Tech Interview

Intel still tops the line of processors

INTEL Corporation launched four new processors built on the company's industry-leading, high-volume 90-nanometer (nm) manufacturing technology in Bangladesh on April 22. These processors are among six new offers in Intel's line of desktop chips, bringing new features and high performance to a wide range of PC users, from mainstream consumers and businesspeople to gaming enthusiasts and computer power users. In an interview with **Nafid Imran Ahmed (NA)** of The Daily Star, Intel Technology India's Marketing Director **Jayant Murty (JM)** elaborates its present market status in Bangladesh and shares his personal opinion.

NA: Could you update us on the Bangladesh market for Intel's processors or other products?

JM: The Bangladesh market in terms of new technology compared to anywhere in the world, takes hardly three or four weeks for a new product to be available in the local market. So, you see the products here are similar to any other in the world.

It's not that emerging markets adopt low technology and developed countries absorb high technology. Consumers in developing countries end up buying higher technology, because they don't want frequent upgrades.

NA: What would you say on the growth rate of our market?

JM: The market growth here is very slow in the sense that the installed base of computers in Bangladesh is very low; it's only half a million computers. But this figure is growing along with the substantial traction of most of our products -- processors and motherboards, is also growing. We are quite happy the way it's growing. Future progress and growth often does not link to what we do, it links the environment and the support of the workflow. You need a revolution and a movement in the entire environment that surrounds computing and communication.

NA: Can you give us the growth rate of the past one or two years?

JM: If there is half a million computers for 1.35 million people, the market has to grow. It's too early to worry about weather the growth will slow down. In Bangladesh, unfortunately there is no data available nor do we have our own research data, in terms of how large the market is, how large it can be and so on.

NA: What do you think are the major factors for the ICT development here?

JM: Every industry must play its part to make the momentum work. Secondly, the government also has a fairly strong role to play ensuring benefits of computing reach a large number of groups, such as educational institutions. When you make foundational investments like these, growth comes automatically. Immediately you know that technology makes a difference, people find the money to make a little investment.
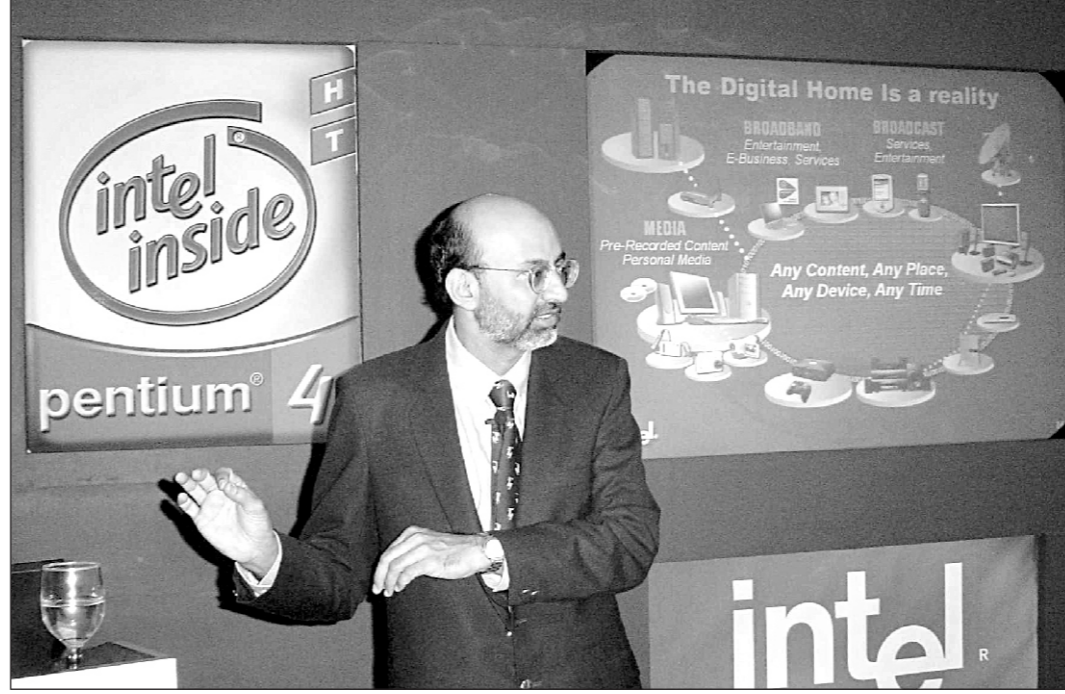
Presently technology offers quite a few services -- Internet, VoIP and Telemedicine, at a cost. There is also a huge opportunity for distance learning. But we have to remember that all these need connectivity, which is a major need for ICT development in Bangladesh.

