Paving the Way for Economic Growth

Palestine's Telecom Infrastructure

By Hani Alami

It is no secret that the development of countries is managed by their telecom infrastructure. For this reason, countries move fast to develop their infrastructure and invest heavily in building 5G networks and installing fiber-optic cables. Telco and telecom infrastructure are the enablers for developing the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector. In Palestine more than 84 percent of households are connected, and the average speed has been raised from 4MB in 2016 to 18MB in 2021, and we expect to reach an average of 21MB by the end of 2022. This increase in the average internet speed reflects huge investments into the fiber networks in all of Palestine, with speeds starting from 100MB and increasing to 500MB per user.

With no access to ports and the ongoing siege on the Gaza Strip, Palestine should benefit from the globalization era in order to achieve economic growth. This is why we should continue to focus on coding and outsourcing. In order to ensure stable economic growth, affordable, wide-reach broadband networks and or 4G/5G cellular networks are a must. The Israeli authorities continue to prevent the two Palestinian cellular operators from having 4G or 5G technologies. In fact, they are only allowed to run a 2G network in the Gaza Strip. The "justification" given, of course, is "for security reasons," even though everyone knows that these restrictions are in place simply to control and hinder growth and development in Gaza and in Palestine as a whole.
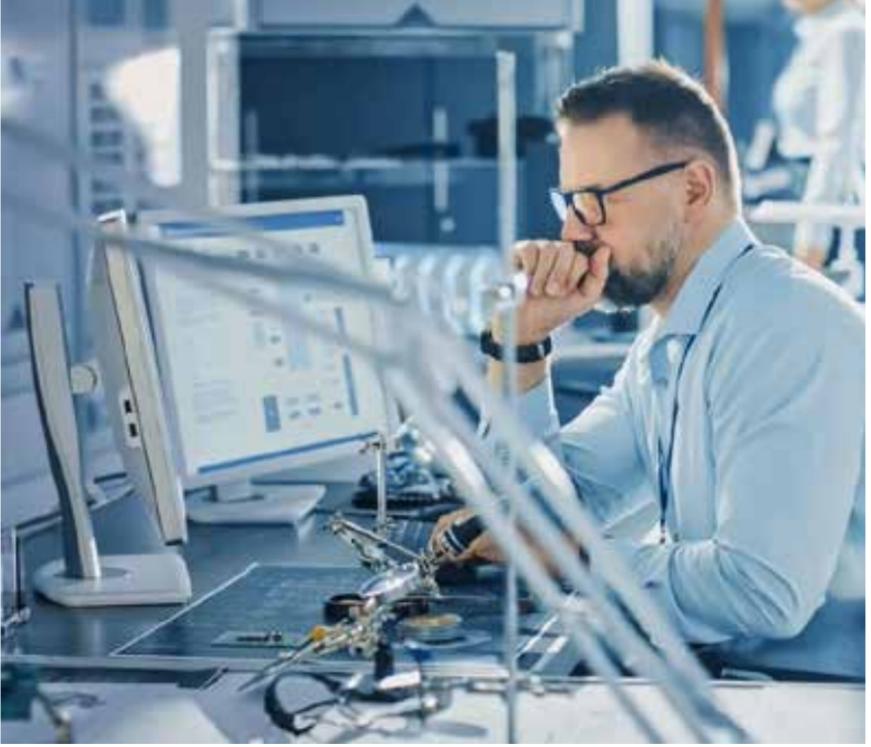
Realizing the importance of telecommunication, the Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunication, under the supervision of its minister Dr. Ishaq Sider, is working diligently to open up the market by issuing new licenses to build fiber networks throughout Palestine in order to reach every Palestinian house. The ministry coordinates

agricultural sectors. In these sectors, the return on investment (ROI) is certainly worthwhile and is achieved in a relatively short period of time. Moreover, new opportunities will arise for those who work in the coding and outsourcing sectors, and with better connectivity they will be able to export their capabilities to the entire world.

closely with the main stakeholders in order to achieve this goal. Both the governmental and the broadband operators fully comprehend the impact of developing a broadband network in strengthening the growth of the Palestinian economy. All stakeholders also know that developing the telecom network will play an important role in strengthening the industrial, manufacturing, financial, and

Broadband infrastructure and operators constitute a vast portion of the world's economy. International development of telecom infrastructure has helped create new opportunities and has increased the demand in Palestine. For instance, there have been many success stories since the IOT (Internet of Things) was adopted by the industrial sector, which has greatly benefitted from the new

telecom development. The availability of internet and connectivity has made possible smart farming and smart factories. In addition, these developments have created more opportunities for engineers and developers who have been able to respond to the huge demand created globally to develop or create new ways of living.

Palestinian talent and fresh graduates have always been interested in this field. As more opportunities arise, more young Palestinians are joining the era of start-ups and entrepreneurship or working for software coding and development companies, thus engaging in telecommunications and getting involved in IT development. More international companies have started to open branches in Palestine to attract Palestinian talent. Apple recently signed an agreement to hire 60 Palestinian engineers for research and development and to work from Palestine with their international team.

The broadband infrastructure has to be ready to respond to the increasing demand. Broadband networks are essential today and have to reach every house, including those in rural areas, with high-quality services at affordable prices.

Hani Alami, a Jerusalem-born expert in the telecom sector, lives in Jerusalem and has founded many telco companies such as Coolnet (internet service provision), Fusion, and SMT. He designed and built the communication network for the PNA between 1994 and 2000. In 2016, he founded JEST, the first NGO in Jerusalem to support and provide financial empowerment to entrepreneurs. Recently, he started Yaboos, the first Palestinian radio station in Jerusalem.

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