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REGIONAL ISSUES

ACHIEVING UBIQUITOUS BROADBAND NETWORKS

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Diplomat Radisson Blu Hotel, Spa & Resort

Manama, Bahrain

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هيئة تنظيم الاتصالات
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

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SAMENA COUNTRIES

Afghanistan **Chairman: Mr. Zakria Hassan**
[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)]

info@atra.gov.af
www.atra.gov.af

- ✦ 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**
[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (RAPT)]

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- ✦ Anonymous mobile telephone SIMs have now been classified as "sensitive equipment" in Algeria. The new regulation aims to prevent misuse of telephony services to conduct terrorist attacks in the country. About 95 attacks have reportedly been carried out over the last three years using anonymous SIMs. (January 03, 2010)

Bahrain **Chairman & Acting General Director: Dr. Mohammed Al Amer**
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

www.tra.org.bh

- ✦ The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority has reported that Bahrain had scored the 1st position in the Middle East and the 19th position globally, moving from 46th position in 2008 in the telecommunications Infrastructure index. This information appeared in the United Nations' e-Government Readiness report of 2010. TRA's Chairman and Acting General Director praised the industry achievement and said the "recognition is a direct result of the vision of HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa the Crown Prince, the guidance of HE Shaikh Ahmed bin Ateyatala Al Khalifa Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Minister responsible for telecommunications sector and the dedicated work of TRA team in encouraging infrastructure investment that supports the delivery of wider range of telecommunications services. I would like to thank all licensed operators for their investment and for putting faith in us." (January 13, 2010)
- ✦ The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority recently announced a number of activities related to the management of the radio frequency spectrum and to the reduction of carbon footprint and to extend its environmental awareness policy. The TRA is aiming to making better use of its website to take its activities forward. The 2009 revised National Frequency Plan (NFP) has recently been approved by the government, detailing the radio frequency bands available in the Kingdom for the various categories of radio communications services, as defined by the International Telecommunication Union. (January 05, 2010)
- ✦ The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority has promulgated a regulation requesting licensees to implement lawful access to all public communications systems. (January 01, 2010)

Bangladesh **Chairman: Brig Gen Zia Ahmed**
[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]

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- ✦ The Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has issued draft licensing guidelines for two new submarine cable licenses. The 20-year licenses will permit construction and operation of undersea cables into the country, cable landing stations and a terrestrial fiber link to the Dhaka region. Ownership by foreign investors has been capped at 40% only. The concessions include the right to sell or lease capacity to domestic holders of international voice/internet gateway licenses as well as to authorized international private leased circuit (IPLC) users. The fee for the license has been set to US\$7.2 million. (January 14, 2010)
- ✦ The Bangladesh Telecommunications and Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has announced that the guidelines for 3G licensing will be completed by June 2010. A number of major international telecoms companies have already indicated their interest, including Vodafone Group, which has approached the regulator for permission to apply for a license. India's Airtel also seems likely to place a bid, as its proposed offer for a majority stake in the Bangladeshi mobile operator, Warid Telecom, recently received the regulatory approval for a 70% stake worth US\$300 million. (January 07, 2010)

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

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www.ntra.gov.eg

- ✦ An Egyptian court has ruled in favor of Orascom Telecom in its bid to block France Telecom from buying outstanding shares of its mobile unit, Mobinil. The court ruling follows the Egyptian regulator's December-2009 approval of an offer from France Telecom to buy a 28.75 percent stake in Mobinil. Orascom appealed the December ruling, which valued each share at US\$45.05. France Telecom had made three previous offers to buy the stake in Mobinil, but all were rejected by the regulator. (January 13, 2010)
- ✦ Egyptian mobile operator Mobinil has denied recent claims that it is late in paying the January installment for its 3G license, and that the payment will be made once spectrum and other information relating to the concession are received by it. The payment in question is worth US\$138 million). (January 13, 2010)

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

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- ✦ The Iranian judicial authorities have banned a large number of websites, including those deemed immoral. Websites containing materials "contrary to security and social peace" as well as those seen by the authorities as "hostile to government officials and institutions" or bound to lead to "crimes" are also banned. According to the list published in several Tehran newspapers, anyone found guilty of using such websites could be jailed for several years in line with a law on Internet offences passed in the parliament more than a year ago. Internet users are also prohibited from posting articles that violate the religious sentiment. (January 07, 2010)

