

# IT & TELECOM

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## Mobiles reign in households

MD HASAN

The mobile phone has become a major communication device at family levels, covering around half of all families in Bangladesh, says a study.

A Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) survey also shows that mobile usage at household levels mainly began rising in 2005. It also means that a stiff price war that began in the same year mainly contributed to dispersing the technology.

According to the survey, 48.3 percent households owned mobile phones at the end of 2009, whereas there were 2.2 percent land phone users at household levels.

In 2005, only 10 percent households were covered by mobile phones, says the survey.

According to the last census by BBS held in 2001, the total number of households was 25.4 million.

The Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) covered as many as 14,000 households for the country as a whole as sample size. Under the preview, there were 8,400 rural households and 5,600 urban households.

The mobile technology was introduced in Bangladesh in 1993. The device gradually became popular among users when the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) was launched in 1997.

However, the high price of the technology kept it away from the general public until 2005.

Industry insiders said the revolutionary entry of the mobile technology at household levels mainly happened because of the country-wide coverage and availability of the technology.

"I came here to buy a mobile connection because it is near my house," said Mahbuba Haque, who was standing at a small shop near Maghbazar intersection.

Mahbuba said she bought the mobile for home use.

She said she is more comfortable in using her mobile to communicate



PHOTO: ANSIR RAHMAN

with people. The different value added services also attract her to use mobiles.

Citing an example, she said, through a mobile conference call, I can talk to several relatives at a time, which is truly a nice way of social communication.

Voice communication through mobile telephony started with CDMA (code division multiple access), which was introduced by Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd -- the owning company of Citycell -- in 1993.

The expensive communication device started to become handy after the introduction of GSM by Grameenphone and Robi (then known as AKTEL) in 1997.

Banglalink and state-run TeleTalk launched their services in 2005 and Warid came in 2007.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) data shows that the number of customers under the mobile networks reached 52.43 million at the end of 2009. As of April 2010, the number of mobile users was 56.43 million,

according to BTRC.

On the other hand, only 1.03 million customers were tagged with landline telecom services at the end of April 2010.

Oddvar Hesjedal, chief executive officer of Grameenphone, said: "The mobile communication will be a major driver to achieve a Digital Bangladesh. It took 15 years to reach the first 50 million customers; I feel that in the right business environment, the next 50 million subscribers will happen much faster," he said.

However, a real hurdle to such development is the SIM tax, which makes new connections more expensive, he said.

"The mobile technology has brought about a revolution here," said Zakiul Islam, president of Association of Mobile Telecommunications Operators of Bangladesh.

"If some tax structures are eased, the market will grow further," he said.

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## Facebook boosts privacy controls amid criticism

REUTERS, Boston

Facebook is beefing up privacy protections on the world's most popular online social network, addressing mounting pressure to better secure personal data exchanged among its nearly 500 million members.

The issue has come to a head in recent months amid concern that Facebook makes it possible for internet stalkers, cyber criminals and even nosy neighbors to gain a wealth of information about its users without their knowledge thanks to a confusing system for setting privacy safeguards.

Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg said on Wednesday his company would roll out changes over the coming weeks that would give users more powerful tools to prevent personal information from being accessed by others.

For instance, Facebook will allow users to block all third parties from accessing their information without their explicit permission. It will also make less information available in its user directory and reduce the number of settings required to make all information private from nearly 50 to less than 15.

Still, Zuckerberg said Facebook's default settings will continue to make it relatively easy for users to obtain information about each other as the company walks a delicate line between protecting privacy rights and promoting social networking.

"Users use the service because they love sharing information," Zuckerberg said on a webcast presentation.

Facebook is increasingly challenging more established Internet players like Yahoo Inc and Google Inc for consumers' online time and for ad dollars.

While Facebook will make it simpler for users to boost their privacy safeguards, they will have to opt out of default policies by which much of their data is publicly available.



## Dell's Streak readies for battle with iPad

REUTERS, Boston

Dell Inc said its Streak tablet computer can double as a mobile phone and will have a front-facing camera for videoconferencing -- features it hopes will help the new gadget compete against Apple Inc's iPad.

