

The INTERNET: What's in it for Bangladesh?

by A K Sayeedul Huq

Bangladesh on the Global Information Super Highway

During the past few years a tremendous development has been taking place in the information and communication technology.

While such a technological revolution has been taking place globally, Bangladesh remained virtually aloof from the main stream.

1996, the Bangladesh T & T Board sanctioned five VSATs (Very Small Aperture Terminal) - one of which is installed in the office of Information Services Network Ltd (ISN).

Access to Internet through VSAT

The best way of accessing the Internet is via a direct data connection between the Local Network and an on-line Internet node.

The potential user by being a subscriber to ISN's on-line services or to those of other service providers can now take full advantage of the recent development in the communication technology.

time. If the number of users are fewer at a time the data transmission is even faster than this. And this is ON-LINE, i.e., open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Various Internet Services Currently Available in Bangladesh

All the Internet services available in Bangladesh are provided by ISN.

E-mail: Send and receive electronic mail to and from another e-mail user in the world inexpensively and speedily on real-time basis.

Tele Discussion: Participate in discussion groups and join a real-time conversation with hundreds of people all over the world on a topic of mutual interest.

File Transfer (ftp): Copy and transfer files (data, programs, graphics) from one computer to another.

Searching Materials: One Internet user can gain access to worldwide computing resources. The search is not only accessible to thousands of computers for files and data but also to hundreds of Bulletin Board Services meant for various purposes.

Telnet: An Internet user can convert one's computer into a terminal of a remote computer.

World Wide Web (WWW): It is the hottest new way for various types of business to communicate with the existing and potential customers.

Web sites can serve a lot of purposes - depending on one's business needs. For example, a garment exporter who previously went through buying houses to showcase his products to the international market.

Web documents: One can search one of the largest

databases, more than 11.5 million pages. Reviews: One can search over 50,000 web site reviews. Usenet: It is a specialised news service provided by no one else in Bangladesh except ISN.

Advances in Information Technology will enable people all over the world to come closer together, faster and more conveniently. One can undoubtedly predict a rapid growth in e-mail, vicarious travel, International Internet clubs, Internet-based expositions and conventions and lots of people to people uses.

Problems of the Development of the Internet Services in Bangladesh

I have already said that the best way of accessing the Internet is via direct data connection between the Bangladeshi network and an on-line Internet mode. As Bangladesh is not on the backbone connecting the Internet, a local service provider is forced to go through another overseas Internet service provider.

1. Bangladesh T & T Board has given the contract to Pak Datacom to set up VSAT in the premises of the Bangladeshi Internet service providers. In our case, Pak Datacom has the responsibility to make the payment to the Hong Kong Telecom for the half circuit facility provided by Hong Kong Telecom.

2. ISN has chosen Hong Kong on the consideration that it is the hub of technological innovation in the telecommunication field in the Asia Pacific region. Additionally, the services provided by the Hong Kong SuperNet are quite flexible and very satisfactory as much as one could expect from a fastest growing free-market operator.

In view of the above, one can easily visualise the risk involved in providing on-line Internet services by the local service providers. Given the opportunity the local service providers could have organised their own VSATs including the payment to the overseas half-circuit provider.

as far as the service conditions with respect to free flow of information is concerned but the situation remains uncertain as to what will happen in the near future when Hong Kong goes under Chinese control.

Similarly, the Singapore Government has recently started introducing considerable control on the free flow of information and data on the Internet. This control system might be good or bad, but we believe that the Internet is a global medium of communication and expression without any restriction.

The purpose of the two examples given above is to demonstrate the advantages that Bangladesh can have by being on the backbone directly connecting the Internet.

Prospect of the Internet in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has just entered the global super highway. The number of users of the Internet services is still very low. Altogether the total number of Internet users will not at present exceed 3000.

1) Low rate of computer literacy: Because of the lack of computer education and knowledge, the number of people in the age group, say, 35 years and above with computer literacy is very low.

2) High cost: If one is to worry about the cost of browsing time on the Internet, needless to say, many will be hesitant to use the Internet extensively for education, research or even for fun.

could get on to the Internet directly.

Suggestions for a Healthy Growth of the Market

In view of what has been discussed above, I would like to venture some suggestions for a healthy growth of the Market for the Internet services in Bangladesh. These are briefly mentioned below:

1) Association of the Service Providers: It is suggested that the Internet service providers in Bangladesh should form an association so that:

- they can exchange ideas for solving common problems, a common development program can be formulated, they can represent the service providers' interest to various controlling authorities, they can adopt a program to provide free or subsidised training to the potential users.

2) The Government is urged to progressively move towards privatisation. Instead of remaining in the controller's seat, the Government should play the role of a facilitator.

