

THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PROVISIONING OF GLOBAL MOBILE PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS BY SATELLITE (GMPCS) SERVICES IN SINGAPORE

1 Background

- 1.1 GMPCS systems provide a wide range of communication services such as mobile and fixed voice telephony, paging, data, messaging or broadband multimedia services on a regional or global basis, using Low Earth Orbit (LEO), Medium Earth Orbit (MEO) or Geostationary Orbit (GEO) satellite technologies. As the services to be provided by GMPCS systems transcend national borders, this has raised regulatory issues for many countries, such as rights to service provisioning, and licensing, type approval, and import/use of GMPCS terminals.
- 1.2 IMDA welcomes the entry of new and innovative facilities and services-based operators into Singapore, so that consumers here can have access to the latest communications technology and have the widest choice of quality telecommunication services.

2 Licensing Framework

- 2.1 This licensing framework has been in place since year 2000. IMDA adopts a technology-neutral approach towards licensing of telecommunication service providers. Consistent with this approach, IMDA views GMPCS services as similar to cellular mobile phone telephone services and international telephone services. IMDA will therefore not be issuing separate service provider licences for GMPCS services. GMPCS operators¹ who wish to offer both domestic and transborder mobile telephone services can either
 - (a) work with the relevant licensed Facilities-Based Operators (FBOs) and/or Services-Based Operators (SBOs) in Singapore and offer the services through them²; or

¹ In this paper, GMPCS operator would refer to the system owner while GMPCS service providers would refer to the local licensee offering GMPCS services in Singapore.

² These include and are not limited to FBO licensees, and/or licensed resellers, offering telecommunication services via terrestrial telecommunication networks, public cellular mobile telephone services (PCMTS), public mobile broadband multimedia services, public radio paging services (PRPS) and public mobile data services (PMDS).

(b) apply to IMDA to be licensed themselves as Services-Based Operators offering Satellite Mobile Telephone or Data Services under the individual licensing framework for services that use frequency spectrum.

2.2 While details of the commercial arrangements for the option (a) will be left to the parties concerned to negotiate, including arrangements for roaming into the domestic cellular networks, use of the international gateway facilities of the FBOs and customer billing and servicing arrangements, IMDA requires its licensees to seek IMDA's approval for any joint venture, association, contract or arrangement with GMPCS operators to provide or operate licensed systems or services of the licensees, and to file with IMDA details of the services to be introduced.

3 Licensing, Import and Type Approval of GMPCS Terminals

3.1 All GMPCS terminals will need to be registered with IMDA before they can be sold for local use. Use of GMPCS terminals in Singapore will be subject to the same class licensing scheme as public cellular mobile phones, public mobile data terminals and trunked radios. Personal GMPCS terminals brought in by foreign visitors would be treated as mobile phones at the Customs, with no additional restrictions. Currently, Customs allows foreign visitors to bring in personal mobile phones. Equipment dealers importing GMPCS terminals will need to seek advance import clearance from IMDA through TradeNet. Imports of GMPCS terminals for GMPCS services not offered by local service providers in Singapore will only be allowed for re-export purposes.

4 Use of Frequency Spectrum

4.1 GMPCS service providers would be subject to the same frequency spectrum usage procedures and regulations as other terrestrial service providers. If the GMPCS system operators set up gateways in Singapore, they would have to apply for an earth station licence, which would require the payment of an earth station licence fee and frequency usage fees for the operation of feeder links between the gateway and the satellite(s). For GMPCS service providers, they would have to pay frequency usage fees for the service links between the GMPCS terminals and the satellites.

5 GMPCS MoU

- 5.1 IMDA is a signatory of the GMPCS-Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) since 10 June 1998. The MOU aims to facilitate global circulation and transborder roaming of GMPCS terminals. The MOU contains arrangements to facilitate type approval, general licensing, marking and customs clearance for GMPCS terminals and access to GMPCS traffic data. ITU member countries have been invited to sign the MOU and to adopt and implement the arrangements on a voluntary and non-binding basis.

Enquiries

For any other queries on this paper, please address them to info@imda.gov.sg.

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Updated 1 Mar 2026