

Indian, Pakistani software companies sign MoU

ISLAMABAD: Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, the minister for information technology and telecom, said on Thursday the government would stand firmly behind any effort to bring together IT industries in Pakistan and India to ensure mutual benefits to the people and IT sectors of the two important countries of South Asia.

"We recognize Indian successes in the IT sector and would like to make maximum use of the Indian experience and the strategy India adopted to become a leading IT player in the world," he said while addressing Pakistan-India ICT summit jointly organised by Pakistan Software Houses Association (PASHA) and India's National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM).

Meanwhile, the PASHA and the NASSCOM have also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for mutual cooperation in the IT sector of the two countries.

Mr Leghari said Pakistan and India could benefit much from a healthy and mutually-beneficial interaction with each other as some 3 to 4 million jobs in business process outsourcing in the West were set to move offshore in the next few years and the number is much more than Pakistan and India together can absorb within their IT sectors.

He said the government had already awarded licences for 12 LDI and 65 local loop operators while the incumbent PTCL is also set to be privatised within the next five to six months.

"We understand that ICTs alone can bring about socio-economic benefits to the people and the government is moving in the right direction to step up the process of growth," he said.

Fibre link with India: Mr Leghari said Pakistan is in the process of building another submarine cable while plans were afoot to link with India through optic fiber cable, which required only linking up of 18 kilometers between the Indian border and Lahore.

He said the government would also introduce in a couple of weeks a broadband policy to promote Internet usage in the country while a comprehensive programme to produce content in local languages is also afoot to enable the masses to use the Internet.

Earlier Jehan Ara, president of PASHA, told the participants Pakistan's IT industry was set for a boom with mergers and acquisitions taking place and some IT products selling in the international markets. Ms Ara said PASHA and NASSCOM were seeking to bring together big IT players from the two countries. She said she led a delegation of some 12 companies to India in February while NASSCOM had returned the visit with some 20 leading Indian IT companies present in Pakistan to seek ways for mutual partnership.

Indians impressed: Kiran Karnik, president of India's NASSCOM, said they had been impressed with the IT talent in Pakistan. He said he had a conservative optimism for an accelerated cooperation and interaction between the IT industries of the two countries. "However, we go back with full understanding of the areas and sectors which we can explore and work together in," he said, underlying education, health and e-government as some of the areas where Indian companies because of their superior experience and higher number of projects could help implement e-government projects in Pakistan.

Zia Chishty, chairman and CEO of Resource Group Pakistan, termed quality of human resource available for employment in this business in Pakistan higher than that of India, which he said could overcome human resource constraint by falling back upon Pakistani skills.

Speaking on the occasion, Jerry Rao, chairman of India's NASSCOM, reflected on the factors leading to the growth of IT sector. He said Indian partnerships with US and later UK played a decisive role in the growth of IT.

"We are now moving towards partnerships with Israel, Holland, France and Japan and a similar partnership with Pakistan can also work to India's as well as Pakistan's advantage," he said, calling for a win-win relationship between IT industries of the two countries. —Staff Report

