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View and Policy &
Regulatory Reading

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Eng. Aladdin Baitfadhil
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THIS MONTH

LOCATION AS THE NEXT DIGITAL COMPETITION

SAMENA TRENDS

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Location as the Next Digital Competition

Digital investment is now becoming more closely tied to location because companies building data centers, cloud infrastructure, international networks, satellite services, and large computing facilities are looking at more than market size. They are also looking at access to power, land, international connectivity, ports, cable routes, regulation, and nearby markets. These factors are becoming increasingly important when decisions are made about where new digital infrastructure should be built.

This is already visible in many parts of the world. Mobile networks continue to add capacity, new spectrum is being brought into use, subsea cable systems are expanding, and satellite services are becoming more closely connected with traditional mobile networks. At the same time, investment in data centers and computing facilities is increasing, creating greater demand for reliable power and international connectivity. The developments covered in this edition reflect these changes, with operators investing in network capacity and automation while governments and regulators address spectrum, satellite licensing, equipment standards, service continuity, and new digital services.

The Middle East is well positioned in this environment because of its location between Asia, Africa, and Europe. The region already carries important international connectivity routes and continues to attract investment in telecommunications, cloud, data centers, satellite systems, and computing infrastructure. This gives several markets in the region an opportunity to build on their geographic position as well as their domestic demand, especially where connectivity, energy, infrastructure, and investment are available together.

Oman is one example. The Sultanate sits on the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, with access to routes connecting the Gulf with South Asia, East Africa, and wider

international markets. That position is supported by ports, economic zones, telecommunications networks, subsea cable systems, data centers, and energy infrastructure. Omantel reports participation in more than 20 subsea cable systems, approximately 120,000 kilometers of subsea network, seven subsea cable landing stations, and direct access to more than 120 international cities. These links give Oman an international connectivity position that extends beyond the requirements of its domestic market.

Different locations within Oman also support different types of activity. Salalah combines Indian Ocean access, port infrastructure, subsea connectivity, and data-center capacity, while Duqm offers large-scale industrial and port infrastructure alongside energy development and emerging space-related activity. Sohar has an established manufacturing and logistics base, while Muscat and the northern corridor bring together government, enterprise demand, national institutions, and communications infrastructure. In addition, foreign direct investment in Oman reached approximately OMR 31.38 billion at the end of 2025, committed investment across OPAZ-supervised zones stood at OMR 22.4 billion, and Future Fund Oman provides OMR 2 billion of capital over five years.

There is also further room for development. Opportunities identified in this edition include data centers, cloud, AI infrastructure, high-performance computing, cybersecurity, international connectivity, energy-supported computing, industrial technology, and satellite services. Some of these areas already have operating infrastructure behind them, while others remain at an earlier stage and will require further capital and technology. Oman is therefore relevant to the wider discussion because it combines existing infrastructure with areas where additional development is still taking place.



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

The broader point is that countries are looking more closely at how geography, infrastructure, energy, investment, and international connections can support digital growth. Different markets will compete in different ways. Some will benefit from large domestic demand, while others will have advantages in energy, cable routes, access to neighboring markets, or locations suitable for data centers and other infrastructure. For telecom operators and infrastructure companies, these factors are becoming more important when deciding where to invest. For governments, digital development is also becoming more closely linked with investment, energy, logistics, regulation, and infrastructure planning.

As digital infrastructure continues to expand, competition will increasingly be shaped by where it can be built efficiently, connected internationally, powered reliably, and supported by the surrounding economy. Location is therefore becoming a more important part of the competition for future digital investment. 🌍

SAMENA Council On Cross-Market Co-operation

SAMENA Council's Participation in AI & Digital Bridge 2026 Reinforces Opportunities for Cooperation Across AI, Telecommunications, Digital Infrastructure, Investment and International Digital Development

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council has concluded a series of high-level engagements in Astana, Kazakhstan, alongside its participation in AI & Digital Bridge 2026, held from 1–3 October under the theme "Kazakhstan as the Eurasian AI Hub." Opened by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Forum brought together government leaders, technology stakeholders, businesses, startups, talent and international participants around artificial intelligence, digital development and the technologies shaping the global economy. The high-level attention accorded to the Forum reflected the importance Kazakhstan is placing on artificial intelligence and digital transformation, as well as its ambition to strengthen its position within the international technology landscape. During his participation in Astana, the SAMENA Telecommunications Council CEO and Board Member Bocar A. BA held substantive discussions with senior leadership from the Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the country's telecommunications regulatory leadership. The discussions explored opportunities to strengthen cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Middle East's digital ecosystem, particularly across telecommunications, artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, policy and regulatory dialogue, innovation, investment and international cooperation. Commenting on the engagements, Mr. BA said: "My discussions in Astana reinforced my conviction that Kazakhstan has an important role to play in the digital geography connecting Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Its strategic position, technological ambition and growing focus on artificial intelligence create a strong basis for deeper engagement with our region." He added: "The Middle East has



Bocar A. BA, CEO and Board Member of SAMENA Telecommunications Council, with senior representatives of the Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development and telecommunications regulatory leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan during high-level engagements held alongside AI & Digital Bridge 2026 in Astana.

accumulated significant experience in advanced telecommunications, AI, cloud and data infrastructure, digital regulation and technology investment. Kazakhstan is developing its own strong digital ambitions and capabilities. Bringing these ecosystems closer together can create meaningful opportunities for governments, industry, innovators and investors on both sides."

Building a digital bridge between central Asia and the middle east

For SAMENA Council, the Astana engagements represent an opportunity to broaden cooperation between two digital ecosystems whose interests and capabilities are becoming complementary. Kazakhstan's geographic position at the crossroads of major economic regions, combined with its growing technology ecosystem and digital ambitions, provides a natural foundation for stronger engagement with Middle Eastern markets. The Middle East, in parallel, is witnessing significant devel-

opment in AI infrastructure, advanced telecommunications, cloud and data centers, digital government, technology investment and innovation. SAMENA Council sees considerable potential to connect these complementary strengths across future telecommunications networks, AI and digital infrastructure, cloud and data ecosystems, cybersecurity, digital policy and regulation, innovation, investment, skills development and international technology cooperation. Mr. BA noted: "The most valuable international partnerships are those that connect complementary capabilities and create practical opportunities. There is considerable scope to bring Kazakhstan's digital ecosystem into closer engagement with operators, technology companies, policymakers, investors and international institutions across the Middle East." "Our ambition should be to identify areas where cooperation can translate into tangible economic, technological and institutional value."

Astana strengthens its international digital engagement

AI & Digital Bridge 2026 provided an important international platform for industry leaders, technology companies, startups, policymakers and other stakeholders to engage around global technology trends and the development of the AI ecosystem. Its theme, "Kazakhstan as the Eurasian AI Hub," reflected the country's ambition to strengthen international cooperation and deepen its role within the emerging global digital economy. A further indication of Kazakhstan's expanding international digital engagement came during the Forum with the signing of an agreement between the Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development and GSMA to bring M360 to Astana in 2027. Mr. BA attended the signing. The agreement brings another important international industry platform to Kazakhstan and creates further opportunities to connect the country with the global mobile and technology community. Commenting on the development, Mr. BA said: "The decision to bring M360 to Astana is significant. International platforms of this nature create more than visibility:



they bring policymakers, operators, technology companies and investors into the same environment and can become catalysts for longer-term cooperation." He continued: "What I witnessed in Astana was a country deliberately widening its international digital engagement. AI & Digital Bridge, together with the future M360 Astana, provides a strong foundation for Kazakhstan to deepen its

interaction with the global technology and telecommunications community."

From engagement to practical cooperation

SAMENA Council intends to maintain its dialogue with Kazakhstan's digital leadership following the Astana meetings and to explore practical mechanisms through which engagement with the Middle East's telecommunications and technology ecosystem can be expanded. This could include greater interaction among policymakers and regulators, telecommunications operators and technology companies, alongside opportunities in AI, digital infrastructure, innovation, investment, cybersecurity, skills and international industry cooperation. Mr. BA concluded: "Astana has provided an excellent foundation for what I hope will become a sustained engagement. Kazakhstan brings ambition, talent, strategic geography and a growing technology ecosystem. The Middle East brings advanced digital infrastructure, investment capacity and considerable experience in technology-led economic transformation." "There is an opportunity to connect these strengths. SAMENA Council is ready to contribute to building that bridge and, importantly, to turning it into practical cooperation." 



SAMENA Council On Digital Continuity in Practice

Key Outcomes from the SAMENA Council Digital Continuity Forum 2026

Discussions across the Forum converged around six areas that together define how digital continuity is increasingly being considered across networks, infrastructure, regulation, operations, and future technology development.

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council convened the Digital Continuity Forum (DCF) 2026 at Atlantis The Palm, Dubai, bringing together telecommunications regulators, operators, technology provid-

ers, industry organizations, and digital ecosystem stakeholders to examine how essential digital services can remain available, recover effectively, and continue operating as infrastructure dependencies

become broader and more complex. The Forum also considered how continuity principles form part of the foundation for future network technologies, including 6G. Held with the Chief Patronage of the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority of the UAE, the Forum examined digital continuity across telecommunications networks, cloud and computing infrastructure, power, software platforms, security environments, and other systems that increasingly depend on one another. Discussions reflected the reality that continuity depends on multiple infrastructure layers, organizations, and technology domains working together and, as noted in the introduction of the Forum, that resilience carries multiple meanings for different stakeholders, while digital continuity is ultimately the test and demonstration of the capabilities built around it.

A central development during the Forum was the launch of the GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative, supported by the SAMENA Council in collaboration with its members, patrons, and ecosystem partners. The Initiative is intended to turn a shared regional concern into a continuing area of practical industry engagement. It recognizes that digital resilience depends on multiple networks, systems, organizations, and sectors working together. The GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative's framework centers on eight connected actions: Plan for disruption; Prevent what can be prevented; Tolerate disruption where it cannot be avoided; Contain failures so their effects do not spread; Recover affected services quickly; Regulate through clear requirements and responsibilities; Monitor conditions, dependencies, and weaknesses across the environment; and, above all, work Together.





As payments, healthcare, government services, energy, trade, and many other essential functions become increasingly dependent on digital systems, resilience must address what happens when something goes wrong: how well infrastructure holds, how far disruption spreads, and how quickly essential services can be restored.

Defining and Measuring Digital Resilience

Resilience now cannot be understood only through redundancy, availability, or recovery after failure. It is an end-to-end capability covering infrastructure, operations, services, security, sovereignty, recovery, and the ability to retain operational control when disruption occurs.

A more measurable understanding of resilience is also needed. Conventional measures such as coverage, speed, and nominal uptime remain important, but they do not fully indicate whether a service remains usable under stressed conditions. End-to-end measures such as latency, packet loss, routing performance, application behavior, recovery time, service degradation, and the ability to preserve priority functions provide a more complete basis for assessing continuity.

Clearer common definitions, measurable criteria, practical assessment, testing,

*The GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative's framework centers on eight connected actions: **Plan** for disruption; **Prevent** what can be prevented; **Tolerate** disruption where it cannot be avoided; **Contain** failures so their effects do not spread; **Recover** affected services quickly; **Regulate** through clear requirements and responsibilities; **Monitor** conditions, dependencies, and weaknesses across the environment; and, above all, work **Together**.*



and greater alignment between regulatory requirements, network design, operational

practices, and future standards are therefore necessary.

Protecting Critical Services and Operating Through Disruption

Maintaining full network capability is different from protecting the services that society cannot afford to lose during disruption. A minimum viable set of services should be identified for continuity during a crisis. These may include network attachment and authentication, voice, SMS, emergency communications, and continued operation of network and security control functions.

Resilience must also account for prolonged periods in which networks remain operational but at significantly reduced capacity. Under such conditions, continuity depends on knowing which services should be protected first, what level of degradation can be tolerated, and how quickly different functions must be restored.



Defining critical services, setting clear recovery objectives, and planning specifically for degraded operating conditions therefore become essential.

Governments and relevant authorities may need to identify national service priorities, while operators and infrastructure providers determine how those requirements can be maintained technically and operationally.



Understanding Dependencies and Designing Infrastructure Diversity

Telecommunications services increasingly depend on power, cloud infrastructure, software platforms, data centers, international connectivity, supply chains, positioning systems, applications, and security environments. A failure in one layer can therefore affect services elsewhere even when the telecommunications network itself remains technically available.

Dependencies across physical infrastructure, operations, applications, cloud environments, software, and external systems need to be mapped, with viable alternatives identified where those dependencies become critical.





failure. Infrastructure decisions should therefore consider not only the capability being introduced, but also the operational, technical, and security dependencies that come with it.

Building Cross-Sector and Regional Continuity Mechanisms

Digital continuity depends on multiple infrastructure layers and organizations working together.

Telecommunications, power, cloud, data centers, logistics, emergency services, government platforms, software systems, and cybersecurity environments increasingly rely on one another. Continuity

Route and geographic diversity, independent landing infrastructure, distributed data centers, backup power, terrestrial and non-terrestrial access, fiber, microwave, satellite systems, HAPS, spare parts, and recovery capability all form part of a broader resilience architecture.

Sovereignty also requires a more practical treatment. Sensitive data and functions may require stronger local protection, while other services may appropriately rely on regional infrastructure. Sovereignty therefore needs to be considered through service criticality, operational control, dependency, jurisdiction, and recoverability, rather than physical localization alone.

New technologies can introduce new dependencies and additional points of





planning therefore requires coordination across sectors, institutions, regulators, infrastructure owners, and technology providers.

Joint planning, regular exercises, simulation, shared threat analysis, coordinated response arrangements, and practical testing between government and industry are necessary to make such coordination operational.

Regional coordination is also increasingly important, particularly in spectrum, licensing, non-terrestrial networks, cross-border dependencies, resilience requirements, and service-performance measures.

Greater regional participation in international standards development is equally important. The region has demonstrated strong capability in adopting new telecommunications technologies, but greater participation in shaping technical requirements, standards, and future network frameworks will become increasingly important.

The GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative provides a continuing platform through which these areas can be taken forward, with its emphasis on planning, prevention, tolerance, containment, recovery, regulation, monitoring, and collective action.





Governing Autonomous and Increasingly Software-Driven Networks

Automation and autonomous network operations can improve fault detection, diagnosis, capacity management, threat response, restoration, and recovery. As networks become more software-driven, cloud-dependent, and operationally complex, manual processes alone may not be sufficient to manage the scale and speed of network events.

Continuous monitoring, event correlation, root-cause analysis, predictive fault management, automated restoration, proactive capacity management, digital

simulation, and self-healing functions are becoming increasingly relevant to network operations.

Greater autonomy, however, also creates governance requirements. Organizations need to determine which decisions may be delegated to systems, where human approval remains necessary, who retains operational authority, how actions are recorded, and how accountability is maintained.

Visibility into events, logs, telemetry, decisions, and outcomes therefore remains essential. Independent monitoring

paths and fail-safe mechanisms are also important where operators cannot rely entirely on the same network they are attempting to monitor or restore.

Digital continuity increasingly depends on knowing what must be protected, understanding where critical dependencies lie, ensuring that essential services can continue under degraded conditions, maintaining operational control as networks become more autonomous, and preparing across sectors and jurisdictions rather than within isolated systems.

Autonomous operations therefore need to develop together with clear authority, operational visibility, security controls, human responsibility, and defined fail-safe arrangements.



Preparing Today's Infrastructure for 6G and Future Networks

Preparation for 6G begins well before commercial deployment. Decisions being made today around architecture, fiber, computing, automation, security, spectrum, standards, and power infrastructure will shape future network capability.

Deep fiber deployment is an important foundation for future networks, extending from backbone and metro infrastructure toward the radio-access edge. Distributed computing and more automated network operations will also place greater demands on power availability, energy storage, operational efficiency, and infrastructure continuity.

Spectrum availability and regulatory preparation are equally important. Flexible licensing, terrestrial and non-terrestrial coordination, early spectrum planning, and regional alignment will influence how effectively future network technologies can be introduced.

Early deployment alone does not create commercial success. Experience from previous network generations shows that deployment must be accompanied by viable use cases, enterprise demand, sustainable investment models, and clear commercial value.

Future-network readiness therefore depends on decisions already being made around infrastructure investment, spectrum, energy, security, standards participation, operational models, and commercial viability.

The Forum further provided a platform for broader industry cooperation. The SAMENA Council and the World WLAN Application Alliance (WAA), the world's first international industry and standards organization dedicated to WLAN application, held their first formal engagement through a dedicated WLAN roundtable focused on regional cooperation, WLAN innovation, user experience, standardization, and the growing scope for cooperation as Wi-Fi, WLAN, and mobile networks become more closely connected within the wider access environment. The discussion

provided an opportunity for WAA and regional stakeholders, particularly regional operators, to establish direct engagement and consider areas for continued interaction.

Conclusively, digital continuity increasingly depends on knowing what must be protected, understanding where critical dependencies lie, ensuring that essential services can continue under degraded conditions, maintaining operational control as networks become more autonomous, and preparing across sectors and jurisdictions rather than within isolated

systems. These requirements carry both policy and business implications. Investment in continuity, cybersecurity, route diversity, backup systems, recovery capability, and automation should be assessed against the operational, financial, and wider economic cost of disruption and prolonged recovery. Resilience therefore needs to be defined, measured, tested, and built into infrastructure, operations, regulation, and investment decisions before disruption occurs, with digital continuity ultimately demonstrating whether those capabilities hold when they are needed. 📡



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SAMENA Council On Arab-Africa AI Cooperation

SAMENA Council Calls for Practical Arab–Africa Cooperation on AI Investment and Implementation

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council has called for stronger practical cooperation between the Arab region and Africa to translate growing interest in artificial intelligence into investment, implementation, stronger capabilities, and measurable economic value. Speaking during the AI-Forward Summit 2026 in Tunisia, the Council, represented by Bocar BA, noted that artificial intelligence is moving rapidly from experimentation into businesses, public institutions, infrastructure, and everyday life. As this transition continues, the focus must increasingly shift toward what AI enables economies, institutions, businesses, and people to do better. The Council highlighted the potential for closer cooperation across

both regions by connecting capital with innovation, infrastructure with markets, technology with talent, and investment with implementation. These complementary strengths can support new enterprises, stronger services, productive investment, and partnerships that extend beyond individual conferences and initiatives. Reflecting the Summit theme, “From Vision to Value,” the SAMENA Council CEO emphasized the need to move from technological ambition toward practical outcomes that reflect regional realities and aspirations. For the Arab region and Africa, the Council emphasized the importance of developing the talent, infrastructure, investment environment, institutions, and market conditions

required for meaningful participation in the emerging AI economy. As AI systems become more capable and autonomous, the Council also stressed the importance of trust, security, identity, accountability, dependable infrastructure, and effective governance. Technological progress should ultimately expand human capability, create opportunity, strengthen institutions, and contribute to wider prosperity. The SAMENA Council believes that the Arab world and Africa have an opportunity to participate in this next phase not only as markets for AI technologies, but increasingly as investors, innovators, partners, and contributors to their development and application. 



SAMENA Council On The Needs of Emerging Digital Markets

SAMENA Council Emphasizes Knowledge and Capability Exchange Across Leading and Emerging Digital Markets



The SAMENA Telecommunications Council has called for stronger exchange of knowledge, experience, and technological capability between leading and emerging digital markets, with telecom operators and technology providers helping turn such exchange into local industry development, investment, and new market opportunities.

Delivering a keynote address in Hangzhou, SAMENA Council CEO Bocar BA reflected on two decades of digital transformation across economies. Connectivity has expanded, industries have changed, new businesses have emerged, and governments have adopted digital platforms and new ICT strategies throughout the SA-ME-NA region and surrounding geographies. This progress has also produced an extensive body of knowledge held in data,

institutions, companies, and the experience of their people. AI can help put more of that knowledge to use.

"AI can help preserve institutional memory, connect information that has remained fragmented, and bring accumulated experience more effectively into present-day decision-making. This can be described as Institutional Intelligence," BA stated.

For the SAMENA Council, a wider matter of interest is how knowledge and capability can move more effectively between markets. Telecom operators, technology providers, regulatory authorities, public institutions, research bodies, investors, and other participants in the digital economy each hold experience that can inform infrastructure development, technology deployment, institutional planning, and the creation of new services and businesses elsewhere.

Speaking at the Ministerial Meeting at Hangzhou, organized by the China-Africa Digital Technology Co-operation Center, BA noted that cross-border cooperation has already supported digital infrastructure and technological capability across Africa and the Middle East. Further engagement can connect China's experience in digital development, industrial transformation, and innovation at scale with the ambitions, market knowledge, and development needs of emerging digital economies.

"The value lies in connecting these capabilities across markets, with telecom operators at the center of this exchange. Digital transformation needs to enable our markets and institutions to do better," BA added.

The SAMENA Council sees scope for new institutional initiatives that bring companies, institutions, expertise, investment, and potential projects into a continuing framework of cooperation. This would allow engagement to move beyond individual meetings and technology deployments toward practical industry relationships, locally developed capability, and new opportunities across participating markets, especially the UAE and other GCC economies. Such cooperation is especially relevant as Africa and the Middle East continue to expand their digital infrastructure and industries. Their engagement with more established digital markets, such as China, Malaysia, among others, should support access to experience and technology while allowing local priorities, market conditions, and capabilities to shape what is developed. 

The Emerging Investment Case for Connected Infrastructure



OMAN NOW

Oman occupies a distinctive position on the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, connecting the Gulf with routes extending toward South Asia, East Africa and wider international markets. That geography has long supported the Sultanate's trade and energy role, but its relevance is now extending further through subsea cable systems, terrestrial telecommunications networks, data centers, cloud infrastructure, satellite activity, major ports and industrial zones.

Together with an established energy base and growing renewable-energy development, these capabilities are giving Oman a broader infrastructure profile at a time when digital, energy and logistics investments are becoming more closely linked.

This development is taking place within the wider direction of Oman Vision 2040, under which economic diversification, private-sector participation and foreign investment are being advanced alongside national programs in digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, advanced technologies, manufacturing, logistics and renewable energy. MTCIT, TRA Oman, Oman Investment Authority, OPAZ, Invest Oman and Omantel each occupy distinct roles within this environment, spanning policy, regulation, capital, investor facilitation, infrastructure and market development.

Geography with Regional and Digital Relevance

Oman's geographic position has always carried commercial importance, given its access to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean and its proximity to major markets across the Gulf, the Indian subcontinent and East Africa. What gives that position greater relevance today is the infrastructure developed around it. Ports at Salalah, Sohar and Duqm, established road and industrial networks, international telecommunications links and data-center infrastructure allow the Sultanate to participate not only in the movement of goods and energy, but also in the movement, storage and processing of data.

The different investment locations within Oman reinforce this position in different ways. Salalah combines Indian Ocean access, major port infrastructure, subsea cable connectivity and data-center capacity, while Duqm offers industrial scale, deep-water port infrastructure, energy development and emerging space-related development. Sohar combines manufacturing, logistics and industrial capability with access to regional markets, while Muscat and the northern corridor provide proximity to government, enterprise demand, national institutions and established communications infrastructure. The same regional logic applies to digital infrastructure. Omantel reports participation in more than 20 subsea cable systems, approximately 120,000 kilometers of subsea network, seven subsea cable landing stations, and direct access to more than 120 international cities. This extends Oman's relevance beyond its domestic market, particularly where international routes can be combined with terrestrial networks, carrier-neutral interconnection, cloud services and local computing capacity.

OMAN COMBINES ESTABLISHED INFRASTRUCTURE, INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY, INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITY AND CONTINUING ROOM FOR NEW CAPITAL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NEXT PHASE OF DIGITAL, INDUSTRIAL, ENERGY, AND SPACE-RELATED DEVELOPMENT.



Oman Vision 2040 and the Economic Direction

Oman Vision 2040 provides the broader policy setting within which these infrastructure developments are taking place. Its emphasis on economic diversification, greater private-sector participation and the development of productive sectors beyond hydrocarbons has created a long-term framework for investment in logistics, manufacturing, tourism, mining, renewable energy, ICT and advanced technologies.

Digital development sits within this wider agenda rather than apart from it. MTCIT's National Digital Economy Program covers government digital transformation, artificial intelligence and advanced digital technologies, cybersecurity, digital industry, space, e-commerce, financial technologies and digital infrastructure. The next phase, covering 2026–2030, places further emphasis on digitizing promising economic sectors and expanding the export of digital services. As government systems, enterprises and industries become more digitally dependent, the demand for computing, storage, connectivity, cybersecurity and data infrastructure grows with them. This gives Oman's digital policy a direct relationship with future infrastructure demand and provides a stronger basis for investment in cloud, data centers, AI infrastructure and associated services.

Foreign Investment, Market Depth and Diversification

Oman already has a substantial base of foreign direct investment, which reached approximately OMR 31.38 billion at the end of 2025. The majority remains concentrated in oil and gas extraction, reflecting the scale and maturity of the country's traditional energy sector while leaving considerable room for diversification into manufacturing, logistics, digital infrastructure, renewable energy and advanced technologies. The country is therefore broadening an established investment base rather than creating one from the beginning. This distinction is important because Oman already has experience in hosting long-term international capital, while its current economic direction is intended to increase the share flowing into sectors capable of generating new productive capacity.

The digital economy provides one indication of that shift. MTCIT has reported that the core and direct digital economy contributed approximately OMR 800 million in 2023, while investment in AI initiatives exceeded OMR 79 million during 2021–2025. The Ministry has also reported a growing domestic base of companies specializing in artificial intelligence. These figures remain modest beside the scale of global AI investment, but they show that digital activity is moving beyond policy into infrastructure planning, market development and commercial activity. For investors, this combination offers established economic activity alongside sectors where additional capacity is still being formed.

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE: SUBSEA, TERRESTRIAL, CLOUD AND COMPUTE

Oman's digital infrastructure is one of the strongest elements of its investment case because several layers of connectivity are already in place. The Sultanate is connected internationally through subsea cable systems, domestically through terrestrial networks, and commercially through data centers, cloud platforms and enterprise infrastructure.

Omantel, the country's leading integrated telecommunications and technology provider, is the most connected wholesale provider to subsea cables in the Middle East. The company has invested in more than 20 subsea cable systems and operates 7 landing stations, including one in Marseille, France. This framework encompasses approximately 120,000 kilometers of subsea network assets, linking Oman directly to more than 120 international cities. It also reports more than 10,000 kilometers of backbone fiber-optic cable networks and 9 data centers, including two carrier-neutral facilities developed with Equinix, MC1 in Muscat and SN1 in Salalah. The development of Equinix MC1, the first carrier-neutral data center in MENA, and SN1 has enhanced Oman's international interconnection ecosystem, hosting around 40 cloud and content providers while extending carrier-neutral infrastructure closer to key subsea cable routes.

Otech adds domestic cloud, managed hosting, colocation and disaster-recovery capability, while international technology companies have established cloud and infrastructure partnerships in the country. These assets support a wider range of opportunities than telecommunications capacity alone. International transit, terrestrial backhaul, carrier-neutral interconnection, local processing, cloud services, sovereign infrastructure, content delivery, cybersecurity, edge services and high-performance computing all depend on different combinations of the same underlying networks and facilities. AI infrastructure adds further demand for power, cooling, fiber, land, construction capability and international bandwidth. This places digital infrastructure increasingly within the same investment discussion as energy and industrial development, both of which Oman already possesses at meaningful scale.

MTCIT: Building the Digital Economy

MTCIT occupies a central position in this development because its responsibilities bring transport, communications, information technology and advanced digital technologies within one institutional framework. This allows infrastructure policy to be considered alongside the industries and public services that will ultimately use it.

The Ministry's National Digital Economy Program covers government digital transformation, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital industry, space, e-commerce, financial technologies and digital infrastructure. Its work has also included the Oman Digital Triangle, AI development programs, open-data infrastructure and support for technology companies and start-ups.

Government digitization adds a further source of demand. As public services move online and government systems become more dependent on cloud infrastructure, data processing and cybersecurity, the requirement for resilient networks and computing capacity grows correspondingly. Enterprise digitization, AI adoption and satellite-data applications reinforce the same requirement across the wider economy. MTCIT's role therefore connects national digital policy with the development of the market that supports investment in networks, cloud, computing and advanced technologies.

Oman Investment Authority: Institutional Capital and Economic Development

Oman Investment Authority adds a financial and institutional dimension to the country's investment environment. Through its domestic and international portfolios, OIA participates in sectors that contribute to national economic development while managing sovereign assets across multiple markets and industries. Future Fund Oman extends this role directly into diversification and private-sector development. Established with OMR 2 billion of capital over five years, the Fund is intended to support local projects, foreign investment, SMEs and emerging companies across sectors that include manufacturing, logistics, mining, tourism, clean energy and digital transformation. This creates a potential domestic institutional counterpart for international investors in projects requiring scale, longer investment horizons or alignment with national development priorities. In infrastructure, where capital commitments are often substantial and returns develop over extended periods, such participation can carry particular relevance.

TRA Oman: Regulation and Market Development

Digital infrastructure investment also depends on a regulatory environment capable of accommodating new technologies, new business models and changing requirements around spectrum, access and connectivity. TRA Oman provides that framework for the telecommunications sector and associated services.

Official 2025 sector indicators recorded more than 6.5 million mobile subscriptions, more than 5.4 million mobile broadband subscriptions, almost 599,000 fixed broadband subscriptions and more than 6,400 5G stations. TRA Oman reported approximately OMR 233 million in telecommunications infrastructure investment during the year, reflecting continued expenditure on network capacity and service development.

The Authority's work also extends into newer areas of communications, including IoT, infrastructure access, private networks, regulatory experimentation and services linked to data centers and cloud computing. Preparation has also begun around future IMT-2030 and 6G requirements, giving regulatory planning a longer-term technology horizon. For infrastructure investors, the value lies in greater visibility around licensing, deployment, access and commercial use, particularly in sectors where technology and service models are changing rapidly.

OPAZ: Creating the Physical Environment for Investment

Large infrastructure projects ultimately require land, utilities, logistics access, permitting structures and locations capable of accommodating scale. OPAZ provides much of that physical framework through the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities under its supervision. By February 2026, total committed investment across these areas had reached approximately OMR 22.4 billion, following more than OMR 1.4 billion of additional investment during 2025. The Authority also reported 325 new investment agreements during the year. The value of OPAZ is reflected in the different characteristics of the locations it oversees. Duqm supports large industrial, energy and logistics projects; Salalah combines port access, free-zone infrastructure and international connectivity; Sohar has developed as a major industrial and manufacturing location; while other industrial cities provide established infrastructure for domestic and international commercial activity. Invest Oman's official guidance identifies 100% foreign ownership for eligible projects across relevant zones, together with zone-specific tax exemptions, customs benefits, repatriation provisions and long-term land arrangements. These benefits are most relevant when assessed alongside the infrastructure, utilities and logistics available within each location.

Invest Oman: A Defined Route into the Market

Invest Oman provides the national investor-facing mechanism through which opportunities, incentives and institutional contacts can be accessed. Its role includes investment facilitation, opportunity identification, establishment support and coordination with relevant government entities.

Infrastructure projects frequently require engagement across land, licensing, company establishment, sector approvals,

utilities, customs and local partnerships. A central point of entry helps investors navigate these requirements while also presenting opportunities within a common national framework.

In this respect, Invest Oman complements the sector-specific roles of MTCIT, OPAZ, OIA and other institutions by providing a practical route into the wider investment environment.

Energy, Renewables and Digital Infrastructure

Oman's energy position has direct relevance to the future of digital infrastructure. The Sultanate has a mature energy sector and is also developing renewable-energy and green-hydrogen projects as part of its diversification strategy, with Hydrom coordinating much of the national green-hydrogen development program.

The relationship between energy and digital infrastructure is becoming more significant as computing requirements grow. Large data centers and AI facilities require substantial and reliable electricity supply, while power cost, grid access, cooling and carbon intensity now influence location decisions alongside fiber and international connectivity.

Oman's opportunity lies in its ability to consider future digital infrastructure alongside renewable generation, industrial land and energy development. Project economics and power arrangements will remain specific to individual investments, but the country possesses an established energy base, growing renewable capacity and large industrial locations in which digital and energy infrastructure can develop in parallel.

This creates potential across renewable-supported computing, storage, smart-grid systems, cooling, power infrastructure and industrial digitization.

Space and Satellite: Extending the Infrastructure Base

Oman's space sector remains at an earlier stage of development, but it adds another area of infrastructure opportunity. Etlaq Spaceport at Duqm is being developed as a commercial space facility, while activity in satellite communications, Earth observation and downstream space applications is also beginning to develop.

The opportunity extends beyond launch activity. Satellite communications depend increasingly on ground infrastructure, terrestrial networks, cloud processing, cybersecurity and data-center capacity, connecting the space sector directly with other areas of Oman's digital infrastructure.

Applications in maritime services, logistics, environmental monitoring, agriculture, energy and IoT can create demand for satellite data and communications while drawing on domestic cloud and analytics capability. Oman's geography, coastline and industrial activity provide practical use cases for these services.

Omantel's participation in Etlaq, through a 25% stake reported in its 2024 annual reporting, reinforces the relationship between terrestrial and non-terrestrial infrastructure. Its capabilities in fiber, international connectivity, cloud, data centers and enterprise services provide a natural technical base for future satellite and space-related communications.



Omantel: Connecting Oman to Regional and Global Digital Markets

Omantel occupies a particularly important position within Oman's investment environment because its infrastructure connects domestic demand with international networks and regional markets. Its role extends across national fixed and mobile connectivity, Subsea cable systems, terrestrial fiber, data centers, cloud services, wholesale networks and emerging technology investments.

The international network is one of its strongest assets. Omantel reports more than 20 Subsea cable systems, seven landing stations, approximately 120,000 kilometers of subsea network and direct access to more than 120 international cities. This gives the company the leading role in the movement of data between Oman and major markets across Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and the wider Middle East, while its terrestrial network provides the domestic infrastructure required to distribute that connectivity within the country. Its data centers and cloud position add another layer. Through its relationship with Equinix, Omantel launched the first carrier-neutral facilities in the MENA region, while Otech provides cloud, colocation, managed hosting and disaster-recovery services. The Company has also established relationships with major international cloud and technology providers across cloud, enterprise services, digital infrastructure and related technologies.

Zain Omantel International (ZOI) extends this position beyond the Sultanate. The joint venture manages international wholesale requirements across eight markets and gives Omantel additional global reach, strengthening its relevance to carriers, content providers, cloud companies and digital infrastructure players seeking connectivity across the wider Middle East. The Company's 25% investment in Etlaq adds further exposure to satellite and space-related infrastructure as terrestrial and non-terrestrial connectivity become more closely related. Combined with its existing fiber, subsea, cloud and data-center capabilities, this gives Omantel relevance across a wider range of future communications requirements.

For international investors, the value of Omantel lies in this breadth. Companies entering cloud, data centers, AI infrastructure, international connectivity, cybersecurity, content, satellite or enterprise technology can engage with a national company that already operates across several of the infrastructure layers required for those businesses. Omantel therefore contributes to Oman's investment case through infrastructure that is already operating, international reach that extends beyond the domestic market and partnerships that connect the Sultanate with the wider technology industry.



20+
Subsea systems



120,000 km
Subsea network



9
Data centers



120+
International cities



50+
Cable landing stations





THE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

Oman now presents investment opportunities across several connected areas of infrastructure. Digital compute includes data centers, AI infrastructure, high-performance computing, sovereign cloud, cybersecurity and the power and cooling systems required to support them. International connectivity continues to create opportunity around Subsea cables, terrestrial backhaul, carrier-neutral interconnection, content infrastructure and route diversity.

Energy development adds another layer through renewable generation, storage, smart-grid systems and infrastructure designed around high-density computing requirements. Industrial and logistics investment remains central to Duqm, Salalah and Sohar, where port access, industrial land and economic-zone infrastructure support manufacturing, technology assembly and larger physical projects. Space and satellite activity adds developing opportunities around ground infrastructure, Earth observation, IoT, satellite communications, launch-support services and associated data processing.

These areas are at different stages of maturity. Some are already supported by operating infrastructure and established commercial relationships, while others remain in development and will require further capital, technology and execution capability. For investors, this provides entry points ranging from established assets and expansion projects to new infrastructure still being formed.

WHY OMAN, WHY NOW?

Oman's investment case rests on the relationship between geography, infrastructure and national economic direction. Its location provides access to important regional and international routes, while its ports, economic zones, Subsea systems, terrestrial networks, data centers and energy infrastructure give that location commercial substance.

The country also has the institutional capacity required to support further development. MTCIT is advancing the digital economy and technology agenda; TRA Oman provides the regulatory framework for communications infrastructure; OIA brings sovereign investment capability; OPAZ provides locations for large-scale economic and industrial activity; Invest Oman facilitates investor entry; and Omantel connects important parts of Oman's digital infrastructure with regional and international markets.

At the same time, additional capacity remains to be developed across data centers, AI infrastructure, cloud, connectivity, energy-supported computing, industrial technology and satellite services. Existing assets provide a working base, while future requirements continue to create room for international capital, technology and expertise.

Oman therefore combines an established infrastructure base with a national development program that is still creating new areas for participation. For investors assessing opportunities across the Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the markets connected to them, that combination gives the Sultanate a credible and increasingly substantive investment case. 🌍

OMAN

CREATING NEW VALUE BY ADVANCING CROSS-INFRASTRUCTURE SUSTAINABILITY

Oman is advancing interconnected infrastructure across networks, AI, data centers, cloud, and energy to support investment and long-term economic value.



Connecting markets.
Creating opportunity.

Omantel's Role in National Priorities

The interview presents Omantel as evolving from a connectivity provider into a broader digital infrastructure and technology platform for Oman. Its central role is to connect infrastructure, technology, talent, investment, and partnerships around Oman's national priorities, while helping translate digital capability into wider economic value and regional market opportunity.



Eng. Aladdin Baitfadhil
Chief Executive Officer
Omantel

عمانتل
Omantel

Q. AI is becoming a central part of Omantel's strategy. Where can the company create distinctive value in AI, rather than simply adopting technologies developed elsewhere?

A. Omantel's distinctive opportunity is to make AI relevant, trusted and scalable for this market. Global technology companies will continue to lead the development of foundational models. Our advantage lies elsewhere: in combining those technologies with sovereign infrastructure, trusted data environments, local product development and the ability to deploy solutions at scale. Omantel already operates across the essential architecture of AI, from connectivity and cloud to computing capacity and cybersecurity. That gives us a credible platform from which to address the priorities of Oman and, over time, the wider region. But infrastructure alone is not differentiation. The real value will come from applying AI to consequential problems: improving public services, increasing industrial productivity, strengthening financial and energy systems, transforming customer experience and enabling organisations to make better decisions. This requires more than importing technology. It requires integrating it with local data, regulatory requirements and sector expertise, and building the capabilities that allow organisations to adopt it responsibly.

Omantel brings extensive digital infrastructure, expanding capabilities across cloud, cybersecurity and digital platforms, established relationships across government and industry, and a growing ecosystem of local, regional and international partners.

Our ambition is not to compete across every layer of AI, but to lead where Omantel has a natural advantage: providing trusted foundations, convening leading global and local partners, and translating technological capability into measurable economic and social value. In doing so, we aim to build a distinctly Omani model for AI, globally connected, locally relevant and scalable beyond our market.

Connectivity remains at the heart of Omantel, providing the foundation for our expanding role in Oman's digital economy. This foundation reflects our continuous investment in network and digital infrastructure, which has surpassed OMR 355 million, strengthening the capacity, reach and resilience in support of Oman's digital growth.

Q. As Omantel expands across AI, cloud, cybersecurity, IoT and digital services, how is its role in Oman's digital economy changing?

A. Connectivity remains at the heart of Omantel, providing the foundation for our expanding role in Oman's digital economy. This foundation reflects our continuous investment in network and digital infrastructure, which has surpassed OMR 355 million, strengthening the capacity, reach and resilience in support of Oman's digital growth.

That foundation extends beyond the domestic market. Through our extensive subsea cable footprint and Zain Omantel International, we connect Oman to major digital corridors across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and Australia. These connections support international carriers, hyperscalers, cloud providers and content companies, reinforcing the Sultanate's position within the global digital economy. Omantel's published reporting describes it as the Middle East operator connected to the highest number of subsea cables.

