



## Maiden meeting of APIS steering committee held

### ICT Newsletter Report

The first meeting of the steering committee of the Asia Pacific Information Superhighways was held in Dhaka on Wednesday focusing on implementation of the master plan for regional connectivity.

The meeting elected chair of the Bureau and discussed on proposed agenda.

The session started with introduction of the participants and later they proposed names for chair for the next period to lead the platform.

Bangladesh representative, Department of ICT Director General Banamali Bhaumik was elected as chair for the Bureau of the organisation by voice vote of the participants.

ESCAP's ICT and Development Section chief Atsuko Okuda made a power point presentation on master plan of APIS focusing on sub regional development through implementing connectivity.

"Bangladesh proposed to amend the intergovernmental agreement of Asian Highways Network and Trans-Asian Railways Network. It will facilitate the APIS master plan implantation though utilising these network," She said.

Okuda later urged all the participants to promote broad-based partnerships, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation and highlighting the importance of such partnerships, for the implementation of the Master Plan for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Regional Cooperation Framework Document.

After elected chair of the forum, Department of ICT Directorate General Banamali Bhaumik said, "That is a great recognition to Bangladesh as elected chair for such hi-floor forum. We will work together with all regional countries to move forward the discussion for betterment of mass. We also inspire the cross-border knowledge sharing on the particular issue,".

The forum discussed on connected world,

poverty is defined increasingly by isolation and disconnect from the benefits of information, knowledge and technological advancements.

They mentioned that the Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the world's ICT leaders, a recent ESCAP report 'Artificial Intelligence and Broadband Divide: State of ICT Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific 2017' revealed that the broadband divide is actually widening within the region.

In order to address broadband deficits, ESCAP member countries developed the AP-IS initiative, which aims to enhance affordability, availability, reliability and resilience of the broadband infrastructure across the region and help accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

The AP-IS Steering Committee meeting marks the first major step to operationalize the governance structure, develop regional and sub-regional implementation plans, identify challenges and opportunities and develop partnerships with international and regional organizations.

Bangladesh Embassy in Thailand's Economic Counsellor Kabir Ahmed moderated the session.

## Two-day APIS Conference kicks off in Dhaka

### "Utilising connectivity for economic empowerment underscored"

#### ICT Newsletter Report

From the beginning of the human of mobile Bangladesh Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith on Wednesday urged all to utilise the benefits of connectivity to empower citizen through socio-economic development.

Muhith also emphasised on expanding of technology-based activities in journey to a poverty-free world.

Minister said those while addressing the inauguration of the Asia Pacific Information Superhighway (APIS) Conference -2017 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.

APIS is the information and communication technology (ICT) focused governing- body of the of United Nation's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

UNESCAP and ICT division of Bangladesh government organise the two-day summit focusing on connectivity among Asia Pacific region as Bangladesh is designated as host country for this year.

Representatives from 56 member countries of the UNESCAP attended the summit discussing on connectivity and long-term master plan for regional development.

ICT State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak chaired the inaugural session while UNESCAP deputy executive secretary Hong Jo Hum, ICT Division Secretary In-charge Shushanta Kumar Saha, Road and Transport Secretary Nazrul Islam, Railways Secretary Mofazzal Hossain and Economic Relation Department Secretary In-charge Monwar Hossain were, among others, present. Department of ICT Director General Banamali Bhaumik made address of welcome.

The two-day session discuss on connectivity, internet traffic management, e-resilience and broadband,

The Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative aims to increase

the availability and affordability of broadband Internet across Asia and the Pacific, by strengthening the underlying Internet infrastructure in the region

Asian highway is a 1, 43,000 kilometre of road communication network that spans from Japan to Turkey, crisscrossing 32 countries including Bangladesh.

Abul Mal Abdul Muhith said Bangladesh entered a new arena of technology in 2009 as the Awami League-led coalition got the mandate in 2008 general election through developing a visionary election manifesto focused on technology-based progress towards 2021.

Underscoring the contribution of ICT in development of knowledge-based socio economic development, Muhith said, "ICT enhances the progress of the country through connecting people. So that the alike other developing nations, Bangladesh has adopted bless of technology in every spares of the public and private initiatives.

