

5G revolution gathers pace; 100 crore users in sight

Affordable data and rapid network roll out drive digital transformation

NEW DELHI

INDIA is on track to connect up to 100 crore people to 5G technology by 2030, Union Commu-nica-tions Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said, highlighting the country's rapid digital transformation and its ambitions to emerge as a global leader in 6G technology.

Speaking at an event, Scindia said 5G services have already reached nearly 50 crore people across the country, describing the figure as equivalent to the entire population of Europe. He said the next phase of expansion would see the number of 5G users double over the next few years.

"When technology reaches every citizen, it creates opportunity, and when opportunity reaches every citizen, transformation becomes inevitable. Mobile phones are today in the hands of 1.33 billion people, data prices have fallen from Rs287 per



GB to around Rs8 per GB. That is democratisation. That is Antyodaya. As we lay the foundation stone of the next chapter, we must examine how in-novations, technology and ideas from India can cross borders and go across the world," he said.

Highlighting the government's long-term vision, Scindia said India now has leadership that is focused on anticipating future global technological trends and ensuring that the country is at the fore-front of those developments.

The minister asserted that

India is preparing to lead the world on 6G and is actively participating in the global standard-setting process through the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), which are shaping the future of next-generation telecommunications.

"With 6G, I firmly believe we will combine the physical, the digital and intelligence into one seam-less ecosystem. Through the Bharat 6G Alliance and our work on global standards, India is preparing to contribute at a level that

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-- Jyotiraditya Scindia, Communications Minister

was never possible before," the minister mentioned.

The minister said mobile internet rates in India have fallen by 97 per cent over the past decade, making digital connectivity significantly more affordable and accelerating the adoption of high-speed internet services across the country.



Vivo Ignite garners over 38,000 registrations

BIZZ BUZZ BUREAU
HYDERABAD

VIVO India announced that vivo Ignite 2026, its flagship nationwide innovation initiative for school students, has received over 38,000 registrations. This year's edition witnessed registrations from more than 12,000 schools across 705 districts and over 4,500 cities.

Students from Grades 8-12 submitted more than 6,100 ideas, applying technology to address challenges across themes aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). Compared to the previous edition, vivo Ignite expanded its national footprint from over 9,000 schools across 668 districts and more than 3,000 cities to more than 12,000 schools across 705 districts and more than 4,500 cities.

North India contributed nearly 38 per cent of total idea submissions, while Technology, Agriculture & Climate Change emerged as the most preferred theme, accounting for 35 per cent of all idea submissions.

AI infra boom to unlock up to \$435 bn investment

AI infrastructure could account for 6% of India's electricity demand

NEW DELHI

INDIA could require 19-23 GW of operational data centre capacity by 2030, up from about 1.6 GW today, and building that AI infrastructure may need roughly \$350-435 billion of cumulative investment by 2030, a report said. The report from OmniScience Capital said a significant expansion in data centre infrastructure is to be expected as India emerges as one of the world's largest generators of digital data, accounting for approximately 15-20 per cent of global data generation along with wide spread AI adoption.

Around \$160 billion of investments have already been announced or are currently under implementation, highlighting the strong momentum behind India's emergence as a global AI infrastructure hub.

The report argued that the opportunity extends far beyond data centre developers. Every additional megawatt of AI infrastructure requires a vast non-compute ecosystem comprising electricity gener-



ation, transmission, transformers, switchgear, industrial cables, backup power, cooling systems, HVAC, networking, security, building automation and other facility infrastructure.

Collectively, this ecosystem spans 11-12 infrastructure sub-sectors, providing a broad and diversified opportunity to participate in India's AI infrastructure buildout.

The report estimated that operating 19-23 GW of data centre capacity could require approximately 150-170 TWh of electricity annually by 2030, equivalent to roughly 6 per cent of India's projected electricity demand and could rise to 8 per cent by 2035.

The ecosystem includes over 230 listed companies across India's power value chain alone, with additional opportunities emerging across cooling, networking, security and facility infra-

structure. This diversified ecosystem provides investors multiple avenues to participate as capital rotates across different phases of the AI infrastructure buildout, the report noted.

"As one of the world's fastest-growing digital economies, India holds immense potential in AI data centres. While domestic frontier AI model developers and semiconductor players are still emerging, the most direct path to participating in the AI revolution today is through non-compute infrastructure," said Ashwini Shami, President & Chief Portfolio Manager at OmniScience Capital.

As India's AI infrastructure scales, companies across utilities, transmission, and electrical equipment will likely emerge as key beneficiaries of this long-term structural trend, Shami added.

Tech-driven audits to track civic projects across Maha

MUMBAI

IN a major move to ensure transparency and maintain quality in government-funded development projects across Maharashtra's Urban Local Bodies comprising Municipal Corporations, Municipalities, and Nagar Parishads, the state government on Wednesday decided to leverage advanced technology.

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Geo-Tagging, and GIS Mapping will now be utilised to conduct technical and social audits of public works.