As technology becomes increasingly integral to how businesses, institutions and entire sectors operate, their requirements are extending beyond connectivity to secure cloud environments, cybersecurity, IoT, AI and integrated digital solutions. This reflects a broader strategy that combines connectivity, cloud, cybersecurity, digital platforms and emerging technologies into an integrated model designed to support both national digital priorities and the evolving requirements of businesses operating across the region.

This evolution is already evident across our business. Through Otech, we are bringing together cloud and hosting, cybersecurity, IoT, AI and systems integration capabilities within a unified digital platform. This integrated model enables us to address

the needs of government and enterprise customers across the digital value chain, from sovereign and secure, locally hosted environments to smart solutions and end-to-end implementation. The scale of this opportunity is evident in areas such as smart infrastructure, where Omantel's IoT solutions had connected more than 500,000 electricity meters and 300,000 water meters by May 2025.

Q. Technology ecosystems increasingly bring together global companies, governments, enterprises, startups, universities and investors. Where can Omantel add the most value between these different players?

A. Omantel is uniquely positioned to connect the different layers of the technology ecosystem, bringing together digital infrastructure, advanced technologies and international partnerships with Oman's digital priorities and the evolving needs of government, enterprises and customers. Our engagement across consumer, enterprise and partner ecosystems provides a broad understanding of how technology can respond to operational priorities, enhance service delivery and improve customer experience.

Omantel Innovation Labs demonstrates this role in practice. Since its launch in 2021, it has built a database of more than 10,000 registered entrepreneurs, supported over 80 startups and contributed to the creation of more than 400 jobs. Its model combines targeted programmes, access to Omantel's digital infrastructure and investment pathways with connections to partners, customers and funding opportunities. In 2025, the Labs supported startups across ICT, fintech, logistics, GreenTech, cybersecurity and healthcare, and engaged more than 120 founders and entrepreneurs through structured programmes, mentorship and events.

The opportunity now is to build on this foundation by strengthening the links between technology, talent, investment and market demand. Working alongside government, enterprises, universities, global technology partners and investors, Omantel seeks to create an environment in which promising ideas are tested against real needs, successful solutions find a path to adoption, and innovation delivers lasting value for customers, businesses and Oman's digital economy.

Q. The technology conversation is increasingly shifting from individual products to platforms and ecosystems. How does that change what customers expect from Omantel?

A. Customers increasingly expect seamless experiences across an integrated ecosystem rather than a series of isolated products. Omantel is responding through its Omnichannel Strategy, digitalization initiatives, customer experience platforms and AI capabilities, bringing together single sign-on, unified billing, personalised services and consistent support across its website, mobile application, retail outlets and contact centre, so customers can access and manage their services conveniently in one place.

Omantel seeks to create an environment in which promising ideas are tested against real needs, successful solutions find a path to adoption, and innovation delivers lasting value for customers, businesses and Oman's digital economy.

Omantel's platform approach combines connectivity with partner services, content, cloud, IoT, fintech and security, into bundled solutions. APIs, a developer-friendly approach and streamlined partner onboarding support the faster integration and introduction of new services. AI and CEX tools power personalisation and proactive support, offering timely offers and problem resolution before customers



Omantel's strategic partnership with Oman Lens, an Omani SpaceTech company developing AI-enabled Earth Observation technologies. The alliance supports the development of local capabilities in satellite operations, geospatial technologies and data analytics in Earth Observability with potential applications across energy, infrastructure, maritime operations and environmental monitoring.

need to ask. On the infrastructure side, Omantel invests in network reliability, 5G and edge capabilities and defines enterprise SLAs so performance meets business needs. The result is a platform-led Omantel that delivers seamless, secure and practical end to end experiences for consumers and businesses alike.

Q. As AI, cloud and data become more strategically important, how should Oman remain open to global technology while developing more capability, expertise and value creation within the country?

A. Oman's opportunity lies in remaining open to global technology while simultaneously building local capability, talent and intellectual property. The country's strategic location, extensive international connectivity and growing digital infrastructure provide strong foundations for this approach.

With more than 20 subsea cable systems landing in Oman, alongside expanding cloud and data-centre infrastructure, the Sultanate is well positioned to serve as a regional hub for advanced digital services, including Generative AI. Global technology partnerships will remain essential, but long-term value creation comes from combining international technology with local talent, local data, sector expertise and entrepreneurial innovation.

Omantel contributes, by investing in future digital infrastructure, enabling sovereign cloud and AI capabilities, supporting technology partnerships and helping develop the startup ecosystem through initiatives such as Omantel Innovation Labs and the Everyone AI programme. The objective is not only to consume technology developed elsewhere, but also to create an environment where Omani companies can co-develop applications, build specialised solutions and participate in regional

and global value chains. Success will be reflected in the growth of local capabilities, stronger technology companies, greater private-sector participation and the development of exportable digital products and services originating from Oman.

Q. Oman has made progress in developing startups and technology talent. What will it take to turn that activity into companies and intellectual property that can scale beyond the domestic market?

A. Omantel's 'Everyone AI' strategy is a concept of co-development, the programme reflects a belief that the next phase of digital value creation will come through collaboration between leading global AI providers and local innovators. By combining frontier technologies with Omani entrepreneurship, domain expertise and market access, the objective is to create solutions that address local needs while remaining scalable across regional markets. The foundation of this strategy is ecosystem-led, bringing together startups, technology partners, enterprises and investors around a shared objective of creating sustainable digital businesses and intellectual property that can compete beyond the domestic market.

Q. Oman has built extensive international connectivity and a growing data-centre and cloud ecosystem. How can it turn those foundations into a broader digital ecosystem that attracts technology companies, investment and higher-value digital activity?

A. Oman has established a clear and forward-looking direction for its digital economy. Oman Vision 2040 provides the national framework for economic diversification and a knowledge- and innovation-based economy. Within that framework, the National Digital Economy Programme sets out priorities that include strengthening digital sovereignty, developing skills and competencies, attracting foreign digital investment, expanding data-centre and cloud services, developing the cybersecurity industry and creating national industries within the digital economy.

Oman Vision 2040 provides a clear direction for a productive and diversified economy shaped by innovation, private-sector participation and sustainable growth. Within this broader national ambition, Omantel can contribute by helping connect the foundations of the digital economy: infrastructure, advanced technology capabilities, talent, investment and access to markets.

Omantel contributes to this direction across several interconnected areas. These include strengthening digital infrastructure, expanding capabilities in cloud, cybersecurity and digital platforms, developing Omani talent, supporting local suppliers and technology businesses, and building relationships with regional and international technology ecosystems. Together, these efforts help create the conditions in which advanced technologies can be adopted securely, applied effectively and translated into broader economic value.

Q. Oman is developing ambitions in the space economy, from launch infrastructure and satellites to connectivity and space-derived data. Where does Omantel see its role in this emerging ecosystem?

A. Oman has established a structured national direction for the space sector through the National Space Policy and Executive Programme, led by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. The programme is designed to support economic diversification, national security, capacity building, environmental sustainability and international cooperation.

Omantel's contribution sits within this wider, government-led ecosystem. Its investment in Etlaq provides a strategic connection to the development of space-launch infrastructure in Oman, complementing the company's established capabilities in connectivity and digital infrastructure. Additionally, Omantel's strategic partnership with Oman Lens, an Omani SpaceTech company developing AI-enabled Earth Observation technologies. The alliance supports the development of local capabilities in satellite operations, geospatial technologies and data analytics in Earth Observability with potential applications across energy, infrastructure, maritime operations and environmental monitoring.

Q. Looking towards 2040, how can Omantel contribute to strengthening Oman's position in the regional digital economy and translating its digital foundations into broader economic value?

A. Oman Vision 2040 provides a clear direction for a productive and diversified economy shaped by innovation, private-sector participation and sustainable growth. Within this broader national ambition, Omantel can contribute by helping connect the foundations of the digital economy: infrastructure, advanced technology capabilities, talent, investment and access to markets.

Omantel brings extensive digital infrastructure, expanding capabilities across cloud, cybersecurity and digital platforms, established relationships

across government and industry, and a growing ecosystem of local, regional and international partners. Through the wider Group, Omantel can also create stronger connections between capabilities developed in Oman and larger regional and global markets.

The value of these assets lies in how effectively they enable activity beyond Omantel's own operations. This includes supporting organizations to adopt technology more productively, creating opportunities for Omani talent and technology businesses, and providing the infrastructure and commercial pathways through which locally developed solutions can reach wider markets.

Omantel's contribution towards 2040 is to advance Oman's digital ambitions by bringing together the foundations of the future digital economy: advanced connectivity, cloud, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, space-enabled technologies, entrepreneurial innovation and access to regional and global markets. This includes enabling an environment where innovation scales, enterprises grow, startups mature, digital talent is continuously upskilled, and locally developed solutions gain access to broader commercial opportunities.

Success should be reflected not only in the growth of Omantel's business, but in the strength of Oman's startup ecosystem, the competitiveness of its technology enterprises, the quality and readiness of its digital talent, and the broader economic value. 🌐



A New Opportunity for Telecom Industry

Bocar BA, CEO of SAMENA Telecommunications Council, reflects on the lessons of the OTT era, the arrival of Artificial Intelligence, and why trust, not connectivity alone, could become one of telecom operators' most important assets in the emerging intelligence economy.



Bocar A. BA.
CEO and Board Member
SAMENA Telecommunications
Council



Q: For almost two decades, the telecom industry has debated how to sustain investment in infrastructure while much of the value created over those networks has been captured elsewhere. Do you believe the industry has been addressing the wrong problem?

A: I would not say it was the wrong problem. It was and remains an important one. For almost twenty years, governments, regulators, operators, technology companies and international organizations have been trying to address the sustainability of digital infrastructure investment. The UN Broadband Commission helped elevate that discussion by asking a more fundamental question: "how should digital infrastructure be financed in the twenty-first century?" That was important because it moved the debate beyond the interests of individual companies towards the sustainability of the digital ecosystem itself. My concern is slightly different. While we have been debating that question, the environment around us has changed profoundly. Artificial Intelligence has arrived, and with it we may be entering an entirely different value-creation cycle. So perhaps we have not been solving the wrong problem. Perhaps we have continued solving yesterday's problem while tomorrow quietly arrived.

Q: What has changed so fundamentally with Artificial Intelligence? Telecom has experienced many technology cycles before.

A: Our instinct is naturally to look first at the technology. We speak about larger models, computing capacity, data centers, GPUs, inference and national AI strategies. All of this matters. But I think there is something deeper taking place. Artificial Intelligence is not simply introducing another generation of technology. It is beginning to change where value is created and how people interact with the digital economy. That distinction matters enormously for telecommunications. The industry connected billions of people and created the infrastructure upon which the digital economy was built. That is an extraordinary achievement. But if AI becomes the interface through which people interact with services, businesses and eventually governments, then we need to ask what position telecom operators want to occupy within that new architecture.

Q: You have argued that connectivity may not actually be the telecom industry's most valuable asset. What do you mean by that?

A: Connectivity is obviously fundamental. But I believe that one of the industry's most underestimated assets is trust. Every day, operators authenticate identities, They

manage secure billing relationships, They protect communications, They operate within rigorous regulatory environments, They provide resilience to critical national infrastructure, And they maintain relationships with governments that very few industries possess. These are not just operational capabilities; They are institutional assets. And when we look at an AI economy in which intelligent systems may interact, make decisions and eventually transact on behalf of individuals and organizations, these institutional assets could become extraordinarily important. The AI economy will need intelligence, certainly; But it will also need identity, authentication, accountability, security and trust.

Q: Does that mean you see AI as an opportunity rather than a threat for operators?

A: Both interpretations are possible. If Artificial Intelligence simply becomes another layer operating above telecommunications networks, there is a risk that history repeats itself. Operators could once again invest heavily in the infrastructure enabling a technological revolution while much of the new value chain develops somewhere else. But I don't believe that outcome is inevitable. The 1st digital economy essentially asked: who connects the world? The emerging intelligence economy raises another question: Who becomes the trusted interface between intelligence and society? That is a much more interesting and meaningful question now for our industry.

Q: Why do you place so much emphasis on trust when most of the AI debate today is about models, computing power and capabilities?

A: Because intelligence by itself is not enough to become infrastructure. If AI is going to participate meaningfully in economic and social activity, people and institutions need confidence in the environment within which it operates. Is the identity genuine? Was an action authorized? Is a transaction secure? Can a decision be attributed? Who remains accountable? Can governments and regulators have confidence in the architecture? Can citizens remain protected? These questions become

important as AI moves from generating information towards acting. Without trust, intelligence remains extraordinarily powerful and interesting. But its integration into critical economic and institutional processes becomes much more difficult. That is why I believe the telecom conversation should evolve. Instead of asking only: "How can operators use Artificial Intelligence?" we should also ask: "What role can operators uniquely play in an AI economy?" Those are very different strategic questions.

Q: You have started using the expression "OTI". What exactly do you mean by that?

A: I am deliberately putting it forward as a proposition rather than pretending it is already an established industry concept. Twenty years ago, we became familiar with OTT: Over-The-Top. Applications and platforms operated above telecommunications networks and transformed the digital economy. Today, we may be seeing another layer emerge, not simply applications sitting above networks, but intelligence sitting above applications, platforms and networks. I describe this emerging possibility as OTI: Over-the-Intelligence. I use OTI, Over-the-Intelligence, to describe an emerging environment in which intelligence becomes the intermediary through which people discover, access and interact with digital services. OTT changed how we accessed services. OTI may change who or what accesses them on our behalf. The idea is worth exploring because, as intelligence mediates how people access digital services, the strategic question changes. It is not anymore about who carries the traffic or even who owns the application. It becomes about who remains relevant when intelligence becomes the interface between people and the digital world.

Q: What would this mean practically for telecom operators?

A: It means that the next phase of telecom transformation should not be limited to using AI to improve existing operations. Of course, operators should use AI to optimize networks, improve customer experience, automate processes and increase efficiency. But that is only one dimension. Operators already possess many ingredients that an AI economy will require:

trusted customer relationships, secure identities, billing platforms, regulated infrastructure, national presence and institutional confidence. The opportunity may therefore extend beyond enabling AI. It could involve participating directly in the trusted infrastructure of the intelligence economy. That is a very different ambition. And it requires operators to think not only about technology transformation, but about the importance of their future position in the value chain.

Q: So are you suggesting that operators should compete directly with global AI companies?

A: Not necessarily, and I think that would be the wrong conclusion. The objective should not be to reproduce capabilities that others can develop more efficiently or at greater scale. The more important question is where telecom operators possess structural advantages that are difficult for others to replicate. Trust is one; Identity is another; Regulatory confidence, secure infrastructure, billing relationships and national presence are others. The opportunity lies in understanding how those assets can participate in the emerging AI architecture and where partnerships may be more intelligent than attempting to build everything internally. The industry does not need to become something it is not. It needs to understand more clearly what it already possesses that the intelligence economy will need.

Q: If you had one message for telecom leaders looking at this next phase, what would it be?

A: I would encourage them not to spend too much time defending yesterday's position in the value chain. The more important task is defining tomorrow's. History rarely gives industries a second opportunity to reconsider their position when a major technology cycle changes the structure of value creation. Telecommunications may now have such an opportunity. The industry built the infrastructure that connected the digital economy. It now has an opportunity to consider what role it wants to play in establishing the trusted foundations of the intelligence economy. The question is whether we recognize that opportunity early enough to shape it. 🌱



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

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The SAMENA Council's Membership brings together capabilities spanning telecommunications, broadband infrastructure, satellite communications, network technology, digital platforms, policy and regulatory intelligence, strategic advisory, service experience, security and monetization.

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stc GROUP



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stc Group provides telecommunications, digital platforms, enterprise technology, cloud, cybersecurity, IoT, infrastructure and related digital services through its operations and subsidiaries.

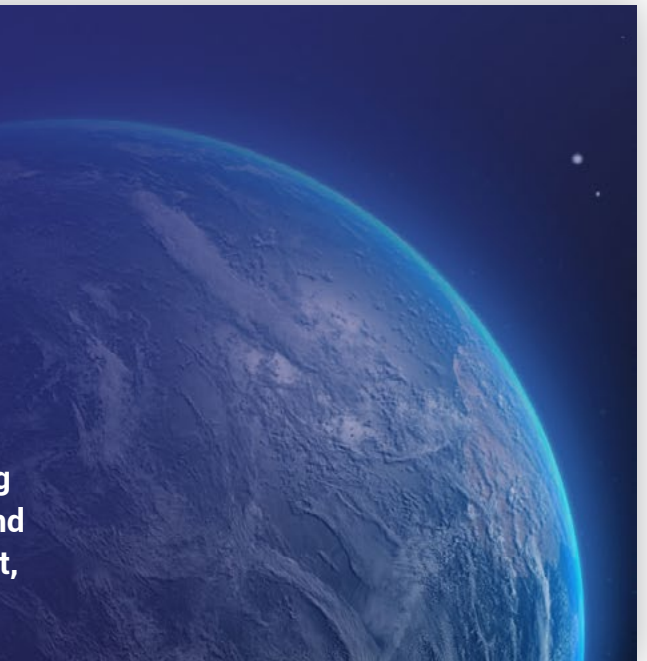


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OMANTEL



Integrated and International Connectivity

Omantel provides mobile, fixed, broadband, enterprise, wholesale and international connectivity services for consumers, businesses, operators, content providers and other communications partners.



ZAIN GROUP



Digital Communications and Enterprise Services

Zain Group offers mobile communications, broadband, enterprise solutions, digital services and financial technology across its markets in the Middle East and Africa.



ANALYSYS MASON



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Analysis Mason provides consulting, research and data services across technology, media, telecoms, digital infrastructure and space, supporting strategy, policy, regulation, transactions, transformation and market analysis.



ARTHUR D. LITTLE

The logo for Arthur D. Little, featuring the company name in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter 'D' is stylized with a white semi-circle cutout on its right side.

Strategy and Transformation Advisory

Arthur D. Little advises telecommunications, technology, media and electronics organizations on strategy, growth, innovation, transformation, operating performance and the development of new technology-enabled business opportunities.

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AT&T provides multinational enterprises with secure networking, internet, voice, mobility, IoT and managed communications services, supported by sales, design and operational capabilities across international markets.

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Secure Networking and Digital Infrastructure

Cisco specializes in networking, security, observability, collaboration and computing technologies that connect and protect users, devices, applications, data centers and cloud environments.



CHINA MOBILE INTERNATIONAL



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Cullen International provides independent regulatory and competition-law intelligence across telecommunications, media, the digital economy and postal services through subscriptions, research, benchmarks, training and direct analyst support.

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HUAWEI



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Huawei provides information and communications technology infrastructure and smart devices, with capabilities spanning carrier networks, enterprise digital infrastructure, cloud computing, data centers and connected devices.

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MTN GROUP



Connectivity and Digital Platforms

MTN Group provides mobile and data connectivity, digital services, financial technology and enterprise solutions across markets in Africa and the Middle East.

NEXIGN

The Nexign logo, featuring the word "nexign" in a lowercase, white, sans-serif font. The background of the slide is a deep green with a 3D illustration of various geometric shapes, including cubes and cylinders, in shades of green and blue, creating a modern, tech-oriented aesthetic.

nexign

Telecom BSS and Monetization

Nexign specializes in telecom business-support and network-monetization software, including converged charging, billing, revenue management and product-management capabilities for communications service providers.

NOKIA

NOKIA

Network Technology and Infrastructure

Nokia provides technology for mobile, fixed, IP, optical, data-center and cloud networks, supporting communications service providers, enterprises and cloud operators with connectivity, automation and network-management capabilities.



OMAN BROADBAND

oman
BROADBAND
العمانية للنطاق العريض

National Broadband Infrastructure

Oman Broadband develops and operates wholesale broadband infrastructure in Oman, providing licensed telecommunications operators with open-access services including fiber connectivity, backhaul, co-location and transmission capacity.



OPENSIGNAL



OPENSIGNAL

Network Experience Intelligence

Opensignal independently measures and analyzes consumers' mobile and broadband connectivity experiences, providing operators, regulators and other industry participants with network-performance, market and subscriber intelligence.

PALTEL GROUP



مجموعة الاتصالات الفلسطينية
PALTEL GROUP

Integrated Telecommunications Services

Paltel Group provides fixed, mobile, internet, broadband, data-connectivity and ICT services in Palestine through its operating companies, serving consumers, businesses and institutions.

SALAM



Integrated Connectivity and ICT Services

Salam offers mobile, fixed, fiber, 5G, national and international data connectivity, satellite, voice, cloud, cybersecurity and managed services for consumers, enterprises and public-sector customers in Saudi Arabia.

stc BAHRAIN



Telecommunications and Digital Services

stc Bahrain provides mobile, broadband, fixed connectivity, enterprise communications, cloud, cybersecurity and other digital services for consumers, businesses and public-sector organizations in Bahrain.

— ZAINTECH

zainTECH

Integrated Digital Solutions

ZainTECH provides enterprise and government customers with solutions across cloud computing, cybersecurity, data and AI, digital solutions, IoT, smart infrastructure, and drones and robotics.

— Zetrix AI

ZETRIX AI

AI Agents with Verifiable Identity

Zetrix AI develops AI agents that can represent individuals, businesses, and institutions, act on their behalf, and execute tasks across digital environments. Its Zetrix Avatar combines AI with verifiable identity to support trusted interaction, delegation, and workflow execution.



we help you

gain clarity and insight
on digital policy, regulation and law



regulation made simple

INTERNATIONAL

MEMBERS DEVELOPMENTS



stc Group Marks 53% Local Content Score Exceeding the ICT Sector Benchmark

As Saudi Arabia marks its National Day, stc group is highlighting the continued growth of its contribution to the national economy, with its Local Content Score reaching 53% in 2026, well above the Local Content and Government Procurement Authority's ICT sector benchmark of 41%. The achievement reflects stc group's continued efforts to increase the economic value generated within the Kingdom through local procurement, services, workforce development and partnerships. The group's Local Content Score has continued to increase over the past five years, reflecting the growing integration of local content across its operations and supply chain. Central to this effort is rawafed, stc group's dedicated platform for driving the national local content agenda. Through rawafed, the group works to maximize local spending, fostering innovation, and attract investments, while strengthening local capabilities. rawafed ensures that stc's scale and reach translate into sustainable economic value for the Kingdom. stc group continues to build on its contribution to the Kingdom's economic transformation by investing in local capabilities, strengthening partnerships with Saudi businesses and supporting the development of a more competitive and sustainable digital economy.



stc Group and Astranis Advance Saudi Arabia's Connectivity with Dedicated Satellite

stc Group, a leading digital enabler, and Astranis has announced an agreement to deploy a dedicated satellite serving the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The satellite, part of Astranis' Block 3 scheduled to launch in 2026, will expand stc group's portfolio of satellite communication services and enhance connectivity across the Kingdom. Countries around the world are increasingly investing in dedicated communications infrastructure, prioritizing ownership

and control over shared capacity. Saudi Arabia's investment reflects the same shift, with expanded satellite coverage adding a further layer of redundancy alongside the Kingdom's existing fiber network and reinforcing communications infrastructure that is already a national priority alongside other key sectors. "As stc plays a key role in advancing Saudi Arabia's digital infrastructure, space has become a critical layer of our ecosystem, with dedicated

satellite capacity central to how we deliver resilient, reliable, and secure connectivity across the country," said Mohammad Alabbadi, Group Chief Carrier & Wholesale Officer at stc group. "Astranis' speed and flexibility made them the right partner for this stage of that work. Together, we are setting a new benchmark for secure and reliable connectivity supporting the Kingdom's digital vision." This partnership gives stc group full authority over payload

configuration and coverage, with data remaining in-region under enterprise-grade security. The model complements stc group's capacity in other orbits, further expanding the reach and resilience of its network. Astranis' satellite offering is built for rapid deployment, providing stc group with capacity on a rapid timeline. "It's an

honor to work with stc group to deliver dedicated, secure networks that support the expansion of Saudi Arabia's broader digital infrastructure program," said John Gedmark, CEO and co-founder of Astranis. "Countries require national control over critical networks and data, and we built Astranis to deliver it." This dedicated

satellite is part of a broader wave of digital infrastructure investment already underway at stc group. The company has committed significant investment to a national network agreement, with phase one deployments already underway.



stc Group Concludes LEAP 2026 Participation with Strategic Partnerships to Accelerate Saudi Arabia's Digital Future

stc group, Saudi Arabia's leading digital enabler, concluded another successful year at LEAP 2026, marking its fifth consecutive participation as strategic partner of the world's leading technology gathering with the signing of a series of strategic partnerships and announcements. Olayan Alwetaid, GCEO of stc group, took to LEAP's Main Stage to discuss Saudi Arabia's accelerating AI ambitions and stc group's role in enabling the ecosystem behind them. He said: "Saudi Arabia is moving rapidly to capture the opportunities presented by AI. For stc group, our partnership with HUMAIN is focused on three fronts: data-center infrastructure, connectivity, and go-to-market. Through center3, we are developing AI-ready data-center capacity starting at 250 megawatts, while continuing to expand our global connectivity footprint across subsea cables, terrestrial networks, and satellites to connect the Kingdom's AI infrastructure with the world." Across the four-day event, stc group showcased a broad portfolio of innovative digital solutions spanning transportation and logistics, tourism,

sports, construction, and real estate. The group's stand drew strong engagement from visitors, offering a closer look at how stc group and its subsidiaries are bringing together advanced technologies and digital capabilities to improve efficiency, transform operations, and accelerate digital adoption across critical sectors. stc continued to leverage LEAP as a defining platform to deepen collaboration with regional and global partners, with the group and its subsidiaries signing a broad range of agreements spanning AI, data centers, advanced 5G connectivity, cloud, and sectoral digital solutions. Key announcements include:

- AWS: Broadened cooperation across cloud technologies, digital services, security, and skills development to accelerate cloud adoption across Saudi Arabia, combining AWS cloud infrastructure with stc's local market expertise to serve government, enterprise, and small business customers across key sectors.
- AMD: Collaboration to advance digital infrastructure and next-generation

digital services, combining AMD's high-performance computing with stc's cloud and connectivity ecosystem to enable advanced computer services, AI inference, analytics, and scalable infrastructure.

- Ericsson: A multi-year agreement to expand stc's 5G network across Saudi Arabia, including the world's first commercial deployment of the Ericsson Radio 4496, integrating stc's newly acquired 600 MHz spectrum to extend coverage, improve indoor connectivity, and reduce power consumption.
- Huawei: Collaborative unveiling of a Zero-Carbon 5G-Advanced (5G-A) site solution, enabling network sites to support greater capacity while consuming less energy and reducing the physical load on infrastructure.
- Cisco: A multi-year collaboration to transition stc's network operations toward L4 Autonomous Network standards, implementing AI-driven closed-loop automation workflows that enable the network to self-configure, self-heal, and self-optimize in real time



supporting sports talent discovery in Saudi Arabia, leveraging AI and data analytics to assess physical, skill, and behavioral abilities and connect athletes with the most suitable sports pathways.

- Salla, noon, SMSA: qitaf, stc's loyalty program, partnered with Salla, noon, and SMSA to expand its presence across Saudi Arabia's e-commerce and logistics ecosystem, enabling customers to earn and redeem points across all three platforms.
- Albawani: A partnership to enable smarter construction driven by data and enabled by AI, improving efficiency, safety, and operating costs.

Beyond partnerships, stc showcased advanced digital solutions supporting Saudi Arabia's critical sectors, highlighted by an intelligent destination management system for Red Sea Global developed by its subsidiary iot squared. The system combines a live 3D digital twin spanning Shura Island and Turtle Bay with the Nucleus smart operations platform, giving teams a unified real-time view across guest experience, mobility, environment, and marine conditions and enabling operators to simulate scenarios, respond to incidents, and optimize the entire destination experience. stc's participation at LEAP 2026 underscores its role as the backbone of Saudi Arabia's digital transformation, connecting infrastructure, innovation, and industry to turn the Kingdom's ambitions into reality.

- using Splunk-powered analytics.
- Intel: An MoU to explore AI technologies enabling smarter digital experiences across Saudi Arabia, covering AI PCs, Edge AI, hybrid AI, and next-generation data-center infrastructure, with a shared focus on advancing AI skills and unlocking practical value for businesses.
- EZDITEK: An agreement to provide stc's DCI services across EZDITEK's data centers in Saudi Arabia, facilitating the growing connectivity demands of hyperscalers and AI players.
- Datavolt: A partnership to strengthen DataVOLT's carrier-neutral connectivity ecosystem across Saudi Arabia, enhancing network diversity and resilient connectivity for data center customers.
- SRMG: An MoU to enhance Saudi Arabia's media production capabilities, spanning next-generation production centers, secure cloud platforms for post-production workflows, emerging technologies including virtual production and augmented reality, and AI solutions across the full content lifecycle.
- King Salman bin Abdulaziz Royal Reserve Development Authority: A cooperation agreement to develop and implement innovative solutions for reserve monitoring, building on a successful proof of concept involving AI-powered cameras and solar-powered tower infrastructure.
- Mahd Academy: An agreement to explore collaboration on smart digital solutions

stc Group Launches Net-zero Carbon Emission Solution for Advanced 5G Sites

stc group, Saudi Arabia's leading digital enabler, has unveiled a new 5G Advanced solution with net-zero carbon emissions at LEAP 2026. The solution enables network sites to support greater capacity, while consuming less energy and reducing the physical load on infrastructure. It reflects the group's commitment to innovation and technical excellence, as well as its ongoing efforts to develop sustainable network infrastructure across the Kingdom. The solution brings together radio units (Tri-Band RRU) covering three low-band frequencies, a three-carrier active antenna unit (3CC AAU) supporting three

5G frequencies, and dual-band remote radio units (Dual-Band RRU) covering two mid-band frequencies. Consolidating this equipment simplifies site design while creating a more integrated and efficient infrastructure without compromising performance. Deployed across stc's network, the solution has already delivered measurable gains in capacity and efficiency. Lower energy consumption per unit of data transmitted has reduced carbon emissions by the equivalent of planting more than 34,000 trees. Lighter, consolidated equipment has also reduced loads on telecoms towers and

minimized their exposure to wind, making maintenance easier, and lowering the long-term costs of operating the network. These results demonstrate the broader role that advanced 5G technologies can play in building more sustainable networks, giving operators a way to add capacity while reducing both energy consumption and the amount of equipment needed at each site. By simplifying tower design, improving energy efficiency and enhancing network performance, the solution supports stc's ambition to build high-capacity, sustainable 5G networks to help shape the Kingdom's digital future.



ARABSAT Unveils “ARABSAT-50” – A New Satellite Celebrating 50 Years of Leadership

Marking a new milestone as it celebrates its 50th anniversary, ARABSAT has announced the signing of an agreement with China Great Wall Industry Corporation (CGWIC) to manufacture its new satellite, “ARABSAT-50,” reflecting the transition of five decades of achievement into a new phase of advancing its space capabilities and enhancing the sustainability of its services. ARABSAT-50 holds special significance in ARABSAT’s journey, with its name coinciding with the organization’s golden jubilee and bringing together a 50-year legacy of Arab space endeavors with an ambition for a more advanced, flexible, and sustainable future. ARABSAT-50 is a high-power Ku-band satellite designed to provide immediate and effective sustainability to support and ensure the continuity of Direct-to-Home (DTH) television broadcasting services at the 26° East orbital position. This enhances the quality of the distinctive and specialized services provided by ARABSAT to satellite television broadcasting customers and delivers ready-to-use, integrated technical solutions for government and private media channels in the Middle East. ARABSAT-50 is being developed in partnership with CGWIC based on the DFH-3E platform, which has proven its reliability in space, providing an integrated solution that combines high reliability, sustainability, operational efficiency, and economic viability. ARABSAT-50 also enhances continuity and disaster recovery plans by providing flexible backup solutions to support operations across ARABSAT’s satellite fleet orbital positions, particularly at 26° East, addressing ARABSAT’s

future Ku-band requirements. Its design incorporates operational flexibility that enables the redistribution or modification of beam and channel frequencies according to operational requirements, enhancing capacity management efficiency and ensuring service continuity. ARABSAT-50 represents the beginning of a new chapter in ARABSAT’s journey. After five decades of building a leading presence in the space and satellite broadcasting sector, ARABSAT is moving toward the next 50 years with a vision founded on innovation, sustainability, and the development of a more flexible and efficient space infrastructure.



e& UAE Launches World-First Mobile Network with Speeds of Up to 10Gbps

e& UAE has announced the commercial launch of what it says is the world’s first mobile network operating on Upper 6GHz using 256TRX Giga-MIMO technology, capable of delivering peak download speeds of up to 10Gbps. The technology has moved into live commercial service over e& UAE’s existing 5.5G network as the telecoms operator develops infrastructure intended to support the country’s eventual transition towards 6G. The network is engineered to deliver single-user peak throughput of up to 10Gbps for downloads and 1Gbps for uploads, according to e& UAE. It can also provide total single-cell throughput exceeding 50Gbps when combined with commercial TDD bands. The operator described the deployment as a world first and said it would provide fiber-like broadband performance over a mobile network. The network uses the Upper 6GHz spectrum between 6425MHz and 6775MHz, providing up to 350MHz of continuous bandwidth. It combines the additional spectrum with 256TRX Giga-MIMO technology, significantly increasing antenna transceiving capacity compared with conventional 64TRX 5G deployments. The technology is designed to increase network capacity while providing more precise beam-

forming and interference suppression, particularly in densely populated urban areas. According to the company, the deployment can achieve site-for-site coverage comparable with existing 3.5GHz C-band infrastructure. Marwan bin Shakar, Chief Technology Officer of e& UAE, said: “The commercial activation of U6GHz 256TRX Giga-MIMO marks a defining milestone in e& UAE’s network evolution. We have moved from technical validation to a live commercial reality that significantly elevates the 5G-Advanced experience for our customers, while operationalizing the native architecture needed for 6G. “This achievement directly underpins the UAE’s vision to remain the world’s most advanced digital hub, supported by world-class infrastructure and next-generation connectivity.” The commercial launch supports the UAE’s national 6G roadmap led by the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority. However, the deployment is not itself a commercial 6G network. Instead, e& is using Upper 6GHz spectrum over its existing 5.5G network as part of an evolutionary path towards the technologies expected to underpin future 6G services and the IMT-2030 framework.

etisalat UAE and Accenture Launch AI Transformation Alliance

etisalat UAE and Accenture today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under the AI Transformation Alliance to accelerate digital and AI-led transformation across government and enterprise sectors in the UAE, with the potential to extend the collaboration into selected international markets. The MoU sets out a scalable framework through which the two organisations intend to jointly develop offerings, coordinate market engagement and deliver complex transformation programmes through a shared operating model. These objectives reflect the parties' focus on building a long-term portfolio of large-scale transformation

opportunities across priority government and enterprise sectors. The partnership is structured around a coordinated delivery model. etisalat UAE and Accenture intend to identify opportunities, develop integrated solutions and execute large-scale digital and AI programmes, supported by commercial, governance and accountability frameworks to be agreed between the parties. Abdulla Al Ahmed, Chief Government & VVIP Relations Officer, etisalat UAE, said: "Organisations are looking for practical ways to move from AI strategy to implementation and measurable results. This MoU brings together etisalat UAE's

digital infrastructure, connectivity and technology capabilities with Accenture's consulting and delivery expertise. By working through a coordinated model, we can help customers simplify complex transformation programmes, accelerate execution and create lasting value for their organisations and the people they serve." Joint governance structures are expected to oversee opportunity development, commercial alignment, performance and risk, while repeatable methodologies, solution frameworks and delivery assets will support consistent execution across different customers, sectors and markets.



Mobily Taps Ericsson for AI RANs and Level 4 Network Autonomy

Ericsson announced it has signed two MoUs with Saudi Arabian telco Mobily – one for AI-powered RANs, and another to boost Mobily's network autonomy to Level 4. Under the first MoU, Ericsson and Mobily will explore the use of AI in RAN software functionalities operating across RAN compute, radio, and active antenna systems (AAS), together with centralized AI use cases enabled by rApps on the Ericsson Intelligent Automation Platform (EIAP). Mobily said that making the network more intelligent, automated and responsive will help create a strong foundation for future AI-native apps and advanced digital experiences,

including augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR), autonomous vehicles and physical AI. As part of the deal, Mobily will also join the EIAP ecosystem, giving it access to a community of software vendors, developers and ecosystem partners that could provide rApps that address network requirements in Saudi Arabia. Mobily said AI RAN capabilities will enable intelligence and automation across the network, from the RAN edge to centralized operations, and advance the telco's journey toward autonomous networks. Which brings us to the second MoU, under which Ericsson will help Mobily boost its network operations and optimization with the goal of achieving Level 4 network autonomy in key scenarios. The MoU establishes a framework for Ericsson and Mobily to jointly prepare and implement autonomous network use cases using the Ericsson Operations Engine, building on the existing operating model, which has contributed to the development of Mobily's operations in recent years. More specifically, Ericsson and Mobily will explore use cases across operations automation, self-healing, optimization and energy management across Mobily's multi-vendor network environment, with a focus on AI-enabled and goal-based autonomous operations within network management and optimization. The two companies aim to explore how greater levels of network autonomy can maximize the value of existing infrastructure, and create new opportunities for Mobily to monetize its network. Mobily also said the project supports its own strategy to leverage AI and autonomous networks, as well as Saudi Arabia's digital transformation ambitions in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.





Omantel Named a “Most Honored Company” at the 2026 Extel Awards



Omantel has been named a “Most Honored Company” at the 2026 Extel Awards, alongside awards for “Best Investor Relations Company” and “Best Investor Relations Team” in the Telecommunications sector. The recognitions were announced as part of the Extel Awards for Europe and Emerging EMEA Markets, with the awards ceremony held in London earlier this month. Ghassan Khamis Al Hashar, Chief Financial Officer at Omantel, said: “This recognition reflects the strength of Omantel’s relationship with the investment community and our approach to investor relations as an integral part of good governance and long-term value creation. Transparent and effective engagement goes beyond reporting results. It requires giving investors a clear

view of our strategy, performance and direction, enabling them to make informed decisions and strengthening confidence in the company.” He added: “The three Extel recognitions reinforce our commitment to continually strengthening our investor relations practices in line with international standards. This includes improving the quality of disclosure, making information more accessible and maintaining an open dialogue with investors and analysts. We will continue to build on this approach as Omantel deepens its engagement with regional and international capital markets, underpinned by high standards of transparency and governance.” The recognition is based on the views and assessments of the investment community, including investors and financial analysts,

through Extel’s annual research. The research evaluates the quality of investor relations practices, the effectiveness of market communications and the level of engagement between executive leadership and the investment community. The awards reflect the confidence Omantel has built among investors and analysts and its emphasis on transparency, disclosure and clear, reliable market communication. They also recognize the company’s continued engagement with capital markets and its efforts to give investors a clearer understanding of its strategy, performance and future direction. Omantel has continued to strengthen its investor relations framework through improved disclosure practices, greater access to information and broader communication channels with investors across equity and debt markets. The approach is intended to deepen engagement with the investment community while responding to an evolving financial markets landscape. The company continues to develop its investor relations practices in line with international best practices, supporting its broader approach to governance and transparency and strengthening its engagement across regional and international capital markets. The Extel Awards are widely recognized as a global benchmark for investor relations. Each year, they draw on assessments from investors, analysts and other capital markets professionals to recognize performance in investor relations, corporate leadership and engagement with the investment community.

Omantel Partners with Liva Insurance to Strengthen Digital Infrastructure and Drive Business Resilience

As insurers across Oman invest in digital platforms and customer experience, the infrastructure behind those platforms matters just as much as the platforms themselves. Reliable connectivity is what keeps branches running, systems online, and customers served; every hour of every day. In line with this, Omantel has signed a

Master Service Agreement (MSA) with Liva Insurance SAOC, establishing Omantel as Liva’s strategic telecommunications partner and providing a comprehensive portfolio of connectivity services across its operations in Oman. The partnership goes beyond delivering infrastructure. It gives Liva a secure, scalable digital foundation

that strengthens business continuity, protects sensitive data, and gives its teams the flexibility to innovate as customer expectations evolve. For Liva, this means fewer disruptions, faster response across its network, and the confidence to grow its digital services knowing the infrastructure behind them can keep pace. Under the

agreement, Omantel will bring together mobility, data, security and voice under a single strategic partnership, including corporate mobile solutions through NAMA Business Bundles, Fixed Business Broadband and FBB Pro with managed security and backup connectivity, Dedicated Internet Access, MPLS network services, Ethernet Point-to-Point connectivity, and SIP Trunk and ISDN PRI voice services. Commenting on the partnership, Bakhit Kashoob, Vice President of Enterprise Business at Omantel, said: "Connectivity is no longer just an operational necessity.

