

TELETIMES MEDIA LLC

INTERNATIONAL teletimes

Issue 255

AUGUST

2026

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Vol: 21 Issue: 08 August 2026 ABC Certified

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Marketing Coordinator - Imran Rasheed

Printer: Khurshed Printers (Pvt) Ltd.

21st YEAR OF PUBLICATION

Recipient of

"MEA Business Award 2021 for Best Telecom Publication"

"Best IT & Telecoms News Outlet Award 2020"

"International Arch of Europe Award for Quality"

"Teradata ICT Excellence Award for Media"



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Media Partner to:



	US\$	AED	SAR	PKR	€	GBP
Price per copy	8	25	25	1000	7	5
One year	80	250	250	12000	70	50

A Teletimes Media Publication, Dubai

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Editor's Note



Dear Readers,

The convergence of artificial intelligence and advanced connectivity is beginning to move beyond technology demonstrations and into the real world, transforming how people experience cities, businesses deliver services and industries create value.

Our August 2026 edition of Teletimes International explores this transition across telecom, satellite, enterprise technology and the wider digital ecosystem.

Our cover story takes us to Xi'an, China, where history and technology are coming together in fascinating ways. During a recent visit to the city, Teletimes witnessed first-hand how AI, cloud computing and 5G-Advanced are being integrated to transform cultural tourism while helping preserve and promote centuries of heritage. From AI-powered travel experiences and digital cultural preservation to high-capacity 5G-A networks supporting some of the city's busiest tourist destinations, Xi'an provides a compelling example of what digital transformation can look like when technology is applied with a clear human and cultural purpose.

The issue also examines the changing economics of telecommunications. From Huawei's vision of a "Token Economy" and the evolution towards AI-native networks, to new developments in uplink capabilities, optical networks and 5G-Advanced, operators are increasingly looking beyond connectivity alone towards differentiated digital experiences and new sources of value.

Across the Middle East, this transformation continues at remarkable pace. We look at the region's growing leadership in AI-ready infrastructure, including developments around U6 GHz and advanced 5G technologies, alongside important industry developments from leading operators including stc, e& and Zain.

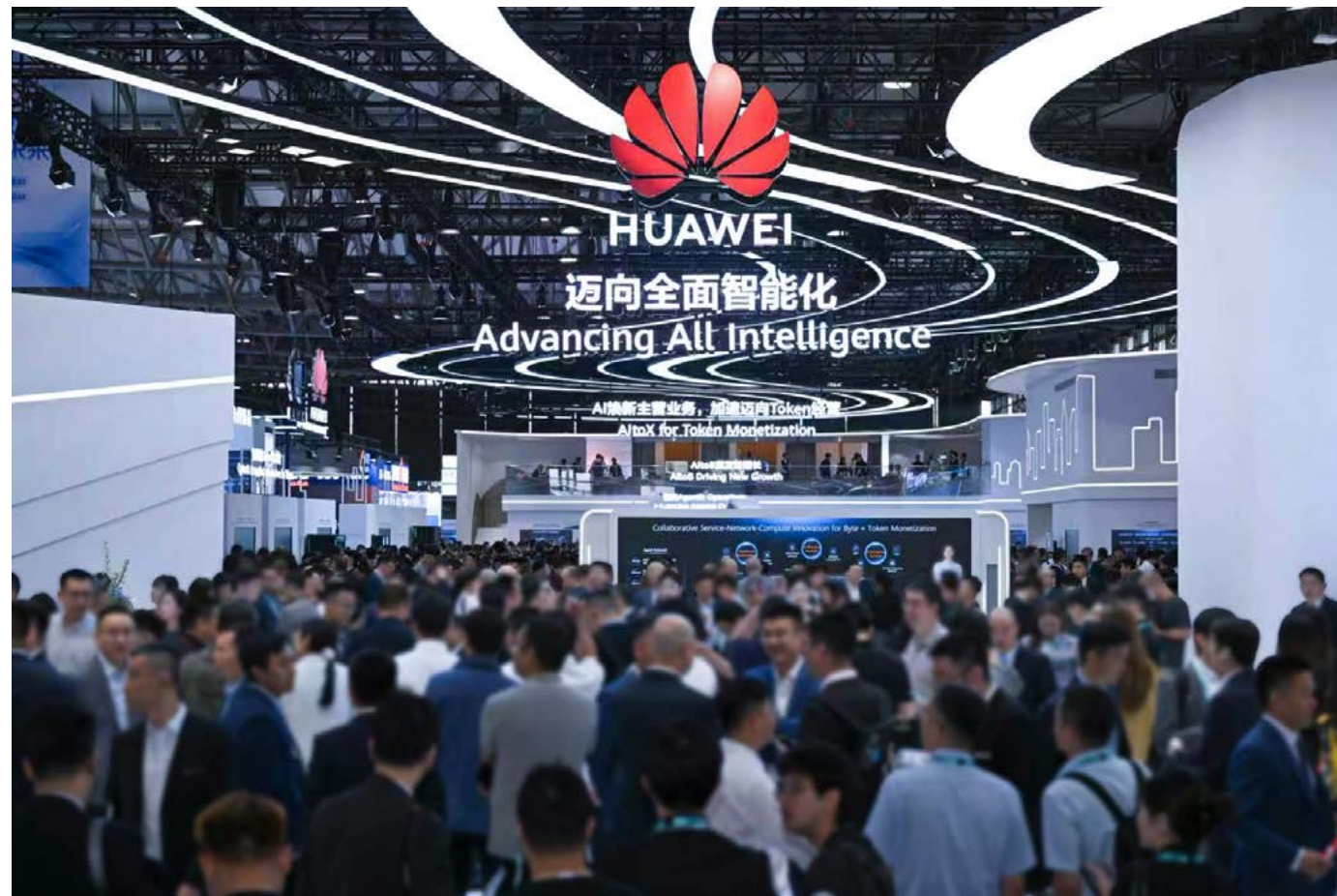
Satellite connectivity is another important focus of this edition. As terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks increasingly complement one another, the industry is entering a new phase of multi-orbit connectivity, direct-to-device services and closer integration between satellite and mobile networks. We examine both the technological advances and evolving regulatory frameworks shaping this rapidly changing landscape.

As always, we thank our readers, contributors and industry partners for their continued support.



Khalid Athar
Chief Editor

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Token Economy

Huawei's Vision for the Next Era of Telecom Monetization

From Connectivity to Intelligent Value Creation: Wang Tao, Huawei Director of the Board and Chairman of the ICT Business Management Committee shares long term vision at MWC Shanghai 2026

Gulraiz Khalid

The telecom industry has reached an inflection point. While 5G has delivered unprecedented network performance, operators worldwide continue to face pressure to generate sustainable returns on their infrastructure investments. At

MWC Shanghai 2026, Huawei presented what it believes is the next commercial evolution of mobile communications: The Token Economy. Rather than focusing solely on selling connectivity, Huawei envisions operators becoming providers of intelligent

digital services, where network capabilities themselves become valuable assets that can be packaged, guaranteed and monetized. Wang Tao summarized this transition succinctly: "Operators' business models have evolved from user management, traffic



management, to experience management, and further to token management."

What is the 'Token Economy'

Unlike cryptocurrency ecosystems, Huawei's Token Economy is a commercial framework for telecom networks. A token represents a trusted digital entitlement to a network capability or guaranteed experience. Operators could package premium latency, bandwidth, network slicing, AI services, satellite connectivity, computing resources, or security as individually priced services. The emphasis shifts from selling gigabytes to selling assured digital outcomes.

Why the Industry Needs a New Business Model

Traffic continues to grow exponentially while average revenue per user has remained relatively flat in many markets. Huawei argues that AI, autonomous systems,

robotics, immersive communications, and industrial digitalization require deterministic communications that customers are willing to pay for. The company, therefore, sees the Token Economy as the commercial layer that unlocks the full value of AI-native networks.

The AI-Native Foundation

Huawei's three-layer intelligence model consists of Network Element Intelligence, Network Intelligence and Service Intelligence. AI embedded inside radio,

while enabling operators to launch entirely new intelligent services through an AI-native core network. Wang Tao noted that the next-generation core network will adopt an AI-native architecture with intent-based collaboration and a dedicated data and AI plane.

Benefits for Operators

Token Economy opens multiple monetization dimensions beyond traditional subscriptions. Huawei describes future revenues coming from 'connectivity + traffic

"Connectivity + traffic + slicing + satellite + computing power" represents Huawei's multi-dimensional monetization vision."

transport and core networks improves spectral efficiency, energy consumption, and resilience. AI also automates operations

+ slicing + satellite + computing power.' Operators can increase enterprise revenues, offer premium consumer experiences,

monetize AI services, improve operational efficiency and expand into satellite-enabled coverage and edge computing.

Benefits for End Users

Consumers gain greater control over the experience they purchase. Rather than generic data plans, users could buy guaranteed gaming latency, immersive XR sessions, premium livestream quality, secure AI services or seamless satellite coverage. Network intelligence allocates resources dynamically according to application requirements.

Benefits for Enterprises

Industrial users require predictable performance rather than best-effort connectivity. Huawei believes future enterprise customers will be able to request guaranteed communications for factories, logistics, autonomous transport, healthcare, ports, airports and energy infrastructure. Network capabilities become promise-able, price-able and callable on demand.

Benefits for Governments

At a national level, AI-native telecom infrastructure supports digital transformation, AI strategies and universal connectivity. Huawei's integrated space-air-ground vision combines terrestrial and satellite networks to extend coverage into remote regions, oceans and airspace while providing resilient communications for emergency response and public services.

Beyond 2030

Huawei expects mobile communications to evolve from connecting people and things to connecting intelligence itself. Future networks will support hundreds of billions—and eventually trillions—of intelligent agents, requiring ultra-high bandwidth, ultra-low latency, integrated satellite communications and AI-driven orchestration. Huawei also called for greater collaboration around U6GHz spectrum, non-terrestrial networks and common standards. ■

stc group and Huawei launch full duplex solution to advance 5G connectivity in Saudi Arabia



stc group and Huawei have announced the successful deployment of an innovative Full Duplex solution in the Riyadh district, marking another milestone in the two companies' partnership and the first deployment of its kind in Saudi Arabia.

The Full Duplex solution, a technology that allows a single connection to send and receive data simultaneously on the same frequency, delivers up to 50 Gbps of transmission capacity, enabling highly reliable, protected connectivity for critical social and livelihood infrastructure. The solution improves spectrum efficiency by up to 200%, supporting large-bandwidth 5G transport particularly in suburban and emerging coverage areas.

As a global pioneer in 5G development, Saudi Arabia launched nationwide 5G services in 2019. A significant share of the country's 5G network relies on microwave links – the wireless connections that carry data between mobile towers and the broader network. Traditionally,

microwave transmission requires two separate frequency channels to send and receive data, which limits capacity expansion where spectrum is scarce and presents challenges to deliver reliable, high-capacity connectivity to critical infrastructure.

To address this, stc and Huawei jointly developed the Full Duplex solution. By operating on a single frequency channel, it reduces spectrum consumption, simplifies network architecture, and maintains ultra-high capacity with built-in protection, providing a more efficient and resilient connectivity option.

This deployment reflects the strong partnership between stc and Huawei and a shared commitment to advancing next-generation 5G transport technologies. It supports the expansion of high-capacity 5G networks beyond urban centers, providing a valuable foundation for future applications and contributing to Saudi Arabia's digital transformation. ■

Huawei spotlights Middle East's leadership in AI-ready networks at MWC Shanghai 2026

New GigaUplink solution and 10 AI-Optical Network products address the growing wireless and fixed connectivity demands of the AI era, as UAE moves to pioneer commercial U6GHz deployment



Huawei has recognized the Middle East's growing leadership in building AI-ready digital infrastructure at Mobile World Congress (MWC) Shanghai 2026, unveiling a series of innovations in mobile and optical networking designed to help operators meet the rapidly evolving demands of the AI era.

During the event, Huawei convened global operators, industry organizations and ecosystem partners at its Mobile AI Industry Summit, where participants reached a shared industry consensus that enhancing uplink is key for mobile networks to drive innovation and business growth in the Mobile AI era.

GigaUplink: Building the foundation for Mobile AI

To address these evolving requirements, Huawei introduced its new GigaUplink solution, leveraging upgraded multi-antenna technologies with intelligent spectrum, device-network and network collaboration algorithms to deliver a fivefold increase in uplink capacity alongside a 10 dB improvement in uplink coverage. The solution supports the high uplink network

initiative jointly released by GSMA and industry partners including Huawei, which established "ubiquitous 20 Mbps and peak 1 Gbps" as the core capability standards for Mobile AI.

Zeng Chuang, President of Huawei Wireless FDD Product Line, said: "Huawei will continue to collaborate with industry partners to build GigaUplink networks for Mobile AI through joint standards, ecosystem and business development. This will promote the iterative evolution of GigaUplink capabilities to deliver better Mobile AI service experiences and drive the mobile industry into the next golden decade."

UAE: At the forefront of U6GHz deployment

The announcements carry particular significance for the Middle East, where operators have consistently ranked among the world's leaders in advanced 5G deployment. Huawei noted that the UAE has already released U6 GHz spectrum resources, with the world's first commercial deployment of 5G-Advanced using the Upper 6 GHz band expected during the second half

of 2026. The company described U6GHz as one of the most strategically important spectrum bands for supporting Mobile AI, enabling a balance between coverage and capacity while providing a smooth evolution path from today's 5G-Advanced networks towards future 6G capabilities.

During the summit, industry leaders also agreed that uplink capabilities, latency assurance and network reliability will become defining characteristics of next-generation mobile networks as AI applications continue to reshape traffic patterns from traditional download-centric usage towards increasingly balanced uplink and downlink demand. The discussions also highlighted the importance of closer collaboration across standards bodies, operators and technology providers to accelerate Mobile AI innovation globally.

Huawei also joined industry leaders from GSMA, China Mobile, 3GPP and ecosystem partners to explore the commercial evolution of 5G-Advanced. During the forum, participants introduced new initiatives focused on AI-native core networks, agent-based connectivity and closer collaboration between terminals,

networks and digital services to help operators monetise next-generation network capabilities more effectively.

AI-Optical networks: Fixed infrastructure for the AI era

Recognizing that AI will depend equally on high-performance fixed connectivity, Huawei also showcased its latest AI Optical Network (AI-ON) innovations during the AI-ON Summit held under the theme "Networks for AI, AI for Networks." Huawei unveiled 10 new AI-ON products and solutions, including AI-FTTR products, the industry's first high-density 50G PON service board for large-scale commercial use, an ultra-large OTN cluster solution and an integrated submarine-terrestrial cable solution, to help operators build AI-centric all-optical target networks.

Kim Jin, Vice President of Huawei Optical Business Product Line, said: "Huawei is advancing its optical-AI convergence strategy to enable the coordinated development of optical and AI technologies. The AI-FAN and AI-OTN product series empowers operators to build AI-centric all-optical target networks, achieving value-driven ultra-gigabit operations and driving the widespread adoption of AI services."

Huawei said the convergence of AI-native mobile and optical networks will play a critical role in supporting the next generation of intelligent economies, enabling governments, enterprises and consumers to benefit from faster, more reliable and increasingly autonomous digital infrastructure. As countries across the Middle East continue investing in AI and advanced connectivity, the company believes the region is well positioned to help shape the future of intelligent communications.

As the ICT industry moves rapidly toward an era of token monetization, Huawei is working with global carriers and partners to explore 5G-Advanced high uplink and experience monetization, as well as AI-powered business upgrades, through enhanced connectivity and compute. ■

Global critical communications association appoints new Board chair and vice-chair

TCCA has announced a new Board chair and vice-chair following the retirement of long-standing chair Mladen Vratonjić, who has led the Association since 2015. Tero Pesonen from Erillisverkot Finland becomes the new chair, and Nina Myren from the Norwegian Communications Authority (Nkom) is the new vice-chair.

Formerly vice-chair, Tero is also currently chair of TCCA's Critical Communications Broadband Group, a position he has held since 2014. A Working Group of TCCA, the CCBG drives the development and adoption of common global mobile broadband standards and solutions for users who operate in a mission critical or business critical environment. A new CCBG chair will be elected at the plenary meeting taking place in September.

Tero has almost 30 years' experience in critical communications, with responsibilities that have ranged from highly technical assignments in global standards creation to understanding the field operational procedures of key players in critical communications. He has been involved with the professional mobile radio communication business since 1997, originally promoting and organising TETRA interoperability activities, and was a founder member of TCCA's

Technical Forum.