The decision stems from an announcement made by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde during the Monsoon Session of the State Legislature, where he emphasised the phased implementation of technology-driven audits to enhance accountability, transparency, and quality in urban infrastructure projects.

Fulfilling that commitment, the state government has issued an official Government Resolution (GR)



constituting a special study group led by the Commissioner and Director of the Directorate of Municipal Administration.

Urban local bodies frequently face allegations regarding substandard construction, poor infrastructure maintenance, and misallocation of funds in roadwork, water supply schemes, and civil projects.

With real-time tracking through Geo-Tagging and AI, authorities will now be able to monitor every execution stage directly, which is expected to significantly improve quality standards and operational transparency, the GR said.

"Under the new audit framework, modern technology and community participation will be integrated.

iQoo Z11 Lite goes on sale

BIZZ BUZZ BUREAU
HYDERABAD

SMARTPHONE brand iQoo, has announced that its recently launched iQoo Z11 Lite is available for sale on Amazon.in and the iQOO e-store, select vivo exclusive stores and major retail stores from Thursday. The Z11 Lite is available in three storage variants, 4GB + 128GB, 6GB + 128GB, and 6GB + 256GB. It is available in two colour options, Midnight Blue and Solar Flame. The device is powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 6300, it also features the segment's brightest 6.74-inch 120Hz display with up to 1200 nits brightness, for an immersive viewing and audio experience. It packs a 6500mAh BlueVolt Battery paired with 44W FlashCharge. It also comes with IP65 dust and water resistance, Swiss SGS Five-Star Drop Resistance, Military-Grade durability, and an AirSping technology drop-resistant protective case for enhanced reliability. The smartphone features a 50 MP Sony Main Sensor Camera and runs on OriginOS 6.

UP, Bihar account for half of India's stillbirths, says study

NEW DELHI



UTTAR Pradesh and Bihar together accounted for half of India's total stillbirths in 2023, according to an analysis published in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia.

Estimates also suggest that about 5,65,900 and 3,47,300 stillbirths occurred in India in 2023, corresponding to stillbirth rates of 25.9 and 16.1 at a gestation period of 22 weeks or later and 28 weeks or later, respectively.

Researchers forming the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative Stillbirth Collaborators said the country's true stillbirth burden is markedly underestimated using the 28-week or later definition.

The stillbirth rate estimate for India at beyond 22 weeks' of gestation was found to be 1.6 times higher than at beyond 28 weeks' of gestation, the definition most used for international comparison.

Addressing the stillbirth burden in India would therefore require an im-

proved surveillance, tracking stillbirths by the 22-week or later threshold, and an integration of stillbirth prevention within broader maternal and newborn health initiatives, they said.

The team compiled and analysed data from 122 sources, including surveys, published studies and sample registration systems. "SBR (stillbirth rate) for both definitions varied fourfold between states, from 9.3 in Mizoram to 38.2 in Uttar Pradesh, with the latter and Bihar together accounting for nearly half of India's total stillbirths," the

authors wrote. They also found a modest inverse correlation between stillbirth rates and SDG3 index score developed by the NITI Aayog, where SDG3 refers to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 3 of 'good health and wellbeing'.

Deferred and referred deliveries, preeclampsia or eclampsia, severe postpartum and antepartum haemorrhage, are among the risk factors for stillbirths, along with multiple births and a previous history of stillbirth and preterm birth, the researchers said.

Health supplements from Jan Aushadhi affordable

NEW DELHI

THE Jan Aushadhi nutraceuticals basket is making nutrition supplements more accessible for households across India, offering protein bars, immunity bars, malt based foods and specialised formulations at lower prices, the government said on Thursday.

With products such as Jan Aushadhi Protein Bar and Jan Aushadhi Immunity Bar in a 35 gram chocolate pack, Jan Aushadhi Women Protein Boost in 250 gram chocolate and vanilla packs priced at Rs204.66, Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana portfolio targets varied needs of children, working adults, women and senior citizens.

For affordable everyday nutritional support for everyone in the family, the Jan Aushadhi Poshan range offers malt-based nutritional food enriched with essential vitamins and minerals.

The Poshan malt range in 500 gram packs is priced at Rs160.17 (regular) and Rs164.62 (cocoa flavoured).



The statement added a 30 gram cocoa sachet is available at Rs8.90.

"The multiple pack sizes offer flexibility for different consumption needs and budgets. Easy to prepare and suitable for regular consumption, the Poshan range provides families with an accessible nutritional supplement for everyday use," the statement added.

"Nutrient-dense Jan Aushadhi Protein Bar & Jan Aushadhi Immunity Bar offer a portable source of nourishment for children, working professionals and fitness enthusiasts," it added.



THE POLITICA
Nothing political about it

SAMY MAGDY &
ELENA BECATOROS

THE US and Iran each fired barrages of missiles Thursday, as the pattern of back-and-forth strikes took hold again and hope dimmed for any quick resolution.

