NAHID AKHTER

The coming of Eid means new clothes, good food, celebrations and a time to be close to friends and family. For a very huge number of people in Bangladesh, this would mean travelling back to their home districts. But that's when you remember that you have to purchase the railway ticket and you squirm at the thought of standing for hours at the railway station behind a humongous queue, just to find at the end that tickets are all sold out. And then you think, "Oh why not just skip it this year?"

Some of our mobile phone operators have understood this plight and came up with a hi-tech solution that helps purchase the ticket alright, but minus the hassle.

Banglalink, in collaboration with CNS Ltd and Bangladesh Railway, launched a Mobile Train Ticket service. Through this service, a person can purchase a railway ticket by sitting in the comfort of one's home by a simple SMS. A railway ticket can also be purchased at any Banglalink Customer Care Centre or one of approximately 500 'Banglalink Mobile Cash Points' located in various areas of Dhaka and Chittagong.

Once the ticket has been purchased, a SMS is sent back with an E-ticket number. That is where half the work is done. Finally, on the day of one's journey, the passenger can go to the station just an hour before departure and get a printed ticket in exchange of the e-ticket number and the mobile phone number.

Solaiman Alam, head of PR and communication of Mobile Financial Services and High Value Projects of Banglalink, says, "In Dhaka, a person has to purchase a railway ticket either from the Komalapur railway station or the Airport Road station. For a person residing in Mirpur or Narayanganj for instance, this becomes quite taxing, as he/she has to sift through the usual Dhaka traffic to get to any of those two stations."

"So we thought, since we were already doing a lot of other financial transactions through the mobile phone (like bill payment and cash transfer) and also because there was such a huge demand for this type of service, we should go for it. Bangla-

SMS for a train ticket this Eid

This file photo shows hundreds of people queuing up to buy train tickets at Kamalapur Railway Station last year. This year the process may be a bit simple and bought from Banglalink Mobile Cash Points, below.

desh Railway and CNS have both been very proactive about this and helped make this possible."

At the moment, these services are available for any destination starting from Dhaka or Chittagong. These two are the cities where such services are much in need too, considering that both are metropolitans and the outgoing crowd is large.

"As we already have competition in this field, it was necessary to give customers something more than what they were already getting," says Alam.

So, it was decided that the service would be available to not just Banglalink customers, but to customers of any mobile operator company.

"This would take us one step ahead of our competitors, who were providing this kind of a service to their own customers only. Moreover, we decided to install special ticket printers in our Customer Care Centres and various Banglalink Cash Points, from where passengers can get their tickets printed."

With Eid-ul-Fitr around the bend, there could be no better time to launch this service.

"Since 10 percent of the tickets have already been reserved for us, chances of the e-tickets getting sold out are less," says Solaiman.

Now, if this service could be upgraded for bus stations, then travelling would seem like a breeze.

"Upgrading this service to the bus stations for some of our Volvo buses could be possible, and we have not ruled out the possibilities."

With increased reach, reduced costs, convenience and speed, this service helps Bangladesh move a step closer to the government's vision of a Digital Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi striker for WCG FIFA-10

IT.TELECOM REPORT

The final round of World Cyber Games (WCG) National Championship Bangladesh, the country-wide gateway to the global competition, was held recently at Scholastica School campus on Uttara in Dhaka.

WCG 2010, which will be held in Los Angeles on September 3, will have Mohammad Afsar Hossain, a Brac University student, to represent Bangladesh in its Fifa 10 category.

Afsar was the winner among 800 contestants of the Fifa 10 from Bangladesh.

1,230 gamers played at the WCG National Championship organised by F1 IT, in all four categories of PC games Fifa 10, NFS Most Wanted, Counter Strike 1.6 and Call of Duty 4.

To qualify in WCG 2010, one has to conquer all rounds in the national championship in a selective category in his/her home country.

WCG has become the "Olympic" for all gamers around the globe as they find an opportunity to see how good they are with a computer against other.

Apart from Bangladesh, the other participating countries include USA, UK, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Australia, China, Japan, India, South Korea, Thailand, and New Zealand, among others.

