Egen to carve niche in academic institutions

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

AS the information and technology fever catches on in academic institutions across the nation, companies are quick to meet new demands by developing software that will facilitate the management of workflow and the communication needs for such institutions.

Electronic Generation (Egen), a web-based Academic Institute Information and Management System (AIIMS) is one such software that is rapidly gaining popularity.
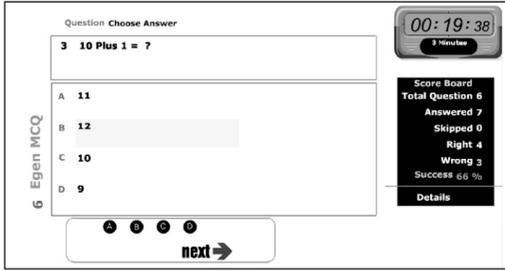
This system is designed to establish a round-the-clock communication bridge between the students, parents, teachers and administrators, customized to accommodate the needs of any academic institution. Egen stores information on each user module allowing students to access updated and efficient e-learning techniques.

The system is divided into four modules -- Administration, Students, Teachers, and Parents. Each module works flexibly with the others, but can be a 'stand alone' system by itself.

The system offers features such as -- integrated report writing, e-mail, ID cards with photographs and skill-based report cards.

Users of each module will be entitled to e-mail and chatting facility with users of other modules. They will also be able to store and update their personal information.

From the *Students* module, any student can obtain his or her attendance records, grades, report cards, personal information, teacher's message, class routine and exam routine. Students can also sit for online exams through this system from any corner of the world. They can be in-touch with their teachers, classmates and foreign students through a 24-hour chatting option.

A parent can monitor their child's daily attendance, exam grades, report cards, class schedules, homework and assignments, course materials and so on. E-mail and chatting options are not limited to those within the academic system, but can also be accessed by parents.

Teachers can access student lists, perform routine administrative tasks such as grading, attendance, reporting and so on, publish and update course information and lessons, update and collect assignments and prepare question papers for online examinations.

Options available to administrators include accessing class and exam schedules, monitoring teacher and student performances, obtaining personal information of any user of the other three modules, putting up important notices, and assigning tasks to teachers through e-mails.

International Computer Connections (ICC), the developers of this system have already received certificates during their participation at the New Jersey School Boards Association's education fair held in October 22-23, 2003, in USA. They have also received similar certificates from international organisations like Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM), National School Public Relations Association (NSRPA) and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

"We are still trying to promote our product to various educational institutions of the nation," said Atiqur Rahman, senior marketing manager, ICC. "Many institutions have shown interest to adopt the system, but the poor internet connectivity in our country is an obstacle to the widespread provision of the system," he added.

Northern University, Bangladesh and Harvard International School, are already using the system. According to Rahman, the administrations and authorities of these two institutions are quite satisfied with the system.

Currently, ICC has two different versions in the showcase the *Egen Enterprise* is the full featured version and *Egen Standard*, a low priced version with fewer features.

Asked about future plans, Rahman said that they are already working on another system containing an online database of the outsourcing software companies of the nation.

Egen student ID cards

UITS IT workshop

Targeting a cybernetic generation

RIDWAN A KABIR

THE University of Information Technology and Sciences (UITS) organised a two-day long IT workshop at its Gulshan campus on September 4. The workshop offered student-participants a hands-on training on different basic computer applications and programming languages.

The event was initiated by Dr A Majeed Khan, vice chancellor of UITS. At the inaugural Khan stated how the university systems in Bangladesh should accommodate a better role in establishing a generation of cybernetic population.

The workshop, which offered training on HTML, Microsoft PowerPoint, GIF Animator, Macromedia Flash and Freehand, was supervised by Dr Hafizur Rahman and Sanjoy Kumar Roy of the Department of Information Technology. Paper handouts were provided for the learners' benefit.

To attend the workshop, each participant had to register paying a minimal fee of Tk 150. "This was only a token money, to compensate for the cost of the certificates for the participants," said F M A Salam, assistant director of the Communication and Public Relation Department. He also mentioned how a similar event pulled a larger crowd previously. "We hope students across the capital will take full advantage of such cost-free workshops in the future," Salam added, promising similar workshops in the near future.