After a brief respite, the risk of a return to all-out war emerged once more, with the fighting threatening to engulf even more countries: Jordan said Thursday it intercepted Iranian missiles for the second consecutive day, while Kuwait said a strike in the northern part of the country killed one person. Also this week, drones caused fires on ships at an Egyptian port, and Saudi Arabia said it came under fire from Iran-backed militias in Iraq.

The spiralling violence underscored the difficulty of winding down a five-month conflict that has sent the price of fuel and other basics soaring, jolted the world economy, and added to concerns about American stockpiles of weapons needed to defend its bases and allies. After an earlier hiatus had given hope that diplomatic efforts were moving forward, there was no public sign of progress.

The US and Iran trade strikes

An Iranian strike hit a Chi-

US, Iran trade missile barrages as hopes dim for solution

Violence underscores difficulty of winding down a five-month conflict that has sent price of fuel and other basics soaring

nese firm's building in Kuwait on Thursday, severely damaging the structure and killing a worker, Kuwait's military said, hours after Jordan's air defences shot down five missiles launched from Iran.

No casualties were reported from Jordan's interception, Jordan's state-run Petra news agency said, quoting the spokesman for the country's armed forces. Both countries are US allies and host American troops.

The attacks came after the US military said it completed "a heavy wave of strikes against Iran," conducted in response to an earlier Iranian missile attack on a US base in Jordan. President Donald Trump vowed to hit Iran "very hard" after it targeted the base.

The military's Central Command said in a social media post that the US struck "dozens" of targets belonging to Iran's Revolutionary Guard, including military command centres as well as missile and drone facilities, and coastal surveillance and defence sites.

Iran's official IRNA news agency said three people were killed and two were wounded in a strike on the island of Qeshm, which lies just off the Iranian mainland in the Strait of Hormuz — a crucial waterway for the world's en-

ergy supplies that has been at the centre of the conflict.

The latest barrage came after the US partnered with Saudi Arabia to strike Iran-backed militias in Iraq, killing at least 20 fighters and six Iranian advisers on Wednesday.

Before the latest eruption, mediators had expressed optimism about bringing the US and Iran back to the negotiating table.

A regional official said Wednesday that mediators are "still trying with both sides" to restore calm and get an interim agreement to end the war back on track. He gave no details on whether progress was being made and spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door diplomacy.

Fires were reported on two natural gas vessels at an Egyptian port

Elsewhere, British maritime security firm Ambrey said drone strikes ignited fires on two natural gas vessels at the Egyptian port of Damietta on Wednesday. It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the strikes on a US-owned floating storage facility and a Greek-owned tanker. No injuries were reported.

The office of the Egyptian prime minister said initial investigations showed the fires on the



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two vessels had been caused by a drone.

Egypt, a close US ally and regional mediator, is one of the only countries in the Middle East to have been spared direct military action during the war. A strike by Iran or its allies, if confirmed, would mark a significant widening of the conflict.

Asked during an Oval Office event if Iran was responsible for the strikes on the vessels, Trump responded: "It's a little more of the same."

The Damietta Port Authority said in a statement on Facebook on Thursday that the facility was fully operational.

The war has wreaked havoc on the global economy

Since Iran began threatening and firing on ships in the Strait of Hormuz early in the war, the conflict has wreaked havoc on the global economy as energy shipments through the waterway ground to a near halt. Much of the diplomacy around ending the war has focused on reopening the strait, through which 20 per cent of oil and natural gas shipments passed in peacetime.

The strait is once again effectively closed — and in recent weeks, fighting elsewhere has squeezed energy supplies further.

Saudi Arabia has accused the Iraqi militias of firing drones against its oil facilities over the past few days. An umbrella group of Iraqi militias initially denied the allegations, while another Iran-backed group — the Houthis in Yemen — said they had attacked Saudi energy facilities as part of a separate but related conflict.

The Houthis have declared a blockade of Saudi shipping and threatened to choke off another crucial Middle East trade route, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait from the Red Sea into the Gulf of Aden. That route became even more important during the war, as Saudi Arabia used it to

bypass the Strait of Hormuz. On Monday, the Houthis said they had launched drones targeting oil facilities used to transport oil across Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea port of Yanbu. The rebels said the attack was in response to a Saudi drone they said breached Yemen's airspace.

Planet Labs satellite imagery from Monday, analysed by The Associated Press, showed damage to Saudi Aramco's Abqaiq oil-processing facility, which is capable of processing approximately 7 million barrels of crude oil per day.

Saudi Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman met separately on Wednesday with Trump and Vice President JD Vance, according to two people familiar with the matter who were not authorised to comment publicly about the private meetings.

They said the Saudi decision to join the US attacks against the Iraqi militias was meant to send a message to Iran that it wouldn't tolerate Iran or its proxies targeting the Saudi oil industry and other critical infrastructure. At the same time, the defence minister underscored to Trump and Vance that the Saudis want to see a de-escalation in the war and for Washington and Tehran to return to negotiations.