

Lebanon telecom authority promises solution to DSL woes

Daily Star staff

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BEIRUT: The head of the Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA) Kamal Shehadi said on Tuesday that all problems facing the DSL Internet connection will be resolved once the highly anticipated LibanTelecom company is set up. Shehadi gave these assurances during a meeting between Ogero officials and representatives of the Internet service providers (ISPs) in Lebanon.

The ISPs complain that Ogero is not supplying them with sufficient bandwidth and international gateways to meet the growing demand for the popular DSL service.

Lebanon introduced DSL more than three months ago, however, most areas in the country still do not have access to the service.

According to well-informed sources, the number of DSL subscribers in the country is still less than 4,000. The ISPs are also furious because of the 4,000 DSL subscribers, most are actually Ogero clients.

Shehadi, who was appointed as head of the TRA more than seven months ago in an attempt to speed up the privatization of the telecom industry, promised to oversee the spread of DSL to most areas as soon as possible.

But he told the representatives that the telecom sector needs to be liberalized to better serve all customers.

"The DSL problems are mainly due to the absence of LibanTelecom in addition to the nature of the current laws," the head of the TRA said.

He added that there should be no discrimination and favoritism in the field of telecommunication and DSL.

"The DSL should be spread to all areas so that all Lebanese will be able to use this service," Shehadi said.

He added that both Ogero and the ISPs should launch a joint media campaign to enlighten the consumers and specify the next areas that will benefit from the DSL.

Some critics have said that the government-owned Ogero should not compete with the ISPs in the field of Internet, adding that the private sector should have the sole right to install and sell Internet services in Lebanon.

Some of the ISPs say that the government is selling the bandwidth at exorbitant prices which hinders their efforts to provide good quality Internet service to the end user.

"The prices of the bandwidth in Lebanon are three times higher than Europe and the rest of the world. The government should allow the ISPs to buy the bandwidth directly from abroad," one Internet provider said.

He added that Ogero is taking advantage of its large size in Lebanon to sell and install the DSL much quicker than the rest of the private companies. - The Daily Star

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