



H.E. Shaikh Ahmed bin Ateyatalla Al Khalifa Officially Opens TRA New Offices

Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain – Wednesday 17 March 2010

H.E. Shaikh Ahmed bin Ateyatalla Al Khalifa, Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Minister Responsible for Telecommunications sector has officially opened The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) new offices located in Seef District.

In a statement on the opening of TRA's offices, Shaikh Ahmed bin Ateyatalla Al Khalifa stressed the keenness of the Government of Bahrain to develop the telecommunications sector and that it seeks to strengthen its competitiveness through the provision of advanced telecommunications services at affordable prices to all areas in the Kingdom to promote and support services provided to the public and to ensure the transform of the Kingdom's economy to service-based economy.

H.E. Shaikh Ahmed bin Ateyatalla Al Khalifa said "One of the key factors that have been identified to achieve the aspirations of the Kingdom's economic vision 2030 is the information communications technology, as considered by the Kingdom of Bahrain as a catalyst for economic growth, increased productivity and social development in the future through the provision of advanced telecommunications services for all. TRA plays a strategic role in meeting these aspirations through its work plan."

H.E. Shaikh Ahmed also addressed the issue of telecommunications masts and their importance to obtain advanced telecommunications services, at the same time being committed to health and safety standards when installing wireless telecommunications networks. H.E. Shaikh Ahmed said "TRA will continue to monitor telecommunications masts to ensure that the operators comply with international standards that has been adapted by the kingdom through ministerial order number 4 for 2010 regulating the emission from masts to those set by World Health Organisation (WHO) and are followed internationally where no links has been found between masts and diseases."

H.E. Shaikh Ahmed listened to and put his input on the TRA's next three years work plan that was presented to him by Dr. Mohammed Al-Amer TRA's Chairman and Acting General Director. The presentation was followed by a dissection on TRA's action plan for delivering the Government's policy and aims towards the telecommunications sector.

On TRA work plan, H.E. Shaikh Ahmed said "The work plan which will be introduced by TRA for the next three years aims to boost the kingdom's vision to turn Bahrain into a telecom hub attracting foreign investments, and aims to support the development of the telecommunications market, promote competition, increase consumer awareness, protect their rights and safety and develop regulatory frameworks in order to cope with technological developments and market forces changes."

H.E. stressed the importance of speeding up the process of launching number portability service, so consumers can enjoy the freedom in moving between operators seeking better offers and without changing their number. It is worth mentioning that TRA has concluded the consultation stage of number portability and is currently looking into the technical specification for implementing number portability services.

H.E. Shaikh Ahmed highlighted the importance of achieving high speed Broadband connectivity by saying "One of the main items in the agenda that we are working on is to formulate a broadband national strategy, this strategy will evaluate the current available broadband services, the future requirements for businesses and residence, what are the gaps, and how can we fill these gaps to ensure affordable high speed connectivity available to all."

H.E. went on to say "International connectivity and local infrastructure are important aspects of the broadband strategy, recently we signed a contract to deploy a new submarine cable to Bahrain, a consortium of local operators coming together to install a new cable through the Saudi causeway, and improvements to the local infrastructure are required to connect all operators. All this is aiming to improve the provisioning of high speed broadband redundant connectivity to all and support the public with more affordable choices of routes when making international calls."

H.E. Shaikh Ahmed also said "As technologies, telecommunications services, TV and multimedia are converging, we are working on having a converged regulator, a regulator that can facilitate this convergence to protect the interests of consumers and businesses. It is worth mentioning that as the public will be exposed to the internet more and our valuable network will exceed the local boundaries as the internet is without boundaries, we need to protect the security of our networks and protect people using these networks. Next month we are hosting an online safety conference to ensure safer internet for users where ISPs will be signing MOU committing them to start the process of ensuring the safety of their customers when browsing the internet."

H.E. instructed TRA to allocate on commercial bases radio frequencies for Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology and said "The overall objective is to provide an extremely high performance wireless technology that offers high bandwidth over the mobile networks. This is in line with our strategy to facilitate the provisioning of high speed broadband communications for all."

H.E the Minister also said “We need to look at international experiences and benchmarks, such as the UK and Singapore and benefit from their experiences in archiving high speed broadband for their nations.”

On the international roaming, H.E. said “It is the time for consumers to enjoy using their mobile services when travelling without the fear of over charges, we are seeking to sign bilateral agreements with some of the GCC and Arab countries agreeing on a discounted reasonable tariff to be paid by consumers when travelling. This should make huge saving for consumers and strengthen the links between the countries.”

Towards the end of his visit to TRA, H.E. Shaikh Ahmed also complemented the achievements of TRA in winning two international awards for the best regulator in the Middle East and SAMENA regions and stressed that TRA play an important role in the development of the Kingdom economy.

Dr. Mohammed Al Amer said “We are confident that now we have established a better and easily accessed office, we will be able to give enhanced support to consumers, operators and suppliers. TRA is committed to continue its best efforts when it comes to serving the industry and the Kingdom’s economy.”

Dr. Al Amer went on to say “H.E. the Minister and TRA recognize the need to have a clear actions plan to achieve competitive communications services, at internationally competitive prices, to support the long-term socio-economic goals”.



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