



THIS MONTH CONNECTING REGIONAL STRENGTHS TO GLOBAL DIGITAL PROGRESS



هيئة تنظيم الاتصالات والحكومة الرقمية TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL GOVERNMENT REGULATORY AUTHORITY





TDRA towards an effective **digital government** that enhances the happiness of society





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Connecting Regional Strengths to Global Digital Progress

As digital integration accelerates worldwide, profound changes are reshaping societies and economies. The UAE remains a leader in this transformation, with several GCC countries both driving inspiration from this transformation as well as contributing to it.

Through institutions such as the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA), the UAE has truly set an example with forward-thinking policies, inclusive innovation, and regional leadership in digital development. This is not to say that other countries have not set similar policies. The cumulative impact extends beyond the UAE's borders.

The country's efforts align with a broader vision of building a connected, sustainable, and inclusive digital ecosystem across South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. These regions, despite their differences, share a common goal: to use technology to drive growth, achieve resilience, and identify new opportunities that could fulfill greater global goals.

Africa, in particular, holds great potential to apply digital tools, such as AI, to overcome longstanding challenges in education, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure. However, it would have to adapt them to the local needs to truly make a difference.

At SAMENA Council, we believe each country, whether within or outside of the region, should have the ability to shape its own digital future by developing AI and digital solutions that reflect local priorities and realities. Global models cannot simply be copied; they must be tailored with homegrown innovation, regional cooperation, and a clear understanding of local goals. This approach opens the door to new collaborations—between governments, private companies, and across industries. Many SAMENA Council members, including Telecom Operators and Technology Providers, are actively supporting Africa's digital progress. These partnerships help share knowledge, pool resources, and tackle shared challenges such as infrastructure funding, regulations, capacity-building, and aiding transformation of Telecom Operators.

Telecom Operators are evolving into technology companies. Frameworks such as Huawei's Techco 1.0 show how telcos can shift from traditional services to integrated platforms and intelligent solutions—an essential change to meet the demands of today's digital world. Our challenge now is to extend new models and industry breakthroughs to help create wider access, deeper impact, and inclusive growth.

As we pursue new synergies and connect regional strengths to global digital progress-making, building networks alone is not enough; we must also build trust, resilience, and shared prosperity, for which sustained dialogue is necessary. One of the key reasons why dialogue is needed is because alignment of local innovation with global challenges cannot be timely achieved without driving collaboration across borders, sectors, and stakeholder.

With strong leadership and shared commitment, we can build a digital future that benefits everyone within the SA-ME-NA region and around the world.



Bocar A. BA Chief Executive Officer & Board Member SAMENA Telecommunications Council Leading Trends in the Business: 5G-A, Telco-to-Techco Transformation, and Sustainable ICT Development

Huawei to Lead Strategic Discussions on 5G-Advanced and Digital Transformation at Three Forums



Phillip Gan President Huawei Middle East and Central Asia



Huawei is set to host three informative forums during the SAMENA Council Leaders' Summit 2025. The forums will address essential industry developments, including the next evolution of 5G technology to 5G-Advanced (5G-A), telco-to-techco transformation, and sustainable ICT development - key areas fundamentally reshaping the digital economy landscape across the Middle East and Central Asia region.

With 10 Gbps downlink, 1 Gbps uplink, massive capacity, and ultra-low latency, 5G-A networks deliver a superior experience for AI-driven applications.

The SAMENA Leaders' Summit 2025 arrives at a watershed moment for the region's digital evolution. With per capita internet usage in the GCC now exceeding the global average by two hours and consumers increasingly demanding immersive, multi-modal experiences, the Summit provides a timely opportunity for global and regional ICT leaders to align on strategies that will shape the future of digital economies in the 5G-A and AI environment. Particularly significant is the region's collective ambition, formalized in December 2024, to establish the Middle East and Central Asia as the world's first 5G-Advanced region. This bold vision positions local carriers at the forefront of global telecommunications innovation.

Bocar A. BA, CEO of SAMENA Telecommunications Council, said, "Having entered the mobile AI era in 2025, the first year of massive adoption of agentic AI, we're now witnessing a fundamental shift in how value is created and delivered across the digital "The Middle East and Central Asia region stands at a pivotal moment in its digital journey, with many countries releasing ambitious strategies like Saudi Arabia's 10Gbps Society Initiative and the UAE's Strategy for Artificial Intelligence. The convergence of 5G-Advanced and AI technologies creates unprecedented opportunities for carriers to evolve from traditional connectivity providers into full-spectrum technology companies. These three forums represent Huawei's commitment to partnering with operators through every stage of this transformation journey—from network enhancement to business model innovation to sustainable operations."

landscape, driven by intelligence embedded at the network and service layers. We need to re-evaluate many things, including viable paths to sustainable digital transformation. The SAMENA Council Leaders' Summit provides an essential platform where industry stakeholders can collaboratively develop strategies to accelerate digital transformation, maintain momentum, and position our region as a global leader in building digital economies. This year's discussions on experience monetization and AI integration are especially timely, as operators transition from traditional growth metrics to experience-centric valuecreation.

The 5G-A Leaders' Forum, themed "Exploring 5G-A and AI Experience Monetization, Creating New Value," will explore how the industry transformation is driven by 5G-Advanced and how AI can create new monetization opportunities for operators. Industry leaders will unpack how these convergent technologies create unprecedented business growth opportunities, operational excellence, network enhancement, and superior user experiences.

The Summit will spotlight the changing paradigm of connectivity, where the future of individuals, homes, and businesses will be dramatically transformed by 2030. Participants will explore how AI agents will become commonplace in everyday life, providing personalized, real-time, interactive services that simplify complex tasks. For home environments, the evolution from basic connectivity to emotional interaction through AI multi-modal interfaces will be showcased, alongside how "Smart Home" and "Home Butler" services will become standard features in future households where data generation will reach petabyte levels.

As emerging services accelerate, they are placing new demands on network capabilities. With 10 Gbps downlink, 1 Gbps uplink, massive capacity, and ultra-low latency, 5G-A networks deliver a superior experience for Al-driven applications. Telecom operators, with their inherent advantage at the entry point of the Al ecosystem, are well-positioned to capitalize on the integration of 5G-A and Al. This convergence is expected to become a key engine for future revenue growth.

Secondly, the Telco to Techco Transformation Forum will delve into the three core pillars defining the techco evolution journey: business servitization, service platformization, and platform intelligentization. Building upon the groundbreaking "Techco 1.0" initiative launched by Huawei and regional carriers in November 2024, this forum provides a strategic roadmap for telecommunications companies to reduce costs, diversify services, and position carriers favorably as they advance in the digital era.

The 9th Global ICT Energy Efficiency Summit, titled "Green Sites, Building an Intelligent Future," completes the lineup. This forwardforum presents thinkina actionable frameworks for implementing greener, low-carbon energy networks that deliver environmental and economic benefits. Through a combination of technical deep dives and strategic dialogues, participants will explore how green site design contributes to carbon reduction while reducing the total ownership cost. The forum will also address evolving regulatory frameworks needed to support green digital infrastructure deployment at scale.

Phillip Gan, President of Huawei Middle East and Central Asia commented, "The Middle East and Central Asia region stands at a pivotal moment in its digital journey, with many countries releasing ambitious strategies like Saudi Arabia's 10Gbps Society Initiative and the UAE's Strategy for Artificial Intelligence. The convergence of 5G-Advanced and AI technologies creates unprecedented opportunities for carriers to evolve from traditional connectivity providers into full-spectrum technology companies. These three forums represent Huawei's commitment to partnering with operators through every stage of this transformation journey-from network enhancement to business model innovation to sustainable operations."

The SAMENA Council Leaders' Summit 2025 will be held on May 26th at the Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai. It will bring together ICT policy, regulatory, and business leaders from across the ICT arena, covering the SAMENA (South Asia, Middle East, and North Africa), Central Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. Under this year's theme of "Intelligent & Sustainable Transformation of Digital Economies," the event will reflect on the urgent need for smart and sustainable approaches to accelerating digital transformation and achieving digital growth across SAMENA Council's markets of strategic focus.

Omantel On Leading Digital Transformation, Sustainability, and Innovation



Sheikh Talal Said Al Mamari CEO Omantel

عمائتــل Omantel Sheikh Talal Said Al Mamari, CEO of Omantel, discussing the company's recent initiatives and its central role in driving Oman's digital transformation.

Q: Omantel has recently launched the National Cloud initiative. Could you elaborate on its significance and how it aligns with Oman's Vision 2040?

A: Absolutely. The National Cloud is a cornerstone in our strategy to propel Oman's digital economy forward. We've established a secure, scalable, and sovereign cloud infrastructure that ensures data residency within the country. This initiative is not just about technology; it's about empowering various sectors, be it government, healthcare, education, or SMEs—with tailored cloud solutions that drive efficiency and innovation. By localizing data and providing advanced services, we're directly contributing to the objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040, fostering a knowledge-based and diversified economy.

Our vision is to position Omantel as a catalyst for digital innovation and economic diversification in Oman. We'll continue to invest in emerging technologies, forge strategic partnerships, and develop solutions that address the unique needs of our society.

Q: Omantel has also completed a significant digital transformation project. What were the key outcomes?

A: This transformation has enabled us to migrate over 200 products and services across all business lines into a unified, real-time charging system hosted on our private cloud. This shift improves our agility in launching new services and enhances our capabilities in real-time rating, charging, and payments. It also enables us to strategically utilize emerging technologies such as 5G and AI, ensuring we continue to meet the evolving requirements of our over three million customers.

Q: Smart city solutions are gaining traction globally. How is Omantel contributing to this space within Oman?

A: We are deeply invested in developing smart city solutions that enhance the quality of life for people in Oman. Our initiatives include smart parking, waste management, and intelligent lighting systems, among others. For example, our smart parking solutions offer real-time availability of parking spaces, while our waste management systems optimize collection routes and monitor bin statuses. These efforts not only improve urban living but also support broader goals in sustainability and efficiency.

Q: Sustainability is a global imperative. How is Omantel integrating sustainable practices into its operations?

A: Sustainability is at the heart of our operations. Our participation in Oman Sustainability Week highlighted our commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices. We showcased initiatives aimed at creating a greener world, developing societies, and providing an ideal work environment. Notably, we were honored with the Silver Award in the ESG Practices category, reflecting our dedication to aligning our

operations with international sustainability standards and contributing to Oman's comprehensive development.

Q: What steps has Omantel taken in supporting startups and fostering innovation, and are you in any way engaged with the ITU Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development?

A: Recognizing the pivotal role of startups in driving innovation, we've launched a program aimed at empowering Omani entrepreneurs. This initiative provides emerging businesses with access to advanced digital technologies, mentorship, and market development opportunities. By equipping startups with the necessary infrastructure and support, we are nurturing a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem that aligns with Oman's Vision 2040 and encourages local innovation.

Q: Looking ahead, what is your vision for Omantel's well-established role in Oman's digital transformation?

A: Our vision is to position Omantel as a catalyst for digital innovation and economic diversification in Oman. We'll continue to invest in emerging technologies, forge strategic partnerships, and develop solutions that address the unique needs of our society. By doing so, we're not only enhancing our service offerings but also contributing to the broader goals of national development and positioning Oman as a leader in the digital economy.

Q: Are there any areas of business or any issues that Omantel is collaborating on with industry bodies?

A: Omantel is actively collaborating with industry bodies on several key initiatives to drive innovation and enhance regional telecommunications infrastructure. Here are some notable areas of collaboration:

- 1. MSS Harmonization: Omantel is leading the production of an important whitepaper on Mobile Satellite Services (MSS) harmonization in collaboration with SAMENA. This initiative aims to align regional efforts and prepare for the World Radiocommunication Conference 2027 (WRC-27).
- 2.6GHz Spectrum Harmonization: Omantel has been involved in the harmonization of the 6GHz spectrum, which is crucial for the development and deployment of 5G and future 6G networks. This effort is expected to boost mobile operators' cost-effective capacity.
- 3. Fixed Wireless Access (FWA): Omantel has been recognized for its achievements in Fixed Wireless Access (FWA), receiving the Best VAS Innovation in Fixed Wireless Access award at the SAMENA Lead Awards 2024. This collaboration is part of Omantel's broader strategy to drive digital transformation and expand highcapacity wireless broadband across the region.

These collaborations highlight Omantel's efforts to improve regional telecommunications infrastructure and foster innovation through strategic partnerships with industry bodies like SAMENA.



SAMENA Council On Regional Digital Leadership in Advancing Transformation & Global Goals

Encouraging Policy Support, Business Growth, and Digital Infrastructure Investment

As the digital landscape continues to evolve across the South Asia, Middle East, and North Africa (SA-ME-NA) region, the SAMENA Council plays an instrumental role in advancing the region's digital transformation. With a core mission focused on fostering collaboration among industry stakeholders, supporting the private sector, and contributing to both regional and global digital goals, the SAMENA Council ensures the responsible deployment of advanced technologies, while highlighting the critical role of telecom operators, promoting the need for sustainable investments, and showcasing the growing leadership of the GCC in digital innovation. Key regional regulatory bodies and telecom operators, including the TDRA (UAE), CST (Saudi Arabia), TRA (Oman), TRA (Bahrain), CRA (Qatar), CITRA (Kuwait), TRC (Jordan), BTK (Turkey), PTA (Pakistan), and NTRA (Egypt), among others, are crucial partners and enablers in the Council's efforts to support the region's digital growth.

A primary focus of the SAMENA Council is promoting industry collaboration and sustainable growth. By acting as a facilitator of dialogue and partnership among telecom operators, technology innovators, and regulators, the Council creates spaces for constructive discussions around digital infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and the adoption of next-generation technologies.

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Bocar A. BA CEO & Board Member SAMENA Telecommunications Council



Through its initiatives, the SAMENA Council seeks to foster an environment that encourages business growth, promotes investment in digital infrastructure, and shapes policies that support innovation. Engaging with both public and private sector stakeholders, the Council plays a key role in ensuring that the regulatory environment facilitates the growth of a competitive digital economy. This collaboration is also a catalyst for fostering entrepreneurship, aligning with global initiatives such as those of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to encourage digital innovation and business resilience.

technology innovators, and regulators, the Council creates spaces for constructive discussions around digital infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and the adoption of next-generation technologies. This collaborative approach ensures that the digital growth of the region remains both sustainable and inclusive, addressing the diverse needs of ecosystem partners, from private companies to governmental bodies. SAMENA's alignment with global digital development goals reflects its commitment to fostering a digital ecosystem that benefits not just the region, but also the broader global community.

The SA-ME-NA region has made significant strides in the adoption of 5G technology, with plans already underway for 5G-Advanced, especially in relation to AI and FWA, and 6G developments - expected over the next five years. In this rapidly evolving environment, the SAMENA Council advocates for the responsible and efficient deployment of these cutting-edge technologies, including Al, while keeping sustainability at the forefront of its priorities. This advocacy is in direct alignment with key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The Council's work ensures that advanced technologies are leveraged to drive longterm regional development, inclusion, and sustainability, enabling a future-proof digital infrastructure that should serve

the diverse needs of the population and businesses alike.

The private sector remains a powerful driver of digital transformation in the SA-ME-NA region. Through its initiatives, the SAMENA Council seeks to foster an environment that encourages business growth, promotes investment in digital infrastructure, and shapes policies that support innovation. Engaging with both public and private sector stakeholders, the Council plays a key role in ensuring that the regulatory environment facilitates the growth of a competitive digital economy. This collaboration is also a catalyst for fostering entrepreneurship, aligning with global initiatives such as those of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to encourage digital innovation and business resilience. By working together with stakeholders across various sectors, the SAMENA Council helps ensure that businesses of all sizes are empowered to navidate the demands of an interconnected world.

The Council's role extends beyond regional boundaries as it creates international collaboration platforms while also actively participating in international forums and discussions, advocating for global digital development goals. By promoting policies that focus on digital inclusion, the digital divide, and the importance of cross-border partnerships, the SAMENA Council aligns its efforts with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), supporting international collaboration in the digital space. Through this approach, the Council fosters crossborder knowledge-sharing, ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation are both inclusive and equitable, bridging gaps between developed and developing regions alike.

One of the key regions being showcased for its leadership in digital transformation is the GCC, where the Council continues to highlight the pioneering efforts of nations such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and others, and spotlighting the GCC's advancements in e-government, ICT infrastructure, telecom innovation, and the regulatory frameworks that support them.

The Council's signature initiative, the Leaders' Summit, created and sustained over the years though partnership with the UAE's TDRA, Huawei, and its board members, serves as a platform for in-depth discussions on digital transformation. Through such leadership platforms, the SAMENA Council ensures that the GCC's digital achievements are celebrated not only within the region but internationally, helping to position the region as a leader in digital governance, telecom infrastructure, and innovation. that the SA-ME-NA region is well-positioned to navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities of the digital age, paving the way for an inclusive, innovative, and sustainable future for all.

The SA-ME-NA region is well-positioned to navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities of the digital age, paving the way for an inclusive, innovative, and sustainable future for all. It does, however, require accelerated collaboration, to ensure regional digital advancements are in harmony with sustainable development goals. By supporting the private sector, advocating for enabling digital policies, and contributing to global digital discussions, the region can tangibly contribute meaningfully to global digital and sustainable development, especially as it strives to be a key digital hub of the world.

SAMENA Council On

Cross-Regional Knowledge Exchange & Cooperation-Building

At Global AI Summit on Africa, SAMENA Council Reinforces Its Commitment to Building Inclusive Digital Economies through Cross-Regional Knowledge Exchange and Cooperation-Building among Private & Government Entities

SAMENA Telecommunications Council, a key regional advocacy organization with the aim to support digital transformation across South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, as well as neighboring regions, contributed key insights during the inaugural Global AI Summit on Africa, held in Kigali, Rwanda on April 3-5. Through its presence at the Summit, SAMENA Council reinforced its ongoing efforts to advocate key requirements for building a sustainable digital ecosystem in the developing world, with a particular focus on the role of intelligence (AI) artificial in drivina sustainable development. Bocar BA. SAMENA Council's CEO and representative at the Kigali Al Summit, highlighted Africa's unique position in the global AI landscape. "Africa now stands at the center of the digital transformation efforts in the developing world," he said. "With the continent's largest youth demographic and a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem, Africa has unparalleled potential to lead the Al revolution. But to do so, it must first build a foundation of trust, investment, and talent that reflects local realities and serves the needs of its diverse markets." SAMENA Council has long been at the forefront of advocating collaborative development across the digital space, and this participation is a natural extension of its mission to support digital economies, including in Africa. BA discussed the importance of prioritizing AI capabilities that are both scalable and locally relevant, such as building secure communication and computing infrastructure, developing multilingual AI models, and expanding Al-driven public service platforms. He emphasized that these efforts must be collaborative, drawing on both regional and global partnerships to ensure inclusivity

and resilience. One of the key areas that SAMENA Council drew attention to, was the critical need to scale AI talent across Africa. With a significant number of tech graduates leaving the continent annually and a projected shortage of AI specialists. SAMENA Council reiterated the importance of developing localized strategies to both retain talent and build sustainable talent pipelines. SAMENA Council also reiterate the need to develop Africa's own AI models. with Africa's unique experiences, needs, and aspirations in mind. Furthermore. SAMENA Council also opined that all countries should aim to develop their own Al models, best suited to match their own ground realities and development profiles. SAMENA Council's continued engagement in the African digital transformation journey is in alignment with its Operator members need for market assessment, exploring new opportunities, building cross-border cooperation and synergies, and to its broader mission of helping in building digital economies that empower regions to thrive in the global digital economy. The Council remains committed to fostering the creation of impactful partnerships among the Private Sector and Government bodies to ensure equitable access to digital technology and innovation across the SA-ME-NA region and regions of similar profiles. As Africa takes significant steps toward embracing AI, SAMENA Council believes, tremendous potential exists to facilitate new partnerships among the private sector as well as among governments. Several of SAMENA Council's members have direct interest in Africa, and this includes Telecom Operators as well as technology companies and providers of super apps. The Council's ongoing advocacy work will continue to play a key role in enabling knowledge and experienceexchange, and to address issues in digital development. which range from infrastructure funding to now development of artificial-intelligence. African nations need to timely harness AI to address their unique socio-economic and developmental challenges as well as create opportunities education, healthcare, agriculture, in infrastructure development, and overall planning. 🚺





IL LITTLE FRANK

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.

MEMBERS NEWS

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stc group. Saudi Arabia's leading digital enabler, proudly participates in the Human Capability Initiative (HCI) 2025 as the Vision Partner, joining global experts in meaningful dialogues on human capability development under the theme "Beyond Readiness". The event comes on the back of stc group's recognition among LinkedIn's 2025 rankings of best workplaces for career growth in Saudi Arabia. During HCI, stc group's training institution, stc Academy, announced a strategic collaboration with IBM to accelerate the development of a future-ready workforce through the launch of a new public learning platform. Ahmad Alghamdi, Chief People Officer of stc group, shared insights on shaping the Kingdom's emerging workforce through continuous learning and smart development for a digital future: "stc group's leadership in fostering digitally empowered talent reflects our unwavering commitment to Vision 2030. Our comprehensive upskilling programs and strategic partnerships are training individuals to thrive in a digital-first economy, driving transformation across the Kingstc Group Pioneers Saudi Arabia's Workforce Transformation as Vision Partner of Human Capabilities Initiative 2025



dom's industries." Mudhi Aljamea, Dean of stc Academy, spoke at the panel discussion titled "Accelerating and Amplifying Learning and Capability Transformation", showcasing the Academy's cutting-edge initiatives in preparing young Saudi talent for the digital age. Having taken place on 13 and 14 April, HCI 2025 united over 12,000 global experts and decision-makers, and featured more than 300 speakers from various backgrounds. The conference focused on unlocking human potential by integrating advancements in technology, education, and workforce development, empowering individuals with the skills, knowledge, and adaptability needed to thrive in today's rapidly evolving economic and technological landscape. As a Vision Partner of HCI, stc group is dedicated to investing in Saudi Arabia's transformation by uplifting the next generation of talent through comprehensive training and upskilling initiatives.



e& UAE said it has kicked off tests to utilize the 6-GHz and 600-MHz spectrum bands for 5G services, with both bands promising to significantly boost data speeds and extend 5G's coverage range. e& UAE said it has achieved data speeds of up to 10 Gbps by seamlessly aggregating the 6-GHz band with other FR1 TDD bands using commercial-grade customer premises equipment (CPE). The telco added that its tests so far have also demonstrated the ability of the 600-MHz band to extend 5G coverage beyond 6 kilometers. The UAE's Telecommunications and Digital

e& UAE Tests 6-GHz and 600-MHz Bands on Its 5G Network

Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) recently allocated both bands for 5G usage, with the 6-GHz band's 350 MHz bandwidth supporting high-capacity urban connectivity and the 600-MHz band enabling extensive coverage and deep indoor penetration. e& said the 6-GHz band enables seamless 8K UHD streaming, ultra-fast downloads, and lag-free virtual reality (VR) experiences, while the 600-MHz band ensures reliable and consistent 5G coverage, even in dense urban areas and remote locations. The telco added that the bands also open up new use case possibilities for enterprises, from data-intensive apps like cloud workflows, IoT, and Al-driven analytics to broad, stable coverage for industrial IoT deployments and smart city applications. "By achieving 10 Gbps with 6 GHz being a key driver and 5G coverage beyond 6 km on 600 MHz with commercial equipment, we are not just setting technical benchmarks—we are paving the way for 5G-Advanced, the future of 6G, and a smarter, more connected UAE," said e& UAE's acting CTO Marwan Bin Shakar in a statement.

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e& and Digicel Group Announce Strategic Partnership to Enhance International Voice Services Across the Americas

e& and Digicel Group have announced a strategic partnership to enhance Digicel's international voice services across the Americas. Under this collaboration, e& will serve as Digicel's partner in 24 markets for inbound and outbound international traffic, optimizing operations and elevating service guality. As fraud threats within the telecommunications sector continue to grow in scale and complexity, Digicel and e& are reinforcing their joint commitment to protecting the industry through the deployment of cuttingedge. Al-driven fraud detection and prevention technologies. This strategic initiative will empower both companies with real-time monitoring capabilities, proactive threat mitigation, and enhanced security protocols-protecting customers, operators, and the broader telecom ecosystem. By combining their global expertise and technological leadership, Digicel and e& are setting a new benchmark in international voice traffic management and fraud resilience. This collaboration marks a significant step forward in establishing more resilient, secure, and trusted ecosystem for the telecommunications industry. By adopting an innovative approach. Digicel continues to refine its wholesale strategy in response to evolving industry trends, including the rise of OTT services and VoLTE. This partnership will enable Digicel to optimize costs, streamline infrastructure investments, and strengthen its market position. "Leveraging our extensive expertise in international voice solutions, our partnership with Digicel Group is fully aligned with e& Carrier & Wholesale's strategy to expand our global footprint and deliver next-generation voice services across key international markets," said Nabil Baccouche, Group Chief Carrier & Wholesale Officer at e&. "As we establish our Wholesale's strategic hub in Miami as one of our key locations for the region, this collaboration reinforces our commitment to delivering high-quality, secure, and innovative telecom services across the Caribbean, Americas and beyond. Together, we are setting new benchmarks in international voice traffic management and fraud prevention, ensuring longterm growth and scalability for both organizations." With its deep industry knowledge and technical capabilities, e& will play a key role in supporting Digicel's ambitions to enhance customer experience, improve operational resilience, and future-proof its international voice services. "Our partnership with e& enables us to optimize operations and elevate the quality of services we deliver to our customers. It also opens the door to broader partnership opportunities across international business lines creating value for both our organizations and the customers we serve." Said Digicel Group Chief Business Officer, Liam Donnelly.



e& Drone Tower Inspections Set for Take Off in UAE

e& UAE revealed it would begin using drones for tower inspections, providing the means for real-time data analysis and AI technology to provide safer and more efficient assessment of the infrastructure. Information is relayed to an operation center where staff can track



live feeds from the unmanned vehicles, oversee flight progress, verify safety protocols and ensure accuracy. In a statement, the operator noted unlike traditional means of checking towers, the drones are able to navigate complex environments autonomously and operate in extreme weather conditions. During inspections AI analytics tools are abetted to detect factors including structural anomalies, providing the information for proactive maintenance of the assets. e& UAE acting CTIO Marwan Bin Shakar said use of the drone system would enhance "the safety and accuracy of telecom tower inspections while enabling faster, data-driven decisions that futureproof our infrastructure". The unmanned vehicles are also set to play a more general role in emergency response in the country, supporting the delivery of critical support and resources where they are needed. The Drones Operations Centre where the vehicles are controlled is a collaboration with the UAE Cyber Security Council and General Civil Aviation Authority. In October 2024, the operator announced a plan to work with authorities on the use of 5G drones for various civil use cases.



Mobily has obtained the certificate of (ISO 9001:2015) in the field of Customer Experience for the second time, after successfully passing the evaluation and audit stages of the quality of services provided, the adopted policies and procedures, as well as embracing modern techniques in quality assurance. This

Mobily Obtains ISO Certificate for Customer Experience

reflects our ongoing commitment to delivering the highest standards of quality in every aspect of the customer experience, as this certification covers areas such as Customer Experience Governance, Quality Assurance, Journey Review, and Voice of Customer. This achievement marks an important step in Mobily's ongoing efforts to ensure its continued leadership in customer experience. It strengthens our ability to deliver sustainable services that align with international quality standards, while also enhancing customer satisfaction and supporting business sustainability at Mobily.



Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communication services operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, released its 14th annual sustainability report, entitled: 'The New Paradigm Shift,' reflecting the company's dedication to responsible business practices. Zain remains one of the most transparent and accountable corporate entities in the entire Middle East and North Africa region with respect to the publication of its sustainability programs and their outcomes. As in previous years,

Zain Publishes 14th Annual Sustainability Report, Titled 'The New Paradigm Shift'

the report reflects Zain's commitment to meaningful connectivity that leads to equitable systemic change and empowers the communities that Zain proudly serves, which is at the center of Zain's Corporate Sustainability strategy on development and economic empowerment. 'The New Paradigm Shift' highlights the numerous sustainability programs and their outcomes implemented under the four pillars of Zain's corporate sustainability strategy – namely 'Climate Change; Operating Responsibly; Inclusion; and Generation Youth'; that



embrace and emphasize the material importance to the company of addressing issues related to preserving the planet and safeguarding it for future generations; access to connectivity and reducing the digital literacy gap; displacement; as well as employee development and social wellbeing, given the rise in geo-political and economic issues regionally. Commenting on the publication, Zain Group Chief Sustainability Officer, Jennifer Sulieman said, "We are in an era of technological innovation that allows us to develop and introduce initiatives that are the most impactful they have ever been. Zain takes responsibility as a regional pioneer in bringing the latest technologies that drive positive societal development and meaningful connectivity across our footprint." Suleiman continued, "What Zain does matters, and we continue to implement ESG principles, climate action, children rights, displacement, connectivity, advancing digital transformation, literacy, and stakeholder collaboration to build resilience, so that amid socio-economic challenges and regional conflicts, Zain may remain a beacon of hope, delivering life-changing solutions for the benefit and upliftment of current and future generations."



An announcement from AT&T and WMS. a global provider of cruise wireless connectivity services, demonstrates a commitment to enhancing the connectivity experience for passengers on cruise ships, who often have restricted and expensive cellular and internet connectivity. Their plan is to provide passengers with reliable, consistent connectivity throughout their journey, thus simplifying the travel experience. At the center of the experience is AT&T's International Day Pass for cruise passengers. For a cost of \$20 per day, the pass will activate automatically to ensure seamless cellular connectivity when visiting international destinations, whether land or sea. On international waters, the

AT&T and WMS Announce a Plan for Simplified Connectivity on the Water

pass enables 500 MB of high-speed data per day - with no overage charges - and unlimited talking and texting. At ports of call, customers can continue to use the pass without sustaining additional charges. The enhanced AT&T Day Pass will be available on more than 200 ocean-going cruise ships across more than 25 cruise lines supported by WMS. The bottom line is that travelers will benefit from reduced costs and uninterrupted service during their voyage. Pramod Arora, president and CEO of WMS, said, "I truly believe this is going to become the gold standard in cruise connectivity, and will usher in a new era of predictable and high-quality mobile communications for American cruisers while creating value and



higher guest satisfaction for our cruise line partners." The WMS and AT&T partnership relies on various connectivity technologies, including 5G.



China Mobile said it will acquire a 15.5% stake in Hong Kong-based broadband service provider HKBN for HK\$1.20 billion (\$154.64 million) through its regional unit. Under the deal, China Mobile Hong Kong (CMHK) will purchase approximately 145 million shares from TPG Wireman for about HK\$758.2 million. It will also acquire debt owed to TPG Wireman by HKBN by converting it into 83.7 million shares, for HK\$437.5 million. Upon completion, TPG

China Mobile's HK Unit Scoops Over 15% Stake in HKBN For \$155 Million

Wireman will hold no shares in HKBN. The deal gives China Mobile, the world's largest wireless carrier by subscribers, a stake in one of the largest telecommunications operators in Hong Kong that it first expressed interest in acquiring for almost two years ago. State-owned China Mobile has been looking to extend its footprint outside mainland China. Reuters reported in January that U.S.-based infrastructure investment firm I Squared Capital was weighing an offer that valued HKBN at up to \$1 billion (7.76 billion Hong Kong dollars), trumping China Mobile's HK\$6.86 billion offer. Earlier in the day, Bloomberg News, opens new tab reported I Squared Capital's potential offer for HKBN has hit an obstacle as it tries to convince China's sovereign wealth fund of the merits of the deal, citing people with knowledge of the matter.

cisco

Cisco made several transformative innovation and partnership announcements that will help security professionals secure and harness the power of AI. An increasingly sophisticated threat landscape combined with an expanding talent shortage means the need has never been greater for machine scale security and response.

