

Govt making big plans for ICT infrastructure: Palak



Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, speaks at a press conference at his office in Dhaka yesterday.

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government is taking massive plans to develop necessary infrastructure for the ICT sector and create skilled manpower, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT division, said yesterday.

The government is also working to help the industry earn \$1 billion in software export and outsourcing by 2018, and take the figure to \$5 billion by 2021, he said. By 2021, the ICT sector will contribute more than 5 percent to the country's gross domestic product, he said.

The aim is to increase internet penetration to 100 percent by 2021, with 50 percent broadband penetration, to lead the country to real digitisation, Palak said. "We have made good progress in building the Kaliakoir hi-tech park and a software park at Janata Tower in Dhaka," he said, adding that the Kaliakoir park will help employ nearly 70,000 in the next 10 years.

"The Kaliakoir hi-tech park will be a specialised economic zone and the lifeline of the country's IT sector. A world-class business environment will be created for local and foreign investors in the park," he added.

Jessore IT park is ready and the government will open it by June, where around 5,000 people will get jobs, Palak said. The government has also allowed five private companies to set up software technology parks. The firms -- Accenture, Augmedix, Digicon Technologies, Bangladesh-Japan IT, and Kazi IT -- will enjoy additional benefits from the government.

The ICT division is also introducing mobile training labs to train some 50,000 women to make them part of an efficient workforce.

The government also plans to set up more than 500 business process outsourcing centres soon, and an Innovation Design and Entrepreneurship Academy by 2016.

The ICT division's planned e-shops will reduce the gap between the farmers and buyers. A "national helpline", for anyone to call for emergency assistance, is also being planned.

A digital forensic lab is also in the works, to curb cyber crime, Palak said.

Palak spoke at a press conference at his office in Dhaka, organised to mark the government's two years in power. "We started some projects in the past two years to supplement these goals, and they are already gaining a good shape," Palak said.

The ICT division has also finalised the Digital Security Act and National e-Service Act, both of which will be passed this year, he said.

About 34 percent of Bangladesh's population have access to internet, with some 54 million active internet connections and about 155 Gbps bandwidth being consumed every day. Per capita data usage is less than 1 Kbps.

Hasina asks Biman to provide better services

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked all officials and employees of Biman Bangladesh Airlines to take good care of the airline and ensure better passenger services.

"I will ask those working at Biman to keep in mind that through Biman, you are not only making your livelihood but you are also upholding a symbol representing the country," she said.

"It is your airline and you must nurture it and develop it, which will bring betterment for yourselves. It will be embarrassing for you in case of its degradation," Hasina said.

The prime minister was speaking at a function marking the induction of two new Boeing 737-800 aircraft -- Meghdoot and Mayurpankhi -- to the Biman fleet at Hazrat

Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. Biman now has six Boeing aircraft of its own.

The inauguration of the two 162-seat aircraft to the fleet will help boost the aviation industry by allowing operations on domestic flights as well as to neighbouring countries, she said. "It will brighten Biman's image abroad." The government has taken a plan to construct a third terminal at Dhaka airport, expand its runways and parking facility and upgrade aviation services, she added.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon, Chairman of Biman Air Marshal Jamal Uddin (ret'd), Civil Aviation Secretary M Khurshid Alam Chowdhury, Chargé d'affaires of the US Embassy David Meale, acting Managing Director of Biman M Asaduzzaman and Boeing representative Savitha Gowda also spoke.



Md Ahsan-uz Zaman, managing director of Midland Bank, opens a branch of the bank in Mokamtola of Shibganj, Bogra on Sunday. Muhammad H Kafi, chief information officer, was also present.

Saudi prince happy with work on cyclone shelters

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The philanthropic programme began after Sidr hit the country's coastal region in 2007, killing 3,400 people, leaving millions homeless and destroying their homes and belongings.

The late King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia donated \$130 million for relief and assistance of Sidr victims, but requested the IDB, which is implementing the project, not to reveal his name at that time. The IDB president revealed the king's name after his passing in January last year.

