Tech Focus

eGeneration attempts poverty alleviation with technology

RIDWAN A KABIR

eGENERATION (Ltd.), an ICT Incubator-based software solution company has currently undertaken a poverty alleviation project by educating the rural population of the country on modern technologies such as the internet.

As part of the initial implemenation of the project, eGeneration, is providing web and network solutions, IT consultancy and other IT related services at the NGO level, particularly to micro-finance institutions located in rural areas.

Selected individuals from more than fifteen NGOs are being trained on internet and software applications at the eGeneration office in Dhaka as well as at regional offices of the NGOs. Upon completion, new trainees will start educating the villagers of their respective areas on how to use basic internet applications, such as browsing the web.

"To keep up with other NGOs located in the capital, one of our client-NGOs located in Bagerhat is purchasing PCs in order to computerise their work," boasts Shameem Ahsan, CEO of eGeneration (Ltd.). He emphasises that through this process remote corners of the country, where computers are a rarity, are gradually tapping into the worldwide network of cybernetic knowledge.

The fifteen NGOs that are currently benefiting from eGeneration's services are located in Jessore, Gazipur, Bagerhat, Rajbari, Shariatpur, Magura, Chuadanga, Madaripur, Kishoreganj, Kusthia and Jhenaidah. Srizony, SETU, and PDIM are among the participating NGO's.

According to Ahsan, eGeneration is focusing on parts of the country with limited access to the latest trends of information technology. The company has plans to help bring radio-link towers to rural sites through governmental support.

The eGeneration team is hopeful about the diversified prospect of training villagers on net-browsing capability. It is expected that while the NGO employees provide villagers with such training sessions, at some later period, the villagers might educate themselves and spread the practice to surrounding localities. Once connections have been established in these rural areas, certain communities will become models for surrounding locations, encouraging awareness and bringing momentum to the rural communication technology project.

The second phase of the project involves informing villagers of internet services that provide information on micro-finance projects such as poultry, dairy, fisheries, and agricultural aspects. The internet can also help villagers acquire information on prevention and spreading of potential diseases.

In addition to internet training, eGeneration has developed and implemented a financial-management software for NGOs. The software, eMicrofinance, stores necessary information and reports for easy access and modification, creating a paperless environment.

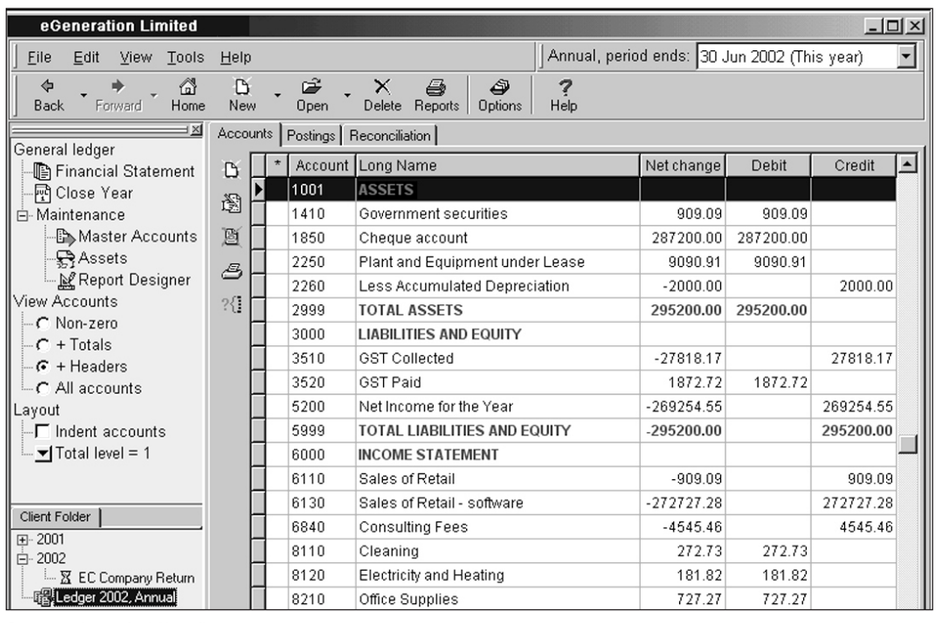
"This is a user friendly software with solid security features," says Ahsan, adding that the implementation of such management software will enhance the efficiency, productivity and service capacity of micro-finance institutions by way of trimming down manpower requirements.

