

**Current Status of Information and Communication Technology in Bangladesh**

*Myth Vs Fact*

*Presentation*

by

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# Outline of Presentation

- The need for ICT in Bangladesh
- Background development of ICT in Bangladesh
- Present position of ICT in Bangladesh
- Some Recent Developments
- Concerns and Recommendation

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# The need for ICT in Bangladesh

- ICT plays an indispensable role in promoting openness, accessibility, accountability, connectivity, democracy and decentralization- all the “soft” qualities so essential for effective social, economic, and political development.
- Bangladesh needs the capacity to network with people, ideas and initiatives. This is as critical and fundamental to nation building as water, agriculture, health and housing, and without it, Bangladesh’s democracy could founder.

# Background

- Computer use started back in 1964 by Atomic Energy Center, Dhaka and Universities, first main frame computer came to Bangladesh in 1964
- The Internet came late in Bangladesh, with UUCP e-mail beginning in 1993 by Pradesta Ltd and IP connectivity in 1996 . By July 1997 there were an estimated 5,500 IP and UUCP accounts  
Source: [http://www.c2o.org/reports/Report\\_PAN\\_Asia\\_Networking.pdf](http://www.c2o.org/reports/Report_PAN_Asia_Networking.pdf)
- In June, 1996 the government decided to allow private companies to act as Internet Services Providers (ISPs) using VSATs.
- In June 1997, the Government of Bangladesh appointed a Committee to look into the problems and prospects of export of software from Bangladesh. The Committee submitted its report in September, 1997.  
<http://www.sdnbd.org/sdi/issues/IT-computer/expartsoft-report.htm>
- The government has taken a decision on June, 1998 to withdraw all import duties and VAT from all computer hardware and software. This has brought the prices of computers down to a level affordable by middle income households

# Telecom Infrastructure in Bangladesh

- 750,000 fixed lines Operated by BTTB- (Government monopoly)
  - Next five yrs demand for fixed lines will be 3.5 million
  - 950,000 Mobile Phones- Operated by Four Company
  - Grameen- Current subscriber base of GP is 7,30,000 while it has coverage in 44 districts including all six divisional headquarters.
  - Grameen –Target to expand 1 million by Dec-02- came to market 1997
  - GrameenPhone connections would stand at 2 million by 2004
  - Aktel- Target to expand 150,000 by Dec-02
  - CityCell
  - Seba
  - 20,000 Village phones are in operation in 18,581 villages of 324 Upzillas, 50,000 Bangladeshi women making living as Grameen phone ladies.
- Source: Grameen, BBC News, BD Media

# The Digital Divide

- More than 600 Million people worldwide have some sort of access to the Internet. That is an astonishing number, and reflect the rapid growth of the network since it was invented in 1970s.
- While over half of UK households are online, only **0.1% of homes in Bangladesh** (Source: BBC News)
- **Present Position in Bangladesh**
- As of **Sept 30th, 2002**, Registered **Dial-Up user accounts 120,000**
- **Broadband(Radio, Cable, xDSL) accounts 5,000**
- Cyber Café Users **6,000** Source: <http://www.ispabd.org>
- **BTTB – Dial-Up user accounts 8,500**, BTTB is now offering its service in **50 districts** Source: <http://www.bttb.net>

## Total Number of Internet Service Provider

- Prior to the formation of BTRC (Bangladesh Telephone Regulatory Commission) Total Number of ISP's **130**
- Operational around **60**
- Highest Bandwidth available now **4 mbps** Source: <http://www.ispabd.org>
- Internet User about : **500,000**
- Internet Access Charge went down to .20 paisa/min (2 am –8am)
- Tk 3000 for Unlimited Access
- Broadband-64kbs Tk 10,000/month, 128kbs Tk 22,000/month
- 512 Kbps Tk 96,000/month Source: Grameen Cybernet

# Recent Developments

- ❖ Grameen Phone launch Wireless Application Protocol (**WAP**) service on July 1st, 2001 and Short Message Service. Anyone can send short message to Grameen Phone via web. Try <http://www.icq.com/>
- ❖ Ministry of Science and Technology has been renamed on April 2002 as “Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology “
- ❖ **BTRC** (Bangladesh Telephone Regulatory Commission) was set up in Jan, 2002
- ❖ **VOIP** ( Voice Over Internet Protocol) to be legalized by March 2003, about 23 Companies are operating illegally, and Government is not getting any revenue out of it, it need to be legalized ASAP, since India, and many other countries already legalized it.
- ❖ Government will break the Monopoly on Fixed Lines (BTTB) by June 2003
- ❖ Equity and Entrepreneurship Fund is being introduced  
<http://www.bangladesh-bank.org/about/dept/eefu/eefu.html>

