

Global information and tech: international technology analysis



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Global Information & Tech in Japan

International Technology Analysis

IT has begun to play an integral role in the development of a country.

Ranging from mobile phones and Internet to e-commerce, the ICT industry is growing at an exponential rate and has considerable potential to promote development and economic growth (Avgerou, 2008). However, there are still many countries in the world that have not been able to keep up with the rapid pace of scientific R&D. The reasons can be myriad, with political factors being significant contributors.

Where Japan has become one of the leading countries in technological advancement, Iran is still lagging behind in the development of technology and scientific research. The disproportion is reflected from statistics. With an approximate population size of 128 million people, almost 50% people of Japan are Internet users. In contrast to that, the number of Internet users in Iran averages 23 million. By the end of 2007, Japan was the third largest country with broadband services in the world with 27.7 million broadband lines; it also has an average of 61 Mb/sec broadband speed. However, broadband usage in Iran extends to about a million users, with low penetration compared to other countries. ADSL was introduced in Iran in 2004 but only a quarter million Internet users have access to high-speed Internet and a lot of users still use dial-up connections.

Personal computers per capita in Japan are 541.628 per 1 million people whereas in Iran, they are 109.143 per 1 million people. In the world ranking, this sets Japan on the 29th position; Iran ranks 67. One of the examples of technological leapfrogging is the marked increase in mobile phone usage. Around 45 million people in Iran own mobile phones and more
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than one-third of the urban population uses mobile phones to communicate. According to BBC News, however, the number of mobile phone subscriptions in Japan tops 100 million- approximately twice that of Iran. Moreover, since most of e-commerce applications operate on the Internet, Internet penetration and connectivity directly influences e-commerce (Kamel, 2006). Electronic commerce in Iran is predicted to reach \$1 billion by March 2009; on the other hand, Japan boasts expected e-commerce sales of \$61.9 billion by 2010. Official country statistics forecast that e-commerce will contribute to almost 10% of the GDP of Japan between 2004 and 2009.

As depicted by the aforementioned statistics, the rate of technological advancement in Iran, especially in the fields of information technology has remained slow due to censorship on the Internet. Mohammad Khatami initiated the restrictions on internet usage in Iran; the restrictions increased during the rule of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in order to curb anti-government activists. Nowadays, it is mandatory in Iran to have websites registered with the government; 150,000 websites have been blocked from being accessed within Iran. The government has decreased the bandwidth, and despite the fact that access to the Internet is available, the slow speed is discouraging to users. The limited Internet access has a lot of adverse effects; the country can not benefit from the potential contribution of e-commerce to its GDP. Political and cultural barriers have impaired technological progress.

Therefore, it is seen that countries that have a clampdown imposed on Internet usage have a slow rate of technological advancement compared to countries that do not. Furthermore, Internet opens up opportunities for business and marketing, promoting e-commerce. IT is creating profound changes in the organization of Japanese society by altering central and

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peripheral regions (Karan, 2005). Japan has a booming technological industry and is progressing by leaps and bounds; on the contrary, Iran continues to maintain one of the most extensive website filtering networks in the world, hampering information and communication technology advancement (Deibert, 2008).

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