

TELETIMES MEDIA LLC

INTERNATIONAL teletimes

Issue 249
FEBRUARY
2026

The latest in Telecom, ICT and SatCom sectors of the Middle East, Asia and Africa

MWVC26

BARCELONA - 2-5 March 2026

stc



stc Group Achieves Record-High Revenues

MEET THE MINDS BEHIND WORLD-CHANGING INNOVATION

MWC BARCELONA, FIRA GRAN VIA
2 - 5 MARCH 2026

MWC26 Barcelona welcomes the connectivity ecosystem's most respected brands, speakers and business leaders – coming together and collaborating across sectors, industries and continents to unlock tomorrow's breakthroughs.

Take your place among tech legends, future founders and global knowledge brokers as we prepare to usher in the new age of connected intelligence.



Get your pass at
mwcbarcelona.com/passes

Vol: 21 Issue: 02 February 2026 ABC Certified

Founder Prof. Nasreen Khalid
Co-Founder Riaz Asher Siddiqui
Chairman Dr. Zafar Khan OBE
Publisher & Chief Editor Khalid Athar
Associate Editor Gulraiz Khalid
Assistant Editors Jassem Hariri
Abdul Majid
S.A. Burney

Technology Writer Ken Herron
Sub Editor Fakher Dawar

Director Sales & Marketing (MEA) Sheraz Hassan Raza
Business Dev. Manager Cell: +971 54 291177
Tahir Alam

Special Correspondents

Riyadh Adnan Raza
Barcelona Mohammed Tanveer
Muhammad Hassan Latif
Dubai Masood Kahout
Cape Town Peter Stoffberg
Jeddah Akram Asad
Amman Eng. Mohammad Sirrieh
Doha Ashraf Siddiqui
Brunei Imran Ul Haq
Farah Muhammad

Bureaux

U.K
235A, Old Brompton Road, London SWFO OEA
Ph: (+44) 0783 1418 072

Spain
C/Vidre 7, Local 2: 08002, Barcelona.
Ph: (034) 699 82 2080, +34 936671010

KSA
P.O. Box 100598, Jeddah, 21311
Ph: (+966) 5098 35514

Canada
126-1055B Forestwood Dr L5C 2T8 Mississauga
Cell: +1 (647) 425-4111

APAC
No. 09, Simpang 95 JLN Ban5, Kampong
Kilanas, BF2780, Brunei Darussalam.
Cell: (+673) 863 2798

Asia Office
Islamabad
PPA Publications,
6, Street 39, G-6/2, Islamabad, 44000
Cell: (+92) 300 9559879
Marketing Coordinator - Imran Rasheed

21th 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"



Scan to download PDF version



TELETIMES MEDIA LLC.
P.O. Box 239031,
Dubai - UAE
+971 50 1305097

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

Contents



11



14



06

Telecommunications

- 11 stc group achieves record-high revenues of SAR 77.8 billion
- 12 e& Leadership Transition: Hatem Dowidar to step down as Group CEO
- 13 MTN and Huawei jointly complete world's first large-scale deployment of the Alpha Antenna
- 18 Wireless Broadband Alliance reveals its Wi-Fi predictions for 2026 and beyond
- 29 WBA report helps enterprises integrate private 5G securely into existing IT and Wi-Fi environments
- 35 Reflections on a year in telecoms
- 38 Ooredoo Kuwait Group reported strong 9% growth in revenue in 2025

Cybersecurity & Enterprise IT

- 16 Telecom threats from 2025 will carry into 2026 as new technology adds new risk
- 28 KSA and UAE among top 10 nations in Global AI for Finance Competitiveness Index
- 32 AI accountability becomes the new mandate as cybersecurity economics shift
- 34 e& and IBM unveil enterprise-grade agentic AI to transform governance and compliance
- 39 UAE-built secure autonomy tech to be introduced in Europe through VentureOne partnerships with Unikie and Solita
- 43 48% of companies in Middle East build SOCs to enhance cybersecurity, with a focus on human expertise

Events

- 06 MWC Barcelona: Two decades on, the global tech industry converges at a new inflection point
- 14 Global cross-sector leadership to converge in Dubai for SAMENA Council 20th Anniversary & Leaders' Summit 2026
- 26 LEAP 5 returns to Riyadh, taking global tech into new worlds
- 40 LEAP East lands in Asia with strong government support from HKSAR Government and key regional tech leaders

Satellite

- 20 Eutelsat's OneWeb enables connectivity for Indian Navy's historic Kaundinya Voyage
- 21 Intersputnik participates in the initiative of United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs
- 22 Eutelsat and unconnected.org partner to deliver affordable satellite-powered community Wi-Fi in Tanzania
- 23 SES and Africa Mobile Network reach milestone: Connecting 5.8 million in DRC
- 25 Iridium NTN Direct prepares to enter beta as testing continues

Editor's Note



Dear Readers,

As we present the February 2026 edition of Teletimes International, we continue to witness a defining period for the global telecom, satellite, and digital infrastructure ecosystem. Across regions—from the Middle East and Asia to Europe and beyond—innovation is accelerating, partnerships are deepening, and digital transformation is no longer an ambition, but a measurable reality.

This issue reflects that momentum.

From Huawei and PEA's next-generation intelligent substation solution redefining smart power infrastructure, to the Wireless Broadband Alliance's forward-looking Wi-Fi 2026 predictions, the industry is clearly moving toward a future shaped by AI, automation, and pervasive connectivity. 5G standalone networks are scaling, embedded connectivity is unlocking new monetisation models, and cloud-native architectures are becoming the backbone of next-generation telecom services.

Meanwhile, major cross-border collaborations—from LEAP East's expansion into Asia to strategic infrastructure investments like Silklink—highlight the growing convergence between markets. The digital dialogue between the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Europe is stronger than ever, creating unprecedented opportunities for innovation and capital flow.

Cybersecurity, AI-driven research platforms like GlobalData's upgraded Ava, sovereign cloud capabilities, and advanced defence technologies further demonstrate that digital transformation is no longer sector-specific. It is horizontal, strategic, and foundational.

As Teletimes enters its 21st year of publication, our commitment remains unchanged: to provide trusted, executive-level insight into the trends shaping telecommunications, satellite communications, enterprise IT, AI, cybersecurity, and digital infrastructure. We remain grateful to our partners, contributors, and readers who continue to make Teletimes a respected platform across MEA, Asia, and global markets.

Enjoy Reading this issue of Teletimes!

Khalid Athar
Chief Editor



Scan to download PDF version

Follow @TeletimesIntl on Twitter



MWC26

MWC Barcelona

Two decades on, the global tech industry converges at a new inflection point

As the global technology ecosystem prepares for another defining gathering, MWC Barcelona 2026 arrives at a moment of profound transition for the communications and digital economy. Marking 20 years of MWC in Barcelona, the event is no longer simply a telecoms conference; it has become a strategic forum where connectivity, artificial intelligence, satellite systems, enterprise digitisation, geopolitics, and public policy intersect at scale.

Scheduled to take place at Fira Gran Via, MWC Barcelona 2026 will once again bring together industry leaders, policymakers, innovators and investors from across the

world. Yet this edition carries a deeper significance. Two decades after Barcelona became MWC's permanent home, the industry itself is undergoing its most fundamental redefinition — moving from networks as infrastructure to networks as intelligent, programmable, economy-shaping platforms.

From Telecoms to Technology Systems: How MWC Has Evolved

MWC's evolution mirrors the trajectory of the global communications industry. What began as a mobile-centric event has expanded into a multi-layered technology ecosystem covering AI, cloud, satellite,

quantum research, enterprise platforms, digital policy, immersive experiences and sustainability.

The GSMA's positioning of MWC Barcelona 2026 reflects this shift clearly. The event now functions as a global technology convergence point, where mobile networks form the foundation, but innovation is driven by cross-sector integration. Telecom operators no longer attend solely as service providers; they arrive as cloud partners, AI enablers, private network architects and digital service orchestrators. This structural transformation is reflected across the 2026 agenda, themes, summits and partner programmes, which collectively frame MWC

as a strategic platform rather than a product showcase.

MWC Barcelona 2026 Themes: Defining the Next Technology Cycle

The core themes for MWC Barcelona 2026 provide a clear lens into where global technology priorities are heading. Rather than chasing short-term trends, the themes focus on long-cycle transformations that will shape markets for the next decade.

Key thematic pillars include:

- AI+ and intelligent systems, examining how artificial intelligence is moving from application-level deployment to becoming embedded across networks, devices, enterprises and governance structures.
- Connected industries, highlighting how connectivity, edge computing and automation are transforming sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, energy, logistics and smart cities.
- Space and non-terrestrial networks, reflecting the accelerating integration of satellite connectivity into mainstream communications architectures.
- Digital trust, policy and governance, recognising that regulation, spectrum policy and international cooperation are now critical enablers — or constraints — of innovation.
- Sustainability and efficiency, addressing energy consumption, network optimisation and responsible technology deployment.

Together, these themes underline a central reality: the next phase of growth will be defined less by coverage expansion and more by capability, intelligence and orchestration.

A Speaker Line-Up Reflecting Industry Convergence

The early confirmation of speakers for MWC Barcelona 2026 signals the GSMA's intent to anchor the event firmly at the crossroads of AI, space technology and next-generation



computing.

Senior leaders from Qualcomm, Character.AI, and Oura are set to take the stage, bringing perspectives that extend well beyond traditional telecoms. Their participation underscores how semiconductor design, AI-native platforms and data-driven health technologies are increasingly dependent on advanced connectivity and edge intelligence.

Equally significant is the presence of thought leaders linked to SpaceX and Starlink, highlighting the growing strategic role of non-terrestrial networks (NTN) in global connectivity planning. Satellite broadband is no longer positioned as a niche or backup solution; it is becoming an integral component of resilient, hybrid network architectures, particularly for

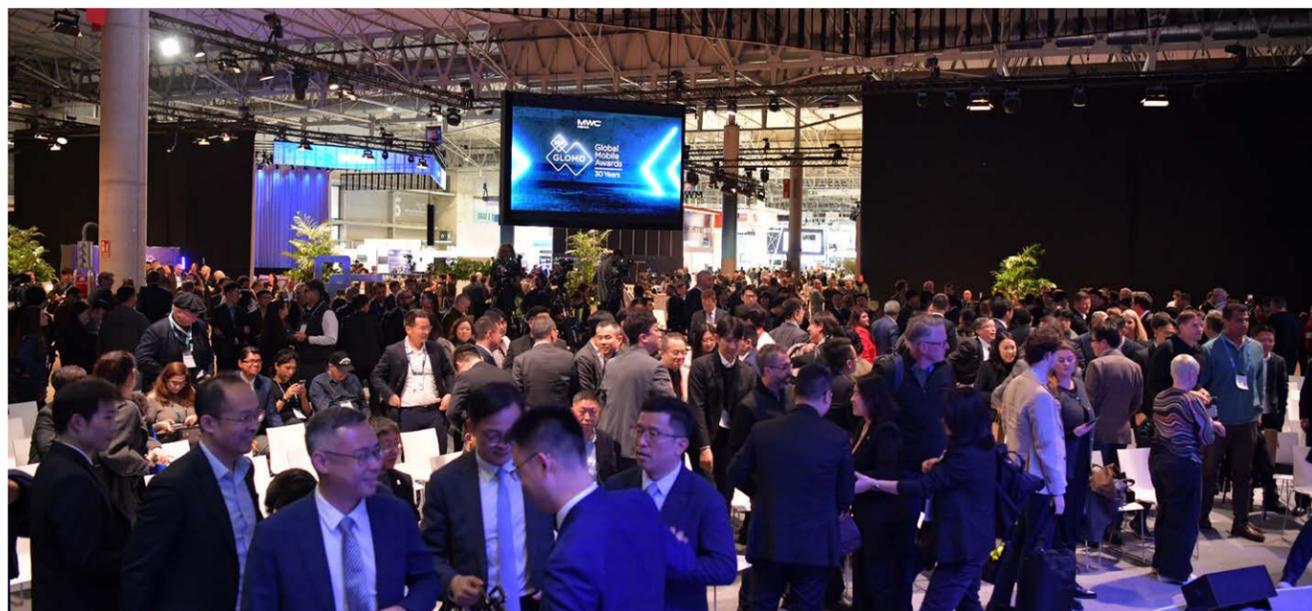
underserved, remote and mission-critical environments.

This blend of speakers reinforces a broader narrative: MWC is now a platform where silicon, software, space and spectrum are discussed as interconnected systems rather than isolated domains.

Ministerial Programme: Policy Moves to the Centre Stage

One of the defining characteristics of MWC Barcelona is the Ministerial Programme, which continues to grow in importance as technology becomes deeply entangled with national strategy and economic security.

The Ministerial Programme brings together government ministers, regulators, heads of international organisations and industry



executives to address issues ranging from spectrum policy and digital inclusion to cross-border regulation and AI governance.

In 2026, these discussions are expected to carry heightened relevance. Governments worldwide are grappling with how to regulate AI responsibly, ensure network resilience amid geopolitical tensions, and balance innovation with national sovereignty. MWC provides a rare neutral platform where public and private sector leaders can engage directly, shaping frameworks that influence global markets.

Agenda Structure: From Vision to Execution

The MWC Barcelona 2026 agenda is deliberately structured to move from high-level strategic vision to practical execution. Keynotes set the macro context, while summits, partner programmes and focused tracks drill down into implementation challenges and commercial realities.

Sessions span:

- *Network transformation and monetisation strategies*
- *AI deployment across networks and enterprises*

- *Private networks and industry-specific connectivity*
- *Cloud-native architectures and edge computing*
- *Security, trust and resilience*
- *Developer ecosystems and platform innovation*

Rather than isolating these topics, the agenda consistently emphasises interdependencies, reflecting how modern digital services rely on tightly integrated technology stacks.

Connected Industries: Enterprise Digitisation Takes Centre Stage

The Connected Industries programme represents one of the most commercially significant areas of MWC Barcelona 2026. It focuses on how connectivity and intelligence are reshaping real-world industries, moving beyond pilots to scalable deployment.

Manufacturing, transport, healthcare, utilities and public services are all examined through the lens of 5G, edge computing, AI and automation. For telecom operators and technology vendors, this represents

a critical opportunity: enterprise digital transformation is emerging as one of the most sustainable growth avenues in a maturing consumer market.

These sessions highlight how operators are repositioning themselves as long-term digital partners rather than connectivity suppliers, embedding networks into operational workflows and mission-critical systems.

Talent Arena 2026: Developers Move to the Forefront

A notable addition to the MWC ecosystem is Talent Arena 2026, which brings together global developers, engineers, startups and technology leaders. This initiative reflects an important shift in industry thinking: talent, not infrastructure alone, is the decisive competitive advantage.

By integrating developers more deeply into the MWC experience, the GSMA acknowledges that innovation increasingly emerges from open ecosystems, APIs and collaborative platforms rather than closed, vertically integrated models.

Talent Arena also reinforces MWC's role in shaping the future workforce, connecting education, research and industry at a time

when demand for AI, software and systems expertise continues to outpace supply.

