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Business

Zain completes trial for 5.5G IoT RedCap technologies in Kuwait

Zain Kuwait continuously enhancing its 5G network and striding to 5.5G

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the Middle East's leading digital ICT service provider, has completed the technical prototype validation of RedCap based on 5.5G technology in Kuwait.

RedCap is defined as part of the 3GPP Internet of Things architecture. It has network speeds of 100Mbps downlink and 10Mbps uplink and can be used in supporting use cases such as industrial Internet, electric power industry, wearables, video surveillance, smart vehicles, and other similar medium to high-speed IoT applications. From the perspective of application scenarios, RedCap has huge potential in the industrial and consumer markets. Take video surveillance and wearable devices as examples:

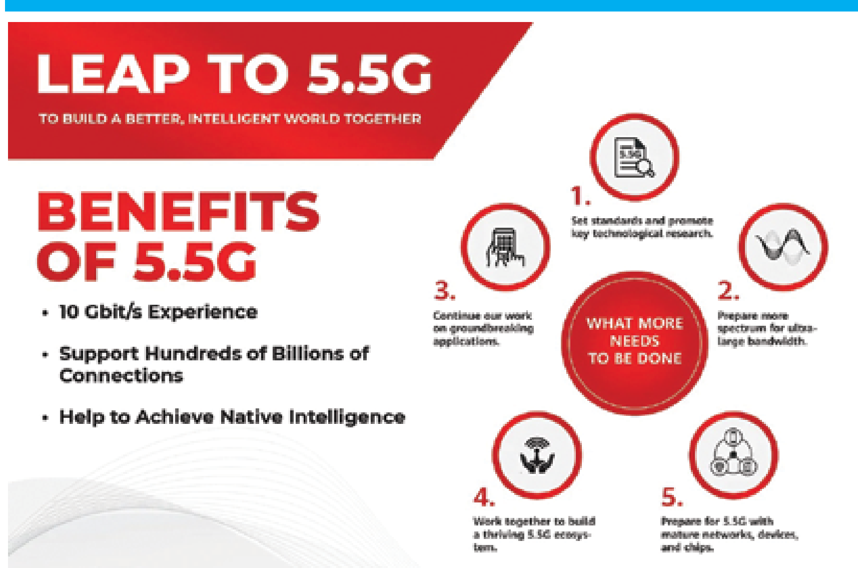
Video surveillance: Mobile cameras mainly provide upstream services. The upstream rate of 4 Mbps can meet the requirements of 1080p video, and the upstream rate of 20 Mbps can meet the requirements of 4K HD video. Therefore, RedCap can meet video surveillance requirements in most scenarios and facilitate the large-scale development of wireless cameras.

Wearable devices: include smart glasses, smart watches, smart bands, and the like. The RedCap technology reduces terminal complexity and optimizes power consumption to save power. RedCap supports 1T1R, facilitating small-sized UE integration. In terms of rate, the RedCap terminal can meet the requirements of wearable devices (5–50 Mbps in the downlink and 2–5 Mbps in the uplink). In the future, RedCap-enabled wearable devices will grow rapidly after the popularity of RedCap networks.

As a critical technology of 5G R17, RedCap offers numerous advantages. First, RedCap reduces terminal complexity by about 60 percent compared to traditional 5G terminals. Second, RedCap takes on some of the best features of 5G NR, such as low latency, high reliability, service assurance, and low power use. Third, RedCap can be introduced on demand for various application scenarios to meet service requirements effectively. RedCap also employs cutting-edge power-saving technologies to extend battery life. The overall cost of the RedCap module is estimated to be significantly lower than that of ordinary 5G mobile phones, achieving a better "cost-effective" balance between the performance and cost of 5G RedCap terminals and having strong market competitiveness. This test showed that the 5G RedCap technology meet all of the procedures and expected performance requirements of the 3GPP R17 protocol, and the test marks a critical step in the evolution of 5.5G technology.

