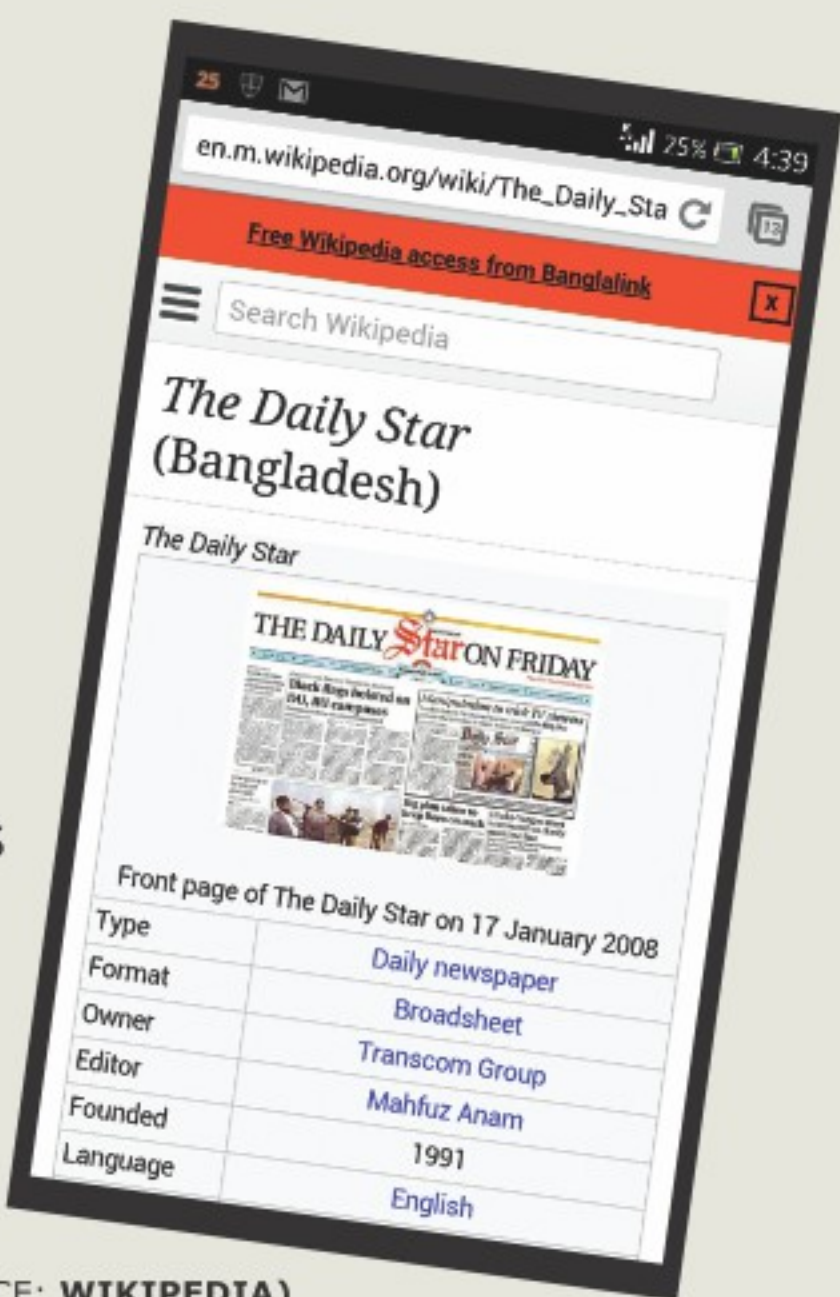## TECH TALK

Wikipedia Zero

A righteous initiative for accessing free knowledge

Wikipedia Zero is a project by the Wikimedia Foundation to provide Wikipedia free of charge on mobile phones, particularly in developing markets. The program was launched in 2012. The objective of the program is to reduce barriers to accessing free knowledge—one of the largest barriers being cost of data usage. One can easily access Wikipedia and other associated domains from data enable smartphones at free of cost. Currently the following domains are free to access now: m.wikipedia.org, zero.wikipedia.org, upload.wikimedia.org, bits.wikimedia.org, commons.wikimedia.org, meta.m.wikimedia.org, meta.wikimedia.org (SOURCE: **WIKIPEDIA**)

Carolynne Schloeder, Director of Mobile Programs at Wikimedia Foundation, carve up the benefits, goals and expectations of this initiative with Shahriar Rahman from 'Bytes' on the eve of launching Wikipedia Zero in Bangladesh.

