



## Citibank area head due in Dhaka today

Sanjay Nayar, area head for Citibank South Asia and Chief Executive Officer of Citibank India, arrives in Dhaka on a two-day visit today, says a press release.

During his visit, Sanjay will attend the opening ceremony of Citibank NA Gulshan Branch, meet senior government officials and major clients of the bank, and review Citibank's growth opportunities in Bangladesh.

Sanjay Nayar was previously global sales head for Fixed Income Emerging Markets business at Smith Barney in New York and held various positions in the Corporate and Transaction Bank, Corporate Finance and Capital Markets businesses in Citibank in the UK and India.

## Sirius to market Motorola broadband solutions

Motorola Limited has appointed Sirius Broadband (BD) Limited the authorised distribution channel partner for Bangladesh, says a press release.

All Motorola broadband communications solutions including wireless broadband will now be available in Bangladesh through Sirius Broadband.

Bangladeshi ISPs who are planning to deploy wireless broadband solution will be benefited greatly as the technology is now readily available.

# Four Sonali Bank branches merge into two

## No prior announcement

UNB, Narayanganj

Without any prior notice, Tanbazar and Adamji branches of Sonali Bank merged yesterday with two others, creating concern among the clients.

The 40-year-old Tanbazar branch merged with the women's branch at Bangabandhu Road while the Adamji branch merged with the Azim Market

branch.

"Shifting of these two branches without any announcement will not only add to clients' plight but also create problem in accommodation of the bank employees and the customers as well," said a high official of the bank, wishing anonymity.

He also said the two branches of the

state-run bank were closed following a decision taken in a board meeting recently.

The Adamji branch, opened in 1973, had nearly 5,000 clients with Tk 17 crore in deposit. Some 15,000 customers deposited their money with the Tanbazar branch, which started operations in 1964.



PHOTO: HOLCIM

BUET Professor Shamimuzzaman Basunia inaugurates a 'mobile concrete lab' of Holcim (Bangladesh) Ltd at a construction site of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission at Agargaon in Dhaka yesterday. Also present were (from left to right) Zeeshan Kingshuk Huq, DGM (Marketing), GMG Mostafa, manager (Technical), PN Iyer, VP (Marketing and Sales), Muzammel Huq, chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, Asraf Uddin Sarkar, project director of National Development Engineers Ltd (NDE), and ATM Sharif, executive director of NDE.

## Holcim comes up with mobile concrete lab

Holcim (Bangladesh) Ltd, a leading ISO 9001:2000 certified cement company, yesterday inaugurated a 'mobile concrete lab', the first of its kind in Bangladesh, says a press release.

The lab, installed in a sophisticated van, was launched at a construction site of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission at Agargaon in Dhaka. The builder of this project is National Development Engineers Ltd (NDE).

The mobile lab, a small prototype of a formal laboratory, is able to drive to all types of sites and carry all the essential equipment to conduct diverse field tests and guide users on proper concrete practice.

Holcim's Mobile Concrete Lab can conduct concrete and cement tests on site, detect common problems of concrete on site and provide solutions guiding users on good concrete practice, and checking and adjusting mix designs.

This service will currently be open free of charge for the exclusive users of Holcim. Others can avail themselves of this service through a nominal fee.

At the inauguration, Prof Shamim Z Bosunia of BUET, Mustafizur Rahman, managing director of NDE, Md Mizanur Rahman, director of NDE, Ashraf Uddin Sarkar, project director, ATM Sharif, executive director of NDE, Muzammel Huq, chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission PN Iyer, VP Marketing and Sales, Zeeshan Kingshuk Huq, DGM (Marketing), GMG Mostafa, Manager (Technical Sales), and other employees of Holcim were present.

## Sonali Bank holds workshops on money laundering

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Sonali Bank Staff College, Dhaka, has organised a series of daylong workshops on prevention of money laundering at divisional offices of the bank at Rajshahi, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna and Barisal.

A Sonali Bank press release said branch managers, officers and some senior executives of Bangladesh Bank attended these workshops held recently to create awareness among the bank officials about repurcussion of money laundering in banking business as well as national economy.

Earlier, the staff college organised a similar workshop in Dhaka.



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors look at some advertisement posters exhibited at the first ever advertising festival held at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

# First ever ad festival held in Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The first ever advertising festival was held yesterday in Dhaka with an aim to boost the fledgling advertising industry of Bangladesh.

Media and production houses, printing presses and outdoor agencies took part in the fair, Titled as 'Dhaka Advertising Festival-2003.'

