

BASIS 25 YEARS Celebration

Special Supplement

Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS)



State Minister
Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications & IT
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

"Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS)" is an important organization in the information and communication technology sector of Bangladesh. My heartiest congratulations and best wishes to all associated with BASIS on its 25th anniversary celebrations.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services started its journey in 1998 with only 18 charter members. In the last 25 years, the membership of the organization has increased to about 2,500. BASIS is working tirelessly for the development of the information and communication technology sector in Bangladesh. From encouraging domestic market development to establishing marketplaces for IT solutions, reaching international markets through networking events, and capacity building among member companies, BASIS has played a leading role in innovation and development in the ICT industry.

Through the visionary planning and implementation of Hon'ble Prime Minister Janonetri Sheikh Hasina, the information technology-dependent middle-income digital Bangladesh has become a public-private joint venture. At present, the country has about 7 lakh IT freelancers, about 3 lakh software developers, about 1 lakh hardware workers working in various organizations, about 20 lakh youth in the IT sector, including 3 lakh youth in e-commerce, and 1.9 billion dollar export income. BASIS has played the most important role in this.

The country is moving towards a developed economy under the leadership of honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. A total of 111 Hi-Tech Parks, Software Technology Parks, Sheikh Kamal IT Incubation Centers, and Knowledge Parks are being set up in the country in public-private joint ventures for the development, and investment-friendly environment of the high-tech industry and information technology industry.

After the successful implementation of the promise of building digital Bangladesh, the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced the construction of a non-communal, progressive, inclusive, advanced, and prosperous Smart Bangladesh by 2041 based on the 4 main pillars of Smart Citizen, Smart Economy, Smart Government, and Smart Society. I strongly believe that BASIS will play an important role in the implementation of this commitment in the future as well as in the past.

The dynamic and youthful leadership of BASIS has infused energy and vision, propelling the organization to new heights. As we celebrate this milestone, it's evident that BASIS has many more achievements to showcase and inspire the next generation of members.

I strongly believe the next 25 years of BASIS will be marked by even greater accomplishments and success stories. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to BASIS and its members on this auspicious occasion and wish them continued success in their endeavors.

Be Innovative & Smart
Joy Bangla, Joy Bangladesh

(Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP)



Ahasanul Islam Titu MP
State Minister
Ministry of Commerce
Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

I am delighted to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) on its 25th anniversary. Starting with just 18 members, BASIS is now a strong family of around 2,500 members contributing to the development of our country. DTO as well as the Ministry of Commerce being a regulatory authority is delighted to observe the successes of BASIS over the years and take part in the 25-year celebration of BASIS.

Escalating the export earnings is one of the pre-conditions to achieve the target of being Smart Bangladesh by 2041 set by the Government in their Election Manifesto 2024. To adequately address the challenges of transitioning from LDCs in 2026, product diversification, efficiency and capacity building in the export sector have no alternatives. ICT will play a vital role in expanding the existing market of export-oriented products and exporting higher quality products and services to the international market.

The Government of Bangladesh designated ICT products and services as the 'Product of the Year' in 2022 to accelerate the growth of our ICT sector and make Bangladesh a strong center for ICT sourcing globally. BASIS has been contributing very significantly to the advancement of this sector since its inception contributing to the relevant national policies, guiding its members to the right direction, and exploring global opportunities relentlessly. Bangladesh's ICT sector currently exports worth about US\$1.8 billion. The government has committed to a target of US\$ 20 billion in revenue from this sector by 2031.

I firmly believe that BASIS will play an important role in the development of country's business and trade of ICT sector and will play an important role in building a Smart Bangladesh by 2041.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangladesh.

(Signature)
Ahasanul Islam Titu, MP



BASIS
Founding President
Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS)

Message

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations to everyone associated with BASIS as we celebrate our 25th anniversary. BASIS is extremely delighted to have achieved the goal of Digital Bangladesh and contributing to the Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041, of our visionary leader Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the able daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

I remember, in the late 1990s, information technology stakeholders, especially those involved in computer software and associated hardware trade, held several meetings to consider the creation of an ICT association. The BASIS was formally established as a result of these talks. The founding member group of 18, which included high-ranking officials and leaders in the ICT sector, played a pivotal role in its formation.

Over the past quarter-century, BASIS has played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of the ICT industry in Bangladesh. Through creativity, hard work, and the uncompromising commitment of our Founding Members, all Presidents, Present and Past Executive Councils to achieve the national vision set, we have come a long way from our modest beginnings to become a progressive force of almost 2,500 members behind the country's digital revolution.