Established in 2003, UITS focuses on integrating job skill development while ensuring that students will be employed at every stage of UITS education, including campus jobs, practical private projects and internships and other research-oriented propositions. "Most of our students are making three to four thousand taka per month, and this may as well inspire them to understand the validity of student work-force for a nation," mentioned Salam.

The university strongly focuses on building team of graduates with a strong IT knowledge-base, hence offers its students with multiple computer and communication laboratories, unlimited internet access, a fully equipped library and an IT help desk. "Our nation has yet to go far to reach the international highway of technology," said Dr Majeed. He was handing over the certificates to the individual participants. Majeed urges on keeping an interrelationship between students and the faculty members of the educational institutions, emphasising on how the country's academic leaders may help to build an IT-oriented nation by promoting general participations through such cost-free workshops.

A participant receives certificate from Dr. A Majeed Khan

Siemens BD plans for future investment

STARTECH DESK

SIEMENS Bangladesh Ltd. (SBL) held a media appreciation meeting on September 1 at Sonargaon Hotel, where the executive members of the company presented the media with current and future endeavors from SBL in Bangladesh, stating specifically how the country holds vast potential for foreign investments in different key infrastructure areas.

Present at the meeting were Dr Peter E Albrich, outgoing managing director of SBL, Klaus Wucherer, member of the corporate executive committee of Siemens AG, Rudolf Paul Klink, new managing director of SBL and Aftab Mahmud Khurshid, corporate communications and business development manager of SBL.

Dr Albrich mentioned that in his four-year tenure the business volume of Siemens in Bangladesh rose from 20 million Euro to 100 million Euro and emphasized on how Siemens now focuses on the power, telecom and transport sectors of the country as potential areas of investment. "Bangladesh faces power shortage and thus the power sector holds huge investment possibilities," states Dr Albrich.

The outgoing managing director also stated how Dhaka is at the focal point of the seven northeastern states of India and hopes that in a few years the rail link between Dhaka and Chittagong will be the heart of all Asian business activities. "Transportation sector of Bangladesh thus holds high hopes for investments from Siemens," Albrich pledges.

Dr Albrich further states that Bangladesh has only a 1.5 percent penetration rate in the telecom sector compared to some of the other Asian countries where it is over a 100 percent; but assures that in another 10 years this penetration is bound to go beyond 10 percent, thus promising another major field where Siemens will be actively taking part.
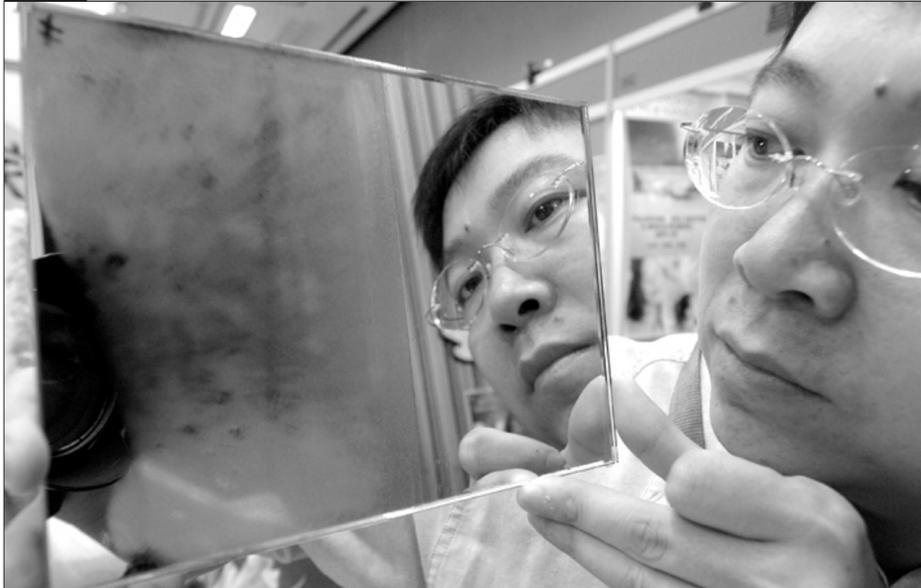
Remarking on the upcoming cell phone project of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB), Albrich mentioned how SBL recently signed a US$ 41 million deal with BTTB to provide the state-run organization with GSM and GPRS technology.