Sports Tomorrow Congress: Technology Beyond Traditional Sectors

The Sports Tomorrow Congress, hosted as part of MWC Barcelona, illustrates how far the event's reach now extends beyond telecoms. By exploring the intersection of sports, technology, data analytics and fan engagement, the programme demonstrates how connectivity and digital platforms are redefining experiences across entirely new domains.

This crossover reflects a broader industry reality: digital infrastructure is now a horizontal enabler, influencing sectors as diverse as entertainment, education and public safety.

Partner Programmes and Summits: Depth Over Breadth

MWC Barcelona 2026 places strong emphasis on partner-led programmes and thematic summits, allowing for deeper, more technical exploration of specific challenges and solutions.

These sessions enable technology providers, operators and enterprises to present real-world case studies, deployment lessons and commercial outcomes. For senior decision-makers, they offer valuable insight into what is working in practice — and what remains aspirational.

Twenty Years in Barcelona: A Strategic Milestone

The 20-year anniversary of MWC in Barcelona is more than a commemorative milestone; it serves as a reminder of how deeply the event has influenced both the city and the global industry.

Over two decades, MWC has mirrored — and often anticipated — shifts in technology, from the rise of smartphones and mobile broadband to the current era of AI-driven networks and space-based



connectivity. Barcelona's role as host has provided continuity, enabling the event to grow alongside the industry it serves.

Why MWC Barcelona 2026 Matters

MWC Barcelona 2026 arrives at a time when the technology industry is navigating uncertainty alongside opportunity. AI promises unprecedented productivity gains, yet raises ethical and regulatory questions. Satellite connectivity offers resilience, yet challenges traditional network economics. Enterprises demand transformation, while sustainability pressures intensify.

In this environment, MWC serves as a global alignment point — a place where competing visions are debated, partnerships are

formed, and future directions begin to crystallise.

As MWC Barcelona 2026 approaches, its role as the world's leading connectivity and technology event appears more secure than ever. Yet its continued relevance lies in its ability to evolve — to reflect the realities of an industry that is no longer defined by devices or networks alone, but by intelligent, interconnected systems shaping economies and societies.

For telecom operators, technology vendors, policymakers and enterprises alike, MWC Barcelona remains not just an annual event, but a strategic compass — pointing toward what comes next in the global digital journey. ■

stc group achieves record-high revenues of SAR 77.8 billion and net profit growth of 12.5%

After excluding non-recurring items

stc group announced its consolidated financial results for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2025, recording the highest revenues in its history at SAR 77.8 billion, reflecting a 2.5% increase compared to the previous year. Net profit rose by 12.5% after excluding non-recurring items, demonstrating the strength of the group's business model and the continued execution of its sustainable growth strategy.

Gross profit increased to SAR 37.7 billion, while operating profit reached SAR 14.4 billion. Earnings before interest, taxes, zakat, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) amounted to approximately SAR 24.5 billion, marking a 6.1% increase after excluding non-recurring items. This growth was driven by improved operational efficiency and disciplined management of costs and capital investments. The Group also announced a dividend distribution of SAR 0.55 per share for the fourth quarter of 2025, in line with its approved dividend policy.

Alongside its strong financial performance, stc group continues to invest in developing employees' capabilities and skills. Over the past year, the group achieved notable progress in talent development through programs such as the Partner Development Program, Job Attachment initiatives, and stc Academy. It also sponsored the Human Capability Initiative Conference, during which it launched a public training platform aimed at equipping national talents with the skills required for the future labor market, underscoring its commitment to building digital capabilities and enhancing competitiveness.

In addition, stc plays a key role in supporting the organization of major international events and religious seasons such as Hajj and Umrah. The group also continues to support national forums and major events through reliable digital infrastructure that strengthens the readiness of vital sectors with high efficiency. stc provides advanced connectivity solutions and digital services aligned with the highest international standards, contributing to strengthening the Kingdom's position as a leading destination across various sectors. These efforts, combined with the brand's strong presence, reinforce stc group's position as a leading digital enabler in the region.

Eng. Olayan bin Mohammed Alwetaid, group CEO of stc, stated that the results reflect the group's ability to achieve sustainable profitable growth while diversifying income sources and strengthening digital infrastructure. He noted that during the year, the group expanded its network to exceed 10,800 5G sites and 3.75 million fiber-to-the-home connections, in addition to conducting



Eng. Olayan bin Mohammed Alwetaid, group CEO of stc

the first regional trial of the 7 GHz spectrum in preparation for 6G technologies.

The year also witnessed the expansion of STC Bank to more than 8 million customers, as well as the signing of strategic partnerships to establish dedicated data centers with capacity reaching up to 1 gigawatt. The group also concluded multi-billion-riyal strategic agreements in digital infrastructure and issued USD 2 billion in sukuk, which were oversubscribed more than four times, reflecting investor confidence in the group's strong financial position.

On the sustainability front, the group's MSCI rating improved to AA, and it received a five-star EFQM certification. stc maintained its position as the strongest brand in the Middle East for the sixth consecutive year. According to the Brand Finance 2026 report, the group ranked first among the strongest brands in the Middle East, third globally as the strongest telecom brand, and ninth globally as the most valuable telecom brand, placing it among the top ten telecom companies worldwide by brand value. This ranking reflects the group's strong presence in international markets and the confidence of investors and customers, reaffirming its commitment to innovation and investment in digital infrastructure and advanced technologies. These achievements demonstrate the integration of strong financial performance, capability development, and digital leadership, reinforcing the group's position as a key partner in supporting sustainable development. ■

e& Leadership Transition

Hatem Dowidar to step down as Group CEO; Masood Sharif Mahmood appointed successor

e& has announced a significant transition in its executive leadership. Hatem Dowidar, who has served as Group Chief Executive Officer since 2020, will step down from his role on March 31, 2026. The Board of Directors has appointed Masood M. Sharif Mahmood, the current CEO of e& UAE, to succeed him as Group CEO, effective April 1, 2026.

The transition comes on the heels of a historic fiscal year for e&. Under Dowidar's leadership, the group reported record-breaking financial results for 2025, with consolidated revenue reaching AED 72.9 billion and consolidated net profit climbing to AED 14.4 billion.

During his six-year tenure at the helm, Hatem Dowidar spearheaded the group's evolution from a traditional telecommunications operator into a global technology and investment powerhouse. His "Telco to TechCo" strategy saw the successful rebranding of the organization to e& in 2022 and the aggressive expansion of its footprint across Europe, Asia, and Africa. Notable milestones include a significant strategic stake in Vodafone Group and the acquisition of a controlling interest in PPF Telecom's assets across Central and Eastern Europe.

"Leading e& during this defining chapter has been an immense honor," said Hatem Dowidar. "With 2025 marking a record year, I believe the timing is right to hand over the reins. Our technology now empowers over 244 million subscribers, and I am confident that the group is well-positioned for its next phase of growth under Masood's leadership."

Masood M. Sharif Mahmood, who will assume the dual responsibilities of Group



Hatem Dowidar

CEO and CEO of e& UAE, brings over 25 years of experience in the ICT and investment sectors. Since joining e& UAE as CEO in 2021, Mahmood has been instrumental in maintaining the group's dominant market position in its home territory while accelerating the deployment of 5G and AI-driven enterprise solutions.

Prior to his current role, Mahmood served

as the CEO of Yahsat for eight years, where he led the satellite operator through its successful IPO.

The Board of e& expressed its profound gratitude to Dowidar for his visionary leadership and reaffirmed its confidence in Mahmood's ability to drive the group's international scaling and digital ecosystem ambitions. ■



Leading Africa's AI-Powered Network MTN and Huawei jointly complete world's first large-scale deployment of the Alpha Antenna

Africa leading operator MTN, in collaboration with Huawei, successfully completed the world's first large-scale deployment of the Alpha Antenna in Ghana. This milestone represents a substantial enhancement in network performance, with the transition to intelligent and AI-driven innovation establishing a new benchmark for the evolution toward autonomous driving networks in Africa and globally. This deployment has validated groundbreaking performance improvements and operational efficiencies. Post-deployment tests recorded a rise in regional traffic by 6.8%, while improving operations and maintenance efficiency by a factor of 30x.

Confronting persistent network operations and maintenance challenges of manual dependency, slow adaptation, and inconsistent accuracy, MTN has unlocked a

new paradigm through the Alpha Antenna deployment. The solution's integrated AISU (Antenna Information Sensor Unit) enables fully automated, real-time, and precise retrieval of antenna parameters, eliminating manual site visits. The AIMU (Array Information Mapping Unit) ensures real-time and exact visualization of network topology, eradicating configuration errors. Furthermore, it supports remote adjustment of multi-dimensional beams, allowing the network to dynamically adapt coverage and capacity to real-time demands, collapsing optimization cycles from weeks to minutes while delivering a consistently superior user experience.

The Alpha antenna is driving a paradigm shift in network operations by endowing networks with closed-loop capabilities for "real-time retrieval, precise control, and

dynamic optimization"—transitioning from passive, reactive manual intervention to a proactive, AI-powered model. This transition provides a crucial "digital foundation" for MTN in building a high-level Autonomous Driving Network (ADN), making self-optimization and autonomous evolution of the network a reality.

MTN Ghana states that the Alpha Antenna solution represents a pivotal step toward the full digital transformation of network infrastructure. It not only significantly reduces operational complexity and costs but, more importantly, empowers the network with real-time retrieval and rapid-response capabilities. This successful collaboration with Huawei has laid a solid foundation for future AI-driven intelligent networks, injecting fresh momentum into Africa's digital transformation. ■

Global cross-sector leadership to converge in Dubai for SAMENA Council 20th Anniversary & Leaders' Summit 2026

With the esteemed patronage of the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) of the United Arab Emirates, the SAMENA Telecommunications Council is pleased to announce the 2026 edition of its invitation-only Leaders' Summit, marking the Council's 20th anniversary. The Summit, to be held at Atlantis The Palm, Dubai, on April 1st, will bring together government leaders, regulators, global industry CEOs, investors, and heads of international organizations for an unparalleled dialogue on the future of digital convergence and collaboration. The agenda of the Leaders' Summit 2026 will be defined under the global theme "Intelligent Networks for Sovereign & Sustainable Futures"

The 2026 Summit is not only a celebration of SAMENA Council's two decades of industry support and contributions to the ICT ecosystem, it is a defining moment to shape the next twenty years of digital growth and innovation across the region. In a technology and business landscape, where rapid convergence between telecommunications, artificial intelligence, and space-based connectivity is driving change and innovation, the Leaders' Summit 2026 will explore how intelligent networks can enable sovereign and sustainable futures. Leaders and experts will discuss AI-native and autonomous networks, the evolution of 5G-Advanced, future-ready broadband, and hybrid connectivity integrating terrestrial, satellite, and device-to-device technologies. The Summit will also examine edge and distributed intelligence, national strategies for sovereign AI, cybersecurity and trust, sustainable digital infrastructure, ecosystem and operator transformation, and the emergence of new value chains defining the digital economy.

"2026 is not only a moment to reflect on our past twenty years, it is an opportunity to shape the next decades of digital progress for citizens and economies alike," said Bocar



BA, CEO of SAMENA Council. "The Leaders' Summit provides a platform for policymakers, industry pioneers, and investors to align on strategies, partnerships, and innovations that will deliver intelligent, secure, and sustainable networks for the region and beyond."

Held in the UAE, a recognized global hub for digital leadership, the Leaders' Summit 2026 will feature high-level discussions on spectrum governance, AI frameworks, regulatory readiness, and digital sovereignty, alongside investment-focused dialogues connecting capital with frontier technologies

and scalable markets. Participants from Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and beyond will explore cross-border collaboration, regional integration, and harmonized policies that support inclusive, interoperable digital ecosystems.

The Leaders' Summit 2026 is being organized with the steadfast support of telecom operators led by the SAMENA Council Board of Directors and chaired by stc group, with legacy sponsorship from Huawei, in strategic cooperation with Smart Africa and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

As the region's premier forum for leadership and collaboration, the SAMENA Council Summit offers companies and ecosystem players an opportunity to engage with decision-makers, explore strategic partnerships, and showcase solutions that will define the next era of digital transformation. Organizations interested in sponsorship or participation are encouraged to connect with SAMENA Council to explore collaboration opportunities. ■

DCO Chief Deemah AlYahya honored for bridging global digital divides at The Montgomery Summit

The Montgomery Summit, a technology conference hosted by LA-based VC firm March Capital, has announced that Her Excellency Deemah AlYahya, Secretary-General of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), will receive the 3rd annual Technology Diplomacy Award on March 11th in Santa Monica, CA in partnership with the Tech Diplomacy Network.

The award recognizes Her Excellency as the first Saudi woman to lead an international organization. Under her stewardship, the DCO has grown from five founding member states to 16 countries worldwide, representing more than \$3.5 trillion in combined GDP and over 800 million people. The Montgomery Summit & Tech Diplomacy Network will celebrate Her Excellency's work in bringing governments and industry together to address the reality that billions of people remain offline, and many communities still lack the digital skills as well as basic technology to participate in today's economy. With her involvement, the DCO has earned formal recognition within the United Nations system.

Across her career, Her Excellency has led initiatives specifically focused on expanding digital skills for women and entrepreneurs. These efforts include supporting more than 480 startups, launching 4 innovation centers to support digital transformation, training more than 26,000 women in tech and entrepreneurship, and building a network of more than 100 women investors.

Earlier this year, DCO Member States unanimously reaffirmed their confidence in her leadership by renewing her mandate for a second term as Secretary-General, further reinforcing her selection for the Technology Diplomacy Award.

"Creating a new multilateral organization and earning the trust of governments and industry leaders across regions is incredibly



difficult," said Jamie Montgomery, Founder of The Montgomery Summit and Co-Founder & Managing Partner at March Capital. "Technology is central to economic growth and national competitiveness, and Her Excellency has helped bring leaders together to address those realities in a practical way. We're honored to recognize her at the Summit."

As part of the award program at The Montgomery Summit, Her Excellency AlYahya will participate in a fireside chat on March 11th with Keith Strier, SVP of Worldwide AI Markets at Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) and Tech Diplomacy Network member, where they will discuss global technology cooperation, digital infrastructure, and the role of public-private partnerships in shaping the future of the digital economy.

"Her Excellency Deemah AlYahya embodies

what multilateral tech diplomacy looks like when employed in the right way," said Martin Rauchbauer, Founder of the Tech Diplomacy Network. "She has not only built a new multilateral institution from the ground up, but has done so with a clear focus on inclusion, trust, and real-world impact."

"Under her leadership, the Digital Cooperation Organization has become a credible global platform that brings governments and industry together to close digital divides, expand digital skills, and ensure that technological progress serves people rather than leaving them behind."

