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Build foundation in learning and adaptability

Organised approach to IT skills development vital to succeed

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The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) will help usher in the new millennium of the Digital Age. The convergence of the computing, telecommunications, broadcasting, publishing, education, entertainment industries and more provide windows of opportunity that are beyond imagination in the 20th century. We are talking about a world of pervasive e-businesses, e-commerce, e-services, e-talents - that is, e-everything.

The ICT millennium presents businesses with the opportunities to penetrate widely and deeply into new markets. Convergence also makes it possible for industries to bundle their products and services in amazing ways, as consumer desires drive the development of new devices for delivering the products and services "on tap" - on demand, anytime and anywhere, digitally, immediately, and customised to exacting detail. Online brokerages - infomediaries - will flourish, aggregating a huge amount of knowledge on producers, con-

sumers, buyers, sellers, physical intermediaries, and the products and services being brokered. Infomediaries will ultimately orchestrate the new economy.

The road ahead requires us to have a new set of skills in order to succeed. We need to build a foundation in learning and adaptability. Therefore, it is very clear the need of an organised approach to IT skills development in Sri Lanka.

Based on surveys conducted in developed countries as well as newly industrialised countries it has been found that there are three levels of knowledge / skills requirement in IT by people.

IT Literacy implies basic knowledge in IT. As a result people will be able to exploit various opportunities available through IT oriented products and services to have a better life. There are many examples like the use of computerized Banking services, New telephone facilities, Internet, E-mail, Voice mail which are commonly available in many cities in Sri Lanka. As a result,

ways of performing various day-to-day activities are becoming flexible and different. In developed countries as well as newly industrialised countries IT Literacy rate is higher.

The Second Level is the use of computer as a tool in various jobs, which make people to be more productive. Example like Accountants by using Microsoft Office Packages they can perform more activities within normal office hours. Others like Architects, Lawyers and Artists can also use computers in the same way. As a result they are becoming more productive and able to earn more while giving improved service to their customers.

The Third Level is to take up a career in the IT industry. Third level needs a recognised certification in IT - Academic, Professional or Trade Certifications.

In Sri Lankan context, the demand for qualified and skilled IT specialists has been growing rapidly. Therefore to exploit these opportunities the future generation should be well prepared. To meet those challenges they need for-

mal education and training of high standard - the third level.

In addition it is important to provide widespread IT Literacy training programs countrywide. Training programs should aim at all three levels concurrently. Most of the countries in the region have already recognised the importance of computing for economic development. We need more literate, more knowledgeable, and more skilled future generation to exploit opportunities offered by new technologies.

Therefore, school leavers will have more opportunities due to rapid growth of IT industry in Sri Lanka and in the region. Now more Sri Lankans find employment in the IT field abroad, making a shift in employment pattern. School leavers should seriously think and understand these changes taking place in the environment and get ready to face the challenges.

They need to select the appropriate level (Second or Third Level) depending on their future expectations.