

# DIGITAL FRONTIERS, BREAKING BARRIERS



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## Boom in ICT exports

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You'll certainly raise an eyebrow once you learn that Bangladesh is now exporting software and ICT related products to more than 50 countries around the globe, and some of them are developed countries. And the number of countries availing these services from Bangladesh is increasing every year.

Few hundred companies of the country are also earning about \$800 million per year from exporting locally developed software, and providing ICT-related services like outsourced and freelance work.

This is the export earning value that the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services has collected from their member companies' export earnings, but the real export number might be even higher. At least, members of BASIS and other policy makers think so.

The value of this export was probably less than even a few million just a decade ago. Yet today, the industry is flourishing, with companies fulfilling local demand and then moving on to the foreign market.

Even just a couple of years ago people thought it was a joke when leaders from this industry started saying that the ICT industry's export earnings will be higher than that of the readymade garments industry. But now the situation has changed, and the government's short term aim is to secure earnings of \$1 billion this year, and \$5 billion by 2021.

Industry leaders are now targeting to bring more foreign currency into the

country than RMG industry does by 2030. Leather and leather goods are currently Bangladesh's second most profitable exported goods, but surely ICT and IT services will overtake this place within a few years.

The industry is not only earning huge amounts of foreign currency, but it's also getting international recognition as a business hub for ICT and ITES products. Some software firms are performing extraordinarily well for the last couple of years and at present, at least 10 companies so far have achieved Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) at level three, while DataSoft Systems Bangladesh limited, a company that brings huge pride to the country achieved level five.

CMMI is one of the major indicators for measuring the quality of software firms and the highest score for this measurement is level five. Hopefully more Bangladeshi companies will continue to achieve this certification, thus attracting more business. As a person working in this industry, I think this is a massive success for the sector and you will be happier when you learn some more success stories of this sector.

DataSoft Systems, exports mostly to Japan and is also targeting African countries as well. They have been working on establishing 10,000 smart homes in Tokyo using the next generation Internet of Things (IoT) solutions in what can be termed a spectacular leap for the country's IT industry.

They also have signed an agreement with the Ministry of Transport and Communication Channels of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

to advise and install IoT-based toll management solution for their longest bridge.

DohaTec, designed Bhutan's electronic government procurement system after the successful rollout of the country's e-GP system.

In August last year, Tiger IT opened a factory in Kathmandu as part of a \$43.7 million project, the biggest IT related one in Nepal, to provide digital number plates for vehicles.

Kazi IT works in the USA and Reve Systems works in different countries, including Singapore. These companies are creating a good name for our country all over the world. While business process outsourcing entities are also playing a huge role in boosting foreign currency earnings.

A good number of Bangladeshi companies export between \$1 and \$10 million, and some of them are on the verge of crossing the \$10 million mark.

The government has also prepared a list that of companies whose exports were worth more than \$10 million/year and 50 more who have the potential to earn \$10 million a year. ICT division of the government is also providing technical and policy assistance to these companies.

The country's export earnings from the ICT sector is growing exponentially after the government took some effective measures in policy and regulations and the country started getting the results.

Half of the country's population is below 35 years, and this young talent is playing a major role in developing the ICT industry. So everything is in our

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favour now, we just need to concentrate on the service and software quality to achieve the next level.

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