

Vol: 01  
Issue: 14  
December 16-31, 2009  
Issue Date: January 10, 2010



**REGIONAL ISSUES**

## SAMENA COUNTRIES

**Afghanistan** **Chairman: Mr. Zakria Hassan** info@atra.gov.af  
www.atra.gov.af  
[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)]

- ◆ No recent developments, including regulatory actions, issuance of licenses or policy frameworks, have been made public in the news/newsletters or on the regulator's website.

**Algeria** **Chairperson: Ms. Zohra Derdouri** info@arpt.dz  
www.arpt.dz  
[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]

- ◆ Internet users and cyber-cafe owners in Algeria are concerned that a proposed internet-filtering system would boost online security but limit privacy and hinder connectivity. The Algerian government has proposed the centralized system to monitor all internet communications, ostensibly to prevent terrorists from hacking websites and committing other acts of piracy. Access to pornographic websites would also be restricted under the new system. Minister of Post, Information and Communication Technologies said in a parliamentary statement that the proposed filtration centre would act as a gateway by monitoring information flows in and out of Algeria. (December 16, 2009)

**Bahrain** **General Director: General Director** www.tra.org.bh  
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

- ◆ Bahraini incumbent Batelco launched ADSL broadband package with download speeds up to a maximum 16Mbps. The telco previously increased its downlink speed cap from 2Mbps to 10Mbps in June 2009. (December 16, 2009)

**Bangladesh** **Chairman: Brig Gen Zia Ahmed** btrc@btrc.gov.bd  
www.btrc.gov.bd  
[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]

- ◆ The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission sees no legal barrier to Bharti Airtel picking up 70 per cent in Warid Telecom. The commission secretary, in an email communication to Financial Chronicle told that according to the provisions of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act, there is no legal bar on transferring shares of the company with the prior approval from the commission. This is the Indian company's second bid to buy up a foreign telecom operator, after a failed attempt for a merger deal with South Africa's MTN. Over four months of 'exclusive talks' and two extensions, the proposed \$24 billion Bharti-MTN deal foundered on regulatory hurdles. The Bangladesh Regulator has sought details from Warid on the proposed stake sale to Bharti. The Regulator is also likely to meet Bharti and Warid officials and have asked for some information and documents relating to the sale. The commission will examine these and will take a decision. The commission's move comes after the Dhabi group, which fully owns Warid, sought approval for going ahead with the deal. (December 18, 2009)
- ◆ The No.1 Indian telco Bharti Airtel may be looking to buy Bangladesh's Warid Telecom, indicating a shift in focus to smaller targets after talks for a \$24 billion merger with South Africa's MTN failed. Bharti is set to buy a 70% stake in Warid, Bangladesh's fourth-biggest telecom company, the Chairman Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission said. The UAE-based Dhabi Group, which controls Warid Telecom, sought approval from the Regulatory Commission for the sale. Bharti initially intended to invest \$300 million, but a written proposal put forward by Dhabi did not mention the value of the deal. It is reported that the deal could be worth \$900 million. (December 16, 2009)

**Egypt** **Executive President: Dr. Amr Badawi** info@ntra.gov.eg  
www.ntra.gov.eg  
[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]

- ◆ According to the Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Centre, the total number of mobile phone subscribers in the country had dropped to 52.978 million in October, Reuters has reported. More than a million accounts had been created every month since late last year, but some 450,000 accounts had been closed during the month, the centre said. (December 22, 2009)



- ◆ National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA) has said if Orascom Telecom Holding sells its stake in Mobinil to France Telecom, finding a local partner will be mandatory. NTRA also said that it agreed with France Telecom on an Egyptian representation in Mobinil. France Telecom and Orascom Telecom Holding, Mobinil's two largest shareholders, have been in a months-long dispute about their stakes in Mobinil. The Egyptian Financial Supervisory Authority said that it had approved an offer from France Telecom's unit Orange Participations. It offered 245 Egyptian pounds (\$44.42) for Mobinil's outstanding shares. (December 16, 2009)
- ◆ Egypt's Telecommunications Ministry is planning to announce a \$1 billion project to boost broadband access to attract off shoring industries. The strategy will include plans to increase broadband usage four times in the next four years, to 4 million households. The plan is likely to be announced in the first quarter of 2010. Egypt will invest in a combination of wireless, wired and mobile services in both rural and urban areas. Egypt, with 77 million people, has invested in international broadband cables that will help increase the capacity coming into the country from the current 60 gigabits a second. The benefits will start coming on line in the second half of 2010. (December 16, 2009)

**Iran** **President & Deputy Minister: H. E. Khusravi Mahmoud**  
[Communication Regulatory Authority (CRA)]

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www.cra.ir

- ◆ Iran and Russia signed four agreements in the telecommunications sector at the 8th meeting of their joint economic and trade commission in Tehran (December 8, 2009).