Cisco Continues to Drive Innovation to Reimagine Security for the AI Era

According to Cisco's upcoming 2025 Cybersecurity Readiness Index, companies worldwide underestimate the complexities of securing AI, with 86% saying their organizations have experienced AI-related security incidents in the past 12 months. Cisco's announcements further its commitment to developing these capabilities for customers through ecosystem partnerships and for the broader community through open-source security models and tooling. "The cybersecurity threat landscape has never been more dynamic and complex, with adversaries constantly emboldened and enabled by AI to drive new attacks and exploits," said Jeetu Patel, Executive Vice

President and Chief Product Officer. Cisco. "To fight back, understaffed security operations and IT leaders need AI power of their own. Cisco is continuing its mission to secure AI and leverage AI for security with novel open-source models and tools, new Al agents, and IoT advancements, alongside the full breadth of the Cisco Security Cloud. Together, these innovations will help level the playing field and deliver AI innovation that makes all businesses more secure." Security teams are inundated with thousands of threat alerts daily. Cisco XDR addresses this challenge by correlating telemetry across network, endpoint, cloud, email, and more, using agentic AI to surface what matters most to organizations. Integrating several new features, Cisco XDR will deliver decisive, AI-powered responses to stop attacks faster than ever. The new Instant Attack Verification integrates data from the Splunk platform, endpoints, networks, threat intelligence, and more - and uses agentic AI to automatically create and execute tailored investigation plans.

This feature swiftly investigates, confirms threats, and enables security teams to automate responses with confidence to stop attacks. New automated XDR Forensics capabilities provide deeper visibility into endpoint activity, increasing the accuracy of investigations. Additionally, a new XDR Storyboard clearly visualizes complex attacks, empowering security teams to understand threats in seconds and decisively respond faster. To further help organizations strengthen their digital resilience, Splunk Enterprise Security (ES) and Splunk SOAR 6.4 enhance defenses against known and unknown threats for better visibility, accurate detections, and integrated and automated workflows that increase efficiency. Organizations that combine Splunk ES and SOAR with Cisco XDR will gain enhanced network visibility and detection to expedite investigations and stay ahead of threats. With this breadth of solutions, Cisco helps organizations build a SOC of the future that harnesses agentic AI to identify threats faster, accelerate resolutions, and realize massive productivity gains. Splunk SOAR 6.4 is generally available, and Splunk Enterprise Security 8.1 will be available in June.



Cisco's 2025 Data Privacy Benchmark Study: Privacy Landscape Grows Increasingly Complex in the Age of AI

Cisco has unveiled its 2025 Data Privacy Benchmark Study, offering a comprehensive analysis of privacy trends and their profound implications for businesses worldwide. As data privacy remains critical to establishing business value and trust, the study uncovers a complex landscape where the demand for local data storage intersects with reliance on global providers' expertise. Conducted across 12 countries with insights from 2,600 privacy and security professionals, the eighth edition Data Privacy Benchmark Study demonstrates the growing importance of



establishing solid data privacy foundations to unleash the full potential of Al. "Privacy and proper data governance are foundational to Responsible AI," said Dev Stahlkopf, Cisco Chief Legal Officer. "For organizations working toward AI readiness, privacy investments establish essential groundwork, helping to accelerate effective AI governance."

Concerns around safety and security drive data residency decisions

Despite increased operational costs of data localization, 90% of organizations see local storage as inherently safer, while 91% (up five percentage points year-overyear) trust global providers for better data protection. These dual data points reveal today's complex privacy landscape: global providers are valued for their capabilities, but local storage is perceived as safer. "The drive for data localization reflects rising interest in data sovereignty " said Harvey Jang, Cisco's Chief Privacy Officer. "Yet, a thriving, global digital economy relies on trusted cross-border data flows. Interoperable frameworks such as the Global Cross-Border Privacy Rules Forum

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will play a vital role in enabling growth while effectively addressing crucial privacy and security concerns."

Building Trust Through Compliance: The Business Advantage of Privacy Laws

Privacy legislation remains a cornerstone of customer trust. with 86% of respondents noting a positive impact on their organizations, up from 80% last year. Despite the costs associated with compliance, a resounding 96% of organizations report that the returns significantly outweigh the investments. This sentiment is echoed by the increasing consumer awareness and confidence in privacy laws mentioned in the 2024 Cisco Consumer Privacy Survey, where most global consumers (53%) said they are aware of their country's privacy laws. Among those aware, 81% feel confident in their ability to protect their data, compared to just 44% of those unaware of such laws.

Privacy: The Cornerstone of Responsible Al in the GenAl Era

As familiarity with AI increases-63% of respondents are now very familiar with Generative AI (GenAI)-concerns remain steady year-over-year. Despite many organizations reporting significant business gains from GenAI, data privacy is still a major risk. Notably, 64% of respondents worry about inadvertently sharing sensitive information publicly or with competitors, yet nearly half admit to inputting personal employee or non-public data into GenAl tools. This gap highlights the need for tools like Cisco's AI Defense which safeguard against the misuse of AI tools and data leakage. In turn, there is an increased focus on investing in AI governance processes among respondents, where an overwhelming 99% of respondents anticipate reallocating resources from privacy budgets to AI initiatives in the future. The 2024 Cisco Al Readiness Index emphasizes this trend, revealing that IT budget allocations are anticipated to nearly double in the coming year as companies work to safely deploy Al technology. Cisco will continue to monitor this shift in future research, recognizing that both privacy and Al governance play a combined role in establishing safe and reliable Al systems.

AI and Privacy: Catalysts for Business Growth and Customer Loyalty

Cisco's annual study highlights the need for organizations to balance local data storage, global expertise, and privacy in an Al-driven world. It emphasizes the need to view data governance as an essential strategic investment for aligning Al strategies with privacy, ensuring sustainable growth and consumer trust.



Eutelsat has officially launched its OneWebpowered low Earth orbit (LEO) connectivity services for both commercial and private aircraft, with over 100 certified antennas now installed and the first aircraft already flying with active LEO internet connections. In addition to its longstanding geostationary (GEO) satellite offerings, Eutelsat is delivering a hybrid multi-orbit model to the

Eutelsat Expands Airborne Internet with Operational LEO Service for Aircraft

aviation sector through partnerships with Intelsat, Hughes, and Panasonic Avionics. Air Canada has become the first airline to implement the dual GEO/LEO solution, delivered via Intelsat, while other prominent carriers have started equipping their fleets and introducing commercial flights with multi-orbit internet services onboard. Within the business aviation sector,



Eutelsat is working with Gogo to bring LEO connectivity to the Embraer Phenom 300. Aircraft manufacturer Textron will roll out installations across its Cessna Citation Longitude, Latitude, and Ascend jets, and Airbus Corporate Jets will integrate the solution across all its ACJ models. The combined order book for Eutelsat's commercial and business aviation services now includes more than 1.000 aircraft slated for installation. "Eutelsat's LEO aviation services, powered by the OneWeb constellation, provide high speed, low latency, and premium performance to meet the evolving connectivity needs of airlines and business jets globally," said Cyril Dujardin, President of the Connectivity Business Unit at Eutelsat. "With a robust backlog and expanding reach across both commercial and business aviation, we are confident in the long-term growth of our aviation services. We believe that a fully integrated IFC ecosystem will transform in-flight connectivity, providing airlines with flexible, responsible, and scalable solutions that enhance the passenger experience and support the future of air travel worldwide."

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Huawei Releases AI Data Lake Solution, Positioned to Accelerate Industry Intelligence

At the 4th Huawei Innovative Data Infrastructure (IDI) Forum in Munich, Germany, Huawei launched the Al Data Lake Solution, designed to accelerate AI adoption across industries. Peter Zhou, Vice President of Huawei and President of Huawei Data Storage Product Line, introduced the solution in his keynote speech: "Data Awakening, Accelerating Intelligence with Al-Ready Data Infrastructure." While digital transformation has evolved over decades and brought sweeping change, one thing remains constant: the critical importance of data. This was highlighted in Zhou speech: "To be Al-ready, get data-ready. The continuous deepening of industry digitalization is a process of transforming data into information and knowledge." By integrating data storage, data management, resource management, and the AI toolchain, the AI Data Lake Solution delivers a high-guality AI corpus and speeds up model training and inference, empowering enterprises to embrace Al. In his address, Zhou provided details about the products and technologies that are part of the Data Lake solution. Accelerated AI model training and inference: The Huawei OceanStor A series high-performance AI storage delivers exceptional performance. It, for instance, enabled the AI technologies developer iFLYTEK, among others, to significantly boost cluster training efficiency. Its advanced inference acceleration technology enhances inference performance, reduces latency, and elevates the application user experience-accelerating the deployment of large-model inference applications in production environments. Efficient storage of mass AI data: The OceanStor Pacific All-Flash Scale-Out Storage offers a high capacity density of 4 PB/2 U and ultra-low power consumption of 0.25 W/TB. Designed to manage exabyte-scale data with ease, it is well-suited for data-intensive workloads across education, scientific research, medical imaging, and media. Al corpus and vector database backup: Huawei's OceanProtect Backup Storage provides 10 times higher backup performance than other mainstream options and boasts 99.99% ransomware attack detection accuracy, safeguarding key data of training corpus and vector databases in fields like oil and gas and MSPs. Huawei DME is a data management platform that integrates the Omni-Dataverse to help customers eliminate data silos in geographically dispersed data centers. In addition, DME's ability to retrieve data from over 100 billion files in seconds helps customers efficiently process data and unlock its full potential. Powered by virtualization and container technologies, the DCS platform provides efficient xPU resource pooling and intelligent scheduling, boosting resource utilization. In addition, the DataMaster in DME enables all-scenario, Al-powered O&M with Al Copilot, offering a range of Al applications such as intelligent Q&A, O&M assistant, and inspection expert, creating an exceptional O&M experience.



Huawei Prepares to Test Advanced AI Chip

Huawei continued to defy widening US trade sanctions, with The Wall Street Journal reporting the company plans to test an AI processor in the early development stage targeted at becoming a replacement for Nvidia chips facing export controls to China. The Chinese company is lining up customers to test the technical feasibility of the Ascend 910D chip, which it is positioning to be more powerful than Nvidia's H100 chip, which was banned in



China in late 2023, the newspaper wrote. The first samples are expected to be released next month. Huawei also is scheduled to start shipments of its 910C AI chip to domestic customers in May, The Wall Street Journal wrote. Founder of industry blog Radio Free Mobile Richard Windsor suggested Huawei is likely to remain stuck at 7nm with Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp (SMIC), as it is at the limits of what multi-patterning can produce. He added the sudden acceleration of product development is driven by "the deepening rift between the West and China" and mainland's need to cut its dependence on Western technology. In August 2023, Huawei sent shockwaves across the industry by unveiling the Mate 60 Pro powered by its Kirin 9000s chipset. The use of a homegrown main processor, designed by the company's chip unit HiSilicon and produced by SMIC using a 7nm process, was promoted in China as a major win over US export controls. Since then, the US Department of Commerce has added a number of new restrictions on the sale of AI chips to China. Following the first US export curbs on AI chips, Nvidia reconfigured its high-end H100 for the China market.

Huawei Launches Five Solutions to Accelerate Aviation Intelligence

During the Passenger Terminal Expo 2025 in Madrid, Huawei launched five aviation solutions, notably including the Smart Airport Intelligent Operation Center (IOC) to advance intelligent industry upgrades. Huawei executives, including Mr. Dong Fangshuo, Vice President of Huawei's Smart Transportation BU, Mr. Yang Guojie, Director of Transportation Industry Solution Domain from Huawei's Data Communication Product Line, Eric Liu, Chief Engineer of Huawei Optical Network Business, and Dr. Rachad Nassar. Director of Global Business & Strategic Partners of Huawei's Smart Transportation BU attended the launch event. The five solutions unveiled will lay a solid foundation for aviation to "go broadband, go cloud, and go AI." They are:

- 1. Huawei's Smart Airport Intelligent Operation Center (IOC) enables precise and efficient decision-making through all-domain situational awareness. With Total Airport Management (TAM) concept at its heart, the IOC streamlines management and operations systems and seamlessly connects more than 30 airport production systems, providing a holistic view on one map. Capitalizing on Al algorithms, the IOC accurately predicts the time when an aircraft moves into the stand, optimizes resource allocation, and improves the rate of aircraft docking to jet bridges. This results in a 5% increase in flight departure punctuality and ground support efficiency. The system monitors operation in real time, deploys service resources in advance, proactively handle disruptions, strengthens security management, and improves passenger experience, helping airports go digital and intelligent.
- 2. Huawei's Smart Airport Perimeter Security Solution with fiber sensing technology elevates airport operational security. Using innovative technologies like Huawei's distributed optic fiber sensing and AI sensing algorithms, the solution can precisely identify airfield intrusions under harsh weather conditions. It detects the vast majority of intrusions and generates very few false alarms (hundreds of alarms per day reduced to less than 1 alarm/km/day).
- 3. Huawei's Digital and Intelligent Platform for Airports based on cloud, data, and AI



makes airport operations smarter, more efficient, and more secure.

- Cloud: Core services are migrated to the cloud for active-active deployment, ensuring zero data losses. The recovery time is shortened from 1 hour to just 5 minutes, meeting the 99.99% availability requirement.
- Data: The platform builds a comprehensive data governance system alongside a robust data foundation to deliver high-quality data for intelligent applications.
- AI: Huawei provides advanced AI capabilities and supports open and compatible mainstream models and engines. Together with its partners, the company looks to create optimal industry models to accelerate aviation intelligence.
- 4. Huawei's Xinghe Intelligent Airport Integrated Data Network Solution builds a high-quality and highly reliable communication network. Wi-Fi 7 enhances the passenger experience, and with its VIP assurance technology, Wi-Fi 7 improves the bandwidth for VIP passengers by 20%. Huawei's exclusive Wi-Fi Shield adopts noise superposition to prevent data from being stolen during air interface transmission and protect data. It also automates access authentication and authorization and can automatically detect and block spoofing and unauthorized access behavior within 30 seconds, eliminating terminal access risks. The solution fully boosts

production and operational efficiency and ensures airport networks are stable.

5. Huawei's Smart Airport All-Optical Network utilizes IP + POL (Passive Optical LAN). It introduces the first 10G M45 panel-type Optical Network Unit (ONU) the OptiXstar P892M - for airports, which supports multiple installation modes such as tabletop, wall embedding, and floor cylinder. One optical fiber allows for integrated access of voice, Wi-Fi, and HD video services, providing more reliable, agile, and green infrastructure to high-quality carry multiple airport service systems.

The solutions reflect that ICT has evolved from a side support system into one of air cargo's core mission-critical production systems, with intelligence being at the heart of the ongoing transformation of the aviation sector. This evolution is prompting airports to rethink how they allocate resources and evolve toward smart airports. Huawei works with aviation partners to deeply integrate novel technologies and create the architecture of intelligent digital twins that synergizes connectivity, cloud, AI, computing, and applications. This architecture aims to significantly enhance operational efficiency, business value, safety and passenger experience. Dr. Rachad Nassar, Director of Global Business & Strategic Partners of Huawei's Smart Transportation BU, noted at the launch event that the advancement of aviation relies on digital and intelligent technologies. He stated that Huawei is committed to

building safer and more efficient airports providing a seamless experience. "Moving forward, we will collaborate with more industry partners who have best practices to establish a new ecosystem for airport innovation and development. Together, we can help customers streamline existing industry systems, maximize data potential, and improve productivity within the aviation sector." During the Passenger Terminal Expo 2025 in Madrid, Huawei launched five aviation solutions, notably including the Smart Airport Intelligent Operation Center (IOC) to advance intelligent industry upgrades. Huawei executives, including Mr. Dong Fangshuo, Vice President of Huawei's Smart Transportation BU, Mr. Yang Guojie, Director of Transportation Industry Solution DomainfromHuawei's Data Communication Product Line, Eric Liu, Chief Engineer of Huawei Optical Network Business, and Dr. Rachad Nassar, Director of Global Business & Strategic Partners of Huawei's Smart Transportation BU attended the launch event. During the exhibition, Huawei also showcased its range of scenario-based solutions for airport operations, security, and services alongside airlines' operating scenarios. The solutions ensure smooth passenger and flight flows, improve travel experience, and increase the operational efficiency of both airports and airlines. To date, more than 210 airports, airlines, and air traffic management authorities all over the world have chosen Huawei. Looking ahead, Huawei will work with industry customers and partners to build a digital and intelligent foundation for civil aviation, develop smart airports that are safe, green, and passenger-friendly, and accelerate the intelligent development of aviation.

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Nokia has announced that it has signed a contract with Danish global integrated logistics leader, Maersk, to equip 450 vessels in its fleet with Nokia's industry-leading private wireless network solutions. This important deployment is part of Maersk's IoT connectivity platform, OneWireless, which offers numerous benefits to its customers, including real-time cargo tracking, enhanced supply chain visibility, and improved operational efficiency. The evolving environment of logistics and maritime operations is uniquely complex and highly mobile, requiring resilient and flexible technology for real-time asset tracking and positioning. By transitioning to Nokia's private wireless technology, Maersk will overcome the challenges of its current infrastructure onboard both its own and chartered vessels and gain access to increased scalability and future-proof connectivity. The new unified mobile network powered by Nokia's radio portfolio is designed to support numerous IoT devices and secure interoperability between private and public networks, ensuring Maersk customers' cargo is reliably monitored at sea, port, or land. This is especially important for tracking parameters such as temperature and humidity for fruit and other perishables. "With our next-generation connectivity platform, we

Nokia Supplies Private Wireless to Maersk's Fleet for Real-Time Cargo Tracking



will be able to offer our customers notable benefits, including real-time cargo tracking, enhanced supply chain visibility, and improved operational efficiency. This platform is designed to support thousands of IoT devices, ensuring optimal performance for reefer tracking and fleet IoT," says Kjeld Dittmann, Head of Vessel & Cargo Connectivity at Maersk. "Nokia's technology leadership in private wireless goes far beyond just connectivity, as demonstrated by this major new contract with Maersk. Our Radio Access portfolio and MantaRay network management solution will deliver reliable, real-time, and future-ready mobile networks that will optimize Maersk's marine

operations. We look forward to working collaboratively with them on this important project," said Tommi Uitto, President of Mobile Networks at Nokia.The solution leverages Nokia's small cells portfolio, including Nokia Shikra Remote Radio Heads (RRH) and compact baseband, along with custom-designed antennas. Each vessel has a small core connected to the radio, utilizing satellite communication for backhaul. Additionally, Nokia's intelligent network management system, MantaRay NM, located in Maersk's operations center, provides a consolidated network view for optimal monitoring and management.

Nokia Lands Strategic 5G RAN Deal with T-Mobile US to Enhance Nationwide Connectivity

Nokia announced a significant multi-year extension of its strategic partnership with T-Mobile US, further expanding and enhancing the Un-carrier's industry-leading nationwide 5G network coverage and capacity. The agreement will advance T-Mobile's network by deploying next-generation baseband and radio technologies. T-Mobile's network already reaches more than 98 percent of the U.S. population. This collaboration demonstrates its commitment to further extending its high-performance 5G capabilities. Under the agreement, Nokia will supply its industry-leading AirScale Radio Access Network (RAN) portfolio - including its latest generation Habrok Massive MIMO and Levante Ultra-Performance baseband solutions. These are powered by its energy-efficient ReefShark System-on-Chip technology and will boost T-Mobile's 5G network for maximum performance, efficiency and reliability. Nokia will also deploy its Al-powered MantaRay SON and AutoPilot, a self-organizing network solution for optimization and automation. The deal includes hardware, software, maintenance, and support services. This collaboration will also advance T-Mobile's network evolution by leveraging next-generation RAN architectures that enhance agility, scalability, and operational efficiency. Nokia will continue to support T-Mobile's groundbreaking AI-RAN initiatives, including the ongoing technology partnership at T-Mobile's AI-RAN Innovation Center launched last year. The center is dedicated to integrating AI into RAN to revolutionize network experiences and deliver stronger business outcomes. Ulf Ewaldsson, President of Technology, T-Mobile, commented, "T-Mobile's nationwide standalone 5G network has solidified our global leadership by delivering tangible benefits to our customers. This new agreement with Nokia will further enhance our current network capabilities as we strengthen our journey supercharged with 5G Advanced, laying a robust foundation for future innovation." Justin Hotard, President and CEO of Nokia, said: "This new agreement strengthens our deep partnership with T-Mobile US, and extends their leadership in delivering next-generation connectivity across the U.S. By implementing Nokia's latest AirScale RAN innovations, along with advanced virtualized and Al-RAN-based solutions, T-Mobile will unlock premium 5G performance for their customers. I'm excited to continue our partnership to shape the next chapter of mobile connectivity in the U.S." Nokia is T-Mobile US's long-standing partner in RAN. The combination of Nokia's advanced solutions and T-Mobile's "Challenger to Champion" strategic initiatives have helped T-Mobile to become America's largest, fastest, and most awarded 5G network, covering more than 332 million people across two million square miles.



Nokia Modernizes Vodafone Idea's Optical Network to Enhance 4G Services and Support 5G Rollout

Nokia announced that it will upgrade and expand Vodafone Idea Limited (VIL) optical transport network across key metro and circle locations in India. The upgrade, which utilizes Nokia's leading optical switching technology, will increase its capacity, supporting 4G data growth. In addition, Nokia's equipment will modernize the network, providing flexibility and efficiency, and boost VIL's 5G rollout. Among the comprehensive optical suite of products deployed to enable this network overhaul include Nokia's 1830 Photonic Service Switch (PSS) platform, and its CDC-F 2.0 wavelength switching technologies. In addition, Nokia will also deploy its market-leading photonic service engine (PSE-Vs) supercoherent optics, industry-leading Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) and optical transport network (OTN) to ensure VIL's customers continue to experience great connectivity even during peak usage times. Nokia's future-ready solution will also enable VIL to efficiently scale its network from C-band to C+L band as required, avoiding the need for any forklift changes in platform or architecture. This deployment will lead to reduced VIL's operational costs. Additionally, the project prioritizes sustainability, incorporating energy-efficient solutions and automation-enabled deployment processes to minimize the carbon footprint. "Nokia's innovative optical solutions align perfectly with our goal to enhance customer experience and ensure robust network readiness for future demands. With Nokia's advanced optical network solutions, we are excited to build an agile, high-capacity and future-ready network that will support India's digital transformation and drive innovation across sectors," said Jagbir Singh, CTO at Vodafone Idea Limited. "We are proud to be selected by Vodafone Idea (VIL) to modernize their optical transport network. We have been a long-standing partner for them in India, built on our trusted performance in network infrastructure. Our cutting-edge 1830 PSS technology will ensure their readiness to deliver multi-terabit data growth and support upcoming guantum-safe services for their enterprise customers. This significant milestone with VIL, further cements Nokia's leadership in India's optical transport market and commitment to enabling next-generation connectivity in India," said Sang Xulei, Vice President and Head of Network Infrastructure at Nokia Asia Pacific.

TECH mahindra

Tech Mahindra a leading global provider of technology consulting and digital solutions to enterprises across industries, announced a partnership with ServiceNow to deliver next-generation broadband solutions tailored for Communication Service Providers (CSPs). The partnership offers a comprehensive vertical solutions stack that covers every aspect of a broadband CSP's journey, including planning and building networks, managing operations, enhancing customer experience, and monetizing services. The partnership leverages Tech Mahindra's netOps.now platform, a preintegrated end-to-end solution built on ServiceNow® Technology. Media and Telecommunications (TMT) product suites, to unify customer care, operations, order management, and partner ecosystems for CSPs. Additionally, the solution provides Al-driven analytics, Network-as-a-Service (NaaS), Cloud-native Open-Source Software (OSS) systems and intelligent automation to streamline operations and capitalize on the fast-growing "Everything-as-a-Service" opportunity. Through the solution, the CSPs will be able to improve operational efficiencies by up to 50%, ensuring accelerated time-to-market and scalable broadband rollouts. Atul Soneja, Chief Operating Officer, Tech Mahindra, said, "The telco industry faces increasing pressure to modernize legacy systems, streamline network management, and enhance operational agility. Our partnership with ServiceNow will address these challenges and empower broadband providers to deliver high-speed connectivity, drive digital inclusion, and create value for communities globally. With an industry-leading zerotouch broadband operations platform, we will enable customers to seamlessly address connectivity challenges across rural, suburban, and urban markets." The partnership marks a significant step in Tech Mahindra's continued expansion in the globalbroadband market, accelerating digital infrastructure and enabling CSPs to

Tech Mahindra and ServiceNow Partner to Deliver Next-Gen Broadband Solutions for Communication Service Providers



scale efficiently. Erica Volini, Executive Vice President, Worldwide Industries, Partners, Go-to-Market. ServiceNow and said. "Partnerships succeed best when we lean into our unique skills and expertise and have a clear view into the problem we're trying to solve. Tech Mahindra's solutions with ServiceNow will help our customers provide the seamless experiences that their customers expect today. I am thrilled to see the continued innovation we will achieve together to help organizations succeed in the era of digital business." Recently, Tech Mahindra and ServiceNow successfully implemented this solution for a leading FibreCo in Germany, demonstrating its transformative impact. By leveraging the full ServiceNow TMT suite, Tech Mahindra streamlined the customer's assurance experience, automated fulfillment processes, and enabled comprehensive end-to-end tracking of fiber rollout. This implementation on the ServiceNow Platform significantly improved operational performance, including a 20% reduction in fiber rollout time and major reductions in order fallouts. By consolidating 22 legacy systems into a single, unified platform, the solution has streamlined execution. enhanced efficiency, and accelerated service delivery.

@zain

Nokia and Zain KSA have successfully completed Saudi Arabia's first live Cloud RAN site, marking a significant achievement in the country's 5G innovation journey. The trial, which took place from December 24, 2024, to January 26, 2025, utilized Nokia's 5G anvRAN solution and achieved peak download speeds of 1.5 Gbps on Zain KSA's 5G core network. This live Cloud RAN site demonstrates the advantages of cloud-native architectures. including enhanced efficiency, lower total cost of ownership, and faster deployment times. These improvements enable Providers Communications Service (CSPs) and enterprise customers to scale their networks more efficiently while supporting the development of new digital applications. Aligned with Saudi Arabia's

ZTE

ZTE Corporation announced that at the first meeting of the Tenth Session of the Board of Directors, the Resolution on the Election of Chairman of the Tenth Session of the Board of Directors was reviewed and approved, with Ms. Fang Rong elected as Chairman of the Board of the company. On the same day, the Tenth Session of the Board of Directors of ZTE Corporation appointed the senior management of the company. Mr. Xu Ziyang continues to serve as CEO of ZTE Corporation. Mr. Wang Xiyu, Ms. Li Ying, and Mr. Xie Junshi act as Executive Vice Presidents, in charge of R&D,



Zain KSA Launch Saudi Arabia's First Live Cloud RAN Site

national digital transformation goals. this successful trial provides a flexible platform that can integrate solutions from various vendors. The project sets the stage for enterprise and private wireless applications across numerous industry sectors, reinforcing Saudi Arabia's leadership in technology. Eng. Mohammed AlNujaidi, Chief Technology Officer of Zain KSA, commented, "At Zain KSA, we are committed to delivering transformative digital experiences that empower our customers in a fast-evolving market. Collaborating with Nokia on the Kingdom's first live Cloud RAN site allows us to explore innovative service models, reduce network costs, and quickly respond to the needs of both enterprise and individual consumers. The added network agility will support a

variety of new use cases, emphasizing our role in advancing Saudi Arabia's digital transformation." Mohammad AlTaveh. Customer Team Head at Zain Group, added, "The deployment of the Kingdom's first live Cloud RAN site underscores Nokia's commitment to delivering next-generation networking solutions. By adopting a fully cloud-native approach, we not only achieve the performance of purpose-built RAN but also establish a future-ready platform capable of supporting AI-RAN, Open RAN, and even potential 6G innovations. Our partnership with Zain KSA highlights how cloudification optimizes resources, reduces total cost of ownership, and opens new growth opportunities across multiple sectors in the Kingdom."

Fang Rong Elected as Chairman of the Board and Xu Ziyang Reappointed as CEO of ZTE Corporation

finance and accounting, and operations management and sales respectively. Ms. Fang Rong stated, "I am deeply honored to take on the role of Chairman of ZTE Corporation, which is truly a profound mission. The world is undergoing an Al-driven industrial revolution. Amid both opportunities and challenges, it is urgent for the company to transform into "connectivity + computing". With our collective dedication, I believe we will seize the strategic opportunities in this evolution, driving the company's steady, sustainable growth, cultivating a robust talent ecosystem, and delivering higher value for shareholders. Together with global partners, we will accelerate the deployment and upgrade of digital and intelligent infrastructure, promote digital intelligence across industries, and make intelligent experiences accessible for every consumer everywhere. Also, we will remain committed to green initiatives, bridge digital divides by developing AI for good and for all and fulfill our social responsibilities to create a sustainable future." Ms. Fang Rong is a senior expert in the ICT industry, with extensive experience in telecommunications operations, R&D, and management. She graduated from Nanjing Institute of Posts and Telecommunications (now known as Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications), specializing in Telecommunications Engineering. Ms. Fang began to work for Zhongxingxin in 1995 and then joined ZTE Corporation in 1997. From 1998 to 2009, she served as Senior Vice President of ZTE Corporation. She has been acting as a board member of Zhongxing Development Company Limited since 2009 and Chairman of Xiazhi Technology Company Limited since 2021. Since 2018, she has been serving as a Non-Executive Director at ZTE Corporation, and since March 2025, she has been working as Chairman of the Board of ZTE Corporation. Under her leadership, the company once yielded notable results in the R&D and large-scale commercial use of products such as optical communications, videoconferencing, and power supply. Additionally, she played a leading role for ZTE's breakthroughs in emerging markets like India and high-end markets such as Europe, laying a solid foundation for the company's globalization.

