

Vannevar Bush was never directly involved with the creation or development of the Internet. He died before the creation of the World Wide Web. Yet many consider Bush to be the Godfather of our wired age often making reference to his 1945 essay, "As We May Think" where, Bush described a theoretical machine he called a "memex," which was to enhance human memory by allowing the user to store and retrieve documents linked by associations. His conception of the Memex introduced, for the first time, the idea of an easily accessible, individually configurable storehouse of knowledge. This associative linking was very similar to what is known today as hypertext.



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TECHSPOTLIGHT

'Amar PC' - a new neighbour in town



RIDWAN A KABIR

It's selling like hot cakes in West Bengal and has aspirations of becoming a national brand -- this is how a leading Indian daily quoted *Amar PC*, a brand computer from the leading Indian PC manufacturer Xenitis Infotech.

Amar PC, meaning 'My PC', has made its entrance to the Bangladesh market through Bengal Airlift Ltd., local distributor for the brand. A grand launching ceremony announced this in the city on May 6.

Through the launch, Xenitis for the first time steps outside its country on export issues. Future plans of both the manufacturer and distributor companies hold high hopes about creating a growth in the PC-oriented market trends that currently exists in the country.

"Our main objective is to make it available and accessible for the customers across the country," said Atif Rahman, director, Bengal Airlift Ltd. He mentioned that initially they are focusing on introducing six different models, which is being offered by *Amar PC*.

Termining it a bold step towards a newer kind of language movement, Rahman referred to

how the word 'Amar' is strongly expected to attract local buyers, considering the fact that now Bangladesh stands as the export market for the brand. Xenitis has done its own research on the current status of the country's growing ICT market and the industry as a whole before deciding on its export drift.

Amar PC already shares a very competitive local pricing, starting from Tk 14,000 to Tk 40,000. Bengal Airlift has already received 250 bookings in advance for the product, which is likely to hit the market by the end of this month.

Amar PC will be available from at local outlet of Bengal Airlift located in Gulshan 2.

"The local PC market is a chaos," Rahman said, blaming the high-pricing of every electronics and computer product. "People are even afraid to go out and fetch a quotation for a PC, worrying that they might not afford it," Rahman added,



citing how he will look forward towards a positive response from local buyers on how the *Amar PC* products are priced.

The director also informed there is a good opportunity for establishment of a testing and assembly plant in Bangladesh from Xenitis. He pointed out how small local plants may further reduce the price tag. "Such manufacturing or assembling plants will also create a growth in the nation's economy, as Bangladesh is a small country with a large population," Rahman shed his hopes.

The local PC market has already become a competitive one and local users do not always want to purchase an expensive brand PC. This further creates a better chance for such a neighbourhood-assembled brand to attain a good grip in the market.

Currently, Bengal Airlift has three local system engineers working at their Gulshan service centre, while two Indian engineers will join the team soon. The distributors hope to set up more service centres around the city.

in the sale of the product. "We'll look into assuring quality customer service, and it'll be our key step towards allowing the brand to build its own market here and Bengal Airlift will utilise the right blend of its logistics towards this vision," Rahman mentioned.

In time, the company also plans to import laptops from Xenitis. "Our country holds a good future for the use of laptops," stated the director while pointing out the huge number of non-government organisations (NGOs) operating in Bangladesh and their necessity of mobility in their line of work. "Laptops might be the next big thing after GrameenPhone," he continued, explaining how laptops can create a better working environment for typical field workers, who may in turn create mass computer-oriented awareness among the rural residents in time.

Xenitis Infotech currently holds a testing and assembling plant worth Rs 260 crore in India, while the production plant for *Amar PC* is situated in China under Unitek Computers Company Ltd. The Chinese Unitek company essentially manufactures computer cases and SMPS, media chips and peripherals such as keyboard, mouse, CD/DVD Rom drives, speakers and home theatres for brand PCs.

"The whole effort is focused on modulating a new, creative breakthrough on how Bangladesh buyers look at PCs," specified Rahman, referring to how the pricing of the brand and prompt after-sales service will allow for a tremendous growth in the number of PCs that were locally purchased before. This approach can make PCs available and purchasable for students, local entrepreneurs and educational institutions and others.

