SAMENA TRENDS

EXCLUSIVELY FOR SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

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Candidate for Radio Regulation Board, 2014 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference

Mr. Nasser A. Bin Hammad
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International Affairs
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), UAE

CMO SUMMIT 2014

11 OCTOBER, 2014
THE PALACE HOTEL DOWNTOWN,
DUBAI, UAE

CONVERGENCE TO JORDAN 2014

11-12 NOVEMBER, 2014
KEMPINSKI HOTEL,
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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN LTE ROAMING

EDITORIAL

Overcoming Challenges in LTE Roaming

International roaming and its associated costs are of prime importance with the evolution of the next generation mobile technologies which promise the availability of ubiquitous broadband access. Telcos are constantly on the move to upgrade their networks to overcome the increasing demands for high bandwidth and improved quality. Service providers are investing in next generation mobile technologies such as LTE for better end user experience. The SAMENA region has been hotspot in terms of investment opportunities in the telecom section.

Over the past two years, considerable growth and development has been observed in terms of LTE with many countries in the region now have commercially deployed LTE networks with increasing numbers of subscribers and quickly expanding service offerings. du's recent announcement of VoLTE enables its customers to be able to simultaneously access the Internet at 4G LTE speeds while making a crystal-clear voice call. Further to this are the countries in the strategic and planning stages of deployment, ready to launch over the next few months. This will give rise to the need for international roaming via LTE both in terms of voice as well as data. LTE international roaming appears to be an important area as a result of the growing competition and the increasing demand for such service. As mobile operators search for new revenue streams, attention is turning to increasing usage of international roaming services. Regional countries have shown great interest towards international roaming. The world has seen a lot of changes in the realm of communication. Likewise the 4G technology has changed the means to use cell phones within very high bandwidth. This technology includes all type of advanced features which makes it most powerful and in huge demand in near future. This is particularly the case within the markets of the South Asia – Middle East – North Africa region, where technology is progressing at such a fast pace, that it surely is on its way to change the way majority of the users go online and connect to each other.

LTE roaming will certainly grow in the coming years; however, in the short term, due to frequency fragmentation, sometimes the only way would be to switch SIM cards. There will be some operators, especially in the early years that will be virtually unreachable from a roaming standpoint, due to their chosen frequency bands (or spectrum limitations of their country). Also, due to the all-IP nature of LTE, the SS7 signaling protocols familiar to telcos of legacy are mainly being replaced by a new generation of specifications, including Diameter and other IP protocols. But a lack of universal interoperability for roaming is a very real challenge, for the value of a network is relative to its reach.

Indeed, international roaming is already a lucrative service for any operator, but monetizing LTE from a roaming point of view is not so straightforward, and the operators need to be in a position to effectively overcome this challenge. This is because, using mobile data services while traveling is becoming increasingly important for enterprise users, and operators have already started offering competitive rates that boost usage in this segment.

Yours truly,

Bocar A. BA
Chief Executive Officer
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

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EDITORIAL

INDUSTRY LEADER'S VISION

Mr. Nasser A. Bin Hammad
Senior Manager, International Affairs
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), UAE

Nasser is an experienced international telecommunication policy and regulatory affairs professional and expert and telecommunications engineer and has been actively participating in the activities of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for the past 14 years.

Nasser has considerable amount of experience in international cooperation and policy including but not limited to Arab Counties affairs, GCC affairs, ITU affairs, other UN office at outer space affairs as well as Arab regulators network activities, international frequency coordination (space and terrestrial), allocation and interference analysis of radio, wireless and space services.

Q. As a nation and a Member State, how active is the UAE with ITU on various international telecommunications activities?

A. The UAE is among a handful of nations, which are not only active with ITU in hosting global events, but also in proactively contributing to its operational leadership. We, as a nation, are also a candidate for two key ITU positions this year. The first position is to ensure continuity of candidacy for the council membership, which is limited to 48 seats only and the UAE has had this prestigious membership since 2006. As citizens, on the other hand, we are candidate for a seat in the Radio Regulations Board (RRB), and I feel honored and privilege to be the one selected to prospectively secure this seat.

ITU and the UAE have long enjoyed a cordial relationship, contributing to each other's global success. This has certainly been highlighted through WTDC-14 and in major ITU conferences that took place in 2012, making the UAE

the first nation to host such global events in the Middle East. The fact that the UAE, as a single administration, was able to host four main ITU events in one year evidences the UAE's level of commitment to ITU and a resolve to strengthen the mutual relationship that has been sustained between the Union and our Administration very well for so many years.

Q. What specific work is TRA-UAE doing to keep a strong leadership position as one of the most active telecoms regulatory bodies of the world that work extensively with ITU?

A. Under our esteemed leadership at TRA-UAE, we have a vision to keep the UAE at the forefront of all major activities that ITU conducts in the Radiocommunication Sector, Telecommunications Standardization Sector, and the Telecommunications Development Sector. A part of our strategy at the TRA is to remain active with the ITU activities and studies, resolutions, as well as decisions taken by the Union. Because we want to be amongst the leading telecoms regulatory bodies in the world, we continue to seek all possible opportunities to contribute to global telecommunications affairs and policy-framing with the intent of bringing the UAE at the forefront of telecommunications and digital development, while making important contributions to all of the Union's five administrative regions.

Q. What have been some of your key assignments as a telecoms policy and regulatory affairs professional?

A. Since 2012, I have been very actively involved in ITU's global events, such as WRC-12, at which I chaired one of the activities on finance and budgets. I was also tasked by the UAE's government as the main focal national coordination from TRA-UAE for hosting key ITU conferences in 2012.

At present, while campaigning for a key position in the Radio Regulations Board, I am leading a team of professionals with expertise in handling policy, technical, and international matters, for the critical purpose of advising the government of the UAE on digital policy issues, international radiocommunications, spectrum management, and negotiations at the UN international conferences and meeting such as the World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly, World Radiocommunication Conference, ITU Council, World Telecom Conference, Plenipotentiary Conference, World Conference for International Telecommunications, World Summit on Information Society, and World Telecommunications Policy Forum. I am also currently serving a position of vice chairman of the Special Committee at ITU-R.

Q. Given your history of involvement with ITU for well over a decade, what new role do you expect to exercise in the foreseeable future?

A. In the future, I hope to be given the opportunity to secure the required number of votes to become a part of the Radio Regulation Board.. It is important to note that the RRB is a critical ITU body to which members are elected from five administrative regions of the ITU, including Asia and Australasia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Northern Asia, Americas, and Western Europe.

Q. Have you ever initiated or lead the implementation of a national idea with international importance?

A. The idea of the UAE becoming the sole founder of a state-of-the-art ICT museum was initiated by me in 2008. In 2009, this idea was executed through an agreement between ITU and the Administration of the UAE. This museum, called ICT Discovery, is located in Geneva and was inaugurated in 2012 by HH Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE. Furthermore, ITU has initiated recently and established a council committee for celebrating the 150th Anniversary in 2015 as the oldest UN organization, UAE through me was selected to be the chairperson of such committee to supervise the entire preparations towards such great celebration in next year.

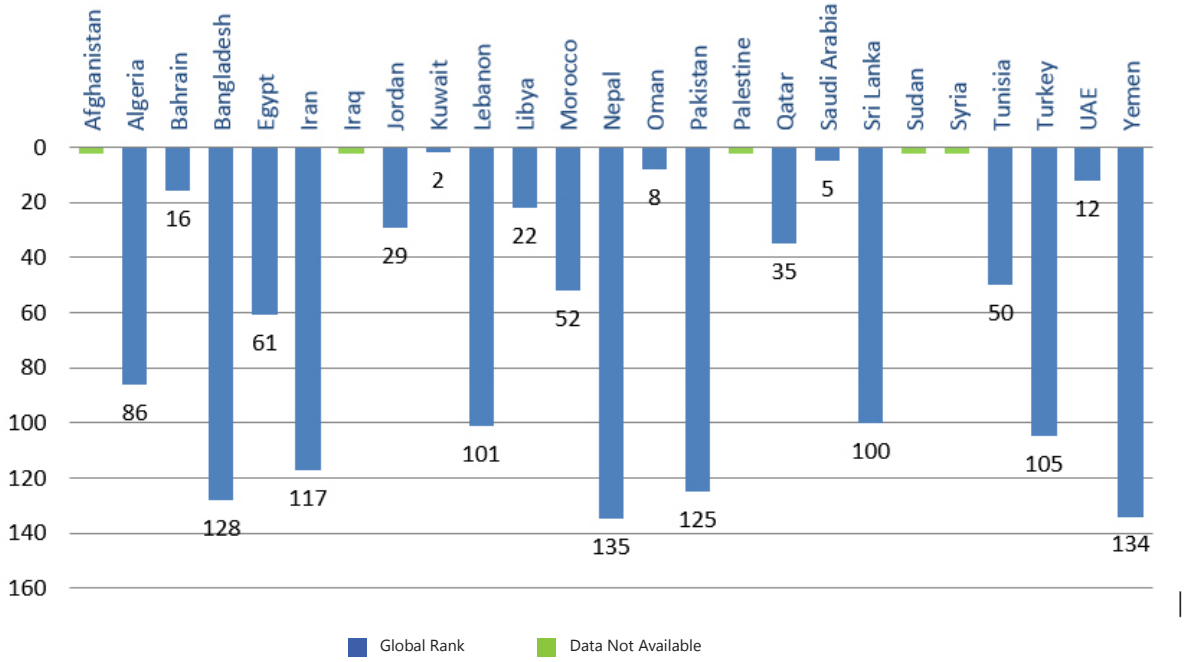
Q. Is there a key strategy that has ensured your success in conducting ITU activities in the past?

A. Organizing and hosting ITU's main conferences was a major assignment for me, and which was full of a diverse array of challenges. However, one strategy that served us very effectively was the knowledge-building work that we carried out extensively and promptly, essentially enabling our team to carry out its own capacity-building and coming to pace itself with the requirements of the work given to us for those conferences. This was supported by our collective availability, mutual trust, candor, and various means to keep ourselves motivated. The amount of the support granted to us from the TRA management team especially from the Director General of the TRA and from the Board is always valuable to all of us.

As a matter of fact, we are proud to state that this very strategy exists within the TRA-UAE at all tiers.

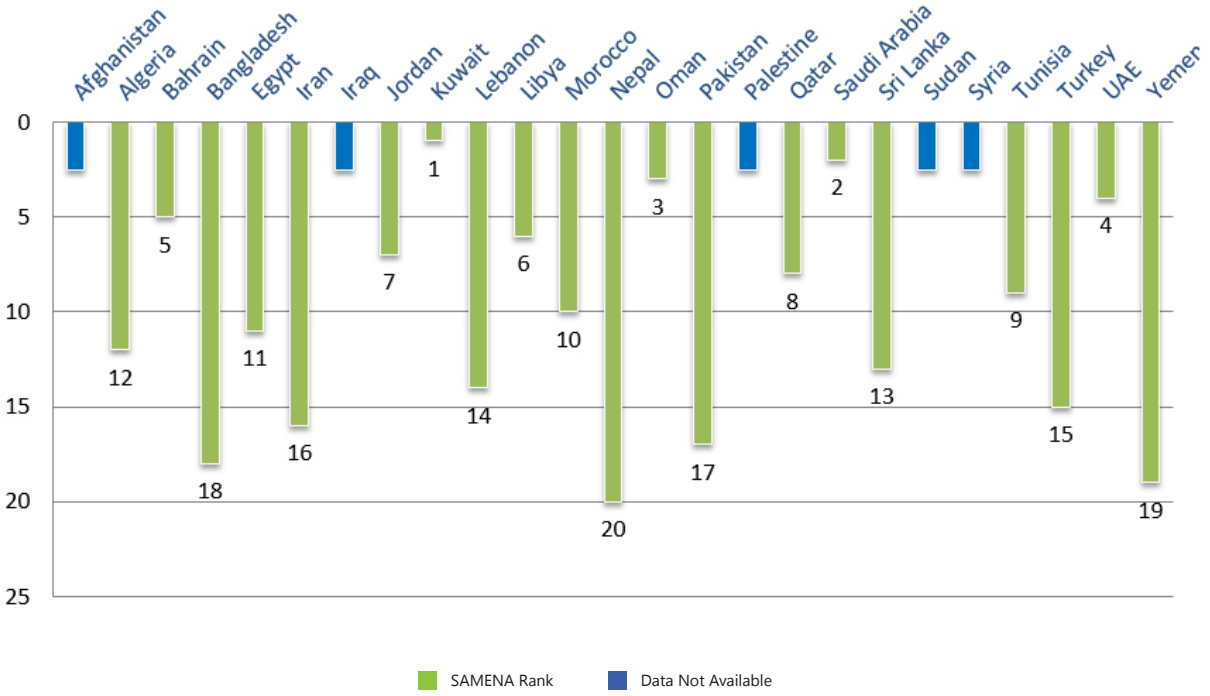
REGIONAL PERFORMANCE

Mobile Telephone Penetration (Global Rank of SAMENA Countries)



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

Mobile Telephone Penetration (Regional Rank of SAMENA Countries)



Research Note: Within the SAMENA region, Kuwait has the highest mobile penetration (mobile phone subscriptions per 100) and Nepal has the lowest mobile penetration in the region followed by Bangladesh and Yemen. The top 5 countries in terms of mobile penetration within the SAMENA region are all from the Middle East. Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco are the three North African countries at 6th, 9th and 10th number respectively.

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

MEMBERS NEWS

Türk Telekom International signs up for RTX partner program

RTX, the carrier exchange platform, announced that Türk Telekom International, the international wholesale business of the Türk Telekom Group, the leading communication and convergence technology operator in Turkey, is the latest global operator to join the RTX Partner Program. The RTX Partner Program supports in-house wholesale activities for and between Telcos, enabling carriers to enter into mutually beneficial capacity exchange agreements in a robust and financially secure environment backed by major international banking institutions.

"By using the program we now have access to thousands of global operators enabling us to enter new markets and formulate relationships that would not have been previously possible," Richard Brindley, Director of International Wholesale Voice at Türk Telekom International said. "Through our Partner Program platform, RTX has become the industry standard for the global wholesale market allowing global tier 1 operators to utilize the platform as a support mechanism for their own in-house revenue generating activities and services," added Miles Esfahani, Director Partner Program, RTX.

Andrew Jacobs, Sales Director at RTX concluded: "With Türk Telekom International joining the platform it is a huge stamp of approval for us. With yet another large operator becoming part of the program using the single VoIP interconnect, the benefits RTX is now capable of bringing to the industry's very biggest players (around capacity exchange agreements in a financially secure environment) are plain for all to see."

PTCL launches customized e-learning program for underprivileged youth

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), largest ICT services provider of the country, launched an online education program 'Illuminating Learning Movement (ILM)' aimed at providing customized and interactive e-learning solutions to underprivileged students.

The program is being launched in collaboration with Click2Learn, which is a comprehensive adaptive online education platform. The initiative, in the preliminary phase, shall enable 5000 talented and underprivileged students to access and benefit from this customized platform of Click2Learn. This initiative by PTCL is in alignment with the Prime Ministers' Youth Development Program, enabling youth and marginalized communities to get e-learning education opportunities, resulting in employment and economic empowerment.

Walid Irshaid, President & CEO PTCL while speaking at the occasion said, "Development of youth is the single most contributing factor towards national prosperity and growth of the country. We at PTCL strongly believe in playing our active role in contributing towards the society and this cause. Providing learning opportunities to talented youth shall enable them to enhance their development and skill base for future endeavors".

Three awards for Ooredoo Qatar

Ooredoo Qatar took home three awards at the prestigious CMO Asia Awards, held in Singapore on July 31. The company was recognized in two separate ceremonies during the event, winning the 'Best Brand Excellence in the Telecom Sector', and 'Best Loyalty Program' for Nojoom at the fifth CMO Asia Awards for Excellence in Branding and Marketing, as well as the 'Best Mobile Payment Service Provider', for Ooredoo's Mobile Money at the Asia Telecom Excellence Awards.

Speaking about the awards, Fatima Sultan Al Kuwari, Director Community and Public Relations, Ooredoo, said: "This is a big win for Ooredoo Qatar, as it shows we're not only competing on a regional level, but we're excelling in several areas. Services like The Nojoom Loyalty Program, Ooredoo Mobile Money, and even our brand, are areas all to do with giving back to our customers and enriching lives, so to be recognized for doing this is a great honor." A panel of industry experts judged the entries, comparing companies' growth, brand likeability and other factors before presenting the winning businesses with the accolade at the ceremony. Ooredoo's Mobile Money service allows customers to send money securely to 321,000 MoneyGram agents in 198 countries around the world.

STC 4G data traffic increased 9% comparing to 2G & 3G

Although the 2G and 3G network grow 196% in 2014 compared to same period last year, 4G network surpassed the total data traffic over the 3G and 2G networks together by 9%. Therefore, these facts will support deploying 4G as the coverage during Q2 reached around 85% of populated areas. Business and Home sector fiber optic network made a significant growth. "FTTH" customers increased 44% during the 2nd quarter compared to the same period last year. Enterprise business unit overall revenues increased 6% during the 2nd quarter compared the same period last year, driven by the 14% increase in Business sector data services revenues, and an increase in the fixed line revenues.

STC is keen to meet the customers' requirements in the private sector. STC Business launched new bundles for services managed by STC Business customers. The new bundles allow enterprises to increase their business productivity and enable them to take advantage without a concern of maintenance, which in turn will allow enterprises to speed up their works.

du announces first-in-the-region VoLTE technology, talk and browse the Internet simultaneously at blazingly-fast 4G LTE speeds

4G LTE network has reached to a whole new level in the UAE. Soon, for the very first time in the Middle East, customers of du in the UAE will be able to simultaneously access the Internet at 4G LTE speeds while making a crystal-clear voice call, made possible by Voice over LTE (VoLTE) technology. du has announced the successful completion of its network's first VoLTE call. This makes the company not only the first to install and test VoLTE on a live network in the region, but also the world's fastest – at just 80 days.

VoLTE empowers 4G LTE operators to transfer voice traffic over an LTE network. It improves customers' experience by delivering high definition (HD) voice with a high quality of service; richer multimedia services such as video share and call, multimedia messaging, chat, file transferring and more, as well as reducing call setup time – the time it takes to establish a call – down to just 1-2 seconds.

Saleem AlBalooshi, Executive Vice President, Network Development and Operations, du, said: "With VoLTE, we will be exploiting the full potential of 4G LTE. Our commitment to our customers has been reconfirmed with this fastest installation and testing of VoLTE on a live network. VoLTE will significantly enhance the call experience for customers using our 4G LTE network, adding more value through the use of the latest technology innovations."

PTCL adds high speed EVO, launches Charji EVO

Pakistan Telecommunications Company Limited (PTCL) has ushered a new era of technological innovation in the country by introducing the next generation 'Charji EVO' in Pakistan. The new service is an addition to the successful EVO family of products already serving millions of users in the country.

The new technology provides ultra-fast uninterrupted connectivity at speeds up to 36 Mbps, making it the fastest wireless broadband in Pakistan. The service, available in convenient dongles and Mi-Fi clouds, is initially being launched in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi and Lahore and will be expanded to other parts of the country later. Both dongles and Mi-Fi clouds have the ability to fall back to the Rev A or Rev B network in case the customer uses the Charji EVO device in cities other than the current launch cities.

