

THE NET

An Opportunity Bangladesh Can't Miss

by Rizwan Bin Farouq

Internet is what will give Bangladesh a level playing field to compete with the rest of the world and give us a chance to get ahead. In the next century, businesses will be done at the speed of thought by using the digital nervous system, and Internet will create immense value for our nation if we choose to use it correctly.

THE three-day showcase of India Internet World '99 was an amazing experience. This was the second exhibition of its kind in India. About 100 companies exhibited Internet-based products and services followed by a 5 track conferences, panel discussions and question-and-answer sessions on all the issues relating to the Net economy.

The speakers in the conference were all top-notch IT professionals and entrepreneurs from the Bay area in the US. Most of them were young successful Indians sharing their experiences and with the intention of transferring their knowledge and ideas back to India. It is a remarkable fact that 35 per cent of startup companies in the Bay area have Indian origins.

After three days of conference, I asked myself: "Where does Bangladesh fit in this global digital economy?" Are we going to miss this golden opportunity? Can we do anything to leverage the Net and make a quantum change in our destination? If we do things at Internet speed then we may have a chance; otherwise it may be just too late.

Internet as a global change factor has significance, far greater than that of its predecessors — the printing press, the television or telephone. This is largely due to the growth of the Internet as an interactive medium, which has surpassed any other communication vehicle in the history of mankind.

The Radio took 25 years and the TV 15 to reach as many people as Internet has done in just 5 years. Finding wide acceptance from business as well as individual, the Internet today is more important than invention of money if you can use it properly.

There are number of a reasons for this. The first is its speed (in Bangladesh WWW is more of a World Wide Wait). The importance of real time communication and transaction mode e-commerce value is set to reach \$1 trillion by the end of year 2000. As local choice are transformed into global options, and as consumer realise that their options are now virtually unlimited, the need for speed will only increase at an incremented rate. In today's context, the acceptable time to get connected is 3 seconds and transaction-processing time is 8 seconds. With the arrival of the Net economy, the power of transaction is no longer in the hands of the vendors. With increasing competition, the choice is now almost in the hands of the consumer. In any economy, this shift of power is always a sign of progress — a move to a free competition market where the vendor with the best offer wins and geographical barriers are barriers no more. The Internet has a life changing effect on the global economy due to its scope and scale. It is the only medium

that offers a global visual equivalent of a world-wide market where vendors from all over the globe with a variety of wares set up stalls and solicit customer from every nation.

On a site like <priceline.com>, a customer can log on and command the price he wants to pay for an airline ticket. On a site like <amazon.com> a consumer in Brazil can buy a book from Milan. He can also check if there are any other site selling the same book at a cheaper price than what he is paying for. A site like <altavista.com> can search this mammoth worldwide directory of virtual locations, i.e., libraries, shopping arcades, malls, etc., to find what one needs in a matter of seconds. From the vendor perspective, a small beer seller in northern Bengal can go on the Net and peddle his wares to world. An artist or a designer in Bangladesh can sell his work in a virtual boutique without ever needing the expensive physical presence he would otherwise need in order to address such a global audience.

Anything is possible on the Net — the medium offers an immense opportunity for any one from anywhere, wishing to do anything. The gestation period for a business on the Net is a tenth of that in the physical world.

Given the fact that it took Yahoo five years to reach the same market capitalisation as General Motors did in a hun-

dred year, this advantage Bangladesh should not ignore. The potential for Bangladesh to launch itself through this medium becomes self-evident.

The skills are there and the ambition and capability are already in our hands. Now we need to break down the barriers in Internet speed. The important thing to note is that e-commerce is not about technology but about knowledge and management. Strengthening our basic communication infrastructure and improving access to information is one key step towards this goal.

Internet is what will give Bangladesh a level playing field to compete with the rest of the world and give us a chance to get ahead. Bangladesh needs to implement the following immediately:

a. Telecom infrastructure that will support our needs without any monopoly.
b. Cyber Law that will protect the vendor and consumer.
c. Banking systems that will support the Net economy.

