

Direct telephone lines between Lebanon and Palestine



Palestinian IT Association "PITA" was instrumental in encouraging the Lebanese government to approve Palestinian requests to have direct telephone links with Palestine. Lebanon signed on 24/08/2008 the telecommunications agreement with Palestinian Minister of Telecommunications and IT Mr. Kamal Hassouneh, in the presence of Palestinian delegation that included PITA chairman Mr. Ala Alaeldeen

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Sponsored by Intel, PICTI rolls out the Technology Business Plan Contest in Palestine

Speaking at the Palestine Investment Conference in Bethlehem in May 2008, Intel's corporate vice president unveiled a number of educational initiatives meant to help Palestine set itself on the right technological track. Mr. Will Swope talked about how the company was working within the US Palestinian Partnership (UPP) to ensure speedy ICT development in Palestine through education.

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Letter from PITA Chairman

Right on Target

It is my pleasure to present to you the recent edition of the Connect Newsletter which encompasses many of the main activities of the Palestinian information and communications technology (ICT) sector and its achievements during the last four months.

I believe that the Palestinian Information Technology Association of companies (PITA) has managed to successfully position the ICT sector in Palestine as an important economic pillar and to highlight its vital role in developing the Palestinian economy. The ICT has become an essential ingredient in any economic plans in Palestine.

You will notice in this edition that PITA focuses on building capacity for its member companies and at the same time vehemently promote the sector locally and internationally.

PITA's strategy for promoting foreign direct investment in the ICT sector with multinational companies and supporting the development of an outsourcing industry in Palestine has been clearly marked in our activities during this quarter. PITA has done several studies to shed more light on the ICT sector capabilities and provide more accurate information about the sector especially in the outsourcing business

For example, the workforce study profiles the capabilities and skills of IT professionals and associates in Palestine and details the capabilities of a Palestinian IT workforce in different areas of the IT industry which helps seekers of information such as investors and business people to better understand the Palestinian capabilities. The aim of the study was to pinpoint not only the strengths of a Palestinian IT workforce but also highlight the gaps in skills so as to address those issues on a national level.

Likewise, the IT Outsourcing Capabilities Report, which is done by an international outsourcing expert is another important study that was published by PITA in a serious attempt to help promote the Palestinian outsourcing capabilities regionally and internationally.

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PITA participates successfully in the Palestine Investment Conference

PITA participated in the Palestine Investment Conference that was held in Bethlehem in May 2008. PITA was actively present at the ICT session by showing a documentary about history and success of the ICT sector in Palestine, followed by that, PITAs Chairman Mr. Ala Aladdin, gave a presentation on the Palestinian ICT sector and the investment opportunities. The session also included presentation by representatives of four PITA members companies who discussed their investment projects that were submitted to the conference.

PITA along with 8 PITA members companies participated in the Best of Palestine Exhibition in Bethlehem.

The exhibition aimed at presenting to potential investor and international guests Palestinian products from different industries in Palestine.

PITA participation in the Best of Palestine Exhibition was made possible through the generous support of the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) through the Private Sector Development Programme (PSDP).



PITA members elect new board

On May 28 2008, The Palestinian IT Association of Companies (PITA) held its 9th General Assembly (GA) meeting at PITA's headquarter offices in Al Bireh linked with Gaza members over video conferencing facilities.

Representatives from 47 companies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip attended meeting along with the Companies' Controller at the Ministry of National Economy, Mr. Nitham Ayoub.

Mr. Ala Aladeen , Outgoing Chairman of the Board of Directors, briefed the members on the board's strategy last year and the activities to provide new services to the members. He described the challenges as normal obstacles expected and stressed that " PITA's achievements during the previous year were the result of the solid interactions between management and the members". He also described few of the projects implemented by PITA adding "the projects has created more value to the ICT sector in general especially in light of PITA's solid relationship with all stakeholders including the government and non-government organizations."

Mr. Aladeen's speech opened the floor for Mr. Saad Abdul Hadi, the Secretary of the Board, to present PITA's administration report for the year 2007, detailing PITA's activities, programs, obstacles and achievements.

Mr. Musa Abu Dieh , head of El-Wafa auditing firm, presented the audited financial report stressing on the transparency and accuracy of the accounting system in PITA. At the conclusion of the session, the General Assembly members discussed the two reports and approved it.

Further, the General Assembly elected new board members to assume leadership for the year 2008/2009. The following members were elected for the board:

- * Mr. Ala Ala' Aldeen ,Chairman .
- * Mr.Mohammad El-Alami.
- * Mr.Majed Bakeer.
- * Mr.Mohammad Haboush.
- * Mr.Mohammad Ewaida.





NEW STUDY PROFILE ICT WORKFORCE

The numbers of IT graduates in Palestinian universities has decreased in recent years, found a new study commissioned by the Palestinian IT Association of Companies (PITA).

This is only one small indicator in a wealth of information gathered by PITA and Alpha Association in a survey of the technical skills of the ICT workforce in Palestine.

The study, carried out this year among PITA member companies and other private sector companies, is intended to provide policymakers, educators and development leaders with industry trends that will guide development policies and investments.

The study seeks to provide an accurate baseline of existing and expected technical skills in Palestine and how these skills can best meet the demands of local and international ICT firms.

Further, the study, available in detail on the PITA website, will aid decision makers in identifying gaps in skills, particularly in areas of software development, networking, web and multimedia in Palestine.