It is a strategic foundation for resilience, innovation, and enhanced customer experience. Through our partnership with Liva Insurance, we are delivering secure and scalable digital infrastructure that supports business continuity and growth. This collaboration reinforces Omantel's commitment to empowering Oman's leading enterprises to compete, innovate, and thrive with confidence." Hanaa Al Hinai, CEO of Liva Insurance said: "Reliable connectivity is fundamental to how we serve our customers and support our teams across the organization. Partnering with

Omantel strengthens our communications infrastructure and gives us the resilience and flexibility we need as we continue to grow our digital capabilities." As Oman's financial services sector accelerates its digital transformation, this partnership reflects a broader shift: resilient connectivity is no longer just a technical requirement; it's central to business performance, customer trust and long-term growth. Omantel remains committed to equipping Omani enterprises with the digital foundations they need to grow with confidence.

DeepAstra and Z.AI Announce Strategic Partnership at LEAP 2026, Supported by Omantel

DeepAstra and Z.AI announced a strategic partnership at LEAP 2026, marking a significant step in Oman's growing role in the global artificial intelligence ecosystem. The strategic partnership sets out a framework for DeepAstra to serve as Z.AI's sole sovereign AI partner in Oman and will expand access to advanced AI capabilities, including Z.AI's latest GLM family of models, through KwnX platform, Deep Astra's integrated AI workspace designed for research, planning, content creation and coding. The platform provides access to advanced global AI models, including Z.AI's flagship GLM-5.3 model, while enabling organizations to deploy AI within environments designed around national infrastructure, governance and data-control requirements. The partnership will also advance plans to formalize an Oman Sovereign AI Development Center, with areas of collaboration including Arabic AI, model adaptation and evaluation, document intelligence and applied AI use cases. The Center will be anchored in Oman, with work intended for broader Arabic-speaking markets, reinforcing the country's ambition to contribute meaningfully to regional AI innovation. Omantel has played a key role in DeepAstra's journey. Following the company's investment by Omantel Innovation Labs, Omantel's venture capital and startup support arm, Omantel also supports DeepAstra as a strategic infrastructure partner. This reflects Omantel's wider "Everyone AI" strategy, which aims to turn advances in artificial intelligence into practical applications with broader economic value. The strategy also combines investment in skills, technology and data infrastructure with responsible governance, partnerships and real-world deployment, helping create the conditions for AI solutions to move beyond experimentation and towards adoption at scale. Commenting on the announcement, Her Highness Sayyida Ghada Al Said, General Manager of Omantel Innovation Labs, said: "DeepAstra's partnership with Z.AI is a significant milestone for Oman's AI ecosystem. It brings together global technology, local capability, and the infrastructure needed to develop and deploy advanced AI solutions from Oman. The focus on Arabic AI creates an opportunity for Oman not only to adopt advanced technologies, but to help shape solutions that are relevant to the region and scalable beyond it. At Omantel, we're proud to support Deep



Astra's growth and to contribute to Oman's emergence as a hub for AI innovation and advanced technologies." The partnership with Z.AI will advance DeepAstra's growth across three areas: sovereign AI deployment in Oman, globally available products, and research designed for broader regional and international use. "We are pleased to establish a strong partnership with DeepAstra. By combining DeepAstra's strong local capabilities and market reach with Z.ai's leading foundation models and AI technologies, we look forward to accelerating the adoption of advanced AI solutions in Oman and supporting the country's digital transformation ambitions," said Robin Chen, Regional Manager for the Middle East at Z.ai." Mahmoud Al Nafei, Co-Founder & CEO of DeepAstra, said: "AI sovereignty is not about limiting access to global innovation; it is about giving organizations the ability to adopt it on their own terms. Our partnership with Z.AI connects advanced GLM models with DeepAstra's trusted national AI platform, providing organizations in Oman with a controlled, secure path to deploy AI while making the same innovation accessible globally through KwnX. With Omantel supporting our path to scale as a strategic infrastructure partner and investor, we are building the foundations for strong Arabic AI capabilities that serve Oman and the wider region."

Omantel Innovation Labs and SME Development Authority (Riyada) Advance AI Entrepreneurship Through 2026 Salalah AI Hackathon

Omantel Innovation Labs, in partnership with the SME Development Authority (Riyada), concluded the Salalah AI Hackathon 2026 at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, advancing a new cohort of innovators through the practical development of responsible, market-relevant artificial intelligence startups. Held from Aug. 23-26, the four-day hackathon brought together 60 participants representing 22 teams, including innovators, aspiring entrepreneurs, startup founders, students, developers, designers and industry professionals. Participants worked with mentors and subject-matter experts to turn real-world challenges into AI-enabled products and services with commercial or social potential. AI was required to form a core part of every proposed solution. Teams progressed through the complete startup-development journey: identifying a meaningful problem, defining the target customer, designing an AI product, building a prototype, developing a viable business model and presenting the startup through a final pitch. Participants developed ideas across seven themes: telecom and digital connectivity; business and SMEs; people and everyday life; education, skills and jobs; tourism and experiences; smart and sustainable communities; and open innovation. The themes encouraged teams to respond to locally relevant needs while considering how their solutions could scale within Oman and into wider markets. The ideas were assessed on the clarity and relevance of the problem addressed; understanding of the target customer or user; the central role of AI in the solution; differentiation of the value proposition; prototype-development potential; commercial sustainability; scalability; and the responsible and safe use of AI. At the closing ceremony, three winning teams were recognized and received cash awards with a total value of OMR 5,000. The winners will also join a two-month incubation program at Omantel Innovation Labs, where they will receive expert mentorship, business-model development support, market-validation guidance and opportunities to present their ventures to potential investors and ecosystem



partners. Wafeer secured first place for its smart platform designed to support the fisheries sector by connecting fishermen directly with customers and markets and facilitating the listing, ordering and purchasing of fish. The platform also provides data and analytics on fishermen's performance that can be used to connect them with financial institutions and banks, helping facilitate access to relevant financing solutions and opportunities. Flow took second place for its smart solution for the restaurant and food and beverage sector, designed to help businesses manage large and unexpected orders more efficiently by improving supply-chain management and ensuring that required materials and supplies are available and delivered on time without disrupting operations. SEER placed third with a smart solution designed to protect data privacy within organizations by masking and safeguarding sensitive information before it is shared with external AI tools, reducing the risk of information leakage and helping organizations maintain the security of their data. HH Sayyida Ghada bint Jaifer Al Said, General Manager of Omantel Innovation Labs, said: "The AI Startup Hackathon reflects Omantel's commitment to creating practical pathways through which talent, technology and entrepreneurship can come together. Over four focused days, participants moved beyond ideas to develop prototypes, test business models and present solutions addressing genuine needs. We congratulate the

winning teams and look forward to helping selected ventures strengthen their market readiness, scale responsibly and contribute to Oman's growing digital economy." Sayyid Mazin bin Saif Al Busaidi, the Vice President at SME Development Authority (Riyada), said: "The solutions developed during the hackathon demonstrate the potential of Omani innovators to apply advanced technology to clear commercial and social challenges. Our collaboration with Omantel Innovation Labs gives participants structured support to translate innovation into viable ventures. By strengthening entrepreneurial capabilities and helping promising startups progress toward the market, initiatives such as this contribute to a more competitive SME ecosystem and innovation-led economic diversification." The hackathon concluded with 22 prototypes and startup concepts presented to a three-member judging panel, reflecting the program's emphasis on tangible outcomes rather than ideas alone. Through the initiative, Omantel Innovation Labs and the SME Development Authority (Riyada) reinforced their shared commitment to AI-powered entrepreneurship, national capability development and technology-led business growth. The collaboration supports the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040 by helping innovators develop responsible solutions, build sustainable ventures and contribute to the Sultanate's digital and economic transformation.



'AA' MSCI ESG Rating Makes Zain One of the GCC's Highest-Rated Companies

Zain Group, a leading TechCo providing innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications across eight markets in the Middle East and Africa, has recently seen its Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) rating upgraded from 'A' to 'AA', marking a significant milestone in the Group's ongoing commitment of sustainable growth, sound governance and responsible business leadership. This makes Zain one of the highest-rated companies across the region of all industries within the MSCI ESG assessment universe and places Zain Group in the Leader category among a global peer universe of 164 telecommunications companies. Zain cemented its position among the highest-performing telecommunications companies in the GCC, reinforcing the momentum of its long-term ESG journey and demonstrating the effectiveness of the Group's approach to identifying and managing material ESG risks and opportunities. Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "Achieving an 'AA' ESG rating marks a defining milestone in Zain's transformation into a purpose-driven TechCo. It is a collective, Group-wide achievement that validates the disciplined execution of our '4WARD-Progress with Purpose' strategy. Across Zain's ecosystem, our

Boards, governance structures and sustainability teams are embedding sound environmental, social and governance practices into strategic decision-making and operational execution." He added: "Our progression to an 'AA' rating demonstrates that credible ESG leadership is built through consistent action, transparent measurement and accountability. By ensuring that our governance frameworks remain aligned with evolving international standards and best practices across every business function, we have strengthened our ability to anticipate risks, safeguard stakeholder trust and create lasting value. This progress also advances our purpose: 'Better Lives. Lasting Connections.'" The latest assessment recognized Zain's continued advancement across several material areas, with the Group performing above the telecommunications industry average in privacy and data security, labor management, environmental practices and corporate behavior, including internal controls and policies. Zain's data security practices were identified as leading those of industry peers, supported by pre-emptive measures, established incident-response mechanisms and provisions for conducting due diligence on the data-security practices of suppliers. The assessment also recognized the Group's efforts to strengthen employee engagement and responsible workplace

practices through measures to support a culture in which ethical conduct, employee experience and accountability are treated as core components of long-term business performance. Zain's 'AA' rating reinforces the strategic importance the Group places on effective oversight, ethical leadership, transparent reporting and disciplined risk management. These practices provide stakeholders with greater confidence that the company is being managed responsibly while supporting its ability to navigate an increasingly complex technological, regulatory and geopolitical environment. MSCI ESG Ratings assess companies' resilience to financially relevant, industry-specific sustainability risks and opportunities. Companies receive an industry-relative rating on a seven-level scale ranging from 'AAA' to 'CCC', based on their exposure to relevant risks and the effectiveness of their management practices. Zain builds on this progress by strengthening its ESG frameworks, enhancing performance measurement and embedding responsible practices across its operations, supply chain and digital ecosystem. Through its 4WARD strategy, the Group remains focused on generating sustainable value for shareholders, customers, employees, communities and the wider economies it serves.



AT&T Signs Over \$3 Billion Fiber Deal with Corning as Data Demand Surges

AT&T said it had signed a multi-year deal worth more than \$3 billion with Corning to procure fiber and cable, as the telecom giant expands its network to meet surging demand for data. Corning shares rose 3.3% in premarket trading. Fiber network build-out has emerged as a critical growth area for the telecom industry as the wireless market matures and internet usage surges. Growing demand for data-intensive services, including AI workloads,

cloud computing and connected devices, is increasing the need for faster, more resilient and scalable fiber networks. "The average AT&T Fiber household now uses more than 1 terabyte each month, 5x more than in 2016. And that number is expected to keep climbing," AT&T said. Fiber is also seen as a critical component for telecom companies because it can quickly carry data for services ranging from video calls and movie streaming to AI tools. The

company aims to reach 60 million fiber locations by the end of the decade as part of its multi-billion-dollar infrastructure expansion. Its \$5.75 billion acquisition of Lumen's fiber business has further expanded its fiber footprint. The company has committed more than \$250 billion over five years to strengthen US connectivity infrastructure.



Cisco Delivers Trusted AI at Scale Through New Splunk Advancements

As AI agents take on more of the work inside the enterprise, the biggest barrier to adoption isn't capability – it's confidence. Customers need to trust that AI is secure, governed, and worth the cost before they let it run at scale. Today, Cisco closes that gap through new Splunk innovations, giving customers the ability to safely and cost-efficiently scale AI wherever their data already lives. This includes an expanded partnership with NVIDIA to bring Splunk AI to on-premises customers. "One of the biggest roadblocks to enterprise AI today is that it's too hard to deploy," said Jeetu Patel, President and Chief Product Officer, Cisco. "Customers want to know: Can I trust it to do the job? Can I afford it? And, most importantly, can I secure it? By running Splunk AI on the infrastructure customers already trust, they can move faster to put AI to work in their business with confidence and control." Self-managed Splunk AI, accelerated by NVIDIA For customers who can't move sensitive data to the cloud, Splunk AI has remained out of reach – until now. Cisco and NVIDIA are expanding their partnership to bring self-managed AI directly to Splunk Enterprise customers, across their own on-premises, private cloud, and air-gapped environments. Cisco Secure AI Factory

with NVIDIA is the reference architecture that brings the full AI stack together, built from Cisco AI PODs. The newest of these configurations, Cisco AI POD for Splunk, brings Splunk AI to on-premises customers with new AI runtime software, Cisco infrastructure, NVIDIA accelerated computing, and Kubernetes-based architecture – pre-validated and optimized for Splunk AI workloads. Cisco AI POD for Splunk is available today. For customers who have their own infrastructure, partners like Accenture, bitsIO, Wipro and World Wide Technology are ready on day one to help customers stand it up. Splunk AI Assistant (available now) and Agent Launchpad (coming later this year) run on this layer. Together, they bring ad-hoc agentic investigations and custom agent building for a broad variety of use cases including the agentic SOC to teams that run Splunk in their own data centers. Customers can also self-host a selection of open and proprietary generative AI models for their Splunk Enterprise workloads, including the Cisco Deep Time Series Model, Google Gemma 4, and OpenAI GPT-OSS 20B, with the NVIDIA Nemotron open models in the coming months. Teams can use the model best suited for the job without sending data outside their environment. "Enterprises

need to bring AI where their data lives, especially when security and sovereignty requirements require critical workloads to stay on-premises," said Justin Boitano, Vice President of Enterprise AI at NVIDIA. "By enabling Splunk AI workloads to run with NVIDIA Nemotron open models on NVIDIA accelerated computing, Cisco and NVIDIA are working together to bring AI agents directly to Splunk and giving organizations a high-performance, full-stack foundation for agentic security operations wherever they run their infrastructure." New observability innovations give Cisco customers one full-stack view into how their AI agents are actually performing. AI agents behave in ways that the people running them can't always predict, running up costs that stay invisible until the invoice lands. Splunk Agent Observability, with its new Tokenomics capabilities, is closing that visibility gap and giving organizations a real-time view into agent performance and AI token spend. This enables teams to see exactly where and why AI costs accumulate before they become a budget problem. Splunk Agent Observability, announced initially as an on-premises offering, is now available in Splunk Observability Cloud and in Cisco Cloud Control, extending visibility to customers working across the Cisco portfolio. It evaluates agent and model behavior, observes performance across the AI stack, and applies runtime guardrails that block inaccurate or unsafe actions, like hallucinations or leaking sensitive data. As part of Splunk Agent Observability, the new Tokenomics solution extends that visibility to spend – tracking and attributing token expenditure across AI agents and employees' use of coding agents like Claude Code, Codex, and Cursor. It will also forecast consumption patterns to project where spend is headed before a billing period ends, using the Cisco Deep Time Series Model. These insights help organizations to operationalize a tokenomics framework and tie AI spend to business outcomes. Cisco is also helping organizations strengthen their infrastructure resilience by minimizing visibility gaps and cost barriers that hinder autonomous



troubleshooting. The Observability Studio enables teams to ensure new applications are “born observable,” measurable and production-ready from the start. The new Network Intelligence App brings Cisco network topology, device health, and events into Splunk, so network teams can trace an alert straight to the device behind it and the network around it. Also, the new editions for Observability Cloud – Essentials and Premier – simplify how customers buy and expand observability across their business, with cost-effective log analytics to debug application and infrastructure problems. AI-driven attacks are moving faster than traditional, human-led security operations can respond. Stopping them requires an agentic SOC capable of reasoning and defending at machine speed, without compromising the data sovereignty and human governance enterprise leaders demand. Splunk is advancing the agentic SOC by combining enterprise-wide telemetry with specialized AI agents powered by leading frontier and domain-specific models. New purpose-built agent capabilities expand the Splunk Agentic SOC Workforce

and mirror how elite security operations teams work across detection engineering, proactive threat hunting, autonomous investigation, coordinated response, and policy governance. By correlating rich, full-stack machine data across network, cloud, application, and identity environments, these agents deliver deep reasoning and transparent, explainable verdicts that cut alert noise and accelerate mean time to remediate. Attackers are now using AI to hunt for vulnerabilities at scale, probing infrastructure, applications, and identity systems continuously and indiscriminately. Recent exploitation campaigns have made complete exposure visibility a board-level requirement. New Exposure Analytics enhancements deliver it with broader asset coverage, historical change tracking, and business-specific risk insights. Connecting exposure context to live security activity across Splunk, Cisco, and an extensive third-party ecosystem, so teams see their entire estate rather than one vendor's slice of it. Agents use that context to pinpoint what matters most and where risk is active. New capabilities

in Splunk Enterprise Security Essentials bring agentic security operations and greater autonomy to far more security teams. Splunk Enterprise Security Premier adds deeper agentic autonomy and the full power of Splunk Enterprise Security. The same urgency is driving Splunk's next chapter with AWS. Splunk and AWS are expanding their long-standing relationship into joint product development through a multi-year agreement. The work advances the agentic SOC to match the speed of AI-driven attacks. Those attacks now move faster than human-led response processes can answer. Matching that speed takes deep security intelligence and the scale to act on it instantly. Splunk brings the data platform and detection depth security teams already run on. AWS brings global cloud scale. Together they will put agentic support in the hands of analysts across detection, investigation, and response. Security teams won't give up oversight to move faster. What's ahead is agentic action at scale, with the governance and analyst control enterprises require.

Cisco AI Research: AgenticOps Scaling Quickly in the Enterprise

Cisco has announced the release of The Impact of Agentic AI on Network Operations, new research examining the state of network operations (NetOps), AI adoption, and attitudes toward AI autonomy and trust. Findings show that amid rising complexity, organizations are moving quickly toward agent-driven operations: AgenticOps. More than four of every five respondents expect to reach an AI-led operating model within 12 months, with more than three-quarters willing to grant agentic AI significant autonomy in NetOps, including nearly a quarter that are comfortable with fully autonomous operation and no human oversight. Conducted independently by Omdia, the study surveyed 1,000 IT and network operations leaders at organizations with 500 or more employees. The findings indicate that organizations have moved from AI in an advisory role to AgenticOps for agent-powered network operations in which operators set direction and guardrails while AI agents sense, reason, and act across domains. It comes as NetOps teams face rising performance



expectations and increasingly dynamic environments, with AI workloads adding new traffic patterns, performance requirements, and operational complexity. "Agentic AI represents a fundamental paradigm shift: moving from running operations to orchestrating intent," said Joe Vaccaro, SVP/GM, Network Platform & Assurance at Cisco. "Agentic AI for NetOps requires

trust built on visibility into every decision, explainable context behind every recommendation, and guardrails that ensure deterministic outcomes. Organizations that master this balance will keep operators firmly in command while enabling agentic systems that act with confidence, validate outcomes, and continuously prove operational trust." Key Takeaways from The Im-

Impact of Agentic AI on Network Operations Report:

- The findings show that agent-driven AI has taken on operational responsibility in NetOps. This shift is occurring as the average organization generates about 4,100 monitoring alerts and events each day; more than half of them are network related. At this volume, manually clearing the daily network-alert backlog would require roughly 100 IT specialists. Organizations also report that nearly half of network alerts are closed without investigation, and an almost identical number of respondents report investigation time is spent pursuing false positives. As adoption advances, requirements for built-in trust are shaping how organizations implement and scale AI.
- Operational complexity is placing pressure on traditional NetOps models. Organizations report managing high alert volumes, continuous change, fragmented tooling, and issues that span multiple domains. Against this backdrop, a vast majority (95%) say their existing, non-agentic AIOps tools fall short in one or more significant areas.
- 92% report that performance issues commonly span multiple domains, requiring correlation across ten or more tools for resolution.
- 57% say their current change processes can't match the speed required today.
- AI adoption creates new demands on the network. That operational complexity is compounded as AI adoption grows and agents operate at software speed, generating unpredictable traffic patterns and greater data exchange.
- AI traffic is on a trajectory to double every six months, according to a Cisco analysis of aggregated direct-to-AI network telemetry.
- When traffic generated by agentic AI is included, Cisco testing found that tasks performed by agents can generate up to 450% more total network traffic.
- Organizations are turning to an agent-driven network. Many organizations are allowing AI agents to take on more responsibility in NetOps, including making production changes such as rerouting traffic, adjusting wireless parameters, isolating suspicious endpoints, and resolving incidents end to end without prior human approval.
- 75% have already deployed AI for NetOps.
- 51% run agentic AI that acts in production today.
- 80% are comfortable granting AI a high or fully autonomous role in NetOps, including 24% who are comfortable with AI acting with no human oversight.
- 82% are comfortable allowing AI to make at least some production network changes without prior human approval.
- 84% expect an AI-led operating model within twelve months.
- Organizations will scale agentic AI on the condition of visibility and trust. Organizations are open to greater agent-driven operations in NetOps, but their willingness to scale it depends on transparency, visibility, and controls.
- 86% say a single integrated platform is the most effective path forward.
- 69% require detailed explain ability for agent-driven actions.
- 36% say full observability, including detailed tracing, summarized rationale, and post-action audits, is the minimum acceptable standard.



Eutelsat and Grupo W Com Expand Partnership in Mexico

Eutelsat announced the extension and expansion of its long-standing partnership with StarTV, part of Grupo W Com, one of Mexico's leading direct-to-home (DTH) television providers, for the continued delivery of satellite television and next-gen services via the EUTELSAT 117 West B satellite. Under the renewed multi-year agreement, StarTV will expand its use of satellite capacity on EUTELSAT 117° West B to support the continued growth of its service portfolio, including direct-to-home television, educational content initiatives, and NVOD (Near Video On Demand) over IP across Mexico. The collaboration reflects the increasing importance of satellite infrastructure in enabling the evolution of television services and digital inclusion throughout the country. As demand for

high-quality content and digital services continues to evolve, Eutelsat's satellite infrastructure remains a key tool to ensuring reliable, scalable, and wide-reaching service delivery. The agreement reinforces the relevance of the 117° West orbital position as one of the most important video neighborhoods in Mexico and Latin America, supporting broadcasters and operators with high-performance distribution capabilities. Jean-François Fallacher, CEO of Eutelsat, commented: "This expanded partnership with Grupo W Com demonstrates how satellite continues to evolve alongside the changing video landscape, expanding access to high-quality entertainment and digital services across Mexico, while driving innovation in the country's television market." Jose

Aguirre Campos, CEO of Grupo W Com, added: "This partnership has allowed us to not just offer low cost pay TV services in Mexico, but to increase our portfolio of services and innovate in order to have added value in our offer and to differentiate ourselves from our competitors. We strongly believe in reinventing ourselves in an industry that constantly demands it and Eutelsat has been working hand-in-hand with our team to launch new services like the NVOD (Near Video On Demand) via Broadcast, which we believe will help reduce churn and will give our customers a chance to have access to movies and tv shows specially in remote places where there are not any accessible ISPs."

Eutelsat Expands Resilient LEO Connectivity Across Portugal in Partnership with MEO, Portugal's Leading Telecommunications Operator

Eutelsat and MEO, Portugal's leading telecommunications operator, announced a new partnership agreement to expand the delivery of Eutelsat's OneWeb Low Earth Orbit (LEO) connectivity services in Portugal. Under the agreement, MEO will integrate Eutelsat's OneWeb LEO services into its connectivity solutions, combining satellite, fiber and 5G technologies, to provide resilient backup connectivity for businesses, public administrations, municipalities and critical infrastructure operators across the country. The

agreement builds on a longstanding infrastructure partnership, with MEO hosting Eutelsat's ground station infrastructure for several years, supporting first its GEO fleet and now the OneWeb LEO constellation. Eutelsat and MEO work closely together to support service continuity and ensure security across both sites. The expansion into LEO services marks the next step in the partnership, strengthening Eutelsat's route to market and brings LEO connectivity to a broader range of customers across Portugal. It

also demonstrates the growing demand for secure and resilient connectivity delivered through trusted European operators and infrastructure. Jean-François Fallacher, CEO, Eutelsat said: "This agreement is an important step in expanding Eutelsat's LEO services in Portugal. Together with MEO, we are expanding access to OneWeb through a trusted European partnership, supporting Europe's need for greater sovereignty over critical connectivity. For businesses, public services and critical infrastructure across Portugal, our OneWeb services provide an important additional layer of resilience alongside terrestrial networks." Ana Figueiredo, CEO, MEO said: "A network's resilience begins with its ability not to rely on a single technology. That is why we are combining the strength of our fibre and 5G networks with Eutelsat's satellite connectivity, creating a multi-layered communications architecture that is more responsive in critical situations. This partnership enables us to bring this capability to businesses, public bodies and organizations that cannot afford to stop, ensuring connectivity where it is most needed and when the continuity of communications is most critical. It is also a step towards building a European connectivity ecosystem that is more resilient, self-sufficient and fit for the future."



Eutelsat Supports Polish Rail Connectivity Trial

Satellite communications company Eutelsat says it has successfully completed its first rail connectivity trial in Poland aboard a long-distance train, demonstrating its OneWeb LEO connectivity capabilities on a live rail network. The trial was led by local network solutions company ACO Solutions as the key systems integrator, with support from satellite operator HispaSat as the distribution partner and Eutelsat. It was conducted aboard a PKP Intercity long-distance train travelling at speeds of up to 160 kilometers per hour on routes connecting Kozlow in the south to the



capital Warsaw and then Tczew in the north. The trial used the Kymeta Kestrel u5 terminal, engineered to meet the tough and demanding requirements of the rail environment. The u5 recently received an official safety and quality certification from TÜV Rheinland, an independent testing organization. The Kestrel u5 is a lightweight, compact and rugged satellite terminal with uses across applications such as rail and unmanned vehicles. It features a high IP rating (IP69K) for durability and reliability, and optimized power consumption (averaging under 100W) for mobile platforms. Eutelsat's

OneWeb LEO connectivity was tested for the first time on a live rail network in Poland, gathering performance data and assessing seamless switching between satellite and terrestrial technologies throughout the journey. Designed to support both passenger and freight rail operations, Eutelsat's rail connectivity solution combines its OneWeb LEO satellite connectivity with existing rail communications infrastructure to support passenger connectivity, operational communications and data services. The solution interfaces with onboard and trackside systems, helping rail operators

enhance communications capabilities in the field while maintaining connectivity with operations centers across their networks. Eva Bisgaard, President of Eutelsat's Connectivity Business Unit, explains: "Our solution gives rail operators the flexibility to prioritize different connectivity needs and evolve as passenger expectations and operational requirements change." Eutelsat's rail support offering hasn't just involved Europe. Late last year we reported that Eutelsat was partnering with Airtel Gabon to provide OneWeb LEO satellite connectivity to passenger trains in Gabon to support on-board Wi-Fi services.

Eutelsat to Expand LEO Connectivity to Critical Infrastructure and Communities Across Greenland

Eutelsat announced its participation in the Enhanced Satellite Connectivity Project for Greenland, a new initiative supported by the European Union, the Government of Greenland and the Government of Denmark to extend reliable connectivity to rural and remote communities across the country. The project was launched at Eutelsat's ground station in Greenland, in the presence of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen and Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. The European Union's support for the project also reflects its broader commitment to strengthening European sovereignty and resilience in critical infrastructure. By supporting a European satellite provider to deliver essential connectivity in Greenland, the initiative helps ensure that critical communications across Europe and the Arctic are underpinned by European capabilities. Under the project, Eutelsat will provide OneWeb Low Earth Orbit (LEO) connectivity in partnership with Tusass, Greenland's national telecommunications provider and the project's lead partner. Building on their longstanding relationship, the two companies will extend reliable communications to remote settlements and critical infrastructure in areas where terrestrial networks particularly difficult to deploy. Operating in polar orbit, Eutelsat's



OneWeb constellation is particularly suited to Greenland and the wider Arctic, providing high-speed, low latency connectivity at high latitudes. By extending this capability to more remote communities, the project will support Greenland's priorities for digital inclusion while strengthening resilient and sovereign communications infrastructure in a strategically important region. The project also brings together broader European satellite capabilities, including those of HispaSat, and builds on the cooperation between the partners within SpaceRISE, the consortium delivering the EU's IRIS² secure connectivity program. Eutelsat is a core partner in SpaceRISE and will contribute its LEO capabilities to IRIS².

Eva Bisgaard, President for Connectivity at Eutelsat, said: "Eutelsat and Tusass have worked together for many years to address Greenland's unique connectivity needs, and this project marks an important new step in that relationship. With support from the European Union, Greenland and Denmark, we will extend OneWeb LEO connectivity to more remote communities, supporting everyday access to communications while strengthening the resilient, sovereign infrastructure Greenland needs for its future. The Arctic is strategically important to Europe, and we are proud that our European satellite capabilities can make a practical difference for the people who live there."

Eutelsat, Skynopy Launch Ground-Based Satellite Venture

Eutelsat and French satellite startup Skynopy officially launched what the pair claim is one of the largest software-defined ground infrastructures for current and future satellite offerings, covering in-orbit, orbital data centers and telecoms services. Announced at the International Space Summit being held this week in Paris, the joint offering is called Global AKAR and brings together Eutelsat's global footprint

with Skynopy's software technology and "commercial traction." The duo explained the ambition of the project is to utilize Eutelsat's ground network of base stations to create a data backbone for multi-mission constellations in the S, X and Ka-bands. The partnership aims to deploy 100 operational antennas by the end of 2029, enabling "a real-time service" at a very high throughput for the fast growing Low Earth

Orbit (LEO) services market. Global AKAR is designed to significantly reduce data latency to less than three minutes compared to the current state of the art standard of one hour, while delivering 10Gb/s throughput. Partially supported by the French government, the project is now underway after successfully demonstrating the technical feasibility through a three-antenna proof of concept for Earth Observation. The same infrastructure is designed to support a new generation of in-orbit services, enabling satellites to transfer data more efficiently and interact with in-orbit computing capabilities. Customers are in line to benefit from access to a secure, high-capacity and globally distributed network without having to build out and operate their own ground infrastructures, said the partners. They further pointed to secure architecture and interfaces, making Global AKAR suitable for defence and other sensitive applications. Emmanuel Macron, President of France, hailed Global AKAR as an alliance of a European champion in Eutelsat and one of France's promising startups in Skynopy, "working hand in hand to offer the best service on the missing element of the space economy: the ground segment".



Huawei Recognized as a Leader in Gartner® Magic Quadrant™ for Enterprise Storage Platforms, 2026

The Business and Technology Insights Company Gartner® has released the 2026 Magic Quadrant™ for Infrastructure Platform Consumption Services. Huawei has been placed in the Leaders Quadrant, the only non-North American vendor to do so. The report comprehensively evaluates vendors based on their IT infrastructure platform capabilities, service-oriented delivery, and operations management. Built on 18 years of technical expertise, Huawei's DCS full-stack data center solution integrates storage, compute, network, virtualization, data and AI, and intelligent management capabilities to accelerate enterprises' digital and intelligent transformation. This leading



full-stack IT solution uses eSphere virtualization to deliver efficient resource

pooling and scheduling for storage, compute, and network resources. In

addition, the ModelEngine model platform and Nexent agent platform help customers accelerate the deployment of models and agent applications. Delivering high performance, reliability, and scalability, OceanStor data storage natively supports multiple protocols such as block, file, and object. It also supports comprehensive data protection through solutions that include an intra-city active-active setup,

remote disaster recovery, and multi-layer ransomware protection. Huawei's unified iMaster DME management platform provides service-oriented storage, compute, and other resources, delivering a new AgenticOps experience for customers. Huawei DCS has already been chosen by more than 15,000 customers from over 170 countries and regions, covering key sectors such as the government, finance,

healthcare, manufacturing, and carriers. Looking to the future, Huawei DCS will continue to prioritize customer needs and work closely with ecosystem partners to help enterprises build efficient and reliable IT infrastructure, improve the service experience, boost operations efficiency, and achieve shared success in the intelligent era.

Huawei Unveils New Unlicensed PtMP Microwave Solution RTN 5100 to Boost Backhaul Efficiency

Operating on the 5 GHz unlicensed spectrum, one RTN 5100 at a central site can handle up to two 1-Gbps channels and accommodate up to 128 remote sites. It supports networking modes like PtMP, PtP, and multi-hop relay, adding extra flexibility for access and backhaul of 4K ultra-HD video and broadband services across massive numbers of sites. RTN 5100 operates in time division multiple access (TDMA) mode to enable access from multiple sites without mutual interference or conflict. It uses high-strength encryption algorithms, including AES256, over the air interface to enhance security, while utilizing redundant link backup to boost network resilience and ensure secure and reliable data transmission. Jason Wang, President of Huawei Microwave Product Line, said, "The new unlicensed 5 GHz PtMP microwave solution is a key member of Huawei's agile, simplified, and resilient family of solutions geared toward

enterprises. We will continue to dive deep into industries by providing all-scenario PtP and PtMP microwave solutions based

on both licensed and unlicensed spectrum to help build a more efficient private-network foundation for industry users."



Kuwait Partners with Microsoft to Advance AI, Cloud and Cybersecurity under Vision 2035

Kuwait's technology and communications authorities have signed a strategic partnership with Microsoft covering artificial intelligence, cloud infrastructure, cybersecurity and digital skills, with the government also preparing to deploy Microsoft 365 Copilot across public-sector organizations. The agreement brings together Kuwait's Central Agency for Information Technology,

the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority and Microsoft as the country seeks to accelerate digital transformation and strengthen its position as an AI hub under Kuwait Vision 2035. The partnership also includes plans for new data centers, a Copilot Solutions Center of Excellence and a cybersecurity platform designed to strengthen protection of Kuwait's national

digital infrastructure. Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar said the government will implement Microsoft 365 Copilot for employees across government agencies. The deployment is intended to use generative AI capabilities to improve productivity and operational efficiency within the public sector. The source does not specify how many government employees will receive

access, which agencies will deploy Copilot first or the timetable for implementation. It also does not detail the governance framework that will apply to government use of generative AI, including how sensitive public-sector information will be managed when employees interact with AI tools. The government is also preparing to establish a Copilot Solutions Center of Excellence. Such a center could provide a central structure for developing AI use cases, building expertise and supporting the adoption of Microsoft's Copilot technologies across government organizations. Al-Omar said the wider partnership represents a significant step in using AI to support Kuwait's economic diversification plans. Beyond government productivity, the initiative is intended to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship while building workforce capabilities in emerging technologies. Microsoft will launch a digital skills program focused on AI, cybersecurity and other emerging technology areas. Kuwait is

also preparing to launch new data centers to address growing private-sector demand for high-performance computing and access to Microsoft services. The source does not disclose the number of facilities, planned computing capacity, investment value, locations or expected launch dates. It also does not specify whether the facilities will constitute a new Microsoft cloud region or describe the exact cloud services that will be hosted locally. That distinction will be important as further technical details emerge. Samer Abu-Ltaif, Microsoft's President for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, said the company would work with Kuwaiti authorities to strengthen cloud infrastructure and cybersecurity within the public sector. Cybersecurity represents another major component of the agreement. The partners plan to establish a security platform using Microsoft technologies to strengthen the protection of Kuwait's national digital infrastructure against cyber threats. The initiative links Kuwait's broader adoption of

cloud and AI technologies with investment in the security capabilities needed to protect an increasingly digital public sector. No technical details were provided about the planned security architecture, products involved, organizations that will use the platform or whether it will include centralized threat intelligence and security operations capabilities. Kuwait is positioning the Microsoft partnership within its Vision 2035 development strategy, with AI and digital infrastructure expected to contribute to economic diversification and public-sector modernization. The collaboration spans several layers of that transformation, from underlying cloud and data center infrastructure to cybersecurity, AI applications and workforce development. Rather than focusing on a single technology deployment, the agreement establishes a broader framework through which Microsoft and Kuwaiti authorities can develop multiple digital initiatives.



MTN Pan-African Media Innovation Program Welcomes Its First Cohort

MTN Group, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and The African Editors' Forum (TAEF) welcomed the first cohort of media practitioners to the MTN Pan-African Media Innovation Program. This marks the start of a continental effort to strengthen journalism and build media institutions in a digital world. The inaugural cohort for the six-week course is made up of 42 journalists, editors and media practitioners from 10 African countries. They come from print, broadcast, digital and independent newsrooms in South Africa, Nigeria, Rwanda, Eswatini, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, South Sudan, Zambia and Benin. Between them, they carry a working picture of how African media is changing. Newsrooms are absorbing rapid technological shifts, audiences that behave nothing like they did five years ago, revenue models under strain, and the growing pull of artificial intelligence and global platforms. How journalism gets made, paid for and delivered is being rewritten – and newsrooms are expected to hold



on to public trust and editorial integrity while it happens. "Strong and independent media institutions are essential to informed societies as well as to Africa's progress," said Nompilo Morafo, MTN Group Chief Sustainability and Corporate Affairs Officer. "This first group is made

up of people who already understand what African newsrooms are up against and can do something about it. MTN is providing the platform and the partnerships. Responsibility for the curriculum as well as the selection of participants sits with our academic partners." UJ selected fellows

independently by using professional and academic criteria based on track record, commitment to ethical journalism, the ability to influence their own organizations, and a genuine appetite for media innovation. The selection also aimed to reflect the geographic and professional spread of journalism across MTN's markets. "The program puts academic rigor alongside the daily realities media professionals actually face," said Professor Sifiso Mnisi, Director of the Centre for Data and Digital Communications at UJ. "Fellows will interrogate how technology; audience expectations and commercial pressure are reshaping journalism – and then take that thinking back into their own newsrooms." The Pan-African program builds on the MTN Nigeria Media Innovation Program, established in 2022, which combines academic study with practical exposure to the institutions and issues shaping Africa's media environment. This week, its fifth

cohort is undertaking a week-long study visit to South Africa, engaging with leaders from academia, business, government and the media. "The shrinking of democratic systems, the rise in attacks on press freedom, and the revolution in technology, all conspire against journalism in many ways than could be imagined, but they also present opportunities – opportunities that journalists who are aware and conscious of their responsibilities can take advantage of and turn positive," said Emmanuel K. Dogbevi, the Vice President of TAEF during the virtual induction of the cohort. "We're genuinely glad you're here. The work ahead matters, it's arduous, but must be done. Africa needs us. Africa needs impactful journalism now more than ever – you have the chance to learn to do it more effectively. Hold yourselves accountable to the facts, and as you do, serve the people, and uphold the standards."

The certified program includes a six-week

curriculum of online academic study, where fellows will work through:

- Pan-African media futures and storytelling
- Media innovation and entrepreneurship
- Digital transformation and platform economies
- Digital journalism, content strategy and analytics
- Media business strategy and sustainability
- Media ethics, law and governance in the digital age

Every fellow will also build a practical innovation project aimed at a real problem or opening in their newsroom or the wider sector. Beyond the curriculum, the intention is a standing Pan-African community of practice – fellows trading knowledge across markets, building relationships that outlast the six weeks, and shaping a broader conversation about where African journalism goes next.