**Iraq** **CEO: Dr. Siyamend Zeid Othman**  
[Communication & Media Commission (CMC)]

enquiries@cmc.iq  
www.cmc.iq

- ◆ A two day conference to highlight the huge business potential and opportunities for broadband in Iraq was held in London. The conference focused on 'integrating business and technology in Iraq'. It also tackled the topic of foreign investment into the telecommunications sector and the opportunities that the country creates to offer a stable investment environment. The conference gathered all the Iraqi telecommunications stakeholders, like service providers, vendors, regulators and government representatives who actively participated and contributed to lively and open debates. Amongst the critical topics discussed in event were the main achievements of the Iraqi Telecom Regulator 'Communication and Media Commission' in developing regulatory rules and procedures according to international standards. (December 7, 2009)

**Jordan** **Chairman & CEO: Dr. Ahmad Hiasat**  
[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

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www.trc.gov.jo

- ◆ Orange, a subsidiary of Jordan Telecom Group (JTG), has requested an extension from the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to implement 3G service, as it had not received the required frequencies. However, the regulator rejected Orange's claims, stressing that 3G frequencies have been extended in the locations where Orange has decided to launch the service in initial stages, and there is no reason for extending the deadline or delaying the launch of the service. (December 16, 2009)

**Kuwait** **Director of International Relations & Information: Mr. Walid Hamad El Giran**  
[Ministry of Communication(MOC)]

www.moc.kw

- ◆ The third-largest Arab telecom operator by market value Kuwait's Mobile Telecommunications Co (Zain) expects to generate \$8.2 billion in revenue in 2009. Zain made revenue of US\$7 billion in 2008. The Company's income in 2009 has been hit by rising costs of operations in the likes of Saudi Arabia and Ghana, and foreign currency exchange rates. Operations in Saudi Arabia and Ghana have impacted income by about US\$300 million and foreign currency fluctuations have affected revenue by about \$700-\$900 million. (December 9, 2009)

**Lebanon** **Chairman & CEO: Dr. Kamal S. Shehadi**  
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

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www.tra.gov.lb

- ◆ The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority with the support of the Cyber crime and Intellectual Property Bureau undertook field detection in several areas in Lebanon to identify sources of interference on the frequencies of cellular networks and service providers networks. Interference sites have been identified in Ashrafieh, Furn el Chebbak and on the main road leading to the Beirut International Airport where the devices causing interference have been confiscated. (December 10, 2009)

## Libya

[General Department of Communication (GCD)]

www.gcd.ly

- Etisalat has revealed that the company expects to be awarded Libya's third GSM license later this month. The firm is also reportedly interested in expanding to the Lebanese market and is waiting for privatization in Lebanon and would like to take a majority stake in one of the existing two operators there. Libya's General Telecommunication Authority launched the license tender on February 16, 2009 with a view to having named a winner the following June; however interest in the concession only gathered pace in July. Etisalat lodged its bid for the license on July 21, 2009, revealing its intentions to expand operations across North Africa. (December 9, 2009)

## Morocco

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

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www.anrt.net.ma

- Research and Markets has announced a new report, '4Q09 Morocco Mobile Operator Forecast, 2009-2013'; the forecast provides over 50 operational and financial metrics for Morocco's wireless market. The publisher provides five-year forecasts at the operator level looking towards 2013, as well as providing quarterly historical and forecast data, starting in 1Q2003 and ending in 2Q2011. Operators covered for Morocco include Maroc Telecom SA, Meditel, and Wana. Subscriber growth, the report notes, is slowing down in Morocco's wireless market, despite growth of 16.1% as an industry average in 2Q09. ARPU levels, which continue to decline in Morocco, are also a problem; an average ARPU growth in 2Q09 cannot disguise low consumer spending. Negative EBITDA growth by Maroc Telecom and Meditel in 3Q09 does not help. As far as forecasts are concerned, the authors believe total wireless subscribers in Morocco will reach 35.9 million in 2013. By this time, Maroc Telecom will continue to be the largest wireless carrier in Morocco, with 16.8 million subscribers in 2013. Meditel will remain in second place (12.6 million subscribers in 2013) while Wana will be third largest (6.5 million in 2013). (December 15, 2009)

