

## Tech Focus

## Gearing up for large IT projects

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

A leading national pioneer of the ICT industry, Daffodil Computers Ltd., has signed an agreement with Hansaworld Middle East (HME), a reputed middle-eastern financial software company to facilitate export of locally developed customised software. This may also help the former to compete in the bid to obtain a part of Bangladesh's upcoming computerisation project.

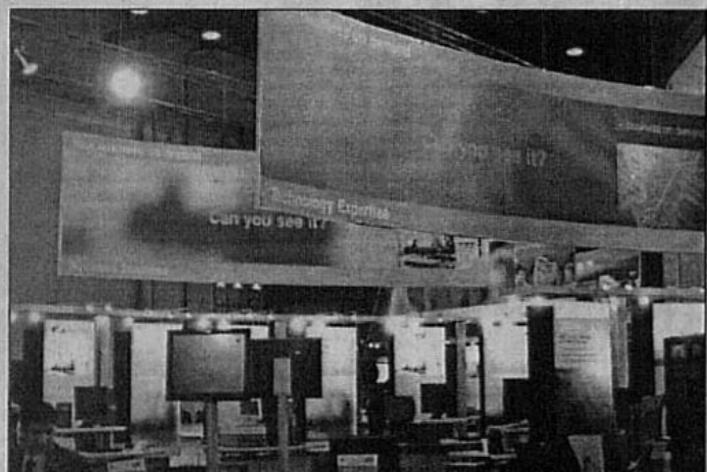
The \$830 million national project to computerise national databases, identity cards, voter lists and machine-readable passports (MRP) will be funded by the World Bank and is expected to be implemented by 2006.

A top ICT official signalled that foreign participation would be needed in the implementation of these projects.

"There are a large number of projects in the pipeline, to be tendered in the next few years, that will require foreign expertise."

He added: "There is huge potential for forging joint collaborations or forming joint ventures by international IT vendors with local companies in Bangladesh to bid for these projects."

Daffodil Computers Ltd., recently participated at the GITEX Fair 2004, held at the Dubai



GITEX Fair draws crowd from all around the globe

International Exhibition Center, from October 3-7 where Sabur Khan, chairman of Daffodil Group of Companies and Johan Ulander, chief executive engineer of HME, signed the joint venture contract.

Daffodil Computers Ltd., is already working on a number of national projects such as computerising ticketing system for Bangladesh Railway. The project is valued at Taka 180 million.

"We would require the expertise and skills of foreign companies to ensure efficient projects," said Altaf Zafar, project director, Daffodil Computers Ltd.

When asked about the huge computerisation project, Zafar

said that it is likely to simplify the daily activities of the government organisations, store updated and accurate record of each and every citizen of the nation, root out corruption and thus aid the whole economy.

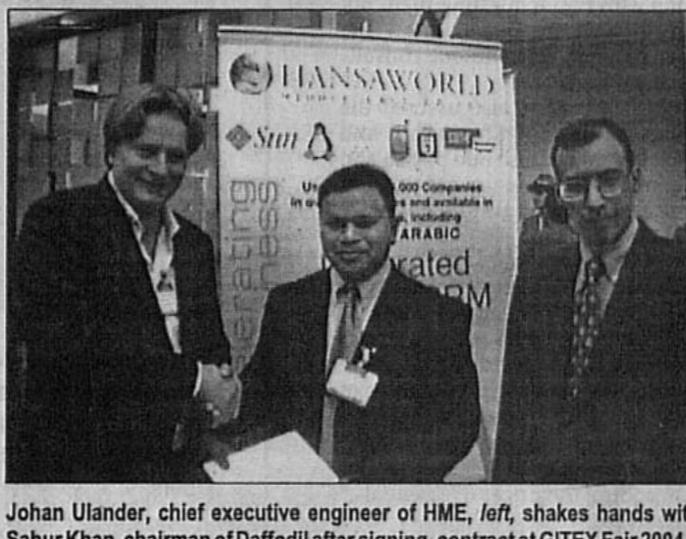
"Also, in the pipeline, are other major projects like the computerisation of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA)," said Zafar.