As we reflect on our achievements, let us acknowledge the collective efforts of our members, whose passion and ingenuity have propelled us forward. Together, we have developed an ecosystem that has created a happy moment for all reminding us, why BASIS was necessary to be formed back then. As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of BASIS, we are not only commemorating our past achievements but also looking forward to an exciting future shaped by the aspirations of our nation. In line with the Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041, and its 4 pillars: Smart Citizens, Smart Government, Smart Economy, and Smart Society, BASIS remains steadfastly dedicated. With the establishment of BASIS BITM and BASIS Students' Forum, BASIS is spreading the blessings of the ICT industry to the young and innovative minds up to the root level. For the establishment of a thriving ecosystem for ICT Startup, BASIS is working relentlessly. Furthermore, now we require tax exemption to be extended till 2031 & cash incentives on ICT export earnings to be continued for further advancement of the sector.

I am grateful that the founding members who led the inception of BASIS set the stage for its growth over the past 25 years. I am optimistic about BASIS's continued progress. I believe, with proper support from the government and tireless engagement with the ICT industry the Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041 is very possible. Together, we will continue to push boundaries, seize opportunities, and shape the future of the ICT industry in Bangladesh and beyond.

Happy 25th anniversary, BASIS! Here is to many more years of success, growth, and impact.

(Signature)
A. Towhid



BASIS
Russell T. Ahmed
President
Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services

Road to SMART Bangladesh

Once described as a 'bottomless basket' with no hope of survival, Bangladesh has made significant strides in its socio-economic development, emerging as a middle-income economy. It is now hailed globally as a development model and serves as a beacon of progress for the world. Under the leadership of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the dream of a 'Digital Bangladesh' has become a reality, instilling confidence in achieving the vision of 'Sonar Bangla'— a technology-based, knowledge-exercising prosperous nation free from hunger and poverty envisioned by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman— by attaining a 'Smart Bangladesh'.

Smart Bangladesh Vision
In the heart of South Asia, Bangladesh is embarking on a transformative journey towards a Smart Bangladesh by 2041. This visionary roadmap, captured in the Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041, charts a course towards eradicating poverty entirely, ensuring universal high-speed internet access, and achieving full penetration of the latest smartphones and digital devices. These aspirations are not merely lofty dreams but tangible markers of progress, with the aim of elevating the nation's per capita GDP from US\$2,765 (FY 2022-23) to an impressive US\$12,500.

At the core of this vision lie four pivotal pillars: smart citizens, smart government, smart economy, and smart society. The Smart Citizen pillar seeks to introduce a digital-first mindset among Bangladeshis, fostering collaboration with government and industry for the co-creation of policies and services. Meanwhile, Smart Government endeavors towards 'invisible efficiency'.

governance' envisioning 100 percent paperless offices and personalized services to drive proactive policymaking and technological advancement.

In parallel, Smart Society champions inclusivity and sustainability, weaving digital ethics into the fabric of communities while facilitating cashless transactions and access to credit. Complementing these efforts, Smart Economy places innovation at the forefront, aiming to lead in key sectors like RMG & Textiles, Light Engineering, and Agriculture. This ambitious trajectory is underscored by the goal of building a US\$50 billion ICT industry alongside a robust startup ecosystem, propelling Bangladesh into the global spotlight as a technology frontrunner.

Demographic Dividend: Becoming Future Smart
According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022), Bangladesh currently boasts a demographic dividend of 38.91 percent, equating to approximately 64.27 million individuals within the 20-44 age group. By harnessing this demographic dividend and nurturing an ICT-skilled workforce, we have the potential to fuel the transformation towards a Smart Bangladesh. This endeavor holds the promise of not only cultivating a dynamic economic driving force, or smart economy, but also fostering a populace of smart citizens. To achieve this vision, it is imperative to introduce early-stage programming education in primary schools and modernize technical and vocational training institutions to address skill shortages and promote collaboration between academia and industry.

Furthermore, the implementation of policies such as remunerated internships and supplementary wages for female ICT professionals serves to incentivize workforce engagement, thereby nurturing a vibrant and inclusive tech ecosystem. In support of these efforts, BASIS is actively collaborating on internship policies to further bolster these initiatives.

ICT is the Nucleus of SMART Bangladesh Vision. From Agriculture, Manufacturing, Trading to Education, all the sectors will have to implement ICT solutions to become SMART.



3 by 3 Framework
As Bangladesh strides towards its digital destiny, the roadmap to Smart Bangladesh encompasses multifaceted strategies to propel growth in the IT sector. For example, the global export market for the Software and ITES sector is getting bigger, registering US\$600 billion by the end of this year, if only 3.4 percent can be captured by redefining our human resources

and private sector, then Bangladesh can earn more than US\$20 billion within a few years to come—can be observed as a milestone achievement, especially when we are facing crunch in our forex reserve. Addressing this potential, to ensure our comprehensive growth in exports, a '3 by 3' framework can be adopted.