TECHFOCUS

Sheradam.com

A deshi e-Bidding ground

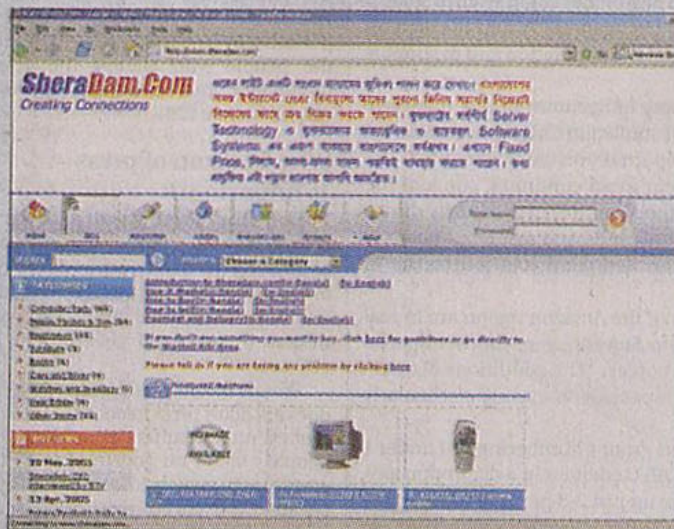
SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

THE latest addition to the slow-going E-commerce assets of the nation, *sheradam.com* is a virtual marketplace for second hand items, where tracing sellers, buyers and bargaining with them, is not at all a hassle.

Being a Bangladeshi version of the world famous Amazon and e-bay, the site has already become quite popular since its inception in September 2004. At present the site has over 1000 registered members. Free membership to the site will be allowed for at least a year, according to Kazi Khurram Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer of the site. "We are planning not to take any charges for sale of items at the site from the first 500 sellers," said Khurram.

In order to sell or buy an item or product from the site, a user needs to register. The instruction for registration has been extensively explained both in Bangla and English at the site. The site is quite user-friendly with illustrated menu and clearly listed categories of items.

The current categories of sale are computer accessories,



mobile phones, electronics, furniture, cars, motorbikes, books, watches, jewelry and real estate.

An item can be sold in any one of three following ways: fixed pricing method, auction method and mixed method. Fixed method is for those sellers, who do not want to bargain about the price.

"Currently auction method is very popular at the site, as there is always a chance that the ending price may as well be a lot more higher than the actual

costing price of the product," said Ahmed. Mixed method is a mixture of both the auction and fixed price methods.

According to the Khurram, very recently a laptop was auctioned at the site at a starting bid of Tk 1. The demand for the item skyrocketed and was finally sold at a price of Tk 45,000.

"Such incidents prove that such sites has high potential in the Bangladesh market given the time and effort," said Ahmed.

"We would probably be

adding more features like forums and polls but there are currently no plans to change the existing transaction methods in the site," said Ahmed, when asked about future plans for the site.

He also pointed out that as a professional UK based company is administering the software system of the entire site, the maintenance and the professionalism behind the site is constantly ensured, unlike most other Bangladeshi sites.

"Bangladesh is still at its infant stage as far as E-commerce is concerned and it can only flourish with the increasing number of internet users and the collective buying power of the population," commented Ahmed, when asked about the current Bangladesh E-commerce scenario.

He also pointed out the important role that the Government has to play by providing legal and technical support to information and communication technologies by establishing and carrying out laws on Intellectual Property Rights, Hacking and other such issues.

TECHNEWS



The 'Hotspot' hotel

STARTECH DESK

TO meet the increasing requirements of guests in all areas of International service standards, Pan Pacific Sonargaon announced the implementation of a High Speed Broadband Internet Service throughout the hotel, which came into operation from May 1.

Grant J Gaskin, general manager, Pan Pacific Sonargaon briefed the media about the service at a press meet on May 11.

Gaskin explained that guests can plug-and-play from any room of the hotel and browse according to his high-speed internet demand. Once checked in, the guest can enjoy the broadband internet facilities anywhere in the hotel specially in the meeting rooms, ballroom, restaurants, swimming pool area, and the lobby.

