

Tech Focus

The spark of a tech conflagration

SDNP Bangladesh reveals BDIX, a local internet exchange

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FOR the first time ever in Bangladesh an effort to locally manage local internet traffic was made through the introduction of Bangladesh Internet Exchange (BDIX), a not-for-profit partnership between Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP) Bangladesh. BDIX establishes a physical interconnection between ISPs to exchange internet traffic.

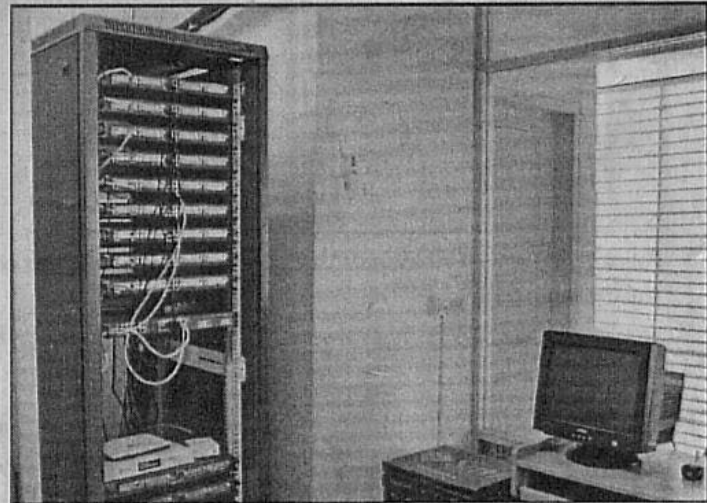
Bangladesh still depends on satellite bandwidth sharing, which causes any transfer of files or mails between local ISPs to go through the channels of foreign servers, taking up more bandwidth and resulting in a huge expenditure of foreign currency. The local server at BDIX will facilitate faster net access for any local traffic by providing faster connection between BDIX member ISPs.

The bandwidth project was taken up in August 2004 by the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP) of the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), which is funded by UNDP and executed by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and Internet Service Providers of Bangladesh.

The current status and

advantages of BDIX were discussed at a press briefing on November 6 at the BDIX Pilot office of SDNP Bangladesh in Pantha Path.

A detailed technical presentation on BDIX was made by Dr Hakikur Rahman, project coordinator of SDNPBD at the



The heart of the BDIX

event.

Using Cisco routers to channel the local traffic, BDIX expects to manage all local internet traffic locally and thus enhance user compatibility and lower bandwidth cost.

"We are hoping to cut down the foreign currency loss due to

international routing of local traffic," said Dr M Asaduzzaman, research director and project director of BIDS and SDNPBD Bangladesh, lamenting that local web users in Bangladesh go all around the globe to send email to their next-door neighbors.

"We look forward to country-

naming ISN, Bangladesh Online Ltd. (BOL), BCom Online Ltd., SDNPBD, Link3 and AccessTel. Four other ISPs are in the queue to be connected through BDIX.

Most of these ISPs are using DSL or Radio-link connections to amend the quality of usage.

"We hope that the regulatory board will continue providing a supporting environment for such exchange server," said Dr Rahman.

The exchange server membership at present is free of cost.

"We are still in the testing-phase," he explained.

Thus BDIX does not plan on acquiring any finance from its members as its project is well-established and runs on full-comprehension.

The expected time frame on such matters may well range from two to five months or a little more, while BDIX acquire further troubleshooting skills on the exchange server.

"All we are looking for is a larger number of members on the server, a good promotion, and then we can go ahead and claim our share of pioneering the effort," Rahman added.

The creators of the exchange server plan to establish a national data centre within a short period. The net exchange server will then include web server, local newspaper server, chat server and

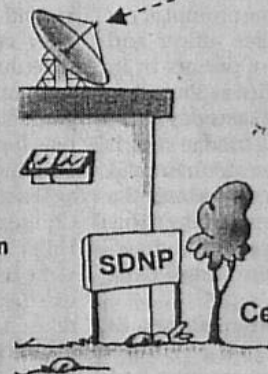
net filter server.

This data centre will also include a server for academic and research institutes of the country, corporate networks, financial sectors, and possibly all the local ISPs of Bangladesh.

SDNPBD has already set up radio links in Dhaka and Mymensingh to set up routing nodes for the exchange. Other regional links yet to be set using VSAT nodes include Satkhira, Cox's Bazaar and Barisal districts. The server administrators are willing to take their efforts to the grass-root levels to offer the goods of net connection to the locals of such rural areas.