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ZTE Releases the Privacy Protection White Paper, Empowering the Digital Economy and Leading Ecosystem Co-Building

ZTE Corporation a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, has released the ZTE Privacy Protection White Paper (2025) (hereinafter referred to as "the White Paper"). The White Paper offers a systematic and comprehensive overview of the company's achievements in privacy compliance, spanning privacy protection policy, framework, co-building, and practical implementation. As a global leading provider of integrated ICT solutions and a Driver of Digital Economy in the 5G era, ZTE places great importance on privacy protection. The company has established the privacy protection policy of "meeting legal requirements, preventing and controlling business risks, winning customers' trust, and promoting the cobuilding of a favorable ecosystem", and has built an end-to-end privacy protection compliance system that is both closed-loop and process-based. ZTE ensures the effective implementation of compliance requirements in business processes from the following aspects: the tone from the top and resource investment, well-structured organization and capability development, cultural integration and creation of a sound environment for compliance. as well as reconstruction of IT systems and introduction of tools. The company incorporates privacy protection into the processes of product design and service delivery, takes privacy protection as an essential element of its core competence and values, and works to achieve sustainable development while meeting compliance requirements. In recent years, ZTE has continuously obtained authoritative certifications in the industry, such as the ISO/IEC 27701:2019: Privacy Information Management certification, the EU's ePrivacyseal Global, and China's Data Management Capability Maturity Assessment Model (DCMM) - Level 5 Certification. The company also passed the Data Export Security Assessment by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC). With excellent privacy



protection capabilities, ZTE continues to safeguard the interests of users, customers, partners, suppliers, shareholders, and employees. To further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of privacy compliance governance, the company has independently developed the Data Compliance System (DCS), which integrates the Al-automated Intelligent Data Screening (IDS) system, Privacy Compliance Review System (PCRS), Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) system, and functions such as personal data breach response. The DCS dynamically displays data compliance governance in real time, achieving digital governance and visualized risk management. In addition, guided by the principles of transparency, openness, trust, and collaboration, ZTE actively draws on its experience in compliance management to promote privacy compliance co-building across the industry chain, thus contributing to a sound compliance ecosystem

ZTE Advances All-Optical Network Deployment with Intelligent ODN Solutions

ZTE Corporation a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, announced that Hans Neff, Senior Director of ZTE CTO Group, delivered a keynote speech



titled "Embracing the AI Era to Accelerate the Development of All-Optical Networks" at the FTTH Conference 2025 in Amsterdam. He shared ZTE's solutions and experience in focusing on AI empowerment to achieve intelligent ODN, improve the deployment efficiency of all-optical networks, and reduce deployment and O&M costs. At present, the deployment of all-optical networks is continuously accelerated, and the rapidly developing AI is increasingly integrated into broadband IT systems, significantly improving the intelligent level of FTTx deployment, operation, and maintenance. In Europe, the National Broadband Plan (NBP) and the EU policies are actively advocating for an all-optical, gigabit, and digitally intelligent society, and the demand for sustainable, efficient, and future-oriented network infrastructure is growing. Hans pointed out that operators are facing challenges such as high costs, complex network management, and diverse deployment scenarios. AI and digital intelligence can provide end-to-end support for ODN construction in multiple aspects. Hans described how ZTE leverages AI technology to build intelligent ODNs across the entire process, enhancing efficiency and reducing operational

complexity. He elaborated on the specific applications and advantages of intelligent ODN across three phases: before, during, and after deployment. Before deployment, one-click zero-touch site surveys, Albased automatic planning and design, and paperless processes replace traditional manual methods, significantly reducing the time and human resources required. During deployment, real-time visualized and cost-effective solutions, along with tailored product combinations-such as pre-connectorized splice-free ODN, plugand-play deployment, and air-blowing solutions-ensure smooth construction while reducing both time and labor costs. After deployment and delivery, intelligent real-time ODN network detection, analysis,

and risk warnings minimize fault location time, improving monitoring accuracy and troubleshooting efficiency. Additionally, new solutions like passive ID branch detection enable 24/7 real-time optical link monitoring, dynamic perception of link changes, and automatic updates, ensuring 100% accuracy of end-to-end ODN resources. This proactive approach optimizes network performance while streamlining maintenance and resource management. Hans emphasized that collaboration among multiple parties is key to accelerating the construction of intelligent ODN networks. Suppliers play a vital role in driving digital and intelligent platforms, developing innovative product delivering portfolios, and localized

solutions through strategic partnerships. By leveraging AI and digital intelligence, operators and stakeholders can effectively address challenges such as high costs, complex construction and maintenance, and regional adaptability. As a global leader in the broadband access field, ZTE is committed to providing comprehensive intelligent ODN solutions and building endto-end all-optical networks. Moving forward, ZTE will continue collaborating with global partners to harness its advanced network and intelligent capabilities. ZTE aims to help operators build and operate cuttingedge, efficient, and intelligent broadband networks, unlocking new application scenarios and fostering a ubiguitous, green, and efficient era of all-optical networks.

Turkcell and ZTE Lead Europe's First Commercial Deployment of 100G ZR QSFP28-DCO Transceivers in an IP Network

ZTE Corporation a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, in partnership with Turkcell, Türkiye's leading telecommunications and technology company, has successfully completed Europe's first commercial deployment of the 100G ZR QS-FP28-DCO transceivers in Divarbakır. Türkiye. This milestone marks a significant advancement in IP+Optical convergence, showcasing innovative features that promise smoother network evolution and reduce optical layer investments. The project harnesses the unique capabilities of the 100G ZR QSFP28 digital coherent optics (DCO) solution, combined with ZTE's latest aggregation router, taking full advantage of its tunable central wavelength capabilities and innovative IPoWDM technology. This flexibility enables operators to optimize metro transport networks by using existing fiber infrastructure and DWDM networks, maxi-

mizing fiber utilization without the need for a comprehensive network overhaul. Furthermore, the solution's seamless compatibility with standard QSFP28 interfaces facilitates a smooth and incremental transition to next-generation 100GE technology. In addition to these technical innovations, the commercial deployment in Turkcell's live network has achieved a significant milestone by successfully establishing metro-long-haul point-to-point interconnections. This accomplishment is critical for the expansion of modern metro networks. By effectively bridging distant nodes within urban regions, the project guarantees robust, high-capacity data transmission over long distances while substantially reducing infrastructure investment demands. This strategic approach underscores a commitment to cost-effective, high-performance connectivity solutions in densely populated areas. Prof. Dr.



Vehbi Çağrı Güngör, Chief Network Technologies Officer of Turkcell, stated: "Our collaboration with ZTE highlights the transformative potential of IPoWDM technology in strengthening our network capabilities. By seamlessly integrating this solution into our existing DWDM infrastructure, we are advancing toward future-ready IP+Optical convergence. Our goal is to drive digital transformation, enhance connectivity for businesses and consumers, and ensure sustainable and efficient network growth." Peng Aiguang, Senior Vice President of ZTE, Chairman of Netas, said: "Our collaboration with Turkcell represents a transformative leap in the convergence of IP and digital coherent optical technologies. By integrating legacy infrastructure with advanced digital coherent technology, we redefine urban connectivity and lay the foundation for resilient, future-proof networks. Looking ahead, ZTE will continue to focus on R&D, deepen collaboration with Turkcell to jointly drive technological innovation, and fully support Turkcell in enhancing its leading market position." The collaboration between Turkcell and ZTE establishes a new standard for scalability, efficiency, and economic viability in telecommunications. As Europe's first commercial 100G ZR QS-FP28-DCO deployment, this pioneering initiative is poised to serve as a blueprint for future IPoWDM network upgrades across Europe and other key markets.

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Servitization | Platformization | Intelligentization

Thriving with Techco1.0

Empowering Comprehensive Intelligent Digital Transformation

Grow Core Business with 3-Extending

Extending monetization dimensions, Extending user scenarios, and Extending operational effect

Push Innovative Boundaries with 3-New

New entries for digital life, New integrated ICT solutions for industries, and New monetization models for data asset

Build 3A Technology Foundation

Advancing 5G-A, Always-online architecture, and Al-driven infrastructure



ARTICLE

Thriving in the Intelligent Era: Empowered by Techco 1.0

Intelligent technologies are rapidly advancing, driving AI adoption across industries and consumer markets. DeepSeek's opensource success and cloud market growth, are key indicators. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of the global public cloud market reached 19% in 2024. Many hyperscalers, such as Huawei Cloud, have also launched training and inference services.

Huawei's Techco 1.0 framework signifies a critical evolution for the telecommunications industry, empowering telcos to effectively navigate the complexities of digital transformation and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

The Middle East and Central Asia are leveraging connectivity technologies to stimulate demand for digital and intelligent operations. In 2024, the region united in its pursuit to become the world's first 5G Advanced (5G-A) region, with many countries releasing dedicated digital and intelligence strategies, such as Saudi Arabia's 10Gbps Society Initiative and the UAE's Strategy for Artificial Intelligence. These digital initiatives are further accelerating the broad adoption of AI, 5G, and cloud. Consequently, telcos across the Middle East and Central Asia are actively repositioning themselves to thrive in this digital and intelligent era.

Inspired by the region's leading telcos' prominent "Techco" proposal in 2022, many other major players have since released similar transformation strategies, which focus on core business growth, operational agility, and expanding into areas like fintech, cloud, data centers, and industry digitalization.

Supporting this transformation, Huawei unveiled the Techco 1.0, as a common reference framework. This initiative aims to accelerate telecom companies' transition from traditional connectivity providers to Techcos – technology-driven companies.



Allen Tang President of ICT Marketing & Solution Sales Department Huawei Middle East & Central Asia



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Techco 1.0: a comprehensive framework facilitating a seamless transition to a Techco model

The Techco 1.0 framework aims to transform telcos for the digital future and growth. Techco 1.0 is built through three paradigms: servitization (everything-as-a-service), platformization (moving operations from silo to a unified digital platform), and intelligentization (evolving telcos' technology infrastructure to prepare for the age of AI).

Through these paradigms, the Techco 1.0 framework delivers well-defined approaches that help telcos grow core services, create new innovative digital services, all built upon a 3A (5G-A/F5G-A, Always-online, and Al-driven) digital and intelligent infrastructure to drive business growth in the intelligent era.

Traditionally, MBB and FBB core services account for significant revenue streams for telcos. During the transition to the Techco model by the Techco 1.0 framework, these revenues have the potential for steady development along three key directions:

- Extend monetization dimension: recent market research indicates that a significant 40% to 70% of consumers are willing to pay for enhanced online experiences, spanning enterprise applications, video streaming, live broadcasts, and gaming. Recognizing this substantial demand, it's crucial for telcos to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to MBB/FBB monetization by exploring and cultivating the requirements of higher-tier users. As telcos upgrade their technologies and operations platforms, they unlock the ability to monetize connection speed, latency, and uplink capabilities, a strategy already proven viable in the Middle East and Central Asia. These evolving monetization models have created mutual benefits for both users and telcos. Meeting specific user needs, telcos have delivered more predictable experiences and improved service perception, particularly for VIP users as evidenced by their VIP identity, consequently increasing ARPU, boosting VIP user retention, and enhancing telco competitiveness.
- Extend user scenarios: consumer digital lifestyle demands are evolving beyond

simple connectivity, presenting significant opportunities for telcos to increase their share of the consumer's spending through scenario-driven services. This

Consumer digital lifestyle demands are evolving beyond simple connectivity, presenting significant opportunities for telcos to increase their share of the consumer's spending through scenario-driven services.

can be realized by enhancing current offerings, such as upgrading optical network terminals (ONTs) to FTTR and set-top-box (STBs) to AI home hubs, alongside promoting home storage solutions. Furthermore, telcos should develop compelling cloud services like cloud storage and video surveillance. Ultimately, building a robust ecosystem is crucial, leveraging their existing channels and platform capabilities to facilitate the sale of integrated products and services, such as integrated IoT solutions, layered on their core mobile and fixed broadband communications. By prioritizing product and service innovation, telcos can transition from competing solely on their installed base to creating new value, strengthening user loyalty, and driving revenue growth.

Extend operation effect: facing evolving O&M challenges due to the continuous evolution of their core businesses and network telcos must embed Al into operations, as this will better position them to not only improve the operational efficiency but also maximize the benefits vielded by these improvements. This shift from efficiency-focused efforts to benefits-focused can be achieved in two phases. The first phase has telcos automate the management of their three value streams by shifting from network KPIs to customer experience index (CEI); applying AI for better complaint handling; and using AI for efficient fault processing. The second phase of this shift will have telcos build synergies across experience,

maintenance, and network optimization processes, enhancing brand image and reducing service loss. Infusing AI into operations not only helps telcos better meet user expectations, but also helps improves O&M efficiency, minimize service loss, and enhance brand perception.

Beyond the development of core services, telcos must capitalize on their existing strengths, such as connectivity infrastructure and established customer bases to expand their service portfolios. This involves the rapid development of new and innovative digital services to enhance their influence in the intelligent digital era. Referring to Techco 1.0 framework, innovative service development can be achieved through three key directions:

- · New entries for digital life: in the digital age, many telcos struggle with customer loyalty, allowing OTT providers to capture significant content value and achieve higher profits. However, telcos possess a unique opportunity to establish new entries in AI and payment services, leveraging their local market knowledge and technical strengths. With new AI applications emerging daily, telcos are uniquely placed to create entry points for users wanting to access this vast array. In addition, the fact that 27% of adults globally lack bank accounts and 50% lack credit cards presents a clear demand for accessible digital financial solutions. Exploring four services-New calling, Fintech solutions, Home AI Hub, and cloud-based mobile phones-can create these entry points. Each allows telcos to provide a rich array of digital lifestyle services, reimagining access to the digital and intelligent world.
- New integrated ICT solutions for industries: industry digitalization presents a significant market, yet telcos face competition from cloud providers offering greater agility and integrated network solutions as part of their portfolio. To enhance competitiveness in the intelligent era, telcos must agile, service-oriented develop an strategy, leveraging network assets, advanced technologies, and enhanced cloud solutions. Traditionally, telcos have provided connectivity and data centers to OTTs and enterprises, acting

as infrastructure providers. The new strategic focus for telcos is to deliver one-stop services such as managed Wi-Fi, Ideahub, and storage, requiring teams with lightweight IT integration capabilities. The ultimate stage involves delivering integrated data, information, and communications technology (DICT) services for industries based on cloud computing, AI, private networks, and collaborative ecosystems. Telcos can achieve unique competitiveness in the B2B field by transitioning from resourcebased to integration-based providers, enabling them to lead the digital transformation of industries through network-cloud-intelligence synergy.

Infusing AI into operations not only helps telcos better meet user expectations, but also helps improves O&M efficiency, minimize service loss, and enhance brand perception.

New monetization models for data asset: telcos possess a significant asset in their extensive user data, the revenue potential of which has historically been underexploited. In the evolving digital landscape, telcos can establish a novel paradigm for data monetization through the implementation of robust data management practices with B2B2C. To achieve that, telcos will first need to transition from silo data management to unified management, which will allow them to process data as a standardized asset. This will improve data governance efficiency and utilization, as well as significantly reducing the time for market analysis and decision-making. Once data is managed as an asset, it can be better monetized. Externally, this can facilitate targeted marketing campaigns for new services and enable the development of specialized, and tailored data dashboards for various verticals.

By adopting the Techco 1.0 framework, telcos can also be guided on advancing their ICT infrastructure to effectively monetize AI technology. The key technological considerations for this advancement can be strategically approached through the 3A network orientation: 5G-A/F5G-A, Alwaysonline connectivity, and Al-driven network.

- 5G-A/F5G-A: wireless and fixed networks advances are crucial for the AI growth, providing performance, improved connectivity, scalability, and efficiency. These networks support the giga experience everywhere, high demands of AI workloads, enabling real-time applications, seamless data transfer, and fostering innovation. Techco transformation is driving advancement of 5G-A/F5G-A with ultra-broadband, ultra-latency, deterministic experience and intelligent sensing as the experience standard.
- Always-online: as 5G-A/F5G-A brings full-service access capabilities, connecting people, home and things, the whole network needs to be more resilient and reliable. ensuring fulltime service online. The approach is to design it with advanced architecture standards. The access network focuses on connectivity, where edge experience, uplink speed, positioning and latency capabilities are crucial. The transport network emphasizes high reliability and security through hardware, software, and protocol collaboration, while the core network is built for ultra-stability, focusing on security, redundancy, and fault resistance.
- Al-driven: to make the most benefit, telcos need to advance AI strategy comprehensively, evolve services, network and operations towards Al. Leading telcos are introducing copilots and AI agents into high-value scenarios, proving their ability to ensure service development and improve user experience. A future-proof infrastructure is to develop DCs, cloud and computing centers ready for Al. Pioneers in East Asia market are striving for a significant role as open LLMs delivers leading performance, starting from internal but evolving to be a key enabler for society.

Techco 1.0 framework benefits

 This evolution is essential due to the swift advancement of digital services, evolving consumer expectations, and the overall expansion of the digital economy. The Techco 1.0 framework offers a comprehensive strategy for meeting the demand and growing overall business in the intelligent era. By focusing on business servitization, platformization, and intelligentization, Techco 1.0 equips telecom telcos to better manage business complexities, adapt to the fast-paced technological landscape, and improve customer engagement. It supports a gradual transition from legacy systems. allowing telcos to introduce advanced intelligence and agility without disrupting existing services. By materializing Techco 1.0 framework, telcos can pursue business growth by expanding core services, and launching innovative digital services, built upon a modernized 3A network to support sustained growth in the intelligent era.

 The strategic integration of AI across network management, predictive maintenance, and customer interactions is projected to reduce operational costs, freeing up resources for growth-focused investments. Furthermore, AI-powered service personalization will enhance customer satisfaction and improve customer retention.

Conclusion: transforming telcos for the new and intelligent era

- Huawei's Techco 1.0 framework signifies a critical evolution for the telecommunications industry, empowering telcos to effectively navigate the complexities of digital transformation and capitalize on emerging opportunities. By strategically adopting AI, 5G-A/F5G-A technology, and cloud platforms, telcos can transition from traditional connectivity providers to innovative technology companies - techcos. This transformation does not only generate new revenue streams for telcos to assume a more prominent role within the digital economy, but also to improve operational efficiency.
- As the telecommunications landscape continues its rapid evolution, strategic initiatives such as the Techco 1.0 framework will be instrumental in shaping a future where telcos are at the forefront of digital innovation. It provides a strategic pathway for telcos to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world, establishing a foundation for a resilient and technology-driven future in intelligent era.

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REGIONAL NEWS

Digital Investment Milestone: Pakistan Becomes First to Host DCO's DFDI Forum

The Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO). in partnership with the Government of Pakistan, today celebrated the successful conclusion of the inaugural Digital Foreign Direct Investment Forum 2025 (DFDI) held in Islamabad. The two-day Forum, hosted 29-30 April 2025, served as a strategic platform. convenina 700 delegates spanning Heads of State, ministers, global investors, policy makers and tech leaders from DCO Member States and beyond, as they explored ways to redefine digital investment frameworks and unlock new investment opportunities. A centerpiece of the Forum was the launch of the Digital FDI Pakistan Insight Report, which outlined the pioneering blueprint pursued by Pakistan in its digital development. Building on the Digital FDI Initiative, the report recognizes Pakistan as the first nation to implement the initiative across its four pillars and identified six strategic priority actions to attract sustained digital investment. Commenting on the conclusion of DFDI. Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif said. "Pakistan is proud to lead the way in digital transformation, and the success of DFDI is a testament to our commitment to fostering a thriving, investment-friendly digitally enabled economy through a multistakeholder approach. With the support of DCO, fellow DCO Member States and partners, we are creating a blueprint for sustainable development that will benefit not only Pakistan and our digital ecosystem, but all nations undergoing a digital transformation". At DFDI. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also recognized the leadership of Secretary-General Deemah AlYahya and the DCO for their role in advancing Pakistan's digital foreign investment ecosystem, which has already attracted over \$700 million in digital economy inflows. The event saw participation from more than 45 countries, with over 40 international companies and



startups showcasing their products. Around 35 ministers and official delegations from various countries attended, along with over 30 global speakers and more than 50 CEOs from leading IT firms. Federal Minister for IT & Telecommunication, H.E. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, also highlighted Pakistan's rapid progress in digital governance and infrastructure. She said: "In just one year, under the leadership of the Honorable Prime Minister, we've delivered resoundingly across digital governance, exports, infrastructure, and skills. Our IT exports have grown by 25% from last year, 146 departments have been digitally transformed, and Pakistan has risen 14 places in the UN's e-government development index. This is the foundation for a truly investment-ready digital economy." "On behalf of the Digital Cooperation Organization, I wish to express our deep appreciation to the Government of Pakistan and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for their stellar efforts in enabling the success of the first DFDI," said H.E. Deemah AlYahva. "The DFDI Forum has demonstrated the transformative power of investment in bridging digital divides and accelerating sustainable growth. More than just an event, it is a declaration that Pakistan is ready to lead in the global digital economy. Pakistan is not waiting for the future to happen; it is actively shaping it on its own terms, driven by its ambition and vision," she added. The DCO remains committed to building a global investment environment where all nations can harness digital innovation to drive inclusive and sustainable growth. Pakistan is one of five founding members of the DCO, which was established in November 2020 on the sidelines of the G20 in Riyadh. With its 2026 presidency on the horizon, the country is strategically positioning itself as a leader in the digital economy, poised to drive global conversations, partnerships, and innovations that will shape the future of digital investment.

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Saudi Arabia Leading in e-Government Services

Saudi Arabia emerged topper among the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries in the 2024 Government Electronic and Mobile Services Maturity Index, issued by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). This was for the third consecutive year Saudi Arabia is securing the top position in the MENA region with a high maturity rate of 96 percent in the overall assessment. Digital Government Authority Governor Eng. Ahmed Alsuwaivan affirmed that this achievement reflects the significant support and interest that the wise leadership has given to the digital government ecosystem, which has contributed to enhancing Saudi Arabia's position in international rankings. He also highlighted the pivotal role of integration among government agencies, their reliance on emerging technologies and artificial intelligence, and the launch of initiatives and digital products aimed at improving the beneficiaries' experience. Saudi Arabia has made significant progress since 2020, starting in fourth place, advancing to second in 2021, then taking the lead in 2022 and maintaining it in the 2023 and 2024 editions. This progress is attributed to substantial improvements in digital services across vital sectors



such as health, education, and smart cities. Electronic healthcare solutions, such as digital prescriptions, appointment bookings through government platforms, and telehealth services, have improved access to services and increased beneficiary satisfaction. Additionally, digital educational services, including remote learning platforms and electronic university admissions, have enhanced users' ability to access government services with flexibility and high quality. Saudi Arabia outperformed 16 countries in the index, which was based on the maturity assessment of 100 priority government services provided to individuals and the business sector through electronic portals and smart applications. This was measured across three sub-indicators: a score of 99 percent in the Service Availability and Development indicator, 93 percent in the Service Usage and Beneficiary Satisfaction indicator, and 99 percent in the Public Outreach indicator.

GCC Telecoms Could Generate US\$5.90 for Every US\$1 Invested in AI-Powered Marketing

Telecom operators in the GCC have the potential to significantly enhance their revenue through Al-powered marketing and personalized customer engagement. According to a report by Strategy& Middle East, operators could generate up to \$5.90 in EBITDA for every \$1 invested in Al-driven, data-fueled marketing engines over five years. The report highlights that while telecom companies hold vast datasets, including real-time location data and customer interactions, they are currently underutilizing these resources, limiting their ability to drive growth. By implementing Al-driven customer value management

engines, telecoms can unlock the full potential of their data, creating personalized experiences that foster customer loyalty and drive revenue. Examples from the region show promising results: one operator used AI to increase conversion rates by 15%, while another reduced churn by up to 60% with proactive, personalized offers. Success hinges on integrating AI with data, analytics, technology, marketing, and customer experience, according to Strategy&.

Key Insights:

Personalization: Al-powered marketing engines offer deeper insights and precision

targeting, leading to higher customer engagement and increased revenue.

Data Utilization: Telecoms can maximize growth by fully leveraging their vast data pools, moving beyond traditional marketing models.

Strategic Necessity: For GCC telcos, adopting Al-driven marketing is no longer optional, but a strategic imperative to remain competitive. The report urges GCC telcos to invest in Al capabilities and adopt agile, integrated systems to capitalize on data-driven decision-making, helping to redefine value in the rapidly changing digital landscape.

Oman Telecom Sector Sees Significant Growth in 2024

Oman's telecom sector has experienced notable growth in 2024, with increased usage of mobile phones, internet, and smart devices, according to new data released by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). The number of mobile phone users rose to 7.5 million in 2024, reflecting a 7 percent increase from 6.9 million in 2023. Fixed home internet connections also saw a slight rise, reaching 573,000, up from 562,000 the previous year. The most significant growth was observed in smart device connections, including IoT services like smart meters and connected cars, which surged by 72 percent, reaching 1.15 million in 2024 compared to just 245,000 five years ago. TRA officials also reported that telecom companies saw higher revenues, reaching RO 920 million in 2024, up 4 percent from RO 881 million in 2023. The industry also invested more in infrastructure, with investments amounting to 28 percent of total revenue, significantly surpassing the



global average of 15-20 percent. Efforts to improve internet access continued, with 97 percent of public schools now connected to high-speed broadband, and 90 percent of households having broadband internet, up from 85 percent in 2023. The number of fiber-optic internet connections increased from 5,238 in 2023 to 5,856 in 2024, while broadband units also grew from 737,000 to 841,000. Oman's postal sector also showed growth, with domestic deliveries reaching 3.2 million, outbound international items totaling 437,000, and inbound international shipments at 3.4 million. Postal companies generated 27.2 million rials in 2024, marking a 2 percent increase from the previous year. The Omanisation rate in the telecom and postal sectors stood at 93 percent in telecom companies, 71 percent in postal firms, and 40 percent in service contractors. Additionally, the TRA confirmed the phased shutdown of the 3G mobile network, with 5,600 stations already upgraded to newer technologies. To accommodate growing data demands, new frequency bands at 2300 MHz and 2600 MHz have been allocated.

UAE Sets Global Record in FTTH Coverage with 99.5% Nationwide Reach

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has achieved a new global record in fibre-tothe-home (FTTH) network coverage, reaching 99.5%, maintaining its position as the world leader since 2016. The achievement, reported by the FTTH Council Europe, highlights the UAE's extensive fibre-optic infrastructure, which spans over 14.5 million kilometers and connects 2.88 million homes nationwide. In the latest report, the UAE outperformed countries like South Korea (96.6%) and China (93.6%) in FTTH coverage, underscoring its leadership in global telecommunications. e& UAE, the country's primary internet service provider, continues to drive digital transformation through its "Fiber-First" strategy, ensuring high-speed, reliable connectivity across the nation. The UAE's commitment to fibre-optic technology began in 1986, and in 2011, Abu Dhabi became the first capital in the world to achieve full fibre-optic coverage. The record is a testament to e& UAE's ongoing investments in advanced digital infrastructure, further enhancing the country's capacity to keep pace with technological advancements. The UAE's role as a digital transformation leader is further supported by innovative services like Fibre-to-the-Yacht (FTTY), which brings high-speed connectivity to yachts, and Fibre-to-the-Room (FTTR), a smart home solution offering superior wireless network coverage.



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Jordan and Qatar Discuss Strengthening Cooperation in Telecom Sectors



Bassam Sarhan, Head of Jordan's Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), met with Ahmed Al Muslimani, Chairman of Qatar's Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA), during the 2nd Arab Postal Leaders' Forum 2025. The discussions focused on ways to strengthen joint cooperation in postal and telecom sectors, enhance infrastructure development, and share regulatory expertise. The two leaders emphasized the need for coordination to keep up with rapid technological advancements and to foster regional integration in the telecom and postal industries. They also highlighted their shared goals of supporting digital transformation and sustainable development within these sectors. The meeting is part of ongoing efforts to enhance pan-Arab cooperation in telecom and postal services, enabling the exchange of successful expertise and experiences. Both parties aim to implement initiatives and projects that will drive the development of their countries' telecom and postal infrastructure, contributing to the digital economy and broader regional goals.

Cybernet and Nokia Redefine Pakistan's Network Landscape with 1.2T-per-Lambda Backbone

Nokia announced that Cybernet, Pakistan's leading fiber broadband provider, has chosen Nokia's cutting-edge optical transport solution for its new long-haul Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) network. Designed to deliver 1.2 terabits per second (Tbps) per wavelength, this next-generation infrastructure will power Cybernet's national backbone. The network will connect over 25 cities in its initial phase and deliver more than 50 Tbps of long-haul capacity. This deployment will support data center interconnect, enterprise and carrier networks, as well as Cybernet's flagship consumer broadband service, StormFiber. Cybernet provides comprehensive connectivity solutions across Pakistan, serving enterprise, corporate, and residential customers, in addition to offering carrier and transit services to international telecom operators. To support its growing data demands and build a terabit-scale infrastructure, Cybernet is deploying Nokia's 1830 GX platform, integrated with 1.2T ICE7 coherent optics. The new network will expand capacity along resilient, diverse routes and enable a high-speed, low-latency terrestrial backbone that spans the entire country. In addition to connecting cities and communities through Cybernet's digital highways, the new backbone will also support cross-border transit services for carriers and internet service providers in Central Asia. By delivering scalable, high-capacity services at globally competitive rates, this initiative will ultimately accelerate Pakistan's digital transformation and foster regional connectivity. "By enhancing our network with cutting-edge technology, we're able to keep pace with our customers' rapidly evolving connectivity needs and deliver a superior end-user experience. Nokia is a trusted technology leader with the expertise and innovation to support our modernization goals. The 1830 GX-based solution will form the foundation for high-capacity services connecting Pakistan—and the region—to the global digital economy," said Maroof Ali Shahani, Chief Operating Officer of Cybernet. "Deploying state-of-the-art optical solutions ensures networks are not just keeping pace with, but even staying ahead in the race to meet surging bandwidth demands. As Cybernet prepares to modernize its network infrastructure, Nokia is proud to be helping transform Pakistan's connectivity landscape with a 1.2T backbone, seamlessly interconnecting data centers, powering government networks, and delivering direct-to-home services," said James Watt, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Optical Networks at Nokia.



OmanSat to Launch Satellite Communications Services Under New Royal Decree

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued Royal Decree 40/2025, granting OmanSat a Category 1 license to establish and operate a satellite communications system in Oman. This initiative will expand the country's telecom services by offering fixed public communication services, including broadband Internet and satellite connectivity, especially in rural areas. The new license aligns with Telecommunications Regulatory the Authority's (TRA) efforts to foster investment in innovative technologies, ensure secure infrastructure, and develop regulatory environment. flexible а The move is expected to improve telecommunications infrastructure and boost market competitiveness, enhancing service accessibility across Oman.

Key Insights:

· License Granted: OmanSat will provide broadband and satellite services under the new Royal Decree.

- · Rural Connectivity: Focus on improving access to communication services in rural areas.
- · Regulatory Development: TRA aims to create an innovative and adaptable

telecom environment.

This initiative marks a major step in enhancing Oman's digital infrastructure and expanding satellite communication capabilities.



BTRC Holds 3-Day Workshop on Policy, Regulation, Services

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission organised a three-day workshop on policy, regulation and services commenced in Dhaka with the participation of South Asian Telecommunication Regulators Council. Around 200 representatives of telecommunications and information technology regulatory agencies of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal,

Bhutan, Afghanistan, Maldives and Iran, telecom operators, officials of government and private organisations, and telecom and information technology-related experts are participating in the workshop, said a press release. The Asia Pacific Telecommunication Community associate member organisations, including Huawei Technologies of China, Amazon India, Internet Society Asia



Limited of Singapore and Cullen International of Belgium, are participating in the workshop. Presided over by BTRC chairman Md Emdad-ul-Bari, Faiz Ahmed Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser, attended as chief guest at the inaugural day of the workshop. Masanri Kunda, secretary general of the APTC and Khawar Siddigue Khokar, member of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and chairman of the SATRC workshop on policy, regulation and services were The first day of the workshop discussed various sessions on addressing the challenges of regulators in the field of fixed and mobile broadband in the era of future emerging technologies, appropriate use of universal service regulation fund for digital inclusion, recommendations, strategies and implications, and progress in regulating ICT e-waste management for sustainable development. The workshop will discuss protecting digital consumers: addressing the challenges of online scams and financial fraud; shaping future tariff policies: analysing the impact of convergence and emerging telecommunications in the South Asian region.

MAY 2025

iData Platform in Iraq Pioneers Data-Driven Innovation for Sustainable Development

Data digitalization is crucial for driving informed policies sustainable and development in Iraq, enabling faster analysis for evidence-based decisionmaking, fostering transparency, and bridging information gaps across various sectors. The UNDP Accelerator Lab in Irag has supported the expansion of the iDATA platform, an initiative that aligns with the Lab's mission to explore, test, and scale local solutions to the country's most pressing development challenges. In an era where data drives progress, Irag is making significant strides through homegrown solutions that place data at the heart of innovation and development.