To promote social digital transformation in the GCC region, Zain will continue to explore additional use cases for 5G RedCap with the assistance of its partners. It will also continue to construct the ecosystem for the 5G Internet of Things industry. Millions of connections will be possible soon, accelerating the digitalization of industries.

Use cases include industrial Internet, electric power industry, wearables, video surveillance, smart vehicles and other IoT applications



BRUSSELS: European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde answers questions during the European Parliament Committee on Economic Affairs at the EU Parliament in Brussels on March 20, 2023. —AFP

ECB sees smaller carbon footprint in bond portfolio

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank said Thursday it was making progress in reducing the carbon footprint of its massive corporate bond portfolio, as part of wider efforts to green its finances and help combat climate change. In a new report, the ECB unveiled details for the first time of the climate impact of its huge corporate bond holdings, amassed over years of crisis-fighting in the eurozone.

Although the portfolio's overall greenhouse gas emissions rose in recent years as the ECB hoovered up more debt to bolster the eurozone economy, the relative carbon footprint of debt issuers actually decreased, the report showed. The ECB's corporate bond holdings swelled from 173.1 billion euros ($188 billion) in 2018 to 358.2 billion euros in 2022, a 123-percent increase, but the "carbon intensity" of its portfolio fell by 30 percent over that period.

The decline was partly down to companies' own efforts to boost their carbon efficiency, resulting in lower emissions for every million euro of revenue they earned, the ECB said. Another contributing factor was the ECB's decision to "tilt" its bond buys towards companies "with a better climate performance", which it started doing in October. The Frankfurt institution said it plans to publish the climate report annually from now on. "These disclosures are a further piece of the puzzle in our efforts to contribute to fighting climate change," ECB president Christine Lagarde said in a statement.

"They give us a clear view of our progress in decarbonizing our portfolios and, over time, they will help us to chart the most effective course towards the goals of the Paris Agreement."

Lagarde has repeatedly stressed that the ECB has a role to play in the fight against global warming, even though its main mandate is maintaining price stability. The ECB has begun holding "climate stress tests" for the more than 100 banks it supervises, to examine their resilience to environmental shocks. —AFP

Most GCC central banks raise interest rates

ABU DHABI: The central banks of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar raised their benchmark borrowing rates after the US Federal Reserve increased its key interest rate at a more moderate level as it tries to balance fighting inflation and avert further volatility in the banking sector.

The Fed increased the policy rate by 25 basis points as it continues its push towards bringing inflation down to its target range of 2 per cent and restoring price stability amid market turmoil fuelled by recent bank failures in the world's largest economy.

Most central banks in the GCC follow the Fed's policy rate moves due to their currencies being pegged to the US dollar. Kuwait is an exception in the six-member economic bloc as its dinar is linked to a basket of currencies.

The Saudi Central Bank, better known as Sama, raised its repurchase agreement (repo) rate by a quarter-point to 5.50 per cent and its reverse repo rate by a similar margin to 5 per cent. The kingdom's inflation rate for 2022 was estimated at 2.6 per cent and has been forecast at 2.1 per cent in 2023, Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said in December.

The UAE Central Bank raised its base rate for the overnight deposit facility by a quarter of a percentage point to 4.9 per cent, effective from Thursday. It maintained the rate applicable to borrowing short-term liquidity from the regulator through all standing credit facilities at 50 bps above the base rate.

The base rate, which is anchored to the Fed's interest on reserve balances, signals the general stance of the UAE regulator's monetary policy and provides an effective interest rate floor for overnight money market rates. The UAE economy is estimated to have grown by 7.6 per cent last year, the highest in 11 years, after expanding 3.9 per cent in 2021, according to the UAE Central Bank. The country's economy is projected to grow 3.9 per cent in 2023, according to the regulator.

Meanwhile, the central bank of Qatar, which had maintained its rates in the previous cycle, on Wednesday increased the lending and deposit rates by 25bps to 5.75 percent and 5.25 percent respectively. The monetary authority also hiked the repo rate by 25bps to 5.50 percent.

