution Service (MMDS) in the 2500MHz-2690MHz frequency band. According to a press release, the telco is now authorized to utilize all 23 channels, each with a bandwidth of 8MHz, for MMDS television services in the south and southwest of the country until 31 December 2016. The PTA opened a public consultation on the topic in October 2013. The regulator pointed out that Vodafone Iceland, which is licensed to operate in the 2508MHz-2564MHz, 2572MHz-2644MHz and 2652MHz-2668MHz frequency bands until June 27, 2014, had requested an extension of its concession until 2020; the company had previously indicated that part of the 2.6GHz frequency band could be utilized for 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) mobile services. However, the PTA said that despite the rapid growth of 4G services, there is currently no shortage of suitable spectrum. That said, the responses of interested parties indicated that such shortages could arise 'within few years', hence PTA's decision to extend Vodafone's license by just two years. (June 27, 2014) telegeography.com

India

India's Telecoms Commission has approved, in principle, the notion of nationwide Mobile Number Portability. At the moment, although MNP is supported, it is only permitted within the same license circle. Under the new rules, MNP would be permitted across circles. The main issue still to be resolved is how the networks and/or customers handle the roaming costs, as the example customer above is still registered as a Mumbai phone number, even though they are now residing in Delhi, and that calls for inter-circle roaming. It's expected that the move though would see roaming charges reduced, or even scrapped for MNP users. The size of the affected customer base is also expected to be fairly small, as not huge numbers of people regularly move cities and would need to make use of the facility. The issue has now been passed to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) for further recommendations. It is expected to report back in about 2 months time.

(June 16, 2014) cellular-news.com

India's Department of Telecom has rejected a request by Vodafone for automatic renewal of seven of its expiring mobile operator licenses. TAs with the company's dispute in Kolkata and Delhi, it was awarded the licenses in 1995, with an option to renew for an additional 10 years when they expire -- subject to an agreed renewal fee. The government has however been blocking renewals, seeking initially to simply reauction the licenses, and now to change them into a different form of license. The government argues that the telecoms market has changed too dramatically since the licenses were originally awarded and that to renew them for another 10 years overlooks the opportunity to include the changes into new licenses. An option by the government to guarantee renewal of the radio spectrum which is the main risk in the current offer does not appear to be favored. At the moment, in theory, Vodafone could buy the unified licenses, but then be outbid by someone in the radio spectrum auction -- rendering its operations worthless. Vodafone has appealed the dispute in Kolkata and Delhi, and may do so again with the latest license renewals. (June 4, 2014) cellular-news.com

Malawi

In the wake of continuing reports about poor service by mobile phone operators in the region, the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) has formulated new regulations that give it the power to send representatives of mobile networks to jail. The regulator is hoping that the new rules will spur operators in the Southern African country to improve their network and customer service quality. But TNM, one of the mobile operators in Malawi, said it such regulations will hinder the growth of the telecom sector in the country. "Large penalties and imprisonment for noncompliance are areas of regulatory concern to the company," said TNM Managing Director Willem Swart in a report. TNM is seeking a renewal of its operating license and has already engaged MACRA on the new regulations, saying that it is looking for rules that will help the operator grow and be innovative. Over the past three years, operators in the region have been engaged in price wars that have resulted in cheaper communication services. But the sudden call-rate reductions have produced congestion and unreliable network service, as customers can now manage to speaker longer for less. Network congestion, dropped calls, network outages and a widespread lack of network availability are some of the problems facing consumers in Africa. Quality assurance tests that have been carried out in several countries in the region including South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania and Nigeria have shown that all operators have been failing to meet service quality levels specified in service level agreements. Tanzania was the first country to threaten stiffer penalties and prison sentences for mobile phone operators that fail to deliver quality services to customers. In Zambia, the Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) has already dragged the country's three mobile operators -- MTN, Airtel and Zamtel -- to court over alleged poor quality of service, which the authority said is criminal in nature because customers were being exploited. ZICTA claims all three operators have been failing to meet minimum quality of service and have also been failing to comply with the provisions of quality of service guidelines. Just last week, ZICTA forced Airtel to give refunds to over 28,000 customers who lost airtime balance amounting to more than US$178,000 total due to a system error. The Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC), meanwhile, has been imposing heavy fines in a bid to force operators to improve their networks and reduce congestion. The NCC has in most cases banned promotions aimed at maintaining or attracting new customers except where adequate capacity is provided by the network. "Although prison sentences may scare aware new investments in the telecom sector, it will move existing operators to act responsibly towards their customers," said Edith Mwale, telecom analyst at the Africa Center for ICT Development. (June 23, 2014) pcadvisor.co.uk

Malta

Malta's telecoms regulator has announced plans to review the existing 3G licenses operating in the 2.1GHz bands to permit them to be used for LTE services as well. It said that the move was due to a European Union regulation from 2012 that calls for harmonization of radio spectrum bands. The MCA said that it now intends to amend the technical annex of the relevant licenses so that licensees will be in a position to deploy new technologies, such as LTE, in this band. These amendments should not be interpreted as providing for an extension of the rights of use granted by the existing licenses. Any comments on the changes have to be sent to the regulator by the June 24, 2014. Following this process the Authority will proceed with issuing the amended licenses. (June 20, 2014) cellular-news.com

Telecoms regulator the Malta Communication Authority (MCA) has announced that it will amend 3G licenses, allowing cellcos to deploy other technologies, such as Long Term Evolution (LTE). The move follows the European Commission's decision 2012/688/EU regarding the harmonization of the 1920MHz-1980MHz and 2110MHz-2170MHz frequency bands. The MCA will accept comments on the decision until 24 June 2014, following which it will precede with issuing the amended licenses.
(June 13, 2014) telegeography.com

Mexico

The Supreme Court is said to have refused to hear injunctions put forward by Mexican telecoms giant America Movil and its mobile subsidiary Telcel which seek to challenge telecoms regulator Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones (IFETEL) 'preponderant economic agent' ruling. Not a single one of the five justices in the court's first chamber was willing to voluntarily take on the appeals made against the declaration the watchdog in March 2014; at that date the IFETEL designated Slim-owned America Movil (AM) as holding significant market power (SMP) in the country's telecoms sector. With it understood that at least one of the justices would have needed to accept to filing for it to be heard in the Supreme Court, the appeals will now return to a lower court which specializes in matters of telecoms and economic competition. Last week, the Supreme Court was also said to have refused to hear a similar injunction by Grupo Televisa, which had also been named as a dominant operator in the Mexican telecoms arena earlier this year by the IFETEL. (June 23, 2014) BNamericas

Moldova

Moldovan watchdog, the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (ANRCETI), has announced that the Central Court of Chisinau has ruled that StarNet, the country's second largest internet service provider (ISP) in terms of subscribers, had breached Article No. 5 of the Electronic Communications Act (No. 241-XVI of 15 November 2007), which relates to the 'unlicensed use of numbering resources in the provision of services and/or electronic communications. According to an ARCETI report, StarNet Solutions provided fixed telephony services to its customers without having the legal right to use numbering resources in the period January 1-20 March, 2014. As a result, the court has imposed a 'fine of 400 conventional units, equivalent to MDL8,000 (US$572) to be paid to the state'. The fine is the third such measure imposed on StarNet since September 2013. That month, the regulator determined that StarNet provided telephony services using geographical numbers outside of the zone to which they had been assigned, in breach of Section 7 of the Procedures for Management of Telephone Numbering Resources (No.58/2010). In December 2013, ANRCETI issued another warning to StarNet, this time for failing to provide it with certain information. (June 25, 2014) telegeography.com

Papua New Guinea

Government has reportedly awarded a new mobile network operator concession said to be worth more than US$ 260 million. Dubai-based multinational AWAL Telecommunications, a unit of AWAL Impex International Holdings Ltd, has been named as the recipient of the license, which according to the website of local telecoms regulator the National Information and Communications Technology Authority (NICTA) was actually issued on March 14, 2014 and is valid for ten years. However, the presentation of the concession was said to have been carried out in a low key event conducted early last month and attended by the Communication and Information Minister and the NICTA's manager of international affairs. Awal has actually been granted three licenses – an Individual Network Gateway Services License, an Individual Application License and an Individual Network License – in order to enable it to enter the country's mobile sector. While AWAL is said to also be examining a possible entry into Papua New Guinea's gas and electricity sectors, telecoms is the group's first priority. To that end, AWAL CEO was cited as saying of his company's plans for the country: 'AWAL will definitely be a catalyst in the development of the country's infrastructure, especially the telecom sector. AWAL's top priority will primarily be at making the telecom facility available to the entire population of Papua New Guinea by improving the network coverage. AWAL will make sure that Papua New Guinea's telecom network is at par with the international telecom operators.'
(May 8, 2014) Islands Business

Nederland

The European Commission (EC) rejected a request to refer the planned merger of the Netherlands' largest and second-largest cablecos Ziggo and UPC Nederland to the Dutch Authority for Consumers & Markets (ACM) for assessment under local competition law. The EC concluded that ACM was not better placed to examine the transaction 'because of the Commission's experience in assessing many mergers in the converging media and telecommunications sectors, the presence of [UPC Nederlands' parent] Liberty Global in twelve countries of the European Economic Area (EEA), and the need for a consistent application of the merger control rules.' Further, the Commission found 'it could not be excluded that the transaction might have effects outside the territory of the Netherlands, such as the linguistically homogeneous Flemish part of Belgium.' The EC will therefore continue its investigation, which opened on 8 May 2014, and has until 17 October 2014 to make a final decision on the proposed merger, while it will 'continue to cooperate closely' with ACM on the matter. (June 26, 2014) telegeography.com

New Zealand

New Zealand announced the official completion of its 4G spectrum auction, having assigned specific frequencies to its three mobile operators The assignment phase of the auction raised an additional NZ$11.1 million for state coffers, bringing the total gleaned from the process to $270 million, the country's Communications and IT Ministry said in a statement. The ministry did not disclose exactly where in the 700-MHz band the telcos will sit, nor which of them will pay extra for their assigned slots. However, it pointed out that Vodafone and 2degrees will occupy adjacent frequencies, something that would enable them to broker a roaming deal. Incumbent operator Telecom holds the

largest portion of spectrum, having acquired a previously unsold 2x5 MHz block of 700 MHz frequencies earlier this year. In the original 700-MHz auction in October both Telecom and Vodafone agreed to pay NZ$66 million plus tax for 2x15 MHz of spectrum. Smaller player 2degrees secured 2x10 MHz for NZ$44 million plus tax. "All three mobile network operators can now start building their 4G networks using this spectrum," said Communications and Information Technology Minister Amy Adams "90% of New Zealanders will gain access to fast 4G services in the next five years, and 75 new towers will be built to increase mobile coverage," she added. Under the terms of its license Telecom is required to build 10 new mobile towers per year for the next five years in areas where it does not currently provide coverage. Vodafone is required to build five towers per year over the same period. All three operators must upgrade 75% of their existing towers in rural areas to 4G within five years.
(June 19, 2014) totaltele.com

Norway
The Norwegian Post and Telecommunications Authority (NPT) has confirmed that it has finalized the auction rules for the sale of six frequency blocks in the 800MHz band designated for offshore use. Having conducted a consultation regarding the terms of the sale process between April 11 and May 23, with the rules now set in stone the regulator has said that the auction itself will be conducted on August 18, 2014. In February 2014 the NPT revealed it had received an application for a license in the 800MHz band for offshore use. With a view to ensuring that any and all interested parties have an opportunity to apply for vacant frequencies in the band in question, the regulator called for any competing applications to be submitted by March 14, 2014. In announcing the development the NPT also noted that a total of 2×30MHz in the 800MHz band (791MHz-821MHz/832MHz-862MHz) was available for use offshore. Under the regulator's plans, six 2×5MHz frequency blocks in the 800MHz band for use offshore will be awarded via a cash auction, with a frequency ceiling set at 2×20MHz, meaning each bidder can bid on up to four blocks.
(June 24, 2014) telegeography.com

