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Govt making big plans for ICT infrastructure: Palak

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

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.

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.

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.

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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.

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