The Central Bank of Bahrain also increased its key rate on one-week deposits by 25 bps to 5.75 per cent. The Bahraini regulator raised its interest rate on overnight deposits by a quarter-point to 5.50 per cent, and by a similar margin on its four-week deposit rate, raising it to 6.50 per cent. The lending rates remain unchanged at 6.75 per cent. —Agencies

ABU DHABI: The Central Bank of UAE building.

Bank of England hikes rate despite banking turmoil

LONDON: The Bank of England on Thursday hiked its interest rate for the eleventh time in a row, as policymakers seek to tackle soaring inflation despite turmoil in the banking sector. The British central bank's Monetary Policy Committee voted at a regular meeting to lift its key interest rate by 25 basis points to 4.25 percent, the highest level since late 2008.

The announcement followed hikes in the United States, Norway and Switzerland. Policymakers "will continue to monitor closely indications of persistent inflationary pressures, including the tightness of labor market conditions and the behavior of wage growth and services inflation", the BoE said in a statement. "If there were to be evidence of more persistent pressures, then further tightening in monetary policy would be required."

The decision had been widely expected after shock official data showed that British annual inflation accelerated in February despite central bank efforts to tame a growing cost-of-living crisis. The Consumer Prices Index rose by 10.4 percent in the 12 months to February, up from 10.1 percent in January. The news strengthened the case for another interest rate hike, despite calls for no change amid recent turmoil in the commercial banking sector.

British inflation unexpectedly accelerated in February, official data showed Wednesday, deepening a cost-of-living crisis and pressuring the Bank of England to hike interest rates further despite global markets turmoil. After slowing for three straight months, the UK Consumer Prices Index shot up to 10.4 percent in February -- not far from 40-year highs and more than five times the BoE's target. That followed CPI of 10.1 percent in January and dashed expectations for a slowdown to 9.9 percent.

Wednesday's data comes after the UK government last week forecast inflation would slow sharply to 2.9 percent by year-end, adding that the country would avoid recession in 2023. The predictions were published alongside finance minister Jeremy Hunt's £94-billion ($114-billion) cost-of-living measures for this year and next. —AFP

Toshiba says it will 'support' $15bn takeover bid

TOKYO: Troubled Japanese conglomerate Toshiba said Thursday it will "support" a $15 billion takeover bid by a consortium led by investment fund Japan Industrial Partners. The long-awaited move follows years of turmoil for the company, which once symbolized Japan's tech prowess but has more recently faced scandals, financial trouble and high-level resignations.

The engineering giant remained cautious in a statement issued after a board meeting, however saying it would ask a special committee to review the deal, before recommending how its shareholders proceed. "At this point, the board... expresses our support for the tender offer if it is commenced," it said. "However, the board has also passed a resolution to not go as far as to recommend it at this point." Toshiba, which produces everything from rice cookers to medical equipment and nuclear plants, said it would likely take four months before the takeover bid gets underway.

The JIP-led consortium includes 17 Japanese businesses and six Japanese financial institutions which are investing in or issuing loans for the deal. When approved under global competition laws, the acquisition—worth nearly two trillion yen ($15 billion) -- is expected to take the engineering giant private. Nearly two years ago, a bombshell buyout offer from private equity fund CVC Capital Partners put a question mark over the future for Toshiba.

The ensuing saga has been closely watched in business circles for clues on what could become of other huge, diversified conglomerates in Japan and elsewhere. After the CVC offer was dropped, plans were floated to split the company up and spin off its device segment—meeting stiff opposition from some investors. Several shareholders argued that a spin-off would only add to Toshiba's woes by creating more managerial posts at smaller units, rather than improving the firm's governance. But that plan was rejected last year at an extraordinary shareholder meeting, dealing a blow to management as deadlock reigned over the next steps for the company.

Toshiba can trace its history back to 1875, when its forerunner operated as a telegraph factory in Tokyo. It grew into a vast conglomerate, but has been rocked by turbulence since 2015 when a profit-padding scandal erupted. That led to huge losses, followed by a recovery that brought pressure from new activist shareholders. Foreign investors have kept Toshiba afloat, but have also pushed for faster growth and a clearer long-term strategy. —AFP