

In with mobile broadband

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BANGLADESH is a developing country with limited resources, but it had never shied away from embracing new technologies. It was the first South Asian country to have a live mobile network back in 1993 by adopting AMPS technology. Electronic mail (email) was also introduced the same year. The first digital technology was introduced through awarding GSM licenses to mobile phone operators Grameenphone, Aktel and Sheba Telecom.

The country reached its first million mobile subscriptions in 2002 and achieved the 10 million mark in 2005. Within a span of four years from then, 50 million subscriptions were reached in 2009. Although, GSM is a second generation (2G) technology mainly focusing on voice, it has helped increase the internet literacy of the country, enabling more than six million people to access the internet, which makes up for more than 80% of all internet users in Bangladesh.

Not only has the growth of this industry helped develop a vital infrastructure of the country, but also played an important part in reshaping the social behavior. Today, a phone is not only a tool for basic conversation, but also a requirement for business, a calculator, a messenger or even a FM radio!

In a span of 12 years, telecom operators got more than 50 million subscribers and seven million Internet users. However the official tele-penetration of Bangladesh still remains around 30 percent whereas some other countries of the region have reached nearly 100 percent.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUJON

Coming back to the government's initiative on 'Digital Bangladesh': The government's election manifesto in 2008 said that the: "Telecommunication facilities will be extended up to rural villages. All upazilas (sub districts) will be brought under internet communication system in the next five years (2013)".

So what is 'Digital Bangladesh? Well, we see it as a vision of the government on fuelling a socio-economic growth, building on the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations focusing on ICT, health, education and energy sectors.

And another phase of Digital Bangladesh represents the goals set by the government to be achieved

by 2021. Poverty eradication, enhancing quality of life, as well as increase employment in manufacturing, services and agricultural sector are in focus of this phase.

Now, how does telecommunication help achieve these goals? According to the educationist Dr. Hafiz G.A. Siddiqi: "Digital Bangladesh is not only e-governance or e-commerce or e-banking, or operating a country-wide mobile phone network through which one can access the daily newspapers or other internet devices. In fact, it is a combination of all of them. It is a country-wide application of 3G ICT to institutionalize the best management practices in every sector and sub-sector."

Dr Siddiqi's words are further

enhanced by studies made by McKinsey & Company stating: "A 10 percent increase in broadband household penetration boosts GDP between 0.1 and 1.4 percent" and "that broadband could have significant impact on overall societal welfare as it helps boost human capital, improve healthcare and create new opportunities in the poorest and most remote parts of the world".

As we know, broadband can be achieved in various technologies. However, as Bangladesh is lacking a well built-out fixed network, wireless technology would be the most efficient manner to grow broadband.

The main challenges for success of the Mobile broadband imple-

mentation in Bangladesh are related to proper frequency planning, policies on Mobile broadband license and renewal of 2G license, and of course the high start up cost for the end subscriber due to the SIM Tax and the Tax on handsets.

Ericsson has been the first to conduct a live 3G/HSPA trial in Bangladesh in cooperation with BTRC in 2008. It included demonstrating very interesting applications such as Mobile-health, where a doctor from Dhaka could monitor a patient in a remote village, Mobile-education, where a teacher in Dhaka could give on-line session to students in a remote location, Mobile entertainment, where we could show live TV programs and video calls, as well as Mobile-surveillance, which could enhance security facilities throughout the country.

These are some of the Mobile Broadband applications that we have demonstrated but in reality 3G/HSPA and the next generation technology would provide a lot more benefits to Bangladesh. It would give a competitive edge to the government and could make Bangladesh more attractive to the outside world of investors as a preferred investment destination and eventually achieve the dream of 'Digital Bangladesh'.

'Digital Bangladesh' is very much possible to achieve with already the technologies available today, with right regulatory conditions. Introduction of Mobile Broadband will help achieve the government's target, perhaps even ahead of time.

The article is an abridged version of a keynote speech by the author who is the president & country manager of Ericsson Bangladesh Limited delivered at a seminar.

A robot Ronaldo, a PC toaster: Spain's Campus Party has it all

AFP, Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo and Raul are kicking a ball about. But they're not at Real Madrid's football stadium but the Campus Party, one of the world's biggest online entertainment events, and they're not the real football stars but their robot versions.

The robots are the result of months of work for the students of Braga University in northern Portugal.

