Tech News

Microsoft presses 'enter' for Bangladesh

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

"THE youth of Bangladesh have a lot of potential and given a chance some Bill Gates may even pop up," said a laughing Faycal Bouchlaghem, Microsoft Asia Pacific's business development director for emerging markets.

The statement made at made at the Pan Pacific Hotel Sonargaon on Monday during the official launch of the first fully-owned

"We will be making our best effort to improve the education sector, aid in developing firms and entrepreneurs involved in the information and technology sector and also aid the government sector with ongoing e-government projects," said Bouchlaghem.

Microsoft plans to formulate education curricula and policies with the education ministry. Through the curricula, the students in the secondary schools

youth of Bangladesh who have a proven record of perseverance and hard work," said Bouchlaghem.

"Intellectual Property Right (IPR) will be implemented to ensure the promotion and encouragement of creative and amateur IT personnel and software developers," said Feroz Mahmud, country manager, Microsoft Bangladesh.

The brand plans to partner with local and foreign companies

"We may even provide new and better solutions for e-government projects in the near future," said Bouchlaghem.

Microsoft also plans to localise their products and sell them in Bangla.

Currently, Microsoft has products in over 60 different languages, which are being sold all over the world.

At the official launching of Microsoft in Bangladesh, the Business Development Director briefly reiterated the primary focus of the newborn local office.

"We are keen on partnering with local and foreign companies. Through such endeavors we not only transfer skills, but we also bring in new players who can play an indirect role in the overall global Information Technology scene," he added while introducing the 15-member Microsoft Bangladesh team.

"Through this partnership, the IT sector of Bangladesh will be bolstered by a powerhouse like Microsoft," said Charles CR Patra, managing director, Square Informatix, speaking at the launch.

"This day is a historic point in our journey through the path to ICT in Bangladesh," said Abdul Moyeen Khan, Science and ICT Minister in his speech.

The Minister criticised the otherwise popular view of technology creating a barrier between the classes. He also pointed out that Bangladesh is currently exporting software to 23 countries of the world.

"The nation appreciates Microsoft's venture and we hope to reciprocate the confidence and trust that it has shown toward us, through hard-work and dedication," Khan concluded.

Faysal Bouchlaghem introduces the 15-member Microsoft Bangladesh team at the launch

subsidiary office in Bangladesh signalled the high hopes Microsoft has for the country.

Through the new office located at Gulshan, Dhaka, the globally reputed brand plans to implement an extensive range of local marketing and sales programs together with their market development partner, Square Group.

The foreign representative laid out the three basic areas on which Microsoft will be focusing in Bangladesh.

and universities of Bangladesh will be able to acquire sound and fruitful computer knowledge and skills in various applications.

"Such programs in academic institutions will equip students with computer knowledge and skills and thus enable him or her to meet job requirements anywhere in the world," said Bouchlaghem told Star Tech, alluding to the current unemployment crisis in the nation.

"We want to work with the

to establish an improved and efficient e-government in Bangladesh.

"If requested we will be more than willing to help out the government with their ongoing projects like the national Id, MRP and so on," Bouchlaghem informed StarTech after the conference. He believes employees of local partners will largely benefit from the global experience that the Microsoft team has acquired over time.

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JFK assassination game launched

AP, Glasgow

A British company said Sunday it was releasing a video game recreating the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy.

A spokesman for the president's brother, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (news, bio, voting record), D-Mass., called the game "despicable."

The Glasgow-based firm Traffic said "JFK Reloaded" was an educational "docu-game" that would help disprove conspiracy theories about Kennedy's death. The game is due to be released Monday, the 41st anniversary of the shooting in Dallas.

Traffic said the game challenged players to recreate the

three shots fired at the president's car by assassin Lee Harvey Oswald from the Texas School Book Depository.

