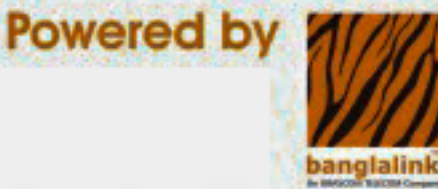


IT & TELECOM

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Computing in Bangla

MUSA IBRAHIM

Bangladesh, a language-driven country, loses much of its charm if the Bangla language is not present in computing.

The language of the computer is only '1' and '0'. Another technique of translating human language into machine (computer) language was needed, namely ASCII. Moreover, development of this technology did not take place at the same pace all over the world. People who developed the technology, they did it only in English as per their language by origin.

As computer use disseminated all over the world, people from different language backgrounds wanted to have the technology in their own language. So comes Unicode. It solved the local language problem in computer use and now any language has become readable in computers. As Unicode is a system that combines more than 65,000 signs (ASCII has only 256 signs), so all languages of the world and all of its symbols can be accommodated in Unicode (mapping).

This is how the Bangla language is now in computing. When mapping in Unicode for the Bangla language is defined, the computer recognises the language as symbols. And if any software is developed in Unicode, it will recognise the alphabet 'Ka' as symbol. That means if Unicode supports all Bangla writing processes in computers in Bangladesh, everyone will be able to see it.

As developers have assembled hundreds of elements, the barriers to computing in Bangla have come to an end. This does not only solve



the Bangla writing problem in computers, but one can write e-mails, upload their Facebook status, develop websites, create calendars and send SMS in Bangla.

The operating system was also an obstacle to Bangla computing. Developers came up with an open source software and operating system, Linux. This open source software enables four types of freedom -- users can handle it as per their demand, the opportunity to view the source code and to edit as necessary, the chance of re-dissemination and to develop, dis-

tribution and to sell new software originated form it -- which were important for Bangla computing, based on this open source software.

The biggest open source project in Bangla is wikipedia -- <http://bn.wikipedia.org>. Bangladesh Open Source Network's (BDOSN) sister concern BanglaWiki is leading in this regard, which already includes more than 15,000 literatures in wikipedia. This also helps the Bangla language's sustainability in the internet, though 80-90 percent of internet based jobs are done in English at this moment.

The demand for computing in Bangla comes to reality in 2004 with the help of hundreds of thousands of volunteers. The first Bangla version of Linux operating system 'Ankur' was made public through the internet. It also came to the market in CDs at the 2005 software fair.

Now all versions of Linux -- Fedora, Red Hat, Debian and the latest Ubuntu -- are enabled under the Bangla operating system. BDOSN (www.bdosn.org) started distribution of Ubuntu and Sycet Publication started distribution of two versions of Bangla

operating system 'Shraboni' of Ankur in the Ekushey Book Fair, which was a milestone for Bangla computing.

But the job of total transformation of these two operating systems in the Bangla language is not done yet.

However, Linux is now available with Bangla Office Suit (www.openoffice.org), web browsing in Bangla by Mozilla Firebox (www.mozilla.com), e-mail management in Bangla by Thunderbird (www.mozillamessaging.com/en-US/thunderbird), instant messenger pidgin (www.pidgin.im/), media player VLC (www.videolan.org/vlc/), media library, audio player and Game (for SMS).

Now the job of developing websites in Bangla is easy with Linux and Unicode based content management system 'Joomla'. Open blog platform Wordpress is also available for use in Bangla.

Another company, Ankur ICT Development Foundation (www.ankur.org.bd), adds few feathers in Bangla computing through Linux. It develops Pidgin (for internet chat in a single platform), VLC media player, Bangla word master - based on Unicode and combines over three lakh Bangla words, Genome desktop and Bangla operating system 'HoiMonti', based on Linux.

Munir Hasan, a consultant to the science and ICT ministry Hasan stressed the government is committed to perform all its computing needs in Bangla and it was also included in the ICT policy. He also said all web portals of all ministries will be done in Bangla by 2010 along with English.

Protect your car through vehicle tracking system

IT, TELECOM DESK

Monitoring and safeguarding any vehicle is now possible from anywhere in the country.

NTrack Vehicle Tracking System is a state-of-the-art service which enables anyone to track a vehicle or a fleet to ensure better security of vehicles by reducing auto-theft which has been an alarming issue these days in major metro areas, says a press release.

With this service, anybody can even switch off their car from a remote location. One only requires a GPRS enabled handset and a Banglalink data package to go to internet to monitor the vehicle live.

