

Kaspersky setting the pace

APAC region boss talks to The Daily Star

NAFID IMRAN AHMED

Even a couple of years back Harry Cheung, managing director of Kaspersky Lab Asia-Pacific, one of the world's top four leading IT security software companies, didn't really care about Bangladesh market. But for the past two years when he saw the figures grow it amazed him and right now to them it is one of the main countries in South Asia other than India.

Cheung admitted this during an exclusive interview with The Daily Star few days back when he flew down to Dhaka for the first time during a corporate product launch.

Kaspersky has been present in Bangladesh for the past three years and so far for the past two and half years or so Cheung has seen a phenomenal growth in this market and according to him the numbers kept on jumping and the growth rate was very close to 100 per cent a year. He gave the credit to their partner Office Extracts, sole distributor for Bangladesh and Bhutan, who have been doing a very good job in this market.

"Our partner did a very good job but at the same time we also supported them quite a lot, otherwise it wouldn't have been possible. We agree in many areas to develop the business here such as having a better pricing for our products and helping with marketing and subsidising," Cheung said.

"We try to give them a lot of margin so that they can use the margin to do a lot of things in the country. And it worked; it not only worked in Bangladesh but also has worked in many other countries," he added.

When asked about the number of active Kaspersky users in Bangladesh, Prabeer Sarkar, CEO of Office Extracts mentioned that till 2010 there were 350 thousand users in this market and this year is projected at 700 thousand and the company's target is to reach a million users by 2012.



Harry Cheung

"The numbers of internet users in Bangladesh are increasing faster and if that continues we are looking at 3 million users by 2014," Cheung said.

The Kaspersky boss also mentioned that the year 2014 is the company's target year to reach number three in the world. In fact the company's headquarter wants to reach the number one position by 2014 and they are targeting for it.

"Usually we have a new version of product every year and we are developing a so called 'Killer Product' for the corporate level. We are very confident that this will be a strong product for the corporates."

Cheung admitted that they have been slow in terms of corporate products. "We had some problems internally but now it is all over and we are very excited about this product."

While talking about the new product he said that it's quite similar to those which are already in the market.

"We didn't try to change the product completely as users tend to see at products that are similar to what they have been using before, so most of the functionalities are pretty much the same as our competitors but other than that we do have something special that makes our product better," he said.

When asked about challenges in this market he said that they don't face any mentionable hurdles in the Bangladesh market and the company has almost 90 per cent of the market share.

"This is the only country where we have 90 per cent of the market share whereas in Vietnam we have 70 per cent. Even though the revenues in terms of figures are not that big but I think that will come someday."

"I don't think our competitors will have any room to make a move in this market and if they do I am sure we'll try our best to defend that," he added.

Cheung mentioned that his company would want to work with the government, the IT body of the government and even large corporations and organisations and plans to do a lot of activities within the next few years.

"We may even look at establishing some kind of a support centre here, localisation in the area, a whole big team in Bangladesh to work for South Asia."

"We do have a lot of after-sales support in the area, not only in South Asia also in South East Asian region. After-sales support in countries such as Australia are very costly, where in this country people speak good English and I believe it's a good destination to set up a centre here, but right now we have to decide whether this should be in India or Bangladesh. More study is needed in this regard such as human resources and their quality," he said.

He also mentioned that at the moment they don't have any plans to set up a representative office in Bangladesh. Furthermore, he mentioned that when they have a strong corporate customer base, may be then the company may think of having a local presence.

Sarker mentioned that education is the largest sector using Kaspersky and at present there are over 10,000 licenses already most of which are universities.

"I think approximately 27 universities are using Kaspersky and the schools are coming next. So right now the government and the academics enjoy 50 percent discount on the standard prices."

When asked if antivirus companies have an underground lab where they make viruses, Cheung said, "We are very busy catching viruses. We really don't know how many viruses are created every day but there is a lot. So why would we create viruses. I can guarantee you we are very busy in analyzing viruses. We are antivirus company not a virus making company."

e-Info Kosh launched

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The internet has always been an alien territory to many Bangladeshis.

Part of the blame falls to the acute shortage of Bangla contents in the World Wide Web, which receives more contents than what is stored at archives of Library of Congress. And also for the lack of signs pointing to the Bangla web pages that are already in the internet.

But the tide could be turning. A new government initiative launched this week aims to bring more contents in the local language and put them under one roof for everyone.