The company is offering necessary training on the software and providing technical support.

Shameem claims that micro-finance institutions have already been able to enhance competence and efficiency in their activities through the implementation of eMicrofinance.

Another software developed by Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) for their partner organisations is also being implemented by eGeneration.

There is no doubt that eGeneration's project is what our country needs for rural IT based development. But such large-scale project cannot be implemented single-handedly. Support from government and private initiatives are necessary for the successful implementation of the project to make the global IT network accessible to remote parts of the country.



Screen shot of eMicrofinance

Tech News

India's first edn satellite blasts off into the space

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, *New Delhi*

MARKING a milestone achievement in India's space technology, the country's first satellite to be exclusively used for distant education connecting classrooms in remote parts was put into orbit.

The EDUSAT satellite weighing 1,950kg blasted off Monday afternoon from a space centre in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

"We have got a perfect launch and hope to have major operations running in the next few days," said an elated PS Goel, director of the satellite centre.

The satellite will help provide primary and university education in cities and villages even in remote areas, according Indian Space Research Organisation Spokesman S Krishnamurthy. It will connect over 1,000 class rooms in phases.

The satellite was put into the space by indigenously-built Geosynchronus launch vehicle which can carry communication satellites weighing up to 2,000kg.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, now in New York, congratulated the scientists on the successful launch of EDUSAT.

The ISRO had in January this year announced the $19.5 million project to use satellites for promoting distant education. India had started the project through the communication satellite INSAT-3A which is now in orbit and the service will shift to EDUSAT which has a mission life span of seven years.

India has been aiming at the lucrative satellite launch market. The government had last year announced a plan to send an unmanned mission to the moon by 2008 at an estimated budget of $83 million.


PHOTO: AFP

A scientist monitors screens at the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) satellite tracking facility in Hassan. India launched its first satellite to be used exclusively for education which will connect classrooms in remote parts of the country.

Photo Tech


Humanoid robot "HRP-2" developed by the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), is prepared for a demonstration in Tsukuba on September 21. Researcher Dr. Kensuke Harada along with six colleagues at the AIST suceeded in enhancing the walk and work capabilities of the "working humanoid robot" standing 154cm tall and weighing 58kg.

PHOTO: AFP

Tech News

Microsoft to share Office 2003 source code

REUTERS, *Seattle*

MICROSOFT Corp. said on Sunday that it would share the underlying software code for its Office program as part of its efforts to make governments more confident in the security and compatibility of the world's largest software maker's products.

The new initiative is an extension of Microsoft's Government Security Program, which allows the governments of more than 30 countries to examine most of Microsoft's underlying source code, or software blueprint for its flagship Windows operating system.

The source code for Office 2003 will be made available so that governments can conduct in-depth testing and examination to make sure that the document, spreadsheet, presentation and scheduling program works with other information technology systems, Microsoft said.

Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft keeps its source code closely guarded, and requires any governments or companies to sign agreements not to divulge the data that is used to create its software programs.

The Linux software system, which is now a major competitor to Windows and other Microsoft products, and its source code are freely available to anyone under an open source license that guarantees that the data will always be shared.

Microsoft launched an initiative a few years ago to share more of its software code with other technology companies, and later expanded that to include governments.

Britain has already agreed to participate in the source-sharing program for Office, Microsoft said. More than 30 countries have signed up to view Windows and Windows-related source code.

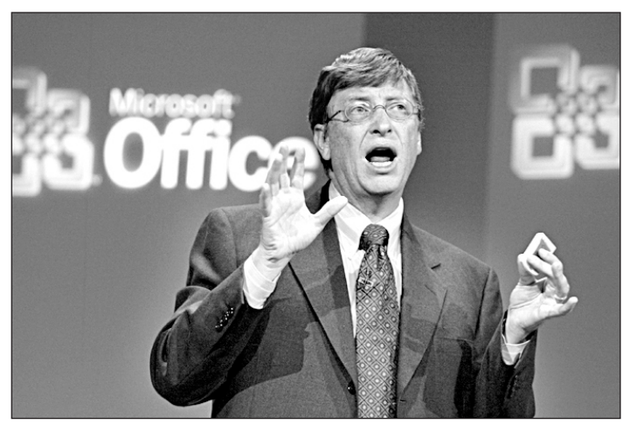


PHOTO: AFP

Microsoft chairman, Bill Gates introduces the new Office software last year. The software giant said it would share the source code of its Office desktop software with more than 60 governemnts including China and Russia.

Tech Seminar

Seminar on earthquake engineering research

A seminar titled 'Earthquake Engineering Research in The University of Asia Pacific' was be held on September 16 at the main auditorium of The University of Asia Pacific (UAP), says a press release. Dr. Abdul Moyeen Khan, minister for Science and Information & Communication Technology chaired the seminar while Dr M Anwarul Azim, president, Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) was present as the special guest. The seminar was presided over by Professor Dr. Abdul Matin Patwari, vice chancellor of UAP.

The discussion focused on various aspects of earthquake engineering research at UAP, such as the chronology of numerical and experimental works done on this topic, demonstration of the recent developments of experimental facilities in this regard, current research works and future plans to extend the research and practical applications.

Panel of guests at the seminar

Tech News

Samsung claims breakthough in key techonologies

AFP, *Seoul*

SOUTH Korea's Samsung Electronics claimed breakthroughs in key technologies that promise greater data storage and faster processing for computers and mobile devices such as MP3 audio players.

The world's leading semiconductor maker said it had developed the industry's first 60-nanometer 8-gigabit NAND Flash memory chip used for data storage. One nanometer is equal to one billionth of a meter.

The 8Gb NAND flash memory will allow storage of up to 16 hours of DVD quality video or 4,000 MP3 audio files or songs on a single memory card.

"For the first time in the industry, we have succeeded in commercialising next-generation 60-nano technology," the company said in a press statement.

The company said the mass production of the 8Gb NAND chips will begin late next year, following the first-quarter 2005 launch of the 4Gb NAND flash memory device.

A second breakthrough concerns its development of the world's first 2Gb DDR2 SDRAM using existing, 80-nanometer micro-processing technology.

The high density, double-data-rate or DDR2 chip will enhance server and workstation performance and enable faster deployment of memory-intensive applications such as real-time video conferences, remote medical services, two-way communications and 3-D graphics, it said.

The chip was produced using existing 80-nano technology instead of 65 nanometers or less.

It was widely believed in the industry that the development of such a high-capacity memory chip would be possible only by using processing technology on a scale of 65 nanometers or less.

"This development has shown that the expansion of semiconductor capacity is also possible by improving design and process technology, rather than micro-process technology alone," Hwang Chang-Gyu, president of Samsung Electronics's semiconductor division, told journalists.

Samsung plans to launch mass production of the 80-nano process, 2Gb DDR2 SDRAMs in the second half of 2005.

The company also said it had developed the world's fastest, 667-megaHertz central processing unit (CPU) chip for mobiles which are suitable for three-dimensional graphics.

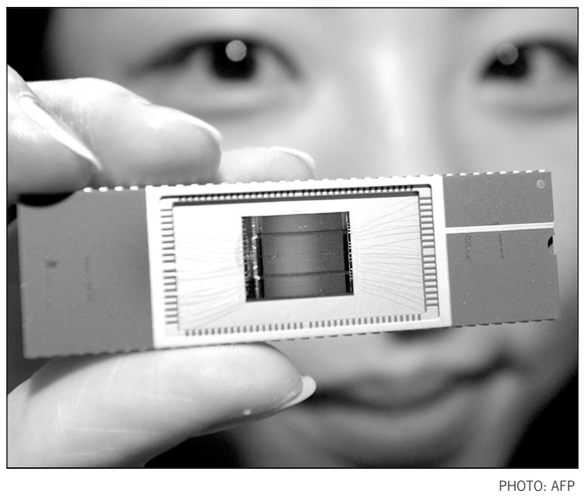


PHOTO: AFP

An employee shows Samsung's 2-Gigabit DDR2 SDRAM memory chip using 80-nanometer process technology during a press conference at a Hotel in Seoul on September 20.