

Tech News

Asocio officers' meet makes a stir HP's Bangladesh bonanza

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

THE government with limited natural resources is trying its level best to help the ICT sector flourish in Bangladesh," said Abdul Moyeen Khan, minister for Science and ICT, speaking at the inaugural meeting of the Asian Oceanian Computing Industry Organisation Officers (Asocio) at Sheraton Hotel on July 7.

The Bangladesh Computer Society (BCS), an Asocio member, organised the three-day Asocio officers' meeting, held from July 5.

Launched in 1984, Asocio has over nineteen countries of Asia and Oceania and five other countries from North America and Europe as its members. Being the only intra-country ICT federation in this region, Asocio also plays a global role.

The BCS became an associate member of the organisation in 1996 and was given full membership in 2001. It also successfully arranged Bangladesh Show and the Multilateral Trade Visit Program of Asocio in Bangladesh that year.

Over 40 ICT personalities from Australia, Japan, India, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand came to Dhaka to attend the meeting.

The Asocio Award nomination and 20th anniversary sub-committee meeting was held on July 5. Executives from the member countries were also nominated for awards for their total contribution in the development of Asocio.



Panel of guests at the formal inauguration ceremony

On July 6, the delegates of the organisation paid a courtesy call on President Iqbal Ahmed. The Asocio Executive and Strategic Planning Meeting was also held on the day.

A press briefing was held at Sheraton Hotel on the same day. Manoo Ordeedelchest, president of Asocio, along with ASM Iqbal, president, Bangladesh Computer Society, Kiran Kamik, president, Nasscom, India, Wilson Tan Yi Yan from Singapore and other officers of the organisation shared various matters of the event with the press.

"Bangladesh and other such emerging countries can learn a lot from the experiences of countries like Australia, India, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore, who are currently doing wonders in the field of ICT," said Ordeedelchest.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) organised a fellowship dinner for the delegates of Asocio at a city restaurant in the night.

"We have already started working on a plan that would equip every single school in the villages with computers and

internet facilities," said Abdul Moyeen Khan.

Science and ICT Secretary Omar Faruk Khan was also present on the occasion and lauded the efforts of Asocio and other such organisations and personalities in strengthening the ICT sector of Bangladesh.

ICT professionals Richard Yen from Taiwan and Lui Kin Ling from Malaysia expressed their eagerness to facilitate outsourcing of software from Bangladesh.

Organisational and strategic decisions and discussions on

setting the future priorities and policies were made at the formal meeting, where the main focus was on strengthening the ICT bonds among the countries of the region.

The agendas of the meeting also included a few issues on the ICT sector of Bangladesh and the ways in which it can flourish.

The Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (Ispab) also hosted a fellowship dinner for the Asocio delegates.

The Asocio ICT Summit 2004 would be held in December this year in Sri Lanka. The event will provide an opportunity for the island's ICT sector to receive the much awaited exposure and access to global markets. The exhibition will focus on key segments of growth within the ICT industry.

Segmented areas would, among others, include e-governance technology for the apparel sector, ICT-enabled services and BPO, wireless technology and societal applications.

A consortium of Sri Lankan ICT associations led by the Federation of the Information Technology Industry of Sri Lanka (FITIS) would be hosting the summit. The Software Exporters Association (SEA) and Computer Society of Sri Lanka (CSSL) would help the consortium.

The presence of key event partners like Microsoft, IBM and other reputed brands would undoubtedly signify the importance of the event, the success of which would be a big boost for the ICT sector of all the regional countries as a whole.