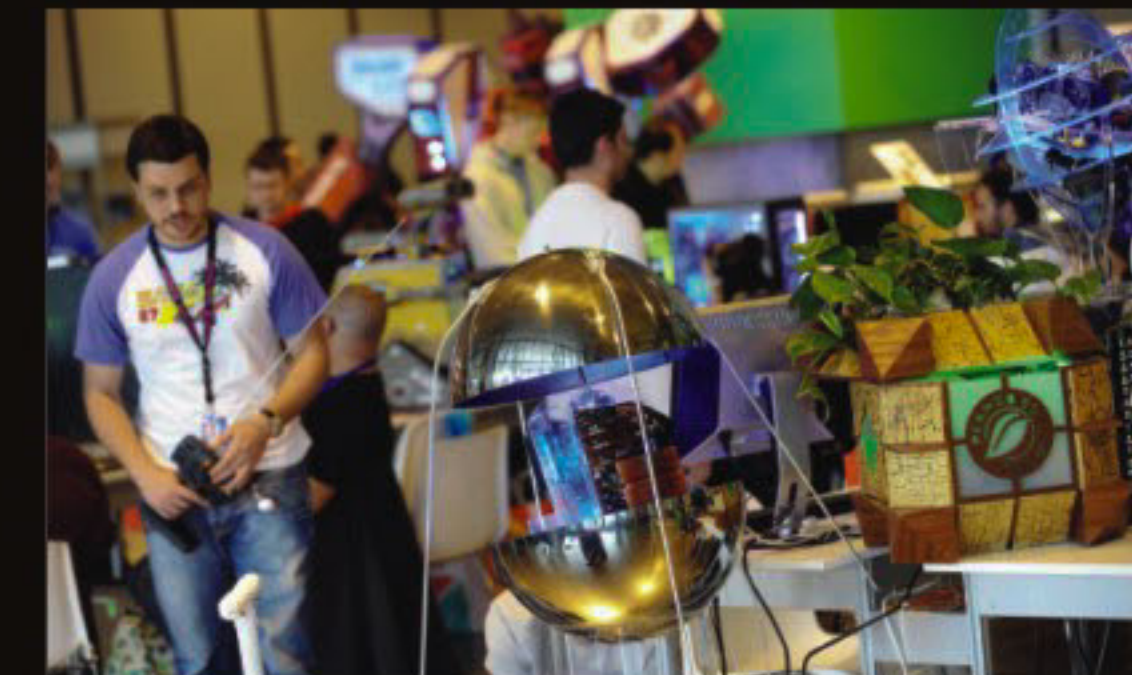
Around 800 IT enthusiasts are taking part in Campus Party, which lasts until Sunday and is aimed at sharing ideas, experiences and all types of activities related to computers, communications and new technology as well as showcasing new talents.

Some of the projects are just for fun, but some are serious. The 20 best ones are to be presented to a jury.

Deborah is a regular at the Campus Party, which began in Spain in 1997 and was held last year in the Mediterranean port of Valencia.

For this year's event, she has spent five months transforming her computer work station into a sort of enchanted forest.

The screen is encased in a tree trunk and covered with a mesh of leaves, with birds in a little cabin on the branches and mushrooms alongside the keyboard.



Matthias said he drove 1,500 kilometres to show off his toaster-computer.

Other projects are more serious, and even educational, such as that of Naima and a group of students from the Paris region.

Tomas, a 27-year-old Chilean, has developed a programme to find stolen computers.

Is that the next iPhone?

AFP, Washington

Technology blogs were buzzing on Monday after gadget site Gizmodo published pictures of what it said was Apple's next iPhone.

Gizmodo said the next-generation iPhone was found "lost in a bar in Redwood City" near

Apple headquarters in Cupertino, California, and turned over to the popular website.

Gizmodo said the phone was disguised as the previous iPhone model, the iPhone 3GS, which came out last year.

"We get false tips all the time," Gizmodo's Jason Chen wrote in a blog post.

"But after playing with it for about a week... there is so much evidence stacked in its favor that there's very little possibility that it's a fake," Chen said. "In fact, the possibility is almost none."

"We got it. We disassembled it. It's the real thing," he said.



PHOTO: GIZMODO

Chen said new features of the phone include a front-facing video camera for video chat, a camera flash and an improved regular camera with a larger lens.

He said it uses a micro-SIM card instead of a standard SIM card.

Chen said the phone has a slightly smaller screen than the last iPhone, a flat back instead of curved back, is thinner than the 3GS, three grams heavier and has a battery that is 16 percent larger.

