Volume 16 | Jan-Feb, 2025

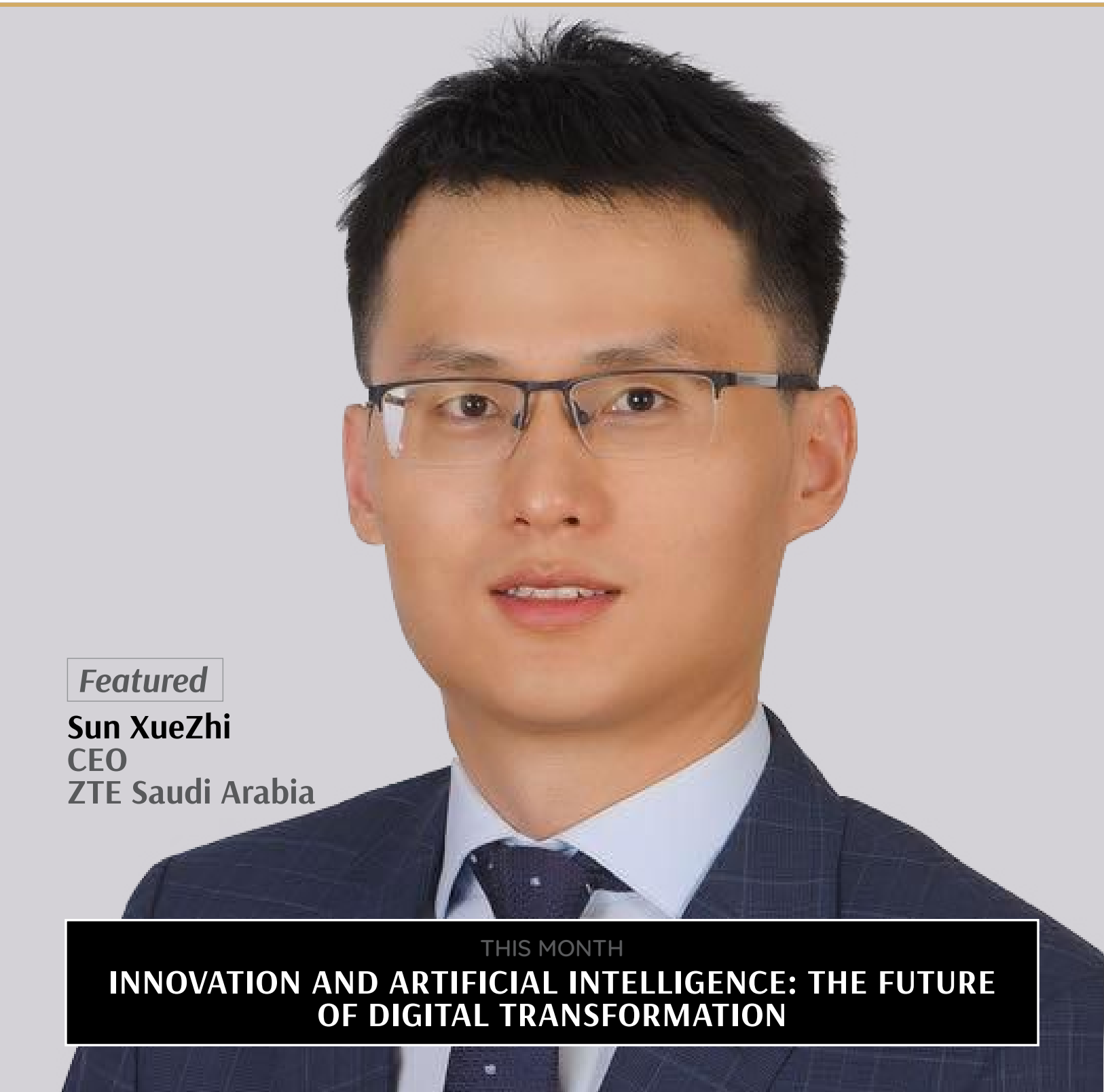
A SAMENA Telecommunications Council Publication

www.samenacouncil.org

SAMENA TRENDS

FOR SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES



Featured

Sun XueZhi
CEO
ZTE Saudi Arabia

THIS MONTH

INNOVATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

VOLUME 16 | JAN-FEB, 2025

SAMENA TRENDS

Publisher
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

trends@samenacouncil.org
Tel: +971.4.364.2700

Editor-in-Chief
Bocar A. BA

Editorial Director
Izhar Ahmad

Contributing Editors
Ali Tahir
Javaid Akhtar Malik

Knowledge Contributions
SAMENA Council Members
TPT Global Tech
ZTE

Subscriptions
subscriptions@samenacouncil.org

Advertising
ads@samenacouncil.org

CONTENTS

03 EDITORIAL

13 REGIONAL & MEMBERS UPDATES
- Members News
- Regional News

80 SATELLITE UPDATES
- Satellite News

89 WHOLESALE UPDATES
- Wholesale News

93 TECHNOLOGY UPDATES
- Technology News

98 REGULATORY & POLICY UPDATES
- Regulatory News
- A Snapshot of Regulatory Activities in the SA-ME-NA Region
- Regulatory Activities Beyond the SA-ME-NA Region

ARTICLES

59 Strengthening AI Governance and Ethics in the Philippines with Expert Training from The Alan Turing Institute

FEATURED

05

Driving Digital Transformation: The Role of AI in Telecom Industry Innovation

SAMENA COUNCIL ADVOCACY

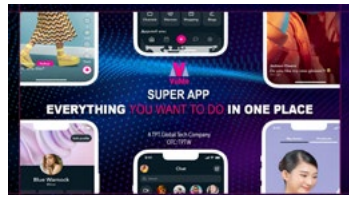
07 At Fiber Connect Council MENA 2025, SAMENA Council Identifies Imperatives to Help Shape the Future of AI-Driven Fiber Infrastructure

08 SAMENA Council, EDISON Alliance, and DCO Drive Thought Leadership...

09 SAMENA Telecommunications Council and Influence Public Affairs Sign MoU...

10 SAMENA Council to Advance Digital Cooperation-Building Across Regions...

11



TPT Global Tech Joins SAMENA Council to Bring VüMe Live Super App...

CONTENTS

Innovation and Artificial Intelligence: The Future of Digital Transformation

With continuous advancements taking place in the 5G mobile and 5G fixed networks, coupled with the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and impactful new broadband technologies, such as FWA, evolution of the digital infrastructure is very clear. These innovations are no longer isolated developments but are instead becoming inherently interdependent, driving the future of economies, businesses, as well as individuals. As digital transformation accelerates globally, AI is no longer simply a tool; it is becoming a catalyst for creativity across diverse domains and for furthering innovation, making it central to the development of next-generation communication networks and digital services.

Innovations in gigabit network technologies, paired with a worldwide push to meet the 17 SDGs and accelerate digital economic development, presents a wealth of opportunities—opportunities that are directly tied to our growing reliance on robust, AI-enabled digital networks in this age of 5G and 5G-Advanced. The integration of AI is not merely enhancing these systems; it is fundamentally reshaping the way these technologies operate and interact. From optimizing connectivity and automating services to enabling greater data interoperability, AI is now the driving force behind advancements in network infrastructure, laying the groundwork for more resilient and efficient digital ecosystems.

In regions such as SA-ME-NA and its neighboring areas, where the pace of digital transformation aspires to reach that of the more advanced economies, the need for dramatic steps to bridge the digital divides is becoming increasingly urgent. Moving towards gigabit broadband infrastructure is critical in this journey, with AI playing an essential role in the automation and optimization of these systems. Integration of AI ensures that digital networks are not only more effective but also better equipped to adapt to the growing demands of the digital age. Thus, the role of AI in driving automation, enhancing network security, and improving the efficiency of broadband solutions and services stands out among key innovations of our time.

Investment in the expansion of these networks, supported by intelligent automation and AI technologies, will be crucial for sustainable growth. Technologies such as 5G-Advanced, AI-driven network automation, and enhanced data interoperability are already setting the stage for the next decade of digital infrastructure. These innovations are not just improving existing systems but are fundamentally reimagining what is possible within the realm of digital connectivity. As AI continues to drive these advancements, we are laying the foundation for a more interconnected, efficient, and sustainable future.

International cooperation will be crucial in realizing the full potential of AI and innovation in digital infrastructure. This cooperation can be strengthened with concerted efforts from SAMENA Council's Members. As the international community works together to advance these goals, the role of AI in enabling smarter, more efficient systems will be central to ensuring that digital transformation remains inclusive, secure, and sustainable. Harmonized cooperation and collaboration building efforts on accelerating innovations and innovative use of AI would help ensure that the integration of AI and innovation-fostering approaches remain the force propelling our Industry and the evolving digital society toward betterment and sustainability. The symbiotic relationship between AI and emerging digital technologies can play a central role in shaping our connected future, here in the SA-ME-NA region, and beyond. With focused investment from the Private Sector, future-friendly policies from Governments, and global collaboration, sustainable and inclusive digital transformation can be made achievable.

Bocar A. BA
Chief Executive Officer
& Board Member
SAMENA Telecommunications
Council

Mobily Connects

Empowering connectivity through
a new digital decade

mobily.com.sa/wholesale

Driving Digital Transformation: The Role of AI in Telecom Industry Innovation

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) within the telecom sector has become a central focus. Telecom operators are navigating the complexities of AI adoption and digital transformation with an emphasis on innovation, collaboration, and openness. By developing intelligent infrastructures and forging strategic partnerships, the industry is embracing AI-powered solutions to drive operational efficiency, scalability, and sustainability.

> *AI applications demand immense processing capabilities, and ZTE's innovations in computing solutions are designed to meet these needs with scalable, energy-efficient resources.*

AI: A Catalyst for Telecom's Digital Evolution

AI is no longer a futuristic concept but a critical tool for transforming telecom operations and services. By integrating AI into network management, resource allocation, and customer experience, telecom operators can unlock significant efficiencies and agility. Leading technology providers are dedicated to providing the infrastructure and capabilities that telecom companies need to adopt AI at scale, ultimately creating intelligent networks and advanced applications that drive business growth.

Building the Foundations for Intelligent Networks

The journey to AI adoption in telecom begins with developing intelligent, efficient, and secure digital infrastructures. Telecom providers are focused on building intelligent computing centers, highperformance networks, and AI-driven capabilities that support complex AI applications. These infrastructures enable telecom companies to process vast amounts of data and offer enhanced services to end-users, all while ensuring energy efficiency and sustainability.

Sun XueZhi
CEO
ZTE Saudi Arabia

> *The future of telecom lies in the seamless integration of AI across networks, facilitating real-time decision-making, automation, and optimization. By fostering strategic partnerships and promoting open standards, companies within the telecom sector are helping operators adopt AI solutions that are flexible, scalable, and compatible with existing infrastructure.*

A critical component of AI-driven telecom is the optimization of computing power and network resources. AI applications in telecom require immense processing capacity, and the advancement of computing solutions is meeting these demands by providing scalable, energy-efficient resources. This approach allows telecom operators to deploy high-performance AI models and services without the need for significant investment in additional hardware or infrastructure.

The Role of AI in Telecom's Future

The future of telecom lies in the seamless integration of AI across networks, facilitating real-time decision-making, automation, and optimization. By fostering strategic partnerships and promoting open standards, companies within the telecom sector are helping operators adopt AI solutions that are flexible, scalable, and compatible with existing infrastructure. This collaborative approach helps telecom operators overcome barriers to innovation and accelerates the deployment of AIpowered solutions that deliver tangible business results.

Opening New Doors for AI in Telecom

Industry forums and councils, such as the SAMENA Telecommunications Council, play an important role in expanding AI's influence in the telecom sector. Collaboration between telecom operators, technology vendors, and policymakers helps companies address emerging trends, align AI strategies with regional challenges, and explore new business models. These platforms foster AI adoption by optimizing network performance, enhancing customer experiences, and supporting the continued growth of the telecom industry.

Data-driven Networks: Our Digital Future

Ultimately, AI is a key driver in the transformation of telecom networks and services. By providing the tools and technologies required for AI adoption, the telecom industry is optimizing operations, improving customer experiences, and creating new business opportunities. Through continuous innovation and collaboration, the sector is poised to shape the future of AI, ensuring that telecom operators remain at the forefront of the digital revolution.

A Strategic Commitment to AI

As a prominent player in this space, ZTE sees AI as a crucial factor in the evolution of telecom networks and services. ZTE's approach focuses on providing operators with the necessary tools and technologies to optimize their operations and improve customer experiences. By enabling telecom operators to leverage AI-driven solutions, ZTE is contributing to the ongoing transformation of the sector, helping operators meet the ever-evolving demands of both businesses and end-users. A key component of ZTE's AI vision is the optimization of computing power and network resources. AI applications demand immense processing capabilities, and ZTE's innovations in computing solutions are designed to meet these needs with scalable, energy-efficient resources.

AI: Shaping a Sustainable, Future-Ready Telecom Industry

In a world increasingly defined by intelligent, data-driven networks, AI is not just about technology—it's about creating a sustainable, future-ready telecom industry. By providing innovative AI solutions, companies like ZTE are empowering telecom operators to meet the changing demands of businesses and consumers, reshaping the industry, and unlocking new opportunities across sectors. Through ongoing collaboration and technological advancement, the telecom industry is poised to lead the charge into a new era of digital transformation.

> *ZTE sees AI as a crucial factor in the evolution of telecom networks and services. ZTE's approach focuses on providing operators with the necessary tools and technologies to optimize their operations and improve customer experiences*

SAMENA Council On
AI-enabled Fiber Infrastructure

At Fiber Connect Council MENA 2025, SAMENA Council Identifies Imperatives to Help Shape the Future of AI-Driven Fiber Infrastructure

SAMENA Telecommunications Council contributed insights at the discussions that took place during the Fiber Connect Council MENA 2025. The event provided a platform for industry leaders, policymakers, and innovators to gather and explore the future of AI-enabled fiber infrastructure in the region. In a keynote speech delivered by Bocar BA, CEO & Board Member of SAMENA Council, emphasized the critical role that artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly playing in revolutionizing fiber networks, driving operational efficiencies, and delivering transformative benefits to Operators and consumers alike. BA outlined how AI Fiber Infrastructure is transforming telecommunications, making networks smarter, more scalable, and more resilient. These advancements are not only enhancing connectivity but also paving the way for more personalized, affordable, and secure digital services. In line with the SAMENA Telecommunications Council's ongoing commitment to fostering fiber and gigabit network growth throughout the SA-ME-NA and neighboring regions, BA highlighted the potential of AI in optimizing network performance and meeting the region's growing data demands. As part of SAMENA Council's mission to support the digital transformation of the SA-ME_NA region, the integration of AI into fiber networks is seen as a key enabler for innovation and economic growth. BA stated: The digital economy is maturing. This requires that AI's potential be fully unlocked with one critical enabler—a robust, reliable, and intelligent fiber infrastructure. AI Fiber Infrastructure is not just a tool for operational efficiency; it is a strategic enabler, unlocking immense value across the entire telecommunications ecosystem, from cost savings for Telecom Operators to enhanced connectivity for consumers, as national ICT visions near fulfillment. MENA is not merely a participant in this revolution—it is a leader. The innovations taking place in this part of the world today will shape the global AI landscape tomorrow, and will set an inspiring exampling for the neighboring regions, such as Central Asia and Africa." SAMENA Council continues to champion the growth of fiber networks across the region as the foundation for sustainable digital economies, as is evident from three SAMENA Accelerators done by the Council on the fiber front, and its active collaboration with entities such as the United Nations Development Program, targeting improved digital inclusion and infrastructure investment in the Arab States. The Council's focus aligns with regional efforts to leverage AI and fiber and fixed-network technologies, which are expected to drive significant advancements in various sectors, including smart cities, IoT, and autonomous vehicles. With the rise of AI-powered technologies, SAMENA Council's first advocacy message to the Industry at the start of the year 2025 was clear: Harness the true potential of these innovations, industry stakeholders must collaborate, overcome challenges such as regulatory uncertainties, data integration issues, and skills gaps, and invest in AI-driven infrastructure that will serve as the backbone for the future of connectivity. Moreover, SAMENA Telecommunications Council remains committed to closely collaborating with policymakers, regulators, Operators, Tech Providers, and digital ecosystem partners, to ensure continued development and expansion of fiber networks throughout the region, advancing digital transformation and digital maturity, and enabling greater economic and societal prosperity throughout the region, especially in the Arab States.

> *SAMENA Council continues to champion the growth of fiber networks across the region as the foundation for sustainable digital economies, as is evident from three SAMENA Accelerators done by the Council on the fiber front, and its active collaboration with entities such as the United Nations Development Program, targeting improved digital inclusion and infrastructure investment in the Arab States.*

SAMENA Council On

Inclusivity, Collaboration, and Sustainable Growth

SAMENA Council, EDISON Alliance, and DCO Drive Thought Leadership in Jordan, to Accelerate Digital Transformation

During his recent visit to Jordan, Bocar BA, CEO of SAMENA Council, made significant contributions to several crucial meetings that highlighted SAMENA Council's ongoing commitment to advancing digital transformation and fostering global collaboration.

At the DCO's latest General Assembly, Bocar highlighted DCO's essential role in shaping the digital future of nations. He stated, "DCO is an instrument of true transformation and implementation for nations. I believe DCO has a tremendous role to play in digital transformation and materializing innovative approaches in building cooperation." He further recognized the leadership of Secretary-General Deemah Al Yahya, applauding her efforts over the last four years in transforming DCO into a powerful inter-governmental body that drives inclusivity, collaboration, and sustainable growth in just four years.

In addition to his involvement in the DCO General Assembly, Bocar led the IAGDI-CRO meeting, where key discussions centered around enhancing regional digital initiatives and building stronger partnerships across industries, and on areas of importance to both the ITU and the ICT industry.

Bocar also participated in a high-level discussion panel organized by the EDISON Alliance, engaging with thought-leaders and decision-makers to address critical global challenges related to digital inclusion and sustainability.

Bocar's active participation and strategic interventions in these forums not only highlighted SAMENA Council's own critical role in the ongoing digital revolution but also reinforced the necessity for collective efforts to create innovative, inclusive, and sustainable solutions for a rapidly evolving digital world, and especially the Arab States

SAMENA Council's engagements in Jordan exemplified the Council's commitment to driving and support positive digital transformation through dialogue, collaboration, policy advocacy, and representation of the Private Sector, especially its Members.

> *When the private sector, governments, and civil society come together with a shared vision and real accountability, we can drive meaningful change. The success of the Edison Alliance proves that collaboration is the key to bridging the digital divide and creating lasting impact.*
>
> **Bocar BA**
> **CEO of SAMENA Council**

SAMENA Council On

Investment in Digital Transformation

SAMENA Telecommunications Council and Influence Public Affairs Sign MoU to Strengthen Public Affairs, Policy Engagement, and Investment Facilitation in Egypt

SAMENA Telecommunications Council and Influence Public Affairs (IPA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance strategic public affairs engagement, policy advocacy, and investment facilitation in Egypt. The collaboration aligns with government goals to drive regional cooperation, policy harmonization, and digital transformation across sectors and industries, with special focus on the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, bringing international best-practices and success cases to Egypt. As a regional, non-profit industry association spanning South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, SAMENA Council continually acts as a sector-development partner to regional governments, regulators, and the Industry for the joint creation of a flourishing and sustainable ICT environment; aid sustainable growth, incentivize investments, and broaden value-creation via the adoption of new collaboration-driven approaches in the areas of digital services, data regulation, industry fees & taxation, among others. Through this strategic partnership, IPA will play a key role in supporting SAMENA Council's efforts to strengthen engagement with policymakers, regulators, and industry leaders in Egypt by facilitating high-level discussions and promoting investment opportunities in the country, in-line with Egypt ICT 2030 and Egypt digital transformation strategies. IPA, a leading consultancy specializing in government relations and strategic communications, brings extensive expertise in bridging the gap between public and private sectors. By fostering constructive dialogue and policy collaboration, IPA aims to create a regulatory environment that enhances investment opportunities, supports sustainable development, and encourages technological innovation. According to Bocar A. BA, SAMENA Council's CEO, and Walid Ramadan, General Manager of Influence Public Affairs (IPA), this partnership aims to reinforce Egypt's position as a leading regional hub for digital and technological innovation. Together, the two institutions will promote private sector investment in digital transformation projects, as well as support the government's efforts to enable Egypt to take full advantage of global developments in the telecommunications and technology sector, in partnership with specialized international organizations and bodies. This strategic co-operation marks the beginning of a long-term engagement focused on reinforcing public- and private-sector collaboration, government-industry partnerships, driving policy reforms, and positioning Egypt as a leading hub for digital innovation and telecommunications advancements in the region.

> *Through this strategic partnership, IPA will play a key role in supporting SAMENA Council's efforts to strengthen engagement with policymakers, regulators, and industry leaders in Egypt by facilitating high-level discussions and promoting investment opportunities in the country, in-line with Egypt ICT 2030 and Egypt digital transformation strategies.*

> *This partnership aims to reinforce Egypt's position as a leading regional hub for digital and technological innovation. Together, the two institutions will promote private sector investment in digital transformation projects, as well as support the government's efforts to enable Egypt to take full advantage of global developments in the telecommunications and technology sector, in partnership with specialized international organizations and bodies.*
>
> **Walid Ramadan, General Manager of Influence Public Affairs (IPA)**

SAMENA Council On

Cross-Regional Knowledge Exchange & Inter-Governmental Synergies

SAMENA Council to Advance Digital Cooperation-Building Across Regions to Create New Synergies in Digital Innovations, Cybersecurity, AI, and Datacenter Development

SAMENA Telecommunications Council is taking steps to advance digital cooperation-building across the regions on key industry fronts such as digital innovations, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI), and datacenter development. SAMENA Council is of the view that achieving the 17 SDGs requires fresh, out-of-box approaches. This includes building cross-regional cooperation and unearthing potential of new opportunities for Telecom Operators, Tech Providers, and the Industry, at large. Bocar BA, CEO & Board Member of SAMENA Council and the leadership of Philippines' DICT, including Undersecretary Ms. Jocelle Batapa-Sigue, have had close exchanges in this regard. BA, following a recent meeting with DICT, stated: "We are at a decisive moment in the digital transformation journey, where regionwide as well as cross-regional collaborations are crucial to advancing shared goals in cybersecurity, AI, and infrastructure development, and the 17 SDGs, overall. Digital developments in the Philippines are of great significance to the ASEAN states and can create new synergies in the broader regional ecosystem that SAMENA Council serves." SAMENA Council's cross-regional cooperation-building efforts are aimed at connecting policymakers and businesses across the SA-ME-NA and ASEAN regions, creating pathways for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and solutions to shared challenges in areas such as AI, cybersecurity, and Digital innovation. SAMENA Council, given its role as an industry advocacy body as well as a key contributor in ITU platforms, such as the IAGDI/CRO Meeting, is engaging with key stakeholders from all around the world, bringing together governments, businesses, and thought leaders to accelerate digital transformation through collaboration.

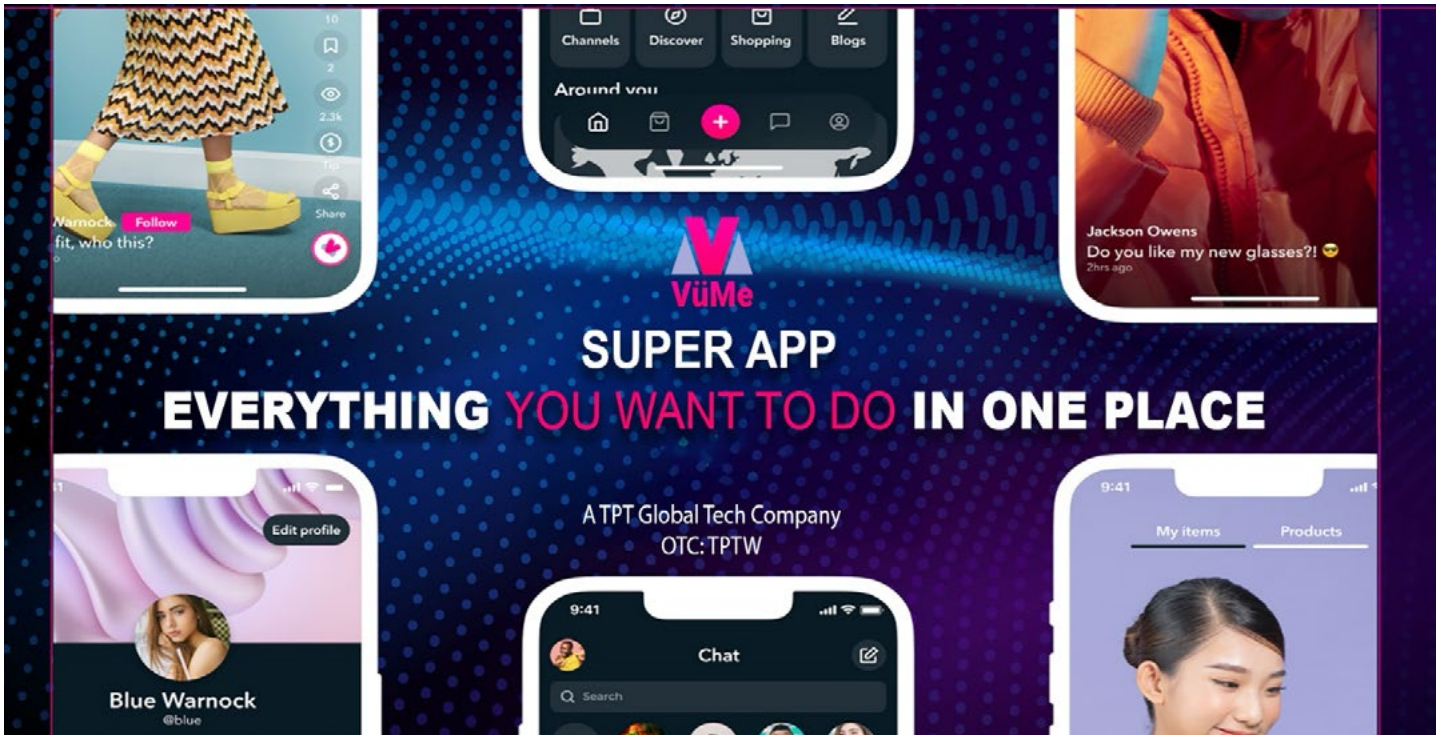
One of the key areas of cross-regional cooperation-building is cybersecurity, where SAMENA Council is promoting dialogue on critical topics such as child online protection and fostering the development of regional cybersecurity frameworks. In particular, one of the ASEAN region's key evolving digital economies, the Philippines, has been at the forefront of driving initiatives related to cybersecurity and child online protection, which are of increasing importance to countries such as Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The Philippines has made significant strides in enhancing its cybersecurity infrastructure and frameworks, addressing the growing concern of online safety for children and other vulnerable groups. These advancements are a key part of the Philippines' broader digital innovation strategy, which aligns with the priorities of SAMENA Council in creating secure, sustainable, and inclusive digital ecosystems. Furthermore, the establishment of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Digital Innovation Acceleration Center in the Philippines marks a monumental step in enhancing the country's ability to foster digital transformation. The center is expected to serve as a platform for the development of innovative solutions and cutting-edge technologies in the fields of AI, datacenters, and digital innovations, contributing to cross-regional knowledge exchange and collaboration between the ASEAN and SA-ME-NA regions. The Philippines is leading the charge in harnessing the potential of AI, with an increasing focus on AI-based solutions that address challenges in various sectors, from healthcare to urban development. The ICT Ministry of the Philippines has been instrumental in framing policies that encourage private sector investment in datacenters, providing a clear and supportive framework for industry players to establish and scale their operations. This positions the Philippines as a leader in fostering pan-regional cooperation and providing innovative solutions that can benefit countries across both the ASEAN and SA-ME-NA regions. SAMENA Council remains committed to advancing its mission of fostering a connected and sustainable digital future, one that is grounded in the principles of collaboration, innovation, and sustainability of investment as much as of the environment. By facilitating dialogue, policy advocacy, and collaboration, SAMENA Council continues to pave the way for a future where digital innovation can thrive across borders. SAMENA Council's next dialogue fostering exercise is expected to take place in May 2025 during its Leaders' Summit in Dubai.

SAMENA Council On

Innovations for Telecom Operators

TPT Global Tech Joins SAMENA Council to Bring VüMe Live Super App and other High Value Partnership Innovations to Telecom Operators in the SA-ME-NA & Africa Regions

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council (www.samenacouncil.org), a leading regional trade association and a private-sector representative body, serving as a unified voice for Telecom Operators, is pleased to announce that TPT Global Tech (www.tptglobaltech.com) has officially joined as a new member. This strategic partnership underscores TPT Global Tech's commitment to driving digital transformation across the Middle East and Africa through its VüMe Live Super App, offering Telecom Operators a comprehensive platform to enhance customer engagement, improve operational efficiency, and diversify revenue streams. As a SAMENA Council member, TPT Global Tech will contribute to regional policy discussions, digital infrastructure initiatives, and technological advancement. This membership enhances the company's ability to partner with regional Operators, providing essential solutions to drive business growth and facilitate their evolution into Super App providers. The VüMe Live Super App (www.vumesuperapp.com), TPT Global Tech's flagship product, integrates communications, entertainment, e-commerce, and digital payment services into a single platform. VüMe Live 's next-generation platform enables telecom operators to expand their service offerings, accelerating digital adoption throughout these rapidly evolving regions. Bocar BA, CEO & Board Member of the SAMENA Council, welcoming the new partnership, expressed: "We are delighted to welcome TPT Global Tech to the SAMENA Council. Their VüMe Live Super App represents an innovative solution for Telecom Operators in the Middle East and Africa by consolidating multiple essential services into one platform. This aligns with the Council's mission to promote digital transformation across the region's telecommunications sector and facilitate the Telco to TechCo evolution. TPT Global Tech's advanced technology will be instrumental in enhancing operator capabilities, developing new revenue models, and delivering superior customer experiences." Stephen J. Thomas, Chairman & CEO of TPT Global Tech, stated: "Joining the SAMENA Council represents a significant milestone for TPT Global Tech as we expand our presence in the Middle East and Africa. The VüMe Live Super App equips Telecom Operators with tools to deliver personalized services, expand product offerings, and strengthen customer relationships. Through features including live television, video streaming, digital payments, and e-commerce functionality, operators can attract and retain customers while developing new revenue channels. We anticipate productive collaborations with the SAMENA Council and its members to advance the region's digital transformation."

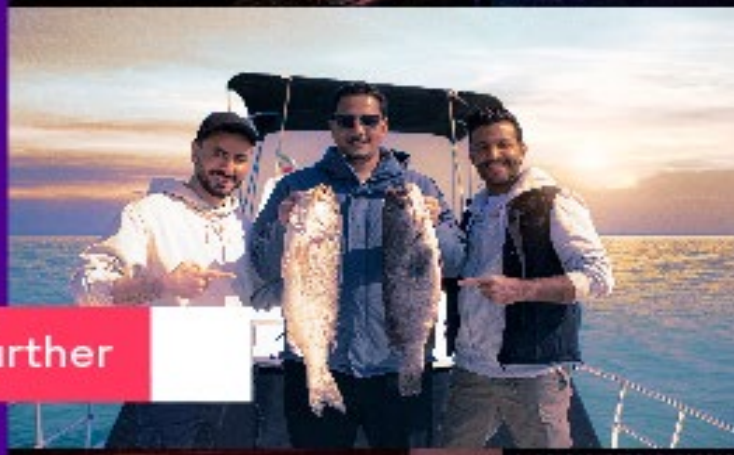


FULL فل
5G

GO FULL 5G

The first and only network to take 5G further

#go_full_5G

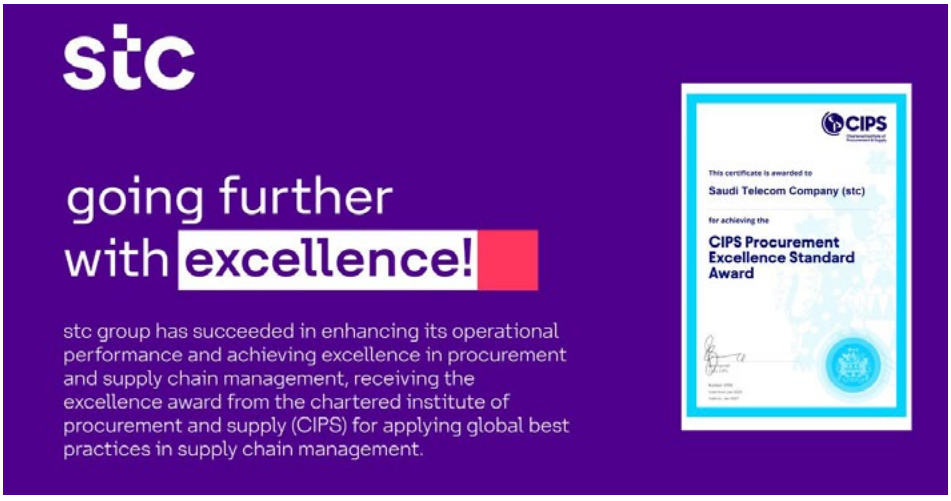


stc

MEMBERS NEWS

stc Group Receives Global Recognition for Procurement Excellence from CIPS

stc Group, a leading digital enabler, has been awarded the globally recognized Procurement Excellence Certification by the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS), reaffirming its position among an elite group of global leaders in procurement and supply chain management. This prestigious certification highlights stc Group's commitment to advancing procurement operations that drive efficiency, promote sustainable sourcing practices, enhance collaboration within the group, and establish a marketplace as a global sourcing hub, making stc Group's supply chain the partner of choice. It also reinforces stc Group's commitment toward streamlining operations, optimizing costs, and strengthening supplier relationships, which are crucial to supporting its growth strategy and investments, while aligning with its mission to drive digital transformation in Saudi Arabia and beyond.



stc Group Launches Upsource at LEAP 2025 Empowering Businesses with Advanced Outsourcing Solutions

stc Group, a leading digital enabler, proudly unveils upsource by solutions, its newly rebranded business process outsourcing (BPO) subsidiary. Building upon the success of stc's leading customer experience solutions provider, Contact Center Company (CCC), this transformation marks a bold new chapter in delivering unparalleled customer experience solutions. By streamlining essential operations, upsource allows entrepreneurs to concentrate their efforts on accelerating core business growth. With upsource, businesses across the kingdom can outsource non-core business functions to external groups, increasing efficiency and resourcing on core business functions. Furthermore, it offers a comprehensive suite of BPO services, including operations management, finance, human resources, and customer experience solutions. Powered by the stc Group ecosystem, upsource aims to become a resource for enterprises looking to optimize processes, reduce costs, and drive long-term growth. It integrates advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, IoT, and data-driven analytics to enhance productivity and accuracy across the business functions that customers choose to outsource. With a customer-centric approach, upsource is poised to set new industry benchmarks in service quality, digital transformation, and scalable solutions for businesses across the Middle East. Launched at LEAP 2025 - the world's most attended tech event- stc Group's upsource introduces advanced business process outsourcing solutions, empowering businesses in the kingdom to drive economic growth and expand their potential.

stc Group Announces Strategic Agreements with Global Digital Giants at LEAP 2025, Strengthening Its Role in AI and Global Digitalization

stc Group, a leading digital enabler, concludes its participation in LEAP 2025, the world's most-attended tech event, as its strategic partner. This year, stc Group has set new benchmarks in connecting Saudi Arabia to the world through cutting-edge digital solutions. Recognized with accolades like TM Forum's Running-on-ODA accreditation, stc is reshaping industry standards across the Middle East. As part of the Group's mission to drive digital innovation, stc Group was proud to announce the launch of upsource by solutions at LEAP, a new business process outsourcing subsidiary. upsource will enhance overall efficiency for businesses across the kingdom, by providing the opportunity to outsource non-core business functions, including operations management, finance, human resources, and customer experience solutions. Showcasing stc Group's leadership in AI innovation at LEAP, stc unveiled stc.AI, the Group's bespoke AI platform. By integrating the latest smart technology with robust cloud storage and computing capabilities, stc.AI will help businesses operate smarter and more efficiently. stc Group has also partnered with sully.ai to offer autonomous healthcare solutions for citizens across the kingdom. At LEAP, stc Group reinforced its position as a leading force in the industry, showcasing over 75 agreements with industry players, and global tech leaders such as:

- AWS: stc Group will accelerate Saudi Arabia's deployment of cloud-based services and AI infrastructure as a System Integrator Premier Partner, the highest tier in the AWS Partner Network.
- Nokia: The two tech giants signed their partnership in spearheading 6G development in the MEA region and complete Saudi Arabia's first Proof of Concept (POC) of Software Defined Access Networks (SDAN) over the Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) network, driving unparalleled connectivity across the kingdom.
- Huawei: stc Group is first in the region to commercially deploy cutting-edge 50 Gigabit Passive Optical Network (50G PON) providing robust, high-capacity digital infrastructure to support the kingdom's rapidly expanding 5G network.
- Ericsson: By adopting the Ericsson Charging to enhance 5G and network API monetization, trialing the 5G Cloud Radio Access Network (RAN), and signing an MoU to advance digital business monetization in Saudi Arabia, stc Group and Ericsson are accelerating digital business opportunities and connectivity solutions across the kingdom.
- Bridge Alliance: This partnership initiates the process to turn telco APIs into digital products, making stc Group the first MENA operator to commit to API Exchange (BAEx).
- Kyndryl: Key enterprises will have advanced network services and streamlined connectivity with stc and Kyndryl's multi-year partnership, establishing enhanced cloud and IT infrastructure capabilities across the MENA region.
- SambaNova: stc Group, through its AI arm, stc.AI, has launched a Large Language Model (LLM) sovereign cloud platform, which will run the world's largest open-source frontier AI model driving innovation and scalability for Saudi enterprises.

stc also presented its vision for smart, sustainable, and connected urban living through its partnership with the Mohammad bin Salman Foundation to develop Misk City. stc Group's centralized data infrastructure, green technologies, and inclusive digital solutions, will redefine connected living in the kingdom. As a proud strategic partner of LEAP, stc Group continues to drive forward-thinking solutions and foster global collaborations. With over 75 new agreements, stc Group is paving the way for a more connected and technologically advanced future.

Arabsat and ZainTech Team for Satellite Cloud and IoT Services

Satellite operator Arabsat says it has established a partnership with UAE-based digital and ICT solutions provide ZainTech to provide satellite-powered cloud, IoT, AI, drones, digital and data services across the MENA region. According to a post on LinkedIn, the partnership will combine ZainTech's managed and secured cloud infrastructure with Arabsat's satellite network. Arabsat said the two companies aim to provide businesses with secure, scalable, and reliable solutions, even in remote areas. Last year, Arabsat – which is wholly owned by the Arab League – revealed plans to reach new markets in the Middle East, Africa and West/Central Asia as "part of Saudi Arabia's wider initiative to continue to invest in space, diversify from the media and broadcast sector and bring satellite internet capabilities to users in remote and underserved areas through its VSAT broadband business." In May 2024, Arabsat contracted ST Engineering iDirect to deploy cloud technologies into its gateway infrastructure to support its diversification move.

e& Joins Forces with NYU Abu Dhabi to Advance 6G Research

e&, the global technology group, has signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) to advance research and development (R&D) of 6G technology, paving the way for the next generation of connectivity. This partnership aims to bridge the gap between academia and corporate worlds by empowering students with various youth-driven initiatives and equipping them with foundational knowledge about future technologies such as 6G, as part of their academic journey. Ali Al Mansoori, Group Chief People Officer, e&, said: "Our partnership with NYUAD is built on our belief that the leaders of tomorrow will emerge from the intersection of cutting-edge technology and human ingenuity. At e&, investing in advanced technologies like 6G is important, but what truly matters is supporting the brilliant minds that will shape its future. By bringing academia and industry closer together, we're helping students turn bold ideas into real solutions. This partnership is about more than preparing youth for the digital age– We're inviting them to build it. By bringing the transformative potential of 6G into the classroom, we're empowering today's students to become tomorrow's trailblazers." Marwan Bin Shaker, Acting Chief Technology and Information Officer, e& UAE, said: "Driving 6G research and innovation is central to our efforts to shape the future of connectivity. By partnering with a leading academic institution like NYUAD, we are adding depth and academic integrity to our research efforts, exploring the full potential of 6G technology. This alliance is set to foster a dynamic exchange of knowledge and skills that empowers students to contribute to meaningful technological advancements." NYUAD Provost Arlie Petters, Chief Academic Officer, said: "We are delighted to partner with e& to push the boundaries of innovation in 6G technology, positioning our academic community as pioneers in next-generation connectivity. Together with NYUAD Wireless, we are creating a dynamic hub where cutting-edge research

meets bold ideas, empowering our students and faculty to shape the future of communication and redefine what's possible in the world of technology." e& will work closely with NYUAD Wireless – the institution's academic research Centre dedicated to wireless communications, sensing, networking and devices, to drive groundbreaking research in 6G technologies. Together, they will explore next-generation connectivity, focusing on the development and deployment of 6G, laying the groundwork for modern connectivity that promises faster speeds, lower latency and enhanced reliability. This partnership will also enable the integration of 6G into academic curriculums, making it a critical learning platform for students to gain insights into next-generation technologies. e& will further support NYUAD on various youth-development initiatives including internship programmes, recruitment drives, providing case studies, allowing students to gain hands-on experience and relevant industry skills. With access to NYUAD's emerging talent network, e& will also benefit from attracting top talent in their workforce. This collaboration allows e& to advance its commitment to developing future-proof connectivity solutions. By equipping students with practical knowledge and skills, e& also aims to nurture the next generation of leaders, positioning them at the forefront of digital transformation.

e& UAE Completes Phase One of Private AI Cloud Deployment

e& UAE, the flagship telecommunications arm of e&, has announced the successful completion of the first phase of integrating AI into its private cloud for operations. This initiative, powered by Intel's advanced AMX technology and Cisco's cutting-edge networking and data centre solutions, aims to elevate e& UAE's operational efficiency by leveraging AI and developing AI use cases across its business operations. The integration of AI into e&'s private cloud was collaboratively developed by Intel, Cisco and e&'s cloud experts with the goal to create a robust cloud environment. The initiative aims to develop AI models for analysing large datasets on e&'s network, optimising operations by migrating AI workloads to the cloud, and creating customer support AI use cases. In addition, this deployment will help improve business performance within e&'s internal operations in the UAE, consequently enhancing their customer experience. Marwan Bin Shakar, Acting Chief Technology Officer, e& UAE, said: "By embedding AI into our private cloud infrastructure, we are transforming how we operate and deliver value at e& UAE. This reflects our commitment to leveraging AI to go beyond enhancing operational efficiency. Collaborating with Intel and Cisco has allowed us to build a future-proof, scalable and reliable cloud environment that supports our vision of becoming a truly AI-enabled organisation. Together, we are laying the groundwork for a digital ecosystem that drives long-term value, adaptability and sustainable innovation across our operations." Intel's Advanced Matrix Extensions (AMX) is a built-in accelerator, integrated with Intel® Xeon® scalable processors. Engineered to handle AI workloads—including inference and fine-tuning on models with up to 20 billion parameters—these processors provide a compelling and scalable foundation for deploying AI at scale. AMX aims to enhance the performance and efficiency of e& UAE's computational workloads by optimising AI and machine learning processes, accelerating data analytics, and reducing resource consumption. This integration contributes to the development of scalable, cost-effective, and energy-efficient operations, allowing e& UAE to effectively run AI workloads.

e& Collaborates with IBM to Launch Pioneering End-to-End AI Governance Platform

e&, a global technology group, has collaborated with IBM (NYSE: IBM) to deploy a pioneering, end-to-end, multi-model Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI governance solution. Announced at the World Economic Forum 2025 in Davos, this collaboration intends to enhance e&'s AI governance framework to promote compliance, oversight, and ethical practices across its growing AI ecosystem, reinforcing e&'s commitment to establishing robust governance, risk management, and regulatory oversight across its AI usage. The solution will leverage IBM's watsonx.governance enterprise AI and data governance platform, combined with IBM Consulting's expertise in AI implementation, build on e&'s commitment to scale AI responsibly and track ROI while addressing compliance requirements, transparency, and ethical oversight of AI models. This collaboration will bring IBM's globally recognized toolkit for AI governance to bear on key challenges like maintaining consistent oversight of e&'s AI systems, navigating risks such as non-compliance, ethical concerns, and the monitoring of AI performance at scale. As it continues to expand its ambitious AI strategy and capabilities, e& is proactively enhancing its AI ecosystem by establishing a robust framework for accountability, mitigating potential biases, and safeguarding data. Leveraging IBM's technology and consulting expertise, e& is taking a significant step forward in building scalable and transparent AI operations. The new AI governance solution introduces advanced features like automated risk management, compliance monitoring, and real-time performance analysis. This will enable e& to mitigate risks, detect biases, and address regulatory standards throughout the entire AI model lifecycle—from development to decommissioning. "As AI continues to transform industries, responsible governance is paramount. At e&, we are committed to leading by example and setting the global benchmark when it comes to establishing robust AI governance practices," said Dena Almansoori, Group Chief AI and Data Officer at e&. "By adopting IBM watsonx.governance, we're taking a decisive step forward in our AI journey. This collaboration ensures transparency, explainability and efficiency across our AI operations, raising the bar for AI governance in the industry." The governance solution is set to empower e& to monitor current AI use cases in real-time, proactively manage any potential AI risks in production, and deliver measurable value to stakeholders. By establishing a centralized inventory of AI models, the solution supports full traceability and oversight. IBM watsonx.governance facilitates dynamic monitoring, offering real-time insights into model performance, risk scoring, and compliance metrics. This helps enable e& to detect issues like bias and drift early, allowing for corrective action and ethical AI practices. IBM Consulting will be working closely with e& to design and implement a comprehensive AI governance framework tailored to e&'s unique requirements. This includes defining workflows and key performance indicators and onboarding existing AI models onto the platform to deliver real-time insights into AI's value, impact, and potential risks. The deployment will also utilize IBM Consulting Advantage, an AI-powered delivery platform, to accelerate the development of the AI governance framework through persona and journey mapping, market research, architecture patterns for AI integration, and knowledge transfer materials. "IBM watsonx empowers organizations like e& to navigate the complexities of AI governance. By integrating automation, real-time monitoring, and centralized oversight, we are addressing key governance challenges and reducing risks associated with AI," said Shukri Eid, General Manager, Gulf, Levant & Pakistan at IBM. "Strengthening our long-standing partnership with e&, this milestone serves as a catalyst for responsible AI innovation." This collaboration builds on the successful relationship between IBM and e&, including the recently joint report titled MENA's AI advantage: Opportunity to leap ahead and lead (Middle East and North Africa perspective) featuring perspectives from top Middle East businesses and data from IBM's existing CEO study. The report identified five critical themes that uncover regional nuances for CEOs to keep in mind as they navigate and prepare their organizations to seize the AI opportunity, including the importance of advocacy for trustworthy AI. This collaboration marks a significant step in e&'s AI governance journey, setting a new standard for responsible and scalable AI operations for the group and industry at large.

e& is World's Fastest Growing Brand in The Latest Global 500 Brand Report

e&, a global technology company, has achieved exceptional brand value growth this year and is ranked by Brand Finance as the "World's Fastest Growing Brand" in their Global 500 Brand 2025 report released earlier during World Economic Forum at Davos. This recognition reflects a remarkable eight-fold increase in brand value versus last year, reaching an all-time high brand value of USD15.3 billion for e& as a standalone brand. This success is the culmination of a three-year transformation journey, during which e& consolidated its historic "Etisalat" brand under a unified identity. The significant increase of e&'s brand portfolio and investment value in the 2025 report was driven by growth in investments and portfolio exceeding USD 20 billion, including but not limited to PTCL (Pakistan), Mobily (Saudi Arabia), and the acquisition of a controlling stake (50 per cent plus one economic share) in the service and infrastructure companies of PPF Telecom Group. Furthermore, this growth was strengthened by the integration of the historic Etisalat brand and an organic year-on-year growth for e& of 13 per cent on a consolidated basis. e& also received a Brand Strength Index (BSI) rating of AAA, with a score of 84.6 out of 100. In addition, e&'s high-profile partnerships, including a 15-year collaboration with Manchester City Football Club and its role as a founding partner of the Formula 1® Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, have brought the brand to global audiences, enhancing its visibility and strengthening its position as a leader in innovation and technology.

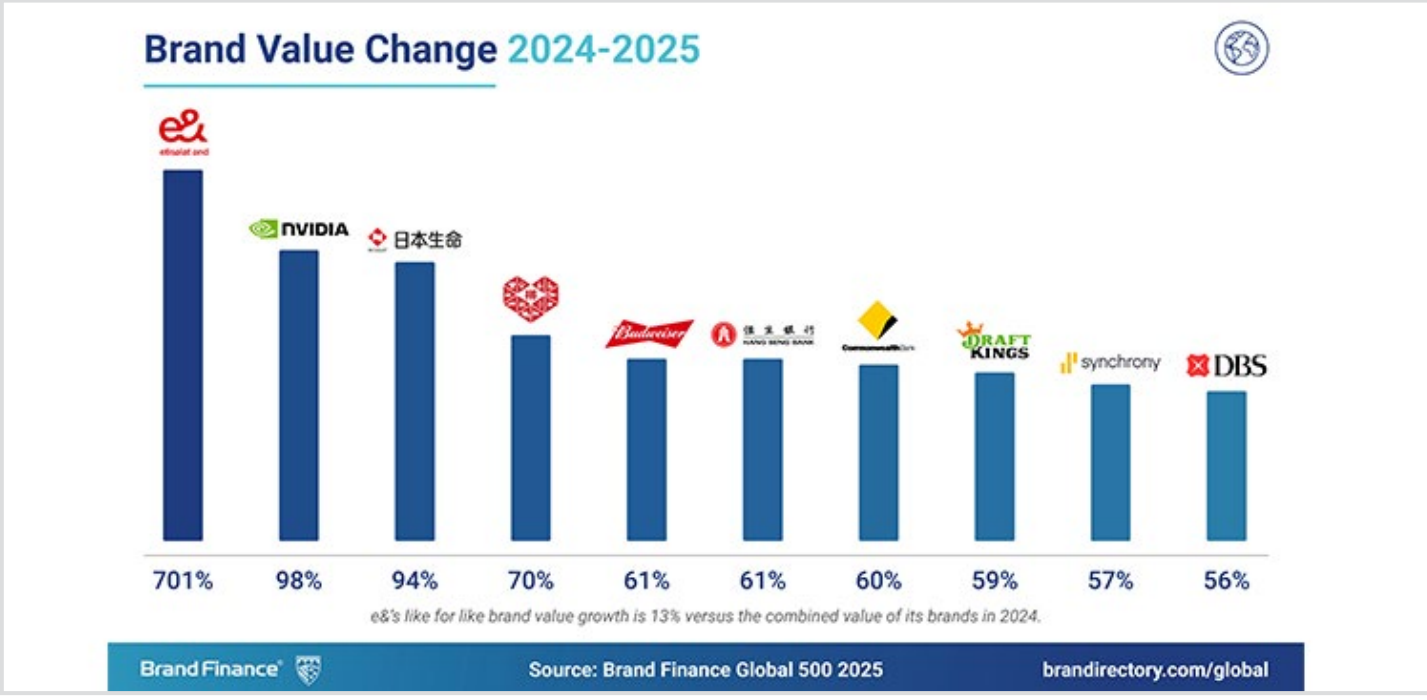
The brand's call to 'Go for More'

The e& brand, introduced as part of the group's strategic transformation, reflects a forward-looking vision that transcends traditional telecommunications. Though relatively young, it has quickly established itself as a technology powerhouse, housing five distinct business verticals that drive its growth and innovation. Last year's Brand Finance Global 500 report ranked both the e& and 'etisalat by e&' brands, with the latter now fully absorbed into e&, significantly enhancing its position and overall brand portfolio value in the rankings, which soared 700 per cent year-on-year. Since unveiling its new brand identity in 2022, e& has quickly redefined what it means to deliver value to customers worldwide. Through its inspiring "Go for More" brand positioning, the global technology group highlights a dynamic portfolio that spans connectivity, digital services, entertainment, fintech, and enterprise solutions. Brands like e& UAE, Mobily KSA, and e& PPF Telecom provide cutting-edge connectivity, while platforms such as STARZPLAY, Charge&Go, and e& money simplify and enrich everyday life. With a focus on empowering individuals, businesses, and communities across 38 countries, e& has built a powerful ecosystem designed to inspire growth, enable innovation, and create opportunities for a brighter, more connected future.

A brand of global significance

e& is also ranked among the Top 10 Most Valuable Telecom Brands globally according to the Global 500 Brand 2025 report. The company has consistently received recognition in its home market, including from Kantar BrandZ, which named it the most valuable brand in the UAE in November 2024.

The Global 500 2025 report again recognized Hatem Dowidar as the "Telecom Guardian of the Year" for the third consecutive year. In the 2025 rankings, he achieved an overall position of 39th and secured the number one spot in the telecom sector. As the world's leading brand valuation consultancy, Brand Finance has bridged the gap between marketing and finance for more than 25 years. It evaluates the strength of brands and quantifies their financial value to help organizations of all kinds make strategic decisions. Every year, Brand Finance conducts more than 5,000 brand valuations, supported by original market research, and publishes over 100 reports that rank brands across all sectors and countries.



Vodafone Expands IoT Connectivity in Middle East with Mobily

Vodafone has a new deal with Saudi tech and telecoms outfit Mobily to expand its IoT coverage in Saudi Arabia. The deal is between the UK-headquartered operator's enterprise IoT arm (Vodafone Business IoT / Vodafone IoT) and the Saudi firm, and sees its customers able to roam onto the latter's national cellular IoT network in the kingdom on their embedded SIMs (eSIMs; sold under the branding 'Vodafone Global SIM'). Vodafone Business ranks consistently well in analyst reviews for managed IoT services. It claims over 175 million IoT connections in 175 countries, and the largest low-power wide-area (LPWA) network footprint of any operator – supporting NB-IoT and LTE-M coverage in 92 countries, via its own network infrastructure in markets where it operates, and via roaming deals with the likes of Mobily elsewhere. Vodafone IoT has been a standalone company since April last year (2024). Its move to spin-off its IoT business, one of the few carrier-led IoT operations with proper global scale, was part of a kind-of mysterious double deal with Microsoft to dichotomize and nebulise its airtime service operations, so its ancillary IoT unit existed separately of a national telecoms business remade in the cloud with the US firm's help. Its corporate nomenclature is a little confusing; the company swaps between Vodafone Business IoT and straight Vodafone IoT in business functions and job titles in press announcements. But the separation means Vodafone IoT manages sundry global IoT services for enterprise, and Vodafone Business, its global enterprise division, sells them – alongside private networks, edge/cloud solutions, and software-defined wide-area network (SD-WAN) services.