PITA is also using the study to promote Palestinian software and networking companies, help them penetrate regional and international markets, and obtain accurate information about them to design development plans. The study also provides a forecast of investment opportunities in the Palestinian market.

Not only does the study profile collective ICT skills and knowledge but it also analyzes the information in light of secondary data collected from other resources, including the Ministry of Higher Education, on the quality of the education system, the curriculum and number of students studying ICT-related subjects.

Good news for Palestinian outsourcing says PITA study

Palestinian companies are capable of providing high-quality services and products similar to those sold on the international market, found a recent Palestinian IT Association of Companies (PITA) study.

International expert in outsourcing, David Ross, was hired by PITA to study the capabilities of local Palestinian companies and whether an outsourcing industry similar to those in the region could be created in Palestine.

Ross interviewed ten companies and studied their profiles including human resources, technical aspects, products, technologies used and management capacities. He reported that Palestinian companies are capable of delivering high-quality services and can develop high-end products similar to those currently sold in international markets.



The report attests to the excellent technical skills and experience of Palestinian companies and focuses on specific Palestinian-made products and services that have great potential in the international market. He advised Palestinian companies to enhance their marketing and business skills to be able to enter international outsourcing markets.

Ross also delivered individual reports to each participating company, detailing their current abilities for outsourcing and recommendations for capacity-building.

This study was part of PITA's efforts to increase the technical and managerial capacity of Palestinian ICT companies, as part of its mission to enhance PITA members' competitive services and market access capabilities.

PITA workshop: 'Software and Services Outsourcing: Why Palestine?'

Fulfilling its mission to increase the capacity of its member companies, the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) held an April 30 workshop on "Software and Services Outsourcing: Why Palestine?"

The workshop was conducted by global sourcing strategic consultant David Ross after his completion of a study on the outsourcing capabilities of Palestinian companies.

Ross discussed with attending members of PITA how Palestine might compete in the global market, what are the advantages and disadvantages of Palestine in outsourcing, what can be learned from the growth of India, China and Philippines' outsourcing markets and how can Palestine and Palestinian companies could take the next step.

Members said the workshop was extremely valuable and provided them with the information needed for them to tackle new business opportunities.

The workshop was organized in cooperation with the Palestinian Enterprise Development (PED) project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI).



Fresh wave of EGP 2 graduates bring new energy to ICT sector

The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) recently conducted training programs in three different locations in the West Bank for 120 new unemployed ICT graduates selected to participate in PITA's Employment Generation Program - Phase 2 (EGP2).

The training courses, held in Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron, are a cornerstone of the EGP, which seeks to provide learning and employment opportunities to private sector companies with an infusion of fresh talent and skills in the area of ICT.

New graduates receive specialized training in software, hardware, networking and web and graphic design.

Upon course completion, an EGP2 graduation ceremony was held for the apprentices in the Best Eastern Hotel in al-Bireh. The event was attended by 120 apprentices and featured speeches by representatives of PITA and an EGP2 graduate, as well as Palestinian Enterprise Development (PED) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which support the training course.

PITA also organized a career day in Ramallah, attended by 76 EGP2 apprentices and representatives of 24 companies. A total of 193 job interviews were held at the career day. PITA also distributed an EGP book of graduates' curricula vitae at the event.



PITA has been working hard to implement its placement strategy, with the goal of placing as many fresh ICT graduates as possible in various private companies and NGOs. The initial EGP was launched in June 2007, graduating 80 apprentices and placing approximately 60% of them in various ICT companies.

The EGP is implemented in cooperation with the PED project, funded by USAID, and implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI).





PITA, Cisco Systems, Inc. discuss advancing ICT in Palestine

Representatives of Cisco Systems, Inc paid an official visit to the Palestinian IT Association of Companies (PITA) in Ramallah on March 17 to discuss efforts to develop the Palestinian ICT sector.

The Cisco delegation was headed by Adrian Godfrey, Director of Corporate Affairs. Also present were USAID representative Amir Dajani and Saed Abu Hijleh from DAI. The group was welcomed by PITA chairman, Ala Aladeen, who noted the importance of Cisco activities in the region.

PITA went on to describe in detail to the Cisco delegation the status of the ICT sector in Palestine and what kind of programs and services PITA and PICTI provide ICT companies, including advocacy, training, promotion and incubation.

Palestinian officials from various IT institutions and companies also participated in the meeting, including PITA executive director Ihab Jabari, the PITA board of directors, former minister of telecommunications and IT Sabri Saidam and Palestinian Information and Communication Technology Incubator chairman, Laith Kassis. The US-based company Cisco is the leading supplier of networking equipment and network management for the Internet.

PITA trains in human resources management

The Palestinian IT Association of Companies (PITA), in cooperation with the Small Enterprise Center/ German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), held a July training program on human resources management. The 13 days of training took place at PITA office in Gaza and was attended by 18 ICT company representatives.

The training sought to introduce basic human resource management as a functional aspect of management. The course included topics such as job analysis, recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, human resources strategies, and job satisfaction.

The training programs also included case studies and exercises.

PITA and Mercy Corps sign agreement for vocational training

The Palestinian IT Association of Companies and Mercy Corps have been working together for over a year to identify opportunities for attracting donor support for strengthening the IT sector in training, market research, and targeted business investments.

The two parties signed a memorandum of understanding on June 24 formalizing this strategic partnership.

The agreement states that Mercy Corps and PITA will cooperate in implementing the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) project to develop ICT capacity and Mercy Corps will adopt and support recommendations made by PITA in developing market-driven training courses to be offered by TVET institutions.

