



mPower to our women

NAHID AKHTER

The 21st century has seen widespread advancement of women in various dimensions -- be it professionally, intellectually or on the domestic front. That is what we hear all the time. That is what the media is always talking about.

But even today, when you get down to the basic level, how much gender equality have we actually achieved? Although developed countries started seeing empowerment of women to a certain degree, women in developing countries are still oblivious to many of their basic rights as humans.

Men in rural Bangladesh still shun the possession of anything that is progressive for women, be it education, finance, access to health services or a mode of communication. Women account for just two percent of land owned and ten percent of credit extended globally.

In February 2010, the GSM Association (GSMA) and the Cherie Blair Foundation for women published 'Women and mobile -- A Global Opportunity', a groundbreaking report on mobile usage by women subscribers in low and middle-income countries. The report identified a gender gap in mobile phone access in the developing world -- 300 million less women than men own mobile phones.

The key barriers that prevent women in these areas from purchasing a set include cost, lack of literacy around mobile technology and society's attitude towards women's ownership of productive assets.

GSMA, in conjunction with the Cherie Blair Foundation for women, founded the mWomen programme -- an unprecedented global public-private partnership between the mobile industry and the international development community.

Twenty mobile operators representing 115 countries in the develop-



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



Hillary Clinton speaks at the launching event of mWomen while Cherie Blair looks on, bottom-left, and Irum Iqbal, head of PR and Communication Marketing, Banglalink, talks to Tony Blair, right.



ing world have committed to closing the mobile phone gender gap.

Key components of the mWomen programme involve offering technical assistance in closing the gender gap with activities focused on catalysing the mobile industry to work collectively and track progress.

GSMA is also launching the 'mWomen Base of the Pyramid Apps Challenge. The challenge is sponsored by Vodafone and aims to stimulate activity for innovative app design and to provide original and fresh customised app solutions targeted at the specific needs of women in developing countries.

In Bangladesh, if some of our rural women could be given proper technical training on the use of mobile phones, then they could reach out to other women in her village and let them know that operating a simple mobile phone for day-to-day needs is not rocket science.

Telecom advertisements in our

country, excepting a few, still focus on the entrepreneurial benefits of the mobile phone for men. More advertisements should focus on women entrepreneurs and how they can benefit from mobile phones. Telecom companies in Bangladesh should also consider providing specialised packages for women that will have lower tariffs on talk-time.

Irum Iqbal, head of PR and Communication Marketing, Banglalink had the honour of being invited to the launching event of mWomen and rubbing shoulders with the likes of Cherie Blair and Hillary Clinton.

"Cherie Blair was happy to see Bangladesh being represented as part of the team and praised the efforts of the telecom industry in Bangladesh in helping bring up the rural sections," says Irum.

"Banglalink has been working with women-oriented projects in the past years. We intend to do more and are working on our roadmap for the next mWomen meeting."

On how rural men will take the idea of their women having access to such life-changing facilities, she said: "We know our culture and limitations. Instead of trying to change the behaviour, we will have to try an approach that will focus on the need for their women having access to such facilities and how it will benefit their family and their standards of living. Everyone wishes to have a better life, and if letting their women use a mobile phone will empower them and create economic opportunities, entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, then this might well become more of a boon than a bane."

"Mobility will give them independence."

"This whole experience has been overwhelming and I feel proud to have represented my country and my company," she added.

Champs of tomorrow

IT:TELECOM DESK

The idea of learning through the internet is new in the country and champs21.com has been a pioneer in this regard.

Champs21 is an e-learning platform for Bangladeshi school students from grade 3 to grade 10. It offers an online self-assessment test service for students to assess their strengths and weaknesses in Mathematics and Science towards strengthening their academic foundation.

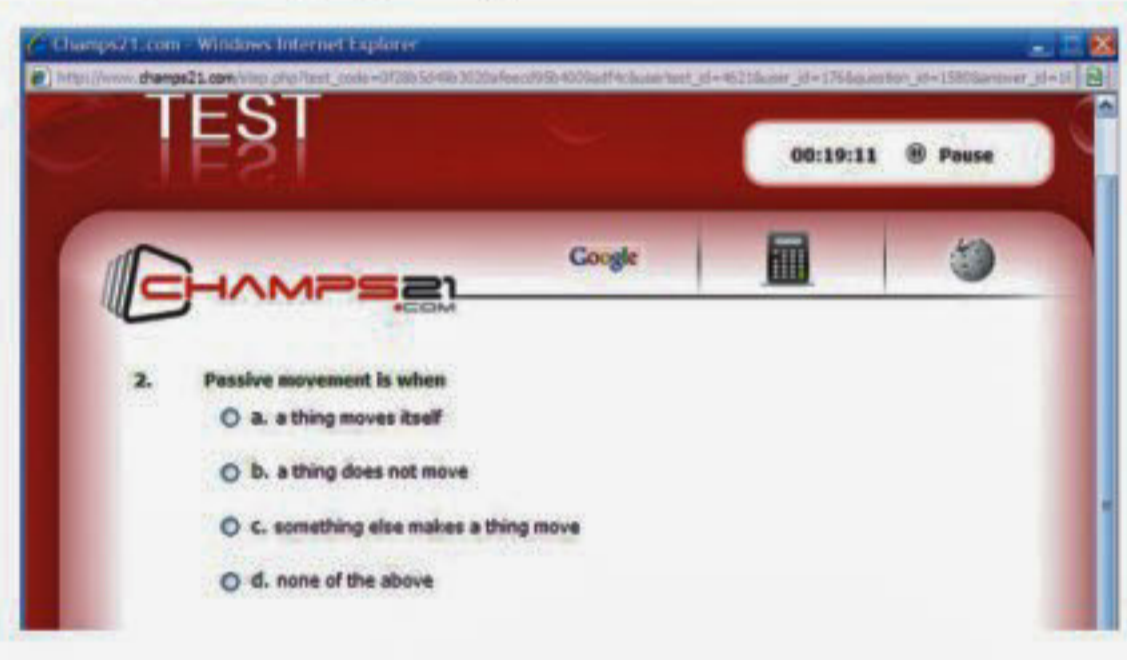
According to Russell T Ahmed, the CEO of TeamCreative Ltd of champs21.com, "Education is the only medium that creates new leaders. But learning has not always been fun. With champs21.com, there are ample opportunities for our future leaders to enjoy every second of learning."

