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How digitised are we?

MUSA IBRAHIM

Changing and developing the standard of lifestyle, increasing per capita income and creating jobs are the key issues of 'Digital Bangladesh' targeted to be achieved through knowledge based society driven by information and communication technology (ICT). The powerful strides of ICT are helping many countries to halve the financial and social backlog. Unfortunately, Bangladesh could not scale like those countries, which achieved the ubiquitous advancements in all sectors leveraging the ICT.

The government has already recommended adaptation of Unicode for the standard Bangla computing

So comes the vision of 'Digital Bangladesh', the target is set to be achieved by 2021. According to the experts, ICT reduces costs, improves efficiency, saves time, raises confidence level among the employees through easy replication of the process. Therefore, we need the service delivery sectors like tax department, water supply, gas, police, land department, city corporation, electricity, banks, customs, insurance etc. fully digitised.

The government has approved an ICT Policy 2009 with 306 action items. Accordingly, the country now has short term, mid term and long term strategic themes with an aim to establish good and transparent governance, develop skilled manpower, ensure the service available to the citizen through public-private partnership and transform Bangladesh into a middle income country

PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Automation of Chittagong customs has made the work flow process much simpler

by 2021 and a developed country within thirty years.

Addressing a query -- how we can achieve this -- the experts say the country has to have the proper connectivity, huge opportunities of employments so that citizens can perform the outsourced jobs at home and thus the ICT can play a pivotal role. Munir Hasan, a consultant to the Ministry of Science and ICT, said, "A personal computer used to cost $3000 in 1984 and its operating system's cost was only $1. But now a far better pc with very good performance costs less than $1000 but the operating system's cost increased to $200. That means there is no substitute to knowledge to develop a nation. So, we need ICT to make ourselves a middle income country."

The government has already recommended adaptation of Unicode for the standard Bangla computing and also developed the national web portal (www.bangladesh.gov.bd) in Bangla language apart from English. Web portals for 64 districts have also been developed. The information of passport and tax of land development has been made easy through publishing the websites of 19 district adminis-

trations. It is also decided to conduct research to launch Bangla OCR.

The government has already distributed laptops with internet to the deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers (UNO) so that they can communicate with the central government any time. They have also been advised to correspond with the higher authorities through e-mail.

To increase the internet and intranet connectivity, the bandwidth fee has already been slashed 33 percent and the internet through cell phones has been introduced.

The government has also sped up the service delivery to the doorsteps using the ICT. The citizens of Dhaka, Sylhet, Pabna, Rajshahi can pay the electricity bill, and gas bill using the

cell phone and this is how the work hour is saved. People can now check the availability of train ticket and schedule through cell phones. The disaster management authority has started circulating the disaster information via cell phone in Sirajganj and Cox's Bazar districts.

As a recent advancement in education sector, the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology completed its admission process using ICT through cell phone. The admission test result for government medical colleges was also published over cell phone, first of its kind. The textbooks are now available in internet (www.nctb.gov.bd) from where the school students can download them for free.

Almost 800 health centres across the country are now connected through the internet and mobile phone. So the video conferencing between the district health offices or headquarters and the physicians is now possible. There are more than 2,300 information centres, community e-centres and telecentres across the country to avail all necessary information.

The benchmark advancement was done through making the Chittagong Customs House fully automatic -- a clear indication of transforming an organisation digitised to ease the process and serve the people better. The Dhaka Customs House is also running the automation in trail basis. The Bangladesh Bank also started the test run of its automated clearing house.

The non-government initiatives are also remarkable to achieve the target of Digital Bangladesh. Digital festivals, IT fair, Information festivals were arranged by Bangladesh Computer Samity, BASIS and Bangladesh Open Source Network. Mobile handset manufacturer Nokia also helped creating the awareness for 'Digital Bangladesh'.

The experts termed all the ICT leveraging activities in our daily life a positive growth for the country.