Apple is notoriously secretive about its products, refusing to divulge details about them until they are publicly unveiled. Technology blogger John Gruber said

in a post that "it's been an open secret to those of us in the racket that Gizmodo purchased this unit about a week ago, from those who claimed to find it."

"I called around, and I now believe this is an actual unit from Apple -- a unit Apple is very interested in getting back," Gruber said.



Microsoft unveils 'social' phones for youth market

AFP, San Francisco

Microsoft unveiled a new line of mobile phones called "Kin" last week aimed at young users which emphasize social networking.

The "Kin One" and "Kin Two" phones, which both feature touchscreens and slideout keyboards, are being manufactured by Japan's Sharp and will be available in the United States through carrier Verizon Wireless in May.

The Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft did not announce prices for the phones.

The US software giant has previously focused on providing Windows operating systems for mobile phones but it was closely involved with Sharp in developing the hardware for the Kin series aimed at the youth market.

"Social's part of the DNA of this phone," Derek Snyder, a product manager at Windows Mobile, said at

an unveiling event for the new phones here.

The home screen of the Kin phones remains always on as the device brings together feeds from social networks such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter.

Videos, photos, text messages, Web pages and location and status updates can be shared by dragging them to a place on the phone called the "Spot."

The Kin One features a five-megapixel camera which shoots standard definition video and is smaller and more compact than the Kin Two.

The Kin Two has a larger screen and larger keyboard, more memory and an eight-megapixel higher resolution camera which can record high-definition video.

The phones are both black and the touchscreen gestures are similar to those used to operate the popular iPhone from Apple.

SAP targets businesses with new partnership

IT TELECOM REPORT

In a bid to cater for the growing demand of software solutions in the telecommunication industry in Bangladesh, SAP, one of the world's largest business software solution companies, on Wednesday at a programme in a city hotel announced their plans to expand its operations in the country.

At the programme, Ajay Turki, head of telecommunication, SAP Indian subcontinent said SAP in partnership with Computer Services Limited (CSL), a local software company, is looking forward to recommend, implement, or develop solutions to yield significant benefits and provide comprehensive value added services to their clients in Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh, being one of the top 10 mobile phone markets in the Asia-Pacific region, is seeing a significant demand for mobile internet data and mobile enter-



tainment services", said Ajay. Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Computer Services Ltd Mouluk Sabir Ahmed said their partnership will enable CSL stay up-to-date with SAP software and technology and generate profitability for consumers by delivering SAP solutions for companies of all sizes.

SAP leads the enterprise applications market through its portfolio of flexible, cutting edge solutions like enterprise resource planning software, customer relationship management and different other Business intelligence platforms.

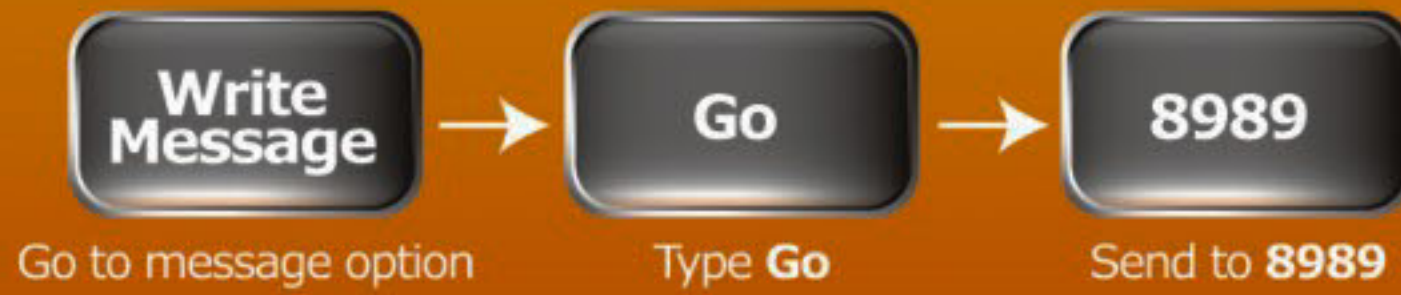


TECHPHOTO

Tooned

Markus Wacker, professor of computer graphics at the college of Technology and Economics in Dresden, moves in the Motion-Capture room on April 16. Wacker's movements are captured by cameras and transferred to the computer where the cartoon figure simulates these movements.

PHOTO: AFP



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