

The articles, or "posts" (to use Internet parlance) published in this page come from the Bangladesh Internet news group called "soc.culture.bangladesh," or SCB. In this newsgroup, Internet users from around the world, mostly Bangladeshis, discuss issues relevant to Bangladesh. In "Live from the Internet" the Daily Star reprints these posts verbatim (complete with English language errors) — just as they would appear on your computer screen. They have only been edited for size and relevance to the subject matter.



INTERNET/DATA-TELECOM NET AND BANGLADESH

Masum Z. Hasan
zmhasan@db.toronto.edu
Canada

This article is in response to the article "On The Information Superhighway, Bangladesh Requires Public Transportation" by Andrew Robinson posted earlier on SCB. I have already commented on the idea of "Live from the Internet" magazine coined by AR. But we have to also look at the other angles of this (Internet/data-telecom network and Bangladesh) issue. In this article I've chosen the technical side of it. Comments? [A revised version will be posted later, probably in the new year.]

Going International on the Internet: Internet is a vast information resource and medium of communication. It grew out organically from a data network dedicated to only academic/research community to a huge network serving people of all walks of life. Internet stretches to almost the every corner of the earth. Unfortunately, Bangladesh is not yet on the Internet map. Off-line email connections to Internet and other networks exist. But full connection what is required to place BD firmly on the Internet map.

Benefits are enormous, including:
a) Bangladesh will be able to enter into lucrative software business. India is reaping great benefit in this arena, one of the reasons, various Indian sites are fully connected to the Internet. You develop software, perform data entry there, then zap your results to your clients through Internet quickly.

A relevant note here: GOB should help BD SW industries to expand their businesses abroad. India is an example. India's diplomatic missions abroad are actively promoting their local SW industry to the world. [Personal experience: to my utter surprise, I was once approached by an Indian diplomatic personnel whose main task is to sell India's SW industry to the world, after a session in an academic-industry conference.]

We are in the process of launching an Internet based organization of expatriates Bangladeshis working/caring for Bangladesh. Helping out BD SW industries is one of our objectives.

b) Every conceivable business organization is on the Internet these days. Businesses in BD will be greatly benefited by advertising various business related information on the Internet. The latest killer application World Wide Web (WWW) is one such marvelous advertising media.

c) No doubt, organizations will be able to tap into the vast resources, both information and human, available on the net. One example, let's say you have installed a local network (such as, Novell) in your business premise. But it turned out you need something for which you don't quite have the local expertise. You may get quick solution by tapping in the net resources (both human and information): check out the web/gopher/ftp resources provided by international (Novell network) customer service branch, contact experts through email, check out newsgroups dedicated to the subject in question, where experts hang out, what not?

d) Bangladeshi expats who love their country, can serve their country without physically being there.

Local data/telecom Network: It is definitely advantageous to get a full Internet connection to the outside world. But Internet's potential can not be fully exploited if the local data/telecommunication infrastructure is not well-developed. Even if full Internet connection is not desired, the local data/telecom infrastructure should grow to a level, so that businesses and various other organizations reap the benefit

out of it.

Organizations may have their own local area networks (LAN), perhaps islands of LANs (located at different branches, in different cities). There should be facilities for LAN interconnectivity (Frame Relay, ISDN, T1, ..., or even 9.6K). MAN (metropolitan)/WAN (wide) connectivity providers, such as, BTB (or other providers) should be capable of providing such connectivities. The organizations may go international through a local Internet POP (point of presence), probably through a high speed connection from their sites, if international Internet connection is desired.

There seems to be a proposal for a BERNET (Bangladesh Education and Research net) fashioned under ERNET of India. But it is not taking off. Why? The Academic organizations probably need such a network more than anyone else. In every single developed and certain developing countries, Govt. organizations take initiative and provide funding for the installation of such networks. The GOB, BTB, Academic organizations, Internet Service Providers, and others, should put their acts together and work on building local network infrastructure, such as, BERNET. Local business networks can also grow at the same time.

The technology we are talking about, is a complex one. Understanding it is very important for the networking infrastructure to grow. By talking to experts in BD, especially some ISPs, I got the impression that they are quite conversant with the technology. BTB may also have experts on their roll. If necessary, the expertise may be supplemented with expatriate experts (some of whom may even volunteer, such as, ProBash members).

(BTB's) Telecom Network Infrastructure: The following information gleaned through different sources may not be 100% accurate. But it shows a trend. The concerned parties should put their acts together and move ahead for building, what Mr. Robinson terms as Bangladesh-Net.

BTB is modernizing its infrastructure. Digital switches (such as, Alcatel E10, capable of services, such as, ISDN, required by modern networking applications; capable of Intelligent Network Services, Telecom industry's jargon for 800 etc. services; can be upgraded to broadband services) are being installed all over the country.