New vice chair Nina Myren is Specialist Director at Nkom's department for Public Safety Communication. Nkom is the Norwegian telecommunications regulator and is responsible for the Norwegian Public Safety Broadband project. Nina is a director and Board member of TCCA and chair of TCCA's Legal and Regulatory Working Group, which is open to government operator TCCA members. Nina is also involved in the Mission Critical Communications Group (MCCG) work, including satellite communications projects, led by the European Commission's DG HOME.

TCCA's Board for 2026-27 is: Chair Tero Pesonen, Erillisverkot; vice-chair Nina Myren, Norwegian Communications Authority; Peter Hudson, Sepura; Jukka Vialen, Airbus Defence and Space; Guilherme Pizzato, Nokia; Renaud Mellies, French Ministry of the Interior; Jason Johur, Ericsson; Cate Walton, UK Home Office, and Ricardo Gonzalez, Motorola Solutions. The Board held its first meeting led by Tero Pesonen this week in Amsterdam, the host city for TCCA's Critical Communications World (CCW) which takes place from 11-13 May 2027. The meeting included a tour of the CCW 2027 venue RAI Amsterdam – planning begins now! ■

Mission-critical recording specialist DataVoice joins TCCA

DataVoice has announced membership of TCCA, the global member-led organisation for the critical communications ecosystem.

With an international deployment footprint spanning more than 50 countries, DataVoice is headquartered in South Africa and serves organisations operating in both mission-critical communications and regulated environments. Customers include public safety, transport, utilities, defence and financial services organisations that

rely on secure access to voice, data and location information for operational, compliance and evidential purposes.

Built on open standards, DataVoice products and solutions are tailored for mission-critical environments. In modern control rooms, the reliable recording of mission-critical radio, telephony, Short Data Service (SDS) messages, status events, telemetry, location information and operator screen activity is essential for incident reconstruction, communications auditing and evidential review. ■

IBC2026 Innovation Awards finalists unveiled, honouring collaborative advances across global media and entertainment

Finalists from around the world showcase groundbreaking innovations in AI, cloud, open standards, accessibility and audience engagement in four categories

IBC has unveiled the finalists for the IBC2026 Innovation Awards, recognising collaborative projects from around the world that solve real-world challenges and demonstrate outstanding advances across the media, entertainment and technology industry. Covering four categories – Content Creation, Content Distribution, Content Everywhere and Social Impact – the awards celebrate projects that show how collaboration between media organisations and technology partners is delivering meaningful innovation in production, distribution, audience experiences and societal impact.

This year's finalists reflect an industry embracing AI, cloud-native and software-defined workflows, open standards, new approaches to live production and distribution, personalised audience experiences, and greater accessibility. From multilingual news production and AI-powered motorsport strategy to next-generation broadcast platforms, digital television transformation and AI-enabled sign language services, the projects demonstrate what can be achieved when organisations combine technology, expertise and resources to solve practical business, creative and societal challenges at scale. Together, they showcase the breadth of cooperation and innovation taking place across markets, regions and sectors worldwide.

"The number and standard of entries received from around the globe for the 2026 Innovation Awards has been amazing – truly outstanding," said Fergal Ringrose, Chair of the IBC2026 Innovation Awards Jury. "Seeing more than 120 high-quality deployed innovation projects competing for recognition underlines the ever-growing appreciation of our unique Awards across the media and entertainment community."



He adds: "It is an honour for our judging panel to review these compelling projects. We remain committed to our guiding principles of innovation, collaboration and partnership as we do our utmost to fairly select the world's foremost completed innovation projects as category finalists

and eventual winners."

The winners of the IBC2026 Innovation Awards will be announced on Sunday 13 September at 18:00 CEST on the main stage of the IBC Conference at the RAI Amsterdam

The 2026 Finalists

Content Creation

• **How Collective Newsroom powers BBC India** — Building a unified, multilingual production operation from scratch against a fixed deadline. Working with the BBC and nxtedition, supported by Adobe, Blackmagic Design, Calrec, Ideal Systems and Ross Video.

• **Media eXchange Layer (MXL)** — An open-source initiative established by the European Broadcasting Union in collaboration with the North American Broadcasters Association, hosted by the Linux Foundation.

• **Formula E Strategy Agent** — Developed with Google Cloud, the AI architecture processes and contextualises a sub-millisecond, multi-feed torrent of racing car data within a compressed window to predict and simplify complex racing strategies for the viewer. Technical support: Aurora Media Worldwide.

Content Distribution

• **Capacity that follows the live news story** — Reuters replaced fixed-capacity infrastructure with a Global Shared Memory ecosystem powered by TVU Networks' MediaMesh, enabling event-driven, API-orchestrated news distribution, including partner integrations: InSync, Kinetiq, Sony, Elecard and TAG Video Systems.

• **Transforming broadcast distribution in Malaysia** — Technical Content Delivery (TCODE) is a centralised digital contribution and workflow orchestration platform for Radio Televisyen Malaysia, developed with Ideal Systems. Technical supporters: Blue Lucy Media, Emotion Systems, and Fortinet.

• **Server-guided ad insertion at scale** — RTBF Belgium migrated from CSAI/SSAI to standards-based SGAI. Launched for the FIFA World Cup, with Bitmovin's Player, AIP's AdBlendr, HLS interstitials and



SVTA2053. Technical support: Dotscreen, Red Bee Media, and Régie Média Belge.

Content Everywhere

• **Implementation of DTV+ in Brazil** — Through DTV+, Globo has combined the reach of free-to-air television with the personalisation and measurability of digital media. By integrating broadcast and broadband, it reconnects mass audiences with digital capabilities. The project involved collaboration across government, broadcasters and industry.

• **The connected fan experience** — Built with Microsoft, the Premier League Companion powered by Copilot reimagines fan engagement at global scale, connecting 1.8 billion fans in 189 countries to 30 seasons of Premier League content through personalised, real-time AI conversational experiences. Technical partner: Beyond Sport.

• **Tilly Norwood (and the Tillyverse)** — Created by Particle 6, with its talent studio Xicoia, the AI-generated performer has reached an estimated 80 million people globally with approximately 500 million cumulative impressions.

Social Impact

• **AI for Good** — Established by the International Telecommunication Union, the platform convenes governments, start-ups, researchers, UN agencies, industry leaders, civil society and youth from over 180 countries, with the mission of unlocking AI's potential to serve humanity.

• **IOC Cyber Abuse Protection Service (CAPS)** — This system protects athletes, teams, coaches and officials from online abuse at the Olympic Games. Technical supporter: Signify AI.

• **Closing the sign language gap** — G&L Systemhaus brought together AI company Signapse, software company Norsk/id3as and CDN provider Akamai to build a broadcast-grade, AI-powered sign language solution for live and on-demand streaming.

The IBC2026 Awards presentation will also feature the IBC International Honour for Excellence, recognising an outstanding contribution to the global media industry, along with the Best Technical Paper, selected from the peer-reviewed papers presented during the IBC2026 Conference. **T**



AI and 5G-A together to reimagine cultural tourism in Xi'an

By Gulraiz Khalid

Xi'an has always been known as one of China's great historical capitals. Today, however, the city is also becoming a showcase for something entirely different: how artificial intelligence, multimodal large language models (LLMs), cloud computing and 5G-Advanced (5G-A) can work together to preserve cultural heritage while simultaneously transforming the visitor experience.

During a recent media tour organized by Shannxi Culture Industry Investment Group (SCG) and Huawei in Xi'an, Teletimes had the opportunity to experience first-hand several real-world deployments spanning AI-powered tourism, digital heritage preservation, intelligent airports and high-capacity 5G-A networks. Rather



Huawei's Edric Chu speaking with the media during Xi'an tour

than presenting isolated technology demonstrations, Huawei and its ecosystem partners showcased how multiple technologies can be integrated into an end-to-end digital platform that benefits governments, tourism authorities, businesses and visitors alike.

AI Built Specifically for Cultural Tourism

At the heart of the initiative is BoGuan, developed Shaanxi Culture Industry Investment Group (SCG) based on Huawei's technology.

Unlike general-purpose LLMs, BoGuan has been trained specifically for cultural tourism and heritage applications. Huawei describes it as the world's first commercial multimodal LLM designed exclusively for this sector.

The model combines Huawei's AI computing infrastructure with an enormous cultural dataset exceeding 1.2 PB, including millions of images, videos, audio recordings, 3D models and structured historical records. The result is an AI platform capable of understanding text, images, audio and video while generating highly accurate, culturally authentic content.

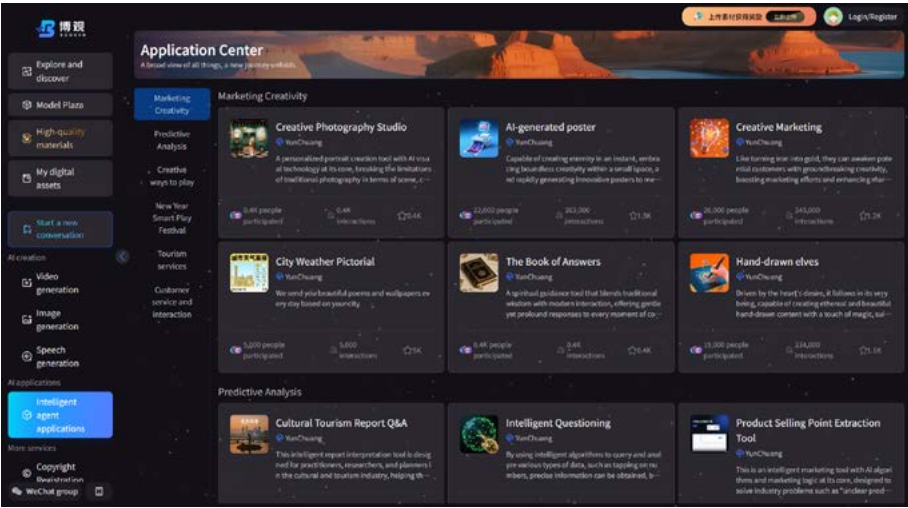
Preserving Heritage Through Digital Intelligence

One of the most interesting aspects of the deployment is that AI is not replacing historians or museum experts—it is extending their capabilities.

SCG and Huawei have created a trusted cultural data platform that digitizes historical artifacts, intangible heritage and traditional knowledge while ensuring secure sharing and reuse of data.

High-quality datasets have been developed across multiple cultural categories, enabling museums, tourism operators, media companies and educational institutions to build new digital services on top of verified historical information.

The BoGuan model enables several practical



Boguan Large Model's application center

applications:

- AI-generated historical videos that accurately reproduce traditional clothing, etiquette and architecture.
- Museum-grade digital reconstruction of valuable cultural relics.
- AI-assisted preservation of intangible cultural heritage.
- Creation of digital intellectual property based on historical artifacts.
- AI-assisted production of cultural tourism content and short dramas.

Rather than generating fictional interpretations, the system has been trained to maintain historical authenticity—an important requirement for cultural preservation.

Turning Ancient Relics into Interactive Experiences

SCG demonstrated how BoGuan can reconstruct historical artifacts with remarkable precision after learning from detailed records including dimensions, textures, materials and craftsmanship.

Instead of viewing an artifact behind museum glass, visitors can interact with a high-fidelity digital version through

consumer applications, examining details that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

Another demonstration showed how AI combines ancient stone carvings with elements of intangible cultural heritage to generate entirely new digital cultural products while remaining faithful to their historical origins.

This illustrates how AI can help extend the lifespan and accessibility of cultural assets without replacing the originals.

AI Becomes the Tourist Guide

Beyond preservation, BoGuan is already being used to improve tourism experiences.

Out of multiple use cases, two consumer applications powered by the model really stand out.

The first is an AI photography application that places visitors inside historically accurate digital scenes. Tourists can generate immersive images featuring ancient architecture, traditional clothing and historical settings within seconds.

The second is an AI travel companion integrated into the Visit Shaanxi application.

Instead of simply searching for attractions, visitors can interact conversationally with

an AI assistant that recommends itineraries, plans routes, answers questions and provides personalized travel guidance based on user interests.

According to SCG, the AI travel companion had already been made available to more than four million users earlier this year.

5G-Advanced: Built for Dense Tourist Environments

AI applications become significantly more useful when supported by high-performance connectivity.

That role is filled by Huawei's 5G-Advanced deployment across the Great Tang All Day Mall (Datang Everbright City)—one of China's busiest cultural tourism destinations.

The deployment consists of 15 macro base stations and 16 micro base stations, carefully integrated into the historical architecture without affecting the area's visual character. The network was specifically engineered to cope with visitor peaks exceeding 200,000 people while maintaining uninterrupted connectivity.

The advanced carrier aggregation technology to deliver premium mobile broadband even in highly congested environments.

A Real-World Experience

Unlike laboratory demonstrations, the network was tested under real tourist conditions.

During the evening visit to the Great Tang All Day Mall, Teletimes conducted live speed tests while surrounded by thousands of visitors.

Despite the extremely dense environment, The network delivers peak uplink and downlink rates of 600 Mbps and 3.5 Gbps, respectively, about 10 times faster than common 5G networks. These are remarkable real-world results considering the heavy network load and demonstrate



Boguan Large Model-powered AI travel photo generation

how 5G-A is moving beyond headline peak speeds to deliver consistent user experience where conventional mobile networks often struggle.

Enabling the Creator Economy

One particularly interesting aspect of Huawei's deployment is its emphasis on uplink performance.

While traditional mobile networks have focused primarily on download speeds, today's tourism economy increasingly depends on users uploading high-resolution videos, livestreams and social media content. The large-uplink 5G-A technology enables smooth livestreaming even from crowded attractions.

According to data shared during the tour, immersive livestreaming experiences at Grand Tang Mall have nearly doubled viewer engagement while increasing average customer spending by 62 percent, highlighting how communications infrastructure can directly contribute to tourism revenue.

More Than Smart Tourism

What Huawei demonstrated in Xi'an is not

simply another AI application or another faster mobile network.

Instead, it represents an integrated digital ecosystem where:

- Cloud infrastructure manages massive cultural datasets,
- AI converts those datasets into interactive services,
- 5G-Advanced provides ubiquitous high-capacity connectivity,
- Digital applications create entirely new experiences for visitors while opening additional revenue streams for cultural institutions.

Perhaps most importantly, the project demonstrates that AI can serve not only as a productivity tool but also as a means of preserving history, promoting local identity and making cultural heritage more accessible to future generations.

For countries seeking to modernize tourism while protecting their historical assets, Xi'an offers a compelling example of how digital intelligence can enhance culture rather than replace it. ■



Es'hailSat and Türksat, the national satellite operator of the Republic of Türkiye, have announced the signing of a landmark strategic partnership agreement for the Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni satellite project. The partnership establishes a long-term framework for capacity sharing and joint commercial expansion on Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni, the high-throughput Ka-band satellite at the 50°East orbital position and marks a significant step in deepening strategic ties between the two countries.

Under the agreement, both companies will leverage their combined satellite assets, ground infrastructure, distribution networks and customer relationships to deliver enhanced services across complementary markets in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The partnership will allow Es'hailSat and Türksat to address growing demand for high-throughput broadband, aviation and maritime mobility, government and enterprise VSAT services, while sharing infrastructure investment, optimizing capacity utilization, and maximizing the commercial potential of Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni from day one.

"Our partnership with Türksat on Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni reflects a shared vision for innovation, resilience and growth in satellite communications. By combining



the strengths of two trusted regional allies, we are expanding our market reach, accelerating commercialization of Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni, and creating new opportunities for customers across MENA, Europe, Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa," said Ali bin Ahmed Al-Kuwari, President and CEO of Es'hailSat.

Ahmet Hamdi Atalay, CEO of Türksat, said, "Today, we are witnessing a remarkable regional cooperation between Türksat and Es'hailSat. Our partnership on Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni satellite represents not only a powerful synergy in space between two allied nations but also a strong response

to the rapidly evolving SatCom market dynamics. By uniting our infrastructure and expertise, we are teaming up to boost our capabilities and deliver next-generation connectivity that unlocks massive global opportunities for both public and private sectors."

This agreement reinforces the commitment of both parties to deliver advanced satellite communications solutions across key markets and applications, and builds upon a strong foundation of cooperation between the State of Qatar and the Republic of Türkiye in the strategic space and satellite sector. **T**



Es'hailSat and Thales Alenia Space sign contract for manufacturing of Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni satellite

Es'hailSat has signed a contract with Thales Alenia Space for the design and manufacturing of its next generation high-throughput satellite, Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni. To be positioned at the 50°East orbital slot, Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni marks a major milestone in Es'hailSat's growth journey and represents the most significant investment in the company's expansion strategy to date.

