

Govt Plans New Electronics Manufacturing Policy

Prasad meets tech leaders for \$1-trn digital economy road map

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The government will come out with a new electronics manufacturing policy better aligned to the present times and an over-arching data protection and security policy, electronics and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Friday. He was speaking after a high-level meeting with tech industry captains including Rishad Premji of Wipro, Rajan Anandan of Google, Vanitha Narayanan of IBM and Kavin Bharti Mittal of Hike.

After a brainstorming session that lasted for over two hours and was meant to work out a road map for the \$1-trillion digital economy, Prasad said some participants spoke about the need for developing startup clusters – which will be like special innovation zones where startups can work together.

“We will look at developing a framework for a startup clusters policy,” he said.

Prasad said there was “unanimity” about the fact that \$1 trillion is an understatement and the Digital India offered big opportunities in e-commerce, artificial intelligence and internet of things. He reiterated his earlier statement that job losses concerns in the IT industry are hyped and possibly “motivated.”

He said the industry has assured him that there was a potential to create millions of new jobs in the future and the number could be as high as 10.5 million.

Premji said the conversation around job losses was a bit exaggerated. On the impact of protectionism in the US, he said there has been no change in US policies yet.

NIIT chairman Rajendra Pawar said he spoke about the potential for cybersecurity and the need for skilling. “In fact, when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the PM, we were called for a similar meeting 20 years ago and that time we spoke about touching a billion dollars and now the figure is a trillion dollars. I think it is doable, completely doable.”

The government will also consider the potential of low-cost cybersecurity products and will also explore the intersection of Digital India and Startup India, especially in the areas of healthcare, agriculture and education as pointed out by the industry.

“We will look at coordinated action with the respective ministries to facilitate start-ups in these areas,” said Prasad.

CP Gurnani, CEO of Tech Mahindra, said the world over, there is a scarcity of resources in new technology areas so if India takes a lead in skilling the relevant manpower, it could address the concerns around jobs.

Some concerns outlined by the industry were the need for faster dispute resolution and perhaps a more liberal policymaking.

Prasad said the government will further try to address the industry’s issues by looking at a framework for setting up a dispute resolution mechanism.