The National e-Content Repository, more popularly known as the 'e-Info Kosh', is available at infokosh.bangladesh.gov.bd, and already boasts over 50,000 pages of information during its launch.

It contains information on a range of topics including education, agriculture, health, law, human rights and citizen services.



"There is something for everyone," says an official at the Access to Information programme at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

"It could be a district lawyer who is curious about a new law or a farmer trying to find the means to rid his croplands from an alien insect," he said.

"Or it could be an indigenous person trying to learn Bangla or a tourist looking for a place to stay in Teknaf," he added. "The website has information for almost everyone."

Apart from text pages, there are also audio, video and other multimedia based entries at the repository.

More audio entries would be included in the future especially for the visually impaired people, government officials said.

A total of 198 government non-government organisations have been working since last June to create the contents, which are expected to reach 5 million pages by 2013.

ASUS brings NX laptop

IT.TELECOM DESK

ASUS, a leading computer manufacturer, has launched its latest laptop NX90JQ laptop in the local market, says a press release.

The NX90JQ comes with Intel Core i7-740QM CPU with 1.73 GHz speed, 6 GB of DDR3 RAM, 1TB of storage and an NVIDIA GeForce 335M 1GB DDR3 VRAM with Optimus Technology.

It has dual touchpads that enable true two-handed multi-touch usability. It also has Bang and Olufsen 'ICEpower' speakers. It also comes with 18.4 wide LCD display.

The notebook has a price-tag of Tk 1, 63,000.



National Digital Innovation Award 2011

Deadline ends tomorrow

IT.TELECOM DESK

The submission date for National Digital Innovation Award 2011 nomination, which has been extended to March 5, ends tomorrow. D.Net (Development Research Network) and Ministry of Science and ICT are jointly organising the prestigious contest in the field of ICT for Development in Bangladesh.

Nominations can be submitted through www.dnet.org.bd.

Cricket apps at OVI Store

IT.TELECOM DESK

Nokia has introduced new cricket applications on its Ovi Store. The free apps let its users to keep track of scores during matches and also allow storing the match records.

The apps include ESPNcricinfo Mobicast, which delivers live scores, ball-by-ball commentary, one-click access to schedules, breaking news and photos of every single international cricket game.

The cricket apps also include Cricket League of Champions, where twelve clubs from seven nations clash in a Twenty20 cricket tournament of the championship.

Then there is an addictive game, Cricket Free Hit, for the cricket enthusiasts. The game tests the users' cricket skills and game play knowledge.



Jobs breaks from medical leave to unveil iPad 2

AP, San Francisco

Apple is back with a refined second-generation tablet computer that squeezes more power into a thinner shell while keeping prices in check. It's a three-pronged push that should handily hold off competitors for another year.

Underscoring the tablet's importance to Apple, CEO Steve Jobs briefly emerged from a medical leave Wednesday and made a surprising appearance to unveil the iPad 2 himself.

With the original iPad, Apple proved there is great demand for a tablet that's less than a laptop and more than a smart phone, yet performs many of the same tasks. Dozens of copycat touch-screen devices are in the works, but so far none has broken into the mainstream consciousness the way the iPad has.

"The competition is essentially going to be picking up the crumbs that Apple decides to leave behind," said Ashok Kumar, an analyst with Rodman & Renshaw.

He said the number of software applications or "apps" available for the iPad gives Apple a huge advantage.

Except for Jobs' appearance, little came as a surprise after months of speculation about features and upgrades. The tablet

has two cameras built in for taking photos, recording video and video chatting. The battery life will be the same as the original about 10 hours of usage or a month on standby.