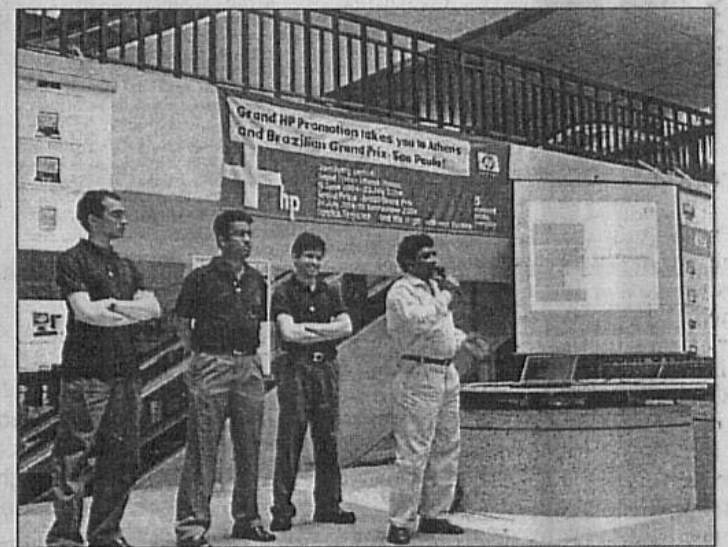
STARTECH DESK

HP has put attractive gifts on offer on select HP products, the company's Bangladesh representatives revealed this at the BCS Computer City at Agargaon on Monday.

The grand HP promotion 'as the official name goes, was held in coordination with Inpace Communications, a leading IT marketing agency of Bangladesh. The launch will also entail a weeklong road show at the country's largest ICT market which will include product showcase, spot registrations with gifts on all registered items purchased and early-bird prizes for the first five HP purchases every day till July 18.

The event comes with a series of promotional customer loyalty programmes from HP. Top officials from HP services (Bangladesh), including Ziaulshams Ahmad, Kazi Shohidul Islam and Shabbir Shafiqullah, along with the CityIT President Azimuddin Ahmed and Md Kamrul Ahsan, CEO, Inpace Communications) attended the event. They made publicity speeches before channel partners of HP (Flora, MultiLink, Techvalley, Desktop and Daffodil) and media representatives on the current endeavors from HP. It also includes two mega draws on July 23 and September 30.

The draws can be participated through an online product registration system, where the



CityIT President Azimuddin Ahmed speaks at the programme

customer will be needed to type in the respective serial number from any purchased HP product and register it online at www.selecthp.com for hard-ware, or www.checkgenuine.com for print cartridges. All entries between June 15 and July 23 will qualify for a grand draw for the Athens tour at the Olympics. Entries between July 24 and September 30 will qualify for the Brazilian Grand Prix tour at Sao Paulo. The prizes include single both-way airfares along with six days accommodation and tickets for each event.

About how the finance for these promotional products from HP was being met, M Iftikhar Uddin, assistant manager of Inpace Communica-

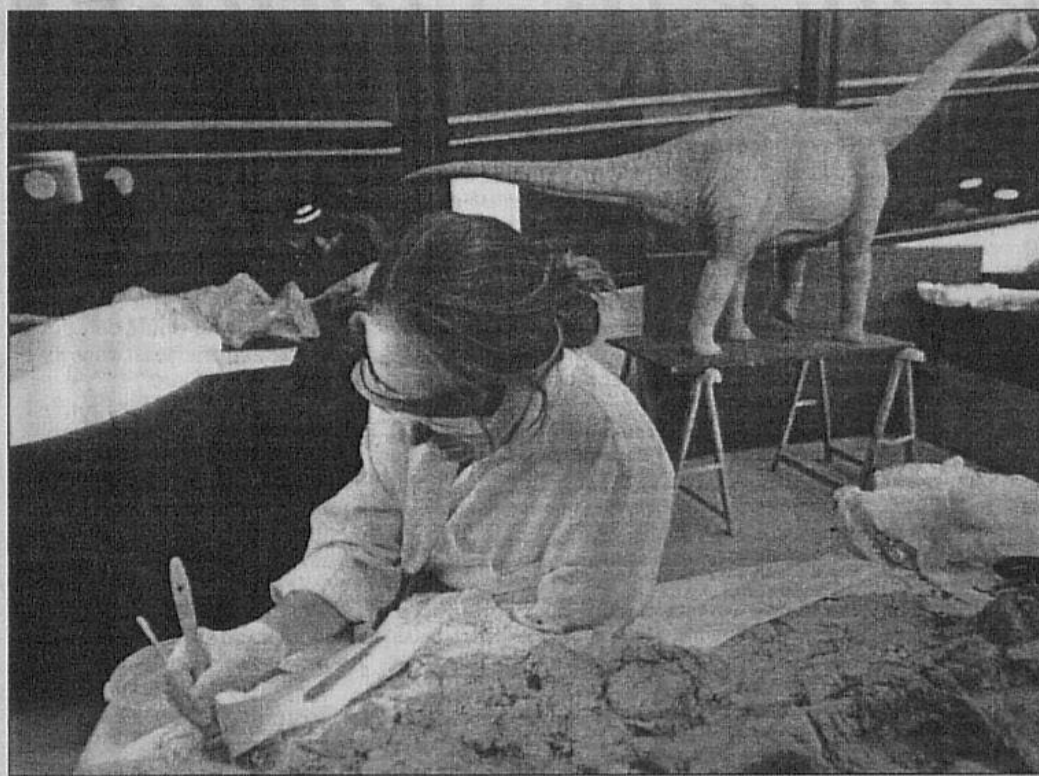
tions, said HP's channel partners were responsible for pulling in the funds from the head office in Singapore. Inpace takes charge of any event management, distribution, media support and advertisement.

