

Turkmenistan faces month without most mobile calls

ASHGABAT: A business dispute between Turkmenistan and Russia's biggest mobile provider threatened Monday (20 December 2010) to leave the ex-Soviet republic without most of its mobile communications for a month.

The MTS carrier said it had been notified that its license would be suspended effective on Tuesday (21 December 2010).

Its Turkmen branch MTS-Turkmenistan owns 80% of the country's 2.5 million mobile phone contracts, making it a major presence in the five-million-strong Central Asian state, where communications have been poor for decades.

MTS said the state offered no explanation for its decision but that the move came amid Turkmen efforts to win a 50-% stake in MTS-Turkmenistan.

"The Turkmen ministry of communications is trying to put pressure on MTS," a company spokesman said. The Turkmen ministry refused to comment on the allegations.

MTS has been present in the isolated former Soviet republic since 2005, also having businesses outside Russia in Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Belarus.

Under its current contract, besides taxes, MTS-Turkmenistan pays 20% of its profits to local government coffers.

Source: AFP