The government is a fairly critical segment of the county. I am sure the government's priority is to deliver ICT in education, provide connectivity to different parts of the country and they are already in the process. The only option is to adopt new technologies. The government is a potential segment of strength.

NA: What challenges do you face here? What are the solutions?

JM: Our challenges are Bangladesh's challenges, which is to have a good connectivity. Make the ICT in education a priority, build up a workforce and make sure that you have substantial skilled manpower to meet the challenges for the next 10 years, and high quality of computer based education.

I think the other part, which is very essential for Bangladesh is good quality of local language software. Not at an Operating System level but at content level.

I believe most of these things are very important for growth. Coming out here and saying: "I make a great processor" will not do much to growth.

NA: What obstacles do you face here?

JM: Our obstacle is the environment. If the environment enables, many more would be able use computers. It is very simple to do business here. There is no import duty. I complement the government for taking such a brave, bold and progressive move.

NA: What kind of policy do you maintain for pricing your products?

JM: Our attitude towards pricing has been same for the past 10 years. When we launch new technology, such as the launching of Pentium 4 with 1.5Ghz speed, and then gradually introducing 1.8, 2.0, 2.4, 2.8Ghz processors, the prices dropped for lower speeds. So we are always bringing the prices down. When the P4 was introduced to the market, it cost $600, but now the price has reduced to $150. Intel is one of the rare brands in the world where the price changes often.

NA: Are you suggesting that people wait for the price tumble?

JM: I don't think it is wise to wait for two years to buy a computer so that it becomes really cheap. Everyone knows that it's going to get cheaper, but no one waits. Because that's the way the industry is.

NA: How is AMD competing with Intel? How do you plan to stay ahead?

JM: Intel is a company who respects any company that is in the same business. We need to invest in our technology; we need to stay ahead of competition -- not only in terms of marketing and pricing but also in terms of technology. For example, from our $30 billion turnover in 2003, we spend $ 7.5 billion between research, development (R&D) and capital expenditure. We spend 25 per cent of our annual revenue because we want to have better technology in store. To me, managing competition is about staying ahead.

NA: Are the new Pentium 4's facing a market threat because of the latest AMD processors?

JM: I don't think so, because it's still the highest performing processor in the world. And then again, we have many types of Pentium 4 -- Pentium 4 with HT, Pentium 4 Extreme Edition. We have a good line-up of processors that deliver performances depending on what the user needs.

NA: How is the Xeon and Centrino market in Bangladesh?

JM: Wireless LAN and HotSpot market is booming. There are 100,000 HotSpots worldwide. Centrino comes with wireless capability, so the moment someone enters a HotSpot with a Centrino equipped Notebook, it accesses the network. It enhances mobility and wireless, the two main features of Notebooks. Bangladesh still does not have a wide range of notebook users, but the scene is changing gradually.

Response for the Xeon processors and Intel server boards are also very positive here. We have experienced an improved market since we introduced them last year.

NA: What steps, or series of steps, do you take when planning an advertising campaign?

JM: We do a lot of in-store merchandising and direct mail. Most of our campaigns are across all mediums. These mediums deliver our message to different levels. In India, a television commercial would be more effective than any other as there are 75 million television sets in India and it is not necessary to be educated to watch television. So our advertising policies vary on which country we are operating. It should also be cost effective. There are lots of scientific and strategic processes for figuring out which media we want to use and how much money we want to spend.