3) For the reduction of the cost of Internet services,

- The Government should reduce the rent for VSAT, The Internet services must be kept out of VAT net, The service providers should be allowed tax holiday like that in other growth-industry.

4) Connected with the Internet services the software development must also take place for the sake of a systematic growth of the entire sector. In this respect, the following issues are relevant:

Copy Right Laws

In the early 1990s the Export Promotion Bureau, an organisation under the Ministry of Commerce, started various activities with a view to exploring the export possibilities of computer software and data entry services. One of the major problems identified in this respect was the lack of quick and efficient data transmission facilities.

Incentives for Investment in Software Development: In addition to the above, an incentive scheme is to be introduced by the Government so that potential investors become interested to come forward in the field of software development.

It is well known that the gestation period in the field of software development is quite long between the time of investment and the time when one can expect to receive some results. Traditionally, there is a lack of a strong domestic market and the potential to explore development of software is not obvious to the Bangladeshi investors because of the information gap about the overseas market.

Accordingly, it is essential that the Government offers various attractive incentives to the potential investors to undertake software development activities. The incentives that can be considered are:

- Suitable credit schemes for the potential investors, Organising seminars and dissemination of information about the export market, Tax holiday for the companies investing in the development of computer softwares, Encouraging joint ventures among overseas software companies and the potential Bangladeshi investors, Complete abolition of duty and taxes on the imported

computers and related materials.

Concluding Observations

The Internet has just come to Bangladesh. Various Internet service providers do not have long experience in the field. The technology is quite new in Bangladesh. There is a great shortage of technical people to provide services efficiently.

Very often their lack of knowledge in operating the system is the cause of the problem. ISN currently offers free orientation classes every Saturday; very soon ISN will start offering free courses on the Internet operation with support from hardware vendors.

Finally, we appeal to our Government to make every effort so that Bangladesh could be on the backbone directly connecting the Internet. This will be tremendously beneficial for this service industry.

1. Presented to the 'Internet Week Seminar' organised by the North South University during September 18-24.

2. The author is the Managing Director of Information Services Network Ltd (ISN) and President of House of Consultants Ltd (HCL), Dhaka.

Connections in high places

- New communications networks will use Low Earth Orbit Satellites (LEOS), stationed 500 to 1,500kms above the Earth, Major projects involving large numbers of LEOS, TELEDESIC (Microsoft, Craig McCaw) 340, IRIDIUM (Motorola) 66, GLOBALSTAR (US-European consortium) 56, GONETS (Russian-led consortium) 36, INMARSAT-P (multinational consortium) 12, ODYSSEY (TRW, US) 12



In the month of February,

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Monday 30th September (All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programmes).

BTV

3:00 Opening Announcement Al-Quran Programme Summary 3:10 Recitation From the Bible 3:15 Cartoon Film: Macron 3:45 Drama Series: Reticelcast of Selected Dramas 4:00 News in Bangla 4:45 Tai-O-Chanda 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Nazrul Songs 5:30 Sports Programme 6:30 News in Bangla 6:30 Shikanggan 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Unish Bish 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shasthatatha 10:35 Sukher Thikana: Family Planning Programme 10:55 Comedy Series: Coach 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tuesday's Programme 11:40 Close down

BBC

6:00 BBC Newsroom inc. World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 The Money Programme 10:00 BBC Newsday 1:00 pm BBC World News 1:15 The Money Programme 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Fat Man in France 4:00 BBC Newsday 6:00 BBC News Headlines 6:05 Correspondent 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC Newshour Asia & Pacific 8:30 Time Out: One Foot in The Past 9:00 BBC World News 9:15 The Money Programme 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 11:00 The World Today 11:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 The Money Programme 1:50 Building Sights 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: The Travel Show 3:00 BBC World Report inc. World Business Report/24 Hours 5:00 BBC World News 5:10 Newswright



Kurukshetra on Zee TV today at 3.00 pm

CHANNEL V

6:00 Frame by Frame 7:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 8:00 Jump Start VJ Trey 9:00 Frame by Frame 11:00 The Vibe VJ Luke 12:00 Rewind VJ Sophia 1:00 By Demand VJ Trey 2:00 Frame by Frame 2:30 First Day First Show 3:00 Sansur Mangla Hai 4:00 Planet Ruby 4:30 By Demand VJ Trey 5:30 Rewind VJ Sophia 7:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 8:00 Planet Ruby 8:33 The Vibe 9:00 BPL Oye! 10:00 First Day First Show 10:33 Launch Pad VJ Sophia 11:33 The Ride VJ Trey 12:00mm Over The Edge VJ Sophia 12:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 1:00 Haysah 2:00 By Demand VJ Trey 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 Asian Top 20 VJ Trey