Omantel Wins 2 Awards at the Oman CSR Summit & Awards for Innovative Social Responsibility Initiatives

Omantel, the Sultanate's leading provider of integrated telecommunications and ICT services, has been honored with two prestigious awards at the Oman CSR Summit & Awards 2024. The company was recognized under the categories of "Trailblazing CSR Initiative of the Year" for its innovative initiative "Maqroo" – the First Arabic Dyslexic-Friendly Font, and "Best Use of Technology in CSR" for its efforts in leveraging advanced technologies for social impact. For the "Best Use of Technology in CSR" award, Omantel was recognized for its contributions to the healthcare sector, particularly its collaboration with the Oman Cancer Association. Omantel supported the deployment of a cutting-edge, AI-powered medical tool designed for the early detection of cancer. This state-of-the-art solution significantly enhances diagnostic accuracy, accelerates the detection process, and reduces treatment costs associated with late-

stage diagnoses, marking a substantial advancement in Oman's healthcare ecosystem. Under the "Trailblazing CSR Initiative of the Year" category, Omantel's groundbreaking project "Maqroo" has been celebrated as a first-of-its-kind innovation aimed at digital inclusivity. Designed to address the challenges faced by Arabic-speaking individuals with dyslexia, Maqroo was developed after an in-depth analysis of over 650 Arabic fonts. The result is a font that improves readability and accessibility, empowering dyslexic individuals by simplifying communication and enhancing their engagement with Arabic text. The initiative has also garnered international recognition, including accolades at the Dubai Lynx Awards 2024, where it won a Silver Award in Healthcare and the Grand Prix in Industry Craft, as well as a Bronze in the Internet & Telecom category at the Effie Awards. Speaking on this remarkable achievement, Qais Mohammed Al Amri, Manager Corporate Social Responsibility stated: "Winning two awards at the Oman CSR Summit & Awards 2024 is a testament to our commitment to leveraging innovation and technology to address real societal challenges. We take pride in our initiatives, from creating a dyslexic-friendly Arabic font to supporting healthcare advancements, as they reflect Omantel's vision of building an inclusive, sustainable future for all." These accolades underscore Omantel's unwavering commitment to innovation and social responsibility, as well as its role in creating a lasting, positive impact on the Omani community. Omantel remains dedicated to pioneering initiatives that improve quality of life, foster inclusivity, and support community well-being. These awards highlight the company's role as a leader in integrating innovation with social responsibility, reaffirming its mission to make a meaningful difference across Oman and beyond.

Omantel and Sultan Qaboos University Sign Partnership Agreement to Support the UNESCO Chair in AI

In line with Omantel's vision to transition from a telecommunications and information services provider to a technology company specializing in integrated digital solutions, with artificial intelligence (AI) being a key pillar, Omantel has signed an agreement with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) to support the UNESCO Chair in AI. This partnership reaffirms Omantel's commitment to advancing AI technologies and empowering society through research and innovation in emerging technologies that address today's global challenges. The agreement falls within the existing collaboration between Omantel and Sultan Qaboos University, as well as Omantel's broader initiatives aimed at supporting scientific research and development in Sultanate of Oman, particularly in the field of AI. The agreement seeks to build national capabilities by funding postgraduate scholarships and hiring postdoctoral researchers in AI-related fields. It also aims to enhance awareness and understanding of AI through awareness campaigns, seminars, and events. Commenting on the agreement, Qais Mohammed Al Amri, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Omantel, stated: "At Omantel, we are committed to enabling Oman's digital transformation through various initiatives that go beyond providing solutions and technologies. A key focus is on developing national capabilities in modern technologies. Our partnership with Sultan Qaboos University has yielded significant achievements in the past, and we are confident that this initiative will further strengthen our collaboration and support researchers in conducting more AI-related studies. This field is crucial for Oman's progress, and we believe the outcomes will contribute to enhancing efficiency, productivity, and economic growth." Prof. Abdulnasir Hussain, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in AI at Sultan Qaboos University, added: "We highly value our partnership with Omantel and appreciate the company's contribution to funding research, particularly in advanced technologies such as AI. We hope that Omantel's support will help the government achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and improve the country's ranking in the UNESCO University-Industry Research Collaboration Index. Additionally, this support will enhance the Chair's activities across various domains, strengthen international collaboration in research, and contribute to Oman's global standing in AI." It is worth noting that the UNESCO Chair in AI focuses on AI applications in education, industry, healthcare, and the economy, while ensuring ethical AI practices. The Chair's approach includes studying and designing AI algorithms and computer systems to enhance education (teaching and learning), improve product quality, and advance healthcare services. Omantel has succeeded, through the integration of its operations, processes, and extensive expertise in the field of communications and digital technology, in establishing its position as a leading telecommunications company within the Sultanate of Oman and beyond. The company's innovative approaches have contributed to providing state-of-the-art solutions to different consumer and business sectors. The company aims to deliver an unparalleled, exceptional experience to its customers and strives always to exceed their expectations. To achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, Omantel invests in emerging technologies and provides cutting-edge ICT solutions, such as cloud solutions, AI, Smart solutions, cybersecurity, and much more, in addition to harnessing its technological capabilities to enhance innovation and leadership in new and advanced technologies

Zain Group's MSCI Rating for ESG Upgraded to 'BBB'

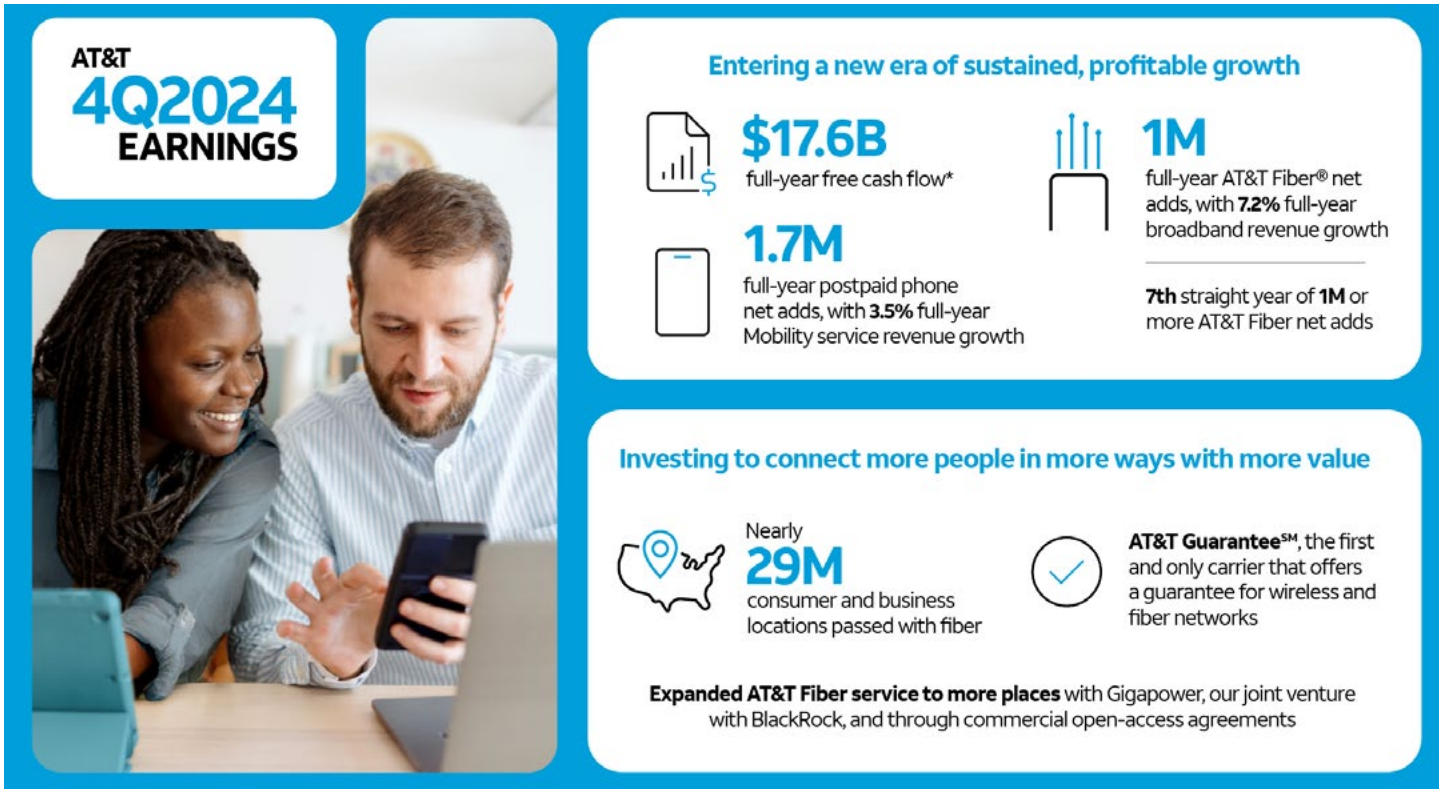
Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle and ICT communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces a significant improvement in its Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) rating in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance), which was upgraded from 'BB' to 'BBB' as of December 2024. The renowned MSCI ESG Ratings methodology evaluates companies on their management of material ESG risks and opportunities including climate change, human capital, and corporate governance, with a focus on policies, performance metrics, and controversies. Ratings are industry-relative and range from 'AAA' to 'CCC,' with scores determined by a company's exposure to ESG risks and the effectiveness of its management strategies. MSCI's upgrade for Zain from BB to BBB reflected the company's ethical leadership that oversaw the implementation of enhanced governance frameworks; evolving sustainability programs; stronger environmental policies and reducing carbon emissions; advancements in transparency and reporting; improving data protection and privacy policies. Notably, in the environmental pillar Zain scored 10/10 – a best-in-class recognition. Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "This ESG upgrade reaffirms Zain's commitment to sustainability, corporate governance, and ethical leadership, that is value creative for all stakeholders. It also marks an important milestone for the company as we continue to align with global industry standards and strive for further improvements in our ESG performance in line with our recently announced '4WARD'-Progress with Purpose five-year sustainable corporate strategy." "Zain operates within a complex geopolitical context and we will continue to invest in ESG initiatives and focus on mitigating risks through the integration of advanced technologies. We are relentless in our ongoing efforts to engage and collaborate with regulators, shareholders, and the wider community, to drive sound sustainable and corporate governance practices." "As a leading entity listed on the Boursa Kuwait Premier Market, sound ESG practices are becoming an increasingly important differentiator for organizations with respect to giving all stakeholders confidence that the company is being run in a sustainable, compliant and transparent manner. This MSCI upgrade to BBB reaffirms Zain's Investor Relations and Corporate Governance Framework as it helps Zain mitigate risks and facilitates an effective Board oversight over the company's executive management by promoting strong internal controls to improve integrity of financials and establishing a culture of compliance." Al-Kharafi concluded, "This framework is a cornerstone of the company's regional appeal, and has won the confidence and admiration from shareholders, the banking community, industry analysts, regulatory authorities and other globally recognized indices, attracting global investors." Zain is one of the most active organizations in the region with respect to delivering meaningful connectivity that leads to equitable systemic change through its ESG initiatives, with the company playing a crucial role in empowering the markets in which it operates to reap the benefits of digital transformation for the benefit of the communities it serves and beyond.

Accenture and NVIDIA to Team with KION to Optimize Supply Chains with AI

KION, Accenture, and NVIDIA jointly showcased how clients can define ideal set-ups for new warehouses and continuously enhance existing facilities with Mega, an NVIDIA Omniverse blueprint for large-scale industrial digital twins at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2025. The companies are building physical AI-powered digital twins with NVIDIA software to improve productivity and the functional design of intelligent warehouses, which operate with automated forklifts, smart cameras, and the latest automation and robotics solutions. By utilizing both NVIDIA Omniverse and Mega, KION will provide digital twins of warehouses to allow facility operators to design the most efficient and safe warehouse configuration without interrupting operations for testing. This will include optimizing the number of robots, workers, and automation equipment. The digital twin will provide a testing ground for all aspects of warehouse operations, including facility layouts, robot fleet behavior, and the optimal number of workers and intelligent vehicles. "Future warehouses will function like massive autonomous robots, orchestrating fleets of robots within them," said Jensen Huang, founder and CEO of NVIDIA. "By integrating Omniverse and Mega into their solutions, KION and Accenture can dramatically accelerate the development of industrial AI and autonomy for the world's distribution and logistics ecosystem." Further, the digital twin will simulate and test configurations, while also training the warehouse robots to handle changing conditions like demand, inventory fluctuations, and layout changes. The digital twin will be integrated with KION's warehouse management software, enabling companies to assign tasks like moving goods from buffer zones to storage locations to virtual robots. Advanced AI will power the virtual robots, which can plan, execute, and refine these tasks in a continuous loop that simulates and optimizes real-world operations with infinite scenarios. "Modernizing supply chains to make them more resilient and agile, with real-time flexibility, is the next digital frontier," said Julie Sweet, chair and CEO of Accenture. "This collaboration with our long-term client KION and partner NVIDIA will break exciting new ground in not only reinventing the warehouse, but also in raising their performance standards with technology, data, and AI, helping our clients operate autonomous, safe supply chains that better serve their customers and consumers, enhance productivity and efficiency, and create new value." Going forward, the three partners will work to integrate the digital twin with a fine-tuned vision language model to capture real-time insights from warehouses, reducing the risk of bottlenecks, accidents, and other unforeseen events, pairing cameras, robots, and NVIDIA NIM, a set of services for deployment of foundation models to edge devices in the warehouse. This partnership between the three companies was one of three announcements Accenture made this week to coincide with CES 2025. The company also released its 2025 Technology Vision report, which publicizes research on how AI will drive new levels of autonomy for businesses and unlock innovation opportunities. The company also announced Accenture AI Refinery for Industry, a solution containing a collection of 12 industry-specific agent solutions to assist organizations with building and deploying custom AI agents.

AT&T Results Beat Expectations for Q4 2024, Driven by 5G and Fiber

AT&T continues to focus its attention on its 5G and fiber businesses, and touted "solid momentum" in expanding its customer base of profitable subscribers to both those services. The company's results for the fourth quarter of 2024 beat expectations. AT&T reported consolidated revenues of $32.3 billion for the fourth quarter, with profits of $4.4 billion. "The strong results this quarter are the result of a four-plus-year period of hard work and consistent execution by our teams, which has positioned us well for a new era of growth," said AT&T CEO John Stankey. "We ended 2024 with strong momentum. Customers and shareholders can look forward to receiving even more value in 2025 as we expand the country's largest fiber network, modernize our wireless network, grow our business and begin share repurchases in the second half of the year." Operating expenses were up slightly year-over-year, which the carrier said was due to accelerated depreciation on wireless network equipment associated with its migration to Open RAN, as well as its continued fiber and network upgrades. AT&T also said that device costs were higher. In terms of subscriber figures, AT&T reported 482,000 postpaid phone net additions, on churn of 0.85%, and 307,000 net fiber additions for the fourth quarter of 2024. Mobility service revenues were up 3.3% compared to the fourth quarter of 2023, to $16.6 billion. For the full year, the AT&T results reflected revenues of $122.3 compared to $122.4 billion in the year-ago quarter, driven down by lower revenues from business wireline and mobility equipment. Net income for the year was down from $15.6 billion to $12.3 billion. Capital expenses for the year were $20.3 billion, up from $17.9 billion in 2023. AT&T reported that capex for Q4 was at $6.8 billion, compared to $4.6 billion in the year-ago quarter. Meanwhile, broadband revenues were particularly healthy: AT&T said that its consumer broadband revenues increased 7.8% year-over-year to reach $2.9 billion in the fourth quarter of 2024. The carrier said that it currently passes 28.9 million consumer and business locations with fiber. At AT&T's investor day in December, executives had emphasized several points of its strategy going forward: owner's economics at scale, particularly when it comes to fiber; implementing multi-vendor Open RAN; and exiting legacy infrastructure. The company plans to push from an estimated 270 million POPs covered with midband 5G at the end of 2024, to more than 300 million by the end of 2026. Meanwhile, the company will also be expanding its fiber footprint to reach 50 million locations, up from that 28.9 million at the close of 2024. 5G, Stankey emphasized in his presentation at the investor day, has provided AT&T with "improved and durable returns" since mid-2020, including both a boost in AT&T's postpaid phone subscriber base as well as mobile service revenues. AT&T anticipates that its mobility service revenues will continue to grow by 2-3% annually in the next several years. AT&T expects to have capital expenditures in a range of around $22 billion a year over the next few years as it works to achieve its 5G and fiber network goals, and the company also plans to execute dividends and stock buybacks totaling around $40 billion.



AT&T, Verizon Trial D2D Video Calls with AST SpaceMobile

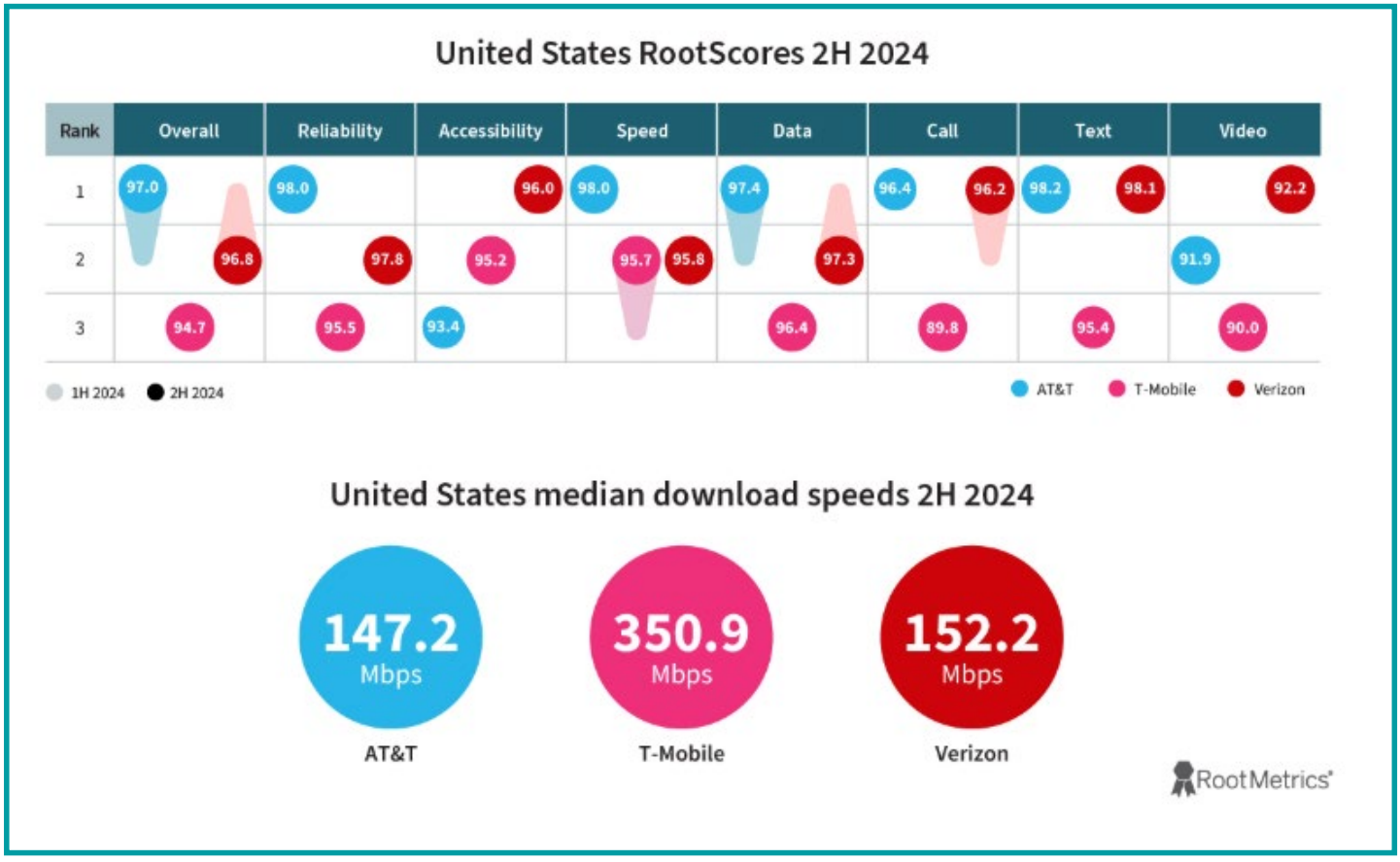
AT&T and Verizon successfully demonstrated direct-to-device (D2D) video calls using AST SpaceMobile's five low Earth orbit BlueBird satellites. Video calls to common smartphones are the next step after the companies received special temporary authority (STA) from the Federal Communications Commission last month to test the satellite broadband network in the US. AST SpaceMobile is using Verizon and AT&T's 850MHz spectrum, which is compatible with standard smartphones, for a non-continuous direct-to-device service in the US. Collectively, the five birds will provide around an hour combined of connectivity during two passes each day. AT&T previously made a video call with the satellite player in 2023 in a test that also included Rakuten Group. AST SpaceMobile and Vodafone Group claimed they conducted the world's first video call using a smartphone and satellites in an area with no mobile coverage last month. Vodafone Group, Verizon and AT&T are investors in AST SpaceMobile. The operators and AST SpaceMobile are in a race with SpaceX and T-Mobile US and Apple to provide D2D services such as text messaging, voice calls and video applications across the US.

AT&T and Nokia Extend Automation and VoNR Partnership

AT&T and Nokia have extended their existing partnership to include support for the evolution of the telco's voice core offering and for injecting additional automation capabilities into its network. AT&T is specifically looking to update its Nokia IMS Voice Core to include Voice over New Radio (VoNR) in a fully cloud-native architecture that it said enables flexible scaling and increased automation. The telco will also use the vendor's digital operations software solutions, as well as the Nokia Cloud Platform (NCP) to "streamline network activities, enhance automation and minimize manual intervention." Yigal Elbaz, senior vice president of technology and network services at AT&T, commented: "With focused execution and investment, AT&T continues to make excellent progress in realizing automation at all levels of its network and service operations." He added that the deeper tie with Nokia will allow AT&T to "further optimize" its network operations and enable new services to "better support [its] customers' evolving needs." The agreement is a notable ecosystem development as Nokia lost a major AT&T contract in late 2023 when the telco selected rival Ericsson as its key infrastructure partner in its ambitious goal of running 70% of its traffic over Open RAN platforms by the end of 2026. To achieve this, AT&T is planning to spend roughly $14 billion with Ericsson over the next five years. That's not to say Nokia had completely struck out with the U.S. telco. Prior to the VoNR deal, the pair announced multi-year deal that will see the vendor provide AT&T with its next-generation fiber access technologies across it current footprint and for future expansions.

AT&T Tops RootMetrics' National, State Network Testing for 2H 2024

RootMetrics' data put AT&T's network on top in at the national and state-level in its network testing for the second half of 2024 in overall network performance. But Verizon and T-Mobile US beat out AT&T when it came to 5G-specific network testing. The assessment from RootMetrics, which is part of Ookla, was based on more than 3 million tests conducted during the second half of last year, including testing across 125 metropolitan areas, more than 6,600 indoor locations and more than 247,000 miles of drive-testing. The test company looked at carriers' relative performance based on their overall network stats (4G and 5G combined), as well as on a 5G-only basis. When both 4G and 5G performance were considered on a national level, AT&T landed the most outright wins from RootMetrics, including overall performance, network reliability, network speed and data performance. The carrier tied with Verizon on call performance and text performance. Based on RootMetrics' methodology that includes consideration of network speeds in terms of floor and ceiling, AT&T landed the top speed award because of its strong minimum performance for users, despite T-Mobile US having a national aggregate median download speed of 350.9 Mbps—which was more than twice as fast as the speeds of either AT&T or Verizon. T-Mobile posted median download speeds of 200+ Mbps in 122 out of 125 cities tested, compared to AT&T's 67 and Verizon's 61 cities. However, speed isn't the whole story when it comes to network testing, and Verizon actually ended up garnering the most RootMetrics awards at the metro level: 847. Comparatively, T-Mobile US had 463 metro area awards, while AT&T came in with 513. AT&T racked up 278 state-level awards from RootMetrics, which included ties. That number surpassed second-place finisher Verizon's 264 state-level awards. T-Mobile US came in with just 73.



John Stankey elected Chairman of AT&T's Board of Directors, William Kennard named Lead Independent Director

AT&T announced that its directors have unanimously elected John Stankey to the role of Board Chair. Stankey succeeds William E. Kennard, who was elected Lead Independent Director. "As AT&T embarks on its comprehensive, Board-approved three-year strategic and capital allocation plan, this change provides the right governance structure for the Board," said Bill Kennard, outgoing Chair and incoming Lead Independent Director of AT&T. "This will increase our governance agility and enhance our ability to seize opportunities to create long-term shareholder value while maintaining robust independent leadership of the Board." Stankey was named President and CEO in 2020.

AT&T Extends Voice Core Relationship with Nokia to Drive New Services, Faster Deployment Times, and Operational Efficiencies

AT&T is extending its voice core relationship with Nokia in a multi-year expansion deal that will support the U.S. operator in delivering on its vision of securely providing customer-focused networks and automation that drive new services, faster deployment times, and operational efficiencies. AT&T is evolving its current Nokia IMS Voice Core to include Voice over New Radio (VoNR). The updated IMS Voice Core is a fully cloud-native architecture that enables flexible scaling and increased automation to improve AT&T's time to market with new services and yield greater cost savings. Yigal Elbaz, Senior Vice President, Technology & Network Services at AT&T, said: "With focused execution and investment, AT&T continues to make excellent progress in realizing automation at all levels of its network and service operations. We are pleased to continue our relationship with Nokia to further optimize our network operations and enable new services that better support our customers' evolving needs." The U.S. operator will utilize Nokia's voice core applications through the Nokia Cloud Platform (NCP) to streamline network activities, enhance automation, and minimize manual intervention. NCP reflects Nokia's multi-cloud strategy of providing operators with the infrastructure of their choice. AT&T will also use Nokia Digital Operations software solutions, open and designed for multi-vendor networks, to deliver capabilities that automate the design, delivery, and assurance of customer services at scale. Raghav Sahgal, President of Cloud and Network Services at Nokia, said: "As a long-time collaborator with AT&T, Nokia fully understands the important journey AT&T is on to enhance automation, reduce complexity, decrease deployment times, and perform operational workflows faster to better serve its customers, and glean more value from its network. Through our network solutions, Nokia will boost AT&T's network agility, efficiency, and service offerings."

AT&T Unveils First & Only Customer-First Promise Across Both Wireless & Fiber Networks

AT&T is leveling up the industry with the launch of the AT&T Guarantee: a bold promise to consumer and small business customers that will deliver the connectivity they can depend on, the deals they want, and the prompt, friendly service they deserve. And if we fall short of this – we're going to take action to make it right. No other carrier has offered a guarantee as comprehensive as this, spanning our network, our care and our deals. We're the first and only carrier that offers a guarantee for wireless and fiber networks. Plus – we are here to take care of our customers across consumer and small business. Why did we do this? Because we're the only ones that can meaningfully do it as the leaders in converged connectivity experiences. Connectivity customers can depend on: People just want connectivity that works. Period. In the event of a network interruption, we will work diligently to restore service and make it right for fiber customers who experience 20 minutes or more and wireless customers who experience 60 minutes or more of a covered outage.1 Consumers will automatically receive a bill credit equaling a full day of service and we'll reach out to our small business customers with options to help make it right. Deals customers want: Our best deals on any smartphone are for new and existing customers and don't require the most expensive plan like our competitors do. 2 And we have no hidden fees or equipment charges with AT&T Fiber.3 Prompt, friendly service that customers deserve: Speak to a friendly tech expert within 5 minutes or schedule a callback at a time that you choose.4 Plus, same or next day technician availability so we can get customers help fast for their fiber.5 And if we can't make that happen, we'll make sure we get back to our customers as soon as possible with options to help make it right. "We've been on a multi-year journey to improve the customer experience, placing our customers at the heart of everything we do," said Jenifer Robertson, Executive Vice President & GM, AT&T Mass Markets & Mobility. "Since 2019, we've invested more than $140 billion in our network and almost a billion dollars in customer care and operations, and that's brought us to where we are today – becoming the first and only carrier that offers a guarantee for wireless and fiber networks. From offering faster solutions and enhancing the digital experience, to meeting customers on their terms and using GenAI for an expert touch, we're committed to raising the bar in the industry. This isn't about maintaining the status quo; it's about redefining it." "With the customer as our compass, this bold initiative embodies the very essence of our company's Purpose," said Kellyn Kenny, Chief Growth & Marketing Officer at AT&T. "Customers tell us they want confidence in their service provider and offering a guarantee makes them four times more likely to choose a brand that offers one. It's about being transparent, taking action and ensuring our customers know they are supported. We're committed to delivering on our promises. We are walking the walk and talking the talk – and this is just the beginning."

Batelco Introduces 'B Spectrum' Service

Batelco, part of the Beyon Group, has introduced 'B Spectrum', an innovative new service set to revolutionise data connectivity across Bahrain and the broader Middle East. B Spectrum is designed to transform Batelco's end user experience, providing customers with enhanced flexibility and scalability in their network infrastructure, the company said. The new B Spectrum service, among the most advanced in the region, runs over Batelco's Network, and is powered by Ciena's optical technology. By enhancing the capabilities of current data connectivity solutions, Batelco reinforces its position as a leading provider of world-class, high demand solutions for its customers across all industries. Batelco's B spectrum service provides customers with a scalable band of data connectivity and allows them to interconnect between multiple nationwide or regional locations. The solution offers a flexible and efficient alternative to traditional lit services and dark fiber, with the key advantage being it provides customers with greater network control and scalability to meet their evolving data requirements at a lower cost. Customers can dynamically adjust their bandwidth as needed, scaling up or down to align with fluctuating business demands. This level of flexibility empowers businesses to tailor their network infrastructure with precision, it said. Batelco Chief Global Business Officer Hani Askar said: "We are very pleased to deliver this advanced service as part of Batelco's ongoing investment into international network infrastructure. B Spectrum is designed to attract new telco providers and opens the door for major global players to connect with Bahrain's growing digital economy. This supports our commitment to developing the high-performance networks that are required to thrive in today's digital landscape, and reflects our plans to enhance connectivity capabilities, in line with Bahrain's digital transformation vision. "To continuously advance network infrastructure services, Batelco collaborates with global technology leaders, such as Ciena, to provide customers with the best connectivity and data solutions," he added. Ciena Head of Middle East and Africa, Pete Hall, said: "As the GCC transitions into a key digital hub for local and global connectivity needs, Batelco's new B Spectrum service offers unmatched flexibility, enhanced control and provisioning of coherent signals onto the network. Leveraging Ciena's optical innovation, Batelco is playing a pivotal role in positioning the GCC as a key player in the digital era."

Cisco Unveils AI Defense to Secure the AI Transformation of Enterprises

Cisco, the leader in security and networking announced Cisco AI Defense, a pioneering solution to enable and safeguard AI transformation within enterprises. As AI technology advances, new safety concerns and security threats are emerging at an unprecedented speed which existing security solutions are unprepared to protect against. Cisco AI Defense is purpose-built for enterprises to develop, deploy and secure AI applications with confidence. "Business and technology leaders can't afford to sacrifice safety for speed when embracing AI," said Jeetu Patel, Executive Vice President and Chief Product Officer, Cisco. "In a dynamic landscape where competition is fierce, speed decides the winners. Fused into the fabric of the network, Cisco AI Defense combines the unique ability to detect and protect against threats when developing and accessing AI applications without tradeoffs." The stakes of something going wrong with AI are incredibly high. According to Cisco's 2024 AI Readiness Index, only 29% of those surveyed feel fully equipped to detect and prevent unauthorized tampering with AI. The security challenges are also new and complex, with AI applications being multi-model and multi-cloud. Vulnerabilities can occur at model or app level, while responsibility lies with different owners including developers, end users and vendors. As enterprises move beyond public data and begin training models on proprietary data, the risks only grow. To unlock AI innovation and adoption, enterprises need a common layer of safety and security that protects every user and every application. AI Defense enables enterprises' AI transformations by addressing two urgent risks:

Developing and Deploying Secure AI Applications: As AI becomes ubiquitous, enterprises will use and develop hundreds if not thousands of AI applications. Developers need one set of AI security and safety guardrails that work for every application. AI Defense helps developers move fast and unlock greater value by protecting AI systems from attacks and safeguarding model behavior, across platforms. The capabilities of AI Defense include:

- Discovering AI: Security teams need to understand who is building applications and the training sources they use. AI Defense detects shadow and sanctioned AI applications across public and private clouds.
- Model Validation: Model tuning can lead to toxic and unexpected outcomes. Automated testing checks AI models for hundreds of potential safety and security issues. This AI-driven algorithmic red team identifies potential vulnerabilities and recommends guardrails in AI Defense for security teams to use.
- Runtime Security: Continuous validation safeguards against potential safety and security threats such as prompt injection, denial of service and sensitive data leakage on an ongoing basis.
- Securing Access to AI Applications: As end users rush to adopt AI applications like summarization tools to improve their productivity, security teams need to prevent data leakage and the poisoning of proprietary data. AI Defense enables security teams with:
- Visibility: Provides a comprehensive view of shadow and sanctioned AI-enabled apps used by employees.
- Access Control: Implements policies that restrict employee access to unsanctioned AI tools.
- Data and Threat Protection: Continuously safeguards against threats and confidential data loss while ensuring compliance.

Unlike safety guardrails built into individual AI models, Cisco delivers consistent controls for a multi-model world. AI Defense is self-optimizing, leveraging Cisco's proprietary machine learning models to detect ever-evolving AI safety and security concerns

based on threat intelligence data from Cisco Talos. Splunk customers that are using AI Defense will receive enriched alerts with additional context from across the entire ecosystem. AI Defense integrates seamlessly with existing data flows for unparalleled visibility and control and is built into the Security Cloud, Cisco's unified, AI-driven, cross-domain security platform. It leverages Cisco's extensive mesh of enforcement points to perform AI security at the network level in a way only Cisco is optimized to deliver. Accuracy and trustworthiness are essential for protecting enterprise AI applications, and Cisco has been actively involved in developing AI security industry standards, including those from MITRE, OWASP, and NIST. "The adoption of AI exposes companies to new risks that traditional cybersecurity solutions don't address," said Kent Noyes, Global Head of AI & Cyber Innovation at World Wide Technology. "Cisco AI Defense represents a significant leap forward in AI security, providing full visibility of an enterprise's AI assets and protection against evolving threats." AI Defense is the latest in a series of AI-driven security innovations from Cisco, including Cisco Hypershield. Cisco AI Defense will be available in March for enterprises to safeguard their AI transformations.

Cisco Identifies Technology Trends That Will Define 2025

Cisco revealed key technology trends for 2025, emphasizing a landscape shaped by shifting consumer behavior, an expanding digital ecosystem, and the need to integrate AI. Reflecting these dynamics, the Middle East emerges as a hub of innovation, with rapid adoption of AI, cloud, cybersecurity, and smart city initiatives. IT spending in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is projected to total $230.7 billion in 2025, an increase of 7.4% from 2024, according to Gartner, Inc. David Meads, Vice President for the Middle East, Africa, Türkiye, Romania, and CIS at Cisco, commented: "By embracing this year's technology trends with both strategic foresight and pragmatism, companies can effectively navigate challenges and seize growth opportunities." He added: "The Middle East is witnessing a significant surge in technology investment, driven by a strong commitment from both governments and private enterprises aimed at establishing the region as a leader in technological innovation. This rapid adoption of technology provides businesses with unique opportunities to enhance efficiency, boost productivity, improve customer experiences, and gain a competitive edge."

Agentic AI will fulfill AI's promise of personalization and efficiency. Many AI-powered tools in use today are based on static rules or datasets. Agentic AI differs in that it can continuously learn from user inputs and make decisions with little to no human oversight. Imagine a customer service AI that predicts user needs before a query is made, or a network management AI that identifies potential issues and resolves them autonomously, ensuring uninterrupted service. In response to the rise of Agentic AI, we will see organizations implementing mandatory ethical guidelines to ensure fairness and transparency in algorithmic decisions and protecting intellectual property. Humanoids and humans collaborating will force companies to rethink workplace dynamics. AI-powered humanoids will form a part of the future workforce. This will force companies to completely reimagine their workplace dynamics. For example, companies will need to ensure their connectivity has the right levels of latency and throughout to process and analyze data in real time. At the same time, organizations must ensure their security postures. This human and machine collaboration will be inspiring and allow organizations to greatly scale operations but will also likely trigger concerns about AI replacing jobs. Leaders will need to be clear and uncompromising about harnessing AI's power

without losing the human touch that defines world-class customer experiences. AI will present challenges for companies, particularly regarding infrastructure and data readiness. AI will continue to captivate businesses, promising unprecedented innovation and efficiency, and companies will continue to invest in AI-powered solutions. As AI journeys progress, so too will the understanding that the path is fraught with hurdles. Despite billions of dollars invested into AI models and AI-powered solutions in 2024, new data from Cisco's AI Readiness Index shows that AI readiness has declined as now only 13% of companies are ready to leverage AI-powered technologies to their full potential. In 2025 organizations will grapple with how best to secure the right level of compute power to meet AI workloads. Companies will need to lean on their strategic partners to identify and prioritize their AI use cases. IT teams will experience increasing pressure to optimize the management, hygiene, which is currently spread across multiple systems and locations. Cybersecurity will face new threats, leading companies to enhance human efforts with machines. Advancements in quantum computing are increasing pressure on security teams to address the vulnerabilities of traditional encryption methods against quantum attacks. As these technologies gain traction, organizations must adopt quantum-resistant security protocols to protect sensitive data. The interconnectedness of digital ecosystems complicates security, making attacks more sophisticated. According to the latest Cisco AI Readiness Index, only 30% of companies globally have the capabilities to tackle these threats. As cybercriminals adapt their tactics, networks will become essential as the first and last line of defence. Integrating AI will enhance human capabilities, strengthening network security and policy enforcement. Network downtime due to misconfiguration will approach zero. Over 40% of network outages are directly caused by misconfigurations, and can cost businesses 9% of their total annual revenue. AI has the potential to virtually eliminate these manual misconfiguration mishaps. Intelligent, automated tools can execute workflows throughout the network lifecycle and provide traceability for every action. AI-driven tools will revolutionize network management, learning from each configuration to reduce errors and ensure uninterrupted operations. As AI adoption increases, we expect to see a rapid decline in misconfigurations and network downtime caused by human error approach zero. Companies will need help to balance sustainability and growth in an AI-powered era. The environmental impact of AI is the elephant in a lot of rooms. AI requires high energy consumption levels that impact carbon emissions across the board. The energy used by AI-dedicated data centers is expected to match the amount consumed by a country the size of the Netherlands in one year. Sustainability frequently arises in discussions with customers, who increasingly seek partners that can help them achieve net-zero commitments and sustainability goals. Successful businesses will prioritize energy-efficient products and circular business models. AI technology will be pivotal in enhancing energy efficiencies, ushering in an era of "energy networking" that combines software-defined networking with direct current (DC) microgrids for improved visibility into emissions and optimization of power usage, distribution, and storage.

Cisco Reports Second Quarter Earnings

Cisco reported second quarter results for the period ended January 25, 2025. Cisco reported second quarter revenue of $14.0 billion, net income on a generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) basis of $2.4 billion or $0.61 per share, and non-GAAP net income of $3.8 billion or $0.94 per share. "Cisco's strong quarterly results were driven by accelerating customer demand for our technology," said Chuck Robbins, chair and CEO of Cisco. "As AI becomes more pervasive, we are well positioned to help our customers scale their network infrastructure, increase their data capacity requirements, and adopt best-in-class AI security." "Q2 was another quarter of solid execution which drove revenue and EPS above our guidance ranges. Splunk continues to perform in line with our expectations on the top line, and was accretive to Q2 non-GAAP EPS, earlier than we had planned," said Scott Herren, CFO of Cisco. "Our strong cash flows have led us to iCisco has declared a quarterly dividend of $0.41 per common share, a 1-cent increase or up 3% over the previous quarter's dividend, to be paid on April 23, 2025, to all stockholders of record as of the close of business on April 3, 2025. Future dividends will be subject to Board approval. Cisco's board of directors has also approved a $15 billion increase to the authorization of the stock repurchase program. There is no fixed termination date for the repurchase program. The remaining authorized fixed amount for stock repurchases including the additional authorization is approximately $17 billion.

Cisco Redefines Data Center Architecture with New Smart Switches, Embedding Services Directly into the Network

Cisco announced a family of data center Smart Switches, disrupting traditional data center network design by enabling networking and security services in a compact all-in-one solution. Utilizing programmable AMD Pensando™ data processing units (DPUs), the switch functions as a high-capacity, multifunctional service-hosting device, architecturally transforming data centers to simplify their design and make them more efficient. Cisco's first integrated offering, the Smart Switch with Cisco Hypershield, introduces a new approach to securing AI data centers by fusing security directly into the network fabric. As AI workloads multiply, building and managing data centers has become much more complex. Data center operators require a simpler way to design, build, and deploy infrastructure to fully benefit from AI. AI applications must sit where they are needed, whether a massive large language model sitting in centralized hyperscale facilities or a network drone monitoring crop irrigation at the very edge of the network. This shift in where data is created, accessed, and stored requires a new type of simplified data center infrastructure–one that integrates compute, storage, networking, and security in new ways, and allows for automated and predictive operations via simplified management platforms. "Data center infrastructure needs be reimagined for both AI training and inferencing workloads that dwarf even the largest enterprise jobs of the past," said Jeetu Patel, EVP and Chief Product Officer, Cisco. "Simply upgrading data center infrastructure with higher 'speeds and feeds' switches does not address the requirements of modern data centers, which require acceleration of security and network services natively within the data center fabric." "Cisco's innovative approach to data center design, leveraging leadership AMD Pensando DPUs, marks a significant milestone in transforming enterprise infrastructure to address the evolving security demands of data center networks while dealing with the fast paced AI deployments," said Soni Jiandani, senior vice president and general manager, Networking Technology and Solutions Group, AMD. "Our collaboration with Cisco enables enterprises to achieve high-capacity throughput and impressive network security without compromising on workload performance on Cisco UCS servers or Hypershield enabled platforms. Together, we are paving the way for a new era of intelligent, adaptive, and secure data centers." As AI drives rapid growth, organizations must manage significantly increased power, compute and networking demands. In traditional data center architectures, when each new service required a specific device, growth led to complexity. It also required adding, changing, or upgrading the enforcement of security policies with each new service or workload. Cisco Smart Switches offer a simpler, more efficient and extensible architecture by integrating services directly with the data center fabric, rather than bolting them on top. By combining Cisco data center networking, Silicon One, and AMD DPUs, customers can scale services and adapt quickly to evolving business needs, all without the need for any additional hardware. The switches feature two processing engines: a high-performance network processor for stable data transfer and a network services sidecar for agile security processing. Traffic is intelligently steered between the two engines for optimal performance. This architectural shift drives cost savings through hardware consolidation, reduced power consumption, and operational simplicity. Cisco Smart Switches embrace all the capabilities of a NX-OS switch and management through Nexus Dashboard, and will unlock a diverse set of use cases like stateful segmentation, IPSec encryption, enhanced telemetry, DDoS protection and more.

Cisco Offers Agile AI Architecture

Cisco unveiled an agile networking architecture to help operators navigate a sea of AI data and generate revenue from related services, one of a host of products being released during the EMEA edition of its regular technology events. During Cisco Live EMEA, the company noted AI swells the volume and variety of data communications service providers must handle, arguing the information should be pushed towards the network edge and, in turn be closer to users. It stated the Cisco Agile Services Networking architecture helps to achieve those goals, providing operators with the tools to manage how AI data moves over their networks. "The AI revolution is a massive potential tailwind for service providers. AI, and especially the advent of AI agents, will mean an incredible influx of new digital workers who will be working together and communicating constantly," Jeetu Patel, EVP and chief product officer said. Cisco noted a key element of its architecture is the potential to generate additional revenue by providing assured services and networking. It stated the set-up simplifies operations by bringing network layers and services together, providing resiliency by employing AI for automation, observation and security. To power the architecture, the company unveiled new Silicon One and Cisco 8000-range products covering access to edge and metro networks. It introduced new 400g ultra long-haul coherent pluggable optics capable of connecting sites up to 3,000km apart. And it unveiled network automation and assurance features, offering predictive AI technology to handle capacity planning and resource allocation.

du Claims First 5G VoNR Launch in the UAE

Emirati-based operator du claimed to be the first operator in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to commercially launch 5G Voice over New Radio (VoNR). It has also secured full certification from top handset manufacturers for compatibility with its 5G Standalone (5G SA) network, the Arab carrier said in a release. The telco noted it is paving the way for the next wave of 5G features that will support AI-driven applicationOs, advanced augmented reality (AR) and immersive communication experiences, adding that this next stage in 5G evolution brings significant benefits to both consumers and enterprises. du noted that users can now experience improved download and upload speeds, ultra-low latency and superior call quality through VoNR. The full implementation of 5G capabilities is expected to impact key industries such as smart cities, healthcare, education, and entertainment, it added. Saleem AlBlooshi, CTO at du, said: "Our commitment to evolving and elevating our network to superior standards has resulted in the 5G SA network certification, guaranteeing that du customers experience ultra-modern connectivity and unparalleled digital experiences. We are also pleased to announce the commercial launch of VoNR over 5G, which aims to enhance the customer experience journey in the voice call services and provide seamless 5G experience as well as improving the network efficiency." "The introduction of the 5G SA network and the enablement of VoNR over 5G network represent a giant leap forward in our mission to deliver exceptional service and innovative solutions to our customers. This technology not only supercharges the user experience with phenomenal speeds and premium call quality but also opens a world of possibilities for businesses and public services, driving the UAE closer to its smart city aspirations," said Karim Benkirane, chief commercial officer at du. du is currently in the process of deploying 5G-Advanced (5G-A) technology in Dubai as part of its national rollout program, Hasan Alshemeili, the telco's head of infra technology planning, had said during a keynote session at Huawei's Global Mobile Broadband Forum 2024 (MBBF 2024), which took place in October 2024 in Istanbul, Turkey. The executive noted that du has already deployed hundreds of 5G-A base stations while its plans for the whole country stipulate the deployment of thousands of base stations. du had initially launched 5G services in 2019 and 5G SA technology in 2023. The Arab telco had previously signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Huawei to boost 5G-A technology in the UAE. The project, dubbed "5G-A Country," seeks to accelerate the digital transformation of the Arab country, according to Huawei.

Eutelsat Partners with NIGCOMSAT to Launch LEO Satellite Services in Nigeria

Eutelsat Group, a global leader in satellite communications and Nigerian Communications Satellite Limited (NIGCOMSAT) are proud to announce a groundbreaking multi-year, multi-million-dollar partnership to deliver low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite services in Nigeria. This strategic agreement positions NIGCOMSAT as Nigeria's leading satellite service provider by leveraging the OneWeb LEO network to deliver high-speed, low-latency connectivity. The services will cater to a wide range of sectors, including government, enterprises, and underserved rural areas, supporting essential applications like remote communications, mobile connectivity, and offshore operations. Commenting on the development, Cyril Dujardin, President of the Connectivity Business Unit at Eutelsat Group says, "We are honored to partner with NIGCOMSAT in this transformative initiative to enhance digital inclusion in Nigeria. LEO satellites are vital for providing fast, reliable connectivity in remote and underserved areas. This collaboration underscores Eutelsat's commitment to driving global digital transformation. We look forward to a long, fruitful relationship with NIGCOMSAT." On her part, NIGCOMSAT's Managing Director/CEO, Jane Nkechi Egerton-Idehen, stated that, "We are delighted to deepen our collaboration with Eutelsat, a globally renowned satellite technology leader. This partnership is a milestone for NIGCOMSAT, enabling us to bridge Nigeria's digital divide through the cutting-edge capabilities of OneWeb LEO satellites. Together, we will deliver scalable, reliable connectivity solutions to foster growth across government services, businesses and communities nationwide." This partnership attests to the strong ties between Nigeria and France in advancing satellite and space technology. By joining forces, Eutelsat and NIGCOMSAT are poised to drive innovation, accelerate digital transformation, and open new opportunities for connectivity across Nigeria and beyond.

Eutelsat, Partners Claim Satellite 5G First

Eutelsat Group, Mediatek, and Airbus Defence and Space conducted what they asserted as the world's first successful trial of a 5G non-terrestrial-network (NTN) connection involving a commercial fleet of low Earth orbit satellites. In a statement, Eutelsat positioned the demonstration as paving the way for deployment of a 5G NTN standard, which enables interoperability between satellite and terrestrial infrastructure. Eutelsat used its commercial OneWeb LEO fleet for the test, during which a 5G user terminal was connected to the core by a satellite link, with traffic exchanged. Alongside equipment and work from the trio, they used technology from Taiwan-based Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI), Sharp, and Rohde & Schwarz. The companies employed the Ku-band, a range commonly used in satellite communications. Eutelsat chief engineering officer Arlen Kassighian noted the demonstration would help pave "the way for new applications in future constellations." The company added compatibility of 5G supplied from space and traditional sources would open the way to "ubiquitous connectivity with economies of scale" benefiting smartphone users, the automotive industry, and other IoT deployments. Head of wireless system and ASIC engineering at Mediatek Mingxi Fan noted, "By making real-world connections with LEO satellites in orbit, we are now another step closer to bringing the next generation of 3GPP-based NR-NTN satellite wideband connectivity for commercial use." The move is the latest in the competitive NTN space, with major players announcing regular breakthroughs and operators looking skywards in their ambitions for ubiquitous coverage.

Eutelsat Achieves ITU's Partner2Connect Milestone: 1 Million People Connected in Sub-Saharan Africa

Eutelsat is proud to announce that it has achieved its Partner2Connect Digital Coalition pledge, backed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), two years ahead of schedule. This milestone marks the connection of 1 million underserved people in Sub-Saharan Africa to reliable high-speed internet via satellite, reinforcing Eutelsat's commitment to bridging the digital divide—a key pillar of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy—and advancing progress toward the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Eutelsat's Konnect hotspots Wi-Fi services, powered by the EUTELSAT KONNECT satellite, have been instrumental in delivering affordable, high-speed internet to rural areas in Sub-Saharan Africa, where terrestrial networks remain inaccessible. With speeds ranging from 5 Mbps to 100 Mbps at competitive rates, the service has empowered individuals, schools, businesses, and healthcare centers to access essential digital resources, unlocking opportunities for education, e-commerce, and critical services. Eva Berneke, Chief Executive Officer of Eutelsat Group, commented: "Reaching this milestone means 1 million people now have access to vital information, education, and communication resources through our Konnect solution. This achievement highlights our commitment to digital inclusion and underscores how we leverage cutting-edge satellite network solutions to meet the challenging demands for low-cost, high-availability, and trusted services in Africa. With both Eutelsat's GEO satellite fleet and OneWeb's LEO constellation, we are expanding our reach and ensuring that connectivity drives meaningful economic and social progress, empowering communities to thrive in the digital era." Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General of the ITU said: "Eutelsat's achievements in satellite connectivity have been instrumental in providing reliable and affordable high-speed broadband to individuals, businesses, schools and healthcare centres in underserved regions. This work underscores Eutelsat's commitment to bridging the digital divide while contributing to ITU's goal of delivering meaningful connectivity to everyone, everywhere."

Eutelsat Announces Changes to the Composition of the Board of Directors

Eutelsat Group announces changes to the composition of its Board of Directors, aimed at fostering greater agility in decision-making in the fast-evolving Satellite industry. Accordingly, four sitting directors, Mia Brunell, Esther Gaide, Cynthia Gordon and Fleur Pellerin have resigned from the Board. The entire Eutelsat Group Board warmly thanks Mia Brunell, Esther Gaide, Cynthia Gordon and Fleur Pellerin for their outstanding contribution to the Board duties and for their continuing support of the Group's strategy. Additionally, Michel Combes has been appointed by the Board, on the recommendation of the Nomination and Governance Committee, as an independent Board Member until the next Annual General Meeting, where he will be proposed for a full term. Michel Combes is Chairman and CEO of MC Advisory. A telecommunications expert, he previously served as CFO of France Télécom (2002-06), and headed TDF (2006-08), Vodafone Group for Europe (2008-13), Alcatel-Lucent (2013-15) and Numericable-SFR (2015-17). In 2018, Michel Combes became CFO of US operator, Sprint, where he subsequently became CEO. In 2020, he joined Softbank Group International, which he led until 2022. Following these changes, Eutelsat's Board of Directors will be composed of 12 members, of which seven Independent Directors. It will include five women, equating to a representation of 42%. Elsewhere, Dominique D'Hinnin has informed the Board of Directors of his wish to retire from the Chairmanship and Board of Eutelsat Group. The Nomination and Governance Committee has taken note of Dominique's intention and will undertake due process prior to recommending a new Chairman to the Board of Directors. As Eutelsat enters the next and exciting phase of satellite communications, this new, re-energized board will guide and support the management team in driving future performance.