The five-inch tablet will debut in Britain next month through mobile carrier O2, a unit of Spain's Telefonica, and Carphone Warehouse. Dell has yet to announce pricing for the Streak, which it said will appear in the United States sometime during the summer.

The company formally unveiled the Streak on Tuesday, after Chief Executive Michael Dell gave the tech world a glimpse of the tablet at a conference two weeks ago in San Francisco.

Dell will become the first major electronics maker to take on the 9.7-inch iPad with a device that runs on Google Inc's Android operating system, more commonly found on smartphones.

"It's portable and mobile. You can put it in your pocket," said IDC analyst Will Stofega, who has

tried out the device. "It is interesting and infinitely usable."

Android is gaining ground on the iPhone in the smartphone market, but it is not yet clear whether Google and Dell will be able to take on Apple in the tablet market.

"Can Dell sell millions of these? That's a tall order. There is certainly the potential. If it is priced right and if the thing sort of does what it's supposed to," Stofega said.

The Streak, which will have a slot for external memory cards, is part of Dell's plan to expand sales of mobile devices to help boost revenue after it has slipped from being the world's largest PC maker to No. 3 by volume.

Forrester analyst Charles Golvin said he was skeptical that Dell could catch up with the iPad in one key area.

"Dell's entry into the phone/tablet market is marked by some nice hardware, but Dell still lacks the one element that will matter most in differentiating itself in the flood of Android devices, and that's skill in software," he said.



## Apple overtakes Microsoft as biggest tech company

REUTERS, Seattle

Apple Inc shot past Microsoft Corp as the world's biggest tech company based on market value on Wednesday, the latest milestone in the resurgence of the maker of the iPhone, which nearly went out of business in the 1990s.

Apple's shares rose as much 2.8 percent on Nasdaq on Wednesday, as Microsoft shares floundered, briefly pushing its market value above \$229 billion, ahead of its longtime rival.

Both stocks ended down after a late-day sell-off, but Apple emerged ahead with a market value of about \$222 billion, compared with Microsoft's \$219 billion, according to Reuters data.

Apple shares closed down 0.4 percent at \$244.11 on Nasdaq, while Microsoft fell 4 percent to a seven-month low of \$25.01.

Shares of Apple are worth more than 10 times what they were 10 years ago, as it has profited from revolutionizing consumer electronics with its stylish, easy to use products such as the iPod,

iPhone and MacBook laptops.

The last time Apple had a higher market value than Microsoft was December 19, 1989, according to Thomson Reuters Datastream.

Microsoft, whose operating system runs on more than 90 percent of the world's personal computers, has not been able to match growth rates from its hey-day 1990s. Its stock is down 20 percent from 10 years ago.

Apple, which struggled for many years to get its products into the mainstream, resorted to a \$150 million investment from the much larger Microsoft in 1997 in order to keep it afloat. At that time, Microsoft's market value was more than five times that of Apple.

Microsoft still leads Apple in sales. In the latest quarter, Microsoft reported \$14.5 billion in revenue compared with Apple's \$13.5 billion.

Cupertino, California-based Apple is now the second-largest company on the Standard & Poor's 500 index by market value, behind energy behemoth Exxon Mobil Corp.

## Banglalink Digital World website launched

IT.TELECOM DESK

Latest news articles on information technology from around the world, tech stories, and most useful tech-tips are now just a click away.

Banglalink Digital World a technology based television programme has officially launched its website in a bid to provide an overview of digital technology.

banglalinkdigitalworld.com has been launched with the aim of creating mass media awareness in the field of technology.