Built on a state-of-the-art platform, Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni will deliver high-speed connectivity, with the flexibility to dynamically allocate coverage, beams, frequency and bandwidth in response to evolving customer demand. The satellite will provide expanded coverage across the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Central Asia and surrounding maritime regions, supporting a wide range of applications including broadcast, telecom,

government services, mobility, maritime, enterprise VSAT, and remote connectivity. Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni will significantly enhance service continuity, capacity, and resilience for Es'hailSat's customers, by enabling sovereign and secure satellite communications infrastructure.

"The signing of this contract with Thales Alenia Space marks a defining moment for Es'hailSat and for Qatar's ambitions as a leading satellite service provider. Es'hail-3/Türksat-Biruni will not only expand our coverage and capabilities into new strategic markets, but also strengthen the resilience and independence of Qatar's communications infrastructure. We look forward to working closely with our industrial partner, Thales Alenia Space, to deliver high-performing communications services to our customers," said Ali bin Ahmed Al-Kuwari, President and CEO at

Es'hailSat.

"I would like to express my gratitude to Es'hailSat for putting its trust in our company," said Hervé Derrey, President and CEO of Thales Alenia Space. "Today's contract is significant for Thales Alenia Space as it recognizes our ability to offer an innovative, fully digitalized telecommunications satellite that can be reprogrammed in orbit, along with the capability to integrate hosted payloads serving both commercial and governmental requirements."

This agreement reinforces the long-term commitment of both parties to deliver advanced, secure and innovative satellite communications solutions across key markets and applications, and lays the foundation for the next phase of growth for Es'hailSat across the broader EMEA region. **T**

Africa Tech Festival 2026 returns as Africa’s defining platform for digital transformation, investment and innovation



Africa Tech Festival will return to the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 16 to 19 November 2026, bringing together key stakeholders driving the next phase of Africa’s digital growth.

Now in its 29th edition, Africa Tech Festival, originally launched as AfricaCom, has evolved alongside the continent’s digital transformation, expanding its focus to encompass the full spectrum of technology, investment opportunities and policies that drive economic growth.

At a time when investment in connectivity, subsea cables, fibre networks, data centres and cloud infrastructure is reshaping Africa’s digital landscape, Africa Tech Festival serves as a catalyst for the conversations and partnerships driving that progress. South Africa’s Department of Communications



and Digital Technologies is a Strategic Partner of the event, with Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Hon. Solly Malatsi, confirmed to deliver the opening address.

“Africa Tech Festival is a strategic platform shaping Africa’s digital future, bringing together leaders from across the continent in government and industry to drive collaboration, investment, and innovation. As host country, South Africa is proud to champion an event that not only strengthens partnerships, but advances a shared vision of an inclusive, connected and globally competitive African digital economy,” said Minister Malatsi.

Africa Tech Festival 2026 is structured around six interconnected pillars that reflect the technologies and priorities driving Africa’s digital economy: Telecoms & Connectivity; Data Centres; AI; Cybersecurity; Startups; and Digital Transformation.

Together, these pillars provide a framework for addressing some of the continent’s most pressing priorities, including digital infrastructure expansion, greater connectivity and digital inclusion, responsible AI adoption, stronger data sovereignty and digital trust, and the partnerships and investments needed to unlock Africa’s next wave of innovation and

economic growth.

The event will feature dedicated content programmes, executive forums, exhibitions, networking opportunities and investment-focused discussions designed to connect decision-makers from across Africa and around the world.

“It is now clear that this is a defining moment for the ICT sector in Africa. AI adoption is transforming business processes, but it also raises questions around inclusion, data sovereignty and the capacity of digital infrastructure. Africa Tech Festival is the only forum where leaders from across the tech ecosystem – telecoms operators, hyperscalers and corporate end-users – can come together to find the answers,” said David Monaghan, VP, Africa Tech Festival.

As Africa’s digital economy continues to attract global investment and attention, Africa Tech Festival showcases the continent’s capabilities and leadership while connecting African stakeholders with international investors, technology companies and policymakers. Beyond the annual event, it continues to serve as a year-round forum for thought leadership, industry engagement and ecosystem development, helping shape the policies, investments and innovations that are accelerating Africa’s digital transformation. **T**

Iridium NTN Direct begins live testing with Mlink



Iridium Communications has announced that Mlink Technology Inc. (Mlink), a fabless semiconductor company specializing in IoT and satellite communication chipsets, has begun live, on-air testing of its MS150-IR IoT-NTN chipset using Iridium NTN DirectSM. MS150-IR is a specialized version of the MS150 chipset family, developed specifically for Iridium NTN DirectSM as part of Mlink's global IoT-NTN product portfolio.

Mlink joins a growing ecosystem of chipset providers supporting Iridium NTN DirectSM, Iridium's 3GPP standards-based non-terrestrial network (NTN) service. By integrating Iridium NTN DirectSM, Mlink's chipsets will help device manufacturers, module makers and mobile network

operators (MNOs) extend low-power IoT connectivity beyond the reach of terrestrial networks through a single global satellite platform. The companies anticipate certification and product availability before the end of 2026.

"We're excited by Mlink's strong progress and the successful transition from lab testing to live on-orbit validation over the Iridium network," said Tim Last, Executive Vice President, Iridium. "This achievement demonstrates the technical maturity of both teams and the readiness of Iridium NTN DirectSM. We look forward to certification of the MS150-IR chipset later this year, giving our partners and customers additional high-quality, standards-compliant options for global NB-IoT and D2D connectivity."

"Having the opportunity to collaborate with Iridium in the emerging NTN field is a tremendous opportunity for Mlink," said Zhiping An, Co-Founder and Vice President, Mlink. "Our MS150-IR chipset platform has successfully completed Iridium's laboratory testing and has now progressed into the over-the-air (OTA) testing phase. We also have introduced a comprehensive reference design kit, enabling our customers to accelerate product development and commercialization. We look forward to leveraging Iridium NTN DirectSM to provide high-quality low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite communication services to customers

around the world, enabling reliable and efficient global connectivity."

Iridium NTN DirectSM leverages Iridium's unique network of 66 cross-linked LEO satellites and 3GPP standards to deliver low-latency, reliable connectivity with excellent signal penetration on a truly global basis. The service is designed for IoT applications including asset tracking, logistics, utilities, agriculture, automotive, industrial monitoring and remote infrastructure, extending connectivity where terrestrial coverage is unavailable, limited or unreliable.

For chipset vendors, module manufacturers, OEMs, and MNOs, Iridium NTN DirectSM reduces the technical and commercial barriers to integrating satellite connectivity into existing products and networks without requiring additional terrestrial infrastructure. The service enables partners to expand coverage, improve resilience and support new connected-device applications using globally recognized standards.

Mlink's advancement adds to Iridium's expanding roster of chipset partners and reinforces growing momentum toward commercial availability of Iridium NTN DirectSM in 2026. Iridium NTN DirectSM is designed to deliver truly global, standards-based NB-IoT and D2D connectivity, enabling devices, sensors and assets to remain connected anywhere on Earth. **■**

Iridium completes the acquisition of Aireon

Iridium Communications has completed acquisition of Aireon LLC, operator of the world's only space-based Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) air traffic surveillance system.

The completion of the acquisition expands Iridium's role in the aviation ecosystem by combining Aireon's space-based air traffic surveillance and aviation intelligence services with Iridium's global satellite

communications network and resilient PNT capabilities. Together, these assets create a comprehensive platform for delivering real-time visibility, trusted connectivity and actionable operational data to aviation stakeholders worldwide. As airspace grows more complex and increasingly dependent on resilient infrastructure, Iridium is positioned to provide the critical services that help improve safety, efficiency and operational decision-making on a global scale.

As part of Iridium, Aireon will continue operating as a wholly owned subsidiary focused on delivering industry-leading air traffic surveillance and aviation data services. Don Thoma will continue to serve as Aireon's Chief Executive Officer and will report to Iridium's Chief Executive Officer Matt Desch, ensuring both leadership continuity and close alignment with Iridium's broader strategy. **■**



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GSMA launches global satellite regulatory playbook to help policymakers build future-ready connectivity frameworks

The GSMA has launched its new Satellite Regulatory Playbook, a practical guide designed to help policymakers develop clear, consistent and future-ready policy frameworks for the rapidly evolving satellite connectivity sector.

As Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite services expand globally and begin to complement terrestrial mobile and broadband networks, the Playbook provides governments with a structured framework to modernise satellite regulation in ways that support societal needs, protect consumers, and encourage investment in the next generation of communications networks.

Developed in collaboration with Access Partnership, the Playbook focuses on emerging satellite broadband and direct-to-device (D2D) services delivered directly to end users without mobile operator partnerships, where existing regulatory frameworks often leave gaps. Where mobile operators are involved, existing regulations typically provide sufficient safeguards. The playbook offers practical guidance that policymakers can adapt to their national circumstances. It is designed to support technology-neutral regulation while promoting greater consistency in regulatory outcomes across markets.

The GSMA emphasises that no single connectivity technology can meet all of society's long-term communications needs. Instead, resilient and inclusive digital societies require multiple forms of connectivity working together, including mobile, fixed and satellite networks. Regulatory frameworks therefore need to evolve to address all connectivity services consistently, ensuring users receive comparable protections and benefits regardless of how services are delivered.

Michaela Angonius, Head of Policy & Regulation at the GSMA, said: "As satellite connectivity becomes an



increasingly important part of the global communications landscape, policymakers have an opportunity to create regulatory frameworks that are fit for the future. The Satellite Regulatory Playbook gives policymakers practical guidance to create frameworks that protect people, ensure law enforcement can always do their job, attract investment into the whole communications sector and keep pace with innovation."

"Connectivity is not a choice between terrestrial and satellite networks. Meeting the needs of citizens, businesses and governments requires a diverse and complementary connectivity ecosystem. Regulation should therefore be technology-neutral and focused on delivering consistent outcomes for consumers and society, regardless of how services are provided."

The Playbook identifies eight key regulatory pillars that policymakers should consider when developing or modernising frameworks for satellite services:

- *Local establishment rules*
- *National security*
- *Consumer protection and operational measures*
- *Infrastructure and facility requirements*

- *End-user terminal deployment*
- *Fiscal considerations*
- *Emergency services and public safety*
- *Enforcement*

The guidance is underpinned by the GSMA's principles of transparency, regulatory parity, harmonisation, collaboration and balanced innovation. Together, these principles aim to support regulatory certainty, encourage investment, strengthen consumer trust and promote fair competition across the broader connectivity ecosystem.

Recognising that regulatory frameworks vary significantly between countries, the Playbook does not prescribe a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, it provides a flexible framework that regulators can tailor to national priorities while helping to reduce fragmentation and promote greater international alignment.

As satellite services continue to evolve and expand, the GSMA believes that forward-looking and harmonised regulatory approaches will be essential to unlocking the full benefits of next-generation connectivity for consumers, businesses and societies worldwide. ■



Regional series of high-level meetings will bring together governments, regulators, technology leaders, investors and international institutions around the infrastructure, intelligence and investment priorities shaping the next digital era.

SAMENA Telecommunications Council is announcing a new series of high-level leadership gatherings across the Middle East during the second half of 2026, bringing together some of the most meaningful voices in government, regulation, telecommunications, technology, infrastructure, investment and international cooperation.

The series will be convened in partnership with leading national institutions across the region and will unite regional and international leaders together to examine issues of growing global importance for digital development: the future of critical connectivity, the protection and continuity of digital infrastructure, the evolution toward 6G, sovereign AI and compute, integrated terrestrial, submarine and satellite systems, and the mobilization of investment for the next generation of digital development.

The first series of gatherings currently being developed will take place in the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman, with each country providing leadership around a distinct but connected set of priorities.

In the UAE, the Digital Continuity Forum 2026 under the Patronage of the TDRA is being developed as an international platform focused on trusted and resilient connectivity for the intelligence-led era and 6G Ecosystem Roadmap. It will convene leaders around critical ICT infrastructure protection, mission-critical networks, private 5G, future wireless systems, standards, talent and the foundations required for the transition toward 6G.

In Oman, AXIS 2026 under the Patronage of TRA Oman and Leadership of Omantel is being developed as a top-level platform focused on integrated digital infrastructure and investment. It will bring together policymakers, operators, infrastructure providers, Hyperscalers, investors, datacenter and cloud leaders, satellite and submarine connectivity players, and AI infrastructure stakeholders around Oman's growing role as a regional digital and economic hub.

Together, this first series of gatherings will form part of a wider regional leadership movement.

The objective is not simply to hold conferences; it is to host a sequence of high-level engagements designed to bring regional perspectives into the international dialogue on digital development, on the infrastructure, investment, policy and institutional foundations of the AI era.

Bocar BA, CEO of SAMENA Telecommunications Council, said: "The Middle East is entering a new phase of digital leadership. The region is investing in connectivity, artificial intelligence, cloud, datacenters, sovereign compute, cybersecurity and future networks at a scale that will accelerate Digital Transformation.

What is now required is a meaningful leadership conversation around how these capabilities connect, how they are protected, how they are financed and how they contribute to long-term national and regional development.

During the second half of 2026, SAMENA Council will bring together leaders across several carefully designed platforms to

advance this conversation. Each gathering will have its own purpose, its own national context and its own strategic contribution. Taken together, they will reflect a region that is helping to define the digital future rather than simply responding to it.”

The series is expected to bring significant contribution from international organizations, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and wider international markets.

Invited participants will include ministers, regulators, CEOs, telecommunications and infrastructure leaders, international organizations, standards bodies, research institutions, technology companies, sovereign and institutional investors, development-finance organizations and global thought leaders.

The series will focus on key priorities driving regional digital transformation, including:

- Critical connectivity and digital continuity
- Infrastructure protection and resilience
- Autonomous future networks and 6G
- AI infrastructure and sovereign compute
- Terrestrial, submarine and satellite integration
- Datacenters and cloud
- Infrastructure investment and innovative financing models
- Local capability talent
- Standards and international cooperation

Further announcements will be issued separately regarding the UAE and Oman gatherings, including their programs, host institutions, strategic partners and participating leaders.

Additional regional initiatives are also expected to be announced soon as part of SAMENA Council’s second-half 2026 leadership agenda. **■**

Opensignal joins the SAMENA Council to advance real-world network experience measurement across SA-ME-NA markets

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council, the South Asia–Middle East–North Africa (SA-ME-NA) region’s leading industry association of telecom operators, service providers, technology providers, and digital ecosystem players, has announced that Opensignal®, a global provider of independent insights into consumers’ connectivity experiences and choice of carrier, joined its members ecosystem earlier this year.

Opensignal’s decision to join the SAMENA Council reflects its focus on enabling mobile and broadband network operators, regulators, financial analysts, and other telecom-sector stakeholders to analyze how users actually experience connectivity. As markets across the SA-ME-NA region continue to invest in mobile broadband, fixed broadband, 5G, 5G-Advanced, and digital services, real-world network experience insight is becoming increasingly important for service quality improvement, network investment planning, market assessment, and regulatory dialogue.

Opensignal brings to the SAMENA Council community practical experience in measuring and analyzing mobile and broadband network performance from the user perspective. Its insights help operators benchmark performance, identify areas for improvement, understand competitive positioning, assess network performance claims, and assess consumer decision dynamics. For regulators and policy stakeholders, Opensignal’s work can support a more accurate understanding of quality of service, coverage, consistency, reliability, and the user-level outcomes of network development.