The event, which makes its eleventh appearance this year, has evolved into a benchmark for the gaming world rather than just a gathering for the best of the gaming freaks around the world.

Other winners of the event are: Alif Rahman Chowdhury in NFS Most Wanted, Md Tanvir, Md Tahfeem Tarik, Md Zubaer, Mehdee Hasan Talukdar and Shahriz Kabir in Counter Strike 1.6, and Zeesan Rahman Chowdhury, Md Jubaer, Faisal Akhter, Abdullah Al Noman and Nabid Imtiaz in Call of Duty 4 Modern Warfare.

Nokia's dual SIM handset hits market

IT.TELECOM DESK

Nokia, the leading mobile phone manufacturer, has announced the launch of Nokia C1-00, the first Nokia device that can be used by the subscribers for two SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) cards at the same time, in the local market to add up to the Eid celebrations, says a press release.

"To celebrate the spirit of choice, we are glad to introduce a phone with 2-in-1 SIM solution. Nokia C1-00 allows consumers to have complete control on the SIM use" said Sajid Rizwan Matin, acting head of marketing of Nokia Emerging Asia.

Nokia C1-00 offers affordability, great functionally and ease of use and has been designed for those who

want cost optimisation when using mobile.

"By simply holding down a key, people are able to switch between SIM cards. This enables them to take advantage of reduced call rates, flexibility when travelling from one country to another, or helps in sharing a phone within a family and still use their own SIM," he added.

Nokia C1 owners will also benefit from a standby battery life up to six weeks, the longest ever for a Nokia mobile phone, especially useful where access to electricity is limited.

The phone has the standard flashlight, a vivid color screen and FM radio with standard headphone.

The product has a price tag of Tk 2,790.

Gmail gets Voice with online phone calls

AFP, *San Francisco*

Google on Wednesday began adding Internet telephone capabilities to its free Web-based email service in the United States.

Gmail was infused with Voice, a Google telecommunications service that lets people use a single telephone number for all of their phones.

"Starting today, you can use Gmail to receive or place Google Voice calls," software engineer Nick Foster said in a blog post.

"We're rolling out this feature to US-based Gmail users over the next few days."

A "call phones" option in Gmail chat will enable people to make, screen or field Voice calls at their computers using Gmail, according to Foster.

National e-content and ICT4D Award 2010 winner

Daisy makes disabilities not so challenging

ADIL MAHMOOD

This week, we focus on the winner of the e-Inclusion & Participation category.

In Bangladesh, approximately 14 million people have some kind of disabilities. About 3 million of them are visually impaired. It is difficult to provide books and written information to these people. So, the alternative formats to print are Braille, talking books, e-text and large prints.

Daisy (Digital Accessible Information System) for All, a range of diverse initiatives and interventions have been introduced in the country by an organisation Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), to address the problems and issues associated with disability and the people affected by it.

