

A lot more needs to be done

BASIS president tells The Daily Star

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

The government needs to tie up the educational system with the growing IT industry to transform the country into a full-fledged knowledge-based economy.

Mahboob Zaman, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), said the present generation has to be wooed to implement the much-talked 'Digital Bangladesh' vision, as the under-25 age group makes up 65 per cent of the total population.

"This segment can take up technology easily," he told The Daily Star during an interview. His comments came as BASIS, the apex body of the software industry and IT-enabled services, organised its annual flagship exposition in association with the Science and ICT Ministry and Access to Information programme of the Prime Minister's Office recently in the capital.

About 110 local companies and 10 firms from Denmark and the Netherlands took part in the ninth edition of the country's largest exposition for software and ICT-enabled services, which also featured over 20 seminars on various topics.

The exposition has been a grand success in terms of size and features, and participation

of industry people, politicians, and policymakers," Zaman said.

He said during the exposition they engaged heads of the educational boards including madrassas and vocational education and vice-chancellors of public and private universities to make the youths aware of the needs of the time.

Zaman said the country's over 800 software companies should work under one umbrella to share knowledge and other infrastructures.

"We need to share knowledge and resources regularly, as some companies are good at data and web contents while others in other areas."

"Besides, the government will not be able to ensure uninterrupted power supply and connectivity to every firm across the country. If we could have offices in the same building or in four to five buildings then it would be good for the industry", Zaman said.

"So, at a meeting we requested the prime minister for the IT park. She agreed and allocated us the Janata Tower," the president said.

Zaman said the government should also build IT parks in the university towns such as Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet to help graduates get engaged in the sector.

"There must be an engagement between universities and



Mahboob Zaman

industry otherwise the industry will not flourish."

He said there would be a revolution in the country if the government can use Public

Private Partnership (PPP) concept in the IT sector. "But business model needs to be changed."

"Many think that PPP only involves financial relationship among the parties. But it should be functional and operational

relationship. Up to a certain period there must be joint ownership arrangement."

"The service must be split between the government and private parties. It must be based on build-operate-transfer basis."

He said the government should connect the country to the second submarine cable, instead of relying on the single one. "Otherwise, we will not be

able to tap our potential in the global outsourcing business."

"We have to emphasize on increasing internet penetration, which now stands at paltry 5 per cent. Otherwise we will not get orders from overseas," he said.

Zaman said there are many students in the country who work online with different countries. "We have to provide them with technical, professional and business support. We have raw

talents, and they should be nurtured methodically."

He said Bangladesh could tap opportunities in Africa and South and South-East Asia in the IT sector. "Africa can be a good market for mobile applications, while both the regions can be destinations for microfinance automation products."

"The government should participate in a single-country fair with products including IT-enabled services in countries where we have potentials."

"The commercial wings of our embassies abroad should also be provided with our products. We also need to set up representative offices in the Gulf countries."

He said although the country seems to be fascinated with 'Digital Bangladesh' vision, there is lack of coordination among the implementing agencies. "Different agencies are doing the same thing."

"This cannot continue, rather we need a coordinating authority. Otherwise, the whole momentum will go in vain if any mishap occurs," said Zaman,

also the managing director of DataSoft Systems, a local software company.

"If we can proceed with a planned way then the IT-enabled services could become the main lifeline of the economy in next five to six years," he said.

On the quality of local software solutions, he said: "In the past, we only focused on providing allied services, while core services came from global IT giants. But our capacity is growing now and the clients are responding positively."

Zaman said Gartner's assessment on the country's outsourcing potentials last year has given the much-needed confidence to the growing industry. "It has shown us where we stand today, but we have to improve on that."

Gartner, world's leading information technology research and advisory company, for the first time, rated Bangladesh as offshore services location and placed among the top 30-country destination for outsourcing, thanks to its good cost proposition.

Zaman also ruled out any possibility of digital divide. "We have IT centres in each union across the country. Ninety-nine per cent of the population is now under mobile coverage".

"Most of the people know how to operate a mobile phone and every mobile phone is itself a computer. It's a great achievement and milestone. If we can enrich them with contents then we will be growing like anything."