Champs21.com has been launched with time-bound assessment tests to complement students' classroom learning. Currently available to English medium students, Champs21 plans to rollout its second phase in January 2011 for Bangla medium students all over the country.

The interactive portal is a great tool for exam preparation allowing students to take test anytime, anywhere, at their own pace. Instant result with performance feedback and answer analysis is provided with a graphical presentation both to the students and their parents. The system allows pupils to know their position among all the other students of their batch across all schools.

It also allows students to track their performance periodically and assess their performance in a particular subject. Teachers can give assignments and homework through Champs21 and parents can monitor their children's performance by notification emails sent to them by the system. For a student or a parent who buys the license of Champs21, the service scores high on affordability with cost as low as Tk. 10 per year.

For subscribing to this service for the first time, one has to create an account in champs21.com, select class and subjects, put relevant information and enter a subscription code before hitting the 'purchase' button. This subscription code is available in a vibrant Champs21 pack in many bookshops and selected retail outlets in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet.



Norton unveils 2011 product line

IT:TELECOM REPORT

Norton, consumer division of Symantec Corporation, last Saturday launched their 2011 product line-up in the local market that includes Norton AntiVirus and Norton Internet Security (for Windows and Mac).

Gaurav Kanwal, consumer sales manager, India and Saarc, Symantec and Asif Mahmud, director, Computer Source, unveiled the new products at an event at a hotel in the capital.

While addressing the media, Gaurav said to combat fast-changing modern threats, Norton uses a statistical detection technique. Symantec maintains a huge database of all programmes found on computers whose owners have agreed to enable 'Norton Community' tracking hundreds of millions of them.

"If a programme hasn't already been categorised, Norton uses the database to check the programme's reputation," said Gaurav.

Apart from it, every scan result window includes a link to click if anyone thinks there's still a problem. This link opens the



download page for Symantec's free Norton Power Eraser, an aggressive cleanup tool designed specifically to remove threats that may balk ordinary antivirus scans or prevent Norton from installing properly, said Gaurav.

"Our extensive network combined with Symantec's technological leadership is a formula for success. With the launch of Norton 2011 in Bangladesh, we are reinforcing our commitment to ensuring seamless availability of world class online security for consumers in Bangladesh," said Asif.

Norton Internet Security 2011 and Norton AntiVirus 2011 are now available for purchase in Bangladesh through various retailers.

BCS computer city's founding anniversary held

IT:TELECOM REPORT

BCS Computer city, country's largest computer retail market under one roof has recently celebrated its 11th founding anniversary.

To celebrate its continuing journey towards a brighter goal, Monthly Computer Bichitra organised a memorial discussion 'Shoroniyo Safoller Sritikotha' at the conference room of IDB building.

Bhuiyan Inam Lenin, a veteran IT journalist and editor of the monthly Computer Bichitra chaired the discussion programme.

Speakers at the programme shared their experiences about the days when the mall was first established, conversation with the visitors and buyers, how time changed and how approaches towards computer and its accessories has been changed so far.

Former BASIS president Rafiqul Islam Rawli and former BCS presidents SM Iqbal and Azim Uddin Ahmed were present.

0.68 inch

Apple shows off iPad-inspired Mac laptop



REUTERS, California

Apple Inc CEO Steve Jobs unveiled the thinnest, lightest Mac laptop yet, fusing features from its popular iPhone and iPad with its traditional line of personal computers.

Apple, whose computers have taken market share from PCs based on Microsoft Corp's Windows, will bring a version of its mobile applications store to the Mac, aiming to replicate its success and spur development of new programs.

Loading up Macs with iPad features may help Apple stave off investors' fears that sales will begin bleeding over to the tablet, which has stirred up astonishing demand.

The new MacBook Air -- introduced on Wednesday with Jobs' signature "one last thing" set-up -- is designed to reproduce the versatility of popular devices such as the iPhone and iPad, and will incorporate FaceTime video chats, which Apple is

bringing to all its Macs.

Utilising flash storage like the iPad rather than hard drives like conventional computers, it can power up almost instantly from standby mode and store data twice as quickly as a standard hard drive. But it sacrifices processing power compared with Apple's other laptops.

"We asked ourselves what would happen if a MacBook and an iPad hooked up? Well, this is the result," Jobs said at a media event in Cupertino, California, calling the Air the "future of notebooks."

It starts at \$999 for an 11.6-inch model, weighs as little as 2.3 pounds (1 kg), and measures 0.11 inches at its thinnest to 0.68 inches at the rear.

"They're basically merging the product lines; they're simplifying it," said Kaufman Bros analyst Shaw Wu. "They're taking the strengths out of what they've learned on the iPhone and iPad and bringing that technology over to the Mac side. It makes a lot of sense."



TECHPHOTO Choreonoid

A 1.58m tall humanoid robot "HRP-4C" of Japan's Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) sings and dances with performers at the Digital Contents Expo in Tokyo on October 17. AIST developed the entertainment software called Choreonoid, formed from choreographer and humanoid.

PHOTO: AFP



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