While PITA will identify qualified IT firms to support the implementation of the ICT component within the TVET program, including developing IT capacity of TVET institutions, PITA will also encourage PITA members to participate in the TVET program Project Advisor Board to represent the interests of the ICT private sector. This board will develop proposals and concept papers for bringing needed support to strengthen the ICT sector in Palestine.

Letter from PITA's Chairman

Continued From Front Page

PITA will be opening direct communication links with Lebanon during the month of November for pursuing outsourcing initiatives, solidifying business relationships with multinational companies such as CISCO and assisting the member companies to increase their regional exposure. PITA market access activities during the last quarter are also highlighted in this edition of Connect Newsletter.

Palestinian Information & Communication Technology Incubator "PICTI" is another essential element in the development of the Palestinian ICT sector that has done major activities to promote innovation and technology entrepreneurship. PICTI activities highlights the importance of technology to the Palestinian economy.

I sincerely believe we are Right on Target when we talk about ICT in Palestine and its importance. I welcome you to our edition hoping you would enjoy learning about the Palestinian ICT sector.

Sincerely
Ala Aladeen

PITA Welcomes Newest Members

Experts for Software Engineering

is a Palestinian software solutions company focused on providing premium quality software development and maintenance outsourcing services to corporate clients from all over the world. ESE specializes in custom software development and provides off-site consulting, development, and testing services.

NTS-NextLevel Technology Systems

(formally known as Safad Systems & Services) was established in 2001 with the aim of accelerating the development of the local and international IT sector by providing added value to solutions and services and improving the effectiveness of our valuable clients. NTS business units include custom software development, outsourcing services, professional services, business solutions, and ICT consultancy and training (ITIL & BPO-based).

Ericsson Radio Systems

Ramallah is the branch of Ericsson of which operation in the region was established in 1996. Ericsson is the 1st Telecommunication Company to introduce GSM in Israel and Palestine.

Primus

a division of Computer Networking Services (CNS) was established in 1996 to meet the maturing needs of the Jordanian ICT community, and has since become one of the leading ICT companies in Jordan. CNS currently has three divisions; one is Primus – Software & Web solutions, which is the Software, Web Solutions and Multimedia Presentations arm. The second is Primus Consulting, and the third is PC Doctor, which provides on-site PC repair, maintenance and network implementation, working 24hrs / day – 7 days/ week.

Members News

Primus Palestine Signs the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement with Wataniya Palestine Telecom

As the first and only Microsoft Large Account Reseller (LAR) in Palestine, Primus Palestine has just signed the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement with Wataniya Palestine Telecom

Microsoft Enterprise Agreement is a Volume Licensing program for large organizations that provides a simple, flexible, and affordable way to buy the latest Microsoft software products

This is the first of many Enterprise Agreements that Primus Palestine is to sign with the many esteemed establishments in Palestine Enterprise Agreement helps businesses to standardize IT across the enterprise

It also simplifies license management, and provides maintenance benefits to help ensure that companies maintain a competitive advantage and increase employee productivity

Wataniya Palestine Telecom (WPT), formed in December 2006, is the second mobile telecommunications company in Palestine. The company is expected to have a significant impact on the Palestinian economy with more than 2000 direct and indirect jobs created over the next few years and millions of dollars poured into the economy

Wataniya's team already includes some of the most experienced individuals in Palestine working side by side with mobile telecommunications professionals from around the world. Wataniya Palestine Telecom (WPT) is committed to the telecommunications sector in Palestine, and to developing this sector through innovative services and products,» said Hani Amer, the IT Director for Wataniya Palestine

We recognized that we needed a technology partner who would provide us with both the tools to do our job, as well as supporting and developing those technologies we deployed as the industry moved forwards, which is why we chose to sign an Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft.» Like the telecoms industry, technology is a fast paced journey, and we realized that we could apply Microsoft technology not only to help us in the present, but to be a partner for the future,» Hani Amer added

Microsoft is very pleased to enter in this Agreement with Wataniya Palestine Telecom and we look forward to a long and fruitful partnership' said Rajai El-Khadem, Microsoft's Territory Manager for Palestine.CNS – Primus

Primus, a division of Computer Networking Services (CNS), was established in 1996 to meet the maturing needs of the Jordanian IT community, and has since become one of the leading Software and web development companies in Jordan. Primus' services are mainly concentrated on Software Solutions, Web Development and Multimedia Presentations

Our development also includes: web applications, portal development, e-commerce, e-government solutions and data warehousing. In addition, Primus provides its clients with all their needs on the web, ranging from web design, management and maintenance, to marketing thru e-mail shots and e-newsletters. We also provide hosting and IT consultancy

CNS latest division PC Doctor provides onsite pc repair and maintenance services, in addition to network design and implantation. CNS - Primus' client base started in Jordan, and has expanded to the United States, Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Lebanon. For more information, please visit www.primus.com

MOSECO 2008 Activities

An agent agreement signed between MOSECO-Palestine and NOKIA –Finland .Modern Scientific & Electronic Co. (MOSECO) Ramallah–Palestine has signed new agent Agreement with Nokia Co. global cellular phones-Finland as an authorized distributor for the Palestinian Authority market (West Bank and Gaza Strip) starting from the year 2008, noted that MOSECO was a Nokia authorized distributor in the Palestine authority for the past three years but through the Jordanian market, where the Palestinian market was a follower of the Israeli market

