

Surf the Net, get the edge

Four-day fair concludes today

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Internet businesspeople look forward to attracting about 50,000 visitors to the four-day Internet Fair 2004, first ever of its kind in Bangladesh.

The final curtain comes down on the fair today -- organised by the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB) at Osmani Memorial Hall.

Forty-four internet service providers (ISPs), solution providers and telecoms equipment vendors -- three from abroad -- exhibit their ware and current internet technology in 65 stalls.

Organisers said 80 percent of the visitors who flocked to the venue in the last three days were students of schools, colleges and universities, who came to update themselves on VoIP (voice over internet protocol), wireless network, broadband, e-mail and web design.

"The fair is a big effort to make people aware of the power of the internet and can be termed a milestone in Bangladesh's IT sector," an organiser said.

Azhar H Chowdhury, systems and software director of Grameen Cybernet Limited and convenor of the fair, said: "Internet for All -- the theme of the fair fits the technologically backward Bangladesh where only 1.5 lakh people have access to the internet."

"The gala event will not only be

sales-oriented in promoting information technology (IT) but will also build awareness about the use of internet," said ISPAB President Akhtaruzzaman Manju.

Aftab IT, Agni Systems, Bangladesh Online, Bijoy Online, Grammen Cybernet, HRC Works and Proshika Computer came up with special offers along with other participants.

Three international companies such as SpeedCast, Globetek Infosys and Eyebill USA came to the fair with internet related software. "Our target is to attract the ISPs, so they can provide service to home users at low cost," said Nusrat Ali Ghansar, technical support engineer of SpeedCast, India.

Most ISPs exhibit latest IT products, services and brought down rates for visitors who come to get dialup connections home or broadband for offices with low-priced packages on offer. "I was thinking of having a broadband connection home for 24 hours. I hope I will find one in the fair," said Ruma Rahman, a student of Dhaka University who browses websites of universities in the world for higher studies.

"I have a low budget and the fair has given me a chance to compare offers by different ISPs."

ISPAB President Manju said the fair lures customers with special offers and discounts. "We offer a special night cruise for only Tk 850. With this service people can

use internet from 10:00pm to 8:00am," said Rasibul Muhib, an official of Proshika Computer Systems (PCS) Training.

Most ISPs participating in the fair also offer 10-20 percent discount on prepaid cards, dialup and broadband internet connections. RANKS-IT Ltd offers a dialup network connection round the clock at Tk 1,500 including value added tax (VAT) a month.

"Home users like students are most interested to have this connection at home. Businesspeople out of the capital want to know about VOIP to run cyber cafés in their areas," said Jashim, radio engineer of RANKS.

SMS competition, free browsing, video conferencing and online chat are also organised for visitors, while ICT experts from home and abroad join seminars and symposiums on 'Poverty Elevation through ICT', 'Meet the challenge VOIP in Bangladesh', 'Satellite', 'E-Commerce'. Fair participants will offer gift and special promotional products to visitors, sponsored by GrameenPhone and Samsung.

Some publishing houses have stalls where books, magazines and other publications related to information and computer technology are available.

The fair, kicked off last Thursday, is open from 10:00am to 8:00pm with an entry fee of Tk 10 a person.

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The Dhanmondi Poribesh Unnayon Jote (DPUJ) has expressed its apprehension over the plan for construction of a new bridge that would connect Road 4 and Road 3A bisecting the Dhanmondi Lake.

DPUJ members believe that if the plan goes ahead, it will further distort the residential character of the area.

The Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) recently gave a graphic presentation of the Tk. 2.2 crore bridge to the Dhanmondi Walkers Club but the Jote believes it will be a sheer waste of government funds.

In a meeting presided over by the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) executive director Qamrul Islam Siddique (DUTP), DPUJ representatives said that recent lake development projects in Dhanmondi have only worsened the lives of residents. They claimed that it had become easier for outside traffic to crowd Dhanmondi for various reasons including business, schooling, medical facilities etc.

Several members at the meeting questioned the planning behind the bridge on Road 4. They said that while a bridge had been considered for Road 5 during the rule of the previous government, nothing was ever said about bridging Roads 3A and 4. The proposed bridge on Road 5, which would have been the third bridge on the lake in addition to the ones on Roads 32 and 8, eventually did not see light following strong community opposition to it.

The participants also thought that instead of reducing traffic congestion, the proposed bridge would only redistribute it from Road 2 to Road 4. In the process, Road 4 will be transformed into another nightmarish commercial street like Roads 2 and 27. They felt the new bridge could also contribute to more illegal com-



A similar bridge at Dhanmondi.

mercialisation of Dhanmondi.

Sultana Alam, the convenor of DPUJ said, "The bridge will not help in any way to resolve the real traffic blockages in our area. These occur on Sat Masjid Road side near the Jhigatola & Rayer Bazar intersections. On the Mirpur Road side, there is a permanent jam at the Science Laboratory crossing, which is the only route to the eastern parts of the city from Dhanmondi, Rayer Bazar, Jhigatola, Kathalbagan etc."

The participants observed that regardless of the direction of the traffic, the bridge would only make it easier for undesired elements from Jhigatola and Rayer Bazar to enter and use Dhanmondi as a hangout. It was mentioned that residents of Dhanmondi were already overwhelmed by the invasion of outsiders and recreation-seekers.

Reacting to suggestions that the bridge could be made off-limits to heavy vehicular traffic, i.e., buses and trucks, DPUJ members pointed out that the heavy traffic snarl-ups inside Dhanmondi was caused mostly by light vehicles like rickshaws and cars. So restricting traffic on the bridge was not a practical solution.

