

# Work on Micron's unit to start in 45 days: Vaishnaw

Groundbreaking ceremony for \$400 mn Applied Materials centre 'very soon'

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY

New Delhi, 3 July

The groundbreaking ceremony for the first chip manufacturing plant in India by US-based Micron Technologies will be held in the next 40-45 days, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday.

Speaking at a government event in Delhi, Vaishnaw said land has been allocated and project approval granted for the upcoming \$825-million semiconductor plant in Gujarat.

This has happened within two weeks of it being announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his recent US visit.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the \$400-million engineering centre, being built by semiconductor toolmaker Applied Materials, will also take place "very soon" as the site preparation is going on near Bengaluru, Vaishnaw added.

The government has also approved five design companies under the semiconductor performance-linked incentive (PLI) scheme. Two of them will work in the telecom and satellite communications sectors, to make a beamforming chip.

"Hopefully, in the next two years, we will have at least one telecom chipset, which is designed and built in India," Vaishnaw said.

The scheme aims to establish compound semiconductor manufacturing in India through the setting up of display fabs assembly and test units. As many as 310 colleges in the country have already introduced courses in semiconductors.

## 5G growing fast

On 5G, the minister also said one new 5G tower is going live in India every minute. Upto 270,000 5G base stations (BTS), or 5G radios have been established nationwide, the minister said.

A BTS is a fixed radio transceiver in any mobile network, most often installed on mobile towers. Vaishnaw said the total BTS in India's telecom network has reached 2.5 million, up from 625,000 in 2014.

Over this period, the total number of Internet users in India has also risen to 850-900 million, up from 250 million.

India secured \$24 billion of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the telecom sector during the last nine years.

Stressing that India has begun exporting telecom technology to 12 countries, the minister said ₹1,600 crore worth of investments have been done in telecom manufacturing. These were by the 42 com-

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Telecom minister

## Bharat 6G alliance launched to create working ecosystem

**Telecom minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Monday launched the Bharat 6G alliance, which brings together the domestic industry, academia, national research institutions and standards organisations.**

It has been facilitated by the government to create a working 6G ecosystem soon. It will focus on growing 5G advanced/6G intellectual properties and essential patents from India, and design and build 6G products and solutions. It will support Indian positions in global policymaking.

The government wants to be the first globally to create a working 6G ecosystem and is targeting that at least 10 per cent of

6G patents should come out of India by 2030. With a grant of ₹240.51 crore under the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF), two agreements were signed for key 6G projects by government bodies. A consortium of the Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering & Research, under the electronics ministry, IIT Madras, IIT Guwahati and IIT Patna, will set up a 6G THz test bed with orbital angular momentum & Multiplexing. An advanced optical communication test bed will be set up by IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, Sterlite Technologies, Nav Tech, Tejas Network, and a host of private sector players.

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panies selected for the design-led PLI for telecom and networking products.

"These companies have already surpassed the manufacturing benchmark and begun exporting to developed markets," he said. The minister said India's 4G footprint is currently at 99 per cent, and will soon rise to a full 100 per cent. This is due to a ₹38,000-crore grant by the government to expand coverage to remote areas.

The minister said the government is also working on bringing out the next set of telecom reforms, which will focus heavily on user experience. This compares

to user protection, which has been the focus till now.

These will be both structural and procedural in nature, and may be announced in the next few weeks, he said.

Close to 150,000 Bharatnet connections, the government's rural broadband programme, are also being given out, thanks to the "good work" done by Bharat Sanchar Nigam (BSNL), Vaishnaw said.

He added that the company is slowly finding its feet. "It has also become profitable now. It's a big commitment made by our government and the Prime Minister.