"The service will facilitate the business and leisure travelers," said Gaskin. "Such



Pan Pacific Sonargaon official speaks at the press conference.

initiative by the hotel will ensure the fact that Pan Pacific Sonargaon is still the best 5 star deluxe property in Dhaka," said Gaskin. He also ensured that the management of the Hotel will continually strive and add new services in the near future to sustain the level of excellence.

Monirul Islam, Management Information System (MIS) Manager of the Hotel

discussed the special features of the newly introduced high speed broadband internet system to the press.

Brett Mahoney, director, Sales and Marketing and Habibullah Monju, director, Finance of the hotel, were also present at the event.

"Unlike the 'alleged' broadband service introduced by most local hotels, our broadband service has twice

the speed and our guests would not just be confined in any particular location of the hotel," said the hotel's Marketing Communications Manager Intiaz Ahmed Siddiqui.

"Unlike the situation of logging into the internet from a particular location termed as 'Hot Spots' by some hotels, our entire hotel is a 'Hot Spot', he said.

The costs for half an hour, 1 hour, 4 hours, 24 hours of this high-speed service has been fixed at US \$ 7, \$ 10, \$ 25 and \$ 35 respectively, which is inclusive of all taxes.

"The rates may seem to be quite outrageous in the Bangladesh perspective, but they have been fixed according to International Standard," said Siddiqui. He also claimed that the prices are extremely low considering the speed and reliability of the service when compared to the Broadband Internet Service of the 5 star hotels in Europe and USA.

TECHNEWS

Microsoft unveils Xbox 360

REUTERS, Seattle

MICROSOFT Corp. unveiled its new Xbox 360 on Thursday, taking aim at Sony Corp. in the video game console market with a machine sporting high-definition graphics and features that make it an entertainment hub for the living room.

The world's largest software maker said its second generation Xbox will be on U.S. store shelves well in time for the 2005 holiday season that begins in late November, but it did not say how much the white-and-silver concave console would cost.

Among the features are three IBM microprocessors that are expected to deliver powerful computing and advanced graphics, as well as a detachable 20-gigabyte hard drive and the ability to customize the machine's front panel with detachable face-plates.

Microsoft's Xbox business is arguably the Redmond, Washington company's biggest bet, costing the software giant more than \$1 billion in sunk costs every year since 2001.

Microsoft, with deep pockets and a reputation for persistently chipping away at competitors,



PHOTO: AFP

A Microsoft employee displays the console and wireless controller of the next generation video game console "Xbox 360" during a press preview in Tokyo theater yesterday.

has Sony squarely in its sights at a time when the Japanese consumer electronics maker is struggling with a top-level management overhaul and weak profitability.

Microsoft narrowly beat its closest competitor, Nintendo Co. Ltd., with the Xbox. The smaller Xbox 360 is a departure from the original squarish black Xbox that debuted in late 2001, and is aimed at a wider audience, said J. Allard, Microsoft's vice president leading the charge behind Microsoft's push into the business.

Allard said Microsoft learned from its mistakes with the first Xbox, which launched a year behind its main rival, Sony's PlayStation 2 console.

Allard acknowledged, "We didn't get the controller right, we didn't get the industrial design right," referring to the original oversized Xbox controller and hardware that scratched DVD disks, generating customer complaints.

For the latest round, Microsoft hired U.S. and Japanese design firms to design a machine with smoother, more fluid lines to attract customers drawn to the iPod and Sony's products.



MINEBURNER

View of the remote-controlled device to clear landmines that kill or maim 2,000 people a month, the new "MineBurner" presented in Pretoria on May 10. Paul Richards, 59, a former air pilot, demonstrated the MineBurner at South Africa's Council for Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR) in Pretoria which has conducted three successful test trials of the device and has approved its use. The device uses oxygen with liquid petroleum gas to provide a high temperature cutting flame that burns through the case of a landmine and ignites its contents. The unique feature of the new MineBurner is that it does not contain any explosive or pyrotechnical components, making it air-transportable and thus far cheaper to get to any parts of the world where it is needed," Richards told reporters.