Eutelsat America Corp. and OneWeb Technologies Inc Appoints Ian Canning as President and Chief Executive Officer

Eutelsat America Corp. and OneWeb Technologies Inc (EACOWT), which operate as a wholly owned independent U.S. proxy company and subsidiary of Eutelsat Group, announced the appointment of Ian Canning as president and chief executive officer (CEO). His appointment by the EACOWT board of directors became effective on December 20, 2024. Ian served as EACOWT's chief operating officer and most recently served as the company's acting CEO. He brings a wealth of leadership experience in the global satellite communications (SATCOM) and telecommunications industries, along with a proven track record driving strategic growth, operational excellence and commercial success. Ian joined OneWeb Technologies' (OWT's) predecessor, TrustComm, in 2012 as COO, helping to lead its successful acquisition by OneWeb and transformation into a U.S. proxy company. Recently, his leadership was instrumental in OWT's merger and integration with Eutelsat

America Corp. Previously Ian led global product innovation and marketing at Stratos Global Corp. Prior to that, at Iridium Satellite LLC, he led sales for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), establishing key partnerships for the business. Ian's extensive experience includes running sales and business development and driving commercial initiatives within global leaders Inmarsat, Nortel and Motorola. In his new role as CEO, Ian will be responsible for furthering the combined EACOWT vision of providing global satellite connectivity, innovative solutions and exceptional support focused on meeting the mission requirements of the U.S. government. His appointment follows the departure of Kevin Steen, who was CEO of the combined EACOWT entity since May 2024, having served as CEO of OWT since 2022. "Ian has been instrumental in driving EACOWT's operational and business success and strengthening our reputation as a leader in the satellite communications industry. His vision and commitment to excellence make him the ideal person to lead the company into its next phase of growth," said Dr. Pamela Drew, chair, EACOWT Board of Directors. "I am honored to step into the role of CEO at such an exciting time for EACOWT. Our team is dedicated to delivering innovative and secure SATCOM solutions to meet the evolving needs of the U.S. government and its allies and I look forward to continuing our mission of providing resilient, multi-orbit satellite capabilities to address our customers' unique challenges," said Ian Canning. "Ian Canning's experience in advancing new technologies in the satellite world, combined with his deep industry knowledge, positions him well to lead EACOWT and drive its continued success in delivering Eutelsat's innovative solutions to the U.S. government and its allies," said Eva Berneke, CEO, Eutelsat Group

Huawei and IEEE UAE Section Launch Groundbreaking Wi-Fi 7 Innovation Program to Shape the Future of Wireless Connectivity

In a significant move to advance wireless technology innovation, Huawei and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) UAE section have unveiled the 'Imagine Wi-Fi 7 to Reality' program. This strategic initiative, running from January 20 to April 20, 2025, aims to explore new requirements based on Wi-Fi 7 scenarios, cultivate high-end talent in the connectivity field, and accelerate intelligent industry transformation across Middle East and Central Asia (ME&CA). The program emerges at a crucial time in wireless technology evolution, as Wi-Fi 7 promises unprecedented advancements in speed,

reliability, and user experience. With data transmission rates approximately three times faster than its predecessor, Wi-Fi 7 is poised to transform everything from 8K video streaming to immersive virtual reality experiences and mission-critical enterprise applications. The launch ceremony in Dubai attracted Huawei executives and key stakeholders from the University of Dubai, IEEE UAE section, and industry partners. In his opening keynote, Dr. Eesa Bastaki, President of the University of Dubai and IEEE Honorary Chair, commended the program's achievements. "The outstanding progress of Imagine Wi-Fi 7 over the past year has been remarkable. The Wi-Fi 7 standard has sparked thoughtful discussions and extensive idea-sharing across the industry. Looking ahead, we eagerly anticipate even more comprehensive and insightful dialogues in the upcoming season." Abdulaziz AlNuaimi, Chief Security Officer, Huawei UAE, delivered a speech highlighting the successful partnership between Huawei, the IEEE UAE section, and the University of Dubai. He emphasized how the new season aims to promote industry development and trigger multi-dimensional thinking on user experience and data security. "Our longstanding collaboration with IEEE and the University of Dubai has consistently delivered remarkable results in ICT talent development and innovation. This continued partnership strengthens both our industry's growth and the UAE's position as a technology leader. Together, we're creating a robust ecosystem that fosters innovation and develops the next generation of ICT talent," AlNuaimi added. Ryan Pan, IP Product & Solutions Manager, Huawei Middle East & Central Asia, presented a comprehensive review of Imagine Wi-Fi 7's achievements in 2024 and outlined Huawei's wireless strategy for 2025. "Huawei has an abundance of industry know-how and considerable experience in Wi-Fi technologies, making remarkable contributions to Wi-Fi industry standards," noted Pan, highlighting several successful Wi-Fi 7 deployments across the Middle East and Central Asia region. Mohammad Haneef, Chief Information Officer, University of Dubai, shared insights from their Wi-Fi 7 implementation. "Our tests demonstrate significant advancements in speed and user experience," Haneef commented. "Huawei's Wi-Fi 7 technology effectively meets the demanding requirements for bandwidth, security, and network operations in digital education within higher education institutions." The Imagine Wi-Fi 7 to Reality initiative features two contests catering to different segments of the technology ecosystem. The Wi-Fi 7 Pioneers track engages industry practitioners who have implemented Wi-Fi 7 solutions, offering them platforms to share deployment experiences through live presentations at Huawei IP Club events and video submissions. Participants can earn up to 1,500 IP Club points through combined participation methods. The Innovation Pioneer track opens the field to a broader audience of technology enthusiasts, researchers, and visionaries. Participants will explore cutting-edge applications of Wi-Fi 7's advanced features, including Wi-Fi Shield technology, VIP Experience Assurance, and Dynamic Zoom Smart antenna implementations, through compelling video presentations. The program offers substantial recognition for outstanding contributions. Elite achievers will experience the Huawei HQ IP Club Explorer Tour to Huawei headquarters and receive the prestigious Pioneer Trophy, jointly presented by IEEE and Huawei. Additional honors include participation in the Huawei Tech Carnival 2025 in Uzbekistan and the latest Huawei FreeClip devices for top social media engagement. The adoption of Wi-Fi 7 has seen remarkable traction across the Middle East and Central Asia region. Huawei has deployed over 30,000 Wi-Fi 7 access points, and over 180 enterprises have chosen Wi-Fi 7 as their technical standard. This widespread implementation demonstrates the industry's confidence in Wi-Fi 7's capabilities and readiness for enterprise-grade applications. As the world's first vendor to launch an enterprise Wi-Fi solution, Huawei's commitment to advancing WLAN standards is unmatched. Ranked No. 1 in cumulative contributions to both WLAN standards and Wi-Fi 7 standards, Huawei has solidified its position as the world's Wi-Fi 7 leader. Notably, Huawei received the prestigious "Best Enterprise Wi-Fi Network 2024" Award at the Wireless Broadband Alliance (WBA) Industry Awards 2024

Huawei Maintains the Top Position in the Global Passive Antenna Market for the Ninth Consecutive Year

In their latest report, the global technology market intelligence firm ABI Research released its 2023 global base station antenna market research report titled "Passive Cellular Antenna Competitive Analysis". According to the report, Huawei continues to lead the global market for the ninth consecutive year with a market share of 38.93%, making Huawei the only equipment manufacturer to maintain positive market share growth during this period. As a leading market intelligence firm in the global information and communications technology (ICT) sector, ABI Research conducted a comprehensive assessment of 15 base station antenna vendors based on three dimensions: Overall, Innovation, and Implementation. Huawei is ranked first in all three areas. This achievement highlights Huawei's outstanding performance and continuous innovation in the global communications technology field.

Overall Leader: Huawei earns the title of industry overall leader with a high score of 86.4, topping the world in market share, innovation, and application capabilities. In addition, Huawei's lead widened to become the only equipment vendor to score over 80 points. The gap between Huawei and the second-place vendor has increased by 1.5 times compared to 2022.

Top Innovator: The report specifically highlighted Huawei's innovative achievements in antenna technology. Huawei is the first in the industry to launch eco-friendly, high efficiency and green antennas, leading the industry's transition to sustainable development. In addressing network deployment challenges, Huawei's A+P (Active+Passive) module solution and invisible antenna solution have brought new ideas to the industry; meanwhile, under the trend towards intelligent networks, Huawei has taken the lead in antenna

digitalization with cutting-edge innovations such as Antenna Information Sensor Unit (AISU) and beam adjustment technologies, significantly enhancing operational efficiencies and performance optimization of mobile networks.

Top Implementer: The scoring basis of implementation capability covers various aspects such as global antenna market share, regional market penetration, financial and organizational health, contract wins with major customers, and product portfolio range. According to the report, Huawei's scored 87.8 points for its implementation capability, which is 8.5% ahead of the second place and fully reflects Huawei's strong competitiveness in the global base station antenna market.

As crucial infrastructure components in wireless communication systems, base station antennas directly affect energy consumption, network coverage, capacity, user experience. Looking toward the future, Huawei will continue to promote innovative solutions, contributing to building more efficient and intelligent networks, moving towards a fully connected, intelligent world.

Huawei & OIC-CERT Release Framework to Secure Software Supply Chains Across Member States

Huawei, in collaboration with the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation-Computer Emergency Response Team (OIC-CERT) and the Oman National CERT, announced the release of the OIC-CERT Software Supply Chain Security Framework. This framework provides crucial guidance to OIC member states on establishing robust software supply chain security management, ensuring end-to-end cybersecurity. This comes at a critical time when cybersecurity is a top priority for businesses in the region, with 55% of companies in the Middle East prioritizing mitigating digital and technology risks over the next year, exceeding the global average of 53%, according to a report by PwC. Within this, cyber risks remain a significant concern, with 42% of regional businesses focusing on them. Developed by the OIC-CERT Supply Chain Security working group, co-chaired by the Oman National CERT and Huawei, the framework addresses the growing complexity and interconnectedness of software systems and the increasing risks of supply chain attacks. It offers practical guidance for regulatory authorities in member countries to formulate effective policies for software supply chain manufacturers and service providers. The framework provides a comprehensive approach to software supply chain security governance, covering key areas such as supplier cybersecurity management, open-source software management, R&D and production management. It guides organizations in implementing security measures throughout the entire software lifecycle, from evaluating and selecting suppliers to securing the development and deployment processes. It also emphasizes the importance of managing open-source software components and integrating security practices into research, development, and production environments. This holistic approach aims to mitigate risks throughout the software supply chain. Aloysius Cheang, Chief Security Officer for Huawei in the Middle East and Central Asia, said: "Huawei is committed to collaborating with global partners to enhance cybersecurity for all. This framework represents a significant step forward in strengthening software supply chain security across the OIC member states. We believe that by working together and sharing best practices, we can create a more secure and trustworthy digital environment for everyone." Dr. Saleh Said Al Hashmi at Oman National CERT, highlighted the significance of this framework and the value of collaboration, stating: "In today's interconnected world, software supply chain security is paramount. This framework provides a crucial foundation for OIC member states to build resilient digital economies. Our collaboration with Huawei leverages their expertise and industry insights to develop comprehensive guidelines that address the evolving threat landscape. By adopting these recommendations, nations can effectively mitigate risks and protect critical infrastructure. We believe this joint effort will significantly enhance cybersecurity across the OIC community." The framework's release comes at a pivotal moment, as software supply chain attacks continue to evolve and pose significant threats to organizations and nations. By prioritizing supply chain cybersecurity, OIC member states can protect their digital assets, foster trust, and enhance resilience in an increasingly interconnected world. This initiative underscores Huawei's ongoing commitment to contributing to the development of cybersecurity standards and enhancing industry security capabilities. By collaborating with international organizations like OIC-CERT, Huawei aims to support the building of cyber resilience and contribute to a more secure and trustworthy cyberspace.

Huawei Europe Bags Prestigious Top Employer 2025 Award for Sixth Consecutive Year

Huawei Europe earned recognition as a Top Employer in Europe for the sixth consecutive year in 2025. This prestigious certification covers the following 17 countries: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and Turkey. The recognition is a testament to Huawei Europe's exemplary human resources practices and underscores its commitment to fostering a culture of innovation, inclusivity, and continuous improvement. Lesley White, Vice President of Human Resources, Huawei European Region said: "Europe is home to a diverse and highly skilled talent pool, driving innovation and excellence. Being certified as a Top Employer in Europe is a testament to Huawei's commitment to fostering a supportive, inclusive, and growth-oriented workplace. This recognition underscores the importance of investing in employee development, well-being and engagement, ensuring that the company not only attracts top talent but also retains and empowers them to thrive in a competitive global landscape." The Top Employers Institute is a globally recognized authority in certifying excellence in employment practices. The certification process involves a comprehensive survey across six core dimensions, with over 250 detailed questions assessing various HR practices. Each topic is evidence-based, ensuring answers are factual and aligned with industry benchmarks, followed by a rigorous audit to guarantee certification accuracy. Patrik Rendel, Regional Manager DACH & CEE of Top Employers Institute said: " On behalf of the Top Employers Institute, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Huawei for achieving the prestigious Top Employer certification with an impressive score of 91.26%. This remarkable accomplishment reflects commitment to implementing best HR practices. Huawei's dedication to empowering talent and driving innovation sets a benchmark for excellence in the industry. We are proud to recognize Huawei as a leader in people practices and look forward to your continued success in shaping the future of work. " Huawei is dedicated to driving digital transformation and innovation, connecting the world through cutting-edge ICT technology. With a focus on excellence, we empower individuals to lead, excel, and shape the future of connectivity. Join us in a dynamic, supportive environment where your contributions will be recognized, and your potential can break boundaries, advancing both your career and global progress.

Huawei to Build US$3.5 Million Data Center for Nepal Telecom

Huawei has signed a Letter of Intent with Nepal Telecom to construct a primary data center in Kathmandu and a disaster recovery center in Bhairahawa, Nepal. The project, valued at NPR 484 million ($3.5 million), is aimed at modernizing Nepal Telecom's data handling capabilities and improving service efficiency. Huawei will oversee the physical infrastructure of the data center, which will become a key element in Nepal Telecom's efforts to enhance its operations. The facility is expected to provide income-generating opportunities for the telecom company, which has faced declining revenues in recent years. Hari Dhakal, a spokesperson for Nepal Telecom, emphasized that the new data center will be instrumental in delivering more efficient services. However, specific details regarding the facility and the overall deal were not disclosed. Huawei's involvement in building data centers in various countries aligns with its commitment to aiding digital transformation globally. In addition to Nepal, Huawei has partnered with Algeria and Pakistan for similar projects. The Chinese tech giant has also been advocating for telcos to prepare for an AI-driven future, with a focus on 5G rollouts. Nepal is home to various data center operators, including Cloud Himalaya, DataHub, and the facilities of telcos Ncell and Subisu. Last year, Indian operator Yotta and Nepal's BLC also partnered to build a new data center outside Kathmandu.

Huawei to Showcase Cutting-Edge Cloud and AI Innovations at Web Summit Qatar 2025

Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, is set to showcase its latest Cloud and AI solutions at Web Summit Qatar 2025, taking place from February 23 to 26 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC). Under the theme "Accelerate Intelligence with Everything as a Service," Huawei will demonstrate how its advanced technologies enable businesses and industries to harness the power of cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and digital transformation to drive unprecedented innovation and efficiency. Following the success of its inaugural edition in 2024, Web Summit Qatar returns for its second year, solidifying Qatar's position as a global technology and innovation hub. The event brings together world-leading technology companies, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and investors, fostering discussions on the future of AI, cloud computing, and digital transformation. As an AI pioneer in industry applications, Huawei Cloud is driving industry intelligence by providing full-stack AI capabilities, including infrastructure, computing power, algorithms, development frameworks, and its advanced Pangu Large Models. Leveraging its CloudMatrix AI-native infrastructure, Huawei Cloud Stack, and Ascend AI cloud services, Huawei delivers massive AI computing power with unparalleled efficiency, offering flexible deployment options tailored to diverse enterprise needs. Huawei Cloud Stack provides an on-premise deployment mode for enterprises or governments that prefer to save data locally and develop foundation models independently. Meanwhile, Ascend AI cloud services offer a public cloud alternative for organizations that want to avoid the complexities of building and maintaining their data centers. The newly launched Pangu Large Model 5.0 offers advancements in multimodal capabilities, reasoning, and real-world applications across sectors such as autonomous driving, intelligent cities, robotics, industrial design, and drug R&D, solidifying Huawei Cloud's position as a leader in AI-driven digital transformation. Building on these technical strengths, Huawei is redefining innovation through its "Everything as a Service" strategy, which offers fully digital, cloud-based, and AI-powered solutions across three key pillars: Infrastructure as a Service, Technology as a Service, and Expertise as a Service. At Web Summit Qatar, the company will showcase how this approach enables scalable, secure, and high-performance solutions tailored to the needs of governments, enterprises, and industries, empowering them to accelerate their digital transformation journeys. Rico Lin, President of Huawei Gulf North Region, stated: “At Huawei, we are committed to accelerating intelligence and enabling businesses to thrive in the digital era. Our participation at Web Summit Qatar 2025 underscores our dedication to providing innovative Cloud and AI solutions that empower industries to operate smarter, scale faster, and drive greater efficiency. As Qatar moves toward a knowledge-based economy, we look forward to collaborating with industry leaders, government stakeholders, and technology pioneers to support the country's digital ambitions and shape the future of AI-driven innovation." Under Infrastructure as a Service, Huawei Cloud's KooVerse, which consists of 96 availability zones (AZs) in 33 regions, provides a unified architecture serving customers in more than 170 countries and regions to meet their diverse application scenarios through different modes of public cloud, private cloud, and edge. Technology as a Service solutions enable businesses to innovate easily and modernize applications through Huawei's R&D advances, delivered to customers, partners, and developers through cloud services. Huawei Cloud has built development production lines designed to accelerate enterprise application modernization. These include ModelArts, a one-stop AI platform that empowers developers and data scientists to rapidly develop and deploy models, driving intelligent upgrades across industries. DataArts, on the other hand, is a comprehensive data lifecycle management platform that provides end-to-end governance of databases, warehouses, data lakes, and AI, unlocking the full value of data. CodeArts is an all-in-one DevSecOps platform offering out-of-the-box cloud services for requirement delivery, code commit, testing, building, verification, deployment, and release throughout the entire software development lifecycle. Meanwhile, MetaStudio delivers cutting-edge tools for virtual avatar video production, livestreaming, and intelligent interaction, revolutionizing content creation across industries.

KSIADC and Huawei Join Forces to Revolutionize Smart Aviation in KSA

The King Salman International Airport Development Company (KSIADC) and Huawei have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during LEAP 2025 to drive innovation and digital transformation in the aviation sector. This strategic partnership is set to revolutionize airport operations and passenger experiences by leveraging Huawei's global expertise in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and KSIADC's leadership in transforming King Salman International Airport into a state-of-the-art aviation hub. Spanning an impressive 57 square kilometers, King Salman International Airport is envisioned as one of the world's largest and most advanced aviation hubs. The development will feature six runways, six terminals, and an iconic terminal designed to redefine the passenger experience. It will also include a private aviation hub, a cargo and logistics center, and an integrated airport city that combines residential, hospitality, retail, entertainment, office, logistics, and industrial assets. This comprehensive vision positions the airport as a global gateway for business, tourism, and logistics. The collaboration will focus on integrating advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT) and Private 5G-Advanced (5G-A) to enhance operational efficiency and elevate passenger services. It also includes the development of an AI-powered digital guest platform to streamline interactions, improve wayfinding, and offer personalized services. Additionally, the partnership aims to incorporate smart infrastructure solutions Private and IoT into airport operations, while exploring future innovations such as predictive analytics and advanced biometrics to ensure scalability and adaptability for evolving needs. Linda Schucroft, VP of Digital Innovation of KSIADC, said: "This partnership with Huawei represents a significant milestone in our journey to transform King Salman International Airport into a global leader in smart aviation. By integrating cutting-edge technologies, we aim to redefine operational efficiency, elevate passenger experiences, and set new benchmarks for innovation in the aviation sector." Simon Zousiyi, Deputy CEO of Huawei Saudi, added: "At Huawei, we believe that technology has the power to transform industries and create smarter, more sustainable ecosystems. This collaboration with KSIADC reflects our commitment to delivering innovative ICT solutions tailored to the unique needs of the aviation sector. Together, we aim to build a next-generation airport that not only enhances operational excellence but also redefines the passenger experience, setting a new standard for smart airports globally. This partnership aligns seamlessly with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, and we are proud to contribute to this transformative journey." The MoU reflects the shared vision of KSIADC and Huawei to harness the power of technology to drive innovation and sustainability in the aviation industry. It also aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which emphasizes the importance of modernizing infrastructure and fostering strategic partnerships to position the Kingdom as a global logistics and tourism hub. The partnership highlights the critical role of technology-driven collaborations in shaping the future of industries. With this MoU, KSIADC and Huawei are poised to lead the transformation of the aviation sector, setting a global benchmark for smart airport solutions. Huawei also showcased its innovations at LEAP 2025, held from February 9th to 12th in Riyadh, where it demonstrated how its holistic approach to digital transformation is revolutionizing industries with next-generation solutions. The company's diverse range of offerings caters to the evolving demands of smart cities, healthcare, education, and industrial sectors, with a strong emphasis on delivering intelligent infrastructure that promotes sustainability and enhances operational efficiency.

Algeria Telecom Partners with Huawei to Deliver 400G WDM National Backbone Network

Algeria Telecom and Huawei jointly announced the official launch of the national 400G WDM project, building an all-optical premium transmission foundation covering the whole country, helping Algeria accelerate the development of its national digital economy.mAs the largest telecommunications operator in Algeria, Algeria Telecom has always been committed to promoting the national digital transformation. This cooperation with Huawei aims to enhance the level of Algeria's network infrastructure by introducing the most advanced 400G ultra-high-speed optical network technology to provide stronger support for the development of the digital economy. Additionally, this network is future-oriented, laying an ultra-high-speed, low latency and sustainable foundation towards intelligence era. Huawei, as a leading global provider of information and communication technology solutions and smart devices, has rich experience and technical accumulation in the field of optical communication. The 400G ultra-high-speed optical network solution provided by Huawei for Algeria Telecom will have the characteristics of large bandwidth, high reliability, and low latency, which can meet the growing digital business needs in Algeria. More specifically, the implementation of this project will help Algeria achieve the following goals:

- Improve network speed and capacity: The 400G ultra-high-speed optical network will provide higher bandwidth and transmission speed than the existing network, enabling Algeria to better cope with the increasing data traffic demand.
- Promote the development of the digital economy: The ultra-high-speed optical network will provide a solid foundation for the development of Algeria's digital economy and promote the vigorous development of emerging industries such as e-commerce, cloud computing, and big data.
- Improve people's livelihood services: A high-speed and stable network will provide better Internet experience for the Algerian people and promote the improvement of digital service levels in fields such as education, medical care, and government affairs.

Algeria Telecom and Huawei will cooperate closely to jointly promote all-optical network development. Both sides will give full play to their respective advantages to ensure the smooth delivery and stable operation of the network. It is believed that with the joint efforts of both sides, Algeria will embrace a more digital and intelligent future.

Microsoft to Spend $80B on AI Data Centers in Fiscal 2025

Microsoft Vice Chair and President Brad Smith revealed the company was on track to spend approximately $80 billion to build out AI-enabled data centers in its current financial year (to end-June), with more than half of that investment earmarked for the US. In a blog post, Smith explained the tech giant plans to use the data centers “to train AI models and deploy AI and cloud-based applications around the world”. While Smith welcomed US President Donald Trump to his second term in office, he cautioned against “heavy-handed regulations” that could slow down the private sector. “The most important US public-policy priority should be to ensure that the US private sector can continue to advance with the wind at its back,” Smith stated. He explained the US “needs a pragmatic export control policy that balances strong security protection for AI components in trusted data centers with an ability for US companies to expand rapidly and provide a reliable source of supply to the many countries that are American allies and friends”. Smith stated the US is well-positioned to flourish in its development of AI due to solid technology development and an innovative private sector. “If the Trump Administration can develop a strong national AI talent strategy and use AI to make the government itself more effective and efficient, it will put the country on a promising path.” He stated the US is in a strong position to “win the essential race with China by advancing international adoption of American AI”. Smith further claimed US “products are more trusted than their Chinese counterparts, and our private sector is unmatched in its ability to invest in infrastructure around the world”.

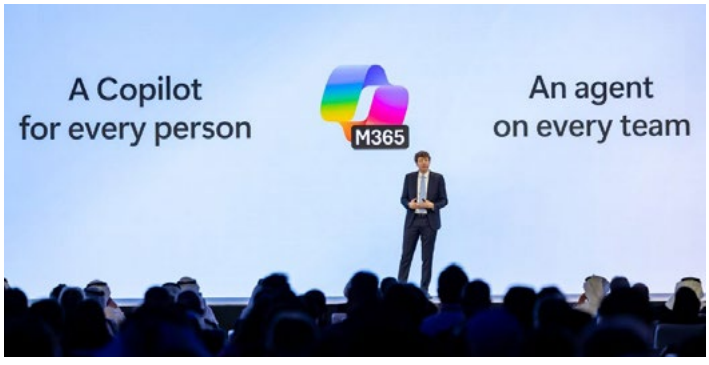
Microsoft to Capture 'Golden' AI Data Center Opportunity With $80 Billion Investment

In a recent blog post, Microsoft Vice Chair and President Brad Smith revealed that the tech giant plans to invest approximately $80 billion into AI-enabled data centers to train AI models and deploy AI and cloud-based applications by 2025. While the company is thinking on a global scale, Smith noted that more than half of this total investment will be in the United States to capture what he called the "golden opportunity" for American AI. "Today, the United States leads the global AI race thanks to the investment of private capital and innovations by American companies of all sizes, from dynamic start-ups to well-established enterprises," he continued. "At Microsoft, we've seen this firsthand through our partnership with OpenAI, from rising firms such as Anthropic and xAI, and our own AI-enabled software platforms and applications." Smith went on to detail Microsoft's "three-part vision for America's technology success," which includes advancements and investments in domestic AI technology and infrastructure, AI skilling programs and exporting AI to other countries. He also offered advice for the incoming Trump Administration, suggesting that rather than "complain about" the AI competition from China — which is currently offering developing countries subsidized access to chips and building local AI data centers — the focus should be on moving "quickly and effectively" to show that American AI is a "superior alternative" to what China has to offer. "While the U.S. government rightly has focused on protecting sensitive AI components in secure data centers through export controls, an even more important element of this competition will involve a race between the United States and China to spread their respective technologies to other countries," stated Smith. "Given the nature of technology markets and their potential network effects, this race between the U.S. and China for international influence likely will be won by the fastest first mover. Hence, the United States needs a smart international strategy to rapidly support American AI around the world." In addition to the investments and partnerships mentioned above, Microsoft in April also announced an investment of $1.5 billion in G42, an UAE-based AI technology holding company, which is said at the time, will strengthen both companies' collaboration on bringing the latest Microsoft AI technologies and skilling initiatives to the UAE and other countries around the world. And just today, Reuters reported that the company will spend $3 billion to expand its Azure cloud and AI capacity in India, marking its biggest investment ever in the country.

Microsoft Showcases AI Innovations and Partnerships Driving UAE's Digital Transformation

Microsoft has commenced its global AI tour in Dubai, showcasing the transformative power of AI and its impact on various sectors in the UAE. The event brought together industry leaders, developers, and innovators to discuss the latest advancements in AI and explore its potential to drive economic growth and societal progress. "The UAE's swift embrace of AI is setting an ambitious benchmark," said Naim Yazbeck, General Manager of Microsoft UAE. "Across sectors like education, finance, energy, and retail, the innovations emerging here showcase the transformative power of AI in unlocking unparalleled opportunities for growth and progress." The event highlighted several key AI-powered solutions developed by organizations in the UAE leveraging Microsoft's AI technologies:

- TAMM Platform: The Abu Dhabi Department of Government Enablement's AI-powered TAMM platform provides citizens, residents, and businesses with efficient and personalized access to over 950 government services.



- Alef AI Tutor: Alef Education is using AI to personalize learning experiences for over 1.1 million students worldwide, resulting in significant improvements in student outcomes.
- DEWA's Copilot Agents: Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) has implemented Copilot agents to enhance customer service and improve operational efficiency.
- FAB Wealth RM AI Advisor: First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) is leveraging AI to provide personalized investment recommendations and enhance wealth management services for its clients.
- Al-Futtaim's Blue AI: Al-Futtaim's Blue AI platform offers personalized experiences and smart lifestyle guidance to over five million customers through its Blue lifestyle app.

These examples demonstrate the UAE's commitment to adopting and developing innovative AI solutions across various sectors. Microsoft's commitment to the UAE's digital transformation is evident in its continued investments in data centers, centers of excellence like the Center for Responsible AI and the AI for Good Lab, and the upcoming Microsoft Engineering Center. Furthermore, Microsoft's strategic partnership with G42 is driving AI innovation and cloud adoption in the UAE, enabling organizations to leverage advanced technologies while ensuring compliance with local regulations. "Microsoft's dedication to the UAE is further reinforced through its partnership with G42," states the report, highlighting the significance of this collaboration. By fostering collaboration and investing in AI development, Microsoft is supporting the UAE's vision of becoming a global leader in AI and digital transformation. The AI tour in Dubai serves as a testament to the country's progress and its potential to shape the future of technology.

Nokia Upgrades ESpanix's IXP Infrastructure to Reduce Energy Consumption and Complexity

Nokia has been selected by ESpanix to provide Spain's first 400G connectivity for IXP customers. The 400G upgrade uses Nokia's Interconnect routers to deliver a more efficient and sustainable alternative to bundling multiple 100GE connections, reducing complexity, power consumption, and operational costs for ESpanix and its customers. ESpanix will also leverage Nokia's Photonic Service Switch to optimize bandwidth across its optical transport network, allowing the IXP to select the most optimized solution for its customer needs. The layered network approach ensures scalability for larger customers and supports ESpanix's goals of expanding its footprint and evolving its infrastructure. All ESpanix's Points of Presence have been upgraded to 400G and are operational as of today. The upgrade project addresses the increasing demand for high-capacity and sustainable network services among ESpanix's 180+ connected networks, including Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Content Service Providers, and national and international carriers. Amedeo Beck Peccoz, Head of Strategy, ESpanix, commented: "Our customers demand technology that is reliable and future-proof. Nokia's solutions deliver the capacity and scalability we need to meet growing demand, enabling us to offer 400G connectivity to our members. With the support of Nokia, we not only become the most advanced IXP in the South Europe region, but our work together also aligns with our commitment to sustainability by reducing power consumption compared to traditional solutions." Matthieu Bourguignon, Senior Vice President and head of Europe for Network Infrastructure business at Nokia, said: "Offering 400G connectivity is a testament to ESpanix's forward-thinking approach to interconnection services. As the leading provider of IXP services, our work together ensures they can meet rising demand in a simple, efficient, and sustainable manner. By leveraging Nokia's high-capacity IP networking technologies, ESpanix is paving the way for a new standard in IXP services across Southern Europe."

Openreach Chooses Nokia to Build Open-Access Fiber Network to Connect Millions to Faster Broadband

Nokia announced it has been chosen by Openreach to build its One Network Platform, an open-access fiber network to serve millions of homes and businesses. Built using Nokia's Altiplano and NSP network domain controllers, the network will help Openreach grow from 17 million connected premises today to 25 million by the end of 2026, responding to the increasing demand for high-speed broadband all over the UK. Openreach's open wholesale broadband network connects users to around 300 communication service providers offering ultrafast full fiber services to urban centers, towns, villages and smaller rural communities in some of the hardest-to-reach parts of the UK. Powered by Nokia technology, the Openreach One Network Platform delivers the flexibility, agility and scale needed to meet these market demands while reducing the number of exchange buildings required to cover the country. Nokia's solution is modeled on a modular data center architectural approach enabling Openreach to build a large-scale multi-service open-access network that can help reduce the power and space requirements by over 50 percent at Ethernet access exchange sites. The architecture supports various deployment models tailored to different population densities, ensuring communication providers can easily connect end users to the Openreach fiber network. With Nokia's Altiplano and NSP network domain controllers, Openreach will be able to automate its fiber connectivity services across Point-to-Point, GPON, and XGS PON technologies through simple intent-based management. This will simplify operations drastically through a common service-oriented interface and will reduce OSS complexity across the network by 85 percent. In addition, the solution provides streaming telemetry to provide detailed insights into the network's behavior and performance. Trevor Linney, Director of Network Technology at Openreach, said: "This is the next step in our plans to build a future-proof, multi-service, one network platform – that supports both full FTTP and future Ethernet products. Introducing Nokia's Altiplano and NSP network domain controllers and 7250 IXR data center routers will boost automation, network visibility and control, and product flexibility for our Communication Provider customers and their end-user customers. Ultimately, this is about making our network easier to manage, more efficient and reliable, for example, through quicker identification of faults via automation, and helping to cut operational costs." Geert Heyninck, General Manager of Broadband Networks at Nokia, said: "Open-access networks are the future of broadband, and we're proud to support Openreach in bringing fiber connectivity to millions across the UK. Meeting growing broadband demands requires scalability and flexibility, which is where the intent-based design of our solution really shines. We are motivated to help Openreach automate operations, optimize resources and create a robust, future-ready network that serves both urban and rural communities."

Nokia, Fraunhofer HHI and Charité to Collaborate on Wireless Sensing Solutions for Healthcare

Nokia announced that it has launched a research initiative with Fraunhofer Heinrich Hertz Institute (HHI) and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin to investigate the use of wireless sensing technologies in medical applications. The trio will focus on how sub-terahertz (sub-THz) frequencies could detect human vital signs from a distance, opening the door to a new generation of non-invasive medical monitoring and diagnostic solutions. The unique characteristics of the sub-THz frequencies (90 GHz to 300 GHz) make them well-suited for wireless sensing applications. These applications would act similarly to radar, but with much higher accuracy due to sub-THz's tiny wavelengths and high bandwidth. Nokia Bell Labs, Fraunhofer HHI and Charité are jointly exploring how sensing networks utilizing sub-THz frequencies could make extremely high-resolution spatial scans in hospital settings to keep track of patients' vital signs. In a hospital room for instance, the sensing network would be able to detect and distinguish the individual heartbeats and respiration rates of every patient in the room without the aid of intrusive sensors like electrocardiogram electrodes or fingertip pulse oximeters. Using beamforming technologies, the sensor network would theoretically follow individual patients, ensuring they were continuously monitored when using restroom facilities or moving about the hospital. These sub-THz sensing networks could provide several benefits in healthcare. They would require no physical contact with human body, which would prevent false alarms from wearable monitors being accidentally removed. They would provide patients with much greater freedom of movement and allow hospitals to extend continuous heart and respiratory monitoring to a much larger proportion of their patient populations. The technology could also lead to new in-home healthcare applications. For instance, smart home systems could track patients' vital signs, alerting physicians to any changes. The collaboration brings together three of the leading organizations in technology and medical research. A groundbreaking innovator in the fields of communications and multimedia, Fraunhofer HHI will lend its expertise in sensor technologies. As Europe's largest academic research hospital, Charité will validate and evaluate the sensing technology. Nokia Bell Labs, one of the world's premier applied-research institutions, will bring its radio-design and sensing competencies to the table. Nokia Bell Labs is investigating many ways for using wireless spectrum to create new sensing technologies. For instance, a key component of future 6G networks is joint communications and sensing (JCAS), which will allow networks to sense their surroundings. By working with Fraunhofer HHI and Charité on healthcare sensing solutions, Nokia is demonstrating its technology leadership beyond the communications business. Peter Vetter, President of Bell Labs Core Research, Nokia, said: "It's a good day when we can find new applications for our research beyond the communications industry. Wireless sensing is a fundamental component of our long-term 6G vision, but if we can apply these same concepts to creating better healthcare solutions, then we've produced even more benefit for society."Professor Sascha Treskatsch, Head of the Department of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine at Campus Benjamin Franklin, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, said: "We need to have more-flexible and less-invasive monitoring solutions, which can easily be integrated in daily life and incorporated into hospitals' information systems." Professor Slawomir Stanczak, Head of the Wireless Communications and Networks Department at Fraunhofer HHI and Head of the Network information Theory Group at Technische Universität Berlin, said: "Sub-THz technology has enormous potential to revolutionize medicine. With its high bandwidths for communication and sensing, it enables real-time monitoring of bodily functions and more precise tracking of treatment progress. This technology can fundamentally change the way we detect disease and treat patients."

Nokia Reaches 7,000 Patent Families Declared as Essential to 5G

Nokia announced that it has reached the milestone of 7,000 patent families declared as essential to 5G with more to follow. Nokia's fundamental inventions in 5G include groundbreaking innovations in 5G radio protocol design, 5G security and interface technologies that define how smartphones, connected cars and other connected devices interact with 5G networks. Patrik Hammarén, Acting President of Nokia Technologies, said: "Nokia's substantial investment in cellular R&D and standardization continues to pay off. We have now reached the landmark of 7,000 high-quality patent families declared

as essential to the 5G standard and Nokia's active pre-standardization work puts us in a leading position for 6G standardization which begins later this year. Thanks to all the Nokia inventors and our patenting professionals for their hard work and problem-solving. Together they continue to help Nokia maintain its technology leadership and drive cellular innovation forward." Nokia's industry-leading patent portfolio is built on more than €150 billion invested in R&D and standardization since 2000 and is composed of over 20,000 patent families (each family can comprise several individual patents). Any device that connects to a cellular network uses Nokia's patented technology and over 250 companies have secured a license to Nokia's patented technologies. These technologies are the essential building blocks for entire industries, including mobile devices, consumer electronics, connected vehicles, IoT devices and solutions, video streaming and more. Nokia contributes its inventions to open standards in return for the right to license them on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory (FRAND) terms. Companies can license and use these technologies without the need to make their own substantial investments in the standards, fueling innovation and the development of new products and services for consumers.

Nokia and DE-CIX to Partner to Upgrade New York Internet Exchange Backbone

Nokia and DE-CIX, the world's leading Internet Exchange (IX) operator, today announced the upgrade of the backbone network for DE-CIX New York, the largest IX in NY and in the US Northeast region. The DE-CIX backbone will be upgraded to 400 Gigabit Ethernet (GE) using Nokia optical technology and redesigned in a ring topology, redundantly interconnecting the 10 data center facilities where DE-CIX infrastructure is housed and enhancing the resiliency of the platform for all participants. The Nokia optical solution also enables 800GE support for anticipated further growth of the IX and employs Reconfigurable Optical Add/Drop Multiplexer (ROADM) technology to ensure much greater routing flexibility, faster reaction times in the case of incidents, and a seamless customer experience without any service interruptions. Dr. Thomas King, CTO of DE-CIX, said: "When we began planning the upgrade of our New York backbone, we wanted to simplify our network, while also increasing the resilience of the platform. We took a detailed look at the options in the market, and Nokia was the best choice for us. We have worked with Nokia globally for more than 10 years now, and the capacity, reliability, and innovative strength of their hardware has always impressed us." Within a dense wavelength-division multiplexing (DWDM) system, the ROADM technology in Nokia's 1830 Photonic Service Switch (PSS) makes it possible to automatically reroute waves at the optical layer in any direction around the backbone. This means that incidents at any location in the network can be mitigated more rapidly and less capacity is required at the IP layer to guarantee the same level of resilience. James Watt, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Nokia's Optical business, said: "In today's connected world, staying resilient and ready to scale is a must. This upgrade to DE-CIX New York's backbone isn't just about supporting the largest Internet Exchange in the Northeast — it's about shaping the future of connectivity in one of the world's biggest markets. With Nokia's cutting-edge optical tech, we're ensuring networks are flexible, reliable, and ready to handle whatever comes next. Together with DE-CIX, we're building the foundation for a limitless digital future." Ed d'Agostino, Vice President DE-CIX North America, said: "This upgrade, powered by Nokia's optical technology, allows us to future-proof our platform to best serve the New York market and start 2025 on track for further growth. With the number of data centers that we integrate, it is imperative that we have a state-of-the-art transport network with scalable capacity. DE-CIX New York is the largest IX in New York and the youngest Internet Exchange in the Top 5 largest IXs in the US. The platform covers an area spanning Long Island to the East and Piscataway and Edison to the South and West. It connects over 265 networks from across the city, with an infrastructure that spans over 40 data centers served. DE-CIX New York is connected to all other DE-CIX locations in North America, enabling remote peering and access to a vibrant ecosystem of networks not present in other local exchanges. The DE-CIX Internet and Cloud Exchanges in New York, Dallas, Chicago, Richmond, Houston, and Phoenix, and the dedicated Cloud Exchange in Seattle, form the largest carrier and data center neutral interconnection ecosystem in North America.

Nokia Upgrades Orange Jordan's Broadband Network Gateway to Enhance Connectivity Across the Kingdom

Nokia and Orange Jordan have announced the successful upgrade of Orange Jordan's Broadband Network Gateway (BNG) with Nokia's cutting-edge 7750 Service Router (SR) platforms. This strategic initiative marks a significant milestone in enhancing broadband services across Jordan, delivering superior connectivity and operational efficiency for both the operator and its customers. The deployment spans 76 sites across Jordan's north, central, and southern regions, positioning Orange Jordan to meet growing subscriber demands with enriched digital experiences, including high-speed internet, IPTV, and personalized broadband services. The upgrade also supports Orange Jordan's sustainability goals by optimizing energy consumption and reducing operational expenses. This collaboration highlights Nokia's value proposition of trusted performance across every network domain. By leveraging resilient, high-performance networks built on Nokia's strong foundation of security, sustainability, and ethical standards, Orange Jordan can deliver exceptional services to its subscribers. Waleed Al Doulat, Chief ITN & Wholesale Officer at Orange Jordan, said: "This upgrade is a testament to our commitment to delivering the best broadband services to our customers. Nokia's 7750 SR BNG allows us to enhance network efficiency and enrich our customers' digital lives, while aligning with our sustainability and growth goals." Bassel Megallaa, Head of IP Networks for Middle East & Africa at Nokia, said: "Our collaboration with Orange Jordan demonstrates Nokia's dedication to providing trusted performance that empowers digital transformation. By providing scalable, resilient, and secure solutions, we enable Orange Jordan to deliver world-class broadband experiences while optimizing network efficiency. Together, we are driving connectivity and creating new opportunities for innovation across Jordan."

Ooredoo Claims MENA First with GSMA APIs

Ooredoo claimed to be the first operator in the MENA region to adopt the GSMA Camara open-network APIs, tapping into 5G and IoT technologies to boost personalization for customers and developers. The GSMA Camara APIs standardize access to advanced telecom features including silent authentication, edge computing and robust security services. Ooredoo stated this interoperability simplifies integration for developers and supports the creation of scalable global services. The API deployment has launched in the Maldives, and there are plans to expand across markets including Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Algeria. Timos Tsokanis, group CTIO at Ooredoo argued the implementation of the APIs will boost service reliability and make online transactions faster and more secure for the operator's customers. Meanwhile, "developers and businesses gain access to cutting-edge tools, such as advanced payment solutions and anti-fraud measures, empowering them to upgrade their customers' digital journeys and drive growth for their own businesses", he added. The latest announcement is part of a broader industry push toward open APIs, spearheaded by GSMA following the launch of its Open Gateway initiative in 2023. The initiative aims to establish a unified framework for open APIs, fostering collaboration between telecom operators and developers.

Ooredoo Kuwait Kicks Off 2025 with Eight Prestigious Wins at Stevie Awards

Ooredoo Kuwait, the leading telecom company and digital enabler, proudly announced a triumphant start to the new year by securing eight prestigious awards at the 2025 Stevie Awards. This remarkable achievement underscores Ooredoo's unwavering commitment to innovation, sustainability, and excellence in the telecommunications industry. It reaffirms the company's dedication to enhancing the lives of its customers and adhering to its core strategy of being a people-oriented company. Ooredoo Kuwait has long been recognized as a pioneer in the telecommunications sector, consistently pushing the boundaries of technology and digital services. The company's strategic initiatives focus on upgrading its networks and services to meet the ever-evolving needs of its customers. By leveraging cutting-edge technology, Ooredoo strives to offer unparalleled connectivity, superior customer experiences, and innovative digital solutions.

Commitment to Innovation and Excellence

The eight awards garnered at the 2025 Stevie Awards reflect Ooredoo Kuwait's relentless pursuit of innovation and excellence. The company received four Gold Awards for its Ooredoo App Upgrade, which has been instrumental in redefining the digital customer experience. These awards were given for:

- Innovation in General Utility Apps
- Innovation in Business Information Apps
- Innovation in Business Utility Apps
- Innovation in Business Information or Application Websites

The Ooredoo App Upgrade represents a significant leap in how customers interact with digital services. By offering a more intuitive, seamless, and efficient user experience, the app has set new standards in the industry, ensuring that customers can access the services they need with ease and convenience.

In addition to its Gold Awards, Ooredoo Kuwait also received two Silver Awards:

- Best Sustainable Telecom Technologies for its innovative achievements in sustainability.
- Advancing Telecom in the Region for its cutting-edge developments in technology within the telecommunications industry.

Furthermore, the company was honored with two Bronze Awards:

- Championing Youth Empowerment for its innovative achievements in corporate social responsibility.
- Smart City Acceleration Initiative for its pioneering work in sustainability.
- People-Oriented Philosophy

Ooredoo Kuwait's success is deeply rooted in its people-oriented philosophy. The company places immense value on its employees, recognizing that they are the driving force behind its achievements. By fostering a supportive and flexible work environment, Ooredoo empowers its employees to thrive both professionally and personally. In recent years, Ooredoo has introduced several initiatives to enhance employee satisfaction and well-being. These include flexible working hours, work-from-home options, and various wellness programs. Such measures not only improve work-life balance but also boost productivity and innovation, ensuring that the company can continue to deliver superior services to its customers.

Driving Technological Advancements

Ooredoo Kuwait's commitment to technological advancement is evident in its continuous efforts to upgrade its networks and services. The company invests heavily in research and development to stay at the forefront of the telecom industry. By adopting the latest technologies, such as 5G and IoT, Ooredoo ensures that its customers benefit from faster, more reliable connectivity and a wide range of innovative services. The recognition for innovation in technology development and sustainable telecom technologies highlights Ooredoo's strategic focus on integrating sustainability into its technological advancements. Commitment to Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility

Ooredoo Kuwait's commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility is a cornerstone of its business strategy. The company actively engages in initiatives that promote environmental stewardship, youth empowerment, and community development. By integrating sustainable practices into its operations, Ooredoo aims to create a positive impact on society and contribute to the well-being of future generations. The recognition for its Smart City Acceleration Initiative and corporate social responsibility efforts at the Stevie Awards underscores Ooredoo's dedication to making a tangible difference in the community. These initiatives are designed to foster innovation, promote sustainable living, and empower individuals to achieve their full potential. As Ooredoo Kuwait looks to the future, the company remains steadfast in its mission to deliver cutting-edge telecom solutions while prioritizing sustainability and social responsibility. With a legacy of technological excellence and a forward-thinking strategy, Ooredoo Kuwait is more than just a telecom provider; it is a catalyst for positive change. By upgrading the world of its customers and making a tangible difference in the community, Ooredoo is shaping the future of telecommunications and setting new benchmarks in the industry.

Ooredoo Kuwait Wins Asian Telecom Awards for the Second Consecutive Year

In a landmark achievement that reaffirms its leadership in the telecommunications and human resources sectors, Ooredoo Kuwait proudly announced its win of two prestigious awards at the 2025 Asian Telecom Awards. The company was honored as "Best Telecom Company of the Year" for the second year in a row and received the "Best Human Resources Initiative" award, highlighting its unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation. The awards ceremony, attended by top industry experts from across Asia, recognized Ooredoo Kuwait's digital and technological advancements, which have positioned it as a benchmark in the telecom sector. The company's continued investment in research and development has enabled it to anticipate market challenges, enhance its digital infrastructure, and introduce cutting-edge solutions that cater to evolving customer needs. Ooredoo Kuwait has also played a pivotal role in supporting entrepreneurship and small businesses by providing comprehensive communication solutions that have contributed to economic growth and a thriving business environment in Kuwait. Additionally, the company has enhanced network quality, introduced state-of-the-art digital services, and focused on customer experience improvements, resulting in higher satisfaction levels and a superior user experience. In the human resources domain, Ooredoo Kuwait's recognition as the recipient of the "Best Human Resources Initiative" award reflects its progressive approach to workplace development. The company has prioritized talent empowerment by fostering a flexible and inclusive work environment that enables employees—particularly national talents—to thrive in leadership positions. Through intensive training and development programs, Ooredoo has significantly increased the representation of Kuwaiti professionals in senior roles. The company has established strategic partnerships with leading local and international institutions, organizing advanced training workshops aligned with global best practices in telecommunications and technology. Ooredoo Kuwait also participated in the third edition of " Watheefti", Kuwait's largest career fair, to attract top local talent and provide promising career opportunities. In collaboration with global educational institutions, the company launched a specialized training program featuring virtual seminars led by Harvard University experts, equipping participants with the skills needed to navigate future market challenges. Continuing its investment in human capital development, Ooredoo Kuwait remains dedicated to cultivating a new generation of leaders in digital transformation. The company's vision aligns with "New Kuwait 2035," which aims to establish Kuwait as a regional hub for technology and innovation. Since its establishment in 1999, Ooredoo Kuwait has grown into a leading telecommunications provider, continuously investing in digital infrastructure, workforce development, and community empowerment.

Ooredoo and ASN to Build Subsea Cable for GCC Countries and Iraq

Qatar-based Ooredoo Group announced on Thursday it has signed an agreement with Alcatel Submarine Networks (ASN) to build a new subsea cable connecting seven countries in the Gulf region. The planned Fibre in Gulf (FIG) cable system will connect all six countries in Gulf Cooperation Council – Qatar, Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait – as well as Iraq. Ooredoo has not yet disclosed the amount of the investment in the FIG cable or a ready-for-service date. The FIG cable will be designed with up to 24 fibre pairs and a capacity of up to 720 Tbps. Ooredoo said the system will provide all GCC countries with a low latency, shorter and secure route to a new corridor connecting Europe. Ooredoo Group's chief business services officer Najib Khan said in a statement the FIG cable will also benefit hyperscalers, business customers, governments, AI providers, data centres and telecom operators by providing extra capacity, network reliability and security. Ooredoo Group CEO Aziz Aluthman Fakhroo added that the cable would boost the region's digital industry by supporting the growth of cloud services, big data initiatives, and the acceleration of digital transformation. "We will deliver cutting-edge technologies to the region while ensuring sustainable growth for our investors through long-term revenue from rising data demand and market leadership in digital infrastructure," he said.

Saudi Operator Salam Announces Deals with EdgeNext and Genesys

Etihad Salam Telecom Company, a provider of telecommunications services in Saudi Arabia, has announced a number of partnerships in recent days, including agreements with EdgeNext, a prominent leader in the global edge cloud services industry, and with call centre solutions provider Genesys. Salam says the partnership with EdgeNext focuses on several key initiatives aimed at strengthening EdgeNext's service delivery and network capabilities within the region, starting with a cornerstone agreement that involves EdgeNext collocating its servers in Salam's state-of-the-art data centres. This setting, says Salam, provides EdgeNext with secure, reliable physical infrastructure, enabling it to leverage Salam's facilities for optimum service performance and scalability. EdgeNext will procure internet services directly from Salam, which will facilitate EdgeNext's peering connection with the Saudi Internet Exchange, significantly enhancing its network interconnectivity and access within the local digital ecosystem. Salam has also announced a strategic partnership with call centre solutions provider Genesys to address critical market needs and elevate customer experience through innovative solutions. The partners say that Salam's SIP trunk service, known for its cost-effectiveness and scalability, combined with Genesys's expertise in customer experience and its recent successful launch of its platform on Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) locally, will address consumers' need for stable and reliable telecommunications infrastructure. They add that business partners of Salam can look forward to an advanced system that not only caters to their current needs but anticipates future demands, ensuring a scalable, efficient, and user-friendly customer service environment.

stc Bahrain Announces MOU with Fortinet to Launch Bahrain's First Sovereign Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) Service

stc Bahrain, a digital enabler, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Fortinet, a global leader in cybersecurity solutions, to work together to launch the first Sovereign Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) in Bahrain. This initiative supports Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030, which intends to create a secure digital economy aligned with the Kingdom's focus on digital transformation. The cooperation intends to combine stc Bahrain's network infrastructure and Fortinet's security technologies to create a secure environment for the Bahraini market. The Sovereign SASE project intends to offer key benefits for Bahraini businesses, including enhanced data protection and control, to ensure data sovereignty within the Kingdom. By keeping data local, the aim of the project is to minimize the risk of unauthorized access and to foster trust with customers and stakeholders. Furthermore, it aims to simplify compliance with local regulations, providing peace of mind. The solution also intends to streamline network and security operations, to improve overall efficiency by consolidating multiple point solutions into a single, cloud-delivered platform. This cloud-based approach would increase agility and scalability, enabling businesses to easily adapt to growing needs and support remote workforces.

Finally, Sovereign SASE aims to enable significant cost savings by eliminating the need for numerous on-premises security appliances and simplifying network management. Eng. Khalid Al Osaimi, Chief Executive Officer of stc Bahrain, stated, "This strategic partnership with Fortinet is a significant leap forward in strengthening Bahrain's cybersecurity infrastructure. The Sovereign SASE initiative empowers Bahraini businesses to confidently accelerate their digital transformation, seamlessly adopting cloud technologies while upholding the highest security standards. This collaboration highlights our commitment to driving innovation." Alain Penel, Vice President for Fortinet in the Middle East, Turkey & CIS added, "We are delighted to join forces with stc Bahrain on this transformative project. By combining Fortinet's cutting-edge security expertise with stc Bahrain's robust network, we are creating a dynamic and secure digital environment. This will enable organizations across Bahrain to thrive in today's increasingly complex threat landscape, unlocking new opportunities for growth and innovation." stc Bahrain remains committed to delivering cutting-edge technological solutions and driving digital transformation across the Kingdom, contributing to a more secure and connected future.