Mentioning past SBL activities in Bangladesh towards the growth of key infrastructure areas since the company's onset in 1956, Dr Wucherer states how SBL was the first direct foreign investor to manufacture telephone switches and sets in a joint venture with the government. "Our telephone exchanges still account for 40 percent of the country's installed capacity," said Wucherer, stating how major SBL clients in the information technology sector include BTTB, Sheba Telecom, the ministry of education, Bangladesh Computer Samity, Telephone Shilpa Sangstha, and the defense purchasing of Bangladesh. "We are also the key suppliers of transmission systems and network management systems to Grameen Phone," he states.

Wucherer assures that to meet growing needs of the country, SBL plans to further expand its operations and activities in the country in the near future. According to him, SBL is confident in providing its clients the right technologies and solutions to help the country build a promising future and a more developed nation.

PHOTO: AFP

Jack Huang, a technician from ONID Technology Corp, explains how NANO technology can help avoid steam on a piece of mirrow. The right part of the mirrow, which was covered with NANO coating, can still make reflections after being taken out from a steam room. Some 70 Taiwanese manufacturers in materials, electronics, energy, environment, medicine and biotech are joining a three-day Taiwan NANO Tech 2004 show beginning on September 7.

Samsung to launch phone with mini hard drive

REUTERS, Seoul

Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd., the world's third-largest handset maker, said on Tuesday it was launching the first mobile phone with a stamp-sized hard disc drive this month that would expand the memory capacity by 15 times.

The phone is equipped with a one-inch diagonal 1.5 gigabyte hard disc drive that expands the memory capacity of mobile phones from the conventional 100 megabyte.

It also comes with a mega-pixel camera and boasts a high-resolution 2.2-inch liquid crystal display. The phone includes features such as MP3 player, electronic book and a dictionary.

The South Korean firm said a powerful microphone enhanced the phone's camcorder function, while dual speakers provide a three dimensional sound effect. It did not give a price for the phone, which will be available in Korea this month.

PHOTO: AFP

A researcher checks the 6.3-meter skeleton of a specimen at the halobios research institute in Shanghai on September 6. In recent years, China poured enormous fund into research of marine resourse, biotechnology, and environmental pollution control.

Sony unveils high-definition camcorder

AP, Tokyo

Japanese electronics and entertainment giant Sony Corp. showed Tuesday a camcorder that takes video at digital high-definition quality for the home.

The 2 kilogram (4.4 pounds) HDR-FX1, set to go on sale next month in Japan and before the end of the year globally, sells for about 400,000 yen (US$3,600; euro 3,000).

It can play current digital video cassette tapes for format compatibility with older models. But Sony will also start selling a video cassette that's best suited for high-definition digital recordings.

Sony plans to ship 5,000 of the camcorders a month in Japan. It did not give a sales target for other nations.

"Recording precious images at the best visual quality is important and the demand for that is sure to spread around the world," Sony Vice President Shoji Nemoto told reporters at a Tokyo hotel.

A more affordable model is likely to follow, Nemoto said, but he declined to say when that would be available.

The high-end offering, which Sony said was a world first as a high-definition camcorder for consumers, is instrumental for profitability at a time when camcorder prices are rapidly coming down, according to Sony.

The HDR-FX1 showcases Sony's newly developed computer chips that can efficiently process digital images, the Tokyo-based company said.

Sony showed a live video image of an open book taken on a standard camcorder next to one on the HDR-FX1, and even the small print on words that looked like blurs on the older model could be read more clearly on the new machine.

High-definition video packs four times as much information than a standard camcorder, Sony said. Other products such as Wega monitors and the Blu-ray disc recorder are part of a package of Sony offerings that work with the new camcorder for high-quality home videos, Nemoto said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Sony unveils its HDR-FX1 digital high-definition video camera recorder in Tokyo on September 7.