The submarine cable is expected to enter the country through Cox's Bazaar, which is

Future connection
plan to SDNP
regional nodes



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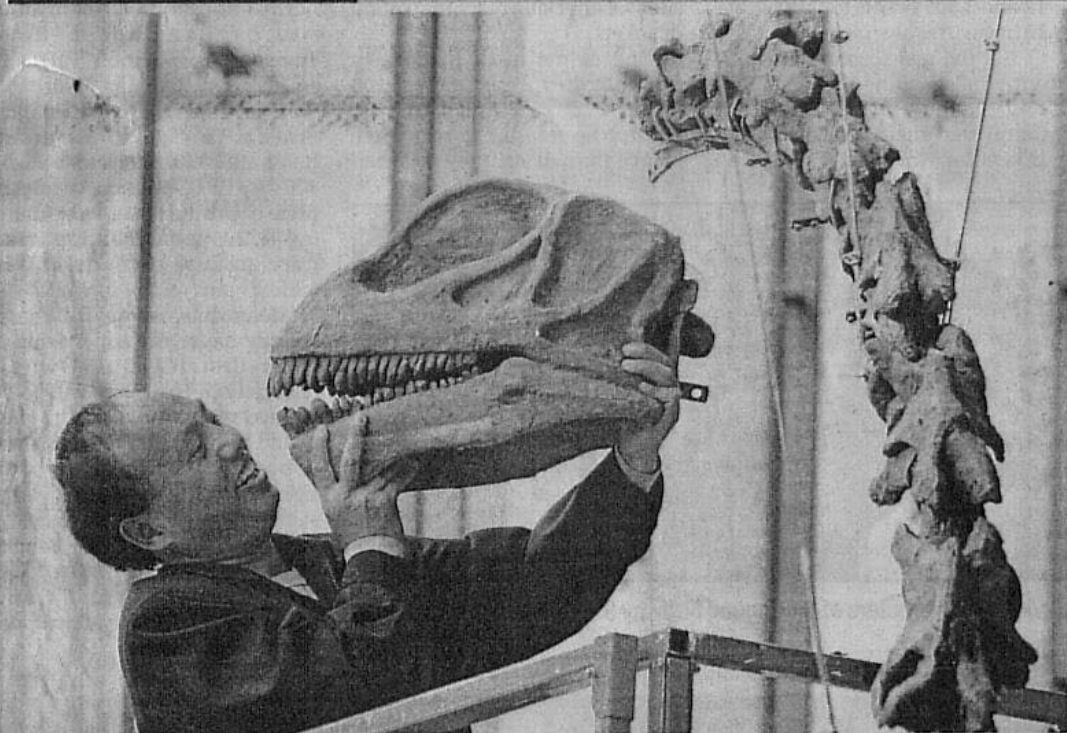
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Mamenchisaurus on Aussie tour



Peng Guang-Zhou from the Zigong Dinosaur Museum in China, lifts the head of a Mamenchisaurus youngi dinosaur into place as it is assembled at the Melbourne Museum on November 8. The Mamenchisaurus was one of the largest dinosaurs to roam the earth 150 million years ago with its heart alone weighing more than a ton and is part of largest exhibition of dinosaur skeletons to tour Australia.

Tech Group

JPGGroup - the voice of the programmers

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

"GIFTED and suitable programmers are discouraged by unnecessary requirements that most computer-related job vacancies demand at present," said Md. Ashikuzzaman, moderator, Java Programmers Group (JPGGroup), and senior software engineer, THERAP (Bangladesh) Limited.

Ashik was speaking at a gathering of the 'Java Programmers Monthly Meet', where noted programmers of the country were present.

"We aim to initiate a panel from our group who would act as the proper intermediary agency between programmers and employers," he added.

The planned panel will have honorary members, consisting of faculty members from the CSc departments of these institutions. The group plans to have

chapters at various universities, which would collaborate with career placement offices. All Computer Science students would maintain a portfolio of the projects and internships and programs that he or she has developed over four years of university study. The portfolio and academic background of the student will be judged by the panel and will be submitted to the firms needing the expertise of such programmers and IT architects.

The group primarily discussed the various problems currently affecting post-graduate and graduate computer science (CS) students.

It was pointed out that annually over a thousand students graduate from different universities all over the nation. Owing to nepotism and red tape, most graduates are deprived of appropriate careers.

As a result, many disillusioned

students are moving abroad to complete their post-graduate degrees or find jobs.

"If such students could be retained, they would be an essential tool towards the development of our nation in various sectors, as far as information communication technology (ICT) is concerned," said Ashik.

The Java Programmers Monthly Meet was held at THERAP (Bd) Limited, a subsidiary of THERAP Services, LLC, based in the USA.

JPGGroup is an email-based forum initiated in late August of 2003. The forum's membership is comprised of 187 local computer programmers and IT architects.