"Her Excellency's work demonstrates that effective global tech cooperation is possible—and urgently needed—and it is precisely this combination of vision, execution, and diplomacy that the Tech Diplomacy Award was created to honor." ■

Telecom threats from 2025 will carry into 2026 as new technology adds new risk, warns Kaspersky

Kaspersky Security Bulletin reviews what shaped telecom cybersecurity in 2025 and what is likely to persist in 2026. Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) activity, supply-chain compromise, DDoS disruption and SIM-enabled fraud continued to pressure operators in 2025, while newer technology deployments introduce additional operational risk.

In 2025, telecom operators faced broad threat categories. Targeted intrusions (APTs) continued to focus on gaining stealthy access to operator environments for long-term espionage and leverage through privileged network positioning. Supply chain vulnerabilities remained an entry point: telecom ecosystems rely on many vendors, contractors and tightly integrated platforms, so weaknesses in widely used software and services can provide a path into operator networks. Finally, DDoS remained a practical availability and capacity problem.

Kaspersky Security Network showed that last year, between November 2024 and October 2025, 13% of users in the telecommunications sector encountered web threats and 21% faced on-device threats. 10% of telecom organizations worldwide experienced ransomware.

At the same time, the telecommunications sector is moving from rapid technological development to broad implementation — and the report argues that this shift creates new opportunities and new operational risks for 2026. Kaspersky highlights three areas where technology transitions could introduce disruption if rolled out unevenly or without strong controls: AI-assisted network management, where automation can amplify configuration errors or act on misleading data; post-quantum cryptography transitions, where rushed deployment of hybrid and post-quantum approaches could cause



interoperability and performance issues across IT, management and interconnect environments; and 5G-to-satellite integration (NTN), where expanding service footprints and partner dependencies introduce new integration points and potential failure modes.

“The threats that dominated 2025 — APT campaigns, supply chain attacks, DDoS floods — aren't going away. But now they intersect with operational risks from AI automation, quantum-ready cryptography, and satellite integration. Telecom operators need visibility across both dimensions: maintaining strong defenses against known threats while building security into these new technologies from day one. The key is continuous threat intelligence that spans from endpoint to edge to orbit,” — said Leonid Bezvershenko, senior security researcher at Kaspersky Global Research & Analysis Team.

To reduce risk and strengthen resilience, Kaspersky experts recommend:

- Track the APT landscape and telecom-relevant infrastructure continuously.

Kaspersky Threat Intelligence Portal helps to monitor actor and campaign context, and pair that intelligence with regular security awareness training so employees can recognize suspicious activity and apply security policies consistently.

- Treat AI-driven network automation as a change-management program. Keep a human override for high-impact actions, roll out in stages with clear rollback paths, and continuously validate the data feeding AI systems so noisy or manipulated inputs cannot trigger “confidently wrong” changes at scale.

- Increase DDoS readiness as a capacity-management problem. Validate upstream mitigation, protect edge routing, and monitor for congestion signals that precede customer impact. Use threat intelligence to enrich indicators and spot botnet infrastructure early.

- Deploy an EDR capability such as Kaspersky Next EDR Expert to detect advanced threats early, support rapid investigation, and enable effective incident containment and remediation. **■**

With us,
every handshake
is a **safe** one.

At AuthBridge, we build trust with *employee verification* checks and *business due diligence*, so you can focus on *growing*, while we handle the risk.



Scan to start
your trusted journey



sales@authbridge.com



+971 50 557 6968



www.authbridge.com/ae/

Wireless Broadband Alliance reveals its Wi-Fi predictions for 2026 and beyond

The Wireless Broadband Alliance (WBA), the global industry body dedicated to driving the seamless and interoperable service experience of Wi-Fi across the global wireless ecosystem, has shared its 10 predictions for Wi-Fi in 2026 and beyond.

Detailed in full in the “WBA Industry Report 2026”, these predictions point to Wi-Fi entering a powerful new growth phase, with Wi-Fi 7 scaling fast while the groundwork for Wi-Fi 8 and mmWave is laid. Equally, 6 GHz, Wi-Fi HaLow and mesh are extending reliable coverage from homes to factories and smart cities, while offload, fiber, satellite and LEO-powered in-flight services are turning Wi-Fi into a ubiquitous, carrier-grade connectivity fabric that underpins both 5G today and 6G tomorrow.

Tiago Rodrigues, President and CEO of the Wireless Broadband Alliance, said: “It is clear that Wi-Fi is becoming fundamental as the digital backbone of modern business. From Wi-Fi 7 and 6 GHz to Wi-Fi HaLow and OpenRoaming, we’re seeing rapid innovation turn into real deployments that improve user experience, unlock new services, revenues and reduce costs for operators and enterprises. As 5G and, in future, 6G increasingly converge with Wi-Fi, organizations can design connectivity to achieve the outcomes they need, whether that’s smarter factories, more resilient cities or new ways to engage customers. The WBA is helping the ecosystem make that leap together.”

Wi-Fi Predictions for 2026 and Beyond

1. Wi-Fi 7 adoption to accelerate: 2025 saw industry adoption of Wi-Fi 7 rapidly gather pace, with consumers and enterprises eager to harness the 6 GHz spectrum band and the advanced new features of the

standard. Reflecting this strong interest in Wi-Fi 7, shipments of APs supporting the standard rose from 26.3 million in 2024 to a projected total of 66.5 million in 2025. ABI Research anticipates that this transition to Wi-Fi 7 will accelerate further in 2026, with a forecast annual shipment number of Wi-Fi 7 APs at 117.9 million.

2. Standard Power 6 GHz to gain further traction: Standard Power (SP) 6 GHz got off to a rocky start, with protracted regulator certifications and limited infrastructure options. Now that there is greater clarity on the regulatory landscape of SP 6 GHz, and that a wider selection of SP 6 GHz enabled equipment has emerged, we expect that 2026 will see SP 6 GHz deployments accelerate. Large public venues, education, and the industrial manufacturing verticals will be the keenest adopters of the technology. We also anticipate that additional regulators will make moves on authorizing SP 6 GHz in 2026.

3. Early prototypes of Wi-Fi 8 to emerge: Although the official Wi-Fi 8 (802.11bn) standard won’t be finalized for several years, we saw the first wave Wi-Fi 8 chipsets being unveiled at the tail-end of 2025. We expect this to be followed in 2026 with a broader array of Wi-Fi 8 chipset announcements, and the revealing of many early prototype Wi-Fi 8 APs. A handful of these prototype Wi-Fi 8 APs will be seen early in the year at MWC 2026.

4. Wi-Fi offload gains in prominence with OpenRoaming: A plethora of trends will act to spur investments into Wi-Fi offloading in 2026. For mobile carriers, the challenge of grappling with ever-increasing traffic on their cellular networks, alongside the need to improve connectivity experiences for their customers, will drive them to expand their Wi-Fi offloading capabilities. Many smart cities on the other hand will look to

leverage Wi-Fi offloading to provide both residents and tourists with continuous free connectivity, as well as enabling a range of new applications, from smart traffic to disaster prevention. Additional advancements in OpenRoaming in 2026 will help to drive this trend further.

5. Wi-Fi HaLow momentum accelerates: Following many successful trials from the WBA, 2025 was the year that Wi-Fi HaLow truly found its feet and commercialization of the technology began to scale up. Throughout the year we saw numerous new chipset and infrastructure announcements, alongside the successful running of the first Wi-Fi HaLow Global Summit and the launch of a new marketing program for Wi-Fi HaLow from the Wi-Fi Alliance. We expect the momentum behind Wi-Fi HaLow to continue in 2026. This will include additional product announcements, and exciting deployments which demonstrate the real-world applications of the technology.

6. Greater clarity on how Wi-Fi and 6G will converge: The WBA’s vision statement for 6G highlights how the upcoming 3GPP standard will be built around a collaboration with Wi-Fi and on harnessing both technologies for the achievement of the greatest cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency. As the cellular industry gradually begins to gear up for 6G throughout 2026, we expect that we will get further clarification on the exact nature of the 6G/Wi-Fi collaboration.

7. Wi-Fi on airplanes witnesses a major advancement: The Quality of Experience (QoE) for in-flight Wi-Fi is set to undergo a major enhancement with the emergence of connectivity underpinned by Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite constellations, which have the potential to enable significantly faster speeds, lower latencies, and uninterrupted connectivity. 2026 will see

a multitude of airlines, including British Airways (BA) and United, adopt in-flight Wi-Fi solutions supported by LEO satellite constellations for the first time. BA, alongside many others, will at the same time make Wi-Fi access available for free to all passengers, irrespective of their travelling class, greatly expanding in-flight Wi-Fi access.

8. Advances in broadband access improve and expand connectivity: Fiber penetration will continue to rise across 2026, with the number of fiber broadband subscriptions reaching a new record of 808.7 million at the end of 2026, up from an estimated 776.3 million at the close of 2025, which itself was a major leap from the 745.5 million at the end of 2024. At the same time, the continued

expansion of satellite broadband will help to enable reliable, high-performance connectivity to the unconnected and underserved. Accordingly, the total number of worldwide satellite broadband subscriptions will increase from 6.76 million at the close of 2024 to 12.67 million by the end of 2026.

9. Mesh adoption continues to rise: Consumers are increasingly turning to Wi-Fi Mesh to extend coverage and eliminate blind spots throughout the home, as well as to enable the delivery of additional services. In the early 2020s much of the demand came through the retail channel, but Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are now beginning to scale up their Wi-Fi Mesh deployments in an effort to raise ARPU (Average Revenues Per User) and to

improve customer Quality of Service (QoS). Reflecting this growing demand, annual shipments of Wi-Fi Mesh equipment are projected to rise from 41.7 million in 2024 to a total of 63.6 million in 2026.

10. Important progress on Integrated Millimeter Wave (mmWave) Wi-Fi (802.11bq): With the Project Authorization Request for 802.11bq initiated back in December 2024, the 802.11bq working group has now begun exploring how Wi-Fi can best utilize the 60 GHz spectrum band. Whilst project completion is not expected until 2029, 2026 should provide us some insight into the direction which the 802.11bq standard will take, and how the industry plans to leverage the band for the delivery of the high-gigabit, low-latency wireless transfer of data. ■



Eutelsat's OneWeb enables connectivity for Indian Navy's historic project Kaundinya Voyage



Eutelsat has partnered with the INSV Kaundinya team, a part of the Indian Navy on one of its most prestigious maritime heritage and strategic initiatives, to provide its OneWeb high-speed LEO satellite connectivity to a vessel undertaking a historic voyage of national importance.

Project Kaundinya is a landmark voyage undertaken aboard INSV Kaundinya, a traditionally built stitched-plank sailing vessel inspired by ancient Indian shipbuilding techniques. The voyage retraced historic maritime trade routes, showcasing India's rich seafaring legacy while promoting maritime innovation and national pride.

As part of this initiative, Eutelsat's OneWeb Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite connectivity has been deployed and remains operational onboard the vessel, enabling reliable, real-time communications throughout the journey. Given the vessel's traditional design and the absence of conventional

communication infrastructure, OneWeb's LEO technology served as the sole connectivity link for the expedition.

Sanjeev Sanyal, Member of the Prime Minister Economic Advisory Council (EAC-PM) and a core member of the crew and project architect of Kaundinya said, "Throughout the voyage, having reliable satellite connectivity from Eutelsat's OneWeb has been invaluable for the crew. It has allowed us to stay connected with shore-based teams, supporting communication, live feeds, and above all morale during long and sometimes challenging periods at sea."

The voyage is documented along its route, with live updates enabled through OneWeb's satellite network. This real-world deployment demonstrates the strength, resilience, and adaptability of OneWeb's LEO connectivity in mission-critical maritime environments, reinforcing its role in maritime security, crew wellbeing, and strategic communications.

Neha Idnani, Regional Vice President APAC, Eutelsat, and Board Director of OneWeb India, said, "We are honored that Eutelsat has been entrusted with enabling connectivity for this historic voyage. I congratulate the team behind INSV Kaundinya on achieving this remarkable milestone and safely reaching their first destination, Muscat, Oman. Project Kaundinya represents a rare convergence of India's rich maritime heritage, national ambition, and technological innovation. Our OneWeb LEO technology is purpose-built for mission-critical environments, where crew safety, security, resilience, and real-time communications are essential."

She added, "This collaboration further underscores Eutelsat's long-term commitment to supporting initiatives of national importance, particularly in defence, government, and humanitarian domains, through secure and resilient satellite connectivity." ■

Intersputnik participates in the initiative of United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

As part of its cooperation with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), Intersputnik sponsored the translation of the UNOOSA Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for the Space Sector into Arabic and Russian languages.

Being an intergovernmental organization, Intersputnik has always defended equal international cooperation as the primary instrument for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. This interaction in outer space is innately of global nature, serving the interests of all humanity in various ways. So, today, the role of international organisations aimed at coordinating the efforts of all players in the space industry to create conditions for constructive cooperation – the UNOOSA, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Global Satellite Operators Association, and others – is more important than ever.

The UNOOSA sees the dissemination of information about possibilities of space technologies, the global humanitarian significance of the peaceful exploration of space, the possible participation of all stakeholders in the development of space applications, etc. as one of the most important areas of its activity. Intersputnik supports constructive UN initiatives to disseminate and promote information and educational materials. At the same time, Intersputnik, which unites countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America, fully recognises the importance of linguistic diversity in increasing the accessibility of important information. In this regard, and in line with its principles of open cooperation, Intersputnik sponsored the translation of the Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for the Space Sector into Arabic and Russian languages.

Intersputnik adheres to the principle of expanding the awareness of the most pressing issues, including in their native



languages, among a wide range of space industry players. So, it regularly participates in projects of this kind. In 2025, in cooperation with the Secure World Foundation, Intersputnik also organised the translation of the information bulletin of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UN Committee on Outer Space, COPUOS) into the languages of the Organization (French, Spanish and Russian). As a result, a wide range of stakeholders were able to become familiar with the activities of the UN Committee on Outer Space as a key platform for sectoral international policy-making. Earlier, in 2024, Intersputnik covered the costs of organising oral simultaneous interpretation into all six official UN languages during the workshop "ITU in the Service of Space".

UNOOSA Director, Aarti Holla-Maini, expressed deep respect and gratitude to Intersputnik for its support of the project. "Intersputnik is willing to contribute to raising awareness of the importance of women's participation in the space industry at the global level," said Intersputnik Director General Ksenia Drozdova.

Achieving gender equality in the space industry is another key driver of collaboration among all leading space industry players, a real step towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and an opportunity to address the shortage of skilled personnel, particularly

in developing countries. Intersputnik participates in UN events aimed at eliminating the gender gap, in particular the ITU Girls in ICT forum, especially those held in its Member States — Mongolia and Tajikistan. Intersputnik's annual online conference, NatSatTel, has got a roundtable discussion about the role of girls and women in the satellite communications industry.