MTN Group Foundation and Gates Foundation Launch First-of-Its-Kind Maternal Health Multiplier Platform to Expand Access to AI-Enabled Maternal Health Care in Nigeria

MTN Group Foundation (MTN) and the Gates Foundation have announced a strategic partnership to launch the Nigeria Maternal Health Multiplier, a first-of-its-kind initiative in Nigeria to improve maternal health outcomes through an integrated digital ecosystem that connects women, frontline health workers, and primary health care facilities. By 2030, the initiative aims to help 500,000 women access trusted health guidance, equip 5,000 frontline health workers with tools to identify complications from pregnancy and childbirth early, and enable 500 health facilities to deliver more consistent, higher-quality maternal health care. The platform is designed to complement Nigeria's ongoing maternal and child health reforms. It will expand equitable access to high-quality maternal health care through three components: AI-enabled, phone-based decision support tools for both frontline health workers and mothers, affordable smartphones and mobile data, and improved connectivity at health care facilities. By strengthening access to timely information, care, and follow-up services, the initiative aims to help more women receive quality maternal health care throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period, particularly in underserved communities. The world has made real progress on maternal survival, cutting deaths by 40% since 2000. But that progress has stalled, and where a woman lives still shapes whether she survives childbirth. In sub-Saharan Africa, that risk is roughly 250 times higher than in Western Europe. While Nigeria has made real progress in reducing maternal deaths over the past decade, a large burden remains to be addressed: The country accounts for nearly 30%



of all maternal deaths worldwide. Many of these deaths are preventable, but with only 59% of women completing four or more antenatal care visits, warning signs often go undetected until it's too late. Both the scale of that challenge and the urgency it represents are why Nigeria was selected as the first market for implementation of the Maternal Health Multiplier. "For too long, the biggest barrier to improving service delivery in Nigeria, whether in health, agriculture, or education, has not been a lack of innovations, but a lack of focus on the foundational systems necessary to drive adoption," said Dr. Bosun Tijani, Nigeria's minister of communications, innovation, and digital economy. "Partnerships like this reflect the kind of collaboration we want to see more of in Nigeria—one that puts the country's digital transformation to work for the people who need it most." The Maternal Health Multiplier is designed to be affordable, reliable, and consistent, and it builds on Nigeria's flagship Maternal and Neonatal Mortality Reduction Innovation Initiative (MAMII), which is being deployed by the Federal Ministry of Health under its Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp). It will combine: Connected devices that give frontline health workers access to real-time guidance, helping them catch warning signs and respond with confidence Affordable phone and data access for pregnant women, so cost isn't a barrier

to using the digital health tools. "Strengthening primary healthcare and empowering the frontline health workers who deliver it are core to our health sector reforms," said Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate, Nigeria's coordinating minister of health and social welfare. "Partnerships that work with our existing health systems, rather than around them, are exactly what's needed to reach mothers who are still falling through the cracks. We welcome this collaboration and look forward to it strengthening the work already underway." The four-year partnership was announced at Semafor's Next 3 Billion event, on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. It begins with an initial investment of approximately US\$25 million between 2026 and 2030, including direct and in-kind contributions from the Gates Foundation and MTN. This anchor investment is intended to catalyze additional funding and support future expansion into other markets over time. "The future of maternal health depends on ensuring that every mother, regardless of where she lives, can access the support she needs to make informed decisions throughout her journey. Technology is creating unprecedented opportunities to make healthcare more personalized, predictive and accessible," said Ralph Mupita, MTN Group president and CEO. "As artificial intelligence evolves, we can

put trusted, locally relevant health insights directly into the hands of mothers and healthcare professionals, tailored to their unique needs and languages. Starting in Nigeria, our ambition is to demonstrate a scalable model for improving maternal and child health outcomes across Africa. The true value of innovation lies in its ability to improve lives and create better futures for generations to come," he concluded. The partnership brings together MTN's connectivity infrastructure, digital inclusion capabilities, mobile financial services, device distribution networks and local market execution expertise with the Gates Foundation's deep experience in maternal, newborn, and child health, digital health innovation, responsible AI, and evidence-based scale-up. "AI has enormous potential to improve health, but only if its benefits reach the people who stand to gain the most," said Mark Suzman, CEO of the Gates Foundation. "Left to the market alone, potential tends to benefit those who can already afford it, not the people who need it most. That's where philanthropy has a role to play: not as a substitute for investment, but as a catalyst for it. Programs like the Maternal Health Multiplier are creating AI tools for and putting them into the hands of Nigerian mothers and frontline health workers, helping keep moms and their babies healthy."



Nokia Improves Network Performance and Efficiency for Zain KSA Across Saudi Arabia

Nokia has announced that Zain KSA has launched Nokia Deepfield Cloud Intelligence across its network covering more than 100 cities in Saudi Arabia. The deployment provides Zain KSA with real-time, end-to-end visibility, enabling faster troubleshooting, improved service assurance and a more resilient digital infrastructure across the Kingdom. As data consumption in Saudi Arabia continues to accelerate, driven by video streaming, cloud services, AI workloads, and emerging digital applications, telecommunication providers face challenges in delivering high performance while operating more secure,

reliable and high-performance networks. Traditional monitoring tools provide limited insight into network flows and application behavior. The Nokia Deepfield solution addresses this challenge by correlating global internet context with large volumes of network telemetry, turning this data into contextualized, actionable intelligence that supports proactive optimization and data-driven decision-making. As digital demand grows in scale and complexity, network intelligence is essential to delivering consistently reliable experiences to our customers. Integrating Nokia Deepfield Cloud Intelligence gives

us deeper, real-time visibility into traffic patterns and enables more precise performance optimization across critical applications and services, enhancing the user experience. This marks another step in building a more intelligent, AI-ready network that supports our customers' evolving needs and strengthens Zain KSA's role in enabling the Kingdom's digital future. Sultan Mohammad Alsabhan, Vice President of Technology Operations, Zain KSA said, using Nokia Deepfield Cloud Intelligence, Zain KSA can monitor and ensure the performance of critical OTT and cloud services across its entire network.

The granular visibility into applications and services allows engineering teams to identify congestion or latency issues before they affect customers, ensuring a seamless, low-latency experience for services such as video streaming and cloud gaming. Central to the solution is Deepfield Cloud Genome®, a continuously updated map of the internet that identifies applications and services across more

than 30 categories, using over 100 AI/ML rules. With large-scale analytics and cloud-native architecture, the platform provides Zain KSA with structured data, enhancing its digital ecosystem and supporting advanced analytics, AI, and new digital services aligned with Saudi Vision 2030. A digital services provider's infrastructure is its most critical asset. Leaders like Zain KSA trust Nokia's expertise to deliver the

trust, performance and reliability they need. This deployment equips Zain KSA with the insights needed to improve service quality, optimize network investments, and accelerate its evolution toward a software-driven, AI-ready network. Mikko Lavanti, President, Nokia Middle East and Africa, Managing Director Nokia Regional Headquarters, Saudi Arabia said.

Nokia and Orange France Complete First Worldwide Live Service Provider Network Tomography Trial, Supporting AI-Ready Infrastructure

Trial gives near real time visibility into conditions across Orange France's live optical transport network showing how AI-ready automation can help operators gain more accurate insights into the health and performance of their optical networks. Nokia today announced the successful completion of a live trial of network tomography with Orange France, demonstrating how advanced optical network intelligence can help operators better understand, manage and optimize their transport networks to prepare for the growing demands of AI-driven services. Network tomography works like a health scan for optical networks. It gives operators a clearer view of what is happening across fiber links and wavelengths, without the need to install intrusive probes throughout the network. Powered by Nokia Bell Labs innovative algorithms, the solution imports and processes thousands of pieces of data sourced from coherent optical transmissions to gain near real-time insight into the condition of the overall network link by link. The trial helped identify issues such as fiber degradation, amplifier problems, configuration errors and other network conditions that could affect performance. By spotting these issues early, operators can validate their underlying network faster and take action before the customers SLAs are impacted. The trial also showed how network tomography can help operators make better use of their existing network capacity. By understanding the real condition of each optical link more accurately, operators can optimize performance, improve spectral efficiency and support more resilient services. This is an important step toward more automated optical networks, including AI-assisted operations

and closed-loop automation. The solution also utilizes equipment already installed in the network, avoiding the need for field force interventions and significantly reducing its environmental impact.



Nokia Launches Industry-First Initiative to Help Operators Accelerate Network Innovation in the AI Era

Nokia announced Mobile Core Early Access, a live hosted environment that provides an up-close look at the software driving advanced network connectivity in the AI era. Available globally to telecommunication providers and enterprises, the initiative is designed to shorten the path from technology awareness to informed planning, validation, and adoption. As mobile networks evolve to support AI-driven services, automation, and increasingly demanding enterprise applications, operators need faster, more practical ways to evaluate opportunities for innovation. Mobile Core

Early Access was created to address these challenges, allowing participants to see how new capabilities operate in practice. In turn, they can assess business relevance, operational requirements, and deployment considerations earlier in the decision-making process. Mobile innovation cycles continue to accelerate, and operators need more than presentations and demonstrations to make confident technology choices. Mobile Core Early Access provides a practical way to experience the latest mobile core innovations in a live environment. By bringing capabilities closer

to customers earlier, we help them reduce uncertainty and move more quickly from exploration to deployment. Kal De, Senior Vice President, Core Networks, Nokia said. Mobile Core Early Access is the first program of its kind to offer a live, hosted, end-to-end environment for exploring the latest mobile core capabilities and use cases alongside radios and devices. After launching in June with a select group of 30 companies, registration is now open to the entire industry. Nokia's Mobile Core Early Access program addresses a longstanding challenge for operators and enterprises: gaining practical exposure to emerging core network capabilities before making

deployment decisions. By providing access to a live, regularly updated environment that showcases real-world 5G Core, automation, analytics and network exposure use cases, Nokia is reducing evaluation friction and helping customers shorten innovation cycles. As the industry moves toward AI-native core networks, initiatives such as Nokia's Mobile Core Early Access can play an important role in accelerating technology adoption and improving customer confidence in future network investments. Roberto Kompany, Principal Analyst, Mobile Infrastructure, Omdia said through Mobile Core Early Access, participants can:

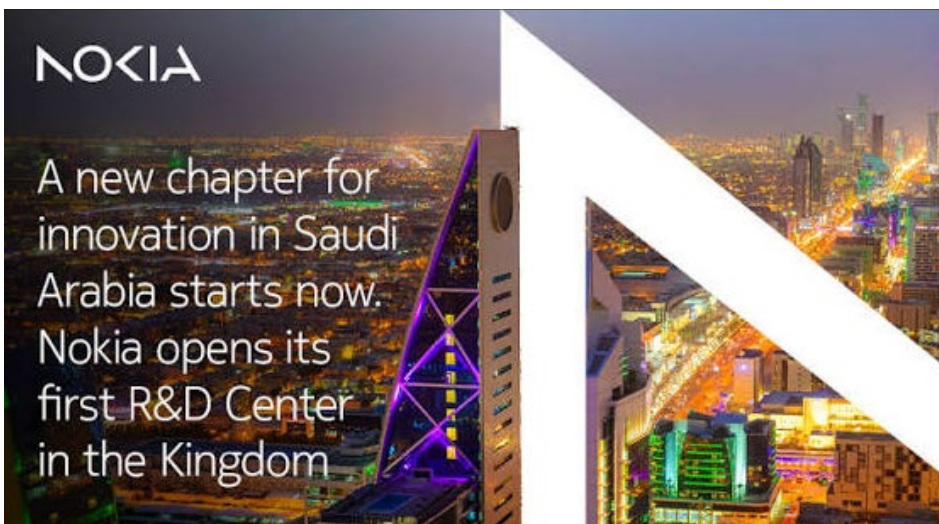
- Explore the latest mobile core capabilities and use cases as they become available.
- Evaluate innovations in a live, end-to-end environment that includes network functions, radios and devices.
- Gain visibility into how new capabilities operate across cloud-native network functions, user interfaces and operational workflows.
- Support technology planning and readiness by understanding deployment considerations earlier in the process.
- Reduce the effort required to establish initial testing environments and align stakeholders on use cases and business value.

Nokia Opens New Research and Development Center in Saudi Arabia to Accelerate AI-Powered Network Automation

Nokia has announced the opening of its new research and development center in Riyadh, focused on developing AI-powered network automation software. The center will create software that enables communications networks to self-configure, self-heal, optimize performance, reduce energy consumption and operate with greater autonomy. The center will specialize in Service Management and Orchestration (SMO), Self-Organizing Networks (SON), Autopilot and rApps for automation and energy efficiency. Its teams will develop AI-driven capabilities for communications service providers and enterprises in Saudi Arabia, while exploring the development of AI-native 6G technologies, and contributing "Made

in Saudi" software innovations for Nokia customers worldwide. The launch follows an agreement announced earlier this year between His Excellency the Minister of Communications and Information Technology of Saudi Arabia and Nokia President and CEO Justin Hotard. The collaboration reflects the Kingdom's ambitions under Saudi Vision 2030 to build a leading economy powered by innovation, local talent and advanced research capabilities. Aligned with the Kingdom's digital transformation agenda, the center will create high-value engineering and research roles while offering advanced training programs, boot camps, and AI and automation certifications for Saudi talent. The initiative

supports national objectives to build local expertise, strengthen innovation capacity and increase the country's contribution to the global technology ecosystem. "The opening of Nokia's new research and development center represents a strategic step toward strengthening the Kingdom's position as a global hub for intelligent network technology innovation and reflects the ambitions of Saudi Vision 2030 to build a knowledge and innovation-driven digital economy. The center will contribute to localizing advanced research and development capabilities, developing national talent in AI and software, and creating technologies made in Saudi Arabia that can serve global markets," said Eng. Abdulrahman AlMufadda, Deputy Minister for Telecom and Digital Infrastructure at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) in Saudi Arabia. "AI is reshaping every industry, and networks are the critical infrastructure that will make that transformation possible. Our new R&D center in Riyadh will bring Nokia's global expertise together with Saudi talent to develop AI-powered automation that makes networks more autonomous, efficient and responsive. It also strengthens the Kingdom's role in creating connectivity innovation for customers in Saudi Arabia and around the world," commented Mikko Lavanti, President of Nokia's Middle East and Africa (MEA) at Nokia.





CEER and Salam Sign SAR 22.5mln Five-Year Agreement to Power Saudi Arabia's Automotive Future

Etihad Salam Telecom Company (Salam), a leading provider of telecommunications services and digital infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, announced a five-year framework agreement valued at SAR 22.5 million with CEER National Automotive Company, Saudi Arabia's first electric vehicle (EV) brand and Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM). The partnership was unveiled at LEAP 2026, where Salam participated as a strategic sponsor under its theme, "Powering what's next." Under the framework, Salam will provide Internet and Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) fiber services to CEER, equipping the company with the high-capacity, resilient connectivity infrastructure essential to its operations across design, development, manufacturing, and distribution. The agreement is a milestone in Salam's newly launched B2B 2.0 strategy, which positions the company as the Kingdom's leading enterprise digital transformation partner, delivering integrated AI, 5G, cybersecurity, cloud, and managed services under one unified vision: Yes to Possible. Commenting on the partnership, CEER's Chief Procurement and Supply Chain Officer, Johnny Saldanha, said: "Reliable, high-performance connectivity is a prerequisite for everything from design and manufacturing to distribution and cus-



tomoter experience. In Salam, we found a partner that understands the scale of what we are building and has the infrastructure and expertise to support it. The agreement gives us the foundation we need to focus on what we do best: delivering world-class electric vehicles under a proudly Saudi brand." As Saudi Arabia's first homegrown EV brand, CEER represents a cornerstone of the Kingdom's industrial diversification ambitions under Vision 2030. By designating Salam as a preferred provider of connectivity services, CEER is positioning itself to leverage advanced telecommunications infrastructure as it scales its national automotive program and brings next-generation vehicles to market.

Abdullah Khorami, Chief Business Officer at Salam, said: "The agreement with CEER is a testament to what Salam's B2B 2.0 strategy is all about: forging deep, long-term partnerships with the companies that are building Saudi Arabia's future. CEER is not just an automotive company, it is a symbol of the Kingdom's industrial ambition, and we are proud to be the connectivity partner powering its journey. At LEAP 2026, we speak of 'Powering what's next,' and this partnership is that in action." The announcement reflects Salam's growing momentum in the enterprise sector and its commitment to serving as the connectivity backbone behind the Kingdom's most transformative industries.

Salam Launches First Integrated Freelancer Ecosystem in Saudi Arabia with Hala, Zid and Futureworks

Etihad Salam Telecom Company (Salam), a leading provider of telecommunications services and digital infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, announced partnerships with fintech leader HALA and e-commerce platform Zid to launch SOHO, an integrated digital infrastructure and services ecosystem built for the operational needs of the Kingdom's growing community of freelancers and independent professionals. The agreements with HALA and Zid are the first in a wider ecosystem that Salam will continue to expand with

further partners. For the initiative, Salam is collaborating with Future Work, a national company that strengthens Saudi Arabia's freelance ecosystem by enabling freelancer license validation, supporting flexible work models, and driving labor market innovation. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed at LEAP 2026, where Salam is participating as a strategic sponsor under the theme "Powering what's next." The launch is part of Salam's evolution from providing connectivity/products to delivering a

broader digital experience for the freelancer segment, working with specialist partners to build the services that Saudi Arabia's freelancers use to run and grow their businesses. SOHO puts professional-grade tools within reach by offering the complete ecosystem at better value than freelancers would pay for sourcing infrastructure individually. Freelancers and independent professionals are a growing part of Saudi Arabia's economy, with more than two million individuals registered on official freelance platforms in Saudi

Arabia. What helps them grow at the same pace is ready access to connectivity and a services-in-a-box that brings finance and digital commerce together, and this is what Salam is championing. For the initiative, Salam is collaborating with Future Work, a national company that strengthens Saudi Arabia's freelance ecosystem by enabling freelancer license validation, supporting flexible work models, and driving labor market innovation. Amr El Dessouky, Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) at Salam said: "The SOHO segment is where much of the Kingdom's freelance economy is being built, and until now it has been served by tools designed either for large enterprises or for consumers. Salam is championing this segment by assembling both the digital infrastructure and the services ecosystem an independent business need from its first day. HALA and Zid are the first partners in that ecosystem, and more will follow. This is what it means to power what's next: assembling the ecosystem that makes ambition operational." In addition, Salam is bringing HALA and Zid together to offer freelancers a business account, a way to accept payments, and an online store from

the first day of trading, so the essentials of cash flow and reaching customers are in place from the start. Through the partnership with HALA, freelancers gain a dedicated IBAN account, debit cards, and the ability to accept payments in person and online, which gives them clearer cash flow and full visibility of their transactions. Yasser Al Mussirii, CEO of HALA Payments said: "HALA has long been committed to empowering freelancers with professional payment solutions that enable them to receive and manage their payments with greater ease, efficiency, and confidence. Our partnership with Salam builds on this foundation, bringing together HALA's payment capabilities with Salam's telecom solutions to create a stronger, more connected experience for freelancers. By combining professional payments with essential connectivity, we are enabling independent professionals to work, get paid, and grow through solutions designed around the way they operate. This partnership marks another step forward in building an ecosystem that empowers freelancers to operate professionally and unlock greater opportunities in the digital

economy." The partnership with Zid lets freelancers build an online store and manage sales through one platform, so the technical work of reaching customers is handled for them. Identifying the underserved niche segment of freelancers and assembling the right partners around its specific needs, Salam has created an end-to-end unified digital experience where banking and commerce flow as one seamless customer journey. Working with Future Work to enable Freelance Work Certificate verification, and bringing together specialized partners including HALA for financial services and Zid for e-commerce capabilities, Salam is building an integrated ecosystem around the evolving needs of freelancers and independent professionals. Working with Future Work to enable Freelance Work Certificate verification, and bringing together specialized partners including HALA for financial services and Zid for e-commerce capabilities, Salam is building an integrated ecosystem around the evolving needs of freelancers and independent professionals.



Salam Launches B2B 2.0 Portfolio, Delivering on Saudi Arabia's Digital Transformation Ambitions



Etihad Salam Telecom Company (Salam), a leading provider of telecommunications services in Saudi Arabia, unveiled Salam B2B 2.0, representing a significant evolution in the company's ambition and value proposition at LEAP 2026. As the Kingdom's transformational ambitions accelerate, the demand for innovation, tailored solutions, and operational excellence has never been greater. The announcement marks a strategic pivot from IT service provider to trusted digital transformation partner and integrated technology solutions architect. With 77% of digital transformation projects failing to deliver long-term results according to industry estimates, Salam is positioned to address the complex and evolving needs of enterprises and government organizations across the Kingdom. Abdullah Khorami said: "For years, Salam has operated as an IT services provider, supporting enterprises with essential connectivity and infrastructure needs. We are evolving into a full-spectrum digital transformation partner, offering a

robust portfolio of solutions capable of designing, deploying, and managing the integrated solutions that enterprises need to compete in a digital-first world. We are committed to deepening relationships with existing clients, expanding the value we deliver, and establishing Salam as the most credible technology solutions partner in Saudi Arabia." Saudi Arabia's digital economy is projected to reach SAR 495 billion in 2026, contributing 15% to the national GDP, while the ICT market has surpassed SAR 180 billion, making it the largest technology market in the region. Yet despite significant investments, many enterprises struggle to realize the full potential of their digital transformation initiatives. Salam is positioned to bridge this gap, delivering on aspirations where others fall short to deliver purpose-oriented, technology-driven solutions that push the boundaries of innovation and implementation. Central to Salam B2B division's repositioning is its alignment with Saudi Vision 2030. With the Kingdom targeting a 19.9% GDP contribution from the digital economy by 2030, Salam B2B positions itself as a key enabler of these ambitions. With a heritage of developing and contributing to Saudi Arabia's digital infrastructure ambitions, the launch now pivots Salam B2B to shaping the future, transforming government services, enterprises, and industries by harnessing the power of technology, innovation, experience, and expertise to deliver purposeful solutions. As a specialized digital transformation provider and trusted technology partner, Salam's expanded service scope covers key decision-making verticals: healthcare, education, hospitality and tourism, logistics, government, banking and financial services, sports and entertainment, energy, aviation, and defense and security. Abdullah Khorami added: "Saudi Arabia is at a defining moment in its digital journey, and the enterprises and government organizations driving that journey need a partner with the expertise, vision, and integrated solutions to help them move forward with confidence. That is what Salam represents, and we are ready to deliver." As Salam takes the stage at LEAP 2026, its proven network foundation, comprehensive portfolio of advanced technology services, and renewed solutions-focused commitment position the company at the forefront of Saudi Arabia's digital transformation. Powering what's next.

ZAINTECH

ZainTECH Expands Collaboration with Red Hat to Accelerate Cloud and IT Modernization Across the Region

ZainTECH, the digital solutions arm of Zain Group, has expanded its collaboration with Red Hat, building on ZainTECH's achievement of Red Hat Premier Partner status and its designation as one of the only Red Hat Certified Cloud and Service

Providers (CCSPs) in the region. Announced during LEAP in Riyadh, the expanded collaboration brings together Red Hat technologies, including Red Hat OpenShift, Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform, Red Hat Enterprise Linux and Red

Hat OpenShift Virtualization, with ZainTECH's regional cloud, managed services, infrastructure and application modernization capabilities. The collaboration is designed to help organizations modernize applications and

infrastructure, automate hybrid IT operations, and deploy cloud environments aligned with sovereignty, resilience and compliance requirements. "Organizations across the region are looking for practical pathways to modernize their technology environments while strengthening resilience, sovereignty and operational agility," said Andrew Hanna, CEO of ZainTECH. "Our expanded collaboration with Red Hat brings together open, scalable technologies with ZainTECH's regional cloud and managed services capabilities, enabling organizations to move from infrastructure modernization to measurable business outcomes. Our focus is on helping customers simplify complex environments, modernize applications and build the foundations needed for AI-driven operations." As organizations across the

region reassess legacy virtualization environments and modernize applications for cloud and AI workloads, ZainTECH will focus on four key transformation areas: supporting the transition from legacy virtualization platforms through Red Hat OpenShift Virtualization; enabling AI workloads through sovereign cloud environments; modernizing applications on Red Hat OpenShift; and automating IT operations using Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform. ZainTECH will combine these capabilities with its regional cloud infrastructure and managed services expertise to support organizations across the lifecycle of their modernization initiatives. ZainTECH Cloud can provide a regional cloud environment for Red Hat workloads and relevant independent software vendor solutions, while

ZainTECH's broader technology capabilities span infrastructure, cloud, data, AI, cybersecurity and application modernization. The collaboration also supports ZainTECH's approach to delivering transformation outcomes through integrated professional and managed services, alongside co-selling opportunities with Red Hat. This enables customers to access technology, expertise and ongoing operational support through a more streamlined approach to modernization. The expanded collaboration builds on ZainTECH's regional capabilities and Red Hat expertise, supporting organizations as they navigate evolving infrastructure requirements, hybrid cloud environments and the growing demand for AI-ready platforms. [\[Link\]](#)





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Avatar is your AI-powered digital representative that communicates, understands, recommends, and helps customers take action.

Answer enquiries, make bookings, take orders, and close sales. Multiple conversations all at the same time.



ONE AVATAR. DIFFERENT JOBS.

Avatar adapts to your business needs and becomes the digital assistant your customers love.



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AI waiter, reservations, orders & promotions



Healthcare
Patient enquiries, appointments & service information



Hotels
Bookings, concierge, requests & upselling



Airbnb & Rentals
Property search, availability & booking assistant



E-commerce
Personal shopper, product discovery & checkout



Automotive
Vehicle info, test drives & sales assistant



Travel
Travel planning, package & itinerary help



Property
Sales assistant, tenant support & maintenance help

WHATSAPP + CATALOGUE + AVATAR

The perfect combination for conversation that convert.



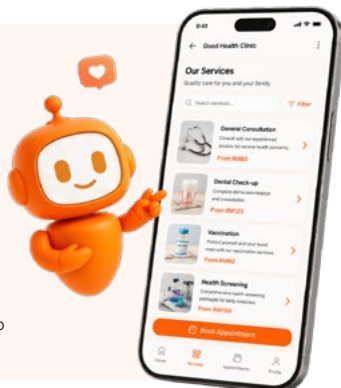
WhatsApp
Where the conversation happens



Catalogue
What your business offers



Avatar
The intelligence that connects customers to the right outcome



READY TO GIVE YOUR BUSINESS AN AI WORKFORCE ?

- ✓ Increase sales opportunities
- ✓ Automate repetitive tasks
- ✓ Improve customer experience
- ✓ Grow your business
- ✓ Reduce response time

HOW AVATAR WORKS?



Customer Reaches Out
On WhatsApp or other channels



Avatar Understands
Understands intent and asks the right questions



Recommends & Guides
Provides options, answers questions, and improves the sales journey



Action Taken
Book, order, enquire or buy with ease



Human Handoff
Avatar connects with your team when needed

Business Outcomes

Never miss an enquiry

Capture & qualify more leads

Boost conversions and revenue

Save time and reduce workload

INTEGRATIONS THAT POWER YOUR BUSINESS

Messaging



WhatsApp



Telegram

CRM

HubSpot



pipedrive

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PayPal

stripe

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by Razorpay

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From Digital Transformation to International Contribution



Kazakhstan Digitalizing

Kazakhstan is building a broader national digital capability across public services, artificial intelligence, telecommunications, computing infrastructure, skills, regulation, technology entrepreneurship and international cooperation. Kazakhstan's digital development is increasingly defined by the breadth of what is being built across the country and by the way these capabilities are beginning to reinforce one another.

Public services, artificial intelligence, telecommunications, computing capacity, technology entrepreneurship, digital regulation and skills development are advancing as parts of a wider national agenda. The result is a growing body of practical experience that carries relevance beyond Kazakhstan's domestic market. The country is developing not only technologies and infrastructure, but also the institutions, rules, skills and international relationships required to use them at scale.

Kazakhstan already has a substantial digital-government base. The country ranks 24th among 193 countries in the global e-government ranking and is in the top 10 for the Online Services Index. More than 90% of public services are available online, and digital channels have become the main way citizens interact with government.

Four areas stand out in that record: digital transformation and innovation; responsible digital development; international cooperation; and connectivity that supports inclusion, economic participation and wider regional exchange.

A National Digital Agenda Moving into a New Phase

In 2026, Kazakhstan began implementing activities under the Year of Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence, in line with the instructions of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. The country also approved Digital Qazaqstan, the National Strategy

for Large-Scale Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence Adoption through 2029.

The Strategy is intended to systematize Kazakhstan's experience and scale digitalization across key industries. According to the Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development, full-scale AI adoption and the digitalization of manufacturing, subsoil use, logistics and energy are expected to add around 1.5 percentage points to GDP per year on average by the end of 2029. Comparable market investment over the three-year period is projected at \$10.5 billion to \$16.5 billion.

The direction is significant because digital development is being treated as a national capability spanning government, industry, infrastructure, skills and regulation.

Digital Government as an Established Capability

Kazakhstan already has a substantial digital-government base. The country ranks 24th among 193 countries in the global e-government ranking and is in the top 10 for the Online Services Index. More than 90% of public services are available online, and digital channels have become the main way citizens interact with government.

The National Artificial Intelligence Platform has been launched in pilot mode

as the government's single entry point for computing resources, data, development tools and ready-made AI models. Thousands of employees already use the platform, its AI assistants have been used more than two million times, and more than 50 AI agents for different areas of public administration are in development. Twenty Digital Transformation Maps covering all key government agencies have also been approved. They address 72 economic and social sectors and are designed around process change and measurable outcomes rather than conventional lists of IT projects.

The new eGov 3.0 portal and eGov GPT extend this direction. eGov GPT already provides access to the 50 most requested services, accounting for about 30% of citizen requests, with a target of reaching 70% by the end of the year.

90%+
Public services
available online

24th
Global
e-government
ranking

\$1.1bn
IT services
exports

2,000+
Companies in
Astana Hub



Responsible Digital Development Alongside Adoption

Kazakhstan is developing the legal and governance framework around technological adoption at the same time.

The country adopted the Law on Artificial Intelligence, described by the Ministry as the first dedicated AI law in the region. It establishes basic requirements for algorithmic transparency, protection of citizens' rights and risk management, including the use of AI in public administration, social policy, education and healthcare.

The Digital Code, adopted on January 9, 2026, provides a broader framework for digital technologies, artificial intelligence and a secure digital environment. It also sets out human digital rights, including the right to have personal data deleted or anonymized and to restrict its processing, while biometric identification may be used only in cases provided for by law.

This balance between adoption, rights, security and institutional accountability gives Kazakhstan's experience wider relevance.

Computing Capacity for the Next Stage

Kazakhstan is expanding the computing infrastructure required for artificial intelligence, research and data-intensive applications.

The Alem.Cloud national supercomputer ranks 86th in the TOP500 list of the world's most powerful computing systems. Built on 64 HPE Cray servers combined into a high-density GPU system, it uses NVIDIA H200 accelerators and supports artificial intelligence, high-performance computing and big-data analytics. The Ministry describes the system as the largest supercomputer cluster in Central Asia, with performance of around 2 exaflops FP8. Kazakhstan also has a commercial supercomputer operated by Kazakhtelecom, ranked 103rd in the TOP500.

The country has also begun developing a Data Center Valley with planned capacity of at least 1 GW. Agreements worth \$10 billion have been announced in AI and digital infrastructure, including cooperation associated with an AI ecosystem and the

Telecommunications infrastructure remains one of the foundations of Kazakhstan's digital development. Over the past three years, investment in the telecommunications sector has exceeded 1 trillion tenge. Fixed-line subscribers grew by 19%, mobile subscribers by 12%, average mobile internet speed increased by 75%, and internet traffic by 67%.

Data Center Valley.

The 22,000-square-meter alem.ai International Artificial Intelligence Center adds another layer by bringing education, startup development, research, governance and international technology engagement into one environment.

Skills, Talent and Institutional Capacity

More than 3,000 civil servants have completed in-person training on the National Artificial Intelligence Platform. Another 57,000 have been trained under the AI Qyzmet program, while more than 24,000 employees of local government offices have completed online training.

The AI Leaders program covers more than 800 civil servants and entrepreneurs from a wide range of industries and is run jointly with Stanford University, OpenAI Academy and Silkroad Innovation Hub. Through a partnership with OpenAI, 200,000 teachers in Kazakhstan have gained access to ChatGPT Edu.

At the education and talent-development level, alem.ai also hosts TUMO Astana for students aged 12 to 18, Tomorrow School, the Apple Training Center, a GameDev Center with Playrix and the ai'preneurs startup campus.

The practical implication is that digital infrastructure is being developed alongside the people and institutions required to use it.

A Technology Economy with Growing International Reach

Astana Hub has become the main platform supporting Kazakhstan's technology-company ecosystem. More than 2,000 companies now operate in the ecosystem, with residents benefiting from infrastructure, international-market access and support programs.

IT services exports reached \$1.1 billion. Over the past five years, Astana Hub residents generated total revenue of \$4.9 billion and attracted more than \$910 million in investment. More than 100 Kazakh startups have entered foreign markets through the Hub's international network.

In 2025, Kazakhstan produced what the Ministry describes as the region's first technology unicorn, Higgsfield.ai. By 2030, the country plans to train 10,000 AI specialists and increase IT services exports to \$5 billion.

Kazakhstan's location also gives parts of its telecommunications infrastructure a wider regional role. The West-East Digital Superhighway is being developed to strengthen international data transit and connect Kazakhstan to key routes between Europe, Central Asia and China.

This export orientation places Kazakhstan's digital development within a wider economic context built around market access, investment, scale and participation in international technology value chains.

Connectivity that Supports Inclusion and Participation

Telecommunications infrastructure remains one of the foundations of Kazakhstan's digital development. Over the past three years, investment in the telecommunications sector has exceeded 1 trillion tenge. Fixed-line subscribers grew by 19%, mobile subscribers by 12%, average mobile internet speed increased by 75%, and internet traffic by 67%.

More than 3,500 villages are to be connected to high-speed internet over the next two years. The Ministry states that this will raise fiber-optic coverage of rural settlements from 43% to 92%. Satellite technologies are also being developed for hard-to-reach areas.

In 2025, Kazakhstan became the first country in the region, according to the Ministry, to officially launch Starlink and OneWeb services. Direct-to-Cell technology was successfully tested in December 2025, with further deployment planned.

The significance is national as much as geographic. Connectivity is being used to expand access to public services, education, telemedicine and economic participation across a large and dispersed territory.

Regional Infrastructure as a Supporting Strength

Kazakhstan's location also gives parts of its telecommunications infrastructure a wider regional role.

The West-East Digital Superhighway is being developed to strengthen international data transit and connect Kazakhstan to key routes between Europe, Central Asia and China. The trunk fiber-optic line will run about 4,500 kilometers from Aktau toward the Khorgos border crossing and is expected to provide bandwidth of 12 Tbps and above.

At the same time, Kazakhstan is progressing the Trans-Caspian fiber-optic

line across the Caspian Sea, scheduled to enter operation by the end of 2026.

These projects add regional relevance to a digital agenda already grounded in domestic transformation, inclusion and technological capability.

The country has developed a strong base in digital public services, is building national computing capacity, is creating regulatory frameworks around artificial intelligence and digital rights, is investing in skills and technology entrepreneurship, and is extending connectivity across urban and rural communities.

International Cooperation Becoming Part of the National Model

Kazakhstan's digital development is increasingly connected with international institutions, technology companies, researchers and governments.

International cooperation in artificial intelligence covered 36 countries over the year, during which 36 memorandums were signed and four agreements concluded. During the President's visit to Washington for the C5+1 summit, 14 agreements were signed with global technology companies including OpenAI, Microsoft, NVIDIA, Cisco, Palo Alto Networks and Oracle. The agreements cover artificial intelligence, cloud technologies, cybersecurity and human-capital development.

The country's convening platforms reinforce this direction. AI & Digital Bridge positions Kazakhstan as the Eurasian AI Hub and brings together technology companies, entrepreneurs, investors,

researchers and government officials. Its 2026 materials report participation from more than 100 countries.

The wider AI Month program links government, startups, technology, creative industries, education and international partnerships. The announced M360 Astana 2027 initiative with GSMA adds another platform through which international digital and telecommunications stakeholders can engage with Kazakhstan and Central Asia. These developments point toward an international role built on practical experience, sustained cooperation and the ability to convene institutions and industry around shared digital priorities.

From National Capability to International Contribution

Kazakhstan's recent progress presents a broader picture than any single technology initiative can capture.

The country has developed a strong base in digital public services, is building national computing capacity, is creating regulatory frameworks around artificial intelligence and digital rights, is investing in skills and technology entrepreneurship, and is extending connectivity across urban and rural communities.

At the same time, it is developing international partnerships and platforms through which that experience can be shared.

This creates a credible basis for a stronger international contribution. Kazakhstan's value lies increasingly in the combination of practical implementation, institutional development and willingness to engage with other countries on the issues shaping digital transformation.

The next stage is therefore not only about what Kazakhstan builds at home. It is also about how effectively the country brings its experience, capabilities and partnerships into wider international digital cooperation. Kazakhstan's digital development is increasingly becoming a record of national capability with international relevance. 🌐

ARTICLE

Agentic AI and the Next Scarcity



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Capability alone does not establish the right to act on behalf of an individual or organization. As intelligence and execution become more widely available, value may move toward the conditions that determine whether an agent can operate commercially in a trusted manner.

AI is already acting on behalf of people and organizations. As this develops further, much of the attention remains fixed on capability: which system can reason better, complete more tasks, integrate with more tools, browse more effectively, or carry out increasingly complex instructions with less human involvement. These differences continue to matter, of course. However, they may not remain equally valuable over time, given the rising similarity in capability among competing AI systems.

We now need to consider what remains difficult to reproduce once capability itself becomes widely available. This is now more relevant as AI moves from assisting users toward actually acting for them. Moreover, there is now also a fundamental requirement for identity, authority, trust, and a recognized relationship between the agent and the person or organization behind that agent.

Trust-based representation might be the next critical scarcity in the world of AI.

From Capability to Scarcity

An earlier July 2026 article in the IA | Intelligence & Alignment newsletter examined how value may increasingly shift toward what remains scarce as agentic AI capabilities converge. That earlier argument placed scarcity around proprietary data, customer access, trusted relationships, regulatory acceptance, specialized workflows, sovereign infrastructure, transaction access, and other conditions that remain difficult to reproduce even as underlying AI capability becomes more widely available.

Trust-based representation can be seen as a further extension of that same scarcity logic. Once AI moves from generating answers toward taking actions, value may increasingly depend on whether an agent is connected to a recognized identity, carries legitimate authority, operates within defined limits, and is accepted by the other side of a transaction. The scarcity is therefore not only in what remains difficult to copy around AI, but also in what allows AI to act credibly within real commercial relationships.

Capability alone does not establish the right to act on behalf of an individual or organization. As intelligence and execution become more widely available, value may move toward the conditions that determine whether an agent can operate commercially in a trusted manner. That includes whether its identity can be established, whether its authority is recognized, what it is allowed to do, and whether the other side is prepared to rely on its actions.

"Do for Me" vs "Do as Me"

A personal AI agent, running in the "Do for Me" mode, may do things for its user by finding information, comparing options, making arrangements, completing routine administration, purchasing services, or communicating with other parties. In these cases, the agent acts on the user's instructions and reduces the amount of direct effort required from that person. Every such action, however, eventually needs to reach another side, another agent. A request for a quotation requires someone to provide it, a purchase requires a seller, and a service booking requires a provider. A commercial inquiry must similarly be received by a business, professional, institution, or platform that can understand the request and decide what should happen next. As personal agents become more widely used, the receiving side will need its own means of responding intelligently and consistently. That is where "Do as Me" becomes relevant.

A business may need an agent capable of representing it in precisely defined interactions with customers. A professional may want one that can handle routine inquiries or transactions within agreed limits. A creator, institution, or company may similarly need a digital representative that can communicate, respond, negotiate within established boundaries, and carry out approved actions on its behalf.

An agent acting for a user needs to understand intent, execute the task, and be trusted by that user. An agent representing a person or organization must also establish who it represents, what authority it carries, what it is allowed to disclose or agree to, and where its limits begin. Representation, conclusively, then requires more than just intelligence.

Why Trust-Based Representation is Scarce

Representation of someone, whether done by a fellow human or an AI agent, is very hard to materialize. Establishing it is a greater challenge than developing the underlying technological capability. Identity has to be established, authority has to be granted, permissions have to be defined, organizational rules have to be respected, and responsibility has to remain clear. Just as importantly, the other

side must be willing to recognize and rely on that representation.

This is what makes the concept of scarcity applicable in the context. That is, browsing, scheduling, purchasing, research, workflow execution, and administrative support may spread quickly across competing systems. However, trusted identity, recognized authority, proprietary relationships, regulated processes, transaction rights, verified data, and market acceptance are harder to duplicate. So greater autonomy makes these requirements even more important. The more an agent is allowed to do, the more essential it becomes to know who authorized the action, which person or organization stands behind it, what the agent is permitted to commit to, and who ultimately remains responsible when its actions lead to a transaction.

Therefore, a highly capable system may still have limited commercial value if another party cannot trust it. A less sophisticated system may still prove highly useful if it is connected to a recognized identity, clearly defined permissions, established commercial relationships, and processes that others are prepared to accept.