This approach involves conducting research to identify target markets and products, promoting products through marketing and sales efforts, and cultivating a skilled workforce to seize growth opportunities. Collaboration among the government, industry represented by BASIS and member companies, and academia including universities, polytechnics, and training institutes is crucial for the effective execution of these strategies. In the pursuit of realizing the transformative '3 by 3' framework towards achieving Smart Bangladesh, is actively engaged in fostering a conducive and business-friendly environment for Bangladesh's software and ITES industry. With a keen focus on future domains including Frontier Technology, FinTech, Startups, EdTech, E-Government, Cloud Computing, AgriTech, and Cyber Security, BASIS endeavors to propel the nation towards a dynamic and innovative digital landscape.

Way Forward
The competitive edge of the ICT sector, unlike other industries, relies solely on human resources possessing global and future-oriented ICT skills. Therefore, it is imperative to heed the following recommendations in order to cultivate such capabilities:

Exemption Tax Exemption till 2031: The current income tax exemption for the Software and ITES sector is set to expire on 30 June 2024. This exemption has been instrumental in propelling Bangladesh towards its digital aspirations. Exemption until 2031 would significantly facilitate the journey towards a Smart Bangladesh. Furthermore, offering tax incentives and streamlining enlistment processes for prominent IT

enterprises to hire recent graduates would further incentivize growth and innovation in the sector.

Establishing the R&D and Innovation Fund: As we transition from a Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) model to a product and service-oriented ICT regime, it becomes imperative to establish the R&D and Innovation Fund.

Cross-Country Comparative Study: Undertake an extensive study, financed by government grants and led by BASIS, to assess the demand for ICT skills and effectively restructure the computer science education system.

Enhancing National ICT Competencies: Re-evaluate and augment national ICT competencies administered by National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) to align with dynamic industry requirements.

Targeted Training Initiatives, Internship Support, and Dedicated Grant Funds: Develop tailored training programs to address graduate unemployment by fostering industry-relevant competencies. Implement a remunerated internship program in the private sector to facilitate the transition of participants into industry-ready professionals. Additionally, institute a supplementary wage policy to incentivize greater female engagement in the ICT sector. Establish a dedicated grant fund to support Micro and Small-sized ICT firms in recruiting fresh graduates.

Bangladesh's journey towards a Smart Future embodies a commitment to progress and prosperity in the digital age. Through collaborative efforts and strategic initiatives, the nation is poised to embrace the boundless opportunities that lie ahead, ensuring a bright and prosperous future for generations to come.

Contribution of BASIS to the ICT Sector and National Economy

BASIS and Bangladesh ICT Industry
BASIS, founded in 1998, represents Bangladesh's software and IT industry. With 2,500+ members, it aims to advance the sector and realize the Smart Bangladesh Vision. The ICT industry has created 0.3 million jobs, expected to reach 0.5 million by 2025, and contributes 1.25% to GDP. BASIS fosters a startup ecosystem with 2,500+ active startups and over US\$1 billion in investments. The goal is a US\$50 billion digital economy by 2041, aligned with Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's vision.

BASIS Contribution to Policy Formulation
BASIS has made significant strides in shaping policy within Bangladesh's ICT sector. Following the meetings of BASIS with Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA), they have issued 'Regulatory Sandbox Guidelines-2023'. BASIS played a pivotal role in shaping the National ICT Policy of 2009 and its subsequent revision in 2018, providing a roadmap for the sector's growth and development, as a part of implementing Cashless Society and paving towards 'SMART Bangladesh' BASIS pursued Bangladesh Bank to introduce 'Digital Bank Guidelines 2023'. Additionally, BASIS has facilitated collaborations with entities like the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Bank to support entrepreneurship through funds like the Entrepreneurship Support Fund (ESF) and Equity and Entrepreneurship Fund (EEF). With a view to observing a globally efficient and hassle-free ICT value-chain, BASIS has contributed to the preparedness of the government to represent Bangladesh's service sector interest at the forthcoming 13th WTO Ministerial Conference. Notably, BASIS's efforts have led to the mandatory provision of BASIS membership for software and ITES companies by the Ministry of Commerce.

Export Market Development
BASIS's strategic efforts position Bangladesh in the global tech landscape, showcased through participation in events like BASIS Europe Roadshow (UK, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia), Japan IT Week, GITEX, and CeBIT. Initiatives like BASIS Japan Desk and



BASIS USA Desk emphasize global expansion. ICT export earnings could reach \$5 billion by 2025 with conducive policies (currently at \$2 billion). Bangladesh Bank's 10% cash incentive (now 8%) boosted exports; reconsidering it is crucial to reach a \$20 billion threshold by 2031. The global ICT market is booming, e.g., AI to \$4T by 2024, Blockchain to \$39.7B by 2025, IoT to \$1.3T by 2026, Big Data to \$103B by 2027, Cloud Computing to \$1.24T by 2027, and Cybersecurity to \$538.3B by 2030. Now is the time to tap into this potential and stay globally competitive.

