

Tech Seminar

IUB participates in the ESDP project along with UK and German varsities

SAAD BIN FAZLE HAMMADI and SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

THE country could now well be a technologically developing nation with the 'E' being synonymous with 'Electronic' standard in every form of business today. E-Governance has been introduced very recently to facilitate government functioning, while E-Commerce made an innovative marketing solution through web portals. Similarly, E-Learning could very well lead to the development of the education sector and add advantage to the IT sector as well. The electronic medium of education is anticipated to further motivate the students, with E-learning being only a component of a wide curriculum. Recently, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) partnered with the University of Stirling, UK and University of Bremen, Germany in a programme to develop an Educational Software Development and Production Project (ESDP).

A seminar on the event was held on May 15 at Spectra Convention Centre at Gulshan, Dhaka. The project aims to develop and run university-level short courses on educational software development and production.

The seminar got off to a start with a welcome speech by Professor M Anwar, director, School of Communication, IUB. "The project is going to



Harry K Thomas, US ambassador in Bangladesh, speaks at the seminar

facilitate students with courses which will aid them to systematically develop and manage software," said Anwar about the project.

"Setting up e-learning requires collective information and organised

course curriculum for the educational software which makes the overall process complicated," said Dr Bibhuti Roy, project co-ordinator, Bremen University, Germany. It was previously the computer-based

training that allowed offline schooling and this led to web-based training that has now enhanced the educational methodology with online education, group learning and discussions including universities,

schools, enterprises and individuals. He also explained that product knowledge, developer and user's requirements of any given software would aid them to formulate the curriculum.

"ESDP is a comprehensive and interlaced process that requires system thinking and process knowledge," said Dr. Roy.

Towheed Samad, chairman of the Education, Science, Technology and Cultural Development Trust, commended the efforts of the three universities toward the formulation of such courses.

Anthony Goodwin, first counsellor and head of operations section, Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh, said, "Developing countries try to provide citizens with better learning and communicational environment and the European Commission had always funded such projects."

The project costs €90,000, which is financed by the EC under the Asia Information Technology and Communication (IT&C) programme. Through this collaboration, the Asia IT&C aims to improve co-operation between Asia and Europe in the identification and implementation of IT solutions. Instructors and students from the three universities would develop the software in a joint effort.

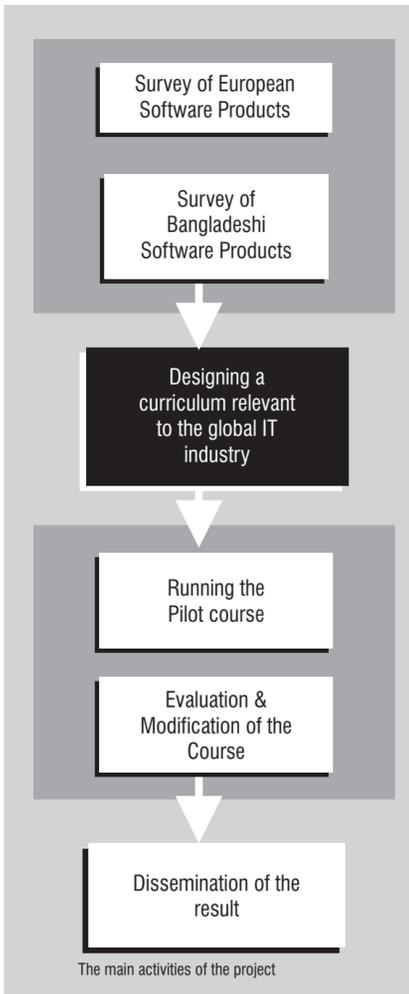
Specific objectives of the ESDP

include providing students of computer science, engineering and ICT in Bangladesh, with the possibility to attend and learn the European standards and market need oriented high level course in the domain of designing and developing educational software, particularly in the field of 3D modelling, process simulation, animation and didactic project management.