The super-fast dongles and cloud devices are a companion for providing a powerful internet experience, enabling faster web browsing, HD video streaming, downloads, uploads and low latency (ping) rates for online gaming. The tremendous ease and comfort of 'Charji EVO' cloud devices with its state of the art Wi-Fi capability and fast internet browsing brings an unparalleled experience, connecting up to 10 Wi-Fi enabled devices (depends on the model) simultaneously to PTCL's revolutionary wireless EVO broadband network.

Mobily, Batelco sign 4G roaming agreement

Saudi Arabia-based telecoms operator Mobily has joined with Bahrain Telecommunications Company (Batelco) on a roaming agreement for 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) services.

The agreement will allow customers of both companies to access advanced data services outside their own countries. Mobily signed a similar agreement with Abu Dhabi-based Etisalat in March this year, which will see the Saudi provider connect its subscribers via Etisalat's SmartHub IPX platform. Etisalat uses the SmartHub platform to provide roaming services, voice, messaging and GRX data exchange between mobile-network operators, fixed-line operators, applications service providers and over-the-top (OTT) content players through a single connection.

REGIONAL NEWS

Electronic payments trend gaining ground in KSA

The Saudi and Middle East market for payment cards, including credit and debit cards, is witnessing significant growth, according to Ahmed Gaber, country manager-Saudi Arabia, Visa. Visa's total transactions across all payment cards in Saudi Arabia in 2013 amounted to SR518,616,131. "The Kingdom registered a record overall growth of 43 percent in e-commerce in Q1 2014 compared to the same period last year, making it the highest growth rate in the MENA region," he told Arab News in an exclusive interview.

It is against this background that Visa launched a month-long risk awareness campaign for consumers in Saudi Arabia titled 'Be Card Wise and Be Card Safe'. The campaign is designed to highlight Visa's security and fraud prevention initiatives and educate consumers on how they can protect themselves when using electronic payment cards at all points of sale, including both online and offline transactions, he added.

TEData to implement Egypt's broadband project

Telecom Egypt affiliate TEData will implement Egypt's broadband project, minister of communications and information technology Atef Helmy has announced, with the project to begin by mid-August.

Helmy said TEData will implement the project in four different areas across the nation with a total of 1,500 points, with a fifth area to involve other mobile companies. The minister said this at a Sohour gathering organized by the ICT civil society organizations, including Eitesal, the computers and software sector at the General Federation of Chambers and the IT industry chamber.

He also announced the broadband tender results will be shown by mid-August and technical evaluation for five zones is currently in progress. Helmy also said three buildings are to be opened at Maadi Technology Park with a capacity of 5,200 seats to provide around 20,000 new direct and indirect job opportunities in IT services exportation using outsourcing systems.

Dubai start-up signs deal with Samsung to use kids app on devices

Growl Media, which creates apps for children aged one to six, has entered into a long-term partnership with Samsung Gulf Electronics to use Zee as a brand ambassador for the device.

Dinesh Lalvani, founder and CEO of Growl, said: "Teaming up with Samsung to provide locally relevant content to the region is an exciting develop¬ment in the Growl Media story. "By reaching out to us, it verifies that we're successfully achieving our goal to create culturally-relevant, 'edutainment' content for kids around the world."

The firm's content is based on the British Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. So far, it has created seven apps and two main characters - Alfie and Zee. Alfie is a little boy from India who goes on adventures with his baby elephant best friend, while Zee is a young Arab girl who dreams of travelling the world like the great explorer Ibn Battuta. Zee's app has been downloaded more than 200,000 times since its launch in November 2014, and has been featured as the number one app in 18 countries.

Egyptian Government signs MOU to fund local cloud initiatives

The Minister of Communications and Information Technology has signed a memorandum of understanding with TE Data, a subsidiary of Telecom Egypt, and Automation Consultants that will see the parties commit billions over seven years to provide cloud computing application services to the private and public sector organizations in Egypt.

The MOU, signed by Egypt Telecom CEO Mohamed Al-Nawawy, Automation Consultants executive chairman Mahmoud El Dessouky, and the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Atef Helmy, will see both companies offer cloud services to the government and private sector via TE's datacenters. Automation consultancy will provide technical support for applications to customers. Helmy said the cloud sector is one of MCIT's strategic priorities for the coming period.

Telecom Egypt CEO Mohamed El Nawawy said the agreement will benefit SMEs in particular, which constitutes a large base of IT consumers in the country but which nevertheless often struggle to afford the high up-front costs associated with traditional or on premise IT platforms. Egypt is the latest of several governments to link up with industry in a bid to extend cloud services in the private and public sectors.

Nigeria: Absence of cyber security laws impedes Nigeria's ICT growth

As Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry continues to serve as one of the key drivers of the national economy, absence of cyber security laws has become an issue of concern to all stakeholders in the sector. From the continued signs of aggressive growth in the ICT industry, with an estimated improved GDP contribution of 8.53 % by the third quarter of 2013, it is obvious that the ICT industry is a "key growth industry" and as such deserves the design and execution of a well thought cyber security policy. This was however was a major concern to the participants at the recently held 2014 edition of the Nigerian Internet Governance Forum (NIGF) organized by the Nigerian Internet Registrations Association (NiRA).

Non passage of the bill was also identified as an impediment to the growth of ICT in Nigeria especially the mobile money transactions and the cashless initiative of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) which has been declared nationwide.

TeleYemen strengthens VSAT network

TeleYemen has expanded its partnership with satellite provider Intelsat to provide additional support for its very small aperture terminal (VSAT) network, Teletimes International reports. Under the new pact, the state-owned telco will expand its Ku-band capacity on Intelsat 15 to deliver VSAT services to corporate, banking and oil and gas companies, in addition to providing capacity to telecom operators in the country. Dr. Ali Nagi Nosary, CEO of TeleYemen, commented on the agreement: 'Intelsat's satellite services will enable TeleYemen to establish a strong VSAT network that will deliver the bandwidth necessary for our customers to further develop and grow their businesses. Intelsat's reliable and robust capacity will enable us to more quickly and efficiently expand our capabilities and provide critical connectivity to some of the fastest-growing business sectors in Yemen.'

Qatar: Vodafone begins mobile phone trade-in service

Vodafone has launched a mobile phone trade-in service, making it the first operator in Qatar to offer it.

Customers can take used phone to any of Vodafone's 23 retail stores and with the instant value given; they can trade them in for anything in store. This includes new devices, accessories, prepaid credit or postpaid bill payment for customers. Others can trade in for new devices and accessories. The transaction happens simultaneously to ensure the customer can use the buy-back value immediately.

Even before customers come into Vodafone stores, they will be able to check their mobile's value on the website www.vodafone.qa/trade-in and can trade in devices when they feel happy with the price.

Vodafone's Online Checker evaluates a phone price using a global and local platform which checks market prices based on age and popularity of make and model and three checks: Does it power on?; Is the screen cracked or broken?; and Is anything else on the handset missing/broken?
The process is also eco-friendly as all phones traded in are refurbished or recycled.

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.

Makkah governor opens e-service to receive complaints

Makkah Gov. Prince Mishaal bin Abdullah launched an online service on Saturday which enables citizens and residents to lodge their complaints on the governorate's website.

Prince Mishaal said the e-service was established to facilitate communication between Makkah residents and the governor's office.

He highlighted that the service is a qualitative step to expedite and ease formal procedures for individuals and raise the capacity of community members to identify their needs and problems.

Individuals can download the complaint-form from the governorate's website, he explained, adding that six different icons are available to categorize complaints.

The icons provide a detailed explanation of the procedures,

guidelines and services as well as the conditions that must be fulfilled for the form to be accepted. The service will be available 24/7 and the website will provide up-to-date information about developments and progress taking place in the governorate. In addition, individuals are encouraged to provide their suggestions and feedback on the website.

ADSL is cheapest in Tunisia and most expensive in Iraq

A new report from the Arab Advisors Group provides an analysis for the residential broadband ADSL rates in 19 Arab countries. While Iraq has the highest average ADSL fees, Tunisia and Morocco have the lowest fees. When rates are analyzed in relation to GDP per capita in each country, the GCC countries take the lead with the lowest rates in relation to GDP per capita. Arab Advisors analysis is based on rates by end of March 2014.

While Internet fiber technologies are emerging in the region, ADSL remains the prevailing fixed Internet broadband technology in the Arab World. The Arab Advisors Group has analyzed the ADSL service provision and rates in the following nineteen Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen.

The Arab Advisors Group's analysis revealed that the 2 Mbps speed is the most common speed offered by ISPs in the Arab World. The total annual cost of residential ADSL services (for the average 2 Mbps speed) in the Arab region ranges from a minimum of US 173 per year in Tunisia to a maximum of US 9,097 per year in Iraq.

Telenor Youth Summit

Top mobile operator Grameenphone invited university students to submit innovative technology project ideas that could serve society. Four best ideas will be presented at the Telenor Youth Summit 2014 in Oslo.

The operator will initiate road-shows at different universities where the teachers will select their own teams for the country-wide competition, while four teams will be selected in the second round to take part in the global competition in Oslo, said Quazi Mohammad Shahed, chief human resource officer of the operator. The Bangladeshi winners will also get to attend the Nobel Prize giving ceremony, he said. The teams will have to come up with innovative ideas on how to serve the society with technology, he said. The initiative was driven by the vision of empowering the society through technology, and by the competition the innovative young minds of Bangladesh will be presented on the global platform, Shahed said.

Using digital communication technology for positive social changes is part of Telenor's ambition to provide "Internet for All" in the countries where it operates, GP said in a statement.

Nepal's Smart Telecom eyes mobile network launch

The Nepalese operator Smart Telecom has sought permission from the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) to import telecommunication equipment worth over NPR1 billion (US$10.2 million) and for wireless frequencies to enable it to expand its network beyond its current franchise area in the Kathmandu Valley. A report from local newspaper The Himalayan suggests that the firm has already invested around NPR3.5 billion to build out its Kathmandu network, and it is hoping to attract 300,000 subscribers in the area before gradually expanding to other parts of the country. A switch-on had been planned for last year but was delayed due to internal wrangling among shareholders. While the disagreements have now been cleared up, a firm launch date has still to be announced.

Jordan jumps 19 places in global e-gov't ranking

Jordan ranked 79th globally in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' (UNDESA) E-Government Survey Report 2014, improving by 19 places compared to 2012.

The report, which covered 193 countries, ranked Jordan in eighth place at the Arab level, preceded by Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Tunisia respectively. The Kingdom was ahead of Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Sudan, the recently launched report said.

In the 2012 report, Jordan ranked 98th out of 190 countries. "The improvement in ranking is due to the continued efforts of the government's e-services programme," Information and Communications Technology Minister Azzam Sleit said in a statement e-mailed to The Jordan Times. "Under this scheme, several e-services were introduced to the public in the fields of health, education, finance, environment and social development, Sleit added.

In the field of e-participation, Jordan ranked 71st globally in 2014, improving by 30 places compared to 2012 when it ranked 101st, the report said. Noting that all UN member states are now online, the survey showed that more governments are expanding electronic participation and using mobile and social media tools to reach people.

Grameenphone invites ideas for ITIDA inks 3 agreements with IDC to boost Egypt's IT exports

Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA) has signed three agreements with International Data Corporation (IDC) with the aim of alluring direct foreign investments and boosting the Egyptian exports such as information technology services and products with the presence of Eng. Atef Helmy, Minister of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

The first agreement aims to launch 'Africa Together' in order to help the local firms operating in IT sector and create new job vacancies. The second agreement targets to regulate and establish Regional Forum of the company which names 'IDC North Africa and Levant CIO Forum' in Cairo and this is the major forum which organized by the company across worldwide , gathering several local and global experts, institutions and IT firms.

REGULATORY & POLICY UPDATES

3G license row one step nearer to being settled

Nepal Telecom (NT) is to begin switching its fixed line network from PSTN to internet protocol (IP) technology during the new 2014/15 fiscal year. The firm says that within three years it will be providing advanced voice, data and TV services over its upgraded fixed networks. A report from local newspaper Republica says NT is hoping the new services will help push up its fixed subscriber base from the current level of around 650,000 to over one million, while also bringing in increased revenue per line. A tender to find a supplier for the network upgrade is to be opened within the next month.

Meanwhile, NT has paid NPR740 million (US$7.6 million) to the regulator, the Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), to settle the bulk of its outstanding 3G license fees, which have been at the center of a long-running disagreement between the two parties. In January 2013 NT paid NPR480.7 million to cover the fees from March 2010, when it launched commercial 3G services, to the end of the 2011/12 financial year, but the NTA said it should have paid NPR1.44 billion dating back to the license award in late-May 2006.

ANRT orders Maroc Telecom to revise its leased line offer

Moroccan telecoms regulator, the Agence Nationale de Reglementation de Telecom (ANRT), has ordered domestic fixed line incumbent telco Maroc Telecom to amend some of the terms and conditions of its wholesale leased line access offer, following a complaint filed by rival Medi Telecom (Meditel) in March 2014. The watchdog ruled that Maroc Telecom must amend its wholesale tariffs in order to ensure a gross profit margin of 50% for alternative operators. In addition, the telco must amend the maximum distance between operator and point of presence (PoP) to a range of between 35km and 100km and include intermediate bandwidth of 4Mbps, 8Mbps and 20Mbps with minimum gross profit margin of 20% for alternative providers. Maroc Telecom has been given a deadline of 1 January 2015 by which to revise the terms and conditions of its fixed interconnection offer.

BTRC to offer 450MHz mobile spectrum

A special committee headed by a commissioner of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) will prepare a licensing guideline for 450MHz mobile frequency licenses by November, with the aim of allocating the 450MHz band to cellcos after the 700MHz band is auctioned next year, the Daily Star reports. Both lower frequency ranges are aimed at allowing mobile broadband network operators to deploy higher-performance services covering wider areas at a lower cost. BTRC chairman Sunil Kanti Bose said the regulator is working on recovering the unused spectrum in the 450MHz band from different entities, as some fixed line/fixed-wireless operators were previously allocated the band. The regulator recently refused state-run PSTN operator Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) an allocation in the 450MHz band in favor of reserving it for mobile companies. Bose also noted

that the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will release updated official guidelines on 450MHz utilization worldwide next year.

TRA lays down guidelines on Twitter usage

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has launched a white paper regarding Twitter usage which prohibits certain undesired content. The prohibited content include content which are contrary to public morals, the principles of Islam and the social and moral welfare of the UAE or any content that contains irreverence towards Islam and any other religion. The white paper comes as part of 'The UAE Social Media White Papers' collection. The laws of the UAE prohibit the publication of content which is contrary to public morals, the principles of Islam and the social and moral welfare of the UAE or any content that contains irreverence towards Islam and any other religion. The content must also respect the UAE Government, its leadership, political institutions and ultimately the UAE's cultural heritage and social norms and customs. The series of awareness documents are designed specifically to highlight the terms and conditions of the most popular social networks in use in the UAE. The latest release focuses on Twitter, which has around 360,000 users in the UAE who share around 2.5 million tweets per day.

Algeria: ANRT introduces 'single number plan' for 3G services

Algerian telecoms regulator, the Autorite de Regulation de la Poste et des Telecoms (ARPT), has published its Decision No. 87/SP/PC/ARPT/2014, effective 8 July 2014, which establishes a 'single number plan' for 3G services. The watchdog implemented a transitional solution via Decisions No. 90/PC/ARPT/2013 and No. 91/PC/ARPT/2013 in November 2013, under which subscribers were allowed to have two numbers (GSM and UMTS) on one SIM card. However, following a consultation with the country's 3G licensees – Ooredoo Algeria (Nedjma), Algerie Telecom Mobile (Mobilis) and Djezzy GSM – the parties reached a consensus on developing a solution for the effective separation of revenues generated by the 2G and 3G services.

According to the new decision, subscribers who have two numbers – 2G and 3G – on the same SIM card are now required to choose one number, and/or obtain a separate SIM card for the other. Further, subscribers to 3G services wishing to maintain their old GSM number are required to enter into a new contract with their respective network operator, which will lead to the automatic termination of the legacy GSM contract. Under Article 3 of the legislation, operators are not allowed to have any dual number SIMs on their books after 15 August 2014.

NBTC to press for auction of spectrum

Thailand's National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said the regulator would draw up details to clarify this point with the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) this week. He added that the auction was the means to ensure that the spectrum was utilized efficiently to benefit the country.

The NCPO had earlier instructed the watchdog to suspend the auctions of the 1,800MHz and 900MHz licenses this year, pending the junta receiving clarification of the plan's details. In addition, the NCPO had told the NBTC to first find out from TOT and CAT Telecom if they anticipated facing any problems from the auctions being held. Then the NBTC will have to submit its final decision regarding the auctions, and the solutions to any CAT and TOT issues for the NCPO's consideration.

The watchdog originally planned to auction the 1,800MHz bands of TrueMove and Digital Phone Co in August and the 900MHz of Advanced Info Service (AIS) in November.