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Kaspersky solutions at GP centres

IT.TELECOM DESK

Grameenphone Ltd, the leading mobile operator in Bangladesh and Officetracts, distributor of a world leading anti-virus solution company Kaspersky Lab, recently signed a deal, says a press release.

Under the agreement Kaspersky Lab Internet Security products are made available in Grameenphone Centres.

The agreement is believed to be the first of its kind in Bangladesh where a telecommunications service provider offers security software solutions to its customers through countrywide outlets. Initially the products are available through select centres in

Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Jessor, Comilla, Dinajpur, Bogra and Noakhali.

Kaspersky Lab hoped it would open a new door for the security software market in the country and acknowledge the need for security in a digital world where cyber crime is an impending issue that requires immediate attention and awareness.

Kaspersky Lab of Russia is a world-leading developer of anti-virus, internet security, mobile security and other security software.

It has pioneered awareness and usage of anti-virus & security software among home-users and various organisations.

Logitech joins hands with CSL

IT.TELECOM DESK

Logitech has appointed Computer Source Ltd., Bangladesh as its sole regional distributor for the country, says a press release.

The appointment is aligned with Logitech's strategy to increase its geographical presence and penetrate deeper into untapped markets.

Expressing satisfaction with the agreement, Subrota Biswas, Logitech country manager for India and South-West Asia, said "Bangladesh is one of the fastest-growing markets for computer accessories in South Asia and our efforts are built around attracting capable and committed partners who can take our innovative products and solutions to the consumers. Computer Source brings in experience, local market knowledge and highly capable

staff to match our growth ambitions in this very exciting market and we are extremely happy about this collaboration."

Computer Source Ltd (CSL) is the largest technology distributor in Bangladesh and has well-established distribution network with more than 18 outlets, distributors and retail partners.

As a result of the agreement, Logitech can now offer its leading edge products and solutions to customers in the fast emerging Bangladeshi market.

AHM Mahfuzul Arif, managing director, CSL said coalition with the Logitech fulfills CSL's objectives as it constantly tries to introduce modern technology in the country. He also said that it will help CSL penetrate the market more effectively, delivering the right solution to consumers.

TECHPHOTO

Watson

This undated file photo courtesy of IBM shows Watson, powered by IBM POWER7, a work-load optimised system that can answer questions posed in natural language over a nearly unlimited range of knowledge. Watson, named after IBM founder Thomas J. Watson, was built by a team of IBM scientists which rivals a human's ability to answer questions posed in natural language with speed, accuracy and confidence. Watson beat human in a first-ever man vs machine Jeopardy! competition on February 14, 15 and 16.

PHOTO: AFP



Samsung beats Apple to second tablet computer

REUTERS, Barcelona

Samsung launched a second tablet computer on Sunday, with a bigger screen and more processing power than the original Galaxy Tab that is seen as the only real rival to Apple's iPad.

The Galaxy Tab 10.1 is intended to be a multimedia hub for aficionados of games, electronic books and social media, with a 10.1 inch (25.7 centimetre) screen, dual surround-sound speakers, and front- and rear-facing cameras.

The tablet, with two core processors to better handle media, is based on the latest Google Android platform, Honeycomb -- which has been optimized for tablets.

It will be sold by Vodafone in more than 20 countries before being released to other carriers.

Samsung, now the world's second-

biggest phone maker after Nokia, also launched a new premium smartphone, the ultra-slim Galaxy S II, designed around hubs for social networking, reading, games and music.

South Korean electronics giant Samsung, whose telecoms division accounted for nearly half its profit last quarter, has sold around 10 million Galaxy S smartphones since its June 2010 debut, and 2 million Galaxy tablets.

It still has a long way to catch up with Apple, which sold more than 7 million iPads and 16.2 million iPhones last quarter alone, but is gaining ground on Nokia, which announced a crucial tie-up with Microsoft on Friday.

"If I were (chief executive) Stephen Elop heading up Nokia, I would be looking over my shoulder at Samsung and feeling extremely nervous," said Ben Wood, lead analyst at telecoms research firm CCS Insight.



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