Some of the products the event will display are HP inkjet and laserjet cartridges, deskjet printers, photosmart photo printers, HP laserjet all-in-one, scanjet scanners, desktop PCs and monitors, laptop notebooks and iPAQ pocket PCs.

Asked about the absence of price listings, Iftikhar Uddin cited the fluctuation of taka's value against dollar that swings prices of electronic items.

Tech News

Europe's largest dinosaur rises from Spanish fields



A paleontologist at the Dinopolis theme-park lab in Teruel analyzes bones found near the village of Riodeva on July 2. If their hunch is right, the recently-discovered bones of a vast animal that may be a Sauropod - a lizard-like dinosaur - would be the largest dinosaur find in Europe.

REUTERS, Riodeva

FARMERS in Riodeva cleared stones from their almond orchards for generations, never dreaming they were tossing aside dinosaur bones -- and laying a trail for one of Spain's greatest fossil finds.

But when two palaeontologists stumbled across a field scattered with the fragments they knew they had probably found a valuable cache, and when digging began in early 2003 it revealed a horde beyond their wildest hopes.

The remains of the largest dinosaur found in Europe, including an upper limb bone as big as a person -- 5.8 feet -- were nestled just below the surface in this remote corner of the central Spanish region of Aragon.

"To find lots of bones is amazing. To find such a big animal is extraordinary, and to find it in Europe is extra-terrestrial," said Alberto Cobos, the man who recognized the potential of the site.

The huge reptile, which weighed an estimated 40 to 50 tonnes, the same as six or seven elephants, probably roamed the region up to 130 million years ago when it was a tropical "dinosaur paradise," criss-crossed with rivers and streams.

Huge, perfectly preserved toe bone fossils and even a single curved nail, larger than a human hand, were found with a rib

and leg and possibly pelvic bones.

The herbivore's bones were jumbled with remains from other, smaller animals -- including teeth from carnivores that may have feasted on its flesh.

Up to 114 feet long, the dinosaur could represent a new species, although the team uncovering it is wary of jumping to conclusions -- but its size alone is enough to put Riodeva firmly on the map.

The largest known dinosaurs have been found in Latin America and the new Spanish dinosaur claims the record for Europe, Cobos said.

DINOPOLIS

The province of Teruel, where Riodeva is located, was already well known to Spanish dinosaur lovers.

Its hills, dramatically layered with red and white striped layers of rock, are a treasure trove for fossil-hunters.

They yielded Spain's first dinosaur in 1872, and then just over a century later the first new species was discovered in the country, *Aragosaurus*.

But the latest find is the most exciting yet -- and its discoverers hope it will boost interest and funds, partly through raising the profile of Teruel's dinosaur theme park, Dinopolis.