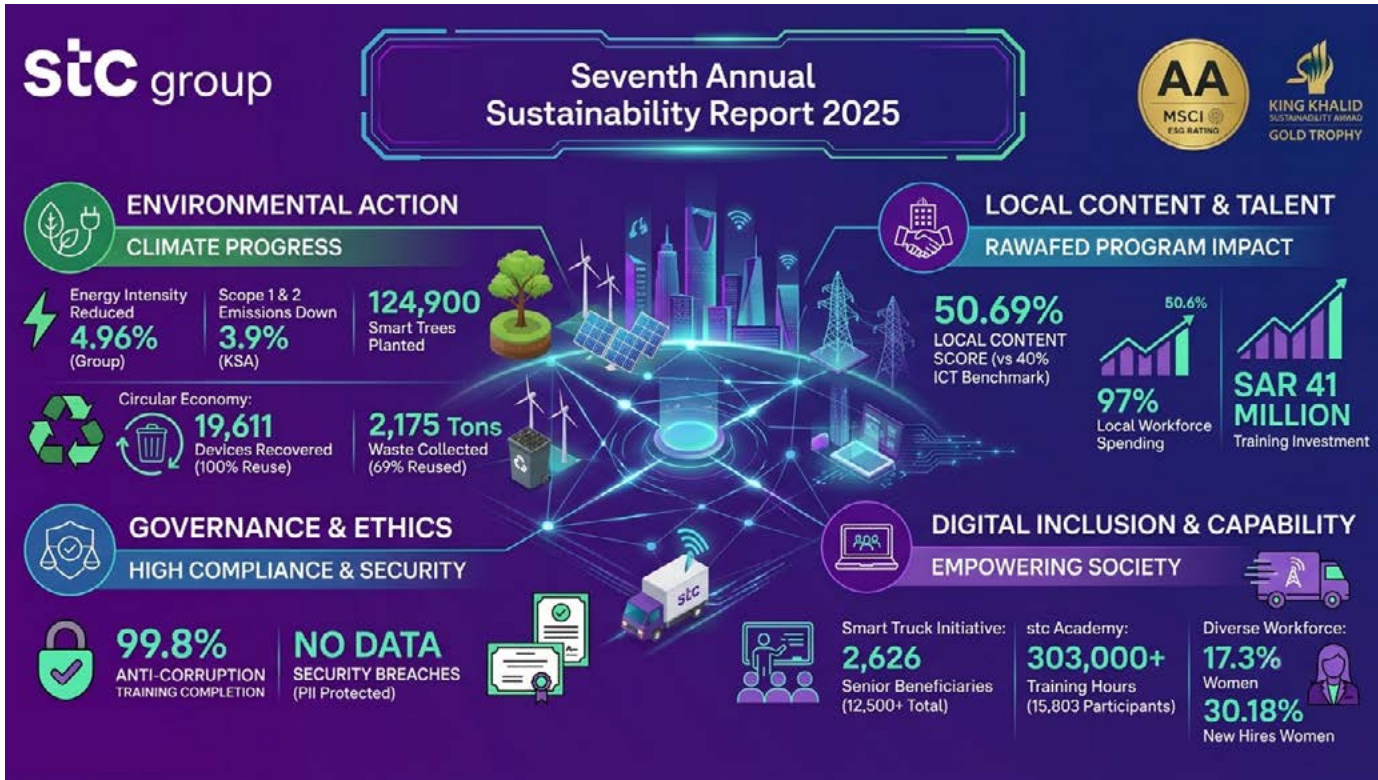
Commenting on the membership, Shawn Heidel, President of Opensignal’s Network Experience Division, stated that “the SA-ME-NA region is an important connectivity market, with operators and regulators placing greater emphasis on network quality, user experience, and the measurable

impact of infrastructure investment. Joining the SAMENA Council gives Opensignal a valuable platform to engage with regional telecom leaders, contribute independent network experience insight, and support discussions on how mobile and broadband networks are measured, improved, and understood across the region.”

Through the SAMENA Council, Opensignal will be able to draw attention to key data-analytics findings and engage more closely with regional operators, participate in industry dialogue, gain exposure to and contribute in creating policy and regulatory perspectives, and contribute to discussions where network experience, service quality, and infrastructure performance are central to mobile and broadband market development. The membership also supports stronger visibility for Opensignal among telecom and digital infrastructure stakeholders across the SA-ME-NA region.

Welcoming Opensignal, SAMENA Council CEO Bocar BA stated: “Opensignal brings valuable expertise in real-world network experience measurement and connectivity analytics. Its ability to provide independent insight into how users experience mobile and broadband networks can support operators, regulators, and industry stakeholders in making better-informed decisions on service quality, coverage, consistency, reliability, and investment outcomes. This is highly relevant as SA-ME-NA markets continue to invest in mobile and broadband network development.”

Opensignal’s membership reinforces the growing importance of real-world network experience insight in telecom development. As broadband, mobile services, cloud access, digital applications, and data-intensive digital services place greater demand on network quality, reliable measurement of actual user experience can help strengthen service improvement, regulatory alignment, investment confidence, and customer trust across the region. **■**



stc group marks seventh sustainability report with AA MSCI ESG Rating and 50.69% local content score

stc group has published its annual Sustainability Report for 2025, marking the seventh edition of its sustainability reporting journey. The report reflects how the group is delivering wider impact across environmental action, human capital development, governance and responsible business practices.

The report highlights the continued development of stc group in 2025, which achieved measurable climate progress, reducing energy intensity by 4.96% at group level. In Saudi Arabia, stc also recorded a 3.9% reduction in total Scope 1 and 2 energy emissions alongside a 10.6% reduction in energy intensity. The group continued to advance circular economy initiatives, with its trade-in program recovering 19,611 devices and achieving a 100% reuse rate, while its end-of-life asset recycling program collected 2,175 tons of waste, with 69% reused. At the same time the Smart Trees Initiative reached a total of 124,900 trees

planted across more than 26 locations since launch.

At the local content level, stc group’s Rawafed program achieved a score of 50.69%, surpassing the ICT sector benchmark of 40%. The program also strengthened local talent development, with 97% of workforce-related spending directed toward the local workforce and SAR 41 million invested in training and development programs.

As part of its commitment to governance and ethical excellence, stc group maintained high levels of compliance, achieving a 99.8% completion rate for anti-corruption training. The group also recorded no data security breaches or incidents involving customers’ personally identifiable information (PII) during 2025.

In terms of digital inclusion and national capability development, the group

strengthened its contribution to digitally empowering society. The Smart Truck initiative, dedicated to enhancing digital literacy among senior citizens, reached 2,626 beneficiaries across 26 governorates in 2025, bringing its total reach to more than 12,500 beneficiaries since inception. During the year, women represented 17.3% of the group’s workforce, 18% of Board seats and 30.18% of new hires, while stc Academy delivered more than 303,000 training hours to 15,803 unique participants.

The group’s performance in sustainability has also received high international recognition with stc’s MSCI ESG Rating rising to AA, in addition to winning the King Khalid Sustainability Award Gold Trophy. Together, these milestones reflect the ongoing progress made in sustainability and its continued commitment to delivering value to its customers, employees and communities. **■**



Zain awarded 25-year Syria telecom license following USD 747 million bid

Zain Group has been awarded a 25-year license (20 years plus an extendable five-years), to operate a mobile telecom network in the Syrian Arab Republic.

This milestone follows a rigorous and highly competitive tender process for the existing MTN network, conducted by the country's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCOT), that encompassed comprehensive technical and financial evaluations, in which Zain secured the award with the most competitive and fully compliant bid for a total of USD 747 million.

Zain will establish a new operating entity in Syria in which the Group will hold a 75% stake and a Syrian government entity will hold 25%. The targeted commercial launch for the Zain Syria brand is expected in Q1 2027, subject to completion of all regulatory and license conditions.

During a six month transition handover

period, the Zain team will work closely with the Syrian MCOT and the MTN team in supporting the improvement and continuity of services for the current 6.3 million customer base.

The license marks Zain's entry as the second operator into one of the Levant's most promising markets, underpinned by a young population and rising demand for high quality mobile and data services for individuals and businesses, given the improving socio-economic conditions.

As part of the award, the Zain Syria entity will invest more than USD 800 million to expand and modernize the network with 5G network and other AI-powered digital technologies over the next decade. This will be funded through the financial resources generated from the Syrian operation. Zain Group's technical, investment and operational expertise will ensure efficient capital deployment, accelerate network development and enhance service quality

and performance.

Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi said: "We extend our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and H.E. Abdulsalam Haykal, Minister of Communications and Information Technology and his team for conducting a transparent, professional and rigorous tender process. Their confidence in Zain is a responsibility we embrace with the highest level of commitment. The Zain Group Board and executive management are fully committed to building a modern, reliable network that supports Syria's digital transformation and delivers high quality telecom and digital services to the Syrian community."

Al-Kharafi added, "Guided by the directives and wise vision of H.H The Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, we reaffirm our firm belief in the importance of strengthening Arab cooperation and advancing development and investment

initiatives that foster stability and prosperity across the region, while reinforcing the foundations of sustainable development for generations."

"I was honored to meet with President of Syria, H.E. Ahmed Al-Sharaa, during which I emphasized that Zain's entry into the Syrian market represents more than a strategic business expansion; it reflects our deep confidence in Syria's future, the capabilities of its people, and its development ambitions. I also conveyed Zain Group's commitment to being a true partner in supporting Syria's digital transformation and economic growth through investing in local talent, advancing digital infrastructure, and support for SMEs and government entities through advanced AI-powered digital solutions that will serve generations to come."

Al-Kharafi continued, "We are confident in Syria's economic recovery and long-term prospects. Zain's entry into the market, alongside the operation's committed CAPEX investment over the coming decade, reflects this confidence. This expansion strengthens our presence in the Levant, reinforces longstanding Kuwaiti Syrian ties, and enhances regional connectivity by enabling cross-border digital services that leverage Zain's regional footprint and technological capabilities."

"Guided by our '4WARD Progress with Purpose' corporate strategy and our purpose of creating 'Better Lives and Lasting Connections', we look forward to welcoming the people of Syria into Zain's Wonderful World and becoming a trusted partner in the country's digital transformation and socio economic progress."

"Established Zain entities such as ZainTECH, Zain Omantel International (ZOI), our fintech platforms and other digital businesses will extend their services to the country. In parallel, financial support and innovation-driven initiatives will be implemented to foster the Syrian entrepreneurial startup ecosystem. This approach underscores Zain's commitment



to creating long-term value that extends beyond telecom and contributes meaningfully to the country's digital development."

Al Kharafi concluded: "We are confident that this expansion will enhance shareholder value through an expanded customer base and increased revenues, driven by synergies with neighboring markets, while reinforcing Zain's position as a leading regional TechCo on the global stage."

Network rollout and services

During the six month transition phase, the Zain Syrian entity will implement a comprehensive network modernization program while also supporting uninterrupted service for approximately 6.3 million existing customers. The rollout will include significant 5G deployments and infrastructure upgrades and AI-powered solutions, with early phases targeting more than 98% population coverage.

Zain will bring operational technical expertise and disciplined investment practices acquired across emerging and

complex markets to ensure high service availability and an exceptional customer experience for Syrian consumers, businesses, SMEs and government institutions.

Once launched, Zain Syria will offer a broad portfolio of voice, data, digital and content entertainment services tailored to households, youth, enterprises and public sector organizations. Customers will benefit from synergies with Zain Group's common products, regional platforms and digital propositions, alongside new services developed specifically for the Syrian market.

Zain currently operates across eight Middle East and African markets, serving 51.2 million customers. Extending its footprint to Syria furthers Zain's position as a leading regional TechCo and supports its '4WARD-Progress with Purpose' strategy to accelerate the business by expanding in high-potential adjacent markets. Once launched, Zain Syria will be the Group's fifth operation with 5G services joining Kuwait, KSA, Bahrain and Jordan, a leading regional 5G position. ■



reports 11.6% increase in consolidated revenue to AED 38.1 billion in H1 2026

- Consolidated revenue for the first half increased to AED 38.1 billion, achieving 11.6% growth YoY
- The Group’s consolidated net profit reached AED 6.0 billion, growing by 2.4% YoY (excluding the gain from the sale of Khazna and the Maroc Telecom settlement in H1 2025)
- EBITDA reached AED 17.7 billion, an increase of 13.1% compared to the same period last year, with a profit margin of 46.5%
- Interim DPS of 47.5 fils, an increase of 10.5% compared to the same period last year
- Strategic portfolio reset to sharpen the focus on strengthening core businesses with the sale of stake in Vodafone at a premium to the market price, and the partial sale of 12.5% stake in Careem Technologies

e& has announced its financial results for the first half of 2026 (H1 2026), delivering strong financial and business performance that reflects the Group’s ability to sustain growth across its home market and international operations. This performance was driven by a clear strategy focused on core businesses, comprehensive digital transformation, and accelerating AI-powered innovation.

During the first six months of this year, e& recorded strong growth in its consolidated revenue, reaching AED 38.1 billion, representing an increase of 11.6 percent year-on-year (YoY). Consolidated net profit reached AED 6.0 billion, marking YoY growth of 2.4 percent, excluding the gain on the sale of Khazna and the impact of the Maroc Telecom (MT) settlement in 2025.

EBITDA in H1 2026 reached AED 17.7 billion, a YoY increase of 13.1 percent, resulting in a strong EBITDA margin of 46.5 percent. These financial results

are supported by the continued growth of the Group’s overall subscriber base, which grew by 30.4 percent to reach 251.5 million subscribers, while the number of e& UAE subscribers reached 16.5 million, an increase of 6.4 percent YoY.

This performance reflects growing customer demand for the Group’s portfolio of innovative services and solutions, as well as its ability to meet increasing demand for advanced connectivity infrastructure and deliver differentiated, AI-enhanced digital experiences for consumers and businesses.

Following a comprehensive strategic review of the Group’s international investment portfolio after the end of the second quarter, e& successfully completed the sale of its entire stake in Vodafone Group Plc. The transaction generated gross cash proceeds of AED 21.9 billion (USD 5.95 billion) and net cash return of AED 4.8 billion (equivalent to

USD 1.3 billion). Similarly, e& completed the sale of 12.5 percent of its 50.03 percent stake in Careem Technologies to Uber for total consideration of AED 367 million (USD 100 million).

Commenting on the financial results, H.E. Jassem Mohamed Bu Ataba Alzaabi, Chairman of e& Group, said: “Our results today confirm that the Group is making steady progress towards leading the digital future. We have successfully navigated regional and global challenges with agility and turned these challenges into real opportunities for business growth.

“Our financial performance in the first half of 2026 reflects the success of our strategy, which is built on the strength of e&’s core business portfolio, alongside our continued investments in technology infrastructure and advanced digital solutions. This has provided us with a solid foundation to sustain growth and reinforce our leadership across regional and international markets, as clearly demonstrated by consolidated revenue of AED 38.1 billion in the first half of 2026.

“The ongoing and rigorous assessment of our international investments is one of the key pillars through which we maintain e&’s financial strength and ensure the highest value and returns for shareholders. The completion of the sale of our stake in Vodafone in July 2026 generated AED 21.9 billion in cash proceeds and resulted in a net cash gain of AED 4.8 billion.

“Guided by the vision and support of the UAE’s wise leadership, e& will continue to play a role in shaping the digital



H.E. Jassem Mohamed Bu Ataba Alzaabi, Chairman of e& Group



Masood M. Sharif Mahmood, Group Chief Executive Officer of e& Group

landscape and advancing social and economic progress. We will continue to strengthen our position and explore new technological frontiers, building on solid foundations to drive long-term growth

and strengthen our leadership as a trusted partner in enabling comprehensive digital transformation. We will also continue to deliver innovations that strengthen the UAE’s position on the global technology

map.”

Masood M. Sharif Mahmood, Group Chief Executive Officer of e& Group, said: “Despite the recent regional and global challenges, e& demonstrated the strength of its operating model and its ability to adapt throughout the first half of 2026. We also achieved a consolidated net profit of AED 6.0 billion and EBITDA of AED 17.7 billion, with a strong margin of 46.5% while maintaining healthy cash flows. This financial performance was further supported by continued growth in the Group’s total subscriber base, which increased by 30.4% to reach 251.5 million subscribers.

“These results are a testament to our proactive risk management, the diversification of our portfolio across telecommunications and digital businesses, and the integration of innovative AI applications, this reinforces shareholder confidence in our ability to lead the digital future.

“Our strategy for long term growth is built on our ability to strengthen and improve our operating model, ensuring it remains responsive to regional and global shifts. This enables us to deliver strong returns that reflect disciplined capital management and flexibility in capital and asset rotation. Our strong financial position allows us to capture promising opportunities and continue developing future-ready digital infrastructure.

The Group Chief Executive Officer concluded: “e&’s greatest strength lies in its ability to ensure business continuity while delivering reliable digital services enhanced by advanced AI capabilities. e& maintained service continuity, strengthened network readiness, supported remote work and education ecosystems, and provided reliable digital infrastructure for individuals, businesses, and government entities. The Group has demonstrated its ability to fulfil its national and economic role, guided by the forward-looking vision of the UAE’s wise leadership.” ■

From Amsterdam to Baghdad: Why Iraq's digital future is closer than ever

Ahmed Kadhum, Chief Investments Officer of Qi Group

Today, discussions at the world's leading fintech conferences have moved beyond digital payments. At Money20/20 Europe 2026 in Amsterdam, conversations revolved around a clear shift in the sector's priorities. The focus has shifted toward building interconnected digital ecosystems that integrate financial services, commerce, education, government services, and artificial intelligence within a unified framework. This convergence is transforming daily life, while fundamentally reshaping the broader financial landscape. For emerging economies, it offers substantial opportunities to create more agile and connected economic models.

