

India on Way to Topping US in Internet Users



Reuters

A man sends a text message from his mobile phone at an Internet cafe in the eastern Indian city of Kolkata

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This is the VOA Special English Technology Report.

India could pass the United States in the number of Internet users in less than two years. A new report says India reached one hundred twelve million users in September. That makes India the third largest Internet market after China and the United States.

China reported four hundred eighty-five million Internet users in June, and there are more than two hundred seventy million Internet users in the United States.

The Internet and Mobile Association of India says Internet growth was especially strong among people in smaller towns and cities.

There was also a large increase in Internet use among school-aged children and college students. This is partly because of the growing number of e-learning services and educational websites.

Subho Roy is president of the Internet and Mobile Association of India. He says another big change this year is that more and more people are using the Internet from home.

SUBHO ROY: "Last year the old pattern was still there -- cyber cafes being top, then office, and then home. So this dramatic change has come about this year -- a very, very great movement in the home-use segment. People are probably buying their own broadband connections and accessing it from their own devices rather than going to common service points." This growth in Internet use has also led to an increase in online businesses.

Deepinder Goyal owns Zomato.com. His website provides information about restaurants and nightlife activities across India. Mr. Goyal got the idea for Zomato while working at a consulting firm three years ago. He and his coworkers kept restaurant menus in their office so they could order lunch from different places.

DEEPINDER GOYAL: "We scanned these menu cards and put them online. So starting an Internet venture was actually an experiment and it worked out really well and currently we are getting around two million people just looking up menu cards on our website every month." Zomato now provides information on more than seventeen thousand restaurants across India. It covers areas from the Delhi national capital region to Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai.

Deepinder Goyal says the growth in Internet use at home has been good for business. Zomato used to depend mostly on business people -- or "corporates" -- going online at work.

DEEPINDER GOYAL: "So earlier we used to see that around fifty to sixty percent of our traffic used to spike at lunches on weekdays. That was due to corporates accessing our website when they used to order lunch. And right now, weekends are also very heavy traffic for us."

In a separate report, GSMA, the global trade group for the mobile industry, says Africa is the world's fastest growing mobile phone market. Africa has the second largest number of mobile phone connections after Asia.

And that's the VOA Special English Technology Report, written by June Simms. Transcripts, MP3s and podcasts are at voaspecialenglish.com. I'm June Simms.

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