Skilled HR for IT and telecom industry

SYEDA NAFISA NAWAL

With the advent and growth of the ICT and telecom sector, Bangladesh has experienced a dramatic progress in infrastructure. Over the last two decades, the flow of communication has increased remarkably which has consequently accelerated economic activities- thanks to ICT and telecom. If we can ensure a business friendly environment, adequate assistance and patronisation, this sector may bring great fortunes for the country.

So far, so good. But first of all it would be essential to strengthen the sector's resources if we want it to give out its best. Only technical advancements are not enough; creation of business value and proper commercialization are also essential. Since the product of this sector is intangible, it relies more on capital resources and human resources.

In fact, human resources influence the profitability bilaterally - by creating high quality products and ensuring their commercialisation. A strong workforce equipped with innovative business ideas, technical expertise, scientific intellect, managerial skills and marketing skills can boost the sector further.

Nowadays, more than ever young people are craving to build their careers in ICT and telecom. It indeed a green signal, but if these potential resources are not trained well enough, the outcome would be disappointing.

Potential human resources should be imparted with standard education along with adequate training facilities for acquiring necessary business skills and working skills. Introduction of related subjects in the mainstream education and formulation of higher education policies in this regard are very crucial.

Besides that, arrangement of fairs, exhibitions, seminars and workshops would be very helpful in reaching out to potential human resources and grooming them. Last but not the least; government must work on it seriously if we want a lasting and positive change in the sector.

For years, we have neglected our HR. It's high time we put the right people in the right place. If we can ensure quality HR for our ICT sector, it won't be late to reach the heights of Silicon Valley. Lets hope for the best.

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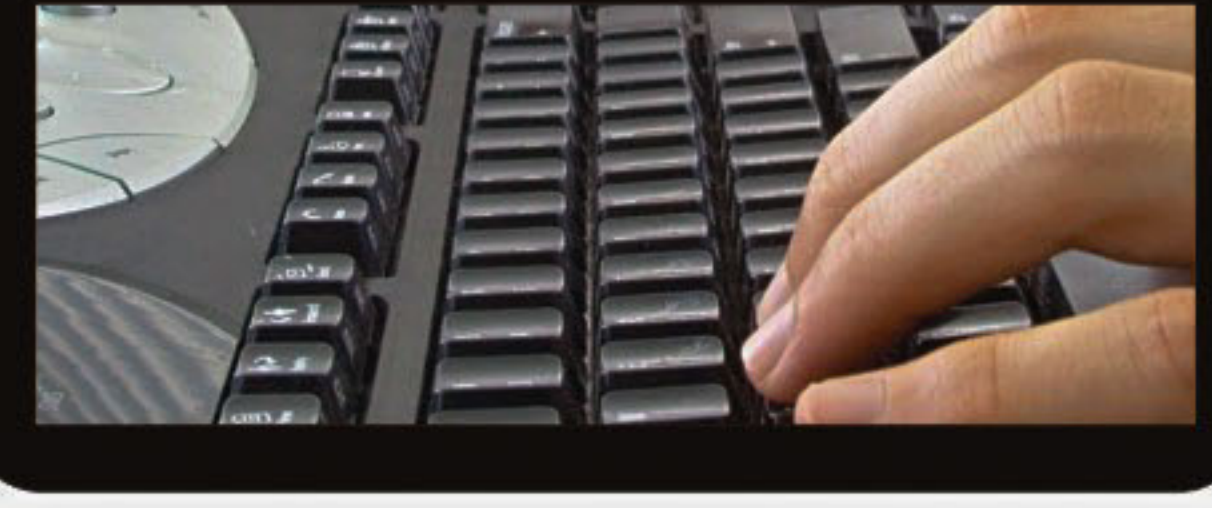
A million dollar opportunity

IT.TELECOM DESK

Nokia has announced $ 1 million venture challenge to encourage innovators to create a mobile product or service that raises the standard of living or enhances the lives of those in growth economies, says a press release.

Announcing the Growth Economy Venture Challenge, Nokia CEO Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo called on innovators across the globe to become a part of a revolution by bringing mobile solutions to the parts of the world that can benefit most.