This raises a fundamental question: Where does Iraq stand in this global transformation?

Iraq is increasingly well positioned for digital transformation, thanks to several key strengths. A young population is driving the demand for technology, while government institutions continue to make steady progress in advancing their digital transformation initiatives. These factors provide Iraq with a unique opportunity not only to keep pace with the changes happening across the globe, but also to leapfrog conventional stages of development that other economies have had to navigate and establish itself as a forward-looking model for digital innovation.

Payments: the beginning, not the end

Experiences from around the world demonstrate that even the most routine digital transaction can become the foundation of a direct and meaningful relationship between citizens and the services they depend on. It can save retirees valuable time, help small businesses expand efficiently, empower individuals

to manage their finances confidently, and equip government institutions with clearer and more effective tools to deliver services. These everyday experiences reinforce a fundamental truth: digital transformation is driven by people's needs rather than technology alone. In this context, digital payments should be considered not as an end in themselves, but as a catalyst for building a more connected and dynamic economy.

Since its establishment, Qi Group has regarded digitization of payments as a much broader objective rather than an end in itself. Our focus has always been to remove barriers that limit people's access to essential services. Experiences have shown that enabling citizens to receive digital money is only the beginning of a much larger journey. As digital adoption grows, so do expectations for secure payment solutions, effective savings management, responsible financing, seamless participation in eCommerce, and easier access to government services. Each of these requirements creates an opportunity to develop an additional solution, allowing the digital infrastructure to evolve into an expanding ecosystem that continuously adapts to the evolving needs of individuals, businesses, and society.

From a payments company to a comprehensive digital ecosystem

At Qi Group, we believe that a digital economy is not built through isolated solutions, but through interconnected systems. This conviction has guided our evolution from a company focused on cards and transactions into a comprehensive technology ecosystem encompassing financial services, artificial intelligence, digital commerce, education, media, logistics, and digital government solutions. Bringing these sectors together within



a unified infrastructure has created a seamless digital experience that simplifies everyday life in Iraq and fosters greater connectivity.

Infrastructure first

Today, the Group serves nearly 22 million accounts and has issued more than 25 million Qi Cards, supporting over 160,000 merchants across Iraq. Beyond their scale, these figures underscore an infrastructure that allows millions of Iraqis to receive their salaries digitally, operate their businesses, participate in e-Commerce and seamlessly access government services.

As this ecosystem continues to expand, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a key part of our operations, especially in fraud prevention and compliance, enhancing customer experience and facilitating decision-making.

Technology alone is not enough to determine the success of a digital ecosystem. It depends on an environment where trust is embedded through effective governance, robust cybersecurity, strong data protection and clear regulatory compliance. As digital infrastructure



advances and its usage increases, the need to protect individual rights and ensure the security of businesses operating within it becomes significant.

This is a key pillar of sustainable digital transformation. It offers both citizens and institutions the confidence to use services while enabling innovative technologies to drive economic development.

Iraq's growing digital infrastructure is increasingly positioning the country as a promising destination for technology leaders, investors and international partners seeking transparency, reliability and efficiency.

A New Narrative for Digital Iraq

International examples show that economies burdened by complex conventional systems often face significant challenges when attempting to modernise. However, in Iraq, this creates broader opportunities. The absence of certain conventional structures has created an opportunity to adopt cutting-edge digital models from the outset.

This supports merchants through mobile payments, QR code payments and

e-Commerce, while it enables citizens to access government services through a unified digital ecosystem that reduces the need to repeatedly provide information or deal with different entities. With a digital ecosystem that integrates payments, logistics and e-Commerce within a single framework, entrepreneurs can easily expand into international markets.

This digital transformation is founded on redesigning processes from the ground up, driven by a vision that prioritises people. It enables seamless integration of services into everyday life, while technology evolves into the infrastructure that boosts access to opportunities and widens their reach.

Iraqi Ambition Is Shaping a New Reality

International discussions on Iraq have often focused on past challenges. Amid those struggles, there is an inspiring story that deserves the world's attention, which is the story of a vibrant generation of developers and entrepreneurs, rapidly expanding companies and institutions that are continuously embracing technology with great agility.

This stands as a testament to Iraq's ability

to develop digital solutions tailored to its evolving needs and responsive to the realities of its society, creating opportunities in local and regional markets. It further underscores the potential of digital transformation as a powerful economic and social force that can open new horizons for future generations and redefine the country's growth prospects.

As digital transformation progresses, technology's success will be marked by its ability to create tangible improvements in people's lives, support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), enhance the efficiency of public institutions and unlock opportunities for future generations. Digital payments marked the beginning of Qi's story, but they have evolved into a gateway to a wider ecosystem, one where technology removes barriers, services become seamless, businesses find new opportunities for growth, and citizens can easily manage their daily lives.

As this digital ecosystem continues to grow, a clear vision is taking shape: building a connected digital economy that harnesses the opportunities of global transformation and lays the foundations for a stronger, more connected future for Iraq. ■

Eutelsat and Poland sign strategic MoU supporting Poland's participation in IRIS²



Eutelsat has announced the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Poland to deepen cooperation in support of Europe's future secure satellite communications infrastructure under the IRIS² programme.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Warsaw by Jean-François Fallacher, Chief Executive Officer of Eutelsat, and Tomasz Szymański, Secretary of State at the Ministry of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland, during a ceremony attended by Andrius Kubilius, European Commissioner for Defence and Space and Marcin Kierwiński, Minister of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland. The signing marks another important milestone in the implementation of IRIS² and reflects the shared commitment of Poland, Eutelsat and the European Union to strengthening Europe's secure, resilient and sovereign satellite connectivity capabilities.

The Memorandum of Understanding complements the agreement signed on the same occasion between the European Commission and the Republic of Poland on Poland's additional investment in the IRIS² programme. Together, these agreements reinforce Poland's contribution to Europe's flagship secure connectivity programme, combining increased financial investment with concrete industrial and operational cooperation.

The MoU reflects the shared ambition of Eutelsat and Poland to strengthen Europe's secure and sovereign connectivity capabilities, contribute to Europe's technological leadership and strategic autonomy, and support the continued development of the Polish space ecosystem.

Under the agreement, Eutelsat and Polish institutions will collaborate on the development of secure satellite communications in Europe, with a particular focus on the deployment and future evolution of the low Earth Orbit (LEO) part of the IRIS² constellation.

As part of this cooperation, Eutelsat will provide Polish space companies with access to its facilities to test and validate IRIS² user terminals, helping accelerate innovation and supporting the integration of Polish industry into the European secure connectivity ecosystem.

The parties also intend to explore the provision of up to 2 Gbps of reserved and prioritised OneWeb low Earth orbit (LEO) capacity over Poland ahead of the entry into service of IRIS², with the objective of concluding a commercial agreement by June 2027. By leveraging OneWeb's operational low Earth orbit (LEO) network, Poland would benefit from resilient, low-latency satellite connectivity ahead of IRIS² becoming operational, providing an effective bridge to Europe's future sovereign secure connectivity system. 

Eutelsat welcomes FCC's order establishing the framework for the upper C-band transition in the United States

Eutelsat welcomes the order of U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC), establishing the regulatory framework for the transition of Upper C-band spectrum in the United States and creating the conditions for an orderly transition of satellite services.

The FCC's order provides the framework for the reallocation of 160 MHz of Upper C-band spectrum to support the continued expansion of advanced wireless services across the United States while ensuring the continuity of critical satellite services. The framework also establishes the process for the orderly transition of incumbent satellite operators over the coming years.

The decision provides regulatory certainty for the implementation of the transition while preserving the critical role of satellite infrastructure in delivering essential connectivity services.

Under the provisions of the order, Eutelsat will receive incentive payments of \$504 million (€443 million) pre-tax, conditional upon the completion of the transition within the two established deadlines and expected during 2031. Eutelsat will also be fully reimbursed for costs incurred during the transition process.

Jean François Fallacher, Chief Executive Officer of Eutelsat, said: "We welcome the order published by the FCC, representing an important milestone for the U.S. satellite and telecommunications industries. It establishes a clear framework that enables additional spectrum to be made available for advanced wireless services while safeguarding the continuity of satellite operations." 

AI doesn't need to outthink you. It needs to understand you

TM Roh, CEO, President, Samsung Electronics

History repeats a pattern. The breakthroughs that change everything are rarely the most powerful inventions. They are the moments those inventions reach into daily life. Electricity changed society not with power plants, but when a switch appeared in homes. The internet became ours through the browser. The phone became powerful through the ecosystem of apps that grew on top of it.

AI will be no different.

AI is getting smarter faster, and this will continue. But to change how people live, it must answer: where, how and into whose hands does this intelligence reach? This will define AI's next chapter.

AI no longer merely answers. It is entering an agentic age, taking action on our behalf while the person carries the final decision. But to act for someone, it must first know them.

That is why it matters where AI meets people. The entry points are where AI understands a person and builds trust. The best AI experiences will come from the devices that know the user best.

This is what Samsung has spent years building. The phone is closest to us, with us daily. The tablet is where we create and learn. The watch reads signals like sleep and heart rate. The TV and connected home appliances add context from where we live. And new form factors, from foldables to intelligent eyewear, expand where AI meets us. Together, a fuller picture of a person's needs forms.

These entry points are powerful together. Signals from across devices become timely assistance: sleep tracked by your watch shapes tomorrow's schedule, with information always available. AI at its best works quietly in the background, bringing these moments into a cohesive experience. That is why we have spent years building an ecosystem not just to reach, but to connect more moments.

Samsung does not do this alone. The platforms that changed the world were the most open. The web was. So were mobile operating systems. With SmartThings, we brought devices, services and partners into one connected experience, shaping industry open standards. Openness lets the best ideas reach people faster. And we don't simply layer intelligence on top, but design how AI works at the center so it serves each person in context.

But openness alone is not the goal. The harder task is turning intelligence into something personal and trustworthy. The best



intelligence in the world should reach people through their everyday devices. But what makes it personal is understanding the user and keeping that understanding safe. That is our responsibility.

As AI becomes more personal and agentic, trust becomes the foundation. People need to know what AI is doing for them and remain in control.

This is why trust isn't added at the end. Samsung Knox protects each Galaxy device and now the connections between them. As intelligence moves across devices, protecting what flows between them is crucial. The most personal data stays on the device so people can understand how AI is working, staying in control.

That same understanding shapes the devices we build. The more personal and capable AI becomes, the more form matters. As AI helps us with more at once, a screen that flexes and folds expands what is possible. This is what makes foldables special: they fold into your hand, opening a larger stage. On this journey, Samsung has continued to make foldables thinner, lighter, stronger and more immersive.

AI is also essential in health. How we sleep, recover and look after ourselves—daily choices add up. A device close to us, like a watch, tracks these signals ensuring a better day. 

APAC operators accelerate legacy network shutdowns to unlock next phase of 5G growth

Asia-Pacific's (APAC) mobile landscape is entering a decisive new phase as operators accelerate the retirement of 2G and 3G networks, freeing spectrum and investment capacity to scale advanced 4G and 5G services. The transition marks more than a technology upgrade; it is reshaping competitive dynamics, enabling AI-driven networks, enterprise innovation, and digital infrastructure that will underpin the region's next wave of economic growth, says GlobalData, a leading intelligence and productivity platform.

GlobalData's Asia-Pacific Total Mobile Broadband Forecast (Q1 2026) reveals that the region already had a low 2G and 3G service penetration of about 6% and 2% respectively in 2025, which is expected to decline further to 3% and 0.3%, respectively by 2030, highlighting the decisive shift away from legacy network technologies.

On the other hand, 4G and 5G service penetration reached about 56% and 63%, respectively in 2025, demonstrating how next-generation technologies are becoming a standard across the region.

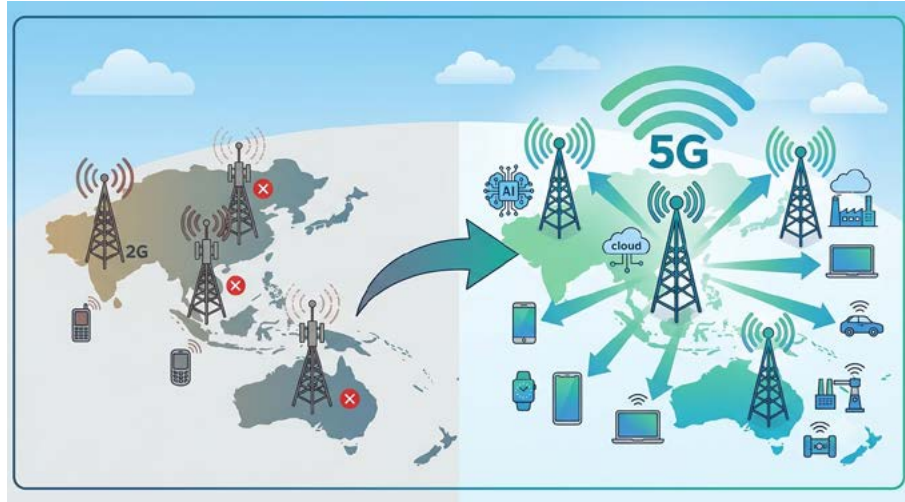
While 2G networks have already been decommissioned in several countries in the region, 3G network shutdowns are being aggressively carried out by the operators in recent times.

Many regional operators are leading the way:

- **India:** Bharti Airtel (2020) and Vodafone Idea (2025) shuttered 3G networks, redeploying spectrum and capital into 4G/5G upgrades.

- **Australia:** Following a 2017 2G sunset, Telstra, Optus, and TPG completed 3G shutdowns in June 2024 to accelerate 5G coverage.

- **Singapore:** After retiring 2G in 2017,



Singtel, M1, and StarHub decommissioned 3G networks in 2024 to fuel 5G expansion.

- **Japan and New Zealand:** Leading a total 5G shift, New Zealand finalized 3G shutdowns in early 2026, while Japan's NTT Docomo and Spark NZ will retire 3G by year-end 2026.

Kantipudi Pradeepthi, Telecom Analyst at GlobalData, says: "The decommissioning of 2G and 3G networks will allow the mobile service markets in the region to fully benefit from improved connectivity, capacity, and innovation potential of 4G and 5G services. High-speed wireless broadband technologies, especially 5G delivers faster data speeds and low latency, crucial for high-bandwidth applications and advanced technology deployments like IoT and private wireless networks."

Not surprisingly, operators are now increasingly directing their investments and efforts towards strengthening their 5G networks that can enable advanced digital solutions, ensuring that consumers and enterprises alike benefit from this next wave of mobile evolution.

Singtel partnered with Ericsson in March 2026 to accelerate the development of

5G Advanced into a programmable, AI-led digital platform capable of powering enterprise transformation. In Thailand, AIS launched an AI-driven 5G-Advanced network in May 2026. Bharti Airtel added over 2,900 5G sites across 77 districts in northern India in June 2026.

Furthermore, New Zealand operators 2degrees, One NZ, and Spark finalized their 2026 2G/3G shutdowns, redirecting liberated spectrum into next-gen networks. Regionally, these moves highlight a massive infrastructure pivot, where capital unlocked from legacy retirements directly funds high-yield 5G expansion, network intelligence, and enterprise digital transformation.

Pradeepthi concludes: "As operators complete the transition away from legacy networks, the strategic value extends beyond spectrum efficiency and network modernization. The shift enables operators to support data-intensive applications, expand enterprise service portfolios, and unlock new revenue streams across sectors such as manufacturing, transportation, healthcare, and smart cities. Ultimately, this evolution will play a critical role in strengthening Asia-Pacific's digital competitiveness and fuelling sustainable economic growth for the long term." ■

Reinforcing leadership in next-generation network innovation and spectrum strategy

du achieves deployment of 5G-Advanced services over L-Band (1.4 GHz) spectrum in commercial network

du has announced the world's first deployment of 5G-Advanced (5G-A) services over L-Band (1.4 GHz) spectrum in commercial network, a landmark achievement cementing du's position as a global pioneer in advanced network innovation and 5G evolution.

Building on its growing track record of firsts in 5G-Advanced, this milestone reinforces du's commitment to maximizing the potential of its spectrum portfolio and continuously raising the bar for connectivity across the UAE. The integration of L-Band within its 5G-Advanced network significantly enhances spectrum efficiency, improves overall network capacity and delivers a more consistent and reliable experience for customers, laying the foundation for next-generation connectivity services.

