

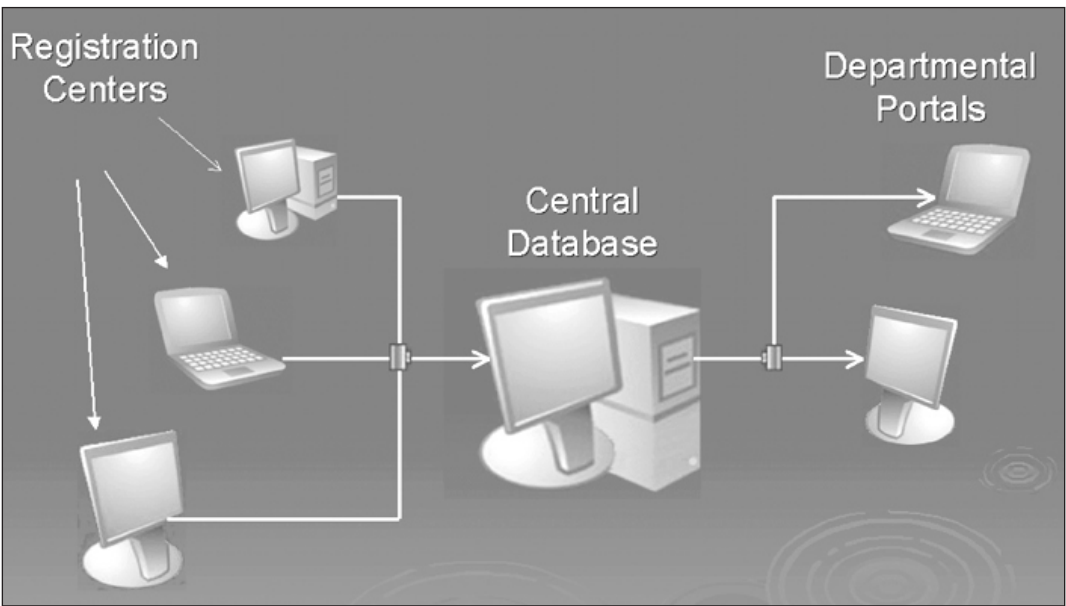
Tech Focus

National ID cards to be issued next year

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

THE government of Bangladesh has recently approved plans to implement a national identification card system for its citizens. The inspiration behind the project came from the students of the Computer Science and Engineering department (CSE) of North South University (NSU), who presented a preliminary plan to the government in April of this year. The objective is to provide an official document containing unique identification numbers to each and every citizen of the country. Already such systems exist in most countries of the world, where the profile of a citizen is tagged to an ID number. According to NSU's proposal, the identification numbers of each citizen can be

keyed in at various registration centers throughout the country, which would automatically update a central database. The comprehensive database system can be accessed by a number of governmental departments operating in various sectors through their respective portals. It has been proposed that each department will have limited access to the main system and would be able to check only the data necessary for their purposes. "In the initial stages of the experimental project, kicked off in 2002, CSE students mainly studied how the voter ID system worked throughout Bangladesh," says Professor M Abdul Awwal of the CSE department of NSU and a consultant for a number of government Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects already underway.



Input and output flow of the National ID central database

The national ID card system was designed after careful analysis of the existing voter ID system and shares some similarities. Renad Hakim, Hasibul Hasan and M Musabbir, three CSE students worked under Professor Awwal on the experimental project. The final sample of the ID card was developed in April 2004. It includes the ID holder's name, picture, identification number, father's name, date of birth, permanent address, village, district and sub-district. The identification number will be ten digits long, the first three identifying the cardholder's area of residence. "This project, when finally

implemented can aid concerned authorities in numerous ways towards better and efficient management of data," said Awwal. The police department can use the system to obtain fingerprints and criminal and immigration records. The National Board of Revenue can use the records to find out about a citizen's tax history, current income, and assets, among other things. In western countries, such ID systems help officials to identify counterfeit and multiple passports and fake voter IDs. Businesses can also benefit from this system, which can help them retrieve credit history, asset information, insurance and transaction records, and other

financial information of a client or associate. It is expected that the administrative processes of hospitals, employers and educational institutions will become more efficient as well. "With the implementation of such a system, we would be establishing the backbone for future projects, thus materializing the dream of an ICT revolution in Bangladesh," concludes Professor Awwal. The home ministry told The Daily Star that the approved system is expected to be in operation from July 2005.

Tech News

Latest mobile technology hits the local market

STARTECH DESK

DAFFODIL Computers Ltd. has launched the new O2 Xphone and the XDA II in its product line. The difference between the two is that the former is an enhanced phone, while the latter is a pocket PC with mobile capabilities. **O2 Xphone** It is as good as a pocket PC with added mobile phone technology. With efficient browsing facilities, generous storage space, and that little extra that a mobile user always looks for in his cell phone, the O2 Xphone is a great catch for the purchaser at a price of Tk 31,500.