Intel Technology India's Marketing Director Jayant Murty makes his presentation during the launch

Contactless and smart

This undated handout photo received April 27 shows the world's first Visa contactless credit card being read by a special terminal reader. The world's first Visa contactless smart card was launched on April 27 by MBF Cards Malaysia in which - handing the plastic to the clerk of swiping it yourself, then waiting for approval and signing the receipt - may be a thing of the past. The contactless card operates via chips imbedded with radio-frequency identification where it is just tapped against a special reader and the amount of purchase is keyed in, then a receipt is given to the card member and no signature is required.
PHOTO: AFP

Tech News

Land allocated for Hi-Tech Park

SAAD BIN FAZLE HAMMADI
back from Kaliakoir, Gazipur

COUNTRY'S first High-tech Park with the allocation of 231.685 acres of land at Kaliakoir, close to Talibabad earth satellite station went under construction. The land was handed over to the Ministry of Science, Information and Communication & Technology (ICT) by the Land Ministry on April 24. This is just the starting of a big budget project that would create another high point for the country.

M Shamsul Islam, minister, land ministry chaired the event organised by the Ministry of Science and ICT while Abdul Moyeen Khan, minister, Ministry of Science and ICT was the special guest. Dr. M Omar Faruk Khan, acting secretary, Ministry of Science and ICT, Azad Ruhul Amin, secretary, Ministry of Land, Dr. Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, principal secretary to the Prime minister and Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui, standing committee member, BNP, were present among the others.

"Procedures for setting up the ICT Park were taken into consideration two years back, but it took a long time to acquire the land. From today, Kaliakoir would be identified as one of Bangladesh's landmarks. We have a plan to set up a helipad at the High-Tech Park so that foreign counterparts will be able to fly to the park. We also have plans to provide uninterrupted power supply and round the clock Internet connections. We would facilitate the park with every state of art technology available overseas," said Khan.

He also informed that the software and hardware that are being produced here at lower prices compared to India is still lacking in competition because of inefficient marketing strategy, and needs to be improved as quickly as possible.

The ministry of Science and ICT also admitted that the private sectors are playing a major role for the development of the ICT sector of the country. More than 70 percent of the contribution to the progress of ICT is made by the private sectors.

Dr. Omar Faruk Khan, acting secretary, Ministry of Science and ICT and Azad Ruhul Amin, secretary, Ministry of Land signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the handover of land.

Ahmed Siddiqui requested the minister of Science and ICT for an expansion of road to the Tech Park.
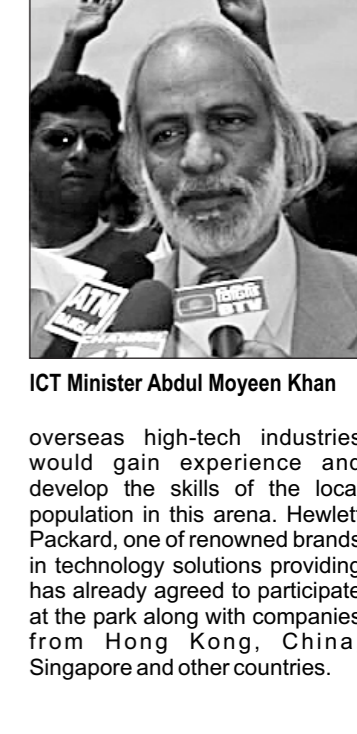
The High-Tech Park is expected to have departments of electronics, hardware, software, human resources and development institutes, bio-informatics, material science, automobiles and metal industries, agro-bio-technology and genetic engineering, pharmaceuticals, ICT enabled services, research & development (R&D) centers and laboratories.

The Bureau of Research, Testing and Consultation (BRTC) from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) earlier made the research and study for the High-Tech Park.

Its infrastructure is planned to facilitate dedicated electric sub-station, uninterrupted power supply, ISDN telephone exchange, wide bandwidth data communication connectivity, fiber optic LAN for high speed data transfer, conference facilities including video conferencing system, housing, hotel and amusement facilities, water supply and sanitation, education and training institutions and medical services.

