

every month, with more than half of them in rural areas and this growth is set to continue,” Mr Mittal told participants. He also underlined that this growth is putting severe strains on energy resources. India has 450 million mobile phone subscribers and is looking to reach 1 billion in the next four to five years. “We need to look at leading-edge technologies. We have to make sure these networks are powered through technologies that will not harm our environment. We are building towers where there is no electricity and using generators,” Mr Mittal explained. And, he added, “we believe that through ITU, policy-makers and Heads of State, we can together find ways and means of using technologies that are outside our industries and available to us. The problem is that countries that have money have no sun, and those with sun have no money. So we need to combine solar energy with technologies and money from the developed world.” Despite these challenges, “we as an industry will deliver on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by 2012,” concluded Mr Mittal.

Indian telecommunication equipment manufacturer Vihaan Networks Limited (or VNL) unveiled its environment friendly solar-powered mobile system. Providing mobile coverage to remote and rural parts of the world is often hindered by high installation and operating costs. In addition, the specialized knowledge needed to set up and run a base station is not widely available. As a result, few operators have gone into these communities. VNL has helped overcome this obstacle with a low-power mobile base station that requires little capital expense and has almost no operating costs.

According to VNL’s founder and Chairman Rajiv Mehrotra, the solar-powered network is designed to help mobile operators connect the unconnected in rural and remote areas where average revenue per user (ARPU) is less than USD 2 dollars, and still be financially viable. “Everyone is looking for solutions that create zero emissions. Today, many companies in India have designed end-to-end solar solutions for mobile. These systems are now widely available. Soon, India will have more solar-powered systems than the rest of the world put together,” Mr Mehrotra added.