The iDATA platform, powered by KAPITA Business Hub. aims to revolutionize data access and utilization across both public and private sectors. It stands as a testament to the capabilities of local solutions in addressing critical issues, such as youth unemployment, ecosystem development, and education reform. One of the most persistent barriers to growth in Irag is the lack of accessible, reliable, and interactive data. Key sectors, including education, entrepreneurship, and digital transformation, often suffer from data scarcity, which hinders stakeholders from fully understanding ecosystem needs and opportunities. The iDATA platform directly



addresses this gap by aggregating official data from the Iragi government and the World Bank, and presenting it through userfriendly, interactive dashboards. Currently, iDATA features six dashboards, including the State Budget Dashboard, the Country Profile Dashboard, and the Digital Economy Actors Mapping in Irag Dashboard. These tools have already attracted significant user engagement, with over 1,000 visitors during the first week of the platform's beta launch. The iDATA platform is more than just a digital tool-it's a transformative initiative that has the potential to reshape Irag's data and innovation landscape. By centralizing sectoral data and presenting it in an accessible, interactive, and actionable format, iDATA empowers policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and citizens to make more informed decisions. To further enhance the platform, the UNDP Accelerator Lab supported the development of two new dashboards: The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Dashboard: Tracks startup activities, investment trends, innovation hubs, co-working spaces, and regulatory frameworks, becoming an essential resource for understanding and strengthening Iraq's startup environment. The Education Ecosystem Dashboard: Provides insights into student demographics, university specialization, skill development, and technology integration in education, aiming to bridge the market-skill gap that contributes to high youth unemployment rates in Iraq.

Morocco Highlights Digital Transformation Progress at Regional Congress in Jordan

Morocco's strides in digital transformation were showcased at the regional congress "Towards a Digitally Accessible Arab Region – ICTs for All 2025," held in Amman, Jordan. Safaa El Alaoui, Head of the Universal Digital Access Service at the Moroccan Digital Development Agency (ADD), presented the country's strategic roadmap for advancing digital inclusion and public service digitalization. The congress, organized by Jordan's Telecommunications Regulatory Commission in partnership with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), focused on promoting digital accessibility across the Arab region. El Alaoui highlighted that the ADD's roadmap aligns with Morocco's "Digital Morocco 2030" strategy, launched in September 2024. This strategy aims to drive digital economic growth, develop local tech solutions, create jobs, and fast-track the digitization of public services. Key elements of the roadmap include modernizing public administration, enhancing interoperability between services, improving the user experience, and fostering digital adoption among citizens, especially vulnerable populations.

Cyber First Qatar 2025 Focuses on Strengthening National Digital Security

Oatar hosted the second edition of Cyber First Qatar, bringing together over 300 cybersecurity leaders, innovators, and policymakers to discuss the future of the nation's digital security. The event aligns with the National Cybersecurity Strategy 2024-2030 and contributes to the broader goals of Oatar National Vision 2030. Yasir Rauf, Head of Market Development at Events First Group, highlighted that the conference gathered top business leaders and experts to shape the future of Qatar's digital economy while addressing real-world cybersecurity threats. As the country advances toward becoming a digitally empowered society, ensuring a secure and resilient cyber environment is critical. Participants engaged in several insightful panels, including one titled "Safeguarding the Digital Future: Aligning Qatar's Vision 2030 with the National Cyber Security Strategy 2024-2030." This discussion explored the essential alignment between national development goals and robust cybersecurity measures to ensure sustainable growth, innovation, and trust in Oatar's digital ecosystem. With the rapid digital transformation, experts emphasized the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in protecting Qatar's growing digital infrastructure. As cyber threats evolve, Al provides adaptive, real-time defense capabilities crucial for safeguarding the country's digital assets. Industry leaders



also underscored the importance of integrating AI into cybersecurity strategies to ensure resilience and continuity in the country's push toward a smart, secure future. The security of critical infrastructure is another key focus, with officials noting that Industrial Control Systems (ICS) and Operational Technology (OT) are vital to sectors like energy, water, and utilities. As cyber threats targeting these systems rise, the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) has proactively enhanced security measures. In addition, the NCSA launched a specialized training program for 70 professionals in information security and OT, recognizing that human expertise is

vital to maintaining the integrity of critical systems. These initiatives align with Qatar's National Cyber Security Strategy, which emphasizes protecting critical infrastructure as a fundamental pillar of national security. The summit, organized by Events First Group, comes at a crucial time as Qatar accelerates its efforts to safeguard its digital infrastructure. Qatar's cybersecurity market, valued at over \$1 billion (QR3.64 billion) in 2022, is expected to reach \$1.6 billion (QR5.83 billion) by 2026, highlighting the growing importance of cybersecurity in the country's digital future.

Algeria Advances Digital Innovation with Launch of New Platforms



Digital technology plays a pivotal role in Algeria's long-term socioeconomic with the development, government prioritizing innovation as a cornerstone of its strategy. In line with this vision, Algeria's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Kamel Baddari, launched three new digital platforms on March 25, 2025, at the Centre for Research on Scientific and Technical Information (CERIST) in Algiers. These initiatives include a cloud computing platform, a drone design and control system, and a business incubator aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. During the inauguration, Baddari emphasized the importance of these

digital infrastructures in strengthening the nation's digital economy and reinforcing Algeria's digital sovereignty. "The cloud computing platform will provide advanced data hosting and high-speed processing services, ensuring robust security," he noted. Additionally, he highlighted the incubator's role in nurturing innovation, with plans to host 20 startups by the end of the year, expanding to 100 new companies annually by 2027. These platforms are part of Algeria's broader digital transformation efforts, which have already seen the introduction of digital tools for publishing scientific research and managing university incubators. By leveraging advancements in 4G technology and open-source software like Linux, OpenStack, and Kubernetes, CERIST aims to develop highperformance, autonomous technological solutions. The new platforms are set to drive growth in Algeria, spurring research, entrepreneurship, and job creation. The cloud platform will provide advanced data storage and processing capabilities, while the drone-focused platform is expected to enhance research and industrial applications in sectors such as agriculture and surveillance. The business incubator will be a key asset for Algerian startups, providing essential resources and access to both local and global markets.

Iraq Launches Eye of Iraq App for Digital Services

The Iragi government has officially launched the "Eye of Iraq" application, aiming to enhance digital verification and streamline access to various electronic services for its citizens. This innovative tool not only improves security and expedites official procedures but also significantly enhances the overall experience of citizens interacting with government systems. One of the standout features of the "Eye of Iraq 2025" application is its ability to provide instant access to emergency services. Users can directly contact civil defense centers by dialing 911, ensuring rapid responses to urgent situations. This feature is particularly crucial in emergencies, as it can save lives by facilitating guick action. The app also incorporates geographical location services, directing users to the nearest essential locations such as hospitals, police stations, and fire departments. This functionality not only aids in emergencies but also helps users navigate their surroundings more effectively. Moreover, the application allows users to send detailed emergency reports, complete with photos or video clips, to the relevant authorities. This capability enables a more accurate assessment of incidents, ensuring that responders have the necessary information to address situations promptly. In addition to these features, the "Eye of Irag" application keeps users informed with immediate alerts and notifications about security events or natural disasters. This proactive approach enhances public awareness and safety, allowing citizens to stay informed

about potential risks in their vicinity. Designed with user-friendliness in mind, the application boasts an intuitive interface that caters to all age groups. Its simplicity encourages more citizens to engage with the app, making it a vital tool in modern governance. Downloading the "Eye of Iraq 2025" application is straightforward. Users can access it through the Google Play Store or the App Store, depending on their device. For Android users, the steps are as follows: open the Google Play Store, search for "Eye of Irag - Digital Verification," click on the install button, and wait for the download to complete. Once installed, users can open the app and begin utilizing its features. For iPhone users, the process is similar: open the App Store, search for "Eye of Iraq - Digital Verification," click the install button, and wait for the download to finish. After installation, the app is ready for use. Using the "Eye of Iraq 2025" application is designed to be effective and user-friendly. To get started, users need to create a new account using their mobile phone number and the required information. Activating the geographical location feature is essential for maximizing the app's services based on location. Once set up, users can select the service they need, whether it's digital verification or contacting emergency services. The app also allows for the submission of detailed reports, accompanied by any relevant images or videos, ensuring that authorities receive comprehensive information. The "Eye of Irag 2025" application is part of a growing trend of government ap-



plications that are increasingly popular among citizens. These applications focus on digital transformation and enhance communication between the public and government entities. By offering a modern digital experience, the app significantly improves service delivery and strengthens daily interactions between citizens and official institutions. In summary, the "Eye of Irag 2025" serves as a bridge between the government and its citizens, facilitating access to crucial services and information. With its array of features designed for safety, efficiency, and ease of use, it represents a significant advancement in Iraq's digital landscape. As citizens embrace this technology, it is expected to foster a more engaged and informed public, ultimately leading to better governance and community safety. 🚺

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ARTICLE

Humanness: The Soul of Humanity and a Solution to Operators' Revenue Struggles



Izhar Ahmad

Director - Industry Affairs & Communication SAMENA Telecommunications Council



The reality has taken a bit of time to dawn that Telecom Operators are no longer just infrastructure providers. They are much more than that, and it continues to take significant investments and innovation to play the central role in the digital realm, as was seen in the earlier years of this decade. However, investments and innovation are not enough...

As Telecom Operators' business model evolves toward the *technology company* model, the next phase of growth lies beyond infrastructure, and hinges on *intelligence*, *humanization*, and preservation of *humanness*.

While legacy issues remain in some known or evolving forms – i.e., performing amidst competition, the need for a level-playing field, new disruptions, monetization and revenue pressures, new service models, and transformational pressures, overall – these realizations lead us into a new opportunity landscape, ruled over by intelligence...and subservient to the human interest.

Over the last five years, the global techno-economic landscape has been utterly reshaped. Assessed qualitatively, the dynamics of the prevailing digital economy were shaped by and are deeply rooted in the lingering impacts of the last pandemic. The results are: accelerated digitalization, hybridization of work, value-based consumption, renewed self and health awareness, clarity on the current state of inequalities and various forms of divides, adaptationdriven mindset, new business models, human-centrism, no more apathy toward the environment, worries about both voluntary and involuntary disruptions in the global supply chains, shifting trade dynamics and routes, data privacy and cybersecurity concerns, trust in national as well as global institutions, a compelling case for digital trust-building, and a host of other trends and realizations. With five years remaining to evaluate the delivery of the 17 promises made by humanity in 2015, making progress direly requires both *human intelligence* and *artificial intelligence* working together to empower each other...via the digital infrastructure. of a sustainable digital future. Digitalization is being driven as much by what's happening within the digital communications industry as it is by what's around it. *Healthcare, education, manufacturing,* and even *space,* among other sectors, are directly influencing

Operators should prioritize helping their human customers be humans and enable their business customers to be human-centric. Operators should not be thinking about the revenues, per se, but about the value they can continually create – whether through strategies, new services and applications, including "SuperApps", or both. In the techco days, the norm should be experience, empowerment, and reclaiming humanness.

Making progress also requires understanding some key realizations, which could dramatically change many things for Operators and the ICT Industry, at large:

First, people, by increasingly leveraging the digital infrastructure to feel more equipped with information, inspiration, and by peer association, are now wanting to *live more consciously*. That is, end-users are now more attuned to being value-driven, experience-focused, and on deciding for themselves, intelligently.

Second. Operators uniquely are positioned to expand their already well-established role by leveraging the power of artificial intelligence (AI) within their core networks, at the edge, and through innovative digital services. infrastructure-With demonstrated level prowess, growing expertise, and increasingly more AI-driven capabilities, Telecom Operators can now contribute more directly across multiple areas and transform their value-creation and revenue profiles.

And, third, prevailing policy debates, regulatory approaches, evolution of networks, device designs, or continually improving modulation techniques, no longer suffice as predictors what lies ahead. There is so much going on, and it needs to be accounted for.

While legacy issues remain in some known or evolving forms – i.e., performing amidst competition, the need for a level-playing field, new disruptions, monetization and revenue pressures, new service models, and transformational pressures, overall – these realizations lead us into a new opportunity landscape, ruled over by intelligence...and subservient to the human interest.

Humanness as a Repositioning Opportunity for Telecom Operators

Operators should differentiate themselves not by data speeds alone but by how well they protect humanness; a natural inclination of people to be, and to remain, human. Considering, Telecom Operators have historically emotional lacked an connection with their customers. This is a major repositioning opportunity, which can be a great compliment to the evolving telco business model.

The premise for this repositioning opportunity is that end-users now think beyond just using systems. In a world where visibility and being respected at scale are the new currencies, what endusers need is more reclaimed time for

Human-Centric, AI-Driven Development Goals of Direct Relevance to Telecom Operators

- 1. SDG 1 (No Poverty): By enabling access to digital tools and AI technologies, Operators can empower individuals as well as Small, Micro, Medium Enterprises to scale and succeed, helping reduce poverty through betterment in livelihoods.
- 2. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): Operators can utilize AI to foster entrepreneurship by supporting digital tools that reduce the barriers to entry for new businesses, especially in UN classified Least Developed Countries and the emerging markets. AI can be a catalyst for growing SMMEs and SMEs.
- 3.SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure): AI can help optimize Operators' network performance, enabling faster and more reliable connectivity for businesses and consumers, giving Operators a furthersolidified edge as the builders of infrastructure that sustains crossindustrial growth. In this context, 5G-Advanced offers a compelling case.
- 4. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality): Digital services powered by AI can direct more opportunities in healthcare, education, and employment to underserved communities, which makes Operators a direct contributor in overcoming inequalities and filling the opportunity gap.
- 5. SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities): Operators can use AI to create smarter, more sustainable cities by enhancing urban mobility, energy management, and disaster response systems.
- 6.SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production): AI can help optimize resource usage, leading to more efficient production and consumption patterns.
- 7. SDG 13 (Climate Action): Operators both affect and are agents of effect in the climate contexts. By harness the power of AI in energy-efficiency solutions for the digital infrastructure, Operators have a direct contribution to make in reducing carbon footprint and enhancing the world's sustainable

themselves, for their relationships, and for remaining focused on *living consciously* and meaningfully.

Our destination as industry should be AI-powered, humanized transformation, guided by human intelligence, done intelligently.

In fact, this is a very similar to how many Telecom Operators are making the conscious choice to become technology groups; entities that no longer just own connectivity infrastructure, but are transforming their investment portfolios and are proactive, experienced, and resourceful enough to provide new platforms, services, and digital experiences across industries. The new, conscious shift to seeking value and creating value is the new normal, with both humans and businesses increasingly pursuing positioning, impact, legacy, and sustainability.

AI for Reclaiming Humanness

By using AI as a pillar that supports human empowerment, and the future infrastructure on which human authenticity should thrive, Operators can make strong gains in truly manifesting meaningful connectivity.

Al's job is to not only to enhance some efficiencies, but to help create long-term freedom and space for humans to achieve more – whether at the core of the network or at the edge, i.e., customer-end. Because implementation of Al is no longer just an option but an inevitability, Operators on their networks – and we all in our lives – need to embrace it as a means to enhance our operational and societal value-proposition; one that is built on simplicity, human-centricity, human authenticity, sustainability, tolerance, and on a combination of both AI and human intelligence.

For Operators, one of the key areas to immediately put AI to work is to help customers in navigating plans, resolving issues, or even accessing services that can be unnecessarily complex. By adding intelligence to their networks, Operators should prioritize helping their human customers be humans and enable their business customers to be human-centric. Operators should not be thinking about the revenues, per se, but about the *value* they can continually create - whether through strategies, new services and applications, including "SuperApps", or both. In the telco days, minutes and megabytes were the norm. In the techco days, the norm should be experience, empowerment, and reclaiming humanness.

Telecom Operators are a custodian of digital well-being and not just mere providers of connectivity. Where, historically, they may have lacked in terms of establishing emotional connections with their customers, Operators can now make the conscious - and Al-powered - choice of changing the approach and re-branding themselves as the protector and guarantor of their customers' right and need to stay human. Opportunities abound in personalized identity management, mental wellness and overall health management, and smart home management solutions,

since advancements in 5G/5G-A, FWA, IoT continue to create new seamless, digital capabilities for the both the service provider and the consumer.

Conclusions

Digital economy, without combining the powerful forces of human intelligence and artificial intelligence to preserve humanness, can give way to multiple shadow economies, including the ransom economy. Instead of allowing digital economy to become a composite of both inhumane ecosystems and exploitative business models, the aim of the ICT leadership should be to create a digital economy that is built on responsible monetization, digital goods, tolerance, productivity, cooperation, innovation, and sustainable development. Our destination as industry should be Al-powered, humanized transformation, guided by human intelligence, done intelligently.

While it may sound overly forward-thinking at a glance, advocating a redefined purpose for (and on behalf of) Operators - one that is centered not just on being providers of connectivity, but also as partners in protecting humanness -could support the transformation of both strategy and the revenue models for Operators. In practical terms, advocating such a purpose requires both a voice of conviction-such as from a trusted industry representative body - and enablement from Regulators and Tech Providers. Operators themselves should be thinking humanness, human authenticity, integrity, and serendipity to drive their rebranded, much-needed transformation.

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SATELLITE NEWS

Rivada Adds Pulsar to Outernet Network for Remote Satellite Coverage

Rivada Space Networks has partnered with Pulsar International to deliver secure, low-latency satellite connectivity. The agreement will see Pulsar integrate Rivada's low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite network into its land mobile and maritime communications solutions. targeting customers operating in areas with limited or no terrestrial infrastructure. Pulsar aims to use Rivada's Outernet network, a planned global LEO constellation featuring inter-satellite laser links and onboard routing capabilities, to enhance data security and connectivity performance across its service offerings. Robert Sakker, president and CEO of Pulsar, said: "By bringing Rivada's innovative satellite internet capabilities to the Pulsar Network, we're empowering businesses, agencies, and organisations with unprecedented connectivity options regardless of their location. "This integration represents our commitment to delivering cutting-edge communication solutions that enable our partners to reach previously underserved markets with reliable, high-speed internet service." According to Rivada, the Outernet network design allows data to travel from origin to destination entirely in space, bypassing terrestrial infrastructure and



the public internet. The company claims this architecture offers lower latency than fibre over long distances and improved cybersecurity for applications where data sensitivity is critical. Rivada's partnership with Pulsar comes as it continues to line up commercial agreements for its satellite constellation, with the company stating it has secured more than \$16 billion in global business to date. The firm said in late April that Outernet spans some 33 countries, having recently penned deals to bring the network to Belgium, Costa Rica, and Sweden. "As a completely new type of LEO constellation, the Outernet can provide any region in the world with a next-generation digital infrastructure for secure, resilient communications and network expansion," said Declan Ganley, CEO of Rivada Space Networks.

Myriota Launches Four New LEO Nanosatellites to Expand IoT Coverage

Four Low Earth Orbit (LEO) nanosatellites from Myriota have been launched into space to bolster its IoT constellation. The nanosatellites, launched on the SpaceX Transporter-13 Mission, were added to Myriota's UltraLite constellation and are designed to transmit data directly to IoT devices that house its modules. The four added to Myriota's UltraLite constellation add to four other units added earlier this year, extending the constellation's reach to cover new markets, including Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and the Middle East. "We are maintaining a regular cadence of satellite launches, adding ever more capacity, coverage and resilience to our UltraLite constellation of LEO satellites as we invest in continuous upgrading of our service offerings," said Ben Cade, CEO of Myriota. Based in Adelaide, Australia, Myriota provides space-based IoT connectivity for customers to monitor and track assets such as water tanks, vehicles, wind turbines, shipping containers, and equipment and tools. The company's satellites are currently complemented with assets from partners like Spire and Viasat, "Our networks can now support tens of millions of IoT connections around the globe, ensuring access to low-power, cost-effective sensor networks to more countries and industries, ready for our partners to further expand their solution deployments in 2025 and 2026," Cade added.

Spacecoin in Talks with Telcos to Launch Cheap Satellite Internet in India

Florida-based satellite communications company Spacecoin is set to enter the Indian market later this year, offering lowbandwidth internet services priced at under Rs 200 per month. The company aims to provide cheap satellite-based connectivity in remote and underserved regions, directly targeting areas where traditional telecom infrastructure is difficult to deploy. Unlike Starlink, which offers highspeed satellite broadband, Spacecoin is focusing on basic internet services such as financial access, messaging, and web browsing. The company's founder. Tae Oh. told Moneycontrol that Spacecoin plans to operate through a partnership model with Indian telecom providers rather than offering services directly to consumers. "We are in talks with several telecom companies in India, doing the co-engineering of the service. We are also interested in working with the existing telcos to provide our satellite services to their users. We were getting a lot of positive feedback from those telcos about the demand in people of India in remote areas," Tae Oh said, as

quoted in the report. The company expects to finalise its first telecom partnership in India later this year. "Indian telcos are interested in Spacecoin's satellite technology to compete with SpaceX's Starlink internet service," Tae Oh reportedly added. "They also want to compete with SpaceX to provide good enough coverage for people who cannot be serviced. We don't plan to go directly to customers in India. We are hoping to work with existing telcos." The service is expected to start at approximately USD 2 (Rs 170) per month, with pricing increasing based on data consumption. Billing will be handled by local telecom companies, who will pay Spacecoin for data transmission over its satellite network. Spacecoin's India launch comes amid rising interest from global players in the satellite communications (satcom) market. Starlink, Amazon's Project Kuiper, Eutelsat OneWeb, and Globalstar are all eyeing the Indian market. Some, including Eutelsat OneWeb and Jio's joint venture with SES, have already received necessary clearances from IN-SPACe and

the Department of Telecommunications. Starlink has signed distribution tie-ups with Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio. Spacecoin launched its first satellite with SpaceX in December 2024 and plans to deploy three more in October 2025. The company envisions building a constellation of low-Earth orbit (LEO) nanosatellites to offer global coverage. It expects to provide satcom services across the globe with fewer than 10 satellites. "About 10 or fewer satellites can be a good starting point to let people experience the service. After reaching ten satellites, we can start scaling. Hundreds of thousands of satellites will be in the project," Tae Oh said, according to the report. The satellite network will be part of a blockchain-enabled Decentralised Physical Infrastructure Network (DePIN). allowing other entities - including telecom firms, militaries, and governments - to launch and operate their own satellites within the Spacecoin framework, sharing in data transmission revenues.

Airtel Africa to Add Starlink to Service Portfolio in 14 Markets

Airtel Africa announced that it has signed a deal with SpaceX to bring Starlink's LEO satellite internet services to customers in all 14 African countries where Airtel operates – at least once Starlink has licences to operate in them. Airtel Africa noted that Starlink currently has licences in nine Airtel markets: Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda, Niger, Chad, Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Meanwhile, Starlink has applied for licences in Airtel's other five African markets: Tanzania, Uganda, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo and the Seychelles. Airtel Africa said it plans to use Starlink's LEO satellites to enhance its next-generation satellite connectivity offerings and augment connectivity for enterprises, businesses, schools, health centres in even the most rural parts of Africa. Airtel will also explore ways to use



Starlink's cellular backhaul capabilities to expand its terrestrial mobile networks to rural areas, while SpaceX will seek ways to leverage Airtel Africa's ground network infrastructure and other capabilities in Africa. Airtel Africa and SpaceX will also continue to explore other areas to promote digital inclusion in the continent, said Airtel Africa MD and CEO Sunil Taldar. "Next-generation satellite connectivity will ensure that every individual, business and community have reliable and affordable voice and data connectivity even in the most remote and currently underserved parts of Africa," he said in a statement. Chad Gibbs, SpaceX's VP of Starlink business operations, added that Starlink is available in more than 20 African markets. "This agreement with Airtel highlights how, once licensed, Starlink welcomes the opportunity to join forces with important industry leaders to ensure as many people as possible can benefit from Starlink's presence," he said.

MAY 2025

Japan's KDDI Introduces Direct Mobile Phone Connections via SpaceX's Starlink Satellite Network

KDDI Corp. has started a service for the direct connection of smartphones with the Starlink satellite network of SpaceX of the United States. It is the first time in Japan that smartphone connection services using satellites has become available. Even in places that were out of the service areas of mobile phones in the nation, some kinds of message information can be transmitted and received. From summer this year, KDDI will make it possible for its smartphone subscribers to access the internet. Subscribers to KDDI's au brand smartphones can use the new service free of charge for the time being. Although applications do not need to be made for the new service. subscribers need to use iPhone models of Apple Inc., Galaxy models of Samsung Electronics Co. or other models that are compatible with Starlink. In the direct connection service, smartphone subscribers can transmit and receive radio waves via Starlink satellites without accessing wireless access points. Even in out-of-service places, such as mountainous areas and on the sea. KDDI subscribers can transmit and receive short message service texts, share



location information and receive emergency earthquake warnings. Subscribers using smartphones with the Android operating system of Google LLC can send texts of questions to conversational AI programs. Prior to rolling out the new service, KDDI provided antennas for Starlink connection to areas damaged by the Noto Peninsula Earthquake.

NetOne Partners with US Satellite Giant to Launch 5G Services

Zimbabwean mobile network operator NetOne has struck a groundbreaking partnership with United States-based satellite telecommunications company AST SpaceMobile, paving the way for the rollout of fifth-generation (5G) mobile connectivity across Zimbabwe. The strategic alliance aims to bridge the digital divide and provide fast, reliable broadband access to remote and underserved communities, marking a transformative step in the country's digital inclusion efforts. NetOne group chief executive officer Raphael Mushanawani confirmed the partnership, describing it as a milestone in efforts to expand the reach of digital infrastructure beyond traditional limits. "We are excited to partner with AST SpaceMobile to revolutionise connectivity in Zimbabwe. This collaboration aligns with our vision of ensuring that every Zimbabwean, regardless of location, has access

to reliable mobile broadband services." Mushanawani said. He noted that the use of low Earth orbit (LEO) satellites would allow NetOne to deliver high-speed 5G services without the need to build costly base stations in rugged or remote areas. "What we want to do is ensure network coverage reaches almost every corner of the country. We're talking about digital communication at fast speeds - 5G. We do not segregate those in marginalised areas," Mushanawani explained. AST SpaceMobile, headquartered in Midland, Texas, is the developer of SpaceMobile, a satellite constellation designed to enable direct-to-smartphone broadband connectivity, especially in areas with little or no cellular infrastructure. AST's vice-president of business development, Paul Nalikka, said the company is committed to connecting the unconnected. "Partnering with NetOne allows us to bring

innovative satellite-based solutions to Zimbabwe and empower businesses and individuals with enhanced connectivity," Nalikka said. The collaboration is expected to rapidly boost Zimbabwe's transition toward a digitally-enabled economy, providing tools for education, health services, e-commerce, and financial inclusion in rural areas. AST SpaceMobile has already established global partnerships with major telecommunications players including Vodafone, AT&T, and Telefonica. and is poised to mobilise US\$160 million in revenue this year as it scales up deployment of its space-based broadband network. With this partnership, NetOne now positions itself at the forefront of technological innovation in the region, accelerating Zimbabwe's progress toward universal internet access and setting the stage for digital transformation across all sectors.

MAY 2025

One NZ Makes Satellite TXT Free for Kiwi

One New Zealand has announced that Prepay customers with an eligible phone can now enjoy nationwide satellite texting at no extra cost as part of a free trial for a limited time, with an RRP of \$5 per month after the trial period. This allows eligible Prepay customers to send and receive texts in the 40% of New Zealand's landmass that is not covered by traditional mobile networks - plus approximately 20 kilometres out to sea. The One NZ Satellite TXT service continues to improve - now with over 500 Starlink Direct to Cell satellites in orbit, text messages being sent and received within minutes, and more than 23 eligible phones. One New Zealand was the

first telco globally to launch a commercial, nationwide satellite text network in partnership with SpaceX in late 2024. The service brings additional resilience benefits, should there be a natural disaster or loss of power to the traditional network on the ground. Prepay customers with an eligible device on MyFlex, Pay & Go, and Travel Prepay Plans can now access the service where they have a clear line of sight to the sky, and which is available at no extra charge for a limited time. Joe Goddard. Experience and Commercial Director. One NZ: We've seen incredible uptake of our One NZ Satellite service so far. with customers sending an average of more than 10,000

messages every day through space. We're excited to take the next step and offer satellite texting to Prepay customers. One NZ Satellite TXT is like packing a coat in case it rains, with the added benefit that it also keeps you warm. It's an extra layer of protection when you need it, and essential in a storm. Having access to the One NZ satellite service will mean our eligible Prepay customers can explore the great outdoors and stay in touch with loved ones and enjoy the peace of mind that they are with a network with coverage like never before, currently at no extra cost. This is an awesome value-add and offers incredible value to Prepay customers.

Brazil Gives Green Light to Starlink Satellite Expansion

Brazil's telecoms regulator, Anatel, has granted approval for SpaceX to operate an additional 7,500 Starlink satellites in the country's airspace. According to Reuters, Starlink currently has 4,408 satellites active in Brazil, based on a statement issued by Anatel. The regulator also confirmed that the approval includes the expansion of frequency bands. However, the expiration date for SpaceX's existing authorisations remains unchanged and is set for 2027. While SpaceX received the goahead, Anatel urged lawmakers to update Brazil's regulatory framework to better accommodate emerging technologies such as low Earth orbit (LEO) satellites. It highlighted gaps in legislation around

market regulation, space sustainability, and digital sovereignty. The move marks another milestone for Elon Musk's Starlink, which reportedly also secured regulatory clearance earlier this month to establish a ground station in Vietnam.



Starlink Wins Bangladesh License, Awaits Ministry Approval

SpaceX's LEO satellite unit Starlink is one step closer to launching services in Bangladesh after the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) reportedly approved its application for a satellite internet license. According to the Daily Star, Starlink Services Bangladesh Ltd applied for the license on April 7. The BTRC said it has reviewed Starlink's documentation and recommended approval of the application. The BTRC said it sent a letter to the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology for final approval. Once the ministry gives the BTRC permission to grant the license, Starlink will be able to start commercial services in Bangladesh as soon as it pays the license fee, the report said. Lauren Dreyer, VP for Global Engagement at SpaceX, said she expects to be ready to launch services sometime next month, the report added. Starlink has been trying to enter the Bangladesh market since 2021. Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus held an online meeting with SpaceX and Starlink CEO Elon Musk in February 2025 to discuss bringing Starlink to Bangladesh by May 2025. Last month, Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited (BSCL), the country's sole satellite company, met with Starlink officials to discuss partnership options for fast-tracking Starlink's entry into the market. Among other things, BSCL proposed a reselling arrangement with Starlink, as well as hosting Starlink's gateway at BSCL's ground stations in Gazipur and Betbunia.

ARTICLE

Super Apps: Catalysts for Revenue Growth and Digital Equity Across Emerging Markets



Stephen Thomas Chairman & CEO TPT Global Tech Inc.



As the telecommunications industry navigates its next evolution, two imperatives have emerged as central to its global mission: advancing revenue growth and closing the digital divide. In this context, the rise of super apps presents a transformative opportunity. These all-in-one digital ecosystems—integrating messaging, payments, entertainment, commerce, education, and financial services—have the power to revolutionize how connectivity is monetized while dramatically expanding digital inclusion for underserved populations.

Designed to address the needs of emerging and underserved communities, VuMe integrates livestreaming, videoon-demand, eCommerce, mobile wallet, messaging, rewards, news, remittance, job portals, education, and even digital banking. All of these features are accessible in a low-bandwidth, data-efficient environment, optimized for 2G/3G regions where legacy apps fall short.

Super apps represent a critical juncture for governments, mobile operators, and digital platforms alike. For governments, they provide a scalable infrastructure to drive socio-economic development. For operators, they enable the diversification of revenue streams beyond voice and data, unlocking new business models. For super app platforms, they offer exponential user acquisition and engagement in markets ripe for digital transformation. And for consumers—especially those in underbanked or rural areas—super apps can serve as a digital lifeline, offering tools for financial empowerment, education, healthcare, and civic participation.