A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN SAMENA REGION

Algeria
Chairperson: Mr. Toufik Bessai
[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]

Telecoms regulator ARPT has published its Decision No. 87/SP/PC/ARPT/2014, effective July 8, 2014, which establishes a 'single number plan' for 3G services. The watchdog implemented a transitional solution via Decisions No. 90/PC/ARPT/2013 and No. 91/PC/ARPT/2013 in November 2013, under which subscribers were allowed to have two numbers (GSM and UMTS) on one SIM card. However, following a consultation with the country's 3G licensees – Ooredoo Algeria (Nedjma), Algerie Telecom Mobile (Mobilis) and Djezzy GSM – the parties reached a consensus on developing a solution for the effective separation of revenues generated by the 2G and 3G services. According to the new decision, subscribers who have two numbers – 2G and 3G – on the same SIM card are now required to choose one number, and/or obtain a separate SIM card for the other. Further, subscribers to 3G services wishing to maintain their old GSM number are required to enter into a new contract with their respective network operator, which will lead to the automatic termination of the legacy GSM contract. Under Article 3 of the legislation, operators are not allowed to have any dual number SIMs on their books after August 15, 2014. A number of domestic operators expressed concerns in December 2013 with regards to the possible complications that accompanied the dual number plan. Ooredoo Algeria stated that it would be difficult for customers to change their SIM cards whenever they wanted to access the 3G service. In addition to being expensive, it constituted a double subscription to the same operator. For its part, the Algerian Consumer Association supported Ooredoo's position. (July 10, 2014) telegeography.com

Bahrain
Chairman: Dr. Mohammed Al Amer
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

For the first six months of 2014 Bahrain-based telecoms group Batelco reported consolidated net profit of BHD24.9 million (US$66.0 million), down slightly from BHD25.3 million for the corresponding period in 2013, while group EBITDA for H1 2014 was BHD71.9 million, a 27% improvement on EBITDA of BHD56.6 million posted in H1 2013. Gross revenue for January-June 2014 reached BHD194.6 million, up by 14% from BHD170.7 million year-on-year, while six-month operating profit rose 27% over the same period to BHD39.1 million. Over half of Batelco's revenues and profits are now generated from outside of its home market, with the aim of offsetting the impact of ongoing and aggressive competition in Bahrain, while results are boosted by its Island portfolio of subsidiaries, which were reported for the first time one year earlier in Q2 2013. The group's subscriber base stood at nine million customers at end-June 2014, a rise of 4% year-on-year, as mobile subscribers grew by 5% to 8.5 million and broadband customers increased by 7% to reach around 287,000 customers, while fixed line subscribers saw a decline of 3% year-on-year. In Bahrain, mobile subscribers increased by 23% year-on-year to reach over one million

at mid-2014, while in Jordan, Umniah's mobile subscriber base grew to 2.9 million, an increase of 13% y-o-y, and Jordanian broadband services witnessed 51% growth in the same period. Meanwhile, in the 'Sure' branded Channel Islands and Isle of Man operations, Batelco reported a 12% year-over-year increase in broadband customers and 2% rise in mobile subscribers in H1 2014. Dhiraagu (Maldives) reported that its broadband subscribers grew 9% year-on-year, while Sabafon (Yemen) maintained 'steady results' and ended June 2014 with more than 4.1 million users, but Atheeb (Saudi Arabia) reported a subscriber decline of 11% year-on-year. (July 28, 2014) telegeography.com

The Minister of State for Telecommunications in Bahrain has ruled out any plans to issue a fourth mobile network operator license. The Ministry said that it would have no economic feasibility. Stressing the government's plan to boost the telecom sector's contribution to gross domestic product, Minister said: "Most countries have two to three operators at the most." Minister said that GCC ministers will discuss a unified telecom pricing in their upcoming meeting.
(July 21, 2014) arabianindustry.com

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

A special committee headed by a commissioner of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) will prepare a licensing guideline for 450MHz mobile frequency licenses by November, with the aim of allocating the 450MHz band to cellcos after the 700MHz band is auctioned next year, the Daily Star reports. Both lower frequency ranges are aimed at allowing mobile broadband network operators to deploy higher-performance services covering wider areas at a lower cost. BTRC Chairman said the regulator is working on recovering the unused spectrum in the 450MHz band from different entities, as some fixed line/fixed-wireless operators were previously allocated the band. The regulator recently refused state-run PSTN operator Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) an allocation in the 450MHz band in favor of reserving it for mobile companies. Bose also noted that the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will release updated official guidelines on 450MHz utilization worldwide next year.
(July 15, 2014) telegeography.com

A proposal by Bangladeshi cellco Robi Axiata to transfer ownership of its passive network infrastructure assets has been blocked by the telecoms regulator. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) refused a request to transfer 80% ownership of the assets including wireless towers, buildings and ancillary facilities, to Edotco Group, a 100%-owned unit of Robi's Malaysian parent Axiata Group. The watchdog reasoned that Robi would lose control over the infrastructure – currently wholly owned by Robi's subsidiary Edotco Bangladesh – if the Malaysian company took ownership. (July 14, 2014) The Daily Star

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

National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) has launched a tender aimed at strengthening the national mobile network in northern Sinai, southern areas of the Red Sea, Halayeb and Shalateen. It is understood that the tender, which the regulator aims to finalize within the next two months, has been sent to all three of the nation's mobile network operators, namely MobiNil, Vodafone Egypt and Etisalat Misr. The project to enhance mobile infrastructure in these areas, which is funded via the Universal Service Fund, will reportedly benefit some 337,000 people.
(July 8, 2014) Agence Ecofin

Minister of Communications & Information Technology, has revealed that the government is still finalizing the details of the long-awaited unified license award and 'the establishment of a national entity for the development of the infrastructure considered the main backbone for the ICT sector', Reuters reports. Although the process was initially earmarked to start on June 30, 2014, that date passed without any further developments. Minister disclosed: 'We are in the last stage to complete the details relating to the unified license and the steps to create the unified entity', although he stopped short of providing any further details. In January 2014 Egyptian telecoms regulator the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) agreed to introduce unified licenses, allowing companies to offer both fixed line and mobile services using a single concession; it is expected that the move will allow fixed line incumbent Telecom Egypt (TE) to enter the mobile market. Further, in May 2014 TE agreed to hand over the requested concession fee by stating: 'The firm's board of directors agreed in its emergency meeting on May 4 to obtain the mobile phone license without frequencies in return for EGP2.5 billion [US$360 million].' (July 3, 2014) telegeography.com

Iraq
CEO: Dr. Buhan Shawi
[Communication & Media Commission (CMC)]

Zain revealed that a court case brought against its Iraqi unit has been thrown out, paving the way for it to seek to overturn restrictions imposed against it. The case, which was brought against both Zain and Iraq's Communications and Media Commission in regard to Zain's US$1.2 billion acquisition of Iraqna in late 2007, was dismissed by the Iraqi court, Zain said in a short statement to the Kuwait Stock Exchange. Earlier this year Zain disclosed that it was being sued by an unnamed Iraqi telecom operator in connection with the acquisition. The plaintiff claimed that certain actions by the CMC and Zain prevented it from acquiring Iraqna. It claimed $4.5 billion in damages from Zain and a further $1 billion from the regulator and Zain combined. Those damages are based on the revenues the unnamed telco lost out on by being unable to acquire Iraqna. At the telco's request, in January an Iraqi court appointed an administrator to manage and collect the revenues generated by the Iraqna subscribers that transferred to Zain through the acquisition and hold them in custody with a local bank pending the outcome of the case. On Thursday Zain said it will apply to the court "as soon as possible" to have those restrictions removed, noting that since the case has been dismissed there is no legal justification for them to remain. The plaintiff has 15 days to lodge an appeal, Zain said. Zain began doing business in Iraq in 2007 when its subsidiary MTC Atheer won an operating licence there for $1.25 billion. It subsequently acquired existing Iraqi operator Iraqna and merged the two businesses under the Zain brand at the start of 2008. At the time the company had around 7 million customers in Iraq. It has more than doubled that customer base since then, ending 2013 with 15.9 million subscribers. The Iraq business now accounts for almost 40% of Zain's group revenues and 37% of profits, based on Q1 2014 numbers.
(July 10, 2014) totaltele.com

Zain Group merged Atheer with Iraqna under the new brand name Zain. As a consequence of the lawsuit, an Iraqi court ruled that that revenue from the Iraqna part of the merged company had to be put into a holding account and not released pending the outcome of the lawsuit. As the lawsuit has now been dismissed, Zain confirmed that it can now apply to have those revenues released by the court. The litigant, who is still unnamed, has two weeks to appeal though. (July 12, 2014) cellular-news.com

Jordan

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

[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

Mobile phone users in Jordan spent the equivalent of around 66,546 years talking on their phones in 2013, according to official figures. Mobile users spent some 35 billion minutes on their mobile phones in 2013, according to Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) figures posted on its website this week. The figure, which includes outgoing and incoming calls between all mobile networks in Jordan, is 3 per cent lower than in 2012, when mobile users in the country spent about 36 billion minutes making calls, according to the TRC. Mobile users in Jordan also sent 2.5 billion text messages in 2013 compared with 2.3 billion in 2012 and 1.6 billion in 2011. "There is a drop in the number of minutes people spend on mobiles, as more users use the Internet to send messages via several apps such as Whatsapp," an expert in the telecom sector, who preferred not to be named, said Monday. "The number of Internet users in Jordan has been growing significantly over the past few years, coupled with a high growth in the number of smartphone holders, both of which encourage more usage of data services," said the expert. Telecom operators in Jordan have repeatedly said their revenues from voice services are on the decline as more people use data and Internet services. By the end of the first quarter of 2014, there were 10.4 million mobile users in the Kingdom, which has a population of around 8 million. Internet users in Jordan reached 5.7 million by the end of March this year with a 73 per cent penetration rate. On the workforce in the telecom sector, the figures showed that the number has declined over the past few years. In 2013, there were 4,212 employees in the sector, compared to 4,596 in in 2012, 4,600 in 2011 and 4,739 in 2010, the TRC said. Investments in the telecom sector reached JD138 million in 2013 compared to JD145 million in 2012, according to the figures.

(July 14, 2014) jordantimes.com

Kuwait

Minister of Communication: Salem Mutheyeb Ahmed Al-Utheina

[Ministry of Communication (MOC)]

Zain group announces its consolidated financial results for the six months ended June 30, 2014. Zain Group added 2.1 million new active customers over the past twelve months to serve 46.5 million as of June 30, 2014, reflecting a 5 percent growth rate. Zain is the market leader in six of its eight operations by customer numbers, the group said in a release. For the second quarter of 2014, Zain Group generated consolidated revenues of US$2.23 billion, up 3 percent annually. The company's consolidated EBITDA for the period reached US$943 million, signing an increase of 1 percent year on year. EBITDA margin stood at a healthy 42.3 percent at the end of the period. Consolidated Net Income increased by 3 percent to reach US$407 million, when compared to the same period in 2013. Earnings per share for the period stood at US$0.10. (July 17, 2014) menafn.com

Kuwait telecoms giant Zain's net profits dropped slightly in the second quarter of 2014 but ended the first six months up as the firm keeps investing in upgrades and expansion. Zain said its net profits in the April-June period dropped 3.0 percent to 59.1 million dinars ($210.1 million) compared to 61 million dinars ($217 million) in the same period of 2013. Overall net profits of Kuwait's largest mobile operator, however, increased in the first half by about 2.0 percent to 115 million dinars ($409.2 million) from 113 million dinars ($402.1 million) a year ago, it said in a statement. "It is encouraging to see customer and revenue growth across many of our key operations, a direct result of significant investments in upgrading and expanding our networks," chairman Asad al-Banwan said. Over the past 12 months, the company added 2.1 million new clients and its total subscribers rose to 46.5 million on June 30, 2014 across eight countries. Besides Kuwait, Zain has operations in Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. It also manages a unit in Morocco. Zain has sustained losses in the past three years blaming currency fluctuations, particularly in Sudan, and new investments for expansion. Zain, in which the government holds a stake of almost 25 percent, is one of three mobile operators in the emirate, alongside National Telecommunications Co (Wataniya) and Kuwait Telecommunications Co (VIVA).

(July 16, 2014) timesofoman.com

Lebanon

Chairman & CEO: Dr. Imad Hoballah

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Research and Markets has announced the addition of the "IT Market in Lebanon 2014-2018" report to their offering. The IT market in Lebanon will grow at a CAGR of 11.03 percent over the period 2013-2018. IT can be defined as an integrated platform to manage information that consists of hardware, software, and services. IT is an integral part of business processes. In an organization, the IT department is responsible for storing, safeguarding, processing, transmitting, and retrieving information. The IT market in Lebanon is one of the fastest growing in the Middle East with a market size of US$365 million in 2013. The favorable performance of the market has benefited from investment in telecommunication infrastructure and broadband connectivity. The IT market in Lebanon is mainly dominated by SMEs, which are mostly occupied in the development of software products and mobile applications. The IT market in Lebanon can be divided into three segments: Hardware, Software, and IT Services. The report provides information on the market share of the key end-user segments and sub-segments of the IT market in Lebanon. It also discusses the competitive advantages of the IT market in Lebanon. The report, the IT Market in Lebanon 2014-2018, has been prepared based on an in-depth market analysis with inputs from industry experts. The report focuses on the IT market landscape in Lebanon and its growth prospects in the coming years. The report also includes a discussion of the key vendors operating in this market.

(July 18, 2014) businesswire.com

New figures have been released by Lebanon's two state-owned mobile network operators Alfa and Touch, stating that Touch (managed by Zain Group) had 1.3 million subscriptions to its mobile data services at the end of

June 2014, equivalent to around 62% of its total mobile subscribers, while Egyptian-managed Alfa had 1.05 million data service subscribers at the same date (around 55% of its total base). Touch currently has around 2.1 million total mobile customers, or about 53% of the market, while Alfa serves the other roughly 47% portion of the market with about 1.9 million subscribers. (July 15, 2014) The Daily Star

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

Moroccan telecoms regulator the ANRT has ordered domestic fixed line incumbent telco Maroc Telecom to amend some of the terms and conditions of its wholesale leased line access offer, following a complaint filed by rival Medi Telecom (Meditel) in March 2014. The watchdog ruled that Maroc Telecom must amend its wholesale tariffs in order to ensure a gross profit margin of 50% for alternative operators. In addition, the telco must amend the maximum distance between operator and point of presence (PoP) to a range of between 35km and 100km and include intermediate bandwidth of 4Mbps, 8Mbps and 20Mbps with minimum gross profit margin of 20% for alternative providers. Maroc Telecom has been given a deadline of January 1, 2015 by which to revise the terms and conditions of its fixed interconnection offer. (July 16, 2014) telegeography.com

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

Nepal Telecom (NT) is to begin switching its fixed line network from PSTN to internet protocol (IP) technology during the new 2014/15 fiscal year which began on 16 July. The firm says that within three years it will be providing advanced voice, data and TV services over its upgraded fixed networks. NT is hoping the new services will help push up its fixed subscriber base from the current level of around 650,000 to over one million, while also bringing in increased revenue per line. A tender to find a supplier for the network upgrade is to be opened within the next month. Meanwhile, NT has paid NPR740 million (US$7.6 million) to the regulator, the Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), to settle the bulk of its outstanding 3G license fees, which have been at the centre of a long-running disagreement between the two parties. In January 2013 NT paid NPR480.7 million to cover the fees from March 2010, when it launched commercial 3G services, to the end of the 2011/12 financial year, but the NTA said it should have paid NPR1.44 billion dating back to the license award in late-May 2006. Although the latest payment has settled the bulk of the outstanding amount, it does not include the NPR240 million demanded by the NTA for the 2006/07 fiscal year. While the regulator is seeking the full annual license fee for that year, NT says that it should only be charged a fee for the month-and-a-half between the licensing date and the end of the financial year in mid-July. Separately, the NTA has confirmed that both NT and its mobile market rival Ncell have paid the second installment of their GSM license renewal fees. The operators are each required to pay NPR2.5 billion per year over an eight-year period and the fees for 2013/14 have now been settled.
(July 18, 2014) The Himalayan

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

Oman continues to perform strongly in studies into IT penetration and usage, with a recent report issued by the World Economic Forum (WEF), in conjunction with the international business school INSEAD, ranking the Sultanate 40th globally for IT readiness, the same as in 2013. In its Global Information Technology Readiness Report 2014 (GITR), the WEF found Oman was making solid progress in transitioning to a knowledge-based society, with the government having a strong commitment to placing IT at the centre of state policy and the economy. While Oman did not move up or down the GITR ladder this year, with an additional four countries covered in the report, taking the total to 148, and with many of those nations bracketed around the Sultanate also having rolled out advances during the past year, maintaining its solid ranking should be considered an achievement in itself.
(July 1, 2014) Oxford Business Group 2014

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

The Ministry of Information Technology (MoIT) is all set to launch the first Draft of Telecommunications Policy. The Minister of State for IT chaired a meeting today, in which international consultant hired for "Reviewing and integrating current Telecommunications Policies" briefed the meeting about his key findings and policy suggestions about various aspects of telecommunication sector. The meeting was also attended by senior officials from the MoIT Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and Frequency Allocation Board (FAB). The Minister expressed that policy be forward looking and focus should be made on promoting latest trends and services. She emphasized that the policy should enable and encourage local manufacturing, content and application development. During the meeting, expected provisions of the new policy regarding interconnection, VoIP, Licensing Framework, Broadband services and Public Wi-Fi etc. were extensively discussed. All public sector stakeholders were given full chance to comment and present their views. The Minister said that the policy will be aimed to achieve universally available and affordable telecom services to all users to benefit the economy and society. A drafting group comprising of MoIT, PTA and FAB has been constituted to finalize the first draft before opening it for consultation. It is expected that the first draft of policy will be launched in the third week of July 2014 for review and comments of stakeholders. Formal workshops are planned with stakeholders in August 2014 to finalize the draft. The process of requisite formal approvals from the Government will thereafter take place. (July 24, 2014) moit.gov.pk

Qatar
Executive Director: Mr. Greame Gordon
[The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR

The ictQATAR issued a public consultation to seek comments on a draft of the e-Participation Policy, which aims to improve citizen's access to information and public services, and to engage the public during decision-making. "e-Participation is the sum total of both the government's programs to encourage participation from the public and the willingness of the public to do so. It is imperative that to successfully embrace e-Participation in the State of Qatar, thereby ensuring social and economic progress of the nation, all government agencies implement the provisions as laid out in the draft policy provisions," said Hassan Jassim al-Sayed, ictQATAR assistant secretary general,

Information Technology Sector, ICT Government Programs. Al-Sayed said the policy aims at instituting the culture and practices of e-Participation in government agencies and improving transparency and public participation to assist the government in achieving national development goals. He said all views and comments should be sent to policyfeedback@ict.gov.qa on or before September 15, 2014. A consultation survey may also be filed online at the Hukoomi website. The draft policy is available in Arabic and English at ictQATAR's official website www.ictqatar.qa. The Ministry, al-Sayed added, also inviting the public to fill in the questionnaire at the Qatar e-Government Portal (Hokoomi) at www.gov.qa, which are available in both Arabic and English. According to al-Sayed, public participation in governance processes and decision making is a "vital component" in the new knowledge-based society. This section provides provisions for government agencies in Qatar to support the use of online community engagement as an integral part of the development, implementation, and evaluation of its policies, programs, and services, he noted. "This policy on e-Participation requires all government agencies in Qatar to take the following steps: e-Participation administration, e-Participation webpage, online public consultation, online public engagement, use of social media analytics, and the national e-Participation portal," al-Sayed explained. He added that Article 12 (9) of Decree Law No 27 of 2014 setting the organization structure of ictQATAR provides it with the authority to draft legislations, policies, and standards for information technology systems, electronic transactions, and e-Government services to enable the transformation of government agencies in Qatar. Further, Article 11 (4) of Decree Law No 27 of 2014 identifies promoting the principles of e-Participation between government agencies and the public as ictQATAR's responsibility.

(July 20, 2014) gulf-times.com

Saudi Arabia

Governor: Eng. Abdullah A. Al Darrab

[Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC)]|

Saudi Arabian telco Etihad Etisalat (Mobily) has signed a 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) roaming agreement with Bahrain Telecommunications Company (Batelco), which will provide customers of both companies with advanced internet services outside of their domestic markets. In March 2014 Mobily inked similar agreement with UAE-based Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat), under which the Saudi Arabian network provider will connect its subscribers via Etisalat's SmartHub IPX platform, which offers roaming services, voice, messaging and GRX data exchange between mobile network operators, fixed line operators, applications service providers and over-the-top (OTT) content players through a single connection. (July 30, 2014) Zawya

The number of subscriptions in the mobile telecommunications services across Saudi Arabia reached about 50 million by the end of the first quarter of 2014, a penetration rate of 165 percent of the population. This is revealed in the quarterly electronic newsletter issued by the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC), SPA said. In its 19th edition of the newsletter, the publication stated the number of Internet users increased by the end of the first quarter of 2014 to reach about 18.1 million users, with a penetration rate of more than 59 percent. Fixed telephone lines operating by the end of the first quarter of 2014 reached about 4.8 million lines.

(July 23, 2014) Arab News 2014

The Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) thwarted nine attempts to hack the websites of sensitive government and commercial agencies last year, it revealed in a recent report. The report also showed that hackers partially succeeded in penetrating the websites of six government agencies last year. The CITC said it has enhanced its cyber security efforts in cooperation with the National Guidelines Center for Information Security, providing a healthy and protected e-service environment for government agencies. It said the commission sent 713 notifications to government and commercial agencies, alerting them about websites that might have been infected with viruses. They belonged to 223 institutions registered at the commission. The commission did not name the targeted government and commercial agencies, which it described as "sensitive" entities. The CITC said it also provided technical support such as electronic analysis to the interior ministry in investigating 11 criminal cases. The commission also sent 15 warnings of expected electronic attacks to entities registered at the National Guidelines Center for Information Security. It sent 15 other warnings for websites that contained loopholes, making them vulnerable to electronic attacks. (July 12, 2014) Arab News 2014

Turkey

Chairman & CEO: Dr. Tayfun Acarer

[Information & Communication Technologies Authority (BTK)]

Turkey's Cukurova Holding is finally poised to recover its controlling stake in Turkcell, with the long-awaited US$1.56 billion payment to Russia's Altimo now expected to take place on July 31. Although the identity of the lender has not officially been confirmed, state-owned Ziraat Bank has been named as the most likely candidate. Russia's Altimo, the telecoms investment arm of oligarch Mikhail Fridman's Alfa Group, appropriated the stake when Cukurova defaulted on US$1.35 billion loan. In July 2013 the Privy Council decided that Cukurova must pay US$1.56 billion to recover the stake. The Privy Council heard the case because Cukurova is registered in the British Virgin Islands (BVI). The Privy Council was formerly a supreme court of appeal for the entire British Empire (other than for the United Kingdom itself), and continues to hear appeals from the Crown Dependencies, the British Overseas Territories, and a number of Commonwealth member countries.