In the next century, business will be done at the speed of thought by using the digital nervous system, and Internet will create immense value for our nation if we choose to use it correctly. But before that we must have a cost-effective access to the Internet, which can put us online in 3 seconds.

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Behind the Sleazy World of Ershad Shikdar

by Md. Asadullah Khan

THE arrest of the so called notorious killer, rapist, money and land grabber Ershad Shikdar of Khulna has caused near-hysteria among some politicians, police personnel and bureaucrats known to be his beneficiaries. The past one month has indeed been unprecedented, with every day bringing fresh revelations of Ershad Shikdar's underworld criminal activities and most heinous atrocities to public view. Not an unusual and unfamiliar case in this country, this notorious criminal has nettled the police administration in Khulna for more than two decades. Most disquieting, as the Home Minister has taken a resolve to arrest all such cronies, accomplices and abettors of Ershad's crime, the police administration in Khulna has chosen to drag its feet. Most shocking, the letter sent by Khulna DIG on 30.9.99 to the Police Commissioner expressing his inability to send police officers for interrogating Ershad Shikdar and his armed cadres arrested so far has again given a jolt to the nation's mind. What has shocked people even more was the conduct of the "uniformed" people in protecting the terrorists and tainted people.

But fact reveals none of the 20 police officers included in Shikdar's interrogation team had shown any reluctance or given any written objection to their inclusion in the team. With Khulna DIG's refusal to conduct interrogation of the hardened criminal Ershad Shikdar and his armed cadres, the image of the police in the country has again shown a beating. Now that it has become crystal clear that with such tainted personnel as the present Khulna DIG who was once ousted from police service allegedly for his misdeeds and has now been restored in the service with full facilities and seniority by court order, the police administration in the country has repeatedly failed in its salutary duty to apprehend criminals and detect crimes by either those in power or outside it and bring the guilty to book.

In the backdrop of such ominous developments, people are looking to courts to intervene if justice is to be done. Killing, arson, looting and plundering of wealth by a handful of terrorists have continued long since with direct and indirect blessings, patronage and protection of some politicians and public figures. And sure enough all such terrorists, and killers like Ershad Shikdar have evaded punishment because all these years right from 1979 they were protected by their political mentors belonging to all the parties in power till 1996.

While the present Home Minister's stand and stance appear clear and assuring to the peace loving citizens, they now increasingly feel that unless the guilty are tried and convicted — and not just tried and then let off at great expense and torment of the suffering community — such scammers are likely to flourish with ever increasing strength. At the same time, the country's highest court may take a singular stance of sum-

moning those named in the Ershad Shikdar's underworld criminal activities and place them on the dock for answering charges of harbouring notorious criminals like Ershad Shikdar and his likes in the country.

If evidence and indications are anything to go by, some criminals, politicians and bureaucrats in this country have always been good friends. Each has a use for the other, a nexus that has been traditionally lucrative. More so, when once in a while a criminal hits the front pages of print media and as his life unravels, politicians and officials patronizing him and enjoying the loaves and fishes run for cover. In the present Ershad Shikdar case, which possibly is the most sensational criminal in the country, so far an entire spectrum of politicians, police and civil administration personnel are alleged to have protected and patronised the most dangerous "Mafia-don" for such a long time. The media has so far given the most illuminating coverage in exposing the crime and rape and far above these, the 60-some

including the jail and police administration. Precisely true, other than the enormous media publicity surrounding his case, he would have ruled supreme for years to come. He has so far been implicated in 13 known murder cases other than the cases involving extortion, cheating, kidnapping, possessing illegal arms, smuggling and drug dealing. To prevent him from securing bail, tampering with evidence and threatening witnesses, the Home Minister has requested the practising advocates to have second thought about taking up his case in the court even in the face of tempting offers. Loyalists of Shikdar and some beneficiaries of the "Mafia-don" in a bid to subvert public attention have been crying hoarse with the plea that the country has other momentous problems to be attended to by the government at this moment rather than too much follow-up of Shikdar's case. But as the revelations of his seamy career of building numerous market places, property, dealings worth crores of taka in Khulna city through illegal possession of railway