## Nepal

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

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www.nta.gov.np

- The Nepal Telecommunication Authority has extended the deadline for the Submission of Expression of Interest on the consultancy services for 'Radio Frequency Radiation Health Hazards from Mobile Services' till January 7, 2009. (December 22, 2009)

## Oman

**Chairman: Mr. Mohammad Al Khasibi**  
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

traoman@tra.gov.om  
www.tra.gov.om

- Telecommunication Regulatory Authority has imposed a fine of R 100,000 (US\$ 259,700) on Nawras for not concluding an interconnect agreement with Injaz to provide resale services. The Regulator has also directed the Nawras to conclude this agreement within fifteen days. (December 17, 2009)

## Pakistan

**Chairman: Dr. Muhammad Yaseen**  
[Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA)]

chairman@pta.gov.pk  
www.pta.gov.pk

- The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority issued show-cause notices to all five Cellular Operators over substandard service quality. The Operators had earlier been asked to improve their network after a Quality of Service (QoS) survey found their performance not up to the set standards. However, despite passage of reasonable time, all cellular operators failed to achieve the desired results and as a result, the PTA issued show-cause notices to all cellular operators for failing to maintain the quality as per the license conditions. The QoS survey included quality of voice and SMS in 14 cities of Pakistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Northern Areas as well as all major highways. The exercise was conducted by the PTA's enforcement teams with the latest automated QoS equipment. The PTA had been conducting such surveys throughout the last year and shared results of first three quarters with the operators with directions to improve their services. The final comprehensive survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2009. Talking about survey results, PTA Chairman Dr. Muhammad Yaseen said ensuring provision of quality services to the telecom consumers had always been a priority of the authority. (December 18, 2009)
- The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority Chairman announced that the regulator has completed a survey to check quality of service of the fixed line incumbent operator Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited and the findings will be released soon. (December 17, 2009)
- The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority is closely working with the State Bank of Pakistan on the draft of 'third party mobile banking regulations' which would be finalized soon. It would connect all banks of the country through cellular operators for mobile transactions. The primary objective of the collaboration was to

develop a unified regulatory framework to facilitate telecom and bank customers at the same time. (December 17, 2009)

**Palestine** **Minister: Dr. Youssef Mahmoud Hamid**  
[Ministry of Telecom & Information Technology (MTIT)]

[www.mtit.gov.ps](http://www.mtit.gov.ps)

- No recent developments, including regulatory actions, issuance of licenses or policy frameworks, have been made public in the news/newsletters or on the regulator's website.

**Qatar** **Executive Director: Mr. William Fagan**  
[The Supreme Council of information and Communication Technology ictQATAR]

[info@ict.gov.qat](mailto:info@ict.gov.qat)  
[www.ict.gov.qat](http://www.ict.gov.qat)

- A Qatari delegation headed by Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology, ictQATAR, participated in the first GCC e-Government Conference held in Muscat. The conference provided a platform for closer cooperation and coordinated strategic policymaking to ensure that the benefits of eGovernment are felt across the GCC region. The conference created a platform for GCC eGovernment authorities to share their experiences, discuss the challenges of implementing eGovernance, agree on the priority of eServices provided in the GCC, and explore ways of linking eGovernment portals of member states. (December 23, 2009)

**Saudi Arabia** **Governor: Dr. Abdulrahman Bin Ahmed Al-Jaafari**  
[Communication & Information Technology Commission (CITC)]

[Info@citc.gov.sa](mailto:Info@citc.gov.sa)  
[www.citc.gov.sa](http://www.citc.gov.sa)