The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for the Space Sector translated with the support of Intersputnik is the next stage of the UNOOSA Space4Women project, which is aimed at empowering women in the space industry. The project aims to ensure that women and girls play increasingly active and equal roles in space science, technology, innovation and exploration. The implementation of the tools is expected to increase the number of women working at all levels of the space industry, create an inclusive work environment, improve the efficiency of space activities through workforce diversity, and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the space sector. Due to Intersputnik's participation, this UNOOSA document will become available in countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. This, in turn, will provide all space industry players with tangible mechanisms for implementing the UN gender policy and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. ■

Eutelsat and unconnected.org partner to deliver affordable satellite-powered community Wi-Fi in Tanzania

Eutelsat and unconnected.org, a global non-profit organization focused on delivering “Meaningful Internet For All”, have entered into a partnership to expand access to community Wi-Fi across Africa leveraging Eutelsat’s EUTELSAT KONNECT high-throughput satellite.

The partnership will launch in Tanzania, where unconnected.org will introduce the KONNECT community Wi-Fi service to local partners – including ISPs, NGOs, system integrators, and government stakeholders through a commercial model designed to accelerate return on investment, expand digital access in underserved and hard to reach places, and support long term delivery.

The initiative will also lay the groundwork for expansion into additional African countries, as the two organizations collaborate to extend digital access across the continent.

Powered by the EUTELSAT KONNECT satellite, the Community Wi-Fi service provides high-speed connectivity to locations beyond the reach of terrestrial networks, enabling schools, healthcare centers and small businesses to access essential online resources.



Positioned at the 7° East orbital position, EUTELSAT KONNECT is a high-throughput satellite offering unprecedented operational flexibility and delivering significant resources for broadband services across Africa.

Philippe Baudrier, Eutelsat’s Vice President for Africa, said “Through EUTELSAT KONNECT, we are already seeing the tangible impact that satellite broadband can have in communities across Africa — from schools and clinics to local entrepreneurs. Partnering with unconnected.org allows us to extend this reach even further, supporting the development of sustainable,

community-based connectivity that delivers real social and economic value.”

Mea Thompson, CCO, of unconnected.org, said “Eutelsat KONNECT plays a critical role in Tanzania by extending connectivity into areas that have historically been impossible to serve in a sustainable way. By lowering the cost of backhaul, it enables viable business models that allow local ISPs and community partners to achieve a return on investment while connecting the unconnected. This is exactly the kind of solution needed to scale digital access in a way that is both impactful and commercially sustainable.”

Eutelsat signs €1bn in ECA financing for the procurement of LEO satellites

Eutelsat has signed a €1bn Export Credit Agency (ECA) financing for the procurement of LEO satellites for its OneWeb constellation.

The financing will be provided by a pool of commercial banks, which will benefit from a French State guarantee, obtained through its export credit agency, Bpifrance Assurance Export for an amount of c. €975m-eq. It will be provided to Eutelsat Communications SA and will rank pari-

passuwith other debts of that entity.

Its disbursement remains subject to several conditions precedent, including a bond issuance at Eutelsat Communications.

The financing backs the recently announced contract with Airbus Defence and Space for 340 LEO satellites, on top of the 100 already ordered, to be manufactured at Airbus’ Toulouse facility. These satellites will ensure full operational continuity for customers

of the OneWeb LEO constellation, by progressively replacing existing satellites as their operational life comes to an end.

Jean-Francois Fallacher, Chief Executive Officer of Eutelsat said: “We are delighted to secure this crucial aspect of Eutelsat’s refinancing plan. We are grateful to the French State for its unwavering support. This funding significantly strengthens our financial structure and gives us the means to support the deployment of our LEO activities”

SES and Africa Mobile Network reach milestone: Connecting 5.8 million in DRC, expanding rural coverage

SES and Africa Mobile Network (AMN) have expanded connectivity infrastructure across the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), now supporting more than 1,100 base stations and increasing population coverage by 27%, bringing mobile network access within reach for more people, many in rural communities.

There is a clear demand for connectivity across the region, a direct result of the mission to bring rural DRC online. For AMN and SES, that’s not just a percentage, it represents millions of people accessing mobile network services for the very first time.

Through this collaboration, AMN successfully installed an additional 292 new mobile network base stations across the country using capacity provided by SES, providing critical telecommunication services to more than 5.8 million people.

The sites were deployed in just 90 days. But the numbers only tell half the story.

“Building nearly 300 sites in just three months, under some of the toughest conditions imaginable, is an extraordinary achievement,” said Michael Darcy, CEO of Africa Mobile Network. “This is what happens when determination meets purpose. This is exactly why AMN exists: to connect even the most remote communities sustainably, reliably, and at scale.”

At the heart of AMN’s mission is a simple belief: connectivity is a fundamental human right.

The real story is about teams navigating impassable roads and hand carrying equipment for miles through the bush when the trucks could not travel any further. It was exhausting, challenging work, but they persevered and successfully provided critical mobile network services to an additional 1.3 million people across rural DRC.



AMN confidently asserts that it can bring mobile connectivity to any community of more than 1000 residents anywhere in the world. The partnership between AMN and SES plays a central role in this initiative. Because sites are entirely solar-powered and utilize VSAT backhaul, they are truly ubiquitous and capable of being deployed in places where the map ends, without relying on power grids or existing network infrastructure.

However, this independence introduces a distinct logistical challenge. Installation teams often travel where no one else can go. Delivering connectivity in areas with no fibre, no power and no existing mobile network coverage; AMN’s engineers are the first to carve a path into the regions that have been disconnected and navigate the very isolation they are working to end.

Innovation is at the heart of how AMN reaches the unconnected. AMN has developed the ‘AMN Radio Node’ (ARN), a multi-technology solution that enables multiple carriers to operate simultaneously from a single unit, supporting mixed 2G, 3G, 4G and future 5G technologies without additional capital expenditure or power consumption. By designing and building AMN’s own ARN in-house, AMN has found a way to deliver high-performance, energy efficient connectivity whilst simultaneously reducing the investment required to do so.

“Connecting to SES’ multi-orbit satellite network offers a multi-orbit constellation (GEO, MEO AND LEO) providing data connectivity services to over 1 billion people worldwide. This includes some of the most remote, unreachable parts of the globe. It is encouraging and inspiring to see how digital transformation profoundly reshaped daily life across the DRC has,” said Jean-Philippe Gillet, President of Fixed Data at SES.

“Before the installation, we had to travel across difficult terrain for about 30 km to seek medical help, make a call or to complete a simple bank transaction. Today thanks to AMN this has been replaced with a clear connection, providing our community with crystal clear connectivity and the ability to seamlessly manage our finances from the palm of our hand,” explains a local resident in Bompensole, a village connected in November 2025.

By providing reliable connectivity, SES and AMN have empowered local entrepreneurs to scale their operations and access real-time market pricing. Students can leverage online resources to deepen their comprehension and academic performance, fostering a more knowledgeable generation. Healthcare delivery has been transformed as local clinics can now consult with external specialists in real-time, ensuring more accurate diagnoses and better patient outcomes.

On-air trials underway: Iridium NTN Direct prepares to enter beta as testing continues

First mobile-originated message sent over Iridium NTN Direct service read: "To Iridium and Beyond."



Iridium Communications has announced the successful on-air testing of Iridium NTN DirectSM, including two-way message transmission over its low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellite network. The achievement represents a major technical and commercial milestone as the company moves closer to beta trials and the planned commercial launch of Iridium NTN Direct in 2026.

Iridium NTN Direct is being developed as the world's first truly global, standards-based NB-IoT and direct-to-device (D2D) non-terrestrial network (NTN) service. Built in alignment with global 3GPP standards, the solution is designed to seamlessly integrate satellite connectivity into the broader 5G ecosystem. By adhering to open standards rather than proprietary protocols, Iridium aims to accelerate ecosystem adoption while lowering integration complexity for partners.

With Iridium NTN Direct, mobile network operators (MNOs) will be able to extend coverage beyond the limits of terrestrial cellular infrastructure, addressing connectivity gaps in remote, rural, maritime, and disaster-prone areas. At the same time, chipset makers and device manufacturers can integrate standardized satellite capability into their modules and devices, enabling global connectivity without fundamentally redesigning hardware platforms.

"Iridium NTN Direct is no longer a concept — it's on the air, sending messages, and now being rigorously tested to meet our elite performance standards," said Matt Desch, CEO of Iridium. "This milestone reinforces why mobile network operators and chipset makers are engaging with Iridium. We offer a low-risk, globally coordinated, and operational network designed to complement what they do, not compete with

what they do."

The successful testing leveraged new 5G waveform algorithms implemented on Iridium's software-defined satellites, supporting the NB-IoT standards-based protocol defined by 3GPP. The Iridium constellation, already fully operational and globally deployed, received a software update enabling NTN capabilities without requiring new satellite launches. This software-centric upgrade approach significantly reduces deployment timelines and capital expenditure while accelerating commercialization.

The first mobile-originated messages were transmitted using the low-power nRF9151 LTE-M/NB-IoT/NTN module from Nordic Semiconductor, a global leader in low-power wireless connectivity solutions. The test reflects the previously announced collaboration between Iridium and Nordic to bring standardized, space-enabled IoT connectivity to the mass market.

"This successful test proves that global connectivity is no longer limited by infrastructure — we can now deploy battery-powered connected devices anywhere, using a standard, low-power module such as Nordic's nRF9151," said Oyvind Birkenes, EVP Long-Range Business Unit at Nordic Semiconductor. "Our roadmap is fully aligned with Iridium's 2026 plans, and we are committed to accelerating mass-market adoption of standards-based, space-enabled IoT for everyone."

Iridium NTN Direct is designed to support a wide range of consumer and industrial use cases. In the consumer segment, it can enable emergency and safety messaging for smartphones and wearables operating

outside terrestrial coverage zones. In industrial and enterprise markets, the service is well-suited for asset tracking, automotive telematics, transportation monitoring, utilities management, logistics optimization, precision agriculture, environmental sensing, and remote infrastructure maintenance. The ability to connect low-power IoT devices directly to satellites using standardized modules opens new opportunities in previously unreachable geographies.

For mobile network operators, the service represents an incremental revenue opportunity without the cost burden of building or maintaining additional terrestrial towers in low-density or geographically challenging areas. By eliminating coverage gaps, MNOs can improve subscriber satisfaction, enhance brand loyalty, and introduce new satellite-enabled service tiers. For chipset vendors and OEMs, Iridium NTN Direct enables the development of a single, standards-based hardware platform capable of operating across both terrestrial and satellite networks — simplifying product design, certification, and global distribution strategies.

Unlike regional or cellular spectrum-based satellite solutions that are limited by geography or regulatory fragmentation, Iridium NTN Direct is designed to deliver 100% global coverage using Iridium's existing LEO constellation. The company's network architecture — already supporting mission-critical communications for government, aviation, maritime, and enterprise customers — provides a proven foundation for NTN expansion. This globally coordinated approach reduces technical, regulatory, and commercial barriers for ecosystem partners, accelerating time to market and minimizing integration risk. ■



LEAP 5 returns to Riyadh, taking global tech into new worlds

As the global technology ecosystem searches for its next frontier in growth, investment and collaboration, Riyadh will once again take centre stage as LEAP returns for its fifth edition from 13 to 16 April 2026. The award-winning global technology event will convene the world's most influential technology leaders, policymakers, investors and founders to explore how innovation is reshaping economies, industries and society on a global scale.

Co-organised by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), the Saudi Federation for Cybersecurity, Programming and Drones (SAFCSP), and Tahaluf, LEAP reflects the Kingdom's growing role as a global hub for innovation under Vision 2030. This year's edition will deliver an expanded programme, new platforms and a world-class speaker line-up, reinforcing Saudi Arabia's position at the centre of the

global technology conversation.

Global tech leaders set to convene in Riyadh

LEAP 5 is where the architects of the next digital era come together. CEOs and innovators from global tech giants, including Google, Amazon Web Services, Luma AI, AMD, Qualcomm, Cisco, Lenovo, HP, HPE, Huawei, Foxconn, and Cerebras Systems — will join Saudi leaders such as stc, Aramco, Elm, Alat, and HUMAIN, demonstrating the scale of innovation, the power of collaboration, and the tangible impact that emerges when the world's top tech minds meet in one place.

The speaker line-up highlights visionaries defining the future of technology, from Matt Garman, CEO of AWS, advancing cloud infrastructure; Justin Hotard, President and CEO of Nokia, shaping connectivity; to Tareq Amin, CEO of

HUMAIN, championing applied AI in the region. LEAP will also spotlight frontier innovators including Andrew Feldman (Cerebras Systems), Hanne Jesca Bax (EY), and Chandra Donelson (US Space Force), whose work in AI, data, and next-generation technology demonstrates what industries and governments will rely on tomorrow.

Together, these leaders make LEAP 5 a living showcase of global innovation, where ideas meet execution and collaboration turns into impact.

Driving global impact

As LEAP marks its fifth edition, it reflects not just growth in scale, but maturity in influence, evolving into a global convening point for leaders shaping the next digital era. Since its launch in 2022, LEAP has grown into the world's most attended technology event, with a combined total

of more than 688,000 attendees, 2,480 startups, 6,200 companies and 5000+ investors across four editions. With a proven record as a launchpad for major announcements and partnerships, LEAP's fifth anniversary will continue to drive global dealmaking. Following USD 14.9 billion in deals and announcements at the 2025 edition, the platform continues to serve as a global catalyst for innovation and investment, delivering USD 820 million in economic impact from Riyadh to the world.

Platforms and technologies shaping the world

LEAP 5 will deliver its most expansive programme yet, spanning more than twenty stages across climate, health tech, fintech, space tech, and smart cities, showcasing breakthrough technologies and real-world adoption transforming industries. DeepFest returns as the region's leading platform for AI and deep tech, bringing global leaders together to highlight applied AI and next-gen technologies. This year features participation from EY, Snowflake, Alteryx, Agibot and Xerox among others, alongside an immersive Tech Arena with live demonstrations, practical AI use cases and next generation technologies.

Bold new zones powered by global and local brands

GameX Creative emerges as one of LEAP 5's flagship zones, powered by global gaming leaders and Saudi creative pioneers. With Savvy Games Group, ESL FACEIT Group, Hero Esports, Steer Studios, OSN+, Red Sea Film Foundation, MDLBeast, and Kojima Productions shaping the experience, GameX will spotlight the technologies, talent, and investment redefining gaming, esports, and digital storytelling.

Sports Tech Hub returns at an expanded scale, convening the institutions and innovators transforming the global sports industry. Leaders from The English FA, La Liga, Saudi Pro League, Juventus FC,



Atlético Madrid, Tottenham Hotspur FC, Ferrari, and Aston Martin Formula One Team will join athletes, founders, and performance-tech pioneers to explore how AI, data, and immersive technologies are reshaping athlete performance, fan engagement, and commercial growth.

LEAP Connect is a new curated environment designed to accelerate meaningful collaboration across the ecosystem. Bringing together founders, investors, C-suite leaders, and policymakers through structured matchmaking and high-value networking, LEAP Connect is built to turn conversations into partnerships and partnerships into deals. Positioned as the connective layer of LEAP 5, it ensures that innovation on stage translates into real-world impact beyond it.

Faisal Alkhamisi, Chairman of the SAFCSF, said: "Over the past four years, LEAP has evolved at a rocket-fuelled pace, playing a critical role in nurturing talent, creativity and investment. Yet, this is just the beginning. LEAP will continue to reflect the ever-changing tech landscape and inspire pioneers from across the globe."