Shahriar: What inspired Wikimedia to actually launch such an initiative?
Carolynne: Originally, I think my predecessor came up with the idea. Maybe he saw the trend like Facebook zero. So, bigger companies were doing this already; working with the operators who wanted to encourage people to try the mobile internet. Think about from mobile operator's perspective. They had people. And everybody had phones and phones where becoming more and more capable and the operators just want to make that internet access viable. So you have to sort of train users or educate user to move over. So I think that originally Facebook Zero was probably created simply to train users to use internet. We looked at it and thought that's a smart idea. But for Wikipedia it's not about getting people to use internet so that we can make money of it. It's because we genuinely want to spread the knowledge freely to all the people of the world. And we know that the next billion users will be in the developing countries. And using Wikipedia in mobile phones- we know a lot of them will be having problem in paying their data charges. So, it is very important for us that we can make sure that the knowledge resource gets to the people who actually need it.

Shahriar: How many operators in how many countries are now covered in the Wikipedia Zero initiative now?
Carolynne: Currently 23 countries have the service already and more are on the last stage. So far we have a reach of 680 million users. In Bangladesh, Banglalink is the first to launch this service. Grameenphone is in the pipeline. Robi and Wikimedia Foundation just had an agreement. So it will be launching soon hopefully.

Shahriar: What's the long term plan regarding this particular program?
Carolynne: I just mentioned about our current partnership reach. We would like to reach 1.5 billion people through our partnerships. And then our secondary plan is to make sure then people use Wikipedia. Wikipedia Zero is a mean to an ends; the end is the impact the way that knowledge can support education and help people improve their lives. So

> Wikipedia zero is important to bring Wikipedia to people to raise awareness. We are more focused on reading through the mobile device than article creation. But we are hoping as people use Wikipedia more and there is such a bigger audience people will be inspired to join the movement and actually contribute articles.

ultimately what we are looking at is IMPACT. And when I talk about access to knowledge, it's not just people reading Wikipedia. Rather knowledge must be multi-directional. So through the Wikimedia Foundation, what we are looking to do is to increase the contributions from the developing regions. So in case of Bangladesh, we want to grow the Bangla language version because it is important to the people here but also we want to see the people in Bangladesh writing articles that are important in the voice of the people here. So this is one of the priorities of Wikimedia Foundation.

Shahriar: Does Wikipedia have any plan to launch any offline version of the Wikipedia which might contain the very basic local information of a particular country or language?
Carolynne: There has been some work done regarding the offline version of Wikipedia. But I cannot actually confirm you about the update on that since I don't actually know how that will be going to fit in to our strategy. But we have some apps for android and iOS. And also we created a JAVA version for lower end phones that we have not yet released. Also we have an app available for Mozilla Firefox platform. So for now we are just looking at mobile internet only.

Shahriar: So currently there are online two ways to avail the Wikipedia Zero Service. The USSD version for basic phones and URL based for smartphone, right?
Carolynne: I would just clarify, the mobile internet site and wikipedia.org is not limited to smartphones but it is limited to internet enabled or data enabled phones. So there are high end feature phones that people use to access the internet. So that's the primary means. The USSD service is still in testing. It's not worldwide available. In fact it is only available for three months period in Kenya right now. So we have to figure it out if this service makes sense for people before we decide we launch it worldwide.

Shahriar: Many researchers have shown that disproportional amount of contents are entered in Wikipedia from developing countries compared to the rest of the world. For example: There are nearly more than double articles in Antarctica than the entire African continent. Do you think this initiative is going to help enrich the contents in Wikipedia from developing countries?
Carolynne: Wikipedia zero is important to bring Wikipedia to people to raise awareness. We are more focused on reading through the mobile device than article creation. But we are hoping as people use Wikipedia more and there is such a bigger audience people will be inspired to join the movement and actually contribute articles. So this is part of the overall initiative to raise awareness and bring Wikipedia to people through which very naturally they will follow and join the local chapters in the movement to enrich the local contents. Right now, articles are created more in computer than on the mobile phone. We do have mobile edit feature now and the Wikimedia Foundation is taking it seriously the need to do more on mobile editing. So over the next few we will continue to advance the mobile editing feature. That will take a bit more time but right now I think the most important thing that Wikipedia Zero can do is increase the audience and raise awareness because from the group of readers is where we find the editors and the committed passionate volunteers.

