

Making India a digital hub tops Ashwini Vaishnaw's agenda

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The Modi 3.0 government will push ahead with its tech-driven agenda while cementing India's position in semi-conductor and electronics manufacturing, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister in charge of electronics and IT (MeitY), Railways, and Information and Broadcasting (I&B), said on Tuesday. The focus will remain on making India a tech and digital hub, he said.

The 53-year-old Rajya Sabha MP assumed office on Tuesday morning, before heading to Bhubaneswar for the swearing-in of the new BJP government of Odisha.

Retaining two pivotal portfolios — Railways and MeitY — and being at the helm of the crucial I&B Ministry, the former tech-savvy bureaucrat-turned-politician appears to have earned the Prime Minister's unwavering confidence.

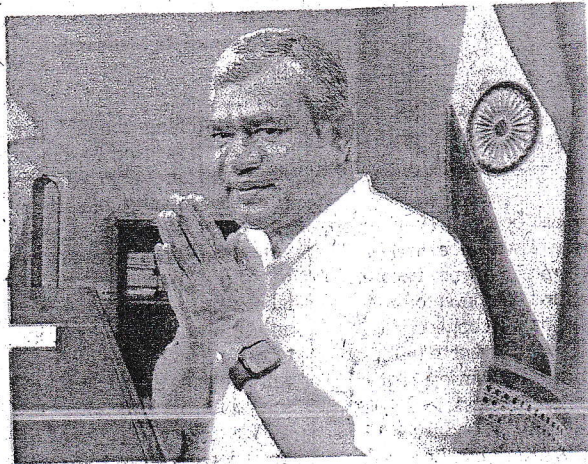
Taking charge of MeitY, Vaishnaw said efforts would be made towards "empowering the common man" and bringing transformative changes through Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and other enabling programmes initiated over the last 10 years.

During his previous tenure, the Ministry spearheaded initiatives in electronics and semiconductor manufacturing, data privacy, internet regulations, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence (AI) technology. A continuation of these policies is anticipated in his fresh innings.

TECH TASK AT HAND

MeitY is tasked with promulgating guidelines for industry stakeholders and data fiduciaries for the implementation of this legislation geared towards protection of data and privacy rights.

Foremost among the



IN THE ASCENDANT. Ashwini Vaishnaw assumes charge as Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting in New Delhi ANI

Ministry's priorities is the formulation and notification of regulatory frameworks through consultation processes. The groundwork for drafting the regulations has already been laid.

While the Digital Private Data Protection Act was passed in 2023, under the Minister's leadership, passage of the law does not mean actual implementation. The MeitY has to notify specific guidelines for the industry or the data fiduciaries to follow and implement this data protection and data privacy law.

The Act also entails setting up a data protection board — an adjudicatory body to deal with privacy-related grievances and disputes. The Centre will appoint the board members.

Efforts to regulate and legislate for AI are poised to gain momentum. Vaishnaw's proactive stance in the past foretells an imminent resumption of these efforts.

India recently began work on a regulatory framework to address the range of issues that have arisen with the growth of AI technology.

An advisory urged tech companies to obtain "explicit permission" before deploying under-tested or unreliable AI models.

In the area of semicon-

ductor manufacturing, MeitY is expected to add local value in electronics manufacturing to ensure self-reliance.

RAIL AGENDA

Vaishnaw, as the 39th Rail Minister, was instrumental in introducing Vande Bharat high-speed trains — the first such end-to-end indigenous offering after Shatabdi.

In his second stint as Rail Minister, his focus would be on introducing sleeper Vande Bharat trains and Vande Metro (for intra-city travel), apart from adding more Vande Bharat trains. He is also spearheading India's first bullet train project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad; the first phase is expected to be commissioned in 2026.

Talks are underway with Japanese companies for supply of high-speed trains, apart from orders placed with ICF Chennai for trial trains.

Towards improving the safety and punctuality of the Railways, a host of passenger-friendly initiatives are expected to be rolled out in the coming days. The most ambitious of these would be the promise of "no waiting list" (everyone gets a confirmed ticket on an Indian train).