Money matters on the phone

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

EVER imagined getting all your banking needs done at the touch of a button, an automated voice at your service 24/7? It's now a reality: a homebred software firm has developed solutions for phone banking. It has pulled out an interactive voice response or IVR system to support fast and round-the-clock customer service.

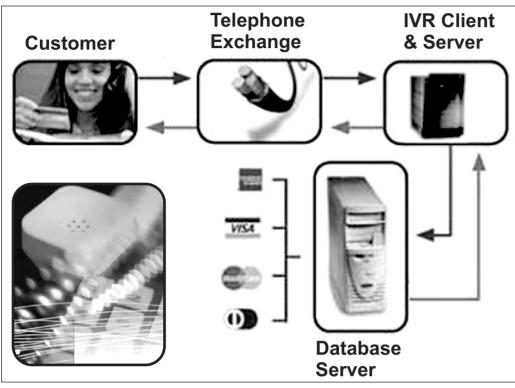Its officials claim the system is a great bargain in terms of price and quality.

Installation of the service enables easy access to a customer's personal banking details via a fully automated voice service.

"The interactive voice based system could be accessed by dialling a pre-designated telephone number and provide inputs from the telephone

information desk, it also enhances their customer support staffs' ability to manually provide information to clients, Mitul added.

"It could be used for customer care and even launching voice-based services for cell phone and fixed phone users."

The system can be an interactive one that prompts customers to key in

It's not the first in the line of tailor-made software Business Automation Limited (BAL) has thrown up; in fact, they are the pioneers in software development in Bangladesh.

keypad," BAL's Executive Director Zahidul Hasan Mitul told The Daily Star.

Besides serving the banks' or financial institutions' basic needs and acting as a general

specific numbers for specific queries and deliver support accordingly.

The fast growing software development company has also focused on developing and

promoting telecommunications solutions. One of its core products, CallRegister, has become somewhat popular among its users.

Over 200 organisations including local and multinational firms use the software for keeping record of telephone calls. Even companies can create logs of both incoming and outgoing calls made by its employees.

BAL is also contemplating developing exclusive telecommunications solutions including ones based on wireless technology.

The phone banking software is attractively priced and would help reduce outflow of foreign currencies. The software could even be customised according to client need.

Some local banks and financial institutions have already installed the software and some are in the process to sign contracts with BAL to have the software installed.

"It has been a very effective tool for customer care at financial and banking institutions," another official said.

Financial institutions are gradually showing interest in prompt customer care to remain competitive, he added.

Gala gathering to break digital divide

STAR TECH DESK

SIXTY-ONE heads of state and government are converging in Geneva from December 10 to 12 in the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

The aim is to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge.

More than 6,000 delegates from governmental and inter-governmental organisations, civil society, the private sector and media will also join them at the WSIS.

The World Summit on the Information Society is being held with the support of Kofi Annan, the UN secretary general, and is being organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN agency specializing on telecommunications.

The summit will endorse a Declaration of Principles for the information society and a plan of action to bring the benefits of information and communications technologies for social and economic development to people all over the world, said Abdul Moyeen Khan, minister for science and information and communication technology, on his return from Geneva after the recently concluded session of the PrepCom3.

The minister joined hectic discussions on the two documents related to declaration of principles and Programme of Action (PoA) to be adopted by the heads of states and heads of governments at the Geneva summit on WSIS.

Khan, however, said unlike Cancun, the environment in Geneva was that of a converging dialogue rather than diverging. The weeklong meeting made significant progress despite stiff differences between the North and the South.

Khan said the developed countries appeared extremely

03 05

world summit on the information society
Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005

reluctant on contribution to the "Solidarity Fund", and actually suggested that the phrase be re-designated as the "Solidarity Agenda."

The Third Resumed Session of the Preparatory Committee met in Geneva from November 10 to 14 to bring the countries closer to a Declaration and an Action Plan to be tabled for endorsement by heads of state and government

PrepCom worked on the premise that "nothing is agreed unless everything is agreed" so that some text could find resolution without prejudging the negotiations on other issues yet to be discussed.

It was also considered useful to agree on the main thrust of the Declaration to pave the way for a speedier adoption of the Action Plan where similar issues are also

this month. The draft Declaration of Principles articulates a common vision of the key values that should serve as the foundation for the emerging Information Society. The Draft Plan of Action sets out time-bound development targets aimed at extending access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) to all.