The Disney-like songs blaring from loudspeakers lining the route to the entrance belie the seriousness of the

investigations the park helps support, but give some taste of a complex that aims to entertain as much as educate.

Inside, a museum packed with rare and beautiful fossils is almost empty, while children head for a "ride through time" and cluster near a "feed the dinosaur" stall -- where they try to throw balls through the mouth of a wooden dinosaur.

The decor is chunky faux-primitive, and the industrial-looking lot it is set on is an incongruous place for a journey through time, but business seems good and the managers are as happy as the customers.

"My son has had a great time, although I'm not sure if it's been educational -- he is only 4 years old," said Cristina Gallego, a 35-year-old administrator from the port of Alicante.

The park seems to be succeeding in helping boost Teruel's economy by capitalizing on the region's unusual assets.

Hotel capacity in the town is expected to climb 70 percent by 2006, five years after the park opened, and it has attracted 500,000 visitors, at 17 euros (\$21) an adult ticket, over three years.

DEVOTED DIGGERS

The laboratory where the team take their fossils for painstaking cleaning -- restoring a single bone can take months -- is a key part of the Dinopolis complex, with a glass wall so visitors can watch the experts at work.



PHOTO: REUTERS

A worker stands next to a 5' 9" dinosaur's upper limb bone in a laboratory at Teruel's recently opened dinosaur theme park Dinopolis on July 1.

As well as an attraction, it is a reminder that the park's future depends on these paleontologists' devotion, as their finds help drum up the publicity that keeps visitors coming.

Teruel Palaeontology Foundation Director Luis Alcalá says he has no problems recruiting new staff and has identified nearly 20 other sites that could hold remains.

But the latest giant discovery is likely to keep them busy for a while.

Alcalá says cheerfully they could still be combing the field where they found it, millimeter by slow millimeter, in 20 years' time.

Tech News

Sony to unveil new PlayStation in May

AP, San Jose

SONY Corp. says it expects to demonstrate a working version of its next-generation PlayStation video game console at a trade show next May.

Sony has been secretive about its next-generation consoles because of stiff competition from rivals Microsoft Corp. of the United States and Japan's Nintendo Co.

To date, Sony has not specified a launch date for the follow-up to the popular PlayStation 2, but company officials in Tokyo on Monday told reporters they'll unveil more details about the highly anticipated product by the end of its fiscal year, which ends in March, said Molly Smith, a spokeswoman for Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc., based in Foster City, Calif.

"We wanted to let our business partners know that our development is progressing as planned on the future platform," Smith said.

Takeshi Kutaragi, president of Sony Computer, said the PlayStation Portable, dubbed PSP, would be on store



PHOTO: AP

A cartoon game is displayed on Sony Computer Entertainment's PlayStation Portable (PSP) at a press preview in Tokyo on Monday. The 260 gram (9.1 ounce) portable game machine features 16:9 wide and high quality liquid crystal display with built-in speaker with headphone and microphone outputs. It is also feasible to play small size UMD optical disc for wide range of music, film and sports.

shelves by the end of March but didn't reveal the product's specifications, Kyodo News agency said.

If Sony meets its targets, then the public will finally get a glimpse of the next-generation game console at the E3 convention in Los Angeles, set for May. Sony and other video game makers have used E3, which draws game developers, fans and industry officials, for major product launches.

Sony's PlayStation 2 game machine is the industry's best-selling console, though Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's GameCube have been gaining some ground. Microsoft has not said when its next-generation Xbox might be available.

Kutaragi also said Sony will sell its PlayStation Portable a handheld device with a color display, stereo speakers and wireless Internet for multiplayer games, music and videos in Japan by the end of December.

PSP will be available in the United States and Europe by March 2005, Kutaragi said, according to Smith.

Photo Tech



PHOTO: AFP

Visitors study the muscles of a human body posed as a chess player at the "Body Worlds: The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Humans Bodies" show at the California Science Center on July 7 in Los Angeles, California. Since its debut in Tokyo in 1996, the show has sparked controversy and curiosity. German scientist Gunther von Hagens, who created the show and developed the preservation technique used to preserve the bodies is called "plastination".