The L-Band (1.4 GHz) spectrum brings a distinct advantage through its optimal balance between wide-area coverage reach and network capacity. Its favorable propagation characteristics enable deeper indoor penetration and stronger signal consistency across a broader geographic footprint, helping reduce coverage gaps across dense urban, suburban, and indoor environments. This deployment also delivers a meaningful uplift in uplink performance, directly translating into a better quality of experience for end users.

The commercial results validate L-Band's role as a powerful complementary layer within du's multi-band 5G-Advanced strategy, strengthening du's network resilience, enabling more effective load balancing across spectrum layers, and enhancing capacity during peak traffic demand.

"At du, we are committed to setting new benchmarks in network quality and service



Saleem AlBlooshi, Chief Technology Officer at du

excellence," said Saleem AlBlooshi, Chief Technology Officer at du. "The successful deployment of 5G-Advanced services is a proud global first for du and a testament to the ingenuity of our network teams. The L-Band spectrum initiative reflects our commitment to innovation and our continuous efforts to maximize spectrum resources to deliver superior connectivity experiences for our customers."

This deployment is a core component of du's broader strategy to pioneer advanced radio technologies and spectrum innovations that power emerging use cases, including enhanced mobile broadband (eMBB), fixed wireless access (FWA), massive IoT, and future AI-driven digital services.

du's 5G-Advanced platform serves as the foundation for next-generation capabilities, including ultra-reliable low-latency communications (URLLC) and massive machine-type communications (mMTC).

These capabilities support the development of smarter cities, connected industries, and a fully digitized society, in direct alignment with the UAE's national digital transformation vision.

This milestone has been made possible through the leadership and support of the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA), whose proactive facilitation of strategic spectrum access for IMT services remains instrumental in advancing the UAE's global leadership in telecommunications and ICT innovation.

As part of its long-term commitment to the nation's connectivity goals, du remains dedicated to leveraging the latest technologies to expand network capabilities, enhance customer experience, improve operational efficiency, and reduce environmental impact, while delivering cutting-edge digital services across the country. ■

Ooredoo Kuwait signs MoU with AlooChat



As part of its ongoing commitment to accelerating digital transformation and empowering businesses with advanced technologies, Ooredoo Kuwait has signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with AlooChat, a Kuwaiti-born AI communications company, specializing in conversational AI solutions that help businesses enhance customer engagement, automate interactions, and deliver seamless digital experiences.

Under the partnership, Ooredoo Business customers will gain access to AlooChat's AI conversational solutions, including intelligent virtual assistants and automation tools designed to strengthen digital customer engagement channels, streamline business operations, and enhance the overall customer experience.

The agreement forms part of Ooredoo Kuwait's strategy to expand its portfolio of business solutions by introducing advanced AI and automation capabilities that help public and private sector organizations improve operational efficiency and meet

the evolving demands of today's digital economy.

Commenting on the partnership, Ali Al-Dabbous, Head of Digital Transformation for Government and Enterprise at Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "At Ooredoo Business, we believe strategic partnerships are essential to expanding the value we deliver to our customers. Our collaboration with AlooChat AI represents another step forward in enabling organizations to harness artificial intelligence to strengthen customer engagement, optimize business operations, and accelerate their digital transformation journeys. Together, we are committed to delivering innovative solutions that address the evolving needs of today's enterprises".

Hamad AlSelmi, Founder of AlooChat AI, added: "We are delighted to partner with Ooredoo Kuwait, a recognized leader in telecommunications and digital innovation. This collaboration reflects our shared vision of leveraging artificial intelligence to help organizations build smarter, more efficient customer engagement experiences.

Together, we look forward to supporting businesses with advanced conversational AI solutions that drive growth, improve service delivery, and accelerate digital transformation".

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at Ooredoo Kuwait's headquarters in the presence of representatives from both organizations. The agreement establishes a framework for future collaboration focused on developing and delivering innovative digital solutions that help organizations enhance customer communication, improve operational efficiency, and accelerate digital transformation across industries.

This partnership reinforces Ooredoo Kuwait's commitment to expanding its digital solutions ecosystem for the business sector by collaborating with specialized technology partners to provide innovative capabilities that enable organizations to enhance performance, elevate customer experiences, and strengthen their competitiveness in an increasingly digital marketplace. ■

ITU's Partner2Connect surpasses USD 100 billion in commitments to connect the world

ITU, the UN agency for digital technologies, has announced at the WSIS Forum 2026 that its Partner2Connect (P2C) Digital Coalition has surpassed USD 100 billion in commitments, exceeding a milestone in the global effort to expand global Internet connectivity and bridge the digital divide.

With one-quarter of the world's population offline, commitments to Partner2Connect directly support the goal of achieving universal, meaningful connectivity – ensuring everyone has access to affordable and reliable Internet and the skills to use it safely and effectively.

"Partner2Connect having surpassed its USD 100 billion goal is a landmark achievement in global efforts towards universal meaningful connectivity," said ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin. "Today is a powerful reminder that every pledge makes a difference to bring everyone on board our shared digital future."

Connectivity creates opportunity

Since its launch in 2021, Partner2Connect has united governments, industry players, international organizations, development banks, and civil society to support digital inclusion across the globe. Commitments focus on expanding digital infrastructure, strengthening digital skills, fostering innovation, and creating opportunities for hundreds of millions of people.

Pledges announced during the Geneva Digital Week include:

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) pledges to implement the Asia-Pacific Digital Highway, aiming to mobilize USD 20 billion in public and private investments by 2035 to improve digital connectivity for up to 650 million people across the region through expanded cross-border digital infrastructure, regional digital hubs, and improved broadband access.



- Microsoft pledges to advance inclusive digital transformation by connecting more than 450 rural and underserved community hubs in Kenya through satellite-enabled infrastructure integrated with Azure Space, and by investing approximately USD 18 billion in Australia through 2029 to expand AI and cloud infrastructure, strengthen cyber resilience, and equip more than 3 million Australians with AI and digital skills.

- Boston Consulting Group (BCG) pledges USD 500 million to deploying AI for social impact, partnering with leading philanthropies and non-profits to unlock and scale development outcomes across education, workforce development, healthcare, and poverty reduction.

- ZTE Corporation pledges to invest a total of USD 450 million over three years (2026-2028) in ecosystem partnership programs, working across the entire industry chain to build an open, collaborative AI value community, lower barriers to intelligent

transformation, and enable co-creation of smart solutions worldwide.

- Telkom pledges USD 6.1 million to establish the Telkom AI Institute, a platform designed to equip South Africans with AI and digital skills, foster innovation, and accelerate inclusive participation in the digital economy.

- SoftBank Corp. pledges to advance AI-ready connectivity infrastructure through AI-RAN technologies, open innovation, and industry collaboration, aiming to build the foundation for more intelligent, accessible, and sustainable connectivity, while supporting AI adoption and digital transformation across markets and communities worldwide.

- GSMA pledges to advance inclusive AI in Africa through the African AI Language Models project, bringing together stakeholders to develop AI systems that reflect African languages, cultures, and

knowledge, while accelerating AI adoption and digital inclusion across underserved communities.

Pledgers are responsible for delivering their commitments through impactful projects, with ITU providing a platform to track progress and share best practices.

"Reaching USD 100 billion in Partner2Connect pledges is a defining milestone in our journey toward universal digital development," said Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau. "Now is the time to turn these pledges into impactful projects, aligning countries' and regional priorities with partner commitments, and ensure results across all regions."

From mobilizing commitments to accelerating impact

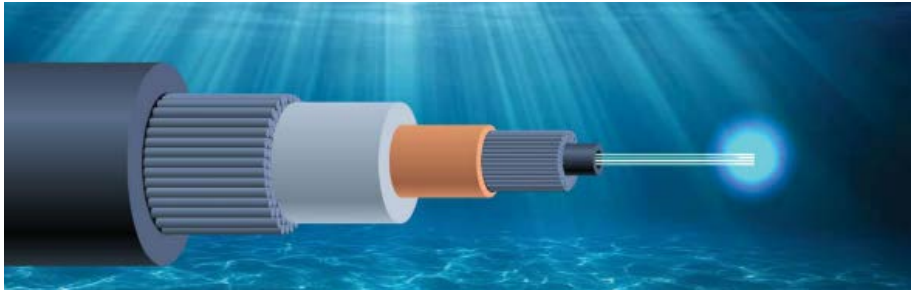
Since its opening, the P2C Coalition has received over 1,000 pledges from 149 countries, driving tangible impact:

- Projects are underway in more than 190 countries, with Africa and Asia and the Pacific leading regions for implementation.
- Women are the most frequently targeted beneficiaries, followed by children and persons with disabilities.
- Digital infrastructure accounts for the largest share of commitments, reflecting the need for stronger networks in underserved areas.

While pledges to Partner2Connect represent significant progress, ITU estimates that achieving universal, meaningful connectivity by 2030 could require USD 2.6 trillion to USD 2.8 trillion.

As Partner2Connect enters its next chapter, ITU will continue mobilizing new commitments while placing emphasis on accelerating implementation, fostering partnerships, monitoring progress, and showcasing the real-world impact of pledges. **T**

International Advisory Body approves landmark report to strengthen submarine cable resilience



The International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience has approved its final report, including explanations of recommendations to strengthen the resilience of submarine telecommunication cables — the critical infrastructure that carries more than 99 percent of data traffic worldwide.

Submarine telecommunication cables are the lifeline of the global digital economy, supporting international communication and finance among other key services. Disruptions to the cables from human activity and natural hazards can affect essential government and industry operations as well as individual access to education, healthcare and banking.

Key challenges to submarine cable resilience highlighted in the report include high exposure to physical risks, increased time needed for repair, geographical concentration of infrastructure, and high dependence of many countries on a small number of cable systems—particularly small island developing states (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other underserved regions.

The report further develops Advisory Body recommendations agreed earlier this year across three key areas: timely deployment and repair; risk identification, monitoring and mitigation; and fostering connectivity and geographical diversity.

"The world relies on connectivity, and thanks to the International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience, we now

have a practical roadmap to keep undersea networks reliable," said ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin. "These reports reflect a shared commitment across governments, industry, international organizations, academia and other stakeholders to safeguard this critical infrastructure that serves us all."

By bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives from across the submarine cable ecosystem, the report provides a common reference to support international cooperation, inform policy development, and strengthen the resilience of one of the world's most critical digital infrastructure systems.

Jointly developed by governments, international organizations, industry and academia, the report reinforces several priorities for action including: strengthening coordination between governments and industry; streamlining regulatory and permitting processes; improving risk identification and monitoring; increasing route diversity and infrastructure redundancy; enhancing preparedness and response capabilities; addressing the needs of vulnerable regions; and integrating climate and environmental considerations.

The adoption of the reports marks the completion of the Advisory Body's two-year work programme and leaves a legacy of combining international efforts to strengthen submarine cable resilience, including through summits in Abuja, Nigeria in 2025 and Porto, Portugal earlier this year. **T**



GSMA convenes national leaders to advance Digital Pakistan 2030

Senior representatives from Pakistan's federal and provincial governments, Gilgit-Baltistan, industry, regulators and development partners convened at the GSMA Digital Nation Pakistan Ministerial Roundtable to identify practical actions that build on Pakistan's growing digital momentum and accelerate the delivery of Digital Pakistan 2030.

The roundtable was one of the few forums to bring together federal ministries, all four provincial governments including representation from Gilgit-Baltistan, the national regulator, mobile industry leaders and international development partners around a shared agenda for Pakistan's digital future. This breadth of participation reflected the growing recognition that delivering Digital Pakistan 2030 requires coordinated action across the federal government, provinces, industry and development partners.

To inform these discussions, the GSMA published a new discussion paper, Digital Pakistan 2030: Building Momentum for Sustainable Investment, Trust and Inclusive Growth, which provided a framework

for discussion by highlighting Pakistan's recent progress and identifying five priorities to help translate today's momentum into long-term economic and social outcomes.

The discussion paper highlighted the significant progress Pakistan has made across spectrum policy, mobile internet and smartphone adoption, women's digital inclusion, digital trust, cybersecurity and stronger collaboration between government and industry. It argued that these advances have established stronger foundations for future growth, while emphasising that continued collaboration between government, industry and development partners will be essential to sustain momentum, create investment certainty, strengthen trusted digital infrastructure and deliver coordinated implementation across



the digital ecosystem.

"Pakistan has established important foundations for digital growth, and the momentum of the past year is clear," said Julian Gorman, Head of Asia Pacific, GSMA. "What makes today's roundtable particularly significant is the opportunity to bring together leaders from

across government, industry and development organisations to discuss the practical actions needed to sustain that momentum. Delivering Digital Pakistan 2030 will depend on continued collaboration, shared priorities and coordinated implementation across the digital ecosystem."

"Our discussion paper is intended to support those conversations by providing a framework for discussion and identifying where collective action can have the greatest impact."

Priorities for Digital Pakistan 2030

The GSMA discussion paper identified five strategic priorities to build on Pakistan's digital momentum and support the delivery of Digital Pakistan 2030, including strengthening investment certainty by building on recent spectrum reforms and creating an environment that supports long-term infrastructure investment, accelerating digital inclusion by reducing the remaining usage gap through greater affordability, digital skills, rural connectivity, and continued progress on women's digital inclusion. It also emphasized on preparing infrastructure for the AI economy through investment in 5G readiness, fibre, data centres, energy resilience, and future spectrum planning, and building trusted digital infrastructure by strengthening cybersecurity, digital identity, child online safety, anti-scam collaboration, and broader digital trust frameworks. The paper also noted that the success of these points relied on strengthening national coordination across government, industry and development partners to improve implementation and accelerate delivery of shared priorities.

The paper also outlined a Digital Pakistan 2030 Action Agenda centered on five shared actions: creating investment certainty, accelerating digital inclusion, building trusted digital infrastructure, preparing Pakistan for the AI economy and strengthening national coordination. Together, these actions provide a practical framework for government, industry and development partners to convert today's momentum into measurable economic and social outcomes.

The Ministerial Roundtable concluded with a shared Call to Action, reinforcing a collective commitment to sustain Pakistan's digital momentum through stronger collaboration, sustained investment and coordinated implementation across government, industry and development partners. **■**

TCCA welcomes intelligent solutions provider Rapidev

For the first time, a Pakistani company has joined the community where the standards for the world's mission-critical communications are influenced. Rapidev Group has been admitted to TCCA, the global member-led association for the critical communications sector, becoming the first member the organisation has welcomed from Pakistan.



Wajid Gulistan,
Founder and Group CEO, Rapidev

With more than 200 engineers and developers across its Pakistan-based facilities, including its Software House, R&D Centre and in-house SMT manufacturing facility, Rapidev delivers a 'Made in Pakistan' portfolio of secure hardware and intelligent software solutions to clients across the Middle East, Africa and South Asia.

Founded in 2017 as a small R&D initiative, Rapidev has since grown into a multi-disciplinary team delivering integrated systems across secure communications and intelligence platforms for national security and smart city operations, network infrastructure for reliable connectivity, and energy and environmental systems for sustainable urban operations, handling everything from consultancy through deployment in-house.

The milestone reaches beyond Rapidev's own growth story. TCCA's membership spans the operators, agencies and manufacturers who influence the standards, TETRA among them, that police forces, ambulance services, utilities and defence organisations rely on every day. Rapidev's admission gives Pakistan a direct voice in that community for the first time, at a moment when the country's technology sector is increasingly exporting expertise rather than importing it.

"Joining TCCA gives us a seat at the table where the standards for the

world's most critical communications are influenced," said Wajid Gulistan, Founder and Group CEO, Rapidev. "It's a significant milestone, not just for Rapidev, but for what Pakistani engineering can now contribute on the global stage."

In 2025, Rapidev achieved CMMI Maturity Level 5¹, reflecting the company's commitment to disciplined, world-class processes. The accreditation shows a focus on continuous improvement and gives Rapidev the stability to pivot quickly in response to new opportunities, a foundation for both agility and innovation.

"It is with great pleasure we welcome Rapidev to the global TCCA critical communications community, our first member based out of Pakistan," said TCCA CEO Kevin Graham. "We look forward to learning and benefiting from the expertise and insights their teams bring in next generation secure solutions, and their use of AI to enhance end user experience and operational capability. A large, quality focused R&D team and CMMI Level 5 accreditation will contribute to our mission critical digital transformation endeavours." **■**



The AI for Good Global Summit and WSIS Forum 2026 wrapped up a landmark Geneva Digital Week, having brought together over 12,000 participants from 177 countries to drive global efforts towards safe and responsible artificial intelligence (AI).