The country has been experiencing a sustainable economic status with around 6.3 per cent average growth in last two decades. ICT has significant role in socio-economic progress of the country," Expressing his vision towards a poverty-free state, Muhith further said, "Poverty is a curse for the civilisation. We have been relentlessly work together to eradicate poverty from the country. Connectivity is one of the drivers in ICT sector for empowering people though knowledge-based tasks. We hope the connectivity of the Asian Super Highway will support our goal to achiever zero poverty line across the region,".

ICT State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak expressed his gratitude to all representatives of member-country of the platform for electing Bangladesh as chair of the forum in previous session held in China last year.

Palak later focused on the initiatives of the Bangladesh government utilising technology in socio-economic empowerment of the citizens.

"Under the bold leadership Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and with the close direction



Date : 1-2 November 2017

Venue : Pan Pacific Sonargaon  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Hosted by:  ICT  
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## Two-day APIS Conference kicks off in Dhaka

and mentoring of ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed, Bangladesh government has been working for the last eight and half years to create a knowledge-based digital economy. And hence, 85,800 Km of National ICT-infrastructure backbone were deployed to connect all of our districts and sub-districts with the high speed broadband connectivity. We already have a dedicated government-intranet among all of our government offices," Palak said.

Palak said Bangladesh has been playing a significant role as Chair of the Working Group on the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway.

He further said the working group finalises the Master Plan to implement APIS for ensuring seamless communication network in Asia-Pacific region in cooperation with the ESCAP members and associate members along with the international and regional partners.

"So, the First Session of the APIS Steering Committee will direct us towards the effective way to operationalize the APIS Master Plan," Palak said hoping that this meeting would be a landmark for achieving SDGs through regional cooperation and Dhaka is ready to welcome all of the foreign delegates.

Emphasising in local capacity building in technology sector, Palak further said, "The main objective of all projects of the government to developed skilled human resources to compete the future of digital world. The government plans to set up 28 IT parks across the country where around 2 million skilled manpower will be placed by 2021."

Palak said Bangladesh government has taken a project titled 'Info Sarkar-3' to reach last mile broadband connectivity up to union level by 2018.

Telecommunication expert and Colombo-based research outlet LIRN Asia's Senior Policy Fellow Abu Saeed Khan made keynote for the session focusing on progress of Digital Bangladesh and importance of cross-border connectivity for development of Asia Pacific region.

"Digital Bangladesh is a socioeconomic roadmap to leapfrog with the digital ecosystems towards modernity. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has pledged it in her election campaign during 2008. She has set a target of 100 per cent internet penetration and 50 per cent broadband penetration by 2021. She has also defined broadband as the internet connection with a minimum speed of 5 megabits per second," he added.

"Since then, Information and Communication Technology remains embedded in every component of our national development. Bangladesh has achieved more than 180 per cent growth of mobile phone subscription and nearly 500% growth of internet users between 2009 and 2016. As a result, Bangladesh is now as one of the top ten contributors to the growth of worldwide mobile phone subscriptions until 2020," Khan added.

Khan said the Asia Pacific Information Superhighways will enable the member countries of which most of are developing

nations to move forward utilising connectivity while the cross-border highways are another ways to deploy network among developing countries. The initiative of UNESCAPE will make a competitive market where the bandwidth price will be reduced.

UNESCAP deputy executive secretary Hong Jo Hum said the world now follow Bangladesh as the country achieved significant progress in last one decade.

ICT division's Secretary In-charge Sushanta Kumar Saha said, "Bangladesh government started its footprints in digital arena establishing Union Digital Centre at bottom level of administration. There are around 8000 government offices are connected through single network. We developed the world's largest website connective 25,000 web pages of administration."

Mentioning the recent success, Saha said Bangladesh is announced as second largest source of internet-based workforces in the world.

"The government is working together in public-private partnership to create an ecosystem for technology development and introducing governance every spare of the administration through electronic management. There are around 1,000 unions are connected through broadband. And total of 4500 unions will be connected by 2018," Saha added.

Department of ICT Director General Banamali Bhaumik said the Master plan of APIS will enhance the usage of internet among mass in the citizen in the region which will also boost gross domestic growth of respective nations.

