

# S M ASHRAF ABIR

## Making Bangladesh smarter than ever

BY MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

If you visit Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) office to get a driving license, complex official procedures and a long queue will take up your entire day. Not only in the BRTA, it is a common scenario in most of our government offices.

But things are now beginning to change. Bangladeshis will soon get an easy access to any government service and information using their smartphone by downloading free apps. With ICT Division of the Bangladesh government, as an implementing partner of this revolutionary change, S M Ashraf Abir, the CEO of Multimedia Content & Communications (MCC) one of the leading app development companies have been developing mobile applications for years mostly for social and educational purposes. Many of these applications such as driving license, hospital finder, Dhaka Zoo, the BTRC are already available in the Google Play Store for free.

Ashraf says, "It is quite obvious why people rely mostly on mobile phones for information exchange more than computer. For this reason, we have decided to develop application software designed for smartphones which will allow everybody to access information and government and non government services they need from anywhere. In fact, currently 25 million people in our country use smartphone and the number is increasing at an astonishing rate."

When MCC started working in the National Mobile Application Development programme under the ICT Division of the Ministry of Post Telecommunication Information Technology, they got the opportunity to develop applications for government organisations and its services. Under this project, the MCC launched its first batch of 26 applications on

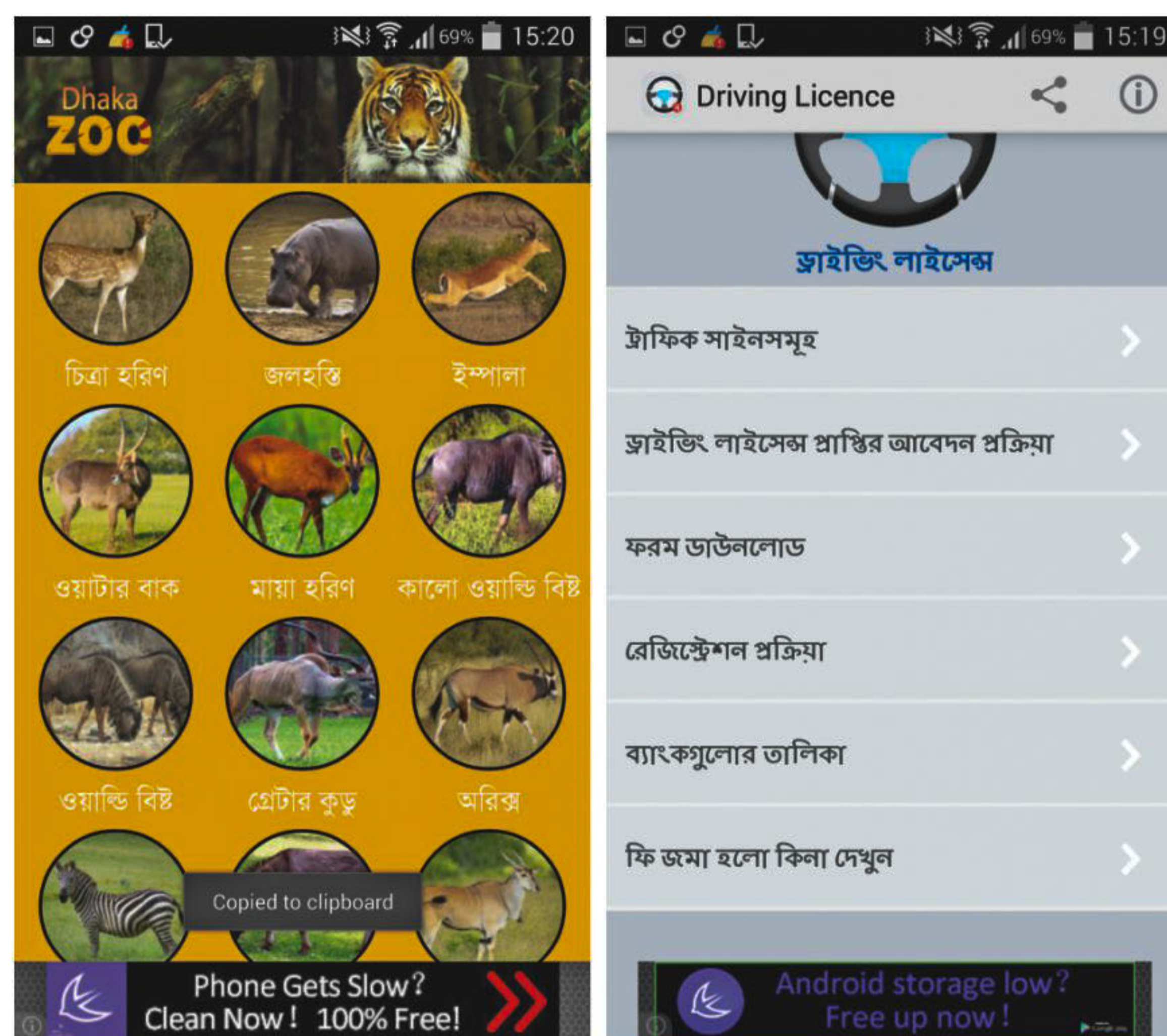
September 26, 2014. Applications for Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation using which one can know about eminent tourist spots in Bangladesh; government services like driving license, different downloadable forms; applications representing Bangladesh such as life and works of Kazi Nazrul Islam; archaeological resources of Bangladesh, rivers of Bangladesh and much more. This January the MCC will be launching 100 more applications which will be available for free download.

Under the programme, the MCC also arranged technical workshops across 64 districts of Bangladesh. Ashraf says, "Our goal is to create a network for our youth so that they can develop ground-breaking applications on their own. We have arranged many hands-on training programmes with the government and also as the organiser of Google Developers Group Sonargaon for this purpose."

Now Ashraf's goal is to make information technology accessible and useful for children and school students. With this vision he has been working on his new app development project with Jessore Education Board. This new free app will be launched this January, enabling educational institutions under Jessore Board to run all kinds of academic activities through smartphones.

For his remarkable achievements Ashraf has achieved several international recognitions such as Nokia Create for Millions, Manthan South Asia Award, mBillionth, World Summit Youth Award.

Abir shares his future plan, "We have been developing free mobile phone applications for years. In 2015 we will come up with newer apps for our people."



Screenshots of apps on Dhaka Zoo and driving licence.



S M Ashraf Abir  
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS