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India will overtake the US as the second-largest Internet user base in the world by next month, behind only China, which has more than 600 million subscribers.

The number of Internet users in India is expected to reach 402 million by December, a growth of 49 per cent over last year, according to a report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India and IMRB International.

While it took more than a decade to go from 10 million Internet users to 100 million and three years from 100 million to 200 million, it's taken only a year to go from 300 million to 400 million users.

"The growth in the number of Internet users is great news for the industry because the mass base is growing," said Nilotpal Chakravarti, associate vice-president at IAMAI.

He said with more people getting online and becoming aware of the benefits of the Internet and ecommerce, there is great potential for growth. "The number of users in India is expected to touch 500 million by next year. This is especially good news for the ecommerce digital industries because now they will have a mass base of consumers," he said. Internet users in the top eight metros accounted for 31 per cent of the total of 375 million in October. Mumbai had the largest base of monthly active users among top metros. Smaller cities saw a 60 per cent jump in total number and Surat emerged with the highest Internet ownership in this category.

While the urban user base expanded almost 40 per cent until October, growth in rural India was 77 per cent. Mobile phones were the main driver of growth in rural areas, where active mobile Internet users are expected to reach 87 million by December and 109 million by June, according to the report.

"To tap such a huge rural base of potential mobile Internet users, digital has to be the core of any company's strategy. The data usage is poised to increase to an unprecedented level and the digitally enabled sectors are up for steep growth in the coming five years," said the report.

In urban areas, online communication continued to be the primary purpose for accessing the Internet, followed by social networking and entertainment. In rural areas, entertainment and social networking led the usage categories. Gaming through social networking sites picked up in rural areas, with 36 per cent of the user base, up from 21 per cent last year. – *Economic Times*

Asus and Google have finally started selling the Chromebit, a candybar-sized Chrome OS computer that retails for a measly 85 bucks. You can plug it into any HDMI port, hook up the power cable and a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse, then kaboom: instant computer.

We've become familiar with Chromebooks. On the low end, they offer a cheap and easy way to get a browser and web-based apps without having to hassle with keeping the thing up to date. The Chromebit is the same idea, only smaller. Basically, take a cheap Chromebook and remove the expensive parts: the screen, the battery, the keyboard and

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trackpad. What you're left with is Asus' cute little stick.

It's compelling, if only because the cheap price compels you to consider new places where you might want a computer. If you have an old monitor lying around, turn it into a secondary computer. Or maybe use that extra HDMI port on your TV so you can relive the 1996 dream of the full web experience on your TV. Or maybe you just want to get a conference room set up for Hangouts conferences. And those hotel room TVs (and the annoying captive-portal hotel Wi-Fi) could become a bit more useful too. Or perhaps Chrome OS is a better option for the classroom than a room full of aging Windows XP boxes.

All grand ideas, so long as the Chromebit itself can live up to them. But if you're thinking about impulse-buying this little computer-on-a-stick, here's my advice: Dream small. The Chromebit is not very powerful. It has a Rockchip processor — a relatively new class of chip that can't handle too many tabs or video at super high resolution. Pair that with a relatively paltry 2GB of RAM and you'll find that your new gadget can't run more than a handful of Chrome tabs before things start getting sluggish and reloading.

There's also the fact that the Chromebit's economics really only make sense if you happen to have a display with an HDMI port you want to use and a spare Bluetooth keyboard and mouse. You can buy all the extra bits you need, but the costs can quickly add up. (If I were Google, I'd make a free Android app that could act as a keyboard and trackpad for this thing.)

All those limitations seem somehow less acceptable on a big monitor or TV than they do on a budget Chromebook like the Flip. If you have a big screen that looks like a full Chrome OS computer, you expect it to perform like one too, and the Chromebit doesn't, not really.

Google seems to understand these limitations. In a blog post, it names the Chromebit as a good device for digital kiosks that can be managed remotely. That's actually a smart scenario for a device like this. The Chromebit won't make you happy if you're trying to juggle Netflix and a Google spreadsheet and six tabs of research and cat GIFs — but it can certainly run the latte selection and headline crawl at your local coffee shop.

If you're well aware of what the Chromebit can and (more importantly) can't do, then by all means give it a shot. Since it runs Chrome OS, you won't have to deal with a lot of setup or maintenance — Google handles all of that for you. Many people have found real uses for Chromebooks — it's entirely possible to get 90 percent of what most of use computers for done on them. Worst case scenario: you have a spare computer sitting in your junk drawer, just in case.

It won't run nearly as many apps as a cheap Windows PC, but then again there are precious few Windows PCs this cheap. — **The Verge**



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