Road, Transport and Highways division Secretary Nazrul Islam said Bangladesh has taken measurable initiative to establish infrastructure to reach internet through submarine cable underground of the roads and highways.

"The Asia Pacific Information Superhighways opens new windows of possibilities where the countries will get opportunity to explore possibilities in the sector and sharing knowledge among others on the field,"

Mentioning a study data, Railways Secretary Mofazzal Hossain said the percentage of usage of connectivity has grown 45 per cent in last ten years.

"Bangladesh Railways department started the development own backbone network of optical fibre in 1984-85. The network of 400 kilometre optical fibre started operation in 1992 and two leading mobile operator has been leasing the network for their connectivity solution. We have taken plan to establish another network of 380 kilometres fibre," Hossain told the meeting.

Economic Relation Department Secretary In-charge Monwar Hossain said Bangladesh has progressed to lower middle income in 2015. The government has been focused on the human resource development from beginning of its journey around nine years ago. The vision of Digital Bangladesh is very synchronising with the sustainable development goal set by United Nations.

After inaugural session of the two-day conference, there was also held the first session of the APIS steering committee meeting.

The AP-IS governance structure stipulates that a Steering Committee will address the regional layer around the four pillars of AP-IS (connectivity, Internet traffic management, e-resilience and broadband for all), while each sub-regional corridor will be supported by the respective sub-regional steering group and implementation group consisting of telecommunications operators.

Activities will be developed around the four pillars and should facilitate the implementation of the subregional and national ICT initiatives. The governance structure is designed to capitalize on relevant international expertise from international and specialized agencies. Monitoring, coordination and advisory functions will be conducted at the regional level through the Steering Committee which will subsequently report to various intergovernmental bodies through the ESCAP secretariat.

Against this background, the objectives of the first Steering Committee meeting are to: a). organize the Steering Committee and Sub-regional Steering Group meeting to discuss the operationalization of the governance structure, as stipulated in the AP-IS Master Plan; b). discuss regional and sub-regional implementation plans of the AP-IS initiative and to identify challenges and opportunities in implementing the initiative; c). develop partnerships with relevant international and regional organizations for the implementation of the AP-IS Master Plan; and d). provide an update on state of ICT at regional and subregional levels to support the deliberations.

The meeting is expected to produce detailed regional and subregional implementation plans in partnerships with international and regional organizations for 2017 and 2018, in addition to the modality of monitoring, coordination and advisory functions through the Steering Committee. The progress made in the implementation of

the AP-IS Master Plan will be reported to the 2nd Session of the ESCAP Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science and Innovation (CICTSTI) in 2018. The outcome of this meeting contributes to the overall objectives of ESCAP resolution 73/6 on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative. In particular, follow-up on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) processes; support the development of universal access to the Internet by 2020 under the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020; support the development of ICT sector under the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024; enhance and promote connectivity and use of for Small Island Developing States(SIDS), under the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway; contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda (SDG 9 on establishing resilient infrastructure.

The 73rd session of the ESCAP Commission in May 2017 adopted resolution 73/6 on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) through regional cooperation. The resolution invited members and associate members to cooperate in the implementation of the Master Plan for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Regional Cooperation Framework Document as endorsed by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation at its first session . It also invited members and associate members to promote broad-based partnerships, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation and highlighting the importance of such partnerships, for the implementation of the Master Plan for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Regional Cooperation Framework Document.

## Connectivity: A Deeper Look

Connectivity is a cornerstone of regional economic cooperation and integration – and has become a major priority for the countries of Asia and the Pacific, especially in the context of efforts to find new drivers of regional economic growth, and to create additional domestic and aggregate regional demand. To best unlock the potential of ever-more closely interlinked production networks and value chains, a broader perspective on connectivity will be key.

The panel discussion session titled 'Emerging trends, opportunities and proposed activities for AP-IS' will provide ESCAP the opportunity to advocate for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) by consolidating good practices and lessons learnt on 'ICT connectivity' issues at the regional level. Selected prominent speakers discussed how

connectivity should not be considered sector by sector, but rather as part of an integrated whole, encompassing the development of corridors of prosperity through networks of trade, transport, ICT, energy, people, and technology. The objective of the panel discussion of is to tease out thoughtful ideas of how Asia-Pacific countries can go the extra mile to ensure connectivity for its population under a budget. In particular, what policy prescription and regulation are already in place and more can be done to promote regional cooperation to increase connectivity.