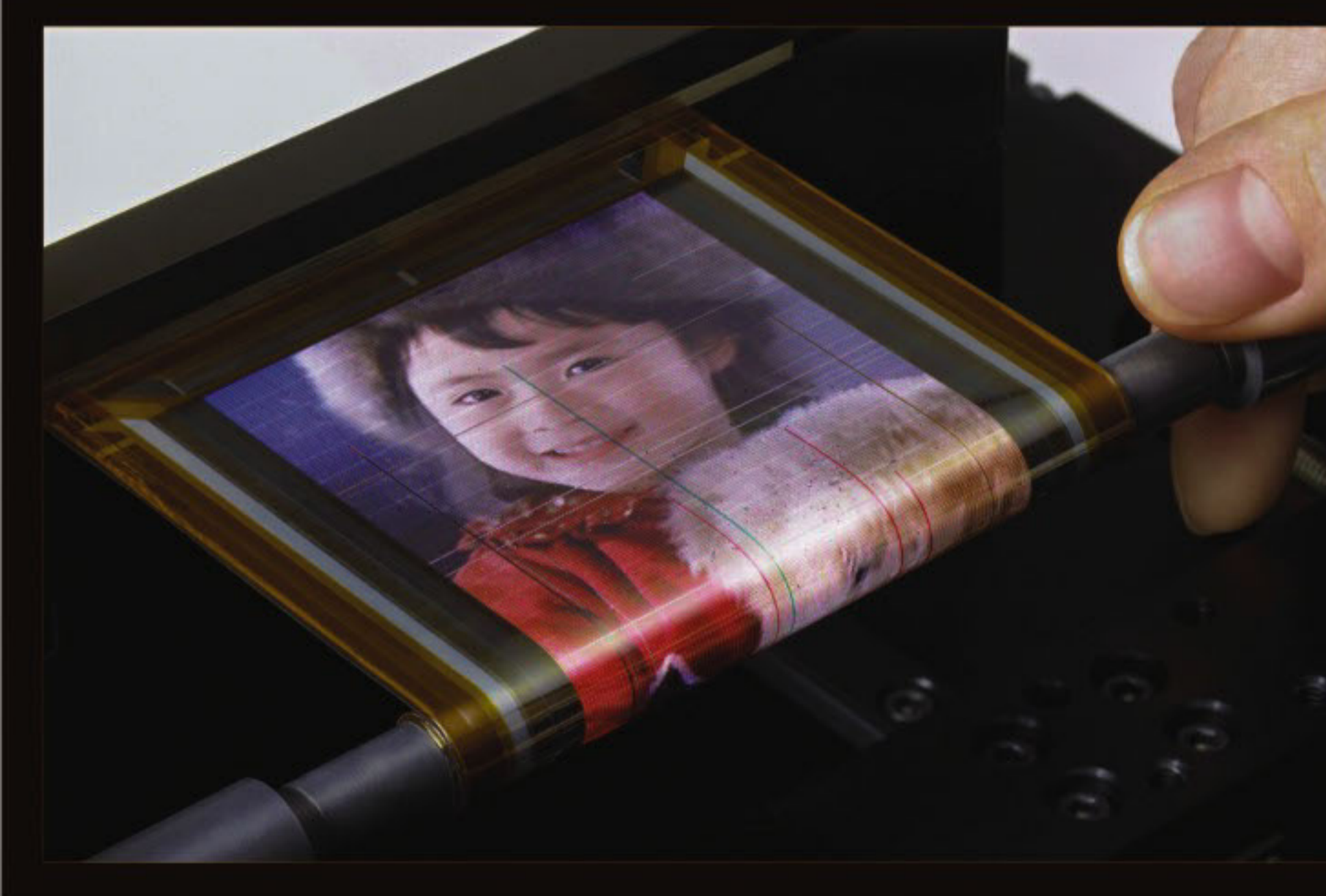
This site is designed to be viewed in all modern standards-compliant web browsers and it will bring out true essence of the digital world.

Banglalink Digital World programme contains important information about the latest technology in this fast-



changing world. This programme is initiated to educate and aware viewers about the aspects of digital technology.

The programme has different IT segments including changes in the digital market, interview of various personalities from different sectors who are directly involved in the technological business, tech tips especially troubleshooting, new techniques for downloading, anti-virus measures, mobile use etc.



### TECHPHOTO Roll-up screen

This hand-out picture released by Sony Corporation on May 26 shows a flexible Organic Light Emitting Display (OLED) recently developed by Japan's electronics giant Sony. The 80-micrometer-thick full color OLED display can be rolled-up around a cylinder with a radius of 4mm.

PHOTO: AFP