owner of the only Ice Factory in the entire ghat area. In the face of fierce opposition from a section of Awami Leaguers in the Khulna city, he manoeuvred his entry into AL in December 1997. But in the face of severe criticism from the AL circle, he was expelled from the party in February 1998. How could "the then ruling party", civil administration and specially KDA evade responsibility when its lands were grabbed by a horrendous criminal? These people should have no pleas and excuses to hide their connections as well as faces.

Shikdar's initiation into such filthy trades taught him the virtues of connections. Equally important, however, were his political connection. Quite at the beginning of his dirty life, Shikdar discovered that politics provided both a cover and protection. And so he flirted with Ershad's JP in its heyday, then joined BNP at the most opportune moment and then AL for a brief spell of time to suit his convenience. But shocking for him, his dirty and sleazy underworld got exposed during his short spell of stay in AL. Now the bare fact that boils down to, is that an intriguing facet of Shikdar's operations was the tacit connivance of the 'authorities'. The victims could complain to the police but Shikdar strutted around in the firm belief that nothing would come of them. And really, he remained unharmed and his 'operations' continued unhindered.

The subversion went to the extreme and seemed hard to digest. The political system in the country is undoubtedly distorted but there are limits to transgression of law. Ershad Shikdar's approach was very brazen and for him during all these years the law did not exist.

The plush houses he owned with provisional of supply of good food and liquors and gracious hospitality for guests helped enhance and build up his connections. As reports now circulate, he understood a person's weakness and vulnerability especially the importance of women in cementing connections. Sources close to Ershad Shikdar claim he had an insatiable sexual appetite. But he was not squeamish about allowing his beneficiaries and friends a share of the spoils.

Surely, there are larger issues involved in Ershad Shikdar's meteoric rise and unhindered operations. He happens to be among the disreputable figures who served the politico-bureaucratic underbelly of the country. In the ultimate analysis, people believe he was not the only one, and only a full and honest enquiry can tell us what made his sleazy world develop to such a shiny empire.

land, KDA land, drug trade and smuggling started trickling out, some of them have abandoned the light and gone for cover. Although confined in the solitary condemned cell in the Jessore Jail, protected by armed guards to prevent him from establishing connections with the outside world, astonishingly he has no dearth of friends and well-wishers even in the doctors in the jail. Some doctors in the jail there are reportedly issuing fake "sick certificate" in his favour to prevent him from being transferred to police remand for interrogation. Notables who had obliged Shikdar so long and had pretty comfortable connection with him till before his arrest now disclaimed any knowledge of him. As already mentioned having no educational background, but the restless and fiercely ambitious Ershad always knew the importance of two things: god-fathers and connections. This connection paid him off enormously. He was elected a Commissioner of Khulna City Corporation in the voteless election in 1988 and never attended any meeting but that also did not disqualify him from retaining his job as Commissioner of KCC.

As it appears, all the higher echelons in the previous governments till 1996 must have protected and abetted his criminal activities. After deserting JP since the fall of Ershad, he joined BNP in 1991 and drove away one Rafiq and became the

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আপনি জানেন কি

আপাতদৃষ্টিতে হোন্ডার মূল্য বেশী মনে হলেও প্রকৃতপক্ষে হোন্ডার মূল্য সবচেয়ে কম।

জ্বালানী, খুচরা যন্ত্রাংশ, মেরামত-রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ খরচ ও দীর্ঘস্থায়ীত্ব, রি-সেল ভ্যালু ইত্যাদি হিসাবে আনলে হোন্ডার মূল্যই নিঃসন্দেহে কম বলে প্রমাণিত হবে।

