October 6, 2001

Bengali Web Technique

Check out **Bengali news**. Now have a look at **China news**.

What you are seeing are not the Chinese ideographs but the underlying double-ASCII coding for it. ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) was designed to map the Roman alphabet (A-Z) plus numbers and some special characters. ASCII, in theory, can handle 256 characters except that some codes are reserved for control functions like Return, Form Feed, Tab, Bell, and other stuff that was used by the old Telex and tele typing machines. The native Japanese and Chinese character sets are much larger then the Roman alphabet and require two bytes to encode them (256X256=64K).

Most of our PCs only have the Roman alphabet capabilities built into the OS so when we access a Chinese page like the one above, or a Bengali page, we get gibberish. The people at Bangladesh.net realized this -- that a PC not equipped with the Bengali alphabet would display gibberish -- and they came up with a brilliant solution. Their home page has NO Bengali text on it, ONLY PICTURES with Bengali text. In case you are interested, the legends below the four icons on the home page say: Front Page, Editorial, Entertainment, and Sports. How do I know? I looked at the underlying HTML code which I reproduce in part:

- img src="icofrontpage.jpg" width="125" height="125" alt="FRONT PAGE" border="0"
- img src="icoeditorial.jpg" width="125" height="125" alt="EDITORIAL" border="0"
- img src="icoentertainment.jpg" width="125" height="125" alt="ENTERTAINMENT" border="0"
- img src="icosports.jpg" width="125" height="125" alt="SPORTS" border="0"

Great solution for the home page, but how do they handle the rest? The other four pages that make up this web site are four Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) documents which can carry inside them any and all fonts that the page needs to display correctly.

Truly ingenious!

>>>how do we get it in English?

I don't know! I don't read Bengali any more than you do. But you must admit that their script is beautiful, a real work of art. I don't really care for Bengali news but their Web technique was a revelation for me!

Denny
"Demand creates queues. Supply gets rid of them."
Software Times