Hopefully BTB will be able to provide high-throughput LAN, MAN, WAN interconnectivity. Various public/private organizations has or are installing LAN in their branches, probably scattered throughout the country. When BTB's (and other private providers) modern infrastructure becomes fully operational, organizations will be able to interconnect their sites. Various orgs. are in need of such interconnectivity. Very low bandwidth connections are being provided now. But the infrastructure that is being laid down, will enable BTB in providing high bandwidth connectivity as demand grows.

The Cellular Telephony market has been handed over to private businesses. Telecom infrastructure development in the rural areas has also been handed over to private businesses. Telecom services are reaching slowly into rural areas.

BTB has assigned Spread Spectrum radio frequency band in the range of 2GHz for point to point wireless communication between computers. Licensing is not required to operate RF equipments in the FCC (in USA) designated Spread Spectrum bands. Probably that is true in BD too.

BTB operates an X.25 based PSDN (public switched data network). This network is being extended with nodes at different divisional headquarters.

then we could publish them in print media both in Wengal and Bangladesh. So PLEASE RUSH YOUR NAMES AND SIGNATURES. SOME VERY SHORT NOTES ARE WELCOME TOO.....

the theme is simple WE SUPPORT ALL EFFORTS OF RAPPROCHMENT AND EFFORTS OF THE PEOPLE OF SUB-CONTINENT IN SOLVING MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST IN GENERAL AND MORE SPECIFICALLY THE WATER-DISTRIBUTION ISSUE BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH.

Let me request netters from any South-Asian countries and other interested netters to answer, please mention your native country as well.

New Year, Daily Star And Our Beloved Bangladesh

HAPPY NEW YEAR 1996
BEST WISHES TO YOU ALL MY BANGLADESHI BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

— Amrul Islam, Australia

Amrul Islam
Islam@topaz.cqu.edu.au
Australia:

HAPPY NEW YEAR 1996
BEST WISHES TO YOU ALL MY BANGLADESHI BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

Saiful Khondaker
sik20
University of Cambridge, UK:
Happy New Year to everybody.

I would like to congratulate the management of The Daily Star for their decision of publishing the items of soc.culture.bangladesh(SCB) in their paper. I am taking this opportunity to express my feeling about the present situation of Bangladesh. I believe the present political uncertainty is having negative impact towards the development of our country. This will encourage brain drain, discourage investment. When people are talking about information super highway, we are wasting our time in unproductive way. Obviously, we can't continue like that if we really want to be a proud nation. I very much hope that the politicians will realize what a great harm they are doing to the nation. I, as a citizen of Bangladesh, urge all the politicians and people to work together for a better future.

Mahbub Kabir
mk10005@hermes.cam.ac.uk
UK:

A happy new year to

Disclaimer

The Internet is a global medium of communication and expression. It is free from all sorts of censorship and restrictions. It is truly a PEOPLE'S FORUM. The opinions expressed in these columns are the author's own as they appear to all receivers of the Internet. We reproduce them authentically to permit our readers to know what Bangladeshis abroad are feeling and saying. The Daily Star is not responsible for the opinions expressed in these columns.

DEBATE ON DEMOCRACY AND BANGLADESH POLITICS

CA
kgazt@ix.netcom.com
USA:

In countries with similar symptoms as BD, recovery has been regained by new ***IRON-FISTED*** LEADERSHIP WHO WIPED OUT CORRUPTION AND SAVAGE GUERRILLAS (MASTANS), rebuilt the educational system from shambles.

Arguments against an "iron-fisted" leader will initially be:

- anti democratic
- dictatorship
- imperialism
- anti-shadhina!

However, nation after nation, that form of leadership has proven to be successful in a very short time - again e.g. Singapore and Peru.

Currently ours is a hotchpotch of the leftovers of the British Raj blended with post-independent India and post-independent Dhaka, and most predominant features are red-tape, inefficiency and backwardness.

Shahed Aziz
shahedaziz@mail.utexas.edu
USA:

The fact that it is a hotchpotch of leftovers does not establish a causal relationship between the current inefficiencies of the system and its percentage. It is possible that the present failings of the system are endemic, then again it is equally likely that the failings are due to us: our laziness, intellectual nihilism, lack of commitment, whatever. The predominant features you cite are those of any moribund system. They are symptoms, identification only tells us that we need change.

CA, USA: We need the change URGENTLY. We don't have the luxury to test various forms of Barbie Doll governments. Ours is a STATE OF EMERGENCY.

