

Towards a Digital Bangladesh through safe internet use

RAJEEV SETHI

NAMES like Uber, Airbnb, Viber and Instagram may sound alien to many people of the older generation, but these are some of the largest service providers in an ever-enlarging digital world. The pace of technological progress in the modern era outpaces that of any other. The meteoric pace of technological evolution never ceases to amaze, as it introduces newer conveniences in our daily lives. Today's global citizens are more tech-savvy and more adaptive to change than their predecessors ever were. Not only do they crave new ways of leading more convenient and connected lives, they demand it.

Probably the most important invention of the modern era, from which stems a bulk of the tech-based comforts that we now take for granted, is a platform called the internet. It is the internet that, over the last two decades, has transformed isolated inhabitants of separate geographical regions into well-connected global citizens. Barriers physically dividing people dissolve in the virtual world. The internet has enabled people around the globe to instantly share ideas and information with each other, a process made dramatically easier by the rise of social media over the last decade. Information belonging to any category imaginable is now accessible by anyone through only a few clicks, or taps if one prefers smartphones.

Regardless of classifications by age, income, or geography, citizens of the modern world continue being ever-more dependent on the internet because of the unlimited amount of resources that can satisfy almost all of their needs. For example, social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Viber, LinkedIn and the like help people to stay interconnected, irrespective of distance. Sites like Wikipedia address almost all information needs, those like Quora allow users to find answers to each other's questions, while initiatives like Khan Academy make learning infinitely more convenient. How could one forget path-breaking online services like Paypal, Uber, and Amazon? Education and training imparted by institutions are becoming more internet-centric every day, while a modern professional can hardly imagine a day without having to go online. From people living



Rajeev Sethi

in some of the remotest parts of the world to those residing in primetime global hubs -- the internet has a generous amount of useful resources and ways of staying globally connected for everyone.

While the internet has helped bring about an unprecedented positive transformation in global lifestyle, irresponsible use of the platform has sometimes brought on hazards on an individual, social, and global scale. Let us take a look from the perspective of a family, which is the root of a larger society.

Our children hold the key to our future, and how we support their growth largely determines our collective fate. Telenor predicts that half a billion children will go online in the emerging Asian economies alone over the next decade, while a staggering 100 million children will go online in Telenor's six Asian markets by 2017. This, in essence, is exceptionally good news. The internet can be a child's best tool for learning. There is an abundance of interactive and informative educational resources that can enhance a child's perspective and knowledge on not only specific subjects, but also about the world at large. Moreover, social media allows children to stay connected and exchange ideas with peers, teachers, and educators. In brief, if used properly, the internet helps children become highly competent global citizens.

However, the above benefits can be effectively reaped only if children are

taught how to use the internet safely and responsibly. Irresponsible and inappropriate use of the internet, like access to improper and explicit content, can severely hamper a child's healthy growth. How do we, as parents and guardians, deal with this risk?

Let us first look at the backdrop. Perhaps the most popular buzzword in the world of information technology is 'innovation'. It is innovation that has propelled the advancement of civilisation through the centuries. Modern-day technology like the internet has catalysed the pace of this innovation-driven progress. However, as we often fail to realise, innovation pervades every aspect of our life, because how we lead our lives and how we interact with our surroundings can always be fine-tuned. This is a reality that I acknowledge not only as a professional, but also, and more importantly, as a parent. I recognise that since the company where I serve as CEO is at the forefront of taking internet to every doorstep of Bangladesh, I as a parent too have the foremost responsibility of setting an example on how to effectively encourage my children to use the platform safely.

Grameenphone's countrywide campaign to promote safe internet use, for example, has focused on some key areas in this regard. Prominent among those are building awareness among children around the benefits of responsible use (as well as the hazards of inappropriate use)

of the tool through effective communication. To ultimately do that, parents and guardians need a friendly and open relationship with their children, where the children can comfortably communicate with them about anything. This is especially important because it is never fully possible, nor is it right, for parents or guardians to monitor their ward's activities round the clock. Parents should encourage children to use the internet at specific times of the day, for a fixed period of time. Setting age limits, appropriate security measures, and filters on internet-access devices also go a long way. Keeping a check on browser history also helps keep track of a child's activities on the internet. Children should always be encouraged to log out of any online account after they are done using them.

The most important part is maintaining a smooth line of communication with children. Every child is different, which is why it is important to be 'innovative' as a parent to understand your child, and know how to help them come to comfortable, friendly terms with you. It should be mentioned that as a parent we too must know how the internet works, so that we can not only enjoy its benefits ourselves, but also educate our children about responsible use of the tool.