Shahriar: Do you think being free is going to enrich Wikipedia's content in the long run since all the editors and contributors are unpaid?
Carolynne: Wikipedia worldwide exists on volunteer labor and it's….AMAZING. It's a miracle actually since people wants to donate their time to spread knowledge. And it's beautiful. So, yes! We don't pay people to do it (chuckled).But it's because we trust in the human nature of helping others.

Shahriar: Since how long are you affiliated with Wikipedia? Shed some light on your academic background.
Carolynne: I joined Wikipedia four months back. Before that I was in my ringtone company 'Moderati'. My career has been in consumer technology for mobile for now about twenty years. And I loved it. I am not an engineer myself. I graduated from Stanford University in International Relationships and did my MBA from Harvard University. Actually I am a non-technical entrepreneur. And I feel so lucky to have my job in Wikimedia Foundation because there are only a few organizations that are in for the right reason and have the ability to impact billions of people; which is awe-inspiring.

Shahriar: Worldwide many governments are imposing acts like SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) and PIPA (Protection IP Act). These are considered as barriers for people to get access to free contents. How is Wikipedia coping with these?
Carolynne: Free speech and free knowledge are the core principles on which Wikimedia Foundation and Wikipedia Movement is based. We hold these principles in the highest value and we fought hard against SOPA. And the foundation will continue to protect free speech.

Shahriar: Have you ever been to Bangladesh before?
Carolynne: No, this is my first time in Bangladesh.

Shahriar: Thank you very much for making the time for the interview. Have a lovely stay in Dhaka.
Carolynne: Thanks to you too.

TECH HAPPENINGS

MoICT launches

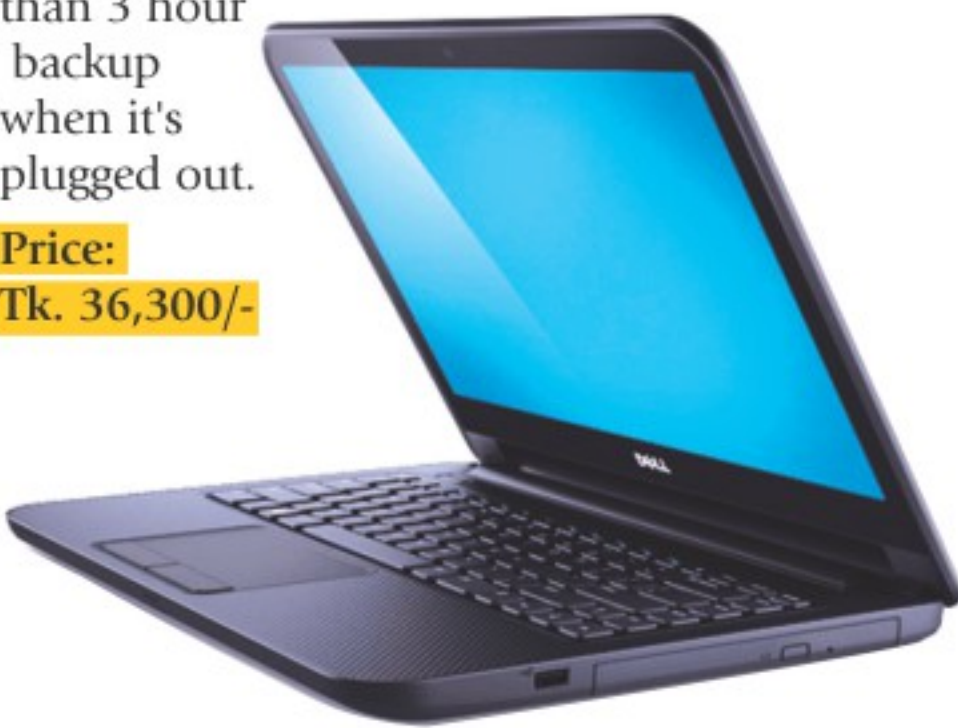# 'National Mobile Application Development Program'

