



Indian, Pakistani Firms OK Tech Agreement

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BANGALORE, India - Private Indian and Pakistani information technology companies will meet in the Pakistani capital next month to tap business opportunities and sign a cooperation agreement.

Executives from 20 Indian companies will visit Pakistan Dec. 15-18, a joint statement by India's National Association of Software and Service Companies and the Pakistan Software Houses Association said Thursday.

"Companies in both countries are keen to collaborate in the area of research and development, policy formulation and in exploring business opportunities together worldwide," said Jehan Ara, president of PASHA.

A Pakistani delegation of software and back-office companies - which handle customers' calls, telemarketing and payroll accounting - visited India in February. The visit by Indian executives will help formulate a framework for the two countries to work together, said Kiran Karnik, the NASSCOM president.

India is the global leader in the fast-growing outsourcing industry and earns \$12.5 billion annually from such services. In addition, about half of Fortune 500 companies have research and engineering design offices in India.

Pakistan earns only \$50 million annually from outsourcing.

Indian companies are keen to use Pakistan as a base for white-collar workers who are available for wages even lower than in India. Pakistanis want a share of the subcontracted work Indians get from Western companies.

The announcement followed a two-day visit to India by Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, during which he met with Indian leaders and top businesspeople.

On the Net:

NASSCOM: <http://www.nasscom.org>

PASHA: <http://www.pasha.org.pk>

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