The Challenge will consider any submission that enhances the target growth economy and also provides a potential return on the investment.

It is not limited to software or hardware that uses Nokia device or software platforms. In fact, as many emerging markets have varying degrees of mobile and internet adaptation, submissions can also expand beyond the mobile phone.

Samples projects of the challenge are available at www.theprogressproject.com.

Interested innovators can learn more and submit their projects at www.callingallinnovators.com.

After selection, ten finalists will be invited to present their ideas and business models to a panel of Nokia business people and private venture capitalists.

The million dollars will be invested in a single winning organisation with the best idea decided by a combination of judges from Nokia Growth Partners, Nokia's venture arm, and Forum Nokia, Nokia's organisation dedicated to 3rd party developers and other innovators.

Finalists will be announced by mid May 2010. The final winner will be announced in June, 2010. The deadline for submissions is April 18, 2010.

The X-factor with X3

IT.TELECOM DESK

Are you a music lover? Then you will love this phone for sure. Pioneering new ways to experience music, Nokia announced the first model of the new "X" Series, the new Nokia X3 in Bangladesh turning over a new leaf in the development of their music line-up that was, until recently, called XpressMusic.

Nokia X3 will certainly appeal to people on the lookout for a compact and affordable music-oriented handset. The X3 is a slider phone utilising Series 40 interface and equipped with 2.2-inch display, 3.2-megapixel camera. It is a sleek and compact music device that comes with stereo speakers and built-in FM radio. This phone comes with dedicated music and volume keys to

control your sounds. It also has a combined send/end key and camera-shutter key for quick and easy operation. The design also features lighting effects around the dedicated 'Navi' key.

Priced for mass-market appeal, it is the first S40 device - the classic Nokia interface loved by millions - to offer direct access to Ovi Store, Nokia's online store for mobile application

and content. Using the store's catalogue of applications no two X3's need ever be the same.

The Nokia X3 sports a diminutive frame and 2.2-inch screen. Support for up to 16GB of storage via microSD card make for a nifty mobile music device. The X3 also sports an active homescreen where users will be able to see their contacts, friends and current music playing. Music lovers will also be able to continue listening on flights thanks to flight mode.

Bluetooth 2.1 is supported with stereo audio profiles for wireless musical enjoyment. Wire fans will be able to use standard headphones thanks to the 3.5mm headphone jack. Full speed USB 2.0 makes music transfer quick and easy and music can be managed via the Ovi Player PC client and Windows Media Player 11.

Messaging is well supported too. Alongside a common inbox for SMS and MMS in conversational view, Nokia Xpress Audio Messaging is supported and Nokia Messaging 2.0 brings users' existing email and IM accounts to the device.

Just take a look at the Nokia X3 and you will immediately notice it´s successor to the handsets of the XpressMusic line-up. The phone is priced at BDT 11300.

Symbian phone software now available for free

AP, New York

The Symbian Foundation says the software that powers the most smart phones in the world is being made largely available for free for anyone to use.

The foundation was set up in 2008 after Nokia Corp., the biggest maker of Symbian phones, bought out the consortium that made the software. Nokia decided to give the software away starting Thursday to make it more popular with other manufacturers, a move not uncommon in the technology world.

Lee Williams, executive director of the London-based foundation, said it has now completed the largest-ever conversion of proprietary software to "open source," which means the source code, or blueprint for the software, is available to anyone. However, software associated with some phone features has yet to be released.

Symbian software is used on more than 330 million phones around the world, the foundation said. It is facing new and vigorous competition in the smart phone arena from

Apple Inc.'s iPhone and Google Inc.'s Android system. Android is also freely available for anyone to use.

Analysts say Symbian, which has more than 10 years of development behind it, is starting to look outdated and has lagged in supporting must-have new features like touch screen. Symbian phones have never been big sellers in the U.S.

The open-source version of the software is known as Symbian 3, and supersedes previous versions like Series 60 and Series 40.

symbian OS