(July 29, 2014) Reuters

United Arab Emirates

Director General: Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Dubai-based telecoms operator Du has indicated that long-delayed network sharing with sole rival Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat) will begin in October, the company's CEO Osman Sultan told. The move will break the monopolies held by the pair within their respective areas by giving consumers nationwide the choice of operator for their fixed line voice and broadband services. Du is primarily restricted to the new development areas and free zones of Dubai, while Etisalat serves the rest of the market. Sultan revealed that IPTV services will not be offered initially, but will be available 'at a later stage due to some technical reasons'. Etisalat and Du first began discussing the issue in 2009 and a trial bitstream service with selected customers was launched in July 2011, but failure to agree the terms of network sharing have so far delayed its full implementation. (July 25, 2014) Gulf News

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SAMENA REGION

Argentina

The government plans to conduct an auction of national 4G spectrum in the 700MHz and 1700MHz/2100MHz (AWS) frequency bands, as well as the remaining regional 3G spectrum in the 850MHz (SRMC) and 1900MHz (PCS) ranges, on October 31. Interested parties will be able to acquire tender documents from July 24 to September 17 at a price of US$24,544, with the prequalification stage scheduled for September 18. The auction will be held on October 31; from that date, communications ministry Secretaria de Comunicaciones (SeCom) will have up to 19 business days to award the licenses. The allocation of new 3G and 4G LTE licenses is aimed at improving the quality and coverage of mobile services in Argentina, and a portion of the spectrum is reserved for a new provider. Winning bidders of the 4G spectrum will be required to provide coverage of all localities with more than 500 inhabitants (around 98% of the population) within five years, with the licenses valid for a period of 15 years. The 3G spectrum licenses have been divided up into three geographic areas: North, South and Buenos Aires metropolitan area.
(July 18, 2014) Convergencia Latina

Argentina plans to reserve spectrum for a market newcomer in its forthcoming 4G auction. The country published conditions for the 4G licensing process it announced in May, officially kicking off the bidding process. However, it has yet to state when the auction itself will take place. "The tender reserves a portion of the spectrum for a future provider," the Secretaria de Comunicaciones (Secom) announced. It did not say how much spectrum would be set aside. Argentina is auctioning off spectrum in the 700-MHz and AWS (1700/2100) spectrum bands for 4G; winners will be awarded national licenses, which will be valid for 15 years. The license holders will be required to cover 98% of the population within five years, fulfilling various staged coverage requirements in the interim. Secom also called for infrastructure-sharing to make the rollout of 4G more efficient, as well as lowering costs and time-to-market, and reducing the visual impact of the networks. The likelihood of a truly new provider entering the Argentine market through the 4G auction is relatively slim. A Greenfield deployment would be a costly exercise, even with roaming agreements with existing players in place. However, the auction could provide a new lease of life for iDEN network operator Nextel, which has been struggling to compete and is the subject of takeover talk. Although it has a tiny market share, Nextel is not technically a new player. However, participation in the auction could be structured in such a way that it, alongside a new investor, could pick up the reserved airwaves. Argentina has tried before to introduce a new player into the market. In 2012 the country cancelled its 3G spectrum auction, claiming the telco bidders did not meet its entry criteria, and handed a swathe of frequencies to state-owned firm Arsat. (July 8, 2014) totaltele.com

Australia

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has published a discussion paper seeking views on setting primary prices for the regulated fixed line services supplied using fixed line incumbent Telstra's copper network. This consultation forms part of the regulator's inquiry into making final access determinations (FADs) for the seven regulated fixed line services, those being: unconditioned local loop (ULL), Line Sharing Service (LSS),

PSTN Originating Access (OA), PSTN Terminating Access (TA), Local Carriage Service (LCS) and wholesale line rental (WLR). With the regulator using a building block pricing method to set primary prices for the regulated fixed line services, it confirmed it has obtained expenditure and demand forecasts for the next five years from Telstra. ACCC commissioner Christina Cifuentes noted: 'The ACCC is seeking views on several complex pricing issues it will consider during the FAD inquiry ... These issues include an assessment of Telstra's expenditure and demand forecasts, approaches to the allocation of costs to access services, the impacts of declining demand and the impact of Australia's transition from Telstra's copper network to the National Broadband Network.'Submissions on the discussion paper are due by 26 September 2014, following which the ACCC expects to release a draft decision regarding fixed line services FADs for comment in 'late 2014', while saying it will 'consider whether there is a need to consult further before releasing its draft decision'. A final decision, meanwhile, is expected by mid-2015. Alongside the aforementioned consultation the ACCC has also launched another, separate discussion regarding the primary price terms for the Domestic Transmission Capacity Service (DTCS) to be included in the DTCS FAD. This discussion paper reportedly reviews the domestic benchmarking approach that was used in the 2012 DTCS FAD, which the regulator said it had adopted because prices on competitive DTCS routes provide a good guide to the prices that should prevail on non-competitive (regulated) routes. With regards to this consultation, Ms. Cifuentes said: 'The ACCC is seeking input from stakeholders on a range of issues relevant to the price terms that will apply to the DTCS ... In particular, we are interested in views about the continued use of the domestic benchmarking approach and whether there are other suitable methodologies that might be considered in pricing the DTCS.' Stakeholder responses to this consultation will be accepted until 12 September 2014. (July 24, 2014) telegeography.com

Austria

Austria's Rundfunk & Telekom Regulierungs (RTR or Regulatory Authority for Telecoms and Broadcasting) approved plans for the country's three wireless operators – A1 Telekom Austria, T-Mobile Austria and Hutchison Drei Austria – to refarm their existing spectrum in the GSM range (900MHz/1800MHz) for 3G and 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) use. RTR CEO Johannes Gungl commented: 'All three mobile operators will benefit from the liberalization of the 900MHz and 1800MHz frequency bands. Due to this reclassification they can use a significantly larger proportion of their existing spectrum for the provision of broadband services via UMTS and LTE. The usable [proportion] of broadband wireless spectrum will increase from 59% to almost 90%'. (July 30, 2014) telegeography.com

Brazil

According to data from telecoms regulator ANATEL the country was home to a total of 3.27 million 4G (LTE) mobile connections at June 30, 2014, up from 2.08 million three months earlier, and now account for 1.19% of all mobile lines in the country. At the same date, LTE coverage had been expanded to a total of 118 municipalities across Brazil, up from the 99 cities and towns (where around 36% of Brazilians reside) as at March 31 this year. In terms of the mobile market overall; ANATEL reported a total of 275.71 million connections at end-June, up from 273.58 million three months earlier, boosting cellular penetration to 136.1% at the same date. The overwhelming majority of lines, 212.27 million (76.99%) are pre-paid, with monthly contract users accounting for 63.44 million accounts (23.01%); mobile broadband users reached 128.49 million it said. Mobile market leader Telefonica (Vivo) increased its slice of the pie in the three months to June, from 28.68% to 28.78% (79.36 million users), while second-placed TIM Participacoes (TIM Brasil) saw its market share fall 27.02% to 26.91% (74.20 million). Similarly, number three player – America Movil (AM)-owned Claro (Brasil) continues to lose ground, reporting a drop in market share to 24.95% at end-June (68.78 million) from 25.13% in 1Q14. Finally, fourth-placed Oi SA closed out the period with an 18.53% (51.08 million) share of the pie, up from 18.47%, Algar Telecom had 0.40% with 1.10 million customers and Nextel Brasil had 0.37% (1.02 million). (July 28, 2014) telegeography.com

Any Brazilian wireless carrier left out of the next fourth-generation (4G) spectrum auction is likely to face merger pressure from other players, the superintendent of competition at telecom regulator ANATEL said in an interview. Anatel's Carlos Baigorri said Grupo Oi is the Brazilian carrier facing the greatest financial difficulties ahead of the auction but that he has full confidence that the company will participate. Oi is the only major operator in Brazil that has not announced it is bidding in the auction, which will likely take place in about a month.
(July 23, 2014) reuters.com

Telecommunications regulator ANATEL approved the terms for the proposed auction of 700MHz spectrum for 4G mobile services, which will be published as soon as the country's comptroller general, Tribunal de Contas da Uniao (TCU), finalizes the reserve price for the licenses. The auction is now expected to kick off in September. The news comes in the wake of a statement from the communications minister Paulo Bernardo last month saying that he expected the auction to go ahead by 'the end of August or the first week of September' – in line with the government's previous rough schedule. At the time, the minister downplayed concerns about possible delays to the timetable, particularly the possibility of the auction being delayed until after Brazil's elections (scheduled for this October), saying that 'theoretically this can happen because we cannot set a deadline for TCU. But the trend is that the auction will happen before the election.' Bernardo was speaking at an international investor presentation given by the ministry and Brazilian telecoms regulator ANATEL at the Brazilian Embassy in London, following a similar presentation in New York, as Brazil aims to attract fresh foreign investment. In June this year the ministry finalized the schedule for shutting down analogue TV signals and freeing up the 4G 700MHz band across Brazil, which, following a pilot phase, begins in major cities in April 2016 and will see the 4G frequencies available in areas representing around 60% of the population by the end of 2017, and the entire country by November 2018. Usage of the 700MHz range for LTE enables coverage of large areas using fewer antennas, enabling high speed mobile broadband services to rural areas at a lower cost. Bernardo notes that, unlike the high levels of competition in large cities, smaller towns in the Brazilian interior have low competition and therefore 'there is a great market to be exploited.' However, cellular operators in Brazil are struggling to sustain profitability in the face of weak demand and heavy investments to roll out

4G coverage. The big four – Telefonica Brasil (Vivo), TIM Participacoes (TIM Brasil), America Movil's Claro Brasil and Oi SA – paid a combined BRL2.56 billion (US$1.2 billion) in 2012 for the first round of 4G licenses.
(July 18, 2014) telegeography.com

Telecoms regulator ANATEL has published the long-anticipated rules governing how digital TV and 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) mobile services in the 700MHz band will be able to sit safely side by side in the country. The watchdog's new regulations are designed to ensure that a degree of convergence can take place in respect of telecoms and broadcast services operating in the same frequency band, while simultaneously establishing technologies and strategies to alleviate and remove potential interference between them. As it stands, part of the 700MHz band – from 698MHz to 806MHz – is currently used for analogue TV services in Brazil, but these will be freed up once Brazil completes its digital switchover within the next three or so years. The Brazilian government intends to auction off 700MHz spectrum for LTE by September this year, although under current rules they will not be able to use them immediately amid concerns that there will be a degree of 4G-digital TV interference. To stop this, ANATEL's regulations – which are based on field and laboratory tests – call for the installation of filters to protect mobile base stations from interference, and also for TV filters and signal amplifiers. The regulator notes that other measures may be needed, such as relocating base stations, reducing signal transmission power or adjusting the position of antenna. In the coming weeks it will publish its cost estimates for the cost and deployment of filters and TV channel reallocation, a bill that domestic cellcos will have to meet.
(July 14, 2014) telegeography.com

Canada

Following on from its nationwide 700MHz 4G license auctions completed in February, Industry Canada announced that it will launch an auction of 'AWS-3' mobile spectrum (1700MHz/2100MHz paired frequencies in bands adjacent to the existing AWS licensed 3G/4G spectrum) early next year – before the 2500MHz license auction scheduled for April 2015. An announcement from the ministry said that AWS-3 spectrum is 'ideal for delivering fast, reliable service [including 4G LTE] to Canadians on the latest Smartphones, tablets and mobile devices', while anticipating that the proximity to the operational AWS band will facilitate expedited network deployment and availability of consumer handsets. The AWS-3 auction will have rules including:

- a 30MHz block of spectrum (of a total of 50MHz of available bandwidth) set aside for operating new entrants;
- strict provisions on the transfer of AWS-3 spectrum so that Canadian consumers benefit from increased competition in wireless services; and
- a simpler, shorter auction process that will provide operating new entrants with a visible path to high-quality spectrum.

Specifically, the government will set aside one 30MHz block of AWS-3 spectrum in each region of the country; wireless carriers with less than 10% national and 20% provincial/territorial wireless subscriber market share will be eligible to bid on the 'set-aside' in license areas where they are providing services.

Consultations on the licensing of this spectrum will begin 'this summer', the release added. Feedback is being sought on proposed details, including:

- whether licenses for AWS-3 should include deployment requirements in both the short term (for example, five years after the licenses are issued) and the long term (ten years after); and
- whether a simplified and accelerated auction process, using a sealed-bid format, would be the best approach to encourage participation.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is currently consulting on an upcoming auction of AWS-3 frequencies (in the 1695MHz-1710MHz, 1755MHz-1780MHz and 2155MHz-2180MHz bands). (July 8, 2014) telegeography.com

The Canadian government announced plans for another mobile spectrum auction, again reserving a large block of frequencies for newcomers to the mobile market. The AWS-3 spectrum will be auctioned early next year, under a "simpler, shorter" process designed to bring the spectrum to market before the 2.5 GHz auction planned in April 2015. A 30 MHz block of spectrum will be set aside for the more recent entrants in the Canadian mobile market, and the awarded licenses will be subject to "strict provisions" on their transfer, to ensure the AWS-3 spectrum does not end up in the hands of the dominant operators. In total, 50 MHz of paired spectrum will be available in the auction. The AWS-3 spectrum is adjacent to the AWS spectrum auctioned in 2008, which led to the entrance of new players such as Wind, Mobilicity and Public Mobile in the market. Consultations on the licensing of the new spectrum will begin this summer. Wind Mobile welcomed the government's announcement and said it looks forward to participating in the consultation.
(July 8, 2014) telecompaper.com

China

China's main telecoms companies have agreed to establish an infrastructure sharing venture to reduce the cost and optimize the construction, maintenance and operation of infrastructure. China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom have formed China Communications Facilities Services Corporation to reduce duplicating and redundant construction of telecommunications towers and related telecommunications infrastructure as well as to optimize investment efficiency, further promote resource sharing and reduce impact on the environment. The company will also allow the carriers to reduce their overall investment scale; utilize existing assets with higher efficiency, save capital expenditure, optimize cash management and focus on core operations. The companies said that they are still in the preliminary stages of discussion but will look at injecting existing infrastructure assets into the new entity. Network sharing is already widely used in mature markets and is becoming increasingly popular in emerging markets as well, particularly those with large geographic areas and low population density like Africa. Several operators can share infrastructure rather than each paying to expand into a low ARPU region. Under the partnership, China Mobile will hold 40 per cent of the company, China Unicom will hold 30.1 per cent and China Telecom will hold 29.9 per cent of the company. (July 14, 2014) telecoms.com

China's two smaller mobile networks have had their 4G licenses modified to enable them to offer FDD based LTE services. China Unicom and China Telecom had been granted TDD based LTE licenses, along with China Mobile, but there is a smaller range of handsets and network equipment available for the Chinese developed 4G standard. The country's Ministry of Industry and Information has now modified their licenses to include the more mainstream global standard, which is based on FDD LTE services. The two companies have struggled with their existing 4G services due to the lack of compatibility between their existing 3G networks and TDD based LTE network infrastructure. The migration path to the FDD based service is much easier. The license modification should see the two mobile networks more easily able to compete with the dominant China Mobile, as they will have access to a much wider range of handsets, and also potentially lower costs for network expansion in the future. (July 3, 2014) cellular-news.com

Cambodia

Cambodia's telecoms operators have allegedly voiced opposition to a draft law from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications Cambodia (MPTC) which states that no company can operate infrastructure assets and also provide retail services. According to a report, if the draft legislation is approved, telecoms operators that choose to retain their retail operations will be forced to sell off their network assets and rely on government-controlled infrastructure providers. The draft law also reportedly states that all telecom licenses will be reassessed on new criteria, and some companies could be forced to hand back their existing permits. In addition, the Post cites a section of the draft law as saying that 'to ensure the effective security, national stability and public order, the minister of the MPTC has the right to order operators to transfer their systems, which control their telecom operations, to the Ministry.' Alan Sinfield, CEO of mobile operator Cambodia Advance Communications (qb), commented that the draft law 'contains a number of extremely concerning articles, which the government has not shown any of the mechanics for their design or implementation.' Meanwhile, MPTC secretary Ek Vandy was quoted as saying that the ministry was 'working hard to make the law more flexible to the recent situation and be [compliant] with the international standard', while adding that the draft is in the final stage of development. When that is complete, it will be submitted to the National Assembly for final approval, although Vandy said he did not expect the MPTC to implement the new law before the end of this year.
(July 28, 2014) Phnom Penh Post

Ecuador

Ecuadorian telecoms regulator CONATEL has approved amendments to the Rules of Access and Use of Shared Physical Infrastructure telecommunications, aiming to establish a process for operators to share passive infrastructure and optimize resources in network deployment. Following public hearings on draft technical standards for network installation, the regulator has standardized processes and technical criteria for routing, identification and management of overhead cables on a national basis. Operators not complying with the policy will be subject to sanctions.
(July 14, 2014) Telesemana

El Salvador

Telecoms regulator SIGET plans to finally introduce number portability (NP) in February next year. Speaking at the Economic Committee of the Legislative Assembly, SIGET head Blanca Coto said that a tender will be launched next month to select a portability administrator, with a view to launching the service in early 2015. The legislation calling for introduction of NP was first passed in June 2010, but SIGET subsequently postponed its implementation, stating that telecoms operators were not prepared for the change, while a lack of consensus over who will fund the process has led to further delays. Meanwhile, Coto has also addressed the need for the introduction of quality of service (QoS) standards in the telecoms sector. The SIGET head said that amendments to the Telecommunications Act are required to empower the watchdog to monitor compliance with such standards, and to also sanction telecoms operators if their service quality is deemed inadequate.
(July 10, 2014) El Mundo

France

Telecommunications regulator ARCEP has launched a public consultation into the use of open, unlicensed spectrum for a variety of unspecified short-range wireless communications that it anticipates will contribute to the IoT (Internet of Things) phenomenon. As ever with these things, a public consultation is just the first phase in a long bureaucratic journey that may culminate in things being done. It is also an admission of the role of the regulator as facilitator rather than expert, hence the need to invite third-parties (in this context referred to as stakeholders) to inform the process. These are the stated aims of the consultation:

- To propose the ARCEP draft decision enabling the use of a wide array of open frequencies by short-range devices, notably through the transposition of a set of provisions that have been harmonized at the European level;
- To deepen ARCEP's forward-planning on the future use of and need for open spectrum, particular in view of the upcoming development of the Internet of Things.

