



TECH FOCUS

Step towards digital Bangladesh



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It is a long tradition in Bangladesh that people, irrespective of caste and creed, celebrate religious and cultural programmes with much festivity and crowds no matter what religion or organisation it comes from. Social and political gatherings are quite a common scenario in every corner of this country. This one is different and exception as well in terms of enthusiasm of the people. The Gyan Utsob 2009: Bagerhat Hobe Digital (Knowledge Festival 2009: Bagerhat will turn digital) took place in Bagerhat on October 2-3. It apparently broke all past records of having people together from all walks of life such as lawmakers, government officials, local leaders, service holders and hard working people.

Bagerhat was buzzing with sounds of footsteps and chattering of people at a rally before the festival, focusing on the information and communication technology, got off to a colourful start.

There were similar initiatives in the past but of no avail. This one drew attention of the mass people. A non-government organisation named Amader Gram arranged the festival called Knowledge Festival 2009. It paved the way for the country to turn digital, by arranging a digital seminar, launching websites for district administration

(www.dcbagerhat.gov.bd) and local press club (www.bagerhatpressclub.com), and a Community e-Centre (CeC) for Rampal upazila, arranging a roundtable conference on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to prevent Crime and a workshop on how to enrich district information on wikipedia. The slogan is Bagerhat Hobe Digital.

According to Munir Hasan, general secretary of Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Committee, it was an awareness build-up extravaganza about how to bring forward a district to others digitally. He said intellectuals of the knowledge-based society participate in ICT oriented programmes but Bagerhat truly broke the jinx.

Festival chronicles

On the first day, State Minister for Science and ICT Dr Yeafesh Osman, in a seminar titled 'A Dreamy Bagerhat and Digital Technology', encouraged all to use digital technology to make the country prosperous. Eminent professor Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, the co-ordinator of the seminar, asked to start the second atomic electric plant of the country with the help of local scientists. Khulna City Mayor Talukdar Abdul Khaleque, lawmakers Mir Shawkat Ali, Habibun Nahar Talukdar and Moajammel Hossain welcomed the move. Mostafa

Jabbar, president of Bangladesh Computer Samity, stressed being connected with second submarine cable network within the shortest possible time. Bagerhat Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Moazzem Hossain, police chief Md Mizanur Rahman, Bagerhat Mayor Khan Habibur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

After inauguration of Bagerhat district administration website, Moazzem Hossain said not only the administration, but also the people, would be empowered through this website. The DC said people will now get information about various important issues the moment they want.

In another programme, the Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology inaugurated Rampal upazila CeC with support from the Asian Development Bank. It offers various facilities such as using computer with Internet connection, making international calls through mobile phone, capturing digital image through web cam and many others. Four other upazilas are going to get CeC soon with the help of CeC Bangladesh.

A roundtable conference titled ICT to prevent Crime was held at the local press club the same day where the discussants opined to create a database of criminals and a digital

map of the areas of all police stations of the country to improve law and order. They informed that a project was underway with Sadar Police Station piloting the project of creating database.

On the second day, a workshop styled 'Keeping the information of Bagerhat district up to date in the Wikipedia' was held. A committee was formed in this regard. It was told in the workshop that the important information of nine upazilas of Bagerhat will be included in the Bangladeshpedia within next three months.

A seminar was held at Bagerhat Cultural Foundation auditorium where Additional District Commissioner (Revenue) Md Delwar Haider presented paper on 'The Dreamy Bagerhat through multimedia presentation. Md Sirazul Islam, who teaches physics at Bagerhat Govt PC College, presented a paper on 'The responsibility of educational institutions to create digital Bagerhat.'

A bracnet employee shows the Classmate PC to a visitor at the fair organised on the sidelines of Gyan Utsob 2009: Bagerhat Hobe Digital, top, one of the key-note speakers presents a paper at a seminar, bottom-right and a rally was organised before the festival started.

PHOTO: STAR

Bagerhat Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Md Aftab Uddin presented paper on Climate Change and Food Security: Context of Bagerhat'. The seminar stressed preparing a database featuring the scenario of education in the district.

Other outcomes

The Ministry of ICT agreed to help establish two computer laboratories, one at a school and the other at a college, for students. The assurance is branded as a milestone as it was earlier restricted to the selected beneficiaries. In the seminars, the need of making the tourism sector of Bagerhat digitally presentable was discussed. Along with, the scope outsourcing the local ICT based works to Bagerhat was also dug up.

The discussants agreed to form a committee to oversee the initiatives to accomplish the Digital Bagerhat. The committee would prepare short, middle and long-term work lists.

The initiators

Bangladesh Open Source Network (BDoSN), District Administration of Bagerhat, Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Committee, Computer Jagat, BTN, Intel, Bangladesh Astronomical Society, Rupantor, Bagerhat Press Club and Bagerhat Cultural Centre joined hand to manage the programme.