In the festival, organised by the Advertising Club, Dhaka, several audio-visuals, print, TV commercials and outdoor display of different products were put on display. The festival also showed 35 top advertisements.

At the opening ceremony,

## Goldsmith holds ornament show

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

An ornament show, organised by Goldsmith Bangladesh, was held at Bowling Club, Gulshan in Dhaka on Thursday.

CM Koyes Sami, president and managing director of The Oriental Bank Ltd, was present at the function as chief guest.

The show, a presentation initiative for both local and foreign buyers, included a Bengali New Year celebration programme and a fashion show.

ATKM Azmal, owner of Goldsmith, in his speech said he has a plan to use local skilled manpower in manufacturing ornaments for local and foreign market.

Goldsmith, a jewellery house, expects new foreign investment in joint ventures in finished ornaments, he said.

## SARS hits China exhibition

AFP, Beijing

China's largest export fair in Guangzhou has attracted only a small number of business representatives compared to last year with most staying away because of SARS.

The fair, which runs from April 15 to 30, has seen just 7,677 representatives from various countries so far, compared with a total 135,482 at the previous fair.

# ICT task force: Need to look at the regional experiences

its task force has anything to do with VoIP. Therefore, the task force asking the authority to finalise within two months the procedure of providing VoIP licences is an impractical proposition.

A government does not, and should not issue licenses for any particular technology. Rather the licences are granted for various services, as it was done for cellular mobile, rural telecom and Internet. Technology was never

encashes this bank guarantee. The ILD operator also submits another annually renewable bank guarantee of Rs. 20 crore for one year. If the operator fails to pay any fees, the government encashes this bank guarantee.

Any operator fulfilling these obligations has the liberty of launching international voice services using both the circuit switched and VoIP technologies. Each ILD operator gets connected with the licensed fixed or

telephone device. First, from one PC to another PC within or outside India. Second, from one PC in India to a telephone outside India. Third, using IP based H.323 or SIP terminals connected directly to ISP nodes to similar terminals, within or outside India.

Therefore, the Indian ISPs are not at all connected with any fixed or mobile network while offering Internet telephony services. No licence fee is applicable for them until October 31, 2003. A nominal licence fee of one rupee per annum will become payable from November 1, 2003. But each ISP is mandated to submit a bank guarantee amounting between Rs. 3.0 lakhs and Rs. 2.00 crores, depending on the business location.

Sri Lanka is, however, appears to be least bothered about Internet telephony. In January last, this island state opened up its international voice gateway for unlimited competition in a very simple way.

Each licence is valid for 10 years, issued by paying an upfront fee of US\$ 50,000 with yearly payment of 0.30 per cent of annual turnover. A contribution of US\$ 0.06 will be levied per incoming minute of international calls.

Such a no nonsense approach caused the influx of 30 applications and the Sri Lankan authority has issued 21 international gateway licences. These operators have the freedom of using both circuit switched and VoIP technologies.

"It will lead to considerably lower retail prices, outgoing as well as incoming," said Rohan Samarajiva, a consultant at the Ministry of Economic Reforms. I asked him how the Internet telephony, being offered by ISPs, is regulated. He was not worried about that. "If the ISPs survive competing with international gateway operators, good luck to them," said Samarajiva who masterminded this liberalisation in Sri Lanka.

In the backdrop of these two regional case studies, our ICT task force would hopefully reduce the decibel level of its rhetoric. Otherwise, their efforts would become a farcical exercise. Let us look into this issue more seriously before we finalise our policy.

The writer is a telecom analyst.

## PASSWORD

**Applying this technology is purely a business decision of our telecom providers. Neither the government nor its task force has anything to do with VoIP. Therefore, the task force asking the authority to finalise within two months the procedure of providing VoIP licences is an impractical proposition.**

stipulated in any of these cases.

Therefore, the government should forget the issue of licensing VoIP technology. Without assessing our ground realities, they get obsessed with the regional experiences in ICT. Let us find how the neighbours are handling VoIP technology. I believe there are important lessons that can be learnt from them.

The Indian government opened its International Long Distance (ILD) voice gateway on April 1, 2002 for unlimited competition. The ILD licences are issued on non-exclusive basis, initially for a period of 20 years, with automatic extension of the licence for a period of 5 years.

The applicant company should have a network of Rs. 25 crore and it pays an upfront and non-refundable entry fee of Rs 25 crore. Besides an annual licence fee amounting to 15 per cent of the adjusted gross revenue is applicable. Respective fees for using the radio frequency and possessing the radio equipment for point-to-point radio link are also payable.