STAR PLUS

6:30 Volttron 7:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 7:30 G. I. Joe 8:00 Saber Rider And The Star Sherif 8:30 Adventures Of Black Stallio 9:00 Aerobics Oz Style 9:30 Charles in Charge 10:00 Mr Belvedere 10:30 Cooking Secrets of the CIA 11:00 Videofashion News: Retro-Active 11:30 The Flying Doctors 12:30 Santa Barbara 1:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 2:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 3:00 Remington Steele 4:00 Cooking Secrets of the CIA 4:30 Videofashion News:

STAR MOVIES

7:30 Classic: All About Eve G (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Comedy: Heavenly Pursuits 15 (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Adventure: The Trial 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Action: Killer Instinct 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Comedy: Sunset Limousine 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Western: Borderline 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Film Fiction: Treasure Island 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 Deccan Dream 9:30 This Week That 10:00 Comedy: The Book Of Love 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30 World Cinema: A Cause D'Elle (English Subtitles) 1:30 Alfer Dark: Thrust 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 3:30 Comedy: Foreign Body 18 5:30 Action: The Long Good Friday 18 (Arabic Subtitles)

ZEE TV

5:30 Surtal 6:00 The News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED 8:30 Dream Merchants 9:00 Hum Zameen 9:30 Gaane Anjaane 10:00 Sallaab 10:30 Positive Health Show 11:00 Apna Ghar/Dak Ghar 11:30 Gopaljee 12:00 Suno Suno Tring Tring 12:30 Celeste 1:00 ZED 1:30 Asian Sky Show 2:30 Tara 3:00 Kurukshetra 3:30 Mere Ghar Ana Zindagi 4:00 Mano Ya Na Mano 4:30 Lijjat Khana Khasa 5:00 ZED 5:30 Akbar Birbal 6:00 Cartoons 6:30 Love Story 7:00 ZED 7:30 Tol Mol Ke Bol 8:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma Pa 9:30 Campus 10:00 Daraar 10:30 The News 11:00 Shehar Aur Sapna 11:30 Close Up: Anaktashan 12:00 Parivartan 12:30 Andaz 1:00 9 Malabar Hill 1:30 Tumhare Lye 2:00 Arabic Programme 4:00 Index 4:30 All Out 5:00 Jagran

PTV

6:00 am Tilawat Aur Tarjuma/Hamd/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabraan 8:45 Abb Pata Chale 9:05 Khat Farmaish 9:20 Sargam Sargam 9:45 Itaq-Bil-

SPORTS INDIA

4:00 Sports India 5:00 1996 Omega Tour Highlights

SONY ET

8:30am Yasoon Ki Baaral 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Surf Wheel Of Fortune (Game Show) 11:00 Cover Story-Hostel (Serial) 12:00 Mere Message Meri Geet 1:30 Baat Ek Raz Ki (Serial) 2:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film 4:30 The Reso Show 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Mere Message Meri Geet 6:30 Dennis The Menace 7:00 Premier 7:30 I Dream Of Jeannie 8:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 8:30 Taak Jhaank 9:00 Jevan Mirtu (Serial) 9:30 Yeh Sadi Nahi Ho Sakti 10:00 Chamakkar (Drama Serial) 10:30 Ghave 11:00 The Young And The Restless 12:30 O Maria (Serial) 1:30 Pehli Mulaakat 1:30 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 2:00 Premier 2:30 Closed