TECH NEWS



Microsoft unveils line of Windows phones

AFP, Paris

MICROSOFT chief Steve Ballmer on Tuesday unveiled his company's line of Windows smartphones in an offensive against Apple's iPhone and Google's Android system.

Around 30 types of "Windows phones" with various designs will be available by the end of the year in more than 20 countries.

Seven phone-makers, including Sony, Samsung and Toshiba, and 16 operators including Orange, Vodafone and T-Mobile, are involved in the launch.

The phones, which combine the ability to make calls, surf the Internet and view videos, carry Microsoft's Windows Mobile 6.5 operating system.

"We have done a lot of work on the user interface, we simplified the user interface," Ballmer told a news conference at Microsoft's new French headquarters near Paris in Issy-les-Moulineaux.

"We have taken the Internet Explorer browser technologies, and we rebuilt

them for the first time for these Windows phones. So you can get the same experience on these phones that you will get on your windows PC," he said.

The new mobile operating system was launched simultaneously in France and New York on Tuesday.

With Tuesday's launch Microsoft hopes to reassert itself on the smartphone market, where it has lost ground. The sector is considered especially promising, with 29 percent jump in sales expected this year.

But in the second quarter only 9.0 percent of all smartphones sold were equipped with Microsoft's operating system, against 12 percent a year earlier, according to the Gartner research group.

At the same time, Apple's iPhone has seen its share jump from 2.8 to 13.3 percent.

Google, which launched its Android system in early 2008 and is provided free to phone-makers, managed to secure a share of almost 2.0 percent in a few months and could gain further ground in the fourth quarter this year.

TECH NEWS

E-reader sales soaring but Apple captures the buzz

AFP, Washington

SALES of electronic book readers are booming, companies are jostling for a share of the fledgling market and Amazon's going global with the Kindle.

So why is all the buzz about Apple?

Because the California company behind the Macintosh computer, iPhone and iPod is rumored to be coming out with a portable tablet computer early next year that may double as an e-reader.

And not just a black-and-white e-reader but one that would boast full color and a 10-inch (25-centimeter) screen making it more of an oversized iPod Touch or a netbook computer, the increasingly popular low-cost mini-laptops.

Forrester Research, Inc., in a report released on Wednesday, estimated that three million e-readers would be sold in the United States this year, up from a previous forecast of two million units.

Forrester said it expected 900,000 units to be sold in the upcoming holiday season alone and for e-reader sales to double to six million units next year, bringing cumulative sales to 10 million units.

Amazon's Kindle, the book giant, is among those expected to throw down the gauntlet to market leader Amazon next along with Plastic Logic, maker of a lightweight large-screen device geared towards newspaper and magazines.

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TECH INTERVIEW

Fulfilling the vision of Digital Bangladesh 2021

ON the sidelines of Gyan Utsob 2009: Bagerhat Hobe Digital, its co-organiser Munir Hasan, who is also the general secretary of Bangladesh Open Source Network spoke to StarTech about the fair.

StarTech: Why does a private organisation, not the government, have to initiate a programme like Bagerhat Hobe Digital programme?

MH: Actually it is a public-private partnership programme through which Digital Bangladesh could be accomplished within 2021 as per the government declaration. It is true that a private organisation step forward to accomplish the programme, but the government agencies took part there deliberately.

ST: Is the government taking initiative to turn Bangladesh digital?

MH: The government is marching forward with huge work plan with 10 objectives, 56 strategic themes and 306 action items to fulfil one vision Digital Bangladesh 2021. Accordingly, the ICT act was amended and five CeC are being established. Actually the private works are more apparent than the government one but people enjoy the benefits from government initiatives for the long run.

ST: Do you really think that Digital

Bagerhat programme is significant for us? MH: Well, it was an awareness building programme through which general people will be benefited and it is really the beginning of a dream. And it is the public who has to come forward to accomplish it. It means we have to think how we can reform our work strategies technologically. Incorporating the technology in work is a part in it, simultaneously, we have to do research to get more outcome out of the technology use. Besides, I would say, the programme was organised to make people understood regarding their stake in Digital Bagerhat which at the end of the day transformed trustworthy.

ST: What do you think the initiators should do now?

MH: Now, the organiser has to keep the tempo among the people of Bagerhat upward so that the digitisation in education, administration, e-Centres, tourism sector, Mongla Sea Port and so on is being kept moving.

ST: Are you going to arrange same kind of programme?

MH: Many districts are now showing interests in it. Among them Panchagarh, Comilla and Brahmanbaria are ahead. We are going to arrange same programme at Panchagarh soon.

TECH PHOTO

Singing Bot

A humanoid robot "HRP-4C", developed by Japanese institute AIST, sings songs accompanied by Yamaha's autoplay piano is, for a demonstration of instrument giant Yamaha's voice synthesis technology "Vocaloid" at the Ceatec exhibition, Asia's largest electronics trade show Ceatec in Chiba on October 6, 2009.

PHOTO: AFP