Martial Law itself may sound like an ALIEN POWER over-ruling the people, but we need the LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THAT EXISTS IN THE MILITARY. Lee Kwan Yew and Mahathir Mohammad of Singapore and Malaysia were both Generals from their own Military, (so was Ershad, but although his leadership qualities were ex-

ceptional, his corruption was a killer).

Shahed Aziz, USA: Unfortunately not true. Lee Kuan is a lawyer by training and a politician. Mahathir is also a politician.

CA, USA: Not sure if I agree with you here.

S. Bari, USA: The historical record is not there for your agreement.

S. Bari, USA: The US tends to believe its own press stories. The US combat officers I know generally don't share that view about Powell. They consider him a political general, mediocre to above-average, with almost no command experience. Of course, your comment belies the fact that your familiarity with the military (US and otherwise) is through the popular press, so you will have reason to disagree.

CA, USA: BD needs a STRONG LEGAL SYSTEM, to strengthen its law & order. THE existing secretariat Administration has to be demolished. We cannot continue to let a handful of Joint Secretaries distribute the wealth of the nation. A new order of STRONG leadership is needed, our resources are the MILITARY, from where we can GROOM leaders to come out and CREATE a strong law-abiding Government for the people, not necessarily with Martial Law, but with BLUEPRINT for a BRAND NEW SYSTEM.

Shahed Aziz, USA: Sheer nonsense. The strong legal system is there (although it may need some more help). How are you going to run a country of 110 million (and growing) without an administrative system? Your prescription about the secretariat has been tried in China -- the Cultural Revolution is almost universally considered a massive and bloody failure. There is no argument that it needs change -- but not summary destruction.

CA, USA: By "legal system" I implied the SYSTEM of crime, punishment, law & order to implement DISCIPLINE, to create deterrents so that people instinctively stop at Red Lights and pass at green, and so on.

CARETAKER GOVERNMENT

Abul anisuzzaman
anisuzzaman.1@postbox.acs.ohio-state.edu
Ohio, USA:

PLEASE SOMEONE POST WHICH 'DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES' HAVE PROVISIONS FOR CARETAKER GOVERNMENTS IN THEIR CONSTITUTIONS.

Bilayet Hossain
mbhossain@aardvark.ucs.uok.nor.edu
USA:

I am not sure whether they have a provision in their Constitution, but the present Benazir Govt. in Pakistan came to power through a General Election held under a Caretaker Government headed by a world-renowned Pakistani economist, Dr. Moeen Qureshi. The Caretaker Govt. existed for about six months--and conducted the election. It came into being after the Pakistan's President dissolved the elected Parliament & the Govt. headed by Nawaz Sharif in 1993- probably three years before its term expired.

The latest news from Pakistan: the main opposition party (Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League) is demanding another mid-term election under a neutral "Caretaker" Government.

Khondakar M Mostafa
kmmst26@pitt.edu
USA:

I think what you mean is that give Hasina a chance at government irrespective of the wishes of the people. Now the question is what does the people want and not what some stupid politician want. It should be "as does the people so does the politician and not as does the politician so does the people". What hasina, or Jammal or JP wants is not as important as what the people want.

In '91 the people wanted BNP so BNP came to power. Lets see what they want in '96 and the hell with what Hasina wants.

INCESSANT HARTALS AND CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY

Akhtar Hossain
hossain@uwk.com
USA:

It's time the common people of Bangladesh rise and put an end to this Hartal-Evil that has plagued Bangladesh. We have had enough of this destructive hartals.

Look at the success storm now raging in the Southeast-Asian Countries - where does Bangladesh stand today. I am told business delegations arrive at the Dhaka airport and return from the airport because of hartals. All our industries are suffering with special emphasis the garment industry.

WILL HASINA PAY for the loss of millions of dollars to Bangladesh. Is she going to feed the hunger. Anyone calling for hartal must take the full responsibility for the deaths, destruction and the

crop of opposition politicians feel that they are more likely to come to power through hartals than through ballots; change in this strategy can occur only if politicians are made to realize that they can pay a big political price for this strategy. As of now, they appear to believe that short-term damage to the national economy is worth the long term 'good of the country', as they define it.

In a functioning democracy, leaders such as ours would have their leadership challenged if they pursued a strategy that is deemed harmful to national interests by the majority of people. In the Bangladesh context, with the narrow hardcore constituency of each leader limited mostly to student groups, who generally do not have much to lose (dismal job

NO MORE HARTAL...NO MORE DESTRUCTION
Lets all concentrate to remove this hartal-evil from our country.

— Akhtar Hossain, USA

human miseries and must be persecuted according to the law.

NO MORE HARTAL...NO MORE DESTRUCTION.

I think we have had enough of Hartals for this year and the next 5-years. Lets all concentrate to remove this hartal-evil from our country.