Domestic Market Development
In last 25 years, BASIS has been able to create its own positioning and brand value within the country and beyond. As a part of highlighting the domestic ICT industry strength to the global buyers, BASIS has been organizing one of its mega signature events, South Asia's largest technology congress-- BASIS SoftExpo annually since 2003. Alongside, BASIS organizes BASIS National ICT Award, BASIS Outsourcing Award, NASA Space Apps Challenge, etc. In addition to that, BASIS played a prominent role in organizing 'Digital World' in 2014, 2015 & 2016 collaborating with the ICT Division. Besides, BASIS persuaded and requested the National Board of Revenue (NBR) for tax exemption, which had been in place since 2008 and is valid up to June 30, 2024. We are expecting that it will continue until 2031. Alongside these, BASIS became the management agency of the country's first and only 'ICT Incubator' since 2002 offering services and managing the ICT Incubator's various concerns which had been declared as the country's first Software Technology Park (STP-1). Nonetheless, BASIS members are implementing significant numbers of government projects and providing required services advancing e-Governance.



Capacity Building by BASIS and BITM
BASIS has undertaken several initiatives aimed at strengthening capacity building within its business community extended to young pool of students enrolled in universities and graduating from there. One of the milestone initiatives to address the skill gap of HR in the industry was to establish BASIS Institute of Technology & Management Limited (BITM) in 2007 equipped with 9 labs. All the training materials of BITM are designed and reviewed by the industry experts and practitioners based on the industry need. Moreover, through the regular organization of seminars, workshops, and roundtables throughout the year, members have been provided with valuable awareness and skill-building opportunities by BASIS. Meanwhile, National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) enlisted BITM which had trained over 55,000 professionals enhancing their expertise and competencies. Furthermore, BASIS has reinforced its secretariat by expanding its team to 35 officers, establishing dedicated IT and R&D departments, expanding the membership department, and introducing insurance and provident fund schemes for BASIS secretariat members for their welfare, professional growth, and stability.

Major Initiatives of BASIS
BASIS has spearheaded several notable initiatives that have garnered international recognition and fostered collaborations with prestigious entities. Bangladesh secured consecutive victories for the 3rd time in the NASA Space Apps Challenge organized by BASIS. Additionally, hosting the APICTA awards in 2017 further solidified Bangladesh's position as a hub for technological excellence. Project and program implementation, such as Bangladesh Information Technology Management Program (BITMAP) with the Embassy of Denmark and Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) phase 2 and phase 3 with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and CBI (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries)/Netherlands have facilitated knowledge exchange, capacity building and business opportunities. Furthermore, initiatives like BMEET (Bangladesh Miyazaki ICT Engineers Educational Training), Top-SE, BJET (Bangladesh-Japan ICT Engineers'

Training) with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Bangladesh Computer Council (BOC), and ICT Division underscore BASIS's commitment to fostering collaboration and capacity building within the industry. Collaborative ventures with organizations such as PUM (Programma Utzending Managers) Netherlands and initiatives like Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP) with Ministry of Finance and Asian Development Bank (ADB) highlight BASIS's dedication to enhancing skill development and fostering sustainable growth in the tech sector.

Fostering Collaboration
For exploring the market opportunities with a deeper understanding, BASIS signed 130+ memorandum of understandings (MoUs) with a good number of national and international organizations. Most importantly with Japan Information Technology Services Industry Association (JISA), Turkey IT Association, Sri Lanka, Germany IT Association, The Swiss Import Promotion Program (SIPO), World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), PUM Netherlands Senior experts. Apart from that, significant MoUs have been signed with local partners to ensure priority services for its members to obtain.

The Way Ahead
With the nation's enthusiasm for turning Bangladesh into Sonar Bangla as dreamt by our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, we are committed to reinforcing our efforts for a cashless and Smart Bangladesh by 2041. Aligning with the national vision, BASIS has concentrated its energies focusing on seven pillars-- i) Human resource development, ii) Developing local market, iii) Export market development, iv) Creating a thriving ecosystem for startups, v) Industry promotion, vi) Access to finance, and vii) Formulating policies to help grow intangible assets. BASIS's strategic focus on seven key pillars for advancing Bangladesh's ICT industry is not only crucial but timely, as we bear and believe. With sustained dedication and a collaborative approach across these fronts, Bangladesh is poised to realize its ambition of becoming a leading hub for ICT innovation, driving economic prosperity and societal advancement well into the future.