Two Sides of the Transaction

Let's visualize a routine commercial interaction: A consumer's AI agent searches for a service, compares providers, requests information, and identifies an option that appears suitable. On the other side, an agent representing the business may provide verified information, check availability, explain terms, and perhaps negotiate within limits established by the company. One agent acts for the buyer, while the other represents the seller.

If such interactions become common, and they will, the growth of personal agents will do more than increase competition among AI platforms. It would also create demand for businesses, professionals, institutions, and other organizations to develop agents of their own. The more activity people delegate to AI, the greater the need on the receiving side to understand, authenticate, respond to, and potentially transact with those agents.

This creates an important commercial

relationship: "Do for Me" can create demand for "Do as Me." The two then become complementing models. Growth on one side increases the usefulness of the other. More consumer agents would mean more requests, inquiries, purchases, and transactions initiated through software rather than directly by people. Consequently, businesses and institutions would need systems capable of responding to those requests while remaining within their own commercial interests, authority, rules, and responsibilities. Success on one side can create pressure for corresponding capability on the other because greater delegation by consumers creates greater need for businesses and institutions to establish credible digital representation of their own.

Where Value May Now Sit

In the agent-driven economy, trust-based representation is a key differentiator and a clear scarcity variable. This scarcity lies less in intelligence itself and more in establishing who an agent represents, what authority it carries, what it can commit to, and whether the other side is prepared to rely on its actions. Both "Do for Me" and "Do as Me" point to more than just two types of AI service. These models reflect two sides of the same commercial environment. One side delegates activity, while the other represents the person or organization receiving that activity. Both require intelligence, but only one depends fundamentally on authenticity, recognized authority, and trust.

The more intelligence is developed and made available, the less scarce it becomes. While intelligence becomes more capable, and yet similar, trust-based representation will remain harder to establish because it depends on identity, authority, relationships, institutional acceptance, responsibility, and the willingness of another party to recognize them.

Therefore, value may increasingly sit in the ability to establish and carry that trusted representation into real transactions and relationships. The agent itself may be replaceable; the recognized identity, authority, access, acceptance, and trust attached to it may not be. This scarcity could be a conduit for new value. 

SAMENA Macro-View

Market Analysis from This Edition

Networks, Compute, and Connectivity: Infrastructure Priorities Take Shape

The September 2026 developments covered in this edition show digital infrastructure advancing across several fronts at the same time. Terrestrial networks are gaining capacity through new spectrum use, carrier aggregation, fiber expansion, and more automated operations. Satellite connectivity is moving closer to conventional mobile and fixed networks. Governments and enterprises are building domestic compute and AI capabilities, while regulators are addressing questions ranging from infrastructure deployment and equipment standards to digital services and consumer protection.

Across the SA-ME-NA region, these developments are increasingly connected. Higher-capacity networks support industrial sites, cloud services, data centers, and growing national traffic. Satellite systems can extend coverage and provide additional routes where terrestrial infrastructure is unavailable or insufficient. AI is being applied to network operations, government systems, enterprise workloads, and customer services. As a result, infrastructure development increasingly depends on how well different networks, technologies, services, and regulatory requirements can operate together.

Network Capacity Moves Closer to Economic and Industrial Requirements

Terrestrial network development remains fundamental, but the September developments show capacity being pursued alongside efficiency and more demanding uses. In the UAE, e& UAE commercially launched a mobile network using Upper 6GHz spectrum between 6425–6775 MHz with 256TRX Giga-MIMO technology on its 5.5G architecture. The deployment delivered single-user peak download speeds of up to 10Gbps and cell throughput exceeding 50Gbps when

combined with commercial TDD bands. du, meanwhile, worked with Nokia on six-carrier aggregation across 420 MHz of contiguous and scattered FDD/TDD spectrum using commercial 5G-Advanced devices.

Operators are also increasing the use of software and automation to manage network complexity. Zain KSA deployed Nokia Deepfield Cloud Intelligence across more than 100 Saudi cities to combine internet context with real-time network information and provide greater visibility into OTT and cloud traffic. stc Group is working with Cisco toward Level 4 Autonomous Network operations. Together, these developments show capacity expansion being accompanied by greater attention to how increasingly complex networks are monitored and managed.

The connection with industrial and economic activity is also becoming clearer. Salam secured a SAR 22.5 million, five-year agreement with CEER National Automotive Company to provide high-capacity DWDM fiber infrastructure across design, manufacturing, and distribution facilities. Oman recorded 1.71 million active IoT subscriptions following 9.3 percent growth, while international internet capacity increased 31.8 percent to more than 5.38 Tbps. Bahrain recorded mobile penetration of 150 subscriptions per 100 people and broadband penetration of 163 per 100 people, with fiber reaching 63 percent of households. In Bangladesh, active 4G connections increased by 8.43 million in seven months to reach 121.92 million.

The figures differ considerably by market, but they point to a common practical requirement: networks must accommodate rising traffic while serving a wider range of consumer, enterprise, industrial, and

connected-device uses. This places importance not only on capacity, but also on how efficiently infrastructure is deployed. Oman's pilot Coverage Request Service, for example, is intended to use geographical data to reduce infrastructure duplication and accelerate 5G and fiber deployment. Bangladesh, facing national data demand projected to exceed 50 Tbps by 2030, is enabling private submarine cable consortia to add international capacity.

The satellite developments in this edition show non-terrestrial connectivity moving into a closer relationship with national and commercial communications networks. This is occurring through satellite licensing, dedicated assets, direct-to-device services, and combinations of satellite, fiber, and mobile infrastructure.

Satellite Becomes a More Direct Part of the Connectivity Mix

The satellite developments in this edition show non-terrestrial connectivity moving into a closer relationship with national and commercial communications networks. This is occurring through satellite licensing, dedicated assets, direct-to-device services, and combinations of satellite, fiber, and mobile infrastructure.

In the UAE, TDRA granted Starlink a

10-year General Space Services License covering broadband for individuals and enterprises as well as maritime, aviation, and emergency-response uses. In Saudi Arabia, stc Group reached an agreement with Astranis for a dedicated communications satellite that gives stc authority over payload configuration, frequency allocation, and coverage. ARABSAT also announced ARABSAT-50 with China Great Wall Industry Corporation, providing dedicated Ku-band capacity and disaster-recovery support for television and government communications across the Middle East.

Oman provides one of the edition's clearest examples of AI development extending beyond models into the infrastructure required to deploy them. Its developments span energy for high-performance computing, locally hosted enterprise and public-sector services, Arabic-language model development, and domestic semiconductor engineering.

Another development is reducing the distinction between satellite access and ordinary mobile service. Airtel Uganda and SpaceX commercially launched Starlink Mobile connectivity allowing standard LTE smartphones to use messaging services in areas without cellular coverage, following a similar launch in the Democratic Republic of Congo. 4iG Group also reached agreements with SpaceX covering Hungary, Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia for direct-to-device connectivity using 2GHz spectrum.

Elsewhere, Eutelsat is combining OneWeb LEO services with terrestrial infrastructure and mobility applications. Its activities include integration with fiber and 5G

through MEO in Portugal, connectivity for remote settlements and infrastructure in Greenland, and live connectivity trials aboard high-speed trains in Poland. These examples differ in purpose and market conditions, but collectively show satellite moving beyond a separate connectivity category. It is increasingly being considered alongside terrestrial networks for coverage, mobility, additional capacity, backup, and dedicated national or commercial requirements.

As this relationship develops, terrestrial and non-terrestrial systems also need to be considered together in areas such as spectrum, licensing, coverage, service availability, national control, and network management.

Compute and AI Move Into Operational Infrastructure

The edition also shows governments, operators, and technology companies investing in the infrastructure required to deploy AI within national and organizational environments. The developments extend beyond models themselves to data centers, energy, hosting, skills, semiconductor capability, security, and operational management.

Oman provides one of the edition's clearest examples of AI development extending beyond models into the infrastructure required to deploy them. Its developments span energy for high-performance computing, locally hosted enterprise and public-sector services, Arabic-language model development, and domestic semiconductor engineering. MTCIT launched the Green AI Alliance with energy authorities and regulators to support high-performance computing using renewable energy. DeepAstra, backed by Omantel Innovation Labs, partnered with Z.AI to deploy its models through a secure local workspace and establish an Oman Sovereign AI Development Center focused on Arabic language-model adaptation and document intelligence. Otech launched a locally hosted sovereign AI API platform, while ITHCA Group backed GSME, which designed the Oman-1 and Oman-2 chips in Muscat and partnered with Teradyne to establish an AI chip testing center in Silicon Valley.

Saudi Arabia is similarly developing capacity across infrastructure, skills, and Arabic-language applications. More than 1.2 million citizens have received foundational AI training through the SAMAI initiative. HUMAIN is developing a data-center footprint planned to scale to 6 GW and has developed ALLaM, an Arabic large language model trained on more than 380 billion Arabic words. SDAIA has also signed an agreement with Bahrain's Information & eGovernment Authority covering data governance, research, and localized language models.

Deployment is widening elsewhere. Kuwait's agreement with Microsoft covers Microsoft 365 Copilot across public-sector agencies, local data centers, cybersecurity, and a dedicated Solutions Center of Excellence. Egypt has linked its digital-export plans with data-center investment and expansion of its Karnak Arabic generative AI initiative. In Bangladesh, Grameenphone, Robi Axiata, and Banglalink are packaging access to multiple AI models into mobile offerings. Taken together, these developments show AI becoming a practical infrastructure and service question rather than only a technology-development issue. Large-scale use requires compute, power, connectivity, secure hosting, skills, and operational oversight. The attention being given to local hosting, national compute capacity, Arabic-language models, energy requirements, and monitoring reflects these practical requirements.

Regulation Expands With the Scope of Digital Services

As networks and digital services extend into new areas, regulation is also addressing a wider range of operational issues. The examples in this edition cover infrastructure planning, telecommunications equipment, digital licensing, consumer protection, submarine capacity, financial services, and network security.

India's TRAI has required operators to deploy AI/ML-enabled systems to identify suspected spam calls, including cross-operator information sharing and sanctions for violations. Pakistan's PTA introduced mandatory equipment standards covering electromagnetic compatibility and radio-frequency certification and directed PTML

At the Digital Continuity Forum 2026 in Dubai, convened by the SAMENA Telecommunications Council under the patronage of the UAE TDRA, the GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative was launched around six operational capabilities: PREVENT, TOLERATE, CONTAIN, RECOVER, OBSERVE, and VALIDATE. The framework addresses prevention, the ability to withstand disruption, containment of failures, restoration, operational visibility, and regular testing.

to suspend new ONIC digital SIM issuance pending formal MVNO licensing. Qatar introduced an e-commerce licensing framework covering 194 commercial activities. Algeria authorized Djezzy to establish Djezzy Payment Services under its banking framework, allowing a telecommunications operator to enter regulated digital payments.

These measures reflect the widening range of activities surrounding communications infrastructure. Operators can provide connectivity, digital financial services, AI access, enterprise infrastructure, and other digital services, while network development itself increasingly involves fiber, subsea systems, cloud infrastructure, satellites, and software-based operations. Regulatory responsibilities consequently extend across more points in the delivery of digital services.

Continuity becomes particularly important as dependence grows across these systems. At the Digital Continuity Forum 2026 in Dubai, convened by the SAMENA Telecommunications Council under the patronage of the UAE TDRA, the GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative was launched around six operational capabilities: PREVENT, TOLERATE, CONTAIN, RECOVER, OBSERVE, and VALIDATE. The framework addresses prevention, the ability to withstand disruption, containment of failures, restoration, operational visibility, and regular testing.

The developments elsewhere in the edition help explain the relevance of these capabilities. Greater network capacity creates more infrastructure to manage. Satellite integration introduces additional routes and operating environments. Data centers and AI add compute and software dependencies. Operators are entering adjacent digital services. As these systems become more closely connected, the points

Capacity remains essential, but capacity alone does not determine service quality or economic usefulness. Networks must be manageable; infrastructure must be available where it is required; terrestrial and satellite systems must operate within clear technical and regulatory arrangements; and compute and digital services must be supported by adequate connectivity, security, and operational control.

at which networks, infrastructure, software, and services meet become increasingly important to service availability, security, and operational control.

Conclusion

The September developments present a sector in which expansion continues, but the nature of that expansion is becoming more varied. Mobile networks are adding spectrum and capacity while becoming more automated. Fiber and international connectivity are growing with national data demand. Satellite services are being integrated more directly into communications networks. Compute and AI investment is extending into data centers, energy, skills, local hosting, models, and services. Regulation is responding across infrastructure, equipment, applications, and consumer-facing services.

For the SA-ME-NA region, this places greater emphasis on coordination between the different parts of digital infrastructure. Capacity remains essential, but capacity alone does not determine service quality or economic usefulness. Networks must be manageable; infrastructure must be available where it is required; terrestrial and satellite systems must operate within clear technical and regulatory arrangements; and compute and digital services must be supported by adequate connectivity, security, and operational control.

From the SAMENA Council's perspective, the September picture points toward a practical priority: digital infrastructure should be developed with equal attention to capacity, operational control, and continuity. As terrestrial networks, satellite systems, compute infrastructure, and digital services become more closely connected, the interfaces between them increasingly affect service performance and continuity. Managing those interfaces effectively will therefore be as important as expanding the individual networks and infrastructure on either side of them. 📍

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.



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

UAE Tops Arab Digital Economy Index 2026

The UAE has topped the Arab Digital Economy Index 2026, whose results were announced at Seamless Middle East 2026 that opened in Dubai. Held at Dubai World Trade Centre from September 22 to 24, the event brings together the payments, fintech, banking, digital commerce, retail, identity and logistics sectors, with more than 25,000 participants, around 800 speakers and 750 exhibitors, an Emirates News Agency (WAM) report said. The opening session drew Arab and international diplomatic, government and institutional representatives, including ambassadors and delegates from Egypt, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon, Mauritania, Tunisia, Syria, Djibouti and Palestine, alongside Russian representatives and officials from international and regional organizations. UAE government, economic, financial and academic officials also attended, along with representatives of the finance, energy, customs and economic development sectors, banks, chambers of commerce, research and innovation centers and international organizations. The opening program featured an address by Dr Ali Mohammed Al-Khouri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Federation for Digital Economy and Advisor to the Council of Arab Economic Unity, followed by the

launch of the Arab Digital Economy Index 2026. Officials from the Sharjah Research, Technology and Innovation Park and the UAE Banks Federation also addressed the event before delegates toured the exhibition. The index assesses digital-economy performance across a framework covering institutions, infrastructure, workforce, digital government, innovation, knowledge and technology, market forces, capital-market growth and sustainable development. The UAE led the highest-performing group, which also included Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman. The second group, comprising countries with medium levels of performance, included Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria. The third group, representing countries in the process of building their digital foundations, comprised Lebanon, Mauritania, Iraq, Djibouti, Comoros, Libya, Palestine, Syria, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. The results showed stronger progress across the Arab world in digital infrastructure, government services and cybersecurity, while wider gaps remained in innovation, the data economy, research and development, and the ability to translate digital investment into productivity and economic value. Al-Khouri said the latest edition of the

index places digital sovereignty at the heart of discussions on the future of Arab economies, as data, artificial intelligence, cloud infrastructure, semiconductors and cybersecurity become increasingly important to countries' economic and institutional capabilities. Commenting on the UAE's ranking, he said it reflects years of sustained investment in digital infrastructure, government services, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and the knowledge economy, establishing the country as a leading model for building an innovation-driven economy that translates technological advancement into higher productivity and economic value. Al-Khouri thanked the UAE for supporting the development of the Arab digital economy and expressed appreciation to President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for his support and patronage of the Arab Digital Economy Vision, which he said has helped advance joint Arab action in the sector. He also praised the continued support of Lt General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, saying his supportive role has helped transform several Arab initiatives from concepts and strategies into practical programs, platforms and projects. The Arab Digital Economy Vision was launched in Abu Dhabi in 2018 with the support and patronage of President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and was subsequently adopted at the Arab leaders' level in 2022 as a framework for regional cooperation in the digital economy and technological transformation. The Arab Digital Economy Index is among the tools developed by the federation to measure progress, identify gaps and determine future priorities. Seamless Middle East 2026 features three days of discussions on fintech, digital payments, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, data analytics, cybersecurity and emerging technologies, bringing together government entities, financial institutions, technology companies, investors and experts from the region and beyond.

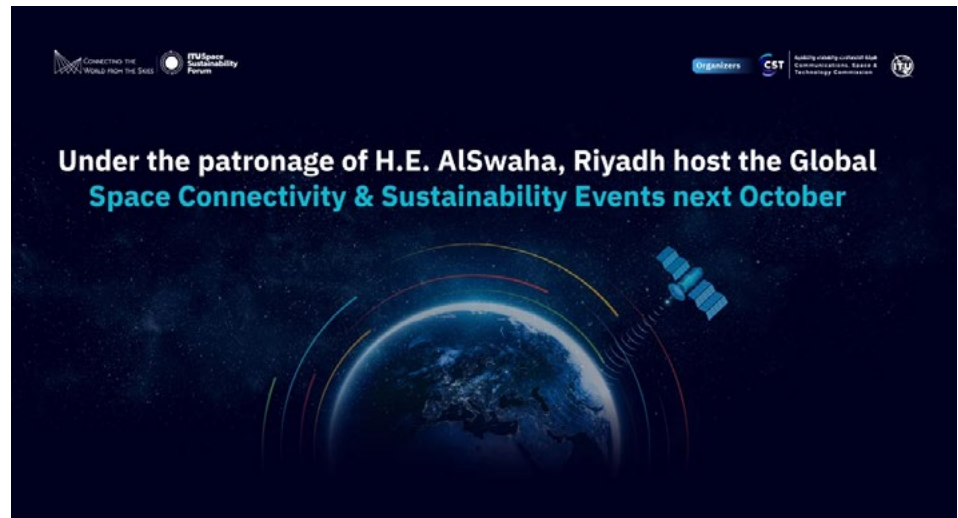


Riyadh Hosts Global Space Connectivity & Sustainability Events

Under the patronage of H.E. Eng. Abdullah AlSwaha, Minister of Communications and Information Technology and Chairman of CST's Board, the Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is organizing the Global Space Connectivity & Sustainability Events, in the city of Riyadh from October 12–14, 2026. The event combines the activities of the Connecting the World from the Skies Forum and the Space Sustainability Forum (SSF), in their third editions, under one umbrella. The event brings together regulatory bodies, companies, specialists, and experts in the telecom and space fields to explore the future of satellite connectivity, enhance the integration of terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks, and discuss the sector's leading directions and challenges, through sessions covering Integrated Connectivity for the 6G Era, Paving the Way to WRC-27, Unlocking the Potential of D2D Connectivity, Space Economies & Emerging Markets, Space as Critical Infrastructure,

Space-Enabled Sustainability on Earth, Global Governance and Responsible Behavior in Space, and Managing Congestion, Mitigating Interference and Preventing Debris. The event will also feature the announcement of the winners of the Non-Terrestrial Networks International Research Competition 2026, organized by the CST in partnership with

the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). The CST invites interested specialists, researchers, and relevant parties to register and attend the event, participate in its sessions, and benefit from opportunities to exchange knowledge and expertise, and build partnerships in the fields of Telecommunications, Space, and Sustainability



Qatar Maritime Sector Moves Closer to Full Digitalization

Qatar's drive towards modernization has increasingly placed technology at the heart of public services and everyday life. Across different sectors, digital platforms, smart systems and integrated government services are being deployed to simplify procedures, reduce paperwork and waiting times, and make essential services more accessible to individuals and businesses. The objective goes beyond adopting new technology. It is about harnessing innovation to improve efficiency, enhance the quality of services and make daily interactions with public institutions easier and more convenient. The continuing digital transformation of the maritime transport sector is another example of this wider national direction. With around 95 percent of transactions related to large vessels now available electronically, maritime users can increasingly complete procedures that previously required visits to government offices. The expansion to 21 electronic services covers important

transactions including ownership transfers, vessel sales, mortgage certificates, mortgage releases and vessel deletion certificates. The benefits are practical and immediate. Ship owners and other users can submit applications, track their progress, make payments and receive completed certificates remotely. This saves time, reduces paperwork and eliminates many unnecessary journeys to government offices. For businesses, such improvements have wider significance. Time spent navigating administrative procedures carries a cost. Making government transactions faster and more predictable allows companies and individuals to devote more attention to their core activities. The introduction of electronically issued certificates with QR-code verification adds another useful dimension. It allows the authenticity of official documents to be checked electronically, including by authorities outside Qatar. This is particularly valuable

in a maritime sector where documents frequently have international relevance. Integration with national authentication and government payment systems also demonstrates the importance of building connected digital services rather than isolated platforms. Yet convenience must continue to be matched by security. As more transactions and sensitive information move online, data protection, confidentiality, secure authentication and the integrity of electronic documents become increasingly important. Public confidence in digital government depends on users knowing that efficiency does not come at the expense of security. Ultimately, the success of digital transformation should not be measured simply by the number of services moved online. Its true measure is whether technology makes government services simpler, faster, safer and more responsive to people's needs. The progress in maritime services is another encouraging step in that direction.

Bahrain Reaches 150 Mobile Subscriptions Per 100 People as Broadband Penetration Climbs

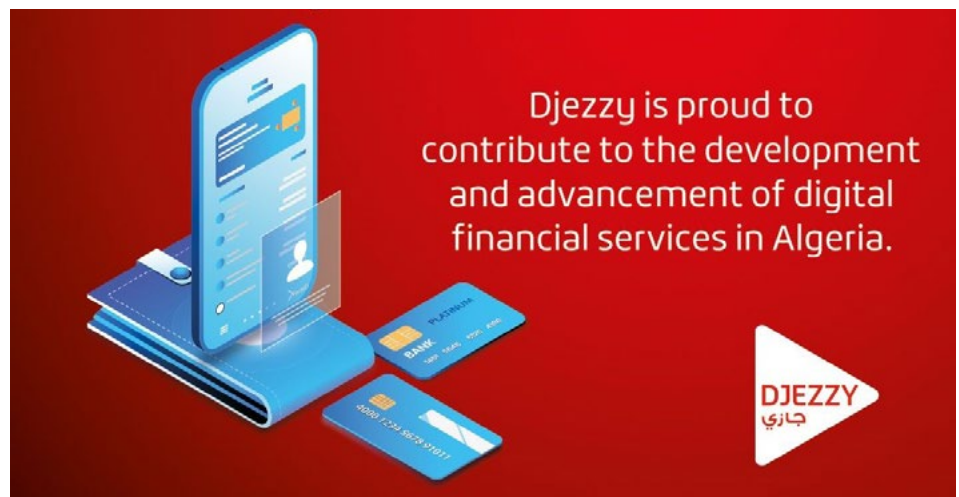
Bahrain recorded 150 mobile subscriptions for every 100 people by the second quarter of 2025, while broadband penetration reached 163 subscriptions per 100 people, highlighting the high level of connectivity across the Kingdom. Figures disclosed in the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority's audited accounts show mobile subscriptions reached 2.387 million, up 2% from the end of 2024. Broadband subscriptions stood even higher at 2.595 million, equivalent to 163 subscriptions for every 100 people. Fiber reaches around 63% of households. Bahrain also continued to record significant adoption of fiber broadband. The number of fiber subscriptions stood at approximately 182,000, equivalent to 63% of households. Among fiber subscribers, 86% were using packages offering speeds of at least 100Mbps, indicating that fiber adoption is increasingly translating into higher-speed connectivity rather than simply network availability. The figures provide another indicator of the maturity of Bahrain's fixed broadband market, alongside the country's high overall broadband subscription rate. Broadband traffic approaches 2 billion GB. The growth of connectivity is also

reflected in data consumption. Broadband data usage reached 1.971 billion gigabytes in 2024. Fixed-network data consumption increased by 7%, while mobile data usage rose by a stronger 15%. The faster growth in mobile consumption comes alongside a market where the number of mobile subscriptions already substantially exceeds the country's population. A rate of 150 subscriptions per 100 people does not mean 150% of individuals have a mobile subscription, as customers can maintain multiple SIMs or connections. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority reported operating revenue of BD21.156 million, which was broadly unchanged. Operating costs, however, increased 7.5% to BD7.125 million, reducing the operating surplus to BD14.031 million. The regulator's overall surplus declined 3.4% from BD15.946 million in 2024 to BD15.402 million. The authority transferred approximately BD15.95 million to Bahrain's Ministry of Finance and National Economy. Annual telecommunications license fees remained the TRA's largest source of operating revenue at BD8.433 million, representing 39.9% of operating income. Spectrum availability fees generated

another BD5.289 million. Frequency and spectrum-band charges declined 7.5% to BD3.541 million. Together, these three revenue sources accounted for 81.6% of the regulator's operating revenue, demonstrating the importance of telecom licensing and spectrum-related charges to the authority's financial position. Staff expenditure remained the authority's largest cost at BD4.023 million. Consultancy and legal expenses increased 25.5% to BD738,000. The regulator also recorded a BD568,000 provision for doubtful debts, compared with no equivalent charge in 2024. The provision accounted for much of the approximately BD500,000 increase in operating expenses. Non-operating income declined 2.3% to BD1.371 million, including BD1.254 million generated by changes in the fair value of investments. Investments themselves increased 28.2%, from BD22.173 million to BD28.427 million. Total assets, however, declined 9.7% to BD37.483 million, while total liabilities fell 13.6% to BD22.081 million. Deferred revenue accounted for BD20.807 million of those liabilities.

Algeria Approves Telecoms Giant Djezzy to Enter Digital Payments

Algeria's central bank has authorized telecom operator Djezzy to establish a payment services provider, opening the door for the company to offer regulated digital payment services alongside traditional banks. The decision was revealed by the Bank of Algeria on September 23, 2026. Djezzy's payment arm, Djezzy Payment Services, has been given 12 months to apply for the final license required to begin operating. The approval does not make Djezzy a bank. Instead, it allows the telecom operator to enter Algeria's regulated payments market under the country's new framework for payment service providers (PSPs). The framework was introduced under Algeria's 2023 Monetary and Banking Law. It allows



certain non-bank companies to participate in payment services under the supervision

of the Bank of Algeria.

Abu Dhabi forum Focuses on Turning Enterprise AI Investment into Measurable Business Value

Technology, business and academic leaders in Abu Dhabi have examined how organizations can move artificial intelligence beyond experimentation and into scaled deployments that deliver measurable business value, with data governance, workforce capabilities and executive support emerging as key priorities. The discussions took place during the CIO Roundtable & Industry-Academia Forum: AI in Action – From Innovation to Impact, hosted by the Abu Dhabi School of Management in collaboration with Siemens Energy and supported by the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The event brought together CIOs, digital transformation executives, technology specialists, academics and students to explore the organizational and technical requirements for deploying AI effectively. The program began with an invitation-only CIO and Digital Leaders Roundtable under the theme "Powering the AI-Driven Enterprise." Senior technology and digital leaders from across the UAE discussed some of the challenges organizations face as they attempt to move AI projects from experimentation into production. These included data governance, workforce capabilities, organizational change and

the need for executive sponsorship. The discussion reflects a growing enterprise focus on the operational foundations required for AI adoption rather than experimentation with individual tools or models. Participants also considered how the Middle East could strengthen its position in the global AI economy through investment in data center infrastructure, human capital and specialized AI models. No specific investment commitments, projects or new AI deployments were announced during the roundtable.

CRA, Qatar Calls for Digital Awareness to Protect Children Online

Parents and guardians have been urged to take an active role in protecting children from cyberbullying and promoting safe and responsible use of digital technology, as the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA), Qatar joins the "Digitally Aware Family" campaign. In a social media post, the CRA stressed that early awareness and open communication can help protect children and strengthen their digital safety. The CRA explained that cyberbullying involves using digital technologies to harm, embarrass or threaten others. It can include sharing harmful content, mocking or insulting

others, spreading rumors or misinformation, and sending hurtful or threatening messages. Children may experience cyberbullying when abusive or threatening messages or comments are directed at them, embarrassing photos or videos are shared without their permission, they are mocked or insulted online, false rumors are spread about them, or someone impersonates them or misuses their account. Parents and guardians are encouraged to listen calmly, believe and support children without blaming them, and reassure them that cyberbullying is not their fault. They should also encourage children not to respond to or retaliate against the bully, keep evidence such as messages and screenshots, use blocking and reporting tools, and seek help when necessary. Highlighting the importance of the internet, CRA noted that it provides children with opportunities to learn, communicate, and be entertained, hence the need to guide them towards using it safely and consciously. It explained that children may encounter offensive messages or comments, fake links or prizes, age-inappropriate content, dangerous games or challenges, as well as fake images or videos created using artificial intelligence while surfing the internet. Therefore, parents and guardians are encouraged to support their children and wards digitally by encouraging ongoing dialogue, reminding them not to share their personal information, warning them to avoid suspicious links, teaching them how to block and report inappropriate content or users, and encouraging them to ask for help when needed. It also added that adults need to help children stay aware and safe by encouraging them to talk about the apps they use, follow family rules for internet use, choose content that is suitable for their age, tell a trusted adult if they face any problems, and protect their privacy by avoiding the sharing of personal information.



UAE Cyber Security Council, Meta Launch First-of-its-kind 'Wearables Studio UAE'

Meta, in partnership with the UAE Cyber Security Council and program delivery partner Startupbootcamp, announced the launch of Wearables Studio UAE, the nation's first dedicated innovation, education and talent development program, focused on building AI-powered experiences for wearable technologies. Unveiled at GISEC Global 2026, the initiative is designed to upskill and educate UAE students, developers, entrepreneurs and startups by equipping them with the technical expertise, mentorship and practical experience needed to build the next generation of AI-powered wearable applications. The launch supports the UAE National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence 2031, which prioritizes AI adoption and building future-ready talent for the country's growing tech ecosystem. Wearables Studio UAE brings this to life by giving participants hands-on access to cutting-edge wearable technology, technical

training and expert mentorship; helping accelerate locally relevant AI solutions and turn ideas into real-world impact. As the national partner, the UAE Cyber Security Council brings its cybersecurity expertise to ensure the initiative's innovation is built on a foundation of security, privacy and user trust. Dr. Mohamed Al Kuwaiti, Head of Cyber Security for the UAE Government, said, "The growing use of AI in wearable devices is opening new opportunities for innovation. At the same time, it requires cybersecurity and privacy to be built into these technologies from the outset, rather than added later. Through this initiative, we aim to help students, developers, entrepreneurs, and startups turn their ideas into practical applications within an environment that promotes responsible innovation and user trust. This will contribute to developing a new generation of talent equipped to shape the technologies of the future and

use them safely." Meta is opening up its leadership in AI hardware to the public through Wearables Studio UAE, giving participants direct access to its wearable technology and engineering expertise to build industry-ready skills. "We're excited to bring Wearables Studio UAE to life with the government backing of the UAE Cyber Security Council and the program expertise of Startupbootcamp, building the right ecosystem to turn AI hardware leadership into hands-on skills for the next generation of UAE's innovators. Through our wearable platforms - Ray-Ban Meta and Oakley Meta smart glasses - students, developers and startups will get the tools and mentorship to build experiences that matter for people's everyday lives, with safety and privacy built in from the start," said Joelle Awwad, Director of Policy Campaigns and Programs, Africa, Middle East and Türkiye at Meta. As the program's implementation partner, Startupbootcamp will lead the delivery of Wearables Studio UAE on the ground, overseeing participant outreach, selection, workshops, mentorship activities and the final showcase program. As AI becomes increasingly embedded in everyday life, wearable technologies are emerging as a powerful new interface between digital intelligence and the physical world, enabling more intuitive, contextual and immersive experiences. Designed as an interactive innovation journey, Wearables Studio UAE will empower participants to develop AI-powered experiences on Meta's wearable platforms, combining public ideation sessions, expert-led workshops, technical mentoring and an in-person build sprint before culminating in a pitchathon and final showcase at GITEX Global 2026. Applications are open to innovators across different sectors aligned with national innovation goals, including: Tourism and Cultural Heritage, Healthcare, Education, Arabic AI Companion and Smart Retail. The top three teams will share a US\$10,000 prize pool.



Bahrain's iGA Seals Agreement with Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority

Bahrain's Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA) has signed an agreement with the Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA) in a move aimed at strengthening joint co-operation and the exchange of expertise and knowledge in the fields of Data and Artificial Intelligence. The MoU covers several areas of mutual co-operation, most notably the exchange of expertise and knowledge in advanced technologies, co-operation in data governance, and the development of infrastructure and technologies supporting artificial intelligence, including Large Language Models (LLMs). It also supports joint research projects, as well as the development and testing of prototypes for innovative technological solutions that serve both parties. The MoU was signed by iGA Chief Executive Mohammed Ali Al Qaed and SDAIA President Dr. Abdullah bin Sharaf Alghamdi, in the presence of Latifa Mohammed Al Abbasi, Director of Innovation and Advanced Technologies at iGA, representing the Bahraini side, and Abdullah Al Khudairi, Chief Executive of the Strategy Management Office at SDAIA, representing the Saudi side, along with a number of officials from both sides. Speaking on the occasion, Al Qaed said the agreement reflects the depth of the long-standing relations between the Kingdom of

Bahrain and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He emphasized the shared commitment to strengthening technical cooperation and exchanging expertise and knowledge in support of the two countries' future aspirations in data and artificial intelligence. Al Qaed noted that the MoU covers several areas of mutual cooperation, most notably the exchange of expertise and knowledge in advanced technologies, cooperation in data governance, and the development of infrastructure and technologies supporting artificial intelligence, including Large Language Models (LLMs). It also supports

joint research projects, as well as the development and testing of prototypes for innovative technological solutions that serve both parties. The areas of co-operation also include the implementation of joint and specialized training programs, as well as the exchange of experiences and best practices in national data governance. These efforts contribute to developing specialized competencies and skills, maximizing the benefits of shared expertise, and supporting efforts to build an advanced and sustainable ecosystem in the fields of data and AI.



Pakistan Makes Telecom Equipment Standards Mandatory Under New PTA Regulations

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority has notified new regulations making compliance with prescribed technical standards mandatory for telecom equipment manufactured, imported or deployed in the country, with a PTA-issued Certificate of Compliance required before equipment can enter operational use. The Telecommunication Equipment Standards Regulations, 2024, have been notified through the Gazette of Pakistan under S.R.O. 1110(I)/2026 following approval from the federal government. Issued under Section 28 of the Pakistan Telecommunication (Re-organization) Act, 1996, the regulations apply to PTA licensees as well as manufacturers and importers of telecommunications equipment. Under the new framework, covered telecom equipment will need to comply with technical requirements prescribed by the PTA before it can be imported, deployed or placed into operational service. The requirement

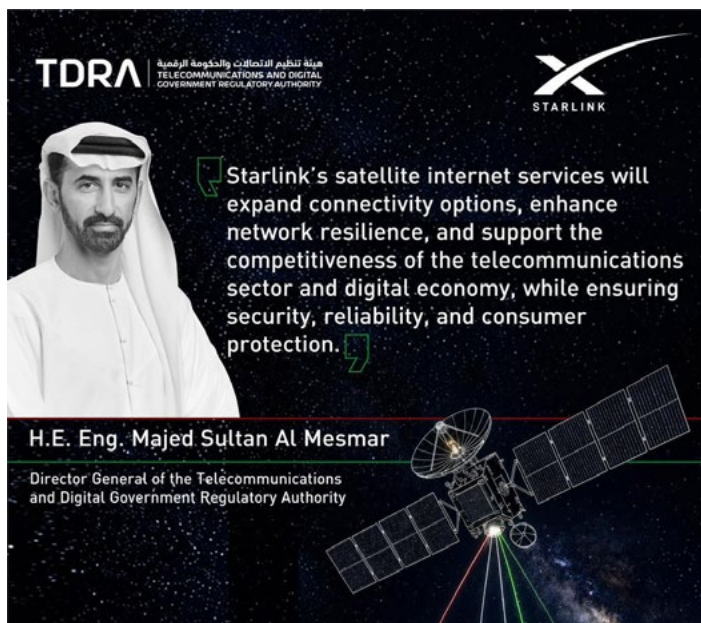
introduces a formal compliance checkpoint intended to ensure equipment entering Pakistan's telecommunications ecosystem meets applicable standards before deployment. The source does not specify individual equipment categories, certification timelines, testing procedures or transitional arrangements for equipment already in the market. The framework includes standards covering Electromagnetic Compatibility, Radio Frequency characteristics, health and safety, and other applicable technical specifications. EMC requirements are intended to ensure electronic equipment can operate without producing unacceptable electromagnetic interference or being excessively affected by interference from other equipment. RF requirements are particularly important for telecommunications equipment because devices operating outside permitted technical parameters can cause harmful interference to licensed networks and other spectrum users.

Health and safety provisions add another layer of compliance for equipment entering commercial and operational environments. The regulations extend beyond telecom network operators. Manufacturers and importers are also covered, meaning compliance requirements will apply earlier in the equipment supply chain rather than only when hardware is installed by a licensed telecom provider. This could have implications for vendors supplying network infrastructure, radio equipment and other telecommunications hardware

into Pakistan. The PTA said the regulations were developed following consultations with licensees, importers, manufacturers, vendors and other industry stakeholders. The authority said the framework is intended to promote compatibility and interoperability with international telecommunications systems while improving service standards. Standardizing technical requirements can help reduce the risk of incompatible, poorly performing or non-compliant equipment entering national networks. It can also provide

equipment vendors and operators with a clearer technical baseline when planning procurement and deployment. The PTA said the regulations are also intended to encourage local manufacturing and contribute to technological advancement and economic growth. For domestic manufacturers, however, the practical impact will depend on how certification, testing and compliance processes are implemented and whether local testing infrastructure is available at an appropriate cost.

TDRA Grants Starlink License to Provide Satellite Internet Services in UAE



The Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) has granted Starlink Satellite Communications a 10-year General Space Services License, authorizing the company to establish, operate, and manage a public satellite communications network and provide broadband satellite internet services in the UAE. The license marks an important milestone in the UAE's regulatory framework for satellite communications services. It adds a space-based layer to the country's national digital infrastructure, complementing terrestrial fiber-optic and 5G networks. This will diversify internet access options, enhance the resilience, readiness, and continuity of the national network under various conditions, and support critical sectors including maritime and aviation transport, energy, logistics, and emergency response. From a regulatory perspective, the license reflects TDRA's approach to adopting a flexible and forward-looking regulatory framework that embraces emerging technologies, expands user choice and connectivity solutions, and promotes competition. This is expected to contribute to service quality, customer experience, and continuity of telecommunications

services, while reinforcing the UAE's position as an attractive destination for global satellite system operators, in support of the objectives of the UAE Digital Agenda and "We the UAE 2031" vision. The scope of the license extends beyond individual consumers to include businesses and government entities, as well as satellite connectivity services for the maritime and aviation sectors, in accordance with the UAE's approved regulatory and technical frameworks. This further enhances the license's strategic and economic significance and broadens its impact across key productive sectors of the UAE. Majed Sultan Al Mesmar, Director-General of TDRA, said, "This license represents a significant addition to the UAE's telecommunications sector and reflects the country's commitment to adopting advanced technologies and fostering a flexible regulatory environment that supports innovation and investment. The introduction of advanced satellite internet services will expand connectivity options, enhance network resilience and business continuity, and support the UAE's ambition to strengthen its position as a regional and global hub for telecommunications and the digital economy." He added, "TDRA is committed to ensuring that the introduction of emerging and new technologies delivers tangible benefits to customers, service quality, and sector competitiveness, while maintaining the highest standards of security, reliability, and consumer protection." The license is expected to contribute to digital transformation, develop connectivity solutions for vital sectors and areas requiring additional connectivity options, and enhance the UAE's readiness to respond to emergencies and crises, in line with the country's national visions and strategies. The services covered by the license are subject to the UAE's approved regulatory and technical frameworks, including requirements related to security and the protection of information infrastructure, service quality, reliability and continuity, consumer rights and data privacy, as well as compliance with spectrum-use regulations and technical coordination with relevant authorities. These requirements form an essential part of licensing decisions of this nature. TDRA's regulatory approach seeks to balance enabling access to advanced technologies with ensuring that their deployment takes place within a robust framework that safeguards network security and consumer rights.

