

IT & TELECOM

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Going Sino-tech

MEHDI MUSHARRAF BHUIYAN,
back from China

An old saying in the ancient 'Middle Kingdom' used to go like this -- "Even the loftiest towers rise from the ground" -- meaning that even the most successful venture in the world has its roots in one single idea or a dream.

Standing in the vicinity of the northern tips of modern day Pearl River Delta, you will have the same kind of feeling, if you know how this city of booming high rises, skyscrapers, hi-tech parks and technology zones looked like thirty years back.

Even at the start of the year 1980, the fishing villages of ancient Bao'an County was, in many ways, a stereotype of eternal Chinese seaside hamlet.

Three decades since then, that place is now where the bulk of the world's iPods, iMacs, iPhones and iPads are churned out while the city that stands there was famously described as "one high-rise a day and one boulevard every three days".

To conjure a sparkling skyline out of thin air might sound nothing new for the world's fastest growing economy, but the accounts of Shenzhen, China's Silicon Valley, could be a brainwave for millions of tech savvies.

Indeed, the growing up of Shenzhen is something out of the ordinary. After all, back in the late 70s, this area became China's first Special Economic Zone when the then leadership singled out this place as a test case for experimenting with market capitalism within Chinese socialist milieu.

The move proved successful and it

changed the whole country forever for the better. Plethora of foreign investment flowed into Shenzhen, from around the world including Hong Kong whose proximity from the former added a boon to the burgeoning city's growth.

Flexible government policies for attracting foreign investment coupled with cheap labour and the city's locational advantage played its part to turn the once fishing village into the harbinger of the Chinese boom.

Today, Shenzhen is not merely a city of high-rise structures and bustling thoroughfares. It can claim to be the darling of every hi-tech enthusiasts for being the manufacturing base of some of the world's famous names in consumer electronics.

The city houses some of the biggest names in global and Chinese hi-tech industry including Foxconn, Huawei, BYD and ZTE.

Ever wondered where your Apple iPods, iPads and iPhones are coming from? In fact, they are all manufactured in Foxconn's very own manufacturing plant in Shenzhen called Longhua Science & Technology Park, deservingly often referred as iPod City.

"Today's hi-tech boom of modern China owes something to Shenzhen," says Wonder Wang, a senior official with Huawei, a hi-tech giant based in the Longgang District of the city.

"When our company was founded in 1980s, China was under the transition from planned economy to market economy," says Wang, now the country representative of Huawei in Bangladesh.

"Against this backdrop, Shenzhen

offered us the best possible support for building giant private enterprises," he says.

Starting its journey in 1988, Huawei, within a short span, has seen a rise to become the world's number two company in the mobile equipment industry.

In Bangladesh, Huawei is linked up with all the major telecom operators, providing 'energy efficient and cost effective' end-to-end telecom solutions.

"Our local partners have gained a lot in Bangladesh, and the reason why they have succeeded until now is Bangladesh's large population that brings a huge number of potential target customers," Wang says.

"But in the next phase of market development, our local customers will not be satisfied with simple voice services. They will ask for more, like speedy internet access, multimedia, video calls and other advanced communication facilities."

In this context, he underscores the need to introduce 3G services.

Experts however say that Bangladesh can replicate the success of Shenzhen, as the country is now in the same advantageous position in terms of cheap labour.

There is a saying in ancient Chinese folklore -- "Wanna be rich? Build roads first!"

"Sadly the infrastructure and energy situation in Bangladesh is not up to the level to lure massive foreign investment," Wang says.

The IT industry insiders in Bangladesh have long been calling for setting up hi-tech and software technology parks to provide a safe heaven for

attracting investment in the ICT industry.

Although, there have been some government initiatives over the years and regular budgetary allocations for building such technology zones, anything like an exclusive hi tech zone or software parks is yet to see light.

"A precondition for attracting foreign investment in the hi-tech zone is the easing of bureaucratic tangles and regulations," says Mahbub Zaman, president of the national trade body for software firms.

"The local companies should also get ready to face the increasing competition from the foreign hi-tech companies," says Zaman, managing director of Datasoft, a local IT company.

In China, the government still provides preferential policies to attract investors to the SEZs, while big companies like Huawei have their own technology park with enough room for separate research and development centres, data centre, manufacturing plant and training institute.

Today's China is growing and Shenzhen is where it all began. As the giant 'Middle Kingdom' gradually reclaims its usual position globally, the once coastal hamlet along the Pearl River epitomises how the government thrust on the hi-tech industries can change a nation forever.

Along the line of the 'Digital Bangladesh' vision, it is time for Bangladesh to showcase its own version of hi-tech miracles that its Asian neighbours have already exemplified.

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New hologram technology brings 3-D to life

REUTERS, Chicago

Executives may not be able to beam a full three-dimensional image of themselves across the world just yet but researchers are a step closer to 3-D real-time images, an advance in holographic technology that could make video conferencing far more lifelike.

Nasser Peyghambarian of the University of Arizona and colleagues said on Wednesday their new holographic technology can project a near 360-degree image to another location that updates every two seconds.

The earliest use of the technology could be in movies, given the popularity of 3-D films such as "Avatar."

"We foresee many applications, including for example, car or airplane manufacturing. They can look at the hologram and design the system they have in real-time and look at the model and make changes on it as they go," Peyghambarian told the briefing.

Known as three-dimensional telepresence, the technology addresses shortcomings of current holograms, which give the illusion of 3-D but leave out the rear view, said Peyghambarian, whose study appears in the journal Nature.

"If you look at the 3-D object, we show it is very much like if you look around you. It's the closest to what you see compared to any other technology," Peyghambarian, who also holds a position at the National Science Foundation, said on a telephone briefing.

Surgeons around the world also could participate in complex operations at the

same time, he said.

To create the hologram, cameras take color images at multiple angles and send them over an Ethernet line. In the lab model, images are projected onto a transparent plastic panel and refreshed every few seconds.

Future displays will lie flat on a table and the system will create an optical illusion that the image is floating above the screen.

The three-dimensional telepresence technology differs from 3-D technology in several ways.

With 3-D, one perspective is projected to one eye and another perspective is projected to the other, which is why people wear special glasses. With the hologram, no special glasses are needed and the number of perspectives is only limited by the number of cameras used.

In a videoconference, this means people sitting on one side of a table see the front of a person, people on the side would get a side view and people in the back would see their back.

The technology builds on earlier work by the same group, which in 2008 reported a black and white 3-D image that could be updated every four minutes.

The new system is more than 100 times faster.

Peyghambarian said the team still needs to work out some issues, including improving the screen and reducing the system's power demands, which will take about two years.

"I don't think you can see these in our houses in less than seven to 10 years," he said.



AP/WIDEWORLD PHOTOS/JEFF GARGAS/UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Qubee introduces UH235

IT.TELECOM DESK

Qubee, a WiMAX service provider in the country has introduced its latest modem UH235, says a press release.

For its users satisfaction Qubee tested the device for a year before releasing it in the market.

The engineers at Qubee had tested a number of WiMAX devices from different countries, and finally they have chosen the UH235 as it is by far the most reliable.