In essence, ARCEP is saying it know IoT is going to be a big deal, but doesn't really know what to do about it, so it would appreciate some top tips. The regulator cited a report by Economics Professor and former ARCEP Commissioner Joëlle Toledano, on the need for spectrum sharing, as a pretext for this consultation. The success of wifi, according to ARCEP, is at least partly down to "the simplicity of the regulatory framework governing the use of radio frequencies that are open to Wi-Fi, chiefly the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands." Tech companies operating in France will be hoping this precedent is maintained with this latest open spectrum initiative.
(July 28, 2014) telecoms.com

Iceland

Telecoms watchdog the Post and Telecom Administration (PTA) has adopted its Decision 17/2014, which approves wholesale network operator Mila's wholesale tariffs for bitstream access via Route Option 1 and Route Option 3 from August 1, 2014. According to the published document, Route Option 1 will be priced at ISK912 (US$8.02) per user, unchanged from the previous charge, while ADSL/VDSL connection via Route Option 3 will be priced at ISK1,367

per unit, which represents a 17% reduction on the previous levy. Mila was designated as having significant market power (SMP) in the wholesale leased line market in January 2014, and as a result is subject to certain obligations in the wholesale market for broadband access. Following a consultation on the topic, which ran until January 13, 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. Meanwhile, the regulator has launched a public consultation on the technical characteristics of terminal equipment for Vectoring technology over VDSL, prior to a proposed adoption of the technology later on this year. The PTA pointed out that in order to facilitate these plans, Mila needs to ensure that users' terminal equipment supports VDSL2 (standard G.993.2). The regulator has invited all interested parties to submit their comments on the proposed equipment upgrade by August 20, 2014.
(July 24, 2014) telegeography.com

Icelandic telecoms watchdog the Post and Telecommunication Agency (PTA) has approved the sharing of frequencies for the provision of 2G (GSM), 3G (UMTS) and 4G (LTE) services by a newly established joint venture between domestic mobile operators Vodafone Iceland and Nova. In March 2014 the watchdog asked the public to comment on a proposal to authorize the shared use of frequencies in the 800MHz, 900MHz, 1800MHz and 2100MHz bands, as allocated to Vodafone and Nova, after receiving an application for joint concessions from the cellcos. The move came after the two companies signed an agreement to establish a common infrastructure company in November 2013. Under the terms set out by the deal, the two companies will provide an equal initial contribution to the 50/50 joint venture, which will be tasked with the implementation of a nationwide integrated distribution network. The Agency said in its Decision No.14/2014 that, subject to certain conditions, the proposed collaboration between Vodafone and Nova will have a positive impact on the Icelandic telecoms market with respect to efficiency in the construction and operation of telecoms networks and services to consumers. The sharing agreement, however, is also subject to approval from the Icelandic Competition Authority (ICA), which has yet to publish its ruling on the matter. (July 4, 2014) telegeography.com

India

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has finally released much-awaited guidelines on the sharing of radio frequencies in all bands, allowing carriers to make optimal use of spectrum. To date, operators have only been allowed to share physical infrastructure like cell towers to bring costs down but not the spectrum resources themselves. Now new recommendations mean that a maximum of two operators that both hold a swathe of spectrum in the same band, can pool their resources. "Spectrum in the bands of 800/900/1,800/2,100/2,300/2,500 MHz will be sharable provided both the licensees are having spectrum in the same band," TRAI said. The authority also recommended a minor 0.5 per cent increase in the spectrum usage charge (SUC) fee due to the enhanced airwave holdings. The proposals apply to both 2G and 3G technologies. Permission for spectrum sharing will be given initially for a period of five years and in respect of spectrum obtained through auction, spectrum sharing will be permitted only if the auction conditions provide for the same. Moreover, both the parties are required to fulfill their individual roll-out obligations as well as the Quality of Service (QoS) obligations prescribed under the license. "The basic objective of spectrum sharing is to provide an opportunity to the TSPs to pool their spectrum holdings and thereby improve spectral efficiency. Sharing can also provide additional network capacities in places where there is network congestion due to a spectrum crunch," the TRAI said. Ultimately, the move could bring prices down for consumers as operators will be less motivated to bid aggressively in upcoming spectrum auctions. (July 22, 2014) telecoms.com

The government hopes to earn Rs. 45,471 crore from communication services, including proceeds from three sets of spectrum frequencies and related charges in this financial year. The estimated receipts from communication services in the Budget for 2014-15 presented by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley are higher than Rs. 38,954 crore revenue projected in the interim budget earlier. Telecom spectrum allocation in India has been hit swirl of allegations after national auditor Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), in a report tabled in 2010, had estimated that the government may have lost potential revenues of Rs. 1.76 lakh crore when it allotted 2G spectrum in 2008 through a controversial "first-come, first-served policy. In the wake of the 2G spectrum allocation scandal, the Supreme Court in an order in 2012 had cancelled 122 telecom licenses and ordered auctioning off spectrum that the government had allotted in 2008. The receipts under the same head were Rs. 40,847.06 crore in 2013-14, according to revised estimates for FY14. "Receipts under other communications services mainly related to one-time spectrum charges levied as per recommendations of TRAI, auction of 1,800 MHz (megahertz) and 900 MHz spectrum and receipts from 800 MHz spectrum," the Budget document said. GSM players use spectrum in 1800 MHz and 900 MHz band for providing wireless telecom services, while 800 MHz band is used by CDMA service providers. In coming days, 1800 MHz and 900 MHz band can be used for high-end mobile services like 3G and 4G.
(July 15, 2014) hindustantimes.com

The government is considering a sale of additional radio spectrum that could be used by the mobile networks to address a lack of spectrum capacity that is holding back some 3G network upgrades. Vodafone and Bharti Airtel have been complaining that the spectrum restrictions are holding back speed upgrades. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is considering a sale of spectrum in the 2.1GHz spectrum, which is most commonly used for 3G services. Currently the Defense Ministry has released 20MHz of 2.1GHz spectrum for sale, although a further 5MHz of spectrum is still pending to be released. Such an auction would take place alongside the already planned 900MHz and 1800MHz spectrum auctions that are due later this year. The DoT is also considering a sale of some spectrum in the 2.3GHz and 2.5GHz bands, although the lack of compatible mobile phones may make those blocks less desirable to the mobile networks. The sale of 800MHz spectrum, mostly for the CDMA operators is however still mired in a dispute over the high reserve price that the government wants, and which the mobile networks are fighting to have lowered.
(July 6, 2014) The Economic Times

Ireland

Ireland has launched a strategic review of its spectrum policy in a bid to encourage future investment in its mobile sector. In a consultation paper published last week, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) asked for industry players to give their views on the potential reallocation of 320-MHz band spectrum – currently used by digital TV broadcasters – for mobile broadband. It also asked stakeholders for comments about its process for assigning frequencies, whether it should reserve spectrum for specific uses, and the level of spectrum fees. "As demand for applications that rely on spectrum continues apace, [the] government is determined to ensure that the Irish spectrum planning and management regime is sufficiently responsive," said Alex White, minister of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, in a statement. "It is important that it supports competition, innovation, research and development in new spectrum-based services and applications, and contributes to sustainable economic and social development." In addition to seeking input from the industry, the government has also proposed amending its current spectrum policy to include an overarching principles document that sets out its long-term objectives and a shorter, more focused document that establishes targets for the next three to five years. "I am committed to ensuring that the national spectrum resource is used effectively and efficiently so that we can boost our competitiveness, and improve the quality of life for our citizens," said White. The review is aimed at helping Ireland reach the objectives set out in 2012 in its National Broadband Plan. The government aims to provide a minimum connection speed of 70 Mbps to 50% of the population by 2015, with 40 Mbps speeds "generally available" throughout the country. For rural and remote areas, a target of 30 Mbps has been set. "In Ireland, where demographics and spatial distribution patterns make the delivery of fixed line services challenging, the use of spectrum to deliver broadband is particularly relevant," said the DCENR, at the time. (July 28, 2014) totaltele.com

Italy

The long running rumors of a possible merger between two of Italy's mobile networks are reported to have been revived. Hutchision Whampoa is said to be close to a deal to merge its Italian network with VimpelCom's local Italian unit, Wind Italia. The main sticking point is on the issue of control of the enlarged company, with Hutchison Whampoa wanting management control, while VimpelCom is said to be seeking equal parity between the two shareholders. The merged networks would collectively hold around 35 percent of the market, with some 30 million customers. That would put them roughly equal to the market leader, Telecom Italia. Vodafone would be pushed down to third place in the market if the merger were to go ahead.

(July 24, 2014) Bloomberg

Jamaica

Jamaica's Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) is to meet with mobile operators Digicel and LIME as well as consumer groups to discuss the cellcos' recent blocking of unlicensed voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) services such as Viber and Skype. The two firms blocked access to the over-the-top (OTT) VoIP services, saying they were unauthorized and that they were having a negative impact on network quality. The regulator is keen to work out a solution which will see the OTT offerings reinstated, the Jamaica Observer writes. Meanwhile, opposition ICT spokesperson Andrew Wheatley has expressed concern at the cellcos' move, saying it will impact business on the island: 'This latest action by the telecoms providers is setting a dangerous precedent and could have an adverse effect on a country trying to encourage greater use of ICTs for economic development.' He went on to comment: 'The current situation highlights the need for the government to accelerate the drafting and tabling of the promised ICT Act which would no doubt address issues of this nature. In its current form, the legislation allows telecoms providers to take advantage of existing gaps, so this needs to be corrected.'

(July 7, 2014) telegeography.com

Kenya

Kenya's telecoms regulator has said that it will seek outside expert advice on the use of embedded SIM cards following a complaint by Safaricom. The complaint was sparked by proposals from the Equity Bank to use an ultra-thin SIM card that can sit on top of existing SIM cards to provide direct access to its own mobile money services. Equity Bank was also recently granted a MVNO license and has signed a wholesale agreement with Airtel. However the thin-SIM would enable it to offer mobile banking services to customers on other mobile networks as well. Safaricom claims that the plans put subscribers at risk of possible fraud, and filed a complaint with the regulator. "We have received the letter from Safaricom. We are going to find out from them what security threats using such a technology poses, talk to SIM card manufacturers and also look at industry best practices before we make our ruling," said the regulator's director-general Francis Wangusi. (July 7, 2014) cellular-news.com

Kenya's Safaricom has secured a 10 year extension on its operating license after it agreed to the SH2.3 billion (US$25 million) license fee. The Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) confirmed that it had renewed the license, bringing to an end several months of doubt about whether it would do so. Although the reality of effectively shutting-down the country's largest mobile network was never likely to happen, the regulator had been hinting that it might do so if the network did not improve its services. The regulator did not elaborate on whether Safaricom had agreed to any conditions for the license renewal. (July 4, 2014) cellular-news.com

Mexico

Mexico's President Enrique Pena Nieto signed into law new rules for the telecommunications and broadcasting industries that are designed to curb the power of billionaire Carlos Slim's America Movil and broadcaster Televisa. The legislation approved by Congress last week, fleshes out a constitutional reform that Pena Nieto pushed through Congress last year to spur greater competition in the telecommunications market that is dominated by Slim. "This reform will promote greater competition, more and better conditions, better coverage and service quality, as well as lower prices and costs," Pena Nieto said at an event in Mexico City where he spoke before government officials and telecoms industry executives. Approval of so-called secondary laws was delayed about eight months, complicating the work of a new regulator that is charged with reducing the power of broadcaster Televisa, which dominates television markets, and America Movil. America

Movil, which has some 70 percent of Mexico's mobile market and over 60 percent of fixed-lines, said last week it would sell assets to avoid regulations that force the company to lower connection costs for competitors and share infrastructure.
After finishing the telecommunications bill last week, lawmakers are now turning toward legislation that will complete the government's most ambitious reform, the opening of Mexico's oil and gas industry to private investment after a 75-year state monopoly.
(July 14, 2014) reuters.com

Moldova

The National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (ANRCETI) has announced that, following a public consultation on a draft proposal to limit the number of operating licenses in the 800MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz frequency bands, it will now review the results. The regulator notes that it received proposals from Orange Moldova and Moldcell. In accordance with a spectrum management program for 2013-2020, as approved by the Moldovan government with Decision No. 116 dated February 11, 2013, ANRCETI ruled that the expiry date of all mobile licenses issued to network providers operating in the Republic should be synchronized. The regulator decided to initiate the synchronization process in order to ensure fair competition in the market, and to create the necessary conditions for the implementation of technological neutrality. Going forward, under the terms set out by the program, November 2014 will see the regulator grant new licenses for the operation of mobile networks in the 800MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz spectrum bands, which will be issued on a competitive basis. Previously, on February 26, 2013 the watchdog granted a 20-month provisional mobile license to Orange just before its license was due to expire (March 7); the technology-neutral licensing regime will be introduced for all operators on November 5, 2014, after the concessions held by Moldtelecom and Moldcell expire. Under the draft resolution, the number of authorizations in the bands 800MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz will be limited as follows:

- three licenses for 2×10MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 791MHz-821MHz/832MHz-862MHz band;
- three licenses for 2×10MHz (FDD) and one authorization for 2×5MHz in the 890MHz-915MHz/935MHz-960MHz) band; and
- three licenses for 2×25MHz paired blocks (FDD) in the 1710MHz-1785MHz/1805MHz-1880MHz band.

The concessions will be issued to 'direct suppliers' who have already built communication networks and provide authorized mobile services in Moldova; the regulator invites qualifying applicants to submit their applications by 25 July 2014. (July 15, 2014) telegeography.com
The National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (ANRCETI) has announced that a total of 44,720 numbers have been ported in the country since the introduction of mobile number portability (MNP) and fixed number portability (FNP) services on July 1, 2013 and August 1, 2013, respectively. The regulator pointed out that 90% of the total, or 40,376 ported numbers, were mobile numbers, while the remaining 10% that changed network provider were fixed. In the wireless arena, Moldcell attracted the lion's share of the ported numbers – 24,812, followed by market leader Orange Moldova (8,038) and Moldtelecom (Unite, 7,526). Of the total 4,344 fixed numbers that changed network, 2,351 transferred their services to StarNet Solutions, while Orange Moldova and Arax-Impex attracted 1,231 and 238 new users, respectively. Gregory Varan, director of ANRCETI, disclosed that the positive result of implementing NP in Moldova is reflected not only by the number of ports, but also by the efforts of network operators to maintain their customers and attract new ones. Following the implementation of number portability, the three main mobile providers – Orange Moldova, Moldcell and Unite – proposed new offers to subscribers, which (for the first time) included unlimited calls to all phone networks. (July 7, 2014) telegeography.com

New Zealand

New Zealand's Commerce Commission has opened a public consultation on a number of decisions relating to the cost models it will build to price the unbundled bitstream access (UBA) service and the unbundled copper local loop (UCLL) service. The paper sets out the Commission's view on the regulatory framework, the type of hypothetical replacement network it will be modeling for the UCLL and UBA services and how it will address a number of key modeling decisions. The regulator's preliminary view is that for the UCLL service, it will model a fiber-to-the-home network, with fixed wireless in remote areas; and for the UBA service it will model costs using Chorus' copper-based inputs. In both models it proposes taking advantage of third-party assets where possible. The Commission also proposes a five-year regulatory period, and indicates that it will make a decision whether or not to backdate the prices it determines when releasing its draft decisions in December this year.
(July 10, 2014) telegeography.com

Norway

The Norwegian Post and Telecommunications Authority (NPT) has confirmed its intention to offer three vacant blocks of 1800MHz spectrum in an open multi-round auction scheduled for January 26, 2015. The frequencies went unsold during the regulator's multi-band auction in December 2013.
The NPT's preliminary schedule is as follows:

- September 15, 2014: draft auction rules circulated for comment
- October 27, 2014: deadline for filing hearing input
- December 8, 2014: publication of final auction rules and the opening of registration for participation in the auction
- January 12, 2015: deadline for registration as a participant in the auction
- January 26, 2015: auction starts. (July 3, 2014) telegeography.com

Peru

The Ministry of Transport & Communications (MTC) has urged local authorities to cooperate with providers on the deployment of telecoms infrastructure, noting that a number of operators had encountered difficulties in obtaining municipal permits to install aerials. Deputy Minister of Communications Raul Perez-Reyes sought to dismiss health concerns regarding mobile sites, explaining that the radiation from base stations reach just 1.5% of the maximum permitted amount and does not pose a risk to the health of citizens. Mr. Perez Reyes went on to say that the withholding of permits could distort competition and result in higher tariffs. (July 15, 2014) Telecompaper

Poland

Orange Poland has received a ruling from the Office of Electronic Communications (UKE) overturning a previous decision in which it had approved the transfer of a 2.4MHz block of spectrum in the 1800MHz band from Polkomtel to Orange. The development was reported by Wojciech Jabczynski, a spokesperson for Orange, who suggested that Polkomtel had performed an 'impressive pirouette' and changed its mind and 'did not want to give up the band it had sold already.' According to the official, Orange has not decided whether it will appeal the decision, adding that Orange can cope without the extra frequencies. Polkomtel reportedly withdrew from the agreement shortly after Orange and T-Mobile Poland announced that they were willing to share spectrum resources, but would compete independently at auction for the rights to 800MHz and 2600MHz frequencies. (July 28, 2014) Rpkom

Telecoms regulator UKE has announced that the country's communications markets were worth a combined PLN40.15 billion (US$13.21 billion) in 2013, down 3.7% on the year before. The biggest fall – of 4.8% – came in the fixed line sector, while the mobile market also declined. The only segment to witness an upturn was for internet access, growing 3.7% year-on-year in value terms. Mobile services still account for the lion's share of revenues, making up 46.3% of the overall market, according to UKE, with 81% of all mobile revenues coming from post-paid subscribers. Some 1.55 million mobile users switched operator in 2013, an increase of 23.9% from 2012. In the internet sector, meanwhile, UKE reports that at the end of 2013 more than one-third of all fixed broadband customers were on tariffs offering peak speeds of between 30Mbps and 100Mbps, while the number of users on packages of 100Mbps and above more than doubled from the year before.
(July 2, 2014) telegeography.com

Russia

Russia's state radio frequencies commission SRFC decided to allow telecommunications operators to use the 890-915MHz and 935-960MHz bands for providing services over the LTE standard and its later modifications. The bands have been used for GSM services only. SRFC took the decision based on the introduction of the technology-neutral principle, which enabled use of the 900MHz band for 3G services from December 2013. The 1,710-1,785MHz and 1,805-1,880 bands also were cleared for use of LTE services then. A decision on the auction of the 2,570-2,620MHz band, currently used for pay-TV services over the MMDS standard, has also been taken. Winners of the auctions will be able to provide LTE services in the frequencies 2,570-2,595MHz and 2,595-2,620MHz. (July 23, 2014) telecompaper.com

Senegal

Telecoms regulator Agence de Regulation des Telecoms et Postes (ARTP) has announced the setting up of a new body to monitor and observe quality of service (QoS) for telecoms services in the country. Noting the importance of QoS to Senegalese users, Regulator explained that the: 'Observatory will be a tool that will measure the quality of service at anytime and anywhere ... This is a project that will ultimately determine whether the costs charged to the end user are reasonable or not.' The ARTP also plans to conduct customer surveys to better understand their expectations for telecom operators, the regulator noted, adding that during recent discussions the ARTP has also actively discussed issues such as 4G licensing, improving network coverage and number portability. (July 15, 2014) telegeography.com

Spain

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) rejected Telefonica's appeal against a €151.9 million fine it received for abusing its dominant position in Spain's broadband market. In 2007, the European Commission upheld a complaint that the margin between the wholesale price Telefonica charged for access to its network and the retail prices levied on end users was too small to enable competitors to compete with it. The Commission classified Telefonica's abuse as 'very serious' and slapped it with a fine. The Spanish incumbent appealed before the EU General Court, but it was thrown out, so then it appealed the General Court's decision before the ECJ. "In today's judgment, the court dismisses Telefonica's appeal in its entirety," said the ECJ, in a statement. "The fine of 151,875,000 imposed by the Commission and upheld by the General Court therefore remains unchanged." Telefonica had argued that the size of the fine was unwarranted, but in its judgment, the ECJ said the operator had failed to show in what way the Commission's "decision was excessive to the point of being disproportionate". (July 10, 2014) totaltele.com

