

● ALLAYING JOB LOSS FEARS

New-age tech to create more employment: Prasad

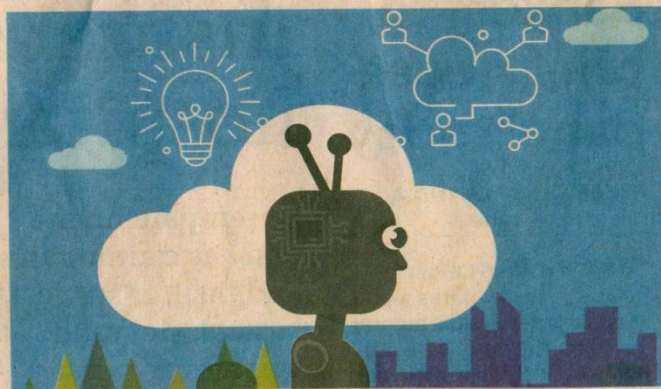
Minister says there's scope for corporate India to do more to upskill people

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ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES LIKE AI will spawn new jobs and fears around job losses are misplaced, electronics and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has said, admitting that India Inc needs to play a larger role in the efforts to upskill people.

"Remember, technology by its very nature requires skilling and I see potential for digital skilling in a big way which, by itself, will create a lot of jobs," Prasad said.

He said the IT ministry is working with other departments like NITI Aayog on various aspects of these advanced technologies, and is also engaged with software body Nasscom on skill development



initiatives. "We are working with Nasscom... Also, I have already set up several committees to examine the whole matter. Artificial intelligence (AI) should be used for governance... for improvement. We are working quite closely with other departments like NITI Aayog," he said.

Asked if corporate India needed to put in more efforts in this area, the minister said: "There is a scope for that. Nasscom is doing that but there is a need to do more".

He dismissed concerns that technology may displace jobs,

but added that it is important for people to upskill to keep pace with changing requirements in the digital world. "If a person is not up to date in new technology, then he may have a problem. You have to be tuned to the new technology," the minister said in a recent interview.

He noted that 39.8 lakh people are working directly in the IT sector, while indirectly, the sector employed about 1.3 crore.

Additionally, 10 lakh people are involved in Common Service Centre (CSC) — which acts as access point for delivery of

electronic governance services — while 4.5 lakh people are involved in mobile manufacturing activities in the country, he added.

"All these numbers are excluding the startup and entrepreneurship movement. When a new technology comes, new skilling comes in, it is going to bring more and more jobs, be very clear about this," he said.

The comments come amid reports of layoffs across various IT companies and apprehensions that increasing automation across sectors could make existing jobs redundant. Nasscom had refuted such reports, saying the IT industry continues to hire people on "net" basis although techies will have to reskill themselves to stay relevant. IT companies, on their part, too had defended their position, saying trimming of workforce is a part of annual performance reviews.

A poll conducted by EY recently found that while business leaders are optimistic about the impact of AI on job creation, talent crisis remains.