

VoIP: Beauty and the beast

NAHID AKHTER

The delight of being able to hear the voices of our dear ones abroad is priceless, but the bills at the end of the day remind us that 'priceless' is an exaggerated word. Nothing comes free, and neither does maintenance of long distance ties. What if by some quirk of technology, we were able to speak long distance at greatly reduced costs? Today, with VoIP (voice over internet protocol), this can be a reality.

VoIP refers to a collection of transmission technologies, which make voice communications possible over internet. It is also known as internet telephony and helps the conversion of voice into a digital signal that can be sent over the Internet. These signals are then compressed and translated to IP (internet protocol) packets for transmission. They are converted to a regular telephone signal, if the user is calling on a normal phone. In other words, it facilitates the use of your personal computer to make telephone calls.

The use of this technology simply involves downloading and installation of a VoIP software like 'Skype' or 'Vonage', purchasing low-cost VoIP cards from the local market or online and using the number on the card for verification and then dialling the re-

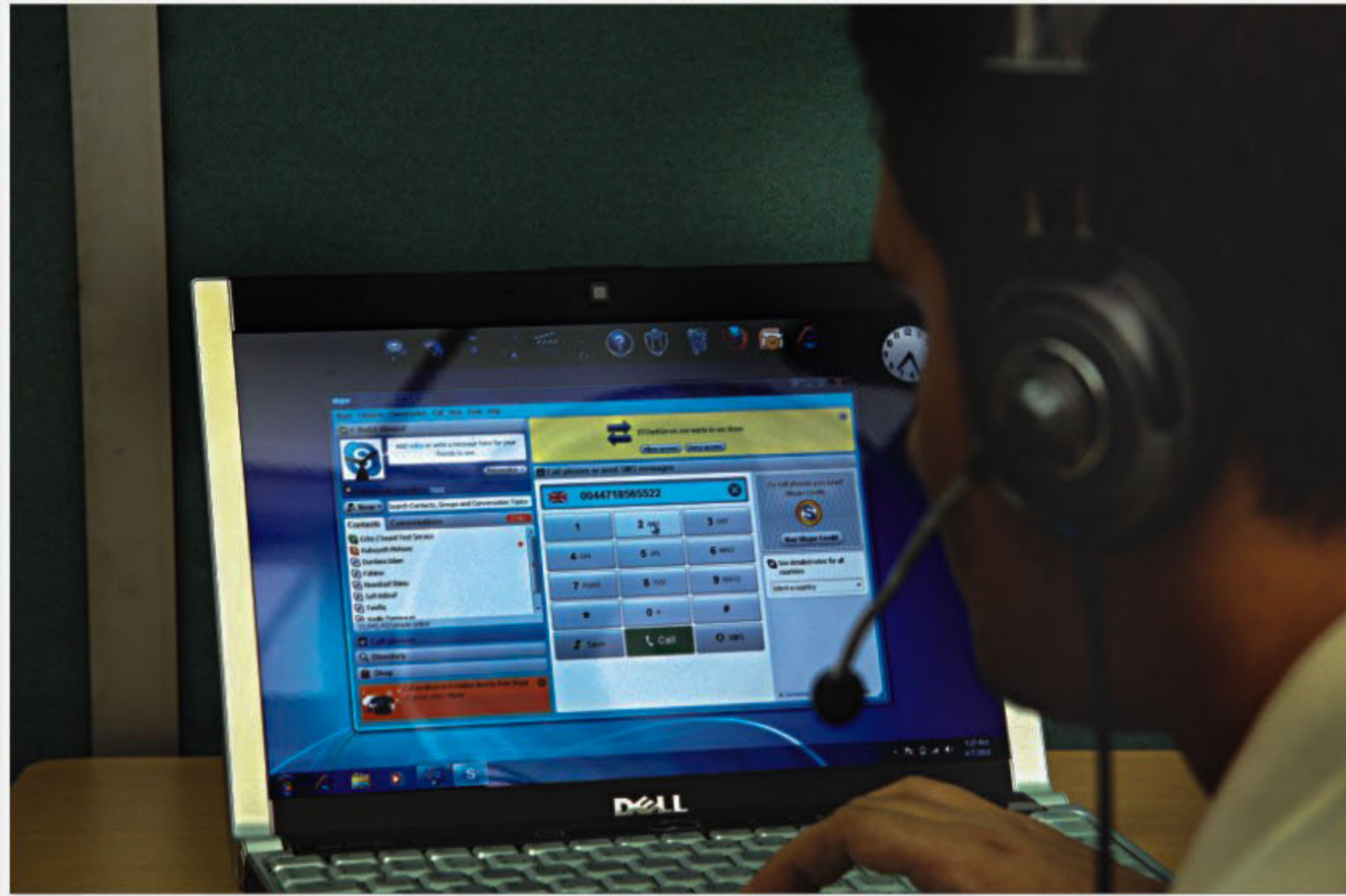
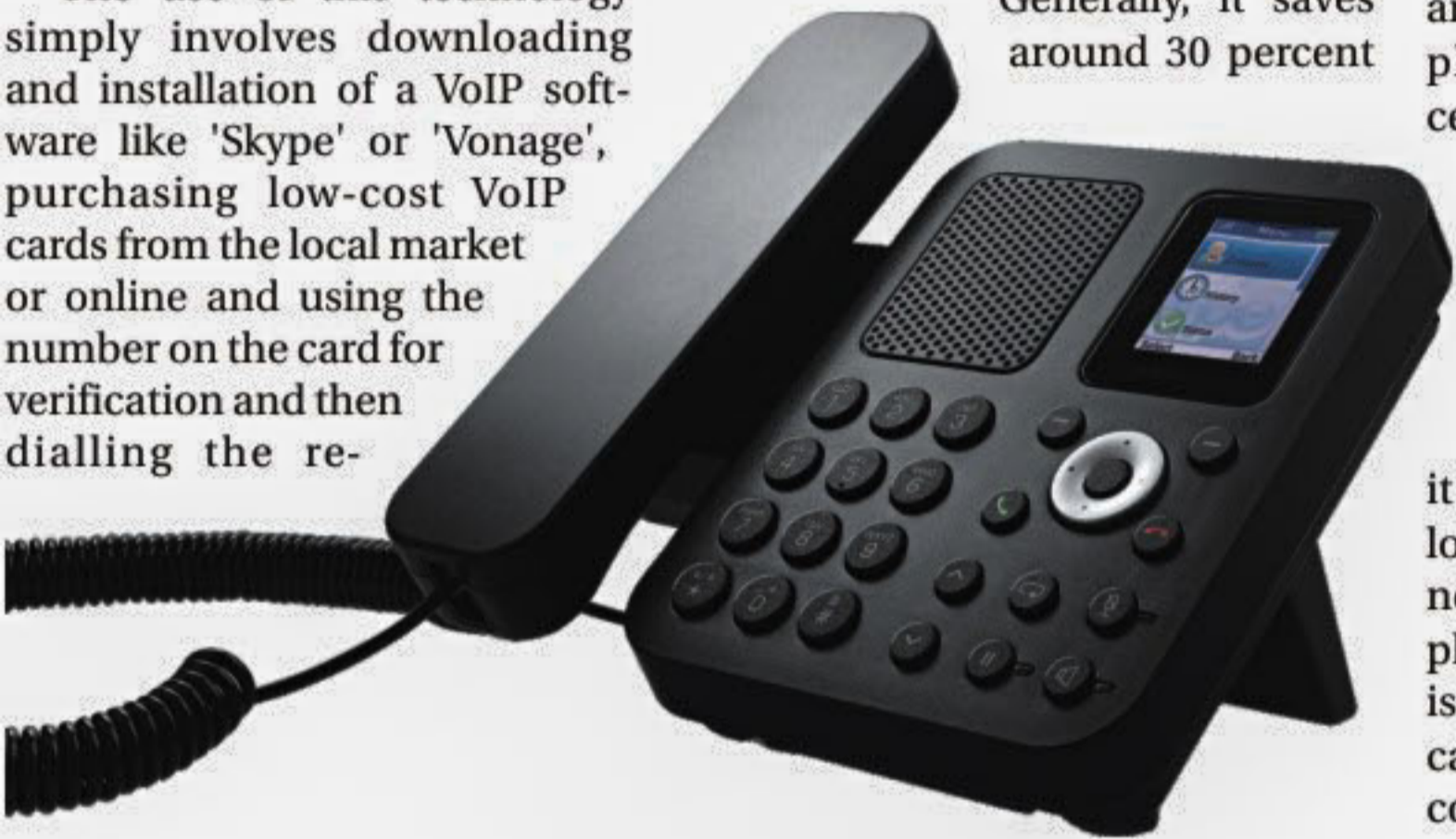


PHOTO: RASHED SHUJON

quired telephone number from the PC.