But due to the tireless efforts of the MOSECO the Palestinian market has been recognized by NOKIA as an entity independent .market from Israeli & Jordanian markets

Moseco Gold Promotion campaigns

Proceeding from our belief that our customers are the most precious thing we own and customer satisfaction is our superior value to achieve . MOSECO launched a campaign under (Moseco is your choice ... gold is waiting for you) during the month of February and March, 2008 the campaign has targeted Moseco customers who have bought Nokia cell phones to have the chance to Be one of the winners out of a hundred & thirteen Gold Award winners that .was weekly withdrawal during the campaign

The campaign successfully ended by honoring its point of sales that have contributed in the success of this campaign giving the best services to our customers, through a special ceremony that was held in DARNA restaurant where the final withdrawal was .(made on lira, ounce and the gold bullion (Awards Campaign

The company also thanked some of its points of sale for supporting our companies trends of providing customer service and focusing on selling Nokia cell phones, by launching a special program for distinctive points of sale

Direct telephone lines between Lebanon and Palestine

Continued From Front Page

Lebanon's initial approval on opening direct telephone lines came during the meeting between the Lebanese Minister of Communication "Jubran Basil and Mr. Alaeldeen who asked Lebanon to open direct telecommunications with Palestine to enable 400000 Palestinians living in Lebanon to communicate with their families in Palestine.

Mr. Basil promised PITA to act upon the demand and get the necessary approvals as soon as possible. After one week, Mr. Basil sent a note to PITA detailing the Lebanese government approval and their request to sign an official agreement between both parties.

Mr. Alaeldeen was in Lebanon attending a meeting of the Arab Information Association "Ijam" that was held in early August. PITA is thankful to the efforts of all parties in this tremendous achievement believing in the solid cooperation between the public and the private sector as a mean to advance the ICT sector

PITA 'Power Breakfasts' address hot topics in ICT



The Palestinian Information Technology Association (PITA) has launched a series of 'Power Breakfasts', meetings intended to tackle important issues facing the ICT sector in Palestine.

On June 26, 2008, PITA held its first 'Power Breakfast', evaluating steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to liberalize the telecommunications market. PITA Chairman Ala Alaeldeen welcomed the guests and opened the session by addressing the challenges facing the ICT sector in Palestine.

Keynote speakers at the meeting were Paltel Group CEO Abdel Malik Jaber, deputy minister of Telecommunications and IT Sulaiman al- Zuheiri, member of the cabinet-level Economic Committee Mashour Abu Daqqa, BCI general manager and representative of companies who recently received broadband licenses Said Baransi, and treasurer of the Internet Society Palestine Omar Sahili. The first 'Power Breakfast' was held at PITA's offices in Ramallah, with live videoconferencing with PITA members in Gaza.

The second 'Power Breakfast' on the challenges and restrictions facing the information network in Palestine was held on July 7, 2008, at PITA's office in Gaza with video conference with the West Bank. Speakers included executive director of the Palestinian National Internet Naming Authority (PNINA), Paltel Group Gaza Chief Officer Ahmed Abu Marzouq, Internet Society Palestine vice chairman Rami Wihaidi, general manager of Al ALTARIQ Systems & Projects Tariq Salim, and General Director of al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, Issam Younis. The meeting was moderated by PITAs vice chair, Mohammad al-Alami.

Meetings are attended by government officials, private sector representatives and other players in the ICT field. All PITA members are invited to join.

2008/09

TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS PLAN
CONTEST



- university students/academic
- entrepreneurs with innovative ideas
- seasoned entrepreneur that want to launch a new innovative product/Service

The Palestine Information and Communications Technology Incubator – PICTI would like to invite entrepreneurs and students to enter in the 2nd Technology Business Plan Contest.

The Technology Business Plan Contest is designed, organized and managed by PICTI, as this initiative is one of the tools towards achieving PICTI's strategic objective of working to identify and support the technical, intellectual and managerial talent of young entrepreneurs who can become the backbone of

TOP REASONS TO PARTICIPATE IN PICTI TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS PLAN CONTEST:

1- LEARN

About yourself, about your working style, about business, about research, about teamwork, about project management, and about the IT industry. Attend industry seminars and workshops on "How to Write a Business Plan," "Protecting Your Ideas," and more!

2- APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED IN THE CLASSROOM

Learn what it's like to make a business work in the "real world." See if it's different from what you learned in school. Experience means a lot to employers and funding agencies.

3- TEAMWORK

Every employer and start-up business recognizes the value of teamwork. A strong team player is one who has had of experience managing different people and working styles and overcoming inevitable obstacles.

4- SEE YOUR IDEAS COME TO LIFE

Had an idea for a while and want to see if you can make it work? Need that extra push to put your ideas on paper? "Live the challenge" and get the extra incentive you need to make your dreams come true. Get incubated at PICTI or Centers of Excellence.

5- ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPERIENCE

How many of your colleagues and friends can say that they have an idea for a technology related business, let alone have written a business plan for one or seen how it stacked up against other ideas? The PICTI technology Business Plan Contest experience will help you to stand out from the crowd.

6- NETWORKING WITH HIGH PROFILE SPONSORS

Meet Palestine's top management of high-profile companies and governmental organizations. Impress them with your know-how and entrepreneurial spirit.

7- FEEDBACK ON YOUR PLAN AND IDEAS FROM INDUSTRY LEADERS

Judges are chosen based on their e-entrepreneurial, business, and IT experience. They will give you feedback about your plan and your idea after the winners have been announced.

8- PRIZES!!