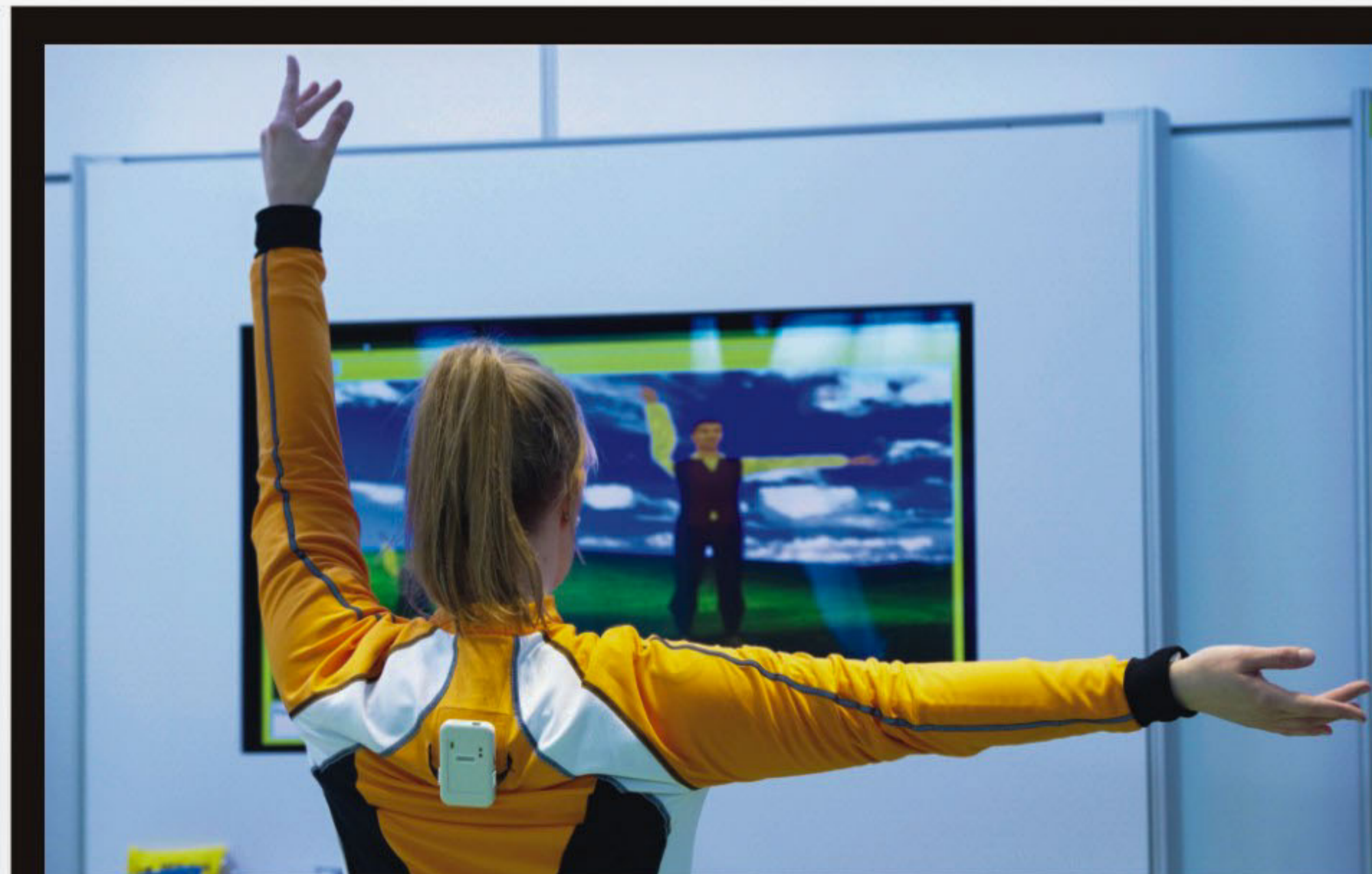
The iPad 2 is faster than its predecessor. Ross Rubin, an analyst for the market researchers NPD Group, said that should make the iPad better for creating music, video and other content, rather than just consuming it.

The iPad 2 is also thinner 8.8 millimeters, or about a third of an inch, instead of the current 13.4 millimeters. It weighs just a bit less 1.3 pounds, compared with the original 1.5 pounds.

With a \$39 accessory, people can connect the tablet to televisions, so they can watch high-definition videos on the bigger screen.

The next-generation iPads will cost the same as the originals \$499 to \$829, depending on storage space and whether they can connect to the Internet over a cellular network. Apple will add a white model to the current black. In the U.S., the iPad 2 will go on sale March 11 and work on AT&T Inc. and Verizon Wireless.

The iPad 2 shared the spotlight with the man who presented it Jobs, who announced in January that he would take a third leave of absence to focus on his health.



TECHPHOTO

Intelligent tracksuit

A woman wears an "intelligent tracksuit" that records and then transmits her movements to a computer presented by the Fraunhofer Institute at the CeBIT IT fair on its opening day on March 1, 2011 in Hanover, central Germany. More than 4,200 tech firms from 70 countries are expected to attend this year's CeBIT, with many of the big names that stayed away during the global financial crisis returning to Germany. The fair is running until March 5.

PHOTO: AFP

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