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

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www.cmc.iq

- ✦ Iraqi state owned Operator has sealed a US\$445 million agreement to establish a landing point for submarine fiber-optic cable in Iraq with Qatar-based submarine cable operator Gulf Bridge International (GBI). The agreement forms the first in a series of Landing Party Agreements that the Doha-based cable operator is expected to sign this year. The government believes that the project will support development in all sectors in Iraq through the establishment of communications network and contribute toward reducing the digital divide. It will also help in forging closer economic and IT ties with the Gulf States.
- ✦ The government of Iraq has entered into talks with local mobile operators over the launch of a fourth cellular network in the country. The news follows the MoC's earlier announcement in July 2009 that plans were underway to set up and license a mixed public and private sector company to provide mobile services in Iraq. The fourth license has so far been retained by the MoC. (January 06, 2010)

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

trc@trc.gov.jo
www.trc.gov.jo

- ✦ The Telecommunication Regulatory Commission has approved the revised version of the Instructions for Implementing the Quality of Service (QoS) Framework in Jordan. (January 07, 2010)

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

www.moc.kw

- ✦ The Ministry of Communications (MoC) has established a committee to oversee the updating of telephone services subscribers' data. The government body has explained that subscribers can update their data at their local Private Branch Exchange (PBX) offices without having to visit the ministry's headquarters. (January 14, 2010)

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

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www.tra.gov.lb

- ✦ The Lebanese government has decreed that mobile service providers in the country must prevent the deterioration of their services or face regulatory actions by the ministry. The government has become more focused in ensuring better QoS in the market. (January 13, 2010)
- ✦ The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority in coordination with the National Media Council and with the support of the Cyber Crime and the Intellectual Property Rights (part of the Juridical Police force) undertook a campaign to stop illegal FM stations using unlicensed radio frequencies. The joint statement issued has declared that the search started from North Lebanon where the working team stopped several unlicensed FM radio stations operating and illegally using radio frequencies. This search campaign will continue throughout Lebanon. (January 12, 2010)

- ◆ The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority has issued a press release about the searches and seizures performed on illegally operating service providers and distribution networks, which have caused major interference on the microwave links and are using frequencies without authorization. (January 01, 2010)

Libya

[General Department of Communication (GCD)]

www.gcd.ly

- ◆ 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.

Morocco

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

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www.anrt.net.ma

- ◆ The Plenary Meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Regulators Group (EMERG) was held in Rabat, Morocco on January 13, 2010. The purpose of this meeting was to enhance collaboration between EMERG members, to promote a coordinated synergy between MEDA and ERG telecommunication's regulators and to encourage bilateral assistance on some relevant regulatory issues. (January 13, 2010)

Nepal

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

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www.nta.gov.np

- ◆ Nepal Telecom (NT) has so far refused to return the 2.4 MHz spectrum as was requested by NTA. The operator has maintained that the frequencies are necessary for NT's service quality and that it is not in a position to return the frequency. The NTA recently requested that NT return 4.2 MHz of its current bandwidth within three months and other temporary frequencies within a year, but in the wake of NT's failure to respond, the regulator has decided, instead, to stop the operator from using the 2.4 MHz spectrum altogether. Currently, NT is using a total of 45 MHz bandwidth, a figure that industry watchers say is unnecessary and is almost double the bandwidth that the operator actually needs. (January 13, 2010)
- ◆ The Nepal Telecommunication Authority extended the date for the submission of expression of interest "to conduct a study on current Nepalese mobile telecommunications market and advise on the necessity or otherwise of an additional mobile operator" to January 19, 2010. (January 12, 2010)
- ◆ Nepal Telecom (NT) has claimed that people operating illegal voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) channels are costing it up to US\$8.38 million per annum in lost revenues. Nearly 20 points located in the Kathmandu Valley have been found to be operating illegally. However, the state is clamping down on the process and NT hopes to recover some losses. Only licensed companies can operate VoIP services in Nepal, subject to tax by the state. Illegal VoIP providers earn between US\$8 and US\$12 per minute per call. (January 08, 2010)

Oman

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

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www.tra.gov.om

- ◆ Privately-owned Omani company Injaz International Telecommunications has signed a strategic partnership agreement with telecoms operator Nawras to launch mobile services over the latter's wireless network in Oman. The company aims to provide the Omani market with innovative products and services supported by its sister company Al Makhah, which is the largest SIM distribution channel in the country. (January 11, 2010)
- ◆ TRA Oman is seeking public consultation regarding the initiation of a labeling scheme for the local market, hoping to facilitate telecom vendors' entry into the market. (January 09, 2010)