They blamed the lack of proper intermediary agencies for the recruitment of such personnel to various employee-seeking firms.

In an effort to increase communication and encourage extensive knowledge sharing,



Programmers at JPGGroup's monthly meet

JPGGroup is planning to start a network of programmers consisting of students from various universities that would increase communication and lead toward extensive knowledge-sharing.

"We would like to have a more hands-on approach to encourage

CSc students to stick to their respective majors and in turn, aid the nation as a whole," said Haque.

The group owns a blog at <http://jpgroup.blog-city.com> and further information can be found by contacting the group at jpgroup@yahoo.com.

Tech News

Countdown to SOFTEXPO 2004 begins

ALTHOUGH the deadline for applications for the IT Entrepreneurship Development Program ends today, Bangladesh Association of Software Information and Services (BASIS) would still be evaluating further applications till November 20.

"We are hoping to choose and select some innovative and useful projects which would be exhibited at a separate pavilion at the upcoming SOFTEXPO 2004," said Forkan Bin Quasem, general secretary, BASIS, while talking to StarTech about the IT Entrepreneurship Development Program.

The program has been initiated to encourage young IT entrepreneurs, with creative and innovative projects. Through this program, a qualified panel of judges would review, analyse, and evaluate these projects and finally select 10 entrepreneurs. These projects would be awarded and thus exposed throughout the SOFTEXPO-2004.

BASIS has already received over 40 applications and is expecting more within the next

few days. "It has been observed that, even though Bangladesh has its own vine of talented software developers, yet such developers are never given the much-desired appreciation and thus, are rejuvenating their will to carry on with their relentless efforts," said Quasem.

He further pointed out that despite the innovation, creativity and technical know-how being used after each project, only the lack of

business value hinders the entire appraisal of such projects. "We would also be providing important tips and suggestions to these amateur programmers," he added.

The association also hopes to receive some positive response from the immense number of local and foreign investors, to such projects and other software and applications, which will be exhibited at the exposition.

The 'SOFTEXPO2004' will be



Organisers of SOFTEXPO 2004 at a press briefing on November 2 at the National Press Club

held from November 25 to 29, this year. The reputed software and IT enabled service providers exposition would be held at the Bangladesh China Friendship Conference centre at Agargaon, Dhaka.

An impressive line-up of 120 local and foreign ICT companies are expected to participate at the exposition. A series of seminars have also been planned, at the occasion. Sponsored by South Asian Enterprise Development Facility (SEDF), more than 10 seminars on important issues such as E-governance, E-commerce, Road map for ICT sector in Bangladesh, Animation and BPO export are in the schedule.

Three international co-sponsors Intel, Microsoft and Sun Microsystems will sponsor the event along with AKTEL. Nescafe will be the official drink for the event.

The event website, www.softexpo.com.bd, has already been set up by BASIS members, for individuals seeking further information about the event.

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

Tech News

GM bacteria may filter well water arsenic: scientists

MUSTAK HOSSAIN
back from Montreal, Canada

CANADIAN scientists are currently working on using biotechnology to filter arsenic from well water for countries like Bangladesh with the help of genetically modified (GM) bacteria.

"Bugs from Australian gold mines may be used to remove arsenic from well water in Bangladesh," said Dr Peter Singer, professor of medicine at the University of Toronto at a briefing of science journalists, last month.

Arsenic contamination is a serious threat to human health. In Bangladesh, for example, chronic exposure to arsenic has been linked to serious medical conditions, including hypertension, cardiovascular disease and a variety of cancers.

Singer said the technology to filter arsenic from water would be applied practically after necessary experiments at the laboratory.

Between 35 million and 77 million are at risk of drinking

contaminated water in Bangladesh, according to an estimation of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The scale of this environmental disaster is greater than any seen before; it is beyond the accidents at Bhopal, India, in 1984, and Chernobyl, Ukraine, in 1986.

Scientists said cutting-edge science could be the salvation of the developing world.

"In every region of the world there are two to three countries that are really innovative. The other 20 or 30 do not have a high level of technology and are learning from the two or three," said Singer.

Canada recently announced it would contribute \$1 billion to government research and development in developing countries. In Canada, about \$22 billion is devoted to research and development.

Taking science to the people and blending it with common practices could end suffering from disease, poverty and infant mortality, mentioned Singer at the science writers meeting.

Photo Tech



An employee of Japan's electronics giant Hitachi demonstrates a prototype of its new biometric security device (front) for the identification and authentication to read venous patterns of the user's finger instead of a password at its headquarters in Tokyo on November 8. People are able to use the device not only indoors but also outdoors because it utilises near-infrared rays from sunlight as well as a light source equipped in it to read vein image. The company is aiming at practical use for cars three years later.