Sweden

Sweden's National Post and Telecom Agency (PTS) issued an injunction on July 4, 2014 to Tele2 Sweden to force it to reduce its mobile termination rates (MTR) for voice calls to an average of no more than SEK0.0815 (US$0.0121) per minute by July 7, 2014, in line with a recent adjustment the regulator made to all operators' MTR guideline rates. The PTS' decision on MTRs (effective July 1) was based on cost-oriented pricing under a new calculation method which the watchdog said was more accurate than previous MTRs. The injunction issued to Tele2 is effective immediately, the PTS' release stated. (July 7, 2014) telegeography.com

Taiwan

Telecoms regulator the National Communications Commission (NCC) has reportedly given the nod to the exchange of spectrum in the 1800MHz band between Taiwan Mobile and Far EasTone (FET). The move will enable both of the aforementioned operators to begin offering 4G services on a commercial basis as early as the end of the third quarter of 2014. In October 2013 Taiwan Mobile secured the 'C1' block in the 1800MHz band (1805MHz-1820MHz), while FET acquired the 'C4' block (1840MHz-1850MHz); both operators also won 700MHz frequencies at that date as part of the NCC's spectrum auction. However, C1 block is presently used by FET for its 2G services, while in a similar fashion Taiwan Mobile is using the frequencies in block C4 for its second-generation offerings. With both of the respective 2G concessions not set to expire until June 2017, negotiations between the duo got underway last month with a view to exchanging a 5MHz portion of the C4 block for a 5MHz chunk of the C1 block in order to allow both to inaugurate commercial LTE-based services.
(July 18, 2014) The Digitimes

Thailand

National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) Secretary General Takorn Tantasith said the regulator would draw up details to clarify this point with

the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) this week. He added that the auction was the means to ensure that the spectrum was utilized efficiently to benefit the country. The NCPO had earlier instructed the watchdog to suspend the auctions of the 1,800MHz and 900MHz licenses this year, pending the junta receiving clarification of the plan's details. In addition, the NCPO had told the NBTC to first find out from TOT and CAT Telecom if they anticipated facing any problems from the auctions being held. Then the NBTC will have to submit its final decision regarding the auctions, and the solutions to any CAT and TOT issues for the NCPO's consideration. The watchdog originally planned to auction the 1,800MHz bands of TrueMove and Digital Phone Co in August and the 900MHz of Advanced Info Service (AIS) in November. The NBTC has already held talks with TOT and CAT. Takorn said that TOT president Yongyuth Wattanasin had told him the state telecom operator wanted the junta and the watchdog to find a way to amend Article 84 of the 2010 Frequency Allocation Act. Starting last December, the Act obliges TOT and CAT to transfer all annual concession revenue to the state coffers. This has resulted in financial woes for both state agencies. TOT also wants to keep the 900MHz spectrum for 15 years after the 900MHz concession it granted to AIS expires next year. It also wants to use half of its 64MHz bandwidth of the 2.3GHz spectrum to provide a 4G wireless broadband service. The NBTC recently told TOT that its 2.3GHz spectrum term had already expired. The watchdog will reallocate all spectra by auction after their concessions expire. Takorn said CAT chief executive officer Kitisak Sriprasert did not oppose Article 84, as it wanted its staff to learn to deal with any challenge. Even without this law, CAT would still face the challenge of the 1,800 MHz concession it granted to Total Access Communication (DTAC), which expires in 2018. CAT also wants the NBTC to find ways for it to utilize the currently unused 25MHz bandwidth of 1,800MHz in the DTAC concession. CAT has granted DTAC the right to use 50MHz bandwidth of the 1,800MHz spectrum but only half of that is being used. (July 7, 2014) nationmultimedia.com

Ukraine

The president of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, has signed a decree to implement a set of urgent measures to convert radio frequencies from military ownership for 3G/4G commercial mobile usage purposes, with a deadline for the conversion set at August 15, 2014. Decree 613/2014'"On ensuring conditions for the introduction of modern telecommunications technology' also stated that the Defense Ministry, State Special Communication Service, the General Staff of the Armed Forces and telecoms regulator NCCIR must collaborate to implement the necessary measures for the conversion, with a view to launching a tender for 3G (2100MHz) licenses by 30 October 2014. Andrey Osadchuk, director of regulatory and legal support at Ukraine's largest cellco by users, Kyivstar, commented on the decree: 'We understand that the Ministry of Defense needed funds for the conversion, and we are ready to pay … this amount will be included in the total cost of the license. The cost of a license should be transparent and uniform for all operators. Also, we believe that operators can immediately pay the cost of the license, which has to be included in the cost of conversion of radio frequencies, and do not [need to] stretch the payments over several years.' Kyivstar calculates that the total cost of a 3G license, including the cost of spectrum conversion, should not exceed UAH1 billion (US$83.8 million). The presidential decree also urged that the short-term tendering of 3G licenses – aiming for an immediate launch of services to follow – should be accompanied by the introduction of technological neutrality in licensing, as well as a policy decision on allowing the launch of 4G LTE technology. Kyivstar's Osadchuk supported this policy, saying: 'Today, the majority of equipment telecom networks can simultaneously provide services to various standards and technologies. Ukraine has a unique chance to launch 3G and 4G services immediately. This is possible [via] the competition for the frequency range of 2100MHz and the simultaneous introduction of the principle of technological neutrality. This will ensure the rapid development of new generation [services] in Ukraine.' (July 25, 2014) ProIT

United Kingdom

The UK's dominant landline operator, British Telecom has won a court battle with the mobile networks over the cost of terminating so called freephone calls on its network. Although termination rates are generally set by the regulator as a fixed rate, often based on the cost of the service, BT introduced a termination rate for free phone calls that was based on how much the mobile networks charged for the call. Although calls to 0800 numbers are free from landlines, some of the mobile networks charge for those calls. BT's proportionate termination rate would have seen it collect more from the charging networks, and nothing from the mobile networks that also offered free calls to the 0800 numbers. Initially, the telecoms regulator, OFCOM upheld protests by the mobile networks against the new costs, but the Competition Appeal Tribunal sided with British Telecom. A subsequent appeal court then sided back with OFCOM and the mobile networks. Now, the UK's highest court, the Supreme Court has returned the judgment in favor of British Telecom Following the ruling, British Telecom said "We will now start proceedings to recover the money that has been refunded to the mobile operators since the Court of Appeal ruling." BT introduced the new regime in 2009, and since then the mobile networks have continued to charge for freephone calls. The financial benefit to BT from the backlog of charges is said to be in the low tens of millions of pounds. It added that the company will "also be pursuing claims for further termination charges subsequent to that ruling. Such pricing was designed to benefit UK consumers by incentivizing the mobile operators to lower their retail prices." (July 14, 2014) cellular-news.com

United States

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has updated a number of rules governing the use of theAWS-3 spectrum that is set to be auctioned off to cellular operators later this year. According to RCR Wireless, the updates include the establishment of 'protection zones' designed to reduce interference concerns between commercial wireless networks and the satellite-based communications services that will continue in select AWS-3 bands. As such, the watchdog said that it has set up 27 protection zones in areas where 47 'federal earth stations' will continue to receive satellite signals using the 1675MHz-1695MHz and 1695MHz-1710MHz spectrum bands. License users with base stations in those protection zones and operating near those bands will be required to coordinate services to ensure that interference concerns are mitigated. The hastily introduced rules did not go down well with FCC commissioner Ajit Pai, who fired off a formal letter stating his objection to the process. RCR Wireless quotes Pai as

saying: 'My position is simple. I can't cast an informed vote on new coordination zones if I don't know what those coordination zones are. Voting first and then learning about what you've voted on is irresponsible. Unfortunately, others disagreed; the item was pulled from the full commission and pushed out at the bureau level today. This is no way to run a railroad'. The sale of 1,614 licenses – which is scheduled to take place this November – will offer 65MHz of frequencies in the 1695MHz-1710MHz, 1755MHz-1780MHz, and 2155MHz-2180MHz bands. 880 licenses will be for the larger 'Economic Area' franchises, while the remaining 734 will be for the smaller 'Cellular Market Area' franchises. Bidders are likely to include major carriers such as Verizon Wireless and AT&T, both of which will be looking to utilize the additional spectrum to bolster the capacity of their existing 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) networks. (July 22, 2014) telegeography.com

Vanuatu

Telecoms watchdog, the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR), has revoked the telecoms licenses granted to Computer Network Services (CNS) and eTech, as the start-ups have 'never provided any form of telecommunications services ... and do not have any future plans to do so'. CNS received its concession on 20 January 2010, while eTech was authorized to provide telecoms services on 21 May 2010. The TRR said that each licensee was consulted and agreed to the revocations; neither action will affect competition within the sector. The regulator has clarified that, following the latest round of license revocations, a total of eight operators hold authorizations for the provision of telecoms services in the country, namely: Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL), Digicel Vanuatu, Wantok Networks, Incite Technology at Work, Interchange Limited, Telsat Broadband, Skycloud Networks and Spim Limited. TVL and Digicel are the only operators authorized to provide mobile and fixed telephony services, while the remainder of the companies are internet service providers (ISPs). In June 2014 the TRR cancelled the concessions granted to start-ups Hotspotzz, Wavecom and Micoms, for non-compliance with their respective license terms and conditions; at that time the TRR also invited all interested parties and potential investors to apply for a new license to operate in the country. (July 31, 2014) telegeography.com

Zimbabwe

The Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) has stated that mobile call tariffs in the country are around 30% too high, based on a recent cost modeling study which compared costs incurred by service providers with the charges passed on to end users. The regulator has said it will now work with network operators to ensure that tariffs are brought down, although it says it is still too early to discuss actual figures. The Regulator further said the data tariffs are on the reasonable range, the tariffs charged by fixed network provider TelOne were found to be within reasonable range. It's just the mobile tariffs that were found to be about 30% above what would be acceptable. Cellular operators Econet Wireless, NetOne and Telecel currently charge around US$0.003-US$0.004 per second for mobile calls, depending on which network is being called and the time of day. (July 15, 2014) NBC news agency

Zimbabwe plans to auction off spectrum for LTE services in the near future in order to raise the money it needs to carry out the switchover of analogue TV signals to digital. According to local press reports, the country needs to find US$173 million to complete the digital switchover and the mobile operators represent the best source of income. Jonathan Moyo, Zimbabwe's Minister of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services, recently said the government could raise the money "right away" if it auctions "LTE spectrum to mobile operators for broadcasting," the Financial Gazette reported on Thursday. The minister did not specify an exact timeframe, but the deadline for the completion of the TV digitization project is June 2015. Zimbabwe has already made some progress with LTE. In April the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) allocated LTE spectrum to the country's mobile operators, according to the local press; there is still no information on the regulator's Website. The news was confirmed by mobile operator NetOne. Meanwhile, rival operator Econet Wireless launched its first LTE service in August last year in the town of Victoria Falls, where Zambia and Zimbabwe were together hosting the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) general assembly. (July 11, 2014) totaltele.com

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SATELLITE NEWS

Optus big bird reaches for the stars as satellite services unfold

The satellite will be the sixth satellite to be launched by ¬Arianespace for Optus. Arianespace launched the Optus A3 satellite in 1987, followed by C1 in 2003, D1 in 2006, D2 in 2007 and D3 in 2009.

While the launch of the Optus 10 has been beset by delays in the past — two previous launches were aborted in May and June — the telco holds high hopes for the new satellite, which along with its sister birds is a great earner for Optus with high margins and ¬annual revenues in excess of $300 million a year. Optus has dominated the -provision and supply of satellite services across Australia and New Zealand for almost 30 years, but the telco is set to take a back seat in the ownership stakes when NBN Co launches its long-term satellites into orbit next year. NBN Co has spent $2 billion on two new satellites that would be used to deliver communication and broadband services to about 200,000 homes, farms and businesses in rural and remote areas.

Once launched, the satellites would deliver download speeds of up to 25 megabits per second and upload speeds of up to 5Mbps into areas that sit outside NBN Co's fibre and fixed-wireless footprint.

Satellite technology secures Ireland's place in space race

The modern space race is better likened to price wars between Tesco and Lidl than any geopolitical rivalries empires might have had in the past.

We already know how to do a lot of stuff in space (clearly this reporter is an expert in the field). Communications, space travel, GPS, etc. The challenge now is to make these rapidly developing sectors a little less Marks & Sparks so that we might all live "a Lidl" more. Okay, it's not that simple. We are still dealing in the tens of millions of euro range for many satellite projects. Today, the image data market – that companies such as Digital Globe work in – is worth about $1.5 billion a year. Digital broadcasting and space and communications consulting firm Euroconsult estimates this will reach about $3.6 billion by 2023.

Irish surface technology company Enbio had been working in the medical sector. But In 2012 it signed a contract with the ESA worth €500,000 to develop a "proprietary surface treatment for use as a 'sunscreen' to protect satellites as they travel through space."

ntelsat celebrates 50th anniversary

Intelsat commemorates its 50th anniversary of providing critical telecommunications and video content distribution infrastructure for businesses, organizations and governments around the world.

In honor of its anniversary, the company created a video library featuring 50 interviews with contributors to the earliest days of the commercial space sector, as well as the business leaders responsible for today's innovations. The video gallery also includes the stories of Intelsat's customers and employees who have witnessed firsthand the vital role of satellite communications in connecting the world.

The International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (INTELSAT) was established on the basis of agreements signed by governments and operating entities on August 20, 1964. Intelsat's sole purpose was to provide the necessary communications infrastructure that would aid in the socioeconomic development of nations around the world. Since then, Intelsat has played a crucial role in enabling the vast progression of telecommunications over the past half century.

ITC Global selected by Harkand for satellite communications to fleet of offshore vessels

ITC Global, a leading provider of satellite communications to remote and harsh environments, announced that it has been awarded a three year contract from Harkand, a global provider of offshore support vessels and subsea services to the oil & gas industry. The new satellite network provides high-performance broadband connectivity for mission critical voice, video and data applications on vessels operating in the Gulf of Mexico, the North Sea, Africa and Asia Pacific. ITC Global built a private end-to-end satellite-based network, tailored to the unique applications of Harkand, which include real-time video support for undersea Remote Operated Vehicles (ROVs), as well as crew communications.

Harkand is known for its expertise in complex subsea operations and using class-leading technology to deliver superior results. The company is focused on setting new standards for operational efficiency with their multi-purpose support vessels, and the new satellite network provides enhanced communications capability that supports that objective.

ViaSat Exede debuts first virtually unlimited satellite Internet service in Alaska

ViaSat Inc. will soon offer Exede® high-speed satellite internet plans that provide households in many areas of Alaska with virtually unlimited data usage for communications, web browsing, and streaming media.

Virtually unlimited satellite internet service -- providing at least 150 GBs of monthly data without a strict data allowance -- is another notable first for ViaSat, a company with a history of leadership in technology and market innovation. Its Exede Internet consumer service, powered by the world's highest capacity communications satellite ViaSat-1, was the first high-speed satellite service to reach a significant portion of the U.S., including rural and remote areas that had historically limited internet options.

Pricing for a six-month promotion of the Freedom plan is $69.99/month. The promotion is available to new subscribers through Nov. 15. Enhanced data plans will be offered to current Exede subscribers this fall in certain geographic areas.

Satellite Internet subscribers in Russia pass 5,000

More than 5,000 Russians now access subscribe to Ka-band satellite internet access, with a "mass market" for satellite broadband services emerging in the country, according to the Russian Satellite Communication Company (RSCC).

The Russian state satellite operator currently offers internet services in the European part of Russia using its Ka-Sat satellite at 9° East, but from the first quarter of 2015 will also extend this to residents in the Far East and Siberia and from the from the second half of 2015 to the central and south Ural regions of Russia. This will be supported by the Express-AM5 spacecraft that is already operating at 140° East and the future Express-AM6, which is due to launch this autumn.

"Once all the network segments have been brought on line, users will be granted satellite broadband access to information resources at any location across Russia from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka, at very attractive prices, absolutely regardless whether there are any cable connections available in a household," said deputy director general for innovative development at RSCC, Evgeny Buydinov.

FCC seeks comment on AT&T's inflight connectivity proposal

The Federal Communications Commission is seeking public comment on AT&T's request that rules governing Wireless Communications Services (WCS) be revised to support its planned launch of inflight connectivity service in the United States.

In a public notice released recently, the FCC said comments pertaining to AT&T's petition are due on 22 September and reply comments are due on 6 October.

This spring, AT&T announced it intends to launch a 4G LTE-based air-to-ground (ATG) service in the continental United States in partnership with connectivity hardware provider Honeywell. On 8 August, AT&T's specific plan became clearer when the company petitioned the FCC to open a rulemaking proceeding to amend rules governing the C and D blocks of the WCS in the 2.3 GHz band.

At present, AT&T cannot launch its proposed 4G LTE inflight connectivity service without this regulatory relief because, as described by the firm, use of the C and D blocks "will not fit neatly" within the literal words of the Commission's existing WCS rules.

ROAMING NEWS

Northern Corridor countries in Africa to cut roaming costs

Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan have agreed on a regional telecommunications framework to establish a "One-Network-Area" by 31st December 2014. According to reports, when fully operational, charges on phones calls within the region could drop by up to 60 percent.

Subscribers travelling within the corridor will be charged as local subscribers in the visited country network. The subscriber will only incur prevailing calling rates of the visited network similar to what local subscribers pay. The One-Network-Area is being implemented following a directive of the 5th Heads of State Summit held in Kenya back in May 2014. At another summit in Rwanda on July 03, the leaders expressed satisfaction with progress.

Regional line-ministries were directed to ensure the following: Exemption of regional calls from surcharges applied by member states on international incoming calls. No additional charges to subscribers on account of roaming within the region. And no charges for receiving calls while roaming within.

Zain KSA offers roaming solutions

Zain KSA continues to offer new roaming solutions in different tourist destinations with (Zain Passport) service, which allows users to enjoy telecommunication services while roaming for a fixed unified rate starting at 75 halalas for voice calls, SMS and Internet data.

The service is offered in a list of constantly updated tourist and educational destinations, providing users with innovative solutions for international roaming services. The destinations include three different regions, the first being the Gulf states, the second region covers several Middle East and north African countries, and the third covers most of the other countries in the world.

Users will receive a welcoming message upon arrival to their destination with details of the roaming options and the network on which the service is available in the destination country. (Zain Passport) also offers an added value for subscribers to postpaid packages, allowing them to receive calls while roaming at no extra charge added to the primary subscription charge when subscribing to the service. Users may add the service by sending the code of their suitable subscription to (959) for SR10 per week or SR30 per month.

More information on the list of included countries, service providers, or subscription codes, customers can contact the customer care center (959 from Zain line) or visit the nearest "Zain" branch.

Azerbaijan and Russia to sign roaming tariff cutting agreement in December

Azerbaijan and Russia are likely to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on the reduction of roaming tariffs this December. The Ministry of Communications & High Technologies of Azerbaijan informs that its minister Ali Abbasov and his Russian counterpart Nikolai Nikiforov

held in Astana the final negotiations on the Memorandum between the two countries' ministries and mobile operators, concerning the reduction of tariffs for international roaming services.

The Memorandum signing is expected at international exhibition BakuTel-2014 to be held in the Azerbaijani capital on December 2-5.

