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Information Technology
Association - Jordan

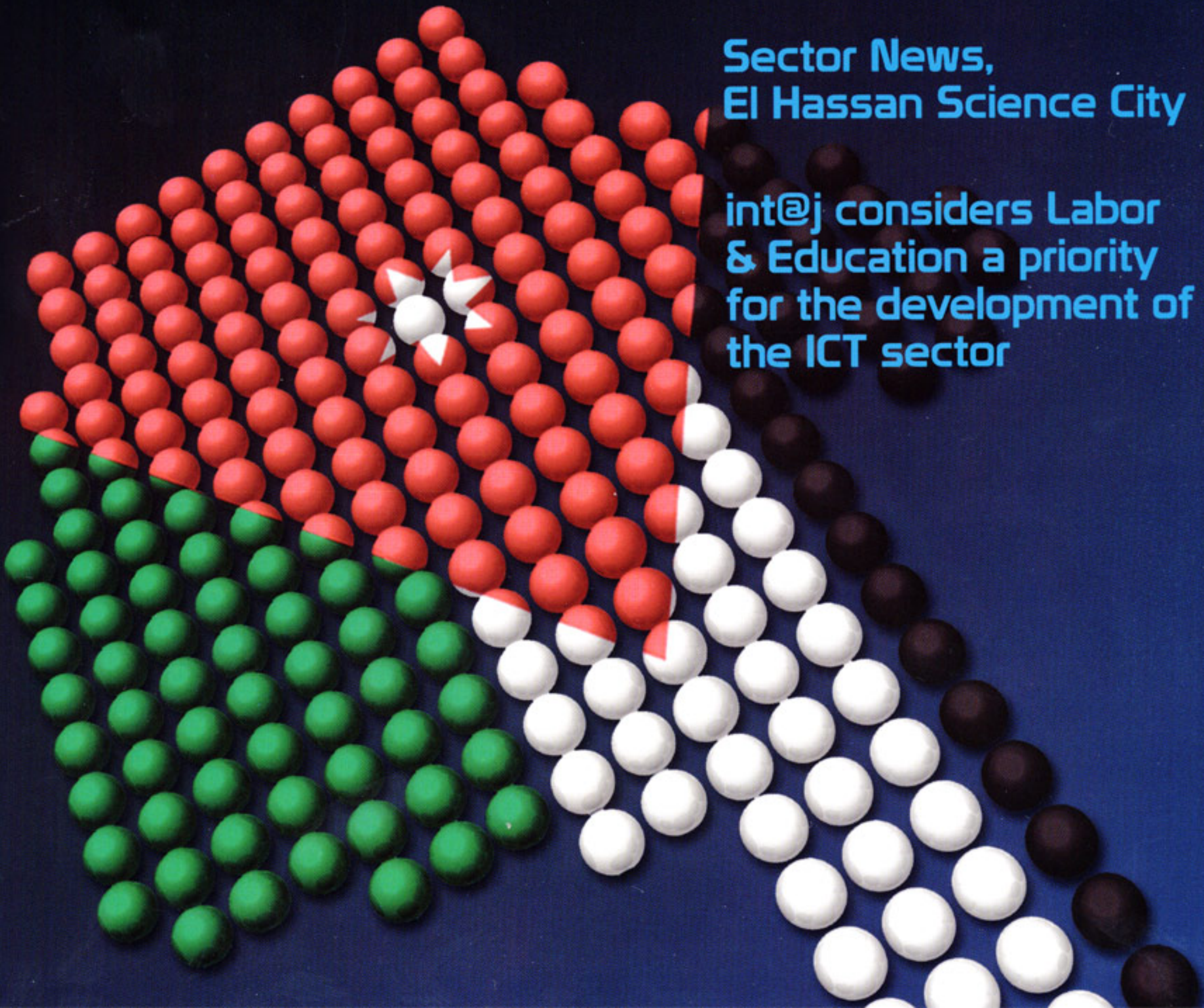
EYE ON TECHNOLOGY

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int@j & JEDCO
host the Jordan Pavilion
in Gitax 2008

Sector News,
El Hassan Science City

int@j considers Labor
& Education a priority
for the development of
the ICT sector





DARDASHAT and ICT "4"

Amman 28/8/2008

By Doha Abdelkhaleq *

About Labor Strikes

Not once since the establishment of the labor union movement have the public sector and the vertical industries in Jordan had so many labor strikes that hit into their operations as in the past eight years alone. We stand by this statement as we have witnessed interesting multiple strikes collecting Jordan's civil servants in one place; those were the engineers, the engineers in agriculture, the pharmacists, the veterinarians and the staff of the press. This most symbolic strike took place on Sunday the 22nd of June 2008. Let us first admit that multiple union-lead strikes are creeping into the body of the civil service as a mode of operation! Reminding us with an operational nostalgia where striking was considered an expression of polarization against the government and an act of political courage mainly coming from the red zones! The difference with this particular strike is that participants held the Jordanian flag and members of the same family came to protest together! The participants distributed red carnations to a smiling police who looked likewise compassionate with the very same issues! Remember that Jordan's treasury did once promise all Jordan's civil servants a salary revision since the 2007 budget, because it recognized this increase both as a labor right and as a social issue!