Banglalink and NITS Service Pvt. Ltd., a sister concern of Nitol-Niloy Group, signed an agreement on September 9 last year to jointly promote the NTrack Vehicle Tracking System. A special discount of 20 percent on device price and yearly service charges will be provided to Banglalink users.

Some of the major features of NTrack are -- Live tracking with street level mapping that will display address, speed and direction of the vehicle, SMS alerts for crossing speed limit, reaching pre-defined location, unauthorized route, remote security control and shutting off engine to protect theft, a web interface to track down the vehicle throughout Bangladesh, fuel cost and mileage reports and arrival and departure reports.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) HQ also has a monitoring tool at their end for NTrack by which they will be able to monitor any stolen vehicle if the device is installed in that car.



Computer Source opens largest IT service centre

IT, TELECOM DESK

Computer Source inaugurated its largest one stop Information Technology (IT) service center in Dhaka to provide international standard facilities on February 17.

The inauguration program was headed by Syeda Mazeda Meher Nigar, Chairperson of Computer

Nokia's 'new toy' in the playground

IT, TELECOM DESK

With mind-blowing colours, chart-booster music and flashing lights at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon ballroom, Nokia launched its new top-of-the-line handset the Nokia X6 and the new web portal on February 18.

The event styled "Welcome to the Nokia Playground" was a showcase to launch the handset with four experience booths, which were giving the invitees the real experience of the handset and the new web portal.

The new Nokia X6 has a 16:9 wide screen optimised for photos, videos and browsing. It offers easy access to social networks like Facebook and Twitter and capable of playing up to 35 hours with music using 16 GB onboard memory. It has a slick 3.2 finger touch interface that allows users to play games using only the touch feature and a five-mega pixel camera with Carl Zeiss lens. The Nokia X6 could be pre-ordered from one of the experience booths.

The web portal www.nowplaying.nokia.com.bd was featured in one of the experience booths, where invitees could

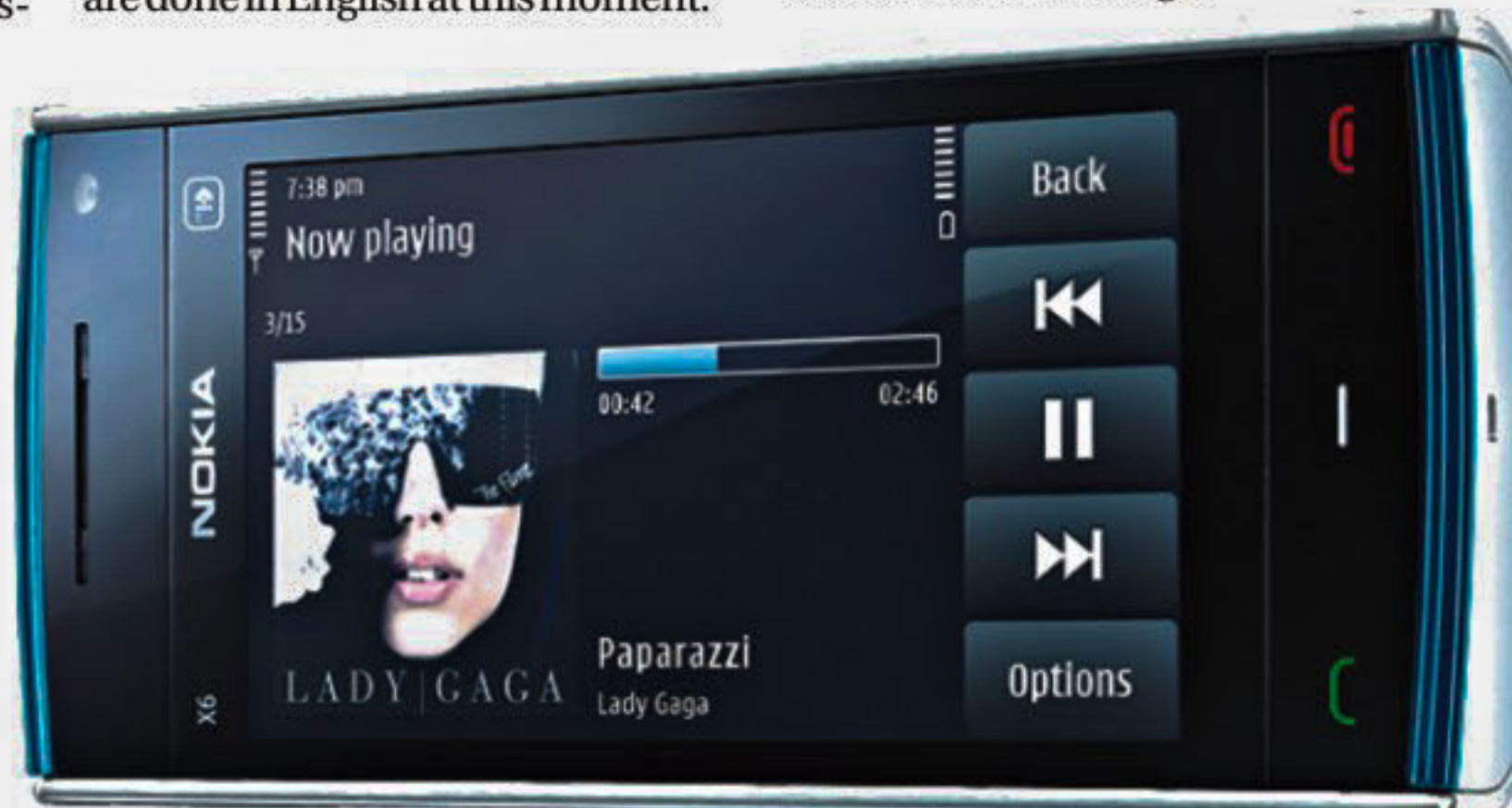
go and sample the portal that is designed not only for music, but also for entertainment such as games and application from Ovi Store. Famous Bangladeshi musicians Fuad and Feedback have partnered with Nokia, giving music fans a chance to be connected with them through their blogs at the portal.