The Jote strongly asserted that the processes by which Dhanmondi had become commercialised was not natural or organic in any way. When the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan converted Dhanmondi from a purely residential to a mixed-use zone, it made the government responsible for protecting and preserving the essentially residential character of the area. Official negligence rather than natural forces is behind the distortion of Dhanmondi by some 146 schools and 158 other commercial establishments, the overwhelming majority of which had been established in clear violation of zoning codes and other regulations.

The members of the DPUJ also asked for implementation of the

various masterplans and opening up of the routes through the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Headquarters to civilian traffic. Representatives from BAPA and DPUJ assured that they would give their full backing to the Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) in this effort and will help in mobilising citizens' support.

They said that constructing the new bridge would only be justified if it is preceded by a solid feasibility study and a competent environment impact study. To have a valid feasibility report the studies should be conducted by independent research teams, half of whom should be selected by the Institute of Architect of Bangladesh (IAB), members of the DPUJ and resident representatives from Roads 4 and 3A.



Scorching summer heat has brought back the 'lost glory' of traditional talpaka (hand fan made of palm leaves) as the low-income group in the city has no alternative to them.

Proposed service cell for high-rises has to be put under microscope

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The One Window Service Cell (OWSC) under the proposed Dhaka City Highrise Building Construction Act-2003 prompted mixed feelings from speakers at a roundtable on Sunday that emphasised it needed a broad analysis before implementation.

"Developers and individual house builders have had to wait for long in obtaining clearance from various authorities before beginning work," said Engineer Nurul Islam, secretary of the Civil Engineering Divisional Committee (CEDC) under the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) at the discussion organised by CEDC on April 11.

Appreciating the move, he told Star City that the OWSC would facilitate contractors to get clearance from a single committee comprising representatives of Wasa, (Water and Sewerage Authority), Fire Service and Civil Defence and Department of Environment.

"But I doubt if the representatives of

all authorities will regularly attend meetings to verify the validity of applications," he added.

A provision in the act says the application would be considered 'approved' if the authorities did not attend the meeting within timeframe, a speaker said. "This provision cannot be considered valid," he said adding it may cause anomalies in the long run.

The speakers said institutions such as BUET, IEB and those of public interest should be involved in processing applications and approving and implementing construction plans.

Solaiman Chowdhury, deputy director of Fire Services and Civil Defence, criticising the OWSC said the authorities do not know what conditions should be met to certify construction plans. "What facilities will the OWSC provide?" he asked.

Instead, he said, gas, electricity, water and other authorities could provide a checklist for a five- or six-member committee of Rajuk that can in turn certify them.

He added that a checklist could be provided for the constructors before the application is made so that they might know exactly what the application requirements are.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, director of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association, said there must be a mechanism like the Appellate Division to hear cases of the parties that fail to get Rajuk approval.

The act should be equal in valuation of all applicants and any flaws in the proposal should be eliminated, she added.

Rizwana also suggested a detailed environmental impact assessment including public hearing of adjoining areas of the project to be carried out before finalising a highrise building project.

However, Engineer Jamilur Reza Choudhury, vice-chancellor of BRAC University, suggested that models of Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority or Software Park could be followed in terms of application and approval of the plans.

Alamgir Mohiuddin, editor of The New Nation, said jurisdictions of Dhaka City Master Plan should be clearly defined in the proposed act.

The high-rises should be defined as structures exceeding 20-metre height from the finished ground level to the top of the parapet wall instead of building height from finished ground level to the top of the staircase as proposed in the act, the participants said.

To maximise the benefit from limited land, Rajuk should consider community use through highrise structures and not permit small extents in lucrative areas to be sites for highrises, the speakers said.

They proposed the inclusion of Rajuk's proper mechanism of the monitoring and enforcement cell and specific provisions to minimise accidents during construction.

useful telephone numbers

COURIER SERVICES



LIBRARY & INFO-



OUTING

CITY BUS ROUTE

Starts from

Golap Shah Mazar

Phoolbaria bus station

Phoolbaria bus station

Shyampur

Sayedabad

Kamalapur

Kamalapur

Motijheel Shaplachattar

Sadarghat

Chittagong Road

Demra Ranimahal

Sadarghat

Sayedabad

Shanir Akhra

Motijheel

Signboard (Chittagong Road)

Chittagong Road

Gulistan

International	9550884
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724	Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970	Pacific Courier- 9568446
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 95656075	Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Airspeed Express- 9563494	Sky International service- 9660442
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543	Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606	TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114	Union Courier Service- 9341722
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989	United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd- 8826429, 8810223
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666	
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636	
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425	
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057	
Enem Express- 9330699	
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd- 9565114	
Modhuban Courier Service- 9557975	

Asian courier Service Ltd- 8313543	Dolphin Courier- 9558802
BAE- 9884851	Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975
Central Courier Service- 9881118	Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759
Confidence Courier Service Ltd. 9567036	Probashi Courier Services- 9346359
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9, 9557975	Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd- 8322773, 8315703
Cosmopolitan Services- 9552793, 9557975	Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249
Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222	Sundarban Courier Services- 951984, 9556189, 9551656
	Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751
	World Runner Express Ltd. 9112068, Fax- 880-2-9112068

TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers	Museum and Zoo
Central Public Library- 8626001-4, Shishu Academy- 9564128	National Museum- 8619396-9
Shipkala Academy- 8614673	Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed