Tech Fair

Fair frames creative flair

Sadia Mahfuz

Notre Dame Science Club gets the best young IT minds together to put up an impressive display from July 31 to August 2. The big hall room was filled with an expectant crowd waiting in anticipation for the inauguration of the IT Fair organised recently by the Notre Dame Science Club.

Dr. Abdul Moyeen Khan, science and ICT minister, who happens to be himself a Notre Damian, encouraged the initiative by being present at the function. He was delighted to see how good the works on display at the fair were and pledged government support for moves to help the fledgling IT sector flourish at the grassroots.

"This country may be lacking in resources but not in talent or creativity. We are profusely gifted with talented girls and boys and this fair has created a platform for squeezing out their creative flairs". He offered to send the best projects through his ministry to the software fair to be held in US in October.

This year's IT Fair showcased a number of projects like web page designing, software displays, digital poster, gaming contest, digital painting contest (for children), and programming contest. As many as 400 participants between 5th and 12th grade from 20 schools and colleges were drawn together for the three-day long fair.

A programming contest was held on the second day and 49 teams fought it out among themselves for the honours. Dr.

M Kaykobad, professor of computer science and engineering department, BUET conducted this contest. Engineering University College students came top solving five out of the six problems posed before them while Notre Dame College were runners-up.

On the same day, a gaming contest was also organised with 106 contenders having to play a game called "Star Craft". On the third day, a seminar and workshop was arranged with Dr. Kaykobad presenting the keynote speech on IT in Bangladesh. This was aimed at projecting the current status of ICT in Bangladesh and addressing various problems faced by programmers.

One may wonder whether teens having limited academic exposure to coding would be able to create competent software for display in a fair having the auspicious presence of a minister. For them, a trip to the fair would have been a pleasant surprise. Their work may not have been entirely perfect for the corporate world but they were not too far either. The ideas and concepts clearly demonstrated that the budding programmers were brimming with creativity and talent.

Ratul of Notre Dame College came up with several projects brilliantly done with Flash MX, Visual C, Adobe and other tools. Personal web page aside he also created a linear programming tool and Locationing Software based on Caller ID, helping users to track callers on a map. Another group came up with an impressive project

called Bangla Soft. All popular and commonly used applications such as web browser, text editor, mp3 and video players are assembled into one unit with the GUI in Bangla. Theme of the web projects seemed to center around Bangladesh; its culture and politics. Bangladesh Janala was an interesting concept in the sense that this web page featured the cultural aspect of our country. Over here festivals, historical places, tourist spots and folk music were presented in very colorful manner. In another project rivalry between the two main political parties and border tension with India came up in the form of funny animated flash presentations.

Some other projects worthy of mention were Bangla Time, Library, Hospital Management, Bangabani Word Processor, Paint Magic, 3D Mass Security System, E-dictionary, Encryption Master, Java Reader, Music Maker etc.

According to the Notre Dame Science Club president, "This fair was held to promote the creative work of the new generation of programmers and acquaint them with the practical scenario."

Inspiration at this age can do wonders and given proper guidance, this kind of exposure might actually act as springboard for helping them embark on real-life projects in the future.

Tech Tribute

ICT doyen Prof. MA Kader dies

GOLAP MUNIR

He was a visionary leader who helped the nation get on the fast track of ICT technology. Fame was not what he had in mind; he wanted spread of the ICT movement across the country. His dream prompted him to launch the monthly Computer Jagat, the first ICT magazine in Bangladesh, 12 years ago.

Prof. M. A. Kader was little known to the general people. But after his sudden demise on July 3, his absence proved what a great mind the country has lost. Many sent their letters of condolence and some rushed to his residence to pay their last respect.

Born to a middle class family in old Dhaka on December 31, 1948, Prof. Kader lost his father at a very early age. He had to work along with his two elder brothers and was on his own to bear the expenses for the study of his

brothers and sisters and of himself. He did his M.Sc. in soil science from the University of Dhaka.

He started his career as a lecturer of Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Dhaka. In 1995, he became the deputy project director of Renewal and Development Project and also officer-in-charge of Computer Cell in the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education. He worked at the Directorate of Education as the deputy director (training) till his death.

Although his major was Soil Science, his interest was on information technology, which led him to learn about 20 application programmes and programming languages, such as BASIC, RPG-II, COBOL, UNIX etc. He also completed a short course on computerised project management sponsored by the World Bank in Washington DC.

His contribution to the ICT field started with the publication of his monthly ICT magazine Computer Jagat in 1991. The cover story of the first issue titled: 'We want computer in the hands of the people' was the first and basic demand to be introduced for a systematic ICT movement in Bangladesh.

Golap Munir is the acting editor of monthly Computer Jagat

Tech Seminar

Brighten your career through information technology

SAAD BIN FAZLE HAMMADI

To emphasise the growing interest in information technology, the University of Information Technology and Sciences (UITS) organised a seminar on "IT-based Higher Education - Global perspectives and National interest" at its premises in Gulshan, PBL Tower on August 1.