I never really liked strikes as I consider them desperate measures taken by obviously desperate groups due to the incapacities of decision makers in charge of the human resources planning. Likewise, hunger strikes and demonstrations are not any fancy politics nor should we attach to them any political novelty. They are simply symptoms of bad planning in the area of

human resources management even on a national level, especially if it hits the country's scientists.

It is unlikely that the ICT sector will ever be victimized consistently by unreasonable unions' practices or by regular strikes, first because it is one of the highest paying sectors in Jordan and second because the larger ICT companies, a privatized Jordan telecom as an example, is now in charge of its own human resources, not the government nor the unions any more. Let us only hope that all int@j members and the sector in general will always adopt voluntarily and ahead of any union or any national reforms, to world's best practice in the area of human resources management, so we never get to force our ICT labor to ever bang on the drums of the labor unions!

About Jordan's Internet City!

Jordan's ICT sector seems to have exported this idea to the region amongst others since year 2000 but could not get it implemented inside Jordan in any scale! Was it the planning? Was it the political will? The budget, or not wanting to spend any? Was it the self-chosen priorities for the sector at the time? Or maybe the choice of partners and methods adopted or lack of those? Or perhaps it was the change of four subsequent ministers at the MoICT since year 2000 that made it humanly impossible to administrate such a project? We really don't know.

Whatever the answer might be, I would first want to suggest to abandon once and for all the rubric "Internet and City", and to replace it with an appropriate brand that would truly reflect Jordan's long old quest to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and its ICT resources in one place. For those who suggest a brand like IT village, IT bay, IT hub and IT corridor, please reconsider a brand that would take into consideration all the components necessary for the success of such a project, mainly; innovation that would ignite increased ICT activities thriving in a comprehensive ecosystem comprising

of the local industry and its export activities, the FDI, Jordan's human resources and the Academia in one place, then to brand it.

As the buzz is getting louder with speculations that the ICT ministry has indeed started a similar project already in Q3 and Q4 during this year of 2008, we would kindly ask the ministry to communicate the status of the project and any likewise initiatives that are simultaneously being taken by the council of ministers and by others carrying the same concept!

Int@j members, those who represent the local IT innovation within the country, do need to know once and for all the accurate status of this in order for them to contribute to its formation.

Finally, it would be most interesting to follow up and observe the development of a fascinating phenomenon that will be happening here in Jordan for the very first time and that is how the collection of Jordan's ICT human resources in one place will make ideas, projects, innovation and sales fly!

Because unlike the QIZ's, this particular Zone should be able to represent Jordan at its best; modern, relevant and enlightening, serving in a high-tech Middle East scenario where it is able to extend its innovation and its exports way beyond its borders. We call this move history in the making, and an engaged ICT minister should give an arm and a leg to make this project happen.

About Jordan's ICT Industry Profile

I would like to reiterate that the objectives of the sector will only be realized by its own labor force and not by anyone else! The People of the sector are the ones who will be delivering the work, whether men or women, locals or foreigners, old or young, and it does not matter if you call them chiefs or Indians, insiders or outsiders, for such rhetoric does not apply. Jordan has furthermore signed an international treaty that should enforce a

certain quota for handicaps in the work place! People, all kinds of people, make the work place what it is and from that point they shape it with a certain profile and they give it an identity.

The good news here is that Jordan's ICT sector did have once rather a progressive profile that enabled it to reach for good results. Combined with some competencies and capital further acquired from the efforts in the Diaspora and some FDI and support, the whole sector did just well based on a profile that served it well at the time. We even expect this profile to stabilize till the end of the planning period for the national ICT strategy in year 2010.

But according to recent Int@j-USAID research, the current profile shows that the majority of the ICT human resources are engaged with technical jobs. A fraction of the count went for sales and marketing or to managers or to entrepreneurs! In a new and modified profile, what the sector needs is a substantial increase in the numbers of salesmen and women and marketers to be able to cash in on Jordan's previous IT innovation and translate it into a physical expansion that will answer for the country's reasonable employment and revenue expectations from the sector.

There isn't also one depository that collects people's data to enable decision makers to search for, find and discover the hidden competence within the country when and where it counts; that is at the right time, place, cost, and quality. Without such data no one will be able to locate the good profiles wherever they are in the country and thus shall remain working within the same old existing limited inner circles, especially in the area of recruitment, the allocation of assignments to the wrong human resources and the unplanned career paths.

A quick look at the academia supply also shows that the sector should be able to benefit from a variety of offers in the area of higher education; while the French Sorbonne opens in the UAE we see no reason

why such endeavors do not multiply in Jordan! By facilitating foreign education, one increases the variety of the supply from the human resources to the local ICT market. Having said that, strengthening local education and research in the country should always remain an obligation and a national priority.

Finally, strengthening the economic freedom for the sector would also mean the elimination of all forms of restrictions on the freedom of movement especially for women, as well as the simplification of Visas and all regional border restrictions. In summary, the profile that will serve us well is one that would score highest on the economic freedom scale allowing for Jordan's human resources to develop an efficient profile that would execute the sector's strategic objectives.



About the writer:

Managing Partner- ESKADENIA Software

Member of the Board of Directors of Int@j: The Labor & Education Pillar