Traffic's managing director, Kirk Ewing, said the game available as an Internet download for $9.99 would "stimulate a younger generation of players to take an interest in this fascinating episode of American history."
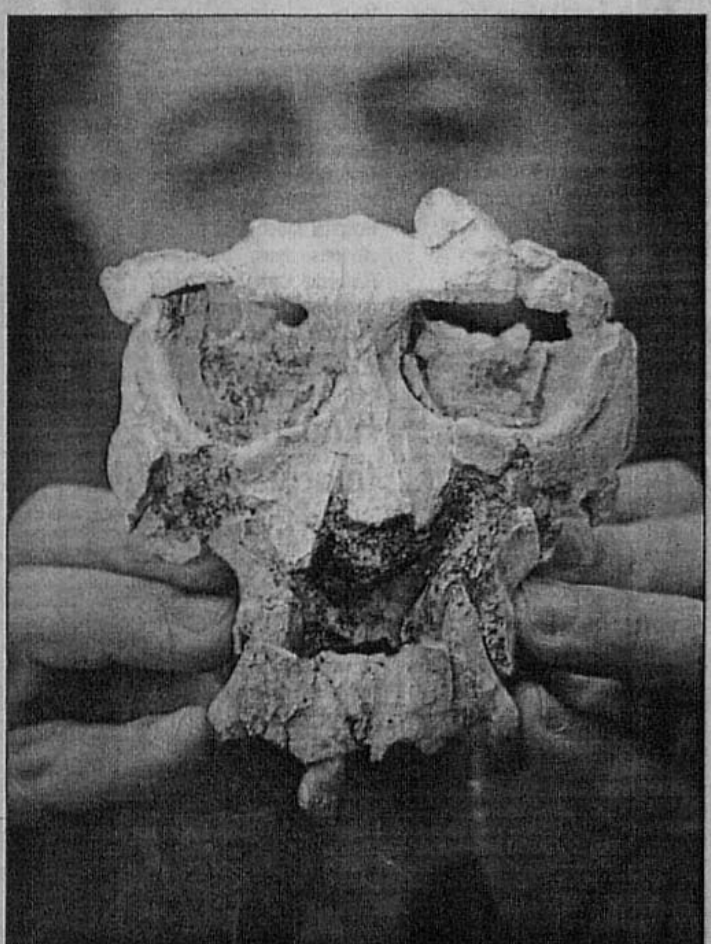
"We've created the game with the belief that Oswald was the only person that fired the shots on that day, although this recreation proves how immensely difficult his task was," Ewing said.

In a statement, Traffic said it was "determined to promote the title respectfully," given the sensitivity of the subject.

A sample scene from the JFK Reloaded simulation of events in Dealey Plaza

Tech News

BIOC arranges nation's first Informatics Olympiad

(From left) Sarwar Alam, president of Basis speaks at the press conference while Dr. Jafar Iqbal, chairman of BIOC, Dr. Kaykobad, professor, Department of CSE, BUET and Dr. Miftahur Rahman, chair, Department of CSE, NSU look on.

RIDWAN ASGHAR KABIR

BANGLADESH Informatics Olympiad Committee (BIOC) is organising the first national competition on Informatics Olympiad 2004 on November 26 in association with East West University (EWU). A press briefing was held on November 11, on the premises of Bangladesh Association of Software Information and Sciences (Basis) at their ICT Incubator office location in the city.

The formation of BIOC on July 16, 2004, was entirely inspired by International Olympiad in Informatics (IOI), which is the premier worldwide high-school computer programming competition. BIOC, which has been formed under the leadership of eminent information technology scientists and academicians, intends to help the nation in the capacity-building of young and talented scholars towards building a refined future and also excel in the changing dimensions with the IOI.

"We tend to create a similar format of problems to that of IOI for this national competition," says Dr Jafar Iqbal, chairman of BIOC and an academic of a local science university.

Earlier this year, Dr Kaykobad, professor, department of CSE, BUET went to Athens, Greece to meet the chairman of IOI 2004 as

an observer from Bangladesh.

"They already know Bangladesh for our participations in ACM ICPC competitions," stated Kaykobad. The chairman of IOI has confirmed the participation of Bangladeshi team in IOI 2005 to be held in Poland.

According to Dr Kaykobad, the sample problems that he was provided during his visit can be expected to be met by programmers from Bangladesh, but he agrees that this much achievement will not come easy.

"We will have to personally train these individuals for taking part in IOI 2005," he said. Thus, BIOC will try to create a similar challenging environment in the upcoming national Olympiad as well. "We will keep the same number and types of problems," he added.

Dr Iqbal emphasised the attention needed by champions of the national Olympiad from BIOC in preparation for participating in the IOI 2005.

"After this competition, we will have some months to help refine the programming excellence of the selected few," he said.

One of the six academic Olympiads for high school students throughout the world, IOI was first proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco). The goals of IOI are to bring together, challenge and give recognition to young

students from around the world who are the most talented in informatics, and also to foster friendship among students from diverse cultures.

The national Olympiad will facilitate about a hundred to a hundred twenty individuals as contestants from different colleges within the city. It has been requested that each college authority nominate at least ten contestants to participate in the national Olympiad. BIOC has already communicated with thirty-seven colleges and have received responses from some.

The registration deadline for the competition was November 22, at which time a nominal fee of Tk 100 was taken. The students were expected to register through the online registration process at www.ewubd.edu/bioc using the registration link.

The key objectives of the national Olympiad are quite extended. BIOC will offer the following criteria as objectives:

· To discover, encourage, bring together challenges and give recognition to young students in Bangladesh who are exceptionally talented in the field of informatics.