Norway's government announced plans to sell off a combined NOK47 billion (US$7.8 billion) tranche of shares in telecoms giant Telenor and industrial conglomerate Kongsberg Gruppen. The state currently holds a 53.97% equity stake in Telenor Group, while it owns 50% of Kongsberg Gruppen, and Industry Minister Monica Maeland was quoted as saying that she would ask parliament for permission to cut the state's stake in both companies to 34%, reportedly the minimum required to ensure their headquarters remain in Norway. The minister elaborated: 'I'm underlining that we're in no rush to make changes, and a permission doesn't mean that we're obliged to sell ... Any change will depend on commercial considerations, taking into account company-specific aspects as well as market conditions,' while she has also confirmed that the government will not block overseas companies from buying the shares in either firm.
(June 20, 2014) thelocal.no

Poland
Poland's Office of Electronic Communications (UKE) is unlikely to conduct an auction for 800MHz and 2600MHz 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) spectrum until next year. While the regulator has completed two consultations into the licensing and is ready to push ahead with the sale, the government is thought to want additional time to overhaul its National Broadband Plan, the 'Digital Poland' program and the objectives of the Digital Agenda for Europe before the auction starts. UKE originally planned the 800MHz/2600MHz auction earlier this year but it cancelled the tender at the last minute after a technical glitch prevented operators from accessing documents relating to the sale. Polish cellular operators are currently using 1800MHz frequencies to support their 4G LTE offerings.
(June 24, 2014) RPkom

SAMENA
SAMENA Telecommunications Council announced a successful conclusion to the Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 which was held recently in Dubai which attracted key industry visionaries from the global and regional ICT landscape. Organized under the theme, The Rise of the Broadband Economy - Shaping Excellence in Cooperation - Government, Telecom Operators, Internet Players, and hosted by Huawei, the Summit was aimed at identifying areas of further business growth and means to sustain investment in the future through SMART regulations. On this occasion, H.E Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development who addressed the assembled leaders focused on the subject of net neutrality and said, "Under the wise leadership of our President, H.E Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, our country values the proper use of the Internet to advance human welfare. We must be both responsive and visionary as we discover how to best use and apply modern technology in a global context. In that context, the role of compromise looms large when various parties try to reach consensus on net neutrality. Few users of the Internet are willing to tolerate anything but equal status with all other users of the Internet. We must discuss and try to understand the value of everything that is at stake in regard to net neutrality. As leaders of the telecommunications community assembled here, you have a duty to Internet users to work together through tolerance, compassion, and dialogue. I am confident that your dialogue here is fulfilling that duty and that you are acutely aware of its importance." Speaking on this occasion, H.E Dr. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary General, ITU said, "The ICT environment is evolving at an unprecedented pace and usage data is rising at a remarkable rate. In such a fast-growing ICT landscape, the need for investments towards broadband infrastructure becomes all the more important, not only for operators but also for the Internet players as well. Regulators need to identify a sound regulatory framework that will work in the favour of all the stakeholders with an overall profitable return. We need to incorporate best practices with lessons learned from various countries while avoiding the same mistakes." "The ICT market in the region is very dynamic and we are experiencing a massive rise in the industry in the Arab region in particular. Mobile broadband is the future and Middle East is already on the right track when it comes to growth and expansion in the ICT sector, with an investment opportunity of $300 billion in the region," he added. The Summit spanned three sessions featuring discussions on various topics including Mobile Data Growth and Spectrum Needs, Convergence of Telecom, Media and OTTs - Regulating for the Future and Broadband Investment. "In 2014, we have witnessed significant events in terms of encouraging the on-going debate on industry issues and opportunities such as the

recently concluded World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in Dubai, which was very successful. The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 is another important initiative organized by the SAMENA Telecommunications Council that brings together key industry stakeholders to facilitate strong cooperation across the sector," said Mr. H.E. Mohamed Al Ghanim - DG, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), UAE. The discussions at The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 highlighted the role of government bodies in developing investment friendly policy frameworks for broadband development, balancing the costs of broadband network upgrades and regulatory frameworks and enabling a conducive environment by reducing regulatory burdens on operators. The panelists also evaluated the evolving trends in digital governance, in addition to the significance of cooperation in digital governance space. Further, the discussions underlined the importance of a comprehensive broadband development strategy, encompassing issues such as the CAPEX (Capital Expenditure) - OPEX (Operating Expenditure) challenge and the emergence of mobile services, Internet player applications and OTT videos. "We need a transparent dialogue with our operators so we can exchange ideas to foster growth and develop new opportunities for our digital economy, especially in an environment that is witnessing huge investments in broadband infrastructure. Currently, we are experiencing transformation in the ICT sector of the region, along with issues such as loss of data in a network, competition from OTT players and the entry of cross-border companies who are operating outside of the jurisdiction of the TRA. This leads to a new kind of a competition that we need to deal with. To overcome this, we need to facilitate discussions between operators, policy makers, regulators and private sector entities. The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 thus serves as a crucial platform that will help shape this conversation to provide us with the answers we need to move a step further into the digital world," said Mr. Bocar Ba, CEO, SAMENA Telecommunications Council . "We are experiencing a massive rise in digital technologies with a major impact that affects the lives of every member of our society as well as corporations, governments, nations and the world as a whole. We are looking at a multi-stake holder equation now. As we move deeper into a world led by digital technologies, we need a very strong conversation between the operators, regulators as well as regional and international organizations that are setting the framework for this advancement in technology as well as our economy," said Mr. Osman Sultan, CEO, du. "We are operating on a very fertile ground in the sense that the infrastructure that exists in the UAE is very advanced in terms of penetration of fiber optics, the penetration of smart phone and mobile technologies, etc. The two key initiatives launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, including 'Dubai Smart Government', which is in line with UAE's Vision 2020 and 'Dubai Smart City', give us the opportunity to explore new areas to experience how the new technology will create a positive impact in the lives of people. We hope that the insights from The Telecoms Leaders' Summit 2014 will help us in providing better services to the end user," he added. "As a leading global ICT solutions provider, our role is to support our strategic partners to ensure that they can operate in the right environment. With our enhanced line-up of technologies, which fall in line with governmental smart initiatives and the anticipated transformation towards digital economies, we are able to successfully cater to the telecom, enterprise and consumer markets. Further, with our end-to-end solutions and global expertise driven by our R&D, we are always keen on collaborating with key industry players to drive the development agenda of not only the telecom sector, but also the overall regional ICT industry," said Mr. Ihab Ghattas, Assistant President, Huawei Middle East. Key panelists and attendees of The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 comprised a strong line-up of company heads, officials and ministers including His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development, UAE; His Excellency Mohamed Al Ghanim, DG, TRA, UAE; Dr. Amr Badawi, Board Member, NTRA - Egypt; Dr. Nasser Marafih, CEO, Ooredoo Group and Chairman of Board of Directors, SAMENA Telecommunications Council ; Mr. Shi Yaohong, President, Huawei Middle East; His Excellency Dr. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary General, ITU; Mr. John Giusti, Head of Public Policy, GSMA; Mr. Luigi Gambardella, Executive Chairman, ETNO; Mr. Osman Sultan, CEO, du; His Excellency Abdelaziz bin Abdullah Al- Sugair, Chairman, STC Group; Mr. Scott Gegenheimer, CEO, Zain Group and Dr. Amer bin Awadh Al-Rawas, CEO, Omantel.
(June 22, 2014) samenacouncil.org

Senigal

Telecoms regulator the Autorite de Regulation des Telecommunications et des Postes (ARTP) has confirmed that the country is still on course to launch mobile number portability (MNP) as early as October. In an interview, the former ARTP official said he recently signed an edict on MNP guidelines in Senegal, including the process of selecting the firm to manage the running of the single platform for it. Lo's statement is in line with a similar announcement in October last year in which the watchdog confirmed it was conducting a public consultation on a number portability regime, to help achieve an October 2014 launch.
(June 6, 2014) telegeography.com

South Africa

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) has clarified that, although it has been made aware of a number of potential mergers and acquisitions in the local telecoms sector, none of the companies involved have formally presented their deals for review. The watchdog named three of the major deals in question as: Vodacom's acquisition of Neotel, a mobile network-sharing deal between MTN and Telkom, and Telkom's acquisition of Business Connexion. According to an ICASA press release, although it is aware which of the agreements have been presented to the Competition Commission (CompCom), 'that in no way negates the regulatory approvals required from ICASA'. The watchdog notes that it intends to make a detailed comment on all of the aforementioned deals as soon as it has been presented with the terms and conditions agreed by the various licensees. In March 2014 Telkom signed an agreement with rival MTN South Africa, under which the latter will take over the deployment and operation of Telkom's radio access network (RAN), although both companies will 'retain and enhance [their] competitive differentiation and flexibility'. Further, in May 2014 Telkom proposed to buy technology company Business Connexion for ZAR2.7 billion (US$250.84 million) and delist it from the Johannesburg bourse. For its part, in May 2014 Vodacom announced that it was set to buy the country's second national operator (SNO) Neotel for ZAR7 billion, with the deal expected to close before the end of FY2015.
(June 4, 2014) telegeography.com

South Korea

The European Union and South Korea have agreed to work together to develop 5G standards and technology. The agreement was signed in Seoul by Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Digital Agenda, and Mun-Kee Choi, South Korea's Minister of Science, ICT and Future Planning. The two will work towards a global definition of 5G, including harmonized spectrum bands to ensure global interoperability of the next generation of mobile technology. In 2016, they will launch a joint call for research projects on 5G. In addition, an industry memorandum of understanding was signed between the EU's 5G Infrastructure Association (whose members include Alcatel-Lucent, Atos, Deutsche Telekom, Ericsson, Nokia, Orange, Telecom Italia, Telenor and Telefonica) and South Korea's 5G Forum. The EU and South Korea agreed already last November to partner on ICT research. They are now setting up a working group to prepare for the ICT R&D cooperation as well as hold policy discussions in the areas of 5G, cloud and Internet of Things, ahead of the launch of jointly funded R&D programs in 2016-2017. (June 16, 2014) telecompaper.com

Spain

Spanish telecoms regulator the Comision Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia (CNMC) has set the final prices which both Vodafone Spain and Orange Espana will pay for accessing the last mile of fixed line incumbent Telefonica Espana's fibre network. In announcing its decision, the watchdog has confirmed that both of the alterative operators will pay the same rate that rival Jazztel does. Such a pricing structure, the CNMC has claimed, will mean an average reduction of 34% compared to the rates that had initially been proposed by Telefonica, and the new pricing structure will be applied retroactively. With Telefonica and Jazztel having signed a vertical infrastructure access agreement for the shared deployment of fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) networks in October 2012, the following March saw Orange and Vodafone strike a deal to invest up to EUR1 billion (US$1.3 billion) on the construction of a joint fiber-optic infrastructure which would use the last mile of the Telefonica network. To facilitate planning and deployment, in July 2013 the regulator made a decision on preliminary pricing for access, at that date saying that provisional charges it had established were between 18% and 24% lower than the price initially offered by Telefonica to its rivals. As per its most recent ruling, the CNMC noted that, a resolution dated June 18, 2014 has fixed prices in line with those charged by Telefonica to Jazztel as such rates were 'reasonable and should also apply for access to these facilities by Orange and Vodafone'. (June 24, 2014) telegeography.com