# Global Information Superhighway

- ❖ Submarine Cable connection to Global Information Superhighway(SEA-ME-WE-4) will be ready for service in 2004. It will be built using DWDM (Dense Wavelength Division Multiplex) technology with 1.28 terabits per second speed

# Bangladesh's Strengths

- ❖ A substantial number of educated unemployed youth force, with ability to read and write English
- ❖ About 2500 Bangladeshi NRB(Non Resident Bangladeshi) IT professionals employed in North America
- ❖ Total number of ICT related graduate every year now Bangladesh producing 4529 from Public/Private Universities.
- ❖ A large number of Bangladeshi students are studying overseas in Computer related subjects, specially in India.
- ❖ Bangladesh offers a very attractive cost-effective wage level for Programmers about half of India.

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# E-Government

<http://www.bangladeshgov.org>

<http://www.most-bd.org/>

- ❖ These two web sites will give you the answer , where we are and what need to be done
- ❖ Most of the web sites contains obsolete information even the Universities don't have any web sites.
- ❖ No interactivity; emails are not replied

# E-Commerce

- CSE (Chittagong Stock Exchange) offers Online Trading of Stocks
- Few Private Banks are offering online Banking
- <http://www.webbangladesh.com/>  
<http://www.homeviewbangladesh.com> offers variety of consumer items

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# Concerns and Recommendation

- More commitment to define and separate the roles of public sector and private sector in IT development; and give due recognition and importance to the private-sector role with the aim of making it stronger.
- Private-sector representation be allowed in the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission. This was part of the original plan and intent in formulating the Commission, but somehow was over looked. Currently, there are the 9 Commissioners comprising of the BTRC who are all retired BTTB and Government officials.

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## Concerns and Recommendation

- ❖ BASIS and MOSICT should encourage Bangladeshi Software companies to get certified for CMM(Capability Maturity Model) from Software Engineering Institute  
<http://www.sei.cmu.edu/cmm/>  
<http://www.sei.cmu.edu/> instead of ISO 9001
- ❖ BTTB need to be privatized ASAP
- ❖ Stop BTTB to market Cellular Phones

# Concerns and Recommendation

- Open a cell on EPB for monitoring the ICT related exports like Pakistan Software Export Board <http://www.pseb.org.pk/> which will keep track of IT and ITES export for Bangladesh
- Be open when it comes to vital data about Bangladesh IT export, our so called ICT policy makers should give real data instead of imaginary.
- BASIS should target a realistic number for IT & ITES export by 2006 instead of imaginary \$2 Billion, when our last year IT & ITES export was only not even \$10 million.
- Promote e-governance-Ease of governance with less scope for corruption

# Concerns and Recommendation

- ❖ As the formation of BASIS was according to Dr. JRC Committee Report to follow the example of NASSCOM <http://www.nasscom.org> "Encourage firms involved in software development and data processing services to form an association in line with e.g. NASSCOM."
- ❖ BASIS should not be used for personal gain as it appears being used for personal gain by its President
- ❖ We need to reorganize the leadership on BASIS(<http://www.basisbd.org>), BCC(<http://www.bccbd.org>), BCS for our real ICT development and enhance the image of our country, as the web site of these organization (BASIS) shows the picture of their EC, which is not a good practice when it comes to a professional organization's web site, since people from outside world will get bad impression about our IT industry

# Concerns and Recommendation

- Bangladesh spends only 2.2% of GNP on Education compared with 3.4% by Sri Lanka, 3.2% by both India and Nepal and 2.7% by Pakistan. We need to spend more on Education of our GNP. Source: [www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org)
- Make our Polytechnic Institute's breeding ground to provide Associate Degree in CS or reorganize them as BIT's, since all 4 BIT's are recently being transformed to Science & Technology Universities.
- Invest at least 5% of our yearly defense budget on IT related R&D, take example from Israel, India, Pakistan, today's war is Network Centric
- Make compulsory IT training for all Government Officials and defense officials.
- Make compulsory English for all Graduate Level Courses
- Promote IT-Enabled Services like Medical Transcription, Call Center, Data Entry, which requires only 3-6 months training.

# Concerns and Recommendation

- Target to produce ICT related graduates about 25000/yr by 2006, now Bangladesh producing 4529/yr from Public/Private Universities
- Invite at least one big company like Microsoft, Motorola, IBM to open a development center in Bangladesh that should be our target.
- All Government Organization (Ministries/Offices) with whom Citizen need to interact must have websites
- All Private/Public Universities must have websites and their Final Year CS students could developed these web sites as their projects

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