"The essence of Nokia has always been connecting people to their passions. We are all about enabling everyone to make the most of every moment," Prem Chand, general manager of Nokia Emerging Asia, said.

"We want to facilitate the famous Bangladeshi culture 'adda' with the portal," said the GM.

Priced at Tk 30,800, the pre-order offer for the Nokia X6 started from February 19 and will continue till March 10 this year. The first fifty consumers, who make pre-order from Nokia stores in Bashundhara City, Gulshan and Uttara, will win the Nokia Bluetooth Stereo Headset BH-503. The handset will be available from March 2010.

The night was marked by live performances by Fuad and Feedback.



Microsoft to pull Facebook, MySpace into Outlook

AP, Seattle

Microsoft Corp. is taking another step toward turning Outlook, its desktop e-mail program, into a hub for information from popular social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace.

Microsoft's "beta" test version of the Outlook Social Connector, an add-on for Outlook, was first discussed last November. When a user clicks to read an e-mail message, a new pane on the main e-mail reading screen fills with the sender's most recent social-networking activities. That could be that sender's new Facebook status update or a newly added professional contact on the business networking site LinkedIn.

On Wednesday, Microsoft updated the Social Connector software, and LinkedIn released the first outside plug-in for the feature.

Microsoft has a mixed record when it comes to Web trends. The company's free Hotmail and Windows Live Messenger programs are widely used, but its Windows Live blog and social network didn't pick up much steam in the face of competition from Facebook. In this case, a small startup called Xobni has already built an Outlook add-on that combines inbox search with content from Facebook, LinkedIn and others.

Microsoft's software also treats Outlook itself

as a social network. If the e-mail sender and recipient are jointly working on a document stored on a company's Sharepoint server, both will see updates if one logs on to make edits.

For now, the software doesn't let people use Outlook to push information back up to LinkedIn, Facebook or other sites.

People using Office 2003, 2007 and beta versions of Office 2010 can download the updated Outlook Social Connector beta from Microsoft and then visit LinkedIn for the add-on software.

Microsoft said the Facebook and MySpace plug-ins will be ready for download by the time Office 2010 goes on sale in June.

Will Kennedy, a corporate vice president for the Office group, said some of Microsoft's business customers have expressed concern that employees will become less productive if they have all this extra information at their fingertips.

But Kennedy sees business-friendly uses for the Social Connector. He thinks it could speed up processes that require approval from a string of people, because each person in that chain could see when it's time for him or her to weigh in.

"We don't want this to sort of be the next great time waster in the workplace," he said.

TECHPHOTO

Eye-controlled earphones

A man controls his mp3 player with his eyes at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, on February 18, 2010. The Eye-Controlled Earphones, on show at the Mobile World Congress, have electrodes around the outside of the buds. These electrodes, called 'electroculograms' (EOG), detect tiny difference in the electrical potential of the eyes as they move.

PHOTO: AFP



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