Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

May 17: The International Day for the Information Society

The information society developed after several stages of human history. Each stage has its own features and advantages. There was hunting technology, agriculture technology, and information technology. They drew the early features of the society of information. The last is distinguished by focusing on the processes of processing information, the basic raw material in it is information, which is invested in generating knowledge; new knowledge.

The information society is all activities, arrangements, and practices that relate to the production, dissemination, organization, and investment of information. It also includes the production of information, research activities, creative efforts, and the composition that aims at serving educational objectives. Despite the multiplicity of the concepts of the information society, we cannot conclude that it is primarily focused on the production of information, obtaining information, and using it to serve development objectives through setting up mechanisms and running their flow using an information and telecommunication infrastructure. It is possible to argue that the most important elements of having the information society is based on the value of knowledge, equal access to information, developing human awareness, and the skill of using information technology.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has decided to reflect on some aspects of the Palestinian information society on the international day for the information society.

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6 PCs per 100 Inhabitants

The basic structure and access to Information Technology (IT) in the Palestinian society has noticeably developed compared to 2000 and 2006. The percentage of owning a computer among Palestinian households tripled to 33% in 2006. The percentage of availability of the Internet service at home is now 10 times, it used to be 15% of households have Internet access at home in 2006. The percentage of owning a mobile phone by households has also doubled to arrive to 81%. The percentage of owning a satellite Dish among Palestinian households was slightly below one-half in 2000; however, that percentage arrived to 80% in 2006 when most Palestinians had a satellite Dish at home. Households having telephones at home was more than one-third in 2000; however, that percentage arrived to 51% in 2006. The percentage of individuals aged 10 and over whom have mobile phones arrived to 38% in 2006.

The progress in the basic structure and access to IT in the Palestinian society gave rise to the necessity for integrating the information basic structure with the development stpercentagegy in a manner that embodies the need for providing information services to rural and distant areas. Moreover, it gave rise to the need for using of computers at schools and universities at all levels, the spread of public internet centers, having competitive and organized telecommunications, and achieving progress through administrative and institutional reform. Also, it brought out the need for upgrading administrative and productive systems, restructuring the telecommunications sector

and connecting it to information, defining the institutions that belong to the sector, and human resources development.

The percentage of males using the Internet is twice that of the percentage of females

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Half of the Palestinian society (of those aged ten and over) knows how to use the Internet; one fifth of them actually use the Internet. The percentage doubles when males are compared to females and arrives to 24% and 13% respectively. The gap between the percentages of using computers among males and females is still wide (24% for males compared to 17% for females). The tendencies to use computers among males are different from those for females; 44% of males use computers for entertainment compared to 34% among females. Moreover, 39% of males use computers for studying compared to 51% among females who use the computer for the same purpose.

A change in tendencies towards the purpose of using the computers and the Internet

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Some change occurred to households' tendencies towards the purpose of using computers and the Internet between the years 2004 and 2006. The percentage of households who had computers for learning purposes increased by 10% to arrive to 62.7%; conversely, the percentage of households who owned a computer for work purposes dropped by 27% to reach 8.4%. Some alteration happened to the purpose of using the Internet since the percentage of individuals using the Internet for fun increased by 32% to register 17% of the total of the purposes of using the Internet. The percentage of individuals using the Internet for search and knowledge dropped by 83% to arrive to 15%; moreover, the percentage of using the Internet for correspondence purposes dropped by 87% to register 9%.

The high price of PCs is among the main reasons for not buying them by households

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Almost one-half of the Palestinian households (41%) plan to have a computer in the future; the majority of them (75%) prefer to pay in allotments but more than half of them (60%) do not know exactly when they can buy a computer. Moreover, most of them (75%) blame not having a computer on high prices of computers.

More than half a billion shekels is spent on technology each year by Palestinian households

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The annual expenditure of Palestinian households on a selected group of technology services and available means of telecommunication at households including computerized programs, additional computer parts, repairing computer operating programs, and using the Internet at home approximately 526 million Israeli shekels at a monthly expenditure average of 55 Israeli shekel per household. The highest monthly expenditure average was on using the Internet at home, which arrived to 68 shekels. According to results, 60% of households consider what they pay per month for Internet service is adequate and 36% of households consider it is much and too much.

The annual expenditure of individuals (aged 10 and over) on selected available technology and telecommunication services including mobile telephones and using the Internet outside home is approximately 456 million Israeli shekels at a monthly expenditure average of 58 shekels per individual including 70 shekels for the West Bank and 20 shekels for Gaza Strip. The highest monthly average spending was on using Israeli mobile phones, which arrived to 99 Israeli shekels.

The contribution of the technology sector in the GDP is limited

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The information sector constitutes key source of the national income, labor, and constructive transformation. In the United States, the information sector produces approximately half of the national income and job opportunities. The economies of developed countries show that 40% of European income came from information activities in mid 1970s. However, the use of the Internet among the Palestinian society for e-commerce not more than 1%, which is a very tiny percentage and does not have any real weight in the Palestinian economy. The size of the contribution of the IT and telecommunications sector in the GDP of the Palestinian Territory is limited in comparison with other economic sectors. Most of those working in IT in the Palestinian Territory are concentrated in wire and wireless telecommunications activities related to computers. The number of those working in these areas totals 2,960 people. Also, the biggest part of the value added of the IT and telecommunications sector is produced by the wire and wireless activities, which arrives to 98 million dollars. The value added of the computer related activities totaled approximately 1.5 million dollars in 2005.

Due to weak technology industry in the Palestinian Territory, commercial exchange of IT and telecommunications goods and services with the rest of the world is the main access to keep up with the global technology advancement. IT and telecommunications imports registered their highest value in 2000, which arrived to 36 million dollars. The value dropped to 20 million dollars in 2004. On the other hand, IT and telecommunications exports registered their highest value in 2004, which arrived to 11.5 million dollars. The lowest value of IT and telecommunications exports arrived to 750,000 dollars in 2001.

1,237 computer labs at schools in the Palestinian Territory

The total number of computer laboratories at schools reached 1,237 during 2005-2006 school year. The percentage of private schools, which have computer labs, reached 67% compared to 57% for public schools and 27% for UNRWA schools. Most schools (90%) have telephones; 40% of schools have facsimiles; and 95% of schools have computers. Also, 90% of schools have printers and 31% of schools have scanners.

Most universities and middle colleges have information technology and telecommunications major. It has been noticed that the percentage of males who tend to study information technology and telecommunications is approximately twice the percentage of females who tend to study the same topics. The percentage of students who major in the areas of information technology and telecommunications totals 9% of the total number of university students; including 11% for males and 6% for females.