The Ministry of ICT, Bangladesh has undertaken 'National Mobile Application Development: Awareness and Capacity Building' program with the goal of helping the youth of Bangladesh connect to the international mobile applications market. The project will especially emphasize providing necessary technical training for independent mobile application development to students in universities and at the grassroots level. As well as that, effort will be undertaken to raise awareness of mobile app potential among the public and among policy makers. The successful completion of this project will be an active boon to the established goal of 2021: Digital Bangladesh mission. The project is also aimed to create a pool of world-class app developer through employment in local and international markets. MCC Ltd and EATL are the implementing partners of this National Program. MCC Ltd., a veteran Bangla language-based mobile app developer, will use their considerable experience in mobile app development to aid the government in conducting this project. Microsoft, Nokia Bangladesh, Google Developer Group, SOLQuest and Symphony will help by acting as associate partners of this program. The programs that have been developed under this project are mobile application idea generation contest, mobile apps idea collection: apps sensitization – boot camp in all the 7 divisions, digital content creation for teaching, apps development training in all the districts and lastly a national mobile app championship. When all these are done, an open web portal will be constructed for mobile app developers, to help them and to act as a news portal for all news about various programs across the country related to mobile app development.

JUST IN

Dell N3421 for anyone and everyone

Dell Inspiron N3421 landed in Bangladesh recently. The Intel core i3 3217U Processor has been used in this third gen. 14" wide screen Notebook. Its processing speed is up to 1.8 GHz. It has Intel 4000 HD Graphics and 2GB RAM. Though this particular model is comprised of 2 RAM slots, users may upgrade it easily up to 8GB. This model comes with a free version of DOS operating system. It contains 500 GB 5400RPM SATA Hard Drive for storage. A 4 cell Lithium Ion (65WHr) battery has been used in this Notebook which is ensuring backup more than 3 hour backup when it's plugged out.
Price: Tk. 36,300/-

TwinMOS launches Smartphone in Bangladesh

TwinMOS recently released the first model of their smartphone series Sky-V501 in the Bangladesh market. This Taiwanese phone comes with Android 4.2 JB and features MTK Quad Core 1.2 GHz Processor, 5 inch Capacitive Full Touch IPS Screen with HD Display, Dual SIM GSM with 3G, Wi-Fi and GPS, 8MP primary Camera, 3MP secondary camera with auto focus & flashlight. The most interesting feature of this Smartphone is the Dual Battery (Total 2800mAH). It contains one Lithium battery and one Li-polymer battery inside which will assist users to continue using their phone even when the main battery charge drains out.
Price: Tk. 17,900/- plus 1 year warranty

ASUS X550CA notebook with encircling beauty and performance

Value-packed with all the essentials, the X550CA notebook reinvents your daily computing experience. Whether you are using it for work or for fun, this is an ideal machine for both productive computing and entertainment. It features 1.80 GHz Intel® Core™ i5 processor, 4 GB RAM, 1 TB hard disk, integrated Intel HD Graphics 4000 VGA, 15.6-inch display. Other special features of the notebook are- Instant on that resumes your computer from sleep mode in 2 seconds, HDMI port, webcam, Bluetooth, wireless LAN and USB 3.0 for 10 times faster data transfer speed. ASUS X550CC Series gives you everything you need for a truly satisfying multitask computing and multimedia experience.
Price: Tk. 48,500/-

Lenovo IdeaTab S6000- 10.1" entertainment tablet

Lenovo S6000 is a sleek and powerful tablet designed for customers looking for a device that switches seamlessly from entertainment to social media and beyond. It is powered by the MT 8125 1.2 GHz quad-core processor and comes with a 10.1-inch IPS 1280 x 800 display, 8.6 mm thickness, micro HDMI port digital microphone etc. It runs Android 4.2 Jelly Bean. It also brings a dual webcam with a 5MP rear camera and wireless LAN, Bluetooth 4.0 and 16 GB of internal storage which is expandable via microSD card.
Price: Tk. 27,000/-

Global Brand Pvt. Ltd. becomes the first to tie up with the Dassault Systemes in Bangladesh

Global Brand Pvt. Ltd. (GBPL) one recently announced that it has entered into an association with Dassault Systèmes, the 3DEXPERIENCE Company, world leader in 3D design software, 3D Digital Mock Up and Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) solutions. The association makes Global Brand Pvt. Ltd (GBPL) the first Value Selling Partner of Dassault Systemes in Bangladesh. This partnership will help GBPL bring cutting edge design solutions across industry verticals in Bangladesh including infrastructure building, construction, transportation and financial and business services.