Prof. M. Radhakrishna of Indian Institute of Information Technology (III-T) Allahabad, India presented the keynote paper He talked about the current educational systems and suggested improvements.

IT has opened the scope of introducing online courses for students across the boundaries of countries. And the cost of such

education is considerably cheaper, said Prof Radhakrishna.

In this generation computers can facilitate students' study through modeling, simulation, visualisation, computation, data generation, virtual environments and in scores of other ways.

Dr. A. Majeed Khan, vice-chancellor of the UITS, Prof. Samsher Ali, vice-chancellor of Southeast University and Prof. A.M Chowdhury, executive director, Bangladesh Computer Council, Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, chairman of the PHP group of Industries were also present during the seminar.

Prof. M. Radhakrishna speaking at the seminar

Dr. Tech

Dear Dr Tech,
Can you please explain the terms 'Broadband' and 'DSL'.
Nafeesa

Dear Nafeesa
You probably hear a lot about "broadband". It's in the news, scattered throughout computer magazines, and mentioned on thousands of different websites. Broadband is a term that can refer to all the high speed connections that are currently available. Stuff like cable modems, DSL, satellite, and other high speed internet connections are considered broadband connections. A 56K connection is not.

It is also used to describe the type of media you might get with the afore mentioned high speed connections. Stuff like high quality video, audio, communications, or

even TV.

DSL
A DSL connection is a high speed internet connection- DSL stands for Digital Subscriber Line.

Anyhow, DSL uses your existing phone lines for connection, but at very high speeds. It is another "always on" type internet connection and in a few years will probably be the # 1 high speed type connection (cable is now).

Keep in mind that cable is generally a little faster then "standard" DSL. However, there are newer DSL technologies that are as fast, or even faster, than a T1 line. So if you go for one of these higher speed DSL connections, you'll blow away a cable modem.

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Tech Toon

Technical Support

GLASBERGEN

"If your kid is up late surfing the net all night, your computer probably needs a nap. That's what the 'sleep' button is for."

Music Tech

MP3 music goes hi-fi

BBC Online

Ever wished you could listen to the hundreds of MP3 tracks on your PC on your stereo? A range of digital music players are springing up that let you listen to songs on a hard drive on a hi-fi.

One of these is a gadget called Slimp3, which spans the divide between your computer and the stereo in the living room.

California-based start-up Slim Devices came up with the idea to tap into a generation who grew up with the internet and the now defunct file-sharing pioneer Napster.

"They now have a disposable income and they don't think about CDs any more," said Patrick Cosson, vice-president of sales and marketing.

"They like to listen to individual songs and have masses of playlists. The Slimp3 fits in with a shift of behaviour."

The gadget went on sale about a year ago. Now, Slim Devices says thousands of people are using the player every day.

Small and unobtrusive
Unlike many MP3 players, the Slimp3 does not have a hard drive. Instead, it works by streaming tracks stored on a computer's hard drive to a hi-fi.

At one end, the player is connected to the PC by a network

cable and at the other to the hi-fi using standard audio cables.

The player is designed to be discreet and easy to set up. In most cases, it will recognise the necessary settings and automatically set itself up.

But an internet firewall could prevent the computer from seeing the Slimp3.

Slim Devices believes its product will appeal to people in their 20s and early 30s who are used to downloading music over

the internet, but do not want to have to listen to the songs on tinny

PC speakers.

"We really appeal to the MP3 collector, to people in countries where the whole culture has evolved," said Mr Cosson.

"Once you have content, you want ubiquitous access to it."

Listening to music is straightforward enough. Using a remote control, you can navigate, search and organise all the MP3 music files on a computer.

You can also set up playlists and change the settings on the

computer, as well as add internet radio stations to listen to.

Slim Devices boasts on its site that the player enjoys "high spouse approval" and anecdotal evidence suggests this is the sort of gadget that a partner would welcome, rather than resent.

Open code
The key element, though, is not the player itself, but the software loaded on a computer that turns it into a music server.

"It is really hard to do well," explained Mr Cosson, saying that the big challenge was coming up with a system that streamed music to the player without any delays or hiccups.

The software used on the player itself is open source, meaning that other programmers can work on the computer code and improve on it.

Slim Devices is also encouraging developers to come up with other uses for the player. Already you can download a program that will stream the BBC news ticker on the Slimp3.

In the future, says Mr Cosson, e-mails or news alerts could be sent to the player to flash up on its screen.

He is reluctant to talk about sales figures, but says the 10-person company set up in 2000 is profitable.