LEAP's Investor and Startup Programme positions Riyadh as a global hub for capital and innovation. Anchored by the Investor

and Founder Stage and the USD 1 million Rocket Fuel Pitch Competition, it unites startups and investors across 60 tech verticals, with participation from PIF, SVC, 500 Global, Rakuten Capital, and 20VC, driving cross-border deals and early-stage investment at scale.

Mike Champion, CEO of Tahaluf said, "LEAP has become a place where the future is not just discussed but built. The momentum in Saudi Arabia is extraordinary, and as LEAP enters its fifth edition, it will take this ambition into new worlds, unlocking investment and shaping the technologies that will define the next decade. Five editions in, that ambition only grows and LEAP's impact grows with it."

LEAP is the global platform where minds, companies, and capital converge to shape the future of the intelligent age. From Riyadh, Saudi Arabia—supported by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince—continues to lead this transformation and convene the world to deliver lasting technological and economic impact. LEAP 5 is expected to attract more than 201,000 visitors, 600+ startups, 1,000+ speakers, 1,800+ global tech brands, and 1,900+ investors, further cementing its role as a hub for global innovation and collaboration. ■

KSA and UAE among top 10 nations in Global AI for Finance Competitiveness Index

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been ranked 7th and 9th respectively in the Global AI for Finance Competitiveness Index (GAICI), released by Deep Knowledge Group with the Hong Kong Financial Services Development Council (FSDC) serving as an observer.

The index provides a benchmark analysing AI competitiveness from a finance, economy and financial services perspective. It combines a global landscape overview of AI adoption in finance with an indicator-based competitiveness index that ranks 20 countries and 15 city-level finance hubs on AI-for-Finance capability and maturity.

Saudi Arabia has emerged as the Gulf's fastest-scaling contender in AI-enabled finance, securing a remarkable 7th place globally in the index. This achievement underscores the country's ambitious drive to integrate AI within its financial systems, fueled by state-led investments and a strategic focus on modernizing its financial infrastructure. While not yet a mature global finance hub, Saudi Arabia is quickly building the capabilities to become a key player in AI for finance. The nation's rapid AI adoption is propelled by its institutional commitment and capital investment, positioning it as a major force in shaping the future of finance in the Gulf region.

The UAE stands out not only for its technological capability but also for its ability to turn AI potential into operational financial systems. This unique combination of state-driven AI development, a globally oriented financial ecosystem, and robust institutional execution makes the UAE a front-runner in deploying AI in regulated financial markets. As a "system builder," the UAE competes not on the sheer volume of research output but on its speed of AI adoption, regulatory modernization, and efficient deployment pathways. Its ability to rapidly implement AI programs, set clear regulatory frameworks, and scale AI-powered financial tools has positioned it as a global testbed for finance-grade AI.

"Saudi Arabia's rapid scaling in AI-driven finance is a testament to its strategic vision and ability to turn ambition into action," said Dmitry Kaminskiy, General Partner of Deep Knowledge Group. "The Kingdom's strong institutional backing and focus on infrastructure development are setting the stage for long-term success. Prioritizing AI adoption in critical financial services, Saudi Arabia is positioning itself to become an essential player in the global AI finance ecosystem."

"The UAE's unique position in the AI for Finance Index highlights its ability to not just innovate but to efficiently deploy AI systems that meet the rigorous demands of regulated financial markets. This makes the UAE a key player in shaping the future of finance through

Global AI for Finance Competitiveness Index: National Scores (Detailed)

Rank	Country	Total Score	CAP2	ECO	REG	TAL	INF	MAT
1	United States	98.84	86	88	78	82	80	85
2	China	83.41	72	80	40	76	62	90
3	United Kingdom	78.26	80	74	55	58	62	75
4	Switzerland	73.09	70	60	40	45	60	60
5	Singapore	69.12	65	50	30	35	40	60
6	Germany	65.44	58	58	30	30	35	55
7	Saudi Arabia	60.91	72	45	22	22	42	45
8	India	56.20	40	55	25	25	50	40
9	United Arab Emirates	53.84	42	40	25	25	40	42
10	France	50.43	42	42	28	25	32	38
11	Israel	47.77	40	38	25	30	30	35
12	Canada	45.09	38	35	25	25	30	32
13	Japan	42.12	36	32	22	22	28	30
14	Australia	39.87	34	30	20	20	26	28
15	Sweden	36.72	32	28	20	20	25	25
16	South Korea	34.20	30	26	18	18	24	23
17	The Netherlands	26.78	19	15	22	20	17	15
18	Estonia	24.85	16	14	20	18	14	14
19	Spain	22.95	15	14	13	13	14	15
20	Italy	21.02	12	12	11	10	12	14

AI across the globe," Kaminskiy added.

The index is led by the United States (98.84) and China (83.41), followed by the United Kingdom (78.26) and Switzerland (73.09), with Singapore (69.12) next. The leaders are not defined by a single strength, but by multi-pillar performance that supports production-grade AI in finance—including deployment readiness, institutional capacity, and ecosystem breadth. The U.S. leads with large-scale capability across AI, capital markets, and financial services adoption. China ranks second on the strength of ecosystem scale and rapid implementation dynamics in AI-enabled financial services. The U.K. and Switzerland follow as high-performing financial centres where strong institutional environments and finance-grade expectations—governance, accountability, and risk discipline—support consistent AI adoption. Singapore rounds out the top tier, reflecting strong ecosystem coordination and high deployment readiness relative to its size. ■

New Wireless Broadband Alliance report helps enterprises integrate private 5G securely into existing IT and Wi-Fi environments

The Wireless Broadband Alliance (WBA), the global industry body dedicated to driving the seamless and interoperable service experience of Wi-Fi across the global wireless ecosystem, has released the report "Enterprise Security for Private 5G Networks". The report defines a unified security framework and guidelines that help enterprises integrate Private 5G into existing IT and Wi-Fi environments while protecting critical operations against evolving cyber threats. It introduces a converged Zero-Trust model built on open standards and shared policies, enabling organizations to deliver secure, interoperable and resilient enterprise networks.

As digital transformation accelerates across manufacturing, healthcare, logistics and energy, organizations are turning to Private 5G to connect mission-critical systems, automate processes and enable new business models. But digital transformation can also expand the attack surface, meaning potential greater exposure to cybersecurity risks, including data breaches, intellectual property theft and operational disruption. The new WBA report provides practical guidance to help enterprises unify policies across wired and wireless domains, helping fuel innovation while safeguarding intellectual property and business continuity.

Positive impact across the connected ecosystem

The Enterprise Security for Private 5G Networks report defines a common language and framework for secure, converged wireless deployments, with new insights and benefits for each part of the connected ecosystem, including:

- **Enterprises:** Gain a practical roadmap to deploy Private 5G and Wi-Fi securely within existing IT architectures. The framework helps reduce cyber risk while accelerating

digital transformation and ensuring compliance with corporate security policies

- **Network operators and system integrators:** Can deliver interoperable, standardized solutions that simplify enterprise adoption, shorten deployment cycles and open new service opportunities in sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare and logistics

- **Technology vendors:** Benefit from a unified approach to security that supports cross-domain connectivity, promotes interoperability and accelerates innovation across the wireless ecosystem

- **Regulators and policymakers:** Obtain valuable insight into the evolving governance, compliance and assurance needs that accompany the convergence of Wi-Fi and Private 5G in enterprise networks

An industry blueprint for success

To achieve seamless and secure connectivity, enterprises must unify security across all wireless domains. The report distils collaboration between global operators, vendors and enterprise security experts into a practical blueprint. It provides clear guidance on how to integrate Private 5G securely into existing IT and Wi-Fi environments, apply Zero Trust principles and unify policies across wired and wireless domains, safeguarding intellectual property and their business operations.

Key insights covered in the report include:

- **Unified security architecture:** Private 5G and Wi-Fi 6/6E/7 are complementary technologies. When combined under a single Zero-Trust framework customers get the best of both worlds: ultra-reliable, secure, flexible connectivity precisely where it is needed most

- **pxGrid integration:** The pxGrid protocol

provides secure, bi-directional data exchange between Wi-Fi, 5G and enterprise systems. This ensures consistent identity management, access control and threat intelligence sharing across a network

- **Zero-Trust implementation:** Continuous verification, micro-segmentation and dynamic policy enforcement minimize lateral movement and enhance defense across both wired and wireless domains

- **AI and edge intelligence:** Multi-Access Edge Computing (MEC) and AI-driven analytics strengthen security posture by enabling real-time anomaly detection, local decision-making, and automated threat response

- **Open standards and interoperability:** REST APIs, WebSocket and pxGrid are key enablers for cross-vendor compatibility, unified management and simplified deployment within complex enterprise ecosystems

- **Immediate security priority:** The report underscores that security must be foundational from the start of Private 5G adoption, not an afterthought, in order to safeguard mission-critical operations and maintain business continuity

Operational security intelligence focus for phase two

The Enterprise Security for Private 5G Networks report encapsulates the phase one work of this WBA workstream, establishing the policy and architectural foundation for converged enterprise security. Phase two will advance to operational security intelligence in Private 5G and converged Wi-Fi networks. It will introduce areas including centralized monitoring, SIEM integration, AI/ML-based anomaly detection and Security Operations Center (SOC) coordination for real-time monitoring and response. ■

With nearly US \$1 billion in spending and the highest ARPU Saudi Arabia leads region's digital gaming markets in value

The Middle East's video game industry has now become one of the region's largest sectors for consumer expenditure on digital media. The gaming sector surpassed the combined value of video-on-demand streaming and digital music services, further showcasing the transition in regional digital consumption trends. These insights come from a recent study conducted by Galal & Karawi Management Consulting (G&K), in collaboration with Orient Planet Group.

In addition, the study highlighted that total spending on video games in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt reached almost US \$2.52 billion in 2024 as compared to US \$1.16 billion on video-on-demand streaming and US \$306.7 million on music platforms. The total amount of consumer spending on video games accounted for 63.2 per cent on digital media across these three key markets.

The study is based on data from accredited and reliable sources, most notably Statista and DataReportal, along with their key partners such as GSMA Intelligence and SimilarWeb. It further focussed on trends pertaining to video games, video-on-demand and digital music in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt. Statistics that were obtained revealed spendings estimated for the year of 2024, with annual comparisons that were based on market data.

A Significant Shift in Digital Consumer Behaviour

The study's findings show that the video games sector has transformed from a minor entertainment activity into a comprehensive economic ecosystem that is driving digital consumer behaviour. The key driver behind this transformation is the spread of smartphones, growth of interactive gaming culture, and rising in-game spending and spending on related

platforms.

Eng. Asem Galal, Co-Founder of Galal & Karawi Management Consulting, stated that the study's results clearly show that the video games sector has become one of the key drivers of the content economy in the region. Additionally, it has created an integrated ecosystem of opportunities in design, storytelling, creative production and digital marketing, along with virtual community management and intellectual property (IP) governance. He further highlighted that this transformation offers Arab talents an opportunity to compete at a global level from their homeland without moving abroad.

Galal added: "One of the most common misconceptions is that the video games industry can only be seen through the lens of software development. Whereas there are clear indications that it is a fully integrated, multidisciplinary ecosystem that requires a combination of creative, artistic, marketing and legal capabilities." He further stated that character designers, illustrators, storytellers, composers, voice actors, digital marketing specialists, community managers and experts in intellectual property rights and international contracts are just a few of the many specialisations that have become attractive job opportunities in the regional gaming market, which is currently valued at over US \$2.5 billion. The diversity of the sector makes the industry an ideal sector that can enable the Arab youth to participate in global competitive productions emerging from cities such as Cairo, Riyadh, and Dubai.

Dr. Nidal Abou Zaki, Managing Director of Orient Planet Group, emphasised that these statistics signify a strategic shift in the region's digital economy structure. Video games have become a significant media and economic platform, attracting

increased investments and reshaping the way brands engage with their consumers, especially the youth. Dr. Abou Zaki further stated that game revenues exceed the combined amount spent on music and video streaming, necessitating a comprehensive scrutiny of digital marketing strategies, content creation, and development of digital communities, particularly in a region with a digitally active young population.

Dr. Abou Zaki added: "The Arab world's youth make the gaming industry more attractive and offers game publishers and content creators a significant competitive advantage on a global scale, as approximately 62.8 per cent of the population is under 35. According to the data, quality investment opportunities are still undercapitalised, and the Middle East region's position as one of the fastest-growing regions in the global gaming industry is further reinforced by the spread of smartphones, high purchasing power in Gulf markets, and the availability of a large player base in Egypt."

Saudi Arabia leads markets in value

According to the study, Saudi Arabia has the highest-value gaming market in the Arab region, with video games spending reaching approximately US \$1 billion. Within the categories analysed, it accounts for about 69 per cent of total consumer expenditure on digital media. With an annual expense of US \$393, the Kingdom also recorded the highest average revenue per user (ARPU) in the region. Saudi Arabia's spending on video-on-demand services totalled approximately US \$310 million, while expenditure on digital music reached nearly US \$140 million.

Furthermore, due to Egypt's large population and high gaming penetration rate of 91.6 per cent among internet

Video Games Dominate Digital Media Spending in the Middle East

Markets	Video Games		Video on-Demand (Streaming)	Digital Music
	Spending	Share of Total Digital Media Spending (%)		
Saudi Arabia	1 billion	69%	310 million	140 million
Egypt	1.1 billion	61%	602 million	101 million
United Arab Emirates	421 million	57.5%	246 million	65.7 million
Total	2.52 billion	63.2%	1.16 billion	306.7 million

All figures are in US dollars.

Overview of the Three Markets: (Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Egypt)



© G & K and OPG

users, the country stands as the largest market by overall volume, with US \$1.10 billion spent on video games. Although, in comparison to Gulf markets, the ARPU is significantly lower at just US \$61.76. Video games amount to 61 per cent of Egypt's total digital media expenditure, with the gaming industry witnessing a year-on-year growth rate of 11.5 per cent. Additionally, smartphone games account for 76.4 per cent of the total usage, making mobile games the dominating factor in the country.

On the other hand, the survey revealed that the UAE has a mature, high-income digital market, with US \$421 million spent on video games. With an ARPU of US \$280, the second highest in the region after Saudi Arabia, and consistent year-over-year growth of 7.3 per cent, it represents

57.5 per cent of total digital media spending. The UAE's market has a relative balance between video games, video-on-demand services (US \$246 million), and digital music (US \$65.7 million), serving as a testament to the diverse culture of digital consumption across the country.

Gaming as a driver of a new creative economy

The study further highlighted the role of the gaming industry in opening up wide avenues for job opportunities for the regional creative economy in the region, including design, illustration, storytelling, music, digital marketing, virtual community management and intellectual property rights. Through this expansion, Arab youth can have more employment opportunities in their local markets

without having to move to international production hubs.