Suapan Ghosh
ghosh@minerva.ias.hiroshima-u.ac.jp
Japan:

Well, I have convinced myself that Hartal was legal and absolutely necessary during Ershad era. Because, Ershad broke Oath on Holy Quran and so on.....

But I can't convince myself, how Gen. Ziaur Rahman did the same thing without breaking Oath on Holy Quran. And I didn't understand whether Hartal was legal or illegal at that time when Ziaur Rahman was in power.

Saleh Tanveer
tanveer@math.ohio-state.edu
Ohio, USA:

With incessant hartals plaguing Bangladesh and no imminent settlement to the political deadlock in sight, Bangladesh's experiment with democracy appears to be on the line. The present

prospects) and perhaps something to gain (postponement of exams) from these hartals, the leaders perceive no such challenges. With the rest of the citizenry covered down by the struggles of everyday life, hopelessness of individual stands against institutionalized hooliganism and intimidation, business leaders and newspapers unable to exert enough political pressure (perhaps due to the need for political patronage for their own survival), we are left to the dictates and whims of our current self-serving political leaders or the wishes of our top men in uniform to intervene.

If people were to continue to believe that democracy is the only viable option in the long run, perhaps the sufficiently disgusted silent majority of people from all walks of life would shed their fear and show unusual courage in the face of intimidation and demand more from the political leadership. Perhaps, something equivalent in the Bangladesh context-- the active involvement of the ordinary citizens in making themselves heard will get us out of the current deadlock and contribute to the making of a functioning democracy.

S. Bari, USA: I know what you meant. That was what the Koreans, amongst others, were looking for when Park came along. That system has been showing serious fault lines of late.

A better idea for this discussion might be the following:

1. Reach a general consensus agreement about what the major problems are in order of importance. It might be a good idea to refrain from political slogans like "shoot hartal callers", that is not particularly helpful.

2. Try to define what the acceptable solutions could be to those problems. Once again, it might be better to look at this in terms of problems and solutions, not slogans and politics.

3. Determine how much we are willing to pay for it. For example, if we're going to get the Army in, find out what it costs, to whom, and whether the Army is actually competent enough to deliver.

4. Reach a general consensus about the next steps.

All of the above requires a basic commonality in the level of knowledge of all the participants. Judging from your comments about Lee Kuan, Mahathir, and Powell, I'm afraid our (yours and mine) are not very compatible. That would not be considered an auspicious beginning for a discussion, far less a "beautiful friendship".



Book Drive

Farzana S. Islam
jsil@Ra.MsState.Edu
USA:

ProBash, the newly formed Bangladeshi expatriate society, is organizing a world-wide book drive. Our objective is to collect old and new books to forward to educational institutions in Bangladesh. We hope to benefit various departments in campuses across the country.

We are in the process of ascertaining any specific demands of BD universities that we can try to meet. Books should be in reasonably good condition to survive the journey intact and to assure us of decent utility once in BD. ProBash may be able to enlist the embassy (diplomatic pouch) or Biman for shipment.

This drive has the potential to really aid higher education in Bangladesh (lower too, if we find such books). Please take this opportunity to involve your communities in an honourable cause.



The newsgroup, soc. mculture.bangladesh, has been provided courtesy of Agni BBS

Please send or fax your Internet posts to: M.Shamimuzzaman, Page in charge, "Live from the Internet", Daily Star, House 11, Road 3, Dharmadati R/A, Dhaka-1205. Fax: 863035.

Letters should be no more than 100 words in length and titled. Anonymous letters will also be accepted.

INDO-BANGLADESH CITIZENS' FARRAKA MARCH

Naem Mohalemen
naem@ix.netcom.com
USA:

Posted on behalf of Andrew Robinson/Ford Foundation/Dhaka: Some leading citizens of Bangladesh and India think that the two countries should enter into a permanent agreement on Ganges water sharing, allowing Dhaka its rightful share of the common river, reports UNB.

How about we initiating a support campaign in the internet??? An indo-bangladesh citizens' march against farakka in March 96.

Masum Z. Hasan
zmhasan@db.toronto.edu
Canada:

Yes, we could show our support for the march by launching a campaign through SCI and two SCB's.

Sayan Bhattacharyya
bhattach@krusty.eecs.umich.edu
USA:

I second this. To coordinate the internet campaign I would certainly like to be a signatory to a statement if

How about we initiating a support campaign in the internet???

— Naem Mohalemen, USA

one is formulated. Maybe something along the lines of what Naem graciously did during the imprisonment of Farhad Mazhar, is called for here.

Soumitra Bose
soumitra@ix.netcom.com
USA:

Please sign your names as