Mr. Rohan Samarajiva, Chairman, LIRNEasia moderated session. While discussing the regional discussion, a clear picture of state of ICT in Asia and the Pacific was depicted in an overview by UNESCAPE.



**First session of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Steering Committee  
31 October -2 November 2017, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

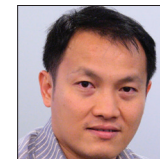
**NEW ZEALAND**

Mr. David Butcher, Principal Consultant, Wellington, New Zealand



**THAILAND**

Dr. Thavisak Manodham, Director General of ICT Department, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications



**BANGLADESH**

Mohammad Lutfur Rahman, ADirector (Planning & Development) Department of ICT



**INDIA**

Rajnesh Singh is Director of the Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau at the Internet Society, world's trusted independent source of leadership for Internet policy, technology standards, and future development, where he oversees activities across the Asia-Pacific region.



**BANGLADESH**

M. Ashraf Hossain, PEng, Director (OPGW)



**FIJI**

Kolinio Gata Takali, Head of Mission, High Commission of the Republic of Fiji, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



**VANUATU**

Mr. Jackson Miake is the ICT Program Manager at the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, Prime Minister's Office, Government of the Republic of Vanuatu.



**THAILAND**

Duangthip Chomprang, Director Regional Support and Assistance Institute of International Trade & Development



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Joyce Chen Global Stakeholder Engagement Strategy & Development Senior Manager Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)



**JAPAN**

Visiting Professor, University of Tokyo



**Connectivity:**

During Pillar 1, discussing the critically important role of 'Connectivity', Mr. Rajendra Singh, Senior Regulatory Specialist, World Bank, talked how ICT Connectivity was breaking barrier and creating waves in low-economic growth regions.

Mr. KeSeetha Ram, Advisor to Dean, Asia Development Bank Institute, while showing ADB's work in the region depicted the project and progress in Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Michael Ruddy, Director of International Research Terabit Consulting, also gave a detailed yet quick "Overview of Broadband Market in Asia-Pacific". He showed how weak regional infrastructure divides and constrains the region. 'The continent's long-haul terrestrial fiber infrastructure is low-capacity, geographically-limited, high cost and unreliable' he said during his discussion. He also showed that there are no coherent, cost-effective, pan regional fiber optic networks. So landlocked nations remain at the mercy of their bandwidth reach neighbors.

Mr. Ruddy also showed how many Asian markets are getting left behind by the region's weak and expensive connectivity. The study conducted by Terabit Consulting showed that, IP transit cost is 50X higher in Central Asian market compared to the USA & Europe.

Terabit Consulting believes that, the first step in addressing the inequality is the construction of international fiber infrastructure that puts the entire continent on an equal footing. The most efficient way to do that is by leveraging existing linear infrastructure for the construction of fiber networks.

Mr. Phet Sayo, Senior Program Officer, Networked Economies, International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in his speech asked the donor organizations to reach out and come forward to ensure connectivity at a low cost for countries with extremely poor connectivity infrastructure.

Mr. Rohan Samarajiva, moderator of the session ended the session by describing how the Asia-Pacific information superhighway initiative advocates enhancing seamless regional broadband fiber-optic backbone connectivity by upgrading and increasing the resilience of and integrating cross-border intra and interregional broadband backbone networks, which will lead to open access and better balanced undersea and terrestrial networks. In addition, how the initiative advocates leveraging existing regional connectivity opportunities offered by the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway networks, as well as other trans-border infrastructure, to utilize the rights of way of existing and planned transport networks and to achieve rapid, cost effective deployment of optical fiber across and within countries also can up in his concluding remarks. Besides developing regional terrestrial fiber-optic cables, the Asia-Pacific information superhighway initiative also seeks to establish operation models of terrestrial cables, facilitate the formation of trans-border terrestrial cable networks and enhance the quality and efficiency of transition, so as to put the completed terrestrial cable resources to more efficient use and to promote regional interconnectivity.