Bangladesh Plans Regulatory Shift for Private Cable Investment

Bangladesh is set to introduce regulatory changes that would allow for increased private and international investment in new submarine cable systems, as reported. The new framework aims to facilitate partnerships between international and local entities, potentially moving the country away from its predominantly state-led connectivity model. Rehan Asif Asad, Prime Minister's Adviser for ICT, telecommunications, science, and technology, said he aims to finalize the revised regulations within four weeks. As of now, these changes have not been implemented, making the four-week timeline the next key policy goal. This proposal comes as the country's first significant private cable project still faces delays. In 2022, Summit Communications, CdNet Communications, and Metacore Subcom were granted licenses for submarine cables and later joined forces under the Bangladesh Private Cable

System (BPCS) consortium. BPCS aims to deliver at least 45 Tbps of capacity through a branch landing at Cox's Bazar. As of April, the project has received about USD 53 million in investment, but it remains hampered by pending regulatory approvals and vessel clearances. This gap between licensing and construction will serve as a practical test for the planned reforms. Currently, Bangladesh relies on state-managed submarine connectivity via SEA-ME-WE-4 and SEA-ME-WE-5, both operated by Bangladesh Submarine Cables PLC. When SEA-ME-WE-6 becomes operational, it is expected to add around 30 Tbps, while Asad indicated that the national demand could exceed 50 Tbps by 2030 due to growth in artificial intelligence, cloud services, and data center investments. Mohammad Aminul Hakim, CEO of Metacore Subcom, suggested that heightened competition might reduce bandwidth costs and enhance service

quality, although these benefits remain speculative at this stage. For cable owners and investors, the regulatory changes could open up new opportunities in a market that requires additional international capacity, redundancy, and diverse landing options. However, how well these changes are implemented will be crucial. The government needs to convert the announced intentions into effective licensing amendments and reliable deployment approvals. Its immediate objective is to finalize the framework within the designated four-week period. Additionally, the BPCS consortium still needs to resolve issues related to its cable-laying vessel clearances before construction can progress, making its advancement a key indicator of whether the new policies lead to tangible infrastructure rather than just licenses.

Saudi Arabia Participated in the WTPF-26 and Appointed Vice Chair

Saudi Arabia, represented by the Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST), participated in the World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum 2026 (WTPF-26), organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and opened by Mr. Philip Davis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas with the participation of policymakers and representatives from regulatory authorities, the private sector, academics, and international organizations. The Kingdom has been appointed as vice chair of the forum, recognizing its contributions throughout the two-year preparations for the Forum, serving as Vice-Chair of the Informal Group of Experts (IEG-WTPF-26) and led several tracks and subgroups addressing the Forum's key themes and its contributions to shaping its direction and outcomes. The forum addressed the future of digital policy amid the accelerating technological developments, bridging the digital divide, sustainable digital transformation, ICT resilience, and space connectivity, as well as supporting inno-

vation and technology entrepreneurship and promoting international collaboration in addressing emerging challenges. The participation highlights the Kingdom's efforts since joining the ITU, leveraging its capabilities and expertise to support the union's efforts and serve the international community, contributing to the advance-

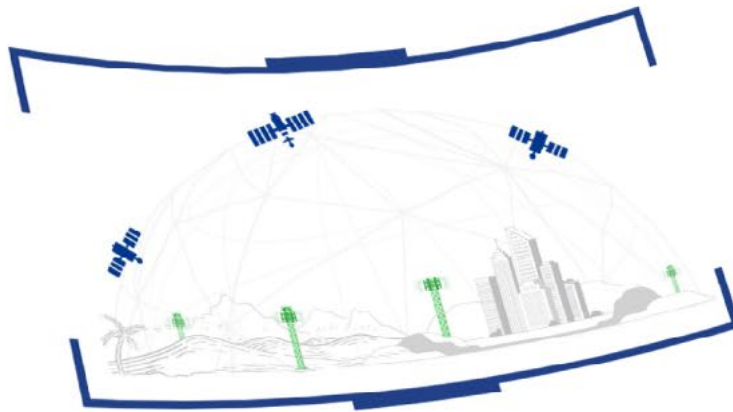
ment of the ICT sector and strengthening international collaboration in the digital domain. The World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (WTPF) is a high-level international event for building consensus, exchanging expertise, and developing shared perspectives on the future of digital policy. 🌐



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SATELLITE DEVELOPMENTS

Thales Wins Contract for New Nigerian Satellite

Confirming Nigeria's plans to expand its satellite resources, telecommunications and technology giant Thales Alenia Space says it has won a contract to build the NigComSat-2A geostationary telecommunications satellite. An undertaking of the state-owned enterprise Nigeria Communications Satellite Limited (NigComSat), the communications satellite, called NigComSat-2A, is set to strengthen Africa's digital connectivity. It will deliver

reliable and secure communications services, including high-quality television broadcasting, fast and stable internet access, even in remote areas, and modern digital applications like voice calls and streaming. The satellite will also expand access of digital services in underserved and remote communities, while supporting the growing connectivity needs of African households, businesses, public institutions and industries. By improving access

to reliable broadband and communications infrastructure, says Thales, NigComSat-2A will contribute to greater digital inclusion, economic opportunity, knowledge sharing and access to information across the continent. With a launch mass of nearly four tons, NigComSat-2A will cover the region extending from West and Central Africa to Southern Africa. The satellite will provide greater flexibility and resilience to Africa's communications infrastructure, supporting the continent's rapidly growing digital economy and the increasing demand for connectivity in areas where terrestrial networks remain limited or difficult to deploy. Its expected operational in-orbit service life exceeds 15 years. The Thales Alenia Space-built satellite will be based on the company's Spacebus B2 platform. In late August, Nigeria's Federal Executive Council (FEC) had approved the acquisition and deployment of two new high-throughput communication satellites. NigComSat-2A and NigComSat-2B (for which a formal contract announcement has apparently not yet been made) are the third and fourth satellites to be launched by NigComSat, replacing NigComSat-1 and NigComSat-1R.



China Launches 25th Batch of SatNet Internet Satellites

A Long March-12 rocket lifted off on September 17 from a commercial launch site in the southern province of Hainan, carrying the 25th group of satellites for SatNet, China's state-run internet constellation. The launch put the payload into its planned low Earth orbit, the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) said. CASC did not say how many satellites were on board. According to Space Launch Schedule, the rocket delivered nine of them. This was the eighth flight of the Long March-12

(CZ-12) and its fourth this year. Across the whole Long March family, it was mission number 667. The rocket runs on liquid propellant, stands 62 meters tall and comes with a fairing 4.2 or 5.2 meters wide. It can lift at least 12 tonnes to low Earth orbit and at least 6 tonnes to a Sun-synchronous orbit. SatNet is operated by the state-owned China Satellite Network Group and is eventually meant to number around 13,000 spacecraft. It is not the only internet constellation China is building: private launch company LandSpace

recently put 10 satellites into orbit for a rival network, Spacesail. Satellite internet is only one part of China's space program. Beijing keeps launching weather, telecom and navigation satellites, works on lunar exploration technology and operates its own crewed station in Earth orbit. In 2025 the country flew a record 92 orbital missions. It has also filed with the International Telecommunication Union for more than 200,000 satellites in orbit.

4iG Group, SpaceX Launch Starlink Mobile in Europe

4iG Group and SpaceX have signed landmark agreements to provide resilient connectivity in Europe. Starlink Mobile will strengthen 4iG Group's telecommunications services in Hungary and the Western Balkans, while the Sovereign Solutions agreement will support the development of sovereign and secure satellite communications capabilities at a national level. Together, the two companies create a collaboration model that is unique in Europe, combining commercial satellite-to-mobile connectivity with satellite technology for Sovereign Solutions communications. The agreement is well aligned with 4iG Group's existing profile spanning telecommunications, space and defence technologies, and represents an innovation-driven breakthrough for the Group. Starlink, the world's largest satellite-to-mobile constellation in low-Earth orbit, enables a direct connection to LTE compatible mobile phones, without requiring dedicated satellite equipment. By complementing terrestrial mobile networks, satellite connectivity makes mobile communications available in areas where conventional network coverage is limited or unavailable. 4iG Group will launch the commercial service in Hungary and Albania. These two countries will join several other markets worldwide where the service is available today to millions of people across six continents. The technology improves the availability of mobile communications particularly in mountainous areas and coastal waters. The rollout schedule will depend on the regulatory, technical and commercial conditions in each market. Starlink Mobile's resilient connectivity will also support 4iG Group's customers during emergencies

and temporary outages and enable communications for public services and critical infrastructure operations. This collaboration in the future will incorporate Starlink Mobile V2, its next generation technology operating on SpaceX's global 2GHz priority rights. The service will launch in Hungary, Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia. 4iG Group is paving a path forward in advancing terrestrial and satellite mobile communications in the EU to enable millions of people to access resilient connectivity in remote and underserved areas. Through a multi-country rollout, 4iG Group is set to become one of Europe's front-runners in the deployment of Starlink Mobile services. Through Sovereign Solutions 4iG S&D and SpaceX will develop an integrated service with augmented satellite communications and end-to-end secured data communications. Scheduled to launch next year, the service will provide broadband connectivity and secure sovereign network infrastructure. Gellért

Jászai, Chairman and CEO of 4iG Group said. The announcement underscores the importance of making connectivity ubiquitous for everyone. 4iG Group and SpaceX developed a first-of-its kind model that represents a commercial service with Starlink's satellite-to-mobile technology and establishing the first Sovereign Solutions in Europe. We are proud to be leading this vision in Europe and setting a new global standard of what's possible. Gwynne Shotwell, President and COO of SpaceX said. 4iG Group's forward-leaning adoption of Starlink Mobile, including our next-gen V2 constellation technology, will deliver resilient direct-to-device connectivity to people across Hungary and the Western Balkans. V2 will enable high-speed broadband directly to mobile phones and harmonize the 2GHz spectrum we'll use around the world. We're thrilled to forge this relationship with 4iG Group, as it positions Hungary as an early adopter of Sovereign Solutions for Europe.



SpaceX Launches 27 Starlink Internet Satellites

SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket launched 27 Starlink internet satellites into low Earth orbit. The launch took place from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California at 7:26 a.m. local time (2:26 p.m. GMT) on Sunday, September 6. Ukrinform reports this, citing Space.com. The rocket's first stage returned to Earth as planned 8.5 minutes later, landing on SpaceX's drone

ship Of Course I Still Love You in the Pacific Ocean. This was the 19th flight of this particular booster. Meanwhile, Falcon 9's upper stage deployed the 27 Starlink satellites into low Earth orbit, deploying them into orbit as scheduled 62 minutes after launch. Sunday's launch was Falcon 9's 103rd flight of the year. According to astronomer and satellite-tracking

specialist Jonathan McDowell, the Starlink megaconstellation currently comprises more than 11,000 active spacecraft. As previously reported by Ukrinform, Germany's Isar Aerospace became the first European commercial space company to successfully deliver satellites into orbit.

SpaceX Launches Giant Starship Rocket on First Orbital Mission

American aerospace company SpaceX launched its massive Starship rocket from its site in Texas, marking the vehicle's first operational mission to deploy satellites into Earth's orbit, Qazinform News Agency cites Anadolu Ajansı. The launch from the company's Starbase facility in South Texas was the 14th flight of the Starship system, but the first intended to reach orbit. The previous 13 flights took suborbital trajectories. The mission is hauling 26 next-generation Starlink Version 3 satellites, which SpaceX plans to deploy during the flight. The satellites are designed to provide greater capacity for Starlink, the company's satellite internet service. Starship is the largest rocket developed by SpaceX and is designed to be fully reusable. The vehicle consists of a first-stage booster called Super Heavy and an upper-stage spacecraft named Starship. SpaceX is developing the system to carry satellites, cargo, and eventually people into Earth's orbit, and to support future missions to the Moon and Mars. The spacecraft is expected to circle Earth about six times during a flight of nearly 10 hours before firing an engine to leave orbit and splash down into the Pacific Ocean west of Chile. The company has said Starship will be needed to launch its larger Starlink satellites, which are to increase the capacity of its growing satellite internet system. The flight also represents a major test of Starship's ability to move beyond repeated suborbital test flights toward

regular orbital missions. SpaceX, founded by billionaire Elon Musk, plans to utilize Starship for future deep-space missions, including NASA's Artemis program aimed at returning astronauts to the Moon, as well as eventual crewed flights to Mars. Earlier, Qazinform reported that NASA and SpaceX are targeting October 1 for the launch of the Crew-13 mission to the International Space Station (ISS).



Amazon Leo Announces Satcoms Partnership to Serve Uzbekistan

Satellite communications giant Amazon Leo has announced a new agreement through which it says it will expand internet connectivity across Uzbekistan with the help of satellite communication service company UZ-SAT. UZ-SAT, a subsidiary of Uztelecom, the country's leading telecommunications operator, will serve as an authorized distributor of Amazon Leo. As Amazon explains, Uztelecom currently provides connectivity to 96% of communities, operates more than 234,000 miles (378,000 kilometers) of fiber-optic infrastructure, and serves more than 13 million users. Despite that extensive reach, Uzbekistan's diverse geography – from mountain regions to remote desert communities

– means some areas remain difficult and costly to connect through terrestrial networks alone. Amazon Leo will complement Uztelecom's existing infrastructure, extending connectivity where it is needed most. Amazon Leo is designed to deliver fast, reliable internet to customers beyond the reach of traditional networks. The system is powered by an initial constellation of more than 3,000 satellites connected to a secure, global network of ground gateway antennas and dedicated fiber infrastructure. A range of customer terminals – Amazon Leo Nano, Pro and Ultra – is designed to make connectivity simple to deploy across a range of use cases. Bakhrom Azimov, general director of UZ-SAT, explains: "Working with Amazon Leo will enable us to expand connectivity options in areas where the deployment of traditional terrestrial infrastructure is limited. Our goal is to make modern digital technologies more accessible, regardless of where people live or work. Next-generation satellite connectivity will complement Uztelecom's existing infrastructure and provide another important tool for advancing Uzbekistan's digital development." Amazon Leo says it has launched nearly 400 satellites to date and is currently testing the service with employees and with selected enterprise customers. It expects to begin rolling out initial service in certain locations later this year, and will expand coverage as it launches more satellites and adds coverage and capacity to the network. 📶



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AI DEVELOPMENTS

Orange Money to Use AI to Combat Financial Crimes in Jordan

Orange Money, the e-wallet owned by Orange Jordan, has signed a strategic partnership agreement with ADSTRA, a Jordanian technology company that specializes in developing artificial intelligence solutions for combating financial crimes. The aim of the collaboration is to provide what are known as 'advanced anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism' (AML/CFT) solutions powered by AI mechanisms. Orange Money says this step reflects its ongoing commitment to strengthening the security of its services while ensuring a safe and reliable fintech ecosystem, in line with relevant regulatory requirements and standards. Under this agreement, both parties will cooperate to enhance security and reliability for customers. Orange Money says it will also adopt advanced, intelligent systems for screening its users' names against sanctions lists, assessing customer risk, and enhancing AML/CFT capabilities. This contributes to safeguarding financial transactions and reinforcing the compliance framework in line with relevant

national and international regulatory requirements and standards. Founder and CEO of ADSTRA, Mohammad Bdair, explains that through this strategic initiative, "we are seeking to deploy ADSTRA's technologies in AI and behavioral network analysis to improve AML/CFT capabilities. We take pride that ADSTRA is a Jordanian company capable of developing advanced financial crime prevention technologies trusted by leading financial institutions like Orange Money." He continues: "Our

ambition is to scale this technology from Jordan to regional and global markets." He also notes that this agreement aligns with ADSTRA's strategy to introduce a unified AI platform for combating financial crimes, combining AML/CFT, advanced analytics, and AI agents technologies aiming to help financial institutions move from simply detecting alerts to truly understanding risks, investigating them, and making faster and more effective decisions.



Egypt Drives \$12B Tech Push with AI, Data Centers, and Infrastructure Overhaul

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi met with Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, Minister of Communications and Information Technology Raafat Hendi, and key military signals leadership to map out the nation's digital transformation agenda. Moving beyond administrative updates, Cairo is positioning itself as a regional tech hub by prioritizing massive cloud infrastructure, artificial intelligence (AI), and strict child online safety mandates. Egypt is targeting eight billion dollars in digital exports by 2028, with outsourcing services projected to hit US \$12 billion

by 2029. Additionally, the state aims to grow its electronics design footprint to 120 companies by 2030. Sisi ordered officials to ramp up investment in hyper-scale data centers, cloud computing, and nationwide 5G network deployment. The government is also advancing "Karnak," its national AI program designed to ensure digital sovereignty and build generative AI models in Arabic. The state is expanding the Unified Government Services Card, coordinating with the Ministry of Supply to unify databases and streamline citizen access to public services. Minister Hendi

reviewed implementation steps for the joint NTRA-SCMR decree issued on September 17, which bans social media accounts for children under 13 and locks mandatory "Safe Mode" settings for users aged 13 to 15. Reviewing the "Digilians" presidential initiative—run jointly with the Egyptian Military Academy— Sisi ordered strict neutrality, transparency, and accuracy in candidate selection to ensure youth are effectively upskilled for high-demand tech jobs.

UAE AI Office and AWS Announce 72% AI Adoption Rate Across UAE Businesses

The UAE is among the fastest-growing AI markets globally, with businesses across key sectors significantly expanding their adoption of artificial intelligence and cloud technologies, according to new research from Amazon Web Services (AWS) launched in collaboration with the UAE's Artificial Intelligence Office. The "Unlocking the UAE's AI Potential 2026" report, developed by global research firm Strand Partners as part of a collaboration between the UAE Artificial Intelligence Office and AWS shows that AI adoption in the UAE has surged to 72% of businesses, up from 53% one year ago, representing 36% year-on-year growth. Dr. Abdelrahman Al Mahmoud, Director at the UAE Artificial Intelligence Office, said: "The UAE has long recognized AI as a key driver of economic growth, better services and future competitiveness. Our focus is on creating the right environment for organizations to innovate, scale new solutions and translate the potential of AI into meaningful outcomes for society." Dr. Abdelrahman Al Mahmoud added: "With 72% of businesses in the UAE now adopting AI, we are seeing the impact of a model built on turning ambition into action. This progress reflects how the UAE has moved from setting a clear national vision for AI to enabling adoption at scale, creating a success story with global relevance and delivering tangible impact across the economy." Chris Erasmus, Managing Director for AWS, UAE & MENA Growth Markets, said: "In the UAE, leadership doesn't wait for perfect conditions – it acts. What we're seeing in this research reflects that: businesses are adopting AI at speed, moving beyond 'can we use this?' to 'how do we scale it responsibly?' Our investments in regional infrastructure, collaborations, and skills exist to answer that question – equipping organizations with the sovereign controls and technical capability to turn experimentation into real-world impact." AI is also accelerating innovation across the UAE, with 85% of AI adopters reporting a faster pace of digital change and expectations that this will increase further in the coming years.



Cloud computing continues to underpin this transformation, giving UAE businesses access to world-class AI infrastructure, tools, and solutions at scale. To power this expansion, AWS is investing up to AED 20.1 billion (\$5.47 billion) in the AWS Middle East (UAE) Region through 2037, estimated to contribute AED 41 billion (\$11.16 billion) to national GDP. To give government entities and enterprise organizations total data control and compliance confidence, AWS and e& enterprise launched the AWS UAE Sovereign Launchpad, endorsed by the UAE Cybersecurity Council. Leading UAE organizations - including Property Finder, Virgin Mobile UAE, The ENTERTAINER, and Careem - are leveraging AWS cloud and generative AI solutions to drive operational performance and transform customer experiences at scale. The report underscores how the UAE's investments in digital infrastructure, talent, and innovation ecosystems are paving the way for an AI-driven economy aligned with the national strategies. To sustain this momentum, more businesses must move beyond incremental AI gains by building on world-class infrastructure, a strong local talent pool, and a trusted regulatory environment to unlock deep innovation at scale. AWS is backing this momentum with a \$1 billion

investment with e& to deliver sovereign cloud and AI capabilities. The company is also investing in local talent through the AI Nation – Afaaq Program, aiming to equip 30,000 people across the UAE with free access to AWS training. Furthermore, AWS maintains a collaboration with Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) and supports initiatives like Qudwatech, a mentorship program designed to nurture Emirati women in technology across all career stages. The report identifies four priorities to sustain and accelerate the UAE's AI leadership, each aligned with the national goals of the UAE:

- Accelerate responsible AI adoption supported by secure, scalable cloud infrastructure
- Ensure policy and regulation enable rather than slow innovation
- Address skills shortages to build the UAE's knowledge economy
- Increase access to funding for businesses of all sizes, with a focus on AI-first startups and SMEs

With these enablers in place, the UAE is well-positioned to convert strong AI momentum into enduring global competitiveness and the full economic transformation at the heart of its national vision and goals.

Oman-Backed GSME Expands US Footprint with AI Chip Test Center

Oman-backed GS Microelectronics US Inc (GSME) is expanding its presence in the US semiconductor industry through a multi-year partnership with Nasdaq-listed Teradyne to establish an advanced test and evaluation center targeting artificial intelligence and other next-generation chips. GSME, in which Oman Investment Authority-owned ITHCA Group holds a 34.25 per cent stake, will establish the facility at its new 42,000-square-foot Silicon Valley headquarters. The center is scheduled to open in the fourth quarter of 2026. The partnership, announced on September 22, will combine GSME's semiconductor design and manufacturing capabilities with Teradyne's automated test platforms. The center will support devices used in hyperscale AI, silicon photonics, automotive applications, power management and radio-frequency technologies, as well as other emerging semiconductor applications. GSME will operate a dedicated test floor equipped

with Teradyne systems, providing customers with facilities for device evaluation, engineering development, pilot production, demonstrations and technical training. The development adds a new international dimension to Oman's investment in the semiconductor industry. ITHCA Group invested \$8 million in GSME and acquired a 34.25 per cent stake in the US company, according to ITHCA's annual report. The investment formed part of Oman's efforts to develop domestic semiconductor design and engineering capabilities. GSME has since expanded its operations in Oman, opening a semiconductor design center in Muscat and designing the Oman-1 and Oman-2 chips using Omani talent. The latest partnership takes the company further into another critical segment of the semiconductor value chain – testing and validation before chips move towards commercial production. That segment is becoming increasingly important as the rapid expansion of AI and data-center

infrastructure drives demand for more complex processors and semiconductor technologies. Teradyne is a major US supplier of automated semiconductor test equipment. Its semiconductor and electronics testing technologies extend across the AI device supply chain, from wafer testing to systems used in data centers. As part of the partnership, GSME said it is also expanding its test engineering teams across the United States, Taiwan, Europe and the Gulf Cooperation Council region. The two companies will additionally collaborate on customer engagements, technical workshops and the development of testing programs aimed at accelerating the transition of new semiconductor devices from development to production. The new center will be located in Silicon Valley rather than Oman. Its significance for the Sultanate stems from ITHCA's 34.25 per cent ownership of GSME and the company's existing semiconductor design operations in Muscat. GSME is headquartered in San Jose, California, with a global presence spanning the United States, Taiwan, Vietnam and Oman. The investment illustrates one route through which Oman is building exposure to the global semiconductor industry: developing engineering and design capabilities domestically while investing in companies operating across international semiconductor markets. The Teradyne partnership now extends that exposure into advanced chip testing as investment in AI infrastructure continues to increase demand for sophisticated semiconductor technologies.



Claro Colombia Invests US\$25.5mn in Data Centers as AI Demand Grows

Claro Colombia is investing US\$25.5 million in 2026 to expand and upgrade its Triara data center in Bogota and Metacenter facility in Medellin, as demand for cloud, AI and data processing capacity increases. According to BN Americas, the investment forms part of US\$123 million that Claro Colombia has committed to its data center infrastructure over the past five years. Around US\$14 million of this year's investment will be used to expand capacity and upgrade infrastructure, while a further US\$11.5 million will be directed

towards cybersecurity platforms and services. The investment will add technical space, replace critical equipment and increase power capacity at the facilities, with Claro targeting growing demand for cloud services, advanced analytics, artificial intelligence and intensive data processing. Claro Colombia president Rodrigo de Gusmao said the company is increasingly positioning itself as a technology provider rather than solely a connectivity operator. The company claims its data center infrastructure accounts for around 50%

of installed capacity in Colombia, with its facilities used by around 80% of financial institutions, 50% of companies and 30% of government entities. The data centers currently host more than 1,500 racks and 14,000 virtual machines, while handling more than 500,000 cybersecurity events each month. Triara also hosts Oracle's Colombian cloud region, following a 2022 agreement that included a US\$25 million investment from the US technology company.

Saudi Arabia Advances AI Adoption as National Training Surpasses 1.2 Million People

Saudi Arabia is expanding its national artificial intelligence strategy across government, business and skills development, with more than 1.2 million Saudis trained in AI as the kingdom uses its designated Year of Artificial Intelligence 2026 to accelerate adoption and strengthen governance. The Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA) is playing a central role in the program, spanning AI policy, infrastructure, regulation, workforce development and initiatives designed to increase adoption across the public and private sectors. The strategy forms part of Saudi Vision 2030 and seeks to combine wider deployment of AI and data technologies with national skills development and frameworks covering responsible and ethical use. Human-capital development is one of the major components of Saudi Arabia's AI program. According to the Saudi Press Agency report, the SAMAI initiative has now trained more than 1.2 million Saudis in artificial intelligence, alongside broader skills development activities delivered through the SDAIA Academy for Data and AI. The programs are intended to expand AI knowledge among the population while developing more specialized capabilities among students, researchers and tech-

nology professionals. Saudi Arabia has designated 2026 as the Year of Artificial Intelligence, placing additional emphasis on building national capabilities and increasing the practical use of AI. The kingdom is also pointing to international rankings as indicators of its progress. Saudi Arabia ranked 13th among 70 economies in the 2026 IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook and third among G20 economies, according to the SPA report. The report also states that Saudi Arabia ranked fourth globally for AI adoption by companies and fourth for societal access to AI. Corporate adoption has been supported by SDAIA programs including the Rowad Package and AI Ethics Incentive Badges, while initiatives such as SAMAI and the SDAIA Academy are being used to expand AI skills and awareness. The International Monetary Fund's 2026 Article IV consultations with Saudi Arabia also highlighted the country's performance in AI adoption across several sectors, according to the source. SDAIA's mandate extends beyond promoting adoption. The authority is involved in policymaking, infrastructure development, regulatory frameworks, capability building and providing technology enablers for government agencies

and private companies using data and AI. Saudi Arabia is also placing emphasis on AI governance principles including transparency, fairness and privacy protection, alongside measures intended to reduce risks associated with algorithmic systems. This creates a parallel strategy in which the kingdom is seeking to accelerate AI deployment while establishing governance structures around how the technology is developed and used. Saudi Arabia is also using international institutions and partnerships to expand its role in discussions around AI governance. Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah reaffirmed the kingdom's commitment to responsible AI use during activities associated with the High-level Week of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Saudi Arabia has also expressed support for UNESCO's work around responsible technology and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, while pursuing partnerships with international organizations and academic institutions. The international dimension complements domestic initiatives aimed at developing AI infrastructure, talent and regulatory capabilities.

AI in Saudi Arabia in numbers

1.2M

Saudis trained in AI through the Samai initiative

13th

the Kingdom's rank in the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook

70

countries covered by the ranking

Source: SDAIA via the Saudi Press Agency and Sabq, September 2026

Africa's AI Workforce Debate Shifts Digital Inclusion from Connectivity to Economic Participation

As world leaders gather at the 81st United Nations General Assembly (UNGA81), a defining question sits at the center of Africa's development agenda: how do we ensure that Africa's young people are not merely consumers of the technologies shaping the future, but creators, innovators and beneficiaries of the economic value they generate? This question was at the heart of the UNDP timbuktoo panel, "Skills, Pathways and Jobs: Preparing Africa's Workforce for the AI Era." The discussion comes at a pivotal moment. While employers across the world are struggling to find AI, data and digital talent, Africa is home to the world's youngest population. According to the World Economic Forum, by 2035 more young Africans will enter the workforce each year than in the rest of the world combined. The question is no longer whether Africa has talent. The question is whether Africa can translate that talent into economic competitiveness. For years, discussions on digital inclusion have focused on connectivity. That focus was necessary, but connectivity alone is no longer enough. Access to networks, devices and digital learning does not automatically translate into economic participation. The next frontier of digital inclusion is not access, but agency. The real measure of success is not how many people are connected, but how many people can use connectivity to learn, earn, innovate and participate meaningfully in the economy. This requires a fundamental shift from counting users to creating pathways from learning to livelihoods. That is precisely why the discussion moves beyond digital skills training to focus on the full ecosystem required for economic participation. The future workforce will require specialized capabilities in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing, data science and digital engineering. But technical skills alone are insufficient. Young people also need work experience, mentors, networks, access to finance and clear pathways into employment and entrepreneurship. Skills must lead somewhere. A critical insight from the panel is that Africa's challenge is not one of talent scarcity, but of system design. Too often, interventions

operate in isolation. Training programs are disconnected from employers. Universities are disconnected from industry demand. Device access is disconnected from skills development. Entrepreneurship support is disconnected from financing and markets. The result is fragmented efforts that improve inputs without changing outcomes. This is why partnerships are becoming increasingly important. No single organization controls the entire pathway from education to economic participation. Governments create enabling policies. Universities develop talent. Technology companies provide platforms and tools. Employers create opportunities. Development institutions provide catalytic funding and scale. The panel highlighted the importance of partnerships in connecting infrastructure, skills development and innovation ecosystems. Discussions between MTN Group Foundation and UNDP reflect this systems approach. Joining forces brings together MTN's connectivity, infrastructure, digital platforms, Skills Academy, ICT hubs and device-access programs with UNDP's policy expertise, government relationships, the timbuktoo initiative, and the University Innovation Pods (UniPods) network to expand

pathways to digital skills, entrepreneurship and economic opportunity for young Africans. Through initiatives such as ICT hubs and device-access programs, young people can gain access not only to learning opportunities, but also to the infrastructure, mentorship and innovation networks needed to apply their skills in the real world. Yet even partnerships of this scale will not be enough on their own. The economy enhanced by emerging technologies will be built by ecosystems, not individual organizations. Technology companies must help shape curricula and provide access to tools. Employers must move from consumers of talent to co-creators of talent. Universities must adapt faster to changing labor market needs. Development finance institutions and donors must support the scaling of proven models. Governments must continue creating environments that encourage innovation, investment and inclusive participation. Africa's competitiveness in the AI economy will not be determined solely by the number of people trained. It will depend on whether innovators have access to devices, connectivity, compute infrastructure, data and capital. Talent without tools cannot compete. Tools without talent cannot create value.



Egypt Taps NVIDIA for AI Push

Egypt's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) is looking to explore avenues for collaboration in artificial intelligence (AI), computing, digital skills development, and support for innovation with NVIDIA. This follows a meeting between ICT minister Raafat Hendy and NVIDIA vice president for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Paolo Guglielmini, where the preparation of a memorandum of understanding outlining the proposed areas of cooperation was discussed. NVIDIA highlighted that this collaboration aims to solidify Egypt's position as a key regional AI hub, transforming the nation into a prime global destination for technology outsourcing, consulting services, and advanced AI infrastructure. The meeting also explored opportunities for coopera-

tion in research and development in AI and advanced technologies, local talent development, and support for entrepreneurs and start-ups. The discussions also covered access to specialized technical and training content, as well as opportunities to leverage training programs in AI, deep learning, and the training of trainers. The two sides discussed ways to strengthen Egypt's domestic computing and AI capabilities to better serve the needs of developers, researchers, and institutions, said the ministry. Hendy highlighted key indicators of the nation's ICT sector, which is a major driver of economic growth. He underscored Egypt's integrated approach to harnessing AI technologies to deliver tangible economic, developmental, and societal impact. This approach includes

initiatives aimed at improving government operations, upskilling the workforce, supporting development efforts, and developing AI applications that serve the public interest, while simultaneously fostering Egyptian talent and equipping it with advanced and specialized AI skills. For his part, Guglielmini highlighted Egypt's talent and ambition to emerge as an influential force in AI innovation, noting that NVIDIA can help accelerate the realization of this ambition through its integrated ecosystem of accelerated computing, software, and AI tools, alongside training programs that empower developers to turn their ideas into practical applications. He also underscored significant opportunities for NVIDIA to support the North African country's AI ecosystem in developing solutions that address local needs and reach global markets. "In addition, the discussion reviewed the MCIT's efforts to advance the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem and build capacity through Creativa Innovation Hubs. This nationwide network provides a supportive environment for developing technological skills, nurturing innovators, and supporting entrepreneurs and start-ups," MCIT said. "The meeting also covered the key pillars and goals of the second edition of the National AI Strategy (2025–2030), progress made in implementing the strategy, and opportunities to support these efforts through skills development, fostering innovation, and expanding the use of AI applications."



Saudi Communications Minister Discusses Expanding AI, Quantum Computing Partnerships in France

Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah Alswaha held a series of meetings during his visit to France with senior executives from leading global companies in artificial intelligence (AI), digital content and digital entertainment, gaming, and quantum computing. The meetings aimed to expand high-impact partnerships, facilitate knowledge transfer, develop national capabilities, and strengthen the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's position as a global hub

for artificial intelligence, electronic gaming, and emerging and advanced technologies, reported the Saudi Press Agency. Alswaha discussed with Ubisoft CEO and Co-Founder Yves Guillemot, Sony Group CEO Hiroki Totoki, Riot Games CEO Dylan Jadeja, and Electronic Arts Chairman and CEO Andrew Wilson the use of AI in developing the gaming, entertainment, and content industries, as well as developing Saudi talent and empowering developers and content creators in the Kingdom to

build globally competitive experiences and intellectual properties. He discussed with Thales Group Chairman and CEO Patrice Caine the security of artificial intelligence applications, data protection, knowledge transfer, and the development of national capabilities in advanced technologies, building on the partnership between the group and the Kingdom spanning more than five decades. Alswaha visited the headquarters of Pasqal in Paris, where he toured its laboratories and reviewed

its advanced quantum computing technologies, in the presence of CEO Dr. Wasiq Bokhari and Chairman of the Board of Pasqal Arabia Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki bin Talal. He discussed expanding the presence of quantum computing technologies in the Kingdom, integrating them with artificial intelligence, and developing national capabilities and talent. In the field of advanced artificial intelligence, he discussed with Advanced Machine Intelligence Co-Founder Laurent Solly the future of the next generation of artificial intelligence models and their capabilities in understanding, prediction, and planning, as well as their applications in robotics, automation, and industry, in addition to enabling Saudi researchers and developers to build new applications and technologies. The visit builds on the Kingdom's efforts to forge effective international partnerships, attract high-



quality technologies and investments, supporting the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. and empower national talent to lead opportunities created by the intelligent era,

Oman: Green AI Alliance to Link Technology Growth with Clean Energy

Oman has launched a Green Artificial Intelligence Alliance to promote the use of cleaner energy in AI and high-performance computing as the country seeks to reduce the environmental impact of its expanding digital economy. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology held the alliance's inaugural meeting in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Authority for Public Services Regulation. The initiative brings together government entities, private companies, academic and research institutions and investors to develop what officials described as a national ecosystem for green AI. At the meeting, participants approved the alliance's founding document, formed a technical committee and reviewed its 2026 work plan. A key focus will be increasing the use of renewable and low-emission energy to power AI technologies and high-performance computing systems, which can require large amounts of electricity. The alliance will also support research into energy-efficient and low-emission computing and help develop



national expertise in sustainable AI. Another objective is to encourage private companies to adopt greener technologies and explore incentives that could accelerate investment in clean digital solutions. The alliance will serve as a platform for attracting local and international partners and supporting projects that combine technological development with environmental sustainability and economic returns. It also plans to promote cooperation with international organizations and research institutions to exchange expertise and

adopt global standards in sustainable AI. Green AI has gained importance globally as the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence increases demand for computing power and energy. For Oman, the initiative is intended to support the goals of Vision 2040 by linking digital growth with environmental protection and greater use of renewable energy. The alliance also plans to expand its membership and strengthen its regional and international presence as Oman develops its capabilities in AI, advanced computing and clean energy.

PIF Spearheading Saudi Arabia's Push to Build AI Ecosystem

Saudi Arabia is ramping up investment in artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure, led by its wealth fund PIF as the country seeks to attract technology capital and build domestic AI capabilities. The kingdom ranked first globally in digital governance and cybersecurity indicators, and third in AI models. Driven by Saudi Vision 2030, technology in the kingdom has evolved from an operational tool into an innovative national industry, establishing a competitive digital ecosystem that attracts significant domestic and international capital, reported SPA. Marking 2026 as the Year of Artificial Intelligence highlights this commitment, following achievements by 2025 in which Saudi Arabia ranked first globally in digital governance and cybersecurity indicators, and third in AI models. Leveraging its strategic location across three continents, steady economic

expansion, and a tech-driven youth demographic, the Kingdom is actively scaling its data connectivity, research, and AI innovation. The Saudi PIF is central to this transformation, anchoring its AI strategy on three pillars: investing globally to establish Saudi Arabia as an innovation hub, integrating advanced AI across internal operations to become a digitally driven institution, and accelerating AI adoption across its portfolio subsidiaries. To advance this mandate, the Saudi wealth fund established HUMAIN as a global AI enterprise focused on developing sector ecosystems, deploying next-generation data centers, providing cloud computing infrastructure, and delivering cutting-edge models, including top-tier Arabic Large Language Models (LLMs), while protecting local intellectual property and attracting global talent and capital. A cornerstone

of this technological output is the ALLaM model, built entirely in the Kingdom by Saudi experts. Trained on more than 380 billion Arabic words, 394,000 books, and 500 billion data units, the model captures cultural contexts and regional dialects worldwide, earning second place among Arabic models developed in the Arab world as independently verified by Cohere on the Massive Multitask Language Understanding (MMLU) benchmark. Powered by ALLaM, the HUMAIN Chat application functions as an intelligent assistant targeting over 400 million Arabic speakers and two billion Muslims globally. HUMAIN's physical computing framework relies on next-generation facilities and partnerships with international tech leaders, supported by a \$3 billion investment from Blackstone. Operating infrastructure services from Damman that reach over 150 countries, HUMAIN has established the world's largest AI data center with a capacity of up to 6 gigawatts, operating as the first global company that does not purchase third-party software. Internally, PIF maximized operational efficiency throughout 2025 by deploying over 100 applications and activating 43 AI solutions for data analytics, task automation, and enhanced decision-making. Through a unified and secure enterprise AI workspace, PIF integrated 15 AI agents serving over 2,300 users. By the end of 2025, the fund automated more than 1,500 manual processes and procedures across its ecosystem, saving over three million working hours.



Côte d'Ivoire Partners with Mistral to Map National AI Ecosystem

Côte d'Ivoire's Ministry of Digital Transition and Technological Innovation has signed a strategic partnership with French AI company Mistral to assess the country's existing AI capabilities and develop an operational roadmap for future deployment. The agreement will see the ministry and Mistral conduct a strategic study and audit covering the country's AI ecosystem, data resources, infrastructure and potential use cases. The work is intended to support

the AI pillar of Côte d'Ivoire's Digital Roadmap 2026-2028, which includes 40 structuring projects. The study will examine the organizations, capabilities and resources already available within Côte d'Ivoire's AI ecosystem. It will also assess existing data and infrastructure to determine whether they can support broader AI adoption. A key objective is to identify practical areas where AI could deliver value for government, businesses

and citizens. The ministry said the findings should provide the basis for an operational roadmap outlining the conditions required to deploy AI solutions and develop high-impact pilot projects. The study will focus on several priority sectors. These include public administration, health, education, agriculture and services to the population. The emphasis on sector-specific use cases suggests the government is looking beyond a general AI strategy toward

applications tied to public service delivery and economic development. However, the ministry has not yet disclosed which individual AI solutions or pilots are likely to be prioritized. Mistral is working on the project with Artefact Côte d'Ivoire, the local arm of the Artefact group specializing in data and AI consulting. Artefact is expected

to contribute local market knowledge and technical expertise to the assessment. This local participation could be important in evaluating the practical constraints around data access, institutional readiness, skills and infrastructure. By conducting an audit before moving into deployment, the government is attempting

to establish a clearer baseline for where AI can be implemented effectively and where additional capability development may be required. The audit is expected to be completed in time for the ministry's IMPACT IA conference in Abidjan next week.