The potential of super apps to alter the economic demographics of entire regions is immense. This article explores how this potential can be fully realized through cross-sector collaboration and strategic alignment across regulatory, infrastructure, and digital platforms. At my company, we've spent the past seven years developing what we believe is one of the most advanced super app platforms in the Western Hemisphere: VuMe. Designed to address the needs of emerging and underserved communities, VuMe integrates livestreaming, video-on-demand, eCommerce, mobile wallet, messaging, rewards, news, remittance, job portals, education, and even digital banking. All of these features are accessible in a low-bandwidth, data-efficient environment, optimized for 2G/3G regions where legacy apps fall short.

So how does a super app like VuMe advance revenue growth for telecom operators and governments?

The Telecommunications Landscape: From Infrastructure to Intelligence

Over the past two decades, telecom operators have transitioned from being infrastructure-centric entities to enablers of digital ecosystems. However, monetization strategies have not always kept pace with the explosion of data consumption. With over-the-top (OTT) platforms now capturing the majority of user engagement and data traffic, traditional operators often find themselves providing the bandwidth without receiving proportional returns.

Super apps offer a new paradigm. Rather than allowing value to escape their networks, operators can integrate or partner with super app platforms to capture revenue at the service layer. The shift is not merely about providing access but about becoming an active participant in the value chain that sits atop that access.

This is particularly critical in regions where Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) remains low, infrastructure costs are high, and rural connectivity is sparse. The answer lies not in increasing tariffs or hardware investments alone but in creating scalable digital ecosystems that generate new revenue through services, transactions, advertising, and data insights.

Super Apps: Multi-Dimensional Revenue Engines

Unlike standalone applications, super apps bundle multiple revenue streams within a single platform. These streams typically include:

- Peer-to-peer payments and remittances
- eCommerce and dropshipping marketplaces
- Advertising and sponsored content
- Subscription-based video on demand (VOD) and live events
- Creator monetization and affiliate programs
- Financial services including lending, micro-insurance, and mobile banking
- · Telehealth and remote education access

Each of these verticals generates



monetizable interactions that benefit all players in the ecosystem. Mobile operators can share in app-related revenue via strategic agreements or service bundling. Governments benefit through taxation, formalization of informal economies, and improved delivery of public services. Super app companies grow user retention and engagement, driving exponential data and monetization opportunities.

For example, a mobile operator with 10 million subscribers that successfully incentivizes 10% adoption of a partnered super app, with each user generating \$1 per month in shared service revenue, could realize \$12 million annually—revenue previously untapped and independent of core voice or data plans. At scale, these models can fund infrastructure expansion into low-ARPU areas that were previously economically unviable.

Advancing Digital Equity Through Monetization

Beyond economic return, super apps are uniquely positioned to address digital inequity—particularly in emerging markets where access to broadband, financial systems, healthcare, and education remains limited.

Digital equity is not merely about providing connectivity; it's about ensuring that connectivity translates into tangible improvements in people's lives. Super apps achieve this by placing life-enhancing services into the hands of individuals with limited resources, often via low-bandwidth, mobile-first platforms. For example:

- In remote agricultural villages, farmers can access market pricing, weather forecasts, and digital wallets to receive payments for crops.
- In urban slums, micro-entrepreneurs can launch digital storefronts and conduct business via dropshipping, without holding inventory.
- In migrant communities, families can stay connected via chat and video, while remitting funds securely through in-app wallets.

 In areas with poor health infrastructure, citizens can receive telehealth consultations, medication reminders, and vaccination updates.

These capabilities transform passive mobile users into active participants in the digital economy. By aligning monetization with impact, super apps create a sustainable path for both private sector profit and public sector progress.

Government's Role in a Collaborative Ecosystem

For governments, super apps offer a tool to both stimulate local economies and deliver more efficient public services. Regulatory frameworks that enable partnerships between telecoms, fintech, and platform providers can catalyze this transformation. Key policy levers include:

- Enabling mobile money and digital ID systems
- Facilitating data interoperability and eKYC (Know Your Customer) standards
- Allowing spectrum allocation and infrastructure sharing to reduce rural deployment costs
- Providing tax incentives for digital platforms that localize services and content
- Supporting public-private partnerships for digital literacy and inclusion initiatives

Governments can also use super apps to deliver public services directly—such as issuing digital health records, providing remote education during crises, or disbursing aid during natural disasters. The app becomes not only a commercial channel but a public utility in its own right.

When governments embrace super app ecosystems, they position their nations to leapfrog traditional development barriers. The resulting tax revenues, employment growth, and GDP impact can be profound. Mobile Operators: From Pipes to Platforms Mobile operators stand to be among the biggest beneficiaries—if they embrace the role of platform enablers rather than data pipes. By integrating or white-labeling super apps, operators can:

 Create bundled plans that include premium app access

- Share in revenue from app-based services like streaming or financial transactions
- Increase data usage through high-engagement services
- Enhance customer retention via appdriven loyalty and rewards programs
- Extend service coverage profitably into low-density or low-income areas
- Additionally, super apps can be used to drive customer onboarding, identity verification, SIM registration, and selfservice billing-reducing operational costs and enhancing user experience.

In this model, operators become service providers and revenue-sharing partners, not simply infrastructure hosts. This approach aligns with emerging trends in telco-fintech convergence and telco-media bundling already underway in various regions.

Super App Platforms: Strategic Expansion Through Local Partnerships

For super app companies, partnerships with mobile operators and governments offer the fastest route to user scale and regional relevance. Localization—through language, currency, content, and payment methods—is critical to success. Integrating with local operator billing systems, leveraging government identity programs, and aligning with regulatory compliance frameworks make adoption smoother and more sustainable.

Furthermore, super apps can aggregate vast amounts of user data—purchasing patterns, location behavior, content preferences—which becomes a valuable resource for targeted advertising, product development, and market intelligence. When responsibly managed, this data can also inform public policy, disaster response, and urban planning.

Through such strategic partnerships, super apps can expand quickly in markets with high mobile penetration but low smartphone or banking access—offering services via USSD, lightweight web apps, or embedded SIM applications.

A Win-Win-Win Ecosystem

The intersection of government policy, telecom infrastructure, and platform innovation has never been more synergistic. Super apps represent a win-win-win model:

- Governments gain tools for economic inclusion, improved service delivery, and digital governance.
- Mobile operators unlock new monetization paths and extend reach into unserved areas.
- Super app platforms gain rapid user adoption and sustainable engagement.
- Consumers receive access to lifechanging digital services, economic participation, and global connectivity.

The challenge lies in aligning incentives and building trust across sectors. Transparency in data use, fair revenue sharing, interoperability, and localized service design will determine the long-term success of super app ecosystems.

Closing the Digital Divide While Accelerating Growth

The digital divide is not just a gap in connectivity—it's a gap in opportunity. Super apps have the power to close that gap by making smartphones more than just communication tools. They become banks, schools, clinics, marketplaces, and civic centers.

This convergence of services on a single platform creates economies of scale that were not previously available to rural or underserved populations. With every download, a user enters a digital economy with multiple entry points for earning, learning, and connecting.

As emerging markets continue to represent the bulk of mobile subscriber growth globally, the role of super apps becomes not just relevant-but essential. Their ability to transform regional economic demographics, accelerate operator profitability, and deliver on the promise of digital equity makes them one of the most important innovations modern in telecommunications.

WHOLESALE NEWS

Bharti Airtel Expands International Roaming with Unlimited Data Bundles

Bharti Airtel has announced plans to expand its international roaming (IR) portfolio by introducing unlimited data bundles available



across 189 countries. Siddharth Sharma, Bharti Airtel's Director of Marketing and CEO of its Connected Homes unit, said: "We have dramatically simplified our IR plans to truly redefine our value proposition for customers, giving them the freedom to use data and voice generously while roaming the world." The new offering also includes additional benefits such as in-flight connectivity, automatic activation upon landing, and 24/7 customer support. Airtel has also introduced a new INR 4,000 recharge plan, valid for one year, which includes 5GB of international data and 100 minutes for overseas use. Domestically, the plan offers 6.5GB of daily data along with unlimited calls. The operator said the plan is designed to deliver a seamless and hassle-free experience for subscribers.

Vodafone and A1 Achieve 5G SA International Roaming Connection

Britain's Vodafone Group and Austria's A1 Group have announced a key milestone: a successful 5G Standalone (SA) roaming connection between two separate operator groups. The connection, established between Vodafone Germany and A1 Bulgaria (a member of A1 Telekom Austria Group), enabled a mobile subscriber from A1 Bulgaria to roam on Vodafone Germany's 5G SA network using a standard device. The roaming session was powered by commercially available 5G core network software compliant with the latest 3GPP standards. In addition to data connectivity, the test successfully demonstrated advanced voice capabilities, including immersive surround sound expected to be supported by nextgeneration smartphones. Unlike Non-Standalone (NSA) 5G, 5G SA does not depend on an LTE EPC to operate. Rather, it pairs 5G radios with a cloud-native 5G core network. The 5G core itself is designed as a Service-Based Architecture (SBA) which virtualizes network functions altogether, providing the full range of 5G features and capabilities. "Ultimately, 5G SA roaming will enhance the customer experience at international events like football championships and provide the same consistent, fast connectivity at a company's warehouses and factories across many markets," said Alberto Ripepi, chief network officer at Vodafone Group. The roaming connection was enabled through a 5G SA architecture leveraging Ericsson's dual-mode 5G Core and Security Edge Protection Proxy (SEPP) platforms, deployed by both Vodafone and A1. Ericsson's Security Edge Protection Proxy (SEPP) - part of its Cloud Signaling portfolio – was installed at Vodafone Germany and provides advanced integrated security capabilities to protect subscriber and network data during cross-border usage, in line with GSMA recommendations. A SEPP acts as the security gateway on interconnections between home network and visited networks. It provides application layer, end-to-end authentication, integrity and confidentiality protection via signatures and encryption, critical management mechanisms for setting cryptographic keys, as well as enables message filtering and policing, topology hiding and validation of JSON objects.

2degrees Fined for False Roaming Claim

New Zealand operator 2degrees admitted its marketing material made misleading claims that roaming in Australia was free, acknowledging a campaign created the impression customers on business plans could roam year-round at no extra cost. The Auckland District Court fined the operator AUD325,000 (\$186,469), which had pleaded guilty to five breaches of the Fair-Trading Act. The Commerce Commission highlighted in a statement affected customers were in fact charged for roaming in Australia after only 90 days. Commission deputy chair Anne Callinan insisted

businesses need to consider the overall impression of headline claims, adding key information about claims they're making needs to be easy to find and not buried in the fine print. The campaign ran between 2020 and 2023. The operator updated its promotional material and removed the 90-day limit on free business roaming. It also refunded current and former customers charged for business roaming in Australia in excess of 90 days. The Commerce Commission filed eight charges nearly a year ago against the operator for false claims made in marketing campaigns.



ARTICLE

Building the AI-centric F5.5G All-Optical Network: A Catalyst for Middle East and Central Asia's Digital Leap

The global AI revolution has entered an unprecedented phase, with over 1,300 industry-specific large models deployed worldwide and \$86 billion invested by operators to integrate AI into network infrastructure by 2029. Countries like the U.S., China, and the EU are racing to establish AI ecosystems, while the Middle East and Central Asia are emerging as pivotal hubs, fueled by Saudi Vision 2030, UAE's AI Strategy 2031, and Kazakhstan's Digital Silk Road, etc. Concurrently, F5.5G all-optical networks have evolved to meet AI's demands for deterministic latency (less than 1 ms), terabit-level bandwidth, and 99.9999% reliability. These networks underpin critical AI applications—from smart cities to industrial automation—transitioning from "dumb pipes" to intelligent infrastructure that adapts dynamically to service needs.

The next decade will witness the fast popularization of AI. Huawei hopes to work with industry partners to build an AI-centric F5.5G all-optical network, extending optical switching to data centers and metro edges, building premium networks for optical access by boosting coverage, bandwidth, and experience, and fully injecting AI capabilities to the management and control platform

The Imperative for AI-centric F5.5G All-Optical Network

To unlock the full potential of AI, the optical industry is faced with a new challenge to enable people to utilize AI and its applications as easily and freely as electricity. To achieve this, an AI-centric F5.5G all-optical network featuring premium transmission and all-optical 10 Gbps must be built. The premium transmission network provides high-quality connections to computing and satisfies the high-quality connection requirements of distributed data center architectures. The all-optical 10 Gbps network provides ubiquitous and ultrabroadband 10 Gbps bandwidth, enabling users to experience intelligent services anytime, anywhere.



Bob Chen

President of Huawei Optical Business Product Line



For optical transmission, the key lies in extending the optical switching technology to data centers (DCs) and metro edges. By leveraging optical switching, DCs can expand the scale and efficiency of AI computing. Moreover, with all-optical switching deployed at metro edges, carriers can establish latency circles of 1 ms, 5 ms, and 10 ms through mesh networking. This enables all-optical one-hop connection for end-to-end all-optical switching, spanning from the backbone to the metro, ensuring the optimal AI experience.

For fixed access, the fixed broadband needs to provide premium services with deterministic and guaranteed service experiences for every user. Globally, there are three phases for fixed access network construction: coverage, bandwidth, and experience network construction.

For coverage network construction: Currently, over 28% of global users lack fiber connections. Urgent efforts are needed to accelerate the fiber coverage, leveraging rapid and cost-effective deployment to connect the unconnected.

For bandwidth network construction: First, some carriers offer fiber broadband with package rates merely in dozens of Mbps, severely limiting the potential of fibers. Upgrading these packages is essential to boost broadband service competitiveness. Second, Gigabit packages provided via GPON often result in poor end-user experiences, such as frequent video freezes. Upgrading from GPON to 10G PON needs to be prioritized to enhance network performance.

For experience network construction: The industry has a consensus on the evolution from FTTH with one single fiber to FTTR with one unified network, since FTTR

networking ensures consistent optimal experience for users. With over 40 million global FTTR users currently, the technology will further evolve into FTTR+X. This evolution will empower carriers to innovate in AI applications like AI-enhanced storage, home guard, and healthcare. The ultimate aim is to enable a smart home ecosystem anchored by one FTTR network.

To unlock the full potential of AI, the optical industry is faced with a new challenge to enable people to utilize AI and its applications as easily and freely as electricity. To achieve this, an AI-centric F5.5G all-optical network featuring premium transmission and all-optical 10 Gbps must be built.

In addition, AI needs to be introduced to the management and control platform to realize automatic service provisioning, proactive user experience management, and proactive O&M, thereby improving user experience and efficiency, increasing revenue, and reducing the OPEX.

Al-Optical Synergy in Middle East and Central Asia: Leadership in Transition

The region is transitioning from "oil economies" to "AI economies" through strategic initiatives and AI-ready optical networks:

 Jordan Zain's FTTR for all innovation: Zain Jordan launched commercial FTTR package, delivering full-house all-room coverage solution for 8K VR education and IoT ecosystems, available to all fiber

With over 40 million global FTTR users currently, the technology will further evolve into FTTR+X. This evolution will empower carriers to innovate in AI applications like AI-enhanced storage, home guard, and healthcare. The ultimate aim is to enable a smart home ecosystem anchored by one FTTR network. users. Al-powered traffic prioritization ensures zero packet loss for telehealth and gaming.

- UAE e&'s 800G 3D-Mesh DCI and 1ms alloptical metro for AI. UAE e& launched the Middle East's first 800G DCI backbone, achieving 48Tbps per fiber pair to interconnect AI hubs with less than 1 ms latency, supporting Arabic LLM training and autonomous drone logistics. It uses OXC technology and intelligent management platform embedded with AI to guarantee 1ms edge-to-core latency for real-time applications like smart grid controls and telemedicine.
- Azerbaijan Aztelekom deployed 10G PON to achieve almost whole nation-wide fiber FTTH coverage by the end of 2024.

Future Outlook: Accelerating AI Through AI-centric F5.5G All-Optical Networks

The Middle East and Central Asia are poised to lead the global AI revolution through AIcentric all-optical networks, which will act as accelerators by:

- Enabling Real-Time AI Collaboration: Ultra-low latency networks will allow seamless integration of distributed AI training clusters, reducing time-to-insight for industries like energy and healthcare.
- Scaling Al Infrastructure: F5.5G's terabitlevel bandwidth and deterministic reliability will support the exponential growth of Al data centers, aligning with projections of 57% global data center capacity growth by 2027.
- Driving Industry Innovation: From smart cities to autonomous logistics, Al-native networks will serve as the backbone for next-gen applications, unlocking \$500 billion in cross-border investments by 2030.

The next decade will witness the fast popularization of Al. Huawei hopes to work with industry partners to build an Al-centric F5.5G all-optical network, extending optical switching to data centers and metro edges, building premium networks for optical access by boosting coverage, bandwidth, and experience, and fully injecting Al capabilities to the management and control platform. In this way, we can accelerate Al popularization and achieve new business growth together in the intelligent era! cullen-international.com



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TECHNOLOGY NEWS

T-Mobile US Claims Uplink Record with 5G-A

T-Mobile US asserted it is the first mobile operator in the world to hit 550Mb/s uplink speeds in sub-6GHz spectrum using 5G-Advanced Release 17 capabilities. The mobile operator explained it achieved the record speed using 3GPP Release 17 UL Tx Switching in a live demonstration with partners Nokia and MediaTek. T-Mobile stated it is the world's first live demo of R17 UL Tx Switching. The testing took place in the US state of Washington on a commercial site. Ulf Ewaldsson, president of technology at T-Mobile, stated "uplink is the next big thing" due greater adoption of applications and services such as 4K video, gaming in real time and using a VR headset. Tommi Uitto, president of mobile networks at Nokia, noted it is "significantly more challenging for carriers to enhance data speeds in the uplink, from a mobile device back to the network, compared to boosting downlink speeds". T-Mobile explained the UL Tx Switching feature provides "smart" multiplexing to maximize user throughput



on the available device transmitter chains by optimizing use of UL carrier aggregation and UL MIMO for TDD and FDD spectrum. In the first live network demonstration, 100MHz of TDD spectrum and 35MHz of FDD spectrum were used to achieve the speed. It was conducted using a MediaTek smartphone test device along with the vendor's M90 modem. The operator announced the nationwide availability of its 5G-Advanced network during a Q1 earnings call last month.

Indonesia Partners to Build a Comprehensive 5G Ecosystem

The Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs is intensifying its efforts to build a comprehensive 5G ecosystem in Indonesia through strategic partnerships with domestic stakeholders and international partners. These collaborations are central to the country's broader vision of accelerating digital transformation and fostering innovation across various sectors. Speaking in Jakarta, Wayan Toni Supriyanto, the Ministry's Director General of Digital Infrastructure, underlined that the government alone cannot carry out the development of 5G in Indonesia. "We realise that the 5G ecosystem cannot be built by the government alone," he stated, emphasising the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure a successful and inclusive rollout. To this end, the ministry is actively engaging with key industry players and associations, in-

cluding the Indonesian Telematics Society (Mastel), telecommunications service providers, and device manufacturers. These partnerships aim to foster synergy in policy formulation and technology deployment, ensuring that the national 5G strategy is responsive to industry needs while supporting innovation and inclusivity. One of the ministry's primary approaches involves collaborative policymaking. By involving stakeholders in the regulatory process, the ministry aims to create a conducive environment for 5G development that balances innovation, investment and accessibility. It is also undertaking real-world case studies and trial projects to explore and demonstrate the practical benefits of 5G. For example, pilot projects are underway to test 5G-enabled smart factory solutions, which allow for automation and remote operations, showcasing how advanced connectivity can revolutionise manufacturing and industry. Another key aspect of the partnership strategy is the efficient allocation and management of radio frequency spectrum, a critical resource for the success of 5G networks. The ministry is encouraging collaboration to release and repurpose frequency bands that are currently being used for other services, such as satellite communications, to support the growing demand for 5G bandwidth. Beyond national efforts, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs is also strengthening international ties to advance 5G development. Over the past two years, Indonesia has held strategic dialogues with three countries, (India, Russia and Japan), that have shown strong interest in supporting Indonesia's 5G ambitions. Earlier, Minister Meutya Hafid met with In-

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dian Ambassador Sandeep Chakravorty in Jakarta to follow up on a memorandum of understanding signed between the two countries in January 2025 covering Al, IoT and digital infrastructure. The discussions focused on expanding cooperation in the fields of 5G and artificial intelligence, paving the way for technical exchanges, joint research and capacity building. Minister Hafid emphasised the need for swift action, proposing a technical working group or joint statement to initiate the partnership, which supports Indonesia's goal of accelerating digital transformation. She also noted that Indonesia's non-aligned foreign policy enables it to form inclusive, strategic global collaborations. Meanwhile, Indonesia and Russia reached an agreement to enhance their strategic collaboration in communication and digital technologies. The agreement includes joint efforts to develop and expand 5G cellular networks, reflecting a shared commitment to leveraging emerging technologies for national development. Japan also reaffirmed its interest in contributing to Indonesia's 5G journey by proposing the use of Open Radio Access Network (Open RAN) technology. Open RAN is seen as a promising alternative to traditional network infrastructure, offering flexibility, cost efficiency and opportunities for local innovation and vendor diversity. These international engagements underscore Indonesia's proactive stance in building a globally competitive digital ecosystem. By leveraging both domestic and global partnerships, the government aims to ensure that 5G serves as a transformative force – improving public services, boosting productivity and enhancing quality of life. Through these coordinated efforts, Indonesia is positioning itself to become a regional leader in digital connectivity, with 5G as a foundational pillar for future innovation, economic growth and inclusive development.

NEC Achieves Japan's Longest Terrestrial Wireless Optical Communication Over 10 Kms

NEC Corporation has successfully achieved Japan's longest terrestrial wireless optical communication or free-space optical (FSO) communication, over a distance of more than 10 km. In addition, NEC has successfully conducted FSO communications between an observation deck at TOKYO SKYTREE, the tallest structure in Japan, and a location on the ground approximately 3 km away, representing a significant change in elevation. the lower-end H20 chip designed for China. FSO is a wireless communication method that enables high-speed and highcapacity communication compared to radio waves. It transmits and receives light beams without using physical paths such as optical fibers. Additionally, it has high directionality and does not spread beams, resulting in low risk of interception by third parties, reduced interference and congestion in communication, and no need for radio wave usage permits. These newly developed technologies are expected to be utilized for communications in locations and regions where it is difficult to install optical fiber, and for communications between ships at sea and the land. In addition, it is expected that the technologies will be used as an alternative or emergency communication method in the event of a disaster when wired communication networks become damaged, making communications difficult, as well as for highly confidential short- and medium-



range communications related to national security. Conventionally, one of the challenges for FSO communications has been overcoming the negative impact on stable communications from atmospheric turbulence, such as heat haze, that increase with distance, and it has been difficult to grasp atmospheric turbulence that differs between different elevations. NEC has now

successfully achieved communication over a distance of more than 10 km and communications at different elevations with FSO communication by applying its capture and tracking technology developed for its communication systems and long-distance optical communication technology used in satellites.

Samsung and KT Partner to Counter 6G Signal Quality Challenges

South Korean technology giants Samsung and KT are joining forces to research and develop technologies for improving 6G signal quality. The two companies will pool their expertise to advance multi-antenna technologies, aiming to expand coverage across the potential frequency bands earmarked for 6G. Furthermore, the collaboration will explore the integration of Al within telecoms systems to bolster network stability and overall performance. Jong-Sik Lee, Executive VP and Head of the Future Network Laboratory at KT, said: "Through this joint research with Samsung Electronics, we expect to secure nextgeneration network technologies that differentiate the quality of the user experience. We will further strengthen our efforts in developing core 6G technologies to lead future mobile communication innovations." This alliance comes amid ongoina alobal discussions and standardization efforts surrounding the future of mobile communication. A key area of initial research for Samsung and KT will be eXtreme multiple-input multipleoutput (X-MIMO.) which is described as an "ultra-high-density antenna technology designed to enhance 6G coverage and increase data transmission speeds." A milestone in the progression towards 6G was the identification of the 7 GHz band (7.125-8.4 GHz) as a candidate frequency at the World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 (WRC-23), hosted by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The global mobile communications industry views this band as a particularly attractive option due to its favorable frequency characteristics and the availability of spectrum. Angelo Jeongho Park. Executive VP and Head of the Advanced Communications Research Center (ACRC) at Samsung Research. commented: "We are committed to



developing innovative 6G technologies that enhance both the operational efficiency of the 7GHz band and the overall user experience. Our collaboration with KT will serve as a key foundation for advancing next-generation communications through reasonable, cost-effective investments." A key challenge associated with using the 7 GHz band for 6G signal is that it operates at a higher frequency than the 3.5 GHz C-band currently utilized in 5G networks. This higher frequency results in greater signal path loss, a factor that needs to be achieve effectively mitigated to communication coverage comparable to existing 5G services. To overcome this hurdle, Samsung and KT will delve into research on advanced beamforming technology. This technique allows for the transmission of focused signals in specific directions, improving signal strength and reducing interference. Additionally, the partners will explore multi-spatial transmission technology, which employs multiple beams to simultaneously deliver data to several users. In the context of X-MIMO systems operating within the 7 GHz band, a significantly higher number of

antennas will be required compared to current 5G deployments. This necessitates the development of system architectures capable of efficiently managing these ultrahigh-density antenna arrays. Looking beyond pure technological advancements, both Samsung and KT recognize the transformative potential of converging The telecoms with AI. partners' collaborative research will focus on leveraging AI to deliver an enhanced user experience, particularly in areas with traditionally weaker signal coverage. For instance, AI could be employed to predict potential and proactively address communication disruptions-such as interruptions to video streaming services, ensuring a smoother and more reliable user experience. This partnership between two of South Korea's leading technology players is a significant moment in the global race to develop and deploy 6G networks. By focusing on key challenges such as signal path loss in higher frequency bands and exploring the intelligent integration of Al. Samsung and KT aim to ensure 6G is a leap forward in delivering faster, more reliable. and more pervasive mobile connectivity.

ARTICLE

Enabling Experience Monetization Through 5G-A & Al Synergy; Transforming Operators' Value Creation

For decades, telecom's growth followed a predictable path: acquiring subscribers, increasing data consumption, and watching revenue climb. That model, however, is losing steam. A new engine is accelerating that fuelled not by mere connectivity, but by digital experiences that users actively value and are willing to pay for.

At the heart of this transformation are two ground-breaking forces: 5G-Advanced (5G-A) and the exponential rise of AI. Together, they are reshaping telecom, redefining how networks operate, and ushering in an era where monetization is built around what users can do, not just how much data they consume. This shift ultimately supports operators' evolution from traditional telecos to techcos in the AI era.

The Middle East has established itself as a global pioneer in 5G-A and AI-driven digital transformation, demonstrating strategic foresight, relentless innovation, and an strong commitment to shaping the future of connectivity.

5G-A: The Evolution Beyond Speed

Forget incremental upgrades, 5G-A is a strategic leap forward. Built on 3GPP protocols, it pushes the boundaries of real-world network performance. This transformation is not theoretical; deployments in China, the UAE, and Finland are already driving measurable results, with average revenue per user (ARPU) increasing by up to 11%.

The power of 5G-A lies in its ability to enhance core network capabilities. With super downlink speeds reaching up to 5 Gbps per user, smartphones transform into high-performance endpoints, making mobile AR gaming, holographic calling, and multi-angle live streaming seamlessly possible. The uplink experience has also been radically improved through AI-driven scheduling, dynamically adjusting resource allocation for bandwidth-heavy applications like live streaming and drone inspections. Multi-User MIMO (MU-MIMO) amplifies efficiency by supporting eight-stream parallel transmission, boosting uplink capacity to four times that of 5G and eliminating longstanding network bottlenecks.



Alex Xu

President of Carrier Business Huawei Middle East & Central Asia



In addition to speed and capacity, ultra-low latency and deterministic communication define the next generation of connectivity. End-to-end latency now reaches as low as 10-20 milliseconds, meeting stringent requirements for industrial automation and remote-controlled robotics. Enhanced URLLC technology, promising 99.999% reliability and centimetre-level positioning, ensures precision-demanding applications like machine vision and autonomous factory operations run without disruption. These breakthroughs are not mere laboratory achievements; more than 60 commercial devices already support 3CC, proving their viability in real-world scenarios.

Al's Rise: Welcome to the Internet of Autonomous Agents

While 5G-A strengthens network infrastructure, AI is revolutionizing humantech interaction. Instead of navigating apps manually, users are now engaging with AIdriven agents that anticipate needs, resolve complex queries, and even perform tasks autonomously.

The ecosystem has expanded rapidly, growing from 30 major language models in 2023 to over 200 in 2025, each fuelling smarter digital assistants. These AI systems can edit films in real time, generate hyper-realistic deepfake actors, manage schedules and finances, and optimize large-scale data libraries. However, their efficiency hinges on fast, deterministic networks that reduce jitter, dynamically scale performance, and ensure reliability. 5G-A delivers precisely this, paving the way for Al-driven scenarios like real-time proxy participation in business meetings or interactive customer service calls without human intervention.

Experience Monetization: The Next Frontier Traditional telecom revenue models relied on selling data buckets and voice minutes, but that approach is quickly becoming obsolete. Surveys reveal that 68% of users are willing to pay for guaranteed quality, 53% subscribe to scenario-specific enhancements like gaming performance boosts, and 35% of AI users increase spending when offered value-added features.

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This shift has led to a three-tier monetization model. The first focuses on speedbased tiers, where operators offer guaranteed throughput, such as KPN's 600 Mbps and 1 Gbps plans, which have lifted ARPU by 15%. The second revolves around scenario-specific plans, bundling optimized services for gamers, streamers, and remote workers, helping drive AIS's 5G adoption surge from 20% to 35% in just 12 months. The final tier introduces Al-enhanced packages, providing users with premium AI assistants, predictive analytics, and exclusive digital experiences. In Shanghai, China Mobile's VIP packages boosted premium user retention by 10%, reinforcing the demand for curated, high-value digital ecosystems.

Telecom is no longer just about providing connectivity; it is about enabling purpose-driven digital experiences. Al is reshaping how people live, learn, work, and play, and operators who embrace this shift will lead the industry into its next evolution.

Engineering the Invisible

Delivering premium experiences requires an AI-native network stack that intelligently orchestrates service delivery. Al-powered prioritizes RAN intelligence traffic dynamically, ensuring VIP users receive three times higher weighting during congestion periods. Huawei Smartcare platform enables real-time monitoring of individual user KPIs, allowing operators to resolve issues before they impact customer experience. Service quality metrics are evolving beyond simple speed guarantees, incorporating responsiveness, jitter minimization, and energy efficiencyall crucial for next-generation applications. Innovations like network digital twins and intent-based orchestration empower operators to simulate and enforce quality standards proactively, shifting from a reactive model to predictive service assurance. These breakthroughs will redefine network management, ensuring users receive consistently optimized experiences instead of raw data access.

The Shift from Connectivity Provider to Experience Orchestrator

Telecom is no longer just about providing connectivity; it is about enabling purposedriven digital experiences. Al is reshaping how people live, learn, work, and play, and operators who embrace this shift will lead the industry into its next evolution.

Instead of simply offering bandwidth, the future belongs to operators capable of slicing networks into ultra-personalized services, dynamically adapting guality based on individual user needs, and supporting Al-driven applications that demand ultra-low latency and compute proximity. 5G-A is not just an upgrade, it's the foundation for future connected intelligent world, a future where communication and sensing merge seamlessly, integrating contextual awareness directly into networks. Telecom leaders who master experience monetization today will position themselves for the next technological leap. Final Thoughts: Telecom's Defining Moment Winning in this landscape demands

Delivering premium experiences requires an AI-native network stack that intelligently orchestrates service delivery. AI-powered RAN intelligence prioritizes traffic dynamically, ensuring VIP users receive three times higher weighting during congestion periods.

more than just technical prowess, it requires vision, leadership, and ingenuous innovation. The technology is ready, and the demand is indisputable. What is needed now is a shift in mindset.