জাপানী হোন্ডার সমতুল্য মনে করে হোন্ডার নামে

অন্য মটর সাইকেল ক্রয় করে প্রতারিত হবেন না।



হোন্ডা সি - ৫০

অরিজিন : জাপান



হোন্ডা সিডি - ৮০

অরিজিন : জাপান



হোন্ডা সিডি - ১২৫

অরিজিন : জাপান



হোন্ডা এক্সএল - ১৬৫

অরিজিন : জাপান

আরামপ্রদ, নিরাপদ ও স্বচ্ছন্দে চলা প্রতিশ্রুতি হোন্ডা

৪-স্ট্রোক ইঞ্জিন বিশিষ্ট হোন্ডা মটর সাইকেল ব্যবহার করে পরিবেশ দূষণ মুক্ত রাখুন।

বাংলাদেশের সর্বত্র আমাদের ডিলার আপনার সেবায় নিয়োজিত

ঢাকা : ১. সোনারগাঁও মোটর, ফোন : ৮০১৮২২, ৮৪২১৯০, ২. আবুল হাশিম এন্ড ব্রাদার্স, ফোন : ২০৮৪৬৬, ২০০৫৭৮, ৩. জালালাবাদ এন্টারপ্রাইজ, ফোন : ৪১৬৪৪৪, ৪. রয়েল মোটর, ফোন : ৮০৭০১৮, ৫. নিউ জালালাবাদ এন্টারপ্রাইজ, ফোন : ৪০৯৪২৭, ৬. মটর সাইকেল বিজন, ফোন : ৮০২৪৯৬, ৭. কর্ণকলী অটো, ফোন : ৪০৬০২৭, ৮. হোজা পেরেট, ফোন : ৮০৭৫৭৯, ৯. সের্গি সি এলিয়ার ট্রেজার, ফোন : ৯০০০৫৮৯, ১০. মইনাম : ১. এ. আর মোটর, ফোন : ৭১৪৪৮২, ২. এ. কে. পান, ফোন : ৭১০১৯০, ৩. হোজা মিডিয়াস, ফোন : ৭২০৪২১, ৪. সিলেট : ১. বসুন্ধরা মোটর, ফোন : ৭১০৫০০, ২. পদ্মা অটো ডার্কল, ফোন : ৭১৪২৯১, ৩. খুলনা : ১. নিউ মটর সাইকেল হাট, ফোন : ৭২১৮৭০, ২. মটর সাইকেল ইম্পোরিয়াম, ফোন : ৭২১০৪১, ৩. বরগুনা : ১. হোজা প্যালেস, ফোন : ৩৫৬০, ২. হোজা স্টোর, ফোন : ৫৯১৬, ৩. ঢাকা মোটর, ফোন : ৭২২২৪৪, ৪. রাজশাহী : ১. রহমান এন্টারপ্রাইজ, ফোন : ৭৭৪১৭৭, ২. নুপ কর্পোরেশন, ফোন : ৭৭০৮৭৭, ৫. পলাশ এন্টারপ্রাইজ, ফোন : ৭৭২৪১৫, ৬. নওগাঁ : ১. নীন ইন্ডো, ফোন : ৯০৬৬, ৭. দিনাজপুর : ১. আহমেদ এন্ড সন এন্টারপ্রাইজ, ফোন : ৫৮৭৯, ৫৭০৬, ৮. ইসলামাবাদ : ১. ইলসাম এন্ড কোম্পানী, ফোন : ৪২২৭, ৪৬৬৬, ৯. রাঙ্গু ট্রেজার, ফোন : ৫৬০৭, ১০. ঠাকুরগাঁও : ১. এ. কে. ট্রেজার, ফোন : ৩৫৭২, ১১. বরিশাল : ১. সাহার মোটর, ফোন : ৫৪১১৭, ১২. যশোর : ১. যশোর অটো, ফোন : ৬২৪৬



হোন্ডা জাপানের একমাত্র পরিবেশক :

এটেলান্স বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড

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