

Technology can help save your life, says **Ruchi Hajela**

SAVING GRACE



PROF. DR. EDUARD HEINDL



PROF. DR. WOLFRAM REINERS

From ring tones to adult games to serious apps like news tickers, the value-added services (VAS) market has grown past its juvenile days. What started as a source of entertainment may soon have a humanitarian role to play with services like the Tsunami-alarm service. Wondering how? Well, read on....

Burn to churn

While the world shuddered at the destruction caused by the deadly Tsunami in 2004 and those affected got busy trying to put their lives back in order, some great minds got thinking about ways to prevent such a destruction. Eduard Heindl and Wolfram Reiners belonged to the tribe that decided to take preventive measures and their thought process has paid off. The two German professors have devised a system called the Tsunami-alarm, an SMS-based disaster management service that promises to warn you of upcoming catastrophes like the deadly Tsunami.

Technology at work

A Tsunami is caused when high pressure is built up in a sea due to earthquakes or due to seaquakes. Whenever a tremor is felt in the sea bed or along the coast anywhere across the world, signals from warning stations across the world are sent to the Tsunami-alarm system. A user can subscribe to the system online and his handheld will be ready to receive alerts. One need not install any app or software on his cellphone to access this service. The

online subscription is available at www.tsunami-alarm-system.com for a monthly charge of Euro 19.95 (Rs 1,188 approximately). The yearly subscription costs around Euro 2.95 (Rs 1,789 approximately). "As a subscriber, you can be sure that any Tsunami warning will result in an alarm being sent to your cellphone as soon as possible," says Reiners.

Help at hand

This SMS-based system played a saviour during the Tsunami that rocked the Indian Ocean in July this earlier. The Austrian Beach Hotel in Sri Lanka, which suffered serious damages during the tsunami that occurred on December 26, 2004, was better prepared this time around, thanks to the system. Christl Wiltschek, the owner of the hotel, realised that it was wiser to resort to preventive measures rather than going through the difficult process of putting up with the losses and subscribed to the service. "We have been using the Tsunami-alarm system for a while now and it is extremely useful. During the recent tsunami, we got a warning and we could warn our guests and staff in time," says Wiltschek.

Joni Soila, marketing and guest relation manager, of Phi Phi Villa resort, Thailand has a similar experience to talk about. "We started using the alert system in July this year and received the first serious alarm on our cellphones on July 17, 2006 from Java island. I received the first alert on my mobile within two minutes after the earthquake. The next alert included details of areas that could be possibly affected and we realised that we were not in the affected area. The first official news came to the international news services over an hour after the first alert from Tsunami-alarm system," he says.

The whereabouts

The Pune-based Indian distributors for

the service are in talks with service providers so that the service could be made available to subscribers as a VAS. "The product is really user friendly and major operators in India are eager to start this service," says Rajendra Y Gunjal, Business Development Manager, Rahul Commerce, the distributor of the service in India. "In India, most weather and disaster related information is controlled by the government. We are in talks with government departments to launch this service through mobile operators," he adds.

The road ahead

Well, the Tsunami-alarm system is just an initiation. The road ahead includes some more significant services like the earthquake warning system and the tropical warning system. People often crib about how technology has been the cause for many a mishap but we would rather leave the cynics to their own speculations for a while. We, for now, would prefer to look at the brighter side of things ■

"Tsunami alarm system is an effective first-aid tool in areas that are susceptible to Tsunami threat"



Harri Ananto, CEO, Andalas Media, Indonesia

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Joni Soila, marketing & guest relation manager, Phi Phi Villa resort, Thailand