**Private Sector Collaboration Key to Strengthen National ICT Development**

Private sector collaboration is the key to strengthen national ICT development for each country, speakers said at a the first meeting of the steering committee of the Asia Pacific Information Superhighways was held in Dhaka on Wednesday focusing on AP-IS partners initiatives.

Suparna Roy, Public sector head of Microsoft Bangladesh Said, Microsoft has partnered with a Bangladeshi youth network for providing basic computer training to around 50,000 students in different educational institutions across the country. She said, Microsoft involved in 2,100 educational institutions and started picking up 25 students from each of the institutions for this training titled "Microsoft Digital Literacy" programme. the rest of the students from different schools and colleges would be given the similar training by next year.

She said, Microsoft is giving a public cloud platform that companies can use to build, deploy, and manage applications quickly across a global network of Microsoft-managed datacenters. Microsoft clouds provides the basic components needed to build a virtual IT infrastructure with a focus on the virtual functions instead of the physical machines. This can cut down the need for investing massive CAPEX budgets and operational costs in maintaining them.

Microsoft also working with cyber security, data analytics, gender issues and internet for all, she added. Sanaz Hoseini, Iran has recognized ICT development as a key to economic development, increase in productivity and sustainable development. ICT is now seen as a fundamental

component in strengthening and accelerating employment, education, health and business. Iran has long yearned for a leap in economic, social and cultural development and today ICT is viewed as the infrastructure that will make such a leap possible. Rabah, Ghezail, group director private policy of Veon, said, we operates services in the regions of Asia, Africa and Europe. It is the sixth largest mobile network operator in the world by number of subscribers with 214 million customers.

Our journey, strategy, leadership and corporate governance: How we grew to become one of the world's largest communications providers

He said, private sector investment is the key for development through ICT. So local investors should come forward with invest in ICT. As a private sector, our concern Banglalink have been fueled with innovative products and services targeting different market segments. Banglalink is giving access to more than 25000 government website for free. Banglalink is working to develop e-Commerce, E-Health,e-Education, and developing a strong network to break the digital divide.

He said, Our transformation and our role as a global communication provider give us unique advantages to disrupt from within, building a new digital infrastructure and personal internet platform, and bringing the full potential of the digital world to hundreds of millions of customers. Our new internet platform that provides customers a completely new digital experience. This fresh outlook and new product offer will secure existing revenue streams whilst generating new sources of income.





ICT SPECIAL EDITION

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NEWSLETTER



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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



ASIA-PACIFIC  
INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY  
CONFERENCE 2017

FIRST DAY IN PICTURES

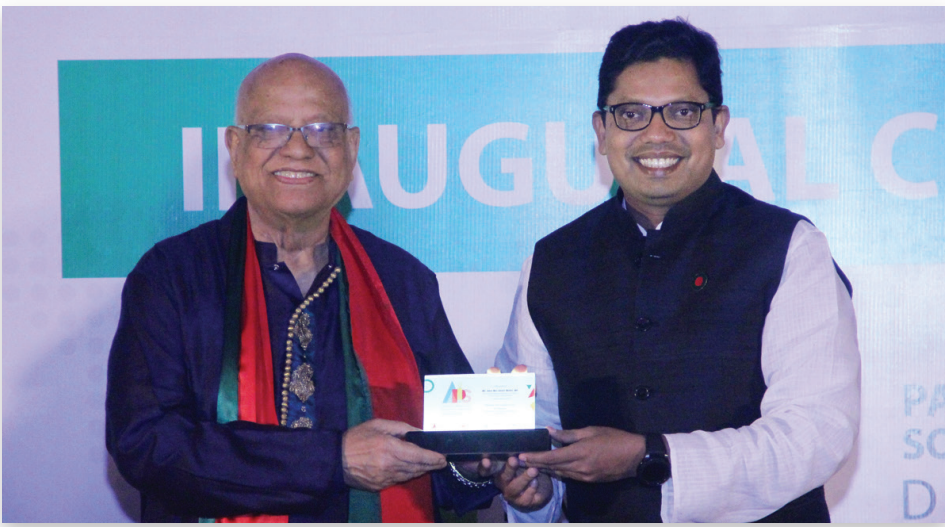


Photo: Hossain Sowrav