Sweden

Sweden's National Post and Telecom Agency (PTS) has lowered the country's unified mobile call termination rate (MTR) to SEK0.0815 (US$0.0121) per minute (down from SEK0.09), valid from 1 July 2014, following a revision of its cost-oriented wholesale pricing calculation model. The regulator states that its new wholesale calculation model is more accurate than its previous model due to using the latest 'actual' statistics on traffic volumes in mobile networks rather than previous data based on volume forecasts, while guidance prices are now provided to two additional decimal places. (June 26, 2014) telegeography.com

Post & Telecom Agency (PTS) has decided that from July 1, 2014 it will no longer use the widely-adopted Long Run Incremental Cost (LRIC) methodology for calculating cost-oriented wholesale network access prices in its regulatory decisions. The regulator revoked regulations which mandate the usage of the LRIC method while putting in place the necessary transitional provisions for several existing service provider obligation decisions which refer to the LRIC regulations. (June 11, 2014) telegeography.com

The Post & Telecom Agency (PTS) has conducted a feasibility study on the appropriate future use of the 450MHz wireless band, the licensed blocks within which are due to expire in 2020. PTS's analysis concluded that the current usages in the band 450MHz-470MHz should be allowed to continue – these are private mobile radio (PMR) and maritime radio alongside a block that is currently used for mobile broadband and telephony services with wide geographical coverage across Sweden (referring to CDMA-based operator Net 1 Sweden). PTS proposes to continue to allocate the band in the same block size, i.e. 2×5MHz, which is in line with current international standardization. (June 4, 2014) telegeography.com

Taiwan

The board of Taiwanese telecoms operator Asia Pacific Telecom (APT) has approved a plan to merge with 4G newcomer Ambit Microsystems via a share swap deal. In a statement filed to the Taiwan Stock Exchange, the company says that under the merger every Ambit share can be exchanged for a 0.4975 share in APT. Upon completion, Ambit's parent company Foxconn Technology Group – registered on the Taiwanese stock market under the name Hon Hai Precision Industry – will see its stake in APT upped to 23% from 14% today; it took its initial stake holding via a new share offering last month. In May this year Foxconn Technology Group moved to purchase a stake in APT for TWD11.6 billion (US$390 million). Foxconn agreed pay TWD20 per share for a total of 582.9 million shares in APT via a private placement, ahead of the planned full merger. However, the plan faces a stumbling block in that the two companies hold a combined 30MHz in the 700MHz and 900MHz bands – exceeding the 25MHz limit set by the National Communication Commission. To assuage regulatory concerns and smooth the deal, Ambit reportedly commenced talks over a potential bandwidth swap with another Taiwanese player, Far EasTone. According to the China Post, Far EasTone will initiate a trade with Ambit under which it will swap its A2 frequency block in the 700MHz band for the A3 block in the same band held by Ambit. Once complete, this would mean that both operators would benefit from operating adjoining blocks of the 4G network. With the deal between the two companies also said to include Far EasTone acquiring 5MHz of bandwidth from Ambit in addition to the frequency swap, it has been suggested that this will resolve regulatory issues related to the latter's acquisition of APT. (June 20, 2014) telegeography.com

Telecoms regulator has approved the allocation of a LTE license to a new entrant, Taiwan Star Cellular Group, which now plans to launch its network in the 3rd quarter of this year. In order to speed up its growth, it has applied to buy the incumbent, Vibo Telecom, although that transaction is still waiting for regulatory approval. A share swap between the two companies is still scheduled to take place later this week though. Applications for LTE licenses by Ambit Microsystems, a subsidiary of Hon Hai Precision Industry, and by Asia Pacific Telecom are still pending final clearance. In related news, the regulator also announced that the incumbent mobile networks will be allowed to port numbers between their existing 3G services and the new 4G services. There had been the theoretical risk that customers seeking to upgrade would have to take out a new number as well. The law change to permit migrations between the networks still needs to be cleared by the government, but that is expected to be a simple formality. (June 8, 2014) cellular-news.com

Thailand

Regulator National Broadcasting & Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) announced that it was suspending the country's upcoming mobile license auctions under the orders of the military-run administration, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). The 1800MHz LTE auction set for August this year is now on hold, as is the 900MHz license sale scheduled for later in the year, while two other projects have also been frozen by the NCPO: a national universal service obligation fund program worth THB20 billion (US$615 million) and a digital TV subsidy scheme worth THB25 billion. The combined value of the two spectrum auctions this year was expected to be in the region of THB40 billion. The report adds that the NCPO's latest move is aimed at 'examining transparency and functioning of the regulator'. (June 18, 2014) The Bangkok Post

Thailand's second-largest cellco DTAC and its Norwegian parent Telenor have issued an apology to the Thai telecoms regulator and ruling military junta for telling its users that the National Telecommunications & Broadcasting Commission (NBTC) had ordered a temporary block on Facebook social media access following the recent coup d'etat. The NBTC and the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) denied any involvement with the Facebook outage, which was officially blamed on a large scale network failure. The regulator has apparently threatened to ban DTAC from the upcoming 4G 1800MHz license auction in August this year due to Telenor's actions which it called 'inappropriate' and 'ill-mannered'. The DTAC/Telenor apology said: 'Earlier this week, Telenor Group released information to both international and Thai media in relation to an incident that occurred on the 28th May. These actions damaged the public image of the NBTC and the NCPO, which regulate the telecommunication industry and oversee the security of the nation as a whole, respectively. The executives of Telenor Group and DTAC regret what happened … Thailand is currently under the administration of the NCPO. Thailand requires unity among its people and its many foreign friends who are operating in the country. The executives of Telenor Group and DTAC would like to take this opportunity to apologize to the NBTC and NCPO. We will continue to strengthen our dialogue with the people of Thailand for the betterment of the country.' Meanwhile, NBTC telecoms committee chairman Setthapong Malisuwan has said he will propose banning any operators holding more than 25MHz in the 1800MHz band from bidding in August's 4G license auction. This would effectively stop DTAC from participating in the LTE competition as it was assigned a 2×50MHz 1800MHzGSM block under its build-transfer-operate (BTO) concession with state-owned CAT Telecom which expires in 2018. 2×25MHz of this portion has remained unused; DTAC has claimed exclusive rights over all of its BTO spectrum until the 2018 expiry but on the other hand the cellco has agreed in principle with the regulator that returning the unused 1800MHz block for reallocation under technology-neutral licences would be the best long-term solution. On June 19 the NBTC will be holding a public forum on the 1800MHz LTE auction plans. (June 16, 2014) TelecomAsia

Togo

The government of Togo has authorized plans to award a third mobile operator license for the country. It is currently carrying out a feasibility study into how to carry out the process. The Ministry partnered with the Banque Ouest Africaine de développement (BOAD), and although it is yet to publish a detailed schedule, the process should lead to a tender. Currently the country has the two mobile networks -- the state owned Togo Cellulaire, and Moov which is majority owned by Etisalat. According to our records, Orange was granted an operating license back in 2008, but its not clear what happened to that. Togo is one of the smallest countries in West Africa, and its population of 6.5 million is spread over 56,600 square kilometers. (June 23, 2014) cellular-news.com

Togo's council of ministers has authorized the launch of a tender for a third mobile license. The introduction of a new 3G/4G operator is intended to increase investment in infrastructure, boost competition in the sector and the economy in general. Togo's mobile penetration rate is currently estimated to be 54 percent, compared to a regional average of 75 percent. The country currently has two mobile operators, state-owned Togocel and Etisalat subsidiary Moov. (June 16, 2014) telecompaper.com

United Kingdom

The telecoms regulator OFCOM has launched a consultation following a request from mobile broadband operator UK Broadband for an extension to the latter's 3.4GHz spectrum license. With the company's concession, which authorizes the use of two 20MHz blocks in the frequency ranges 3480MHz-3500MHz and 3580MHz-3600MHz, set to expire in July 2018, UK Broadband has asked for an indefinite extension. In launching the consultation OFCOM said it was presenting 'an assessment of the potential impact of this proposal within the context of our statutory duties', and in its conclusion on the request said it 'believes granting [it] would promote competition and encourage investment and innovation, in line with our statutory duties to further the interests of citizens and consumers.' The watchdog has now invited comments from interested parties, with the consultation to close on July 25, 2014, following which it has said aims to reach a final decision after considering any responses. (June 16, 2014) telegeography.com

Telecoms regulator OFCOM has unveiled plans to reduce mobile termination rates (MTRs) further, despite saying that the rate had fallen 'significantly' in recent years on the back of its previous intervention. With the rate currently standing at GBP0.0815 (US$0.017) per minute as of April 1, 2014, under the watchdog's latest proposals it has set out reductions for each of the next three years. As such, from April 1, 2015 OFCOM has said that the MTR will be reduced to GBP0.0515 per minute, before falling to GBP0.0498 per minute and GBP0.0476 per minute at April 1, 2016 and April 1, 2017, respectively. The new rates will apply to all operators. Having concluded its previous review of MTRs on March 15, 2011, OFCOM has said that in reaching its latest decision there were a number of relevant factors that it had considered. Among those was the fact that between 2011 and 2013 the availability of spectrum to provide mobile services had increased significantly following the regulator's work on spectrum liberalization and the 4G auction. Further, it has argued that mobile networks and technologies are also becoming more efficient, leading to lower costs, and has claimed that the new charge controls are designed to ensure that the charges levied by operators reflect these lower costs. Brian Potterill, OFCOM's Competition Policy Director, said of the plans: 'Consumers in the UK benefit from a thriving competitive market, and mobile calls have never been cheaper. The average cost of a call bundle has fallen from GBP40 to around GBP13 in real terms over the last ten years … We want to ensure mobile users continue to benefit from competition, which will deliver affordable services in the years ahead.' OFCOM's consultation on the proposals closes on August 13, 2014, and the regulator has said it expects to publish its final decision by March next year. (June 5, 2014) telegeography.com

United States

A study of indoor tests of a hybrid wireless location technology was submitted to the US telecoms regulator which claims that existing technologies can satisfy location requirements within the timeframe proposed by the FCC in its draft rule on indoor 9 1 1 accuracy for wireless calls. Multiple wireless carriers have challenged the technical feasibility of the proposed rule, claiming that existing technologies cannot satisfy the proposed accuracy requirements, with a spokesperson for the industry trade association claiming the rule represented "aspirational target setting." TechnoCom says that the results of its study disprove those assertions, showing that viable technology exists in the market today. According to TechnoCom's findings, "The outcome is a current overall performance that readily meets the FCC's proposed location performance threshold for indoor wireless E911 at the 67th percentile. The demonstrated performance even comes very close to meeting the 50 meter threshold at 80%, which is intended for 5 years from adoption of the proposed rules." Multiple other vendors have submitted filings to the FCC claiming that their technologies would also satisfy the requirements of the rule on the timeline proposed by the FCC. "These results should prove helpful to the FCC as it moves toward reaching a resolution on its proposed rule on indoor location requirements," said Craig Waggy, CEO of TruePosition. "We know that accurate location information is vitally important to American consumers, and that the FCC is intent on remedying the lack of wireless indoor location requirements for calls placed to 9-1-1 from wireless devices." The tests were conducted using TruePosition's commercially available Uplink Time Difference of Arrival (UTDOA) technology standalone, and a hybrid solution consisting of Assisted Global Positioning System (A-GPS) and UTDOA technologies, and included indoor testing in both urban and suburban environments in Wilmington, Delaware and surrounding areas. For the testing, buildings of varying sizes, construction materials and use were selected by the independent firm, and a total of 62 test points were selected among 16 buildings. In all cases, the test buildings and test points remained anonymous to TruePosition until the conclusion of the testing and delivery of all results to the independent firm. In early 2013, TechnoCom conducted the indoor accuracy testing for the FCC's Communications, Security, Reliability and Interoperability Council (CSRIC). The same location and measurement methodologies were used in these tests. (June 24, 2014) cellular-news.com