They cover almost all types of service delivery models and rights based approaches in a multimedia form. The newest trend is the inclusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs). It uses an open international standard for accessible multimedia.
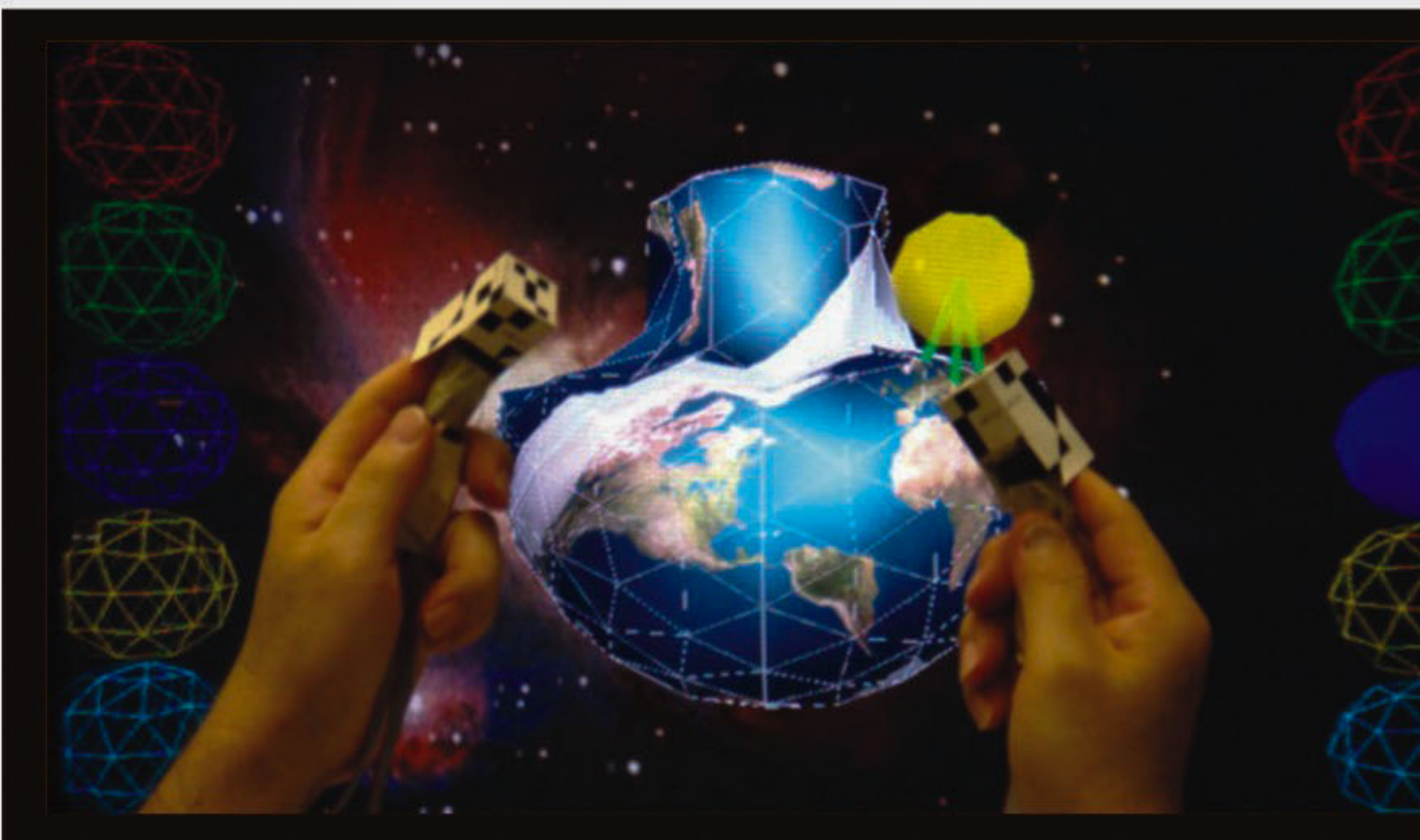
The YPSA ICT & Resource Centre on Disabilities (IRCD), based in Chittagong, has established a digital talking book library using the standard.

At present, there are over 455 publications in Bangla and English including books on primary and reproductive health, HIV & AIDS, disaster preparedness and management, text books and Bangladeshi legislation.

Each book can be accessed in several ways. If a PC has Daisy software installed, the text can be displayed on screen and its font size and colour may be adjusted to aid readers who are visually impaired.

If a user prefers to listen to the book, a voice recording of the text can be played back. These options are managed in such a way that words are highlighted on screen during the playback. If a PC is not available, talking books can also be played on CDs and MP3 players. Talking books may also be printed out in Braille format.

The Talking Library has approximately 500 members from all over Bangladesh. Twenty organisations have also registered to use the library.

TECHPHOTO

'Touch' TV

This picture demonstrates the world's first 3D television system that allows users to touch, pinch or poke images seeming to float in front of them at the Japanese National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology . The technology changes the shape of three-dimensional images in response to "touches", aided by cameras that monitor how the fingers move. It is not known when the technology will be put to practical use but its creators see it being used to simulate surgical operations and in video game software allowing players to experience the sensation of holding weapons or sports equipment.

PHOTO: AFP