As a professional working in the country's leading digital services provider, I try to abide by these principles of staying safe online, so that we, alongside, our children can reap the maximum benefits of the internet without falling prey to any of its hazards. The dream of a technologically enriched 'Digital Bangladesh' can be made a reality only when we develop collective awareness through education, and take the necessary responsible action to build towards that ambition.

Keeping all these in mind, Grameenphone, like all other Telenor companies around the world, is observing Customer First Day today. My colleagues will be visiting different customers locations with the message "Be Smart, Use Heart," disseminating knowledge regarding how to remain safe on the internet both for the children and their parents. We believe that the informed parents, teachers and children will be more equipped to cope with the challenges and use the internet to its greatest potential.

The writer is the chief executive officer of Grameenphone Ltd.

Qantas warns of phone fire risk after US flight incident

AFP, Sydney

Australian carrier Qantas has warned of the danger of mobile phones being crushed in reclining plane seats and catching fire after one ignited during a US flight, according to a safety report Wednesday.

The findings came just weeks after Qantas and domestic competitor Virgin Australia, as well as other international airlines, told customers not to use or charge Samsung's Galaxy Note 7 during flights after faulty lithium-ion batteries in the new smartphone caused some handsets to explode.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau report said the phone, without revealing the brand, was crushed in a Qantas business class passenger's seat on a Los Angeles-New York flight on June 21 and "immediately began hissing and emitting smoke".

"Moments later, the PED (personal electronic device) ignited... when the cabin crewmembers arrived at seat 3A, they observed an orange glow emanating from the seat," the report said.

"A crewmember discharged a fire extinguisher into the seat, extinguishing the glow."

A Qantas spokesman told AFP the airline was telling customers to keep track of their phone while seated and to alert flight crew if they lose it down the side, instead of moving their seats.

"When the seat moves, that's when the phone may get crushed," the spokesman said, adding that the seats were fire-retardant.

Kuwaiti court scraps petrol price hike

AFP, Kuwait City

A Kuwaiti court on Wednesday ordered the government of the oil-rich Gulf state to abolish an increase in petrol prices nearly one month after it took effect.

The price hike, ranging from about 40 to 80 percent depending on the type, met stiff opposition from lawmakers and activists when introduced on September 1 following a slide in oil revenues.

The administrative court did not immediately give the reasons for its ruling which was based on a petition filed by lawyer Nawaf al-Fuzai.

Fuzai told AFP that he argued the price decision "should have come through a bill from parliament and not from the cabinet."

"I believe the judge has accepted our argument," he said after the verdict was announced.

The court was expected to release the full ruling later Wednesday. It can still be challenged by the government at the appeals and supreme courts.

The development came after Kuwaiti lawmakers on Thursday requested an emergency session of parliament to debate the price increase.

In their motion, lawmakers said the move had resulted in a rise in the prices of commodities and goods.

MPs want the government to compensate Kuwaiti citizens who comprise around 30 percent of the 4.3 million population, which also includes about three million foreigners.

Wells Fargo CEO forfeits millions as board orders review



REUTERS

Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf testifies before a Senate Banking Committee hearing on the firm's sales practices on Capitol Hill in Washington on September 20.

REUTERS

WELLS Fargo & Co said on Tuesday that Chief Executive Officer John Stumpf will forfeit unvested equity awards worth about \$41 million and will not get a salary while the company's board investigates the bank's sales practices.

Carrie Tolsted, the former head of the retail division at the center of a burgeoning sales scandal, has left the company ahead of her planned Dec 31 retirement date, will get no severance and has forfeited unvested equity awards worth about \$19 million, the bank said. Stumpf and Tolsted will also not receive bonuses for 2016.

The penalties represent one of the biggest financial sanctions ever levied against a major bank boss and mark a sharp change from a few years ago when despite scandals at large banks, no CEO had to give back a bonus.

Wells Fargo, the United States' third-largest bank by assets, is under pressure to show it is holding its top brass accountable after government investigations revealed that some of its employees opened as many as 2 million accounts without customers' knowledge in order to meet sales targets.

The company's failure to claw back executive bonuses was a big feature of Stumpf's appearance before a Senate Banking Committee meeting last week into the bank's sales tactics. Some lawmakers also called on him to resign. Stumpf will appear before the House Financial Services Committee on Thursday.

The San Francisco-based bank agreed to pay \$190 million earlier this month to settle regulatory charges over the account scandal and has fired about 5,300 employees, most of them low-ranking staff, in connection with it.

A special committee of the bank's independent directors will lead an investigation into the retail bank's sales practices, helped by the board's human resources committee and the law firm Shearman & Sterling LLP, according to the statement.