Total gift prizes for the top teams, However, the PICTI Business Plan Contest team considers every team that submits a plan to be a winner, and each will receive a certificate for their

Organized by



The PICTI Technology Business Plan Awards:

Win prizes by registering to enter and submitting your technology relevant business plan based on the following 3 Categories:

1- Best Business Plans – No Prototype, but Ideas

This category is meant to encourage university students to start developing technology related business plans.

1st Place US\$2000 2nd Place US\$1000 3rd Place US\$500

2- Best Business Plan – With Prototype

This category is made to encourage university students working on their technical graduation project, newly established companies and community developers with a recently developed prototype to start developing their technology related business plans.

1st Place US\$3000 2nd Place US\$2000 3rd Place US\$1000

3- Best Business Plan – Seasoned Entrepreneur

This category is made to encourage seasoned entrepreneurs to go globally.

1st Place US\$3000 2nd Place US\$2000 3rd Place US\$1000

- Business Plans accepted would only be for innovative IT products & services and will exclude broadband & VOIP services licensed by Ministry of Telecom & IT.
- All Teams will receive a certificate of entry.
- Team Advisors will receive a certificate of consultancy

Deadline for Submission: October 9th, 2008

More Details on the Technology Business Plan Contest Registration, Participation Guidelines, Mentorship, Participation in Workshops, Business Plan Form, and Contacts are available on:

www.picti.ps

Students are encouraged to refer to one of these Centers of Excellence for assistance on developing their business plans

Jenin

Hassib Sabbagh IT Center of Excellence (HSITCE)
Mr. Sami Awad
Email: sawad@aauj.edu
Tel: 04 251 0801 (ex:668)
Fax: 04 252 0802

Bethlehem

Institute for Community Partnership
Mr. Philp Daoud
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Birzeit

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Nablus

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Hebron

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Mr. Radwan Tahboub
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Gaza

Islamic University of Gaza
Omar F. Al-Tabbaa, Director
ICT Incubator
Tel: 08 286 0700 (ex:1294)
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PITAI PICTI NEWSLETTER

Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, PICTI to encourage innovative entrepreneurs



The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding with the Palestine Information and Communications Technology Incubator (PICTI) on June 24 to initiate joint efforts for encouraging and stimulating entrepreneurial activity within Palestine and across the Arab world.

The MoU was signed in Dubai by Sultan Lootah, Vice President of Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation – Entrepreneurship and Employment sector, and Laith Kassis, General Manager of PICTI.

“With a remarkably large proportion of youth, the Arab region offers huge untapped opportunities,” said Sultan Lootah. “The foundation endeavors to support individual efforts while creating a network of leading incubators such as PICTI to provide integrated resources for promoting entrepreneurial activity across the Arab world. The proposed network will play significant role in mitigating unemployment in the region.”

Targeting the sustainability of regional economic growth, the Arab Incubators’ Network will facilitate the exchange of information and best practices among key stakeholders and decision makers to foster regional job creation.

Online entrepreneurship-related educational content will also be made available to all members of the network’s partner organizations.

“In association with our key partners, the Foundation is keen to provide small but dynamic enterprises with high value-added enablers and help invigorate the region’s productive structure,” said the sultan. “We aim to develop an integrated model that is tied to the local private sector.” Kassis said that PICTI is fully committed to the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation’s “noble cause”. The Foundation’s proactive approach for tackling the issue of unemployment mirrors PICTI’s aspirations towards promoting sustainable economic development in the Arab world.

We believe PICTI’s expertise, accrued over the years, will catalyze the Foundation’s efforts to alleviate unemployment and enhance youth involvement as a key engine for economic and social development across the region.”

Launched in May 2007 with an endowment of US\$10 billion, the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation seeks to invest in a series of programs that provide the necessary infrastructure and set the appropriate environment for knowledge creation in the Arab world.

The agreement complements the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation’s efforts to establish an Arab Incubators’ Network that will mobilize efforts towards closing the unemployment gap and promoting enterprise, productivity and innovation across the Arab world.

Encouraging Arab intellectual output, facilitating knowledge transfer, nurturing young talent, and setting the right environment for cultural development are some of the key strategic objectives of the foundation.

PICTI, an independent organization that seeks to sustain the growth of the ICT sector in Palestine, is recognized for its remarkable contribution as an incubator. It offers professional business services to emerging entrepreneurs who have mature concepts for unique and innovative products that boast a strong market potential.

PICTI expands programs with the support of Mercy Corps

ICT incubation and other stimulus programs will continue through Mercy Corps support of Palestinian Information and Communication Technology Incubator (PICTI).

The two organizations have signed a memorandum of understanding for support of programs that will train 100 entrepreneurs and offer incubating services and initial funding for four projects, not exceeding US\$30,000 each with the objective of turning such entrepreneurial ideas into products and services of commercial value and ultimately networking them with markets and further rounds of investment.

The agreement extends the existing cooperation between the two organizations for positively advancing the development of the technology sector, and promoting job creation, entrepreneurship and access to capital and markets.

A new website will be launched and dedicated to prospective employees including students of vocational schools and colleges and graduates of universities to allow them to network with the wider private sector.

In addition, the organizations will collaborate to create multimedia software for enhancing the process of vocational education, and to support and complement applied education for students at Palestinian vocational schools and colleges.

Another area of cooperation funded by the British Consulate will introduce business development and incubation services to technology entrepreneurs and support their ventures technically and financially through seed funding.