- Mobily is testing its upcoming Digital Video Broadcast to Handheld (DVB-H) service. The company is trying out broadcasting eight popular satellite TV channels in Jeddah, in a joint trial with the Ministry of Culture & Information. Mobily claims that its customers in Jeddah can now receive live feeds of Saudi TV's Channel 1 and Sport, MBC's 1, 2 and 3, Alarabiya news channel, CNBC Arabic and children's favorite Spacetoon in high definition. The company expects the project to be its next runaway hit. The trial service will not be available to subscribers of other operators. (December 22, 2009)
- The Communications and Information Technology Commission has announced that the number of mobile phone subscriptions reached 41.1 million at the end of September 2009, up from 33.6 million a year earlier. As mobile penetration exceeded 160%, the Regulator revealed that over 85% of all subscriptions were to pre-paid deals, allowing consumers to own multiple SIMs and patronize whichever of the country's three operators represents the best deal at any given time. Meanwhile the broadband market continues to develop, with 1.98 million customers at the end of September 2009, 1.24 million of which were contracted to DSL-based services, while the remainders were subscribed to WiMAX and HSPA networks. The CITC estimated that 31 out of 100 households across the kingdom had access to broadband services at the same date. Fixed line subscription remained stable in the nine months ended 30 September 2009, with 4.1 million accesses in service and teledensity at 16.3%. (December 21, 2009)

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

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[www.trc.gov.lk](http://www.trc.gov.lk)

- The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority plans to allocate frequencies for Long Term Evolution (LTE) mobile broadband services alongside additional WiMAX frequencies next month. Dialog Telekom, the island's mobile market leader, has indicated its interest in the '4G' frequencies to be offered. Mobile WiMAX licenses are set to be awarded to two new data operators with the aim of commencing operations by February. India's Reliance Communications, which lost out to fellow Indian firm Bharti Airtel in Sri Lanka's fifth mobile license auction, still remains interested in entering the island's mobile sector via a joint venture with existing Sri Lankan broadband and IDD telephony provider Electroteks, named RTEC Mobile Lanka. Meanwhile, 3.5GHz band WiMAX Broadband Wireless Access frequency licenses are already held by Dialog Telekom, Lanka Bell, Suntel and Sri Lanka Telecom. (December 22, 2009)
- A global rating agency Fitch has assessed the telecom regulatory risk environment across seven markets that it covers in South and South East Asia, as part of an Asia-Pacific wide study. The study revealed that these markets were divergent in terms of regulatory risk, with Malaysia at the low end of the spectrum and Sri Lanka scoring the highest. The total regulatory risk score for each market is derived based on three major sub-categories, namely Political & Social Policy Risk, Industrial Policy Risk, and Inability of Ownership/Management to Offset Regulatory Risk. In the case of Malaysia and Singapore, well-developed and mature regimes remain broadly supportive of the entrenched players, underpinning low-to-medium-risk scores in Malaysia, and medium-risk scores in Singapore. The two largest operators in the Philippines also exhibit medium-risk scores, as the relatively inactive regime has facilitated little change to the industry structure, and thereby remains slanted in favor of the major operators. Meanwhile, Political and Social Policy

risks in Sri Lanka are amongst the highest in the region, and therefore a major adverse rating factor for the country's operators. Sri Lanka's high regulatory risk score reflects insufficient transparency in the regulatory process combined with the regulator's strong connection with the political framework. (December 22, 2009)

- ♦ Telecommunications Regulatory Commission is looking at setting an interconnection rate of around 60 cents a minute for mobile operators from February next year. Sri Lanka telecom sector was gripped in a deadly price war after the regulator approved the entry of a fifth operator, India's Bharti Airtel. Existing operators started a street fight even before Airtel launched its operations. Sri Lanka now has a 'sender keeps all' interconnection regime which the larger operators claim is allowing smaller firms to 'dump' calls for termination in their networks, which have larger customer bases. Interconnection rate at 60 cents per minute would also effectively set a 'floor' price per minute. The celco war has also hit fixed access operators, with some users disconnecting phones following a trend seen in more developed markets earlier. (December 16, 2009)
- ♦ Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Chairman announced that Sri Lanka Telecom, Dialog Telekom, India's Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd and Sweden's Ericsson, are among the firms in the running to get a fiber-optic backbone for the island and deal will be awarded by April 2010. TRC is now in process of evaluating expressions of interest received from a number of companies. The qualified companies will be issued detailed documents early next year, to submit the final bid. The project will cost about 150 million US dollars and is a vital link in building fiber to the home (FTTH) facilities in the island. The winning firm will also get a 12.5 million US dollars subsidy from the World Bank's e-Sri Lanka project. (December 16, 2009)

**Sudan** **Director General: Mr. Abbas Arabi Abdalla**  
[National Telecommunication Commission (NTC)]

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www.ntc.org.sd

- ♦ No recent developments, including regulatory actions, issuance of licenses or policy frameworks, have been made public in the news/newsletters or on the regulator's website.