A performance bank guarantee for Rs. 25 crore for three years is to be submitted in favour of the government. If the operator fails to roll out its services by three years, the govern-

mobile networks. While offering the VoIP services, the ILD provider is mandated to make the subscribers fully aware of the degraded call quality at a lower tariff.

It is clearly evident from the above that licences were not issued for VoIP but for international long distance services in India. So far six companies have applied for ILD licence. Only three -- Reliance Communications, Bharti Teleonic and Data Access have obtained their respective licences. The remaining three -- Pacific Netinvest, Connecting Network and Satyam Infoway are yet to come.

Some academics and industry gurus of Bangladesh claim the Indian Internet service providers (ISPs) offer VoIP. They are absolutely wrong. Because the Indian government has tagged the provision of Internet Telephony, not VoIP, in the ISP license. Internet telephony is completely different from VoIP. Earlier I wrote about their differences and it is need-less to repeat now.

The Indian ISPs are granted with a 15 year licence to offer Internet services including Internet Telephony. It allows processing and carrying voice signals, through public Internet in three different ways, either using a Personal Computer (PC) or an Internet

**ABU SAEED KHAN**

A knee-jerk reaction about the voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) technology is preventing a proper discussion on this very important subject. National Task Force on ICT (Information Communication Technology) is not helping the process either. A section of media, which has no in-depth comprehension about the technology, has been amplifying a distorted chorus. Regrettably a large segment of the industry is also creating a hysteria on this issue. As a result, the consumers have been paddling in the troubled water of confusion.

The fourth meeting of the ICT task force was held on April 3, 2003 with the prime minister in the chair. The government reportedly decided to "withdraw" restrictions from VoIP in this meeting. The authorities have been asked to finalise within two months the procedure of providing licences for VoIP to private firms for offering this technology. The public and private TV channels covered this item with due importance. Various national dailies also treated this news very well.

Immediately the objectives and authority of the ICT task force crossed my mind. This 15 member consultative body was formed under the notification No. 3.34.16.0.0.04.97-14, dated January 4, 2001 with the prime minister heading. The present government inducted four more members in the task force later.

However, the task force's resolution to "withdraw" restrictions from VoIP technology is grossly misleading. Because the government has neither restricted nor encouraged the usage of any transmission technology, let alone VoIP.

Applying this technology is purely a business decision of our telecom providers. Neither the government nor

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### New business... oncemore

I am going to start a business of import and marketing of products. I do not have any academic qualification in this field but do have some practical knowledge from a company I worked for. I am confident of my ability and my passion for this persuaded me to start but sometimes I become confused whether I am missing any area which demands more careful thought, analysis or closer look. Can you suggest what areas I should work on before I start? M. Mofazzal Hossain, Narayanganj

You have got the basics right - confidence and passion, sprinkled with experience. You don't need a formal business education to be successful in business. The basic questions you need to ask yourself as you begin your venture are the following:

Who is your customer segment? The product you want to sell has to satisfy a need of a particular segment of the population. Who are they? How many people buy Rolex or Casio watches? The answer is quite obvious - so first you need ask yourself, are you selling a Rolex or a Casio type of product?

Once you have clarity of the customer segment you want to sell to, the next question is how do you reach your product to this segment? You will need to fix your channel strategy to reach your product to your customers. How many layers do you need to reach your product to your customer? Will you do it alone? One distributor, several? If it is a mass consumption product for the mass, then you will need retailers. What kind of commissions do you have for offer? Will this interest the channel? Will you sell on cash or credit?

If you think you have a great product and people will come rushing in to buy, think again. In most cases, this is a wishful dream. How do you expect your customers to know about your product? How do you make your customers aware of your product? What kind of advertisement do you have in mind? Who will sell? Sales people? What about their salaries, incentives?

I am sure you have no intention of giving out your products for free! So what kind of margins do you want to make? What about your price? How about competitive products in the market? What is their price? Are you matching the price, or do you want to be a price leader?

As you can see, there are several questions you need to clarify before you jump into the business bandwagon. Even if you plan meticulously, you will need to 'burn your fingers' quite often before you get your cake right. But don't get discouraged. Only when you make mistakes you learn, and learn fast! This is the cost of getting the business on its feet!

Successful businesses have not been made overnight. You need to burn your midnight oil, knock door to door before the money starts to flow. People who have made a fast buck either gambled or used means you and I would not use. So be prepared for the initial frustrations, heart breaking events before you see the light of the day. And when you will see that light, it will bring you the satisfaction of creating something - an exhilarating moment of celebration. I look for your invitation to join that moment in your life!