Bangladesh and South Korea Launch \$13 Million AI Training Hub in Dhaka

Bangladesh and South Korea have signed a \$13 million agreement to establish a dedicated artificial intelligence training center in Dhaka, with the project aimed at expanding Bangladesh's AI talent pool, strengthening applied research and improving the global employability of local technology professionals. The initiative will be funded through a grant from the South Korean government via the Korea International Cooperation Agency, with the project scheduled to run from 2026 to 2029. The planned AI-Hub Center will be located at Software Technology Park-2 in Kawran Bazar, Dhaka, and implemented by the Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority. The agreement was formalized through a Record of Discussion involving KOICA, Bangladesh's ICT Division under the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology, and the Economic Relations Division of the finance ministry. South Korea will provide \$13 million in grant funding for the project. The initiative is therefore structured as a government-backed capacity-building program rather than a private commercial investment. The planned center will focus on advanced AI education and applied research. It is also intended to create a platform linking universities, businesses and government agencies. That structure is designed to help move AI development beyond classroom-based training by connecting skills development with practical research and industry requirements. The project will also support the development of local instructors and AI professionals as Bangladesh seeks to expand its domestic

pool of specialized technology talent. A central objective of the program is to improve the employment prospects of Bangladeshi technology professionals in both domestic and international markets. South Korea is expected to be one of the target markets for skilled workers emerging from the program. For Bangladesh, this creates an opportunity to link AI skills development directly with export-oriented technology employment and international labor demand. The country already has a growing software and outsourcing sector, but AI-related capabilities could allow local professionals to compete for higher-value roles in areas such as machine learning, data science, automation and applied AI development. The proposed hub is also intended to strengthen collaboration between academia and industry. That is an important component of the project because AI skills programs often struggle to remain aligned with rapidly

changing commercial requirements. By connecting universities, companies and government institutions, the initiative could help create a more practical training environment while giving businesses access to emerging research and skilled graduates. Applied research activities could also support the development of AI solutions tailored to local market needs. Project adds to Bangladesh-South Korea technology cooperation The program expands the technology relationship between Bangladesh and South Korea, with digital skills and AI becoming a more prominent part of bilateral cooperation. The 2026-2029 implementation window gives the project several years to develop training capacity, research programs and institutional partnerships. The source does not specify annual trainee targets or employment placement goals, so the eventual scale of the program will depend on how the center is implemented.



Saudi Arabia Hosts UNESCO Global Forum as AI Ethics Moves from Principles to Implementation

Saudi Arabia is hosting the fourth UNESCO Global Forum on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence in Riyadh, bringing together more than 1,200 participants to examine how governments can translate AI ethics principles into practical governance frameworks as adoption accelerates globally. The three-day GFEAI 2026 runs through September 17 under the theme "Transforming Global Cooperation for Ethical AI Governance." Co-hosted by Saudi Arabia and UNESCO, the forum is organized by the Saudi Data and AI Authority in partnership with UNESCO and the International Center for AI Research and Ethics, and in coordination with the National Commission for Education, Culture and Science. More than 100 speakers are participating across over 30 sessions and workshops, including ministers from UNESCO member states, policymakers, researchers, academics and representatives of governments and international organizations. Opening the forum, SDAIA President Dr. Abdullah Alghamdi said Saudi Arabia's hosting of the event comes during 2026, which the Kingdom has designated as its Year of Artificial Intelligence. He said Saudi Arabia views AI development as requiring more than the adoption of new technologies, with institutions, regulation, technical capabilities, talent and international partnerships forming part of the wider national ecosystem. SDAIA was established in 2019 to institutionalize the Kingdom's work around data and AI at the national level. Its board is chaired by Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman. Saudi Arabia subsequently established the International Center for AI Research and Ethics in Riyadh in 2022. The center operates under the auspices of UNESCO and focuses on research, policy development, capability building and international cooperation around responsible AI. Its remit also includes translating ethical principles into practical tools and practices. Alghamdi highlighted several measures Saudi Arabia has introduced as part of its governance framework. The Kingdom adopted its Personal Data Protection Law in 2021,



alongside national data governance policies covering the classification, sharing, availability, protection and use of data. Saudi Arabia followed this with AI Ethics Principles in 2022, aligned with the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. The principles cover areas including fairness, privacy, security, safety, transparency and accountability in the development and deployment of AI systems. The Riyadh forum is focusing on the next stage of that process, particularly how broad principles can be translated into practical governance measures as AI becomes more deeply embedded in government, business and society. AI skills and human capability are another major component of Saudi Arabia's strategy. Alghamdi said more than one million beneficiaries have received training in AI fundamentals through the national SMAI initiative. The Kingdom's wider approach spans basic AI awareness, talent identification, academic and professional training and the development of specialized expertise. Building those capabilities is intended to complement Saudi investment in AI technology and infrastructure by expanding the pool of people able to develop, deploy and govern the technology. UNESCO Deputy Director General Åsa Regnér said Saudi Arabia completed the organization's Readiness Assessment Methodology process in 2025. UNESCO's RAM process is intended to examine countries' readiness to implement

responsible AI across relevant institutional and governance dimensions. Its completion provides another link between Saudi Arabia's domestic AI governance program and UNESCO's wider international framework. Regnér also highlighted the participation of women in AI, arguing that strong academic achievement among young women is not always translated into equivalent participation in the labor market or AI-related decision-making. She called for greater utilization of that talent as AI ecosystems develop. Forum targets international cooperation on AI governance GFEAI 2026 is placing significant emphasis on international coordination. Panel discussions are examining AI ethics and governance, practical implementation of responsible AI principles and mechanisms for strengthening cooperation between governments and international organizations. The discussions come as countries face increasingly similar questions around privacy, transparency, accountability, safety and governance while pursuing different national approaches to AI development and regulation. The forum therefore provides a venue for governments, researchers and technology stakeholders to compare approaches and explore areas where greater international alignment may be possible. No new binding international AI governance agreement was announced in the source.

DeepAstra Becomes Z.AI's Sole Sovereign AI Partner in Oman

Omani AI company DeepAstra has entered a strategic partnership with Z.AI that makes it the company's sole sovereign AI partner in Oman, with plans to expand access to Z.AI's GLM models and establish a dedicated Sovereign AI Development Center in the Sultanate. The partnership was announced at LEAP 2026 in Riyadh and will combine Z.AI's artificial intelligence models with DeepAstra's local platform and sovereign AI capabilities. DeepAstra, a portfolio company of Omantel Innovation Labs, will make Z.AI's latest GLM family of models available through KwnX, its integrated AI workspace for research, planning, content creation and software development. A central focus of the collaboration will be helping organizations deploy AI while maintaining greater control over infrastructure, data and technology. This is particularly relevant for government entities and organizations operating in regulated or sensitive sectors where data residency, governance and infrastructure control can influence how AI services are deployed. The companies aim to provide a pathway for adopting advanced AI models while addressing these sovereign requirements within Oman. Specific details about the infrastructure architecture, hosting arrangements and deployment models

were not disclosed. DeepAstra will expand access to Z.AI's GLM family through its KwnX AI workspace. KwnX brings together AI capabilities for activities including research, planning, content generation and software development. The integration is intended to give users access to Z.AI models through a locally developed environment rather than requiring organizations to interact with the models solely through external services. The partnership could also support adaptation of the underlying models for local requirements and specialized use cases. One of the most significant elements of the agreement is the planned establishment of an Oman Sovereign AI Development Center. Based in the Sultanate, the center is expected to support the development of AI solutions for Oman and potentially other Arabic-speaking markets. Areas of collaboration will include Arabic AI, model adaptation and evaluation, document intelligence and practical applications across different industries. The parties have not disclosed the investment required for the center, its location, opening timetable or planned computing capacity. The focus on Arabic AI could give the partnership relevance beyond Oman. Arabic presents specific challenges for AI systems because of differences between

Modern Standard Arabic, regional dialects and specialized terminology used across industries and government. Developing and evaluating models against local language requirements could improve their usefulness for applications including document processing, knowledge management and AI-assisted public or enterprise services. The proposed center could therefore serve as a development environment for adapting general-purpose models to more specific linguistic and organizational requirements. Omantel Innovation Labs has supported DeepAstra since its early investment stage and is now acting as a strategic infrastructure partner. The collaboration fits within Omantel's broader "Everyone AI" strategy, which focuses on moving artificial intelligence beyond experimentation and into practical commercial and organizational applications. The operator is increasingly positioning itself within a wider AI ecosystem rather than limiting its role to providing telecommunications connectivity. The initiative has also received support from Oman's Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, reflecting the wider national interest in building domestic AI capabilities.



Accenture and AWS Sign Six-Year Middle East Cloud and AI Transformation Agreement

Accenture has signed a six-year strategic collaboration agreement with Amazon Web Services to help organizations across the Middle East modernize legacy infrastructure, strengthen their digital foundations and accelerate adoption of cloud, data and artificial intelligence technologies. The agreement includes dedicated support through the AWS Migration Acceleration Program, with Accenture deploying a regional team of architects and delivery leads focused on migration, modernization, data, AI and enterprise platform transformation. The companies will also develop industry-specific initiatives targeting sectors including energy, financial services and the public sector. AWS migration program to support legacy modernization A central component of the collaboration will be dedicated support through the AWS Migration Acceleration Program, or MAP. The program is designed to help organizations assess and migrate existing workloads to AWS while modernizing infrastructure and applications during the transition. For Middle Eastern enterprises with large legacy technology estates, migration can involve more than transferring applications from on-premises infrastructure to the cloud. Organizations increasingly need to redesign applications, modernize data environments and prepare infrastructure for AI workloads. Accenture and AWS intend to address these areas as part of a broader transformation approach. Accenture will deploy a dedicated Middle East team consisting of architects and



delivery leads to support organizations participating in the collaboration. The team will focus on three principal areas: migration and modernization, data and AI, and next-generation enterprise platforms. This regional delivery model is intended to help organizations move from transformation planning towards implementation while adapting projects to local business, regulatory and industry requirements. Accenture said strengthening the underlying digital core will be central to enabling companies to scale more advanced technologies. The collaboration reflects a shift in cloud adoption as organizations increasingly link infrastructure modernization with their AI strategies. Moving workloads into cloud environments can provide access

to computing, data and AI services, but legacy systems and fragmented data architectures can limit how effectively enterprises deploy those capabilities. Accenture Managing Director and AWS Business Group Lead for the Middle East and Africa Imran Sayyed said organizations across the region are increasing investment in cloud, data and AI to support growth, resilience and innovation. He said the expanded AWS relationship would focus on modernizing infrastructure, unlocking enterprise data and helping clients adopt AI at scale through AWS. Accenture and AWS will develop initiatives tailored to major Middle Eastern industries, including energy, financial services and the public sector. 🌱

5G in MEA

Unleashing a smarter,
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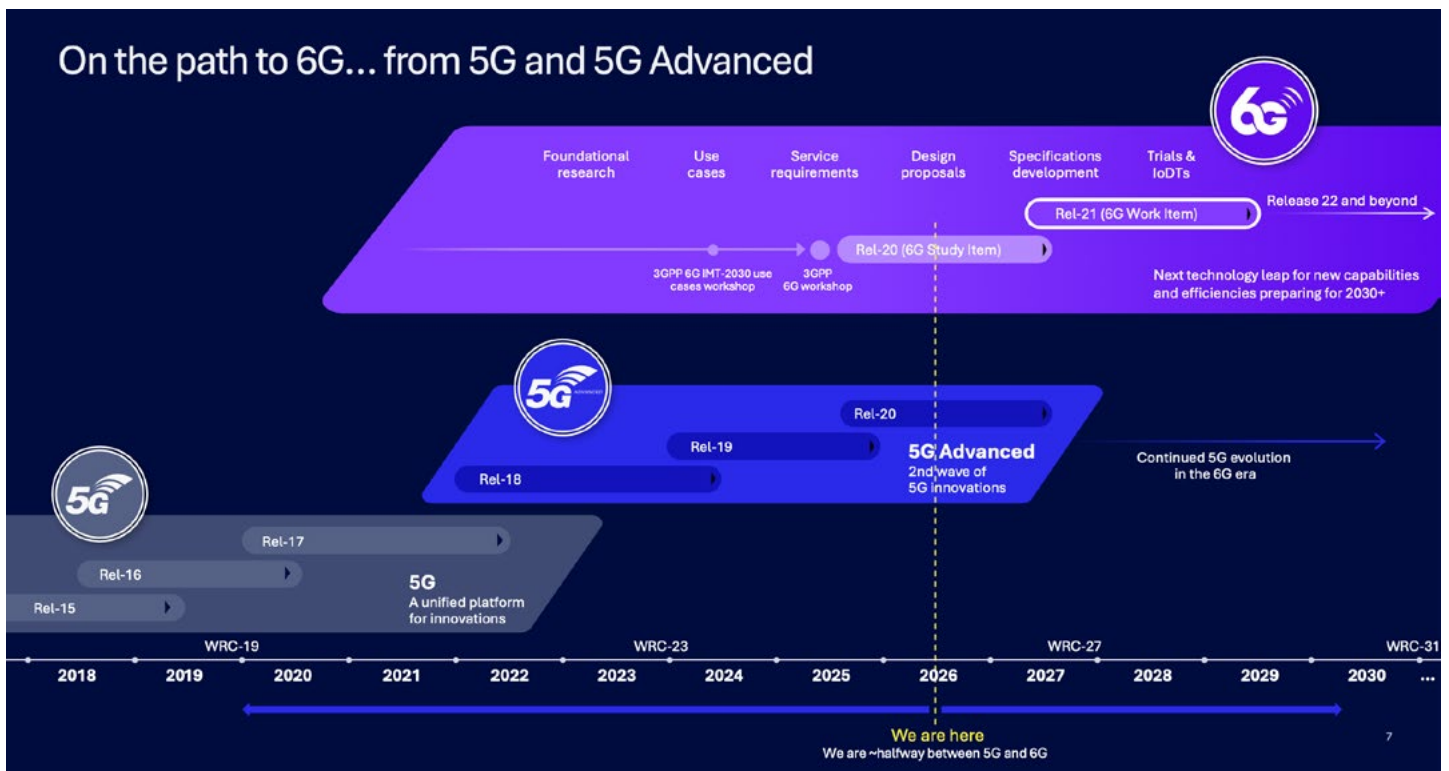
TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENTS

6G Takes Shape as Standards Give Way to Engineering

The 6G conversation is moving from vision-setting into engineering. After years of research projects, vendor white papers and debates about what the next generation should accomplish, the standards process is beginning to put hard boundaries around what 6G will actually be. At the ITU, the IMT-2030 framework now includes 20 minimum technical performance requirements spanning six usage scenarios: immersive communication, hyper-reliable low-latency communication, massive communication, ubiquitous connectivity, AI and communication, and integrated sensing and communication. In June, ITU-R Working Party 5D also completed draft evaluation guidelines that define how candidate 6G radio technologies will be tested, including new factory and urban-macro environments for sensing. Candidate radio-interface submissions are expected between February 2027 and February 2029. In parallel, 3GPP is turning those high-level requirements into an implementable system. Release 20 is the study phase for foundational 6G

technologies; Release 21 will contain the first normative 6G specifications. Based on the timeline agreed in June 2026, technical studies should conclude across 3GPP groups during the first half of 2027, with specification work continuing through late 2028 and final review extending into early 2029. That puts first commercial systems broadly in the 2029-2030 window; the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, set for July 14-30, will likely serve as a first-look at 6G trials. More interesting than the dates, however, is what 3GPP has already decided. The emerging 6G radio is looking less like a clean-sheet break from 5G than early generational hype sometimes implied. 3GPP has selected CP-OFDM for the downlink, with CP-OFDM and DFT-s-OFDM supported in the uplink. Much of 5G's channel coding will be reused. The basic radio-frame structure will remain similar to 5G, in part to make dynamic spectrum sharing between 5G and 6G practical. Supported system bandwidths are expected to range from 3 megahertz to as much as 400 megahertz depending

on spectrum, while massive IoT is being designed into 6G from the beginning rather than inherited from an earlier generation. The architecture is simultaneously being simplified. The baseline design assumes standalone 6G rather than repeating 5G's initial non-standalone model, which tied 5G radio to the 4G core. 3GPP is also retaining flexibility around centralized and distributed RAN implementations: a higher-layer CU/DU split is supported, while a potential lower-layer multi-vendor interface between baseband processing and the radio unit would be defined in detail by the O-RAN Alliance. The goal is not to discard the cloudification and disaggregation work underway in 5G, but to carry it forward without making 6G dependent on a legacy radio architecture. Where 6G does represent a more meaningful expansion is in what the network is expected to do. ITU's inclusion of AI and communication and integrated sensing and communication (ISAC) as explicit usage scenarios is significant. Qualcomm now describes



6G as an AI-native platform combining advanced connectivity, distributed compute and wide-area sensing. Nokia similarly argues that AI-native design is becoming the industry direction, with AI used both to operate the network and supported as a workload across devices, edge infrastructure and cloud. Capabilities including AI/ML, NTN, energy efficiency and sensing have been progressively developed through the later stages of 5G and 5G-Advanced. With 6G, the industry is attempting to treat intelligence, sensing, energy efficiency, resilience and a broader

relationship between connectivity and compute as design considerations from the outset. Qualcomm, for example, expects terrestrial and non-terrestrial networking to be integrated from day one, while both Qualcomm and Nokia increasingly position distributed AI workloads as part of the 6G system proposition. For operators, that evolutionary character may prove as important as the new capabilities. A commercially viable generational transition depends on preserving infrastructure and spectrum investments where possible while creating

enough improvement in capacity, uplink performance, energy efficiency and automation to justify new capital. None of that means the 6G standard is settled. Release 20 is explicitly a study phase, and major questions around spectrum, AI implementation, sensing architecture and commercialization remain open. The takeaway is that the industry is no longer primarily discussing what 6G might be; standards bodies are increasingly deciding what 6G will do.

Japan's Operators Test a New Path for mmWave Expansion

Japan's four major mobile operators are studying whether greater cooperation around 5G millimeter-wave infrastructure could help address some of the challenges associated with expanding coverage. KDDI, NTT Docomo, SoftBank and Rakuten Mobile have recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to study the use of 5G mmWave infrastructure and technical architectures for coverage expansion. The four operators said mmWave can deliver ultra-high-speed, high-capacity data transmission, but its propagation characteristics make signals susceptible to attenuation and physical obstructions. Expanding coverage therefore requires a large number of base stations and related equipment. Remy Pascal, an analyst at Omdia, told RCR Wireless News that those characteristics make the economics of mmWave challenging for individual operators. "Because mmWave requires a dense network grid to overcome short range and blockage, the economics are challenging for a single operator," he said. Infrastructure sharing could potentially address part of that challenge by distributing costs among multiple operators. Pascal also pointed to potential benefits beyond the direct sharing of network equipment. "Network sharing would enable to share the burden and spread costs across multiple parties, strengthening the investment case," he said. The analyst added that physical infrastructure sharing could help streamline permitting and installation, noting that municipalities and venue owners may prefer approving a single location and



equipment installation rather than multiple parallel deployments. For Pascal, cooperation does not necessarily have to begin with active network sharing to have an impact. "For instance, further physical site sharing arrangements, even without active network equipment sharing, could be beneficial by reducing costs and facilitating site acquisition," he said. The distinction could be relevant as the four Japanese carriers assess how to make greater use of their existing mmWave infrastructure. The operators said the joint study will examine the technical feasibility of expanding the usage coverage of 5G mmWave base stations among mobile network operators and evaluate efficient operational frameworks. The study will focus on technologies and approaches involving 5G mmWave base stations, repeaters, and other related assets. The companies said

they will study how deployed facilities can be used more effectively while each operator continues its own mmWave deployment. Pascal identified limited coverage, poor in-building penetration and a limited device ecosystem as established mmWave challenges. He also pointed to permitting, total cost of ownership, and backhaul access as other barriers to adoption globally. "Therefore, any agreements, policies, or initiatives that contribute to address these challenges should be seen positively," Pascal said. Omdia research also suggests that operators in markets where mmWave spectrum has already been allocated have an interest in sharing. Pascal said a survey conducted earlier this year found that a majority of operators in those countries were interested in network sharing for mmWave. 

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SAMENA Regulatory Dashboard

Policy & Regulatory Reading from This Edition

The September 2026 edition points to a regulatory environment shaped by network continuity, sovereign digital infrastructure, operator-led AI service distribution, satellite-terrestrial integration, equipment standards, digital identity, cybersecurity, spectrum execution, and competition oversight. Several developments are moving into implementation, including the GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative, operator AI-service platforms, national cloud and AI infrastructure initiatives, satellite licensing and direct-to-cell services, equipment standards, anti-spam enforcement, and spectrum assignments.

The SAMENA Council's Regulatory Dashboard provides a concise reading of selected developments in this edition and their policy relevance for the SA-ME-NA region. The common regulatory issue is how these developments are governed as they move into operational networks and commercial services.

The September 2026 edition shows a regulatory agenda becoming more closely connected to implementation. National AI initiatives are increasing attention on cloud, compute, data residency, and national data control. Regulators are also acting on equipment standards, unauthorized services, anti-spam enforcement, spectrum allocation, and competition.

Dashboard Overview

Regulatory Area	What This Edition Shows	Policy Relevance
Network continuity	The GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative establishes six capabilities: PREVENT, TOLERATE, CONTAIN, RECOVER, OBSERVE, and VALIDATE.	Continuity assessment is extending across telecom networks, cloud, power, transport, and software dependencies.
AI service distribution	Robi, Grameenphone, and Banglalink are offering multi-model AI access through consumer platforms and operator billing arrangements.	This raises issues around AI pricing, user consent, consumer data privacy, and accountability.
Sovereign cloud & AI infrastructure	Kuwait is working with Microsoft on M365 Copilot and data centers; Oman's DeepAstra is working with Z.AI with Omantel support; Saudi Arabia's HUMAIN is deploying ALLaM and planning large-scale AI data-center capacity.	These initiatives place attention on compute infrastructure, data residency, national data control, and cloud governance.
Satellite-terrestrial integration	The UAE granted Starlink a 10-year General Space Services License; Airtel launched Starlink Direct-to-Cell in Uganda; 4iG and SpaceX partnered for Starlink Mobile across Hungary and the Western Balkans.	Licensing, spectrum coexistence, service authorization, and terrestrial-satellite integration become more important as these services expand.
Technical & market enforcement	Pakistan introduced mandatory telecom equipment standards and acted against unauthorized SIM/eSIM services; Algeria authorized Djazzy to launch payment services.	Regulators are tightening technical requirements, enforcing authorization rules, and enabling telecom participation in adjacent regulated services.
Spectrum execution	Developments include commercial Upper 6 GHz use in the UAE, 5G-Advanced carrier aggregation, spectrum auctions in Japan and Ghana, mmWave sharing, and meteorological spectrum protection.	Spectrum policy is addressing mobile capacity, coexistence, infrastructure sharing, market allocation, and protection of critical radio uses.

1. Top Regulatory Indicators

Network continuity is becoming more structured. The GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative establishes six practical capabilities: PREVENT, TOLERATE, CONTAIN, RECOVER, OBSERVE, and VALIDATE. The source places this within a wider environment involving cloud, power, transport, and software dependencies. Regulatory reading: continuity assessment may increasingly need to examine several failure and recovery capabilities rather than availability alone.

Telecom operators are becoming direct distributors of AI services. Robi, Grameenphone, and Banglalink are offering multi-model AI access through operator-linked platforms and billing arrangements. Regulatory reading: these models raise practical questions around transparent AI pricing, user consent, consumer data privacy, and accountability.

National AI initiatives are closely tied to cloud and compute infrastructure. The edition covers initiatives involving Kuwait and Microsoft, Oman's DeepAstra and Z.AI with Omantel support, and Saudi Arabia's HUMAIN, including ALLaM and large-scale AI data-center plans. Regulatory reading: these developments bring data residency, compute availability, national data control, and cloud infrastructure into the regulatory discussion.

Satellite-to-mobile integration is moving into commercial deployment. The UAE granted Starlink a 10-year General Space Services License. Airtel launched Starlink Direct-to-Cell in Uganda, while 4iG and SpaceX announced Starlink Mobile cooperation covering Hungary and the Western Balkans. Regulatory reading: licensing, spectrum coexistence, service authorization, and integration with terrestrial mobile networks require greater clarity as these services expand.

Technical enforcement remains active. Pakistan introduced mandatory telecom equipment standards covering EMC and RF requirements and acted against unauthorized SIM/eSIM services. Algeria authorized Djazzy to launch payment services. Regulatory reading: regulators are addressing both technical conformity and the conditions under which telecom providers enter adjacent regulated activities.

Automated network operations are creating governance questions. The edition cites expectations of greater AI use in network operations and examples of automated network-management deployments. Regulatory reading: greater automation places more attention on auditability, operational control, and human oversight of automated network changes.

2. Policy Implications

Policy Theme	Implication
Continuity frameworks	Network continuity assessment may need to cover prevention, tolerance, containment, recovery, observability, and validation across interconnected infrastructure.
AI service governance	Operator-distributed AI services raise issues around pricing, consent, consumer data privacy, and accountability.
Sovereign infrastructure	AI and cloud initiatives increase the importance of compute availability, data residency, national data control, and infrastructure location.
Satellite integration	Direct-to-cell and related satellite services require clear approaches to licensing, spectrum coexistence, and terrestrial integration.
Technical standards	Equipment conformity and authorization controls remain important as telecom services and connected devices become more complex.
Digital public infrastructure	Pakistan's National Digital Stack and Bangladesh's One-ID initiative show continued policy attention to digital identity and citizen-access platforms.
Sustainable compute	Oman's Green Artificial Intelligence Alliance links AI infrastructure development with clean and lower-emission energy sources.

The developments show increasing overlap between telecom regulation, cloud and data infrastructure, AI services, cybersecurity, satellite connectivity, digital identity, and spectrum policy. Network continuity also reaches into cloud, power, transport, and software dependencies, while satellite-to-mobile services bring licensing and spectrum questions directly into existing mobile markets.

3. Questions for Regulators and Policymakers

Area	Practical Question
Continuity	Do existing continuity frameworks cover prevention, tolerance, containment, recovery, observability, validation across telecom, cloud, power, transport, and software dependencies?
AI services	Are existing rules adequate for AI pricing, user consent, consumer data privacy, and accountability when telecom operators distribute AI services?
Sovereign infrastructure	Are data residency, compute, cloud, and infrastructure requirements clear enough for national AI initiatives?
Satellite integration	Are licensing and spectrum frameworks prepared for direct-to-cell and other satellite services operating alongside terrestrial mobile networks?
Automation	What auditability and human-oversight requirements should apply where automated systems make network changes?
Technical standards	Are equipment standards addressing EMC, RF, cybersecurity, and other technical requirements before equipment enters operational networks?
Digital identity	Are governance arrangements for national digital identity and access platforms sufficiently clear?

4. Operator Implications

Readiness Area	Why It Matters
Network continuity	Operators may need to demonstrate how networks prevent, tolerate, contain, observe, recover from, and validate disruption.
AI distribution	AI subscriptions delivered through telecom channels raise issues around transparent pricing, consent, consumer data privacy, and accountability.
Automated operations	Greater automation increases the importance of auditability, operational control, escalation, and human oversight.
Satellite partnerships	Direct-to-cell and hybrid connectivity models require closer coordination on spectrum, service authorization, and network integration.
Enterprise infrastructure	Cloud, AI, cybersecurity, and sovereign infrastructure initiatives extend operators further into regulated enterprise and national infrastructure environments.
Technical compliance	Equipment, SIM/eSIM, cybersecurity, and network conformity requirements place greater emphasis on compliance across technology and supply chains.
Dedicated satellite capacity	Dedicated satellite payloads, including the stc Group-Astranis agreement cited in the edition, can give operators greater control over regional capacity and network redundancy.

Operators remain directly involved in the main regulatory developments covered in this edition through connectivity, AI-service distribution, automated network operations, cloud and enterprise infrastructure, satellite integration, technical compliance, and network continuity.

5. Regional Coordination Watch

Coordination Area	Regional Relevance
GCC network continuity	The GCC Network Resilience Joint Initiative provides a common six-capability structure for regulators, operators, and technology providers.
AI & data cooperation	Cooperation involving Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan shows the growing relevance of cross-border work on AI, cybersecurity, and digital infrastructure.
Satellite integration	Direct-to-cell services create common questions around spectrum coexistence, licensing, and terrestrial-network relationships.
Spectrum planning	Upper 6 GHz, mmWave, low-band spectrum, satellite services, and 5G-Advanced developments create shared technical and regulatory interests.
Digital infrastructure	Cloud, data centers, AI compute, cybersecurity, and digital identity increasingly involve cross-border investment and institutional cooperation.
WRC-27 & space governance	Saudi Arabia's CST is hosting the Global Space Connectivity & Sustainability Events in Riyadh in October 2026, with regional alignment on satellite D2D and 6G integration among the issues identified in the edition.

Regional coordination is particularly relevant where spectrum use, satellite coverage, cybersecurity, infrastructure investment, digital services, and network continuity extend across national markets. The developments in this edition also show growing institutional cooperation around AI, data, cybersecurity, and space connectivity.

6. WRC / ITU / Spectrum Watch

Upper 6 GHz commercial deployment: e& UAE launched commercial mobile service using 6425–6775 MHz on its 5.5G network, with reported single-user download speeds of up to 10 Gbps.

5G-Advanced carrier aggregation: du UAE and Nokia aggregated 420 MHz across six 5G NR carriers spanning 3.6 GHz, 2.6 GHz, 2.1 GHz, 1.8 GHz, and 600 MHz.

Japan spectrum auction: Japan completed its first spectrum auction, with NTT DOCOMO securing a nationwide 26 GHz license for JPY 6.288 billion. Japan's four major mobile operators also signed an MoU to study joint mmWave site sharing.

Ghana spectrum auction: Ghana's NCA opened competitive bidding for 700 MHz, 2.3 GHz, and 3 GHz spectrum, with MTN Ghana securing 700 MHz spectrum for more than US\$100 million.

UK competition oversight: Ofcom proposed blocking an Openreach wholesale broadband rebate arrangement because of concerns over its effect on alternative-network fiber providers.

Meteorological spectrum protection: ITU and WMO issued a joint handbook calling for governments to protect radio frequencies used for weather, climate, and ocean observation from commercial RF interference.

Closing Reading

The September 2026 edition shows a regulatory agenda becoming more closely connected to implementation. Network continuity is being expressed through defined capabilities. Telecom operators are distributing AI services directly to customers. National AI initiatives are increasing attention on cloud, compute, data residency, and national data control. Satellite services are moving closer to terrestrial mobile networks. Regulators are also acting on equipment standards, unauthorized services, anti-spam enforcement, spectrum allocation, and competition.

For regulators and policymakers, the practical issue is how technical, licensing, operational, and coordination requirements develop as these services and infrastructure models expand. For operators and other regulated participants, the developments increase attention on continuity, technical compliance, AI-service distribution, automated operations, satellite integration, and participation in cloud and national digital infrastructure. 🌐

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REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

TRA, Oman Launches Pilot Coverage Request Service for Governorates

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has launched, on a pilot basis, a Coverage Request Service within the Quality System. This is an electronic service that enables all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman to submit and track requests related to telecommunications services through a



unified electronic pathway, thereby contributing to accelerating the processing of requests, improving the level of planning and supporting data-driven decision-making. The service standardizes the mechanism for submitting coverage requests and regulates their flow between the governorates and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority. It also enables comparison of a request with previous or ongoing requests at the same site and in neighboring areas, monitors cases of duplication or similarity, verifies the existence of current or future projects or plans related to the site and ultimately classifies the request and determines the most appropriate processing pathway for it. The service allows requests to be submitted electronically, specifying their type, requirements, and location, and enables tracking of the completion level and progress rate. It also displays data related to the geographical scope of the request, contributing to the formation of a more comprehensive view of the needs of the governorates. It provides TRA staff with a dedicated interface for studying and processing requests. Requests that can be submitted through the service include the establishment of a new telecommunications station, the improvement or enhancement of telecommunications network coverage and internet services, the provision of 5G services, the relocation or removal of telecommunications stations, and the extension of fiber-optic networks, in addition to reports related to vandalism, defacement, or obstruction of the establishment of telecommunications stations, and any other requests related to telecommunications services. It is worth noting that the Coverage Request Service leverages artificial intelligence technologies to conduct a preliminary analysis immediately upon submission, link it to available technical and geographical data, determine the status of telecommunications services and coverage at the requested site, and verify nearby towers and stations and the technologies available therein. In its current phase, the service targets the governorates, with the scope of benefit set to expand in the future to include government institutions, economic and logistics zones, and other relevant entities.

TRAI Orders Indian Big Three to Offer Data-Free Tariffs

India's three largest operators - Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea - will be required to offer affordable voice & SMS-only tariffs from next month, following a mandate from regulator TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India). As reported by Times of India, TRAI has ordered that the new plans be made available from 21st October 2026. The tariffs are intended for low-income users who require short-term, flexible plans for calling and messaging but have less use for bundled data services. Under TRAI's mandate, operators must offer Special Tariff Vouchers (STVs) for voice and SMS with shorter validity periods of up to 30 days, with the option

to renew monthly. Operators are also obliged to offer at least one longer validity plan solely for voice and SMS. This is not the first time that TRAI has tried to address this issue; in December 2024, the regulator mandated that all operators must offer at least one voice and SMS-only STV, but this effectively resulted in lower availability of voice and SMS plans as operators offered limited validity options while failing to reduce prices to reflect the removal of data. To resolve this, the new mandate requires parity across validity periods. For their part, all three operators formally opposed TRAI's mandate, arguing that it was anti-consumer. In particular,

Jio claimed that voice now functions as an application on an underlying data network, making voice-only plans technically infeasible, and highlighting that 88% of

its subscribers are active data users. While TRAI has noted these objections, it has nonetheless pressed ahead with the mandate in the interests of consumer

protection, arguing that users who do not require data will benefit from plans with the same validity period as data tariffs, but with proportionally lower prices.

ITU and WMO Call to Protect Radio Spectrum for Weather, Climate and Water Services

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) call on governments, regulators, and meteorologists to safeguard access to radio frequency spectrum essential for weather forecasts, early warnings, climate monitoring and water management. The appeal comes with the release of a new joint handbook, the *Use of Radio Spectrum for Meteorology: Weather, Climate, Water and Related Environmental Applications*. The new publication offers updated guidance on the use and protection of radio frequencies supporting critical meteorological systems. These systems enable observations of the atmosphere, oceans, and land, and the transmission of data that supports life-saving early warnings, reliable weather forecasting, and long-term climate monitoring. The ITU-WMO handbook, formally released at the opening of the Global ITU-WMO Seminar on Spectrum Use for Meteorology, also highlights the potential impact of radio-frequency interference on the accuracy and availability of essential environmental data. "Preventing harmful radio interference is a matter of public safety and can save lives," said Doreen

Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General of ITU. "Interference-free spectrum keeps weather forecasts accurate, emergency alerts and warnings timely, and climate data reliable — so communities can prepare, respond and build resilience." "The radio-frequency spectrum is a finite natural resource. Meteorology relies on specific bands — determined not by choice, but by the physical properties of the atmosphere itself: they enable observations that no other frequencies can provide. These bands must be protected," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo. "Protect the spectrum that lets us observe the atmosphere, and we protect forecasts and early warnings on which every country depends." Some satellite sensors measure very weak naturally occurring signals at specific frequencies, making protection from harmful interference particularly important. Weather radar, lightning location systems, aircraft and marine observations, hydrological monitoring systems, and other platforms also rely on these frequency bands to collect and exchange data. Experts at the WMO-ITU event will review recent and upcoming international spectrum decisions relevant to meteorological and Earth observation

services, including outcomes of the latest ITU World Radiocommunication Conferences. The event comes as the demand for wireless communications, satellite services, and environmental data continues to grow, underscoring the importance of ensuring continued access to, and protection of radio-frequency spectrum for Earth Observation. Radio frequency interference can degrade the accuracy and availability of vital data needed for early warning systems, weather forecasting, and climate monitoring. Such impacts can affect the ability of governments and communities to prepare for and respond to environmental hazards. Bringing technical, operational, and regulatory guidance together in one resource, the new handbook supports informed decision-making on spectrum management and promotes collaboration between the meteorological and radiocommunication communities. The Global ITU-WMO Seminar on Spectrum Use for Meteorology: Challenges, Opportunities, and Evolving Requirements takes place at ITU headquarters in Geneva from 28 to 30 September 2026.



MTN Ghana Secures 5G 700 MHz Spectrum for \$100+ Million

Ghana's telecom regulator moved its long-running 5G spectrum sale into its financial stage, opening and ranking sealed price bids for the 700 MHz, 2.3 GHz and 3 GHz bands used for mobile broadband. The National Communications Authority said in a statement that the process, the country's first competitive multi-

operator spectrum auction, produced a mixed outcome: one band settled, one undersubscribed, one oversubscribed. The result narrows Ghana's 5G rollout to a contest between its two dominant carriers, even though a third company was cleared to compete just two days earlier.

Russia Finally Launches 5G in Major Cities

Russian mobile phone operators have launched their first commercial 5G networks across 16 major cities, according to an announcement from the country's Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media Ministry. The announcement follows years of regulatory disputes and, of course, Western sanctions imposed after the invasion of Ukraine. The delays in rolling out the service are also linked to major suppliers like Nokia and Ericsson exiting Russia after the full-scale invasion of

Ukraine. In addition, the rollout of 5G has been complicated by the fact that the military and security services have maintained exclusive control of the 3.4-3.8 GHz frequency range used for 5G internationally. Operators have not been happy with this, although they are allowed to use the 4.63-4.99GHz frequency range. This, however, means iPhones will still be unable to connect to 5G in Russia since they operate at a lower frequency – unless Apple decides otherwise. The Digital Ministry has apparently said Android users will gain access to 5G “in the near future.” Even with working phones, mobile internet disruptions are a regular occurrence, but authorities insist they are necessary to deal with daily Ukrainian drone attacks across the country. As independent news service The Moscow Times reports, all four of Russia's major mobile operators have now launched 5G in Moscow, St Petersburg and Yekaterinburg. Coverage in other major cities varies by operator. The Digital Ministry plans to extend 5G coverage to 50 more cities by the end of this year. 4G mobile networks already cover 90% of Russia's inhabited territory. The launch aims to bring high-speed internet access to 10 million people, officials say – and there's clearly demand. The Moscow Times says that domestic mobile internet traffic has more than tripled in six years.



Icasa to Investigate What South Africans Pay to Communicate

Communications regulator Icasa has given notice that it intends to conduct a market inquiry into the affordability of telecommunications services in South Africa, opening a process that will run well into next year and that revisits ground already covered by the Competition Commission, by Icasa itself and, as of last month, by the communications department. The notice was published in the Government Gazette under section 4B of the Icasa Act and signed by the regulator's chairman, Mothibi Ramusi. It says concerns persist about the affordability of voice and broadband services for low-income households, rural communities, young people and informal sector workers, despite what it calls progress in network coverage and mobile broadband penetration. The stated purpose is an evidence-based assessment identifying structural cost drivers, the impact on household budgets and possible regulatory or market interventions. That auction raised R14.4-billion for the fiscus, well above the R8-billion the regulator had projected. The inquiry, it says, is explicitly aligned with the regulator's previous market inquiries into data services and

with its role in monitoring pricing outcomes following spectrum assignment and pro-competitive interventions. In plainer terms, Icasa wants to establish whether the 2022 spectrum auction delivered anything for consumers' pockets. That auction raised R14.4-billion for the fiscus, well above the R8-billion the regulator had projected, and was sold to the public for years as the intervention that would bring prices down. The follow-up sale has slipped repeatedly and is now expected in Icasa's 2027 financial year. The regulator has already published evidence that the obligations attached to that auction are running behind. Its State of the ICT Sector report in March found that of 21 878 government facilities operators were required to connect under spectrum license conditions, only 4 377 had been connected by October 2025 – about 20%. The same report put 5G population coverage at 58% nationally but as low as 7% in rural parts of the Eastern Cape, and noted that entry-level smartphones had fallen to R399, removing devices as the main barrier and leaving price.