Based on these indicators, the study's outcome states that the Middle East region's video games sector is now one of the key drivers of the digital economy, both in terms of spending volume and audience engagement levels. As major markets such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt constantly evolve, along with the integration of gaming across media, entertainment, and marketing ecosystem, the study reveals the need for integrated policies and strategies to further strengthen the sector's role in supporting the creative economy, and to create new investment opportunities that can capitalise on the region's rapidly accelerating digital and behavioural shifts. ■

AI accountability becomes the new mandate as cybersecurity economics shift

Exabeam has announced the findings of its new multinational report, *From Adoption to Accountability: The New Economics of AI in Cybersecurity*. Based on a survey of 750 IT decision-makers responsible for security in organizations with 500+ employees across 12 countries, the research reveals a critical paradox. While cybersecurity budgets surge with unprecedented growth, security leaders race ahead on AI transformation while falling behind on measurement, justification, and strategic alignment.

According to the study, 95% of organizations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) are confident cybersecurity investments are delivering business value. 97% of KSA organizations believe their current cybersecurity budget aligns with the threats they expect to face in 2026.

However, AI simultaneously holds three contradictory positions in budget planning for the KSA: it's the top driver of increases (39%), the second investment that would be cut if budgets are tightened (42%) and the most challenging spend to justify to business stakeholders (22%). 75% also say AI is already improving speed and accuracy in security operations, with 38% believing that data enrichment and contextualization will be most impacted by AI in 2026.

"Security leaders are getting mandates to invest in AI, but nobody's given them a way to prove it's working. You can't measure AI transformation with pre-AI metrics," said Steve Wilson, Chief AI and Product Officer at Exabeam. "The problem isn't that security



teams lack data. They're drowning in it. The issue is they're tracking the wrong things and speaking a language the board doesn't understand. Those are the budgets that get cut first. The window to fix this is closing fast."

Unprecedented Budget Growth Driven by AI Transformation

For Saudi Arabia, cybersecurity investment trends in 2026 represent a significant shift, with AI and automation emerging as the primary catalyst for budget expansion (39%), followed by talent acquisition and workforce development needs (35%) and cloud infrastructure, mainstream business use of AI, and replacing legacy tools each contributing 32%. Organizations in the KSA are considering how cybersecurity and AI investment impacts the entire infrastructure, from channeling technology, to closing workforce gaps.

The Value Demonstration Gap Creates Vulnerability

While 95% of Saudi security leaders express

confidence that their investments are delivering business value, 20% cite a lack of board understanding of the link between cybersecurity investment and business resilience as one of their biggest challenges in defending spend. 23% of Saudi security leaders found the biggest challenge to be an overemphasis on compliance compared to risk reduction. The disconnect reveals a critical vulnerability: 65% of security leaders report using quantified ROI and 58% use outcome metrics, yet boards and executives still don't understand the connection between security investments and business risk.

The problem isn't a lack of information, but a mismatch between security metrics and business-decision metrics. Security teams are relying on traditional security measurements that don't translate into the business impact language boards need to evaluate investment decisions.

Regional Variations Show Diverse AI Adoption Strategies

Regional differences in AI adoption are

striking. Saudi Arabia demonstrates the most aggressive position, with 75% reporting AI is already improving security operations, nearly triple the rate of Japan (27%) and the Netherlands (30%). These variations reflect different organizational priorities. Saudi Arabia's figures align with broader national digital transformation initiatives, while European and Asian organizations emphasize careful evaluation and workforce preservation before scaling deployment.

"In Saudi Arabia, AI is being leveraged as a strategic advantage. The region's willingness to embrace AI in cybersecurity is positioning it as a leading global hub, in line with regional initiatives including Saudi Vision 2030," said Mazen Adnan Dohaji, Senior Vice President and General Manager, IMETA at Exabeam. "What stands out in the KSA is the improvements the region has already seen from AI adoption. Looking ahead, future investment will depend on closing the gap between operational success and the ability to clearly articulate financial or risk-reduction value at the executive level."

Closing the Justification Gap

The cybersecurity industry is experiencing a rare moment of budget abundance, yet this creates a sustainability challenge. Security leaders are investing heavily in AI transformation while simultaneously struggling to articulate its business value to boards and CFOs. This isn't a sustainable dynamic — budget abundance creates expectations, and organizations that can't demonstrate clear value from AI investments risk seeing those budgets retracted when economic conditions shift.

The organizations that will thrive are those that recognize deployment is only half the challenge. Success requires developing new frameworks for measuring AI impact, creating outcomes-based metrics that tie security performance directly to business resilience, and establishing executive-ready communication that translates technical improvements into business impact language. ■

Microsoft advances sovereign private cloud with secure AI and fully disconnected capabilities

Microsoft has announced new sovereign private cloud capabilities that enable governments and regulated industries to run advanced artificial intelligence (AI), productivity tools and cloud infrastructure securely, including in fully disconnected environments.

The development strengthens Microsoft's Sovereign Cloud portfolio by giving organizations greater control over how and where their data, AI models and operations run, while maintaining consistent governance, security and compliance standards.

Key developments include:

Azure Local disconnected operations – allowing organizations to run mission-critical infrastructure locally with Azure governance and policy controls, even without cloud connectivity; **Microsoft 365 Local disconnected** – enabling core productivity workloads, including Exchange

Server, SharePoint Server and Skype for Business Server, to operate entirely within a customer's sovereign boundary; and **Foundry Local with support for large AI models** – bringing modern infrastructure and large, multimodal AI models into fully disconnected sovereign environments, allowing AI inferring to run locally on customer-controlled hardware.

These capabilities deliver a unified sovereign private cloud stack, spanning infrastructure, productivity and AI, designed to ensure operational continuity, protect sensitive data and maintain strict regulatory compliance, even in highly secure or isolated environments.

As countries across the Middle East accelerate national digital transformation agendas and AI strategies, digital sovereignty has become a strategic priority for governments and key sectors including defense, energy, financial services and critical infrastructure. ■

stc group extends partnership with PLDT Global to deliver enhanced international connectivity

stc group has signed a two-year extension of its partnership with PLDT Global, reaffirming its role as the primary gateway for PLDT's international long-distance communication traffic for the next two years.

With the extended agreement, stc will continue to provide PLDT Global with advanced technological capabilities, including routing optimization, fraud prevention systems, and robust network security, bringing seamless international voice services to PLDT's customers.

Ziad Alhasson, Carrier & Wholesale Sales VP at stc group said, "Our renewed partnership with PLDT Global underscores our

commitment to connecting people across the world. By integrating our advanced digital capabilities with PLDT's services, we are setting new standards for seamless, reliable communication, ensuring consistent performance and exceptional service quality for customers."

Albert V. Villa-Real, PLDT Global CEO, stated, "Our extended collaboration with stc group strengthens our ability to deliver secure and reliable international voice services. This partnership ensures we remain at the forefront of connectivity to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving digital landscape and support our customers wherever they are in the world." ■

e& and IBM unveil enterprise-grade agentic AI to transform governance and compliance

Global technology group e& and IBM have announced a strategic collaboration to advance towards an enterprise-grade agentic AI foundation at e&, starting with policy, risk, and compliance. Unveiled at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, the initiative reflects e&'s move beyond traditional natural language processing (NLP)-based chatbots toward governed, action-oriented AI embedded in core enterprise systems.

e& and IBM have introduced an agentic AI solution built on IBM watsonx Orchestrate – a product offering more than 500 tools and customizable, domain-specific agents from IBM and its partners – to help employees and auditors quickly access and interpret legal, regulatory, and compliance information. Integrated with IBM OpenPages and the broader watsonx portfolio, the solution delivers clear, traceable responses aligned with enterprise governance requirements.

A joint proof of concept delivered by IBM, GBM (Gulf Business Machines) and e& within eight weeks demonstrated how agentic AI can operate at enterprise scale under real-world conditions.

IBM's Client Engineering team led the design and integration of the agentic AI solution, with GBM supporting delivery through project coordination and deep familiarity with e&'s OpenPages and watsonx Assistant environment. The work showcased AI capabilities that move beyond traditional question-and-answer tools, enabling reasoning and action while remaining aligned with e&'s governance, risk, and compliance framework.

"Our ambition is to move beyond isolated AI use cases toward enterprise-scale agentic AI that is trusted, governed, and deeply integrated into how the organization operates," said Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO, e&. "By collaborating with IBM, we are embedding intelligence directly into our risk and compliance processes, enabling faster decisions, consistent policy interpretation, and a foundation for broader agentic AI adoption across the enterprise."

IBM watsonx Orchestrate enables agentic AI that goes beyond chat-based interactions, allowing AI agents to reason, orchestrate tasks, and integrate with enterprise systems under governance controls. For e&, it provides a foundation for trusted, explainable AI that can scale across compliance and other enterprise domains. It helps to streamline compliance tasks, reduce response times, and enables 24/7 self-service access across the organization.

The initiative also aligns natively with watsonx.governance, already in use at e&, providing a strong foundation for AI governance,



(L) Ana Paula Assis, SVP and Chair for Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific, IBM and Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO, e&

explainability, and compliance by design. By embedding agentic AI directly into the OpenPages governance, risk, and compliance platform, this represents one of the early enterprise-grade agentic AI implementations in the region, demonstrating how AI can support trusted, human-led decision-making under regulatory and operational requirements.

The deployment also demonstrates the flexibility of IBM's AI and model gateway approach, enabling large language models to run across hybrid environments, including customer-managed infrastructure, while remaining governed under enterprise controls.

"As organizations move from experimenting with AI to embedding it into the fabric of how they operate, governance and accountability become just as important as intelligence," said Ana Paula Assis, SVP and Chair for Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific, IBM. "Through our collaboration with e&, this proof of concept intends to demonstrate how agentic AI can be designed and validated for enterprise-scale use, deeply integrated into core systems, governed by design, and trusted to support human-led decisions and outcomes."

This collaboration marks an important milestone in e&'s enterprise AI journey, establishing a scalable and governed foundation for agentic AI adoption across the organization. By embedding action-oriented AI directly into core governance and compliance workflows, e& is reinforcing its commitment to responsible innovation and setting a new benchmark for trusted, enterprise-grade agentic AI in the region. ■

Reflections on a year in telecoms



In 2025, the telecoms industry experienced a year of consistent execution. For Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) and Mobile Virtual Network Enablers (MVNEs), this year was defined by implementation at scale, automation and monetisation strategies that moved from concept to reality. Here, **Hamish White, Founder and CEO of eSIM software specialist Mobilise**, reflects on the year and highlights three key themes shaping the future.

This year marked a turning point for telecoms. Global 5G connections surpassed 2.6 billion, growing 37 per cent year-on-year and outpacing 4G adoption at the same stage. More than 90 operators launched standalone 5G networks across 42 countries, unlocking advanced capabilities like network slicing. eSIM adoption surged, with over half of smartphones shipping with eSIM capability, enabling instant activation and powering digital-first MVNO launches.

These milestones have reshaped how MVNOs and MVNEs operate, with three key themes defining 2025: embedded connectivity, 5G monetisation and cloud-native architectures.

Embedded connectivity and monetisation

One of the most significant shifts in 2025 was the rise of embedded connectivity: telecoms services integrated into broader digital ecosystems. This trend was led by non-traditional players, particularly fintechs, using MVNO models to deepen engagement and unlock recurring revenue

streams as part of a wider superapp creation strategy.

Fintech giants Revolut, N26 and Klarna all entered the telecoms space this year in a bid to build superapps: an all-in-one lifestyle app for their users that integrates messaging, payments, e-commerce and more. Revolut introduced mobile plans with unlimited calls and 20GB of roaming across the EU and US, while N26 rolled out N26 SIM in Germany, offering unlimited calls, free EU/EEA roaming and monthly rolling plans. Klarna followed suit in the US with a \$40/month unlimited 5G plan, using telecom to diversify revenue streams.

The rationale is clear: mobile connectivity fosters daily engagement, unlike sporadic banking interactions. By embedding telecom services into their apps, vertical sectors unlock new monetisation opportunities and boost customer lifetime value. eSIM technology is the key enabler, delivering instant activation and making connectivity a frictionless part of the digital experience.

5G monetisation

While 5G consumer adoption accelerated in 2025, and the buzz around 6G is already building, monetisation remains a challenge for operators. However, 2025 has seen some creative ways to convert connectivity into revenue.

Enterprise deployments led the way. In the UK, Vodafone deployed a private 5G

network at Harwell Science and Innovation Campus to support quantum computing and advanced manufacturing projects. Similarly, Thames Freeport partnered with Verizon and Nokia to roll out private 5G across major industrial sites, enabling automation and AI-driven logistics. These examples demonstrate how private 5G networks are becoming a cornerstone of enterprise monetisation strategies.

On the consumer side, the VodafoneThree merger is expected to significantly improve 5G coverage, following their unprecedented £11 billion investment to deliver 99 per cent standalone 5G coverage by 2030 and nationwide coverage by 2034, improving Vodafone user experience by 92 per cent and Three UK users by seven per cent.

At the same time, MVNOs are experimenting with AI-driven personalisation for plan recommendations and churn reduction, enabling upselling of premium 5G tiers, roaming bundles, and other add-ons. With ARPU growth largely flat, operators and MVNOs are turning to enterprise IoT, embedded connectivity and API-driven services as the real engines of 5G monetisation.

Cloud-native core networks

The third major trend of 2025 was the migration to cloud-native architectures. Legacy telecom infrastructure, with its rigid systems and manual processes, cannot keep pace with the demands of 5G, IoT and real-time service delivery. Instead of

taking months to launch, cloud-native solutions now allow MVNOs to go live in weeks, thanks to API-driven onboarding and automated orchestration. Billing, CRM and eSIM provisioning can all be integrated seamlessly, reducing complexity and accelerating time-to-market.

This shift is being powered by platforms like Mobilise's HERO® MVNE Platform. HERO® is a fully cloud-native MVNE solution designed to give digital MVNOs the agility they need to compete in a digital-first world. It offers multi-tenant support,

enabling MVNEs to manage multiple brands from one platform, and includes white-label apps for eSIM and VoIP with instant activation in over 175 countries. HERO® also provides real-time analytics, secure payment integration and AI-driven customer engagement tools, making it a complete ecosystem for launching and scaling MVNO services quickly and efficiently.

For years, the industry has spoken about embedded connectivity, AI-driven customer experiences and cloud-native

transformation as future possibilities. In 2025, those possibilities became reality. What were once emerging concepts are now heading towards being mainstream strategies.

As we look ahead to 2026, the challenge is not so much adoption, but how to create and maintain differentiation. With these technologies now standard, success will depend on how creatively MVNOs and MVNEs leverage them to deliver unique value, deepen partnerships and unlock new revenue streams. ■

Help AG strengthens cloud SOC capabilities through partnership with Securonix

Help AG, the cybersecurity arm of e& enterprise and the region's leading managed security services provider, has announced the renewal and expansion of its long-standing partnership with Securonix, a global leader in AI-powered SIEM. The collaboration enhances Help AG's Next-Gen Cloud SOC offering for UAE organizations, combining advanced analytics, AI-driven automation, and cloud-scale threat detection into a unified managed service.