Tech Mahindra Solidifies Its Position Among the Top 10 Global IT Services Brands in the Annual Brand Finance Ranking

Tech Mahindra has been recognized among Top 10 strongest IT Services brands globally and the 'Top 5 Gainers' in Brand Strength Index score by Brand Finance, the world's leading brand evaluation firm indicating a sustained brand building effort. Tech Mahindra showcased an impressive growth of 9.4% YoY, improving its brand value to $3.4 billion in 2025. Tech Mahindra's BSI (Brand Strength Index) moved up from 73.4 in 2024 to 77.3 in 2025 and its brand rating improved from AA rating to AA+. This is the highest ever BSI score achieved by Tech Mahindra in the Brand Finance rankings so far. Tech Mahindra has been consistently strengthening its brand positioning with the launch of its Scale at Speed™ promise that has been resonating with customers across the globe. The organization has aligned its brand promise to the dual imperatives of scale and speed, bringing together the influence of both Tech Mahindra and the larger Mahindra Group. Peeyush Dubey, Chief Marketing Officer, Tech Mahindra, said, "This is a remarkable win for the brand Tech Mahindra. It reflects the effectiveness of our brand narrative of "Scale at Speed ™" and its alignment with rapidly evolving market needs. It is testament of our journey to deliver future-proof solutions, leveraging emerging technologies like GenAI, while staying anchored to our Rise pillars. Each action is a drop in the ocean of effort to create a world that is equal, future-ready, with sustainability at the core." Over the last year, Tech Mahindra's

brand activation has enabled significant on-ground impact with the launch of multiple brand initiatives that include launching a new website, introducing a new marketing tech stack and streamlining the marketing function to simplify operations and delivery. Tech Mahindra has also strengthened its partnership with Mahindra Racing, the greenest team in motorsport and the only Indian team to compete in ABB FIA Formula E World Championship. Further, with the roaring success of the second season of the Global Chess League (GCL) in London last year, the organization is preparing for the third season. David Haigh CEO & Chairman, Brand Finance, said, "Under the visionary leadership of CEO and Managing Director Mohit Joshi, Tech Mahindra is undergoing a remarkable transformation, reigniting growth in both financial performance and brand value. The company's brand value saw a notable 9% year-over-year increase, reaching $3.4 billion, securing its position among the top 10 strongest IT services brands globally. This resurgence underscores Tech Mahindra's strategic focus on expanding its footprint in the banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) sector, with an ambitious goal to grow the sector's revenue contribution from 16% to 25% by March 2027. Moreover, Tech Mahindra's recent sponsorship efforts around the Global Chess League underscores their dedication to innovation and strategic thinking. This initiative aligns seamlessly with their core brand values, while also boosting global recognition and fostering greater engagement on a worldwide scale." Tech Mahindra has also deepened its partnership ecosystem with several initiatives around modernizing the workplace, enhancing business transformations, delivering enterprise solutions that are powered by artificial intelligence (AI)/GenAI. The organization is also committed to democratize technologies like GenAI further, building sovereign LLMs with projects like Project Indus that are being taken to the world. There is a significant focus on deepening Tech Mahindra's identified strengths — a unique combination of engineering capabilities with a strong IP play, network services, and software services, and investments around industry-specific platforms. Tech Mahindra is well positioned to further integrate sustainability with digital transformation, reflected by its strong performance in this year's ranking. It has consecutively been positioned as the top IT company, ranking at number 1 in the S&P Global Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) for the IT Services Sector in India, and number 2 globally.

Tech Mahindra Joins the AI-RAN Alliance to Advance 5G and AI-Powered Networks of the Future

Tech Mahindra a leading global provider of technology consulting and digital solutions to enterprises across industries, announced its membership in the AI-RAN Alliance, Anchora global initiative committed to fostering the development and deployment of AI-driven solutions within Radio Access Networks (RAN). This collaboration will enable Tech Mahindra to help its customers, enterprises, and partners navigate the evolving telecom landscape. As a significant player in the telecom systems integration sector, Tech Mahindra will leverage its expertise in network architecture, AI, Open RAN, and 5G technologies to support the alliance's mission of accelerating innovation and enhancing the efficiency of next-generation networks. Through its membership in the AI-RAN Alliance, Tech Mahindra will work alongside industry leaders to create AI-powered RAN solutions that improve network performance, optimize operational costs, and open new opportunities for telecom providers worldwide. Membership also ensures alignment with global industry standards, enhancing service reliability and delivering more efficient and scalable solutions. Manish Mangal, Chief Technology Officer, Telecom & Global Business Head, Network Services at Tech Mahindra, said, "AI is no longer a futuristic concept; it is actively shaping networks today. Initiatives like AI-RAN Alliance enable Tech Mahindra to collaborate with telecom operators, vendors, and AI experts to develop cutting-edge, future-ready solutions. With our experience in systems integration and a robust network of strategic partnerships, we are well-poised to drive the AI and 5G revolution, enabling efficient and scalable networks globally." Being part of this alliance positions Tech Mahindra as an industry leader in the rapidly evolving telecom sector, showcasing its commitment to innovation. Alliance members will leverage their technology expertise and collective leadership to focus on three main areas of research and innovation:

- AI for RAN – advancing RAN capabilities through AI to improve spectral efficiency.
- AI and RAN – integrating AI and RAN processes to utilize infrastructure more effectively and generate new AI-driven revenue opportunities.
- AI on RAN – deploying AI services at the network edge through RAN to increase operational efficiency and offer new services to mobile users.

Network operators in the alliance will spearhead the testing and implementation of these technologies, developed through the collaborative efforts of member companies and universities.

Tech Mahindra's Net-Zero Targets Receive Approval from Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi)

Tech Mahindra a leading global provider of technology consulting and digital solutions to enterprises across industries, announced that it has achieved formal validation for its Net-Zero targets by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). This recognition underscores Tech Mahindra's commitment to the ambitious 1.5°C trajectory and its innovative initiatives to address global climate change. With this milestone, Tech Mahindra becomes the first Mahindra Group company to secure SBTi validation for its Net-Zero goals, joining an elite group of very few Indian companies whose targets have been approved. Tech Mahindra's sustainability initiatives have already delivered measurable results with renewable energy now accounting for 31% of energy consumption at owned locations and 22.96% globally as of 2024. Further, Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions have been reduced by over 31% in 2024, compared to the baseline year 2016.

Net-Zero Targets:

- Overall Net-Zero Target: Tech Mahindra commits to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across the value chain by FY 2035.
- Near-Term Targets: Tech Mahindra commits to reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions 58.8% by FY 2030 from FY 2016 as base year.
- Long-Term Targets: Tech Mahindra commits to reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions 90% by FY 2035 from FY 2016 as base year. Tech Mahindra also commits to reduce absolute scope 3 GHG emissions 90% by FY 2035 from FY 2020 as base year.

Sandeep Chandna, Chief Sustainability Officer, Tech Mahindra, said, "Most of the new Request for Proposal (RFP) by various businesses globally are now making SBTi-approved targets a mandatory requirement. Achieving SBTi validation for our Net-Zero targets is a step forward in aligning with global sustainability standards.

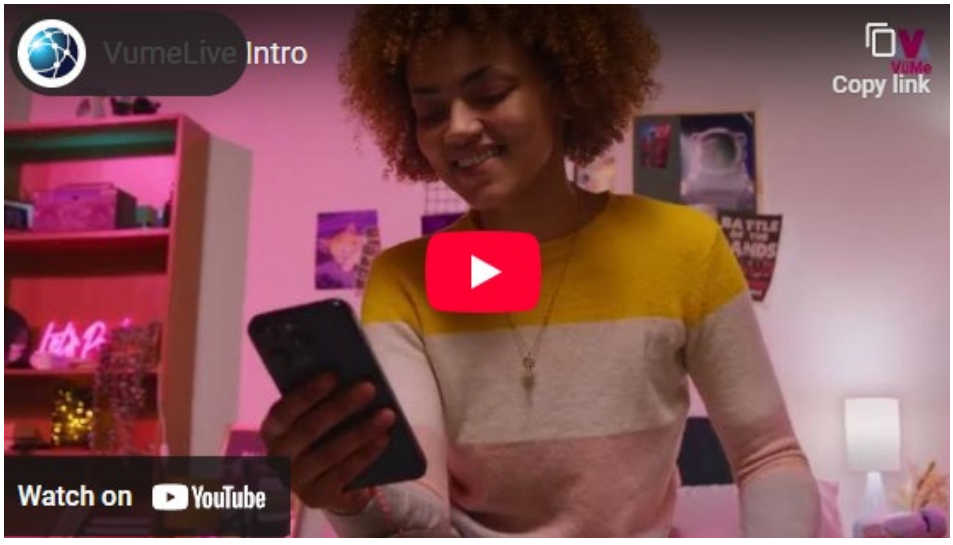
We remain dedicated to embedding sustainability into the fabric of our operations while enabling our customers to achieve their ESG objectives through innovation and technology." Tech Mahindra's journey to sustainability extends beyond emissions reduction. The company actively incorporates eco-design principles, enhances energy efficiency through advanced technologies, and increases reliance on renewable energy sources. Its green mobility initiatives include encouraging electric vehicle adoption and offering eco-friendly commuting options for employees. With a dedicated ESG talent pool and a comprehensive portfolio of consulting services, Tech Mahindra works closely with suppliers to promote sustainable practices across its supply chain, conducting regular audits and offering capacity-building programs.

Tech Mahindra Tops India and Achieves Second Place Globally in the S&P Dow Jones Sustainability Indices 2024 for TSV IT Services Segment

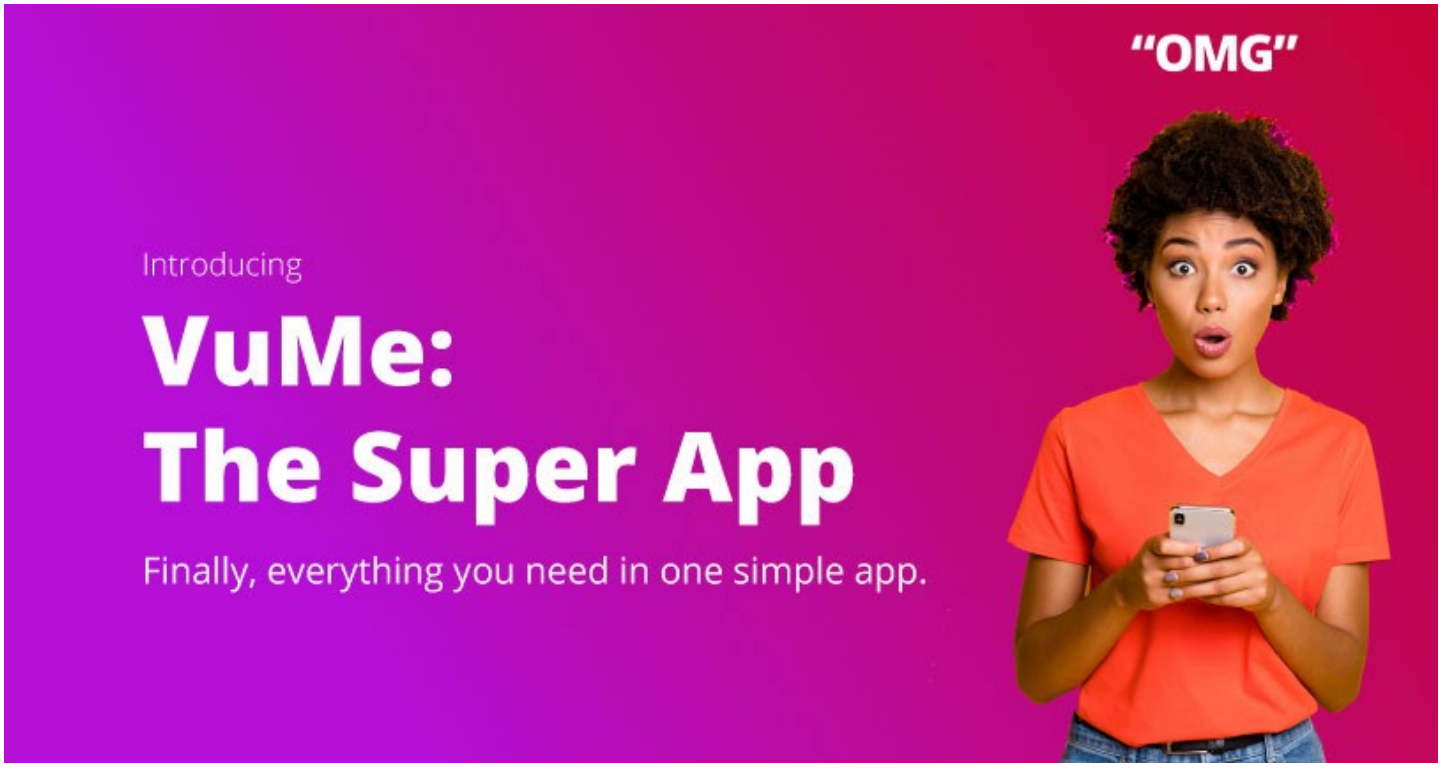
Tech Mahindra has announced its recognition as a global sustainability leader by S&P Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI) 2024, one of the world's most renowned indices for ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance). DJSI has ranked Tech Mahindra as 1st in India and 2nd globally, with an impressive score of 88 and 100 percentile in the "TSV IT services" segment, highlighting the organization's unwavering commitment to advancing sustainability across its businesses globally. The TSV IT services segment comprises three divisions: data processing and outsourced services, internet services and infrastructure, and IT consulting & other services. The announcement follows the recent results of the annual Dow Jones Sustainability Indices rebalancing and reconstitution, marking Tech Mahindra's inclusion in the DJSI World Index and DJSI Emerging Markets for the tenth consecutive year. The DJSI World Index represents the top 10% of the largest 2,500 companies in the S&P Global Broad Market Index (BMI) based on long-term economic, environmental, and social criteria. Sandeep Chandna, Chief Sustainability Officer, Tech Mahindra, said, "In a rapidly changing world, organizations must commit to sustainability and resilience, ensuring our actions today pave the way for a better tomorrow. Tech Mahindra is proud to celebrate its inclusion in the prestigious Dow Jones Sustainability Indices for the 10th consecutive year. This sustainability milestone is a testament to our commitment to a greener future and reflects our unwavering commitment to environmental responsibility, social impact, and ethical practices." Tech Mahindra's sustainability initiatives are committed to creating a positive environmental impact and achieving ambitious targets, including Net Zero by 2035, Carbon Neutrality by 2030, and attaining 90% renewable energy sourcing by 2030. The organization also aims to become water-positive by 2030 and ensure 100% Zero Waste to Landfill certification across all owned facilities. Through the implementation of an internal carbon pricing mechanism, Tech Mahindra drives strategic investments in renewable energy, green buildings, and energy-efficient technologies. This reinforces Tech Mahindra's position as a global leader in sustainability, committed to creating lasting value for its stakeholders and the planet.

TPT Global Tech Launches First "Super App" in the United States with VuMe Live

After seven years of development, TPT Global Tech (OTCBB:TPTW) www.tptglobaltech.com, a leading and innovative technology and telecommunications company is proud to announce the launch of the VüMe Live Super App. VüMe Live is a next-generation all-in-one mobile app that seamlessly integrates messaging, payments, shopping, content creation and monetization, education, transportation, live broadcasting, social media, entertainment, education, global news, and the best of AI in one easy to navigate App. At the core of the VüMe Live Super App is original content, including a live News Network, Live Streaming of Sporting Events and Concerts; a heavy focus on e-learning opportunities; advanced social media capabilities that offers a secure U.S. based alternative that incorporates the best features of TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Reddit, and X. VüMe Live will also acquire and produce original content. "This has been an incredible journey," said Stephen Thomas, CEO of TPT Global Tech. "We not only are the first to the US market with a super app; we are here to stay. VüMe Live is more than just entertainment, it's a complete digital ecosystem that connects, educates, and informs. With the addition of exclusive content from Blue Collar Productions www.bluecollar.com, we are taking content monetization to the next level." Now available for download in beta version in the Android and IOS App Stores, the VüMe Live Super App is set to revolutionize the way people consume and interact with digital content. According to Harvard Business Review, "a 2022 consumer survey found that 72% of U.S. respondents would be interested in using a super-app."And according to SNS Insider research, The Super App Market size was recorded at US$75.5 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach US$706.2 billion by 2032.



https://youtu.be/ZczkTzlhvYI



Zain Bahrain Revenue For 2024 Hits US$203 Million

Zain Bahrain, a leading telecommunications provider in the kingdom, has announced a revenue of BD77.24 million ($203 million) for FY2024, up 6.8% from the previous year's figure of BD72.32 million ($190 million). Announcing its financial results for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2024, Zain Bahrain said it reported a 2% increase in total profit for the year attributable to the shareholders amounting to BD5.92 million compared to BD5.81 million in the previous year. Basic and diluted earnings per share stood at 16 fils for the year, while the ebitda increased to BD23.58 million for the year ended December 31, 2024, from BD22.45 million in the previous year. Zain Bahrain's total equity as of December 31, 2024 accumulated to BD88.12 million, up by 2.8% from BD85.66 million at the end of 2023. The company's asset base stood at BD 141.91 million, a 3.1% increase from BD 137.63 million in 2023, it added. On the Q4 performance, Zain Bahrain said its total profit attributable to the shareholders stood at BD1.88 million representing a 29.6% increase compared to BD1.45 million for the same period in the previous year with Basic and Diluted earnings per share of 5 fils. Revenue for the fourth quarter, meanwhile, increased to BD19.80 million, representing a growth of 7.3% compared to BD18.45 million for the same period the previous year. Ebitda reached BD5.44 million, down by 5.6% from BD5.76 million in Q4 2023. Impressed with the results, Zain Bahrain's Board of Directors have recommended annual dividends representing 9% of the company's paid-up capital, equivalent to 9 fils per share. This totals to a dividend amount of BD3.275 million, reflecting a 55% payout ratio, subject to the Annual General Meeting approval. Zain Bahrain Chairman Shaikh Ahmed bin Ali Al Khalifa said: "This year has been one of growth, resilience, and transformation - achievements that we are incredibly proud of and that lay the foundations for a brighter future. I am proud to share the outstanding progress we have made in delivering exceptional value to our customers, shareholders, and the Kingdom of Bahrain." Innovation and digital transformation, he stated, were key drivers of Zain's healthy revenue growth, which was attributed to the development of new services and products. "We remained focused on investing in our networks and building our digital capabilities, which are important to our customers and future success," observed Shaikh Ahmed. "We are thrilled to share that Zain Bahrain has been recognized with the prestigious Employer of the Year Award in the Private Sector at the 12th Annual GCC GOV HR & Youth Summit and Awards. This accolade is a testament to our unwavering commitment to nurturing a positive workplace culture and supporting employee growth," he noted. "Moreover, we are delighted to announce that Zain Bahrain has maintained a remarkable Bahrainization rate of 93.33% and was recognized by the Ministry of Labor as one of the top 10 companies achieving the highest Bahraini employment rate in 2024," he added.

Zain KSA Reports Highest Ever Revenue of SAR 10.4 Billion (US$2.8 Billion)

Zain Group's operation in Saudi Arabia (Zain KSA) released its financial results for 2024, reporting an all-time high revenue of SAR 10.4 billion (USD 2.8bn), compared to SAR 9.9 billion (USD 2.6bn) in 2023, reflecting a 5% growth. The company reported net profit of SAR 596 million (USD 159m) for 2024 compared to SAR 1,267 million in 2023, which included one-off gain of SAR 1.1 billion from sale of 8069 towers recognized during 2023. Adjusting this one-off gain, normalized net-profit grew 354%. EBITDA reached SAR 3.3 billion (USD 886m), a 12% growth YoY. With the sustained upward financial and operational performance, Zain KSA's Board of Directors recommended to distribute cash dividends of SAR 0.5 per share (5%) to shareholders for 2024. The financial results highlight Zain KSA's operational strategy, focusing on providing the best user experience for individuals and businesses over a powerful 5G network – one of the most advanced in the region – positioning Zain KSA as the digital provider of choice in Saudi Arabia. Consumer and enterprise revenue segments continued to grow during the year, with sustained demand for 'Yaqoot' all-digital service and attaining a high ROI in adjacent businesses, specifically fintech through 'Tamam Finance.' Commenting on the results, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO & Zain Saudi Arabia Vice-Chairman, Bader Al Kharafi, said, "This impressive growth in Zain KSA's constantly improving financial results for 2024 are attributed to the team's focus on operational efficiency, digital innovation, new business verticals and expansion of 5G services. This is supported by the provision of a great customer mobile and data experience that is instrumental in growing its enterprise and individual customer base. Furthermore, the close cooperation and support of the resources of Zain Group is a vital element in Zain KSA's forward trajectory." Al Kharafi concluded, "The operation is playing its key role as a major contributor to Saudi Arabia's ICT sector; a position it has earned through vast investments in 5G network expansion and multiple initiatives aimed at further developing Saudi nationals. Zain KSA's productive relationship with The Communications, Space & Technology Commission, emphasize the company's dedication to supporting the targets of the Kingdom's Vision 2030."

ZTE Recognized with EcoVadis Gold Medal for Sustainability Excellence, Ranked Among the Top 4% Globally

ZTE Corporation has been awarded the prestigious Gold Medal in the EcoVadis 2024 Sustainability Performance Overview report. This recognition places ZTE among the top 4% of companies assessed by EcoVadis over the past 12 months (96+ percentile) globally. Furthermore, ZTE ranks in the top 2% of companies within the Manufacture of Communication Equipment industry, reflecting its outstanding performance in sustainability. EcoVadis awards medals based on a company's percentile rank, with the Gold Medal recognizing those in the top 5% (95+ percentile). ZTE's exceptional performance places it among this elite group, underscoring its strong commitment to sustainable practices:

Environment: ZTE ranks in the top 7% of companies in the Manufacture of Communication Equipment industry, demonstrating its ongoing efforts to minimize environmental impact.

Labor & Human Rights: ZTE's performance in this area places it in the top 3% of companies, reflecting the company's dedication to ensuring fair labor practices and human rights standards.

Sustainable Procurement: ZTE's commitment to sourcing responsibly places it in the top 3% of assessed companies in this category.

Ethics: ZTE ranks in the top 3% in ethics, emphasizing its strong governance practices and dedication to transparency and integrity in business operations.

An EcoVadis medal or badge is an acknowledgement of achievement relative to other assessed companies across the EcoVadis database. It serves as a positive indicator of a company's commitment to sustainability management. To celebrate the completion of this assessment, EcoVadis will be planting a tree on behalf of ZTE through its partnership with One Tree Planted. As a member of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and the Global Enabling Sustainability Initiative (GeSI), ZTE has proactively released its sustainability report for 16 consecutive years since 2009. ZTE's achievements in sustainable development have been widely recognized. ZTE is the first large-scale ICT company in China to receive dual targets approvals from Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) while also making CDP A List. Additionally, the company has been included in the FTSE4Good Index Series for the ninth consecutive year and selected as a constituent of the Hang Seng Corporate Sustainability Index Series for the 13th year. ZTE has further distinguished itself by winning two accolades at the 6th BDO ESG Awards 2024, namely the "Theme Award" and the "Outstanding ESG Performance of H-Share Companies" award. These recognitions demonstrate ZTE's ongoing commitment to advancing sustainable development through innovative practices and corporate responsibility. The EcoVadis Gold Medal this time further strengthens ZTE's position as an industry leader, committed to fostering innovation while maintaining a strong focus on sustainability standards.

ZTE Partners with Italy's EOLO to Launch a 5G mmWave Network Delivering 1 Gbps Speeds

ZTE Corporation, a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, has signed a multi-year collaboration agreement with EOLO, Italy's largest fixed wireless broadband (FWA) provider, to jointly develop a 5G Stand-Alone mmWave network. The partnership will involve the deployment of a next-generation wireless network based on 3GPP standards, enabling EOLO to expand its infrastructure to achieve its 1 Gbps FWA network coverage goal, helping bridge the digital access and speed gap in towns across Italy. EOLO delivers high-quality ultra-broadband access services to both residential and business markets. Currently, EOLO serves over 7,000 towns and more than 700,000 customers, including 116,000 businesses and public institutions. Under the partnership agreement, ZTE will provide EOLO with 5G mmWave radio access systems based on 3GPP standards. The solution includes key components such as RAN baseband, RAN radio, and FWA CPE terminals, ensuring the rapid deployment of the 5G SA mmWave network. ZTE's 5G mmWave solution,

designed for high-capacity and high-density scenarios, enables industry-leading ultra-long range 1 Gbps high-speed networking. It supports high-demand applications such as interactive online education, large file downloads, and HD IPTV. With a proven track record in RAN product performance, ZTE has been recognized as an industry leader by GlobalData 2024 and Omida 2024. Additionally, ZTE holds the number-one global market share for 5G FWA & MBB terminals, with over 4 million units shipped worldwide, showcasing exceptional commercial performance. Through this collaboration, ZTE and EOLO aim to deliver superior connectivity services to households and businesses in small Italian towns, comparable to the quality delivered in the very big cities. This initiative will establish a fixed wireless access service platform targeting the Italian market, in line with the goals of the Digital Agenda. Guido Garrone, CEO at EOLO, stated: "These infrastructures, which complement fiber coverage, play a pivotal role in strengthening networks and driving the country's future growth. Starting in 2025, we will roll out 1 Gbps FWA networks, ushering in a new era of connectivity." Hu Kun, CEO of ZTE Italy, remarked: "We are thrilled to be a key partner of EOLO. By leveraging our industry-leading 8TR mmWave solutions, we are committed to delivering an unparalleled 1 Gbps network experience to EOLO's users."

ZTE and Turkcell Conduct Europe's First "Fiber Fingerprint" Intelligent ODN Trial in Türkiye

ZTE Corporation a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, partnered with Türkiye's leading telecommunications operator, Turkcell, to conduct the first "Fiber Fingerprint" trial in Europe. The trial was deployed at Turkcell Kartal Plaza, leveraging ZTE's Fiber Fingerprint line card, external optical multiplexer with an integrated optical switch, and Fiber Fingerprint splitter. Traditionally, optical access ODN networks have functioned as passive "dark" pipelines, presenting ongoing challenges in resource updates, fault detection, and proactive assessment of optical path quality. ZTE's innovative "Fiber Fingerprint" intelligent ODN solution effectively overcomes these limitations by enabling accurate identification of optical splitter port statuses, intelligent restoration of network topology, and precise detection and localization of optical path quality issues and faults. This innovative solution lights up "dark" ODN network, offering an efficient, labor-free, and intelligent approach for visualizing ODN topology, enhancing splitter port resource utilization, rapidly locating fault with precision, improving operation and maintenance (O&M) efficiency. These advancements are recognized as pivotal for the future evolution of ODN networks. The trial was designed to address practical network challenges, ensuring that "Fiber Fingerprint" intelligent ODN solution delivers tangible benefits in live deployments. During the trials, significant improvements were observed across multiple ODN application scenarios: Accurate Fault Diagnosis: Weak-light faults in feeder, distribution, and drop segments were precisely identified, enhancing network reliability. Automated ODN Topology Updates: The network topology was automatically refreshed following new Optical Network Terminal (ONT) registrations, streamlining network management. Enhanced Visibility and Monitoring: ONT information and connection relationships were accurately displayed, enabling more efficient network operations. Splitter Port Status Detection: The system effectively detected splitter port statuses, classifying them as occupied, idle, directly connected to ONT's, or virtually occupied. The successful completion of this trial highlights Turkcell's steadfast dedication to improving network quality and creating a superior unified platform for comprehensive optical access network management. Moving forward, Turkcell and ZTE will continue refining algorithms to improve system performance, expand the Fiber Fingerprint solution to wider applications, and accelerate the seamless integration of advanced digital intelligence into ODN infrastructure.

ZTE Again Makes CDP A List for Leading Climate Action, Reinforcing Global Climate Leadership

ZTE Corporation a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, has once again been recognized with the prestigious CDP A score for leading climate action in CDP's 2024 disclosures. The company achieved A score across multiple categories, including Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, emissions reduction initiatives, low-carbon products, environmental policies, and the disclosure of risks and opportunities. This accomplishment underscores ZTE's unwavering commitment to environmental transparency, sustainable practices, and its core competitiveness in green development. CDP is a global non-profit that runs the world's environmental disclosure system for companies, cities, states and regions. CDP holds the largest environmental database in the world, and CDP scores are widely used to drive investment and procurement decisions. In 2024, over 24,800 companies, representing two thirds of global market capitalization reported through CDP on climate change, forests and water security. Companies featured on the climate A List are recognized as key players in mitigating climate change through formulating robust strategy and taking bold actions. Making the prestigious CDP A List for two consecutive years is a testament to ZTE's collaborative efforts with partners across the value chain to drive global green and low-carbon transformation. The company places green and low-carbon development at the heart of its sustainable development strategy. ZTE has established a robust company-wide carbon reduction governance framework, set a corporate net-zero emission vision, and is actively fulfilling its commitments under the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), striving to become a benchmark enterprise in low-carbon technology for global sustainable development. As a Driver of Digital Economy, ZTE leverages core digital technologies such as 5G, big data, cloud computing, and AI to pave a green digital pathway across four dimensions: Green Operation, Green Supply Chain, Green Digital Infrastructure, and Green Empowerment. Through technological innovation, ZTE contributes to the global economic transition towards decarbonization. For Green Operation, ZTE has developed green smart campuses to achieve low-carbon development through eco-friendly office practices, research and development, and green manufacturing. In 2024, the company implemented several energy-saving and emission-reduction initiatives, resulting in an absolute electricity savings of 45 million kWh and an 13.4% year-over-year reduction in Scope 1 & 2 carbon emissions. Additionally, ZTE's photovoltaic systems generated 30 million kWh of electricity annually. Its self-developed "Carbon Visibility App" covers 83% of major carbon emission categories and data. For Green Supply Chain, ZTE, utilizing the SMART Model, provides systematic carbon reduction guidance across five dimensions: Strategy, Management, Accounting, Reduction, and Transmission. In 2024, the company guided 100 suppliers in completing organizational-level carbon

audits and assisted 10 suppliers in setting carbon reduction targets and measures. Furthermore, ZTE collaborated with over 160 environmental service providers worldwide to establish a global green recycling network. For Green Digital Infrastructure, ZTE's end-to-end green solutions have been deployed across more than 30 networks worldwide, covering over 1.5 million sites and 250,000 data center cabinets, helping global operators save over 10 billion kWh of electricity annually. In 2024, the company's system products achieved an 8.39% reduction in physical intensity during the use and maintenance phase, while terminal products recorded a 5.02% year-over-year decrease in absolute emissions across their full lifecycle. As of 2024, ZTE has conducted carbon footprint assessments for 154 products, encompassing all product categories. For Green Empowerment, ZTE leverages its "Digital Nebula" architecture and precision green cloud-network solutions to drive sustainable transformation. Collaborating with over 2,000 industry partners, the company has implemented innovative 5G+ green practices across 15 key sectors, including steel, electronics manufacturing, transportation, and energy. These efforts have led to the creation of more than 100 innovative application scenarios, accelerating digital transformation, energy efficiency, and emission reduction across industries. Looking ahead, ZTE remains committed to advancing its green initiatives, joining hands with global partners to build a sustainable and low-carbon industrial ecosystem, and shaping digital innovation for a sustainable future.

ZTE's Liquid Cooling Intelligent Computing Solution Wins 2024 China IDC Industry Green Solution Award

ZTE Corporation a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, announced that its Liquid Cooling Intelligent Computing Center Integrated Energy Saving Solution has won the "2024 China IDC Industry Green Solution Award" at the 19th China IDC Industry Annual Awards Ceremony. This recognition highlights ZTE's remarkable achievements in advancing green, energy-efficient intelligent computing solutions for data centers. The China IDC Industry Annual Ceremony, organized by its dedicated committee, is a premier event focusing on cloud computing and data centers, bringing together industry leaders to explore the future of the digital economy. With the rapid growth of artificial intelligence, the demand for data centers has surged, leading to larger-scale intelligent computing data center projects, increased power density, and heightened challenges in power consumption and heat dissipation. ZTE's Liquid Cooling Intelligent Computing Center Integrated Energy Saving Solution addresses these issues through innovative liquid cooling technology. Its core advantages include:

· Green Efficiency: Leveraging cold plate liquid cooling technology combined with high-voltage direct current technology to enhance energy efficiency, while the iDCIM+AI management system optimizes energy use throughout the lifecycle.

· Flexible Deployment: Power modules and intelligent busbars adapt to evolving business needs, with air-liquid hybrid technology ensuring dynamic matching.

· Modular Design: The elastic intelligent computing cabin supports rapid deployment and on-demand expansion.

This solution has been successfully implemented at the Nanjing Binjiang Intelligent Computing Data Center, where a traditional facility was transformed into a liquid-cooled data center in just 90 days, achieving a PUE of 1.1 and demonstrating its practical benefits. Winning this award underscores ZTE's technological strengths and innovation in data center liquid cooling solutions. Moving forward, as "a pioneer of digital intelligence and green energy", ZTE will continue to prioritize technological innovation, collaborate with global industry partners, explore new green energy-saving solutions, and empower enterprises worldwide to thrive in the digital economy.

ZTE Donates FTTR Equipment to the 25th China Medical Team to Ethiopia, Enhancing Network Experience

ZTE Corporation, a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, has donated its cutting-edge FTTR (Fiber to the Room) solution to the 25th China Medical Team to Ethiopia. This initiative aims to resolve the team's long-standing issues with internet stability and speed, significantly improving their online experience and supporting their medical aid work. The FTTR solution replaces the team's previous traditional copper-based network architecture. The previous network subscribed to a 100 Mbps broadband plan, but the actual usable speed was often less than 30 Mbps. It relied on a switch and WiFi 4 routers setup, which frequently caused network interruptions and poor coverage, severely impacting both work efficiency and daily life quality. ZTE's FTTR-B solution, supporting WiFi 6 technology, features full-fiber architecture, strong coverage, high bandwidth, low latency, and seamless Mesh roaming. These advancements have drastically improved network speed and stability. After deployment, the medical

team now enjoys a highly reliable network for remote consultations, online training, and uploading or downloading medical reports. Additionally, the network enables smoother video calls with family and seamless HD video streaming, significantly enhancing both work efficiency and quality of life. Liu Junying, the team leader of the 25th China Medical Team to Ethiopia, said, "ZTE's FTTR solution has greatly transformed our internet experience, the network is now faster and more stable, which has significantly improved both our work efficiency and daily lives." Chen Min, CEO of ZTE Ethiopia, stated, "ZTE is honored to support the 25th China Medical Team to Ethiopia with our advanced FTTR solution. We remain committed to using innovative technology to drive progress and strengthen the friendship between China and Ethiopia." This donation underscores ZTE's dedication to leveraging its innovative technology to create a positive impact, not only in the telecommunications sector but also in supporting humanitarian efforts and improving lives worldwide.

BEYOND SA-ME-NA: PERSPECTIVES ON AI

Strengthening AI Governance and Ethics in the Philippines with Expert Training from The Alan Turing Institute

Philippine government agencies whose mandates are related to artificial intelligence (AI) are now embarking on a strategic initiative to enhance artificial intelligence (AI) governance and ethics in collaboration with The Alan Turing Institute (ATI) and the Embassy of the United Kingdom in the Philippines. This landmark technical assistance project, running from February 18-21, 2025, aims to fortify the country's regulatory and policy frameworks in AI by equipping government leaders, academics, and industry stakeholders with global best practices and expert guidance.

The AI Ethics and Governance in Practice Programme, developed by The Alan Turing Institute is a capacity-building initiative tailored to address the specific needs of senior policy makers and regulators in the Philippines, which includes the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and other government agencies together with leaders from the industry and tha academia.

The four-day training workshop in Manila will focus on enhancing AI literacy and readiness among policymakers, regulators, and industry players, equipping them with the philosophical, theoretical, and practical knowledge required to understand, regulate, and shape responsible AI ecosystems.

The Alan Turing Institute, based at the British Library in London, was established in 2015 as the UK's national institute for data science and AUI. In 2017, following a government recommendation, its scope was expanded to include artificial intelligence. Named in honor of Alan Turing, the Institute recognizes his groundbreaking contributions to mathematics, engineering, and computing—key disciplines underpinning data science and AI.

The Institute was founded in 2015 by five universities—Cambridge, Edinburgh, Oxford, UCL, and Warwick—alongside the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. In 2018, eight more universities—Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Queen Mary University of London, Birmingham, Exeter, Bristol, and Southampton—joined the Institute. In 2023, the Institute launched an open university network, enabling all UK universities with an interest in data science and AI to engage and collaborate with the Institute and its wider networks

The AI Ethics and Governance in Practice Prog-ramme, developed by The Alan Turing Institute is a capacity-building initiative tailored to address the specific needs of senior policy makers and regulators in the Philippines, which includes the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and other government agencies together with leaders from the industry and tha academia.

The Alan Turing Institute has three main goals, namely:

(1) Advancing world-class research and applying it to national and global challenges – The Institute aims to innovate and develop cutting-edge research in data science and artificial intelligence,

> *This initiative aligns with the Philippines strong commitment to ethical AI adoption, particularly in digital governance, smart cities, cybersecurity, and AI-driven policymaking. Complimentary to the direction is the EUREKA AI Policy Discussion Framework launched by the DICT serves a guiding principle for AI governance, ensuring AI development is ethical, inclusive, and aligned with national priorities.*

supporting next-generation theoretical advancements while addressing real-world issues. This work fosters the creation of new businesses, services, and job opportunities.

(2) Building skills for the future – The Institute seeks to equip individuals across various sectors and career stages with the technical and professional expertise needed in data science and AI, aligning with the UK's growing industrial and societal demands.

(3) Driving an informed public conversation – The Institute strives to provide a balanced perspective on data science and AI by addressing its technical, social, and ethical aspects. Through public engagement and advisory roles, it informs policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society.

This project aims to strengthen AI governance in the Philippines by providing a tailored knowledge and capacity-building program for senior stakeholders from government, academia, and industry. The program will enhance AI literacy and readiness, equipping participants with theoretical, philosophical, and practical insights into AI ethics and governance. Delivered over four days in Manila, the program will feature interactive sessions led by Turing researchers, focusing on best practices and international standards. It will build knowledge progressively, culminating in the development of preliminary AI governance action plans. Training materials will be customized for the local context to ensure long-term impact on AI ecosystems. Stakeholder input will shape the program through preparatory discussions, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness. Additionally, Turing experts will provide follow-up advisory support for up to 20 working hours per country after the program. The initiative ultimately seeks to foster responsible AI development while balancing innovation and protection for vulnerable communities.

This capacity-building program aligns with Project Objective (i) by enhancing AI literacy and preparedness among key stakeholders. It equips them with philosophical, theoretical, and practical knowledge to understand AI ethics and governance and to develop AI governance and regulation papers for their respective organizations or governments.

Each session includes an initial learning segment followed by a workshop, where participants engage in discussions and hands-on activities, applying their knowledge to case studies and real-world challenges.

This initiative aligns with the Philippines strong commitment to ethical AI adoption, particularly in digital governance, smart cities, cybersecurity, and AI-driven policymaking. Complimentary to the direction is the EUREKA AI Policy Discussion Framework launched by the DICT serves a guiding principle for AI governance, ensuring AI development is ethical, inclusive, and aligned with national priorities.

The EUREKA AI Framework is a strategic initiative led by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) of the Philippines to ensure that AI development aligns with ethical, inclusive, and forward-thinking principles. It was highlighted by Undersecretary Jocelle Batapa-Sigue during the AI Ethics and Governance in Practice Programme with The Alan Turing Institute.

EUREKA stands for Education, Universal Access, Responsible Use, Ethical Inventions, Knowledge- or Data-Driven Decision-Making, and Agile Governance. The framework promotes AI literacy and skills development across sectors to prepare a future-ready workforce while ensuring that AI benefits all Filipinos, including marginalized communities, through inclusive digital infrastructure. It establishes safeguards and governance mechanisms to prevent AI misuse while maximizing its benefits, encourages AI innovations that uphold human rights, fairness, and transparency, and leverages AI to enhance government efficiency, data management, and public service delivery. Additionally, the framework focuses on developing flexible policies that can adapt

to the fast-evolving AI landscape while maintaining accountability and oversight.
Serving as a guiding principle for AI adoption, the EUREKA framework aims to ensures a balanced approach to AI innovation and responsibility. It aims to protect the public interest and safeguard human dignity, promote fairness, inclusivity, and transparency in AI-driven decisions, align with global best practices while responding to local needs, and foster collaboration among governments, industry leaders, and academic institutions. Through this framework, DICT reinforces its commitment to fostering a responsible AI ecosystem in the Philippines.

> *The EUREKA AI Framework is a strategic initiative led by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) of the Philippines to ensure that AI development aligns with ethical, inclusive, and forward-thinking principles.*
>
> **Jocelle Batapa-Sigue**
> **Undersecretary for ICT Industry Development DICT**

The Alan Turing Institute Workshop aims to strengthen AI governance and regulatory capabilities within the Philippine government while ensuring that AI policy frameworks align with international norms and best practices. It also seeks to equip participants with essential AI ethics and risk assessment tools, enabling them to develop AI governance and regulation papers tailored to the Philippine context. Additionally, the program fosters cross-sector collaboration by bringing together key stakeholders from government, academia, and industry. The training sessions, led by renowned AI ethics and governance experts from the Alan Turing Institute, provide in-depth insights and guidance on responsible AI development and implementation.

The training sessions will be led by renowned AI ethics and governance experts from the Alan Turing Institute, covering a comprehensive range of topics essential for responsible AI development and implementation. Participants will engage in discussions on AI ethics and governance fundamentals, gaining a deeper understanding of ethical frameworks and best practices. The sessions will also address AI safety, risk management, and accountability, equipping stakeholders with the tools to mitigate potential risks associated with AI deployment. Additionally, experts will provide insights into AI and data protection laws, ensuring compliance with

regulatory standards. Ethical AI innovation and national strategy development will be a key focus, guiding participants in aligning AI policies with broader digital transformation goals. Finally, the training will emphasize practical AI policy implementation, helping policymakers and industry leaders translate theoretical principles into actionable governance strategies. The training will be interactive, featuring workshops, real-world case studies, and group discussions to ensure hands-on learning. DICT Undersecretary Jocelle Batapa-Sigue, in her welcome address, highlighted the importance of inclusive AI governance, emphasizing that the country must strike a balance between innovation and ethical responsibility. She underscored DICT's role in AI policy leadership, citing its participation in international AI governance discussions, including ASEAN AI regulations, the International AI Safety Report, and the Seoul Ministerial Statement on AI.

The Alan Turing Institute's AI Governance Expertise

The Alan Turing Institute is the UK's leading national center for AI research, recognized for its work in AI governance, ethics, and regulatory frameworks. It has previously

contributed to the UK's National AI Strategy and collaborated with international organizations to shape responsible AI governance.

> *The Alan Turing Institute Workshop aims to strengthen AI governance and regulatory capabilities within the Philippine government while ensuring that AI policy frameworks align with international norms and best practices. It also seeks to equip participants with essential AI ethics and risk assessment tools, enabling them to develop AI governance and regulation papers tailored to the Philippine context.*

The AI Ethics and Governance in Practice Programme is based on the Process-Based Governance (PBG) Framework, a structured approach to ensuring AI ethics, fairness, transparency, and accountability. The initiative also builds on global AI governance standards, including best practices from the EU AI Act, OECD AI Principles, and ASEAN AI Ethics Guide.

The AI Governance Workshop in the Philippines, led by The Alan Turing Institute, featured a distinguished panel of experts specializing in AI ethics, governance, and regulation. Dr. Florian Ostmann, the Director of AI Governance and Regulatory Innovation at the Alan Turing Institute, led discussions on AI governance, regulation, and policy innovation. As a recognized expert, he is a member of international AI governance bodies, including the OECD and the World Economic Forum. Another key speaker, Dr. Andrés Domínguez Hernández, serves as an Ethics Fellow at the Alan Turing Institute's Public Policy Programme. His expertise lies in the ethical, social, and policy implications of AI and emerging technologies, drawing from his previous role as a Senior Research Associate at the University of Bristol.

Dr. Allaine Cerwonka, Director of International Work and Partnerships at the Alan Turing Institute, led discussions on international AI governance collaboration and policy strategies. With a background in interdisciplinary AI research, she was formerly the Associate Director of AI for Government & Science at the institute. Supporting AI regulatory efforts, Christopher Thomas, a Research Associate in AI Governance and Regulatory Innovation, provided insights on AI regulatory frameworks and policy. His contributions to UK AI Strategy and the AI Assurance Roadmap position him as a key expert in operationalizing responsible AI principles.

The workshop also featured Nalanda Sharadjaya, a Senior Research Assistant in the Public Policy Programme, specializing in AI regulation, cybersecurity, and ethical AI governance. Smera Jayadeva, a Researcher in Data Justice and Global Ethical Futures, contributed expertise in global AI ethics and responsible innovation. She has played a role in various AI ethics projects under UK and international organizations. Charlie Thomas, the International Affairs Manager at the Alan Turing Institute, led discussions on developing international AI governance projects, with a research focus on AI ethics, bias in healthcare, and national security.

This expert panel provided in-depth sessions on AI ethics, governance, regulation, and risk assessment, tailored to Philippine government stakeholders, academia, and industry. Their collective experience and global expertise ensured that participants received cutting-edge insights into responsible AI development and governance.

Impact on Philippine AI Policy and Digital Transformation

The Philippines has been making significant strides in AI regulation and digital governance, and its collaboration with the Alan Turing Institute further cements its position as a regional leader in AI governance. This training initiative is expected to yield several key outcomes that

will shape the country's AI policy landscape. One major outcome is the drafting of AI governance action plans aimed at enhancing AI policies to ensure ethical and responsible deployment. Additionally, the program will support the development of AI regulatory sandboxes, providing a controlled environment for safe AI experimentation under regulatory oversight. The initiative also seeks to strengthen collaboration with international AI policy groups, aligning the Philippines with global best practices in AI governance. Lastly, it will enhance AI ethics training within the public sector, equipping government agencies with the necessary knowledge and tools to deploy AI responsibly and transparently.

As the Philippines positions itself as a hub for AI policy innovation, DICT is advocating for AI policy leadership, emphasizing that AI governance should be housed under DICT rather than multiple agencies. The department has been vocal about ensuring AI governance aligns with national digital transformation priorities, advocating for DICT's leadership in AI policy and regulation.

The AI Ethics and Governance in Practice Programme marks a significant milestone in the Philippines' AI policy development, ensuring that AI is implemented in a fair, transparent, and accountable manner. Through this strategic partnership with The Alan Turing Institute, the country is poised to become a regional leader in ethical AI adoption.

The recently launched International AI Safety Report is a comprehensive document designed to guide policymakers and stakeholders on the risks associated with advanced general-purpose artificial intelligence (AI) and the strategies needed to manage these risks. Developed by a team of 96 international AI experts, led by Professor Yoshua Bengio, the report underscores the rapid evolution of AI technologies, particularly those with broad capabilities that pose significant implications for safety and security. Initiated after the Bletchley Park AI Safety Summit, the report includes updates from subsequent expert discussions and developments in the AI field.

DICT Secretary Ivan John Uy emphasizes that the path to responsible AI is the fine balance between maximizing its capabilities and ensuring its safety. The Philippines will continue to be a strong voice towards inclusive use of AI and driving innovation that benefits all of society.

The report categorizes AI risks into three main areas. Risks from malicious use include AI-generated fake content, manipulation of public opinion, cyber-offenses, and the potential for biological and chemical attacks. Risks from malfunctions highlight issues such as AI system reliability, biases, and the possibility of losing control over AI operations. Lastly, systemic risks address broader challenges, including labor market disruptions, the widening global AI R&D divide, market concentration, environmental impacts, privacy concerns, and copyright infringement.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) of the Philippines played a key role in the report's development through its nominee, Dominic Vincent Ligot, a member of the international Expert Advisory Panel. Ligot contributed significantly to discussions on AI risks and safety measures, advocating for a balanced approach that maximizes AI's benefits while mitigating its dangers. The Philippines' contributions to the report focused on three critical areas: labor market risks, emphasizing how AI-driven automation could impact employment in developing economies; the global AI R&D divide, which highlights disparities between developed and developing nations in AI research and innovation; and the misuse of AI in generating fake content, a particularly relevant issue given the Philippines' highly digital and social media-driven landscape. This report serves as a foundational document for shaping global AI policies, ensuring that AI advancements drive positive societal and economic outcomes while minimizing potential harms.

> *The Philippines has been making significant strides in AI regulation and digital governance, and its collaboration with the Alan Turing Institute further cements its position as a regional leader in AI governance.*

With DICT's commitment, AI governance in the Philippines will not only support innovation but also safeguard the rights and welfare of its citizens in an increasingly AI-driven world.

Source: https://jocellebatapasigue.com/2025/02/19/strengthening-ai-governance-and-ethics-in-the-philippines-with-expert-training-from-the-alan-turing-institute/

NEW AND ENHANCED CONNECTIVITY **FOR THE ENERGY SECTOR**

Eutelsat OneWeb enables fixed and mobile connectivity for oil, gas, and offshore operations. Our GEO and LEO satellite capabilities combine network density and high throughput with high speed and low latency. Our service level agreements and committed information rates support complex production, processing, and distribution technologies as well as crew safety, efficiency, and wellbeing. Connectivity for remote locations everywhere, including offshore platforms, rigs, turbines, and vessels.

- Higher capacity and throughput than other legacy network solutions
- Low latency for new applications and future-ready technology
- Flexible plans that streamline offshore operations with shore-based control centers

Scan to find out more
https://oneweb.net/solutions/customer-solutions

eutelsat ONEWEB
eutelsat GROUP

REGIONAL NEWS

UAE Hosts Panel Discussion on AI and Innovation to Celebrate Safer Internet day

A panel discussion hosted by the Emirates News Agency (WAM) in collaboration with the Khalifa Empowerment Programme (Aqdar) highlighted the UAE's leadership in artificial intelligence (AI) and innovation. The event, part of the UAE Innovates 2025 initiative, took place during Safer Internet Day and Innovation Month celebrations. The discussion, titled "Artificial Intelligence and Innovation: How AI Pushes the Boundaries of Innovation," featured prominent speakers including Mohammed Ismail Al Harmoudi, CEO of Aqdar; Mohamed Al Hammadi, Director-General of WAM; and several officials from both organizations. Additionally, female students from UAE University and female interns from WAM participated in the event. Ahmed Majan, Chairman of the Emirates Inventors Association, discussed the importance of supporting innovation among young inventors and emphasized AI's role in transforming various sectors such as healthcare, education, and transportation. He also highlighted AI's economic impact and the need for legal frameworks to ensure its safe use. Engineer Cesar Moukarzel, CEO of SIA Middle East, underscored the importance of AI investment across sectors to support societal development, particularly in urban development. Samer Chidiac, Executive Advisor at the New Economy Academy, pointed out AI's potential to analyze data, predict future needs, and anticipate societal behavior. Student Humaid Al Balushi shared his perspective on balancing technological advancements with cultural identity, stressing that while AI is a driver of innovation, human intelligence and values must remain at the core of true innovation. The panel concluded by agreeing that AI is a powerful tool for progress but requires appropriate regulations to harness its potential while maintaining the importance of human creativity and values.

Oman Signs US$10 Million in Tech Agreements at LEAP 2025 in Riyadh

At LEAP 2025 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Oman's participation saw the signing of nine cooperation agreements between Omani tech startups and international firms, totaling over $10 million. The agreements were signed at the Oman Pavilion, attended by key Omani officials and business leaders. Among the agreements, Global Semiconductor & Microelectronics (GSME) secured a $10 million deal with Saudi's e-Photonics to collaborate on semiconductors, electronics, and 3D computer vision solutions. DataMining, an Omani software company, signed a $1 million agreement with AlJazeera Falcons for AI, software development, and electronic product production aimed at the Saudi market. The success of these agreements reflects the growing influence of Omani tech startups in the international arena. Mubasher, a digital advertising screen solutions company, signed a $1 million agreement with Saudi's OOMCO, while Osos, part of the Oman Information and Communications Technology Group (ITHCA), signed six agreements across software, AI, cloud computing, and tech support. These agreements mark a significant milestone in strengthening Oman's tech sector and expanding its reach within the global market, particularly in Saudi Arabia, as the country continues to prioritize innovation and technological growth.

Bahrain's Minister Advocates Global Digital Cooperation and AI Governance at DCO General Assembly

Dr. Shaikh Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications, participated in the fourth General Assembly of the Digital Cooperation Organisation (DCO) held in Jordan. During the meeting, he emphasized the importance of global digital cooperation, particularly in the development and governance of artificial intelligence (AI). The minister highlighted Bahrain's advanced regulatory and investment environment, which supports technological innovation and digital entrepreneurship. He also reiterated Bahrain's commitment to enhancing digital cooperation, promoting AI adoption, and advancing sustainable digital growth. Furthermore, the minister called for global cooperation in responding to the proposal of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain, for an international treaty on AI governance. This highlights Bahrain's proactive role in advocating for responsible AI development and deployment on a global scale. The DCO General Assembly served as a platform for discussions on various initiatives, including digital investment, training, and the empowerment of startups, youth, and women in the digital economy. The meeting also saw the election of Kuwait as the next DCO chair in 2025, the distribution of the Digital Prosperity Awards, and the launch of the International Digital Cooperation Forum. Bahrain's participation in the DCO General Assembly demonstrates its commitment to international cooperation and its proactive role in shaping the future of the digital economy. The minister's call for global collaboration and responsible AI governance underscores Bahrain's leadership in promoting a sustainable and inclusive digital future.

Tunisia's Major Telecom Operators Launch 5G Services

Orange Tunisia, Ooredoo Tunisia, and Tunisie Telecom all launched their respective 5G mobile services last week, just three months after receiving their 5G licenses. The launches mark a significant milestone in the country's telecom landscape. Orange Tunisia, which unveiled its 5G service on Friday, is offering both mobile 5G and a fixed wireless access (FWA) router with Wi-Fi 6, along with a "Turbo option" aimed at gamers and streaming users. The operator has already activated 400 5G sites in multiple regions, with plans to expand coverage to all governorates. Additionally, Orange Tunisia has opened a 5G Lab near its Orange Digital Center in the Berges du Lac district of Tunis, showcasing potential enterprise use cases such as Industry 4.0, health, and education. Ooredoo Tunisia also introduced a 5G FWA service called "Fix Jdid 5G" for homes and offices, offering data speeds of up to 100 Mbps. CEO Mansoor Rashid Al-Khater emphasized that 5G would not only offer higher speeds but would also enhance the digital economy and create a more connected society. Tunisie Telecom highlighted the extensive fiber infrastructure backing its 5G deployment. CEO Lassâad Ben Dhiab shared that the company has rolled out over 61,000 km of optical fiber, linking 90% of its 4G base stations. This infrastructure, he stated, would provide a solid foundation for its 5G network, which already boasts near-complete coverage in urban areas and impressive speeds in remote regions. The three telecom operators—Tunisie Telecom, Orange Tunisia, and Ooredoo Tunisia—received their 5G licenses from the Ministry of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy at the end of November 2024. The licenses grant each operator 5 MHz of duplexed spectrum in the 700 MHz band and 100 MHz of TDD spectrum in the 3.5 GHz band. Additional frequency bands for 5G are expected to be released in future phases.