The government of Bangladesh (GoB) will spend 91.5 percent of Tk.251 crore issued for the structure of High-Tech Park. Tax holidays, customs clearing and banking facilities would be combined in a one-stop service to invite foreign high-tech industries. Working with the
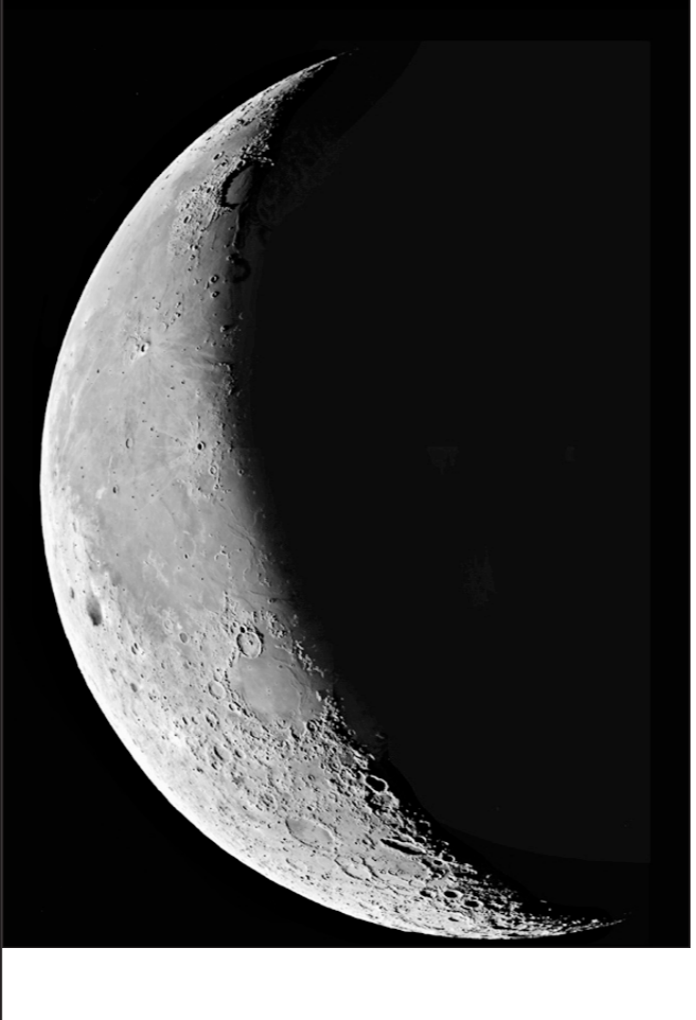

ICT Minister Abdul Moyeen Khan

overseas high-tech industries would gain experience and develop the skills of the local population in this arena. Hewlett Packard, one of renowned brands in technology solutions providing has already agreed to participate at the park along with companies from Hong Kong, China, Singapore and other countries.

Best 10 Websites

Tech News

New mineral found on the Moon

REUTERS, Washington

A new mineral formed by repeated bombardments from meteorites and other space debris has been found in a meteorite that fell to Earth from the moon in 2000, researchers reported on Monday.

The finding shows that "space weather" can help create materials not seen on Earth, they reported in this week's issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The new mineral is named hapkeite, after Bruce Hapke, an emeritus professor of geology and planetary sciences at Cornell University in New York, who predicted its discovery.

Airless bodies such as the moon, Mercury, and asteroids have an inorganic soil made of crushed rocks called regolith.

In theory, it is formed by the impact of micrometeorites traveling at high speed. The heat from their impact melts and vaporizes metals, which are then redeposited on rock fragments as tiny, scattered beads in a glassy coating.

Hapkeite is made when iron and silicon are deposited with two parts iron and one part silicon, Mahesh Anand of the University of

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Tennessee in Knoxville and colleagues reported.

They analyzed a meteorite found in Oman for their report.

"We propose a scenario for the indigenous lunar formation of iron silicides that involves melting and vaporization of lunar soil by micrometeorite impact," they wrote.

Photo Tech

PHOTO: AFP

A tear-drop-shaped ship named "Himiko" cruises down the Sumida river in Tokyo on April 25. A Tokyo cruise ship company has operated the 114-ton, 30.3-metre-long, 8-metre-wide and 231-person-capacity Himiko, designed by Japanese science fiction animation writer Leiji Matsumoto, since March 26 this year.