This project is concerned with the computerisation of traffic and road systems, driving licenses and other such processes. The company is working hand-in-hand with another foreign company for the implementation of this project

worth Taka 120 million. With the tender dates of the national database and other such projects creeping in, the company is also conversing and anticipating further agreements with other renowned foreign software companies.

"Besides this, we are also planning to introduce our end-results in international markets and thus broaden the prospects of the future of the Bangladeshi ICT industry," explained Zafar.

With a promising introduction at GITEX and enthusiastic responses from software companies all over the world,



Johan Ulander, chief executive engineer of HME, left, shakes hands with Sabur Khan, chairman of Daffodil of Companies after signing contract at GITEX Fair 2004.

Daffodils is also planning to set up an office in Dubai.

The company wishes to export Bangladeshi software from such branch offices in foreign grounds. The Dubai office is expected to be operational from June 2005.

Inaugurated in 1981, GITEX has been one of the most successful global information technology showcases. Over the years, the exhibition has gained popularity among the software companies across the globe and this year, the fair sported stands represented by Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, Oracle, Samsung, Panasonic and many others.

## Tech News

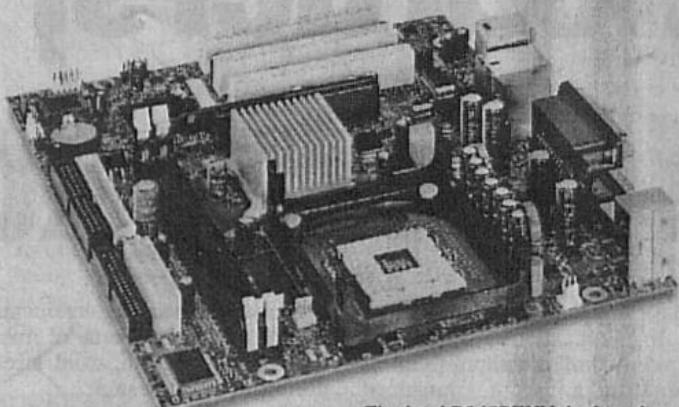
## Intel introduces desktop board for local market

## STARTECH DESK

PROMISING great quality and value Intel recently launched the D845PEMY motherboard in Bangladesh, says a press release. The desktop board is now available with authorised Intel distributors and Genuine Intel Dealers (GID).

The D845PEMY is a flexible solution with onboard LAN and Audio, plus an AGP slot for 4XAGP Graphics Accelerator. The main features of the D845PEMY Desktop Motherboard are:

- Based on the Intel 845PE chipsets
- Supports the Following Processor in mPGA478 socket:
  - Intel Pentium 4 processors with 400/533 MHz FSB
  - Intel Celeron D processors with 533 MHz FSB
  - Intel Celeron processors with 400/533 MHz FSB
  - 4X AGP slot for add on graphics card
  - 2 GB of DDR333/266 Memory supported
  - AC'97 Audio
  - Onboard Intel Pro 10/100 Network Interface card
  - 4x USB ports, 1x serial port, 1x parallel port
  - 2x IDE interfaces for 4x IDE HDD/CD-ROM



The Intel D845PEMY desktop board

## Grants Dale day and training

Intel's distributor and their sub-distributor Com Valley Ltd. observed Grants Dale Day at BSC Computer City at IDB Bhaban on September 16 and a training session for GIDs and ITRs on the new Grants Dale board by its chipset number, all GD chipsets look like this: 9XX, i.e. 915G, 915P, 925P etc.

Representatives from 31 resellers attended the training session, which was conducted by Zia Manzur, local sales manager for Intel and A K M Muktadir, channel manager, Ingram Micro Asia Ltd.

Express graphics bus, high definition audio and the most significant change, the introduction of LGA775 socket. These boards are promised to deliver high value for money and performance and stability unlike any other. Users can identify a Grants Dale board by its chipset number, all GD chipsets look like this: 9XX, i.e. 915G, 915P, 925P etc.