The federal government's plans to free up spectrum resources to support the exploding wireless telecommunications space looks to be on track to meet its goal, according to a recent report from the National Telecommunications & Information Administration. In its Fourth Interim Progress Report, NTIA noted that between the end of 2010 and September 2013, it had formally recommended or otherwise identified for potential reallocation up to 405 MHz of spectrum to support wireless broadband use. The allocation is just short of the 500 MHz earmarked by President Barak Obama in a June 2010 memorandum calling for up to 500 MHz of new spectrum to be freed up by 2020. In noting the work that has been done, NTIA cited spectrum sharing arrangements between federal agencies and commercial users in the 1.7 GHz band; its release of regulations to allow for financial assistance to move current federal users to new spectrum bands; spectrum sharing initiatives targeting the 5 GHz band; and developing plans for federal agencies to provide quantitative assessments of their spectrum usage and needs. NTIA cited work conducted by the Federal Communications Commission in moving forward with rulemaking for 40 MHz of spectrum in the AWS-4 band; 10 MHz that were recently auctioned off in the H-Block; 70 MHz of spectrum scheduled to be auctioned off later this year as part of the AWS-3 band; 100 MHz of spectrum being set aside for small cell use in the 3.5 GHz band; and 295 MHz of spectrum in the 5 GHz band. NTIA also said it was making progress to meet a second memorandum ordered by President Obama in 2013, to free up more spectrum, with NTIA providing a plan for federal agencies to conduct quantitative assessments of their actual spectrum usage in 960 MHz of additional spectrum. (June 9, 2014) rcrwireless.com

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is considering changing its technical definition of broadband, increasing the download threshold from its current level of 4Mbps to between 10Mbps and 25Mbps. Meanwhile, the minimum upload speed for a service to be classed as broadband is likely to increase from 1Mbps to 2.9Mbps. An internal inquiry on the subject was circulated within the FCC , and the watchdog is expected to solicit public comment on the subject in the near future. If eventually approved, the switch would statistically increase the number of US residents who lack true broadband connectivity.
(June 4, 2014) Washington Post

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which is shoulder deep in the net neutrality debate, looks like it is going to take on a related hot button item: the definition of broadband. Right now, the legal definition of broadband download is a measly 4 megabits per second (Mbps). The FCC will ask the public to comment on moving the dial up to 10 Mbps or 25 Mbps. There are two important points here. The first is that changing the playing field has a better than even chance of impacting the path forward on net neutrality, which arguably is the most important issue before the FCC today. If the FCC does put a more stringent definition on what is considered broadband, it could indirectly affect other ongoing policy debates. The FCC has the authority to regulate Internet providers if it believes that the rollout of Internet infrastructure is being impeded. Under a higher standard for broadband, the commission could argue that an ISP isn't working fast enough to upgrade its networks, and intervene. Precisely how a download minimum of 25 Mbps and an upload speed that also is increased will impact the net neutrality debate is unclear. But such a significant change to the ground rules certainly will color the debate in some way, though it is unlikely to structurally change it. The basic questions of whether an organization can pay to have better last-mile access than another and what should be done to protect the slower competitor will remain. When the negotiating, politicking and compromises necessary to reach a resolution come to pass, it will matter if the floor is a glacial 4 Mbps or more reasonable 10 Mbps or 25 Mbps speeds. The other point to be made in the defining of broadband is a bit more subtle. The FCC would sound the call only if it was confident that the industry is ready to answer. During the past few months, a steady stream of news announcements have been made by telcos and cable operators that suggest that a 25 Mbps threshold is not the challenge that it was in the past. The cable industry's current drive to increase speeds is summed up in a Light Reading story: In a flurry of announcements and pronouncements over the past 10 days, three of the top eight US MSOs have unveiled plans to boost downstream as high as 1 Gbit/s. All three MOs – Time Warner Cable Inc. (NYSE: TWC), Cox Communications Inc. , and Mediacom Communications Corp. – intend to carry out the speed hikes in at least several of their biggest markets over the rest of the year. That story looks at the big cable companies. Companies at the other end of the spectrum, the smaller telecom firms in areas that to date have been underserved by broadband, are also picking up the pace. Wyoming Business reports that Advanced Communications Technology and CenturyLink are the first companies chosen for a project focused on building dual rings that connect all state schools and agencies. The $15.8 million project will create dual 100 Gigabit broadband rings. The speeds available to end users are unclear, but it is safe to assume they will be far north of 4 Mbps. It just goes to show that in broadband, speeds are rising. In some cases, the organizations driving the increases are the usual suspects. In others, they are far less known. The bottom line is that the readiness of the telecommunications industry to provide higher speeds is enabling the FCC to move in this area. (June 3, 2014) itbusinessedge.com

Vanuatu

Telecoms watchdog, the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR), has launched a public consultation regarding the allocation of spectrum for fixed telecoms services within the country. The document outlines suggested frequency bands for fixed microwave systems, and bands that should be set aside for the provision of universal satellite, mobile voice and broadband services. Under the draft proposal, the TRR plans to allocate the 1500MHz and 5GHz-22GHz frequency bands for fixed microwave point-to-point services, while the 1800MHz, 1930MNHz-1980MHz/2110MHz-2170MHz, 2300MHz-2450MHz and 2500MHz-2690MHz frequency bands will be retained for future mobile broadband use. All interested parties are invited to submit their comments and proposals until 28 July 2014. (June 27, 2014) telegeography.com

The Supreme Court of Vanuatu has dismissed a case brought by incumbent cellco Digicel Vanuatu against the telecoms watchdog Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR). According to a regulator's press release, Digicel filed a judicial review claim against TRR in 2011, claiming that TRR had no power to carry out internal reviews of a prior internal review, under section 52 of the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulation Act (TRR Act) No. 30 of 2009. The move was prompted by TRR's Decision 02/2011, under which the regulator proposed to issue interconnection rates for fixed and mobile termination based on cost, which were much lower than the benchmark rates determined in 2010. The Supreme Court ruled that the regulator indeed has the power to carry out internal reviews of a prior internal review under Section 52 of the TRR Act, and dismissed Digicel's case.
(June 24, 2014) telegeography.com

Telecoms watchdog, the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR) has revoked three telecoms licenses granted to start-ups Hotspotzz, Wavecom and Micoms, for non-compliance with their respective license terms and conditions. Hotspotzz and Wavecom received their concessions on 22 September 2009, while Micoms was authorized to provide telecoms services on January 20, 2010. The resolution was taken after the TRR decided in late 2013 to investigate the activities of all licensees that hold an authorization to provide telecoms services but 'have not shown any utilization … of their license to date'. According to a TRR press release, the three prospective operators have 'never provided any form of telecommunications services … and do not have any future plans to do so'. The watchdog pointed out that the companies were given 30 days revocation notices ending May 19 (Hotspotzz) and May 21, 2014 (Wavecom and Micoms) respectively, to respond to the regulator's proposed action, but each company failed to do so. Further, the TRR has invited all interested parties and potential investors to apply for a new license to operate in the country. (June 5, 2014) telegeography.com

Javaid Akhtar Malik
Regulatory Affairs
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

SATELLITE NEWS

Aireon completes requirements for third investment from Nav Canada

Aireon, the joint venture between Iridium Communications and three European Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), completed all the requirements for its third tranche investment from Nav Canada totaling $65 million, of which $32.5 million was funded on June 19, 2014. The second half of the tranche will be allocated in the first quarter of 2015. This brings the total investment in Aireon by Nav Canada to $120 million and will increase its fully diluted common equity position to 36.5 percent, on a post conversion basis. Aireon will soon receive the second tranche of investments from its other three ANSP investors: Enav of Italy, the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) and Naviair of Denmark. Total payments of $12.5 million are expected to close on or near to July 2, 2014, with an additional $12.5 million expected to close in the first quarter of 2015. Enav, IAA and Naviair will collectively increase ownership in Aireon by 3.1 percent, bringing their combined fully diluted common equity position to 10.6 percent.

Global Teleports joins Urban Broadband Fund's Connection Vouchers Scheme

Global Teleports successfully registered for the United Kingdom government-run Urban Broadband Fund's Connection Vouchers Scheme, a program to help create "SuperConnected Cities" across the United Kingdom. This program allows customers in the cities covered to receive funding for the cost of broadband installation. The Connection Vouchers Scheme covers more than 20 cities in the U.K., including Bristol, Cardiff, Cambridge and Oxford. Global Teleports' broadband service, Vip3Play, once installed, costs around $22 per month and covers 100 percent of the United Kingdom. The service delivers data, voice and video services to both domestic and enterprise customers. Installation does not require additional personnel with technical experience, and needs only the manufacturer's Point and Play device. The service reaches speeds up to 45 Mbps for enterprise users and 20 Mbps for domestic users.

Outlook positive for Hispasat at annual shareholder's meeting

Hispasat held its annual shareholder's meeting on June 25, 2014 to approve the annual accounts for the 2013 tax year, which were unanimously passed by the shareholders. The company's net profit was just under $74 million for 2013, a 5.5 percent increase from 2012 profits. Revenues reached $274.2 million in 2013, a 0.57 percent increase compared to 2012. Comparing these revenues year-over-year factoring in exchange rates for the Euro, the increase would have been 4.35 percent. More than 55 percent of total revenue for space capability rental comes from the Americas, with most of that coming from Latin America. The remaining 44.4 percent comes from the European market and North Africa. The distribution of a $14.8 million dividend was approved in the shareholder's meeting, which means a payout of 20 percent of the consolidated net result. The positive outlook for the company can be attributed to the launch of the Amazonas 3 satellite in 2013 and gaining rights to the new orbital slot at 36 degrees west. Hispasat also began offering new video and data services in 2013, and emphasized satellite broadband access for mobility and developments for Ultra-High Definition (Ultra-HD) transmissions. The company also invested $210.6 million in 2013, for projects such as developing new satellites Amazonas 4A and 4B, and for other research and development projects. During the meeting, the Abertis group increased its participation to 57.05 percent, making it Hispasat's majority shareholder.

Lockheed Martin to acquire Zeta Associates

Lockheed Martin will acquire Zeta Associates, a company that provides systems for efficient collection, processing, safeguarding and dissemination of critical information for intelligence and defense applications. The transaction is expected to close in the third quarter of 2014, and upon closing, Zeta Associates will be a wholly-owned subsidiary of Lockheed Martin, reporting through the company's Space Systems sector. "Zeta Associates' expertise in cross-platform information collection, analysis and dissemination is an ideal complement to our national security capabilities," said Marillyn Hewson, chairman, president and CEO of Lockheed Martin. "Adding Zeta to our diverse portfolio strengthens our ability to deliver vital ground, air and space-based intelligence in support of our customers' most essential missions." Zeta was founded in 1984, and specializes in the technology that powers national security missions. The company has roughly 350 employees, and is focused on cutting edge software, communications and ground systems.