Mercy Corps will provide capacity-building to PICTI staff by contracting the UK-based “Team Start” in providing value training to PICTI’s personnel in the UK. Instruction will include guidance on selecting entrepreneurs, a comprehensively-applied program on entrepreneurship, the process of meeting and networking with partners to develop team efforts, the process of backing and supporting entrepreneurs in developing their business ideas through a sustainable business plan and office space as is PICTI currently doing.

Sponsored by Intel, PICTI rolls out the Technology Business Plan Contest in Palestine Competition

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The Technology Business Plan Contest project will be launched in September, 2008 by the Palestinian Information and Communication Technology Incubator (PICTI). Intel also said that the Competition for technology entrepreneurs is meant to come up with the best technology business plans. an exercise the company hopes will stimulate further interest in entrepreneurship.

Mr. Jamil Daher, the chairman of PICTI, also announced the organization's new partnership with Intel «allows us to identify and incubate Palestinian talents and enhances high-growth business models in Palestine, specifically in technology.

We are indeed proud of this partnership and look forward to building on the successes we have achieved so far.» Mr. Ala' Aladdin, PICTI vice chairman, advised that the Technology Business Plan Contest is one of the tools towards achieving PICTI's strategic objective of working to identify and support the technical, intellectual and managerial talent of young entrepreneurs who can become the backbone of a dynamic export market for ICT products and services in Palestine.

The general manager of PICTI, Mr. Laith Kassis, advised that the Contest is meant to be a learning experience for the youth to learn more about oneself, about people's working style, about business, about research, about teamwork, about project management, and about the IT industry. It is also an opportunity for the Palestinian youth to attend industry seminars and workshops on "how to write a business plan," "generating and protecting innovative ideas," and more! It is also an opportunity to give that extra push to put your ideas on paper and to "live the challenge" to make the youth's innovative and entrepreneurial dreams come true through incubation at PICTI.

The Technology Business Plan Contest has three categories and there is a category for everyone to participate in including a category specifically targeting university students so that to encourage them to start developing technology related business plans that may be their technical graduation project.

The second category is targeting innovators and entrepreneurs including young companies with existing prototypes in an effort to assist them in commercializing them later through incubation at PICTI.

The final category is made to encourage seasoned entrepreneurs to take submit their business plan and specifically qualify to participate in regional and global Contests.

The total cash prizes for the three categories is US\$15,500 and will qualify the winners for incubation at PICTI and the participation in regional and global business plan competitions.

Mr. Kassis has also advised that PICTI has several financing options for the winners to continue with their commercialization of their ideas and prototypes. Mr. Kassis also advised that PICTI staff will be conducting awareness campaigns and capacity building seminars in technology entrepreneurship, leadership and business plan writing in support of this Contest. These events will take place at the Centers of Excellence located in different universities as well as PICTI. Mr. Kassis also advised that the winners will be awarded their prizes at a ceremony that is expected to take place in February 2008. Mr. Kassis envisions that many of the participants, specifically with existing prototypes, will also be given the opportunity to exhibit their innovation under the PICTI umbrella and booth during the Expotech in November 2008.

Mr. Kassis also expressed his thanks to his partners the Palestine Information and Technology Association of Companies (PITA) and the Palestine Trade Development Organization (Paltrade) in co-organizing the Contest during Expotech.

Ms. Rula Habash, the Intel Corporate Affairs Manager also advised that "winners from all categories will have the opportunity to take part of the global business plan competition that is organized by the University of California Berkeley and is sponsored by Intel. But first, the PICTI technology business plan contest winners have to make it through the regional Arab Science and Technology Foundation organized business plan contest.

Win-win' PICTI project places needy graduates with ICT companies, micro-enterprises

The Palestine Information and Communications Technology Incubator (PICTI) has placed 57 recent ICT graduates from needy families in companies who will benefit from their skills. PICTI was able to do so through the Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Program (DEEP) project funded by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). PICTI received more than 300 applications from the West Bank and Gaza, the vast majority of them unemployed recent ICT graduates in West Bank and Gaza.

To select the applicants, PICTI conducted field visits in March to meet with those who were accepted according to the UNDP criteria, interviewing the applicants and surveying their living conditions and family needs. PICTI also carried out a series of workshops to promote the program in the private sector and as a result received more than 30 requests from companies in the West Bank and Gaza that were interested in hiring fresh ICT graduates.

The organization attributes this success to its close relationship with company owners in the private sector who are seasoned entrepreneurs and understood the value of the PICTI program. Of the total 78 beneficiaries, 57 recent ICT graduates were directly placed in more than 30 local companies in West Bank and Gaza. Seventeen of the graduates are now employed in technology companies in Gaza. This employment generation program is in part a relief effort designed to provide job opportunities for needy families, capitalizing on the availability of a recent graduate as a member of this economically-deprived family. PICTI provided value-added training and matchmaking services to place the graduate in a job in the private sector.

It is worth noting that providing these services in Gaza was a challenge, due to the fact that PICTI does not have physical representation in the Gaza Strip. Instead, PICTI relied on its strong relationship with the technology business community there through its partner the Palestine Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) and their office in Gaza.

PICTI also succeeded in incubating 21 recent graduates out of the total 78 beneficiaries in forming and establishing six micro-enterprises in different geographical locations including Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Ramallah, Hebron and Jerusalem.

The program commenced as PICTI provided a pool of 100 candidates with a comprehensive training seminar, including PICTI lectures, case studies and training material on personal skills development, leadership and management skills, business development, technology marketing and technology entrepreneurship skills, said project manager Hasan Omar.