So far, most of the players have been sold in the US, but about a third of sales are to the UK.
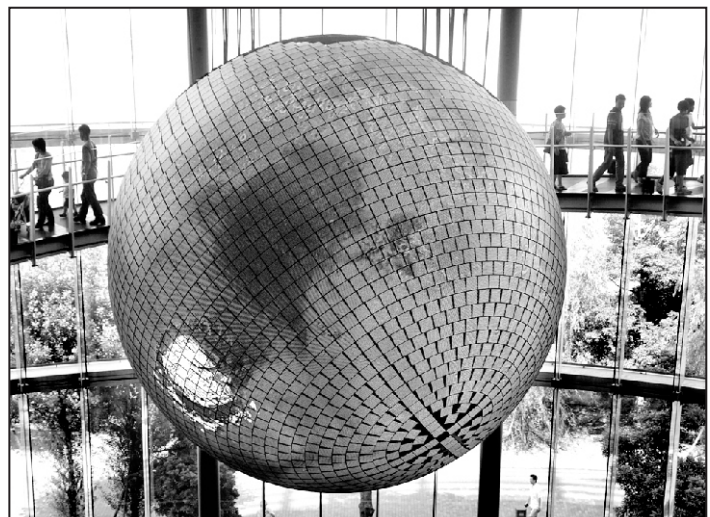
Photo Tech

PHOTO: AFP

Tech News

Internet chat comes of age in Bangladesh

Several hundred Bangladeshis have come out of the anonymous world of Internet chatting in a first-of-its-kind meet-and-greet for the country's increasing number of on-line enthusiasts.

In a bid to draw more people to its chatroom, new web portal www.BDFriends.org brought the men and women together Friday night at a club in the capital Dhaka, giving many of them their first glimpses of companions they only knew on-line.

"It is interesting and it is a different feeling as we never met in person until now," said one woman after meeting a man she had met through the Internet.

An increasing number of Bangladeshis, many of them teenagers, are joining chatrooms as cybercafes open across the cash-strapped country and personal computers become more affordable.

Bangladesh has an estimated 300 cybercafes, 200 of them in Dhaka.

"Chatting on-line is something virtual and we thought actually meeting one another would be fun -- and it was great fun," said an organiser of the event who goes by the single name Ashish.

Organisers said it was the first event of its kind in Bangladesh, although small private gatherings have been held among friends made on-line.

Bangladesh is trying to set up an optical fibre network and aims to bring the Internet to all stretches of the country by 2005, a telecommunication ministry official said.

-AFP, Dhaka

Tech Snaps

New Intel Pentium 4 processors and motherboards in Dhaka

The Intel Pentium 4 processor 2.4C GHz featuring 800 MHz Front Side Bus and Hyper Threading Technology, Intel D875PBZ desktop motherboard, and Intel D865PERL desktop motherboard are now available in the Bangladesh Market, says a press release.

The Intel Pentium 4 processor 2.4C GHz is said to be the most attractively priced Hyper Threading enabled processor from Intel Corp. The "C" suffix after the clock speed denotes an 800 MHz FSB. The 800 MHz FSB will provide 2x and 1.5x bandwidth over previous 400 MHz and 533 MHz FSB supported processors. Coupled with HT Technology, this processor will offer great performance for the PC users.

However, this processor is only compatible with motherboards based on the Intel 875P chipset and Intel 865PE/865G chipset, such as the Intel D875PBZ and D865PERL desktop motherboards. Good news is the D875PBZ and D86PERL motherboards are also available in the market.

Launching of DIT's 4th Batch

IT Bangla Ltd is conducting a 'Diploma in Information Technology (DIT)' under a pilot project titled "Develop IT Professionals for Bangladesh" from Assumption University (ABAC), Thailand at Dhaka, says a press release.

After successful completion of DIT's 1st & 2nd batches, DIT's 3rd batch is expected to complete the Diploma by January 2004, Assumption University is going to start its DIT 4th batch from September 20, 2003 at IT Bangla premises in Dhaka.

Robo Cat

Japan's toy maker Sega Toys unveils a prototype model of a cat robot "Necot", which was developed with the technology from Japanese electronics maker Omron's pet robot "NeCoRo" priced at 185,000 yen (1,540 USD), during the annual toy show in Yokohama on July 31. The Necot is equipped with 15 motors and 10 various sensors on the 1,650g cat robot to react against human voices, moving object and smoothing of the fur.

Best 10 Websites

Category: Science - II

Closer To Truth
Wonderful minds deliberating the deeper issues of life & our times.
URL: http://www.closertotruth.com/

Great Thinkers & Visionaries
Big bunch of troublemakers.
URL: http://www.lucifer.com/%7Esasha/thinkers.html

K2K
Explore the amazing world of "mysterious mutli-flavored neutrinos" at the Long Baseline Neutrino Oscillation Experiment.
URL: http://k2k.physics.sunysb.edu/

The Neurosciences Institute
Shedding light on the most complex "self organizing" system in the known universe - your brain.
URL: http://www.nsi.edu/public/

PhysicsWeb
Latest physics news & information.
http://physicsweb.org/

Technology Review
MIT's magazine of innovation.
URL: http://www.techreview.com/

Scientific American Editors Selections
Selection of top science websites.
URL: http://www.sciam.com/bookmarks/editselect.html

Mad Scientist Network
Get your questions answered by the collective cranium of a bunch of mad scientists, run some crazy experiments or browse the collection of oddities.
URL: http://www.madsci.org/

The Why Files
Learn the science behind the news.
URL: http://whyfiles.org/

The Register
Fresh & humorous technology news.
URL: http://www.theregister.co.uk/

AAAS
American Association for the Advancement of Science.
URL: http://www.aaas.org/