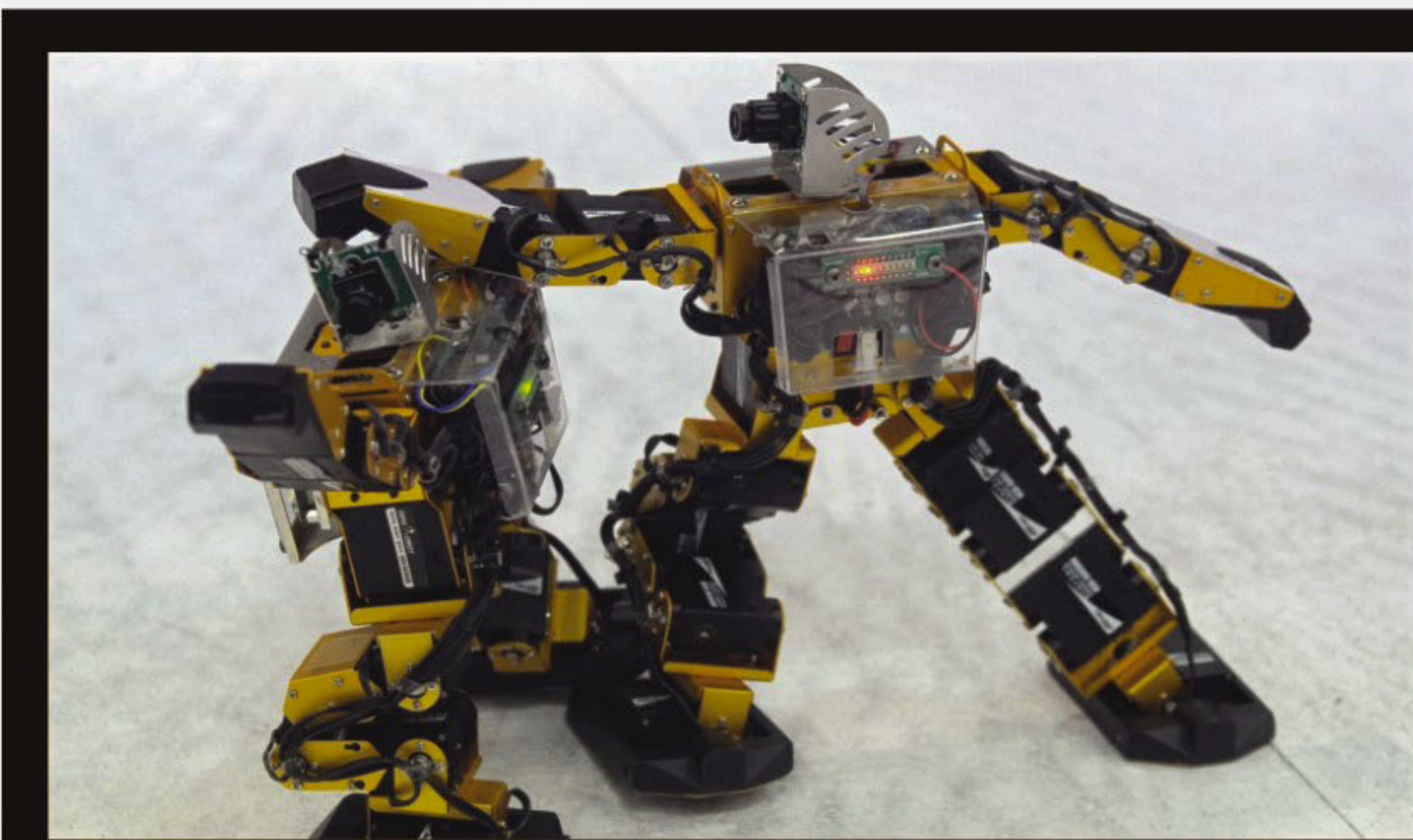
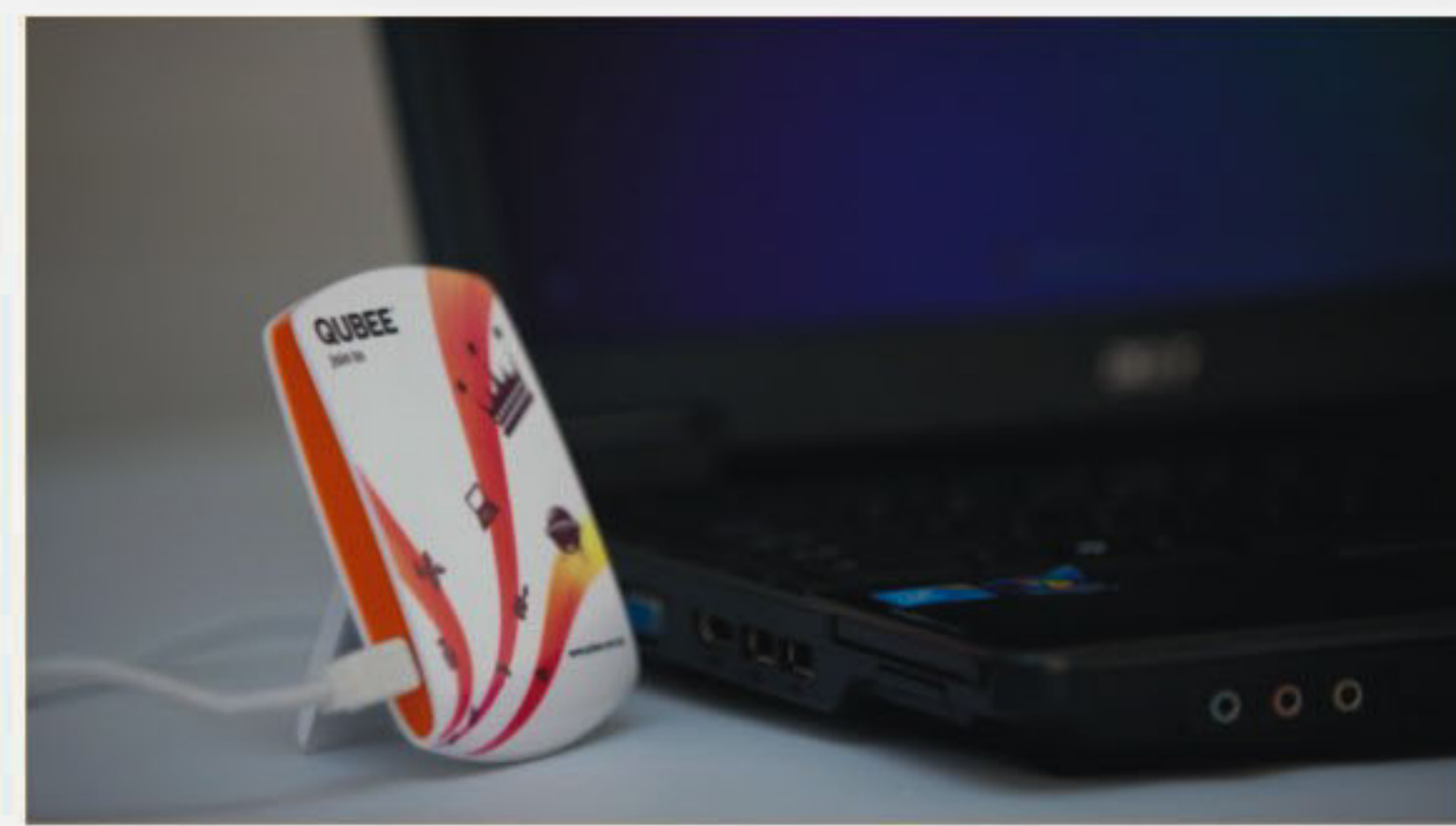
The sleek and trendy device has been brought to Bangladesh