"The training was a good opportunity for PICTI to learn more about the trainees, their skills, and preference either to opt for employment or to establish their own businesses," Omar says.

By the end of the five days comprehensive training, participants were divided into two groups: those who are looking for jobs and interested in the employment generation program, and those who are willing to establish their own businesses through the micro-enterprises model. PICTI subsequently provided recent graduates seeking jobs with value-added matching-making services with local IT companies. Dozens of interviews were held at an employment day organized on PICTI premises. Thirty-six beneficiaries signed new employment contracts for a period of one year. The first month of employment, the new hires will be provided with on-the-job training

in technical aspects related to the companies' business processes." Omar says "it was necessary to mitigate the risk of these recent graduates not having any industry-related experience by financially compensating the companies that were willing to hire these recent graduates in return for their training. This was a brilliant PICTI intervention that the UNDP program provided for us, in order to kick-start the professional careers of this pool of beneficiaries. Now, all of them are working in quality jobs in web development, ICT marketing, graphic design, communication, technical support and other fields in ICT." PICTI is also monitoring the performance of the new employees through risk reporting, site visits, and frequent meetings, making sure that they are making the right moves in their career and assisting them in adapting to their new environment through mentoring.

Finally, six micro-enterprises were established for 21 program beneficiaries. PICTI assisted the micro-enterprises in renting premises for them in Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Hebron. PICTI also assisted them in registering their businesses at their local municipalities and providing them with procurement services for furniture, hardware, and equipment needed.

PICTI is offering these fledgling companies a package of business services including legal and contract issues, financial assistance and marketing. Mentoring and coaching support will be ongoing for two years to assist these micro-enterprises in developing their business and marketing plans, as well as running and managing their businesses. To make sure that these companies succeed in generating income and revenue, PICTI utilizes its advisors' experience and its own network to open new business opportunities for the micro-enterprises and increase their market share.

In one successful example, a business agreement was signed between each micro-enterprise and an existing company named GlobalCom Company to distribute VoIP services in their local communities. This business model presents a win-win model for the vast majority of the existing technology companies, which are predominantly based in Ramallah, and for the micro-enterprises located in various geographic areas in the West Bank. It is more economical for a company like GlobalCom to rely on representation in various geographic areas due to movement and transportation impediments in the West Bank as a result of the many Israeli military roadblocks and the high cost of travel. Furthermore, Kameel Qattan, CEO of GlobalCom, has expressed "openness for GlobalCom to be part of innovative and dynamic business model that is based on building partnerships and complimentary roles in the value chain in the ICT sector in lieu of the predominantly monopolistic attitudes." PICTI is witnessing some breakthrough with some of the micro-enterprises in generating sales for VOIP services in their communities, said Omar.

He said that some of their talents include multi-media and graphic design and encourages other technology companies based in Ramallah to sign business contracts with these companies in areas such as Internet broadband and other value added services, personal computer sales and maintenance as well as mobile handset logistical operations.

"PICTI is happy to see this pilot project with IDB and UNDP become a success due to results in providing new job opportunities to recent graduates," Omar continued. It brings him "personal satisfaction" to see each beneficiary building his or her professional careers and carry out entrepreneurial activities.



Intel and PICTI initiate educating for entrepreneurship in Palestinian universities

Few other players have a role as critical in the technology entrepreneurial eco-system as higher education institutions.

Recognizing this, California-based company Intel Corporation sponsored a two-day seminar in Ramallah on July 7-8 intended to support the role of Palestinian higher education in building domestic information technology.

This initiative was only one of several unveiled by Intel's corporate vice president at the Palestine Investment Conference in Bethlehem earlier this summer. Will Swope said the company was working within the US Palestinian Partnership (UPP) to ensure speedy ICT development in Palestine through education. He said the initial Theory to Practice seminar would emphasize "jump-starting academically-based entrepreneurship programs focused on technology and creating linkages between regionally-aligned efforts."

The July seminar sought to initiate discussions on teaching entrepreneurship and creating advanced educational programs and organizations to support entrepreneurship. David Charron and John Danner, two professors from the Lester Center at the University of Berkeley, introduced a wide variety of practical techniques and theoretical frameworks in the

sessions. They brought the combined experience gained from teaching, their own entrepreneurial ventures and work as business consultants. Intel Corporation is sponsoring this series as part of a program to create and support entrepreneurship education around the world, said Ferruh Gurtas, Corporate Affairs Manager for Middle East, Turkey and Africa.

The company provides in-country coordination through the Intel Higher Education Program. The Intel and UC Berkeley Entrepreneurship Initiative includes a two-week comprehensive Global Faculty Colloquium held at Berkeley for individuals who have completed the seminar and are recognized as entrepreneurial leaders in their regions. The Initiative also includes the Intel and UC Berkeley Technology Entrepreneurship Challenge, a global business plan competition held at Berkeley in the fall.

Most of the academic programs at the Palestinian universities are geared towards graduating youth that are psyched and eager to join the market as paid white collar professionals and not as professional

entrepreneurs," said Laith Kassis, general manager of the Palestinian Information and Communication Technology Incubator (PICTI).

"In contrast, the latest trend in the US higher education system is to develop industry-relevant technology entrepreneurship education such as those programs rolled in the University of California – Berkeley in partnership with Intel," Kassis explained. "This is the main reason that PICTI sought to launch this two-day seminar: to initiate such training at Palestinian universities."