India PM following PSLV-C23 launch

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) successfully launched five international satellites on June 30, 2014 using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). India's Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, emboldened by the launch's success, has called for further strengthening of India's launch program along with the development of a new satellite project. Airbus Defense and Space's Spot 7 Earth-observation satellite was the primary payload for the PSLV C23 mission. Onboard as secondary payloads were small-satellites AIsat, Can X4, Can X5 and Velox 1, of Germany, Canada and Singapore, respectively. According to Modi, 40 of the 67 satellites launched by the PSLV were foreign payloads. In a speech at India's Mission Control Center following the launch, he called for ISRO to further expand its launch capabilities. "India's advanced space program puts her in an elite global group of five to six countries today," said Modi. "This is one domain in which we are at the international cutting edge ... India has the potential to be the launch service provider of the world. We must work towards this goal. Construct the required new launch infrastructure. And extend our launching capabilities to heavier satellites.

IR releases new series of two output DC-DC converters for satellite power systems

International Rectifier (IR) introduced its D series of low power radiation-tolerant two output Direct Current-to-Direct Current (DC-DC) converters for satellite power systems. The new series offers low output noise, guaranteed End-of-Life (EOL) output voltage drift with notable output cross regulation. Each converter output is independently regulated with 5-Watt maximum rated output power or 10-Watt total output power. The series is available in two output configurations. The first configuration offers the traditional positive and negative output combination for analog and linear circuit loads. The second configuration offers two positive outputs, where each output may have the same or different voltages with each voltage as low as 1V or as high as 5V. The D series is designed to meet Military Standard (MIL-STD) 1547B and NASA's Electronic, Electrical and Electromechanical (EEE)-INST-002 standards, the industry's de-rating standards for EEE components stress de-rating. The converters incorporate IR's Pulse-Width Modulation (PWM) controller Integrated Circuit (IC), which integrates several circuitries to decrease overall component count. The converters weigh less than 2 ounces, and are characterized with Total Ionizing Dose (TID) of more than 50K Rad (Si), and Single Event Effect (SEE) Linear Energy Transfer (LET) of heavy ions more than 40 MeV square centimeters per milligram.

Third AEHF satellite successfully completes on orbit testing

Northrop Grumman's protected communications payload for the U.S. Air Force's third Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) satellite successfully completed on orbit testing ahead of schedule. The AEHF 3 was launched Sept. 18, 2013 on board a United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas 5 rocket, and reached its final position in geostationary orbit in January 2014. Testing involved establishing communication between combinations of EHF terminals on the ground and other terminals prepared to handle the wideband AEHF extended data rates (XDR). A series of on orbit payload tests were successfully completed in February, after which the fourth Air Force Space Operations Squadron at Schriever Air Force Base in Colo. Took over operations in March from the Space and Missile Systems Center in Los Angeles, Calif. As a result, AEHF 3 was integrated into the constellation, which provides global, highly secure communications for warfighters on the ground, in the air and by sea. The constellation includes five Military Strategic and Tactical Relay (Milstar) and three AEHF satellites, communicating via satellite-to-satellite crosslinks. Northrop Grumman provided all AEHF payloads to the prime contractor, Lockheed Martin Space Systems.

Airbus inaugurates first direct receiving station for customer GeoNorth

GeoNorth became the first client to purchase a multi-satellite Direct Receiving Station (DRS) from Airbus Defense and Space. The DRS will give access to both high-resolution and very high-resolution optical and radar satellite imagery for the Fairbanks, Alaska-based information technology custom application provider. It draws on the Spot 5, 6 and soon 7 satellites, Pléiades 1A and 1B, TerraSAR X and TanDEM X satellites, with resolutions across optical and radar products ranging from 0.25 meters to 40 meters. The GeoNorth DRS will have applications in North American markets such as oil, gas and mining, infrastructure development, fisheries and ice monitoring. It brings the number of stations to Airbus' DRS network to nearly 40, the largest worldwide. The network ensures near real-time delivery of data and services by allowing customers to downlink imagery instantly each time a satellite passes over the stations. This also frees up more memory onboard the satellites and increases acquisition capacity.

Dauria Aerospace launch of Perseus satellites successful

Dauria Aerospace successfully launched two Perseus M spacecraft into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) on June 19, 2014 aboard a Kosmotras Dnepr rocket. These two satellites will co-locate with Dauria's upcoming DX1 spacecraft and eight Perseus O imaging satellites to form the Perseus space monitoring and remote sensing constellation, which will track and monitor vessels in open seas and waterways in the U.S., Canada, Northern Europe and Russia. "Once established, the maritime segment of the constellation will provide valuable vessel traffic information to a range of users from captains and ship owners to coast guard and search and rescue services in the Northern Hemisphere," said Mikhail Kokorich, founder and president of Dauria Aerospace. Canopus Systems, a California-based affiliate of Dauria developed the satellites. They feature a proprietary microsatellite platform and experimental Automatic Identification System (AIS) payloads. The next segment of the Perseus constellation will entail a DX1 small satellite, which is scheduled to launch aboard a Soyuz 2.1B rocket from Baikonur, Russia in early July. The DX1 satellite was built in 18 months, and will also carry an AIS payload for remote sensing.

Iridium, SpaceX Finish Dispenser Qualification Tests for NEXT Satellites

Iridium and SpaceX have completed all four types of testing for the satellite dispensers to be used in launching the Iridium NEXT constellation. The testing was comprised of static loads testing, a modal survey, fit check, and separation and shock testing. The dispensers are mission-unique and serve the purpose of holding the satellites throughout the launch, followed by managing separation from the rocket. SpaceX is tasked with launching 70 Iridium NEXT satellites, carrying 10 at a time per Falcon 9 rocket to Low Earth Orbit (LEO). Gwynne Shotwell, president and COO of SpaceX said the launches are slated to begin in 2015. The seven launches are planned over a two-year period. The contract, at a value of $453.1 million, is the largest single commercial space launch contract in history. In addition to improving Iridium's bandwidth, data speeds and service, Iridium NEXT will also carry a hosted payload or Aireon's space-based Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) and serve as a platform for Iridium Prime, a turnkey solution for hosted payloads.

Raytheon Plans Tests for New Anti-Jam Waveform

Raytheon is readying for a test this month of a new protected tactical waveform for the United States government. The waveform is being developed to provide increased anti-jam satellite communications for a larger audience of military users beyond those with access to Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) satellites. "Most users are only allowed to use advanced EHF in protected areas," Brian Rodriguez, director of business development for Raytheon's Integrated Communication Systems division, told Via Satellite. "Front line tactical users cannot use it because of the risk of compromise of the strategic keys and because it is used for nuclear command and control, the waveform is classified, etc. There has been a push to see how do we provide the more anti-jam capability to advanced users [such as] Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), comms-on-the-move, manpacks and people on the front lines so that they don't have a risk of compromising those strategic keys." Raytheon demonstrated the new waveform using one of its modems on Dec. 22, 2013 on a Wideband Global Satcom (WGS) satellite.

Global Invacom Releases New FibreIRS Mark 3 GTUs and SwitchBlade Fibre-Multi-Switch Products

Global Invacom has released a new range of programmable FibreIRS Mark 3 Gateway Termination Units (GTUs) and SwitchBlade fibre-multi-switch products. The new products are based on the Romeo and Juliet chip-set. Global Invacom's FibreIRS architecture and products are designed for customers seeking to distribute satellite TV services in hotels, enterprises and Multi-Dwelling Units (MDUs). "These products are software configurable in the factory or by installers in the field to meet any of the many satellite TV frequency plans used in the world," said Malcolm Burrell, technical director, Global Invacom.

ROAMING NEWS

OECD study on impact of high telecom termination rates

A new study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), telecoms analysts has revealed the practice where governments of countries including Ghana, impose artificially high termination charges on inbound phone calls from abroad. According to the analysts, although new competition in telecoms markets has caused incoming call charges to drop sharply in most part of the world, these charges have, however, risen in a number of African and Caribbean nations. This is because a growing number of African countries have introduced a government mandated standard termination surcharge for incoming international traffic even though they have liberalized their domestic communication markets. Governments have created officially sanctioned cartels to set mandatory high rates, and have often ended up losing, rather than gaining, revenue as call volumes have dropped in response.

EU slashes mobile data roaming fees by 55 percent

The European Union says the surcharges for surfing the Internet on mobile devices while traveling across the 28-nation bloc will be more than halved. The European Commission says the new cap on the so-called roaming fees will be effective soon, just in time for the summer holiday travel season. It said the price cap for one megabyte of data use will be lowered to 20 euro cents (27 dollar cents) from 45 cents - a 55 percent drop. Phone calls and text messaging services across national borders are also getting cheaper by about 25 percent. The bloc's executive Commission - keen on being seen as helping the EU's 500 million consumers - cents. d cracking down on the fees in 2007 and seeks to abolish them altogether by 2016. Earlier, EU and South Korea announced plans to jointly research 5G mobile wireless technology. EU is hoping the Asian country's expertise will help it catch up in a field crucial for economic growth and jobs. South Korea has one of the fastest mobile broadband networks and is home to Samsung, the world's biggest smartphone maker. Europe had led the competition in GSM technology - the original standard for mobile networks - in the 1990s, but fell behind the United States and Asia in the rollout of faster 4G connections.

Italy proposes new cut to wholesale telecom fees

Italian regulator AGCOM has proposed a new to wholesale telecom fees, an official said, a move that may erode earnings at Telecom Italia which owns the bulk of Italy's phone network. The plan is to cut monthly prices Telecom Italia charges its rivals to access each line on its network to 8.66 euros for 2010, 8.91 euros for 2011 and 9.06 euros for 2012, from 9.28 euros, according to AGCOM commissioner Antonio Preto. Speaking on the sidelines of a conference, Preto said AGCOM was forced it the decision by Italy's top administrative court which asked it to review prices for maintenance services following a legal complaint by three Telecom Italia rivals. Separately Telecom Italia CEO Marco Patuano said his group would appeal against the proposed new cut, which is subject to a 30 day long consultation period. A previous decision to cut by around 6 percent access fees for 2013 reduced Telecom Italia's income by 110 million euros ($150 million) and sparked criticism by the European Commission which said the cut discouraged investment in faster networks.

National roaming plans under consideration for across the UK

According to a BBC report, Culture Secretary Sajid Javid is pushing mobile operators to facilitate 'national roaming' so mobile users can access services across alternative networks where their own network's coverage is lacking. Prime Minister David Cameron is also behind the initiative after complaining about patchy network coverage during a holiday to Cornwall last year. "This is a really big issue for people all over the country - the 'not-spots'," Prime Minister David Cameron said, according to a report by local news publication Western Morning News. "It's not good enough to say here's the mobile coverage for the whole country. You have got to recognize a lot of people are making important calls while they are on the move. We do need to improve the coverage of the mobile phone signal." A spokesperson for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) said that the government has already invested in improving mobile coverage across the whole of the UK. "The government has made clear it wants to ensure the UK has world-class mobile phone coverage as part of our investment in infrastructure for the long term economic plan," the spokesperson said. "We are investing up to £150 million to improve mobile coverage in areas where there is currently no coverage from any of the mobile network operators (MNOs). Of course we want to look at what more can be done in areas with poor coverage."