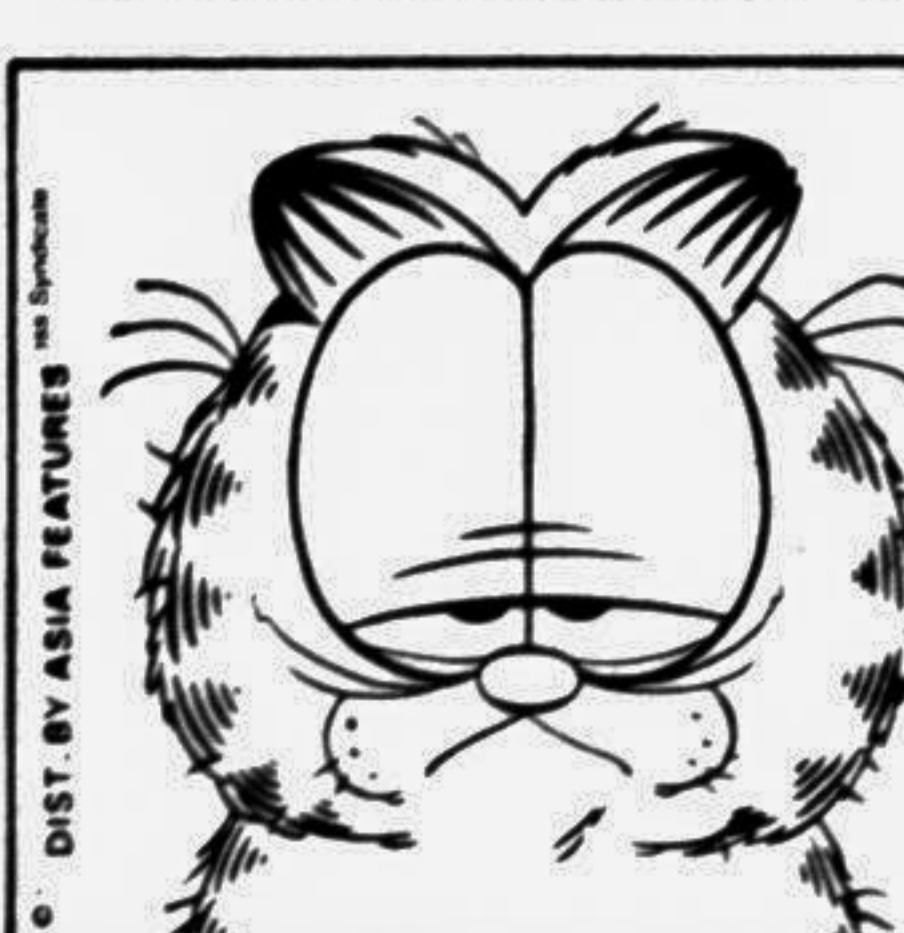
DD 7

10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Educ Prog 11:00 Nazrulgeeti 11:15 Folk Songs 12:30 Ek Sitai Onk Gan 1:00 Janani 1:30 Monokaram Cabin 2:30 Ek Diner Sultan 3:00 Gaan Niye/Darpan 3:30 Irsha 5:05 Nepali Programme 5:30 News 5:35 Desh Bidesher Khatie 6:00 Patti Khatie 6:30 Batayan 6:55 Arati 7:30

EL TV

12:30am Shammi Kapoor Special

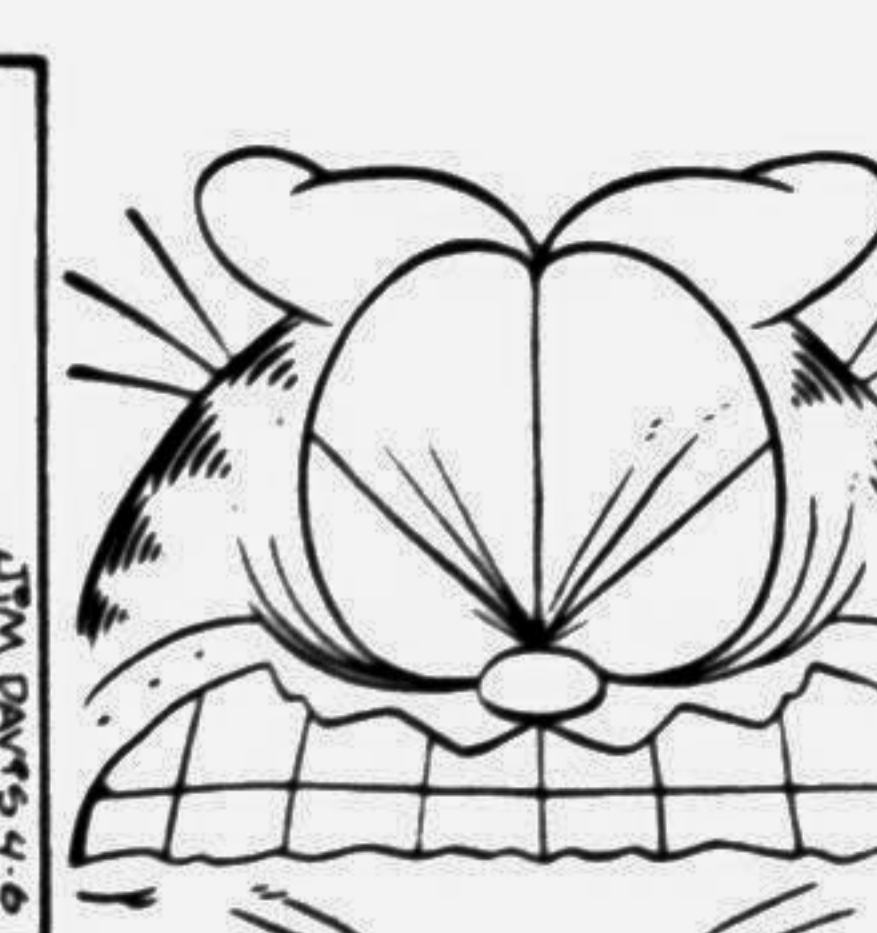
Garfield



Tom and Jerry



Garfield



by Jim Davis



Tom and Jerry



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