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BHUTAN INFOCOMM AND MEDIA AUTHORITY
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN



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PRESS RELEASE

ICT and Media Services during Lockdown

During the ongoing lockdown, the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA) has been working with the service providers to provide uninterrupted communication services. Among many, Mobile Internet and Cable TV services are one of the basic services required along with other essential services.

1. Mobile Internet Services

The current lockdown has resulted in government agencies, corporations and private entities to work remotely from home. In addition, when we are confined to our homes, most resort to going online, browsing the internet and social media, video sharing platforms, OTT platforms, and communication apps. Unlike in other countries, the majority of Bhutanese are dependent on mobile internet services and not leased line connections at home. As a result, service providers felt substantial increase in usage compared to a normal day, thereby, resulting in a significant increase in internet traffic.

Even though the telecommunication companies and Internet Service Providers are trying their best to keep their services running, due to the high contention ratio on the existing infrastructure and internet traffic congestion, the mobile internet service couldn't meet the requirements as per the prescribed Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of Quality of Services (QoS) in some locations in Thimphu. The Authority is also cognizant of public concerns raised in social media and received some written complaints. Therefore, we have been working with the service providers from the Day 1 of lockdown to ensure uninterrupted and smooth delivery of services throughout the country.

A team of BICMA officials are continuously monitoring the mobile internet services by carrying out drive tests in all mega zones in Thimphu (where around 15% of our population resides). The monitoring is done both indoor and outdoors to get the real time picture and at different times of the day. Depending on the result of the system generated data, the drive test would be extended to other parts of the country.

The verification of past few days has shown that in some locations the services are below the required KPI of QoS standard. As such the Telcos has been issued with directives to immediately rectify and take remedial measures in the affected areas to facilitate the users with uninterrupted mobile Internet services. To facilitate remote working and online engagement during lockdown, BICMA has also approved the issuance of bonus offers for



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both telcos from 20 - 22 January 2021, for the benefit of all mobile users so that more data/talk time can be received for the same amount spent.

2. Cable Television Services

Secondly, the Authority is also working to ensure uninterrupted Cable Television Services during lockdown which is crucial for dissemination of important public information and entertainment when every household is going through difficult times. The cable operators have been directed to provide its services even if the subscribers couldn't pay their monthly fees.

The Authority has also instructed all cable television operators to have technical support on standby to cater to any cable television related complaints and issues during lockdown. In order to facilitate the movement of technical staff, the Authority has been collaborating with the respective Dzongkhag Covid Task Forces as per the set protocols.

The Authority would like to inform the general public that in the event of any issues/complaints related to the aforementioned and other ICT and Media services, the Authority may be contacted through its focal officers appointed for each service, the details for which, have been mentioned in the website (www.bicma.gov.bt) and social media (Facebook) page (www.facebook.com/bicmabhutan).