The operators that will thrive in this era will treat AI as a strategic partner rather than a standalone product, see 5G-A as a foundation for transformation rather than just another upgrade, and recognize that customers are not passive data consumers but creators of experiences.

Experience is no longer a by-product of connectivity; it is the product itself. With 5G-A and AI converging, telecom operators now have the tools to sell it not as a commodity, but as a differentiated, scalable, and premium service.

The Middle East has established itself as a global pioneer in 5G-A and Al-driven transformation. demonstrating digital strategic foresight, relentless innovation, and an strong commitment to shaping the future of connectivity. Nations like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar have embraced next-generation technologies as catalysts for economic diversification, smart city development, and industrial modernization. effectively leveraging telecom advancements to fuel broader societal progress. Their proactive spectrum allocation, robust regulatory frameworks, and strategic investments have enabled the seamless integration of cutting-edge telecom infrastructure, setting a new global benchmark for technological excellence.

At the heart of this transformation are telecom powerhouses such as e&, stc, Zain and Ooredoo, collaborating with technology service reliability but also unlocking new monetization opportunities through 5G-A and AI. Their pursuit of Al-integrated applications across different industries, has redefined the role of telecom providers as techcos.

This evolution signals a fundamental shift from traditional telecom operations to comprehensive digital ecosystem enablers, positioning Middle Eastern operators at the forefront of global leader in 5G-A deployment and techco transformation. By prioritizing experience-based service offerings and leveraging 5G-A and Al, operators can deliver highly personalized and industry-specific digital services, actively shaping the future of intelligent connectivity. Their ability to monetize superior customer experiences, leverage real-time insights, and enable AI-powered service innovation ensures sustained

The operators that will thrive in this era will treat AI as a strategic partner rather than a standalone product, see 5G-A as a foundation for transformation rather than just another upgrade, and recognize that customers are not passive data consumers but creators of experiences.

leaders like Huawei to revolutionize regional connectivity. By deploying 5G-A network and Al-Enabled network optimization and superior experience-driven solutions, these operators are not only enhancing revenue growth while solidifying the Middle East's reputation as a powerhouse in the global techco revolution.



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REGULATORY NEWS

ITU's 160th Anniversary: ITU for Everyone, Everywhere

Every time you turn on your radio or television, hop on a plane, call home, access the internet, find your location with your smartphone, tablet or personal computer, watch a weather forecast or view satellite images of the Earth, you use a vital service coordinated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) worldwide. As ITU celebrates its 160th anniversary in 2025, see some of the benefits you get through ITU's work behind the scenes.

An Internet backbone

Interconnected networks built to ITU standards facilitate communication. information sharing and access to knowledge and services. Today, an estimated 68% of people are internet users. But disparities exist: an estimated 84% of people in high-income countries are covered by a 5G network, while only 4% of the population in low-income countries is. With partners, ITU develops standards, collects internet use statistics, and promotes digital public infrastructure and digital literacy to connect the unconnected. Mobile devices for development

Mobile phones, laptops, and other devices have changed how we purchase, study, socialize, and work. More than 95% of people over 10 years old own a mobile phone in high-income economies, compared to 56% in low-income economies. As mobile telephony rapidly expands, ITU is supporting developing countries in upgrading their networks, integrating new technologies, and expanding to unserved and underserved areas.

Satellite services

Earth's orbital space is becoming more crowded. ITU manages radio spectrum used in space ensuring multimillion-dollar investments in satellite systems deliver connectivity and data worldwide. ITU ensures frequencies allocated to satellite systems are protected from harmful interference. ITU supports administrations as they coordinate satellite systems, and administer the Radio Regulations which contribute to sustainable and equitable



access to space.

Cutting-edge television standards

Did you know that ITU has won six Emmy Awards for global technical standards for broadcasting, video, and image coding? The awards are a testament to ITU's remarkable innovation and relentless pursuit of excellence exemplifying successful public-private sector collaboration to enhance the quality and accessibility of radiocommunication services and technologies.

Radio for all

Broadcast radio remains the medium that reaches the widest audience. The ITU Radio Regulations cover all radiocommunication services, systems, and applications – fixed and mobile broadband, satellite systems, broadcasting, maritime navigation, weather, space research, earth observation, amateur radio, and more. The Radio Regulations enable countries to develop innovative terrestrial and satellite technologies and services while preventing interference between different radiocommunication systems.

Cybersecurity for cross-border threats

As digital tech access grows, so do cyber-risks – with potential to disrupt infrastructure and compromise safety

for people and businesses everywhere. Cyberthreats cross borders, and ITU works on related international technical standards and with countries on the Global Cybersecurity Index, Guidelines on Online Child Protection, Women in Cyber Mentorship Programme and Guidelines, regional and national cyber-drills and the Guide to Developing a National Cybersecurity Strategy, and more.

Robotics for humanity

Increasingly powered by Artificial Intelligence, robots are designed to help humans – to walk, see and hear, to search and rescue, and more. ITU's AI for Good Global Summit – including a Robotics for Good stream – is the annual global showcase for responsible, safe and inclusive AI, bringing together insights on AI innovation to address key challenges facing humanity, ethics and governance, and supporting standards and capacity development.

160 years of ITU: Improving telecoms, use of AI and robotics, cyber security and connectivity in schools

Maritime communications for safety at sea With 80% of global trade transported by sea, ITU enhances its safety and security by allocating and protecting radio frequencies for maritime communications and developing standards for maritime systems. ITU ensures radio vital maritime communication channels are free from interference, enabling reliable communication pathways are free for distress signals and navigation guidance. fostering cooperation between By governments, industry stakeholders, and international organizations, ITU keeps global maritime communication systems robust, reliable, and secure.

Early warnings for all

Our climate is changing. Heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires and tropical cyclones are becoming more intense. About three and a half billion people live in places that are highly vulnerable to extreme weather. Many countries lack early warning systems that alert their citizens to hazardous events. UN agencies and international organizations are working together to harness the latest tools and technologies to bring effective early warning systems to all. ITU encourages countries to work with mobile network operators from the private sector to send alerts directly to people's phones. These alerts reach those in at-risk areas, saving precious time and lives.

Transforming Agriculture

Global food production may need to increase by 70% from 2005 to 2050 to match population growth, according to latest estimates. Innovations in artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, drones, and robotics are transforming farming with precise, sustainable techniques – down to a single square meter or individual plant or animal. ITU and its partners are developing standards to ensure farmers worldwide can access these technologies to produce more with less.

Connected schools, connected communities

It is estimated that half of the world's schools are not connected to the internet and the opportunities it brings. Schools connected to the internet can serve as digital hubs for students, families, communities and businesses, thereby helping to achieve a country's progress towards multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals. ITU's Giga initiative with UNICEF stands out for its ambitious goal to connect all schools by 2030: over 2.1 million schools in 141 countries have been mapped so far using technology.

Bangladesh Proposes Conditional Concessions Over 700MHz Spectrum Auction

The government has formally responded to concerns raised by major foreign telecom investors regarding the upcoming 700MHz spectrum auction, proposing conditional pricing concessions to ease industry apprehensions. Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser with executive authority over the Ministry of Posts. Telecommunications and ICT, suggested a potential 5-10 percent reduction in spectrum prices. However, this discount would be contingent upon mobile network operators committing to infrastructure upgrades, lowering consumer prices and enhancing service quality. The move comes after foreign investors expressed reservations about the auction, citing high costs and uncertain returns. In a letter dated March 25, Taiyeb acknowledged investor apprehensions about spectrum costs, limited bandwidth availability and device compatibility, but underscored the state's focus on aligning pricing with global standards and addressing systemic sectoral inefficiencies. Earlier on March 17, major international telecom investors expressed concerns about the proposed parameters for the upcoming auction, citing technical, commercial and economic challenges. In a joint letter addressed to Taiveb, the parent companies of Bangladesh's leading mobile network operators urged the government to

reconsider the auction's timing and pricing structure. Signed by senior executives of Axiata, Telenor, and Veon, the letter highlighted three key issues with the current plan: the limited amount of spectrum being released, the disproportionately high pricing and limited device compatibility with the 700MHz band. Citing a 40 percent devaluation of the Bangladeshi Taka against the US dollar since 2022, Taiyeb defended its dollar-denominated spectrum valuation as a safeguard against currency risks for foreign-dominated telecom operators, which repatriate profits in USD. Responding to concerns over partial release of spectrum in the 700 MHz band -- 2x25MHz out of a total 2x45MHz - Taiyeb said efforts were underway to resolve technical and commercial barriers for releasing the remainder, emphasising the band's role in expanding 4G/5G coverage and IoT services. While noting 50 percent of existing 4G devices already support 700MHz, the government revealed plans to mandate local manufacturers and importers to halt non-compliant device sales -- a policy expected to boost penetration "significantly" within months. The letter sharply criticised mobile network operators for underutilising higher-frequency spectrum bands (7-18 percent usage) intended for urban capacity,

blaming inadequate deployment of critical infrastructure like Baseband Units (BBU) and Radio Resource Units (RRU) for fragmented networks, slow speeds and frequent call drops. It accused operators of maintaining "artificially" high internet prices and restrictive data validity periods, perpetuating a "vicious cycle" that limits digital adoption despite low utilisation rates. "Mobile network operators have not shown proper willingness to adjust consumer pricing accordingly. Moreover, the very short data validity period of national internet packages is being criticised in society," Taiveb said. "This seems to be a coordinated vicious cycle that mobile network operators have artificially engineered, holding back the growth of internet services," he added. The telecom regulator aims to auction spectrum in the 700 MHz band this year to support the expansion of 4G and rollout 5G networks in the country. It set the price at Tk 263 crore per MHz, but mobile operators are unhappy with that decision so further negotiations are anticipated in this regard. The latest spectrum auction took place in March 2022, when the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission fetched around \$1.23 billion as operators acquired a total of 190MHz spectrum.



EU Looks to Revamp Merger Rules to Remain Globally Competitive

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the bloc's longstanding merger rules, which it is hoped will encourage investment and innovation. The review relates to the horizontal merger guidelines (HMG), which governs mergers between actual or potential competitors in the same market, as well as those that operate at different levels of the supply chain. Seven key topics were listed as a focus of the review: competitiveness and resilience, market power, innovation, decarbonization, digitalization, efficiencies, defence and labor considerations. "This is a pivotal moment for Europe, and it is only by evolving that we can ensure that our merger control policy continues to serve people, drive innovation, and strengthen Europe's resilience and leadership," said Teresa Ribera, executive vice president for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition. "We count on your help. We stand ready to hear the views of consumers and businesses



across Europe on how our merger review framework can be made fit for the future." The EU's existing merger rules were drafted in 2004 and have received numerous updates since that time. From a telecoms perspective, these rules have long been viewed as overly restrictive, blocking consolidation in highly competitive markets. This, the operators argue, has limited their ability to invest at scale and is hindering their international competitiveness. The national antitrust regulators, however, argue that shrinking the number of players in individual markets risks reducing competition, driving up prices for consumers, and decreasing incentive to invest in infrastructure. Regulators from Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Portugal notably issued a joint statement to this effect last month. "The narrative that fragmentation in the electronic communications sector, hindering investment and innovation, allegedly results from unduly strict competition rules is misplaced," read the statement. Following her re-election in July last year, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, wrote a letter to Ribera, outlining the need for "new approach to competition policy" to boost innovation. The letter asked Ribera to "modernize the EU's competition policy to ensure it supports European companies to innovate, compete and lead world-wide and contributes to our wider objectives on competitiveness and sustainability, social fairness and security." More specifically, it said that revisions to the HMG should "give adequate weight to the European economy's more acute needs in respect of resilience, efficiency and innovation, the time horizons and investment intensity of competition in certain strategic sectors and the changed defense and security environment."

FCC Pushes Forward with 37 GHz Sharing Rules

The Federal Communications Commission is moving ahead with new rules on federal/non-federal sharing in the 37 GHz band, hoping to spur deployments such as wireless backhaul, broadband and IoT services, plus additional capacity for mobile networks. The agency has been working on a framework for coordinated sharing in the 37 GHz band for a number of years, with rules adopted in 2016 outlining the use of the band for fixed and mobile terrestrial operation. (Parts of the band are also used by space-to-Earth communications and fixed satellite services.) The 37 GHz band is one of the sections of spectrum that were identified in the National Spectrum Strategy (and the subsequent implementation plan, released last year under the Biden administration) as a pipeline of spectrum to study with an eye toward opening up additional spectrum for various uses. Late in 2024, the Department of Defense and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) released a report that recommended the adoption of a coordination framework for 37 GHz which had been outlined last year. That proposal is essentially what the FCC adopted, and it prioritizes DoD access at 37-37.2 GHz while offering "co-equal access" for federal and non-federal users at 37.2-37.6 GHz. That report also recommended stricter limits on out-of-band emissions, in order to protect passive receivers that operate in the

adjacent 36-37 GHz airwaves. The upper 37 GHz band, at 37.6-38.6 GHz, was part of the millimeter-wave spectrum that was auctioned by the FCC in 2019 as part of its Spectrum Frontiers auction. That band was divided for auction into 10 blocks of 100 megahertz in each Partial Economic Area (PEA) geographic designation. "We are once again exploring creative ways the FCC could unleash wireless innovation in this underutilized swath of spectrum," said FCC Chairman Brendan Carr. He acknowledged the challenges in the shared band, saying that "Both government and commercial entities are allowed to operate in it, and there are no clear rules of the road for sharing. This lack of clarity prevents companies from moving forward with investments and deployments. "This proceeding can fix that by establishing rules for commercial fixed wireless on a shared basis with federal users. If we succeed, this new licensing framework could unlock 600 MHz of spectrum for new and more intensive commercial services-laying the foundation for massive innovation and growth," he concluded. The new rules adopted by the FCC put together a licensing framework that requires users to obtain a "nationwide, non-exclusive license" and then coordinate sites on an individual basis and register them. Licensees have to start operating the site within a year of registering it.

MAY 2025

BTRC Approves Mobile Operators to Install Device to Transmit More Data at Lower Cost

Mobile operators can import and install data transmission amplifier equipment for their leased fibre optic networks to transmit more data at lower costs, the telecom regulator decided in its last commission meeting. Each installation will require case-by-case approval from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). This decision marks a significant victory for mobile operators, who have long pushed for greater control over their network infrastructure. Earlier in March 2021, BTRC banned mobile operators from installing Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) equipment on their leased fibre lines, giving Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network (NTTN) companies an advantage in handling data transmission. "DWDM technology can increase the capacity of fibre optic cables by 100 to 1,000 times - or even more - depending on the equipment's strength. If mobile operators can deploy DWDM on backbone fibre, their transmission costs could drop by around 39%," said Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser overseeing the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and ICT. "By relying on mobile operators, we reinstated the DWDM facility to them, allowing them to provide quality services at lower prices," he added. The 2008 NTTN guidelines had separated fibre network operations from mobile telecom services. Mobile operators were not allowed to lay fibre cables unless no NTTN provider was available in a specific area. Over time, Fiber @ Home Ltd and Summit Communications became the largest NTTN operators, building nationwide networks by themselves and getting government fibre leased. The network is used by mobile operators and internet service providers. Government organisations like Power Grid Company, Bangladesh



Railway, and BTCL, which already owned fibre networks, later obtained NTTN licences. However, they primarily leased their fibre to NTTN companies or mobile operators. To increase competition in the transmission sector, BTRC has now suggested that Railway and Power Grid create commercial subsidiaries and compete in the market.

German Coalition Disagrees on AI Regulation, Digital Sovereignty

Leaked coalition documents reveal disagreement between the center-right Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) working groups on AI regulation and digital sovereignty ambitions in negotiations over a new German government platform. The leaked draft, with statements marked as CDU/CSU, SPD or unity, favors a digital sovereignty push and "innovation-friendly" implementation of AI regulation, but splits on the ambitions of the twin agendas. "The AI Act should be revised, or at least further developed in the course of technical and legal specifications to reduce burdens on the economy," reads a CDU/CSU amendment. The party also wants to create a basis to combine data legislation in the future. The Commission is currently reviewing whether to do a targeted AI Act revision and withdrew the Al liability directive after taking a strong pro-innovation stance at the Al Summit in Paris. "We are committed to an Al Liability Directive at the European level," reads an SPD amendment. Both parties want regulation that accelerates the construction and design of data centers, but CDU/CSU want to also amend existing regulations for



this purpose. The coalition is seeking more sovereign open-source government systems, but where CDU/CSU want non-comittal "ambitious targets," SPD wants "to achieve an open source share of 50% by 2029." SPD also wants the EU Competitiveness Fund to also be used to invest in a "digitally sovereign society and economy."

ITU Chief Pushes Connectivity, AI Governance

ITU secretary-general Doreen Bogdan-Martin highlighted the importance of global connectivity, AI governance and sustainability, emphasizing the need for industry-wide collaboration to tackle pressing digital challenges. Speaking to Mobile World Live, Bogdan-Martin acknowledged the growing complexity of discussions around connectivity but remained optimistic about progress. "Everyone, whether it's industry or government, believes in the power of connectivity. So, we're focused on that goal to connect the unconnected." she stated. However, she noted that bridging the digital divide remains a major challenge, with 2.6 billion people remaining in "digital darkness". The ITU estimates that bridging this connectivity gap will likely require about \$1.6 trillion in investment, with a focus on building infrastructure, ensuring affordability, and creating digital skills. In addition, Bogdan-Martin highlighted Al's role in climate action, emphasizing



that while AI is an "energy hungry and water thirsty" technology, it can also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions when implemented effectively. She pointed to the ITU's efforts in advancing green digital standards and initiatives like the Green Digital Action Coalition launched at COP29. which attracted around 1,000 signatories. Addressing the digital gender gap, the ITU chief noted that fewer women work in the digital and AI sectors. "We're pushing to get girls excited about careers in the STEM field," she said, stressing the need to ensure access to economic opportunities through digital inclusion. Bogdan-Martin urged a range of stakeholders including governments, telecom operators, satellite providers and academic actors to take collective action, stating that digital access is critical to economic growth and resilience. She pointed to the ITU's Partner2Connect initiative, which secured \$73 billion in commitments towards bridging the connectivity gap and aims to hit \$100 billion by next year. Ultimately, despite the challenges, she stated "I am optimistic, because we see commitments being made."

Ukraine Frees Up 700 MHz Band to Eliminate Interference with 4G And 5G Networks in Poland

In western Ukraine, the process of releasing the 700 MHz band in Lviv and Volyn regions has been completed, which will allow Polish operators to fully develop 4G/5G networks in accordance with the license in this band. This is stated in a statement by the National Commission for State Regulation in the Spheres of Electronic Communications, Radio Frequency Spectrum and Postal Services (NCEC). It is noted that the work took place in a 100-kilometer zone along the border in Lviv and Volyn regions, where frequencies of 50-53 television channels (range 694-790 MHz) were released. The process was supported by international donors, who helped replace equipment on 11 DVB-T2 digital television broadcasting transmitters. "In accordance with the decision of the European Parliament and

the Council of the EU, member states were required to ensure the use of the 700 MHz band for electronic communications by June 30, 2020. EU countries gradually released this spectrum, but Ukraine's neighboring countries faced interference from Ukrainian television transmitters," the NKEC noted. In 2024, as part of the work of the Radio Spectrum Policy Group at the European Commission, a communication platform was organized, where meetings were held with the participation of of Ukraine, representatives Poland. Hungary, Slovakia, and the EU. Together they have defined an action plan, according to which the first stage is the release of the 700 MHz band in Lviv and Volvn regions. and the second stage is in Zakarpattia. This process is ongoing due to the lack

of a budget and the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is now expected that the release of the 700 MHz band should be completed by December 31, 2026. Recall that since 2021, the Ministry of Digital Affairs has been working on releasing radio frequencies necessary for the launch of 5G in Ukraine. The key bands for Ukraine are the same as in Europe - 700 MHz and 3.4-3.8 GHz. These are radio frequencies that will allow covering more territory. On November 1 last year, the Ministry of Digital Affairs announced the launch of a pilot project to implement the 5G network , which will last 2 years. The first city where the testing will take place will be Lviv. If the equipment does not affect the work of the military, the project will be scaled up to two more cities.

MAY 2025

1,055% Surge in Unauthorized SIM Swaps as Mobile and Telecoms Sector Hit Hard by Rising Fraud

Cifas, the UK's leading fraud prevention service, has raised the alarm on SIM swap fraud, with cases surging by 1.055% in 2024. The stark warning comes as part of the organisation's annual Fraudscape report. which paints a grim picture of escalating threats across the mobile and telecoms sectors. Nearly 3,000 cases of unauthorised SIM swaps - where criminals hijack a victim's mobile number by porting it to a new SIM without their consent - were filed to the National Fraud Database (NFD) in 2024. impacting multiple telecoms providers. Once in control of a victim's number, criminals intercept calls and messages, including crucial two-factor authentication codes, enabling further fraudulent activity to take place, such as account takeovers for apps and other forms of identity theft. The latest Fraudscape report reveals that in 2024, a record-breaking 421,000-plus cases were filed to the NFD - the UK's largest and most comprehensive database of fraud risk data and intelligence. The telecoms sector has emerged as a primary target, with identity fraud linked to mobile products up 87%, reflecting a surge of more than 16,000 cases. In addition, facility takeover fraud - where criminals take control of an individual's accounts soared by 76%, with telecoms and online retail the most affected sectors. Notably. 48% of all account takeover cases in 2024 involved mobile phone accounts. Filings



concerning unauthorised mobile upgrades rose by 96%. Older consumers remain a target. Those aged 61-and-over now make up 29% of all account takeover cases, with filings about this demographic rising by 90% year-on-year. Simon Miller, Director of Policy, Strategy, and Communications at Cifas, said: "Our latest figures underscore the urgent need for collaboration and the sharing of data and intelligence across sectors to tackle fraud. "In the mobile and telecoms sector, criminals are exploiting vulnerabilities in the system to assume control of people's mobile identities – with devastating consequences. "At Cifas, we enable our members across all sectors – including telecoms, banking, retail and insurance – to share crucial information, helping prevent over £2.1 billion in losses last year alone. Together, we can outpace the criminals." Cifas urges consumers to be vigilant; monitor mobile accounts for unexpected changes and look out for notifications recommending security PINs or passwords from their telco providers. Businesses, meanwhile, should adopt stronger identity verification methods and continue sharing threat intelligence across industries.

BSNL Gets Fresh Spectrum from DoT for Its Upcoming 5G Service

India's Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has reportedly awarded 5G spectrum worth INR610 billion to state-owned telco Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) to ready the telco for its planned launch of 5G services sometime this year. ETTelecom reported that DoT allocated spectrum in the 700-MH, 3300-MHz and 26-GHz bands to BSNL for 5G usage. No timeline has yet been released regarding an official launch date, but BSNL has said it will start with Delhi before expanding the service to other select cities. Minister of state for communications Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar told Parliament that BSNL has

deployed almost 84,000 4G base station sites (out of a planned 100,000) across the country as of March 8, of which just over 74,500 are live. Sekhar added that all of BSNL's 4G network will provide the foundation for its no standalone 5G launch, as all base stations are 5G-upgradable, the report said. BSNL has launched 4G services in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai as of the end of 2024, as well as most state capitals. The telco aims to offer 4G in all circles by June 2025. Government officials told ETTelecom that funding won't be a problem for BSNL's 5G rollout, as the government has provided enough funding to cover the telco's capex in the near term via a INR60 billion funding package issued in February. The government will provide more funding once 5G deployments are underway, the report said. BSNL also plans to launch standalone 5G in Delhi across 1,876 sites using the 900-MHz and 3300-MHz bands. That project has run into problems – partly because BSNL is required to use only indigenous gear to build the network, and partly because vendors are unhappy with the telco's revenue share model, under which BSNL would get at least 70% share of revenue, with select vendors getting whatever is left.

CRA Qatar releases a Position Paper on IoT and M2M

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) has released a Position Paper on the Internet of Things (IoT) and Machineto-Machine (M2M) technologies, aiming to foster innovation, enhance security, and drive Qatar's economic growth. Through this Position Paper, CRA intends to develop a comprehensive regulatory framework that ensures seamless connectivity, interoperability, and a secure digital landscape. This will enable Service Providers and businesses to operate under clear standards that support both investment and innovation. Furthermore, the Paper addresses existing regulatory gaps and meets evolving market needs by implementing mechanisms that balance regulatory oversight with necessary flexibility. This approach allows emerging technologies to scale efficiently while maintaining the highest levels of security and compliance. The pillars of this Position Paper positively impact various stakeholders. On one hand, consumers will experience improved reliability and security in IoT services, leading to safer and more efficient utilization of smart devices in their daily lives. On the other hand, Service Providers will benefit from clear regulatory guidelines, reducing uncertainty and facilitating smoother development and deployment of IoT and M2M technologies. Additionally, this Paper opens new horizons for businesses and investors by providing a regulatory environment that supports investment and expansion in digital markets, further strengthening Qatar's position as a leading hub for advanced technologies. In this context, Mr. Ali Al-Suwaidi, Technical Affairs Department Director at CRA, emphasized the document's importance, stating, "IoT and M2M technologies are rapidly evolving and have become key enablers of smart cities, industrial automation, healthcare advancements, and environmental sustainability. Therefore, it has become essential to have a regulatory framework that keeps pace with digital transformations and ensures a secure and transparent environment that supports innovation." He added, "The release of this Position Paper marks a significant milestone in Qatar's digital transformation journey, establishing advanced regulatory



foundations that will stimulate an integrated digital economic environment, accelerate the transition towards aknowledge-based economy, and enhance the nation's global competitiveness in the technology sector." knowledge-based economy, and enhance the nation's global competitiveness in the technology sector." He further stated, "By providing an integrated regulatory environment for the IoT that aligns with the highest international standards and best practices, CRA reaffirms its commitment to developing an advanced digital market that supports innovation and sustainable growth. This strengthens Qatar's position as a leading regional hub in the digital technology sector, aligning with the Qatar National Vision 2030, the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030, and the Digital Agenda 2030." CRA's IoT Position Paper serves as a foundation for future regulatory policies that will drive the deployment and adoption of IoT technologies in Qatar. As the country continues to embrace advanced digital solutions, the regulatory framework will work to balance between technological growth, consumer rights protection, and economic sustainability

AST SpaceMobile and AT&T Get FCC OK to Test Direct-to-Satellite Cellular on FirstNet

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has granted AST SpaceMobile permission to test direct-to-cellular connectivity on Band 14 spectrum, which is reserved for public safety – a request made in coordination with AT&T. The tests will be conducted on the AST SpaceMobile fleet of BlueBird satellites. The company says it "envision(s)" that it will test on select FirstNet transponders later this year. The press release said that the service could enhance public safety by doing such things as helping in the thousands of search and rescue missions it conducts annually in national parks. "It's still too early to give a specific timeline," the spokesperson said. "As we look ahead, we are excited to continue our work with the FirstNet Authority to explore how satellites will be used in public safety communications and bring new capabilities to first responders on America's public safety network." In January, AST SpaceMobile was granted Special Temporary Authority (STA) by the FCC, enabling it to begin testing its five low-earth orbit (LEO) BlueBird satellites with unmodified devices in AT&T and Verizon's low band wireless spectrum. The announcement offered no details on the precise nature or time of the planned tests. The partnership between AT&T and AST SpaceMobile is approaching its first anniversary. The two companies reached a long-term agreement in late May of last year. The goal was set at creating satellite-to-cell phone service that work with standard cellphones. In January, AST SpaceMobile entered into a restructuring support agreement with holders of approximately 88% of the funded indebtedness of Ligado (formerly LightSquared). AST SpaceMobile was to receive long-term spectrum usage rights for more than 80 years to up to 40 MHz of L-Band MSS spectrum in the United States and Canada held by Ligado, plus access to an additional 5 MHz in the 1670-1675 MHz Band in the United States.
UK Announces First Ban in Europe on SIM Farms

The UK government is set to ban the possession and supply of 'SIM farms' in the fight against fraudsters and scammers. SIM farms, sophisticated devices capable of housing numerous SIM cards simultaneously, enable offenders to automate the sending of scam text messages on a massive scale. They are also instrumental in creating large volumes of seemingly 'verified' online accounts, used for further illicit activities. The government's action comes amid statistics revealing a 19% increase in fraud last year. Currently, fraud accounts for over 40% of all reported crime in England and Wales-highlighting the nature of the threat and the urgent need for robust countermeasures. This ban forms a crucial part of the government's security-focused "Plan for Change" and precedes the promised publication of an expanded national fraud strategy later this year. Under the proposed legislation, possessing or supplying a SIM farm device without a legitimate justification will become a criminal offence. This aims to directly choke off a vital resource for organized criminals. Those found guilty will face stringent penalties: an unlimited fine in England and Wales, and fines up to £5,000 in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The ban is scheduled to take effect six months following the Royal Assent of the Crime and Policing Bill (PDF). This legislative change ensures that criminals exploiting these devices will not only face prosecution for the underlying fraud but will also be penalized specifically for using the enabling technology, adding another layer of deterrence. Fraud Minister Lord Hanson emphasized the government's commitment to tackling this issue head-on. "Fraud devastates lives, and I am determined to take the decisive action necessary to protect the public from these shameful criminals," he stated. Highlighting the scale of the problem, Lord Hanson added: "Two-thirds of British adults say they've received a suspicious message on their phone equivalent to more than 35 million people - which is why cracking down on SIM farms is so vital to protecting the public." The announcement has been welcomed by industry and law enforcement partners, who view it as a critical step in disrupting criminal operations. Rachel Andrews, Head of Corporate Security at Vodafone UK, commented: "Vodafone UK is committed to protecting all our customers from fraud, including activity enabled by SIM farms. So far this year we have blocked over 38.5 million suspected scam messages, and in 2024 that figure reached over 73.5 million for the year. "As an industry, UK telecoms operators have blocked more than one billion suspected scam messages since 2023. However, we cannot fully tackle fraud in isolation, collaboration between industry and government is crucial. This is a really important step taken by the Home Office and we fully support the inclusion of SIM farms in the upcoming legislation." Nick Sharp, Deputy Director for Fraud at the National Crime Agency (NCA), added: "Fraud is the crime we are all most likely to experience, and one that causes victims significant emotional and financial harm. We know that fraud at scale is being facilitated by SIM farms, which give criminals a means and an opportunity to contact victims at scale with relative ease. "The ban announced is very welcome. It will give us a vital tool to step up our fight against fraudsters, target the services they rely on, and better protect the public." The government advises members of the public concerned about falling victim to fraud, or seeking information on protective measures and common scam tactics, to consult the official Stop! Think Fraud resource website.



Ofcom Bans UK operator Global Titles Leasing

UK communications regulator Ofcom placed a ban on operators leasing out addresses used for routing signalling messages known as Global Titles (GT), a move it believes closes a technical loophole

Cracking down on the exploitation of mobile networks by criminals

which could pose a security risk. The regulator explained criminals could exploit GT to intercept and divert calls and messages, using the example of SMS two-factor authentication codes used by banks and retailers. It also noted in "extreme cases" they could be used by criminals to track the location of individuals. Ofcom acknowledges mobile network operators typically leased them "largely to legitimate businesses who use them to offer mobile services", but cited worries about criminals being able to access them, a threat also recognised by the UK's National Cyber Security Centre. The ban on new agreements starts 22 April, but for existing deals it comes into force during 2026. Ofcom group director for networks and communications Natalie Black described its move as "world-leading action to tackle the threat posed by criminals gaining access to mobile networks", adding "leased Global Titles are one of the most significant and persistent sources of malicious signalling".