Pakistan

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

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

- ◆ Pakistan Telecommunications Authority has formulated two sets of key performance indicators (KPIs) to improve and monitor the quality of service (QoS) of 'Fixed Broadband' and 'General Packet Radio Service/Enhanced Data rate for GSM Evolution (EDGE) networks. The objective of introducing these KPIs is to create transparency and set monitor-able standards in fixed broadband and GPRS/EDGE services, resulting in improved consumer satisfaction. (January 01, 2010)

Palestine

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

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]

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www.ict.gov.qa

- ♦ ictQATAR has announced the names of the six companies who pre-qualified to participate in the application phase for three individual VSAT licenses in Qatar. The announcement follows the invitation to pre-qualify, issued by ictQATAR on October 14, 2009. The pre-qualified companies are: CapRock Communications, GulfSat Communications, QSAT Communications, RigNet Qatar, Saudi International Telecom & Electronics Company (Skyband) and Schlumberger Overseas. (January 11, 2010)

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

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www.citc.gov.sa

- ♦ Mobily Saudi Arabia is the first to use Evolved High-Speed Packet Access (HSPA+) in the region on its 3.75G network, available in 337 areas within the country. The new technology allows for internet access at speeds of up to 21.6 mbps. (January 10, 2010)

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

priyanthak@trc.gov.lk
www.trc.gov.lk

- ♦ Telecommunication Regulatory Commission has announced its intention to survey the advertised broadband speeds offered by the licensed operators. (January 01, 2010)

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

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- ♦ 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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- ♦ The Tunisian telecoms market is to gain additional competition with the entry of France Telecom this year. Believed to result in a considerable impact, the sale of 35% of Tunisie Telecom may also drastically change the market dynamics. The remaining 65% of Tunisie Telecom is under government control and is under consideration for privatization this year. As a result of a strong mobile penetration rate and with decreasing tariffs with the entry of the third mobile operator, total mobile revenue is forecast to grow modestly over the coming years. (January 05, 2010)

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

tacarer@btk.gov.tr
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- ♦ The Information & Communication Technologies Authority has issued a study document on "Physical Infrastructure Network Access to the Market". (January 13, 2010)
- ♦ Turkey's dominant mobile network operator, Turkcell has been fined US\$23.8 million by the country's Competition Commission for an alleged anti-competitive behavior. The fine stems from allegations that the operator created de facto exclusivity for companies seeking to sell mobile content and marketing services to its subscribers. The company has confirmed that it will take necessary legal action against the imposed fine, which it believes lacks any basis. (January 04, 2010)

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

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- ♦ Director General of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority has announced during the 2nd annual Crisis and Emergency Management Conference the Emergency Plan for the UAE's telecommunications sector. The plan comes in response to the directives of the government of the UAE to develop a national emergency plan that would cover all vital sectors in the country. (January 13, 2010)

- ◆ The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority will soon announce a policy to provide phone calls over the internet through the UAE's two telecom operators Etisalat and du. In the current year, residents will also be able to switch between mobile phone service providers, and will be able to obtain services for Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). (January 06, 2010)
- ◆ The UAE's telecom sector registered a new record growth when mobile subscribers in the country reached over 10 million subscribers at the end of 2009, the TRA has reported. The number, which doubled over the last four years, represents an unprecedented mobile penetration rate of over 200%, placing the UAE as one of the highest penetration markets in the world. The regulator believes that it has succeeded in designing a regulatory framework that has created sustainable, vibrant and fair competition, as well as ensuring the emergence of more attractive price offers and the introduction of innovative new services within the market. (January 01, 2010)

Yemen

Minister: H. E. Eng. Kamal Hussain Al-Jabry

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

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www.mtit.gov.ye

- ◆ The decline in website hosting in Yemen appears to be linked to the “blocking policy” and taxation conditions, which are imposed on site owners or applicants in the country. Internet penetration in the country is predominantly low not because of the lack of infrastructure but rather due to high internet prices, which on average amount to more than US\$20 per month. (January 05, 2010)

Sources: MOJ News Agency, Dow Jones News, Arabianbusiness News, Zawya.com, Emirates News Agency, The National, The Daily Star, Lebanon, MENA News Agency, Reuters.com, Telegeography.com, Commsday, SAMENA's news archives, Industry News and Newsletters, Regulatory Bodies' websites and Press Releases.



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