The week celebrated breakthroughs in AI and digital innovation, uniting world leaders, tech pioneers, policymakers, civil society, and youth from around the globe. From cutting-edge technology showcases to historic discussions on AI governance, the events underscored a shared vision: ensuring AI and digital technologies benefit all of humanity.

"At Geneva Digital Week, the world came together to shape our shared digital future," said ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin. "We demonstrated that AI governance, innovation and digital development are not separate challenges — and that international cooperation remains our most powerful tool to solve them, while ensuring technology benefits all people, everywhere."

From dialogue to delivery

The inaugural Global Dialogue on AI Governance, the first mandated by UN Member States, gave every country a voice in shaping the future of AI. The two-day event at the start of the week emphasized science-based collaboration as the

foundation for addressing challenges such as trust, equity, and accessibility, and is set to reconvene in New York in May 2027.

Back-to-back with the AI Dialogue, the annual AI for Good Global Summit 2026 showcased the latest breakthroughs in AI innovation, showing how real-world solutions, skills development, and standards work together to translate into AI that works for all.

At the heart of the summit was the first meeting of the newly formed AI for Good Global Commission, co-chaired by Rwanda's President Paul Kagame and Salesforce Chair and CEO Marc Benioff with ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin serving as Vice-Chair. Commissioners called for urgent action on trust, equitable access, and real-world AI solutions, highlighting AI's unparalleled potential to address global challenges.

With the future of AI depending on trust, AI for Good announced a new Focus Group on Agentic AI to develop frameworks for trusted digital identity and to ensure that the behaviour of AI agents remains trustworthy and accountable throughout their lifecycle.

ITU's Goodwill Ambassador for the AI for Good AI Skills Coalition, will.i.am, highlighted the importance of skills and education at Summit events throughout the week, while also participating in the

announcement of three new AI Skills Coalition partners during the initiative's annual meeting.

Throughout the global event, AI for Good highlighted AI achievements across borders, ages and disciplines through initiatives including the Robotics for Good Youth Challenge, AI for Good Film Festival, AI for Good Innovation Factory, AI for Good Impact Awards, Canvas of the Future, AI and Space Computing Challenge, and Innovate for Impact 2026.

Advancing a people-centred digital future

Running across the week, the WSIS Forum 2026, the UN's longest-standing platform on advancing digital development, gathered global stakeholders to explore innovative ways technology can power sustainable development.

With a renewed mandate through 2035, the Forum featured high-level discussions and grassroots exchanges spanning digital cooperation, capacity building, and refugee connectivity. Participants also celebrated the winners of the WSIS Prizes, which honoured top tech solutions for digital development.

A major milestone was reached as the Partner2Connect (P2C) Digital Coalition exceeded its USD 100 billion target, advancing efforts to connect the 2.2 billion people worldwide still offline. **■**

SAMENA Telecommunications Council welcomes MTN Group to its membership of operators, tech providers, and ecosystem partners

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council has announced the membership of MTN Group to its membership. MTN will be represented by Lele Modise, the Group’s Chief Legal and Regulatory Officer and an internationally-recognised professional featured on the Legal500 GC Powerlist and Chambers Global rankings as well as Vice-Chair of the ITU Industry Advisory Group on Development Issues and the Private Sector Chief Regulatory Officers forum (AIGDI-CRO).

As a Pan-African digital operator, MTN Group brings practical experience from markets where infrastructure investment, digital inclusion, regulatory certainty, cross-border connectivity, and trusted platforms are closely linked. Through the SAMENA Council, MTN Group aims to contribute operator perspectives to regional industry discussions on critical issues. This includes advancing discussions on infrastructure protection and resilience, enabling sustainable investment

models, strengthening data governance frameworks, and promoting trusted digital infrastructure. Additional interest areas for MTN include shaping conversations on cybersecurity, AI readiness, and enabling policy and regulatory frameworks that support long-term sector development, innovation, and inclusive growth across the region.

Commenting on MTN’s membership of the SAMENA Council, Lele Modise stated: “Our participation in the work of the SAMENA Council reflects our commitment to shaping bold industry dialogue that supports resilient networks, in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment, catalyzes investment-ready policy frameworks, and drives inclusive digital growth across the markets we serve, thus ensuring better outcomes for customers, enterprises, and the societies.”

Welcoming MTN Group and Ms. Modise to the Council, CEO of the SAMENA

Council Bocar BA stated: “We are pleased to welcome MTN Group to the SAMENA Council. MTN’s experience as a major operator, digital infrastructure investor, and provider of fintech and connectivity platforms across Africa is highly relevant to the priorities of the Council. As telecom infrastructure becomes more central to national resilience, economic development, enterprise growth across industries, and digital transformation, MTN’s perspective will add practical value to our regional industry dialogue and to the wider effort to strengthen secure, sustainable, and investment-ready digital ecosystems.”

As networks increasingly transform and support new essential services and as AI, cloud, fintech, enterprise platforms, and cross-border data flows increase demand on connectivity, operators and ecosystem partners need stronger alignment around infrastructure security, regulatory clarity, cyber resilience, and long-term investment models. ■

ZainTECH joins SAMENA Telecommunications Council to expand role in enabling enterprise-scale digital infrastructure across the region

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council announced that ZainTECH has joined its membership strengthening its engagement with regional operators, regulators, and technology partners. ZainTECH enables government bodies and organizations to become Digital, Intelligent, and Resilient; modernizing operations, embedding AI, and ensuring secure, always-on performance at scale.

ZainTECH provides cloud, cybersecurity, data, AI, and digital infrastructure services across multiple markets. Its participation in the Council will focus on infrastructure resilience, cross-border data flows, and accelerating enterprise adoption of emerging technologies. As telecom operators expand beyond

connectivity toward cloud-based networks, cybersecurity frameworks, and data-driven services, the company sees closer coordination with industry stakeholders as necessary to scale these capabilities effectively.

Andrew Hanna, CEO of ZainTECH, said “Our role sits at the intersection of telecom and enterprise technology, where infrastructure, data and security must come together to support scalable, real-world operations. Joining SAMENA alongside many other distinguished entities allows us to engage more closely with operators, policymakers and ecosystems partners on how this transition is being shaped across the region. At ZainTECH, we see this evolution not just as a technology shift, but

as an operational one requiring structured delivery models, strong governance, and regional execution at scale”

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council brings together telecom operators, technology companies, and government stakeholders across the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa. Its work includes policy dialogue, industry coordination, and initiatives tied to connectivity and digital development.

ZainTECH will contribute to the Council’s broader industry work, contributing to discussions and initiatives related to telecom development, digital infrastructure, and evolving technology needs across the region and afar. ■

From satellite data to startups: Azercosmos launches Azerbaijan’s first National Space Incubation program

Azercosmos has launched its first-ever National Space Incubation program to support the development of space startups and strengthen Azerbaijan’s innovation ecosystem.

The six-month program is designed for early-stage startup teams working on Earth Observation applications, digital platforms and other space-based solutions. It helps participants turn their ideas into practical products that can enter the market.

Eight teams were selected for the program. During the first stage, they took part in technical and business training, market research, business model development, prototyping and pitching sessions. The teams also received guidance from local and international mentors and gained access to the wider space innovation ecosystem.

As an important milestone of the program, Azercosmos held a Demo Day, where seven teams presented their startup ideas to a jury and other participants.

The teams explained the problems they aim to solve, their proposed solutions, target customers and future growth plans. Following each presentation,



the jury provided feedback on product development, market potential and business strategy.

The presented projects included solutions for:

- automated real estate valuation and compliance assessment using GIS;
- identifying suitable locations for food service businesses through satellite data;
- environmental monitoring and protection;

- detecting changes and preparing analytical reports for companies;
- identifying potential fishing areas using GIS and artificial intelligence;
- monitoring soil fertility and irrigation systems;
- analyzing natural disasters and assessing risks.

Following Demo Day, the participating teams will move into the active product development stage. With the support of experienced mentors, they will continue to develop, test and improve their solutions in real-world conditions.

The program also provides opportunities to connect with local and international experts, enter the global space ecosystem and attract potential investment for market-ready projects.

Through the National Space Incubation program, Azercosmos aims to encourage technology entrepreneurship, support the creation of new space-based services and contribute to the development of Azerbaijan’s digital economy. ■



e& secures global leadership with world's first commercial U6GHz network, establishing the foundation for the 6G era



e& UAE has awarded a contract to a strategic infrastructure partner to roll out the world's first commercial mobile network using Upper 6GHz (U6GHz) 256TRX Giga-MIMO technology. Planned for commercial launch in the second half of 2026, the deployment marks a major step from technical validation to commercial readiness. It positions e& UAE at the forefront of 5G-Advanced evolution while laying the network foundations needed for the 6G era.

The deployment also supports the UAE's national 6G roadmap led by the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA),

strengthening the country's role in advancing future connectivity technologies ahead of global 6G standardisation. It will also support broader use of the "Golden 6GHz Band" and enhance e& UAE's long-term network evolution pathway towards IMT-2030 and 6G.

Marwan Bin Shakar, Chief Technology Officer at e& UAE, said: "The commercial deployment of U6GHz 256TRX Giga-MIMO is a major step in e& UAE's network evolution. It will enhance the 5G-Advanced experience for customers today while preparing the architecture needed for 6G. This investment supports the UAE's ambition to be a leading hub for advanced digital infrastructure and future digital services."

The network will use the U6GHz spectrum range of 6425–6775 MHz/ 350MHz, providing up to 350 MHz. This will be combined with 256TRX Giga-MIMO technology, which increases antenna capability at each site compared with standard 64TRX 5G configurations. The result is higher network capacity, more accurate beamforming,

improved interference management and a better experience in high-traffic urban areas.

The technology is designed to deliver peak speeds of up to 10 Gbps downlink and 1 Gbps uplink. Its advanced beamforming capability also helps address coverage challenges usually associated with higher-frequency spectrum, supporting coverage levels comparable to existing 3.5 GHz C-band sites.

By moving U6GHz 256TRX Giga-MIMO from technical validation to commercial deployment, e& UAE is building the high-capacity network layers needed for next-generation digital services. These include AI-native networks, immersive experiences, industrial automation, smart-city services and future Integrated Sensing and Communication use cases.

Through this deployment, e& UAE aims to develop an evolutionary mobile network in the UAE, bringing fibre-like speeds over the air and supporting the country's wider digital infrastructure goals. ■

Liquid C2 secures gold-level in Google's Verified Peering Provider Programme, providing improved cloud connectivity in Africa

Liquid C2 has achieved gold-level status in Google's Verified Peering Provider (VPP) programme. This accreditation highlights the strength and reliability of its peering infrastructure with Google. It places the company among a select group of global providers and positions it as the most widely peered gold VPP partner in Africa.

For customers, this means easier access to Google services via Liquid's network. The impact is significant because it eliminates delays and congestion from shared internet paths. Businesses enjoy faster access, lower latency, uninterrupted service, and more reliable performance when using Google Workspace, Google Cloud, and AI workloads.

Liquid C2's qualification spans Johannesburg, Lagos, Nairobi and London, creating a geographically distributed, high-availability foundation that supports customers globally.

"Securing Google's VPP status represents a significant step forward in Liquid's efforts to strengthen Africa's digital infrastructure," said Vinay Hiralall, Chief Commercial Officer, Liquid C2. "In today's cloud-first economy, network performance is a key driver of competitiveness. This recognition strengthens our ability to deliver consistent, low-latency access to Google services at scale, supporting enterprises across Africa as they expand into global digital markets."

The achievement is part of Liquid's broader strategy to expand advanced cloud connectivity and strengthen global technology partnerships. It builds on a growing relationship with Google, including the launch of Africa's first Google Cloud-powered Partner Experience Centre in Johannesburg.

As a business of Cassava Technologies, Liquid continues to expand digital inclusion across markets through its portfolio of cloud, cyber security, and digital solutions. This ensures that organisations of all sizes can access advanced technologies and participate more fully in Africa's digital economy. ■

Rocket Lab to acquire Iridium in historic deal, creating a fully vertically integrated space powerhouse primed for growth

Rocket Lab Corporation and Iridium Communications Inc. have entered into a definitive agreement under which Rocket Lab will acquire Iridium. Rocket Lab will acquire all the outstanding shares of Iridium common stock for USD54 per share in a cash and stock transaction. This represents an enterprise value for Iridium of approximately USD8.0 billion.

The acquisition will be one of the most transformative deals in the space industry, joining together two innovative American companies to play a leading role in the U.S. space economy. It merges Rocket Lab's leading launch capabilities and satellite manufacturing with Iridium's global satellite communications network, spectrum, and 500-plus strong partner ecosystem to create a competitive, vertically-integrated space company that designs, builds, launches, and operates its own constellations, delivering critical communications capability to millions of users worldwide.

The transaction will give Rocket Lab an immediate foothold in space-based applications, including both proprietary and standards-based satellite Internet of Things (IoT) and direct-to-device (D2D), PNT, and critical safety-of-life services, creating a formidable challenger in the global telecom market. Rather than simply continuing the Iridium network, Rocket Lab will build upon it to scale into untapped markets and pioneer new space-based services to the benefit of global customers.

Iridium's globally harmonized L-band spectrum and low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite network provide a secure, resilient foundation for reliable satellite communications and PNT services across government, defense, aviation, maritime, and commercial markets. Supporting more than 2.55 million active subscribers worldwide, Iridium delivers highly reliable, weather-resilient connectivity and an alternative PNT architecture for



applications where Global Positioning System (GPS) and other Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) are degraded or unavailable. Combining Rocket Lab's launch, spacecraft manufacturing, and space systems expertise with Iridium's global network and L-band spectrum will accelerate innovation, positioning the combined company to support the development and deployment of Iridium's next-generation constellation. This includes

direct-to-device (D2D/Iridium NTN DirectSM) services, which will grow into an important new capability for U.S. national security and emergency response, helping to ensure reliable, resilient communications when and where they are needed most, particularly where traditional networks are unavailable or compromised.

"This is a defining moment for the space industry and the start of a new era of

strategic, accelerated growth for Rocket Lab and Iridium," said Sir Peter Beck, founder and CEO of Rocket Lab. "Iridium has built the gold standard in secure, safety critical global satellite connectivity. It is relied upon by maritime fleets, the aviation industry, governments, and heavy industrial organizations who operate in the most remote off-the-grid locations. By marrying Iridium's deep heritage, trusted infrastructure, and highly sought-after spectrum with Rocket Lab's extensive and proven launch and manufacturing capabilities, we have the capability to unlock entirely new markets. We will go far beyond maintaining a legacy; we are going to build upon it to pioneer next-generation space applications and deliver sought-after capabilities to existing and new customers."

"As the worlds of space and terrestrial communications continue to converge, more critical services will depend on space-based capabilities," said Matt Desch, CEO, Iridium. "Success will come from those who can bring new innovations to space quickly and sustain them over time as efficiently as possible. We're excited about being able to accelerate the next generation of IoT, aviation, maritime, PNT, and national security capabilities, and pursue new innovative applications as part of Rocket Lab - a fully integrated, end-to-end space company. That's an incredible opportunity for our customers, partners, employees, and stockholders."

Transaction Highlights:

• **Strengthens Rocket Lab's Strategic Vertical Integration:** Creates an end-to-end space company spanning launch, spacecraft, spectrum, and on-orbit communications services through a proprietary network. Expected to eliminate third-party launch costs for constellation deployment and replenishment and captures launch margin internally while guaranteeing orbital access as launch capacity tightens, ensuring continuity of service to customers.

• **Unlocks Entry to Space Applications Market:** Provides Rocket Lab with

immediate access to a proven constellation of LEO satellites and an established global communications customer base, realizing the company's long-term strategic vision to expand beyond launch services and spacecraft manufacturing into a vertically-integrated space applications company with recurring revenue from satellite services.

• **Provides Access to Globally-Coordinated Spectrum:** Adds globally-coordinated L-band spectrum that enables reliable user communications.

• **Unifies Two Trusted Government Partners:** The transaction combines two deeply trusted, long-standing defense partners, combining their specialized strengths to deliver highly resilient, next-generation capabilities directly to the warfighter across denied, degraded, and disadvantaged environments.

• **Accelerates Growth and New Market Opportunities:** Positions the combined entity to deliver next-generation satellite communications, resilient PNT, and emerging defense and commercial space services.