The government of Bangladesh and the IDB signed a memorandum of understanding in May 2008. The IDB is implementing the programme with the government providing all necessary assistance to ensure its successful

implementation within the stipulated time.

The schools-cum-shelters, designed to withstand top wind speeds, were constructed using top quality materials, and to the highest international technical specifications to ensure durability for a 100 years or more.

These facilities were designed to be green, equipped with durable school furniture, solar power and potable water supply system, including rainwater harvesting.

Each building, apart from serving as a modern educational institution for 240 students, will also shelter 2,000 people during calamities, said MH Salem, coordinator of the programme.

In total, 173 buildings will be built in the coastal belt, using about \$110 million of the fund.

The other \$20 million was set aside as a Waqf trust, to provide urgent relief and rehabilitation in the form of agricultural and other inputs to the afflicted population, and was allocated to four NGOs who in turn disbursed it as interest-free loans.

Prince Turki, son of King Abdullah, also said the charity has plans to expand its activities in Bangladesh in future.

His brother Prince Badr Bin Abdullah, a member of the Board of Trustees of KAICHE, was also present at the media briefing.

Sixty-one of the 173 shelters are ready for operations, and the rest will be ready within the next one and a half years, said Sufee Mustaque Ahmed, programme director of the Fael Khair Programme.

Bangladesh to be second best performer this year

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The forecast by Bloomberg, which is calendar-year based, is similar to the World Bank's recent forecast of 6.6 percent growth for Bangladesh in 2016.

The government, however, has set the growth target of 7 percent for fiscal 2015-16, against the WB and the International Monetary Fund's forecast of 6.5 percent.

The strong forecast comes at a time when the global economy is going through a recession.

WB Chief Economist Kaushik Basu last month said Bangladesh is financially very stable but it has to be very cautious to keep up the stability.

"Your economy is rising, but on

the other hand, Brazil's is declining. So the global situation is still very difficult."

Any global fluctuation can affect Bangladesh as it is still a developing country. Basu said he checked statistics on Bangladesh ahead of his second visit to the country last month, so he was well aware of the country's advancement on the economic and social fronts.

But his visit has made him even more upbeat: Bangladesh is on the cusp of a take-off and will become one of the new Asian Tigers. However, there are two major challenges: infrastructure and making business processes faster and efficient by cutting red tape, he added.

New country head for State Bank of India in Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Abhijit Chakravorty has taken over as country head of State Bank of India's Bangladesh operations, the bank said in a statement yesterday.

Prior to the assignment, Chakravorty was chief executive officer of the bank's Dhaka branch, it added.

He has 26 years of experience in banking, with focus on corporate credit, loan syndication, foreign exchange and treasury functions, trade finance, HRD and risk management.



Radisson Blu Ctg launches business class rooms

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Radisson Blu Chittagong Bay View has launched exclusive business-class rooms on levels 16 to 19, the hotel said in a statement.

Booking business-class rooms will allow Radisson's clients to access exclusive amenities like the business-class lounge with all-day refreshments, complimentary evening reception, and complimentary breakfast at the lounge.

Clients will also enjoy complimentary use of the lounge boardroom (subject to availability), four pieces of laundry per room/night, newspapers, local calls and room turn-down services, according to the statement.

Correction

In a report headlined "\$200m project to automate state banks" published yesterday, it was mentioned that 260 branches of Janata Bank out of its total 901 branches have been automated. Actually the bank has 908 branches and 503 of them have been automated. We regret the error.



Syed Mohammad Bariqullah, deputy managing director of National Bank, launches a programme for "marketing of government securities" at the bank's head office in Dhaka yesterday.



Johan Frisell, ambassador of Sweden, poses during a visit to Fakir Apparels on Monday. Fakir Maniruzzaman, managing director of Fakir Apparels, was also present.

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(Joar Sahara, Purbachal Express Highway, Khilkhet.) Dhaka.

FOR DETAILS CONTACT : ASK TRADE - 01711 532312 / 017 323 98998.
EXHIBITION TIMINGS : 11.00AM - 7.00 PM