Grants Dale is the code name for the next generation PC platform recently released by Intel, which marks some interesting shifts from the traditional PC architecture, including introduction of PCI

## Photo Tech

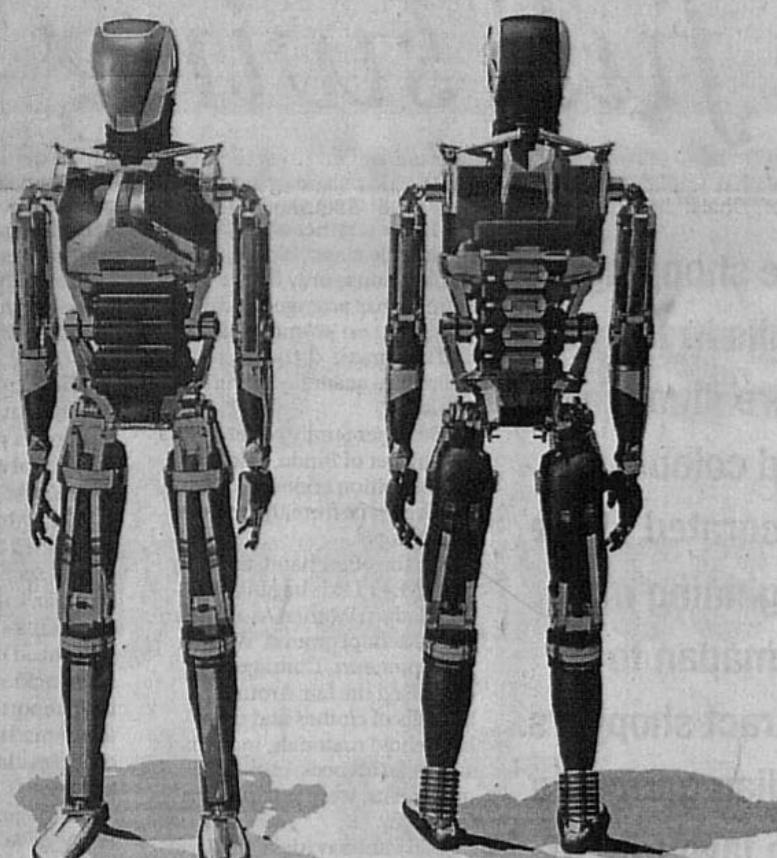


PHOTO: AFP  
An undated computer-generated picture shows front and back view of 1.75 m tall humanoid Kibertron. It is developed by a team of Bulgarian students and is equipped with human-like intelligence.

## Tech News

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## Nasa scientists find surface of Titan 'Very Alien'

REUTERS, Los Angeles

THE surface of Saturn's moon Titan may be covered by thick drifts of combustible organic "snow" floating on lakes of liquid methane or water and ammonia ice flows, NASA scientists said on Friday.

Scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California have been poring over new radar and infrared images of Titan taken this week by the Cassini spacecraft in the closest fly-by ever of the smog-covered moon.

"The surface could be very flammable," scientist Toby Owen said at a Friday briefing. "We can imagine flammable swamps on Titan with liquid methane and flammable aerosols."

The \$3-billion mission, a joint project with the European and Italian space agencies, was designed, in part, to unlock the origin of life by studying the celestial body scientists believe most resembled Earth 4.6 billion years ago.

The slice of terrain captured by Cassini's instruments in Tuesday's fly-by showed sharply

contrasting bright and dark areas with sharp and grooved features that scientists believe may be "wrinkle ridges," where the moon's thin plates collided.

The Cassini team was excited by a dark formation nicknamed "The Halloween Cat" that appears to be one of the lakes of methane or ethane they believe must exist on Titan to explain the high concentration of those gases in the atmosphere.

The team also was surprised by the apparent absence of volcanic

craters or vents they predicted would replenish methane that appears to be escaping from the atmosphere.

"It has to come out of the interior," Owen said. "Somewhere in these mysterious radar images we're looking at has to be a way for this methane to come out."