· To bring the discipline of informatics to the attention of young citizens

· To develop friendly international relationships among computer scientists and informatics educators, and

· Send teams to IOI competi-

tions.

The competition will be hosted by EWU and co-organised by Basis. The prize giving ceremony for the competition will also be arranged by Basis on November 26 of Basis SOFTEXPO 2004, at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center.

It should be mentioned here that the mega-exposition titled SOFTEXPO 2004, whose theme has been selected to be 'Towards ICT driven Bangladesh', is the biggest showcase for software products, ICT enabled services, and ICT system solutions in Bangladesh, where large manufacturers, service industry players, development organizations, different governmental agencies, consultants, and other local system integrators will be present. More information on Basis SOFTEXPO 2004 is available at www.-softexpo.com.bd.

The whole team of BIOC and also the Basis executives present at the event were very enthusiastic about the integration of Bangladesh industries and the students.

"Academics as well as local industries need these students to work for them," says Alam.

It is hoped that in some recent future local entrepreneurs will make use of local talents while they are in the education system, which will elevate the practical experience base of the student body of the country.

Oldest ancestor

Paleontologist Salvador Moya-Sola shows the cranium of 'Pierolapithecus catalaunicus' in the Paleontologigc Miquel Crusafont Museum in Sabadell, near Barcelona on November 19. The creature that lived 13 million years ago in what is now Spain may have been the last common ancestor of all apes, including chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans and humans researchers said on Thursday.

Tech News

NASA launches Black Hole hunter

AP, Cape Canaveral

THE fastest-swiveling space science observatory ever built rocketed into orbit Saturday to scan the universe for violent celestial explosions that astronomers believe represent the birth screams of black holes.

NASA launched the observatory named Swift for its speedy pivoting and pointing following weeks of delays caused by hurricanes and a three-day postponement due to rocket trouble. The unmanned rocket climbed smoothly through a cloud-flecked midday sky, and delighted flight controllers wished the spacecraft a successful mission.

Swift, a $250 million collaboration by NASA, Italy and Britain, should begin its hunt for gamma ray bursts by January and erase some of the mystery surrounding these explosions and black holes.

Gamma ray bursts are the most powerful events in the universe, exceeded only by the cosmic curtain-raising Big Bang itself. Lasting just a few seconds on average, the bursts appear out of nowhere like

flashlight beams and are thought to signal the formation of black holes.

Astronomers theorize the collapse or collision of massive stars is what produces black holes so dense not even light can escape and that the resulting gravitational energy sends gamma rays shooting out across time and space.

"We think that, perhaps, bursts are the birth cries of

black holes and we're seeing these throughout the universe," said NASA's Neil Gehrels, principal scientist.

A single gamma ray burst releases more energy than the sun will emit in its entire lifetime at all wavelengths, Gehrels said.

Put another mind-blowing way, "If you added together everything in the rest of the universe during that second,

it would not be as bright as the gamma ray burst," said Pennsylvania State University astrophysicist John Nousek, director of mission operations.

So far, astronomers have managed to identify only a couple dozen gamma ray bursts, as close as a few million light years and as far as 12 billion light years. Swift should zero in on two gamma ray bursts a week as far away as 15 billion light years, representing the very first generation of stars, for a grand total of more than 200 during the planned two-year mission.

The spacecraft will scan one-sixth of the sky at any one time and thus see one-sixth of all gamma ray bursts out there. The observations will help scientists learn more about what the bursts are and how many are out there, and how and when black holes form.

As soon as Swift's gamma ray burst-alert instrument spots an explosion, the spacecraft will quickly turn all by itself so that two other onboard telescopes can observe the X rays and ultraviolet and optical light streaming from the afterglow.

In this photo released by Boeing, NASA's Swift satellite is launched aboard a Boeing Delta 2 rocket at 12:16 p.m. EST from Launch Complex 17A at Cape Canaveral on November 20. The satellite will pinpoint the location of distant yet fleeting explosions that appear to signal the births of black holes.

Tech News

Kazaa offers unlimited free internet phone calls

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Sharman Networks Ltd., distributor of the Kazaa file-sharing software, on Monday launched its latest version which enables users to make free online calls anywhere in the world.

Kazaa v3.0 includes the integration of Internet telephony software from Skype Technologies SA and also offers advanced search capabilities and a free weblog trial.

Skype, headquartered in Lux-

embourg, is the newest venture of Niklas Zennstrom and Janus Friis, co-founders of Kazaa and Altnet, a secure peer-to-peer network.

Tech Toon

"I KNOW IT'S ILLEGAL TO DOWNLOAD MUSIC FROM THE INTERNET... BUT YOU SAID THE STUFF I LISTEN TO ISN'T MUSIC!"