Outlook The phone uses a Texas Instruments OMAP 710 processor that powers the Microsoft Windows Mobile 2003 operating system for smart phone facility, combining style with a great set of features, such as multi-language ability supporting English and Chinese menus. Considering all its advanced capabilities, the O2 Xphone is impressively small and lightweight. Measuring about 12 cm x 5 cm x 2.4 cm and weighing around 130 grams, it's a slick equipment to handle. The trans-reflective screen measures 4.3 cm x 3.5 cm and displays 16-bit colours with a 176x220 pixels resolution, thus offering crisp clear pictures even in broad daylight, while taking up most of the face of the phone.

Going Net The SD/MMC expansion slot includes a built-in Bluetooth v1.1 wireless modem technology allowing enhanced GPRS global internet connectivity. We also find Internet Explorer on it, enabling a rich mobile web-browsing experience. Interestingly, MSN messenger comes pre-installed with the phone, which further expands the peripherals of its mobile connectivity, while messaging is also available in SMS and MMS modes with image or

audio files attached with it. A USB 1.1 port is located on the set. The generous 32MB RAM and 64MB Flash also means faster applications as well as plenty of room for storing thousands of contacts, emails and tasks. Additionally, the versatile Windows Media Player allows one to experience much of the multimedia world, from MP3 files to MPEG movies. **Added Features** Added features include a 640 x 480 pixel built-in camera, video and audio recording capabilities, an album for photo and video viewing, and finally a task manager that includes photo contacts, calendar, and photo caller-id features.

O2 Xda II While the O2 Xphone still prevails, the latest from the Xphone series, Xda II, has already made its debut in the global mobile market. The XDAII has already been brought into our own mobile market by Daffodil Computers Ltd., available to purchasers for a cost of Tk 59,000. **Flying through the cyberspace** Weighing about 190 g, this gear is devised with a powerful Intel PXA263 400 MHz processor, with infrared, Bluetooth wireless modem using USB port, SDIO and optional Wi-Fi support-system. It supports full internet browsing (powered by Windows Mobile 2003) along with reliable emailing, instant messaging and multimedia modes, even permitting real-time online chatting. **XDA Cloning**

The XDA II is similar to the original XDA in size (69.9mmx130mmx19mm), but without its antenna. With a much larger 3.5 inches trans-reflective, 65K colour LCD display, it follows the look and trend of a PDA. The phone contains pocket PC software, including Pocket Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint and Word, thus allowing the creation and update of Word and Excel files on the run, along with displaying PDF files and other Microsoft presentations. The hand-writing recognition ability allows the user to experience the best of task-management that PDA clones have to offer, along with a 128 MB RAM and 64 MB ROM, adding it a wide storage and application capacity. **Added features** The Xda II has a built-in integrated, CMOS chip VGA resolution (640 x 480 pixels) digital camera to shoot quality video and still images. Additional features include VGA output ability, MP3 playing options in stereo format, supporting MPEG4, H.263, and Motion-JPEG AVI files with a minimum scene illumination of 5 lux and a frame rate of 15 fps. The phone has a talk-time of 3.5 hours, including 150 hours standby and 11 hours of Pocket PC usage. The expansion interface slot includes one SDIO/MMC slot, a back pack connector for file transfer and output purposes, an infrared port, one USB slave interface complaint with USB 1.1, and DUN (dial-up



Tech News

Virgin to launch commercial space flights

AP, London

AIRLINE mogul and adventurer Richard Branson announced plans Monday to boldly go where no private transport company has gone before into space. Branson's Virgin Group said it would offer commercial space flights by 2007, with Branson himself joining the inaugural journey. The bid is a natural for Branson, a high-school dropout turned flamboyant tycoon who has made several failed attempts to circle the world by hot-air balloon. "It's just the kind of thing he absolutely loves, because it gets him maximum publicity," said David Learmount, operations and safety editor of Flight International magazine. "But the technology is there, it's plausible." Branson, 54, announced a deal to license technology from Mojave Aerospace Ventures, the

firm owned by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen that bankrolled June's historic 90-minute space flight by the aircraft SpaceShipOne. The Virgin craft will be based on Burt Rutan's design for SpaceShipOne, a stubby rocket-plane capable of carrying a pilot and two passengers. "Virgin has been in talks with Paul Allen and Burt throughout this year, and in the early hours of Saturday signed a historical deal to license SpaceShipOne's technology to build the world's first private spaceship to go into commercial operating service," Branson told a news conference in London. SpaceShipOne cracked the barrier to manned commercial space flight in June by taking a 90-minute flight almost 62 miles above Earth, just over the distance scientists widely consider to be the boundary of space. Virgin said its agreement with Mojave Aerospace could be worth



PHOTO: AP

British entrepreneur Richard Branson poses for photographers after he announced that his Virgin company plans to launch commercial space flights over the next few years in London on September 27.

up to \$25 million over the next 15 years, depending on the number of spaceships it builds. The company said it planned to begin construction of the first vessel, VSS Enterprise, next year and to offer flights by 2007. It will invest about \$108 million in spaceships and ground infrastructure for the venture, it said. The new service will be called

