



Message from the Minister of Communications - Department of Telecommunications

June 2026 Edition

12 Years of Telecom Revolution: The Great Democratisation of Aspiration

History remembers technological revolutions through the societies that harnessed them most effectively. The Industrial Revolution transformed Britain from an island nation into the workshop of the world. The age of mass production found its fullest expression in the United States. The electronics revolution reshaped the economic geography of East Asia. Every transformative technological shift has had a centre of gravity from which its influence radiated outward.

The digital revolution is different. Its innovations emerged across continents, its platforms transcend borders, and its technologies connect billions across the globe. Yet if future historians seek a nation that demonstrated how technology could be deployed at population scale to expand opportunity, strengthen governance, and democratise access, they will find themselves looking closely at India.

The story of India's digital transformation is often told through the lenses of software, startups, digital payments, and entrepreneurship. But the true foundation of this revolution was laid on an invisible highway. Long before citizens began scanning QR codes at roadside stalls, accessing government services online, or consulting doctors through smartphones, India embarked on one of the most ambitious expansions of telecommunications infrastructure anywhere in the world. The digital economy that surrounds us today rests upon networks, fibre, towers, and connectivity that have fundamentally altered the relationship between citizens and opportunity. A decade ago, much of this transformation would have seemed improbable. In 2014, India remained unevenly connected. Broadband subscriptions stood at just 6 crore, while internet connections numbered around 25 crore. Large parts of rural India remained outside the ambit of meaningful digital participation. Connectivity was often determined by geography, and opportunity frequently followed connectivity.

Over the last twelve years, that equation has been fundamentally rewritten. Today, India is the world's second-largest telecom market and accounts for nearly one-fifth of global mobile subscribers. Broadband subscriptions have crossed 107.3 crore, while internet connections have risen to 109.5 crore. The country's overall telecom subscriber base now exceeds 133 crore.

Behind these headline figures lies an extraordinary infrastructure story. Mobile towers and Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs) have increased from 6.5 lakh in 2014 to over 32.38 lakh today. More than 42 lakh kilometres of optical fibre have been laid across the country. To put that achievement into perspective, this network could stretch from the Earth to the Moon and back more than five times.

Yet telecommunications history offers numerous examples of countries that achieved widespread connectivity without achieving widespread inclusion. India's experience has been distinguished by a second factor that is equally transformative: affordability. At approximately ₹7.87 per gigabyte, mobile data in India is among the most affordable in the world. The significance of this extends far beyond consumer convenience. Affordable connectivity lowers the cost of participation in modern society itself. It enables access to information, education, healthcare, financial services, markets, public platforms, and professional networks at an unprecedented scale.

The results are visible across the country. Average monthly wireless data consumption has risen to 36 GB per user, reflecting not merely increased usage but a profound expansion of digital engagement. Perhaps the most consequential outcome has been the democratisation of exposure. For much of human history, access to ideas, information, and global trends was distributed unequally. Connectivity has begun to change that reality. Recently, I had the opportunity to meet Yogendra Khushwaha, popularly known as the "Indian Ashton Hall," whose content was inspired by creators located thousands of kilometres away. His story reflects a broader phenomenon unfolding across India. What is being democratised today is not merely information, but imagination itself—the ability of individuals, regardless of geography or background, to envision possibilities that once seemed beyond reach.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an unexpected stress test for this emerging digital architecture. During periods of lockdown, telecommunications networks sustained educational continuity, economic activity, healthcare delivery, governance, and social interaction. Connectivity became a form of societal resilience, enabling institutions and individuals alike to maintain continuity under extraordinary circumstances.

The experience reinforced a reality that had already begun to emerge: telecommunications was no longer simply an industry. It had become the foundational infrastructure for modern life. India's telecom journey has now progressed beyond connectivity towards technological capability. The deployment of more than 5.41 lakh 5G BTS sites represents one of the fastest rollouts of advanced telecommunications infrastructure anywhere in the world. Simultaneously, India's emergence as one of the few countries with end-to-end indigenous 4G technology, now operational across one lakh BSNL sites, signals a growing capacity not merely to consume technological systems, but to build and shape them.

The transformation extends beyond networks. Under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, telecom manufacturing has generated sales exceeding ₹1.1 lakh crore and exports worth ₹23,711 crore, contributing to India's emergence as the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer. More importantly, these developments are fostering a broader technological ecosystem that links telecommunications, semiconductor manufacturing, artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, and next-generation communications standards. Initiatives such as the IndiaAI Mission and the Bharat 6G Alliance reflect India's ambition not only to participate in future technological revolutions but to help define them.

Yet the most enduring legacy of the last twelve years may ultimately lie elsewhere. The telecom revolution has expanded the boundaries of participation within Indian society. It has reduced the costs of access, weakened the constraints imposed by geography, and widened the distribution of opportunity. In economic terms, it has lowered barriers to entry. In social terms, it has broadened horizons of aspiration. In democratic terms, it has brought millions of citizens into fuller participation in the institutions, markets, and opportunities of modern India. The story of India's telecom revolution is therefore not merely a story about towers, fibre, spectrum, or data consumption. It is a story about empowerment. It is the story of how connectivity became capability, how access became opportunity, and how technology helped democratise aspiration for more than a billion people. That achievement deserves to be recognised as one of the defining developmental transformations of contemporary India.

Jai Hind!

Warm regards,

Jyotiraditya M. Scindia
Minister of Communications,