The most important benefit of VoIP is of course, reduced cost.

Generally, it saves around 30 percent



to 50 percent of traditional phone bills, and sometimes even more. Because VoIP is all done over the internet, it cuts out the phone lines and expensive networks that other phones require. By bypassing cellphone towers and telephone lines, and using cheap internet access, you eliminate the middleman and the distance in between you and the person you are talking to.

The beauty of cheap VoIP is that it can be used anywhere and as long as you have an internet connection. Since it involves the employment of the internet, the user is able to integrate computer applications like email, e-fax and web conferencing, with the telephone.

It gives the provision of using the phone, while accessing all other programs, and surfing the Internet at the same time. It is also possible for the users to take the VoIP adapters anywhere, and use their number at any place where internet is available. This feature is particularly helpful for those with active lifestyle and whose jobs require a lot of travel. Not to mention, all such calls made this way are also relatively cheaper.

However, all good things in life run the risk of misuse. There are growing concerns on the possibility that unwanted VoIP advertising messages -- often referred to as Spam over internet telephony, or SPIT -- will overwhelm IP voice

systems, such as email spam has overwhelmed email messaging systems. VoIP is also susceptible to worms, viruses and hacking. But the worst case of misuse of VoIP is in the execution of cyber crimes. Terror groups increasingly use this service in their planning stages since it is cheap and very difficult to track. Effective measures by security agencies to monitor and regulate (not block) VoIP calls could help in bringing more order to the VoIP regime and prevent potential misuse.

Some ISPs (internet service providers) and governments have taken it in their own hands to censor what their Internet subscribers can or cannot do online. Scared of the loss of revenue posed by VoIP, some incumbent telephone companies and governments have in the past blocked ports so that calls cannot connect with a user on their network. Certain telephone companies have even gone as far as to block Google Talk, MSN Messenger and Yahoo! IM because they have also offered voice as well as text chat.

However, in spite of all the restrictions, people have managed to find their way around by using applications that dodge the blockage. Technology is such a thing that whenever a path is closed, someone always eventually finds a crack to it. So all these drives for banning VoIP technology are actually pointless. These governments should rather find a more lucrative way to utilise this technology to enhance their business, and at the same time allow their citizens to reap the benefits of cheaper phone calls.

Dell to open office in Dhaka

IT, TELECOM DESK

Dell Incorporation, one of the largest technology companies in the world, will open its local representative office very soon to expand its business in the country.

But Dell has no plan for setting up a manufacturing plant in Bangladesh right yet, said a visiting high official of the company.

While presenting a keynote paper to the consumers, partners and policymakers from the banking, public sector and telecom industries at a city hotel on March 31, Tian Beng Ng, Dell general manager (South Asia) also said the decision of opening an office in Bangladesh was taken as his company sees an impressive long term growth opportunity in Bangladesh.

"I am impressed by what I have seen during this visit and Dell is committed to growing our presence in Bangladesh and establishing a representative office in Dhaka," he added.

Though Dell products are comparatively expensive than other companies, the Dell GM (South Asia) said, they will market their products in Bangladesh in future considering the economic condition of the people.

Welcoming the present government's vision to build 'Digital Bangladesh', he termed it as an excellent initiative, adding, "Dell is ready to extend its cooperation to this end."

During the presentation, Tian outlined Dell's vision and spoke about the corporate steps his organisation is taking to continue to remain the global IT leader.

Reiterating Dell's long-term commitment to Bangladesh, Tian said, Dell pledged to build a generation of people in Bangladesh and across the globe for today's economy by helping them gaining access of the right technology resources, teaching them how and when to use them.



Tian Beng Ng, Dell general manager (South Asia), speaks at the event

Globitel and Interactive launch services with Onecall

IT, TELECOM DESK

World-renowned business solution providers Interactive Intelligence and Globitel have jointly launched their services in Bangladesh in partnership with Onecall Solutions Ltd, says a press release.