The investigation may lead to further compensation changes or employment actions, the company said.

"We are deeply concerned by these matters, and we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of the Company's business are conducted with integrity, transparency, and oversight," Stephen Sanger, the board's lead independent director, said in a statement.

Canada approves \$36b LNG project, eyes Asia

AFP, Montreal

Canada approved on Tuesday a massive Can\$36 billion (\$27 billion USD) project by Malaysia's Petronas to build a liquefied natural gas pipeline along its Pacific Northwest coast, targeting Asian markets.

The project is the first deal by Canada's year-old Liberal government that goes against environmentalists in the name of the country's economic interests.

Environmental activists and indigenous groups have opposed the plans.

"The government approved the Pacific Northwest LNG project," said Environment Minister Catherine McKenna.

"As the prime minister has emphasized, the only way to get resources to market in the 21st century is if it is done sustainably and responsibly. Today's announcement reflects this commitment," she said.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has repeatedly said that the economy and environment should be pursued in parallel, without sacrificing one for the other.

The project includes a pipeline and two Petronas terminals to ship gas to Asia.

The gas terminals are to be built on Lelu Island, near Prince Rupert on the Pacific coast. Each will have a capacity of six million tons per year, with the possibility of adding a third down the road.

Germany and Deutsche Bank rush to quash state aid rumours

AFP, Berlin

THE German government and Deutsche Bank were at pains Wednesday to quash speculation of a rescue plan for the troubled lender, in an effort to reassure investors spooked by a potentially massive US fine.

The denials came after Deutsche's share price sank to a record low this week on reports that Germany's biggest bank had asked Berlin for help after US authorities demanded an unaffordable \$14-billion fine over the subprime mortgage crisis.

State aid "is not on the table", chief executive John Cryan told Germany's biggest-selling newspaper Bild.

But investors were further rattled when news weekly Die Zeit on Wednesday reported that German and EU officials were working on an emergency plan for Deutsche "if the worst comes to the worst".

Germany's finance ministry swiftly shot down any talk of such a bailout.

"The report is wrong. The government is not preparing rescue plans. There are no grounds for such speculation," the ministry said in a statement.

The rapid-fire developments saw Deutsche shares rise more than 2.5 percent in early afternoon trading to 10.8 euros, making up some of the ground lost in the last two sessions, while Frankfurt's DAX 30 index was showing a gain of 0.9 percent.

Uncertainty over the bank's financial health had seen shares hit a record low on Monday, dropping 7.54 percent to close at 10.55 euros (\$11.80) and ending at the same level on Tuesday.

Deutsche has been dominating business headlines ever since the US Department of Justice (DoJ) made its demand for the eye-watering fine earlier this month.

If Deutsche is unable to negotiate the sum down to less than the \$5.5



REUTERS/FILE

A statue is seen next to the logo of Germany's Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt.

billion it has set aside for legal costs and fines, it could be forced to raise fresh capital on the markets, diluting the value of its shares.

"We expect the DoJ will treat us just as fairly as the American banks" that have settled for much less in similar cases, Cryan insisted to Bild.

Eager to show investors it was working to clean up its balance sheet, Deutsche on Wednesday announced it had agreed to offload its British insurance company Abbey Life to life insurer Phoenix Group for 1.1 billion euros, which will provide a slight boost to its capital buffer.

Cryan insisted to Bild that he had "at no point" asked Chancellor Angela Merkel for a rescue, adding that "I also didn't hint at any such thing".

But Die Zeit is to report on Thursday on plans by Berlin that "if the worst comes to the worst" to sell off parts of Deutsche Bank to other financial institutions, and could "in the most extreme emergency" buy a 25-percent stake in the bank.

Some voices in the government favour involving the European Single Resolution Mechanism, set up in the wake of the financial crisis to prevent taxpayer bailouts of failing

banks, the newspaper said.

In that case, creditors and customers would bear a share of the rescue costs -- potentially creating fresh chaos on the financial markets.

German officials believe attempting to intercede with the US authorities would have little chance of helping Deutsche and would be "potentially counterproductive", Die Zeit said in an extract sent out on Wednesday.

Deutsche faces further looming problems in the shape of an investigation by New York regulators into alleged money laundering at its Russian branch.

The two cases are among the most pressing of some 8,000 weighing on Deutsche, and CEO Cryan has promised to resolve them by the end of the year.

In the boss's chair at Deutsche Bank for a little over a year, Cryan has launched a massive restructuring of the Frankfurt institution, planning to slash 200 branches in Germany and almost 9,000 jobs worldwide by 2020.

Shares in the bank have lost more than half of their value since January after the bank booked an almost 7-billion-euro loss in 2015.