Progress on substance with agreement was reached on a number of issues leading to a better-balanced Declaration of Principles. The rate of progress accelerated considerably in the second part of the week but time was too little and the delegates widely divided on some outstanding issues.

Negotiations went into higher gear towards the middle of the week, which finally led to the adoption of nearly 90 percent of the text of the Action Plan and 75 percent of the Declaration. The outstanding paragraphs of the Action Plan are those linked to the issues in the Declaration that are still proving challenging.

However, the main objective of the summit has already been achieved, according to Yoshio Utsumi, the ITU secretary-general. "We have succeeded in raising awareness at the highest political level about the implications of the information society. Commitment has been expressed to tackle the injustice of the digital divide and develop new frameworks for cyberspace to ensure that the benefits of the information society are extended to all, not just to a privileged few."

found. To hammer out divergence of views on the Declaration, several working groups met along with bilateral and multilateral ad hoc groups. Each of these small groups focused on some particular issues of contention namely, security, internet governance, intellectual property rights (IPRs); the financing of an inclusive global information society, open-source software, freedom of expression and opinion and the role of media.

PHOTO: AFP

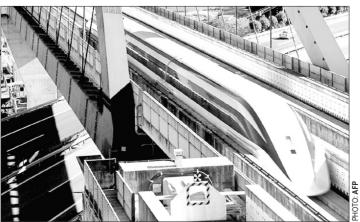Japan's H-2A rocket, carrying a second pair of spy satellites to monitor North Korea, takes off from the launch pad at Tanegashima Space Center, southwestern Japan, 29 November 2003. Japan destroyed the H-2A rocket while in flight about 10 minutes after in a bitter blow to its efforts to enhance space and security programmes

Financial suite helps treasury departments

STAR TECH DESK

AT the Association Of Financial Professionals Conference, Orlando on November 3, Oracle Corporation announced significant enhancements to Oracle Treasury, which will help companies achieve regulatory compliance, provide greater visibility throughout the entire business and reduce costs and increase efficiencies, says a press release. A part of Oracle Financials, a suite of integrated financial applications that gives companies complete visibility into their finances and control over all transactions, the latest version of Oracle Treasury was developed in conjunction with Oracle's Treasury customer advisory group. "We've been impressed with the depth of knowledge and experience that Oracle Treasury's development team has brought to the table," said Steve Wolgamott, international treasury manager, Diebold, Incorporated, a global leader in ATM and self-service delivery and security systems for financial, commercial and retail markets. "It is refreshing to work with a group that understands the issues that affect Treasury and is proactive in addressing them. Their customer advisory group is just one example of their focus on our needs." To help companies with issues such as regulatory compliance, the need for increased visibility into treasury activities and cost reductions, the latest version of Oracle Treasury includes the following enhancements:

Enhanced Regulatory Compliance

Oracle Treasury contains new

enhancements to assist companies with regulatory compliance, a part of Oracle's ongoing commitment to helping companies with this important issue. Additional validation levels for payment processing and more preconfigured business roles help enforce common separation of duties principles, both addressing Sarbanes-Oxley concerns of fraud prevention and risk control. The application also has expanded support of FAS 133

and IAS 39, two major accounting standards for treasurers. The latest release helps provide greater visibility into financial exposures treasurers hedge to reduce income fluctuations. It allows them to establish new types of hedges and track them through their life cycles. Additionally, new reports detail the use of all financial derivatives, an important disclosure requirement for these regulations.

Enhanced Straight-

Through Processing (STP)

The new version of Oracle Treasury expands the existing STP capabilities beyond foreign exchange and inter-company transactions to also include money market transactions. For example, companies that frequently purchase or issue debt using discounted securities such as CDs or commercial paper can have information about those transactions automatically fed into Oracle Treasury, rather than having to

manually enter it. Automating this process can save time, reduce the chance for costly errors or fraud, and help mitigate risk. Additionally, to help companies save time, cut costs and accelerate the monthly close cycle, Oracle Treasury can automate the entire set of back-office treasury processes from portfolio revaluation through passing journal entries to the general ledger, which previously were separately initiated processes.

Flexible, Real-time Cash Positions and Forecasts

Companies now have real-time access to operational cash flow information for improved cash positioning with Oracle Treasury. Instead of waiting for batch summaries, organizations can now manage cash by accessing real-time detailed information from both treasury and operational sources. Positioning and forecasting capabilities have also been enhanced to allow companies to view cash flows in multiple dimensions, enabling them to make better investment and borrowing decisions.

Oracle Treasury at AFP Conference

Oracle was present at the Association of Financial Professionals (AFP) 24th Annual Conference. On Nov. 3, Oracle Vice President and Assistant Treasurer Geri Westphal presented a session entitled "Centralization and Automation: A Winning Combination For Oracle's Corporate Treasury" that detailed Oracle's internal transition to a global treasury department. Additionally, Steve Wolgamott, international treasury manager, and Timothy McDannold, vice president and assistant treasurer at Diebold, Incorporated, gave a presentation entitled "Evolving into a Global Treasury Operation at Diebold" on Nov. 3. This session demonstrated the challenges Diebold faced, the choices it made and the benefits it achieved in its quest to become a global treasury operation, including its implementation of Oracle Treasury.

"No, I don't remember which button I pushed."

GLASBERGEN

Check the box beside the correct answer

1. Which is the best hard disk seek time?

☐ 20 ms   ☐ 15 ms
☐ 10 ms   ☐ 5 ms

2. What piece of hardware do EIDE cables connect to?

☐ Floppy disk   ☐ Sound card
☐ Hard disk   ☐ LAN card

Name: Occupation:
Address:
Contact Number: E-mail:

Last week's answers
1. 133Mhz   2. AGP
Winners: Rupak
Flat - FC5, 135/A, Elephant Road, Dhaka 1205

Please fill this up and send your answers to Star Tech Quiz, The Daily Star, 19 Karwan Bazaar, Dhaka 1215 by December 9, 2003.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan's super-fast Maglev train marks the new world speed record of 581 km/h on an experimental track in Tsuru city, Yamanashi prefecture, 100km west of Tokyo on December 2 during manned testing its operator said.

BASE offers Oracle University courses

Oracle Corporation, along with its education partner, BASE (Bangladesh Advanced Software Education) Limited is offering Oracle University's courses through its Workforce Development Program (WDP), says a press release. The Workforce Development Program (WDP) is a partnership between Oracle Corporation and BASE Limited to deliver low-cost IT training for students and adult learners within certificate and non-degree programs.

At BASE, WDP students are authorised to use curricula developed exclusively by Oracle University. Oracle's corporate training division. The curriculum will prepare the WDP students to obtain widely recognized Oracle certifications including the Oracle Certified Professional (OCP) and the new Oracle Certified Associate (OCA).

The training offered at BASE is on Oracle technology products: Oracle 9i Internet Application Development and Oracle 9i Database Administration.

Oracle has installed new regulations under the Oracle 9i certification process. From now on, it is mandatory to get training from an authorized WDP partner in Bangladesh in order to qualify for OCP 9i exams. EIn Bangladesh BASE Limited is the only Prometric Testing Center authorisedEto administer Oracle OCP exams.

Registrar Accreditation Program
Providing accreditation services for providers of ISO 9000 AND ISO 14000 Quality Management Systems Registrars.
URL: http://www.rabnet.com/

W. Edwards Deming Institute
Founded by W. Edwards Deming, regarded as the founder of the 'quality movement' in modern industrial life.
URL: http://www.deming.org/

World Standard Services Network
Network of providers of standards organisations around the world.
URL: http://www.wssn.net/WSSN/

Standards Resources on the Net
University of California, Santa Barbara Library web site specifically in the area of Quality Accreditation & Standards.
http://www.library.ucsb.edu/subj/standard.html

Human Resources Learning Center
Information on human resources & employee services, addressing issues such as benchmarking & best practices.
URL: http://www.iplabs.com/hr/

Best Practice Network
Australian National Training Authority - best practices in vocational education & training.
http://www.bestpractice.net.au/main.html

Best Practices in Health Care & Nursing
A non-profit body to provide mechanisms for sharing innovative solutions & best practices among nurses & other healthcare practitioners.
URL: http://www.best4health.org/

The Benchmarking Exchange
Site provides an information system for individuals & organisations in benchmarking & process improvement.
URL: http://www.benchnet.com/index.htm

Best Practice Database
Database containing information about social, economic & environmental problems, with an emphasis on developing practical solutions.
URL: http://www.bestpractices.org/

European Business Best Practice Network
Part of the European Business Best Practice Network - designed to introduce small to medium sized enterprises to the concepts of 'Business Best Practice'.
URL: http://www.brainstorm.co.uk/EBBPN/welcome.html