As digital ecosystems expand, organizations face rising complexity across cloud, hybrid, and distributed environments. Help AG continues to invest in next-generation capabilities to meet these challenges. Through its partnership with Securonix, the company integrates a unified, AI-powered platform, combining Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) & User and Entity Behavior Analytics (UEBA) into its managed detection and response services, enabling faster investigations, deeper visibility, and high-fidelity detection at scale.

Securonix has recently introduced AI agents purpose-built for Security Operations Center (SOC) teams, capable of automating high-volume L1/L2/L3 workflows and accelerating decision-making across threat detection and response. Help AG incorporates these advanced automation capabilities into its own Managed Security Services offering, reinforcing its position as



Dr Aleksandar Valjarevic
Acting Chief Executive Officer of Help AG

a market leader in delivering autonomous, cloud-native security operations.

Commenting on the strengthened partnership, Dr Aleksandar Valjarevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Help AG, said: "Help AG continues to take a pioneering role in providing sovereign cyber defense services across the UAE. Our deepened collaboration with Securonix allows us to bring a mature, AI-driven SIEM and analytics capabilities into our cloud-delivered cyber defense offering, maximizing analyst efficiency and elevating threat detection for our clients. As we continue to expand our 'Help AG as a Service' model, Securonix is a key partner in



Ajay Biyani
Vice President - Sales - APMEA, Securonix

our mission to deliver 90% of our services in a fully managed format."

Ajay Biyani, Vice President Sales, Securonix APMEA: "Help AG has built one of the Middle East's most trusted managed security operations, and we're proud to deepen this partnership to raise the bar for Cloud SOC outcomes across the region. By combining Securonix AI-powered SIEM, UEBA, and agentic automation that can take on high-volume L1 to L2 workflows, customers can onboard faster, drive more consistent operations from day one, and put SOC analysts to work where they matter most: higher-value investigation and response." ■

Huawei partners with marathon legend Eliud Kipchoge for the next era of intelligent running



The DSM-Firmenich Running Team, home to marathon icon Eliud Kipchoge, announced a revolutionary partnership with Huawei. As their official technology partner, Huawei joins forces with this unparalleled squad, known as the world's most formidable running team, to elevate the spirit of running, inspire widespread passion for the sport, and advocate for smarter training methods.

To champion a universal passion for running, Kipchoge seeks a globally influential partner with cutting-edge technology and a vast user network. Commitment to innovation and massive user community, Huawei embodies the essence of running excellence. Its state-of-the-art solutions offer Kipchoge and his team invaluable insights like precise training data and scientific load evaluations, empowering elite runners to break through boundaries and redefine what's possible.

This collaboration comes at an interesting point where Huawei is set to unveil a cutting-edge professional running watch, five years after the debut of the first-generation HUAWEI WATCH GT Runner in 2021. This time, Huawei has meticulously honed its technological edge with the TruSense system delivering unparalleled comprehensive health and fitness tracking, and the Sunflower positioning system representing a quantum leap in accuracy.

Rigorous testing involving over 100 runners ensures race performance predictions exceed 97% in accuracy, while a fatigue assessment machine learning model empowers athletes to train smarter. Elite runners like Kipchoge and Joshua Cheptegei will also contribute real-world insights from training and race days, driving iterative improvements in algorithms and features to craft devices that genuinely resonate with the needs of runners. ■

Huawei appoints Rajesh Nagpal as Vice President of Enterprise Business for UAE



Huawei has appointed Rajesh Nagpal as Vice President of Enterprise Business for Huawei UAE, reinforcing the company's continued investment in local leadership and its commitment to advancing enterprise digital transformation across the country.

Brings more than two decades of experience in enterprise technology and business leadership, Rajesh will lead Huawei's Enterprise Business in the UAE, overseeing strategy, sales execution, and ecosystem development to support customers across key sectors including government, energy, financial services, transportation, and large enterprises. He will focus on expanding Huawei's enterprise portfolio, strengthening partner collaboration, and enabling customers to adopt advanced cloud, data, AI, and networking solutions aligned with national digital priorities.

Highlighting his enthusiasm to join the Huawei team, Rajesh Nagpal said: "Stepping into this role at Huawei comes at a time when organisations across the UAE are accelerating their digital transformation journeys. Huawei has built a strong foundation in the UAE's enterprise market through deep customer relationships and a robust partner ecosystem. I look forward to building on this momentum, working closely with stakeholders to help organisations modernize their operations and unlock new opportunities through digital and intelligent technologies."

Under Rajesh's leadership, Huawei Enterprise Group will continue to work closely with customers and partners in the UAE to accelerate industrial intelligence and support digital and intelligent economic development, helping create future-ready digital infrastructure across key industries. ■

Ooredoo Kuwait Group reported strong 9% growth in revenue in 2025

Ooredoo has announced its financial results for the year ended 31 December 2025:

- Consolidated revenue increased by a strong 9% to KWD 774 million in 2025, compared to KWD 711 million in 2024. Revenue growth was supported by the strong operational performances in Algeria, Tunisia and Kuwait.
- Consolidated customer base increased by 3% to 27.4 million in 2025 compared to 26.6 million in 2024.
- EBITDA increased by 20% in 2025 to reach KWD 313 million compared to KWD 262 million in 2024. Normalizing for the impact of the one-off bad debt provision raised in 2025 and 2024, EBITDA increased by 16% YoY.
- Net profit attributable to NMTC increased by 56% to reach KWD 77 million in 2025 from KWD 49 million in 2024. Normalizing for the impact of the one-off bad debt provision in 2025 and 2024, Net profit attributable to NMTC increased by 33% YoY.
- The consolidated earnings per share was 154 fils in 2025, compared to 99 fils earned in 2024.
- The board of directors recommends a dividend payment of 150 fils per share, subject to shareholders' approval at the General Assembly scheduled for March 2026.

Sheikh Nasser Bin Hamad Bin Nasser Al Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented: "2025 marked a year of strong and disciplined execution for NMTC, with our core markets in Kuwait, Algeria, and Tunisia delivering sustained commercial momentum, and the Maldives continuing to demonstrate resilience.

Our performance was supported by solid service revenue growth in Kuwait, driven by enhancements in customer experience and network leadership. Algeria and Tunisia



Sheikh Nasser Bin Hamad,
Chairman of the Board of Directors

continued their strong growth trajectories, benefiting from focused commercial execution, targeted network investments, and ongoing operational efficiencies."

Abdulaziz Yaqoub Al-Babtain, CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "I am pleased to share our positive results for the end of 2025, which reflect an exceptional year filled with achievements made possible by the collective efforts of the Ooredoo team, whose commitment and professionalism were instrumental to our success. The year marked a pivotal milestone in our journey, beginning with the launch of 5G Advanced technology, representing a significant leap in fifth-generation network capabilities in terms of speed and efficiency. We concluded the year by announcing the readiness of Kuwait's first AI-powered data center, in collaboration with NVIDIA—a landmark achievement that lays the foundation for a sovereign, secure, and sustainable artificial intelligence ecosystem to drive the country's digital economy."

Review of Operations

Ooredoo – Kuwait: Ooredoo Kuwait's customer base increased by 1% to reach 2.9 million customers in 2025. The company's revenue increased by 4% to KWD 274 million in 2025 compared to KWD 264 million in 2024. Additionally, EBITDA surged by 27% to KWD 90 million in 2025, up from KWD 71 million in 2024. EBITDA in 2025 and 2024 was impacted by a one-off bad



Abdulaziz Yaqoub Al-Babtain,
CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait

debt provision raised in line with company's standard policy. When normalizing for this one-off provision, EBITDA grew by 14% YoY.

Ooredoo – Tunisia: Ooredoo Tunisia's customer base increased by 3% in 2025, reaching a total of 7.2 million customers. Revenue increased by 12% to KWD 145 million in 2025, compared to KWD 130 million in 2024. EBITDA in 2025 increased by 13% to KWD 61 million compared to KWD 54 million in 2024.

Ooredoo – Algeria: The customer base increased by 4%, reaching a total of 15.3 million in 2025. Revenue for in 2025 rose by 16% to KWD 278 million, compared to KWD 239 million in 2024. EBITDA increased by 24%, reaching KWD 125 million in 2025 compared to KWD 101 million in 2024.

Ooredoo – Palestine: Ooredoo Palestine's customer base decreased by 4% to 1.5 million customers. Revenue decreased by 3% in 2025 to KWD 33 million. EBITDA improved by 2% to KWD 13 million in 2025 compared to KWD 12 million in 2024. The performance remained affected by the aftermath of the conflict in Gaza and the West Bank.

Ooredoo – Maldives: Ooredoo Maldives' customer base increased by 5% to 426 thousand customers in 2025. Revenue in 2025 increased by 1% to KWD 44 million, while EBITDA increased by 5% to KWD 25 million compared to KWD 24 million in 2024. ■

UAE-built secure autonomy tech to be introduced in Europe through VentureOne partnerships with Unieke and Solita

VentureOne, the Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC)'s venture builder, has confirmed its first European deployment through new agreements with Finland's Unieke and Solita. The partnerships will explore integration of UAE-made secure technologies into public safety, security, and infrastructure projects across Finland and northern Europe as nations worldwide accelerate efforts to strengthen critical systems.

Unieke, a global software engineering and innovation company, and Solita, a European AI and data transformation company, will add several of VentureOne's secure flight technologies to their portfolios: Saluki, a high-security flight control and mission computing solution, as well as a mesh networking system that enables secure communications and mission orchestration. The companies will also explore applications for VentureOne's GNSS-Less, a navigation solution that does not require GPS signals to operate.

"VentureOne exists to put made-in-the-UAE deep tech to work driving tangible positive change on an international scale," said Chris Walton, VentureOne's Senior Director. "Unieke and Solita bring extensive expertise in integrating smart technology and autonomy into critical infrastructure projects, making them an ideal European deployment partner for us. We're just getting started on what these partnerships will deliver."

Developed by the Technology Innovation Institute (TII), ATRC's applied tech research arm, the solutions support secure, resilient, autonomous operations in drones and vehicles, even in challenging environments:

Saluki offers Zero Trust architecture for autonomous systems that supports AI and multi-vehicle operations, enabling safeguarded commercial flights, mission-



critical reliability, and hardened control logic for drone missions.

The mesh networking system extends the range of human-machine collaboration by powering secure, tamper-proof communications from one drone to another and between drones and humans, as well as enabling mission orchestration.

GNSS-Less offers a secure, vision-based alternative to satellite navigation. While traditional GPS can be vulnerable to interference, leading to compromised navigation and tracking, GNSS-Less prevents jamming and spoofing, significantly increasing flight safety and security.

"Unieke is one of the leading tech companies developing intelligent autonomous systems for vehicles and drones," said Juha Ala-Laurila, Unieke's CEO. "We

have extensive expertise in autonomous operations, security, and the application of AI within software engineering. Through this partnership with VentureOne, we are even better equipped to provide advanced secure technologies to our customers, thus contributing to a safer Europe."

"Contributing to the security of Europe's critical infrastructure is a mission we are deeply invested in," said Ossi Lindroos, Solita's CEO. "By combining VentureOne's state-of-the-art technological solutions with our long-standing expertise of secure software systems, data, AI, and connectivity, we are well positioned to help build safer and more resilient societies."

These new agreements build on a recently announced partnership between Business Finland and ATRC, designed to accelerate R&D exchange, co-develop new solutions, and strengthen innovation in each ecosystem. ■



LEAP East, which will debut in Hong Kong from 8 to 10 July 2026, is gathering strong government and institutional support as it prepares to enter the Asia Pacific market. Anchored in two of the world's most influential innovation economies, the event positions Hong Kong as a gateway for global technology dialogue connecting Asia, the Middle East and beyond.

LEAP, headquartered in Riyadh, has established itself as one of the world's most impactful technology platforms, generating more than USD 820 million in economic impact and attracting global technology leaders, investors and policymakers. With this foundation in place, LEAP East establishes its presence in Asia Pacific, with Hong Kong selected as the natural home for the platform's first regional edition.

The Innovation Technology and Industry Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has agreed to be the Hong Kong Government Partner of LEAP East. Alongside Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), the partnership reflects a shared ambition to deepen cross-regional collaboration across advanced technologies,

digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence and fintech.

Hosted at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and co-organised by MCIT, the Saudi Federation for Cybersecurity Programming and Drones (SAFCSP) and Tahaluf, LEAP East is designed as a meeting point for companies scaling internationally, investors seeking growth opportunities and governments shaping the future of technology policy.

Prof. Sun Dong, Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry of the HKSAR Government, said the city welcomed the arrival of LEAP East. "We warmly welcome the first ever LEAP East to be staged in Hong Kong, the best springboard for overseas enterprises to take a leap forward bringing their products and services to the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area, other areas of the Chinese Mainland and the wider Asian markets."

Alongside senior government participation, LEAP East is drawing support from institutions that play a central role in shaping Hong Kong's economic and innovation ecosystem. The Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises (OASES)

has joined as a Supporting Partner, underscoring LEAP East's relevance for large-scale enterprises seeking to understand the policy landscape, market dynamics and long-term opportunities associated with establishing or expanding a presence in Hong Kong and the wider region.

LEAP East signs up Saudi tech giants NHC Innovation and stc

LEAP East is seeing momentum build as NHC Innovation and stc have become the latest big names to sign up for the global tech event's inaugural Hong Kong edition.

As momentum builds, stc has announced it will join LEAP East as a Digital Enabler, whilst NHC Innovation joins as a Future Tech & Innovation Partner for July's event – demonstrating both Saudi companies' appetites for expanding into APAC and beyond.

Additional Supporting Partners include the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Dubai, the Alibaba Entrepreneurs Fund and the FinTech Association of Hong Kong, reflecting the breadth of public and private sector engagement behind the event and

its positioning at the intersection of capital, innovation, and enterprise growth.

That institutional presence is complemented by deep engagement from Hong Kong's innovation community. HKAI Lab has joined LEAP East as a Supporting Partner, bringing one of the city's most active artificial intelligence networks into the platform. As a recognised convenor across startups, researchers, academics, and entrepreneurs, HKAI Lab's participation highlights the strength and maturity of Hong Kong's AI ecosystem and the role it will play in shaping conversations on the LEAP East stage.