Roaming in Customs Union countries may be cancelled in early 2015

The agreement, which will cancel the roaming on the territory of the Customs Union (Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia) may be signed in early 2015. "Now we are discussing the agreement that regulates all the issues. Upon approval of this agreement at the end of this year or early next year we will be able to report on how these issues will be resolved," chairman of Kazakh Communication and Information Agency Askar Zhumagaliyev told reporters. In turn, Russian Minister of Communications and Mass Media Nikolai Nikiforov noted that the state does not regulate the price of cellular communication, but could pave the way to address this issue by offering mobile operators to sit down at the negotiating table.

The abolition of roaming in the territory of the Customs Union will affect the development of economic relations between these countries, according to Nikiforov. "We will do everything for it, but a lot depends on the cellular operators. We intend to conduct step by step work in this regard," he said.

East African roaming agreement benefits telecoms and trade

In Europe roaming fees are a crucial source of revenue for the region's struggling operators, but in East Africa, where the majority of subscriptions are still prepaid, BMI believes the elimination of roaming fees will benefit operators and subscribers, and lower the cost of trade in the region. In May 2014, the East African Community (EAC) agreed to eliminate roaming fees and implement a one-area network in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi by the end of December 2014. Tanzania is not participating in the agreement, however.

The move is part of a general trend towards reducing barriers in the region, for example with citizens now allowed to travel in the EAC using an ID rather than a passport. Kenya has been pushing the hardest for change, though, in order to reverse an increase of inbound international call taxes in Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi in mid-2013. In October 2013, Safaricom stated that inbound international call tax had risen to US$0.16 a minute in Burundi, US$0.12 in Tanzania, US$0.09 in Uganda and US$0.10 in Rwanda. In response, the operator raised the price of calls from Kenya to other EAC countries by 39%.

Quebec Superior Court refuses to authorize class action concerning international data roaming charges

On July 2, 2014, the Superior Court of Quebec ruled on a motion for authorization to institute a class action against Fido Solutions Inc., Rogers Communications Partnership, Bell Mobility Inc. and Telus Communications Company (the "Respondents"). The Honorable Justice Michel Yergeau ruled that the Motion for Authorization (the "Motion") did not meet the criteria required under Article 1003 of Quebec's Code of Civil Procedure ("CCP") to authorize the class action. More particularly, the Court notably held that: 1) the facts alleged did not appear to justify the conclusions sought (Art. 1003b)); and that 2) the representative plaintiff, Inga Sibiga, was not in a position to represent the proposed group members adequately (Art. 1003d)).

Wind Mobile cuts roaming rates

Wind Mobile will slash what it charges customers when the roam on other companies networks by 95 per cent after a CRTC ruling that forces big telecom companies to charge smaller rivals less for that service.

The company announced Thursday its customers will be charged only five cents to download one megabyte of data when they are outside of Wind's coverage area. The rate for standing voice calls while roaming has also been cut, from 20 cents to 15. And the rate to send a text while roaming is also now lower — down to 5 cents, from 15 previously. The move is likely a reaction to a CRTC ruling last month that found larger telecom companies were overcharging smaller rivals like Wind to use their networks, and making it unnecessarily difficult for them to write similar agreements with other companies. The RTC finding effectively voided those roaming agreements, meaning Wind and other smaller companies could now renegotiate better deals for themselves and their customers.

The regulator has so far stopped short of implementing a hard cap on roaming rates, but that option could be on the table in a series of hearing the CRTC is holding this fall on the issue of wireless pricing.

Cost model adopted for call termination rates

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) has announced it has adopted the Long-Run Incremental Cost Plus (LRIC+) as the cost standard for bottom-up and top-down modelling to determine the cost of mobile and fixed wholesale voice call termination.
The basis for the decision is as follows:

- LRIC+ would allow operators to recover a portion of joint and common costs incurred in the provision of wholesale voice call termination service through termination rates.
- To ensure continued investment in electronic communications networks in South Africa.
- To correct the imbalances created in 2010 wherein the 2010 Call Termination Regulations applied different cost standards to different markets.
- To ensure a smooth transition from a Fully Allocated Cost standard used in 2010 to an eventual cost standard of pure LRIC.

The regulator said a briefing document, including the assumptions used for the top-down and bottom-up models, is available on ICASA's website.

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Bell Labs broadband test hits 10G BPS over copper

Bell Labs scientists are saying they have hit data transmission speeds of up to 10 gigabits per second over traditional copper telephone lines, a development that could result in service providers bringing gigabit speed to broadband networks without the high cost of having to replace copper wires with fiber inside the buildings.

In an announcement July 9, researchers at Bell Labs—the research unit of Alcatel-Lucent—said they were able to leverage the copper wiring and a prototype technology called XG-FAST to achieve 1 G-bps speeds over 70 meters on a single copper pair of lines provided by a European operator and 10G bps over 30 meters using two pairs of lines, a method called "bonding."

For network operators, the results could mean the ability to bring high-speed broadband services to businesses and homes in a more economical fashion. Data transmission tends to be faster over fiber, particularly over longer distances, so carriers are moving to fiber in their networks. They can relatively easily bring fiber to the home or business building, but installing new fiber cables in the building itself can carry a huge expense, or simply be too expensive or intrusive to do.

xG Technology to showcase innovative private broadband wireless network solution

xG Technology, Inc. , a developer of wireless communications and spectrum sharing technologies, will showcase the xMax System, a private broadband wireless network solution that features patented cognitive radio network technology, at the 80th annual APCO International Conference and Expo to be held August 3-6, 2014 in New Orleans, LA. With over 5,000 attendees and exhibitors, APCO's Conference & Expo is the largest gathering of public safety communications professionals in the industry.

The xMax System is a first-of-its-kind wireless mobile broadband network that can be rapidly deployed in any environment to provide voice, video, and data communications when traditional infrastructure is compromised due to natural or manmade disasters. Once the xMax System is deployed, any commercial device with WiFi connectivity, including smartphones, tablets and laptops, can be connected to the network. This flexibility provides emergency management leaders with unmatched command and control capabilities.

Lam Cloud and Sunesys achieve critical milestone in 10G DWDM connection project

Lam Cloud, a leading New Jersey-based provider of proven Business Continuity, Workplace Recovery, Data Center and Network solutions, announces the completion of a lateral 10G DWDM network extensions to the Lam Cloud Technology Campus, a critical development in partnership with Sunesys, LLC. The companies initially announced their strategic alliance in January 2014, heralding a new 10G DWDM fiber network connection from Lam Cloud's central headquarters in Cranbury, NJ to the 165 Halsey Newark colocation center.

With the construction of Sunesys' own fiber path, which now connects Lam Cloud's New Jersey headquarters at 1 Farr View Drive, Cranbury, NJ to 165 Halsey Street, Newark, NJ, Lam Cloud is able to expand the portfolio of carriers available to its customers. The network also serves as a conduit for carrier diversity, offering virtually unlimited capacity as well as a diverse and unique entry path ensuring reliability and access to a wide range of additional services.

VoLTE drives IMS deployments

Infonetics Research has published the findings of its global survey on the implementation of IP multimedia subsystem (IMS) core equipment. The results show that voice over LTE (VoLTE) is the key driving force behind deployment plans but network operators have to address certain challenges.
At present, only 3% of mobile and cable operators have deployed VoLTE but 83% of the survey respondents stated that they would do so by 2016, Infonetics Research reported. In addition to VoLTE, IMS deployments are also being spurred by the ability this equipment offers for converged services over multiple access methods. Fixed-line voice over IP (VoIP) remains responsible for the bulk of IMS deployments: all participants in the poll said they planned to run business and/or residential VoIP services over IMS by 2016.

ICT investments accelerating Middle East's development agenda

The Middle East has been a seedbed of cutting-edge science and technology for centuries. It gave the world the word 'algebra' and local doctors were already surgically removing cataracts and treating kidneys at a time when Europe was still using leeches. Europe relied heavily on knowledge culled by Arab innovators to emerge from the Dark Ages and step into the Renaissance.

Today, backed by vast oil reserves, aggressive government-driven economic diversification and ambitions of establishing a digital society, the Middle East has once again positioned itself at the forefront of global technological advancement.
The Arab World has been allocating huge funds for the development of its Information and Communications Technology (ICT) framework, pushing the envelope in mobile, fixed and internet networks and adopting world-class ICT capabilities. The region is among the fastest-growing IT markets in the world, with spending expected to top US$32 billion in 2014. A significant portion of investment is currently being directed towards the 'third platform' of computing encompassing social, mobile, cloud and big data.

Telesur Internacional taps VSN for VOD news platform

Venezuela's Telesur Internacional has purchased a package from Spain's VSN to integrate into its news platform to add streaming, video-on-demand (VOD) and social networking interaction.

Telesur's project is based on VSNExplorer for content management and the platform VSNSpider for automating work flows. Both are specially designed to integrate VOD and streaming in a fluid and fast system. The solution is to be integrated into Telesur's former platform iNews, which has licenses for 15 journalists, five Avid News Cutter editors and a central storage unit of 48Tb. VSN also included an automated process of content digitalization based on VSNAutorec Director, controlling the servers of two channels each recording with OPAtom format. This helps to integrate content directly with the NewsCutter editors, allowing a native Avid edition. 12 additional channels for other news networks based in VSNBroadrec servers are also included in the solution.

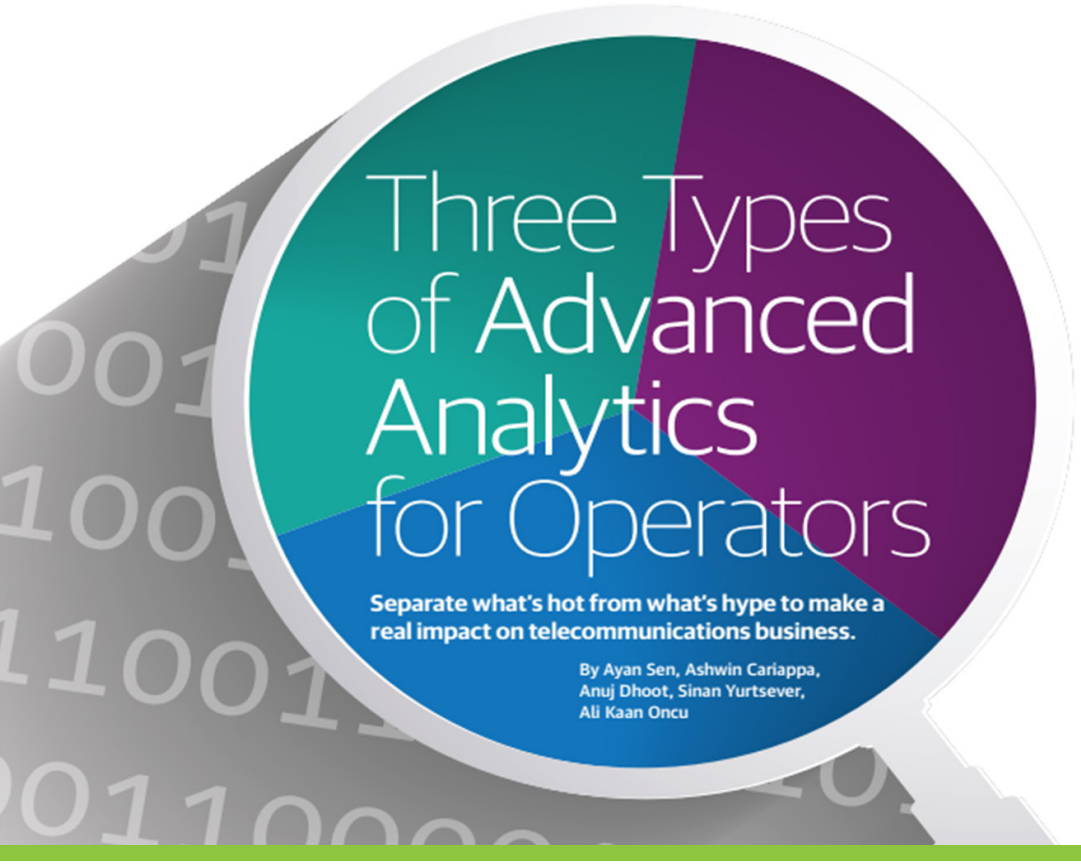
SingTel claims first 300Mbps LTE-A service

SingTel announced it is ready to launch the world's first commercial LTE-Advanced (LTE-A) network supporting theoretical peak download speeds of up to 300Mbps. Singapore's largest operator will go live with the service on Saturday (August 23), when it also introduces the Samsung Galaxy S5 4G+, "the first handset globally to be compatible with 4G LTE-Advanced networks." A second LTE-A smartphone, the Galaxy Alpha 4G+, will be available in Singapore next month. The LTE-A network, which first went live for testing in late May, combines 20MHz of bandwidth from each of the 1.8 and 2.6GHz bands. Working with Ericsson, SingTel said it has extended street-level coverage of its LTE-A network to more than 55 percent of the island. In May Telstra demonstrated network speeds of 450Mb/s also using LTE-A carrier aggregation technology. SingTel will offer the S5 4G+ for between SGD688 (US$552) and free, depending on the service plan.

China Telecom is promoting its fourth-generation (4G) wireless telecom services based on FDD-LTE technology

China Telecom is promoting its fourth-generation (4G) wireless telecom services based on FDD-LTE technology in 16 pilot cities across the country. The telecoms giant wants to gain a share of the 4G market and the confidence of investors, especially as its number of 2G and 3G users fell off in the first six months of the year. From January to June, China Telecom lost 5.34 million mobile users, its data show. The figure for June alone was 980,000.

The drop comes as China Mobile got a license to provide 4G services in December from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), the telecoms industry regulator. The license lets China Mobile use TD-LTE technology to provide 4G services. TD-LTE was developed primarily with China in mind and accepted by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) as a 4G standard.



THREE TYPES OF ADVANCED ANALYTICS FOR OPERATORS

SEPARATE WHAT'S HOT FROM WHAT'S HYPE TO MAKE A REAL IMPACT ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUSINESS

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Every day, telecom operators wield a double-edged sword. They are fortunate to be in a business that thrives on data—the industry collects more customer data on average than just about any other. Yet this data can also be a curse. Customers for the most part know their data is being collected, and are beginning to expect companies to use it to improve experiences, products, services, and the like. In addition, there are a number of substantial IT, business, and privacy issues surrounding the effective use of data.

When it comes to data strategy, how can companies turn the information they have into real actionable insight? What's hot, what's hype, and what can make a real impact on business?

Analytics is already a key component of telecom businesses, and it's poised to grow substantially. Today, the industry invests approximately $1.9 billion in analytics that are primarily descriptive and diagnostic. Firms look at past interactions

to make future decisions based on what happened and why. This strategy is evolving, however, to be more predictive and prescriptive. Investment is forecast to reach $9.8 billion by 2020, with the sector connecting more than 11 billion devices, up from 7 billion today, according to research from Huawei and IDATE Consulting and Research. Data savvy operators who implement efficient analytics processes will gain significant ground over their competition during this period of growth by creating superior products, services, and experiences.

Advanced analytics can give forward-thinking operators a huge competitive advantage when it comes to meeting the needs of emerging customer groups, facing unforeseen competition, and innovating with new technologies, like mobile broadband. Examples from around the globe include:

- Engage new segments (youth, expats) with relevant offerings
- Improve customer experience by prioritizing customer needs
- Maximize efforts to retain most valuable customers
- Dedicate resources toward customer acquisition to keep revenue high
- Increase focus on customer mobile data use and patterns
- Build a well thought-out mobile data strategy

Three specific types of advanced analytics will help operators face these challenges: geomarketing, social network analysis, and deep packet inspection.

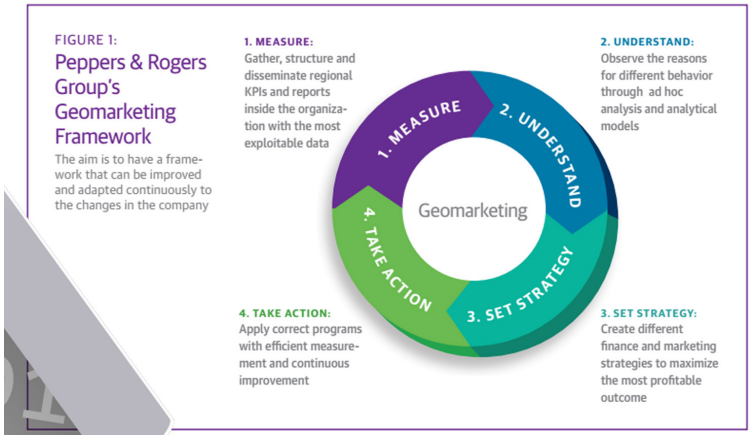
Geomarketing

Geomarketing analytics enables telco operators to use geographical insights to plan marketing and sales activities and get more granular with their analytics activities. It provides an added dimension when profiling customers to better interact with them.

Typical analytics activity such as segmentation, propensity models, and churn strategies take on a new spin. Regional customer segmentation may result in different segmentation thresholds or even new customer profiles. Regional propensity models can reveal region-specific product needs and behaviors that will initiate new marketing actions, and regional churn models may uncover unique drivers of churn, which can be fine-tuned in more relevant, local customer retention programs and communications.

Peppers & Rogers Group has created a framework specifically for geomarketing within telecoms (see Figure 1). First, you need to understand the overall company strategy and goals—which segments to focus on, what products to prioritize, and how much market share to gain or protect. Measurement is critical in this phase. Identify relevant KPIs to track customer value, needs, and behavior. Design reports and dashboards for senior leaders and other stakeholders that include geomarketing elements. Involve IT in this critical planning stage to pinpoint data to be analyzed from the necessary platforms and create new data efforts if necessary.

With the foundational elements in place, the next step is to capture insights to understand the effect of geomarketing. This can be done by enriching segmentation programs with location information to understand the distribution of different profiles in different categories, as well as the value and behavior of customers in those areas. There is opportunity to apply propensity models and churn analysis to different locations to test and learn what products, services, and promotions work best, and if location is a potential root cause of churn. The customer experience in different regions can also be assessed to understand unique attributes that influence the customer experience in different geographies.



Then, set the strategy by creating different finance and marketing strategies to maximize the most profitable outcome. It will be possible to prioritize investments based on location value, such as optimizing cell tower maintenance and expansion in high-value areas, or adjusting dealer revenue targets in certain locations. You will have data to back-up operational decisions to change or close low-performing stores. The insight generated will also inform how best to enhance the customer experience in key locations, and marketing efforts can become more granular to manage and grow customer relationships, such as promoting products in potentially valuable locations.

These strategies must then be translated into a diverse set of actions to be implemented across locations. Propose cross-up-sell deals to customers in a specific segment and location with optimized prices. Create retention plans that deter local churn causes in advance. Use the information to improve the customer experience. Know what customers like and do not like in a specific location, and disseminate this information to all channels to provide a consistent experience. Tell customers when an interaction is based on their location. Something as simple as referring to a person's location in a campaign will likely improve results.