• **Diversifies Financial Profile with Recurring Cash Flow Streams:** In 2025, Iridium delivered \$871.7 million revenue¹, \$495 million OEBITDA¹ or 57% OEBITDA margin¹, providing substantial recurring cash flow to fund growth.

Transaction Details

Under the terms of the transaction, Iridium stockholders will receive USD27.00 in cash and a number of shares of Rocket Lab common stock calculated pursuant to an exchange ratio (subject to a collar) for each share of Iridium common stock outstanding at the closing. The collar is banded from USD67.50 to USD112.50. The transaction has a notional value of USD54.00 per share of Iridium common stock, implying an enterprise value for Iridium of approximately USD8.0 billion.

Complete details on the calculation of the exchange ratio will be in the transaction

agreement, which will be filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The transaction is expected to be completed in mid-2027, subject to the satisfaction of customary closing conditions, including approval of Iridium stockholders and required regulatory approvals.

The transaction has been unanimously approved by the boards of directors of Iridium and Rocket Lab. Moreover, each director of Iridium holding shares of Iridium common stock has entered into a voting agreement to support the transaction.

As part of the transaction, Rocket Lab has received commitments for a USD3.6 billion 364-day senior secured bridge term loan facility from Deutsche Bank and Wells Fargo. Rocket Lab intends to fund the cash component of the transaction through a combination of cash from its balance sheet and other debt and equity financing sources.

Advisors

Deutsche Bank Securities is serving as lead financial advisor and Wells Fargo and PJT Partners as financial advisors, Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, P.C. is serving as legal counsel, Goodwin Procter LLP as financing counsel and DLA Piper LLP as regulatory counsel to Rocket Lab. Evercore is serving as exclusive financial advisor, Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP is serving as legal counsel, Wilkinson Barker Knauer LLP is serving as regulatory counsel, and Joele Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher is serving as strategic communications advisor to Iridium. ■

[1] Based on Iridium's publicly reported 2025 results. Iridium Operational EBITDA, or OEBITDA, is defined as earnings before interest, income taxes, depreciation and amortization, gain (loss) on equity method investments, transaction related expenses, and share-based compensation expenses. Iridium Gross Margin has been calculated as Total revenue less Cost of services (exclusive of depreciation and amortization) and Cost of subscriber equipment, divided by Total revenue.

SMB cyber readiness: the road to resilience starts here

Your business may be small, but its attack surface is anything but. Readiness is the first step to resilience

Phil Muncaster

SMB cybersecurity isn't always given the attention it deserves, including by small businesses themselves. That's concerning for various reasons, notably because the companies comprise 90% of the world's businesses, 70% of its employees, and 50% of global GDP, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF). With fewer resources to spend on cybersecurity, funds must be allocated as effectively as possible.

For these businesses, cyber resilience should be the direction of travel – that is, the ability to continue operating and recover even during a serious incident. But where does the journey start? Cyber readiness is about putting in place the processes and controls to prevent, detect and respond to threats. A new ESET report details how well SMBs are doing, what their biggest challenges are, and what should happen next.

Cybersecurity as an operating condition

SMBs are in many ways no different from their larger peers. They face a threat

landscape that continues to evolve at pace, with adversaries harnessing the latest technologies to increase the volume, scale, and speed of attacks. The corporate attack surface is expanding with each new digital tool and investment. Employees remain a source of risk. And businesses must meet a growing number of regulatory mandates.

According to the ESET report, 45% of

SMBs suffered a cyber incident last year, and even more (61%) fear an attack over the coming 12 months. They're most concerned about data loss, operational disruption and financial impact.

These are the kinds of concerns that SMB owners share with the CISOs and boards of the largest multinationals. They speak to the business-criticality of cyber readiness. And why security must function

SMBs are in many ways no different from their larger peers. They face a threat landscape that continues to evolve at pace, with adversaries harnessing the latest technologies to increase the volume, scale, and speed of attacks. The corporate attack surface is expanding with each new digital tool and investment. Employees remain a source of risk. And businesses must meet a growing number of regulatory mandates.

as an operating condition – not a siloed IT function, but something deeply embedded into culture and business operations. This shift is critical because while many SMBs eventually recover, 34% still require two to six weeks to resolve an incident – a duration of operational pain that can be disastrous for many firms.

Is it all about AI?

The report also reveals that most (73%) SMBs are integrating AI into their business, even though they acknowledge that this will introduce new risks. But there are also concerns about its potential in the wrong hands. In fact, AI-powered malware is cited as the “most concerning threat” by a

are helping threat actors to upskill and scale their efforts – for social engineering, vulnerability research and exploitation, and other “legacy” threats. In this context, the SMBs that ESET spoke to are keen to use AI to fight fire with fire, for anticipating threats before they occur, faster identification and mitigation of attacks, and detection of social engineering.

The challenge is that these tools either don’t exist, or SMBs aren’t often able to benefit from them.

Before and after

SMBs that adopt cybersecurity awareness training are well on their way to

Your business may be small, but its attack surface is anything but. Readiness is the first step to resilience

plurality of respondents. Should it feature so prominently?

The truth is that malware using AI in an automated and real-time way is still uncommon, despite what the news headlines may say. Sightings are relatively rare, making it more a topic for cybersecurity researchers than a burning concern for SMBs.

If we look at actual cybersecurity incidents, the usual suspects are responsible for the majority of events. Phishing and unpatched vulnerabilities come top, which chimes with data from other sources like Verizon’s latest report – which cites exploitation and phishing as among the top three initial access vectors for SMBs. Weak passwords and a lack of security monitoring also rank high in the ESET data.

When it comes to AI, the more acute threat comes from within. According to DBIR, shadow AI is the third most common non-malicious insider action. Meanwhile, while AI-powered malware might not be the most burning concern, AI and automation

developing a stronger cyber-readiness posture. But are they doing so proactively? ESET finds that training adoption is highest among businesses that have experienced multiple incidents (81% versus 53%). These organizations also display higher confidence in their resilience – perhaps because they’ve reactively adopted best-practice security measures.

In an ideal world, SMBs would pivot from a “better late than never” mentality to one in which they understand the benefits of cyber readiness before an incident teaches them some harsh lessons.

Confidence is high

The good news is that four in five respondents view their security budget as sufficient or more than sufficient, while half of them expect it to increase next year. This indicates smart planning and allocation of resources, including outsourcing where it makes sense financially and operationally to do so. It also points to confidence in current spending but it doesn’t mean every SMB has matched the budget to the risks most

likely to test the business first.

So, should confidence in cyber resilience posture be so high, especially if organizations are still getting hit multiple times? Confidence has surged from 48% in 2022 to 87% this year. The truth is that there’s no end state for cyber readiness or resilience. Rather than celebrate what they’ve achieved so far, SMBs should continue to focus on:

- Prevention-first technology and processes including training, regular patching, and strong identity management
- Realistic and regular risk assessments that help them to prioritize security investments
- Incident response that helps organizations recover faster and reduce the business impact of attacks

- Outsourcing capabilities where appropriate, such as managed detection and response (MDR)

- Improved governance to help reduce shadow IT and AI

The journey has only just begun

Despite canny budgeting, a quarter of SMBs say more funds would help them improve cybersecurity posture faster. Complexity and integration remain persistent challenges for those with fewer resources. Respondents say they want reliable, feature-rich, and easy-to-use services and solutions.

Getting hold of these tools shouldn’t be as challenging as it is for many SMBs. If it’s serious about improving the cyber readiness of small businesses, the vendor community should step up. Yet equally, there’s no silver bullet. SMBs have shown they’re well on the way to enhancing resilience. But this is a journey that will continue as technology and threats evolve. Continuous vigilance and adaptability will be key to long-term success. ■

Inception42 and Microsoft move agentic AI from pilots to government and enterprise operations

Inception42 and Microsoft have announced a collaboration to advance agentic AI adoption. By deepening interoperability between their platforms, the two companies are helping organizations move from fragmented AI deployments to a governed, enterprise-wide agent ecosystem – giving governments and enterprises access to a wider pool of agents while keeping data processing in country.

This is a key step in supporting the UAE’s national agentic AI initiative, which targets 50% of federal government operations to use AI agents within two years.

The rapid rise of AI agents is creating new opportunities for organizations, but also new challenges. As enterprises and governments deploy AI across more workflows, many are grappling with fragmented deployments, inconsistent governance, and growing complexity across their technology environments. At the same time, requirements for security, compliance, and data sovereignty are becoming increasingly important. This collaboration addresses those challenges by giving access to a single ecosystem of AI agents and everyday productivity tools in a governed, sovereign operating layer at national scale.

Catalyst, Inception42’s enterprise and government agent operating system, is built to operate with sovereign infrastructure, with all data processed in-country. It can run on premise, in a sovereign cloud, or in the public cloud, and it works across an organization’s existing data sources building institutional context, an AI Brain.

Agents composed in Catalyst are served through Compass, Core42’s sovereign model and infrastructure layer and surface directly inside Microsoft 365



Copilot, while agents built inside Copilot compose natively back into Catalyst. Accelerated by Microsoft Forward Deployed Engineers, it gives governments and enterprises a shared operational framework across people, data, applications and agents. This helps them deploy AI with greater consistency, accountability and impact as they move from experimentation to production-scale adoption.

Three critical layers of enterprise AI that organizations increasingly need but often source separately now come together: sovereign infrastructure, intelligent agent orchestration and everyday user adoption – reducing complexity and giving organizations a trusted foundation for scaling AI across industries, functions and teams.

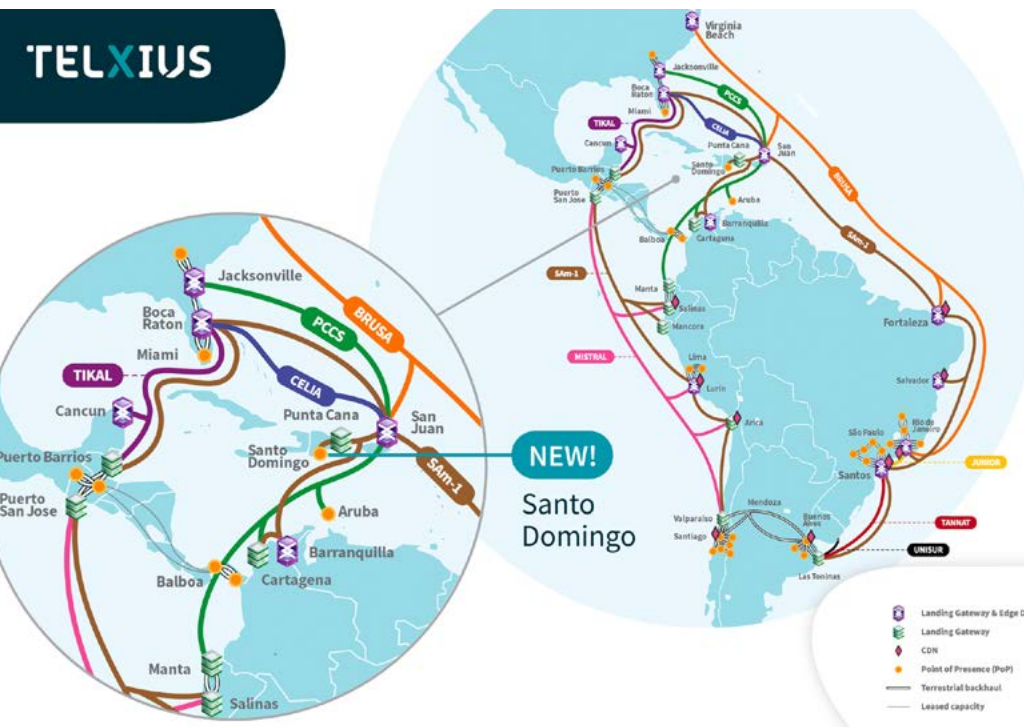
“This integration reflects how sovereignty and interoperability work together,” said Ashish Koshy, CEO of Inception42. “Catalyst gives governments and enterprises a comprehensive platform to build, govern, and observe their agents. Combined with Copilot, an agent built on Catalyst works in Copilot, and an agent built in Copilot works in

Catalyst, with nothing to rebuild and no separate infrastructure to stand up. Demand for agents is moving faster than any single platform can meet on its own, and this puts Inception42 and Microsoft in a position to meet that demand together.”

Amr Kamel, General Manager, Microsoft UAE, said: “Customers are looking for AI that is powerful, trusted, governed and practical to adopt. This brings together Compass, Core42’s in-country infrastructure, Catalyst’s agent orchestration and Microsoft 365 Copilot’s productivity experiences, creating a foundation for organizations to scale AI with confidence. By enabling agents to run with data processed in country and integrated into the tools people use every day, we are helping governments and enterprises accelerate innovation while maintaining control, security and compliance.”

The collaboration reflects a broader shift underway across the region, as governments and enterprises look to build AI capability on their own terms – with the infrastructure, partnerships and talent to sustain it long term. ■

Telxius expands Caribbean network footprint in the Dominican Republic with new Santo Domingo PoP at NAP Caribe



Telxius has launched a new point of presence (PoP) at the NAP Caribe data center in Santo Domingo, strengthening its network presence in the Caribbean. Together with Telxius' submarine cable landing gateway in Punta Cana, a key asset in the company's network expansion across the Caribbean, the new PoP further reinforces the Dominican Republic's role as a strategic connectivity hub for the region.

The expansion brings Telxius' full suite of Network and Transport, Interconnection and Security services closer to customers in the region, helping to meet increasing connectivity demands from carriers, content providers and enterprises.

By expanding its presence in the Dominican Republic, Telxius enhances service availability, performance and resilience, while providing customers with greater access to its global network and ecosystem. This deployment

reinforces the company's commitment to supporting digital growth across the region and further strengthens its position as a trusted connectivity partner.

The Dominican Republic has the largest number of internet users in the Caribbean, with more than 10.2 million citizens online as of Q1 2025, according to DataReportal. Strategically located in the country's capital city, the new PoP supports a fast-growing digital population and internet economy through direct integration with Telxius' global network. Telxius currently operates more than 100,000 km of submarine and terrestrial fiber worldwide, with 25 carrier-neutral landing gateways and edge data centers.

"Our new PoP in Santo Domingo reinforces our commitment to delivering world-class connectivity across some of the world's most dynamic markets," said Carlos Casado, Northern Region Sales VP

at Telxius. "The Caribbean is home to a growing number of digital hubs, making it a key growth region for our customers and our network. Together with NAP Caribe, we are enabling faster, more secure and more reliable connectivity across the Caribbean and wider Latin America."

Telxius' new Santo Domingo PoP provides customers with direct access to scalable, high-performance global infrastructure. Supported by Telxius' landing gateway in Punta Cana, a key new element for Caribbean connectivity, the new PoP enables seamless interconnection with Telxius' network across the Americas and Europe, customers can leverage a broad portfolio of solutions, ranging from internet and interconnection services to private connectivity, cloud access and security.

"We are proud to welcome Telxius to our data center in the Dominican Republic, where its global connectivity footprint is anchored by our advanced technological capabilities, robust security standards, and a highly resilient, carrier-neutral digital infrastructure," said Maria Waleska Álvarez, CEO at NAP Caribe. "By aligning our visions and strengths, we are accelerating the development of a seamlessly interconnected regional ecosystem and enabling new opportunities for innovation, growth, and digital transformation across local and regional markets."

NAP Caribe is a key neutral interconnection hub in the Caribbean, designed to meet the highest standards of security, reliability and redundancy. This announcement follows Telxius' recent network expansion in Fortaleza and underscores the company's ongoing investment in Latin America, driven by rising content demand and growing internet traffic across the region. 📡

GLOBAL ICT, TELECOM & SATCOM EVENTS 2026

27-28 August 2026 Zanzibar, Tanzania	05-07 October 2026 Dubai, UAE	27-28 October 2026 Bangkok, Thailand
31-03 Aug - Sep 2026 Lagos, Nigeria	13-15 October 2026 London, UK	02-05 November 2026 London, UK
31-03 Aug - Sept. 2026 Riyadh, KSA	13-15 October 2026 Messe Wien Vienna, Austria	08-11 November 2026 Doha, Qatar
11-14 September 2026 Amsterdam, Netherlands	14-15 October 2026 Lagos, Nigeria	09-10 November 2026 Riyadh, KSA
16-18 September 2026 Dubai, UAE	15-16 October 2026 Nairobi, Kenya	17-19 November 2026 Cape Town, South Africa
05-07 October 2026 Dubai, UAE	26-27 October 2026 Dubai, UAE	08-11 December 2026 Dubai, UAE



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