Europe cuts roaming charges, plans to eliminate them by end of next year

More European mobile operators should offer free international roaming, following the example set by U.S. operator T-Mobile, a European Commission vice president said. After enforcing a series of reductions in voice and data roaming charges across the European Union over the last four years, the latest round of which takes effect, Neelie Kroes is ready to take the ultimate step of abolishing roaming charges entirely by late 2015. She hopes to win the support of national telecommunications ministers for that by the end of this year. European mobile roamers will see a big cut in the cost of roaming, with data charges dropping 55 percent or more compared to last summer. "In 2014 we can finally say that the telco sector is getting the message about roaming," Kroes said, adding that many companies are bringing in prices and plans below the price ceiling set by the Commission. In at least six EU member states, consumers can choose mobile phone plans where roaming fees have been removed entirely, Kroes said, but went on to say that this is not enough. "It is still ridiculous in my opinion that companies in the U.S. give their customers free roaming to more than 100 countries including the EU, but European customers are still not enjoying the same opportunity," she said. Last October, U.S. operator T-Mobile introduced free data roaming in over 100 countries for customers on a Simple Choice Plan costing US$50/month or more. Calls made while roaming still cost $0.20 per minute.

PTA proposes changes in tariff calculation for bitstream access

Icelandic telecoms watchdog the Post and Telecom Administration (PTA) has submitted a draft decision to the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) regarding Mila's wholesale tariffs for bitstream access via Route Option 1 and Route Option 3. According to a press release, following a consultation on the topic which ran until 13 January 2014, the watchdog decided to make alterations to the calculations of the drafted tariff for wholesale switches. The PTA pointed out that it took into account varying use of wholesale switches, both with respect to Mila customers and to service options. Under the proposed amendments, Access Option 1 must be priced at ISK912 (USD8.02) per user, while ADSL/VDSL connection via Access Route 3 must be priced at ISK1,367 per unit. The wholesale operator is required to provide a new wholesale reference offer after a final decision is published next month; the new rates must take effect on 1 August.

Starhome Mach accelerates globalization of LTE with complete LTE roaming portfolio

Starhome Mach, the global leader in mobile inter-carrier network and clearing services, announces the availability of its complete LTE Roaming Services Portfolio at the LTE World Summit in Amsterdam. The portfolio includes everything operators require to quickly implement and deploy LTE roaming as well as products for efficiency, management, and revenue enhancement. Operators are just beginning to enable LTE roaming but the process can be slow and costly if new LTE roaming agreements are needed. Requirements such as fall back to 3G for voice calls significantly increase technical complexity and reduce quality of service. Starhome Mach's LTE portfolio is accelerating connections between networks, simplifying the technology mix, ensuring LTE roaming is readily available, and maintaining quality of the user experience. "Many operators are now completing domestic implementation and launch of LTE. Subscribers will expect their LTE service to continue when roaming, with its higher speeds and seamless quality of service," says Guy Reiffer, VP Marketing and Partnerships at Starhome Mach. "Operators will also need roaming value-added services that support LTE. We have upgraded our full suite of roaming products to ensure it is fully ready."

MTN Ghana introduces new roaming package

MTN Ghana has introduced a new roaming tariff that allows subscribers to enjoy local rates on voice, data and SMS while travelling in any of the remaining 21 countries in which MTN operates. The countries include: Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Republic, Liberia, Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), Afghanistan, Iran, Cyprus Rwanda, Botswana, South Africa, Sudan, South Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia. "Roam Like Home" is the latest in the portfolio of tariff offered by MTN Ghana to deliver more value to subscribers, a release from the company said. The service, it said, required MTN Ghana subscribers to select the MTN network while roaming. The new tariff is expected to bring relief to customers of the Talco who travel frequently to the countries mentioned to conduct business. It is also expected to impact the cost of doing business as business people who travel will have a reduced bill no matter how marginal. Commenting on the new roaming offer according to the release, the acting Chief Marketing Officer of MTN Ghana, Mr. Noel Ganson, said, "The 'Roam Like Home' offer is a bonus tariff introduced to enable our valued subscribers stay connected longer with their friends, family and business associate while travelling outside Ghana". He further explained that, "an MTN Ghana subscriber, who is charged locally per minute for on-net calls in Ghana will pay the same rate when roaming in South Africa, Nigeria or any of the 21 countries.

'National roaming' plan to tackle mobile phone blackspots

Mobile phone operators could be made to share their networks in rural areas of the UK where signals are weak under plans being considered by ministers. Some parts of rural Britain have just one or two of the main mobile phone networks available, or none at all, leaving some people without any signal. It is hoped so-called national roaming could be used to plug blackspots. However, mobile phone companies say this would remove their incentive to build more masts to improve coverage. New Culture Secretary Sajid Javid wants mobile phone companies to introduce national roaming which would allow customers to switch to an alternative network if their own was not available, as happens when they are abroad. A spokesman for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which oversees telecommunications, said the government was already spending £150m in areas with no coverage and was looking at doing more. A mobile phone industry source told the BBC the government might be able to force the big operators to share their networks using existing legislation. But the companies are likely to argue that national roaming will be a brake on their investment because there will not be an incentive to build new phone masts in remote areas if the service has to be shared.

Linktel and Accuris Networks delivering Seamless roaming for visitors at World Cup in Brazil

Visitors to Brazil cheering at the 2014 FIFA Soccer World Cup are also getting best-in-class, seamless, secure mobile phone connectivity to Wi-Fi networks through a new multi-phase partnership between Wi-Fi offload and roaming innovator Accuris Networks (www.accuris-networks.com), and telecommunications service provider Linktel (www.linktelcorp.com). It's estimated that more than half a million visitors are going to Brazil for the World Cup and those with cellular service from mobile carriers like AT&T can get instant phone service without cumbersome usernames or passwords through quick, easy connection to Wi-Fi Hotspots. The enabling technology is the award-winning AccuROAM™offload and roaming platform from Accuris Networks. In addition to this vital mobile service for visitors to Brazil, Linktel and Accuris Networks will soon be delivering Wi-Fi access to Brazilian mobile phone users travelling abroad. In the near future, the companies will also be providing much-needed local Wi-Fi offload for key enterprises and ISPs in Brazil as well as in areas that experience network congestion such as malls and metro stations. Linktel is also investing heavily in Wi-Fi networks in order to provide much needed offload solutions with Accuris Networks to the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Subscribers Hail Glo's Roaming Services in Brazil

The roaming service offered by Globacom in Brazil has been commended by Nigerian sports administrators and consultants currently in Brazil for the World Cup. Globacom had announced the launch of its prepaid roaming service in Brazil to complement its postpaid roaming hitherto available in that country. The development is expected to excite thousands of Nigerian soccer fans and tourists who have either traveled or who still intend to travel to Brazil to witness the on-going 2014 World Cup. Head of Glo Gateway, Globacom's international gateway division, Steve Stretch, said the prepaid roaming service was offered on Tim Brazil and comes at competitive rates. TIM is the largest mobile operator in Brazil with over 74 million subscribers. Stretch said with the prepaid roaming service on Tim Brazil, Glo prepaid subscribers who travel abroad for business or leisure would now be able to make and receive calls on their phones, send SMS and browse on their phones with ease. The Chairman of Pamodzi Sports Marketing Company Limited, Mike Itemuagbor who commended Glo for also launching prepaid roaming said he had enjoyed an excellent roaming service on the Glo network since he arrived in Brazil.

Azercell Telecom recalls deposit for opening roaming services

Azercell Telecom - the leader of country's telecommunication market continuing to present variety of beneficial tariffs and discounted campaigns for its subscribers this time will please everyone who is planning a summer vacation. So, as of June 13, 2014 Azercell Telecom recalled the deposit, required for opening of the roaming services. Thus, all Azercell subscribers can conveniently open the roaming line and enjoy the services during the trip abroad. Without the deposit post-paid subscribers can activate, deactivate or check the current balance by sending SMS with the relevant text (START/STOP/STATUS) to a short number 8808. Each SMS sent to this short number will cost 0,01AZN. We also would like to inform that the campaign will last between 13.06.2014 - 31.08.2014. The campaign is also open for the subscribers who have earlier paid the deposit of 150 AZN, as well as for the subscribers with the "Flat Corporate" status.

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Samsung launches MBC VOD app for Middle East smart TVs

MBC's Shahid video-on-demand (VOD) service is now available for new Samsung Smart TVs across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

MBC's VOD service Shahid.net registered 284 million views in 2013 alone. With this move, the Shahid app will allow viewers to catch up on their favorite MBC shows on Samsung's Internet connected TV sets. Both standard definition (SD) and high definition (HD) picture quality will be supported by the app, so viewers can choose the definition most suited to their broadband network and speed. "Since 2007, Shahid has made the best Arabic content available on VOD. Recent upgrades to the service have also made it easier to search and faster to watch. We're now ensuring that this popular service is accessible across different devices. So we're delighted to announce this partnership with a leading company like Samsung," said Sam Barnett, CEO, MBC Group.

Choong Ro Lee, president, Samsung Middle East and North Africa, added: "The television experience is rapidly evolving for viewers across the MENA region. We at Samsung are dedicated to create new and innovative ways to deliver best viewing experience, and with our partnership with MBC Group we will continue offering viewers the content they want, when they want in a new MENA consumer lifestyle."

Wuaki.tv takes TV App Engine to spread OTT across smart TVs

As part of its strategy to expand across TV platforms, and avoid platform fragmentation, online video provider Wuaki.tv is to use TV App Agency's TV App Engine to deploy across all major smart TVs.

Wuaki.tv believes that as competition in streaming services heats up it is essential to ensure its service reach a wide a range of supported devices so that content — including productions from major Hollywood studios Warner Bros, Disney, Sony Pictures Entertainment and Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, the BBC and ITV — can be seen on as many devices as possible. The new deal means that the free streaming online TV service owned by Japanese ecommerce giant Rakuten can launch on all the latest generation of smart TV platforms such as Samsung, LG and Panasonic. TV App Agency has also developed Wuaki.tv apps for Sony Bravia, Orange, Sony PlayStation 3 and more recently Sony PlayStation 4.

Commenting on the move, TV App Agency co-founders Bruno Pereira and Andy Eardley said: "We are really excited that Wuaki.tv has chosen to use the TV App Engine. Our original vision was to solve the issue of smart TV fragmentation; we have been using the technology ourselves for the past three years and have developed over 450 apps so far. To now have Wuaki.tv choosing to use the TV App Engine is a fantastic validation of our technology".

ATEME demos live end-to-end Ultra HD delivery chain

Video compression solutions provider ATEME has revealed that it used the recent Roland Garros tennis championship to demonstrate carrier-grade 4KTV/HEVC video encoding/transcoding.

At the 2014 French Open tournament, ATEME used its TITAN product to address the challenges of setting up a live UltraHD channel at 50 frames per second from capture to encoding and broadcast to 4KTV screens. ATEME partnered with France Télévisions, Eutelsat and the French Tennis Federation (FFT) to broadcast live, via satellite, the 2014 French Open event on an UltraHD (3840x2160) channel.
During the event, TITAN Live received live video feed from the event's 4K cameras via its 3G-SDI inputs, encoding with the HEVC codec and delivering a full single 4Kp50 stream below 30Mpbs. The feed was then uplinked on Eutelsat EUT 5WA satellite. Eutelsat's unencrypted ON AIR satellite UltraHD channel was received throughout Europe and viewed on Panasonic, Sony and Samsung 2014 generation 4KTV sets throughout the event.