"Assistance in software development project would help local participants to concentrate in science and computers," said Harry K Thomas, US ambassador in Bangladesh, who paid a short visit to the seminar.

"A substantial amount of investment is required for such notable projects to be initiated in the country," said Education Minister Osman Farruk, who was the chief guest. "The curriculum will be based on EC and Bangladeshi software and such an input will lead to trained resources," said the minister.

"Youngsters of this generation are referred to as the dot com generation. The project as the name suggests will usher in a new era," said Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury, vice-chancellor, IUB.



Tech News

3-Day Nirvana for game lovers unveils new software

REUTERS, Los Angeles

I used to think a three-ring circus offered the ultimate in sensory overload -- until I went to Los Angeles for an Electronic Entertainment Expo, better known as E3.

The E3 -- based on past shows I have attended -- is an explosion of sight and sound: Screens pulsating with previews of the very latest in computer and console games, kiosks where game lovers can sample what's going to be on the shelves in the months ahead, and all kinds of tchotchkes and gimmicks -- frequently involving scantily-clad women -- designed to build up a buzz for new titles.

Think of it as a three-day-long amusement park ride for game geeks, as companies vie for a chunk of the \$7 billion that folks in the United States spend on electronic games each year.

The sequels -- like "Halo 2," "Half-Life 2," "Doom 3" and "Final Fantasy XII" -- will get most of the attention this year. But here's a rundown of some other titles from the thousands being previewed at

the show, which opens May 12, including a few I might put on my wish list.

"S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Shadow of Chernobyl" is based on the adage: It's always darkest before things get totally black. It's bad enough that Ukraine's Chernobyl reactor in 1986 was the site of the worst nuclear power disaster in history.

This game is set in 2010, four years after another explosion has hit the area, releasing a bizarre form of radiation that special suits cannot protect against. Scavengers known as S.T.A.L.K.E.R.s are allowed to enter the disaster site. As the player, you are looking for loot, but you'll find a lot more, including a creature with the oddest looking lower lip ever seen in a computer game and areas where gravity has gone haywire. THQ is promising that "S.T.A.L.K.E.R." will have at least eight different endings. It will be for the PC.

"Ghosthunter" offers an interesting twist on the usual ghostbuster story line. In this third-person shooter, two Detroit



Displays for Spiderman the Game hang at Activision's exhibit at the Electronic Entertainment Expo held at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Los Angeles.

police officers are checking out an abandoned high school when they stumble onto a secret paranormal laboratory. To make matters worse, the male cop of the duo releases hordes of malevolent ghosts, one of which fuses with him, allowing him to see into

the spirit realm. Naturally, he has to save the world and his female partner.

His name: Lazarus Jones. Nice touch. Namco Hometek is planning an August release for the PlayStation 2 (news - web sites). The pseudoscience folklore of



Jason Van Winkle, center, plays the PlayStation 2 game 'Syphon Filter the Omega Strain' at the Electronic Entertainment Expo at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Los Angeles.

psychic phenomena come into play with two games. Codemasters is promoting "Second Sight," where the hero comes out of a coma and discovers he can use his mental powers to move objects, take

and even deliver a fatal blast to his enemies. It will be available for Xbox (news - web sites), GameCube and PlayStation-2.

Midway's contribution to psychic silliness is "Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy," scheduled for release next month on Xbox

and PlayStation-2. It sounds very similar.

Then, in the fall, it's off to "Area 51," named after the reputed sanctuary for UFOs and abducted aliens, where in the game you can meet the big-eye extraterrestrials and discover why -- wink, wink -- the moon landings were faked and the cheesy "Alien Autopsy" movie was real. It will be for Xbox and the PS-2.

Speaking of stretching your mind, Sammy Studio's PS-2 game "Spy Fiction" involves a couple of secret agents with the ability to turn invisible or quickly transform themselves into other characters in the game (known as the "identity theft system"), allowing players to get out of tight spots. The old "Mission Impossible" series used to do this all the time, but not nearly as quickly as these spies.