exclusively for Qubee. Despite its tiny shape, UH235 is capable of receiving signals on par with the original Qubee modems the robust and strong Gigaset devices.

The modem can be carried with ease. It can be connected to both laptops and desktops as long as it's within a Qubee coverage area.

It is a plug and play device. It can be used by plugging it in to USB port and thus, it does not need a separate power source.

The device has a price tag of TK 3000.



TECHPHOTO

Robo-fight

This picture taken on October 29, shows two robots fighting each other in an international contest at an exhibition centre in Goyang, a satellite city northwest of Seoul.

PHOTO: AFP

N8 Pre-order begins

IT.TELECOM DESK

The highly anticipated Nokia N8, latest entertainment smartphone with Ovi services, is now available for pre-ordering in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Consumers can pre-order the Nokia N8 on the Nokia Bangladesh website nokia.com.bd/bookn8 and be the first to receive their Nokia N8.

"With the N8, and the new Symbian software, we are bringing a familiar, faster and more intuitive user experience to the world's most popular smartphone platform. The Nokia N8 has received the highest amount of consumer pre-orders in Nokia history worldwide and we are thrilled to start the pre-ordering of the N8, the first of Nokia's new Symbian smartphone range, in Bangladesh" said Sajid Rizwan Matin, acting head of marketing, Nokia Emerging Asia.

"To appeal to today's high-end buyers, smartphones have to be enjoyable, useful and beautiful. Ease of use, excellent

multimedia performance and elegant design are all essential elements of the package," he adds.

The Nokia N8 comes with a 12 megapixel camera with Carl Zeiss optics, Xenon flash and a large sensor that rivals those found in compact digital cameras.

Additionally, it offers the ability to make HD quality videos and edit them with an intuitive built-in editing suite. Doubling as a portable entertainment centre, people can enjoy HD quality video with Dolby Digital Plus surround sound by plugging into their home theatre system.

Considering the immense popularity of the social networking, it makes easier for people to update status, share location and photos, and view live feeds from Facebook and Twitter by a single app directly on the home screen. Calendar events from social networks can also be transferred to the device calendar.

Powering the Nokia N8 is Symbian 3, the latest edition of the world's most used smartphone software, which introduces several major advances, including support for gestures such as multi touch, flick scrolling and pinch-zoom. The Nokia N8 also offers multiple, customisable homescreens which can be loaded with apps and widgets.

The new 2D and 3D graphics architecture in the platform takes full advantage of the Nokia N8's hardware acceleration to deliver a faster and more responsive user interface.

The Nokia N8 will be available at a retail price of TK 37,500.



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