**Syria** **Minister: H. E. Dr. Imad Sabouni**  
[Ministry of Communication & Technology (MoCT)]

www.moct.gov.sy

- ♦ Etisalat is eyeing telecom license in Syria in line with its strategy to expand business through overseas acquisitions, a top company executive said. Jamal Al Jarwan, chief executive officer, International Investments at Etisalat told reporters that Syria will invite bids for a third GSM license. This presents an opportunity for Etisalat to buy a stake, preferably a majority stake. (December 9, 2009)

**Tunisia** [National Telecommunication Commission (INTT)]

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www.intt.tn

- ♦ Boosting Tunisian-Italian ICTs co-operation at enterprise-level is the main theme discussed during the meeting held between Communication Technologies Minister and Italian National Democratic Association for Social Actions (ENDAS) chairman who is on a working visit in Tunisia. The Minister pointed out the special interest Tunisia takes in developing Tunisian-Italian co-operation in ICTs field. Chairman ENDAS highlighted importance of digital activities to further reinforce co-operation between associations operating in ICTs sector, on the one hand, and ENDAS, on the other. (December 10, 2009)

**Turkey** **Chairman & CEO: Dr. Tayfun Acarer**  
[Information & Communication Technologies Authority]

tacarar@btk.gov.tr  
www.tk.gov.tr

- ♦ According to a report by Dow Jones Newswires, Russian tycoon Alisher Usmanov has petitioned the Ministry of IT and Communications (MinSvyaz) in an attempt to get the state to block the proposed merger of Turkcell and MegaFon. Usmanov, whose holding company AF Telecom owns almost a third of MegaFon, asked a legal consultancy to write a letter to MinSvyaz arguing that the combination of Alfa Group and TeliaSonera's respective stakes in Turkcell and Megafon would break Russia's law on strategic sectors, since the Swedish and Finnish governments would hold a controlling influence in the new company. As reported by CommsUpdate on 12 November 2009, Alfa and TeliaSonera announced plans to merge the cellcos in an attempt to resolve ongoing legal disputes over the ownership of Turkcell which have persisted since 2005, when Turkcell shareholder Cukurova Holding reneged on an exclusivity agreement with the Swedish firm to sell shares to Alfa. (December 14, 2009)

**UAE** **Director General: Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim**  
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

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www.tra.gov.ae

- ♦ Fulfilling its strategic mission in developing and enhancing the performance and quality of service delivery to the telecom and IT sectors in the UAE and best serve the country and its residents, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority concluded a series of internal workshops in sustainable excellence as part of the



Authority's Capacity Building Program in the fields of excellence and organizational development. The workshops started on November 9th, 2009 and took place in the emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. (December 21, 2009)

- ♦ The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority hosted the first Arab group meeting entrusted with the preparations for the Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-10) to take place in Mexico 2010. The meeting, attended by 14 Arab delegations in addition to the representative of the League of Arab States and the representative of the Technical Communications Bureau of the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council. (December 20, 2009)
- ♦ Etisalat has connected more than 665,000 households and has reached the final stage of completion of its FTTH connectivity in Abu Dhabi. The project is scheduled to be completed by end of this year, it added. With eLife connecting all the households in Abu Dhabi, the city will become the world's first 100 per cent FTTH-connected capital. Etisalat is also in the process of connecting Dubai, Sharjah with eLife and aims to connect every household in the UAE by 2011. (December 16, 2009)

## Yemen

**Minister: Eng. Kamal Hossain Al-Jabry**

[Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology (MOT&IT)]

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- ♦ The Yemeni Cabinet approved the National Table of Frequency Allocations submitted by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, which has been prepared in accordance with the International Table of Frequency Allocations and conditions attached thereto contained in the Radio Regulations issued by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (December 9, 2009)

# REGIONAL ISSUES



*Sources: MOJ News Agency, Dow Jones News, Arabianbusiness News, Zawya.com, Algeria.com, Emirates News Agency, Propakistan.com, The New Vision, The National, Thedailystar.net, Lebanon, MENA News Agency, Daily Al Anbaa, Daily Star, Reuters.com, Al Qabas, Telegeography.com, Gulf Times, Commsday, SAMENA's news archives, Industry News and Newsletters, Regulatory Bodies' websites and Press Releases.*



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