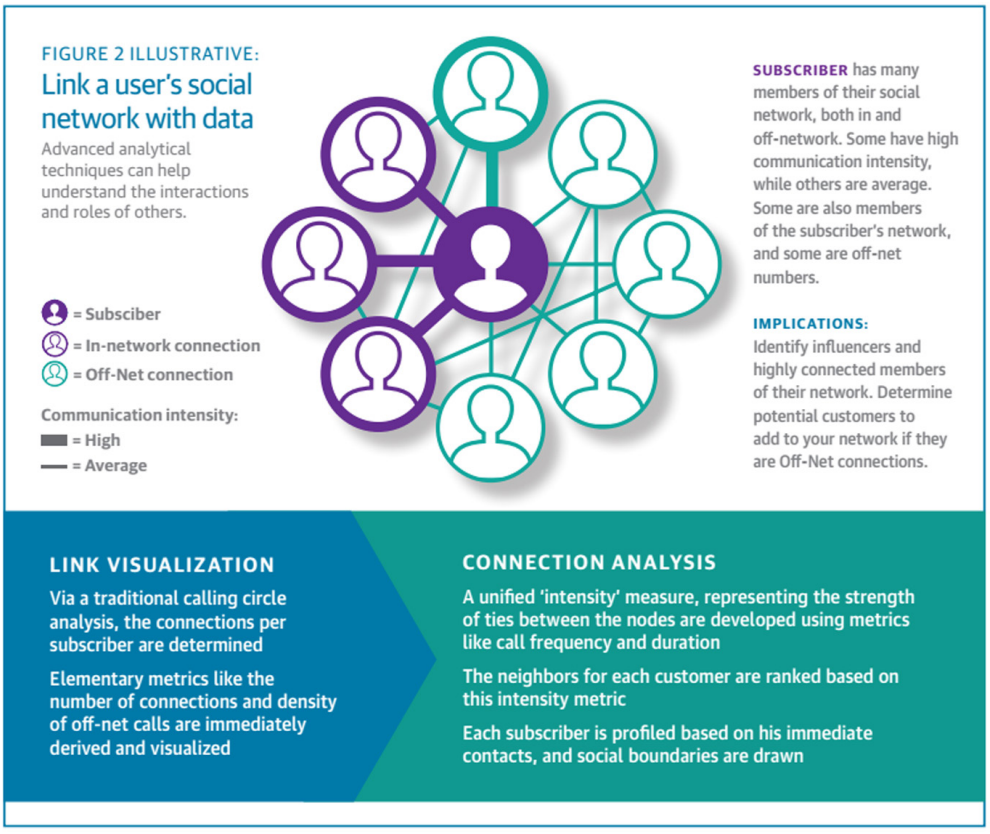
Geomarketing in action: Many mobile operators already analyze customer data to inform one-to-one campaigns for prepaid customers. However, it may take up to six months to understand a customer's recharging cycles. Knowing the location of the customer at a very granular level may shorten this learning curve because operators can look at similar habits of other customers in that region. Profiling new customers according to their demographic segment and location can let the mobile operator address the customer with campaigns from the first month.

Social network analysis

Understanding relationships among the customer base allows operators to get a better sense of their customers and how best to interact with them. Social network analysis (SNA) is the analysis of relationships among people, groups, and organizations. Understanding what communities they belong to and how active they are, whether they're an influencer within their networks, etc. gives operators insight for more relevant and better targeting, enhanced customer differentiation, and a more complete customer value analysis.

Social network analysis is not social media analysis. It leverages the valuable data being collected by telecoms to gain a true customer value picture. It starts with a customer's ARPU (average revenue per user). Then, traditional calling circle analysis can determine the connections per user. Add to it elementary metrics like the number of connections and density of out-of network calls to derive and visualize a customer's actual social network.

A unified 'intensity' measure represents the strength of ties between metrics like call frequency and duration. The user's connections are ranked based on this intensity metric. Each user is profiled based on his immediate contacts, and social boundaries are drawn. A person's social network then comes into focus. And the value of his or her network is determined by the activity of connections within the network and their ARPU (see Figure 2).



This analysis can be used to identify high priority customers for acquisition based on network value and contribution. Attrition can also be predicted by gauging the pressure on communities when one of their members churns. SNA works on the premise that a churner exerts pressure on other community members to churn, as well.

Finally, SNA can improve marketing success through the definition of target groups based on the size of their networks and their roles within it. Influencers are people who are more (or more strongly) connected, trailed by neutrals and followers. Not only will influencers' impact on the network be larger than for people with an average amount of connections, they are also an ideal target for a marketing campaign.

Social network analysis in action: Peppers & Rogers Group worked with an operator to assess customer churn pressure and churn influencer scores using the SNA model. The team identified churners with high influence scores, and analyzed the behavior of their social network. The analysis revealed that the probability of finding another churner(s) in a churn influencer's social network is six times more likely than finding another churner(s) in the social network of an ordinary churner. With this insight, we piloted a few campaigns to its influencer segment to head off potential churn. More than 50 percent of the influencer group opted in to the campaigns, compared to less than 25-percent opt-in rate from mass campaigns.

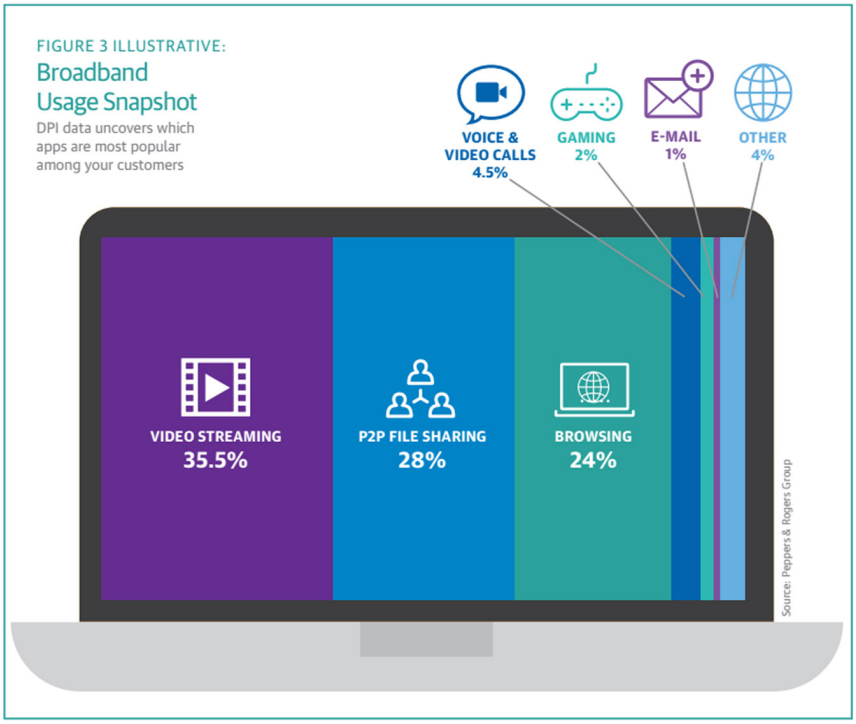
Deep packet inspection analysis

Mobile broadband is becoming a dominant communication platform worldwide. Operators, which provide the infrastructure for these systems, have the opportunity to get a deep understanding of what and why customers are using mobile broadband data.

Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) is a next-generation technology capable of inspecting every byte of every data packet transmitted over an operator's network. DPI devices can examine packet payloads to identify the program or service being used by customers. Operators may use the available data in a number of ways, including for customer engagement and customer experience improvements.

On the engagement side, telcos can introduce innovative content-based plans to meet the needs of individual customers, study overall network usage to analyze aggregate behavior, and identify behavior patterns by application type and time of day/week to engage customers with the right offer at the right time. By analyzing aggregated data, operators can also determine the exact applications used on their network (see Figure 3). In addition, operators can ensure service quality by instigating traffic control and bandwidth allocations, prioritizing popular applications such as YouTube, Netflix, or Skype, over other less time sensitive data. And from a revenue generating perspective, operators can create plans with different service levels enforced through DPI tools.

On a more granular level, DPI data enables operators to segment customers by their online behavior. For example, "VoIP Chatters" browse within normal levels, but use above average Skype, WhatsApp, or other communication apps, while "Energetic Youths" mainly use their data plans for gaming and video streaming. This insight can lead to new product and service bundles based on segment needs, moving away from mass market plans.



DPI analysis in action: One leading operator offers an unlimited social data package, allowing subscribers to access only Facebook, Blackberry Messenger, Twitter, and WhatsApp through their mobile devices. Similar packages can be developed that include email, video streaming, or P2P usage.

Challenges and roadblocks

Building an effective advanced analytics capability within an organization requires long-term vision, planning, and persistence. It is a gradual process from designing an exhaustive data management environment to implementing analytics solutions for decision making.

The most basic requirement for analytics is data, which requires setting up a robust IT infrastructure. This requires millions of dollars of investment in the form of secure IT systems, analytics software, and skilled human resources. Since analytics is a fairly new industry, companies are wary of making a big investment due to lack of analytics know-how and conviction. This is the first challenge that executives must address on their path to analytics maturity.

With analytics bringing in huge monetary value to businesses, companies around the globe are taking notice and analytics adoption is growing at a tremendous pace. However, very few of these companies are successfully able to maximize its potential due to a dearth of analytics talent, an out-of-sync marketing ecosystem, or both. This is the second hurdle to be overcome, and requires a well-defined organizational structure and efficient company processes. With either of these elements missing, any analytics initiative is doomed to fail at either the development stage or the implementation stage.

In their quest for analytics maturity, leaders must be cognizant that the industry is constantly evolving and it is of utmost importance to continuously innovate and persevere.

Conclusion

While each of these individual analytics tactics provide important insights, it is critical to adopt all three to be able to use insights to their maximum value. In this case 1+1+1 will equal 6, as each helps accentuate the impact of the others.

RETHINKING ICT REGULATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SEPARATE WHAT'S HOT FROM WHAT'S HYPE TO MAKE A REAL IMPACT ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUSINESS

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The digital revolution is calling existing regulatory frameworks into question and disrupting multiple sectors. In Beirut and Dubai, people can use apps such as Uber or Careem to book rides and avoid conventional taxi services. In other cities, however, taxi drivers have protested because these digital services deprive them of business. Some companies have turned to the courts to deal with digital start-ups. In the U.S., broadcasters won their case against Aereo, a digital start-up that retransmits television signals, forcing it to suspend its service.

These developments are forcing regulators to respond. Regulators have to grapple with these disruptive forces in a manner that will foster both innovation and fairness. In developed economies, where the communications markets and providers are sustainable and the industry can efficiently serve new markets, regulators can afford to just focus on the telecom sector. In emerging markets, such as the Middle East, where the vibrant digital markets have less depth in terms of their suppliers and local human capital, regulators have to be pro-active and focused on digitization, which is the mass adoption of connected digital services by consumers, enterprises, and governments. For regulators this means adjusting the existing regulatory framework to provide ongoing oversight and monitoring of critical information and communications technology (ICT) and digital markets.

In the Middle East, focusing on digitization makes sense because of the importance of ICT to the economic development, the widespread use of digital products by consumers, changes in the sector, and the three main areas which regulation must deal with.

Several Middle Eastern countries have identified ICT as a key driver of development and an enabler of future economic growth and diversification. Most GCC governments regard ICT as one of the key components of their national development plans.

In a similar fashion, their citizens have enthusiastically adopted digital technology. The UAE has the highest penetration of smartphones per capita in the world. Five years ago, broadband penetration in Saudi Arabia was less than 1 percent. Today, broadband is widespread in the kingdom. The economic results are as impressive. A recent study by the SAMENA Telecommunications Council study found that digitization created 6.7 million jobs in the MENA region and contributed $631 billion to its GDP between 2005 and 2011.

Moreover, the ICT sector has developed rapidly in the region. It has gone from focussing on infrastructure and basic connectivity to promoting a broad range of digitization-related services. These include cloud computing, apps, and smart meters. ICT companies have also evolved. Once mostly licensed telecom operators, ICT is now a complex ecosystem including apps providers and device manufacturers. The difficulty is that the Middle East's ICT sector is often weak on the supply side, with the notable exception of telecom operators. Too much of the Middle East relies on imported ICT skills and too often the level of the human capital is insufficiently developed.

Policymakers are already adapting to these changes. Middle East regulators are moving their focus from establishing a liberalized, competitive marketplace to developing an innovative and economically vibrant ICT sector. As they rethink their regulations, however, they will also have to

recognize that experience shows that as a country becomes more digitally sophisticated, so the less impact regulation has.

There are three key areas that regulators generally look at and that require a focus on digitization: market efficiency, scarcity management, and safeguarding customer welfare. Market efficiency involves identifying and then regulating those areas of ICT that might potentially fail. In the Middle East, this means monitoring and getting involved to safeguard the markets created by the growing use of such digital services as e-health devices and apps, areas where failure can have catastrophic results for patients. Similarly, in the Middle East regulators may allow preferential treatment for local companies, along with incentives and the creation of a favorable, pro-innovation, to build up a strong local base of ICT suppliers.

Scarcity management seeks to drive market efficiency through methods to most effectively allocate scarce resources, such as the spectrum. In the Middle East, this involves closer control to maximize spectrum availability for licensed services. Similarly, regulators could ensure that there is a proper balance between scale and market efficiencies in spectrum trading.

Safeguarding customer welfare involves moving away from using price as a key measure of consumer welfare. Instead, regulators should look at other indicators, such as quality of service, data security, and the protection of consumer privacy. In an era of massive hacks of consumer data, regulators should mandate digital security policies and practices. These will set norms for how companies use customer data and protect customers.

As they rework the rules that govern the ICT sector, regulators will also need to absorb three major lessons regulatory lessons of recent years. First, innovation drives regulation, and not the other way around. In the U.S., the increasing commercial use of drone has led the aviation authorities to announce the phased introduction of drones into U.S. airspace. Second, regulators need to intervene if non-regulated activities could have a detrimental effect on consumers. This is why some countries are looking at regulating ride sharing apps because they worry about safety, fares, and insurance. The third is that non-regulated activities create risk in regulated markets. The 2008 financial crisis stemmed in part from a lack of transparency in derivatives trading and issues in proprietary trading.

Regulators are unlikely to be able to anticipate innovation and that they should not seek to dictate its course. They can, however, promote an innovative and robust ICT ecosystem, and protect broader national interests, by focusing on the digitization that now permeates the economy.

CISCO SYSTEMS JOINS SAMENA COUNCIL'S MEMBERSHIP

SAMENA Telecommunications Council has announced that one of the worldwide leaders in networking for the Internet, Cisco Systems, has joined its membership, which includes some of the largest telecoms groups, global telecommunications and wireless technology providers, Internet companies, knowledge contributors, as well as public-sector entities.

Cisco Systems' decision to become a member of the South Asia - Middle East - North Africa Telecommunications Council comes at a time when greater cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders within the evolving digital value-chain has begun to take a more aggressive and goal-driven turn toward the future.

Moreover, the opportunities that exist within the core region in which SAMENA Council operates present a need for the world's largest technology providers, such as Cisco, to work with a telecommunications and ICT interest group, that is SAMENA Council, which can provide a wide range of strategic and cooperative support, required today to carry out investment-centric decision-making, and in tapping those opportunities.

According to the CEO of the SAMENA Council, Bocar A. BA, "Cisco's decision to join SAMENA Council is a strategic decision for both organizations, especially given the myriad of industry issues that require collective resourcefulness of all players of the industry. Similar to SAMENA Council's mandate of carrying out work in support of the communications industry through collaboration and by expanding possibilities of new cooperation, Cisco Systems is also committed to creating and fostering a diverse, innovative, and collaborative environment. Such similarity in aims can be a catalyst for making positive contributions and inspiring further collaboration within our industry not only on technology but policy matters as well."

"Cisco's decision to become a member of the SAMENA Council is a reflection of our commitment to collaborating with other global technology providers, governments and policy bodies to digitally transform South East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa driving growth and enhance social and economic well-being, said Pastora Valero, Head of Government Affairs, Cisco Systems EMEAR. "We believe that technology and education are the two great equalizers in life. Digitization, if harnessed by both the private and public sectors, can allow the regions supported by SAMENA to position themselves as leading developing economies."

Having become a member of the SAMENA Council, Cisco Systems will be able to leverage the Council's regional and international reach as well as advocacy support programs, which are designed to promote digitization in the region, encourage investment in broadband infrastructure, approach regulatory and industry governance matters from transparent and consensus-driven perspectives, and to enable close communication among all the stakeholders.

SAMENA Telecommunications Council's membership platform, since its creation, has generated new approaches for better dealing with telecoms and pertinent regulatory challenges as well as for fulfilling growing customer needs in the market. The entire SAMENA team welcomes Cisco Systems and looks forward to working together, closely.

PALTEL GROUP BECOMES MEMBER OF SAMENA COUNCIL

مجموعة الاتصالات الفلسطينية
PALTEL GROUP

Dubai, UAE, August 27, 2014 - SAMENA Telecommunications Council today announced that Palestine's PALTEL Group has joined its membership adding to the illustrious ranks of leading regional telecom companies who have become part of Samena. PALTEL Group is one of the Middle East's largest integrated telecommunications service providers.

Mr. Bocar BA, CEO of SAMENA Council expressed his enthusiasm over PALTEL Group's decision to join the Council and said, "PALTEL Group has been a significant contributor in Palestine and to the region and we are delighted to have them join us. We are aware of the challenges telecom operators like PALTEL Group must constantly encounter to be able to realize greater investment value and provide excellent service to their customers. In order to bolster its investment efforts in technology expansion and development across the ICT industry, we shall extend all possible support to PALTEL Group as our valued member."
Ammar Aker, CEO of PALTEL Group stated, "It is our privilege to be a part of the SAMENA Telecommunications Council. PALTEL Group has always been dedicated to enriching the local landscape of ICT and technology in Palestine and by joining this well established council, we will be able to further share our experiences, learn from other telecom networks and grow our relationships across the SAMENA network. We look forward to working with the Council to carry out its mission and hope that both organizations will benefit from this strategic partnership."

Some of the key challenges that exist in the region revolve around spectrum and general ICT policy matters, among others. In its efforts to highlight the regional telecoms industry's needs and, specifically, those of its operator members', SAMENA Council actively participates in and highlights issues that must be addressed to support further investment in broadband, accelerate digitization for socio-economic development, create new possibilities in stakeholder cooperation, and to realize better governance and industry performance.

As the largest private-sector company in Palestine, PALTEL Group is embracing the future with a new, innovative spirit, centered on providing greater quality and variety of integrated telecom services to its subscriber base while realizing greater operational efficiencies as well as enhanced stakeholder value.

PALTEL Group was established at the outset of the Peace process in the Middle East and started its operations in Palestine in 1997 as a public shareholding company. It is the first and leading telecommunications and ICT Company in Palestine where it provides state-of-the-art services to the Palestinian end user. Its bundled services include local and international telephone services, internet, data communications, mobile services, payphones and next generation services. PALTEL Group has been able to achieve the highest standards in telecommunication services based on its investment in modern technologies, telecom infrastructure and human resources. PALTEL Group's mobile operator unit- Jawwal currently serves over 2.63 million mobile subscribers and its network covers 95% of Palestine.

Data Dynamics:
Innovative monetization opportunities

CMO SUMMIT
3rd Chapter

Discussion Topics

- **Revenue Stream Expansion:** Seeking new business opportunities across industries
- **Cloud computing, data privacy, big data, M2M:** marketability and revenue diversification.

11th October, 2014
The Palace Downtown, Dubai

Networking Platform & Cocktail
6:00 – 7:30 pm
Dinner & Discussion
7:30 – 10:30 pm

Book Your Seat
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Join us

This year, SAMENA Telecommunications Council's Convergence annual conference will vindicate the Council's sensitivity to the importance of adopting and strengthening a region-wide drive to re-boost the business environment within the communications industry by attending to various aspects of the broadband business and by zooming in on factors and needs that revitalize the health and sustainability of the digital, integrated communications business.

Of particular interest to the participants and attendees of Convergence 2014 will be the validation and adaption of strategic engagement via dialogue among regulators, policy-makers, telecoms service providers, and technology partners, all being critical to and possessing significant stakes in the provisioning and availability of digital, consensus centric services that add value to every-day lives of those who enable those services and those who consume them.

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