Kuwait Launches "TechEdge" Program to Equip Youth with Cutting-Edge Tech Skills

The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) has introduced the "TechEdge" program, a strategic initiative developed in collaboration with the National University of Singapore, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), and Zain. The program aims to provide young Kuwaiti professionals with advanced expertise in high-demand technological fields such as artificial intelligence, data science, and cybersecurity, ensuring they are well-prepared to thrive in these rapidly evolving sectors. With a particular focus on cybersecurity and data protection, the program seeks to address the growing digital challenges by equipping participants with the necessary tools to combat cyber threats and bolster digital infrastructure. The initiative aims not only to enhance technical expertise but also to prepare young professionals to meet the demands of an increasingly digital world. The program aligns with the New Kuwait Vision 2035, fostering collaboration between the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), advancing digital transformation, and driving economic diversification. By equipping the workforce with advanced skills, it strengthens Kuwait's path toward a resilient, technology-driven future. Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager and Head of Group Human Resources, emphasized the importance of developing a highly skilled national workforce capable of adapting to a rapidly changing labor market driven by technological advancements. He stated, "By providing the necessary expertise and tools, we empower them to lead in advanced technology fields. This initiative accelerates Kuwait's digital transformation and aligns with the country's broader strategic vision." Al-Ablani further highlighted the significance of the program's collaboration with the National University of Singapore, a globally recognized leader in technology. He added, "This program represents a major opportunity for early-career professionals to enhance their expertise, equipping them with the skills needed to excel in cutting-edge fields. This collaboration underscores our commitment to fostering talent and driving innovation in Kuwait's technology sector." Nawal Bourisli, Chief Purpose and HR Officer at Zain Kuwait, noted that the partnership reflects the company's ongoing efforts to foster innovation and build a knowledge economy by developing youth capacity in digital and tech skills. "Innovation is a key driver of sustainable growth, and through this program, we aim to contribute to Kuwait's digital transformation," she said. Bourisli also emphasized the importance of public-private sector collaboration in advancing the country's developmental goals, focusing on investing in human capital to drive sustainable economic and social development. Through its "Innovation Nation" initiative, Zain continues to collaborate with leading entities to strengthen Kuwait's innovation ecosystem and digital skills development, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Additionally, last year, NBK introduced the NBK Tech Academy, Kuwait's first academy dedicated to digital technology and data systems. The academy offers a comprehensive professional training program designed to nurture young Kuwaiti talent in areas such as FinTech, Data Analytics, Cyber Security, Artificial Intelligence, and Digital Innovation.

The Arab ICT Organization (AICTO) Announces the Signing of an MoU with USPACE Technology Group

The Arab ICT Organization (AICTO) announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with USPACE Technology Group. The Mou is willing to establish a strategic partnership focused on advancing satellite technologies to benefit the Middle East and Africa region. This partnership aims to enhance regional connectivity and address key socio-economic needs such as smart transportation, precision agriculture, urban management, and disaster response through the development of low-earth orbital satellite constellations. The MoU sets a framework for long-term cooperation, with a view to advancing satellite technology and its applications in the region, enhancing socio-economic development. The Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organization (AICTO) is a regional governmental body working under the umbrella of the League of Arab States. Headquartered in Tunis, Tunisia, AICTO is dedicated to advancing information and communication technologies (ICT) in the Arab world, fostering regional cooperation, and promoting technological innovation across member states. USPACE Technology Group is a global leader in satellite manufacturing, aerospace technology, and satellite services. As the first company in the world to manufacture industrialized satellites based on Industry 5.0 concepts, USPACE combines cutting-edge satellite technology with innovative production techniques. Their mission is to create affordable, high-quality satellite products to benefit global communities, with a special focus on the Middle East and Africa.

Qatar Continues to Lead in Global Internet Penetration

Qatar has continued to solidify its position as a global leader for Internet penetration, according to data from Worldostats, underscoring Qatar's commitment to technological advancement, infrastructure development, and digital inclusion, and positioning it as a leader in the Middle East and beyond. According to the 'Internet Penetration By Country: Global Comparison 2025' by Worldostats, one of the world's leading compendiums of comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date statistics and data about countries across the globe, Qatar have a 100 percent Internet penetration, alongside three other GCC countries, making the region the most Internet-penetrated globally. The Internet Penetration Rate corresponds to the percentage of the total population of a given country or region that uses the Internet. In the rankings by Worldostats, only four countries—Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain—have been able to achieve total and complete Internet penetration. The four GCC countries are joined by Iceland (99.86%), Kuwait (99.75%), Luxembourg (99.35%), Norway (99%), Brunei (98.97%), and Denmark (98.78%) to round up the top ten countries in the rankings. Worldostats noted that countries that top the list for Internet penetration share common traits, including substantial investments in technology, strong government support, and a commitment to providing widespread access. "In the Middle East, countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have made internet access a priority, helping to transform their economies and societies through digital connectivity. Similarly, European countries like Iceland, Luxembourg, and Norway have built robust digital ecosystems supported by comprehensive infrastructure and policies that promote universal access," it said. "The high levels of internet penetration in these countries are not just about accessibility; they also focus on digital literacy and creating environments where technology is integrated into daily life. "These nations have recognised the power of the internet to drive innovation, education, and economic development," Worldostats added. Qatar's rise to prominence in Internet penetration reflects years of strategic investments in telecommunications infrastructure, government-led initiatives, and private sector innovation. The country's leadership recognized early on that widespread Internet access would be critical to achieving its long-term vision of becoming a knowledge-based economy. This vision aligns with the goals outlined in *Qatar National Vision 2030, which emphasizes sustainable development, human capital growth, and economic diversification. Several factors have contributed to Qatar's success in achieving near-universal Internet penetration, including advanced telecommunications infrastructure, government initiatives and policies, smart city development, youth engagement and education, as well as economic diversification efforts. Looking ahead, the continued expansion of internet penetration promises to unlock new opportunities and propel Qatar toward a brighter, more interconnected future.

Kuwait and Qatar Discuss Strengthening Cooperation In Communications and AI

At the AI Action Summit in Paris, Kuwait's Communications Minister, Omar Al-Omar, and Qatar's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Mohammad Al-Mannai, discussed ways to enhance cooperation in the fields of communications, digital technology, and artificial intelligence. The meeting focused on supporting digital transformation and innovation in the region. Al-Omar expressed Kuwait's commitment to strengthening both regional and global development in the communications and technology sectors. He emphasized the role of AI technology in advancing sustainable development and developing modern digital solutions. Al-Mannai praised the strong bilateral relationship between Kuwait and Qatar, highlighting the importance of exchanging capabilities to achieve future goals. The summit, attended

by over 100 world leaders and 1,000 representatives from civil society and the private sector, brought together experts to discuss AI's impact on the economy and society, reinforcing the role of international cooperation in this vital field.

UAE Champions AI Governance, Technology Innovation: KPMG-WGS Report

A new KPMG report in collaboration with the World Governments Summit (GMC), titled "The Future of AI Governance: the UAE Charter and Global Perspectives", underscored how the UAE's global leadership in ethical AI is paving the way for robust AI governance in the region. These strategic initiatives take centre stage at the WGS in Dubai, as international leaders gather to discuss and define the future of AI, government services, urbanisation, education and smart mobility. The UAE has successfully embedded technology into government services and aligned its advancements with human well-being and societal values. The UAE AI Charter, released in 2024, reflects this leadership through its 12 guiding principles, which prioritise inclusivity, transparency, innovation, and accountability. The WGS 2025 theme of 'Shaping Future Governments', makes this charter especially relevant as AI governance becomes a defining challenge for policymakers. The principles in the charter are designed to ensure that AI technologies enhance human capabilities while safeguarding fundamental rights, promote fairness and inclusivity, reduce bias and discrimination, maintain trust through transparency and robust data privacy measures and drive innovation with ethical governance. Joe Devassy, Director of Strategic Alliance at KPMG Lower Gulf, said, "The UAE is rapidly emerging as a global hub for technology, including ethical and responsible AI development – both key themes at this year's WGS. In this context, the UAE AI Charter is playing a pivotal role in consolidating the nation's ambitions to secure a digital future. He added, "The charter is more than a set of guidelines; it is a precursor to formalised AI regulations that are likely to shape the future of AI governance in the region. Organisations that act now to align with these principles will gain a competitive edge, enabling them to unlock opportunities for responsible innovation, positioning themselves as leaders in ethical AI adoption." Governments worldwide are shifting from voluntary AI ethics frameworks to enforceable regulations. Without clear AI oversight, risks like bias, misinformation, and misuse could undermine digital governance efforts. Furthermore, businesses that delay alignment will face serious consequences. The UAE's structured approach to AI accountability benefits businesses and its citizens, who stand to gain from more transparent, unbiased, and secure AI-driven systems.

Egypt Prioritizes ICT Training to Drive Digital Transformation

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi convened a meeting with government officials to discuss initiatives aimed at training professionals in communications, information technology, and software development. The meeting emphasized the importance of developing a skilled workforce to support Egypt's digital transformation and economic growth. The discussions focused on Egypt's efforts to enhance its digital infrastructure, improve the quality of communication services, and attract investment in the ICT sector. President El-Sisi stressed the importance of positioning Egypt as a leading destination for digital service investments, leveraging its strategic advantages and qualified talent. A key highlight of the meeting was the "Digital Pioneers" initiative, which aims to provide young Egyptians with free scholarships and training in various ICT fields. This program will offer comprehensive training in technical, practical, and language skills, preparing graduates for careers in high-demand areas such as AI, data science, cybersecurity, and software development. "The meeting also addressed the goal of positioning Egypt as a leading global destination for digital service investments, including software development," stated the report, emphasizing Egypt's ambition to become a global tech hub. The "Digital Pioneers" initiative will be accessible to all citizens, regardless of their academic background, promoting inclusivity and expanding opportunities for those interested in pursuing a career in the ICT sector. President El-Sisi also underscored the importance of Egypt's transition to a fully integrated digital society. This includes fostering a skilled workforce of independent professionals, expanding training opportunities, and enhancing digital capabilities through technology schools and Egypt Digital Creativity Centers. "President Al-Sisi also underscored the importance of Egypt's transition to a fully integrated digital society, focusing on fostering independent professionals, expanding training opportunities, and enhancing digital capabilities through technology schools and Egypt Digital Creativity Centers," stated the report, highlighting the comprehensive approach to digital skills development.

Bangladesh to Establish First Green Data Centre to Boost Investment and Services

Bangladesh is set to establish its first green data centre near the port city of Chattogram, aimed at attracting foreign investment and offering cost-effective services. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has partnered with the Bangladeshi government to set up the centre, which will be developed under a public-private partnership (PPP) model. The project will use renewable energy and be supported by two new subsea cables. Currently, Bangladesh lacks an established data centre market, with most existing facilities in Dhaka being outdated and unable to modernize. Chattogram's larger land areas and power resources make it an ideal location for advanced data-centre development. The country's growing mobile-connectivity network and favourable demographic profile are expected to drive increased demand for data centres. However, political instability poses a risk to short-term investor confidence. Despite challenges, Bangladesh's mobile network operators (MNOs) have seen significant growth in mobile data revenues, with mobile data contributing significantly to total sales. Bangladesh's fixed broadband connections have been growing, with 13.7 million connections in Q3 2024. The addition of two new subsea cables—SeaMeWe-6 and the Bangladesh Private Cable System—set to be operational by 2026, will enhance the country's international bandwidth capacity, fostering growth in the data centre sector. Several Asian data-centre firms are already investing in Bangladesh to build new facilities.

Saudi Arabia's CST and SSA Launch the SpaceUp Competition to Develop Innovative Space Based Solutions

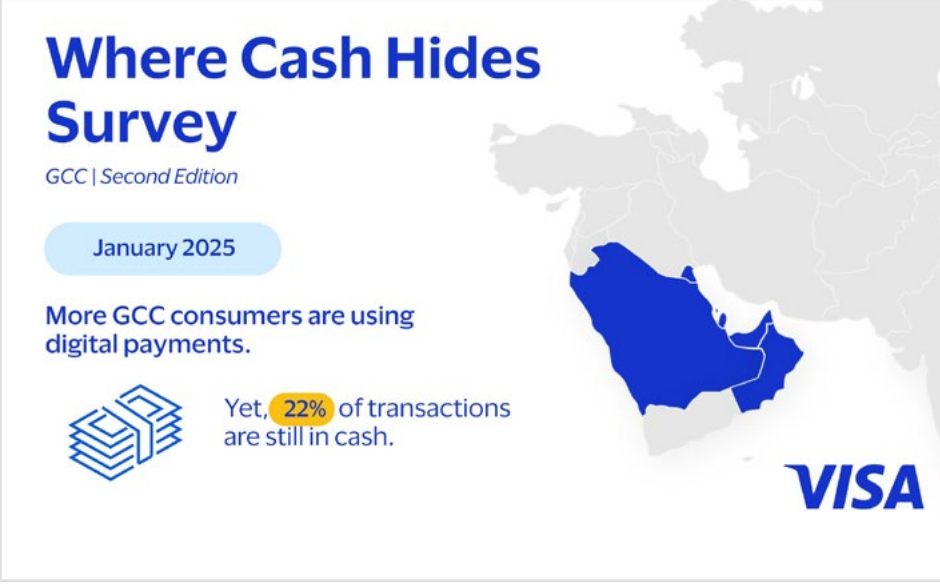
The Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) and the Saudi Space Agency (SSA) have launched the global SpaceUp Competition, in partnership with Neo Space Group (NSG), which aims to promote Space entrepreneurship, support local companies specializing in Space based solution, attract global entrepreneurs, startups and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and encourage the adoption of Space based solutions by entities operating across various vital sectors. Through its six challenge tracks, the SpaceUp Competition targets global & local entrepreneurs, startups and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to develop Space based solutions for challenges in vital sectors, by linking the supply with the demand. The SpaceUp Competition presents about 28 Million USD contractual opportunities across all competition tracks, in addition to providing direct access with end-users. localization, as well as connecting with end-users to implement the proposed solutions. The SpaceUp Competition includes six challenge tracks supporting various sectors. The first challenge track is “Monitoring Date Palms Pest and Disease” track sponsored by the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture and the Weqqa Center, which focuses on providing Space based solutions to monitor palm farms and detect pests. The second is “Improving City Livability by Monitoring Urban Heat Islands” sponsored by the Quality of Life Program, which aims at solving the problem of rising temperatures in crowded cities. The third is “Monitoring the Impact of Infrastructure Development” sponsored by Riyadh Infrastructure Projects Centre to promote infrastructure projects and traffic management. The fourth and fifth challenge tracks are “Optimizing Urban Road Assets” track that aims to provide solutions to detect urban road damage and elevate its maintenance, and “Mapping of Urban Trees” that aims to monitor and maintain urban green spaces, sponsored by the Ministry of Municipalities and Housing. The sixth is “Greening Saudi Arabia” which seeks to monitor tree growth and support sustainability efforts related to Saudi Green Initiative. It is worth noting that the SpaceUp Competition extends the efforts of CST and the SSA in enhancing investment opportunities in the Saudi Space sector and stimulating research and innovation.

Pakistan Joins 2Africa Cable Project, Strengthening Telecom Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity

The Pakistani government has launched the 2Africa Cable Project to address challenges in internet provision. The project, which spans 45,000 kilometers of undersea cables, will connect 46 landing stations across 33 countries. The cable’s landing point in Pakistan will be at Hawks Bay, Kemari Town, Karachi, with Transworld Associates as the local operator. Pakistan’s telecom sector has seen impressive growth, with a 17% increase in telecom revenue from fiscal year 2022 to 2023. The sector’s revenue for fiscal year 2023-2024 reached 955 billion rupees, and its contribution to the country’s economy is projected to hit 335 billion rupees in 2024. In addition, Pakistan improved its global ranking, moving from 79th to 40th in the 2024 Global Cybersecurity Index. The country also saw a 14% increase in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) ICT Development Index for 2024, alongside a 29% growth in mobile phone users, further boosting digital connectivity. Furthermore, Pakistan has become one of 37 countries to establish a Webtrust-Audited National Public Infrastructure, enhancing its position in global digital infrastructure development.

Oman Advances in Digital Payments

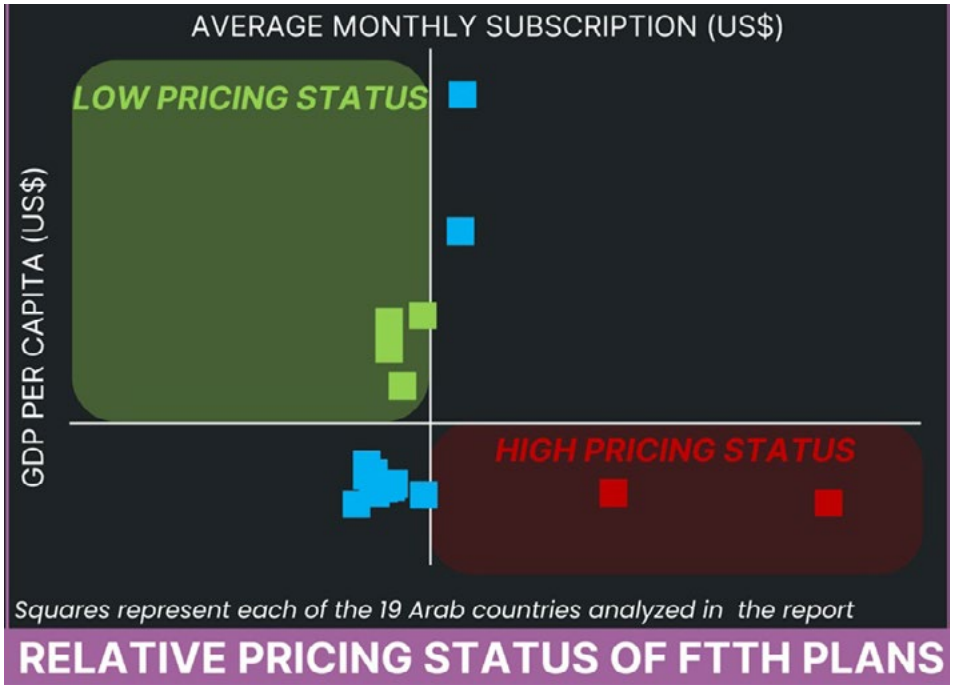
While Oman is at the forefront of digital payments, a quarter (25%) of transactions among consumers surveyed in the sultanate are still made in cash, according to the second edition of Visa's Where Cash Hides research report. Visa, a global leader in digital payments, conducted the survey across the GCC to examine cash usage trends and explore opportunities to further accelerate the shift towards digital payments. The research, based on a survey of 2,800 individuals across the region, looked into the overall frequency of, and motivations for, cash usage. It identifies cash-heavy categories and proposes simpler, more secure digital payment solutions for both consumers and local businesses. In Oman, peer-to-peer (P2P) transactions (42%) and everyday spending (28%) account for a significant proportion of cash usage. Within the P2P segment, tips (66%) were the top category where surveyed Omani consumers used cash, showing the biggest drop from 2023. This was followed by money exchanges between friends and family (53%) and property rent (24%). However, international money transfers through exchange houses saw an increase (23% in 2024 vs 14% in 2023), suggesting opportunities to advance secure, digital cross-border payments. Everyday spending – such as offline taxis (63%), farmers' markets (55%), and app-based taxis (33%) – are primarily where cash is used. Restaurants saw the most significant drop in cash usage (20% in 2024, down from 38% in 2023), indicating progress in digitizing payments in these sectors. The main reasons respondents prefer cash for P2P transactions are habit (32%) and convenience (28%). For everyday purchases, the leading reasons cited are speed (31%) and acceptance (26%). According to Visa's report, efforts to introduce convenient and secure solutions, such as Visa Direct (for P2P, tips, other disbursements, and remittances), Click to Pay (for a better online checkout experience), and Tap to Phone (a low-cost acceptance solution for SMEs, freelancers, and taxis), will further promote digital payments and increase card acceptance in the identified categories. It said, 'Encouraging mobile and contactless payments also presents a pathway to increasing digital payment usage for everyday expenses. This requires educating both banked and unbanked populations about the acceptance and security of digital payments.' In a press statement, Manish Gautam, Visa's Country Manager for Oman, said, "Despite progress with digital payment adoption in Oman, 25% of consumer transactions are still in cash. For Visa, this represents an opportunity to further drive financial inclusion and digitize commerce in the country. Our second edition of Where Cash Hides research highlights precisely where and how Visa, together with our partners, can help grow the digital economy.



Moroccan Fintech Talaty Secures Investment to Drive Financial Inclusion for SMEs

Talaty, a fintech company based in Rabat, Morocco, has secured an undisclosed investment from Casablanca-based venture capital firm Witamax and Africa-focused impact investment firm Renew Capital. The funding aims to support financial inclusion for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Morocco and Francophone Africa. Founded in 2022 by Slimane Lahriche, Simo Bernoussi, Ilyas Daghiri, and Zakaria El Idrissi, Talaty provides instant lending solutions utilizing artificial intelligence (AI). The platform integrates technologies such as computer vision, text analysis, and behavioral finance to reduce costs and default rates, enabling faster, more efficient credit decisions for SMEs. "Securing financing is a significant hurdle for small and medium businesses, with many facing bankruptcy due to payment defaults," said Slimane Lahriche, CEO of Talaty. "Our AI-driven platform simplifies the process, allowing our partners to offer timely and effective financial support to these businesses." Nihal GRII, Investment Ecosystem Development Manager at Renew Capital, praised Talaty's impact, stating, "Talaty is providing a much-needed solution for Morocco's financial institutions facing SMB financing challenges. This initiative represents a true step toward financial inclusion by equipping institutions with the tools needed to serve a broader range of SMBs, thereby improving access to essential financial services for a larger segment of the business community."

Arab Advisors Reveals Affordable FTTH Pricing Trends in MENA



Arab Advisors Group released a new research report," A Comprehensive Analysis of FTTH Trends, Pricing, and Market Leaders in MENA" that analyzed residential FTTH plans offered by 50 major Internet service providers ("ISPs") in 19 Arab countries. Arab Advisors Group analyzed residential FTTH fees, connection/installation fees, and available FTTH download speeds. Arab Advisors Group calculated each country's average monthly fees for the most common download speed, contextualizing it using the GDP per capita and GDP per household figures of all 19 countries to determine the affordability per country. Fiber-to-the-home, once the gold standard for ultra-fast, reliable Internet connectivity, now faces intense competition with the advent of 5G networks. Today's Internet users have access to an expanding range of ultra-fast, dependable network options, empowering them with greater flexibility to choose the best service for staying connected. Consequently, telecom operators, particularly those yet to commercially launch 5G services, must adapt by offering more affordable fiber packages to remain competitive. Moreover, it's increasingly common for telecom operators to constantly reduce their services fees, responding to market changes and subscriber demands for better value. In the Arab world, telecom operators are expanding their FTTH offerings, increasing availability and coverage, while also making these services more affordable. However, despite the regional expansion of fiber networks, some operators limit fiber availability to specific locations. As part of Arab Advisors Group's continuous monitoring of MENA's telecom sector, we released an in-depth research report analyzing residential FTTH trends and pricing in the Arab world. In its report, Arab Advisors Group covered 50 major Internet service providers ("ISPs") in 19 Arab countries. Arab Advisors Group analyzed residential FTTH features including: fees, connection and installation fees, as well as available FTTH download speeds. Furthermore, Arab Advisors Group calculated the average monthly FTTH fees of the main Internet service providers ("ISPs") operating in the region. Arab Advisors Group further contextualized these fees by comparing them against the GDP per capita and GDP per household for each of the 19 countries under study. This comparison allowed Arab Advisors Group to determine FTTH affordability per country. Leveraging Arab Advisors Group's unparalleled regional expertise and accurate data, the report is the most comprehensive overview of residential FTTH trends, pricing, and market leadership in the region. It is an invaluable resource for ISPs currently providing FTTH services, as it allows them to assess their pricing strategies in comparison to regional and national averages. Such assessment allows ISPs to evaluate how competitive and affordable their residential FTTH services are, enabling them to adjust accordingly to align with market needs. Furthermore, the report offers crucial pricing insights for operators looking to launch fiber services, enabling them to develop market entry strategies based on solid, data-driven analysis. Lastly, monitoring telecom fees is a prerequisite for regulators to effectively fulfill their role in advancing and developing the telecommunications sector. In this regard, our report is equally valuable to telecom regulators, as it enables them to regulate and monitor fiber pricing within their countries, and ensure market transparency, and service accessibility. Hiba Rabadi, Managing Director of Arab Advisors Group said: "Telecommunications regulatory authorities are instrumental in driving the advancement of the telecom sector. To effectively execute this responsibility, these authorities must closely monitor telecom service pricing to ensure market competitiveness, foster service accessibility, and prevent market-dominant practices by a single operator. Data-driven monitoring empowers regulators to take timely actions, compelling operators to adjust their fees and offer more affordable services. At Arab Advisors Group, we take great pride in providing ongoing research that supports regulatory bodies in fulfilling this crucial role. Our latest residential FTTH fees assessment report further enriches our extensive library of over 6,000 reports, continuing our commitment to delivering valuable insights for the sector." Rabadi added, "Our report goes beyond merely cataloguing residential FTTH fees across the Arab world; by contextualizing the data by download speed on national and regional levels, Arab Advisors Group can identify key disparities in FTTH pricing across the region. This in-depth analysis is invaluable to Internet service providers ("ISPs"), as it allows them to benchmark their pricing strategies against both regional and national averages. By doing so, ISPs can assess the competitiveness and affordability of their services, pinpoint areas for improvement, and refine their pricing strategies to make their FTTH plans more appealing to Internet users."

Bangladesh Leads South Asia in Mobile Money Growth

Bangladesh continues to spearhead mobile money adoption in South Asia, with a significant impact on financial inclusion and economic growth, according to a report of Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA) published during the first half of 2024. The report titled "The State of the Industry Report on Mobile Money 2024" states the use of mobile money is increasing rapidly all over the world with approximately $2.7 million (nearly Tk33 crore) was transacted every minute globally via mobile phones in 2023. GSMA is a London-based non-profit organisation representing mobile network operators worldwide. The report states that mobile money is having a significant positive impact on people's lives and livelihoods as the growth of mobile money directly contributes to economic growth. Analysing data from 2013 to 2022, GSMA stated that a 10 percentage point increase in the use of mobile money can increase a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 0.4% to 1.0%. This global trend is reflected in Bangladesh as well. Here, mobile financial services (MFS) are making the largest contribution to financial inclusion. MFSs are not just limited to providing services like cash-in, cash-out, or sending money anymore. The MFS platforms are also facilitating payments of all types, paying utility bills, donations, stipend disbursement, and salary disbursement etc. Even products like loans and savings are also available in bKash's platform. Besides, MFS like bKash has made it easier than ever for expatriate Bangladeshis to send remittances with just few clicks. According to the GSMA report, in 2023, the number of registered MFS accounts worldwide was 1.75 billion, a 12% increase from the previous year. Transactions through these accounts in that year amounted to US$ 1.4 trillion, a 14% increase compared to 2022. From 2013 to 2022, mobile money contributed $600 billion to global GDP. For all these reasons, mobile money is now the most influential medium of financial inclusion globally. In 2023, the number of registered agents worldwide was 18.6 million, a 22% increase from the previous year. In 2023, international remittance growth was the highest among mobile money services. Global remittances via mobile phones increased from $22 billion in 2022 to $29 billion in 2023, seeing a 33% increase. Merchant payments increased by 14% to $74 billion. The average transaction per active account was $169, compared to $163 in 2022. Both bank-to-mobile and mobile-to-bank transactions have also increased. In 2023, the transaction amount stood at $210 billion in that area, registering a 50% increase from the previous year and a 250% increase compared to 2020.

Ooredoo Group to Build One of the Largest International Submarine Cables in GCC Connecting Seven Countries

Ooredoo Group has signed an agreement with Alcatel Submarine Networks (ASN) to build the Fibre in Gulf (FIG) submarine cable, connecting seven GCC countries: Qatar, Oman, UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq. This cable will create a low-latency, high-capacity route to Europe, offering up to 24 fibre pairs and a total capacity of 720Tbps. The advanced infrastructure aims to significantly enhance regional connectivity, improving network reliability, security, and speed for hyperscalers, telecom operators, governments, AI providers, data centers, and businesses. The FIG project will support the growth of cloud services, big data, and digital transformation initiatives across the region. Ooredoo's Group CEO, Aziz Aluthman Fakhroo, stated that the project aligns with the company's strategy to lead in digital infrastructure, expanding network capacity and interconnectivity across the GCC and beyond. He also emphasized Ooredoo's role in meeting the growing data demand between Asia and Europe. Alain Biston, CEO of ASN, praised the partnership, calling the

FIG cable a transformative project that will strengthen the GCC's position as a global digital hub. The initiative is also expected to support regional digital transformation, boosting connectivity and establishing the region as a critical hub for data exchange. Ooredoo continues to invest in innovative technologies, having recently become the first NVIDIA Cloud Partner in the region in 2024 and planning to deploy advanced GPU chips soon. The company's strategic focus also includes initiatives in AI, data centers, fintech, IoT, and submarine cables, with its Oman division landing the 2Africa Cable System last year. Group Chief Business Services Officer, Najib Khan, highlighted the substantial benefits of this project for businesses, governments, and AI application providers, reinforcing Ooredoo's position as a leading digital infrastructure provider in the region.

Egypt Unveils Ambitious AI Strategy to Become Regional Leader by 2030

Egypt has launched the second edition of its National Artificial Intelligence Strategy for 2025–2030, showcasing its ambition to become a leading AI hub in the Middle East and Africa. Building on the original framework introduced in 2021, the updated strategy, revealed by the National Council for Artificial Intelligence, centers on six key pillars: governance, technology, data, infrastructure, ecosystem, and talent. These elements are designed to support Egypt's "Digital Egypt" initiative, aiming to drive socio-economic growth and facilitate the establishment of over 250 AI-based companies. The updated strategy aligns with Egypt's goal to increase AI's contribution to the national GDP to over $42.7 billion by 2030, representing 7.7 percent of the total GDP. This announcement comes as AI is expected to contribute $15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030, with the Middle East capturing 2 percent of this, or approximately $320 billion, according to a PwC report. Among the countries in the region, Saudi Arabia is set to benefit the most, with AI projected to contribute more than $135.2 billion, or 12.4 percent of its GDP. The UAE is expected to experience the largest relative impact, with AI accounting for nearly 14 percent of its GDP. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, in his opening statement, emphasized the importance of AI in global development, stating that it is at the core of transforming various sectors and unlocking opportunities for sustainable growth. He highlighted that the pace of advancements in AI technology necessitates fully realizing its potential to shape a brighter future for Egypt. The President also noted that the new strategy builds on the foundation laid by the first AI strategy launched in May 2021, which focused on integrating AI tools into education, enhancing professional development, and fostering international collaborations. According to the strategy, AI applications are expected to benefit 26 percent of Egypt's workforce, considered a marginalized population. Additionally, the number of AI professionals in Egypt is forecasted to reach 30,000 by 2030. The strategy further anticipates that AI technology, including generative AI, will significantly boost academic research, increasing the number of AI-related publications to 6,000 per year and positioning Egypt as a key regional research center. "We remain determined to achieve excellence in this transformative field," President El-Sisi declared. "Our aim is to establish Egypt as a leader in AI in the Middle East and Africa and an influential contributor on the global stage. We will continue to prioritize investments in skill development and capacity building to cultivate AI professionals who meet international standards."

Pakistan Readies 5G Auction

Pakistan's Ministry of IT and Telecom set a timeline for rolling out 5G service, with a spectrum auction of four bands scheduled for May and deployment to start the next month, Pakistan Today reported. The Ministry's Advisory Committee for 5G Planning is due to complete its work on policy reforms, covering spectrum pricing, auction format and tax framework in March, the newspaper wrote. Pakistan established the committee in 2020. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) is expected to allocate spectrum in the 3500MHz, 2600MHz, 2300MHz and 700MHz bands. In a report on the Pakistan market in August 2024, the GSMA noted spectrum costs were already high and ARPU had been declining, making it "imperative a rational approach to pricing is adopted for the upcoming auction so the total cost of spectrum is sustainable and operators have the right incentives to invest in network rollout which delivers affordable connectivity". The GSMA also urged the government to eliminate a 15 per cent withholding tax on telecoms services and a 19.5 per cent sales tax on mobile services. In 2023, Pakistan's Minister of IT and Telecom and the PTA chair committed to eliminating hurdles to a 5G auction, with a priority on addressing issues around taxation. At the time, the officials aimed to hold an auction within ten months. The PTA issued six-month 5G test licenses in the 2.6GHz band to operators Jazz and Zong in 2020.

PTCL Sets Prerequisites for Participation in 5G Auction

President and Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), Hatem Bamatraf has set prerequisites including extended payment term, reasonable reserve price as well as moving to rupee-based price for participation in 5G spectrum auction, which the government is planning latest by May 2025. “We will participate in the 5G spectrum auction. It all depends on the conditions of the auction. If the terms or conditions of the auction are, somehow, make sense for us from business point of view then definitely, we would like to be the most innovative company in this market and we will jump into the new technologies as long as it makes [a] business case,” said Bamatraf, while talking to Business Recorder. He said that terms and conditions for 5G spectrum auction were yet to be announced, however, some good and favorable terms were expected to make it a success. During their engagement with the Ministry of Information Technology, other government stakeholders as well as the National Economic Research Associates Inc (NERA) – a US-based international consultancy firm hired for the spectrum auction, they have conveyed their concerns and message in clear words, he added. Talking about the impact of 5G in the country, the CEO said it would help the digitalization of Pakistan by connecting people with robust purpose-built technology opening up opportunities for industries as well as individuals. The NERA has also backed telecom operators’ demands, including extended payment term, reasonable reserve price as well as moving to rupee-based price for successful 5G auction in the country. The NERA

warned that high spectrum prices will result in fewer players, and levels of competition will decline, potentially leading to lower levels of innovation, high prices and other poor outcomes for consumers. It is critical to emphasize that even from the perspective of net flows to government revenue, it is highly likely that lower spectrum prices will lead to long-term higher government revenues, not lower ones, said MD NERA in a presentation. Dollar-pegged prices; IMT spectrum prices are tied to the US dollar, and with the devaluation of the Pakistani rupee, the cost for operates has skyrocketed, since the last auction in 2021, where $1 equivalent Rs163, the exchange rates has risen to Rs278, a 70 percent increase solely owing to currency devaluation.

BTRC Initiates Telecom Licensing Reforms for Better Services

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has launched efforts to reform the country's telecom licensing regime to align with contemporary demands. A committee, led by BTRC Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Iqbal Ahmed, has already held three meetings to restructure the network and licensing roadmap. BTRC Chairman Maj Gen (retd) Md Emdad Ul Bari shared this information at a press conference at the commission's office in Dhaka. "Currently, we observe that many licenses are functioning as intermediaries, increasing costs instead of promoting cost efficiency. We intend to review this and strive for a licensing framework that is streamlined, effective, and efficient," he said. Bari said that the reforms aim to safeguard consumer interests rather than protect business entities. The initiative seeks to foster healthy competition and collaboration among stakeholders, including consumers, businesses, and the government. Addressing challenges such as transitioning from existing licenses, establishing sustainable investment policies, and creating effective regulations, the BTRC plans to submit its reform proposals to the government by March. The chairman acknowledged the need for consumer-centric policies to ensure sustainability and facilitate, rather than regulate, telecom companies. He said the committee would streamline complex network structures, reduce pressure on spectrum usage, and enhance fixed broadband services. The commission also aims to adopt green technologies and promote active sharing to support digital service expansion. He mentioned plans to eliminate unnecessary licenses and terminate licenses that hinder healthy competition. The proposed framework will address gaps in clear and sustainable policies, which have deterred investor interest, he said. Regarding 5G, Bari said that consultations are ongoing, and preparations are underway to auction the 700 MHz band spectrum by June. However, no definitive timeline for the 5G rollout has been established. The BTRC will also advise the government on developing policies that position telecom as a key enabler of digital development, focusing on simplified, efficient, and cost-effective networks to meet growing digital demands, he said. He said VAT and taxes are the government's concern, not the BTRC's. However, VAT and taxes should be reduced as much as possible. Internet services need to be more accessible. Regarding attracting foreign investment in the telecommunication and internet sector, Bari said that to attract foreign investment, the country must establish investment-friendly regulations. Companies like Amazon, Google, and Meta have emphasized that liability for social media posts should rest with the individual who made the post, not the platform itself. "We will communicate this perspective to the government," he added.

Sri Lanka Advances with Digital ID Project

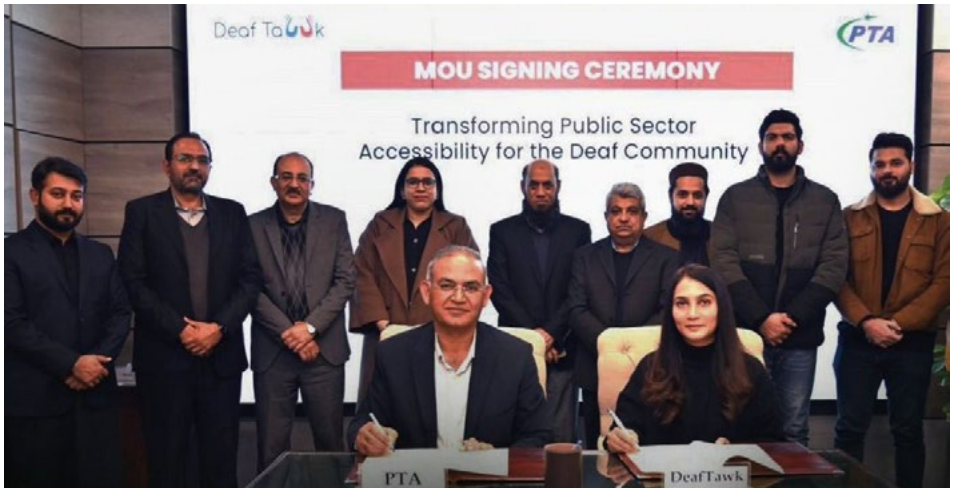
The Sri Lankan government has procured 350 units of biometric hardware, which include high-resolution cameras and fingerprint scanners, for the country's ambitious Sri Lanka Unique Digital Identity (SL-UDI) project. This project aims to convert the nation's standard identification card (ID) into a digital format. In a statement on Sunday in Colombo, Deputy Minister of Digital Economy, Eranga Weeraratne, confirmed that a tender for an additional 400 units of similar biometric hardware has been awarded. The Department of Registrar of Persons (DRP), responsible for issuing national identity cards, has already invested 5.5 billion Sri Lankan rupees (SLRS) into the SL-UDI project, which is designed to boost the economy, enhance services, and reduce corruption. Weeraratne also revealed that the previous government had secured a financial grant of SLRS 10.4 billion from India to support the project, which is estimated to cost SLRS 20 billion (approximately US$67.3 million). This sum includes the establishment of two sophisticated data centers to host the platform at DRP sites, alongside the running costs for three years and hardware expenses. The Sri Lankan government is expected to contribute an additional SLRS 4.5 billion to the project. Concerns regarding Indian access to Sri Lankan personal data led to further discussions by the National Peoples Power (NPP) government. To address these concerns, the NPP amended the agreement with India to ensure local control of the project, working with the non-profit Indian platform provider, MOSIP (Modular Open-Source Identification Platform), which has been engaged with the Sri Lankan government since 2020. Weeraratne assured that the system would be entirely managed and controlled by Sri Lankan professionals, emphasizing that the government would oversee database management, software updates, and logins. The DRP is currently in the final stages of implementing the platform and training personnel. Collection of fingerprints and facial recognition data is expected to begin next month. The revised Digital ID Act in Sri Lanka now includes provisions for fingerprint and facial recognition. Iris biometric scanning will be introduced later once the DRP and system infrastructure are ready for this data collection. Initially, the digital ID program will be launched for 16-year-olds, who will be issued their first ID cards. After six months, the project will extend to the older national identity cardholders, offering them the option to transition to electronic national identity cards (e-NICs). Banks and other institutions will integrate fingerprint scanning to confirm account holders' identities. As the project progresses, the Sri Lankan government also plans to integrate various government services, including payments for municipal councils, university fees, and other official functions, through its GovPay project. Weeraratne stated that 16 government institutions have already been integrated, with 30 institutions expected to be included by April. India's collaboration with Sri Lanka is significant as it operates the world's largest digital identity system, providing funding and technical expertise for the e-NIC project. International financial organizations such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are also in discussions to support Sri Lanka's digitalization efforts. With the increasing importance of digital infrastructure, commentators have urged Sri Lankan officials to ensure adequate safeguards are in place, maintaining sovereign control over the nation's digital identity system.

Satellite Internet Fuels Industry 4.0 Across the GCC

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is stepping into a new age of digital transformation, and satellite internet is leading the charge. While cities across the region enjoy fast and widespread connectivity, remote areas have been left in the digital dust—until now. Satellite internet is changing the game by bringing high-speed access to these underserved communities, sparking innovation and boosting growth across all sectors. It's not just about staying connected; it's about opening up a world of possibilities for everyone. Despite advanced infrastructure in major cities, significant connectivity gaps remain as a challenge for further advancements and tech adoption. Satellite internet is playing a key role in bridging this divide, connecting remote communities to essential services like education and healthcare. In Saudi Arabia, where Vision 2030 prioritizes equitable development, satellite broadband is facilitating telemedicine initiatives and enabling virtual classrooms, bringing quality education to remote corners of the Kingdom. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are vital to the GCC's economic prosperity. Satellite internet is empowering these businesses, particularly in countries like Bahrain and the UAE, with seamless access to e-commerce platforms, cloud-based solutions and global markets. By leveraging satellite connectivity, SMEs can adopt advanced logistics and inventory management systems, enhancing their competitiveness in international trade. Across the UAE and the wider Middle East, farms are increasingly adopting precision farming techniques, leveraging satellite-based technologies such as GPS-guided tractors, drones for crop monitoring, and sensors for efficient irrigation management. Increased connectivity is expected to significantly boost SME contributions to the GCC's GDP. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is transforming key sectors in the GCC, including oil and gas, agriculture, and logistics. Satellite technology is playing a crucial role in this transformation. For instance, Saudi Aramco's use of various digital technologies, for remote monitoring and automation in its oil fields offers a relevant example. They've reported significant improvements in efficiency, safety, and environmental performance. In oil sector, the integration of IoT-enabled sensors with satellite networks can optimizing oil extraction processes, contributing to increased operational efficiency and safety. Further, satellite technology is enabling precision farming techniques in arid regions, with the potential to significantly improve agricultural yields.

PTA Partners with DeafTawk to Provide Sign Language Interpretation Services

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with DeafTawk, a social enterprise dedicated to supporting deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, to offer sign language interpretation services at PTA offices. The collaboration was announced on Thursday by state-owned media. DeafTawk, a Pakistani-founded social enterprise, operates a globally available mobile application that provides real-time sign-language interpretation services. The app connects deaf users with qualified interpreters, facilitating communication in various scenarios such as medical consultations, education, transportation, and family interactions. The service is currently available in Pakistan, Denmark, Singapore, and Puerto Rico. Through the partnership, DeafTawk will provide "DeafTawk Plus," an online sign language interpretation service for deaf visitors at PTA offices. Additionally, PTA plans to integrate AI-powered text-to-sign and speech-to-sign tools into its digital platforms, alongside conducting annual accessibility audits to ensure continuous improvement in services. The initiative aims to address the communication challenges faced by over ten million deaf individuals in Pakistan, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. DeafTawk was founded in 2018 by Wamiq Hassan, Pakistan's first deaf software engineer, who developed the app to overcome communication barriers faced by the hearing impaired in Pakistan. Hassan highlighted the importance of creating solutions that bridge the gap and enhance accessibility for the deaf community.



Sri Lanka to Introduce 'GovPay' to Digitalize Revenue Collection

'GovPay', the initial step in the digitalisation of Sri Lanka's government services, will be officially launched on February 7, the president's media division said. This "initiative will streamline and modernize how government institutions handle payments, enabling seamless transactions through a secure and efficient digital platform," the PMD said. The facility, which aims to modernize revenue collection processes, will be launched by President Anura Kumara Disanayake. GovPay will initially integrate 16 government institutions, then Ministry of Digital Economy said. An additional 30 institutions are scheduled to join in two further phases, achieving full implementation by April 2025. This facility will enable citizens to make payments for government services through fintech applications or online banking platforms.

China Mobile | International

Together we evolve

The complete suite of high-quality iConnect products and services, ranging from global Voice, SMS, Data, Mobile to IoT and professional services, is built on one of the world's largest and most technologically sophisticated networks. iConnect is your connect-all carrier solutions that empower you to strive for even greater success in the journey of global connectivity.

To realize the potential of 5G, cloud, AI and IoT, CMI evolves with you to drive digital transformation and seize every opportunity.

BEST MOBILE/5G SERVICE INNOVATION
Global Carrier Awards 2021

BEST CLOUD INNOVATION
Global Carrier Awards 2021

BEST IoT SOLUTION PROVIDER
CC-Global Awards 2021

180+ POPs **SMS** **70+** Cable Resources

CUSTOMER **VOICE** CARING **IOT** INNOVATION

iCONNECT

INSIGHT INTEGRATION

DATA Your Connect-All Carrier Solutions

PRO COLLABORATION **MOBILE**

100T International Transmission Bandwidth

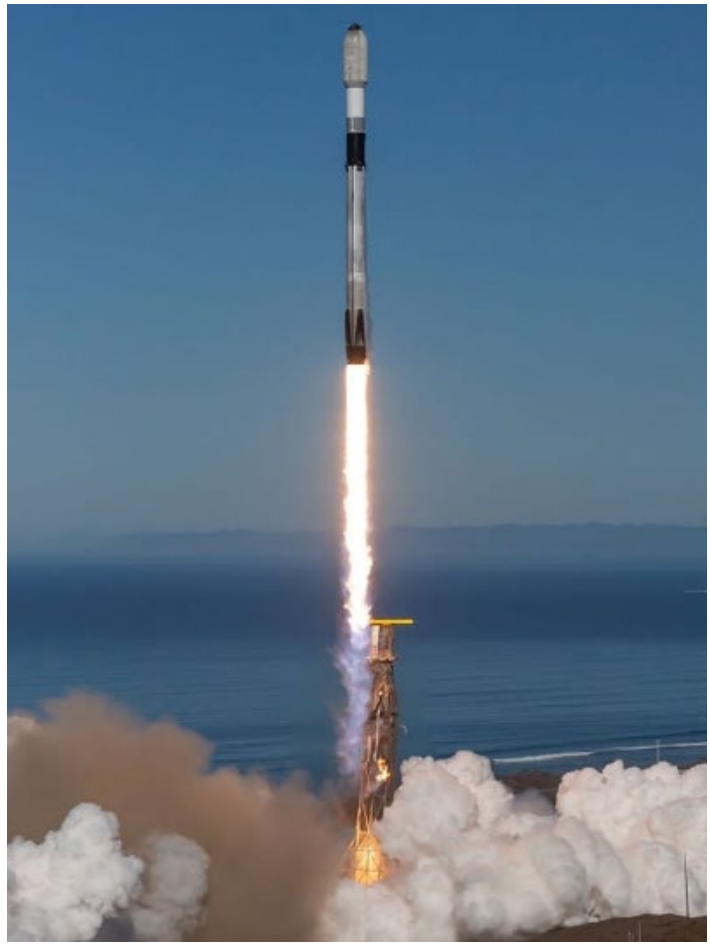
Website LinkedIn

cmiiconnect@cmi.chinamobile.com

SATELLITE NEWS

UAE Launches Its Most-Advanced Satellite MBZ-SAT

The UAE's Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) has announced the successful launch of MBZ-SAT, the most advanced satellite in the region, named in honor of President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. MBRSC announced that the MBZ-SAT was launched from the Space Launch Complex 4E (SLC-4E) at the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, USA, aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket. MBZ-SAT marks a significant milestone in the UAE's satellite development journey, having been fully developed entirely by Emirati engineers at MBRSC, said a WAM news agency report. The satellite was announced in 2020 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai. The satellite was officially approved for launch last year by H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, and President of MBRSC. Weighing 750 kg with dimensions of 3m x 5m, MBZ-SAT represents a significant advancement in Earth observation technology. The satellite's technical specifications demonstrate substantial improvements across all systems. Its imaging system also consists of one of the highest resolution cameras with improved data transmission rates - four times faster than existing systems. It is also equipped with an advanced electric jet propulsion system, a navigation system accurate to one meter, and a star tracking system that allows for unparalleled precision in positioning capabilities. These capabilities position MBZ-SAT as a significant advancement in Earth observation technology, providing valuable data for both research and practical applications. The satellite will be able to capture images with double the precision of previous models while increasing image generation capacity tenfold. This improvement comes from its integrated scheduling and processing system, which can deliver processed images within two hours of capture. The satellite will serve multiple functions, including supporting environmental monitoring, infrastructure management, and disaster relief. These features allow local and international entities to make informed decisions based on current, accurate data. The satellite will be operated and managed by the Mission Control Centre at MBRSC, with specialized teams handling operations and analyzing the data transmitted to Earth. Local manufacturing played a crucial role in the satellite, with UAE companies producing 90% of the satellite's mechanical structures and a significant portion of the electronic components. Companies like Strata, EPI, Rockford Xellerix, Halcon, Falcon, and EGA contributed their expertise to various aspects of the satellite's construction. This collaborative approach has strengthened the UAE's space technology capabilities while transferring vital knowledge and skills to local talent—ensuring the nation maintains its competitive edge in global space exploration. Talal Humaid Belhoul Al Falasi, Vice President, MBRSC, said: "We extend our deepest gratitude to our leadership for their unwavering support and vision, which have been instrumental in achieving this milestone. We are proud to announce yet another successful



mission that is the launch of MBZ-SAT, which has given a positive start to a busy and promising year at MBRSC. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the entire team at MBRSC whose dedication, expertise, and hard work have made this milestone possible. This achievement is more than a testament to our capabilities—it is a signal of what lies ahead for the UAE in the realm of space exploration. Each mission builds on the last, paving the way for groundbreaking advancements and cementing the UAE's role as a leader in shaping the future of space science and technology." Hamad Obaid AlMansoori, Chairman, MBRSC, said: "Under the guidance of our leadership, we have succeeded in launching MBZ-SAT. This historic accomplishment demonstrates the UAE's advancement in space technology and reinforces our position as a global leader in the sector. The achievement also underscores our commitment to elevating the nation's standing in the international space arena, while showcasing the collective expertise of Emiratis who are dedicated to realizing our leadership's ambitious vision. We will continue working on missions to enhance our space capabilities, advancing the leadership's strategic objective of establishing the UAE as a pioneering force in space exploration and technological innovation."

Starlink to Provide Reliable High-Speed Connectivity to the Oracle Enterprise Communications Platform

Oracle is using connectivity from Starlink, the world's first and largest satellite constellation using a low Earth orbit to deliver broadband internet, to enable high-speed communications for the Enterprise Communications Platform (ECP). Now, customers using Oracle ECP to power Oracle's extensive portfolio of industry applications can connect from almost anywhere, including some of the world's most remote locations, and benefit from capabilities such as real-time video and audio streaming. "Starlink provides reliable high-speed connectivity for those in areas where it has been historically difficult due to lack of infrastructure or natural obstacles," said Jason Fritch, SpaceX's Vice President of Starlink Enterprise Sales. "Providing fast and secure broadband to all corners of the world will help Oracle expand the reach of cloud technology and real-time information for its customers in invaluable ways." Oracle ECP unifies fixed, mobile, and the Starlink networks to securely manage and ensure cloud application delivery in remote or previously poorly connected areas. With the integration of Starlink's network on Oracle ECP, Oracle industry applications customers can leverage satellite connectivity in a rapidly growing list of more than 100 countries and territories. Built on the high performance and security of Oracle Cloud Infrastructure, Oracle ECP delivers real-time information for connected devices, IoT endpoints, and mobile applications. It also secures and monitors the equipment against misuse or failures. With its edge component, Oracle Cloud Connector, Oracle ECP can remotely host and manage video and audio applications to address a variety of industry use cases. Its redundant backhaul connectivity enables Oracle industry applications customers to maximize application uptime—even during an outage on the primary connection. Real-time connectivity is essential in supporting some of the biggest challenges in industries such as healthcare, construction and engineering, utilities, hospitality, and the public sector. For example, hospital systems could use Starlink and Oracle ECP to gain reliable access to Oracle's clinical applications in metro hospitals through to suburban and rural clinics in desert or mountainous areas. Similarly, public safety agencies can leverage capabilities that help keep first responders connected and safe, even in areas with limited or no mobile coverage. "By adding Starlink's proven performance and expansive network to our established network relationships, we're powering ubiquitous IoT connectivity, safeguarding mission-critical operations, and protecting data integrity during emergencies," said Andrew Morawski, executive vice president and general manager, Oracle Communications. "Together, we're creating the intelligent communications foundation that will accelerate business transformation across industries around the world."

China's Satellite Internet Provider Spacesail Sets Up in Kazakhstan

Spacesail Kazakhstan, a subsidiary of China's Spacesail International, has officially registered at Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) with a capital investment of $17mn. Often regarded as a potential competitor to Elon Musk's Starlink, the company is positioning itself as a major player in the "mega-constellation" satellite internet sector. In 2024, Spacesail successfully put 18 satellites into low-Earth orbit using the Long March 6A rocket launched from Taiyuan Launch Complex in China's Shanxi Province. By 2025, the company plans to deploy 648 satellites to cover China's entire territory, with an ambitious long-term goal of launching approximately 15,000 satellites worldwide by 2030. Once fully operational, Spacesail aims to provide high-speed internet access globally. The company plans to establish a local facility to integrate its satellite internet services with Kazakhstan's communication infrastructure. Kazakhstan's Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry is expected to formalize cooperation with Spacesail by signing a memorandum of understanding within the year, after which a detailed timeline for the satellite internet rollout in Kazakhstan will be announced, Kursiv reported on January 22. Spacesail Kazakhstan has pledged to comply with requirements from the ministry. Kazakhstan is already testing its satellite internet capabilities. A pilot project has been launched to bring Starlink internet services to schools in remote areas. Additionally, satellite internet services from global providers OneWeb and Amazon Kuiper were introduced in the country in 2024.