Bangladesh Looks Beyond Mobile Expansion as 6G, Satellite and Spectrum Demand Reshape Connectivity



Bangladesh is shifting its telecommunications priorities from expanding basic mobile connections toward improving network quality and preparing spectrum policy for 5G, future 6G systems, satellite communications and other emerging wireless technologies. The transition was highlighted at the 37th meeting of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity Wireless Group (AWG-37), hosted by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission in Dhaka. The five-day meeting, running through September 11 at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel, brings together regulators, policymakers, industry representatives and technical experts from across the Asia-Pacific to discuss future wireless networks and spectrum management. Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology Minister Faqir Mahbub Anam said Bangladesh's next telecommunications challenge is no longer simply increasing the number of connections. Instead, the focus is shifting toward the quality, affordability and reliability of services and ensuring that connectivity delivers practical benefits for citizens and the economy. "Digital connectivity should create opportunities for citizens, support economic activity and ensure that people can benefit from technology," he said. Bangladesh had around 190 million mobile connections as of July 2026, while more than 108 million subscribers were using 4G

services, according to figures cited during the meeting. The country's telecommunications infrastructure includes more than 49,000 4G sites, 46,000 towers and approximately 173,000 kilometers of optical fiber. These figures illustrate the scale already achieved by the country's mobile industry, but the government's emphasis is increasingly moving toward how efficiently that infrastructure can support rising data consumption and more advanced services. Spectrum management is emerging as a central issue as Bangladesh considers the requirements of 5G, satellite connectivity, the Internet of Things and future wireless technologies. The government is also seeking to strengthen domestic capabilities across artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, software, hardware and other technology-driven industries. The convergence of these technologies means future spectrum planning will have to accommodate a broader range of networks and devices than conventional mobile broadband alone. AWG-37 provides Bangladesh with an opportunity to participate directly in regional technical discussions that could influence how spectrum is planned, shared and coordinated as next-generation technologies develop. Asia-Pacific Telecommunity Secretary-General Masanori Kondo said AWG-37 would advance existing technical studies while considering proposals for new work areas responding to changing technology

and regional requirements. Dedicated workshops are examining AI for 6G, satellite technologies and Ultra-Wideband systems. APT Wireless Group Chairman Daejung Kim said wireless communications are undergoing a significant transformation driven by IMT-2030 and future 6G systems, artificial intelligence, expanding satellite communications and increasing demand for spectrum. He also stressed the need for regional cooperation, with emerging wireless challenges increasingly requiring coordination between countries, regulators and industry participants. IMT-2030 is particularly important to these discussions because it provides the broader international framework around which future 6G capabilities and technical requirements are being developed. Satellite communications are another major component of the AWG-37 agenda. For Bangladesh, incorporating satellite technologies into long-term spectrum planning could broaden the range of connectivity options available alongside terrestrial mobile and fiber networks. The discussions come as regulators across the region increasingly have to consider how terrestrial and non-terrestrial communications systems will coexist within future connectivity environments. Nearly 400 participants join Dhaka meeting. AWG-37 is drawing 395 participants from Asia-Pacific Telecommunity member countries, including 168 attending physically and 227 participating virtually. BTRC Chairman Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari (retired) said hosting the event would allow Bangladesh to participate more actively in international technical discussions around wireless communications and spectrum management. It also provides opportunities for exchanges between regulators, telecommunications companies, academic institutions and international technical experts. Ahead of AWG-37, an APT Frequency Information System training program was held in Dhaka on September 5 and 6. The program focused on coordinated frequency information management and updating data submitted by member countries.

Saudi Arabia Participates in the G20 Innovation Working Group Ministerial Meeting Held in USA

Saudi Arabia, represented by the Communication, Space and Technology Commission (CST) Governor Eng. Haitham Alohal, participated in the G20 Innovation

Working Group Ministerial Meeting held in USA, to discuss future trends and policies supporting innovation, AI adoption and emerging technologies, and their role in

driving economic and social growth. On the sidelines of the event, H.E. held a series of meetings with officials from several countries, including H.E. Mr. Krzysztof Gawkowski, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Digital Affairs of Poland, H.E. Grigori Borisenko, Deputy Minister of MDDCMM of Russia, Mr. Arif Satria, Chairman of National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia, and Ms. Adriana Baravalle, Secretary of Innovation, Science and Technology of Argentina. The meetings explored ways to strengthen collaboration and opportunities for adopting innovation and emerging technologies to enhance economic and social prosperity. The G20 Innovation Working Group Ministerial Meeting, held in the US, brings together leaders from the world's largest advanced and emerging economies to discuss and coordinate economic policies.



Oman Issues New Number Portability Framework to Accelerate Mobile Switching

Oman's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority has introduced a new Number Portability Regulatory Framework aimed at making it faster and easier for users to switch telecom providers while keeping their existing numbers. The regulation standardizes number portability procedures, introduces greater automation and establishes clearer timelines for completing transfers, as the regulator seeks to improve user experience and strengthen competition in the telecom market. The new rules are designed to institutionalize and standardize the process for transferring numbers between licensed telecom operators. The TRA said the framework is intended to reduce processing delays, streamline procedures and establish defined time limits for completing portability requests. The regulator also plans to strengthen oversight of service delivery to ensure operators comply with the required standards. Number portability allows customers to change telecom service providers

without losing their existing numbers. The revised framework is intended to give users more flexibility to choose providers based on factors such as pricing, network coverage and quality of service. By reducing friction in the switching process, the TRA is also seeking to strengthen competitive pressure between operators. If customers can move more easily between providers, operators face greater incentives to compete on service quality, pricing and overall customer experience. The framework applies both to licensed telecommunications providers and end-users. It sets out the roles, obligations and rights of each party involved in the number portability process. The objective is to make the process more transparent and efficient while reducing uncertainty around how requests should be handled. The TRA said the framework is also intended to improve consumer confidence in the telecommunications market as the sector continues to evolve. Oman introduced number portability services

in 2006, allowing subscribers to retain their numbers when moving between telecom providers. The TRA issued its first regulatory instrument governing operator obligations for the service in 2008. Since then, the telecommunications market has expanded and the number of licensees has increased. The regulator said this growth exposed weaknesses in the existing portability process, including delays in handling requests. Those shortcomings led to the decision to overhaul the framework and move towards a more automated, centralized model. The revised framework calls for a centralized system to support number portability operations. This is intended to make transfers faster, more consistent and more equitable across participating operators. Centralization can also make it easier for regulators to monitor how long transfers take, identify bottlenecks and ensure operators are applying the same rules.

Qatar CRA Clarifies Complaint Escalation Rules for Telecom and Postal Consumers

Qatar's Communications Regulatory Authority has updated its consumer complaint guidelines, clarifying when users can escalate unresolved telecommunications and postal service disputes to the regulator. The updated guidance sets out specific timelines and conditions under which the CRA will intervene after a consumer has first attempted to resolve the issue directly with the relevant service provider. Under the guidelines, consumers are expected to submit their complaint directly to their telecommunications or postal service provider before approaching the CRA. The regulator can then intervene if the issue remains unresolved beyond the prescribed timeframe or if the provider fails to handle the complaint properly. For standard complaints, consumers can escalate the matter if it remains unresolved for more than 10 working days. For customers with disabilities, the escalation threshold is shorter at 8 working days. Consumers may also escalate their case before the normal resolution process is completed if the provider does not follow basic complaint-handling requirements. This includes situations where the service provider refuses to accept the complaint, does not issue a reference number, closes the case without resolving the issue, or provides an outcome that the consumer considers unsatisfactory. The rules are intended to make the escalation process clearer and provide consumers with a formal path when direct engagement with a provider fails. The requirement for service providers to issue complaint reference numbers is particularly important because it gives consumers a record that can be used when taking the case to the regulator. A reference number also allows the CRA to establish when the complaint was first lodged and whether the provider was given the required time to resolve it. The updated guidelines therefore place greater emphasis on traceability and accountability in complaint management. The CRA said consumers should prepare the necessary information before filing an escalation so that cases can be processed efficiently. While the source excerpt does

not list the full set of required documents or details, consumers would need to demonstrate that they had first attempted to resolve the issue with the relevant provider and that one of the CRA's escalation conditions had been met. The framework applies to both telecommunications and postal services regulated by the authority.



CRA Can Help If:

-  Your complaint remains unresolved for more than 10 working days.
-  You are a customer with a disability, and your complaint remains unresolved for 8 working days.
-  Your complaint is not accepted or no complaint reference number is provided.
-  Your complaint is closed without resolution.
-  You are not satisfied with the outcome.

Jio and T-Mobile US Pioneer 5G SA Roaming

Reliance Jio and T-Mobile US have claimed the world's first 5G Standalone roaming connection between their respective networks in India and the US. The connection is enabled via a platform provided by Syniverse, with T-Mobile stating that it is the first SA 5G roaming carried out on a live network, rather than in trials or proof of concepts. T-Mobile US launched SA 5G in 2020; Jio was trialing the technology at this time using equipment manufactured in India. For Jio, the move demonstrates that its SA 5G works across international networks - a major step towards its ambition of expanding its technology to overseas markets - using a 5G core instead of relying on legacy 4G infrastructure. This enables more advanced functionality such as lower latency and network slicing. Reliance has expressed interest in making Jio's

technologies - such as the aforementioned 5G core as well as its cloud-native network technology, FWA and software platforms - available to operators overseas. Given its gigantic scale - around 533 million subscribers including 285 million 5G users - expanding into new markets presents Reliance with enormous opportunities. Jio's partnership with T-Mobile US demonstrates that its technology can work with networks outside India, which will serve as a demonstration of its networking capabilities to potential investors. While this partnership is focused on consumer roaming, enterprise use cases would likely be more appealing to investors going forward, with standalone 5G able to support services such as industrial IoT and network slicing. 

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



Algeria

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications has launched what it describes as the country's largest universal electronic communications service tender to date, targeting telecom coverage across 3,000 underserved areas. The program will focus particularly on low-density communities with fewer than 2,000 residents and will be fully financed by the state. Electronic communications operators have been invited to submit bids to provide network coverage and services in the designated

locations, with the rollout expected to be completed within a maximum of 18 months. The initiative forms part of Algeria's universal service framework, which is designed to ensure broader and more equitable access to telecommunications services. By focusing on communities with relatively small populations, the program is aimed at areas where conventional commercial network expansion can be less attractive to operators because of lower expected returns. (September 9, 2026) www.meatechwatch.com



Bahrain

Bahrain's commitment to strengthening ICT data and evidence-based policymaking was highlighted as the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) participated in key international telecommunications meetings in Switzerland. The TRA delegation took part in the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) 21st World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS-26), alongside sessions of the Expert Group on Telecommunication/ICT Indicators (EGTI) and the Expert Group on ICT Household Indicators (EGH) held in Geneva. Held under the theme 'Guiding digital policy through statistics,' the events brought together global experts and ITU Member States to advance methodologies for measuring connectivity, digital inclusion, and emerging technologies – including artificial intelligence, satellite broadband, and 5G-Advanced. Discussions

also focused on developing indicators to assess the ICT sector's environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions. "Reliable and internationally comparable data is essential to understanding how the digital landscape is evolving and to making informed regulatory and policy decisions," said TRA general director Philip Marnick. "Bahrain's participation enables us to contribute our experience while learning from international best practices, particularly as new technologies such as AI, advanced mobile networks, and satellite connectivity reshape the sector. The TRA's engagement supports the kingdom's alignment with global measurement standards, ensuring its achievements in telecommunications infrastructure and digital economy competitiveness are accurately represented on the world stage.

(September 14, 2026) www.gdnonline.com



Bangladesh

Bangladesh's internet subscriber base reached 135.94 million at the end of June 2026, after adding 6.27 million users during the first half of the year, according to data from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission. The figures show that internet subscriptions now account for more than three-quarters of the country's population, with mobile networks continuing to provide the overwhelming majority of connections. Of the total 135.94 million internet subscribers recorded in June, 120.84 million were mobile internet users. That means mobile connectivity accounted for nearly 89% of all internet subscriptions in the country. The remaining 15.10 million subscribers were

connected through broadband services. The split highlights the central role of mobile networks in expanding internet access across Bangladesh, particularly in areas where fixed broadband infrastructure is less widely available. According to BTRC data, Bangladesh added 6.27 million internet subscribers during the first half of 2026. The increase points to continued demand for digital connectivity across both mobile and fixed broadband services. The source does not provide a breakdown of how many of the new users came from mobile versus broadband connections, but the overall market remains heavily weighted towards mobile access.

(September 2, 2026) www.meatechwatch.com



Egypt

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector recorded a real growth rate at fixed prices of 13.76% during fiscal year (FY) 2024/2025, compared to 8.43% in FY2013/2014, according to a report by the Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC). The report also highlighted strong growth in Egypt's digital exports, which rose by 7.2% year-on-year (YoY) to \$7.4 billion in 2025 from \$6.9 billion. Outsourcing services exports reached \$5.2 billion in 2025, higher than \$2.4 billion in 2022 and \$4.3 billion in 2024. The figure more than doubled over three years, with outsourcing exports targeted to hit \$6 billion in 2026. Moreover, IDSC pointed out that the ICT sector continued to attract higher public investment, as its value rose from EGP 750

million in FY2013/2014 to EGP 27.69 billion in FY2024/2025. As for the telecommunications and internet user base, the number of mobile phone subscriptions reached 125.65 million lines in March 2026, marking an annual growth of 8.47% from 115.83 million. Active mobile internet subscriptions increased by 9.48% to 94.43 million in March 2026 from 86.25 million a year earlier. High-speed fixed internet subscriptions also rose to 12.95 million from 11.87 million during the same period. Regarding investments, public investment in the ICT sector surged from EGP 750 million in FY2013/2014 to about EGP 27.69 billion in FY2024/2025.

(September 16, 2026) www.zawya.com



Jordan

Jordan and Rwanda have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in Information and Communications Technology (ICT). During the U.N General Assembly in New York, Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Minister Sami Smeirat and Rwanda's Information Communication Technology and Innovation Minister Paula Ingabire signed the agreement on the sidelines of the 81st session of the General Assembly, according to a ministry statement issued earlier this week (23 September 2026). Speaking at the signing ceremony, Smeirat said the agreement covers several key areas, including

AI, cloud computing, digital identity, cybersecurity, data protection, telecom infrastructure, digital payment systems and interconnectivity. According to Smeirat, the ministry also wants to use the partnership to bring government institutions, businesses, universities and research bodies in both countries closer together, with the aim of turning the areas covered by the agreement into joint projects. Additionally, the MoU also includes cooperation and knowledge-sharing on digital policy, the Internet of Things, big data, smart cities, e-commerce and data center disaster recovery, the company revealed. (September 25, 2026) www.mobileurope.co.uk



Kuwait

The Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) took part by videoconference in the 32nd meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) committee of undersecretaries of posts and telecommunications. The Kuwaiti delegation was led by CITRA Chairman Khaled Al-Zamel. In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), CITRA said its participation was part of efforts to strengthen cooperation and coordination with GCC member states' posts and telecommunications bodies. It said the meeting discussed a number of topics and recommendations in a way that supports joint Gulf action and serves the shared interests of GCC states.

CITRA said the participation of both the authority and the Ministry of Transport showed the importance of joining up national efforts and coordinating among the bodies involved. The aim, it said, is to support Gulf work and draw on shared expertise and experience to develop the postal sector. The authority noted that such meetings are part of continuing dialogue and coordination among GCC states on shared priorities, cooperation and keeping pace with developments in the two sectors. The delegation also included Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport Meshaal Al-Zaid and Head of the Public Relations Department Ahmad Al-Hoseini. (September 28, 2026) www.kuwaittimes.com



Morocco

Morocco's mobile subscriber base surpassed 58.8 million by the end of June 2026, remaining virtually unchanged from a year earlier, according to the Directorate of Studies and Financial Forecasts. The latest economic outlook report showed that the number of mobile subscriptions increased by 0.1% year over year, following 3.2% growth the previous year. Mobile penetration stood at 157.9% at the end of the first half of 2026, down from 159.6% a year earlier but significantly above the 135.6% recorded in the first half of 2021. The fixed-line subscriber base also grew

during the first half of 2026, increasing by 8%, according to the report. Internet subscriptions reached nearly 42 million by the end of June, up 1.9% from a year earlier. That followed growth of 5.2% in the previous year. Internet penetration rose to 112.6% at the end of June 2026, compared with 111.8% a year earlier and 86.2% in June 2021. The figures cover subscriptions rather than individual users, meaning penetration rates above 100% reflect multiple subscriptions held by individuals or organizations.

(September 28, 2026) www.en.hespress.com



Oman

Oman's total mobile telecommunications subscriptions rose 1 % year-on-year to 8,435,420 at the end of July 2026, compared with the corresponding period last year. According to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), active postpaid mobile subscriptions increased 6.8 per cent to 1,326,014, while active prepaid mobile subscriptions declined 2.6 % to 5,394,199. Subscriptions to Internet of Things (IoT) services recorded a 9.3 % increase, reaching 1,715,207 by the end of July 2026. In the fixed internet segment, subscriptions to fiber-optic services for homes and establishments grew 6.4 %

to 366,686. Meanwhile, fixed 5G subscriptions fell 3% to 209,796, while fixed 4G subscriptions dropped sharply by 69.1 % to 5,333. Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) subscriptions declined 21.4 % to 8,677. In contrast, satellite subscriptions recorded the highest growth among fixed internet technologies, surging 148.1 % to 1,871 by the end of July. The total number of active fixed-line telephone subscriptions also edged up 0.5 per cent to 441,306. Meanwhile, international internet capacity increased 31.8 % to 5,382,003 megabits per second (Mbps) by the end of July 2026.

(September 11, 2026) www.zawya.com



Pakistan

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has proposed tougher competition rules for telecom operators found to hold Significant Market Power (SMP), expanding both the criteria used to assess market dominance and the regulatory obligations that may follow. The proposed changes form part of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication's Competition Rules 2026 and are intended to give the regulator a broader framework for assessing how much influence a telecom operator holds in a relevant market. Under the proposed amendment, a licensee may be presumed to have significant market power if its share exceeds 25 percent of the relevant telecommunications market. However, PTA would not rely on market share alone. Instead, the regulator may examine a wider set of market, financial,

and competitive factors before reaching a final determination. The proposed framework would allow PTA to consider market share based on sectoral revenues, overall market concentration, control over essential infrastructure, spectrum holdings, economies of scale, vertical integration, and barriers faced by new or expanding competitors. Other factors may include an operator's financial and technical resources, access to subscribers and distribution channels, network effects, buyer power, demand elasticity, excess profitability, and competition on non-price factors. PTA may also consider the possibility of coordinated behavior between operators where relevant to competition in the market.

(September 29, 2026) www.phoneworld.com.pk



Qatar

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) updated guidelines clarifying how consumers can seek official intervention for unresolved postal and telecommunications issues. The authority stated that consumers experiencing service disruptions or dispute delays with their service providers can escalate their grievances directly to the regulator under specific conditions, provided they first attempt to submit the complaint directly to their postal service provider. Under the guidelines, the CRA intervenes if a standard complaint remains unresolved by the provider for

more than 10 working days, or after 8 working days for customers with disabilities. Consumers are also eligible to escalate their case if the service provider refuses to accept the initial complaint, fails to provide a reference number, closes the complaint without resolution, or delivers an outcome that the consumer finds unsatisfactory. To process an escalation efficiently, consumers must prepare essential details before filing.

(September 8, 2026) www.thepeninsulaqatar.com



Saudi Arabia

The Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) held an international webinar titled "Shaping Tomorrow's Radio Spectrum Ecosystem," bringing together a distinguished group of global experts in the field of radio spectrum management. The webinar aimed to highlight key trends and developments in spectrum management, explore the development and implementation of radio spectrum strategies, the role of research and development in the field, and share Saudi Arabia's approach to radio spectrum management at the national level. The webinar featured the participation of Eng. Mohammad Al-Janoobi, the Radio Spectrum Deputy Governor at CST; CST Deputy Governor for Strategy and Digitalization Mr. Naif Sheshah; Deputy to the BR Director at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Ms. Diana Tomimura; Group Director, Radio Spectrum at Ofcom Mr. David Willis; Associate Administrator of the Office of Spectrum Management at the U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Mr. Charles Cooper; Radio Spectrum Advisory Group President at CST Dr. Sami Alhamidi and President and CEO of Federated Wireless Mr. Iyad Tarazi. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Faisal Hamady, Partner at Boston Consulting Group (BCG). (September 28, 2026) www.cst.gov.sa

Under the patronage of H.E. Eng. Abdullah AlSwaha, Minister of Communications and Information Technology and Chairman of CST's Board, the Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is organizing the Global Space Connectivity & Sustainability Events, in the city of Riyadh from October 12–14, 2026. The event combines the activities of the Connecting the World from the Skies Forum and the Space Sustainability Forum (SSF), in their third editions, under one umbrella. The event brings together regulatory bodies, companies, specialists, and experts in the telecom and space fields to explore the future of satellite connectivity, enhance the integration of terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks, and discuss the sector's leading directions and challenges, through sessions covering Integrated Connectivity for the 6G Era, Paving the Way to WRC-27, Unlocking the Potential of D2D Connectivity, Space Economies & Emerging Markets, Space as Critical Infrastructure, Space-Enabled Sustainability on Earth, Global Governance and Responsible Behavior in Space, and Managing Congestion, Mitigating Interference and Preventing Debris.

(September 20, 2026) www.cst.gov.sa/en



Turkey

Türk Telekom's group company Argela and Stanford Research Institute (SRI), one of Silicon Valley's most established research institutions, have signed a strategic collaboration agreement covering joint research and development in next-generation communications technologies. The collaboration marks an important step towards strengthening Türkiye's engineering capabilities through international research know-how and expanding its reach across the global technology ecosystem, Türk Telekom said in a statement. The initial focus of the collaboration

will be on the high-speed packet processing technologies required by future communications networks. The project will explore a new approach to moving high-performance workloads currently handled by specialized hardware to programmable GPU-based platforms. This approach aims to enable the development of more flexible and cost-effective next-generation technologies that can be readily adapted to different needs, according to the statement.

(September 25, 2026) www.hurriyetdailynews.com



United Arab Emirates

The UAE's ambition to be among the first countries ready for the 6G era took another step forward as telecom operator e& switched on what it describes as the world's first commercial mobile network operating on Upper 6GHz (U6GHz) spectrum. While 6G standards are not yet finalized globally, governments and telecom companies are increasingly investing in infrastructure capable of supporting the next generation of wireless communications. The UAE has positioned itself at the forefront of that race, with regulators and operators accelerating trials and commercial deployments that could eventually underpin advanced artificial intelligence applications, smart-city networks and industrial automation. The latest deployment brings U6GHz spectrum into live commercial use over e&'s existing 5G-Advanced network,

reflecting a broader industry trend of squeezing more capacity and performance from current networks while laying the groundwork for future technologies. According to the company, the spectrum allocation covers the 6425-6775 MHz range and provides up to 350 MHz of continuous bandwidth. Industry experts view access to additional spectrum as critical as data consumption rises and new technologies place greater demands on mobile networks. AI-powered services, immersive extended-reality experiences and connected industrial systems are expected to require significantly higher speeds and lower latency than current consumer applications. 📡

(September 29, 2026) www.khaleejtimes.com

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REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SA-ME-NA REGION



Argentina

The Argentine telecommunications operator Telecentro agreed to purchase the fiber optic provider Iplan for US\$260 million reported the Argentine outlet Infobae, in a deal that would consolidate one of the largest connectivity operators in Argentina. According to that information, the financing would come from a five-year syndicated loan granted by ICBC, Banco Galicia and Banco Santander, and closing would be expected within 30 days, although the legal documentation would already be signed. If confirmed, the transaction would consolidate a player with more than 7 million homes passed between both companies and around

US\$750mn in combined revenues. The news comes after, in mid-August, Telecom Argentina proposed Metrotel —backed by the funds Riverwood Capital and Blackstone— as the buyer of the fixed and mobile assets it must divest following the conditional approval that the National Competition Authority (ANC) granted in June to its purchase of Movistar's Argentine operation for around US\$1.200mn. This transfer of assets to Metrotel still has to be evaluated by the sector regulator Enacom and the ANC.

(September 1, 2026) www.bnamericas.com



Australia

Telecom operator Optus suffered a 76-minute technical glitch that impacted network users across three Australian states (September 11). Customers in Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia experienced "intermittent call dropouts", according to Optus' statement. Communications Minister Anika Wells addressed the outage in a televised address: "No piece of infrastructure be it roads, bridges, poles, wires, is 100% resilient." "What we need to do is make sure these systems are as resilient as we can possibly make them." The outage comes almost exactly a year after Optus' last widescale disruption, which prevented callers from connecting to the emergency services number ("000") for up to 15 hours. The glitch occurred

during a network firewall update and was linked to the deaths of four people. A national outage on Optus' network in 2023 also disrupted calls to emergency services. For this, Optus received a penalty from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) of over A\$12 million (US\$7.9 million) in 2024. In 2022, a cyberattack on Optus impacted the data of approximately 9.5 million Australians. Following last week's outage, the Australian government has now stepped in. Chris Bowen, the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, called the disruption "deeply concerning". He added that "all the necessary investigations have begun."

(September 17, 2026) www.capacityglobal.com



Brazil

The National Telecommunications Agency (Anatel) will receive, over the next 70 days, contributions from society for two public consultations that propose rules to enable the use of Wi-Fi in the 6 GHz band in outdoor environments. The proposals define technical conditions for the use of the latest generations of Wi-Fi, including Wi-Fi 7, considering the efficient use of the spectrum and the protection of already existing radiocommunication systems. The Agency's social

participation system, Public Consultation No. 41/2026 proposes technical requirements for Standard Power Wi-Fi equipment and test procedures for conformity assessment of restricted radiation radiocommunication equipment, and Public Consultation No. 42/2026 addresses Automated Frequency Coordination Systems (AFC) in the 5,925 MHz to 6,425 MHz band.

(September 25, 2026) www.bnamericas.com/en



Dominican Republic

Vietnamese telecoms group Viettel is preparing to enter the Dominican Republic after securing 240MHz of spectrum, making the Caribbean nation its 11th international telecoms market. Viettel Global, the group's international investment arm, was awarded spectrum across the 700MHz, 2.3GHz and 3.6GHz bands by Dominican regulator INDOTEL. The licenses

are valid for 20 years and provide the operator with spectrum for 4G and 5G network deployment. The award was made under INDOTEL Resolution No. 073-2026 on August 19. Viettel must sign the corresponding concession agreement within 90 days and is also establishing a local entity ahead of the launch. Viettel said it plans to invest in telecoms infrastructure in the

country, including extending coverage to underserved and remote areas, while developing digital services for consumers and businesses. The Dominican Republic will become Viettel's first new international telecoms market as the Vietnamese group expands its presence across Asia, Africa and Latin America. Viettel currently

operates in 10 overseas markets, seven of which have the largest mobile subscriber base in their respective countries. Its international operations generated US\$3.34 billion in revenue in 2025, up 23.9% year-on-year and marking the ninth consecutive year of double-digit growth. (September 1, 2026) www.developingtelecoms.com



Ghana

Ghana plans to start deploying 5G before the end of 2026, once the National Communications Authority (NCA) completes the allocation of new frequencies. The timeline was presented on Monday, 7 September in Accra by the Minister of Communications, Digital Technologies and Innovation, Samuel Nartey George. The regulator has launched allocation procedures in the 700 MHz, 2.3 GHz, and 3 GHz bands. This step follows the reform approved on 15 July 2026 by the NCA board, which ended the wholesale exclusivity framework previously associated with 5G to further open the

market to competition and investment. The project is not to be limited to major cities. The government also aims to upgrade the old 2G and 3G infrastructures in rural areas to equipment compatible with 4G and 5G, including the necessary fiber and microwave links to support higher data speeds. The technological transition is already supported by an increase in voice usage over LTE. Its share of traffic has risen from about 7% to 22.43%, covering more than 8.4 million subscribers, according to data presented by the ministry.

(September 11, 2026) www.beninwebtv.bj/en



Kenya

The Communications Authority of Kenya has opened a consultation on a proposed standalone license for colocation data centers, aiming to give the sector a regulatory framework better aligned with the infrastructure it provides and to support further investment in the country's digital economy. The authority has given stakeholders 30 days from September 8 to review and comment on the proposed framework, which would remove colocation data centers from the Network Facilities Provider Tier 2 licensing category. The change is intended to separate data center regulation from telecom infrastructure licensing while maintaining regulatory oversight over facilities that increasingly host critical digital services.

Under the existing regime, colocation data centers fall within the NFP Tier 2 category. The CA said that classification was initially intended to give the regulator visibility over data center operations, but the category is primarily designed for companies that establish and operate telecommunications network infrastructure. The proposed standalone license would instead recognize data centers as providers of infrastructure such as colocation space, power, cooling, storage and computing capacity. The proposed model would allow the CA to retain oversight of the sector without applying requirements designed primarily for network operators.

(September 11, 2026) MEA Tech Watch Press Reporter



Malawi

Malawi has activated a new telecommunications tower in Lilongwe Nyanja, bringing the number of operational sites under the government's Last Mile Rural Connectivity Project to 36 as it works toward a target of 136 towers in underserved communities. Information and Digitalization Minister Shadric Namalomba launched the Kalira tower, which is intended to improve access to mobile connectivity, internet services and digital payments in an area where commercial network deployment has previously been constrained by limited economic returns. Five additional towers are currently under construction, while the government aims to

complete 16 sites during the current financial year. Government targets 136 shared rural towers. The Last Mile Rural Connectivity Project is designed to address coverage gaps in communities where the economics of conventional commercial network investment can make infrastructure deployment difficult. The government ultimately plans to deploy 136 telecommunications towers that can be shared by Malawi's mobile operators and managed through the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA).

(September 9, 2026) MEA Tech Watch Press Reporter



Mexico

The telecommunications regulator has opened a public consultation on the terms of a future spectrum auction aimed at expanding internet and telephone coverage in hard-to-reach communities. The proposal would open up radio frequencies for microwave signals, a technology that carries data between distant points over wireless links. Officials say the approach could reduce the need for civil works and cable laying to connect rural villages, mountain towns and other locations where conventional infrastructure is difficult to install. According to the regulator, the plan is also

designed to make it easier for small internet and telephone providers to take part, since the investment required to deploy this type of infrastructure would be lower. The government estimates that implementation costs could fall by as much as 50 percent compared with projects requiring underground civil works. The frequencies under consideration could also be used to reinforce the transmission routes of established carriers in cities and other high-demand areas, helping ease network congestion and improve response capacity. (September 25, 2026) www.rivieramayaneews.mx



Mozambique

The communications regulatory authority INCM says it is responding to concerns expressed by consumers on social media and elsewhere regarding the rapid exhaustion of mobile data packages. INCM informs says it is developing what it calls a Tariff Management System, whose start-up is scheduled for November of this year. This platform will strengthen the monitoring of tariffs and packages offered by operators, compare tariffs, identify the effective price of the service, including conditions and validity, verify the conditions applied to consumers and ensure greater transparency and

accountability in the provision of telecommunications services. In the field of data services in particular, INCM says it intends to ensure that the announced validity of the packages is effective for the consumer and that the depletion of the data volume does not result in an abrupt interruption of service before the scheduled date. INCM is also conducting a process of restructuring telecommunications packages with a view to adopting fairer and more predictable solutions.

(September 22, 2026) www.developingtelecoms.com



Nigeria

The Executive Vice Chairman of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Dr. Aminu Wada Maida, has revealed that Nigerians consumed over 1.66 million terabytes of data in a year. Maida stated this at the opening ceremony of a two-day Nigeria Digital Connectivity and Investments Forum organized by the Commission in partnership with SwedFund and Okla held in Abuja. According to him, the figure represented a 47 per cent increase in data consumption compared with the 1.33 million terabytes consumed the previous

year. In light of this, the EVC said Nigeria would need sustained investment and network expansion to improve the telecom consumer experience. The Forum had the theme: Unblocking infrastructure investments through data, transparency and partnership. He said the Investments Forum was organized as Nigeria marked 25 years of GSM, noting that policy reforms and a transparent licensing process gave private investors the confidence to enter the telecom market. (September 29, 2026) www.ripplesnigeria.com



Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is ready to issue 5G spectrum licenses in the 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz bands to qualified mobile operators, moving the country closer to commercial 5G deployment while linking new spectrum rights to wider 4G coverage obligations. The National Information and Communications Technology Authority (NICTA) said it has completed the legal, technical and regulatory work required for its 5G licensing framework following several years of spectrum planning, market assessments, industry consultation and reviews of international practices. The next phase will see licensed operators plan and deploy their networks, with NICTA responsible for monitoring compliance with the conditions attached to the spectrum. NICTA's framework makes spectrum

in the 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz bands available for mobile network development. Both bands have been approved for 4G and 5G use, giving operators flexibility in how the spectrum is incorporated into their networks. The 3.5 GHz band in particular has become an important spectrum range for 5G deployments internationally because it can provide a balance between network capacity and coverage. NICTA did not disclose in the announcement how much spectrum will be assigned to each operator, license prices or the detailed allocation mechanism. Papua New Guinea is also using the licensing framework to connect 5G investment with wider mobile coverage objectives.

(September 9, 2026) MEA Tech Watch Press Reporter

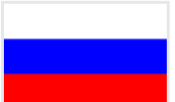


Poland

The President of Poland has signed a law amending the Act on the Provision of Electronic Services and certain other laws, which establishes the national framework for the implementation of the Digital Services Act (DSA). Under the new regulations, the UKE President will serve as the Digital Services Coordinator in Poland and will be granted the powers necessary to carry out the tasks arising from the DSA regulation. This marks an important step in establishing the national framework for implementing the DSA. Since May

2025, the President of UKE has been performing some of the Coordinator's tasks pursuant to a resolution of the Council of Ministers, primarily by participating in European cooperation and information exchange. Once the Act enters into force, the scope of his responsibilities will be significantly expanded. The President of UKE will play a central role in the national DSA implementation system, but will not be the sole authority responsible for its enforcement.

(September 30, 2026) www.uke.gov.pl/en



Russia

The State Commission for Radio Frequencies (GKRCH) has approved the use of LTE frequencies for building 5G networks. Operators Beeline, Megafon, MTS, and T2 will each receive 90 MHz in the 4630-4990 MHz band without auctions, the Ministry of Digital Development's press service reported. The launch of 5G on these frequencies will take place in two stages: by the end of 2028, networks will be operational in popular locations of million-plus cities, then coverage will expand over

three years. For now, operators can use foreign base stations installed before September 1, 2026. Starting in 2027, a phased transition to domestic equipment will begin, which should be fully completed by the end of 2031. Maksim Shadayev, the head of the Ministry of Digital Development, previously stated that by 2030, 5G infrastructure would be provided to 16 cities – this is 16-17 million subscribers.

(September 1, 2026) www1.ru/en



South Korea

South Korea will impose administrative fines of up to 3 percent of related revenue on companies that repeatedly cause cyber incidents through intent or gross negligence. The revised Act on Promotion of Information and Communications Network Utilization

and Information Protection and its enforcement decree take effect on Oct. 1, the science ministry said. The changes raise the status of chief information security officers to executive level for some firms and require security committees. (September 30, 2026) www.digitaltoday.co.kr



Switzerland

Switzerland is preparing a standalone Cybersecurity Act that would introduce cybersecurity requirements for digital products, important data, and hosting and cloud service providers. At its 25 September meeting, the Federal Council instructed the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) to prepare a consultation draft of the new legislation by June 2027. The Act would consolidate three cybersecurity projects commissioned by parliament into a single regulatory framework. The three projects concern the cyber resilience of products containing digital elements, the protection of important digital data, and the cybersecurity responsibilities of hosting and cloud providers. They had originally been intended as amendments to Switzerland's Information Security Act. Under the proposed framework of the Cybersecurity Act, manufacturers, importers, and distributors of software and hardware would face binding cybersecurity requirements, including market surveillance provisions and a ban on selling products that do not meet security requirements. The product rules are intended to follow the approach of the EU's Cyber Resilience Act while limiting additional administrative burdens on businesses. The legislation

would also establish cybersecurity obligations concerning important digital data and hosting and cloud service providers, including requirements to cooperate and defend against cyber threats. Existing sector-specific cybersecurity rules would remain in place. Switzerland's existing requirement for critical infrastructure operators to report cyberattacks, in force since April 2025, would also be moved from the Information Security Act into the new Cybersecurity Act. The Information Security Act would continue to regulate information security within federal authorities. The Federal Council said consolidating the rules into one law should create a more consistent framework and make it easier to incorporate future technological and European regulatory developments. It also expects alignment with the EU Cyber Resilience Act to help internationally active Swiss companies avoid additional compliance requirements. (September 28, 2026) www.dig.watch

The Federal Communications Commission (ComCom) is launching the invitation to tender for a significant proportion of the mobile radio frequencies currently in use, which will become available and be awarded as of 1 January 2029. The primary objectives of the award

are to maintain and further develop the three high-quality mobile communications networks and to foster competition in the mobile communications market. The award is expected to take place in the second quarter of 2027 by means of an auction. Today's mobile network coverage relies to a large extent on the frequencies that will become available at the end of 2028 following the expiry of the current licenses. These frequencies – in the 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800

MHz, 2100 MHz and 2600 MHz bands – are of great importance for operating mobile communications networks. As these frequencies are a scarce public resource, ComCom launched a transparent procedure that is open to all on 1 September 2026 for the next award. Current mobile network operators and other interested companies may participate on equal terms.

(September 1, 2026) www.admin.ch/en



Thailand

Thailand's National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) has published its 2026–2030 master plan for broadcasting and television, signaling significant changes ahead for Thailand's broadcasting and digital media sectors,

including new and revised licensing requirements. Businesses should assess how these developments may affect their operations and prepare for forthcoming regulatory changes.

(September 25, 2026) www.facebook.com



United Kingdom

Tarana Wireless is busy in the UK as it prepares to test its fixed wireless access (FWA) technology in the upper 6GHz band with service provider customers under Ofcom's new sharing framework that will make more spectrum available for commercial use. Scottish wireless internet service provider Scot-Tel-Gould applied for an experimental license for a trial of Tarana's Gigabit 1 (G1) 6GHz base nodes in an area near Aberdeen. The WISP currently uses Tarana's G1 FWA gear that operates in 5.8GHz spectrum. Tarana's

FWA technology already supports the 6GHz band. With the UK opening access to the upper portion, the extra bandwidth will allow Tarana to increase FWA capacity to gigabit speeds, making the wireless technology "fiber-class" broadband, the company claims. The G1 platform can combine four 40MHz carriers to deliver up to 1.6Gbit/s capacity per link. "This allows over gigabit throughput to the remote site," Ivo Lansky, Tarana business lead for Europe, UK and Central Asia, told Light Reading. (September 25, 2026) www.lightreading.com



United States

On September 29, 2026, the World Radiocommunication Conference Advisory Committee (WRC-27 Advisory Committee, or WAC) approved and provided for Commission consideration its draft recommendations on issues that will be considered by the 2027 World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-27). Based upon an initial review of the draft recommendations forwarded to the Commission, the Office of International Affairs, in coordination with other Commission Bureaus and Offices, tentatively concludes that we can generally support most of the content found in

Attachment (the WRC-27 Advisory Committee draft recommendations dated September 29, 2026). FCC seeks comment on the draft recommendations provided in Attachment A. In addition, FCC seeks comment on National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) draft proposals. The comments provided by interested parties will assist the FCC in its upcoming consultations with the U.S. Department of State and NTIA in the development of U.S. positions for WRC-27.

(September 29, 2026) www.fcc.gov



Vietnam

Vietnam's Ministry of Science and Technology will auction rights to use spectrum in the 900-915MHz and 945-960MHz bands on Sept. 9, repurposing frequencies freed up by the shutdown of 2G networks for the expansion of 4G and 5G. According to the Authority of Radio Frequency Management, the Ministry of Science and Technology will auction rights to use frequencies in the 900-915MHz and 945-960MHz bands on Sept. 9 following the retirement of 2G, allowing mobile operators to use the spectrum to develop their 4G and 5G networks. Participants can submit bids directly

at the auction under an ascending-price format. Each company may register to acquire a maximum of two paired spectrum blocks. According to mobile operators, the 900MHz spectrum has become available following the shutdown of 2G networks. Under a Prime Ministerial decision approving Vietnam's information and communications infrastructure master plan with a vision to 2050, the country's telecommunications infrastructure development strategy includes a roadmap for phasing out older mobile technologies, including 2G and 3G. (September 10, 2026) www.vietnamnet.vn/en

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