PM unwraps IT plan

10,000 programmers a year; IT curriculum must in SSC level by 2013, in primary 2021; opens digital expo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government will do whatever necessary to create 10,000 information technology (IT) programmers every year.

The government will introduce compulsory IT curriculum at secondary school level by 2013 and primary level by 2021, Hasina said at the inaugural ceremony of BCS Digital Expo-2009 in the capital's Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

Earlier, she had been informed at the Expo that the country's educational institutions produce only 2,500 programmers every year.

The premier said Bangladesh's major problem is illiteracy, not population.

"If we can educate a portion of the population in information and communication technology (ICT), they can get employment at home and abroad," she said.

Hasina said the present government is keen to introduce e-governance and now planning to make all its procurement through 'e-tender' to check corruption.

The ICT stakeholders placed a list of demands before Hasina. Her party Awami League had made an election pledge to have a 'Digital Bangladesh' by 2021.

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Hasina said her government prioritises the ICT sector. But the sector's progress was hindered as the previous Awami League government's programmes were discontinued by the following government.

"There should be a continuation of a work, no matter which government comes to power. It is unfortunate for the nation that some of our IT-related initiatives had been discontinued," the prime minister said.

Hasina said she is aware of the fact that power crisis remains one of the major hurdles for the development of ICT sector.

The government is trying to ease the power crisis as early as possible but it will take time, she said.

Hasina said her government is working to connect the country with another submarine cable soon.

"We are very flexible about giving facilities to the private sector," she said urging the sector's stakeholders to give the government suggestions for formulating policies to have a 'Digital Bangladesh'.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith said the present government will ensure that all the sectors reap the benefit of information technology.

The government has already taken a number of measures to introduce e-governance, said Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, adding that the registration process of Joint Stock Company was made online recently.

Yafez Osman, state minister for science and information and communication technology and Mustafa Jabbar, president of Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) also spoke.