



## **JICA helps Bhutan Telecom build disaster resilient mobile network**

In keeping with the Royal Government's efforts in making the country disaster prepared, Bhutan Telecom initiated a request for JICA assistance to make its mobile services resilient during major natural disasters. BT had submitted a request for assistance to JICA through GNHC in 2016 for a mobile core to be put in place at Jakar to work in pool with BT's existing mobile core at Thimphu. JICA considering the benefit of having a secondary mobile core at Jakar to Bhutan as a nation in the events of major disasters, approved BT's request post which the agreement for the project for the construction of Disaster-Resilient Emergency Mobile Network was signed on the 20th of December 2017 between JICA and GNHC.

The scope of this JICA Grant Aid in brief included assistance in the form of design/plan, procurement & supply of mobile core equipment, services for installation & commissioning and knowledge transfer through trainings conducted during the project phase. BT's scope included, among many, provisioning of equipment shelter, transmission equipment and power supply facilities. JICA Grant component for this project was in excess of Nu. 660 million and BT's internal fund of Nu. 40 million.

Bhutan Telecom currently has only one mobile core equipment located in its Network Operation Centre building in Thimphu. In the events of any disaster happening to this building, communication services will be totally disrupted both within and outside Bhutan. If disaster strikes, restoration time may last anywhere from few days to several months depending on the severity of the damages.

With the 2nd Mobile Core put in place at Jakar, the reliability and resilience of BT's mobile service will not only improve during normal conditions but also in the events of major disasters in the country. Since the existing core in Thimphu and the new core at Jakar will operate in pool, even with major failures with either core due to disasters, we will not have total disruption of service, which would facilitate emergency rescue and restoration works by the government. Therefore, this project will not only benefit Bhutan Telecom as the direct recipient of the Grant but also the country as a whole.

The Government of Japan through its Grant Aid during 1991-1998, helped develop Bhutan's domestic telecommunications network which laid the foundations of Bhutan Telecom's network. These Grant Aid projects connected Bhutan with the rest of the world in the form of voice communications. The current Project for the construction of Disaster Resilient Emergency Mobile Network will greatly help BT in fulfilling its mandate of providing quality and resilient communications services to the citizens of Bhutan both during normal and emergency situations in the country.