EU to Build AI Gigafactories in €20bn Push to Catch Up with US and China

The EU has revealed details of a €20bn (£17bn) plan to create new sites equipped with vast supercomputers in Europe to develop the next generation of artificial intelligence models, while opening the door to amending its landmark law that regulates the technology. Publishing a strategy to turn Europe into an "AI continent", the Commission vice-president European Henna Virkkunen said the technology was at the heart of making Europe more competitive, secure and technologically sovereign, adding: "The global race for AI is far from over." The EU is attempting to catch up with the US and China, which have taken a lead in pioneering the technology that increasingly powers shopping websites and self-driving cars, generates text, and is predicted to play a transformative role in healthcare, security, defence and advanced manufacturing, among other sectors. The US has a commanding lead in AI. far ahead of China. A report from Stanford University this week said 40 "notable AI models" meaning influential - were produced by institutions in the US in 2024, compared with 15 in China and three in Europe (all French). In a separate 2024 report. Stanford found that no EU country made the top five for "vibrancy" in AI, a metric that considered private investment, patents and research. It ranked the UK in third place behind the US and China, with France in sixth place and Germany eighth. The EU has already embarked on a plan to build 13 AI factories - sites with supercomputers and datacentres, where researchers develop and test AI models. The new AI "gigafactories" would be much larger, targeting what the commission called "moonshots": significant innovations in healthcare, biotech, industry, robotics and scientific discovery. While the best-performing AI factories have supercomputers equipped with up to 25,000 advanced AI processors, a gigafactory would exceed 100,000 AI processors, the strategy document said. These power-hungry facilities, which can require huge amounts of water for cooling, should run "as much as possible" on a

green energy supply, an EU official said, with plans for "recycling" water if it was used. Last year 47% of electricity generated in the EU came from renewable sources, but campaigners fear that power-hungry datacentres could undermine Europe's climate ambitions. "Europe has made some strides towards fully renewable electricity, and still has a long way to go, but this could all be undone by ballooning energy consumption," said John Hyland, a Greenpeace spokesperson. "Every powerguzzling datacentre risks being a lifeline to polluting power plants, well illustrated in Ireland where they consume over a fifth of the electricity." EU officials envisage three to five AI gigafactories in the EU at a cost of around €3-5bn each, compared with €600m for the biggest AI factory. The commission is seeking to raise €20bn, using public money to incentivise private investors, via a facility provided by the European Investment Bank. The bloc is also seeking to develop European-made AI semiconductors, advanced chips that are vital for AI factories. But the commission faced criticism for indicating an openness

to rethink its AI Act. The regulation, which aims to control the risks posed by AI, was approved by the European parliament only last year and will not be fully applicable until August 2027. The commission said it was launching a consultation on "possible simplification" of the AI Act, as part of a wider drive to cut redtape amid concerns about Europe's lagging economic growth. The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) said the commission needed to focus on the implementation and enforcement of the Al Act. "Much of the Al Act does not even apply yet but the commission is already signalling that it is open to cutting some of its requirements. When we know that consumers worry about how AI could be used to harm them, the commission should instead be trying to reassure consumers," said Frederico Oliveira da Silva at BEUC. Virkkunen said the commission was "very committed" to the risk-based approach and the main principles of the AI Act, but was looking at whether there were some administrative burdens or reporting obligations that could be cut to make life easier for businesses.



Oman and Rwanda Sign MoU to Boost Cooperation in ICT and Digital Economy

In a significant step toward fostering international collaboration in the digital sphere, the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) focused on advancing cooperation in information and communication technology (ICT), digital economy development, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. The agreement was signed during the Global AI Summit on Africa, hosted in Rwanda, and was represented by Dr. Ali bin Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology of Oman, and Yves Iradukunda, Permanent Secretary at Rwanda's Ministry of ICT and Innovation. The MoU outlines strategic areas of cooperation including:

Cybersecurity and IT industry development Joint research on AI, emerging technologies, and Internet of Things (IoT)

Workforce development in data protection Exchange of expertise in government digital transformation



Collaboration in AI applications and advanced digital technologies

Promoting participation of private sectors and startups in innovation ecosystems

Commenting on the occasion, Dr. Al Shidhani stated:

"Honored to have signed, on behalf of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology - Oman, an MoU with Rwanda's Ministry of ICT & Innovation during the Global AI Summit on Africa. This partnership reflects our shared commitment to advancing collaborations in digital economy, AI, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies." He expressed his appreciation to Her Excellency Paula Ingabire, Minister of ICT & Innovation of Rwanda, and His Excellency Yves Iradukunda for their valuable partnership and expressed optimism about the fruitful opportunities this collaboration will bring for both nations. This MoU represents a shared vision between Oman and Rwanda to create an inclusive and innovative digital future through mutual exchange, knowledge-sharing, and technological empowerment.

New Ofcom Report Uncovers Breadth of Digital Exclusion

Despite a more connected society, millions in the UK remain digitally excluded, facing barriers in access, affordability, and confidence. For many, the internet is a lifeline connecting them to work, healthcare, and loved ones. But for millions in the UK, going online remains fraught with barriers, leaving them isolated, disadvantaged, and at risk of worsening mental and physical health. A new Ofcom-commissioned report reveals the stark reality of digital exclusion, exposing how gaps in access, confidence, and affordability are deepening inequalities. While the number of people entirely offline has dropped from 13% before the pandemic to just 5% today, that still represents 2.8 million people cut off from an increasingly digital society. Even among those who are online, 8% lack confidence, leaving them hesitant to engage with essential services. Researchers commissioned by Ofcom spoke to 70 people across the UK, including disabled individuals,

those in unstable housing, minority ethnic groups, non-English speakers, and infrequent internet users. Their experiences paint a troubling picture of an internet that fails to serve everyone equally. For disabled participants, going online often came at a physical cost - fatigue, pain from poorly designed devices, and heightened anxiety. Many struggled with websites and apps that weren't built with accessibility in mind, forcing them to rely on workarounds or simply go without. Those in insecure housing, meanwhile, described the frustration of unreliable connections. Overcrowded homes led to sluggish speeds, while short-term rentals made signing up for broadband nearly impossible. Some found themselves locked out of remote work or education opportunities, exacerbating financial instability. Racism and abuse further poisoned the online experience for many minority ethnic users. Nearly half (48%) reported encountering hateful content targeting their ethnic-

ity in the past month alone-a figure that underscores the toxic undercurrents running through digital spaces. The consequences of digital exclusion ripple far beyond inconvenience. Participants described missing medical appointments, struggling to apply for jobs, and feeling increasingly isolated as services moved online. Non-English speakers, in particular, found themselves dependent on family or friends to navigate essential tasks-banking, government forms, even booking a GP appointment. Even those who were technically online often faced barriers. Around 27% of UK adults are "narrow internet users," sticking to just a few basic tasks due to fear or lack of skills. Another 18% rely solely on smartphones, often because they can't afford a home broadband connection-a limitation that disproportionately affects women and lower-income households. [8]

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

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Afghanistan

Service provider MTN has officially concluded its operations in Afghanistan, transferring its stake to the Beirut-based M1 Group. The company will now operate under the brand name ATOMA. At a formal handover ceremony, Najibullah Haqqani, the Taliban's Minister of Telecommunications and Technology, announced that MTN's shares had been acquired by M1 Group for an undisclosed multi-million-dollar sum. In November 2022 it was reported that MTN Group had named Lebanon's M1 New Ventures as the buyer of its Afghan unit. At the time news outlets suggested that M1 was set to acquire MTN Afghanistan for US\$35 million. MTN, which began operations in Afghanistan in 2007, held a 40% share of the market and was the country's largest mobile operator. MTN's strategic decision aligns with its long-term goal to concentrate on African markets. MTN first announced plans to exit the Middle East in August 2020. Indeed this exit follows announcements of planned withdrawals by MTN from Syria in August 2021 and Yemen soon after. MTN's only remaining presence in the region is a 49% stake in Irancell, its joint venture in Iran. At the ceremony Haqqani called on ATOMA to deliver high-quality services, honor its license obligations, and priorities consumer rights. Hashim Ramazan, the newly appointed CEO of ATOMA, pledged to modernize the company's network infrastructure, improve 4G services, and provide reliable, high-quality voice and internet connectivity across the country.

(April 22, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com



Bahrain

Mohammed Ali Al Qaed, Chief Executive of Bahrain's Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA), highlighted key achievements in 2024, emphasizing the progress made in enhancing data transparency and quality. He noted that over 900,000 transactions were completed related to ID, population, civil records, and address services, with 95% of these conducted via digital channels. This effort contributes significantly to Bahrain's digital transformation, supporting both the country's Economic Vision 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Al Qaed also mentioned the launch of several eServices via Bahrain's National Portal, including updates to household status, ID card verification, and GCC ID card activation, incorporating biometric data. The iGA also unveiled its Virtual Customer Service Centre, expanding service delivery channels. Bahrain's national datasets have been enhanced to improve the accuracy of economic data, notably increasing GDP estimates by 5-6%. Additionally, the iGA improved the GCC Common Market statistical database and continued refining the country's

population and household statistics. Al Qaed outlined the launch of several surveys, including the Household Income and Expenditure Survey and the National Health Survey, to provide accurate insights into Bahrain's socio-economic landscape. Furthermore, the Bahrain Open Data Portal saw major enhancements in 2024, adding over 435 datasets and logging more than 9 million visits, reflecting significant public and international interest. The iGA's ongoing collaboration with local and international entities ensures reliable data management, underscoring Bahrain's commitment to data transparency and sustainable development. Al Qaed also highlighted upcoming projects, including the Tourism Survey, Labour Force Survey, and the rollout of the enhanced ID card in Q1 2025. The year 2024 reflects iGA's dedication to advancing Bahrain's digital transformation and supporting effective policymaking through trusted, high-quality data.

(April 29, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com



The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has released a draft policy aimed at reforming the country's telecom network and licensing framework. Titled the "Telecommunication Network & Licensing Regime Reform Policy 2025," it seeks to consolidate the fragmented licensing system into three main categories, eliminate minor intermediaries, and promote infrastructure sharing to reduce operational costs. The policy also includes a migration plan to phase out obsolete licenses by 2027, introduces lighter frameworks for small-scale operators, and deregulates certain telecom sectors. However, several

Bangladesh

contradictions in the policy could lead to regulatory confusion, particularly concerning mobile operators' ability to offer wired services and inconsistent foreign ownership limits. The three-stage migration process will begin in 2025, with full implementation by 2027. The BTRC's focus is on promoting fair competition, efficient resource utilization, and improving the quality of service. Shahed Alam from Robi Axiata and Rakibul Hasan from Link3 Technologies welcomed the policy draft, emphasizing the need for mergers and acquisitions to drive service quality improvements and lower Costs. (April 25, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com



The Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Dr. Amr Talaat, officially inaugurated the new office of IGT Solutions at Maadi Technology Park in Cairo. IGT Solutions; a leading provider of digital and data-driven transformation solutions is expanding its operations in Egypt as part of its strategic growth across different markets. The event was attended by IGT Solutions' Global CEO Katie Stein, ITIDA CEO Eng. Ahmed El-Zaher, IGT Egypt Managing Director Mohamed Guemei, and senior officials from the Ministry of Communications and ITIDA. IGT Solutions entered the Egyptian market in 2022 and currently operates a multilingual service center providing support in over eight languages, including English, Spanish, French, and German. The company plans to grow its local workforce from 450 to 2,000 professionals by 2027. Dr. Amr Talaat, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, stated that Egypt's outsourcing industry is witnessing rapid growth: "Egypt's outsourcing industry has tripled its global delivery centers in the past three years, reaching over 200 centers thanks to our



efforts to expand talent pools and attract investment,". Talaat highlighted the diversity and sophistication of services provided, citing the Ministry's strategy to expand the talent pool, strengthen digital infrastructure, and enhance competitiveness in high-value engineering services such as embedded systems, automotive software, semiconductor and electronics design. "Egypt continues to attract top-tier outsourcing investments thanks to its costeffectiveness, skilled workforce, and modern infrastructure," noted Eng. Ahmed El-Zaher, CEO of ITIDA. He emphasized that the agency proudly supports companies like IGT Solutions in scaling global operations from Egypt and contributing to the growth of the local digital economy and Egypt's thriving offshoring industry. "This expansion reflects the growing confidence in Egypt's strategic position as a regional outsourcing hub," El-Zaher added, highlighting Egypt's competitive edge in multilingual talent, advanced infrastructure, and favorable operating costs.

(April 10, 2025) www. meatechwatch.com



Iraq is emerging as both a major digital and commercial transit hub connecting Europe and the Middle East. Its geographic advantages make it an ideal bridge between Europe and the Middle East. For too long it has been overlooked or underappreciated as a critical connectivity option for global carriers, regional service providers and hyperscalers. Multi-billion-dollar investments are fueling growth across Iraq's industries. Continued investment in digital infrastructure spanning Iraq has created a digital corridor that provides terrestrial routes from key hubs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), UAE, and Bahrain, as well as cable landing stations

Iraq

that connect to Asia-Pac via Oman. Unlike some neighboring countries, Iraq has seen a decade or more of stability and an opening of global trade. At the same time, the Red Sea has seen growing congestion with many subsea cable systems running in parallel through the Suez Canal. Telecom Egypt estimates that 17% of the global internet connects via the Suez Canal, making it one of the most concentrated centers for subsea cable infrastructure in the world. Houthi rebel activity saw cables in the Red Sea damaged in early 2024, disrupting connectivity between the Middle East and Europe. One of the many challenges is that repair ships have

limited access to the region, which can prolong outages. According to the Suez Canal Authority, 50% fewer ships transited via the Suez Canal in 2024 compared to the previous year. The shipping and logistics industry is rerouting and avoiding the Red Sea at great cost to their businesses. The challenge for global carriers, regional service providers and hyperscalers is to mitigate these risks and add new resiliency to their networking strategies. They need diversity as well as low-latency networks to support increasingly Al-enabled applications and mission-critical cloud services. There is an opportunity for network-centric businesses to add Iraq's terrestrial routes to their networking strategies. It isn't a matter of swapping out routes via the Suez Canal, but instead adding new resilience via alternative routes. The Suez will always play a



The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission reported significant growth in Jordan's telecommunications services in the fourth quarter of 2024, driven by a surge in data consumption and the rapid adoption of 5G technology. According to the TRC's guarterly statistical report, fixed-line voice service subscriptions slightly decreased by 1.4% to 486,000, compared to 493,000 in Q4 2023. Residential users represented 67% of the total, while commercial users made up 33%. Despite the decline in subscriptions, fixedline call traffic rose by 6% year-on-year, reaching 11.3 million call minutes. Notably, 85% of these calls were local, and 15% were international. The number of mobile broadband subscriptions grew by 4.1% in Q4 2024, reaching 8.046 million compared to 7.727 million in Q4 2023. Prepaid plans accounted for 69% of total mobile broadband subscriptions. Mobile voice traffic also increased, totaling 7.37 billion minutes, with 97% of the calls being domestic. Text messaging saw a dramatic 122% increase, rising from 260 million messages in Q4 2023 to 576 million messages in Q4 2024. Mobile phone penetration reached 69% of the total population and 106% among individuals aged 15 and above by the end of Q4 2024. Mobile broadband data usage increased by 13%, reaching 658 million gigabytes, up from 580 million GB in Q4 2023. Fixed broadband internet subscriptions rose slightly to 812,000, reflecting a 0.8% growth rate and a household penetration rate of 33.4%. Fiber-optic internet continued to dominate, accounting for 72.8% of total fixed broadband subscriptions. Fixed broadband data consumption also surged by 15%, reaching 1.339 billion GB, compared to 1.161 billion GB in Q4 2023. The average monthly fixed internet usage per subscription rose by 14%, reaching 550 GB, up from 481 GB in Q4 2023. The 5G sector saw remarkable growth, with mobile 5G subscriptions soaring by nearly 60% from the previous quarter, reaching 112,900, a staggering 800% increase compared to Q4 2023. Additionally, leased line subscriptions

vital role in regional and global connectivity. It is about identifying new routes that support networking strategies and mitigate risks. This is becoming increasingly important with global deployments of bandwidth-intensive and latency-sensitive applications and services. Cloud and AI have created a networking market where 'best effort' no longer matches the requirements of hyperscalers, governments and large enterprises. What matters now is finding the ideal alternative that provides a range of benefits and partners that can help to maximize the value of Iraq in a networking strategy. The players that recognize Iraq's potential will see immediate benefits in terms of resiliency, reliability, and performance when connecting between the Middle East and Europe.

(April 15, 2025) www.thefastmode.com

Jordan

increased by 17.5%, totaling 24,143 by the end of Q4 2024. (May 9, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) of Jordan said that mobile providers have finished the first technical tests of the new mobile broadcast emergency alert system in different parts of the country. A statement from TRC says that Zain Jordan did the first live test on April 6 by sending emergency warning messages to subscribers in certain areas. After that, other cell phone companies will test on dates that will be revealed soon. These tests are part of a government-led effort to improve emergency reaction and make sure that people can quickly get in touch with the government during crises. The system will go off during severe weather, natural disasters, and other situations that need people to act right away. The TRC stressed that the new alert system would send important information directly to people's phones, so they could take the right safety measures and follow official instructions in an emergency.

(April 7, 2025) www.criticalcommunicationsreview.com

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority has warned citizens not to engage with any SMS or electronic messages containing links to websites that request payment of fees, fines, or any other payments, whether from government entities, banks, telecom companies, or delivery services. The authority clarified that interacting with such messages could expose users' banking card data to theft, allowing suspicious entities to potentially steal their money. The authority emphasized the importance of making payments only through recognized payment channels, such as commercial bank applications and the "eFawateercom" platform. (March 30, 2025) www.jordannews.jo



Morocco

Morocco is accelerating its digital transition by integrating advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, to modernize public services, boost socioeconomic development, and enhance global competitiveness. To achieve these ambitious goals, the North African nation has forged partnerships with telecom giants Ericsson and Nokia during GITEX Africa 2025 in Marrakesh (April 14-16). The agreement with Ericsson focuses on strengthening digital education and supporting small business growth in Morocco, aligning with the country's "Digital Agenda 2030." This initiative aims to promote innovation, upskilling, and inclusive digital transformation, providing Moroccan entrepreneurs and small businesses with the necessary digital skills to thrive in the expanding digital economy. Through this collaboration, Ericsson's global educational programs will help entrepreneurs and small business owners acquire essential 21st-century skills, contributing to sustainable job creation and fostering innovation across various sectors in Morocco. In addition, Morocco has teamed up with Nokia to further advance its digital agenda. The multinational company will help improve the country's network connectivity, share its technical expertise, expand high-speed internet access, and build a robust digital ecosystem. These efforts are particularly crucial as Morocco prepares to host major international sporting events in the near future, including those planned for 2030. (April 18, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com



Nepal's digital payment transactions have surged significantly in recent years, with a 43.5% increase in transaction volume over the past three fiscal years. A report from Nepal Rastra Bank highlighted the role of QR code-based payments, which saw a 230% increase in transaction volume and a 210% growth in value from FY2021-2022 to FY2023-2024. The rise in digital payments is attributed to the growing accessibility of digital platforms, with QR code payments becoming a preferred method due to their convenience and real-time processing. As a result, the number of merchants accepting QR payments has risen dramatically, with QR codes issued to merchants increasing from 282,000 in July



2021 to 2.34 million in January 2024. While the digital payment landscape is rapidly evolving, challenges such as infrastructure gaps in rural areas, mobile connectivity issues, and rising online scams persist. However, the adoption of digital lending, mobile banking, and cross-border digital payments is steadily growing, contributing to the overall shift from cash to digital payment methods. Notably, mobile banking usage jumped from 114 million users in mid-2020 to 265 million by January 2024, and QR code payments have continued to grow, with transactions in Nepal now expanding internationally through cross-border QR payments with India and China. (April 11, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

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Oman

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) of Oman has issued Decision No. 1111, introducing a "Bylaw on Regulating International Telecommunications Cables" to enhance the country's telecom infrastructure and regulatory framework. The new bylaw aims to establish a secure and accessible telecom environment in Oman while ensuring the regulatory system keeps up with rapid advancements in the sector. This move aligns with Oman's vision of fostering a competitive, investment-friendly environment. The bylaw mandates the establishment of a regulatory framework for marine communication cables in economic zones and straits, without the need for anchoring. It covers all activities related to the installation, operation, maintenance, and repair of international telecommunications cables within Omani lands, waters, Special Economic Zones, and straits. Additionally, the bylaw centralizes approval processes, streamlining procedures for efficiency. This decision affects licensees and companies involved in laying international telecommunications cables, aiming to attract investment and develop necessary regulations for the sector. It also focuses on enhancing competitiveness by improving service quality, diversifying options, and ensuring competitive pricing. These efforts are expected to foster better collaboration between government agencies and stakeholders.

(May 5, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) of Oman is set to introduce new regulatory measures aimed at improving transparency and consumer rights. Among the key developments is a new regulation ensuring accurate billing systems, addressing consumer concerns about fair charges. Additionally, the TRA is launching the "Commercial Caller ID" project, which will require corporate call centers to display their true identity and the purpose of calls, aiming to reduce misleading commercial calls. These initiatives are part of Oman's broader strategy to modernize the telecom regulatory environment while ensuring consumer protection and service transparency. (April 25, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, through the National Programme for Government Digital Transformation "Tahawul," launched the Digital Accessibility Guide. This initiative aims to improve digital inclusion, ensuring that all services, including mobile apps and websites, are accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities and the elderly. The guide is designed to assist mobile app and website developers in adopting best practices for digital accessibility. It encourages institutions to create applications and websites that meet accessibility standards, reducing costs associated with making modifications later. Targeted at mobile app and website development teams across both the public and private sectors, the guide serves as a valuable resource for project managers, user experience and interface designers, software developers, digital content writers, accessibility specialists, and quality engineers. Additionally, it provides guidance for application owners and stakeholders involved in digital accessibility for people with disabilities, senior management, and decision-makers. The guide offers step-by-step instructions on how developers can achieve digital accessibility and how to measure the accessibility levels of their applications and websites.

(April 21, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com



A high-level delegation from China Mobile Communications Corporation (CMCC), led by Chairman Mr. Yang Jie, visited the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) in Pakistan, meeting with Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja. The visit emphasized the longstanding Pakistan-China relationship and explored opportunities for digital cooperation within the framework of CPEC and Pakistan's Digital Vision. The CMCC delegation included senior officials from China Mobile HQ, while the Ministry of IT was represented by Secretary IT, Additional Secretary IT, Chairman PTA, and other senior officials. During the meeting, discussions focused on several key collaboration areas, including support for AI-enabled, energy-efficient data centers, advancing 5G development, and establishing Pak-China connectivity under the CPEC framework to improve regional connectivity. Additionally, both sides explored potential content hosting partnerships with Chinese digital platforms and advancements in Artificial Intelligence education, supporting Pakistan's ambition to achieve 100 Mbps internet speeds, expand fixed broadband access to 10 million households, and raise smartphone penetration to over 85%. Federal Minister Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja praised CMCC's ongoing investment in Pakistan's digital landscape and highlighted the Prime Minister's vision for a digitally inclusive and empowered Pakistan. She stressed that partnerships like this are vital for enhancing the IT and telecom sectors, expanding access, and fostering innovation.

(April 29, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) is moving towards approving the merger of Telenor Pakistan Limited with

Pakistan

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), following intervention from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). In a letter addressed to the CCP, PTCL's legal representative, Rahat Kausar Hasan, referenced Section 11(11) of the Competition Act 2010 and presented a new settlement offer. The proposal suggests an investment of approximately \$1 billion from UAEbased telecom company e&, formerly known as Etisalat, which holds a majority stake in PTCL. Sources indicate that the CCP has requested a timeline and specific details on the investment areas to be made. Under Section 11(11) of the Competition Act, if the Commission determines that a proposed merger will not substantially reduce competition, it cannot block the transaction. The law also allows the Commission to approve the merger with conditions or enforceable agreements. PTCL's merger application had been delayed for almost a year due to the company's failure to provide the necessary documents in response to multiple gueries. Additionally, there is an unresolved issue regarding an outstanding payment of Rs 800 million. A settlement of \$640 million had been reached between the previous government and PTCL management, but the payment remains pending. Following the intervention of SIFC, PTCL proposed a fresh investment of \$1 billion. The company had approached the council for assistance in resolving the matter. Upon completion of the merger, Ufone Pakistan, which will acquire Telenor, is expected to have over 75 million mobile subscribers, positioning it as the second-largest telecom company in Pakistan. This merger is anticipated to enhance competition in the mobile phone services market, leading to improved services for consumers. Meanwhile, the government is actively working on initiatives related to the mobile phone services sector. (April 10, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Numerous investments are carried out across various level of technology innovation, with partnerships fueling significant growth in these areas and revitalising the country's economy. Speaking to The Peninsula, Partner and Advisor at KPMG Qatar, Ahmed Ben Abdallah said "Qatar is rapidly advancing in AI, cloud computing and across other emerging technologies." He mentioned that Qatar is positioning itself as a regional and dynamic leader in digital transformation. "That is an area, which is a testimony of the role of Qatar at the global level when it comes to innovation and technology", he said. Abdallah explained, "There are strategic investments at many levels that are happening when it comes to technology innovation in Qatar and partnerships that are driving real growth in these fields, supporting the transition of Qatar towards a knowledge-based economy." Abdallah was a key speaker during the Web Summit Qatar 2025 held in February, exploring innovation and the role of emerging technologies in shaping the

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Saudi Arabia has been selected as a member of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Digital Regulation Network Board, with Eng. Omar Alrejraje, Deputy Governor for Regulation and Competition at the Communications, Space, and Technology Commission (CST), representing the Kingdom. This appointment underscores Saudi Arabia's growing international leadership and the global confidence in its regulatory capabilities. This selection follows Saudi Arabia's impressive ranking as the second-best G20 country and fourth globally in digital regulatory readiness. Additionally, the Kingdom has achieved a G5 leadership level in digital regulatory maturity, according to the ITU. The Digital Regulation Network includes 13 entities representing regulatory bodies from around the world, working to address key challenges, share experiences, offer recommendations, and launch initiatives aimed at accelerating digital transformation, enhancing international cooperation in the digital economy, and fostering an innovative environment for investment. Saudi Arabia has been a long-standing member of the ITU Council, contributing actively to ITU initiatives and objectives for nearly six decades. The Kingdom remains committed to strengthening both regional and international collaboration in the communications sector. (May 2, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

The Digital Regulatory Academy (DRA) held a training program titled "Understanding Public Policies" in collaboration with international public policy experts. The program aimed to strengthen the capabilities of professionals specializing in public policy, regulatory law, and economics from the digital economy, future of businesses, alongside other tech and industry leaders with startups, entrepreneurs, and investors. Abdallah said, "If you even think forward technologies around quantum computing, these are on the horizon and you see many hyperscalers, tech giants, and leaders already delivering their cloud and quantum computing solutions." He noted these emerging technologies will be solving challenges once thought were impossible around by adding "Technology alone is not enough and the real impact comes from how organisations apply it." The official stressed that KPMG in Qatar "witness, observe and help" clients to deliver successful technology programs and the most successful companies we see do not just adopt AI. He said that they don't merely explore digital solutions, but integrate them into every aspect of their business and those that harness that power of technology with proposed agility and vision are setting new bedrocks for success in industries. (April 11, 2025) www.thepeninsulagatar.com

Saudi Arabia

Oatar

space and innovation ecosystem, the National Regulatory Committee, and telecommunications and technology service providers. This initiative was designed to achieve excellence and regulatory maturity in response to rapid changes, while enhancing decision-making. Over 40 participants from 14 different organizations attended the four-day training program. Throughout the sessions, participants learned about public policy concepts and how to systematically analyze complex challenges. The program emphasized developing participants' skills in public policy analysis and understanding its complex dynamics, while providing practical frameworks and tools for designing and drafting policies using a collaborative approach that promotes alignment among stakeholders and addresses long-term challenges through an integrated perspective across various disciplines. This program is an advanced extension of the public policy training program held in 2024, representing one of several initiatives by the DRA aimed at developing human capital and building capabilities in public policy and digital regulations to support the Saudi Vision 2030 objectives and contribute to creating a thriving digital economy with innovative regulatory approaches. (April 29, 2025) new.cst.gov.sa

The Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) leads a high-level roundtable on global Dialogue for Satellite Industry Synergy on the sidelines of the 40th Space Symposium, held in Colorado Springs, USA, from 7-10 of April 2025, attended by senior executives, experts and decision-makers from prominent global companies in the communications and Space sector (SpaceX, Project Kuiper, Iridium, EchoStar, Lockheed Martin,

Boeing, NSG, SEAKR, PwC, BEA Systems, LEONARDO). The roundtable aimed to discuss the unification of technical standards in Space communications and enhance international collaboration in the sector, as well as provide an effective international platform to discuss challenges and opportunities associated with expanding the use of these technologies. It also aimed to foster innovation and create an integrated system that encourages investment and technological advancement in this critical field, in addition to strengthen regulatory in the space sector and unify the global perspectives. H.E. the Governor of CST, Dr. Mohammad bin Saud Altamimi, opened the session by indicating to the rapid development of Space communications technologies and the

necessity for intensive efforts to unify technical standards and coordinate the frequency spectrum to build an attractive investment climate in the Space communications sector, as well as its role in enhancing integration between active entities at both local and international levels, promoting market entry opportunities for interested parties, and adopting technical systems with compatible specifications and standards, which will lead to reducing capital and operational costs. This roundtable is part of CST's continuous efforts to strengthen Saudi Arabia's position and global leadership in Space communications, aligning with Saudi Vision 2030's goals of enhancing the role of modern technologies in economic growth and social development. (April 8, 2025) new.cst.gov.sa



Syria

Minister of Communications and Technology Abdul Salam Haykal discussed with Saudi Ambassador in Damascus, Dr. Faisal al-Mujfel, ways to enhance joint cooperation in the telecommunications and information technology sector. The talks are part of efforts to support the reconstruction process. Minister Abdul Salam Haykal emphasized during a meeting at the ministry, the vital role of the telecommunications sector in improving citizens' living conditions and driving economic development. He highlighted the ministry's plans to enhance digital infrastructure and keep pace with global advancements, despite challenges such as funding shortages and infrastructure limitations. In turn, Saudi Ambassador Dr. Faisal al-Mujfel hailed the deep historical ties binding Syria and Saudi Arabia. He affirmed his country's readiness to provide technical support and share its expertise in the telecommunications sector to assist Syria, including the formation of joint task forces to implement projects.

