

Bharti Airtel has chosen IBM to manage its computing technology and services that power its mobile communications network spanning 16 African countries. An agreement is expected to be finalized in the fourth quarter. Under the 10-year planned agreement, IBM will consolidate 16 different IT environments across Bharti Airtel's African operations into an integrated IT system and will oversee the management of all of the applications, data center operations, servers, storage and desktop. In addition, IBM will deploy advanced technologies created by IBM Research, including the Spoken Web service, a voice-enabled Internet technology that allows users to access and share information simply by talking over an existing telephone. This is particularly compelling for populations with little or no literacy, visual impairments, or which lack access to PCs.

Sunil Bharti Mittal, Chairman and Managing Director, Bharti Airtel, said: "There are huge opportunities throughout Africa to transform how people communicate and how communities interact. Delivering on that opportunity through affordable mobile communications for everyone is our focus. We are delighted to extend our successful relationship with IBM in South Asia to Africa. This transformational business delivery model, which will be a first in Africa's telecom industry, will bring enhanced efficiencies to our operations and help us deliver world-class mobile services to our customers. It will also offer career enhancement opportunities to Bharti Airtel's employees in the IT domain who will now get exposure to global best practices and latest technologies with IBM. More importantly, this alliance underlines our commitment to the growth of Africa's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector and contributes towards bridging the digital divide on the continent."

Samuel J. Palmisano, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, IBM, said: "We see our strategic relationship with Bharti Airtel as a powerful example of building a smarter planet. We have achieved great success together in India, and now we are bringing that model to Africa. By building a 21st century telecommunications infrastructure for the continent in effect, treating all of Africa as a system of systems we expect to help spark transformation not just in communications but across all sectors of society empowering businesses, governments and individual citizens to connect, innovate and achieve economic growth."

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