The data also seems to show that Titan could be covered in up to 656 feet of fluffy hydrocarbon "snow" that fell out of the heavy atmosphere. It is still not clear how much of the surface is liquid



PHOTO: AP/NASA/JPL  
A radar image of the surface of Saturn's moon Titan, taken by the spacecraft Cassini on October 26. Spacecraft's imaging science subsystem captured the image while flying approximately 1,600 kilometers above the surface.



PHOTO: REUTERS/NASA  
Saturn's southern hemisphere looms in this image taken by the spaceship Cassini on October 26, displaying rich detail in its swirls and bands.

and how much is solid and whether the "land masses" are ice, scientists said.

"We are beginning to see a few things we recognize, but most of what we see is very alien," geophysicist Laurence Soderblom said.

Cassini is set to collect more images of Titan in its Dec. 13 fly-by, one of 45 passes planned for the four-year mission. On Christmas Eve, Cassini will release the Huygens probe it carries for a 20-day data-gathering trip to Titan's surface.

## Tech News

## 'Weightless Wonder' makes final flight

AP, Houston

THE NASA turbojet, notoriously known as the "vomit comet" for its use in training astronauts for weightlessness, made its final flight Friday. Few among the two dozen seasoned passengers aboard got sick.

"It's inevitable," test director John Yaniac said.

Nasa's "Weightless Wonder" KC-135, a four-engine turbojet, was more commonly used by researchers to conduct experiments in a zero-gravity environment.

Yaniac proudly told those who attended a post-flight briefing that over the years, the plane's crew had cleaned up at least 285 gallons of vomit.

"They are there to do the research in the microgravity environment so if it means cleaning up a little bit of vomit then so be it, we do it," Yaniac said of researchers who conduct experiments as the plane climbs and dives.

Everyone aboard the plane carries a "sick bag" in their flight suit; plastic bags are available to lock away the odor, said Donn Sickorez, who coordinates college students

who conduct experiments aboard the plane.

"It's just not a big deal," said Sickorez, who was ill his first time up. "The point is to enjoy it and get good scientific data and not feel bad."

The KC-135's final flight lasted almost three hours and made 50 of the steep climbs and dives it used to achieve

Nasa got two KC-135s from



PHOTO: AP  
The NASA KC-135, better known as the "Weightless Wonder," lands at Ellington Field in Houston October 29, after its last training flight. Used for astronauts' weightlessness training, the aircraft is being retired after logging more than 2,000 hours of flight time and 200 hours of weightlessness.

between 20 and 30 seconds of weightlessness at a time.

During the flight, researchers evaluated the repair tools in a zero-gravity environment. Two astronauts assigned to the next shuttle mission, Steve Robinson and Soichi Noguchi, were among about two dozen aboard.

The final KC-135 will have its

usable parts sold off and be placed in permanent storage in Arizona. It will be replaced by a C-9 aircraft next year.

Yaniac said since the second KC-135's first flight in 1995, more than 2,000 students and 460 college teams have conducted experiments on board.

"We're a laboratory just like any other laboratory at JSC," he said. "We just have to go into the sky to do it."

The aircraft made its final landing at Ellington Field late Friday afternoon, where it was greeted by two Air Force fire engines. With their lights going, the fire trucks escorted the plane down the runway. They pulled ahead as the aircraft approached Hangar 990 and then opened their water hoses, spraying an arch of water over the plane as it completed its final voyage.

the military, which originally used the aircraft for cargo and refueling. The first KC-135 used in the movie "Apollo 13" starring Tom Hanks was retired in 2000 and is on permanent display at Ellington Field, not far from the Johnson Space Center.

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INDIA'S information technology showcase IT.com opened in the hi-tech hub Bangalore on Monday with some 290 foreign and domestic companies participating.

Britain, China, Germany, and Russia are among 15 countries represented at the five-day event, Shankarlinge Gowda, Karnataka state government secretary said Friday.

"The objective is to promote and provide a platform for industry to interact. The other aim is also to attract investment into the state," Gowda told reporters.

It is the seventh edition of IT.com in the state capital Bangalore, home to more than 1,400 technology companies.

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