

India eyes Internet revolution to reach rural areas

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A farmer to threshes wheat in the remote village of Purushwadi, some 140 miles (220kms) west of Mumbai, India, in March 2009. India said Thursday it aims to sharply expand its national broadband network as it seeks a "revolution" to bring high-speed Internet to the country's rural heartland.

India said Thursday it aims to sharply expand its national broadband network as it seeks a "revolution" to bring high-speed Internet to the country's rural heartland.

India is the world's fastest-growing cellular market with some 700 million people having mobile phone services but [Internet penetration](#) has trailed badly.

At present, the number of [broadband connections](#) stands at only 10.3 million.

"We need to provide broadband connections to rural India on a scale similar to the revolution we had in mobile connectivity," said Gurudas Kamat, minister of state for communications.

"Broadband for all should be our mantra," Kamat said at the opening of a [telecommunications](#) conference in New Delhi.

The left-leaning Congress government sees access to broadband as a way to bolster education, health care, banking and other services and help lift hundreds of millions of Indians out of poverty.



People browse the net at a cyber cafe in Calcutta. India said Thursday it aims to sharply expand its national broadband network as it seeks a "revolution" to bring high-speed Internet to the country's rural heartland.

Kamat's statements came after the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India proposed an ambitious plan this week for India to seek to have 75 million broadband connections by 2012 and 160 million by 2014.

The recommendations for the 600-billion-rupee (13-billion-dollar) investment in broadband services came in the wake of the Congress government's failure to meet its target of 20 million broadband

connections by 2010.

Most of India's broadband connections are through landlines but companies are rolling out wireless broadband networks after winning third-generation and wireless [broadband spectrum](#) in auctions earlier this year.

The regulatory authority has proposed that all villages with populations of at least 500 people be connected to broadband by 2013.

"The network will provide easy access to high speed data and information to citizens," it said.

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