Ofcom Grant UK Licence for Amazon's Project Kuiper Broadband Satellites

Ofcom has grant Amazon's Project Kuiper a UK Earth Station Network Licence (ESNL), which will support their effort to launch a global mega-constellation of satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) to deliver affordable ultrafast broadband and mobile (4G, 5G) services. The UK telecoms regulator also made more spectrum available in the 28GHz and 32GHz bands. Currently, Amazon are still in the progress of developing their service, which means that they're trailing well behind established rivals like OneWeb (Eutelsat) and Starlink (SpaceX). Nevertheless, Amazon has approval to deploy their own constellation of 3,232 LEO satellites as part of Project Kuiper, which will sit at an altitude of between 590km and 630km. The system can process up to 1Tbps (Terabits per second) of data traffic on each satellite, albeit shared between many users. Each of Amazon's satellites are fairly small, but like Starlink they make up for that in quantity, and this approach typically delivers lots of data capacity (100-400Mbps broadband speeds), as well as relatively fast latency times (often c.20-40ms) and wide global coverage. But only provided it's all matched by plenty of Ground Stations and regulatory approvals in supporting countries, which is where Ofcom comes in for the United Kingdom. The announcement today essentially authorises Kuiper to operate user terminals in the Ka band in the UK and connect it to their satellites, which will be able to serve local homes, businesses and public sector sites. Amazon have already launched a couple of test satellites and their first production satellites are due to be carried into orbit during early 2025. The first commercial beta testing is thus likely to follow during the latter half of 2025 (later than originally planned, although delays are not uncommon with space projects). But it will then take another 6 years to fully manufacture and launch their planned constellation, which takes us to around 2030. Project Kuiper has so far secured 83 future launches on rockets from Arianespace, Blue Origin, SpaceX, and United Launch Alliance, and they have options for additional launches with Blue Origin, providing enough capacity to deploy the majority of their satellite constellation. The project has yet to announced what sort of prices and packages consumers can expect from the service, but they'll probably aim to be competitive with Starlink.

Vodafone Sets Up Space Research Hub to Develop 4G/5G Satellite Connectivity

Vodafone is taking mobile connectivity to new heights—literally. The company isto open Europe's first dedicated research hub in Malaga for integrating low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite and land-based mobile broadband services. This initiative will enable seamless switching between 4G/5G networks and satellite connections using standard smartphones. The Málaga hub will focus on designing, testing, and validating open-source hardware, software, and next-generation processing chips capable of operating seamlessly across both space and terrestrial networks. A dedicated *space-to-land gateway* will allow operators and technology partners to test and refine their services using AST SpaceMobile's BlueBird satellites before commercial deployment. Currently, satellite services require dishes, terminals, or satellite phones for direct connections. Vodafone's vision is to make satellite connectivity as seamless as switching between WiFi and mobile networks. Earlier this month, T-Mobile US announced it was beta-testing direct connections between regular devices and Starlink satellites. Last month, Vodafone made the world's first space-powered mobile video call using this technology, connecting a phone directly to AST SpaceMobile's satellites. The new hub will accelerate Vodafone's mission to eliminate coverage gaps for its 340 million customers across 15 countries, as well as for network partners in 45 additional markets. Vodafone is promising an era where users can stay connected anywhere—whether deep in the mountains, out at sea, or in remote rural areas where traditional networks struggle. The research centre will be housed within Vodafone's European Innovation Centre in Málaga and will be backed by a grant from the Spanish Space Agency. Key collaborations include AST SpaceMobile and the University of Málaga (UMA) . Vodafone is also inviting tech innovators, developers, and industry partners to help build a new European ecosystem for hybrid space-terrestrial communications.

Colt Launches LEO-Based 4G, 5G Service

UK-based Colt Technology Services' Managed LEO+ offering is available across 65 countries for use in production facilities, manufacturing sites and retail outlets, in addition to rural and remote areas. The digital infrastructure company bills Managed LEO+ as complimentary to its fibre-based offering by providing businesses with a back-up option for their infrastructure, or for organisations requiring rapid deployment. Colt Technology Services stated the service can be deployed within 24 hours after a site survey and approval by the customer or site owner. The service launch follows a trial with a large pharmaceutical company with operations across 30 countries, some of which are in rural locations underserved by network providers. It announced a partnership with Rivada Space Network in 2024. The satellite service provider plans to launch a constellation of 600 LEO birds in 2026.

Measat and SPACESAIL sign MoU to Advance LEO Satellite Connectivity

Measat has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Shanghai Spacesail Technologies Co. Ltd. (SPACESAIL), formerly Shanghai Spacecom Satellite Technology. Measat has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Shanghai Spacesail Technologies Co. Ltd. (SPACESAIL), formerly known as Shanghai Spacecom Satellite Technology, to explore potential collaboration in satellite broadband and emerging space technologies. The MoU exchange ceremony took place in Shanghai, with Measat represented by Chief Operating Officer Yau Chyong Lim and SPACESAIL by its President, Dr. Jason Zheng. This partnership aims to facilitate the deployment of SPACESAIL's Low Earth Orbit (LEO) broadband services and solutions, including its Thousand Sails mega-constellation, also known as "Qianfan." The collaboration will focus on emerging technologies such as Direct-to-Device (D2D) communications, satellite-based IoT services, and Earth Observation (EO) capabilities in Malaysia and other Asian markets where Measat operates. Additionally, both companies will conduct a joint study on rain fade effects in Q-/V-band high-frequency transmission. Commenting on the MoU, Communications Minister YB Fahmi Fadzil, said: "In 2024, Malaysia marked the 50th anniversary of our diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, celebrating the many positive outcomes of this cordial friendship. Looking forward, there are abundant opportunities for deeper collaboration, especially in harnessing advanced technologies to enhance people's lives. These innovations have the potential to drive a wide array of benefits, from improving the delivery of government services to fostering economic growth through industrial and commercial applications. Additionally, with Malaysia serving as Chairman of ASEAN this year, we hope to showcase the country's technological capabilities and explore new opportunities across the region." Yau Chyong Lim, Chief Operating Officer of Measat, added: "Measat is excited to begin this partnership with SPACESAIL to advance LEO satellite services across our markets. We firmly believe in a multi-orbit satellite network to achieve progress in society and are pleased to have the opportunity to integrate the capabilities of SPACESAIL's Thousand Sails mega constellation with Measat's fleet of Geostationary Orbit ("GSO") satellites. In regions where Measat operates, satellites have immense potential in further bridging the digital divide and overcoming geographical challenges. We look forward to realising this multi-orbit potential – from expanding the reach of established use-cases like satellite broadband in remote areas to advancing cutting-edge satellite solutions such as D2D connectivity and satellite-based IoT."

SpaceX Expands Starlink In-Flight Wi-Fi to 500 Planes

SpaceX is seeing major progress in making Starlink an in-flight perk, officially installing the satellite internet system on 500 planes. SpaceX began integrating Starlink in commercial planes in spring 2022 and announced its latest milestone this week. "500 planes and more every day," SpaceX VP for Starlink Engineering Michael Nicolls tweeted. This is a huge increase from the end of 2023, when Starlink was installed and used on about 80 aircraft, with another 400 planes on contract to receive the satellite internet. A year later, the company increased that to 450 aircraft, with over 2,000 additional planes in line to receive the satellite internet, according to SpaceX's annual progress report for 2024. Starlink is often faster than other in-flight Wi-Fi services, with download speeds ranging from 40 to 220Mbps for passengers, according to SpaceX. On a March 2023 test flight with regional carrier JSX, PCMag found that Starlink downloads averaged 126Mbps, with uploads at 7.6Mbps. More Americans will also start encountering Starlink on their flights this year. United Airlines plans to install it on hundreds of passenger jets before the end of the year and start rolling out Starlink-powered in-flight Wi-Fi this spring. Starlink is also coming to Hawaiian Airlines—which has merged with Alaska Airlines—Qatar Airlines, Air France, and Scandinavian Airlines, among others. An FAQ from SpaceX adds that Starlink equipment currently supports two Airbus and two Boeing aircraft models, including the 737 and 777, in addition to several smaller passenger jets. For airlines, the Starlink equipment isn't cheap. In the past, the company charged $150,000 to install a dish on a plane and $10,000 per month to receive unlimited internet data. SpaceX also supports customers using its Starlink Mini dish on small planes. But the company notes: "This use of Starlink Mini has not been certified or otherwise approved by the FAA or any other civil aviation authority."

Viasat Secures Task Order for LEO SATCOM Services Under US$13 Billion DoD Contract

Viasat, a global leader in satellite communications, announced that Inmarsat Government (dba Viasat) received a Task Order award to provide satellite communications (SATCOM) services under the Proliferated Low Earth Orbit (PLEO) Satellite-Based Services (SBS) Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract, which was awarded in 2023 to multiple vendors by the U.S. Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) on behalf of the U.S Space Force and Space Systems Command (SSC) Commercial Satellite Communications Office (CSCO). This is the first Task Order award for Viasat under the 10-year IDIQ contract, which now has an expanded ceiling value of $13 billion. As part of this contract, Viasat aims to provide a suite of fully-managed LEO satellite-based services and capabilities, to include space relay services, supplemented by GEO and NGSO satellites, supporting all domains – space, air, land, maritime and cyber. Under this initial $3.5 million Task Order, Viasat will provide Ku-band LEO services through a partner network to support U.S. government operations in various global locations. As part of this work, Viasat will provide network management support, including real-time data through an online account management tool and offering comprehensive technical support 24/7 to ensure uninterrupted service. A leading satellite services provider and network integrator, Viasat has worked with trusted satellite owners/operators to provide the bandwidth government customers require at a cost-effective price point. As government operations increasingly depend on space-based capabilities from trusted commercial operators for defense and national security missions, it is critical to have resilient communications architectures that include satellites in geostationary (GEO) and non-geostationary orbits (NGSO). The expansion of satcom services in LEO is part of a Department of Defense (DoD) strategy to strengthen resilience for satellite communications, remote sensing and other capabilities by diversifying and integrating the orbits used.

Starlink Nears Approval to Launch in India

Starlink will reportedly soon be granted approval by Indian authorities to introduce satellite broadband services, with the company submitting the required material for final clearance. The Economic Times stated the satellite broadband arm of Elon Musk's SpaceX agreed to most conditions for securing a licence from the country's regulator but questioned some security-related requirements, which are under discussion. The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre will review Starlink's application, the newspaper wrote. The news comes a week after India Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Musk during his visit to the US to see President Donald Trump. Back in early 2022, Starlink was ordered by the Indian government to refund deposits made by customers as the venture had not received a licence to operate. SpaceX set up local subsidiary Starlink Satellite Communications in late 2021 to offer broadband service.

Kazakhstan Explores Satellite Systems to Enhance Internet Connectivity

Top global experts at the Digital Almaty forum discussed how non-geostationary orbit (NGSO) and Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite communication systems could help bridge the digital divide, reported the Kazakh Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry. NGSO systems can significantly increase the availability of communications in remote areas by providing low-latency, high-speed internet, which makes them indispensable in telecommunications, transport, defense, and emergency response. Meanwhile, developing LEO satellites is not just a technological trend but a fundamental step toward eliminating the digital divide. Vassiliy Leonov, the deputy chairman of the Republican Center of Space Communications, said that beyond advancing the telecom industry, these systems could expand access to education, healthcare, and businesses even in the most remote regions. However, large-scale deployment of LEO systems presents challenges, including frequency regulation, orbital safety, and competition with traditional geostationary orbit (GSO) satellites — for example, environmental sustainability. Thousands of satellites are already in orbit, and their numbers are expected to rise. Experts warn that without proper disposal and deorbiting strategies, increasing space debris could disrupt operations and lead to collisions, turning Earth's orbits into chaos. Regarding regulation and international cooperation, coordinating orbital and frequency usage is becoming increasingly complex amidst intensifying competition between key players, including SpaceX, Spacesail, Amazon Kuiper, and Chinese and European projects. "We must acknowledge that dozens of operators are currently active in space, and the frequency spectrum is limited. It is essential for governments and international organizations to establish unified rules that allow satellite systems to coexist without mutual interference," stated Dmitriy Vetlugin, the director of Market Access and Sales, Central Asia at Eutelsat OneWeb. Besides that, NGSO systems open up new market opportunities in developing countries and sectors such as aviation, maritime transport, agriculture, and corporate sectors. The goal is to make satellite internet as accessible as mobile networks while ensuring commercial sustainability, noted Jie Wan, Vice President of Marketing and Service at Spacesail. Experts concluded that the future lies in integrating GSO and NGSO systems. In the coming years, hybrid models will emerge, where GSO satellites provide high bandwidth capacity while LEO satellites ensure low latency and real-time responsiveness.

VEON and Starlink to Launch Direct-to-Cell Satellite Connectivity in Ukraine

Telecoms group VEON has announced a new partnership with Starlink, a division of SpaceX, to bring direct-to-cell satellite connectivity to Ukraine. The deal will see Kyivstar, VEON's Ukrainian subsidiary, offer these satellite-based connectivity services to its customers across the country. The deal will see Ukraine become one of the first countries to benefit from Starlink's direct-to-cell services, with T-Mobile in the US the only other operator that has agreed to roll out the technology so far. Service activation in Ukraine is expected in the fourth quarter of 2025 and will include SMS and over-the-top (OTT) messaging functionality. Service offerings will expand to include voice and data services in future phases. Global satellite constellation Starlink is currently operational in roughly 118countries worldwide, where it aims to serve customers in regions where traditional internet infrastructure is limited. Its technology has already played a significant role in connecting areas affected by natural disasters, conflict, and other infrastructure challenges. All of these deployments, however, currently require the use of a Starlink terminal dish. Direct-to-cell capabilities, on the other hand, will allow customers to use the satellite connectivity without any deploying any additional equipment. These capabilities are limited the latest Starlink satellite models, of which SpaceX has launched over 100 in the past year. For Ukraine, this satellite connectivity could provide customers with an invaluable emergency resource, allowing them to stay connected even when terrestrial infrastructure has been destroyed by Russian military action. "Kyivstar has done a tremendous job in investing in Ukraine's 4G connectivity, expanding coverage to remote areas and increasing the energy resilience of its network. This announcement helps us take our commitment to Ukraine's connectivity to the next level, exponentially amplifying the resilience of our services with satellite connectivity," said Kaan Terzioglu, CEO of VEON Group in a press release. Kyivstar CEO Oleksandr Komarov emphasised the importance of the collaboration in ensuring continuous communication for customers in Ukraine, especially during ongoing challenges. "Kyivstar has been the backbone of Ukraine's resilience throughout the war, and we are committed to leaving no stone unturned to keep Ukraine connected. Our collaboration with Starlink is a game-changer in our journey towards achieving our 'LTE everywhere' ambition," he said. VEON, which has invested over $10 billion in Ukraine since 2013, has committed an additional $1 billion for the country's recovery and reconstruction between 2023 and 2027. The company was named the top international investor in Ukraine for 2022 and 2023 by Forbes Ukraine and NV Ukraine. "Working with Starlink allows us to extend connectivity to underserved areas, supporting our broader mission to provide reliable services in emerging markets," said Augie K Fabela II, Chairman and Founder of VEON. At the World Communication Awards held last month in London, VEON Kyivstar won the Crisis Response Award.

SpaceX, Amazon in Talks with British Airways Owner on Wi-Fi Deal

British Airways owner IAG SA is in discussions with Elon Musk's Starlink to outfit its jet fleet with Wi-Fi service, reflecting the increasing inroads SpaceX's satellite internet business is making with major global carriers, reported Bloomberg News. IAG, also owning Spain's Iberia and Ireland's Aer Lingus, hasn't made a final decision and is weighing options with multiple providers including Amazon.com Inc.'s nascent Project Kuiper, said the report. "The talks underscore a looming shakeup in the aviation services market fueled by the deployment of satellite constellations orbiting closer to Earth," noted the report. "Airlines are inking deals with Starlink and others to replace costly, limited in-flight Wi-Fi. Expanded satellite bandwidth has helped to produce web-surfing experiences closer to what consumers expect on the ground." Starlink, SpaceX's internet-from-space initiative, serves some 4 million customers through a network of thousands of satellites in a relatively low orbit around Earth. Together, the spacecraft work in tandem to beam broadband internet coverage to the ground below.

NIGCOMSAT and OneWeb Partner for LEO Connectivity in Nigeria

Nigerian Communications Satellite Limited (NIGCOMSAT) has reportedly struck a multi-year, multi-million-dollar partnership with Eutelsat OneWeb to deliver LEO satellite services across Nigeria. According to Space in Africa, NIGCOMSAT will leverage OneWeb's network to provide high-speed, low-latency connectivity solutions for various sectors, including government services, businesses, and rural communities. No financial details were disclosed. NIGCOMSAT managing director Jane Egerton-Idehen said the OneWeb partnership will enhance nationwide remote communications, mobile connectivity, and offshore operations, as well as fill in coverage gaps in underserved and unserved areas across Nigeria. "This partnership marks a major milestone for NIGCOMSAT, allowing us to bridge Nigeria's digital divide with OneWeb's advanced LEO satellite technology," she said in a statement. "Together, we will deliver scalable and reliable connectivity solutions to drive growth across government services, businesses, and communities nationwide." Egerton-Idehen also said Eutelsat and NIGCOMSAT aim to combine resources to "foster innovation, accelerate digital transformation, and expand connectivity opportunities within Nigeria and beyond," the report said.

WISeSat.Space to Launch Next-Generation Satellite for Secure IoT Coverage

WISeKey International, a leading global cybersecurity, AI, and IoT company, announced that its subsidiary WISeSat. Space, on January 14, 2025, will launch a new-generation satellite, an innovative system designed to provide comprehensive Earth IoT coverage with ultra-low latency, enabling real-time tracking and monitoring of trillions of IoT devices. These satellites incorporate advanced technology to deliver secure and scalable global connectivity, addressing critical concerns around data security, privacy, and geopolitical neutrality. By leveraging Switzerland's neutrality, political stability, and rigorous data protection laws, WISeSat.Space is building a trusted infrastructure for secure global communications. This constellation integrates SEALSQ Corp post-quantum semiconductors, future-proofing the network against emerging quantum computing threats. These advanced chips utilize post-quantum cryptography, ensuring secure data transmission and protecting the constellation from potential adversarial quantum attacks. Additionally, the satellites feature WISeKey's WISeID identity management system, a platform for authenticating connected devices, and Hedera distributed ledger technology to provide a decentralized framework for maintaining data integrity and transparency across the network. WISeSat.Space's satellite constellation addresses the growing demand for secure and scalable infrastructure to support the exponential rise of IoT devices, projected to exceed 75 billion by 2030. Beyond connectivity, this initiative offers advanced Earth observation services for environmental monitoring, logistics optimization, and disaster response, providing real-time data and actionable insights. With tiered subscription models, governments, enterprises, and organizations can access a robust suite of services tailored to their specific needs. Positioned as a neutral and secure alternative to satellite systems operated by corporations or national governments, WISeSat.Space offers a solution free from geopolitical risks, data misuse, and transparency issues. By operating under Swiss jurisdiction, the system ensures compliance with the most rigorous privacy and data protection standards globally, making it a trusted choice for critical communications. The integration of blockchain technology enhances data security, enabling decentralized, tamper-proof smart contracts and facilitating seamless transactions across industries such as shipping, logistics, and finance. WISeSat.Space also addresses the growing need for reliable global internet access, particularly in underserved and remote regions. By bridging the digital divide, the constellation supports educational and economic growth while providing on-demand connectivity solutions for disaster recovery and emergency communications. The secure communication channels enabled by post-quantum cryptography offer unparalleled security for governments, financial institutions, and enterprises requiring the highest level of data protection.

5G in MEA

Unleashing a smarter, faster future for all

www.nokia.com

NOKIA

WHOLESALE NEWS

TRA Approves Wholesale Price Changes to Boost Fiber Broadband Speeds in Bahrain

In an era where the internet is integral to daily life, supporting everything from information access and entertainment to commerce and business, Bahrain stands out as one of the most advanced communications markets globally. With nationwide 5G coverage and widespread fiber broadband availability, consumers in Bahrain can select the broadband services that best meet their needs. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) approved changes to the wholesale services BNET provides to internet service providers to support consumer and business fiber broadband services. This decision will allow the speed of fiber broadband services to more than double at no additional cost to consumers. Broadband connectivity is essential for fostering inclusive participation in the digital economy. Whether through 5G or fiber networks, it is imperative that consumers have access to high-quality services at competitive prices. The TRA believes that these changes to BNET's services will contribute to Bahrain's vision of being one of the best-connected nations globally, while maintaining internationally competitive pricing. Philip Marnick, General Director of TRA, commented on the development: "To ensure the prices we pay are globally competitive, we benchmark prices not just against our neighbors in the GCC, but also against other advanced competitive markets. We already have competitive mobile prices, and these changes we have approved will help ensure the prices we pay for fiber broadband services remain globally competitive. In approving the changes, we have also ensured that all telecommunications operators can continue to invest in their networks and services to ensure we always remain one of the best-connected countries in the world." The TRA remains committed to fostering a robust and competitive telecommunications environment that benefits consumers, supports economic growth, and positions Bahrain as a leader in digital connectivity.

Ghana's 5G Wholesale Network Still Has No Customers: Minister

Two months after Ghana saw the launch of its first 5G wholesale network, telecoms operators have yet to lease capacity from it to offer commercial 5G services, according to Minister of Communications and Digitalization Ursula Owusu. Owusu first announced plans to introduce 5G to Ghana via a shared wholesale network model in May 2024 to help telcos save on rollout costs. To that end, Radisys, Nokia and Tech Mahindra united with Ascend Digital Solutions, telecom solutions provider K-NET, mobile network operators AT Ghana and Telecel Ghana, and the Ghanian government to launch a JV called Next-Gen InfraCo (NGIC) to build out the shared infrastructure. NGIC was granted a ten-year exclusive license to deploy neutral 4G and 5G infrastructure to be leased to operators, and launched its 5G wholesale network at the start of November 2024. NGIC said it would start rollouts in Accra, Kumasi, and Takoradi, with the goal of achieving national coverage by 2026. The NGIC launch was heralded by the government and stakeholders as a pivotal move to accelerate digital inclusivity and growth in Ghana. The ministry also said rolling out a wholesale 5G network in phases would ensures rural inclusion, with subsidies to support underserved areas, as opposed to commercial 5G rollouts that are typically concentrated in urban centers. However, since the November launch, none of Ghana's main mobile operators – which includes NGIC stakeholders Telecel Ghana, AT Ghana, as well as MTN Ghana – have leveraged the NGIC network to launch their own 5G services, according to the Ecofin news agency. During an interview on local television channel TV3, Owusu that the ministry has done its part to get the 5G ball rolling in Ghana, but it's now up to operators to actively sell it. "People didn't listen to us at launch. This is a wholesale infrastructure. We built it, and now it's up to telecommunications companies to buy capacity and provide it to their subscribers," she told TV3. The Ecofin report notes that it's unknown if Telecel, AT Ghana and MTN have started discussions with NGIC or what the conditions of leasing 5G capacity will be. The ministry has also stopped short of providing a timeline of when it expects operators to start offering 5G services. One sticking point may be the question of how much demand for 5G actually exists in Ghana, given that the penetration rate of 4G in the country – which has been available for the last nine years – was just 15% as of June 2024, according to government figures. The Ministry of Communications and Digitalization plans to boost that figure up to 80% by 2027.

Malaysia Ends DNB's Role as 5G Single Wholesale Network

The government of Malaysia has revoked a previous ministerial direction of 2021, which had designated Digital Nasional Berhad (DNB) as the sole entity responsible for Malaysia's 5G deployment. DNB was set up by the Malaysian government in 2021 as a special purpose vehicle to develop the country's 5G network infrastructure, which private telecommunications firms are currently using to offer 5G services to their customers. DNB's 5G network was deployed by Ericsson. Under the ministerial direction, DNB was to operate as a neutral, Ministry of Finance-owned entity tasked with deploying 5G infrastructure and offering wholesale services nationwide. However, the revocation of this directive signals the government's intent to transition to a dual-network model. As of now, all operators in Malaysia are offering 5G service via the state-run 5G network Digital Nasional Berhad. CelcomDigi, Maxis, YTL and U Mobile currently hold stakes in DNB, each with a 16.3% share. These four Malaysian operators had previously submitted bids to build the country's second 5G network. In November, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) gave the approval to deploy the second 5G network to U Mobile, the third-largest operator in the country. U Mobile also noted that it will also be working with DNB to ensure the quality of 5G service is maintained. The operator also noted it will reduce its foreign majority shareholding to 20%, with the main aim of "ensuring greater Malaysian control and inviting participation from local investors". In May 2023, Malaysian authorities said that the country would shift to a dual 5G network once DNB achieved 80% coverage in populated areas, something that occurred in December 2023. Although U Mobile was selected as the lead implementer for the second 5G network over two months ago, the MCMC has yet to finalize the spectrum assignment, rollout targets or operational conditions for this network.

e& Carrier & Wholesale Strengthens Global Connectivity With Strategic Market Expansion

e& Carrier & Wholesale (C&WSS), the international wholesale arm of e&, is reinforcing its position as a global connectivity enabler with a strategic expansion into high-growth regions and a renewed focus on digital infrastructure. By strengthening its international footprint and integrating AI-driven solutions, e& C&WS is driving new business opportunities to scale, transform, and stay ahead in a fast-evolving digital landscape. Nabil Baccouche, Group Chief Carrier & Wholesale Officer, e&, said: "Our global expansion and investments in digital infrastructure reflect our commitment to delivering seamless, secure, and intelligent connectivity solutions. We are not just growing our presence—we are redefining how businesses connect across borders. With a robust ecosystem spanning subsea networks, AI-powered platforms, and localised expertise, we enable our partners to scale with agility and confidence in a hyperconnected world." As part of its international expansion, e& C&WSS is establishing new strategic hubs in Miami and Johannesburg, strengthening its existing presence in London and Singapore. These locations serve as key gateways to some of the world's most dynamic markets, enabling e& C&WSS to provide 20 cutting-edge services across Voice, Data, Roaming, and Mobility Services to enterprises, telcos, and digital-first businesses. This robust global infrastructure empowers businesses to scale seamlessly, supported by cutting-edge connectivity solutions and localised expertise. This expansion strengthens C&WS's support for international partners while unlocking new market opportunities, allowing the company to forge strategic partnerships across the Americas and Africa, enabling businesses to establish a presence in high-growth, previously underserved regions. Going beyond traditional wholesale services, C&WS acts as a single entry point for MNOs, MVNOs, cloud providers, and enterprises seeking frictionless global connectivity. By leveraging AI-powered automation and localised market expertise, it enables businesses to expand rapidly, enter new markets, and monetise emerging digital opportunities. This diversified strategy has successfully expanded C&WS's international customer base, acquiring non-telco clients in sectors such as enterprise technology, hyperscalers, and AI-driven platforms while scaling its business with new and existing telco customers. As part of e&'s broader transformation strategy, the C&WS arm continues to evolve its offerings to align with the demands of the AI, cloud, and edge computing era. With a specialised international workforce, deep market expertise, and an expanding global footprint, e& C&WS is poised to accelerate digital transformation across industries, powering the future of seamless global connectivity.

Liberia, The Gambia and Sierra Leone Sign Roaming Deal

The latest African roaming agreement comes from the west of the continent, where the governments of Liberia, The Gambia and Sierra Leone have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at reducing telecommunications costs through improved roaming services. The agreement, which covers voice, SMS and data services, is set to begin its phased implementation on 2 May 2025, allowing travellers from Liberia to Sierra Leone to receive calls free of charge and make calls, send SMSs, and use mobile data at local rates without the need for a new SIM card. From 1 July, citizens of Liberia and The Gambia will also be able to enjoy similar benefits without incurring additional international roaming charges. Some 16 million people in total live in the three countries. According to Liberia's Oracle News Daily, the initiative, driven by the Liberia Telecommunication Authority (LTA) in collaboration with the National Communications Authority of Sierra Leone and the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority of The Gambia, seeks to promote economic growth and ease communication for citizens traveling within the three countries. There is still some way to go until all West Africans can roam anywhere without facing increased charges. However, the LTA Chairman Abdullah Kamara has been quoted as saying after the signing: "With these MoUs, we are making decisive progress towards implementing the ECOWAS regulation on roaming within the region, an initiative aimed at eliminating high roaming charges." Change is most certainly coming. Among a growing number of agreements in Africa, Ghana last year implemented free roaming with Benin and Togo and 2023 saw a Senegal-Mauritania deal.

Qatar and GCC Nations Lead Global 5G Roaming Speeds

An Ookla study has revealed that Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, particularly Qatar, offer some of the best 5G roaming speeds globally, greatly improving the digital experience for visitors. The research, based on Speedtest Intelligence data, assessed mobile user experiences in Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in 2024. Karim Yaici, Lead Industry Analyst for the Middle East and Africa at Ookla, emphasized the importance of mobile connectivity for travelers, noting that 5G technology enables users to stay connected, navigate, access tourist information, and share experiences on social media, all while benefiting from high-speed internet and lag-free video calls. The study found that visitors to Qatar, the UAE, and Kuwait experienced top-tier 5G speeds, with median download speeds reaching 381.05 Mbps in Qatar, 374.60 Mbps in the UAE, and 240.37 Mbps in Kuwait. The research also showed that visitors from Austria, Saudi Arabia, and Hong Kong were the most likely to use 5G while roaming, while travelers from Pakistan, India, and Egypt were less likely to adopt 5G roaming. In the UAE, over 37% of roaming users identified by Speedtest were from India, Saudi Arabia, Austria, Russia, and Hong Kong. However, their experiences varied, with Saudi Arabian and Russian visitors enjoying the fastest download speeds, particularly on 5G networks. Russian tourists, for instance, saw a threefold increase in download speeds compared to their home networks. Conversely, visitors from Austria, India, and Hong Kong experienced comparatively slower network performances. The study also highlighted the rapid evolution of the GCC region into a global tourism and business hub. This growth is expected to continue, with the region's travel and tourism market projected to generate $9.57 billion in revenue by 2029, up from an estimated $8.32 billion in 2025, at an annual growth rate of 3.56%. The expansion is driven by ongoing infrastructure investment, world-class amenities, and simplified visa policies, further enhancing the demand for seamless 5G connectivity. As the GCC region continues to grow, mobile operators are positioning 5G roaming as a key revenue driver, underscoring the importance of high-speed connectivity for tourism and business development.

Edge-to-Edge Intelligence

helps businesses generate near real-time insights by connecting IoT & cloud & software-defined networking & security & what's next.

Learn more about Edge-to-Edge Intelligence℠ at
att.com/globalbusiness

AT&T Business

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Malaysia's Telcos Sign Network Sharing Deal for Six-Way 4G Multi Operator Core Network

Malaysia has become the first country to witness the signing of a 6-way 4G Multi Operator Core Network (MOCN) sharing agreement, says Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil. He said the agreement was signed in May last year, but its implementation took some time as telecommunications companies (telcos) needed to develop the infrastructure necessary for collaboration. Fahmi noted the concept had been proven successful through the achievement of the 6-way 4G MOCN project, spearheaded by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), as part of an industry pilot initiative to share network resources and infrastructure. "I posed a challenge to MCMC and all the telcos, and finally, in May last year in Kuala Kubu Bharu, the telcos signed a memorandum of understanding to work on an agreement or collaboration enabling what is called the 6-way 4G MOCN," he said. Fahmi was speaking at the launch of the 6-Way 4G MOCN Network Sharing and Infrastructure Guidelines and the inauguration of a telecommunications tower at Jalan Bukit Putus. He said the implementation of the project aimed to improve connectivity, particularly in areas with limited internet coverage. "Thanks to our telco partners, Celcom, Digi, Maxis, U Mobile, TM and YTL Communications, I understand that no other country has had competing companies establish a framework allowing such collaboration. "Malaysia is the first in the world to facilitate all telco companies working together in this manner. This project proves that telcos can collaborate to help rural and remote areas gain better internet access and improve connectivity," he said. Also present were Communications Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Mohamad Fauzi Md Isa, Kuala Pilah MP Datuk Adnan Abu Hassan, and MCMC State Coordination Division head Bukhari Yahya. The five locations for the 6-Way 4G MOCN are Ikon Tengkolok, Bukit Putus and Kem Pengakap Bukit Putus in Negeri Sembilan; Prima Gambang (Pahang); West Coast Expressway (WCE) Kota Seri Langat Toll Plaza, Banting (Selangor), and Tanjung Asam (Penang). Fahmi said this initiative also demonstrated that telcos in the country could collaborate to provide better internet access, especially in remote areas. "I believe this effort will facilitate closer cooperation among telcos, and I hope the issues faced by users can be managed effectively," he said. Fahmi also called on stakeholders to raise awareness about the negative effects of social media use on children and urged adults to be cautious of scammers. Meanwhile, MCMC in a statement explained that the MOCN set out principles, processes, and guidelines for implementing Network Infrastructure Sharing among Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to encourage collaboration, optimize resources, and improve connectivity, particularly in seven areas with unsatisfactory coverage. These areas include highways, public universities, hospitals, event venues, tourist spots, stadiums, and military and police installations. According to the statement, the MOCN focuses on two main methodologies, namely Passive Infrastructure Sharing, which involves sharing physical components such as towers and poles without involving electronic or network components, and Active Infrastructure Sharing, which refers to sharing electronic components and signal processing within the network to enhance efficiency. The guidelines provide practical solutions to help MNOs maximize the benefits of infrastructure sharing for the benefit of the people. "This integrated approach enhances the operational efficiency of MNOs and accelerates the delivery of high-quality 4G services," the statement added.

Airgain Launches New Solar-Powered 5G Repeater

Airgain has just introduced a new, solar powered 5G repeater, which it says can extend 5G signals by 20% and operate "fully detached from the power grid." Airgain is positioning the solution as a way to cost-effectively push 5G into rural and hard-to-reach areas, so that 5G can be cost-effectively and quickly extended to rural and hard-to-reach areas. The company said that a recent field trial of the new Smart Network-Controlled Repeater or NCR, which it calls Lighthouse Solar, have confirmed that the equipment boosts speed as well as coverage. According to Airgain, the 5G repeater enabled connectivity speeds averaging more than 250 Mbps, and achieved peak speeds of 425 Mbps even in areas previously underserved. Comparatively, the company added, the existing 4G speeds in the area were 1 Mbps. "This breakthrough positions Airgain at the forefront of the 5G infrastructure revolution," said Dr. Ali Sadri, Airgain's CTO, in a statement. "By offering a sustainable, grid-independent, and rapidly deployable solution, we are enabling telecom operators to expand their networks at lower costs, increase service reliability, and drive greater monetization opportunities—all while advancing global connectivity." In the field trial, Airgain said, the 5G repeater also demonstrated a more than 50% improvement in spectral efficiency and maximization of network utilization, as well as "super link quality … in challenging environments". Because the equipment operates self-sufficiently, it was also able to be deployed quickly—in less than a day, according to Airgain, while eliminating the need to obtain costly and time-consuming power grid and backhaul extensions. Airgain will be showcasing the solar-powered 5G repeater at next week's Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain. It is holding an event on Wednesday focused on sustainable and smart 5G infrastructure, with operator partner Omantel, which provides telecommunications service in Oman.

MoU Signed to Set Up AI chip Unit in Salalah

The sultanate is set to start an advanced artificial intelligence (AI) semiconductor chip manufacturing project in Salalah Free Zone, Dhofar following a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed recently. The agreement, between Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) and AONH Private Holdings, is supported by regional and international investment funds. The project aims to consolidate Oman's position in the global semiconductor industry, addressing the rising demand for AI technologies. It will also help develop local expertise in chip design and manufacturing, while attracting international talent, particularly from Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. H E Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology in MTCIT, stated that the project aligns with the Digital Industry Programme under the National Programme for Digital Economy and Oman Vision 2040. "This project will contribute to attracting new investments in the semiconductor industry, stimulating local technical innovation and advancing research in microelectronics. It will support economic growth, technological progress and sustainable development in Oman," he said. He noted that the global semiconductor industry is expanding rapidly, driven by increasing demand for AI, the Internet of Things, 5G networks and autonomous driving technologies. According to global management consultants McKinsey, the market is expected to reach US$1tn valuation by 2030. Ali Steve Chao, Chairman of AONH Private Holdings, highlighted Oman's strategic location and investor-friendly environment as key factors in selecting the country for the project. "With this initiative, Oman is set to make its mark on the world stage of chip manufacturing, developing advanced memory solutions and next-generation AI chips," he said. He added that the company aims to attract top global talent, creating a hub for researchers, engineers and developers to drive innovation in semiconductor manufacturing, data centres and AI industries. Production operations are expected to begin three years after the project's launch.

China's 5G Subscriptions Surpass 1 billion

China's 5G mobile phone subscriptions surpassed 1 billion by the end of November, local press reported, citing data released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT). The 5G subscriptions now represent 56% of all mobile lines in China, reflecting a 9.4 percentage point increase compared to the previous year. The official data also showed that China had installed approximately 4.2 million 5G base stations as of the end of November. This infrastructure accounts for more than 60% of the global total, according to earlier industry estimates. Currently, the country boasts a total of 29 5G base stations per 10,000 residents, meeting a target outlined in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) ahead of schedule, according to Zhang Yunming, Vice Minister of MIIT. These networks now provide comprehensive coverage, including critical areas such as government service hubs, cultural landmarks, tourist destinations and key transportation corridors. Efforts by the Chinese government to extend 5G connectivity to rural and remote regions are also underway as part of a broader strategy to bridge the digital divide, the report added. The MIIT, in collaboration with 11 other government bodies, recently announced an updated plan to expand 5G applications, with a goal of widespread use by 2027. Known as the second "Set Sail" action plan, it prioritizes consumer-oriented applications and aims to:

-Increase 5G base stations to 38 per 10,000 people.

-Achieve a personal 5G user penetration rate exceeding 85%.

-Ensure that over 75% of network traffic is carried via 5G networks.

The report also stated that Shanghai, one of China's key economic centers, has unveiled a three-year strategy to scale up 5G applications by 2026. This includes advancing 5G Advanced (5G-A) technology and fostering its convergence with artificial intelligence. Specific objectives include achieving a 5G personal user penetration rate of over 90% and ensuring continuous 5G and 5G-A coverage for low-altitude aviation routes.

Over 100 million Wi-Fi HaLow IoT Devices Within Five Years

There will be over 100 million Wi-Fi HaLow devices, geared for mid-range IoT applications in 850-950 MHz spectrum, in circulation by 2029, reckons ABI Research. The projection describes the creation of an entire market, effectively; there are only "several million" Wi-Fi HaLow-enabled devices in existence, as it stands. Wi-Fi HaLow, sing sub-GHz spectrum frequencies in global ISM bands, makes Wi-Fi a candidate technology, suddenly, for low-power IoT use cases – which have traditionally been the reserve of cellular and non-cellular wide-area IoT technologies such as NB-IoT/LTE-M and LoRaWAN, as well as shorter-range IoT technologies like RFID and BLE. Wi-Fi HaLow (802.11ah) offers advantages over the unlicensed 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands, where Wi-Fi traditionally plays, insofar as the spectrum is less congested and lower frequency, improving reliability, propagation, and coverage. As a consequence, the HaLow version makes Wi-Fi viable effectively for lower-power wider-area IoT cases. Fans of the technology claim it offers a 10-times advance in terms of range, compared with conventional Wi-Fi. The marketing also suggests a 100-times advance in terms of coverage area, and 1,000-times advance in terms of coverage volumes. ABI Research has a new research paper on the technology. The firm forecasts "dramatic growth" in smart homes and offices, as well as in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Andrew Zignani, senior research director at ABI Research, said: "Wi-Fi HaLow offers robust, long-range connectivity with low-power consumption, making it ideal for home, building, facility, or neighborhood-level IoT applications… [It] provides enhanced signal penetration, enabling operation of beyond one kilometer in certain configurations, [and] up to 10-times longer range compared to 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi. It can support thousands of devices from a single access point, reducing deployment complexity and total cost of ownership (TCO) compared to other IoT technologies."

e& Egypt Unveils First Locally Manufactured 5G Router in Partnership with SICO

e& Egypt announced on Sunday that it has officially started manufacturing Egypt's first entirely local router at the Egyptian Silicon Industries Company (SICO) factory in Assiut Governorate. This significant milestone is part of e& Egypt's broader strategy to enhance local manufacturing and offer innovative technology solutions that meet customer needs while also targeting international export markets. The new router, which is designed with 5G technology, is the first of its kind to be locally produced by an Egyptian company. This development marks a major leap forward in Egypt's technology and telecommunications sector. The router was created in collaboration with ToZed, a Chinese networking device specialist, who is transferring its advanced expertise to the SICO factory to ensure the products meet international quality standards. In October, the National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA) signed an agreement with Egypt's top telecom companies – Orange Egypt, Vodafone Egypt, and e& Egypt – granting them licenses to provide fifth-generation (5G) mobile services. "This effort reflects our commitment to supporting the local manufacturing sector and aligns with our vision to enhance Egypt's technological infrastructure, contributing to sustainable economic development," e& Egypt stated. The partnership with SICO also positions Egypt as a regional hub for technology and digital manufacturing, opening new opportunities for the local telecommunications and IT sectors and reinforcing the country's role as a global player in technology. Ahmed Yehia, CEO of e& Egypt's Financial Technology and Digital Applications, praised the achievement, emphasizing that investing in local industry is crucial for technological excellence and economic growth. "This step supports the Egyptian government's strategy to localize electronics manufacturing," he said. Mohamed Salem, Chairman of SICO, expressed pride in the company's role, highlighting that it was the first to produce a fully locally manufactured smartphone in Egypt and now leads the way in manufacturing Egypt's first 5G technology router. He added that this move not only reduces reliance on imports but also saves foreign currency and strengthens the competitiveness of Egyptian products in global markets.

Ofcom Proposes Shared Access to 6 GHz Band for Mobile and wifi Use

Ofcom is looking to expand commercial access for both mobile and wifi services to the 6 GHz band after unveiling plans to make upper 6 GHz spectrum available. The regulator has proposed launching a phased approach that would initially focus on low-power indoor wifi before expanding to mobile network access under a shared-use framework. Ofcom is also exploring whether to authorise standard power wifi in the Lower 6 GHz band (5925–6425 MHz), including for outdoor use in locations such as stadiums and public hotspots — but only if there is sufficient interest from industry. Ofcom launched a consultation on the proposal this week, following calls from stakeholders in both the mobile and broadband sectors for access to Upper 6 GHz. The regulator said upon launching the consultation that it was leaning towards a prioritised spectrum split, where at least 300 MHz of the Upper 6 GHz band would be dedicated to mobile use in high-density areas, while Wifi would retain access across the band in locations without mobile deployments. Ofcom is also considering standard power wifi (up to 4W) in the Lower 6 GHz band, which would require an Automated Frequency Coordination (AFC) system to manage interference with existing users. However, this would depend on industry demand and would require an Automated Frequency Coordination (AFC) system to prevent interference with existing services, such as fixed satellite and telecoms backhaul links. The consultation will remain open for responses until 8 May 2025, with a final decision expected later in the year.

Let's advance together digital transformation for all!
Let's Partner2Connect!

www.itu.int/Partner2Connect #Partner2Connect

ITU | Partner2Connect

REGULATORY NEWS

Partner2Connect: Mobilizing Pledges to Bridge the Connectivity Gap

The Partner2Connect Digital Coalition (P2C) led by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) seeks a more equitable and inclusive world through digital technologies. ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin has set an ambitious goal of mobilizing USD 100 billion worth of pledges through the platform by 2026. P2C is now more than halfway there, surpassing the USD 50 billion mark in commitments by May 2024, and reaching USD 54.27 billion by year end. More than 450 entities, including governments, private sector entities, international organizations, academia, and civil society groups, have submitted over 950 commitments through the P2C online platform. Infrastructure development, notably, constitutes almost half of P2C commitments to date, involving mobile, satellite, and broadband technologies, as well as artificial intelligence (AI).

Strategic investments and impact

P2C pledges represent concrete commitments covering a wide range of projects, policies and programmes aimed at increasing digital access and usage for all. P2C pledges typically strive to create societal value by building digital ecosystems where innovation and entrepreneurship can flourish, as well as by identifying ground-breaking investment models for financing meaningful global connectivity. More than USD 17 billion in pledges were submitted in 2024, of which 97 per cent are dedicated to improving people's access and the affordability of connectivity. Other pledges address digital skills, inclusive policies and regulations, and digital innovation and entrepreneurship. All pledges are publicly accessible via the P2C pledging portal. Partner2Connect serves as an open and impartial platform for mobilizing resources and partnerships and enhancing collaboration to bridge the digital divide. It also enables cooperation across the public and private sectors through meetings at the country, regional and global levels. Importantly, the P2C online platform enables pledgers to regularly report how implementation of their pledges is progressing. Aggregated data and key indicators about progress are publicly available through the P2C online platform.

Success stories

Many pledges have already translated into tangible progress, both in connecting the unconnected and in empowering individuals with the tools and skills needed to thrive in the digital age. In Africa, for example, new broadband networks are helping connect rural schools, while connectivity in healthcare centres is improving access to education and medical services for remote and underserved communities. In Asia, digital literacy programmes are empowering women and youth to launch online businesses. In Latin America, investments in digital infrastructure are facilitating e-government services, making it easier for citizens to access public services online. These examples and others illustrate the transformative power of digital connectivity. Governments around the world have committed significant public funds to support digital infrastructure projects. Private-sector companies, including major tech companies and telecom operators, have pledged to invest at scale, pursue innovative solutions, and form strategic partnerships to connect the last one-third of humanity and advance sustainable digital transformation for all. Civil society organizations, for their part, have pledged on-the-ground support to ensure connectivity initiatives are inclusive and reach even the most marginalized populations.

The road ahead

The journey towards universal and meaningful connectivity is far from over. Connecting everyone, everywhere will take continued investment, innovation, and cooperation, along with steady implementation. Partner2Connect aims to demonstrate what leadership, resources, and inclusive collaboration can do. ITU hopes this multi-stakeholder model will catalyze further action. Ultimately, the coalition represents a shared commitment to open opportunities, create a fully connected world, and build a digital future for all.

UAE Cybersecurity Council Chairman Highlights Advanced Defense Against Digital Threats

Dr. Mohammed Hamad Al Kuwaiti, Chairman of the UAE Cybersecurity Council, has emphasized the country's sophisticated cybersecurity infrastructure, capable of predicting and countering most electronic attacks before they happen. The UAE experiences over 50,000 daily cyberattacks, all of which are proactively mitigated to protect critical sectors such as electricity, water, healthcare, energy, and banking. In an interview with Emirates News Agency (WAM), Dr. Al Kuwaiti revealed that the UAE's national security operations center is interconnected with these vital sectors, ensuring the protection of the nation's digital infrastructure. The country's advanced cybersecurity systems, which leverage artificial intelligence, can detect cyberattacks before they occur, trace their origin, and identify their nature, adhering to global best practices in cybersecurity. Dr. Al Kuwaiti also pointed out the evolving nature of modern warfare, which has increasingly shifted to cyberspace, with cyberattacks being executed through tools like viruses, deepfakes, and misinformation campaigns, aimed at destabilizing societies and manipulating public opinion. He noted that many of these attacks are state-backed or perpetrated by terrorist organizations. During the upcoming IDEX and NAVDEX 2025 exhibitions, the UAE Cybersecurity Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and other partners, will conduct simulated exercises focused on countering misinformation and deepfake threats, demonstrating the nation's readiness to tackle emerging cybersecurity challenges.

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority to Conduct Extensive Field Visits Across Oman in 2025

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has announced its plan for comprehensive field visits in 2025 to enhance the quality of telecommunications services in Oman. The visits aim to assess critical performance indicators such as signal strength, network coverage, data speed, voice call quality, and social media application performance. The TRA's evaluation will cover various regions, including centers across all governorates, five major tourist destinations – Jabal al Sharqi (Hat), Al Ashkhara, Harat al Aqar, Jabal Shams, and Dhofar. Additionally, 15 key roads, including the Muscat Expressway, Quriyat-Sur Road, and Nizwa-Ibri Road, will be evaluated. Airports in Muscat, Suhar, and Duqm, as well as industrial cities in Sur and Ibri, are also part of the assessment. The parameters to be reviewed include video streaming speed and quality, data upload/download speeds, voice call clarity, 4G/5G signal coverage, and the percentage of failed calls. Field visits by the TRA have seen significant growth, with a 172% increase recorded in 2024 compared to 2023. A further 197% increase in visits is expected in 2025. The results of these assessments will be shared with the public via the TRA's official website and social media platforms to ensure transparency and promote improvements in the telecommunications sector.

Ofcom Consults on the Future of 6GHz

Ofcom launched a consultation on the future of the upper 6GHz spectrum band, potentially allowing both mobile and Wi-Fi networks to share the valuable airwaves. Back in 2020, 500MHz of spectrum in the lower portion of the band were allocated to Wi-Fi as part of the Wi-Fi 6E and Wi-Fi 7 standards. The future of the upper portion of the band, on the other hand, remained up for debate. With its low latency, high capacity, and relatively strong propagation, the 6,425 –7,125MHz spectrum band is appealing to both mobile and Wi-Fi operators. For the mobile players, this band could substantially bolster the quality of their 5G offering, while for Wi-Fi it could support high-power and outdoor deployments. As a result, both parties have been deeply involved in regulatory discussions with Ofcom, alongside the band's existing users – mostly satellite services and radio astronomy users – that are also seeking assurances from the regulator. Ofcom's proposed solution would see the band potentially split between mobile and Wi-Fi. The regulator wants to make the whole of the upper 6GHz band available for Wi-Fi as soon as possible, ideally before the end of this year. But, by 2027, it suggests the band should be shared, with 160MHz and 400MHz prioritised for Wi-Fi, with the remainder prioritised for mobile usage. In cases where mobile deployments are not present, the full band would still be available for Wi-Fi usage. In addition to these changes, Ofcom is also suggesting that the use of the lower part of the band be expanded to outdoor and high-power Wi-Fi deployments. "This new spectrum would provide a large increase in capacity for both mobile and Wi-Fi services, laying the foundations for future generations of data-hungry technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, and AI," said Ofcom in its announcement. "In a boost for the economy, it would also help mobile and Wi-Fi providers to deliver improved services to more customers, especially where demand is greatest. It would support advanced Wi-Fi for homes, businesses and industry, and enable mobile networks to better serve their customers, particularly in the most crowded places like high streets or stadiums." As Ofcom makes clear in its announcement, much of this regulatory approach is based on harmonising with its European counterparts, who are similarly debating the best use of this spectrum and are expected to make a decision by 2027.

Bahrain TRA Conducts 148 Inspections and Sees Improvement in Telecom Device Compliance

In 2024, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) carried out 148 inspection campaigns, focusing on telecommunications device retailers, licensed wireless device vendors, and authorized frequency spectrum users. This proactive approach aims to enhance compliance with Bahrain's technical regulations and prevent harmful interference. Throughout the year, the TRA reviewed 11,423 import license applications for telecommunications devices, marking a 9% increase compared to 10,488 applications in 2023. Notably, violations related to telecommunications device imports dropped to just four in 2024, down from 19 the previous year, reflecting growing awareness among businesses and individuals. The TRA's Spectrum Directorate conducted inspections of imported telecom devices before and after arrival in Bahrain, in collaboration with the Customs Affairs Department at the Ministry of Interior. This effort ensures compliance with technical regulations, optimizes the use of the frequency spectrum, and prevents interference, contributing to the integrity of Bahrain's telecom landscape. The TRA emphasized the importance of obtaining the necessary licenses before importing wireless devices to ensure compliance with Bahrain's regulations and avoid potential issues for individuals, businesses, and government entities.

TRAI Pushes for Direct 5G Spectrum Access for Enterprises

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recently proposed granting direct access to spectrum for companies, enabling them to set up private 5G networks independently, according to Indian press reports. This proposal generates optimism among corporations such as Infosys, Tata Communications and Larsen & Toubro, that have been advocating for the possibility to establish their own dedicated 5G networks without relying on telecom operators. Industry analysts suggest that if the government approves TRAI's recommendation, enterprises could deploy private 5G networks at significantly reduced costs compared to leasing spectrum or using telco-provided services. Last week, TRAI made a recommendation for a distinct authorization framework under Section 3 of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, allowing captive non-public network (CNPN) providers to establish, maintain and expand private networks for businesses. Section 3 of the Act permits the administrative allocation of spectrum for sectors such as defense, disaster management, broadcasting, in-flight and maritime connectivity and other critical industries, including mining and oil exploration. However, legal experts noted that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has yet to formally implement Sections 3 and 4 of the Telecom Act, which address spectrum allocation and authorization. If accepted, TRAI's proposal could accelerate enterprise 5G deployments, an area that has so far seen little traction in India. According to data from the Global Mobile Suppliers Association (GSMA), India currently has only 10 private 5G networks, compared to over 170 in the United States and more than 50 between China and Germany combined. "TRAI recommendations, if accepted by the government, will be a game changer as we have more than 10 domestic design-led players who can take up the projects… there is demand for above 10,000 projects," said Rakesh Kumar Bhatnagar, Director General of the Voice of Indian Communication Technology Enterprises (VoICE). "Many players need not be at the mercy of licensed service providers." However, Indian telcos including Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, and Vodafone Idea, have been opposing any move to allocate spectrum administratively rather than through auctions. These companies argue that such an approach would create an uneven playing field, as they are required to pay substantial amounts to acquire spectrum in competitive bidding processes.