Speaker confirmations continue to underline the international scope of the event, bringing together leaders from some of the world's most influential technology hubs. Newly announced speakers include:

- *H.E. Abdullah Alswaha, Minister of Communication & Information Technology, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*
- *Alpha Lau, Director General, InvestHK*
- *Cindy Chow, Executive Director and CEO, Alibaba Entrepreneurs Fund (AEC)*
- *Dr. Ted Suen, CEO, Hong Kong Applied Science and Research Institute (ASTRI)*
- *Sunghyun Park, Co-founder & CEO, Rebellions AI*
- *Kam Shing Kwang, CEO, JP Morgan Hong Kong, and Chair of North Asia*
- *Terry Wong, CEO, Hong Kong Science & Technology Park (HKSTP)*
- *Yinglan Tan, Founding Managing Partner, Insignia Ventures Partners*
- *Yanping Ziang, CEO, AICT*
- *Carol Lin, CEO International of Zhipu AI, one of China's leading artificial intelligence companies and one of the world's first publicly listed large language model*

companies

- *Kai Wu, Chief Revenue Officer of Airwallex, the global payments and financial platform*
- *Shunsuke Okada, Corporate Senior Vice President and Chief Digital Officer of Toshiba, who will share insights into the company's digital and quantum ambitions.*
- *Michael Spranger, President, Sony AI, leading the company's global research efforts at the intersection of artificial intelligence and creativity*
- *Ivana Bartoletti, Chief Privacy Officer, Wipro, bringing a global view on data governance, trust and regulation in emerging technologies*
- *Dr. Alex Zhavoronkov, Founder and CEO, Insilico Medicine, whose work sits at the convergence of artificial intelligence, drug discovery and life sciences*

Building on four successful editions of LEAP in Riyadh, with the fifth taking place in April this year, LEAP East will bring a powerful startup and investment programme to Hong Kong, supporting emerging companies, accelerating investor connections and opening routes into new markets across the Middle East and Asia. Anchored in Hong Kong, the event connects two of the world's most active technology regions, putting Saudi Arabia's fast growing digital economy in direct conversation with Asia's leading innovation hubs and driving new opportunities for collaboration and expansion.

Annabelle Mander, Executive Vice President and co-creator of LEAP at Tahaluf, said the Hong Kong edition reflects how the platform is evolving. "Hong Kong gives LEAP a new vantage point. It brings together capital, talent and policy in a way that supports meaningful growth. LEAP East is not simply an expansion of the platform; it marks the beginning of a network designed to shape how the Middle East and Asia engage on technology and investment in the years ahead." ■

stc

stc group signs an agreement to implement "Silklink" project in Syrian Arab Republic

stc group has signed an agreement to implement the Silklink project in the Syrian Arab Republic. This signing comes after the Group winning a competitive process for the project, which was attended by most regional telecommunications companies.

With an investment of more than SAR 3 billion, Silklink aims to enhance telecommunications infrastructure and connect Syria regionally and internationally via a fibre-optic network extending over 4,500 kilometers, alongside the establishment of data centers and international submarine cable landing stations. The project provides high data transfer capacities and greater reliability, enabling telecom operators in Syria and the region to offer advanced communication services, and support digital applications, cloud services and the Internet of Things, in addition to improving internet quality and raising the efficiency of the digital infrastructure within Syria.

The Silklink project is an extension of stc group's strategy to expand its investments in cross-border digital infrastructure, and to build a regional connectivity system linking Arab, Asian and European markets, which enhances the Group's position as a leading digital enabler in the region and supports its plans for sustainable growth in the telecommunications and digital services sector. ■

Saudi Arabia becoming 'a connector economy' as world trade evolves



His Excellency Majid A. Alkassabi, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Commerce at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos said the Kingdom stands to benefit from ongoing shifts in global supply chains.

Speaking in a session titled 'Many Shapes of Trade', HE commented: "Trade today is definitely shifting from fair trade to a managed and rule-driven trade model. For us in Saudi Arabia, we have a strategic location, we have a lot of resources, we could become a bridge economy. We could become a connector economy where we can connect with Africa, with Europe, with Asia, becoming a logistic hub."

His Excellency Ahmed A. Alkhateeb, Minister of Tourism, in a session called 'The New Geography of Travel: Elevating Destinations, Expanding Opportunity', said: "UN Tourism is projecting the number of tourists to grow to 2 billion by 2030, which means adding 500 million. This is a lot, and this is very encouraging for Saudi Arabia – for its hotel operators, investors, technology providers. This is an industry of amazing potential."

His Excellency Mohammed A. Aljadaan, Minister of Finance said: "Our role as policymakers is to ensure that a predictable environment is provided for businesses, and we are doing so by strengthening the resilience of our economy and giving the private sector the confidence it needs."

His Excellency Abdullah A. Alswaha, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, in 'Converging Technologies to Win', said: "In AI, the Kingdom is tackling the energy wall and the memory wall. We're issuing a call to our partners, that in the Intelligence Age, you need a partner that can accelerate AI, but more critically adopt AI; and the Kingdom stands as your partner of choice."

His Excellency Bandar I. Alkhorayef, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, in 'A Collective Voice on the Future of Minerals: Aligning Policy, Investment and Supply', said: "The Kingdom adopts a multilateral approach to international cooperation, creating platforms that enable dialogue and partnership. The Future Minerals Forum stands at the forefront, now a global convening platform uniting

governments, industry, finance, academia, and technology leaders."

Speaking in 'Redefining Economic Partnerships: From Dialogue to Delivery', His Excellency Faisal F. Alibrahim, Minister of Economy and Planning, said: "I believe there is a world where every country can unlock its economic potential and still keep dialogue open." He added: "There has never been a more blank canvas or a wider opportunity for us to design the future."

On Thursday, the Global Innovation Platform, a strategic partnership between Saudi HoldCo and GoldenPoint Global, launched the Saudi-U.S. Innovation Partnership. It is a nationally anchored platform designed to accelerate bilateral collaboration in life sciences, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing. Anchored by the cities of Riyadh and Austin, the partnership aligns two of the world's most dynamic innovation ecosystems.

Additionally, Amplifai Health was announced as a winner of the second cohort of WEF's MINDS - AI Global Alliance initiative. ■

48% of companies in Middle East build SOC's to enhance cybersecurity, with a focus on human expertise

Among the primary reasons for establishing a Security Operations Center (SOC) are strengthening cybersecurity posture, enabling faster detection and response and gaining a competitive edge. Interestingly, despite the increasing demand for automated cybersecurity solutions, businesses rely on skilled security professionals to make key decisions, as human expertise remains essential for effective security management.

A Security Operations Center (SOC) is a dedicated organizational unit responsible for continuous monitoring and safeguarding of a company's IT infrastructure. Its core mission is to proactively detect, analyze and respond to cybersecurity threats. To identify the main drivers, strategic priorities, and potential challenges in SOC planning and implementation, Kaspersky has conducted a comprehensive global study involving senior IT security specialists, managers and directors from companies with 500 or more employees. All participants operate without a SOC but have plans to establish one in the near future. The study spans 16 countries across APAC, META, LATAM, Europe, and Russia, including the Middle East, providing valuable insights into the emerging trends and best practices in SOC development worldwide.

The findings of the research reveal that 48% of companies in the Middle East intend to establish SOC's to strengthen their cybersecurity posture, and 41% are motivated by the need to address increasingly sophisticated and dangerous threats. Other drivers include budget optimization (45%), the necessity for faster detection and response (40%), and the expansion of software, endpoints and user devices (44%) - factors that demand more comprehensive and layered security measures. Additionally, 38% seek better protection of confidential information, 39% aim to meet regulatory requirements and (34%) expect SOC capabilities to provide a



competitive edge. Larger enterprises tend to cite each of these reasons more often, reflecting the broader operational and regulatory pressures they experience.

Continuous monitoring becomes the leading SOC requirement

Among the key functions organizations in the Middle East plan to delegate, 24/7 security monitoring leads at 56%. This around-the-clock vigilance enables early detection of anomalies, prevents escalation and sustains cyber resilience in real time. This demand highlights a strategic requirement for proactive risk management, as organizations aim to defend against persistent threats that can strike at any moment.

Companies intending to fully outsource SOC operations show a stronger interest in applying "lessons learned" methodologies, whereas those developing internal SOC's focus more on access management to maintain tighter control.

Human expertise drives SOC technology choices

While SOC's use advanced technology, the choices made by organizations in the Middle East show that human analysts

are very important. Among the solutions that organizations plan to include in SOC are - Threat Intelligence Platforms (49%), Endpoint Detection and Response (30%) and Security Information and Event Management systems (42%) - are sophisticated solutions that automate data collection and reduce operational load, however, they depend heavily on skilled security professionals who provide critical context, interpret complex findings and make final decision when guiding appropriate responses.

Other solutions chosen include Extended Detection and Response (35%), Network Detection and Response (41%) and Managed Detection and Response (35%). Large enterprises tend to adopt more technologies (5.5 per SOC on average), while smaller ones integrate fewer (3.8).

"To successfully build a SOC, companies must prioritize not only the right mix of technology but also the careful planning of processes, clear goal-setting and effective resource distribution. Well-defined workflows and continuous improvement are essential to ensure that human analysts can focus on critical tasks, making the SOC a proactive and adaptable component of their cybersecurity strategy," comments Roman Nazarov, Head of SOC Consulting at Kaspersky. ■



World Economic Forum reskilling revolution on track to reach over 850 million people

The World Economic Forum has announced major global commitments to invest in skills development for workers. The Reskilling Revolution initiative is on track to reach more than 850 million people worldwide, nearing its target of equipping 1 billion people with better access to skills, education and economic opportunities.

As artificial intelligence, geoeconomic shifts and the energy transition rapidly reshape global labour markets, preparing workers for the economy of tomorrow is an urgent global priority. The new commitments span corporate pledges, university-employer partnerships and national skills accelerators focused on redesigning how people enter the workforce, transition between jobs and remain employable in an economy increasingly shaped by AI.

Among the Reskilling Revolution commitments, more than 25 technology companies have pledged to support 120 million workers with AI access, skills training and job pathways. In parallel, India and Jordan have launched new national skills and education accelerators, extending training and education opportunities to an additional 14.8 million people.

"The global economy is undergoing

its most significant transformation in decades. But the future of work is not fixed. How it unfolds for workers depends on opportunities for learning, support for job transitions and backing for entrepreneurship," said Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director, World Economic Forum.

Reskilling Revolution Reaches more than 850 Million People

The Reskilling Revolution initiative has mobilized commitments to reach 856 million people globally by 2030, putting it on track to achieve its goal of providing 1 billion people with improved access to education, skills and economic opportunity. The initiative works with 79 economies and 18 industries and is supported by more than 350 organizations and over 35 CEOs.

New commitments come from companies such as Adobe, Cornerstone OnDemand, Cisco, JD.com, SAP, Salesforce, ServiceNow, Snowflake, Wipro, Workday. Across all Reskilling Revolution commitments, the majority focus on AI and digital skills, emphasize human-centric capabilities and prioritize entry-level roles most vulnerable to disruption.

Leading technology companies pledged to

collectively support 120 million workers by 2030 through the World Economic Forum's Reskilling Revolution initiative. The pledge brings together companies including Cognizant, Accenture, Cisco, SAP, IBM, Salesforce, HP, Dell and e& from the US, Europe, the Middle East, India and Japan. It focuses on expanding free access to AI and digital technologies, equipping workers with AI, digital and human skills, and creating pathways to digital careers for individuals without formal technical backgrounds.

National Skills and Education Accelerators

The launch of new skills and education accelerators in India and Jordan strengthens a global network of 45 national accelerators that have collectively supported 14.8 million people. These accelerators bring together government, business and civil society to translate global insights into country-specific action on employment, skills development and inclusive economic growth. The India Accelerator will focus on addressing barriers to equitable skilling, while the Jordan Accelerator will work to leverage emerging technology to improve education quality.

Across the network, national efforts focus on developing skills for the new economy in areas such as human-centric capabilities, AI and digital technologies, sustainability, trade and vocational pathways and business fundamentals. Two new reports explore how human skills are becoming the primary differentiator as AI advances and reveal uneven regional preparedness in AI and digital skills development.

Support for Entry-Level and Platform Workers

New research developed with PwC and surveying 9,000 entry-level workers in 48 countries reveals widespread uncertainty about skills relevance and job security as AI reshapes traditional career entry points. To address this, the Forum launched a Learning-to-Earning Sandbox connecting universities, employers and governments to pilot models integrating paid work experience with skills development. ■

Azercosmos and Chad's ARCEP sign MoU on digital transformation and space cooperation



The Space Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Azercosmos and the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications and Posts of the Republic of Chad (ARCEP) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the fields of digital transformation, innovation hubs, and the export of digital products.

The primary objective of the Memorandum is to develop economic, industrial, scientific, technical, and technological cooperation in the areas of satellite services and space activities.

Under the MoU, the parties plan to cooperate on the development of the space ecosystem, strategic consultancy, spectrum management, geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing, satellite communications, satellite operations and ground systems, as well as regulatory and normative matters related to space activities and satellite services.

The cooperation framework also includes



the exploration of business opportunities in telecommunications, video broadcasting and data services, teleports, and ground station services, as well as the implementation of joint initiatives in space technologies, artificial intelligence, and Earth observation services.

Education and human capital development

are also given special emphasis in the Memorandum. In this context, the implementation of educational programs for teachers and students through Azercosmos' SPACE Academy, the organization of summer schools, the deployment of satellite programs for schools, and the execution of joint educational initiatives are planned. ■

GLOBAL ICT, TELECOM & SATCOM EVENTS 2026

10-12 February 2026 Dubai, UAE	13-16 April 2026 Riyadh, KSA	24-26 June 2026 Shanghai, China
02-05 March 2026 Barcelona, Spain	20-21 April 2026 Dubai, UAE	11-14 September 2026 Amsterdam, Netherlands
23-26 March 2026 Washington, DC	05-07 May 2026 Dubai, UAE	13-15 October 2026 Messe Wien Vienna, Austria
01 April 2026 Dubai, UAE	20-22 May 2026 Singapore	02-05 November 2026 London, UK
07-09 April 2026 Marrakesh	20-22 May 2026 Singapore	17-19 November 2026 Cape Town, SA
09-10 April 2026 Singapore	02-04 June 2026 Dubai, UAE	08-11 December 2026 Dubai, UAE

info@relacom.com.pk

www.relacom.com.pk

/company/relacom-pakistan-ltd/



RELIABLE & COMPETENT PARTNER



Relacom Steps into Cybersecurity: Expanding Beyond Telecom and IT

Relacom has firmly established itself as a leader in telecom deployment and enterprise IT solutions and now, it has strategically expanded into cybersecurity. This evolution reflects Relacom's commitment to building secure, scalable digital ecosystems that meet today's complex infrastructure demands. With expertise spanning network rollouts, cloud infrastructure, and advanced threat protection, Relacom is uniquely positioned to deliver integrated technology services across telecom, IT, and cybersecurity.

- Security Information and Event Management (SIEM)
- Endpoint Protection & Threat Intelligence
- Security Orchestration, Automation & Response (SOAR)
- Network Detection and Response (NDR)
- Managed Security Operations Center (SOC)
- Incident Response & Forensics
- Vulnerability Assessment
- Penetration Testing

Relacom successfully deployed a full-scale SIEM for a public-sector client, showcasing its cybersecurity capabilities. For more details, contact info@relacom.com.pk.



CONNECTING QATAR TO THE WORLD AND BEYOND

At Es'hailSat, we power Qatar's communications through cutting-edge satellite technology. From broadcasting and government services to business connectivity and beyond, we ensure secure, reliable, and high-performance satellite solutions across the region. Proudly rooted in Qatar, we're enabling a future that's always connected, always advancing.