The theory behind educating for entrepreneurship, said Charron is that "entrepreneurship is a management process, not a personal or individual characteristic and trait. As a process, it can be taught at academic institutions to increase the likelihood of entrepreneurs to succeed in their entrepreneurial start-up careers."

Charron says that the Intel and UC Berkeley seminar and business plan tool have become the best expression of entrepreneurial education, which differs from the classical 'corporate management' business courses. Despite that some programs in the Middle East and North Africa region teach entrepreneurship for businesses or small family companies, "the technology entrepreneurship seminar is all about educating individuals about future big companies that tend to start up small," said Rula Habash, the Intel Corporate Affairs Manager for Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

The seminar "is about knowing the stages of the start-up company in its life cycle as it grows to join the corporate world. It is about creating new products and new markets and bringing technology solutions to compelling market needs."

The seminar has already been conducted in more than 15 countries worldwide, with over 300 participants. The program has received excellent feedback and helped faculties jump-start entrepreneurship and incubation initiatives in their respective universities. In Palestine, "the framework for teaching the technology entrepreneurship in the seminar will rely on the related, localized curriculum and courses at our Palestinian academic institutions," said Kassis. He expressed satisfaction that 30 professors from seven higher education institutions,

including the Arab American University, An-Najah University, Birzeit University, Bethlehem University, Abu Dis University, Polytechnic University and al-Quds Open University participated in the seminar.

Kassis also reported that PICTI will continue to cooperate with the higher education institutions in Palestine and Intel in introducing relevant technology entrepreneurship material



Place: PICTI
Al Bireh, Ramallah

Date: 25/06/2008

Time: 10:00 a.m – 01:00 p.m

Promotion of the Digital Arabic Content Industry through Incubation

Digital Arabic Content Competition

Invitation to a Launching Event

The Launching Event will include presentations on:

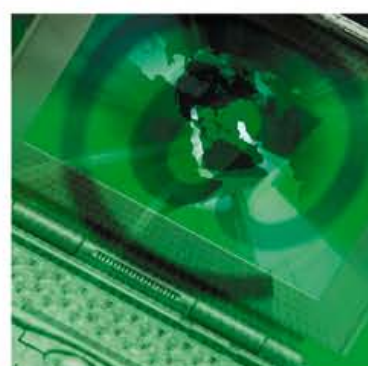
- Importance and Opportunities of the Digital Arabic Content Industry
- How to apply to the Digital Arabic Content Competition
- Value of the Incubation Process through Palestine Information and Communications Technology Incubator (PICTI)

Please call : +(970) 2 240 9290 to confirm your participation

For more information:

<http://www.escwa.un.org>

<http://www.picti.ps>



UN-ESCWA



Palestine Information & Communications Technology Incubator
الحاضنة الفلسطينية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات

PITA Overview

The Palestinian Information Technology Association (PITA) was founded in early 1999 in Ramallah, Palestine as a membership-based organization for domestically-registered companies in the ICT sector. The association represents 75 companies from various sub-sectors including hardware distributors, software development firms, office automation vendors, Internet service providers, telecommunications, ICT consulting, ICT training and related businesses.

Our Purpose

To represent the collective interests of the private IT sector in Palestine

Our Vision

To lead the positioning of the ICT sector as the economic pillar of Palestine

Mission Statement

- To promote and defend the private ICT sector by advocating business-enabling policies, mechanisms and environment through public/private partnership.
- Promoting the Palestinian ICT sector locally and internationally by facilitating access to markets that benefit PITA members
- Engaging the technical and non-technical ICT human resources and related institutions in-order to expand the pool of qualified ICT sector personnel and uphold its professional standards

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PICTI Overview

Mission Statement: PICTI's mission is to design, develop and implement initiatives that will lead to the creation of innovative entrepreneurial enterprises focused on ICT. Key competitive advantages of PICTI include its governance structure that provides access to economic clusters, its dedicated staff with incubation know-how, its clients, and an initiative underway to structure a seed fund for the benefit of pre-revenue start-up companies incubated at PICTI. PICTI aims to develop the Palestinian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector as a means of generating new jobs, attracting foreign investment and improving the economic situation in the Palestinian territories

Strategic Objective: Political uncertainty and difficult economic conditions continue to severely impact the ability of Palestine's ICT sector to efficiently, effectively, or competitively gain access to markets for its goods and services the specific actions required to overcome these impediments will be a key focus of PICTI in the design, development, and implementation of the ICT sector support infrastructure to be established. PICTI will craft promotions and marketing strategies that will separately and uniquely focus on the development of, and access to, business opportunities in regional and international markets for Palestinian ICT firms. but most importantly, PICTI will identify and support the technical, intellectual and managerial talent of young entrepreneurs who can become the backbone of a dynamic export market for ICT products and services in Palestine

Global Market Focus: PICTI utilizes a diverse network of industry professionals that will help identify and assess future ICT development trends where high-value-added regional and/or international niche markets will emerge. Within these niche technology applications, it will be necessary to identify those that will be applicable to a wide cross section of industry sectors and that will maintain strong, sustainable growth acceleration into the future. the Incubator will work closely with its client firms to channel and focus their entrepreneurial zeal and technical talent into developing those expertise required for successful entrée into these valuable niche markets

PICTI Partners: A partnership agreement between the founding (partners, PITA, Palestine Banking Corporation (PBC) and PalTrade, resulted in the establishment of PICTI. USAID funded PICTI operations for three years, with this support expiring on September 29, 2006

Paltel Group replaced the PBC as of November 2006

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