UK Government's Project Gigabit Brings Superfast Broadband to Scotland

Around 11,000 Scottish homes and businesses will gain access to lightning-fast broadband, as joint efforts by the UK and Scottish governments to supercharge internet access in rural areas across the nation get underway and power the UK Government's Plan for Change. Rural areas in the Scottish Borders and East Lothian will benefit from gigabit-capable internet upgrades, allowing residents to fulfil day-to-day tasks, from rapid access to health advice through remote hospital consultations to interviewing for jobs and working more flexibly. The upgrades will benefit some of the most remote areas of Scotland and the UK, including Athelstaneford and Innerwick in East Lothian and St Abbs, Broughton and Ettrickbridge in the Scottish Borders. These areas will be among the first in Scotland to benefit from a £26 million contract awarded under Project Gigabit – the UK Government-funded rollout to areas unlikely to receive upgrades through commercial plans due to their challenging location. The contract was awarded to independent Scottish provider GoFibre by the Scottish Government. Now the £26 million contract is signed, detailed planning and surveying work will begin immediately with the first connections expected in the Autumn. Further contracts to be signed this year will see faster broadband delivered to tens of thousands more premises across Scotland, including Aberdeenshire and the Morayshire Coast, Fife, Perth and Kinross, Orkney and Shetland. Chris Bryant, UK Government Minister, Telecoms and Data said as technological advancements race ahead and revolutionise our day-to-day lives, we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. It is fantastic to see this UK Government-funded gigabit investment being delivered in Scotland for the first time, not only bringing thousands of people the fastest broadband networks on the market and levelling the

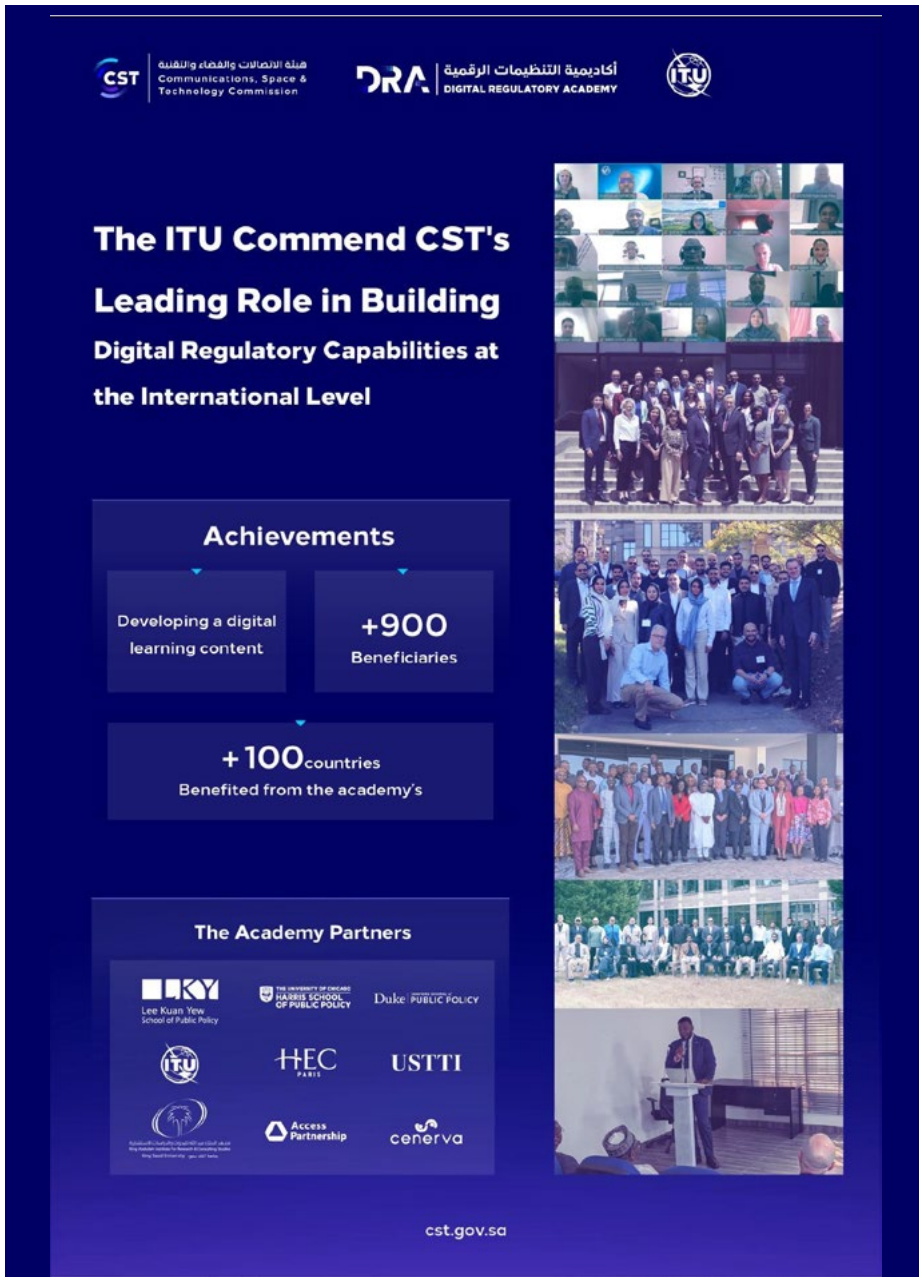
playing field but also helping us realise our mission to boost economic growth and improve living standards across the whole country, under the PM's Plan for Change. Richard Lochhead, Scottish Government Business Minister said, as reliable internet connectivity is a vital part of everyday life - allowing people to work flexibly, engage in education and stay connected with loved ones. The Scottish Government has successfully implemented digital infrastructure programmes across Scotland to increase broadband speeds and help grow the economy. Expanding upon the achievements of the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband and Reaching 100% programmes, we will deliver Project Gigabit in Scotland to provide resilient connections that meet the needs of people and businesses now and into the future.

CST Publishes the Annual DRA Report for 2024

The Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) has published the 2024 annual report for the Digital Regulations Academy (DRA), which aims to introduce the academy, its inception and objectives, explain its educational tracks, and share its notable achievements and training programs. The report presents the Academy's methodology in building its programs, which began with benchmark studies of over 40 organizations to detect best practices, followed by gap analysis in local and global markets. This resulted in establishing four training levels, starting from foundational and concluding in executive level. The Academy's outstanding achievements during 2024 were also highlighted, such as delivering 8 professional training programs and two executive programs, in addition to offering its first specialized professional certification within its programs - the "Advanced Professional Certificate for Compliance and Regulatory Affairs Officers." The report revealed key figures and achievements during 2024, with 421 local and international trainees from 17 countries worldwide benefiting from the Academy's programs, along with 36 participating organizations. The Academy delivered its programs in partnership with educational institutions such as National University of Singapore and Duke University, and global organizations like the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The DRA was established in 2021 by CST to serve as a leading platform for developing national capabilities, enhancing regulatory capacity, promoting regulatory innovation, and collaborating with local and international partners to build a thriving and sustainable digital economy.

ITU Recognizes CST's Digital Regulatory Academy for Advancing Global Digital Capabilities

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has praised the Communications, Space, and Technology Commission (CST) for its leadership in developing digital capabilities internationally through its Digital Regulatory Academy (DRA). This recognition highlights the academy's key contributions to the Telecommunications and Technology Assistance Project, aimed at helping member states create advanced digital regulatory policies and improve their regulatory capabilities. The DRA plays a crucial role in supporting the global digital transformation, aligning with sustainable development goals by fostering human competencies. The academy has launched various initiatives to raise awareness of digital regulation and its applications in digital markets. It also helps member states keep up with rapid global digital changes. Notable achievements include workshops and specialized training programs that have benefited over 900 trainees from more than 100 countries. This international recognition affirms Saudi Arabia's prominent position in the telecommunications and technology sector and its essential role in driving global digital transformation and sustainable development. The DRA is a pioneering platform for knowledge exchange, further highlighting Saudi Arabia's commitment to promoting digital regulation globally.

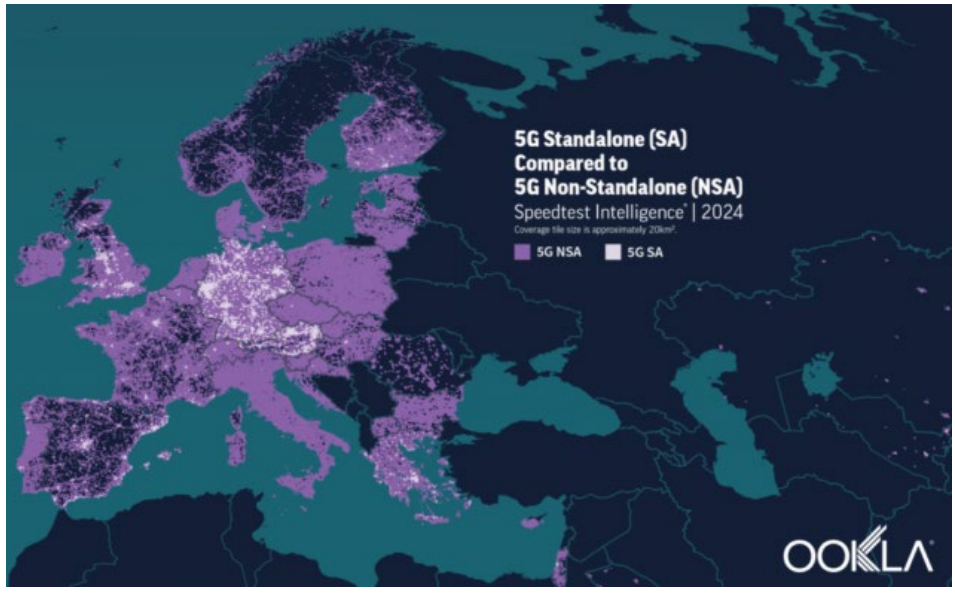


Australia Pushes Universal Mobile Coverage

Australia's government proposed what it called a world-first reform requiring operators to deliver basic universal outdoor mobile coverage across the country, a move made possible by the arrival of direct-to-device technology using low Earth orbit satellites. The Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation (UOMO) would require operators to provide access to mobile voice and SMS almost everywhere across Australia. The measure calls for 5 million square km of new outdoor coverage, including more than 37,000 km on regional roads. Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland noted the government would consult with stakeholders and introduce legislation this year to expand a universal service framework to include mobile coverage for the first time. Implementation of universal outdoor SMS and voice coverage is expected by late 2027. Rowland believes the reform will improve public safety, increase resilience during natural disasters and provide an extra layer of coverage in areas previously thought too difficult or costly to reach. Telstra reached an agreement with Space X in January to deliver satellite-to-mobile service to customers in remote areas. In 2024, Telstra called for a multi-technology approach to the universal service obligation using a mix of fixed, mobile and satellite technologies.

Europe Showing 'Poorest 5G SA Outcomes,' According to Ookla

Ookla this week released a report examining Europe's 5G Standalone (SA) competitiveness as it compares to other major global regions. The results show that, despite Europe's ambitious 5G infrastructure targets — namely, the European Commission's recent launch of the "Competitiveness Compass," which outlines 5G SA investments as a central driver — the region is showing "the poorest outcomes" in terms of 5G SA performance and availability. Based on Ookla's data from Q4 2024, China (80%), India (52%) and the United States (24%) are not only leading the SA charge, but are massively ahead of Europe, which shows only a 2% SA market share. Further, Europe is also falling behind on other key metrics, including median 5G SA download speeds, with the average European consumer experiencing download speeds of 221.17 Mbps, compared, for instance, to 384.42 Mbps in the Americas. "The interplay of earlier deployments, a more diversified multi-band spectrum strategy, and greater operator willingness to invest in the 5G core to monetize new use cases have driven rollouts at a faster pace in regions outside Europe," stated Ookla. Another trend revealed in the report is the disparate progress of 5G Standalone across Europe, with the best outcomes observed in countries that have specific policies intended to incentivize 5G SA deployment. For example, Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain are all have targeted 5G SA-specific fiscal stimuli or coverage obligations, and all are currently leading Europe in terms of 5G SA rollout across multiple operators. Additional takeaways include Greece's lead when it comes to median download speed in Q4 2024 at 547.52 Mbps due to its use of the 3.5 GHz and the fact that Spain and Austria are "excelling" in rural 5G Standalone coverage as a result of their deployment of the 700 MHz band.



TRAI Earmarks 37-40 GHz Bands for India's Next 5G Auction

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) issued its recommendations for auctioning off millimetre wave (mmWave) spectrum for 5G services at a relatively lower price than previous auctions. In a statement, TRAI recommended including spectrum in the 37-37.5 GHz and 37.5-40 GHz ranges in the next spectrum auction, with a block size of 100 MHz per telecom circle with a validity period of 20 years. TRAI also recommended setting the spectrum cap at 40% of the total spectrum put to auction, and that "it should not be clubbed with 26 GHz band for the purpose of spectrum cap." The regulator also recommended that ISPs and M2M service providers under unified licences be permitted to bid for the spectrum. TRAI also set the reserve price for the 37-40 GHz bands at INR59.8 million (a little over US$686,000) per MHz, which is over 14% cheaper compared to the 26 GHz spectrum that was up for auction in 2022, according to a report from ETTelecom. The Department of Telecommunication (DoT) included the 26-GHz band in its 5G spectrum auction in June 2024, but there were no takers, as telcos opted to focus mostly on renewing existing spectrum licences and beefing up mid-band spectrum pools. Another reason telcos skipped the 26-GHz band last time was the lack of a device ecosystem – something that analysts told ETTelecom will be less of an issue with the 37-40 GHz bands, which are already being used in the US for 5G services. TRAI had also considered auctioning off the 42.5-43.5 GHz bands for 5G during its consultation, but decided against it as there's no ecosystem for that band, either.

Bangladesh to Auction 700 MHz Spectrum for 4G and 5G Expansion

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) is preparing to auction spectrum in the 700 MHz band this year. This initiative aims to support the expansion of 4G networks and facilitate the rollout of 5G services in the country. The 700 MHz band is considered crucial for mobile broadband expansion, especially in rural areas, due to its ability to provide wider coverage and better penetration compared to higher frequencies. The BTRC recognizes the importance of allocating this spectrum to meet the growing demand for mobile connectivity and improve service quality for users. To ensure a smooth auction process, the BTRC has formed a committee to draft auction guidelines, determine the base price for the spectrum, and engage with mobile operators. However, challenges remain, including concerns about spectrum scarcity, pricing, and a pending legal dispute regarding a portion of the 700 MHz band. The GSMA, a global organization representing mobile operators, has raised concerns about the limited amount of spectrum available for auction, suggesting that it could lead to higher prices and fragmented assignments, potentially hindering the effectiveness of 4G and 5G deployments. Despite these challenges, the BTRC is committed to completing the auction in 2025. This initiative aligns Bangladesh with global trends in spectrum allocation and is expected to significantly enhance mobile broadband connectivity across the country.

Germany Commits Additional €870k to Offshore Launch Facility

Germany's Federal Ministry for Digital Affairs and Transport has committed an additional €870,000 to support the development of an offshore launch platform that will operate from the North Sea. The North Sea launch platform is being developed by the German Offshore Spaceport Alliance (GOSA), a joint venture formed in December 2020 by Tractebel DOC Offshore, MediaMobil, OHB, and Harren Shipping Services. The platform will be constructed on the 170-metre-long Combi Dock I vessel and will accommodate launchers with a mass of between 36 and 52 tonnes. A 2020 feasibility study stated that the development and operation of the North Sea launch platform would cost between €22 and €30 million over six years. In September 2023, the German government committed an initial €2 million to the project. A month later, a GOSA spokesperson told European Spaceflight that its first launch from the North Sea was expected in April or May 2024. In April 2024, the company announced that it would support the launch of four small rockets ranging from 15 to 52 kilograms from the floating platform between 16 and 30 June. The launches were postponed to July, after which no further updates were provided. On 7 February 2025, the Federal Ministry for Digital Affairs and Transport (BMDV) announced the launch of the "Offshore Spaceport – Finding Solutions and Infrastructure Development for Orbital Launches" project, a joint venture between BMDV and GOSA. BMDV has committed €870,000 to the project, with the distribution of funding managed by the German aerospace agency (DLR). The project's primary aim is to develop a "holistic solution for an offshore spaceport, primarily for commercial orbital and suborbital launches, by the end of September 2025." The findings from the project will be incorporated into the development of demonstrator systems that will "pave the way for the use of the mobile infrastructure for the first launches."

Bangladesh to Auction 700 MHz Spectrum for 4G and 5G Expansion

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) is preparing to auction spectrum in the 700 MHz band this year. This initiative aims to support the expansion of 4G networks and facilitate the rollout of 5G services in the country. The 700 MHz band is considered crucial for mobile broadband expansion, especially in rural areas, due to its ability to provide wider coverage and better penetration compared to higher frequencies. The BTRC recognizes the importance of allocating this spectrum to meet the growing demand for mobile connectivity and improve service quality for users. To ensure a smooth auction process, the BTRC has formed a committee to draft auction guidelines, determine the base price for the spectrum, and engage with mobile operators. However, challenges remain, including concerns about spectrum scarcity, pricing, and a pending legal dispute regarding a portion of the 700 MHz band. The GSMA, a global organization representing mobile operators, has raised concerns about the limited amount of spectrum available for auction, suggesting that it could lead to higher prices and fragmented assignments, potentially hindering the effectiveness of 4G and 5G deployments. Despite these challenges, the BTRC is committed to completing the auction in 2025. This initiative aligns Bangladesh with global trends in spectrum allocation and is expected to significantly enhance mobile broadband connectivity across the country.

New ITU Coalition to Bridge AI Skills Gap for Developing Countries

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) said it has launched the AI Skills Coalition, an initiative to bridge the global AI skills gap that has the backing of 27 organizations, including Amazon Web Services, Microsoft, the East Africa Community and Cognizant. According to the ITU, the coalition will serve as an online platform for AI education and capacity building that will also encourage inclusive participation by offering open and accessible skills training on generative AI, machine learning and applying AI for sustainable development. The rise of AI has prompted the telecoms and ICT sectors to prep their digital infrastructures and data centers to support bandwidth and compute-intensive AI workloads. Meanwhile, an estimated 94% of global business leaders already see AI as critical for the success of their organizations, according to a recent AI for Good Impact Report published by ITU and Deloitte. However, insufficient technical skills and the need for extensive upskilling and reskilling are among key barriers to broader AI adoption globally, as well as a considerable lack of trust in AI amid fears that it will replace human jobs, the ITU said. Recent announcements regarding the launch of AI cloud infrastructure investments in developing markets by big-name players like Google, AWS and Microsoft have typically come with promises of local AI skills training, but the ITU says a more global and inclusive approach is needed to address the issue and ensure more stakeholders are involved. The AI Skills Coalition aims to will provide educational materials that can bolster skills for the future and address global inequalities in AI knowledge. Meanwhile, the ITU will work with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to leverage UNDP's presence in over 170 countries and territories to deliver AI capacity development directly to partner countries. “Capacity development is the number one ask from the developing countries that we work in,” said Achim Steiner, administrator of UNDP. “As part of this Coalition, we will work with our partners to deliver crucial foundational AI training, so that policy-makers and national governments can responsibly harness AI to achieve sustainable development.” The initiative will also address underrepresentation of marginalized groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities in the development of AI products and services, the ITU said. The coalition initiative will be rolled out in phases, starting with the launch of a new training platform developed by the ITU in March 2025. The platform will include a comprehensive training portfolio and a customizable digital library of AI material supplied by coalition members, as well as self-paced courses, webinars, access to in-person workshops, and hybrid programs tailored to diverse learning needs – all offered free of charge, The coalition will also develop specialized government training in AI governance, ethics, and policymaking to address the specific needs of developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs), the ITIU said.

Regulators and EU Agree Over Splitting Telecoms Companies

At a meeting with top officials of the Italian regulatory authority for telecommunications, Information Society Commissioner Viviane Reding was determined to introduce functional separation as a "last-resort remedy" in telecoms liberalization. Reding reaffirmed her conviction that "national telecoms regulators should be given this tool that can promote both competition and investment". She stressed, however, that the disputed splitting-up of telecoms incumbents should be applied only as a "last-resort remedy to address the stub-born cases where other remedies have failed". She added: "It is the responsibility of legislators both at European and at national level to ensure that, in the interest of legal certainty, there is a sound legal basis for applying functional separation. To enable regulators to do their job properly, legislators will need in particular to define clearly the required elements of this remedy and the conditions under which it may be used by an independent telecoms regulator." ERG President Calabrò said: "We are convinced that functional separation, given the peculiarities of the Italian market, could be a win-win solution as has been the case in the UK market," where the incumbent, BT, was forced to create a separate company, Openreach, to operate the network business. Calabrò went on to say: "We have started an intense discussion with Telecom Italia and initiated a public consultation on the subject. We are ready to go further on this route and I am confident that the Italian Parliament will soon approve legislation giving AGCOM powers to apply functional separation."

Majority of Residents in the Netherlands are Overpaying for Internet

The majority of Dutch residents with fixed and mobile internet subscriptions have contracts which have been automatically extended after expiring. Customers with these so-called dormant contracts often pay more than those who regularly switch or renew their subscriptions, especially as providers often offer discounts as part of new subscriptions. A prime example of this is shown in the data gathered by ACM where households with internet subscriptions in the budget segment have lower internet speeds and often pay more compared to those with higher speeds. For speeds of up to 100 Mbps, the average monthly cost is 44 euros, while someone with internet speeds between 250 and 750 Mbps pays an average of 41 euros per month. While Dutch internet is known for being slow and pricey compared to neighboring countries, according to Manon Leijten, a board member of ACM, switching or renewing contracts can save internet users a substantial amount of money. "Especially at low speeds, it can save you up to 250 euros per year to renew your contract," Leijten told NOS. "Those are considerable amounts." Dutch internet providers need to better inform customers while customers can save a lot by switching contracts, it is not always as easy as it sounds. "We receive reports that people are sometimes without internet for days after switching," stated Leijten. "Providers are also required to inform consumers when their contract expires. We have signals that this is not done, or not done properly. We will keep a close eye on this." There are various reasons that residents do not change their subscriptions: some do not know their contract has expired or do not know the advantages of renewing it, while others find it too much of a hassle or are happy with their current contract. The Dutch organization wants internet providers to be more upfront with customers about which rates are the most advantageous, so that users can see how much they can save with different subscriptions and therefore make an informed decision.

5G Adoption in Europe is Falling Behind, Says GSMA

A new GSMA report focusing on the mobile economy in Europe shows that while 5G will become the dominant mobile technology in Europe by 2026, the continent lags behind other regions including North America, East Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, where the firm says attention is now being turned to 5G standalone (5G SA) and 5G-Advanced (5G-A). More specifically, only around 15% of operators in Europe with live 5G networks had launched 5G SA by the end of Q3 2024, compared to more than 30% in Asia Pacific and North America. "This is indicative of the difficult operating conditions facing European operators," commented GSMA. "Recent 5G SA launches by EE in the UK and Free in France suggest 5G SA deployments are gathering pace, but the speed of rollouts remains slower than many industry players anticipated a few years ago." And when it comes the 5G experience, Europe is also falling behind — the average 5G download speeds by the end of 2023 in the region had reached approximately 230 Mbps. While a more than fivefold increase from the 44 Mbps of 4G speeds, the GCC states and in developed Asia Pacific continue to surpass those seen in Europe, particularly when it comes to download speeds. At the close of last year, 5G accounted for 30% of mobile connections in — equivalent to 200 million connections. Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Switzerland and the UK showed themselves to be leaders, with each country achieving a more than a 40% 5G adoption rate.

Take a Lean Approach to Telco Business Growth

IT solutions approved by CTOs, trusted by leaders

- **Business Support System**
- **5G Monetization**
- **IoT**
- **Wholesale & Partner Management**
- **Software Development & Data Processing Tools**

100%

successful track record in telecom transformation projects

220+

million end-customers touched by our solutions

nexign

nexign.com

A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN THE SA-ME-NA REGION

Afghanistan

The Directorate of Telecommunications and Information Technology of Logar Province has announced the imminent launch of the Fiber to the Home (FTTH) Internet project in Pul-e-Alam city. According to Bakhtar News Agency, Mawlawi Matiullah Abid, the Director of Telecommunications and Information Technology in Logar, stated that the project, to be implemented by Afghan Telecom, will cover 11,781 meters across six districts of Pul-e-Alam, the provincial capital. The Fiber to the Home Internet project is one of the key national infrastructure initiatives by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, aimed at delivering high-quality internet services directly to households through fiber optic networks. He added that practical work on this project will initially commence in the provincial center and later expand to the districts of the province. (January 7, 2025) www.bakhtarnews.af

Algeria

The Algerian Ministry of Post and Telecommunications has launched a national awareness campaign dedicated to protecting children from the dangers of improper internet use. Under the theme "The Internet is a Vast Ocean – Let's Help Our Children Navigate Safely," the campaign runs from February 8 to 14, 2025, and brings together a broad coalition of government bodies and institutions to ensure a comprehensive and effective approach to online safety. This high-stakes initiative is being carried out in coordination with the Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Interior and Local Assemblies, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Vocational Training, Ministry of Culture and Arts, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of National Solidarity and Family Affairs, Ministry of Communication, and Ministry of Health. Additionally, key organizations, such as the National Cybersecurity Agency, the National Gendarmerie, the General Directorate of National Security, the National Observatory of Civil Society, the High Commission for Digitalization, the Supreme Council for Youth, and the National Authority for the Protection of Personal Data, along with the National Authority for the Protection and Promotion of Childhood, are actively contributing to the campaign's success. (February 10, 2025) www.dzair-tube.dz

Algeria is accelerating its digital transformation with a bold plan to implement over 500 projects between 2025 and 2026 as part of its 'Digital Algeria 2030' initiative. Meriem Benmouloud, the High Commissioner for Digitalization, unveiled the strategy at a Government-Walis meeting held at the Palais des Nations in Algiers. Benmouloud emphasized that Algeria is undergoing a significant digital transformation and urged collective efforts to position the country as a leader in global digital rankings. The five-pillar strategy, encompassing infrastructure, training, digital governance, digital economy, and digital society, is set to position Algeria as a regional leader in innovation and governance. Despite the ambitious vision, challenges remain, as Algeria ranks 116th out of 193 countries in the UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI) as of 2024, improving from a score of 0.5611 in 2022 to 0.5956. However, the country's focus on e-administration and digital governance through platforms like 'Bawabatak' reflects Algeria's commitment to streamlining services and aligning with global digital trends. The ongoing efforts demonstrate the government's progress in establishing a robust digital framework for the future. (January 9, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Hicham Sifer, Chairman of the Committee on Legal and Administrative Affairs and Freedoms at the Algerian People's National Assembly, emphasized Algeria's commitment to advancing digitization and artificial intelligence during a workshop at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF 2024) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Sifer stressed the importance of Algeria's initiatives to develop its digital infrastructure and AI technologies. He noted that the country is leveraging international experiences to enhance its local capabilities and mentioned the extensive digital connectivity efforts underway across Algeria. The Chairman also highlighted that the Algerian Parliament is working to create a legislative and regulatory environment that supports digitization. He referenced legislation such as the bill on auto-entrepreneurs as an example of how the country is fostering a conducive framework for digital progress. Sifer further pointed out the adaptation of Algerian laws to the needs of artificial intelligence, including the enactment of a law on cybercrime. He emphasized that Algeria's legislative approach to digital technology not only promotes the digital economy but also sets the stage for significant economic growth in the tech and AI sectors. (December 23, 2024) www.meatechwatch.com

Bahrain

The Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA) has officially launched the My Gov app, marking a significant step in the country's digital transformation. This app, which offers 41 eServices from nine different government entities in its first phase, is designed to streamline access to public services for both citizens and residents. Developed in partnership with CrediMax, the app is available via the eGovernment Apps Store (bahrain.bh/apps) and reflects Bahrain's commitment to improving its eServices landscape. The launch coincides with the 25th anniversary of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's accession to the throne, celebrating his Silver Jubilee. The app is aligned with the directives of the Government Executive Committee, chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister. My Gov app offers users a unified login for 41 different eServices and integrates with eKey 2.0, allowing access to 10 personal documents and certificates. The app's development is based on public suggestions, including feedback from the Fikra competition and the National Suggestions and Complaints System (Tawasul), ensuring it meets the needs of the community. During a special ceremony, iGA Chief Executive Mohammed Ali Al Qaed emphasized that the app marks a milestone in Bahrain's effort to digitize services and support the 2023-2026 Government Plan. The app is expected to enhance the user experience by enabling faster access to government services and completing transactions in record time. It was officially launched by General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Ministerial Committee for Information and Communication Technology (MCICT), at the Gulf Hotel, with senior officials present.

(February 10, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Spectrum Strategy and Coordination Committee held its fourth meeting, chaired by Eng. Mariam Ahmed Jamaan, Chairperson of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), with the participation of committee members representing eleven government entities. The meeting aimed to review and discuss the items on the committee's agenda. At the beginning of the meeting, Eng. Mariam praised the members for their efforts in coordinating spectrum requirements and developing technical policies for planning and distributing spectrum resources across the Kingdom. She emphasized the importance of maintaining effective performance to support the telecommunications sector and government plans. The meeting highlighted the latest developments in the implementation of the National Frequency Plan (Resolution No. 4 of 2024), based on the outcomes of the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23) and sector needs. The plan seeks to organize spectrum distribution to facilitate flexible frequency allocation, addressing both current and future demands. Bahrain is among the first countries to adopt a four-year plan aligned with local and international telecommunications needs. Key updates to the plan include the allocation of new bands for mobile communications, satellite services for aviation, and aircraft connectivity through satellites. Additionally, frequencies were allocated for Earth exploration services via satellites, contributing to the collection and transmission of scientific data. The committee affirmed that this plan provides a clear and transparent guide for manufacturers and investors in the radiocommunications sector. It establishes clear regulations to organize the sector, ultimately benefiting the national economy.

(January 1, 2025) www.tra.org.bh

Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has proposed stricter quality of service (QoS) benchmarks for mobile operators in an effort to better protect user interests. This new draft includes significant changes, such as reducing the call drop rate ceiling from 2 percent to 1 percent and increasing the call setup success rate standard from 97 percent to 98 percent. The voice call setup time has also been shortened from 8 seconds to 7 seconds, while a new benchmark has been introduced for Voice over Long-Term Evolution (VoLTE) technology, setting the call setup time at a maximum of 3 seconds. VoLTE, a technology enabling high-quality voice calls over 4G LTE networks, will play a key role in improving communication efficiency. In addition to these changes, the mobile internet upload speed requirement has been raised from 2 Mbps to 4 Mbps, and mobile data latency is now capped at under 50 milliseconds. The broadband sector will also see new rules, with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) required to meet 75 percent of the subscribed download speed and 50 percent of the upload speed. The BTRC's new guidelines are designed not only to safeguard consumer interests but also to foster a competitive market and encourage innovation. The regulatory framework aims to improve customer satisfaction, service quality, and trust within the telecommunications sector, while promoting fair competition. Furthermore, the BTRC will assess the performance of service providers through random or complaint-based checks, including inspections, drive tests, and other methods. The draft also includes penalties for operators that fail to meet the established standards, including administrative fines under the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act, 2001. Despite the new regulations, local mobile operators have struggled to maintain current standards, with Grameenphone, Robi, Banglalink, and Teletalk failing to meet the BTRC's performance criteria in recent drive tests. (January 17, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Egypt

Egypt is rapidly advancing in the digital sector, now ranked as the top African country in fixed internet speed. This achievement is a result of the government's ongoing digital transformation and infrastructure development, according to Abdel Wahab Ghoneim, Vice Chairman of the Arab Federation for Digital Economy. Ghoneim highlighted the broader influence of digitalisation on the global economy, noting that the worldwide digital economy has reached a value of $55 trillion. He emphasized Egypt's role in this shift, citing the country's significant progress in improving internet connectivity, which solidifies its position as a leader in Africa's digital landscape, as reported by Sada El-Balad, a partner of TV BRICS. The country is also seeing growth in outsourcing and digital service exports, with approximately 55 digital service companies now operating in Egypt. This growth aligns with global trends shaped by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is transforming industries worldwide. Egypt's focus on developing human capital is another key element in its digital expansion. Ghoneim noted that 200,000 young professionals have been trained in artificial intelligence and digital technologies. The country remains committed to equipping its workforce with the skills necessary to drive digital transformation and enhance its economic competitiveness. (February 10, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Egypt's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Amr Talaat, has officially announced the launch of Wi-Fi Calling. This new service enables citizens to make and receive mobile calls using fixed internet networks, offering improved call quality, particularly in areas with poor mobile network coverage or in locations with technical challenges. Developed over the course of a year in partnership with the National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA) and Egypt's four major telecom providers—Vodafone Egypt, Telecom Egypt, Orange Egypt, and Etisalat Egypt—Wi-Fi Calling ensures high-quality voice calls in difficult environments like high-rise buildings and indoor spaces. This service is part of a larger effort to improve telecom services across Egypt, including the construction of over 3,000 mobile towers in 2024 and the expansion of full mobile coverage to highways and rural villages by mid-2025, under the "Hayah Karima" initiative. Wi-Fi Calling is available at no extra charge, functioning under existing mobile plans, and can be easily activated directly through phone settings. (January 21, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Amr Talaat, Egypt's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, presented the country's Digital Strategy vision during a visit to the Creativa Innovation Hub in Giza, led by Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly. Talaat highlighted the Ministry's initiative to establish Digital Egypt Innovation Hubs across all governorates, emphasizing their critical role in advancing the digital strategy. These hubs will offer programs in collaboration with the private sector, focusing on digital skills training, promoting freelance work, and fostering technological innovation. Talaat noted that the number of innovation hubs has grown from three in 2016 to 20 in 2023, with a target of 27 hubs by 2025. The Digital Strategy centers on three key pillars: empowering citizens to secure digital economy jobs, promoting entrepreneurship and innovation, and simplifying access to digital government services. Talaat underscored the importance of an efficient digital infrastructure, regulatory frameworks to attract both local and foreign investments, and partnerships with the private sector and civil society as key enablers of this vision. He also explained the criteria for selecting hub locations, which include ample space for activities, centrality within the governorate, and proximity to major universities. Talaat presented ongoing efforts to repurpose historical buildings into Digital Egypt Innovation Hubs, such as one in Giza, which will preserve the architectural design of the structure. Other hubs with historical significance include the Sultan Hussein Kamel Palace hub in Cairo. Talaat also spoke about the ministry's efforts to nurture technological innovation within the hubs, including partnerships with the German Development Agency for a Government Innovation Lab and collaboration with South Korea for startup incubation and electronic design labs. Talaat affirmed that Egypt consistently ranks among the top three countries in the region for entrepreneurship and technological innovation. Since their establishment, the innovation hubs have supported approximately 1,000 startups and trained over 100,000 individuals in technological and freelance work skills. In 2024, around 20,000 individuals utilized the hubs' coworking spaces.

(January 14, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Iraq

The Ministry of Communications announced the signing of an agreement with global telecom giant Vodafone to launch a fully government-owned 5G network. Vodafone is one of the leading telecommunications companies in Europe and Africa, serving over 330 million customers across 15 countries. "The project seeks to improve telecom services, lower costs, increase state revenues, and bring modern technology…It will create jobs for Iraqi youth and enhance their network management skills," Communications Minister Hayam Al-Yasiri stated. Peter Dvorak, Vodafone's CEO for Partner Markets, said the initiative would boost Iraq's social and economic development, emphasizing "the company's global expertise and dedication to training young Iraqi talents." The

agreement covers preparations for the telecom operator's launch, network design, commercial proposals, business growth plans, and a memorandum for ongoing discussions on services and the optimal management model. On 26 November, Vodafone secured the license to operate Iraq's national telecommunications network, after the Council of Ministers approved its selection as the operator for the national mobile license project using 5G technology. (December 4, 2024) www.shafaq.com

Jordan

Jordan is set to host the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Regional Development Forum for the Arab States Region (RDF-ARB) next week, along with a regional preparatory meeting for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC). The events will gather high-level delegations, including policymakers, regulators, industry leaders, and representatives from development organizations. The forum, held under the patronage of the Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, aims to foster cooperation and address regional challenges in telecommunications and ICT development. It will be followed by a preparatory meeting for the 25th WTDC, which will take place in Azerbaijan later this year. These events highlight Jordan's commitment to promoting regional and international collaboration in the communications sector. (January 29, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Jordan experienced a significant 37% increase in 5G subscriptions during the third quarter of 2024, as reported by the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) in the 2024 5G Indicators Report. By mid-2024, mobile broadband users in the Kingdom reached around 8 million, with over 70,000 subscribing to 5G services by the end of the third quarter. The expansion of 5G infrastructure also advanced, with over 230 operational towers across the country, improving connectivity in key regions. ICT specialist Lina Hani highlighted that 5G's broader economic benefits would support the growth of tech companies, startups, and industrial automation, fostering an inclusive economic system. Bayan Khaled, a computer engineer and AI developer, emphasized Jordan's progress toward a digitally connected economy, noting that the growing 5G infrastructure would also generate job opportunities in telecommunications and related sectors. While the Kingdom has made significant strides, both experts agree there is still room for further development in 5G adoption.

(January 6, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Kuwait

The Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) announced that 2024 was a year of exceptional success for the organization. CITRA emphasized its commitment to continuing its role in developing digital infrastructure and strengthening its leadership in supporting the digital economy. The announcement was made during a press conference held by the Acting Chairman of the CITRA Board of Directors, Eng. Abdullah Al-Ajmi, where he reviewed the authority's achievements in 2024 and outlined its vision for 2025. Al-Ajmi reported that CITRA achieved record revenues exceeding KWD 75 million (approximately USD 243.4 million) during the first half of the fiscal year (2024-2025). This success was driven by improved operational performance and increased revenue collection in key areas such as landing station licenses, telecom companies' number range licenses, and income from leased international connection circuits. As part of CITRA's efforts to implement cutting-edge technologies in communication networks, the authority launched the first phase of the direct extension registration service (kw.) in 2024. It also introduced new frequencies in preparation for the launch of the advanced fifth-generation technology (5GA), which represents the highest level in the communications networks sector. In a bid to strengthen the information technology sector, CITRA signed a land lease contract with Google to establish modern data centers for cloud computing services in Kuwait. Al-Ajmi emphasized the importance of this project, noting that it would enhance digital infrastructure and support digital transformation efforts in both the public and private sectors. Al-Ajmi concluded his remarks by emphasizing the authority's continued efforts in 2025 to contribute to the development of the communications and information technology sector. He stressed the importance of enhancing digital transformation, supporting economic growth, and fostering partnerships with the private sector while adopting best global practices. (January 29, 2025) www.arabtimesonline.com

Morocco

Morocco's Minister of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform, Amal Falah, has announced plans to roll out the 5G network in line with the country's hosting of the 2025 African Cup of Nations and the 2030 World Cup. During a parliamentary session, Falah detailed the kingdom's ambitious digital agenda, aiming to achieve 25% population coverage of 5G by 2026 and expand this to 70% by 2030, prioritizing full coverage in cities hosting World Cup matches. These efforts are part of Morocco's "Digital Morocco 2030" strategy, which seeks to position the country as a digital hub on both regional and global scales. As part of this strategy, the government plans to secure fiber optic internet for 6,300 public administrative sites by 2026, and provide high-speed internet access to 5.6 million homes by 2030. Falah also highlighted the significant role of digital services in the development of Morocco's telecommunications sector. The government has backed this growth through investment agreements, with over 8.4 billion dirhams invested in 2023 to support national digital transformation projects. (December 24, 2024) www.meatechwatch.com

Nepal

The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MoCIT) has issued a new directive for the operation and management of data centers and cloud services in Nepal. Approved by Communication Minister Prithvi Subba Gurung on Magh 15, 2081, the directive outlines critical regulations for service providers, covering areas such as safety, privacy, and infrastructure. Service providers must be registered with the Department of Information and Technology (DoIT) before offering services. They are required to submit various documents, including company registration and building construction certificates, and ensure fire safety measures. A privacy policy and business continuity plan must also be in place. Additionally, companies must submit a location map of their data center, details about their tiers, and technical personnel responsible for operations. Firms need the necessary infrastructure to run data centers, such as network equipment (firewalls, routers, switches), server and storage devices, and HVAC systems. If they do not own their building, a lease agreement with the property owner must be submitted. Furthermore, data security certifications are mandatory. Existing operators must apply for listing within six months, with separate listings required for those offering both data center and cloud services. For government-related services, operators are mandated to use services from the Integrated Data Management Center (IDMC), although security agencies are exempt. Government service providers not using government data centers must migrate, with exceptions granted for valid reasons. Operators must ensure full security, reporting any unauthorized access to regulatory bodies, and comply with international standards. They must also conduct annual security audits. (February 13, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Oman

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has initiated field visits to assess key telecom indicators, including social media performance, signal strength and coverage, data speed, and voice service quality. The field visits will cover centers across all governorates of Oman, as well as five popular tourist destinations, including Al Ashkhara, Harat al Aqr in Nizwa, Jabal Shams, Dhofar, and Muscat Expressway, along with roads such as Sur-Quriyat, Nizwa Ibri, Rub' al Khali, Haima, Duqm, Adam Thumrait, Bukha, and important locations like Muscat, Suhar, and Duqm airports, as well as the industrial estates of Suhar, Sur Free Zone, and Ibri. TRA's team will closely monitor video broadcast speed and quality, access time for key applications, band access time, and video playback performance. The field visits will also focus on measuring signal strength, including the percentage of 4G and 5G coverage, and evaluating data speeds such as download/upload rates and response times. Additionally, the quality of voice service will be assessed, including sound quality and the percentage of failed calls. The number of field visits by TRA has significantly increased and is projected to grow by 197% in 2024, reflecting the authority's commitment to ensuring high-quality telecom services across Oman. (February 17, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Oman's telecommunications sector underwent notable shifts in mobile subscription patterns through the end of 2024, as postpaid subscriptions surged by 33.9%, reaching 2,391,951, while prepaid subscriptions saw a slight decline of 1.6%, totaling 5,114,919. Despite the drop in prepaid users, overall mobile subscriptions grew by 7.5% year-on-year, reaching 7,506,870. This trend highlights the increasing consumer preference for postpaid services in Oman. Active mobile broadband subscriptions rose to 6,455,261,

and fixed internet subscriptions grew by 2%, totaling 574,730. Meanwhile, fixed-line subscriptions fell significantly by 24.8% to 435,596, with traditional analogue subscriptions dropping by 20.9% to 66,834. In contrast, fixed-line IP technology subscriptions rose by 7.4%, reaching 318,478. Despite the shift toward broadband and postpaid services, subscriptions to digital network channels for integrated services declined slightly by 0.2%, and public telephone subscriptions saw a dramatic 98.1% drop. The data indicates evolving consumer preferences in Oman's telecom landscape, with a growing demand for mobile broadband and postpaid services. (February 13, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Oman will host the largest annual meeting of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) in October 2025.An official from Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) stated that the annual general meeting is the most significant of ICANN's three annual gatherings. It will bring together a distinguished group of stakeholders, including government representatives, private sector leaders, civil society members and technical experts, to discuss critical issues related to Internet governance, policy development and the management of the global Domain Name System (DNS). The official added that the conference aims to shape global policies for DNS, improve transparency and accountability in ICANN's operations, promote capacity building through workshops, and foster consensus on decisions that will enhance Internet governance and keep pace with technological advancements. "Oman's role as a regional technology and communications hub will be further cemented by hosting this prestigious event. It will provide an opportunity to boost the sultanate's presence in the global Internet governance arena." The event will be organized by TRA in collaboration with other relevant authorities. ICANN meetings are an essential element of multistakeholder model and provide a venue to progress policy work, conduct outreach and business, exchange best practices, and interact with other members of the ICANN community. Founded in 1998 and headquartered in Los Angeles, USA, ICANN is a non-profit organization responsible for managing DNS and distributing Internet addresses (IP) globally. ICANN plays a crucial role in maintaining the stability, security and resilience of the Internet, making it one of the foundational entities in the global Internet ecosystem. (January 7, 2025) www.muscatdaily.com

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) has launched the 'Digital Transformation: A New Reality' campaign as part of its Government Digital Transformation Program, Tahawul. The campaign highlights the wide range of digital services provided by government entities, focusing on how these services improve efficiency, enhance public services, and elevate the quality of life for both citizens and residents. Running for a month and a half, the initiative aims to deepen public understanding of digital transformation and build trust by showcasing key achievements and successes. The primary goal of the campaign is to demonstrate the convenience and efficiency of digital solutions while encouraging their adoption as the preferred method for accessing government services. It also aims to improve user satisfaction by simplifying government procedures and enhancing productivity. For businesses, the transition to digital offers multiple advantages, including increased agility, better planning, and cost savings by reducing reliance on paper-based processes. The campaign emphasizes the time-saving benefits of remote transactions, eliminating the need for physical visits.
(December 24, 2024) www.meatechwatch.com

Pakistan

A high-level meeting, chaired by Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, discussed the establishment of Pakistan's first-ever Data Park to promote data-driven learning and informed decision-making among the youth. The meeting was attended by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) Chief Statistician Dr. Naeem Uz Zafar and Member Muhammad Sarwar Gondal, who expressed support for the initiative. The Data Park aims to provide students, researchers, and policymakers with real-time socio-economic data through interactive screens, storytelling galleries, and digital dashboards. The minister emphasized the need for evidence-based policymaking and highlighted the importance of engaging universities in data-driven research and analysis. He directed PBS to develop an interactive digital environment that enables students to explore Pakistan's economic and social trends. Inspired by the World Bank's digital learning initiatives, the Data Park will be established in public and recreational spaces to maximize accessibility. The initiative seeks to foster data literacy, policy research, and innovation, equipping young professionals with critical thinking skills. PBS officials assured full cooperation in executing the project, with the government set to develop a formal plan to launch Pakistan's first Data Park, reinforcing its commitment to digital education and knowledge-based policymaking. (February 25, 2025) www.profit.pakistantoday.com.pk

Pakistan is poised to roll out 5G services as early as June 2025, according to a comprehensive timeline presented by the Ministry of IT and Telecom to the country's parliament. The schedule outlines key milestones leading up to the much-anticipated launch, marking a significant step in the country's telecommunication transformation. The implementation process will begin in February 2025 when recommendations from the appointed consultant will be submitted to the Spectrum Advisory Committee. By March 2025, the committee will finalize policy reforms, covering areas like spectrum pricing, trading conditions, and taxation. In April 2025, the federal government is expected to approve the policy directive for 5G deployment. A crucial step will be the auction of key spectrum bands—3500MHz, 2600MHz, 2300MHz, and 700MHz—scheduled for May 2025. Following this, telecom

operators are set to launch 5G services in June 2025, though coverage obligations and specific rollout details remain unclear at this stage. The Ministry of IT and Telecom has stressed that the introduction of 5G will represent a major milestone in Pakistan's strategic telecommunications plan, ensuring reliable, high-speed internet across the country. This ambitious project, which began planning as far back as January 2020, aims to enhance Pakistan's technological infrastructure, although it has been delayed from its original target of an August 2024 launch.
(January 21, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

According to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), the number of cellular subscribers in Pakistan reached 193,238,238 million by the end of November 2024, with a mobile teledensity of 79.10 percent. The data also showed a growth in mobile broadband subscribers, reaching 139 million and achieving a mobile penetration rate of 56.90 percent. Fixed telephone subscribers stood at 3 million, reflecting a fixed teledensity of 1.10 percent, while broadband subscribers totaled 143 million, resulting in a broadband penetration rate of 58.39 percent. In response to a National Assembly query, Parliamentary Secretary Sajid Mehdi revealed that 86,000 SIM cards had been blocked for involvement in anti-state activities. He also mentioned the government's action of blocking the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) to combat misinformation. Additionally, restrictions have been placed on VPN usage to control the flow of false information. Mr. Mehdi further indicated that amendments to the Electronic Crimes Act are expected soon, aimed at strengthening regulations against fake news. (January 7, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) launched its annual report for the year 2024. The report offers an insightful overview of key technological, infrastructural, regulatory, and consumer-centric interventions and reforms implemented by PTA during the year. According to the report, the telecom sector generated a record revenue of Rs. 955 billion in FY 2023-24, reflecting a remarkable growth of 17pc over FY 2022-23, despite economic challenges. Moreover, cellular mobile services are now available to 91pc and 4G services to 81pc of the population, with total telecom subscribers reaching an impressive 196 million by September 2024. The number of broadband subscribers touched 142.3 million from 127.6 million in June 2023, while average mobile internet speed saw an increase of 28pc, rising from 15.65 Mbps to 20.02 Mbps. According to the repot the data usage also increased by 24.2pc reaching 25,141 in FY 2023-24, whereas, broadband penetration reached 58.4pc compared to 53.6pc in 2023. During FY 2023-24, 29.6 million mobile devices were locally manufactured, which met 94pc of the demand in the country. These advancements were underpinned by a series of strategic regulatory initiatives aimed at sustaining sectoral growth and innovation. The Annual Report 2024 serves as a testament to PTA's commitment to steering the telecom industry towards digital transformation in line with global standards. (December 17, 2024) www.pakobserver.net

Qatar

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA), represented by its President, Engineer Ahmad Abdulla AlMuslemani, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to enhance global efforts in addressing harmful interference to space services. The signing ceremony occurred in Geneva, Switzerland, in the presence of the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Office in Geneva H E Dr. Hind Abd Al Rahman Al Muftah. The MoU establishes a framework for cooperation in radio-frequency monitoring and interference resolution to support international telecommunications. Under the MoU, CRA's Space Radio Monitoring Centre (SRMC) will provide technical assistance to ITU in performing measurements related to cases of harmful interference affecting geostationary and non-geostationary satellite networks and systems. This initiative aligns with ITU's Constitution and Radio Regulations, which mandate the coordination of global efforts to eliminate harmful interference between radio stations of different countries. "This MoU reflects Qatar's continuous efforts to ensure an interference-free environment for space communications," said AlMuslemani. "Through our Space Radio Monitoring Centre, CRA is well-positioned to assist ITU in detecting and resolving harmful interference, which is crucial for maintaining the reliability of global telecommunications services. This partnership strengthens Qatar's role in international spectrum management and reinforces our dedication to upholding ITU's regulatory standards," he added. "These enhanced space monitoring capabilities will continue to ensure the high reliability of satellite communications and other space services in the real world," noted the ITU Radio Communication Bureau Director, Mario Mankiewicz. "This supports the interference-free operation of not only current systems but also of future innovative systems that will be launched thanks to the 2023 World Radio Communication Conference decisions adopted in Dubai in 2023 and effective from this year". (February 25, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The government struck an agreement with US-based data company Scale AI to help boost adoption of and training in the technology, with plans to develop more than 50 use cases by 2029. Qatar's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) stated it signed a five-year strategic deal during the Web Summit Qatar 2025 event as part of ongoing efforts to enhance operational efficiency in government entities. Scale AI will provide the Qatari government with "advanced AI-powered tools" and products to simplify key processes including predictive analytics, automation and advanced data analysis. Over the next five years, the MCIT will work with Scale AI to drive adoption in the

government, promote electronic services and develop the skills of the national workforce to lead the country's digital future. The tie-up also includes development of AI-driven projects, supporting digital transformation strategies, promoting sustainable economic growth and reinforcing global leadership in responsible AI adoption. Of the 50 use cases, four initial AI applications and projects are already in progress with various government entities. Alex Wang, founder and CEO of Scale AI, said "this long-term partnership will further modernise government operations, enhance public services, and grow and upskill Qatar's AI-ready workforce".

(February 24, 2025) www.mobileworldlive.com

Qatar's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) launched the 2024 Digital Inclusion Index, marking a significant step toward ensuring equal access to digital services for all citizens and residents. The initiative supports Qatar's Digital Agenda 2030 and its broader goal to build an inclusive digital society aligned with the Qatar National Vision 2030. Key Highlights of the Digital Inclusion IndexThe index, launched on Tuesday, is designed to promote global collaboration in digital transformation, exchange of expertise, and strategic partnerships. It measures progress in seven key areas: digital access, affordability, policies, attitudes, adoption, impact, and digital content. These pillars identify opportunities and challenges in promoting digital inclusion across various societal segments. Qatar's ranking of second regionally and 16th globally in digital inclusion is attributed to substantial investments in digital infrastructure, including extensive 5G and 4G network coverage. The country has also implemented impactful digital capacity-building programs, like the "Better Connections" program and "SafeSpace" platform, which have enhanced digital skills for over 1.5 million migrant workers. With 77% of the population aged 15 and older completing secondary education, Qatar's investment in ICT and education has helped build a digitally proficient society. The report also highlighted the role of regulatory frameworks in promoting technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), which are critical in fostering digital trust. Qatar's goals for the future include a 10% increase in digital access, a 30% improvement in digital competencies, and a 20% rise in digital trust. These goals are supported by targeted initiatives aimed at enhancing digital skills among senior citizens and those with lower digital proficiency. Reem Al Mansoori, Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Industry Development at MCIT, stressed that the Digital Inclusion Index is essential to achieving the nation's vision of a sustainable, knowledge-based economy. Duha Al Buhendi, Director of the Digital Society and Digital Competencies Department, added that the index will guide future policies to expand digital equity and access. The launch of this report underscores Qatar's dedication to creating a digital society where every individual can fully participate in and benefit from technological advancements. (January 30, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) has announced its collaboration with Google to bring Qatar's landmarks and cultural heritage to the world through Street View in Google Maps. This initiative leverages advanced technology, like 360-degree panoramic views, to enhance navigation and boost tourism, supporting Qatar's digital transformation goals. Street View in Google Maps is a global feature that includes over 220 billion images from over 100 countries. This collaboration highlights Qatar's commitment to smart city development and innovation in urban planning. "Google Street View" offers an invaluable resource for people of Qatar, visitors, and businesses. While people in Qatar can benefit from improved navigation, visitors can virtually explore Qatar's landmarks, such as Qatar's museums, Souq Waqif, The Corniche, Al Zubarah Fort, and even experience the thrill of cruising the sand dunes in the Inland Sea, before planning their trips. For businesses, particularly in tourism and retail, the platform provides global exposure and engagement opportunities. These efforts reinforce Qatar's position as a leading destination for culture, tourism, and business. As part of this initiative, CRA worked closely with relevant entities in Qatar, including the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department at the Ministry of Municipality, Qatar Tourism, and national security agencies. Engineer Ahmad Abdulla AlMuslemani, President of CRA, welcomed the initiative, saying: "This collaboration with Google underscores CRA's commitment to contributing to building a knowledge-based economy and adopting technologies to drive sustainable development and global competitiveness. By integrating advanced tools like Street View in Google Maps into its smart city and tourism strategies and bringing Qatar's cultural and architectural treasures to a global audience, we are enhancing our leadership in innovation and digital transformation, in line with CRA's strategy and the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030." (January 8, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has unveiled the formation of the Digital Skills Working Group, as part of its commitment to the Digital Agenda 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy. The working group's primary objective is to advance digital skills development across government entities. Key goals include conducting comprehensive studies to identify training needs, designing innovative training programs, and aligning efforts among stakeholders to create an environment conducive to learning and professional growth in the digital sector. In a recent meeting, the working group collaborated with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Labor to define the organizational framework for future initiatives. These discussions aim to ensure that the group's actions align with Qatar's national objectives for digital skills development. The working group will expand its scope by including more stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, thereby broadening the inclusivity of its programs and enhancing its impact on the nation's digital progress. It plans to hold quarterly meetings to review progress, identify opportunities, and refine ongoing digital skills initiatives. The group's focus areas will include digital skills programs for youth, workforce skill development, and the creation of comprehensive digital skills frameworks. By promoting collaboration, sharing insights, and tackling challenges, the group aims to enhance Qatar's digital skills ecosystem, contributing to the nation's advancement as a future-ready, digital society. The Digital Skills Working Group is a key part of Qatar's broader strategy to accelerate digital transformation and establish an integrated ecosystem that fosters innovation, collaboration, and growth across all sectors.