(May 6, 2025) www.sana.sy



Tunisia has been ranked 79th globally and 4th in Africa in the newly released Digital Evolution Index 2025 by the Fletcher School's Institute for Business in the Global Context. The study evaluates 125 countries, covering 92% of the world's population, across four key pillars: institutional environment, demand conditions, supply conditions, and innovation/adaptation capacity. Mauritius leads Africa in the rankings, securing 62nd place globally with a score of 52.31 points. South Africa follows in 66th place with 50.11 points, and Botswana is ranked 76th with 45.33 points. After Tunisia, Kenya rounds out the African top 5 with a score of 41.48, ranking 84th globally. Other African nations in the top 10 include Morocco (87th), Egypt (91st), Namibia (94th), Algeria (96th), and Senegal (97th), with scores ranging from 40.64 to 34.70. Despite the progress, the report highlights a significant digital divide, with North America and Europe leading the rankings, while Africa and the Middle East continue to face challenges in digital development. The United States takes the top spot globally with a perfect score of 100, followed by Singapore (96.72), Finland (89.20), Denmark (88.55), and Sweden (88.24), all praised for their advanced digital ecosystems and innovation capabilities. The overall score is derived from 184 indicators, which are grouped into the four main pillars and rated on a scale from 0 to 10, providing a final score from 0 to 100. (May 9, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com

Tunisia

Tunisian authorities are looking into opening the 3.3-3.4 GHz frequency band for private 5G networks. The goal is to let businesses set up their own networks for specific industrial or commercial needs. The National Frequencies Agency (ANF) has launched a public consultation, to gather input from stakeholders. The ANF says this frequency band offers a good balance between coverage and speed. It supports data rates up to several gigabits per second-enough for demanding industrial uses. "5G in Tunisia isn't just about faster internet," the agency said in its consultation paper. "There's growing interest in private networks across different sectors. The private 5G market offers big opportunities for businesses and is expected to grow guickly in the coming years, driven by demand for high-quality, low-latency connections." But there's a hurdle. In Tunisia and other North African countries, the 3.3-3.4 GHz band is still used by European military radars, especially along the coast and on ships. To avoid interference, the International Telecommunication Union recommends using mitigation techniques and safeguards to allow telecoms and defense systems to operate side by side.

(April 7, 2025) www.ecofinagency.com



Dubai aims to be a business-friendly artificial intelligence hub with every future digital company being Al-driven, according to a UAE Minister. It is part of a roadmap that will see the emirate further cement its status as one of the leaders in AI adoption. Speaking at the opening of Dubai AI week, Omar Sultan AlOlama Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, Digital Economy and Remote Work Applications, said that the emirate has set several targets to improve its use of AI over the next year, one of which will be an integration of government and private sector. "Dubai understands business and artificial intelligence," he said. "We know that we can work with the best of the brightest to be able to ensure that Dubai is the place where artificial intelligence is deployed and where the benefits are reaped." He added that there is going to be "a shift" when it comes to startups, success, and artificial intelligence. "Every single unicorn that has come out of the UAE was an AI company," he explained. "Whether it's Careem or Souq.com, they are all companies that were AI first. Every single company that's going to be in our digital economy moving forward needs to be an AI first company. And that's going to be a key focus for the next phase." AlOlama said that Dubai was committed to creating a talent pool. "We want to be a hub that grows the best talent, nurtures them, and hopefully exports their ingenuity to the rest of the world," he said. To do this, Dubai will invest in education and

United Arab Emirates

equipping educators with the "right tools" to help students. Over 10,000 students benefitted from launching AI week in educational institutes last year.

(April 21, 2025) www.khaleejtimes.com

Omran Sharaf, the UAE's Assistant Foreign Minister for Advanced Science and Technology, has warned that the rapid rise of AI technologies could lead to dangerous outcomes if they fall into the wrong hands. Speaking at the Global Conference on AI, Security, and Ethics in Geneva, Sharaf emphasized the importance of putting controls in place to prevent non-state actors and militants from accessing advanced weapons technologies. He highlighted the blurring lines between peaceful and military uses of technology and noted that emerging technologies are increasingly being used by non-state actors, sometimes more effectively than even state governments. Sharaf called for responsible and transparent handling of these technologies, urging global cooperation to set standards and avoid reckless approaches. The UAE, which has been a leader in AI initiatives, also aims to have a fully AI-powered government by 2027, showcasing the country's commitment to advancing technology while managing its risks.

(April 2, 2025) www.meatechwatch.com 🚺



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REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SA-ME-NA REGION



Australia

The telecoms Regulator has laid out its views on options for the future use of spectrum licences, expressing favour in extending most licences due to expire between 2028 and 2032. The Regulator outlined that most of the licences for wide-area wireless broadband should be renewed as they "will continue to promote the longterm public interest". The regulator is, however, looking into 2.3 GHz licenses for private networks in remote areas and what it described as "inefficiencies" with the 3.4 GHz band, used for network capacity and fixed wireless. Adam Suckling, deputy chair of the ACMA, said: "Decisions affecting licences held by the mobile operators will shape the Australian telecommunications market and the services that it delivers for consumers for the next 20 years. "The considerations are complex, but the long-term public interest guides our thinking. That means keeping in focus every Australian who uses a mobile phone, catches a train, or relies on free-to-air news, including for information on natural disasters such as the recent Cyclone Alfred." In addition to looking into specific use cases like private networks, the regulator is exploring the idea of offering licences for smaller players, in particular, operators "interested in providing localised wide area wireless broadband services".

(April 2, 2025) www.capacitymedia.com



Belarus

The Belarusian government has announced plans to roll out a single 5G network, following a similar approach taken by the Malaysian government. According to national news agency BelTA, President Aleksandr Lukashenko has signed a decree aimed at developing modern telecoms infrastructure, laying the foundation for the eventual launch of 5G services. The government said the initiative forms part of a wider effort to harness new technologies to improve the functioning of the state, benefit citizens, and support the business sector. Under the decree, Belarus will develop its 5G network using a single infrastructure operator model. It also plans to enhance existing 4G services and expand coverage. This approach is not entirely new for the country. Mobile operators A1, MTS and Life currently provide 4G services through wholesale agreements with state-owned operator beCloud. The deployment of 5G is expected to improve both the availability and quality of mobile services nationwide.

(April 7, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com



Brazil

The National Telecommunications Agency (Anatel) has approved changes to Starlink's license, allowing it to launch 7,500 more satellites. The decision significantly broadens Starlink's footprint in Brazil, building on its existing license granted in 2022, which covered 4,408 satellites. Starlink currently operates around 6,750 low Earth orbit satellites, which provide global coverage of satellite internet services. Following this latest approval, the company is now authorized operate up to 7,500 additional satellites to provide services across the country. While the council unanimously approved the expansion, Anatel issued a regulatory alert highlighting the need to modernize Brazil's telecoms framework. According to councilor Alexandre Freire, the "purpose is to preserve the coherence, predictability and legitimacy of administrative deliberations, while ensuring transparency in dialogue with the regulated sector and society in general". "Although we have unanimously granted the request to change Starlink's satellite exploration right to expand the number of satellites and authorized frequency bands, as well as update the associated networks, this case has made clear to me the limitations of the current regulations to offer adequate responses to the complex issues that emerge in this scenario," he added. Starlink's operations in Brazil have become entangled with Elon Musk's broader business interests, particularly his ownership of X (formerly Twitter). In August 2024, Brazil's Supreme Court ordered the suspension of X after the platform refused to comply with legal demands to take down accounts accused of spreading misinformation and failed to appoint a local legal representative. Although Starlink and X are legally separate, authorities treated them as part of the same economic group, freezing Starlink's assets to force compliance. While Starlink ultimately agreed to block access to X, allowing it to maintain its service in Brazil, the episode highlights the fragile and politically sensitive relationship between Musk's companies and Brazilian institutions. (April 9, 2025) www.totaltele.com



A new report says Telus Corp. is the most complainedabout telecommunications service provider in Canada so far this year, as overall grievances by customers continue to rise in the sector. The mid-year report by the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-Television Services (CCTS) says it handled 11,909 total complaints from customers between Aug. 1, 2024 and Jan. 31, 2025. That's up almost 12 per cent from the same reporting period a year earlier. The increase was driven by customers' issues with their wireless service, which represented around half of all complaints submitted, followed by internet issues, which accounted for just over one-quarter of total grievances. The watchdog said it's the first time since it was established in 2007 that Telus topped its complaints list. Rogers Communications Inc. has held that undesirable title for two straight full-year reports after overtaking Bell Canada. Telus accounted for 19.7 per cent of all complaints accepted by the CCTS, followed by Rogers at 18.7 per cent and BCE Inc.'s Bell Canada at 16.7 per cent. Complaints about Telus were up almost 63 per cent year-over-year, which the commission said was driven by issues around incorrect charges, breach of contract, and regular price increases on monthly plans. (April 30, 2025) www.globalnews.com



China

China's three major mobile players racked up nearly 1.05 billion 5G network subscribers at end-March, with market leader China Mobile registering an 18.6 per cent year-on-year growth to 578 million. China Telecom and China Unicom disclosed their network numbers in the quarter, previously releasing package subscriber figures. China Telecom reported 266.2 million 5G network subscribers, with its website no longer showing package subs – those with 5G plans but not compatible devices. Total mobile users increased 4.3 per cent to 429.5 million. China Unicom ended the quarter with 203.8 million 5G network subs. A year ago it reported 268.9 million 5G package subs. China Mobile's operating revenue was flat at CNY222.4 billion (\$2.6 billion), while China Telecom's sales were also unchanged at CNY135.5 bil-

lion. Both reported roughly 3 per cent growth in net profit: CNY30.6 billion for China Mobile and CNY8.9 billion for China Telecom. China Mobile's telecoms services revenue inched up 1.4 per cent to CNY222.4 billion. Its overall mobile subscriber base dipped marginally to 1 billion. ARPU improved 3.5 per cent to CNY46.90. Average data consumption slipped from 16.6GB to 16.1GB. China Unicom's operating revenue increased 3.9 per cent to CNY103.4 billion, with service revenue edging up 2 per cent to CNY90.9 billion. Sales of telecom products grew 19.3 per cent to CNY12.5 billion. Its net profit increased 5.6 per cent to CNY5.9 billion. The operator added 4.8 million mobile subscribers to close March with 349 million.

(April 28, 2025) www.mobileworldlive.com

Colombia

Colombia started operations of a 20bn-peso (US\$4.7mn), 324km fiber network connecting Medellín and Quibdó to enable internet access in Chocó department. The network is owned by Internexa, the connectivity division of state firm ISA. It is the region's second fiber network and seen as essential to provide redundancy and guarantee connectivity as Azteca Comunicaciones' infrastructure is severely damaged. Last week, fiber cables in Santa Cecilia municipality were cut, leading to a service outage in Chocó. The damage resulted from vandalism, according to Azteca Comunicaciones. This backbone network connects municipalities around Quibdó, a press release by the ICT ministry said. It also connects to 712km national fiber network that serves 19 municipalities and is part of a project to connect 40,000 homes in 13 municipalities.

(April 28, 2025) www.bnamericas.com



Democratic Republic of Congo It now seems that the Democratic Republic of Congo has granted a licence to satellite communications company Starlink – despite an earlier ban, which finally appears to have been rescinded. The DRC said not only that it had become the latest African country to grant a licence to Starlink but that the company would begin operations soon. As Reuters points out, DRC, which has been dealing with war and instability for some time, has low connectivity. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) figures indicate that under a third of the population were using the internet by 2023. However, it's not clear why DRC has reversed its view given the apparently strong resistance to a service that military officials feared could be used by rebel groups, including Rwandan-backed M23 insurgents who have reportedly routed the DRC army to take control of the eastern part of the country. Indeed, only a year ago, the Congolese Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority said use of Starlink was banned and violators would face sanctions. Meanshile Starlink continues to make inroads into African markets. April saw licence awards in Lesotho, Guinea-Bissau and Somalia, bringing the service to more than 20 African countries. Could Uganda be next? It has been widely reported that Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said that he had had a productive meeting with Starlink representatives. Starlink isn't having things entirely its own way. Late April also saw the first 27 satellites in Project Kuiper launched, though that still leaves the Amazon business, also positioned as a boost to connectivity in remote or rural areas, some way behind Starlink.

(May 5, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com

Arcep is adopting a decision setting a price cap for access to the Orange copper local loop, which is subject to an obligation of cost-based pricing, and applicable for three years: 2026, 2027 and 2028. The responses to the public consultation, which ran from 5 December 2024 to 17 January 2025, did not lead the Authority to make any substantial changes to its draft decision. The Authority submitted this draft decision to the European Commission for comment on 27 February 2025. As a result, the Authority has set the recurring monthly rate for access to full unbundling (LLU), subject to an obligation of cost-based pricing, of €9.20 for the years 2026 to 2028. This tariff is identical to the one charged in 2024 and 2025. This capped price is on top of the monthly flat-rate tax on network businesses (IFER) which Arcep adjusts every year to factor in the annual IFER update, as was the case in 2024 and 2025.

(April 11, 2025) www.en.arcep.fr



Ghana

France

Sam George, Ghana's Minister of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations, is widely reported to have set what is described as a firm deadline of June 2025 for the Next Generation Infrastructure Company (NGIC) to launch 5G services in the West African country. But will it be met? Ghana's government announced in August 2023 that it did not plan to auction 5G spectrum but would establish NGIC, a "neutral shared infrastructure company", to deliver nationwide 4G and 5G services. In November 2024, NGIC announced its readiness to collaborate with operators and internet service providers (ISPs) to launch 5G services. It apparently claimed that operators MTN Ghana, Airtel Ghana and Telecel would roll out the services to their customers before the end of 2024 in the cities of Accra. Kumasi and Takoradi. However, the rollout deadlines have been repeatedly postponed. In January 2025 we

reported that Sam George's predecessor, Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, said that deploying 5G services depended on operators purchasing the necessary capacity and providing it to their customers. This does not appear to have happened. A May deadline to deliver 5G services is not going to be met. Sam George has said that if a new deadline of June 2025 is missed, renegotiations will be on the table. At the moment NGIC has an exclusive right to offer 5G services in Ghana for a decade. Even if this target is met, 5G demand is not guaranteed. Many sources quote market research company Omdia, which estimates that 8.2 millions of MTN Ghana's 29 million subscribers were on 4G at the end of the fourth guarter of 2024 but only 445,000 subscribers of Telecel Ghana's almost 6.5 million subscribers were on 4G in the same period. Many other subscribers are still using 3G. (April 18, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com





Hong Kong's Communications Authority (CA) revealed plans to hold an auction in Q4 to reassign 50MHz of 2.6GHz spectrum, which expires in May 2028. CA stated the spectrum utilisation fee will be determined by auction, with the reserve price to be specified nearer the time of the sale. The agency explained its technology-neutral approach would allow assignees to use any widely recognised standard for service provision. Winning bidders may submit a joint application for frequency swapping mutually agreeable to the companies. The resigned spectrum will be sold in five 2x5MHz blocks, with a spectrum cap of 20MHz

to be imposed on each bidder. A new unified carrier licence with a validity period of 15 years will be issued to each winner. Assignees will be required to provide a minimum coverage of 90 per cent within five years of receiving the spectrum. The spectrum is currently held by China Mobile Hong Kong, Genius Brand, HKT and SmarTone. Genius Brand is a joint venture between HKT and Hutchison Telephone. The CA and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development opened a public consultation in September 2024 to gather input from stakeholders.

(April 2, 2025) www.mobileworldlive.com



The Indian government will increase its stake in Vodafone Idea, opens new tab to approximately 48.99% by converting 369.5 billion rupees (\$4.3 billion) in outstanding spectrum auction dues into equity, a regulatory filing from the company showed. The Ministry of Communications has directed Vodafone Idea to issue 36.95 billion shares at 10 rupees each, the filing said, boosting the government's stake from 22.6%. The government is already the largest shareholder in the telecom company, according to LSEG data. Vodafone Idea - formed by a merger between the Indian arm of the UK's Vodafone Group (VOD.L), opens new tab and Aditya Birla Group's Idea Cellular in 2018 - said its initial investors will continue to have operational control despite the increased government stake. The move aligns with the government's September 2021 relief package announced for the telecom sector. In December, the company announced a plan to raise up to 19.80 billion rupees through the issue of preferential shares. As of September 2024, the debt-saddled firm's total debt pile stood at 2.16 trillion rupees, including deferred spectrum payment obligations it owes to the government.

(April 1, 2025) www.reuters.com

Indonesia

Singapore-based mobile network provider Smartcom has begun operations in Indonesia, focusing on logistics, oil and gas, and public safety sectors. The company provides push-to-talk communication solutions and devices with features such as barcode scanners and GPS tracking. The technology integrates ATEX-certified hardware with TASSTA communication apps, working on LTE or Wi-Fi networks. Smartcom's solutions are already used by the National Traffic Police Corps and Kereta Api Indonesia. The systems rely on 4G to 5G networks, with support from Indonesian telecom provider Telkomsel to ensure priority bandwidth during peak traffic. This collaboration aims to maintain connectivity for sensitive communications in high-risk environments. Smartcom's devices, are now available in Indonesia through local partners in Java, Sumatra, and Kalimantan.

(April 30, 2025) www.techinasia.com



Italy

Italy is pressing ahead with a plan to set up its own low-orbit satellite constellation, a source close to the matter told Reuters. The dual use constellation - for civil and military uses - will be made up of over 100 satellites, which will be interoperable with all other existing constellations, the source said. "The idea is for the constellation to work together with others, not necessarily on its own," the person said, adding that the constellation isn't likely to be ready earlier than

2031. Italy's space agency presented the government with a preliminary feasibility study for the project in early March, well ahead of the summer deadline it had initially set. It is now moving forward with a so-called phase 2, entailing talks with companies including statecontrolled defence and aerospace group Leonardo (LDOF.MI), opens new tab, which will be involved in manufacturing and setting up the constellation. (March 31, 2025) www.reuters.com



Kyrgyzstan

Kazakhstan has surpassed 3,000 installed 5G base stations nationwide, Kazinform reported recently, citing Kazakhtelecom, the country's largest telecommunications company. Chief Innovation Officer at Kazakhtelecom Nurlan Meirmanov stated that the rollout is part of a consortium project with Mobile Telecom-Service, a joint company of Tele2 and ALTEL brands, and progress is ahead of schedule. The first stage of license obligations is expected to be completed by 2027, so that 5G will be available in all regional

centers. Meirmanov noted rapid growth in 5G usage, with traffic increasing by up to 40% in some cities in the first quarter of 2025. In Almaty and Astana, 30-50% of mobile traffic is already being served via the 5G network. Each operator now has access to a band of 100 MHz, which is a significantly larger resource compared to the 20 MHz available for 4G. Kazakhtelecom plans to install over 50 new 5G stations in 2025, and more than half of them are already operational.

(April 21, 2025) www.astanatimes.com



Malavsia

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has reportedly directed all telcos in the country to proactively resolve internet access issues on a monthly, state-by-state basis rather than wait for customers to complain before taking action. According to the Bernama news agency, Malaysia's Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said he often receives complaints about Internet access in many areas, particularly in Ayer Kuning. Fahmi had told service providers to come up with a solution by Sunday or face strict disciplinary action. Fahmi said the problem is that telcos only act on receiving complaints. Under the new

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policy, the MCMC will collect internal telco data as well as data from speed-test service providers like Ookla to identify areas with spotty internet access, and provide telcos with a monthly list of access issues by state for them to resolve. "We are shifting from 'waiting for complaints' to 'this is the list you must complete for this month'," he told Bernama. Fahmi also said the directive is a follow-up measure to the 6-Way 4G Multi-Operator Core Network (MOCN) sharing agreement signed by all telcos in late January 2025, the report said.

(April 16, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com



Mexico

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum called on for part of a controversial telecommunications bill to be changed or eliminated, after critics said the legislation could limit free speech and permit government censorship. The bill moved quickly through Senate committees less than 24 hours after Sheinbaum proposed it, after the local broadcast of a U.S. government advertisement discouraging migration stirred controversy. Sheinbaum argues the legislation would prevent foreign governments from broadcasting political or ideological propaganda in Mexico. Critics say the bill would deliver control of telecoms to the state through a new agency to replace Mexico's previous telecoms agency, which Sheinbaum's allies in Congress voted to abolish last year. At a press conference, Sheinbaum said one of the bill's articles, no. 109, should be "clarified" to curb criticism. "If it's causing confusion and people think it's about censorship, that has never been the goal. In any case, the article should be removed or its wording modified to make it absolutely clear that the government of Mexico is not going to censor anyone, especially not what is published on digital platforms," she said.

(April 25, 2025) www.fidelity.com



Nigeria

Nigeria's National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with SecDojo, a cybersecurity training platform, to strengthen the country's resilience against cyberthreats through what are described as targeted capacity-building initiatives. This strategic partnership is designed to bolster Nigeria's cybersecurity landscape through comprehensive capacity-building initiatives. The collaboration will focus on the establishment of a Cybersecurity Academy, delivery of advanced training and simulation programmes, development of customised curricula and educational resources, and facilitation of research, knowledge sharing, and professional exchange programmes. This initiative is described as part of a continued effort towards the implementation of the present administration's agenda of strengthening national security by committing to robust cybersecurity measures and digital trust. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Director General of NITDA, Kashifu Inuwa Inuwa expressed his enthusiasm about the collaboration and noted that, as Nigeria continues its digital transformation journey, investing in human capital is paramount. He also touched on the growing global demand for cybersecurity professionals and emphasised Nigeria's potential to fill the talent gap, given its large and youthful population. However, he also argued that there is an urgent need to shift from short-term skills acceleration programmes to longterm, systemic integration of digital skills into academic curricula at all levels, from primary to tertiary education, and called for more partnerships with vendors to support digital literacy.

(April 16, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com



Peru

Peru has opened a call for the allocation of the 3.5GHz frequency band for public telecommunications services using 5G or higher technology. More precisely, the call comprises frequencies in the 3300-3800MHz band. News website BNamericas reports that the country's transport and communications ministry (MTC) will offer the frequencies directly to operators. MTC will offer 25MHz blocks. There is to be a maximum acquisition limit of four blocks per operator or group. However, the sale process is an interesting one. While every 100MHz package is valued at US\$127 million, the price will not necessarily guide the awards process. Instead,

allocations will be made in exchange for a number of mandatory investment commitments. These are expected to include the implementation of 4G along road corridors and in areas with no mobile connectivity or with only 2G or 3G coverage. Additional commitments include outdoor coverage in sports facilities, universities and other educational institutes and healthcare centres. As no bids appear to be involved, it's not clear what could constitute a winning submission. That said, it seems that the award of a block in the 3.5GHz band will be based on points obtained based on the additional commitments offered. We will, however, find out the winners by early August. Companies interested in participating must submit expressions of interest to communications programmes and projects authority DGPPC between May 7 to June 3. Qualifiers will be decided from June 25 to July 1. The submission of envelopes with additional deployment commitments will follow. Auction results are set for August 11. Part of the band (between 3400 and 3600MHz) is already assigned to operators Entel, Telefónica, Americatel and América Móvil for the provision of local carrier, personal communications and fixed telephony services. In the 3600-3800MHz frequency band there are four private and public telecommunications service operators that use fixed satellite services. BNamericas says that telecommunications operators using fixed satellite services will migrate to the Ku or extended Ku band.

(April 21, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com



Philippines

Philippines operator NOW Telecom Company has, it seems, lost its license to operate by order of regulator the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC). The NTC denied NOW's request for an extension of its nationwide mobile telecommunications system operating authority. This was a unanimous decision based on the alleged failure of the operator to comply with specific regulatory and operational requirements. NOW had, the ruling said, severely underutilized its assigned spectrum and has accrued more than PHP3.57 billion (about US\$62.33 million) of unpaid regulatory fees. As for rollout, quoted in a number of local news outlets, the NTC said: "After more than five years, the frequency band 3520-3540 MHz is used only in six out of 2,306 base stations (0.26%) or three out of 245 locations (1.22%)." The operator is also said to have missed an 18-month deadline to infuse additional capital accrued in 2020. The NTC has dismissed NOW claims that it owes no outstanding supervision and regulation fees (SRF) and spectrum user fees (SUF). A number of rulings have upheld the NTC's position, including one in March when the Supreme Court had upheld earlier rulings denying NOW's petition for a preliminary injunction against the NTC. The clincher, however, may be that, according to the NTC, NOW Telecom had agreed to conditions in an earlier temporary authorization, stating that any violation of the set conditions would lead to the recall of assigned frequencies. NOW has been around in various forms since 1992 when it was known as Satellite Paging Systems Philippines. It officially took the name NOW in 2013. In late 2020 NTC granted NOW a provisional authority and a cellular mobile telephone service license. The company has apparently claimed that it is now the fourth major telecommunications provider, though this has been disputed by the NTC, which says that it does not have enough frequencies to compete with the major players.

(April 7, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com



South Africa

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa has published the Draft National Radio Frequency Plan (NRFP) 2025 for public consultation. This plan outlines the allocation of radio communication services within the frequency range of 8.3 kHz to 3000 GHz to ensure the efficient and effective use of the radio frequency spectrum and orbital resources. All Radiocommunications Services and Radio Frequency Spectrum Assignments in the Republic of South Africa must be in line with the National Radio Frequency Plan in force and on a Technology Neutral basis. The draft update and amendment of the NRFP incorporates the decisions taken by the 2023 World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23) contained in the Final Acts of WRC 23, including the Minutes of WRC Plenary. The amendment and update of the Draft NRFP further incorporates the International Telecommunications Union's (ITU) Radio Regulations Edition 2024, in the main, the relevant frequency allocations in the ITU Region 1

and its associated footnotes. The Radio Regulations ensure that the use of the radio-frequency spectrum is rational, equitable, efficient, and economical, all while aiming to prevent harmful interference between different radiocommunication services. The Draft NRFP incorporates the agreement reached on the updates to the Radio Regulations identified new spectrum resources to support technological innovation, deepen global connectivity, increase access to and equitable use of space-based radio resources, and enhance safety at sea, in the air, and on land. The Draft NRFP is also consistent with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Frequency Allocation Plan (FAP) as well as the African Spectrum Allocation Plan thus ensuring that there is Regional Harmonisation with the resultant benefits on economies of scale, leading to Maturity of systems of the Radiocommunications that are affordable.

(April 7, 2025) www.icasa.org.za



Spain

The CNMC has approved the distribution of the net cost of the universal telecommunications service. In 2021, it amounted to €8.64 million and will be financed through the National Universal Service Fund (FNSU). Universal service guarantees that all citizens can access certain basic telecommunications services (regardless of their geographical location) at an affordable price. Each year, the CNMC calculates both the cost of providing the universal service and the contributions of the different operators. Telefónica provided the universal telecommunications service in 2021. According to the General Telecommunications Law, all electronic communications operators with revenues exceeding €100 million must contribute to financing the cost of the universal service. In 2021, 20 operators met this requirement and must assume the financing of the universal service based on their total business volume in the market. In any case, several of these operators belong to the three largest business groups in the sector (Telefónica, MASORANGE, and Vodafone), which together contribute 95% of the fund.

(April 16, 2025) www.cnmc.es

Thailand

Thailand's Association of Digital Television Broadcasting (ADTEB) reportedly urged the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) to either scrap its plan to auction 3500-MHz spectrum to telcos or postpone it until it comes up with a feasible migration plan for digital TV broadcasters. ADTEB issued its comments at a NBTC public hearing to discuss future plans for seven spectrum bands: 850 MHz, 1500 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 3500 MHz and 26 GHz. The 3500-MHz band is currently used by digital TV and satellite broadcasters. The NBTC initially planned to auction the band in 2027 but is considering holding it earlier. According to the Bangkok Post, ADTEB president Suphap Kleekajai complained that the NBTC is moving too fast on the 3500-MHz band and hasn't offered any practical solutions for digital TV broadcasters - who are already struggling to stay in business - to migrate to other bands. The NBTC auctioned the band to 24

digital TV channels in 2013, but of those, only 15 are still broadcasting, with the other nine shutting down due to financial difficulties. With video streaming growing in popularity, only around 10% of Thai households watch digital TV channels via set-top boxes, the report said. ADTEB called on the NBTC to drop plans to auction the band to telcos, who want to use the band for 5G and potentially 6G services. AIS and True Corp have already expressed interest in acquiring 3500-MHz spectrum for their 5G networks. Paiboon Damrongchaitham, Chairman of media conglomerate GMM Grammy, said that ADTEB members need to use the band until at least 2029, which is when existing digital TV licenses expire. He also said ADTEB would file a complaint against NBTC with the Administrative Court over any negative effects its decision on the 3500-MHz band would have on its members, the report said.

(April 2, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com



Uganda

UAE-based investor RCC or Rowad Capital Commercial, is set to acquire a substantial 60% stake in Uganda Telecommunications Corporation (UTel). This deal isn't just about snapping up another telecoms firm it's got a much bigger aim. They're planning to pour in an initial investment of US\$25 million and that won't be the end of it, mind you. Over the next three years, they're committing an impressive US\$200 million more, specifically aiming to help UTel capitalise on managing and commercialising Uganda's National Backbone Infrastructure (NBI), the country's crucial ICT network spanning nationwide. The Ugandan government isn't stepping away entirely; they'll hold onto a 40% share. To be precise, the Ministry of Finance will keep a 25% stake, while the Ministry of ICT retains the remaining 15%. It does look like the state wants to keep skin in the game and ensure UTel continues serving the broader national intrest. There's no shortage of optimism and ambition behind this partnership, but there's also a realisation that turning around UTel is no walk in the park. Let's not forget, the company has had its difficulties, including a troubling spell under court-appointed administration. Exactly how RCC and the government plan to tackle these challenges remains unclear.

(April 9, 2025) www.en.arageek.com



United Kingdom

The communications regulator Ofcom is banning mobile operators from leasing numbers that can be used by criminals to intercept and divert calls and messages, including security codes sent by banks to customers. Ofcom said it would stop the leasing of "global titles", special types of phone numbers used by mobile networks to support services to make sure messages and calls reach the intended recipient. The regulator said until now global titles, which are used in the background of billions of calls and messages sent worldwide, could be leased out to third parties, providing a technical loophole whereby criminals could get hold of and intercept messages. Natalie Black, the director for networks and communications at Ofcom, said: "We are taking world-leading action to tackle the threat posed by criminals gaining access to mobile networks. Leased global titles are one of the most significant and persistent sources of malicious signalling. Our ban will help prevent them falling into the wrong hands, protecting mobile users and our critical telecoms infrastructure in the process."The National Cyber Security Centre has recognised the risk posed by leasing global titles, but Ofcom said it had implemented a ban because industry-led efforts to tackle the problem had not been effective.

(April 22, 2025) www.theguardian.com



United States The Federal Communications Commission initiated a review of the decades-old spectrum sharing regime between different types of satellite systems. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking adopted, begins a formal proceeding to enable greater and more intensive use of spectrum for space activities in the United States. Today's satellite systems offer highspeed, low-latency broadband connectivity across the country to American consumers and businesses and enable lifesaving communications in rural areas and during emergencies. In short, these satellites are bridging the digital divide. Even so, regulatory barriers

hold satellite systems back from delivering even better coverage, capacity, and signal quality. Outdated power restrictions adopted decades ago represent the greatest limitation on modern commercial satellite capabilities. In this proceeding, the FCC will look to update those power restrictions for use of the workhorse satellite frequencies (Ku- and Ka- bands) that support the next generation of satellite broadband constellations in Low-Earth Orbit. FCC spectrum rules for these bands are underpinned by dated technical rules that were written for the satellite marketplace of the 1990s.

(April 29, 2025) www.fcc.gov



Vietnam

The telecoms regulator is urging the government to introduce mandatory handset registration in a bid to tackle rising cybercrime and improve the safety of mobile money transactions. Hasha Myambo, an engineer at the Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), called for handset registration to complement the country's existing SIM card database. He argued that this would enhance transaction security and help rebuild trust in Zimbabwe's digital infrastructure. While SIM card registration has been in place since 2013, Myambo is advocating for the creation of a national database of mobile phone IMEI numbers. He noted that this could play a crucial role in combating fraud, especially as more unconnected users come online and become vulnerable to digital threats. One of the key benefits of the proposed system, according to Myambo, would be the ability to block lost or stolen handsets from accessing mobile networks - helping to curb device theft and unauthorised use. Myambo also highlighted that POTRAZ is working with ICT stakeholders and other regulators to develop a national strategy aimed at integrating ICT into economic and social development. He added that the regulator is shifting away from a "command and control" model in favour of a more collaborative approach to drive Zimbabwe's digital economy forward.

(April 15, 2025) www.developingtelecoms.com 🕼

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