Ultrafast Fibre unveils new 1Gbps offering

The New Zealand broadband network owner Ultrafast Fibre has unveiled plans to launch the country's fastest high speed internet offering yet, with a 1Gbps service due to be introduced next month. The new 'Ultra Max' product offers download at ten times the current peak speed of 100Mbps provided by Ultrafast Fibre for residential consumers. The firm says the new product will be priced at NZD65 (USD55.60) a month for its wholesale partners who are then free to set their own prices for the retail end user. A new 200Mbps tariff is also being launched at NZD55 per month wholesale. Ultrafast Fibre is deploying fibre infrastructure in eight markets in central North Island: Hamilton, Tauranga, Te Awamutu, Cambridge, Tokoroa, New Plymouth, Wanganui and Hawera. To mark the new launch, the company is renaming its network 'The Giganet'.

LIWEST upgrades router estate to meet multiscreen demands

As its customers demand better access to more content on more devices than ever before, Austrian cable operator LIWEST Kabelmedien has turned to ARRIS to enhance its bandwidth and service capacity.

In addition to claiming the country's fastest private use Internet service, LIWEST offers analogue, digital and HDTV channels in Upper Austria. By deploying the E6000 converged edge router (CER) the cable provider believes that it can deliver a 250Mbps capacity high speed Internet service to its customers and to ensure Giga-bit speeds in future. LIWEST will utilize the E6000 CER in tandem with the ARRIS TG682 cable modem/gateway, which is already widely deployed to its subscriber base. In addition to offering capacity and bandwidth expansion its also expects to make cost efficiencies at the same time.

Brazilian operators pick Aptilo for Wi-Fi offload solution

Stockholm-based Aptilo Networks, which produces systems to manage mobile data services for 3G, Long Term Evolution (LTE), WiMAX, Wi-Fi and fixed broadband networks, is reportedly working with three Brazilian operators to facilitate Wi-Fi mobile data offloading and carrier Wi-Fi services across the country. Mobile network operators TIM Brasil and Oi SA are said to be using the Aptilo Service Management Platform (SMP) to provide a carrier Wi-Fi service with mobile data offloading, while Linktel – which operates the largest independent network of hotspots in Brazil – is also using Aptilo is for carrier Wi-Fi services. Commenting on the tie-ups, Aptilo vice president of sales for Latin America, Jonas Jacobsson, said: 'Large-scale sporting events represent a significant opportunity for carriers to generate revenue and increase branding with Wi-Fi offloading ... Brazil will be host to some of the most exciting, highly anticipated sporting events, and Aptilo will be working with operators to leverage these opportunities, manage data traffic and ensure a great Wi-Fi user experience.'

UK cloud computing usage continues to rise, CIF finds

Cloud computing has officially hit the mainstream in the UK, according to the latest research published by the Cloud Industry Forum (CIF). The research, conducted in June 2014, found that more than three quarters (78%) of organisations had "formally" adopted at least one cloud-based service, which indicated a 15% growth since the last research undertaken in September 2013. Of that number, almost half (45%) use only one cloud service, while 28% use two, 13% use three and 14% use four or more, indicating a fairly solid uptake up the scale. The most popular of these services are web hosting, email, CRM, data backup and disaster recovery, with video conferencing, collaboration tools, HR apps and data storage seen as in the secondary tier. The most popular driver of cloud computing is flexibility of delivery model among the private sector (17%), while, perhaps less surprisingly, operational cost savings (21%) drive the growth of cloud in the public sector.

Arizona Homestead records from the National Archives to be digitized and made accessible online

An important project is underway that will provide unprecedented public access to the homestead records of Arizona. The goal of this initiative is to digitize the records from one of the most important eras in our Nation's history, the Homesteading Era. The preparation and digitization of the Arizona Homestead Final Certificate Case Files, held at the National Archives in Washington, DC, is underway and will soon be available to the public. The Homestead Final Certificate Land Entry Case Files, amassed by the General Land Office, were intended to ensure that those who claimed a portion of the public domain through the Homestead Act of 1862 met the requirements of this law. These records describe improvements made to the property, including houses constructed, wells dug, crops planted, trees cleared and fences built. Some case files include records of military service, evidence of naturalization, and much more.

3G/4G SERVICE IN PAKISTAN: GOING BEYOND SPECTRUM AUCTIONS

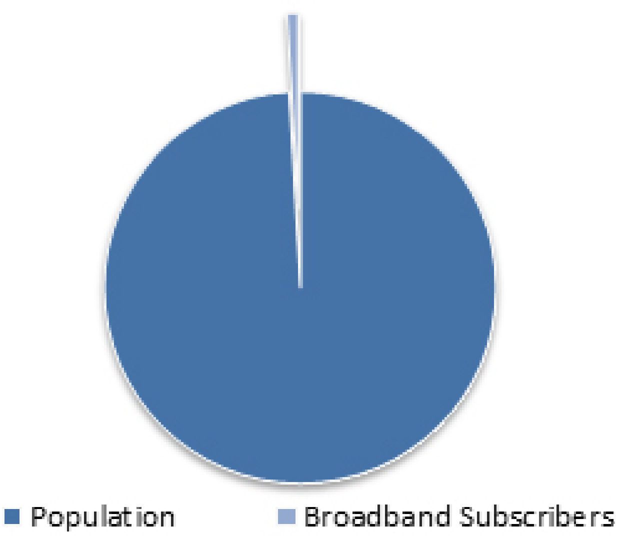
The long awaited auction of the Frequency Spectrum for Cellular Mobile Broadband Services in Pakistan finally took place last month. The auction resulted in over US$1.1 billion for the government, and opened the doors for next generation mobile broadband technology and the associated services. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority had constituted a special committee for making preparations to conduct the auction in the most possible transparent manner. The auction process was overseen by a joint professional group comprising of public sector stakeholders, including representatives of different ministries and PTA, among others.

Nonetheless, some industry expertsclaim the government sold the spectrum for comparatively lessprice then the expected, trying to make sense of these results requires the consideration of a great many factors, anyway. The timing of the auctions is important for Pakistan probably is the only country in the South Asia with no 3G cellular service. Questions that are more significant are conditions attached to the spectrum, such as coverage requirement, cost of the service, the ability to overcome the digital divide, and a lot more including its role in the socio economic development of the masses.

The demand for high speed connectivity in the country is growing at a steady rate. Today, Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become ubiquitous all over the world, with, research & development, health, education and commercial networks connecting remoteregions to the rest of the world are taking advantage of the high speed internet. In Pakistan, however, after the spectrum auction, the key point is "how soon will the masses have 3G services available to them. This is because cellular 3G service provides a more profitable path to serving rural subscribers in both developing and developed countries. For many of these customers, 3G service symbolizes the most affordable access to high-speed Internet connectivity, sometimes even the only access. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), only 15.8% of the population in developing countries has Internet access and only 22.5% have a computer. In the future, Internet access will primarily be through mobile devices, and this represents a significant opportunity for mobile operators.

The tremendous growth in Pakistan's telecom sector has attracted several big players from different regions of the world, including China Mobile, Etisalat, Telenor, Warid, Omantel and others. This has resulted in attracting huge foreign direct investments in telecoms and ICT sector of the country. With the 3G/4G spectrum auction, the industry is all set to further grow further and terms of subscribers and new technologies.

Pakistan: Potential for Broadband

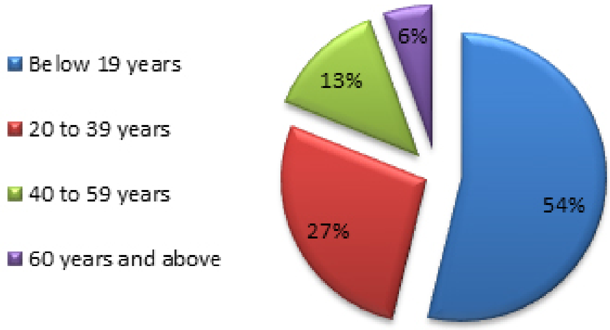


Broadly speaking, 3G service is going to set the contours of further technological progress in the time to come. Convergence of text, voice and video appears to be the most obvious and phenomenon resulting from the launch of 3G service in Pakistan.

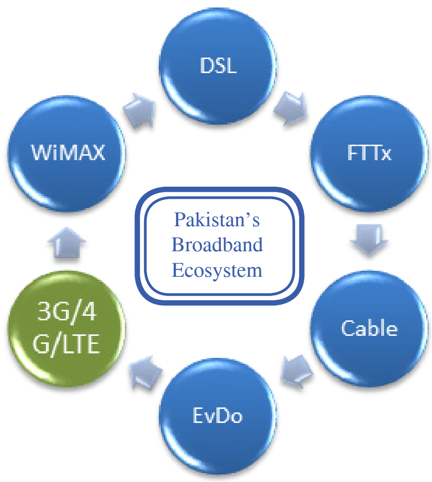
Deployment of mobilebroadband service in the country will take the broadband penetration to the next stage thereby providing services capable of generating more revenues. The introduction of 3G service will bring a revolution in the Pakistani telecoms market with the introduction of mobile broadband service by cellular operators thus opening a whole new landscape of applications for end users, and opportunities in terms of revenue streams for operators and content providers. It is believed that the country has a strong business case in terms of 3G for it has the best cellular coverage in the region with a huge subscriber base. Currently, there are more than 3.3 million broadband subscribers in the country with the number growing at a fairly good annual rate. This highlight the huge potential for mobile broadband with more than 54 percent of the population below 19 years of age, and more than 27 percent between 20 to 39 years. The telecom landscape in Pakistan has changed with the phenomenal expansion of the country's mobile market. Over the period 2002 to 2014 the number of mobile subscribers jumped from less than 2 million to more than 136 million. The overall Internet penetration is still low and broadband penetration has been negligible but during the past few year a considerable increase in the broadband subscription that will be augmented with the introduction of mobile broadband technologies as a result of the launch of 3G/4G service by the cellular operators.

At present, voice works almost ubiquitously and text messaging is all set, which leaves data.Many customers want data and think it should be available ubiquitously, too. The onset of 3G will make that happen, enabling customer to enjoy broadband service on the go, but how soon that going to happen, time is will tell.3G technologies have proven to

Market Segmentation in Terms of Potential Subscriber



be the right choice, both developed and emerging markets as it has helped operators'world over to offer gainful, multimedia and content rich services thereby considerably enriching customers' experiences.Compared with emerging markets, data ARPU is quite higher in developed nations, and the difference gets even greater in those markets where operators provide flat-rate data bundles and promote 3G. According to Pyramid Research's forecasts 71 percent of subscriptions in developed markets to use 3G handsets in 2012 compared to only 10 percent in emerging markets.



It is the cellular market that is driving the strength of Pakistan's telecom market and, in turn, it is also resulting in high levels of competition and investment as well as low tariffs and great consumer demand, which are boosting mobile growth. Pakistan has one of the highest mobile penetration rates in the region.Broadband access and wireless broadband internet has is available in the major citieswith the market showing considerable improvement in terms of growth and price reductions. Introduction of mobile broadband service will further expedite the growth resulting in the progression of overall progression of the telecoms & ICT sector.

Demand for low tariffs and maximum coverage has been constantly intensifying the competition among the cellular operators already facing a downward trend in the ARPU, specifically in terms of voice. This has resulted in operator's strategic marketing plans to be contingent on one another's marketing initiatives and is not strategically planned, which makes the rivalry even more challenging. This is evident of the fact that none of the operators who acquired the spectrum has announced 3G tariffs yet. These intense competitions between the operators force them to indulge themselves in the price war that ultimately shows its domino effect in shape of low ARPU. 3G is going to be an opportunity for these operators to overcome the challenge of falling ARPU by introducing innovative services and targeting the right segment.