(December 30, 2024) www.meatechwatch.com

Saudi Arabia

CST participates in the Arab Preparatory Meeting for 2025 Telecommunication Development Conference Saudi Arabia, represented by the Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST), participated in the Arab Preparatory Meeting for 2025 World Telecommunication Development Conference, which were held in Amman, Jordan, from February 3 to 6, 2025. The meetings were attended by excellences, leaders and experts, policy makers, and representatives of regional and international development organizations in the telecommunications and technology sectors. The meetings aimed to identify strategic priorities for developing a regional action plan for telecommunications development over the next four years. CST's delegation led by Eng. Muath AlRumayh, General Manager of International Affairs at CST, played pivotal leadership roles in Arab teams during the preparatory meetings, where they highlighted the development of the global space economy in serving humanity through the adoption and development of the latest space technologies. CST has organized and hosted several global conferences, including the Space Debris Conference, seeking to bridge perspectives between countries and address current challenges, as well as explore future opportunities for space sector development. The upcoming conference will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan in late November 2025, aiming to establish new collaborative frameworks while advancing digital innovation. It will also address sustainable development and strategic planning for the telecommunications sector. (February 21, 2025) www. cst.gov.sa

During the Global Tech Conference LEAP25, The Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) received for achieving first place with 94% in the Emerging Technology Adoption Readiness Index 2025 It is worth mentioning that CST had ranked first in this index for two consecutive times in 2023 and 2024. This achievement comes as part of CST's efforts to reach organizational maturity and integration, increase flexibility and collaboration between its sectors, as well as leveraging all available opportunities and investing in human capabilities, along with adopting the latest emerging technologies. The index seeks to provide necessary support in identifying suitable emerging technologies with sustainable impact, and methods to invest in them efficiently to enhance user experience and contribute to building a smart digital government. (February 17, 2025) www.new.cst.gov.sa

The Communications, Space, and Technology Commission (CST), in partnership with Type One Ventures and Deloitte Consulting, hosted the 3rd edition of The Frontier event, which brings together entrepreneurs, experts, and investors in the space sector, along with Space technology end users from both the private and public sectors. The event aimed to discuss opportunities and challenges for Space tech adoption in the mining, oil and gas, environment and agriculture, healthcare, communications, urban development, transportation, and tourism sectors. CST is hosting this edition of the event from its role as a regulator of the space sector and an enabler of investors and entrepreneurs, therefore contributing to the growth of the Kingdom's space economy.
(January 28, 2025) www.cst.gov.sa

The Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) and the Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO) have announced that the first mandatory phase of the unified charging ports for mobile phones and electronic devices in the Saudi market is effective 1 January 2025, which requires "USB Type-C". CST and SASO indicated that the unified charging ports decision aims to improve the user experience in Saudi Arabia, reduce extra costs for consumers, deliver high-quality charging and data transfer technology, and enhance the quality of tech products. Furthermore, it promotes environmental sustainability and helps achieve SDG's by reducing electronic waste. The first phase will include mobile phones, tablets, digital cameras, e-readers, portable video game consoles, headphones, earphones, portable speakers, Amplified speakers, keyboards, computer mice, as well as portable navigation systems and wireless routers. The second phase will commence on 1 April 2026, and will include laptops. It is noteworthy that CST and SASO announced the phases of the unified charging ports for mobile phones and electronic devices in the Saudi market on 6 August 2023, which also require companies and suppliers to adopt the "USB Type-C"as the unified charging port type, in accordance with the technical and administrative requirements outlined in the relevant technical regulations and standard specifications. (January 1, 2025) www.cst.gov.sa

The Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) represented by its Deputy Governor Strategy & Digitalization, Mr. Naif Sheshah, received the National EA Certificate for the fourth level during the third edition of the Digital Government Forum (IGF) which was held in Riyadh between the 15th and 19th of December 2024. The certificate was presented by the Digital Government Authority (DGA) to the institutions that apply the National Overall Reference Architecture (NORA) which aims to facilitate the integration of government services and enhance the efficiency of government performance Achieving the fourth level reflects CST's fundamental efforts throughout the year, as it has elevated to new levels of regulatory excellence by developing over 100 digital services to enhance the user experience, while ranking the first position among government agencies in Emerging Technologies Adoption Readiness for the second year in a row. Applying the NORA method enables the Saudi government agencies to achieve integration and harmonization between the business sector and technology, and provide detailed information and indicators that support decision making. As well as optimizing the use of resources, governing investment in technology, while upgrading the maturity of electronic services provided to the public.
(December 18, 2024) www.cst.gov.sa

Sri Lanka

Starting in June, Sri Lankan mobile phone users will be able to retain their existing numbers even when switching mobile network operators, as announced by officials from the Ministry of Digital Economy. This move, aimed at enhancing consumer choice and competition, was confirmed during a meeting of the Ministerial Consultative Committee on Digital Economic Affairs. Additionally, the Ministry is constructing 50 new mobile signal towers in areas with poor network coverage to improve connectivity nationwide. The initiative is part of Sri Lanka's broader efforts to enhance digital infrastructure. The meeting, chaired by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, also covered key digital policy topics, including cryptocurrency regulation, with a decision on its legality pending the recommendations of the Governor of the Central Bank. Other discussions addressed protecting citizens' personal data, managing emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, and the salaries of IT engineers. To further support the digital economy, the committee will hold a workshop on March 10, 2025, to brief Members of Parliament on upcoming government programs related to digital advancement. (February 25, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Sri Lankan telecom provider SLT-Mobitel announced that it has successfully conducted the country's first trial of 5G-Advanced. The trial, which took place at Mobitel's Colombo headquarters, used the 3.5-GHz band and ZTE's radio equipment, incorporating 3CC carrier aggregation, massive MIMO, and 1024QAM modulation. A Xiaomi 14 Ultra was used as the terminal, achieving downlink speeds exceeding 5 Gbps. Mobitel's Chief Operating Officer, Sudharshana Geeganage, emphasized that 5G-A's advanced features would unlock new use cases across industries such as healthcare, transportation, entertainment, and smart cities. He stated that these innovations would play a critical role in advancing the country's digital transformation and contributing to Sri Lanka's development. Currently, 5G services in Sri Lanka are in the trial phase, with Mobitel and Dialog Axiata offering pre-commercial services. Mobitel has already conducted trials in Colombo, Kandy, Anuradhapura, Galle, and Jaffna. In December, the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) issued a consultation notice for the auction of 3.5-GHz and 27-GHz bands, with licenses set for ten years.

(January 29, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) has urged the public to purchase only mobile phones with International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) numbers registered with the Commission. This is part of the country's efforts to implement the IMEI Registration System. In a statement posted on their official website, the TRCSL announced that mobile devices with non-registered IMEI numbers will not be able to connect to the networks of Telecommunication Operators in the future. However, this rule will not apply to IMEI-enabled mobile phones that are already connected to these networks before January 28.

(January 13, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Tunisia

Tunisia will officially launch 5G mobile telephony services within the next ten days, as announced by Minister of Communication Technologies, Sofiene Hemissi. The three telecommunication operators in the country will be rolling out the service, with the prices and other details expected to be revealed soon. This marks a significant step forward in the country's digital transformation, positioning it to take advantage of faster mobile internet speeds and enhanced connectivity, which are essential for supporting various industries and improving user experience.

(February 4, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Ministry of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy has officially granted 5G licenses to three major telecom operators: Tunisie Telecom, Orange Tunisie, and Ooredoo Tunisia. This decision marks a significant milestone in the country's digital transformation, with commercial 5G services set to launch in 2025. The licenses were approved, following a six-month tender process that began in June. The three operators submitted their applications in September. Each license is valid for 15 years and includes 5 MHz of duplexed spectrum in the 700-MHz band and 100 MHz of TDD spectrum in the 3.5 GHz band for 5G use. The Ministry has also allocated three 20 MHz blocks available for operators upon request, with other frequency bands to be released in future phases. Originally aiming for a commercial 5G launch by late 2024, Minister of Communication Technologies Sofiène Hmissi confirmed that the rollout will now begin in 2025. Despite the delay, Hmissi assured that the operators have already conducted extensive tests, pilot projects, and network upgrades in preparation for the deployment.

(December 3, 2024) www.meatechwatch.com

United Arab Emirates

The UAE is seeing 600 MHz international mobile telecommunications (IMT) development enter a new chapter as its Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) officially announced, on November 29, 2024, that 600 MHz would be assigned to IMT systems. This represents a major milestone in the country's mobile communications development following the identification of this band for use in mobile communications systems at the 2023 World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23). In addition to providing extra spectrum for operators, the use of 600 MHz will enable the UAE to further consolidate its leading position in the adoption of mobile communications technology. As a significant chunk of below 1 GHz spectrum, which is key to ensuring IMT system coverage, 600 MHz boasts wide coverage due to its excellent propagation characteristics, making it an ideal choice for further expanding 5G connectivity while also improving stability and experience. These characteristics of 600 MHz make it important to the IMT industry, which has reached a broad consensus on the need to seek new low-band spectrum to fill up the deficit in low-band and medium-band spectrum as mobile communications continue to develop rapidly.

600 MHz Is an Accelerator for Service Improvement and the Digital Economy

600 MHz will emerge as a core 5G low band that will benefit 5G networks in the following ways:

- Broader 5G reachability: Thanks to its strong obstacle-penetration capabilities, 600 MHz can effectively extend mobile connectivity to deeper spaces within residential and commercial areas. Featuring a huge coverage area, the band will also enable operators to expand 5G coverage to rural and connectivity-scarce areas, further reducing the digital divide.
- Quicker 5G standalone (SA) evolution: The use of 600 MHz for 5G IMT will be essential to ensure consistent SA experiences and expand native 5G capabilities from subscribers to a huge population of vertical users, with a focus on promoting reduced capability (RedCap) for the innovative Internet of Things (IoT), Internet of Vehicles (IoV), and industrial Internet applications.
- Stronger mobile AI enablement: Leading networks are the prerequisite for leading services. 600 MHz, with its extensive coverage reaching hundreds of square miles, provides a solid and ubiquitous foundation for diverse Mobile AI applications. This ensures the availability of AI phones, AI assistants, AI wearables, intelligent driving, and embodied robots anytime, anywhere, thereby fostering the innovation and expansion of more Mobile AI services.

The 600 MHz spectrum's superior penetration and wide coverage are set to enhance indoor connectivity and reliably connect millions of devices, fostering innovation and technological advancement. This frequency band is crucial for deploying advanced 5G services such as IoT and smart cities, thereby improving user experience, competitiveness, and digital infrastructure across the UAE.

(January 2, 2025) www.mobileworldlive.com

SUBEX

READY TO OPTIMIZE YOUR CAPEX SPENDINGS?

Explore the 5 strategies of
Fixed Asset Registry (FAR) reconciliation
and boost your asset ROI

Download the Guide Now!

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SA-ME-NA REGION

Angola

The Angolan government plans to sell its shares in the troubled state-owned operator Unitel as part of broader efforts to privatize the country's economy. Minister of State for Economic Coordination, José de Lima Massano, stated: "We are privatizing our telecommunications company Unitel" in the coming months, with part of the sale set to be conducted through the stock exchange, reported Bloomberg. Unitel is one of the 200 largest state-owned companies and assets identified for privatization. The minister noted that more than half of these companies have already been sold to the private sector since the program began in 2019. Unitel made headlines for the wrong reasons last year when Isabel dos Santos, former director and daughter of Angola's former ruler José Eduardo dos Santos, was accused of mismanagement and misappropriating nearly US$400 million in company funds.

(January 24, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com

Australia

The government proposed laws to strengthen the Australian Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) enforcement powers with the aim of better protecting consumers. The proposed reform measures include amendments to the Telecommunications Act 1997 and would also raise penalties for breaches, with the maximum for not following industry codes and standards to increase from AUD250,000 ($157,200) to as much as AUD10 million. Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland wrote in a post: "The significant reforms included in this bill will better equip the ACMA with the tools and powers it needs to protect telco consumers and hold providers to account." She added the changes provide a powerful deterrent by incentivising operators to educate themselves about their obligations to consumers. Rowland explained the laws would empower ACMA to take direct and immediate enforcement action against telecoms providers which breach their obligations to customers under industry codes. The change would remove the current two-step process requiring ACMA to first issue a direction to comply to the offending operator regardless of the significance the breach and only take further action if non-compliance continues, she added. ACMA would be able to take "quick and appropriate action" in response to breaches to immediately address consumer harm, the government stated.

(February 12, 2025) www.mobileworldlive.com

Brazil

The National Telecommunications Agency (Anatel) and the Band Management Entity (EAF) announced that the 3.5 gigahertz (GHz) frequency band, intended for 5G, had been cleared after the total removal of interference that prevented the activation of the signal in the 5,570 municipalities nationwide. Hence, mobile phone operators are now free to install 5G technology as per the authorization granted on Nov. 26 which could not be implemented earlier. Before 5G, this band was used by broadcasting and open satellite television services, mainly by satellite dishes, which operated in Band C. This technology works in the 3.7 GHz to 6.4 GHz range, very close to the 5G band, it was explained. Over the last few years, Anatel has acted on two fronts: migration from Band C and eliminating interference in the band close to 3.5 GHz. Overall, 1,482 professional satellite stations (FSS), used by radio and TV stations, distance learning institutions, and even the Air Force, which were operating in the Extended C Band, were vacated. The process ended in March this year, two years ahead of schedule. The second stage was the cleaning of the frequency, with the installation of filters in the satellite dishes to attenuate interference from the towers on mobile devices as well as the distribution of around 4.3 million free conversion kits to families benefiting from federal social programs who depend on the traditional satellite dish to access the open TV signal. The clean-up of the Band C signal used a partnership similar to that observed in the switch-off of analog television. To free up the 700 megahertz (MHz) analog TV frequency for the adoption of 4G, cellular operators paid for the distribution of UHF antennas and digital television converters to low-income families.

(December 4, 2024) www.en.mercopress.com

Colombia

The Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC) and its Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies (MinTIC) have announced the launch of a public consultation focused on OTT (over the top) digital services. It began on 11 December 2024 and will continue until 31 January 2025. This initiative seeks to collect detailed information on the operation and operation of these digital platforms that use internet networks to connect, communicate or facilitate transactions between users. OTT services include platforms such as messaging applications, social networks, audiovisual content streaming services, internet calls and e-commerce solutions. These tools have become a key component of the digital ecosystem. The main objective of this consultation, therefore, is to better understand the impact of OTT services on telecommunications networks and on the user experience. It also seeks to identify opportunities such as the development of the digital ecosystem and encouraging a competitive and sustainable environment. Another area of study will be equitable access and free choice for users – notably evaluating current cooperation agreements. Investments in technological infrastructure will also be examined, in particular identifying barriers to, and incentives for, the deployment of networks. The consultation also includes an analysis of current and future investments by telecommunications network and service providers and OTT digital services agents, addressing possible regulatory and technological barriers.

(December 16, 2024) www.developingtelecoms.com

Costa Rica

Seven prequalified companies have confirmed to Costa Rica's regulator Sutel their participation in the 5G spectrum auction in Costa Rica, which will take place this month. In phase one of the tender, operators Claro and Liberty will bid for spectrum for 5G at the national level. In phase two, the other five companies – Coopealfaroruiz, Coopeguanacaste, Coopelesca, Coopesantos and Ring Centrales de Costa Rica – will bid for frequencies at the regional level. The spectrum bands that will be made available include the 700MHz, 2.3GHz, 3.5GHz, 26GHz and 28GHz bands. All companies involved have accepted the basic prices of the spectrum and the infrastructure units they will be required to deploy after being informed of these conditions on 17 December last year. Sutel says that today, 13 January, sees the start of training of any representatives chosen by the operators to familiarize them with the software they will use in the auction, software that, Sutel says, offers satisfactory levels of security, transparency and trust, and fits in with the specific requirements of the auction. The national 5G auction, involving Liberty and Claro, will be held on 23 January 2025, while the regional tender will be held on 24 January. The funds raised will be channeled into the development of programmes by the country's National Telecommunications Fund, to finance access to telephony and internet among vulnerable populations. It could take up to 25 days for Sutel to make its formal recommendations for the award of frequencies to the Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications. (January 14, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com

Djibouti

The country is actively working to extend the coverage of mobile telephone and high-speed Internet services to the entire population by 2027. To achieve this objective, strategic partnerships are essential. The government wants to strengthen its cooperation with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) in the field of digital and telecommunications. The issue was at the heart of discussions during a meeting on Tuesday, January 28, between the Djiboutian Minister of Communication in charge of Posts and Telecommunications, Radwan Abdillahi Bahdon, and the director of the ITU regional office for the Arab States, Adel Darwish (photo, center). Discussions focused on several strategic areas, including improving connectivity in remote areas, deploying 5G and strengthening cybersecurity. Djibouti is looking to benefit from ITU's expertise and support to develop solutions tailored to local challenges and modernize its digital infrastructure. These discussions are part of the Djiboutian government's vision to make digital technology a lever for economic and social development. With increasing investments in infrastructure, Djibouti aims to become a technology hub in East Africa by 2035. Last December, the public company Djibouti Telecom signed a partnership with Ericsson for the deployment of 5G, marking a key step in this transition. According to DataReportal data from January 2024, Djibouti had approximately 553,800 mobile subscribers, representing a penetration rate of 48.4%. The number of Internet users stood at 744,200, representing 65% of the population. In terms of cybersecurity, the country has just adopted a national strategy for the period 2024-2030. In addition, the ITU Global Cybersecurity Index 2024 report ranks Djibouti in Tier 4 with a score of 31.47 out of 100, highlighting the efforts needed to strengthen cybersecurity capacities. ITU support is expected to assist Djibouti in implementing its cybersecurity strategy, as well as improving connectivity in rural areas, a government priority under the flagship "Djibouti Fondement Numérique" project, supported by the World Bank.

(January 31, 2025) www.agenceecofin.com

Finland

The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency, Traficom, has unveiled its latest report, "Private Networks in Finland", highlighting the rising interest in private mobile networks among Finnish businesses and organizations. The regulator noted that these networks offer tailored solutions that promise high performance, security and reliability, particularly beneficial for sectors like healthcare, manufacturing and logistics. However, the report identifies hurdles for the adoption of private networks in Finland, such as high initial costs and limited awareness, slowing widespread adoption. According to the report, these challenges are expected to diminish as technology matures, prices drop, and promotional efforts increase. The regulator also highlighted that private networks deliver stable, high-speed connectivity, making them ideal for industries that require dependable operations. Traficom's chief specialist Heidi Himmanen, said: "The fast and stable connection that a private network provides makes it possible to introduce technologically advanced solutions like automation and robotics in industrial plants." The higher capacity of the 5G network and options such as network slicing make it possible to implement increasingly high-quality services, according to the Finnish regulator. "The growing spectrum requirements of private networks needs to be recognized and considered in European spectrum management, while also taking into account the new opportunities offered by 6G technology", added Himmanen. At the moment, the regulator said that the 2.3GHz and 24.25–25.1 GHz bands are available to local 4G/5G networks with a radio license from Traficom. (December 4, 2024) www.rcrwireless.com

France

Arcep is launching a public consultation on proposed commitments from Orange for the years 2026 to 2028, regarding its tariffs for accessing copper local loop unbundling (LLU) which are subject to an obligation of non-excessive pricing. As a reminder, for the years 2024 and 2025, Arcep had accepted and made legally binding the commitment that Orange made to comply with a price cap on copper local loop access, subject to an obligation of non-excessive pricing. In a letter to the Authority dated 21 January 2025, the firm Orange proposed new commitments for this same LLU access, planning on maintaining the 2025 price cap from 2026 to 2028. For these three years, the recurring monthly price cap would therefore be €10.70 per pair. The purpose of this consultation is to gather interested stakeholders' feedback on the commitments that Orange has proposed. (February 6, 2925) www.en.arcep.fr

Germany

The Federal Ministry for Digital Affairs and Transport (BMDV) has launched its 2025 Gigabit Funding program. Starting this month, €1.2 billion will be available to support infrastructure projects and a pilot program to close connectivity gaps in underserved areas. This year's funding round is centered on the 2025 infrastructure funding program, which includes both a standard funding process and a quicker "fast lane" option. The criteria and rules for applying remain largely the same as last year, providing stability for states, municipalities, and applicants. The funding round also includes the continuation of a pilot program designed to improve internet access in smaller regions that have been left out of gigabit expansion so far. With a simplified application process, this program aims to develop these areas quickly, making use of both public and private funding to ensure the best results. "Digitalization requires high-performance, resilient and future-proof networks. Fiber optic technology enables particularly fast, energy-efficient and reliable data communication. In this legislative period, we have made great progress in fiber optic expansion – thanks to the high dynamics in the market and our targeted funding," said Federal Minister Dr. Volker Wissing in a press release. In 2022, around 560 projects were approved, with €2 billion invested in expanding fiber optic networks. This helped provide more than 440,000 connections and helped around 1,700 communities. (January 24, 2025) www.totaltele.com

Hong Kong

Nearly five years after operators launched 5G in Hong Kong, users of the service accounted for almost 30 per cent of total mobile subscriptions at end-September 2024, data from Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) showed. OFCA reported 5G subscriptions grew 16.1 per cent year-on-year to 7.6 million, while 4G users were marginally higher at 17.5 million. The number of 3G customers fell 13.7 per cent to about 563,000. Average monthly data usage increased 7.7 per cent to 8.6GB. Prepaid users accounted for almost 39 per cent of total mobile subscriptions. Operators launched 5G services in 2020 using the 3.5GHz band. MVNO subscribers rose 13.6 per cent to 4.2 million and machine-type connections increased 21.1 per cent to 762,203.

(January 6, 2025) www.mobileworldlive.com

India

5G services were launched across all states and union territories in India by October 2024, according to the Economic Survey 2025, released by the Indian government. Currently, 5G connectivity is available in 779 out of 783 districts, supported by the deployment of over 460,000 5G base transceiver stations (BTSs) across the country. Indian telecom operators, including Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel, have been actively expanding their 5G networks since October 2022. "The deployment of 5G services, along with new policies aimed at improving telecommunications infrastructure and user experience, has been instrumental in advancing digital connectivity," the survey noted. The report further emphasized the rapid growth of India's telecom sector, driven by rising smartphone adoption, increasing data consumption and next-generation technologies like 5G. India has now become the second-largest telecom market globally, with over 1.18 billion telephone subscribers, an overall teledensity of 84% and 941 million broadband users as of October 31, 2024. To enhance digital inclusion, the Indian government has undertaken various initiatives, including a project to bring 4G mobile services to 24,680 previously unconnected villages and upgrade 6,279 villages from 2G/3G networks to 4G. Currently, both Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio Infocomm offer 5G networks in all major cities across the country. While Jio is offering standalone 5G technology (SA), Airtel has opted for Non-Standalone 5G technology (NSA). Vodafone Idea has announced plans to initiate a phased rollout of 5G services in 2025, as part of its broader strategy to enhance network capabilities and improve customer experience. Vodafone Idea has recently initiated trials for its 5G services in India, according to local press reports. The 5G trials are limited to 17 telecom circles and are not yet commercially available. This development follows a two-year delay since Vodafone Idea participated in the 2021 spectrum auctions, where rival operators Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio Infocomm launched their 5G services soon after.The 5G trials by Vodafone Idea are accessible to both prepaid and postpaid customers and are operating on the 3.3 GHz and 26 GHz spectrum bands.

(February 3, 2025) www.rcrwireless.com

The Government of India has approved the refarming of 687 MHz of spectrum from various ministries for the deployment of 5G and future 6G services, local press reported, citing the country's Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, as saying. The frequencies are being refarmed from the Ministry of Defense, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. According to the reports, these frequencies will now be brought for auctions. "By 2030, the telecom sector's total spectrum demand is projected to reach 2,000 MHz. Currently, we have 900 MHz, leaving a gap of 1,100 MHz," Scindia told reporters. The refarming of 687 MHz spectrum brings the total available spectrum to 1,587 MHz, Scindia said, adding that the remaining 413 megahertz required to meet the 2030 demand would also be made available within the stipulated timeline. Out of the 687 MHz spectrum approved by the government, 328 MHz of spectrum will be released immediately, according to the report. Indian carriers have been recently asking for more spectrum from the government to improve 4G and 5G services, and also for 6G services. Scindia added that a committee of secretaries is working on identifying more spectrum to refarm soon. "A report will come by the middle of this year [on further spectrum refarming], and we would take that step to ensure that there are no bottlenecks for our telecom landscape to grow in India," Scindia added.

(January 23, 2025) www.rcrwireless.com

Italy

The Italian Government is reportedly in negotiations to commission secure telecoms from SpaceX in what could be the largest project of its kind. A report by Bloomberg claims discussions are said to be ongoing; and if agreed upon, SpaceX could win a five-year contract to provide the Italian government with telecommunication services. Unnamed sources familiar with the matter stated the country's Intelligence Services and Defense Ministry have already expressed approval for the deal. The deal, believed to be worth €1.5 billion ($1.6 billion), would see SpaceX provide telephone and internet service encryption for the government. Discussions had previously been put on hold until the country's Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, recently visited upcoming US President Donald Trump in Florida. Talks have been ongoing since mid-2023, however some have expressed concerns about how a deal with Musk's SpaceX could be detrimental to Italian competition. Under the deal, the Italian military operating in the Mediterranean would also benefit from the encrypted services. Direct-to-cell satellite services are also on the cards, which would provide an important backup when terrorist attacks and natural disasters render cellular connections unusable. However, the relationship between Meloni, Trump and Musk has been criticized on a global scale. The SpaceX leader's substantial political contributions and alliances could give him extensive access to the White House and global leaders, harming both politics and market competition. Should such a deal go ahead, it wouldn't be the first time that Italy and the US have worked together, as in 2024, Telecom Italia SpA sold its landline network to KKR & Co, a US private equity company. The Italian government has explored other options, including building its own satellite constellation and using IRIS, a secure satellite constellation developed by the European Union to support European sovereignty, however SpaceX's costs are believed to be favorable.

(January 13, 2025) www.techradar.com

Kenya

Kenya's Communications Authority (CA) has introduced a proposal to significantly increase the 15-year licensing fees for satellite Internet providers (ISPs) from $12,302 to $115,331. The new rules also include an annual levy of 0.4% of gross turnover, further raising the operational costs for providers like Starlink. These changes are critical for Kenya's digital landscape as demand for high-speed Internet is surging, especially in underserved and rural areas where satellite ISPs play a crucial role. However, the proposed fees risk dampening this progress, as smaller ISPs, such as Viasat and NTvsat serving under 1,000 users combined, may struggle to absorb the financial burden, potentially slowing the rollout of much-needed connectivity in remote regions. While the CA's proposal aims to ensure fairness and regulate the growing satellite ISP market, the higher fees could inadvertently limit competition and innovation. Small and medium-sized ISPs, essential to expanding Internet access in remote areas, face the risk of being priced out of the market. This could leave underserved communities with fewer options and perpetuate the digital divide. Despite these challenges, the proposal includes progressive elements, such as allowing satellite ISPs to engage in terrestrial cable operations, telemetry, and even space research. This expanded scope could attract more investment into Kenya's tech ecosystem, enabling companies like Starlink to establish ground stations and improve service quality. Starlink, owned by Elon Musk's SpaceX, has quickly established itself in Kenya's market since its June 2023 launch. By offering affordable and high-speed satellite Internet, Starlink grew its subscriber base to over 8,500 users in just over a year. The service has been instrumental in bridging digital gaps, providing connectivity in areas beyond the reach of traditional telecom infrastructure. However, local players like Safaricom, which has over 350,000 fixed Internet users through its fiber network, see satellite ISPs as both competitors and potential disruptors. Safaricom had earlier urged the CA to mandate partnerships between satellite providers and local mobile operators, arguing that independent operations by companies like Starlink pose security risks and weaken local accountability. Kenya's regulatory approach highlights the tension between fostering innovation and maintaining market oversight. Stricter rules could safeguard local players and ensure compliance, but they risk stifling competition and slowing the spread of high-speed Internet to regions that need it most. As the CA finalizes these changes, stakeholders must consider policies that promote both accessibility and sustainable business operations for ISPs. Striking this balance will be key to ensuring Kenya's digital transformation benefits its entire population. (January 13, 2025) www.techpoint.africa

The Communications Authority (CA) proposed new licensing rules and fees from that could financially impact distributors of terminal electronic devices and complex network equipment as well as satellite internet service providers (ISPs). Plans for a new license, called the Telecom Equipment Distributor (TED) license, which is aimed at limiting counterfeit electronics, will mean that distributors of terminal electronic devices and complex network equipment will need to apply for a license by paying KSh5,000 (about US$38.58). But that's not all. There will also be a license fee set at KSh250,000 (US$1,929), renewable after 15 years, and an annual operating fee charged at 0.4% of turnover or a minimum of KSh120,000 (US$926). There certainly does seem to be an issue with fake mobile phones in Kenya (up to 40% of phones in the market could be fake according to CA in February last year). Under the new license, violators will face fines of up to KSh300, 000 (US$2,315). The CA has already introduced a web-based platform that enables Kenyans to ascertain the validity of their device brands. An attempt to require individuals (eventually specified as only Kenyan citizens entering the country) to declare the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) numbers of their devices was suspended after data privacy concerns were expressed. The CA has also introduced a proposal to significantly increase the 15-year licensing fees for satellite ISPs from $12,302 to $115,331.

(January 10, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com

Malawi

In a bid to improve disaster response and enhance communication during emergencies, Malawi has officially launched the National Emergency Telecommunications Working Group (NETWG), following the devastating effects of recent severe weather events. The initiative, spearheaded by the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), aims to create a resilient and efficient emergency telecommunications system that can save lives and protect communities during crises. The move comes after the country experienced the tragic impacts of Cyclones Idai, Kenneth, Eloise, Ana, Gombe, and Cyclone Freddy, which wreaked havoc across Malawi in recent years, causing widespread destruction, loss of life, and the crippling of vital infrastructure. Cyclone Freddy alone claimed over 700 lives, displaced tens of thousands, and left many missing after torrential rains. MACRA's Director of Broadcasting, Zadziko Mankhambo, highlighted the crucial role of communication in disaster response, stressing that without reliable communication, coordination falters, and lives are at risk. He noted that following Cyclone

Freddy, MACRA worked with partners like the World Food Program (WFP) and the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) to set up an emergency operations center to coordinate rescue efforts through dependable communication channels. In addition to this, the country has developed the National Emergency Telecommunications Plan (NETP), supported by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to ensure the availability of communication resources during all phases of disaster management. The plan includes the creation of the NETWG, which was formally launched at a workshop in Blantyre on December 17, 2024, bringing together key stakeholders from across the communications, government, and humanitarian sectors.

(December 19, 2024) www.nyasatimes.com

Mexico

Mexican telecoms regulator, the Federal Telecommunications Institute (FTI), has cancelled the auction for 5G spectrum that was scheduled for this month. In a translated statement, the regulator revealed that on January 2, it received a request from the Digital Transformation and Telecommunications Agency, the federal branch responsible for developing the government's telecoms and broadcasting policies, to cancel the auction. The agency requested this cancellation based on its assessment that it lacked the necessary resources to continue with the tender under the conditions set by the FTI. The issue arises from the planned dissolution of the FTI during the tender process, which is set to run until Q1 2026. This would have required a new authority to manage the auction, prompting the tender's cancellation. The agency stated that this decision was made to prevent complications and uncertainties that could arise during the process. The auction would have included the sale of multiple blocks of spectrum, such as the 600MHz, 2.5GHz, 800MHz, and the L band, for the provision of 5G services. (January 17, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com

The IFT-12 tender, in which spectrum will be made available for 5G networks in Mexico, will begin on 27 January when an invitation to would-be buyers to express their interest begins, according to an announcement from regulator the Federal Institute of Telecommunications (IFT). The IFT-12 tender aims to allocate 2,223 radio spectrum blocks for the provision of wireless access services in different frequency bands. This seems to be mainly for 5G, although some news outlets suggest that some spectrum might be used to support or expand LTE. In addition, as of September 2024 two 5G networks were actually deployed in Mexico, owned by AT&T and Telcel's Radiomovil Dipsa. At the same time, says the global data and business intelligence platform, there were also five LTE networks in Mexico, each owned by a different operator. The bidding mechanism for this tender is called the multiple rounds ascending simultaneous type. The IFT version will involve a maximum of three competitions in which spectrum acquisition limits will increase in each contest based on demand in the previous contest and spectrum available. The IFT explains that it is imposing limits seek to prevent levels of spectrum accumulation that may harm free competition and economic competition, as well as avoid the establishment of barriers to entry. In addition, it seeks to encourage the entry of new participants or strengthen the ability to compete of those already established and promote the efficient use of the spectrum. The IFT has also incorporated incentives to participation, designed to promote competition and the provision of services at competitive prices for end users. Blocks will be available in the 600MHz band, the L-band, the 800MHz band, the AWS band, the PCS band and the 2.5GHz band, for national and other sorts of coverage. There is some coverage obligations included in the national blocks of the 600MHz band and in the 2.5GHz band, to support less well-served areas.

(December 23, 2024) www.developingtelecoms.com

Mozambique

The Communications Regulatory Authority INCM, within the scope of its powers and attributions, carried out a campaign to measure the quality of service, at a national level through drive tests (using equipment that allows results to be obtained under equal conditions and simultaneously for the three mobile phone operators) in the South, Center and North Zones of the country. The tests were carried out from the perspective of a common user, evaluating the level of coverage and quality of Voice and Data services provided by operators, using 2G/3G/4G technologies, in 31 geographical areas, in capital cities, municipal towns and districts, as illustrated in the table below, with emphasis on commercial, residential, tourism and leisure areas, between 7:30 and 18:00 hours. Overall, both in terms of accessibility and in terms of retention (call duration, without interruption), the results indicate significant variation in the quality of voice service depending on the geographical area. In terms of voice services, it was found that Tmcel is the operator with the highest number of non-compliances, with around 66%, followed by Movitel with 54% and, finally, Vodacom with around 53%. For data services, the operator with the highest number of non-compliances was Movitel, with around 74%, followed by Tmcel with 25% and finally, Vodacom with around 6%. In terms of coverage, the highest number of non-compliances

was recorded at Tmcel with around 50%, followed by Vodacom with around 32% and finally Movitel with around 27%. Regarding accessibility, in the 2G/3G Voice Service, in the cities, the results vary with an average of 90.54% for Tmcel, 93.57% for Vodacom and 95.55% for Movitel. The average time required to start the call is 8.27 seconds for Movitel, 8.66 seconds for Vodacom and 9.71 seconds for Tmcel. In other areas, still in the 2G/3G Voice Service, the success in issuing calls is 95.93% for Movitel, 95.93% for Vodacom, and 85.14% for Tmcel, and the average time needed to start the call is 8.20 seconds for Tmcel, 8.51 for Movitel and 8.83 for Vodacom.

(January 16, 2025) www.techafricanews.com

Namibia

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRAN) has ordered Starlink, the satellite internet provider owned by Elon Musk's SpaceX, to cease business for operating without license in the country. While Starlink has filed an application for an operating license, the CRAN has yet to grant it, and has cautioned consumers against purchasing or using Starlink equipment. "The public is hereby advised not to purchase Starlink terminal equipment or subscribe to its services, as such activities are illegal," said an emailed statement. "Investigators have already confiscated illegal terminals from consumers and have opened criminal cases with the Namibian police in this regard." The escalation highlights Starlink's ongoing challenges in establishing a foothold in Africa, where it faces regulatory hurdles and resistance from a number of state-owned telecoms monopolies. However, since the start of 2023, Starlink has been launched in 15 African countries. Starlink's services, which are promoted as helping to bridge the digital divide in rural and underserved areas, are often seen as disruptive to local telecoms markets. Indeed, this month Starlink has faced allegations of predatory pricing in Kenya, aimed at luring away customers from local service providers, though the national competition regulator says it will not be investigating the issue. Disruption from Starlink's presence in national telecoms markets will only increase as the company begins to offer direct-to-device connectivity, which it is currently testing in the US with T-Mobile. It is worth noting that claims of operating without a license is nothing new for Starlink. Similar issues have arisen in other nations, such as Cameroon, where authorities have also seized Starlink equipment for operating illegally.

(December 1, 2024) www.totaltele.com

Nigeria

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has introduced a data classification framework that mandates cloud service providers to establish local operations in Nigeria. This regulation requires sensitive data, especially from the finance, healthcare, and government sectors, to be stored within the country's borders. This initiative aligns with global data localisation trends and supports Nigeria's broader digital economy objectives. The framework aims to reduce reliance on foreign cloud storage, improve national security, and strengthen regulatory oversight. NITDA's Director-General, Kashifu Inuwa, stated that this policy is part of Nigeria's strategy to become a key player in Africa's digital economy. By enforcing local data hosting, the government hopes to attract cloud service providers, boost economic growth, generate jobs, and foster a thriving local cloud ecosystem. International cloud providers like Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google Cloud, and Microsoft Azure will need to either build local data centres or partner with Nigerian cloud providers to comply with the new regulation. While this may increase operational costs, it also presents opportunities for joint ventures and collaborations with local businesses. The policy also complements the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA) 2023, which outlines strict data handling and security requirements. By improving data security, the framework aims to increase public trust in Nigeria's digital economy while supporting the country's AI and digital transformation efforts. The initiative presents significant opportunities for local cloud companies, including Rack Centre, MainOne, and Galaxy Backbone, while also challenging them to scale operations and enhance infrastructure. This move marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's push for digital sovereignty and its ambition to lead Africa's digital economy. (February 21, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Mobile telephone and data subscribers in Nigeria will now have to pay more after the government approved a 50-percent increase in tariffs, as the country battles one of its worst cost-of-living crises in decades. The industry regulator, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), said earlier this week that it approved the tariff hike "in response to prevailing market conditions". The tariffs have remained the same in Africa's fourth-largest economy since 2013, the regulator said. The hike will heap more pressure on Nigerians already grappling with inflation that sits at a near 30-year high of 34.8

percent. "This is not the right time to increase the cost of making calls," 51-year-old trader Adebisi Olanrewaju told AFP. "Things are very expensive and this increase will only add to our problems." The increase will push the minimum price of telephone calls to 9.6 naira (about $0.0062) per minute from 6.40 naira. "The approved adjustment is aimed at addressing the significant gap between operational costs and current tariffs while ensuring that the delivery of services to consumers is not compromised," the NCC said in a statement on Monday. Telecommunications companies in the west African country had initially proposed a 100-percent tariff increase in the face of rising operational costs. (January 23, 2025) www.barrons.com

Nigeria and the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) have announced the award of a USTDA grant to Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy (FMCIDE) for a feasibility study to support internet access for 12 million people through the deployment of new fiber optic backbone infrastructure across the country. FMCIDE says it has selected US-based HIP Consult, an independent management consulting firm with a specialization in ICT, to conduct the study. The study will support Nigeria's National Broadband Plan 2020-2025, particularly its targets to increase the country's broadband penetration rate from the current 42.27% to 70% and to ensure that at least 90% of the population has access to affordable, reliable broadband coverage. The study will assess the deployment of at least 90,000 kilometers of new fibre optic backbone infrastructure along existing routes of the national power grid, railways, roads, and oil and gas pipelines. It will identify gaps in the backbone infrastructure market and develop strategies to bridge those gaps to strengthen connectivity across Nigeria, including to underserved and hard-to-reach communities. Enoh T Ebong, USTDA's Director, says: "As Nigeria and the United States deepen our cooperation in the technology sector, USTDA is proud to partner with FMCIDE to deliver concrete action in support our shared digital infrastructure goals. This project will help expand connectivity to Nigeria's urban and rural communities while opening opportunities for trusted US technologies to advance the country's digital priorities." (January 15, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) says internet subscribers increased to 134.78 million in October. 2024KANO FOCUS reports that the figure is higher by 1.88 million compared to the 132.9 million subscribers recorded in September 2024. In its industry report published recently, the NCC said out of the total figure in October, mobile (GSM) accounted for 134.27 million subscribers – leaving the remaining subscribers under fixed wired and VoIP. The NCC said all telecommunication companies recorded a significant increase in internet subscriptions — except for 9mobile — in the period under review. In October, MTN Nigeria's internet subscribers rose by 1.13 million to 69.52 million from 68.39 million in September. According to the report, Airtel was next as its internet subscriber base increased by 678,219, from 44.79 million to 45.47 million. The NCC said Globacom gained 184,887 internet subscribers in the reviewed period, raising its data users from 16.92 million in September to 17.10 million last month. However, internet subscribers for 9mobile dropped by 125,780 — from 2.29 million to 2.16 million. In terms of subscribers for telephony services in October, the NCC said it recorded 157.37 million, representing an increase of 2.69 million compared to 154.9 million in the previous month. Out of the total industry telephony subscriber base, MTN accounted for 80.37 million in October, with Airtel, the second largest telco, recording 54.44 million. Next was Globacom (19.10 million) and 9mobile (3.33 million). The NCC industry data also showed that broadband penetration increased from 41.56 percent in September 2024 to 42.24 percent in October 2024. Broadband penetration is the number of subscriptions to fixed and mobile broadband services divided by the number of residents in a country. The telecoms regulator also said data usage climbed to 870,398.28 terabytes – up from 850,249.09 terabytes in September. The commission said in terms of generation, 5G, 4G, and 3G usage rose by 2.33 percent, 46.27 percent and 9.40 percent, respectively.
(December 27, 2024) www.kanofocus.com

Poland

The Office of Electronic Communications has launched a consultation on a new Frequency Plan for the 174-230 MHz band. This is the VHF band occupied by MUX-8 terrestrial digital TV and possibly additional DAB+ multiplexes in the future. "For the time being, I can confirm that Emitel will take part in the consultation," says Agnieszka Sobucka, the company's spokeswoman, to Wirtualnemedia.pl. "The consulted project aims to reduce restrictions on the free development of digital terrestrial radio broadcasting (hereafter 'NRC'), to reduce the likelihood of interference in the network of DAB+ broadcasting stations taking into account the market demand for local NRC multiplexes," UKE President Jacek Oko wrote in the announcement. (February 25, 2025) www.worlddab.org

Peru

A new step forward in the deployment of 5G in Peru. The Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC) of that country announced the publication of the regulation that promotes the deployment of telecommunications services using 5G technology or higher. Thus, the Government of Dina Boluarte has already published the Regulation of Legislative Decree No. 1627 in the Official Gazette El Peruano, which aims to collect comments from citizens on this regulatory proposal, available on the MTC website. The Legislative Decree, issued in August 2024, grants the MTC the power to allocate radio spectrum directly to interested companies, provided that the demand for spectrum does not exceed its availability in the corresponding band. This will be done through open calls for the submission of expressions of interest, ensuring transparency and efficiency in the process. In this regard, the draft regulation seeks to optimize the spectrum allocation process, promoting competition in the market, guaranteeing adequate compensation to the State and, above all, ensuring that the benefits reach the population directly. Interested companies must make investment commitments focused on closing connectivity gaps in 4G services and promoting access to 5G technology in the country. "After a rigorous technical work, this proposal develops the details of the special mechanism for assigning radio spectrum, the requirements and guarantees for those interested, and the contracting of technical-economic studies that adequately value the available spectrum and the necessary migrations," said the Deputy Minister of Communications, Carla Sosa Vela. The MTC calls on society to actively participate in this regulatory process, which is key to promoting technological innovation and improving the telecommunications experience of Peruvians. Citizens may send their contributions and suggestions until January 6, 2025, considering that the deadline is fifteen (15) calendar days from the publication of the project.

(December 25, 2024) www.americaeconomia.com

South Africa

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) has approved transfer of control of Cell C's relevant telecommunications licenses to Blue Label subsidiary The Prepaid Company. This is a significant milestone for JSE-listed Blue Label and a crucial step in advancing its strategy to obtain control over Cell C. "Although the licenses will continue to be held by Cell C, Icasa's approval to transfer control of Cell C's licenses was required because a transfer of control would be deemed to occur when the shareholding held by The Prepaid Company, exceeds 50% of the issued share capital in Cell C," Blue Label said in an update to its shareholders.

(January 27, 2025) www.engineeringnews.co.za

South Korea

The 5G transmission speed of South Korea's three major mobile carriers have improved by an average of 9.2% in 2024 compared to the previous year, significantly enhancing the quality of the 5G service network. This development was highlighted in the "2024 Communication Service Coverage Inspection and Quality Evaluation" report announced by the Ministry of Science and ICT and the National Information Society Agency (NIA) on Dec. 30. In major cities with the highest number of communication service users, such as Seoul and six other metropolitan cities, KT ranked first in 5G transmission speed. Meanwhile, SK Telecom was the fastest nationwide, including in small and medium-sized cities and rural areas. The average 5G transmission speed of the three major carriers was recorded at 1025.52Mbps, a notable increase from the previous year's 939.14Mbps. Breaking down the performance by carrier, SK Telecom recorded a 5G transmission speed of 1064.54Mbps, KT achieved 1055.75Mbps, and LG Uplus reached 956.26Mbps. Although SK Telecom increased its speed by 77.00Mbps from last year, KT's significant increase of 106.87Mbps has narrowed the speed gap between the first and second-ranked carriers. By city size, the average 5G download speed in major cities was 1121.54Mbps, up from 1035.46Mbps last year. In small and medium-sized cities, the average speed was 1101.53Mbps, compared to 962.07Mbps last year. Rural areas saw an average speed of 645.70Mbps, an improvement from 607.86Mbps last year. While the gap between major and small and medium-sized cities has significantly narrowed, the disparity between major cities and rural areas remains.

(December 30, 2024) www.businesskorea.co.kr

Thailand

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) is scheduled to auction six spectrum bands by April with a combined reserve price of 121 billion baht. The NBTC is slated to hold a public hearing on the auction plan on Feb 6, following its board approving the draft auction plan last month. The auction has three categories of bands, including the low bands of 850-megahertz, 1500MHz and 1800MHz. The other sets are the middle bands of 2100MHz and 2300MHz, and the high band of 26GHz. An NBTC source who requested anonymity said all the bands will have valid periods of 15 years, except 2100MHz, which is for 13 years. The source said the 850MHz band will be auctioned in two sets, each featuring 10MHz bandwidth for upload and download at a starting price of 6.609 billion baht each. The 1500MHz band will be available in 11 sets, each containing 5MHz at a starting price of 904 million baht each. The 1800MHz band will be auctioned in seven sets, each containing 10MHz bandwidth at a starting price of 6.219 billion baht each, said the source. The 2300MHz band has seven sets, each containing 10MHz at a price of 1.675 billion baht each, while 26GHz has one set containing 100MHz, with a reserve price of 423 million baht. Twelve sets of 2100MHz are on sale, each containing 10MHz, at a price of 3.391 billion baht each, while another three sets of the same band, each containing 5MHz, are on sales priced 497 million baht each. The winning bidders must allocate bandwidth capacity for mobile virtual network operators to offer service, as well as devise cybersecurity and personal data protection plans. The plans must be submitted to the regulator at least three months before service commences. www.bangkokpost.com

NBTC unanimously approved a draft of the planned auction of six mobile spectrum bands. The auction is expected to be held in the second quarter of this year. Under the planned auction, there are three categories of bands, including the low bands of 850-megahertz, 1500MHz and 1800MHz. The other sets are the middle bands of 2100MHz and 2300MHz, and the high band of 26GHz. NBTC commissioner, said the NBTC office will hold a public hearing of the draft within 30 days. The NBTC office plans to hold an auction of each of the spectrum categories, starting from low band, middle band, and high band respectively. "The 850, 1500, and 1800MHz will be auctioned simultaneously," Commissioner said. The 850MHz, 2100MHz and 2300MHz bands are being used by National Telecom (NT), but its license expires in August this year. The 1500MHz band had been used via a microwave communication system and is now vacant. Part of the 26GHz range has been auctioned since 2020. There is some 100MHz bandwidth of the 26GHz left and available to be auctioned. The 2100MHz range comprises part of NT's 2100 MHz, totaling 45MHz of bandwidth, and other parts of the range that were auctioned in the past, with licenses of the auction winners to expire in 2027. Another 15MHz of bandwidth on the 2100MHz range is also available for the auction. Commissioner said the auction conditions would prioritize spectrum utilization for optimum benefit, with price the least important factor in the decision.

(January 15, 2025) www.bangkokpost.com

United Kingdom

Ofcom has announced its intention to auction the upper block of 1.4 GHz band (1492-1517 MHz) for 4G and 5G mobile use. It expects that further deployment of the upper block of the 1.4 GHz band will help improve the performance of mobile services, particularly in areas where coverage is patchy, such as some indoor areas and in remote parts of the UK. To avoid potential disruption to Inmarsat satellite receivers on board maritime vessels and aircraft, Ofcom is also proposing to limit the power that mobile networks can transmit around certain ports and airports for an initial period, relaxing this limit later on. To award the 1492-1517 MHz spectrum, Ofcom plans to use a sealed-bid, single round auction format, with a 'second price' rule – where winning bidders pay fees based on the second highest price bid. Ofcom's proposals (including a draft license template) are available here and any interested party can provide comments until 25 April 2025. Ofcom also intends to consult separately on its competition assessment for this award once any spectrum trades, which are being considered as part of the merger between H3G and Vodafone, have been completed. Potentially interested parties should bear in mind the potential risk of antitrust liability arising from the exchange of competitively sensitive information in connection with auctions of this kind.

(Februray 7, 2025) www.natlawreview.com

The UK government has announced the launch of two antitrust investigations into the mobile ecosystems of both Apple and Google by the country's competition watchdog, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). In the accompanying press release, the CMA defined a mobile ecosystem as including "the operating systems, app stores and browsers that operate on mobile devices". Core elements of the investigation include the extent of competition between Apple and Google's ecosystems, how each company may be leveraging its power to maintain footholds "into other activities" and favor their own platforms, and whether either company is exploiting app developers by strong-arming them into unfair terms and conditions in order to have their products accepted onto their respective app stores. (January 24, 2025) www.techradar.com

Ofcom has set the date to auction off the mmWave

spectrum for October 2025. The regulator has been waiting for the Competition and Markets Authority to make its decision on the Vodafone and Three UK merger before finalizing its plans for selling the mmWave frequencies. "We have considered whether we need to review any of the policy decisions we have taken for the mmWave auction in light of the CMA's decision, and we consider all of our decisions would remain appropriate in a three player market," Ofcom said as it shared its auction plan. "In particular, we do not consider that the new structure of the market changes our reasoning for not imposing competition measures." Participants will be required to submit their applications on 16 and 17 September 2025, with the principal stage of the sale kicking off the following month, Ofcom said. It chose those dates to enable the merged entity to prepare for the auction, it said. In September, the regulator confirmed that it will open the 26 GHz and 40 GHz spectrum bands to mobile technology, including 5G services. Opening up these spectrum bands can improve mobile services – particularly capacity and speeds in cities and major towns – as well as enabling wireless applications that require large amounts of data, very high speeds, or both. Ofcom has confirmed that three categories of spectrum lots will be auctioned: 26 GHz lower (25.1-26.5 GHz), 26 GHz upper (26.5-27.5 GHz), and 40 GHz (40.5-43.5 GHz). Each lot will comprise of a block of 200 MHz, with reserve prices set at £2 million for each lot of 26 GHz lower and 26 GHz upper, and £1 million for each lot of 40 GHz. The auction will be run in two stages. The principal stage will decide the quantity of spectrum each bidder will be allocated. This will be followed by an assignment stage which will decide the precise frequencies allocated to each winner.

(December 18, 2024) www.commsbusiness.co.uk

United States

The Federal Communications Commission has voted unanimously to allow Very Low Power (VLP) devices to operate, unlicensed, across the entirety of the 6 GHz band where unlicensed operations are allowed. VLP devices that operate across short distances with very high connection speeds are an emerging device category that the FCC said is "ideal for the types of high-data rate cutting-edge applications that will both enrich consumer experiences and bolster the nation's economy." The regulatory agency said that making additional spectrum available for unlicensed VLP device use will provide more capacity for devices and applications including augmented reality and virtual reality (AR/VR), in-car connectivity, wearables, healthcare monitoring, short-range mobile hotspots, high-accuracy location and navigation, automation, and more. The availability of additional unlicensed spectrum for VLP device use is meant to help support a cutting-edge device category that is still emerging. FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said that the FCC's action would "help jumpstart the next generation of unlicensed wireless devices." While the FCC had already opened up 850 megahertz of the 6 GHz band for unlicensed use that would include VLP devices, FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said in a statement that the move to allow VLP devices in additional spectrum "take[s] the effort to support unlicensed activity in the 6 GHz band even further." The FCC's action now means that VLP devices will be allowed to operate across the total of 1,200 megahertz which the FCC designated for unlicensed use back in 2020.

(December 12, 2024) www.rcrwireless.com

Vietnam

The Vietnamese government has issued Decree 163, providing a detailed legal framework for three newly recognized telecommunications services: data center services, cloud computing, and basic telecommunications services delivered via the internet. The decree, comprising seven chapters and 86 articles, is applicable to both domestic and foreign entities involved in telecommunications activities in Vietnam. While most provisions took effect on December 24, 2024, regulations specific to data centers, cloud computing, and internet-based basic telecommunications services will be enforced starting January 1, 2025. According to the Telecommunications Authority under the Ministry of Information and Communications, Decree 163 is a significant step in operationalizing the Telecommunications Law. It aims to foster market growth, enhance competition, and promote the development of advanced and integrated telecommunications infrastructure. Additionally, the decree supports the modernization of subscriber registration processes, including online registration, aligning with the nation's digital transformation goals. These provisions aim to accelerate digital infrastructure and economic growth while ensuring public safety and cybersecurity. Decree 163 stipulates the rights and responsibilities of foreign service providers under a light management framework, striking a balance between regulatory oversight and market flexibility. It also mandates the secure handling of user data shared during service agreements and emphasizes the secure utilization of these services by government entities. To promote fair competition, the decree sets clear criteria for identifying dominant telecommunications companies and outlines their obligations.

(December 31, 2024) www.telecomreviewasia.com

oman BROADBAND
العمانية للنطاق العريض

@omanbroadband
www.omanbroadband.om

Oman Broadband Company is unlocking the potential for Oman to become an increasingly connected nation, supporting the growth of the online economy, allowing new ways of doing business & boosting the rapidly growing SME sectors.

Oman Broadband is focused upon the deployment of a broadband infrastructure, providing equal & open access to telecommunication service providers on a wholesale basis, enabling end users to efficiently leverage high speed fiber connectivity.

HUAWEI

Huawei Cloud GaussDB
A Better Way to Database

AI-Native Distributed Database

2x performance | 0 data loss | AI-Native

HUAWEI CLOUD
EVERYTHING AS A SERVICE