The original "Backyard Wrestling" got some notoriety for taking the idea of extreme wrestling to new heights -- or depths, depending on how you view a pseudosport where some of the participants seem to be a

couple of cans short of a six-pack.

Eidos is trying to outdo itself with "Backyard Wrestling 2: There Goes the Neighborhood," designed to take the over-the-top violence even higher. What other wrestling game lets you go after an opponent with a weed whacker? But when players pick up a chainsaw or a razor wire-covered baseball bat, you have to wonder whether things have not gone too far.

The interesting feature of this game for Xbox and the PS-2 is that it will let fans of this genre play each other online, making for some interesting conversation between players.

Those who watch professional wrestling for the divas may have trouble tearing their eyes away from "Rumble Roses," an all-female grappling game, due in November for the PS-2. It looks like it will have plenty of bounce, with Konami promising more than eye candy. It will have over 20 fighters, a special "mud mode," and the ability to turn a wrestler into a heel or hero, depending on whether you fight dirty or fair.

WIRED NextFest



PHOTO: AFP

The Skycar is one of the many cutting edge innovations that is featured at the WIRED NextFest festival on display at the Fort Mason Center on May 15 in San Francisco, California. Cutting edge NASA research and technology is featured at the WIRED NextFest festival. The worlds most advanced humanoid robot Asimo also went through a demonstration at the WIRED NextFest. The NextFest festival showcases more than 100 innovative exhibits highlighting the future of design, entertainment, exploration, health and transportation.

Tech News

Crater rocks may hold more clues to Mars' wet past

REUTERS, Los Angeles

THE Mars rover Opportunity began scanning a stadium-sized crater for clues to what the Red Planet was like before volcanic eruptions covered its surface in lava, NASA scientists said on Monday.

Opportunity is one of two robotic geologists that arrived on opposite sides of Mars in January to discover whether the arid planet once held enough water to support life.

Scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, announced in March that Opportunity had found evidence that a salty sea once covered its landing on a flat plain known as the Meridiani Planum.

Its twin rover, Spirit, also found evidence that small amounts of water were involved in forming the rocks it examined in the Gusev Crater, a massive depression the size of Connecticut, which scientists believed was a dry lake bed.

JPL scientists hope Opportunity's latest observations at Endurance Crater will unlock an even earlier chapter in the planet's environmental

history than the water-bearing rock it discovered in Eagle Crater in March.

The walls of Endurance Crater are lined with layers of exposed rocks that scientists would like to examine closely with the rover's onboard cameras and scientific equipment -- if Opportunity can traverse the steep crater walls.

The rover has begun sampling a 4-inch by 12-inch rock dubbed Lion Stone that resembles the rock that gave the NASA team its first evidence of martian water.

"However, it is different in subtle ways from what we saw at Eagle Crater: a little different in mineralogy, a little different in color," lead scientist Steve Squyres said. "It may give us the first hint of what the environment was like before the conditions that produced the Eagle Crater rock."

Halfway around Mars, Spirit is headed toward a range of hills nicknamed Columbia Hills where scientists plan to search for older rocks than the basaltic specimens the rover has already examined.

If its solar-powered batteries hold out, Spirit could reach the hills by mid-June, scientists said.

Photo Tech



This undated handout photo received on May 12, shows the Coca-Cola Unexpected Summer can, which is equipped with a SIM card, keypad and GPS chip transponder so it functions as a cell phone, and GPS locator. Consumers find the cans and receive a surprise deliver. The device, which is shaped like a soda can, includes a specialized GSM cellular phone and a GPS location-tracking device. According to a reliable source at Coca-Cola, winners in the give away will find the device in a 12 pack of Coca-Cola cans. One of three buttons connects the winner with a company representative, who will explain that the person has won a Chevrolet Equinox SUV.

PHOTO: AFP