Virgin Galactic and expects to fly 3,000 new astronauts in its first five years. Fares will start at \$208,000 for a two- to three-hour suborbital flight, including three days' training. The only space tourists to date are U.S. businessman Dennis Tito and South African millionaire Mark Shuttleworth, who each paid \$20 million for journeys to the International Space Station on a Russian

rocket. The firm that arranged those trips, Space Adventures, also hopes to begin ticketed suborbital flights within a few years. Branson, who began his career as a teenage newspaper publisher and record peddler, is now worth \$2.2 billion, according to a Forbes magazine estimate. His Virgin Group began as a record label, and now sells everything from soft drinks to bridal gowns, and runs a train service and mobile phone network. He was the first person to cross both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by hot-air balloon and made several unsuccessful attempts to be the first balloonist to circumnavigate the world without stopping. Other feats include setting a trans-Atlantic speedboat record in 1986. In June, he made a 22-mile crossing of the English Channel by amphibious vessel in one hour, 40 minutes, 6 seconds, setting a new record.

Photo Tech



PHOTO: AFP

German engineer and head of the "Hysun3000" project, Frieder Herb, gives a thumb up as he sits in Marseille, in the prototype "Hysun3000", an hydrogen fueled cell vehicle on September 20. The target energy consumption is to run a distance of 3000 kilometres on European roads with a mass of three kilograms of hydrogen (equivalent to eleven litres of gasoline).

Tech News

Maxtor Onetouch II raises the bar in consumer backup

STARTECH DESK

SIMPLE, safe and powerful describe the new Maxtor OneTouch(TM) II drive, the next generation of Maxtor Corporation's award-winning external drive family that allows consumers to easily back up family photos, MP3 music collections, and other important personal and business data with a simple touch of a button, says a press release. No high tech knowledge is required to set up the new drive, giving consumers no excuse to not backup their computers. Leveraging the company's first-to-market leadership and proven expertise in external storage and push button backup, the new Maxtor OneTouch II drive offers an exclusive version of Dantz Retrospect software for easy backup, a Maxtor DriveLock security feature for added data

protection and more powerful restore capabilities, including historical backup recovery. "Combine all this with a new, consumer-friendly user interface, and now the most difficult part of a backup solution may be choosing which capacity Maxtor OneTouch II drive to buy," said Yogesh Kamat, sales manager, Maxtor, India Subcontinent. New features of the Maxtor OneTouch II external drive include: - Simpler backup: no complex menus or commands or in-depth technical knowledge are required to set up the Maxtor OneTouch II drive. The new click-through installation asks a few simple questions such as the user's name and preferred language, while configuring the software in the background to automatically back up all locally connected drives and files on the computer every day. This powerful, yet

simple, default setting backs up virtually everything on the local drives including all Microsoft Outlook emails, address books, Internet favorites, My Documents folder, operating system, applications and more. Once installed, the Maxtor OneTouch II drive runs quietly and automatically. Users do not even have to close an application or a file for the drive to back up the saved versions. - DriveLock security: The Maxtor OneTouch II also offers Maxtor's new DriveLock feature for added data protection. This feature allows users to password-protect the contents of the drive, keeping important data safe from unauthorised users. Once a consumer powers down the computer, or the drive is removed from the system, access to the drive will be automatically locked until the correct user defined password is provided.

- More powerful restore: If data is lost, restoring a backed up copy from the Maxtor OneTouch II drive to the source system is simple. With historical backup copies, users can restore their entire system to its backed up status from yesterday, two days ago or even two weeks ago. The user is simply guided through a three-step process that includes clicking on the desired point in time, selecting the files or folders to restore and then choosing the destination for the restore. The drive also self-manages its storage space and deletes older backup versions as the drive fills up. - New user interface: Maxtor has redesigned the graphical user interface from the ground up so that installation and setup are easier than ever. The wizard has an exclusive design that combines storage, security and backup in a single solution, in

contrast to other offerings that only drop in software without integration. - Mac(R) bootability function: Mac users have the option to create a fully bootable backup copy of their main system drive. Once a bootable backup copy is made, users can restart their system quickly using their Maxtor OneTouch II drive as if it were their system drive. Nothing needs to be moved or disconnected. - New look: The Maxtor OneTouch II drive sports a new, sophisticated, contemporary look that suits a home or office setting and distinguishes it from competing products. "Maxtor has helped make external storage and backup solutions a popular and growing consumer market category," said Larry Zulch, CEO and president of Dantz. "It's been a pleasure working with Maxtor to develop Retrospect Express HD backup

software for their next generation Maxtor OneTouch II drive. The Maxtor OneTouch II is a significant achievement in consumer data protection, combining true backup power and honest ease of use." **Pricing and Availability** The new Maxtor OneTouch II external drive comes with a 7200RPM 300GB or 250GB hard drive with a 16MB buffer. Both feature a combo FireWire(R)/USB 2.0 interface for easy connection to a Mac or PC. The drives are available through Maxtor's network of leading retailers, distributors and online stores. Suggested retail price is \$379.95 for 300GB and \$329.95 for 250GB. Additional capacities will be rolled out later this year. For more detailed information on the Maxtor OneTouch II drive and its new features, please visit www.maxtor.com.

