

## BlackBerry under the gun

Following an announcement that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia would ban emails sent via BlackBerry devices due to security concerns, Lebanon's official Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA) announced that it had "launched a technical, commercial and legal study covering data services used by the Smartphones in Lebanon, such as BlackBerry and others in order to assess their conformity with the laws and regulations applied in Lebanon." The TRA also stated that once the study was complete any cases of non-compliance would be addressed by the authorities by "taking the necessary measures." Nevertheless, on August 6 the TRA also stressed that it "hasn't taken any decision to stop any of the BlackBerry services." The telecom Ministry also weighed in, saying that it was preparing for negotiations with BlackBerry's Canadian-based manufacturers Research In Motion, saying that negotiations could take up to two months. Lebanon has recently arrested several public telecommunications employees on charges of espionage and spying for Israel. In other telecom news, the Telecom Ministry announced that a new mobile phone tariff scheme for off-peak hours will come into force this month, decreasing the cost of phone calls and SMS messages by time-of-day usage. From 10:00 pm to 12:00 am, phone calls will cost 20 percent less (29.6 cents per minute instead of 37 cents), and the cost of SMS messages will also be reduced by 20 percent (7.2 cents instead of 9 cents.) From 12:00 am to 8:00 am the cost of phone calls and SMS messages will be reduced by 40 percent. Lebanese mobile phone provider MTC also announced that it would start issuing mobile phone numbers starting with '76' because they had no more '03', '70', or '71' codes to issue.