The market still has the potential to attract investors, particularly in the broadband sector. What needs to be done is to take effective measures to take the broadband market to the next stage and to provide services capable generating more revenues. So, effective measures are necessary to facilitate the launch of 3G/4G in the country, particularly in the rural and remote areas where the infrastructure is limited and the cost of deployment is not economically feasible due to the possibly low ROI.

Today, over 90 percent of the country's population has access to mobile phone services all across Pakistan though the access is mostly within and around urban areas. There are still some no coverage areas in the North, North West of the country and in the Baluchistan. So CAPEX and OPEX control for these operators is emerging as one of the foremost challenge ahead. In case of 3G, the service will in the first phase be available exclusively in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta then later on in other cities from the four provinces. In the second phase the coverage will be expanded to another 80 cities and similarly, in the third phase, which will reportedly begin in about four years from now, 90 percent of all tehsil headquarters will have access to 3G services. So a common for the masses to enjoy high speed mobile broadband connectivity, they still have to wait for another 3-4 years.

Even with tremendous growth in the information technology sector over the past several years with the internet reaching almost 2000 towns and villages and the international bandwidth rates dropping by almost 90 percent, the overall ICT usage and penetration in rural and remote areas is far below when compared to the urban areas. There is very tangible national wellbeing in the development of the ICT sector in general and the world of broadband in particular all across Pakistan. This is because in today's world, high speed connectivity to the information super highway is considered as a national imperative. It is therefore the significance of the adoption of modern ICTs in rural and remote areas of the country cannot and must not be overlooked for it has to play a major role in the lives of the masses that lives in these areas. The questions that arises are that "going beyond the spectrum auctions, has all the stakeholders planned a program for the proliferation of mobile broadband to the rural areas? Has the government put inline a strategy for initiatives to be able to overcome the digital divide that exist in terms of the broadband availability?

Zakir Syed
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL
BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

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TELECOM LEADERS' SUMMIT 2014

Multi-stakeholder Discussions Key to Shaping Excellence in Cooperation in the Regional ICT Landscape

Organized by SAMENA Telecommunications Council and hosted by Huawei, The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 fostered dialogue between government, operators and Internet players amid a fast-growing broadband economy SAMENA Telecommunications Council announced a successful conclusion to the Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 which was held recently in Dubai which attracted key industry visionaries from the global and regional ICT landscape. Organized under the theme, The Rise of the Broadband Economy – Shaping Excellence in Cooperation - Government, Telecom Operators, Internet Players, and hosted by Huawei, the Summit was aimed at identifying areas of further business growth and means to sustain investment in the future through SMART regulations.

On this occasion, H.E Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development who addressed the assembled leaders focused on the subject of net neutrality and said, "Under the wise leadership of our President, H.E Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, our country values the proper use of the Internet to advance human welfare. We must be both responsive and visionary as we discover how to best use and apply modern technology in a global context. In that context, the role of compromise looms large when various parties try to reach consensus on net neutrality. Few users of the Internet are willing to tolerate anything but equal status with all other users of the Internet. We must discuss and try to understand the value of everything that is at stake in regard to net neutrality. As leaders of the telecommunications community assembled here, you have a duty to Internet users to work together through tolerance, compassion, and dialogue. I am confident that your dialogue here is fulfilling that duty and that you are acutely aware of its importance."

Speaking on this occasion, H.E Dr. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary General, ITU said, "The ICT environment is evolving at an unprecedented pace and usage data is rising at a remarkable rate. In such a fast-growing ICT landscape, the need for investments towards broadband infrastructure becomes all the more important, not only for operators but also for the Internet players as well. Regulators need

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to identify a sound regulatory framework that will work in the favour of all the stakeholders with an overall profitable return. We need to incorporate best practices with lessons learned from various countries while avoiding the same mistakes."

"The ICT market in the region is very dynamic and we are experiencing a massive rise in the industry in the Arab region in particular. Mobile broadband is the future and Middle East is already on the right track when it comes to growth and expansion in the ICT sector, with an investment opportunity of $300 billion in the region," he added.

The Summit spanned three sessions featuring discussions on various topics including Mobile Data Growth and Spectrum Needs, Convergence of Telecom, Media and OTTs - Regulating for the Future and Broadband Investment.

"In 2014, we have witnessed significant events in terms of encouraging the on-going debate on industry issues and opportunities such as the recently concluded World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in Dubai, which was very successful. The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 is another important initiative organized by the SAMENA Telecommunications Council that brings together key industry stakeholders to facilitate strong cooperation across the sector," said Mr. H.E. Mohamed Al Ghanim – DG, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), UAE.

The discussions at The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 highlighted the role of government bodies in developing investment friendly policy frameworks for broadband development, balancing the costs of broadband network upgrades and regulatory frameworks and enabling a conducive environment by reducing regulatory burdens on operators. The panellists also evaluated the evolving trends in digital governance, in addition to the significance of cooperation in digital governance space. Further, the discussions underlined the importance of a comprehensive broadband development strategy, encompassing issues such as the CAPEX (Capital Expenditure) - OPEX (Operating Expenditure) challenge and the emergence of mobile services, Internet player applications and OTT videos.

"We need a transparent dialogue with our operators so we can exchange ideas to foster growth and develop new opportunities for our digital economy, especially in an environment that is witnessing huge investments in broadband infrastructure. Currently, we are experiencing transformation in the ICT sector of the region, along with issues such as loss of data in a network, competition from OTT players and the entry of cross-border companies who are operating outside of the jurisdiction of the TRA. This leads to a new kind of a competition that we need to deal with. To overcome this, we need to facilitate discussions between operators, policy makers, regulators and private sector entities. The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 thus serves as a crucial platform that will help shape this conversation to provide us with the answers we need to move a step further into the digital world," said Mr. Bocar Ba, CEO, SAMENA Telecommunications Council.

"We are experiencing a massive rise in digital technologies with a major impact that affects the lives of every member of our society as well as corporations, governments, nations and the world as a whole. We are looking at a multi-stake holder equation now. As we move deeper into a world led by digital technologies, we need a very strong conversation between the operators, regulators as well as regional and international organizations that are setting the framework for this advancement in technology as well as our economy," said Mr. Osman Sultan, CEO, du.

"We are operating on a very fertile ground in the sense that the infrastructure that exists in the UAE is very advanced in terms of penetration of fibre optics, the penetration of smart phone and mobile technologies, etc. The two key initiatives launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, including 'Dubai Smart Government', which is in line with UAE's Vision 2020 and 'Dubai Smart City', give us the opportunity to explore new areas to experience how the new technology will create a positive impact in the lives of people. We hope that the insights from The Telecoms Leaders' Summit 2014 will help us in providing better services to the end user," he added.

"As a leading global ICT solutions provider, our role is to support our strategic partners to ensure that they can operate in the right environment. With our enhanced line-up of technologies, which fall in line with governmental smart initiatives and the anticipated transformation towards digital economies, we are able to successfully cater to the telecom, enterprise and consumer markets. Further, with our end-to-end solutions and global expertise driven by our R&D, we are always keen on collaborating with key industry players to drive the development agenda of not only the telecom sector, but also the overall regional ICT industry," said Mr. Ihab Ghattas, Assistant President, Huawei Middle East.

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The panels discussed the significance of the evolving trends in digital governance, in addition to the importance of cooperation in digital governance space. Key panellists and attendees of The Telecom Leaders' Summit 2014 comprised a strong line-up of company heads, officials and ministers including His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development, UAE; His Excellency Mohamed Al Ghanim, DG, TRA, UAE; Dr. Amr Badawi, Board Member, NTRA – Egypt; Dr. Nasser Marafih, CEO, Ooredoo Group and Chairman of Board of Directors, SAMENA Telecommunications Council; Mr. Shi Yaohong, President, Huawei Middle East; His Excellency Dr. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary General, ITU; Mr. John Giusti, Head of Public Policy, GSMA; Mr. Luigi Gambardella, Executive Chairman, ETNO; Mr. Osman Sultan, CEO, du; His Excellency Abdelaziz bin Abdullah Al- Sugair, Chairman, STC Group; Mr. Scott Gegenheimer, CEO, Zain Group and Dr. Amer bin Awadh Al-Rawas, CEO, Omantel.

The debate also highlighted the need for building a sustainable internet business model to be able to effectively rollout broadband to boost the digitization wave in the region. Telecom markets in the SAMENA region are approaching saturation level and the revenue growth appears to be a challenge for the service providers. Following the world-wide technological development, industry evolution, and its continuously increasing contribution to the telecoms & ICT sector of the region, SAMENA is committed to focus on the Internet policy dynamics, digitization and broadband investment policies, and aims to support investment & investor friendly policies as well as cooperation among industry stakeholders.

TELECOM LEADERS SUMMIT: TESTIMONIALS

Mr. Charles Ding

Senior Vice President Public Affairs & Communications for the Middle East, Africa & the United States

“ The Middle East presents a flourishing ICT landscape, one in which the opportunities are only surpassed by the ambitions of government leaders as well as companies working within the sector today. Huawei is one of these companies and we are privileged to support the development of the telecom industry in the SAMENA region. The industry has witnessed significant change in recent years. Changes that have allowed Huawei to exceed the expectations for a better connected world and a quickly developing regional economy. In places like the Gulf, we have already seen this taking hold with many smart city and smart government initiatives being announced – a trend that will no doubt increase. ”

Mr. Shi Yaohong

President, Huawei Middle East

“ The Telecom Leader’s Summit brought together industry heads, operator leaders, regulators and Ministries to discuss how a cooperative approach could help address the untapped emerging business opportunities created as a result of an evolving ICT industry.

Acting as a collaborative platform, the event gave us the opportunity to work closely with government and private organizations to support the development of the telecommunication and ICT industry in the Middle East, utilizing our global expertise.

At Huawei we pride ourselves as a frontline contributor to the advancement of the region’s broadband economy, so headlining this important leader’s summit was a perfect fit for our business. It provided an open forum for leaders to exchange ideas, collaborate on industry issues and make significant progress that will help drive change for telecommunications in the Middle East. ”

Mohammad Omran Al Shamsi
Chancellor, Higher Colleges of Technology, UAE

“I was delighted to participate in the last Samena Council Leader's Summit 2014. Rich and candidate discussion on issues relating to the industry was very relevant. I am sure that leaders attending the conference left better equipped to conduct their business and handle both challenges and opportunities.

Meeting many friends and colleagues was another benefit where we discussed means of utilizing the knowledge we gained over our business life in enhancing prosperity and development of our societies. Thank you.”

Rashid Abdulla
CEO, Batelco, Bahrain

“Thank you for organizing this major event very professionally with wonderful hospitality.
I believe the event was very informative, addressed issues of major concern to our industry, and the idea to invite government officials and regulators was excellent to jointly share and understand our viewpoints. Last but not least wonderful experience of networking among members and stakeholders. Thank you.”

Scott Gegenheimer
CEO, Zain Group

“The recent SAMENA Leaders event held in Dubai was a worthwhile gathering of regional industry leaders, which helped us all focus on the priorities our industry faces at this point in time. I was impressed by the quality of the participants, and the frank, insightful exchanges that occurred during the gathering.”

Walid Irshaid
President & CEO, PTCL

“The Leaders' Summit was a very well executed top-level event that managed to bring together the industry's preeminent leaders, government officials, CEOs, policy makers, and major stakeholders to focus on some of the most critical and pressing needs of our time. The agenda and the contents of the discussions were high in quality and were very relevant to what is being done in this region to take broadband to the next level.”

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