'Consulting industry for developing GPU'

Against the backdrop of the US restricting export of advanced computer chips used to develop artificial intelligence in a bid to preserve American leadership in that space, **ASHWINI VAISHNAW**, Union minister for electronics & IT, information & broadcasting, and Railways spoke to **Surajeet Das Gupta** in New Delhi on a range of issues. Edited excerpts:

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

With the Biden administration proposing restrictions on export of advanced chips or GPUs (graphics processing units) which would impact several countries, does the government have any plan for designing a make-in-India GPU?
We are consulting with the industry for developing a GPU, and our endeavour is to support such a move. We have discussed this with C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing).

Will the proposal have an adverse impact on India as we are not amongst the 18 friendly countries where there is no restriction on the export of advanced chips?
We are examining the impact of the AI regulation. Obviously, it is dependent on how the new administration looks at it after which we will take a holistic view. We are awaiting details as well.

After the release of the Draft DPDP (Digital

Q&A

ASHWINI VAISHNAW

Minister for Electronics & IT, Information & Broadcasting, and Railways

Personal Data Protection Act) Rules, many stakeholders have raised concerns over the government's willingness to give big tech players two more years to implement the law. Is so much time justified?
No, it will be in stages. I have said that it will be up to two years. For instance, MSMEs and start ups will get the maximum time. Big tech companies have already implemented it in Europe, so they will be able to implement it faster. We are talking to them to finalise a timeline.

There have been concerns that the draft rules are in conflict with the DPDP Act, which does not have a provision for setting up "committees" for imposing restrictions on transfer of data. What is your take on this?
We have always said there will be sectoral safeguards in transfer of data. For instance, RBI already has rules of not allowing data transfer, the health ministry might have data of patients which they don't want to transfer, the transport ministry might want some locational data not to be transferred. To determine this, we have decided on a consultative process through the committees which will have industry participation also.

"WE EXPECT THE FIRST MADE-IN-INDIA CHIP TO ROLL OUT IN AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2025 FROM MICRON PLANT… THE FIRST FAB PLANT WILL ROLL OUT BY 2027 END"

'Examining recommendations on AI regulations'

How is the rollout of the fab and ATMP (assembly, testing, marking and packaging) plants going?

We expect the first made-in-India chip to roll out in August-September 2025 from Micron plant. Our expectation is that the first fab plant will roll out by 2027 end. In the second round, our focus will be to incentivise the materials and equipment players which is required to power the fab plants. All the five plants have also built their eco system of partners and many of them have set up semi manufacturing outfits in the country.

Has your ministry started work on AI regulation? And, will it be through a separate Act?

All this is under discussion. The principal scientific advisor of the government has given the report on the framing of AI regulations. We are currently examining the recommendations.

The government last year had invited applicants for empanelment of companies which would provide GPUs and build computing infrastructure. What is the progress on

Q&A

ASHWINI VAISHNAW
Union Minister for Electronics & IT, Information & Broadcasting, and Railways

that front?

Thirteen companies have shown interest and we are in the process of evaluating, which will be done in a month. We will get more than 10,000 GPUs, which was our earlier target. To put into perspective, that is a lot of computing power considering the fact that our most powerful super computer is 700 GPU equivalent.