Onecall offers communications technologies for contact centre solutions, next-generation enterprise, conference bridging, SMS gateway, performance and workforce management systems and much more.

To provide these services in international standard, Onecall has formed partnerships with the solution providers from across the globe.

Globitel is a leading global provider of telecom solutions. The company is introducing some of its customer care solutions to



Sharp shows 3D displays for mobile devices

AP, Tokyo

Sharp's latest 3-D displays deliver bright, clear imagery without the cumbersome glasses usually required for such technology. Now the bad news: They only work on a 3-inch (7.5-centimeter) screen held one foot (30 centimeters) from the viewer's face.

Sharp Corp. demonstrated liquid crystal screens Friday for mobile devices that showed 3-D animation, touch-panel screens that switched from one 3-D photo to another and a display connected to a 3-D video camera.

Movies and TVs in 3-D are no longer surprising. Sony Corp. and Panasonic Corp. of Japan, as well as South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co. and LG Electronics, already sell or are planning 3-D TVs.

The drawback until now has been the need for special glasses, which show different images to the right eye and the left eye. Sharp's 3-D technology doesn't require them because the displays are designed to shoot different images to each eye.

The technology may be applied to TVs in the future, said Executive Man-

aging Officer Yoshisuke Hasegawa. But he acknowledged it now works better when the distance between the viewer and the screen is fixed.

The smaller displays, shown Friday, are intended for mobile devices such as cell phones, game machines and digital cameras.

The 3-D animation on the handheld screen looked like a miniature version of the 3-D animation we are used to seeing on larger TV screens, though images were less convincing than those seen in a darkened cinema.

Photos on the touch screen were less clear and even a bit blurry from certain angles, though Sharp said its latest technology does away with such "ghosting" effects.

Still, the system promises gaming and technology fans the potential for pop-up e-mail messages and taking 3-D photos of friends.

The technology is likely to show up in the next DSi portable game machine, which Nintendo Co. says will be 3-D. Sharp refused to confirm the names of companies it was supplying.

Sharp expects 3-D to replace two-dimensional displays the same way color replaced black-and-white in movies and television.

Seminar on software development industry

IT, TELECOM DESK

Software development company bGlobal Interactive LTD organised a seminar styled 'SQABD Lightning Talks 4' recently in the capital. IT professionals of the country attended the seminar and discussed new trends and common themes in the software development sector of Bangladesh, says a press release.

At the seminar, an IT expert from an US-based software outsourcing company said that Bangladesh's software development industry has prosperous future as a good number of talented IT graduates are now entering the industry every year.

Presenting the keynote paper, Samuel D Bretzfield, managing director of bGlobal Interactive LTD said adequate IT infrastructure and smooth supply of utilities have become inevitable

to give the booming software development sector a further boost.

He also put emphasis on business, product launch, development, and working with clients from around the world in the web-development and web-application industry. He hoped that Bangladesh

would be able to compete in the world market reasonably better with over 20 per cent yearly increase in the number of English language students.

In comparison with India, Bretzfield said Bangladesh is lagging behind by 10 years as India has adopted the internet vigorously and also Bangladesh's English proficiency is not as good as India.

To overcome the obstacles, he put forward a set of recommendations including introduction of improved curriculums in IT graduation, special focus on English language.



Bangladesh in cooperation with Onecall for contact centre automation, enterprise IP telephony, and enterprise messaging.

Interactive Intelligence is a global provider of unified IP business communications solutions, providing innovative contact centre software.

In a press conference, Globitel's Sales Manager, Wissam Sabha pointed out "Globitel's reliable solutions have been successfully helping organisations for many years. We are confident that we will provide enhanced solutions to Bangladesh's call centre industry through this new partnership with Onecall".



TECHPHOTO Waiter...

A robot waiter holds a tray of food at a Japanese robot restaurant in Bangkok on April 1. At Thailand's first Japanese robot restaurant, where all the serving waiters are robots, customers order their food on a touchscreen display and their robotic waiter will whizz into action. The mechanical server will also dance to a rhythm and automatically go out to collect empty dishes.

PHOTO: AFP



dial 5858 & rock with more than 14,000 complete songs

• charges, VAT and conditions apply

