

Microsoft offers free virus-busting programs

AP, Washington

Microsoft Corp., whose popular Windows software is a frequent target for Internet viruses, is offering a free security program to remove the most dangerous infections from computers.

The program, with monthly updates, is a step toward plans by Microsoft to sell full-blown antivirus software later this year.

Microsoft said yesterday that consumers can download the new security program from the company's website www.microsoft.com and that updated versions will be offered automatically and free each month. It will be available starting Tuesday.

Also, Microsoft offered Thursday a free program to remove "spyware," a category of irritating programs that secretly monitor the activities of Internet users and can cause sluggish computer performance or popups.

Microsoft said the virus-removal program will not prevent computer infections and was never intended to replace the need for traditional antivirus software, such as flagship products from McAfee Inc. or Symantec Corp.

But a senior Microsoft executive confirmed the company's plans to sell its own antivirus software, which would compete against programs from McAfee, Symantec and others.

Microsoft purchased a Romanian antivirus firm, GeCAD Software Srl, for an undisclosed amount in 2003. Industry rivals expect Microsoft's formal entry into the market as early as the spring.

"We will have a stand-alone antivirus product that is one of the things you can buy from Microsoft, but we're not announcing anything today," said Rich Kaplan, vice president for Microsoft's security business and technology unit.

The offers of free virus- and spyware-removal tools were intended to convince consumers that Microsoft is working to improve its software's security, Kaplan said.

Microsoft and other companies occasionally have offered separate programs to disinfect specific viruses. Microsoft promised its new removal tool will target a variety of infections and will be updated each month to recognize new ones.

Microsoft is sensitive to criticism about the susceptibility of its Windows operating system software to computer viruses. It has responded by tightening security for its popular Outlook e-mail software and improving the protec-

tive firewall utility for Windows. But its reputation largely has hinged on consumers' effective use of antivirus products and other security programs outside Microsoft's control.

Microsoft has proceeded more cautiously in recent years as it moves to compete against its one-time partners. European antitrust regulators last year fined the company \$613 million over charges it abused its software monopoly. Microsoft is operating under restrictions from a U.S. antitrust settlement with the Bush administration until 2007.

Kaplan encouraged consumers to buy updated antivirus software from vendors such as Symantec and McAfee. He also expressed confidence that an industry organization formed to share details between Microsoft and leading antivirus companies about virus outbreaks would survive Microsoft's decision to compete directly against those same businesses.

Antivirus vendors have warned investors about the fallout as Microsoft enters the market. McAfee, for example, said in its most recent annual report that its own products could become "obsolete and unmarketable" if Microsoft were to include antivirus protection in Windows software.

A Symantec executive, Vincent Weafer, said Microsoft's success as an antivirus company at Symantec's expense was not guaranteed. Weafer noted that some leading security companies have decades of specialized experience and skilled researchers.

"This is an area we certainly think we can differentiate ourselves from Microsoft," Weafer said. "We've worked hard over the years to build trust with customers."

Microsoft disclosed last month that it planned to offer software to remove spyware programs that are secretly running on computers. But in a shift from past practice, Microsoft said it may charge consumers for future versions of the new protective technology, which Microsoft acquired by buying a small New York software firm. Kaplan said the free version of Microsoft's new spyware-removal software will expire July 31, and pricing for future versions is still undecided. Rival anti-spyware tools, such as Lavasoft's eScan, offer similar functions to Microsoft's, and many are free.

No action

FROM PAGE 12 Earlier he in violation of rules of the university had allowed a senior student of the department to take classes.

A member of the probe committee requesting anonymity said they would not recommend any disciplinary action as they think the teacher is suffering from mental depression due to estrangement from his wife.

The probe body would however advise issuing warning against him for giving fatwa (religious edict) as well as allowing a student to take classes.

"The probe report is ready. We would publish it after dealing with some other important issues in hand," said Prof Enamul Huq Khan.

The five-member probe committee comprising four deans was formed on September 28 last year and asked to publish report by October 7.

Govt puts administrator

FROM PAGE 1 A petition with the Court of Second Assistant Judge against the government. The content of the petition, on which the judgement was based, could not be known immediately though.

According to the true copy of the judgement, Second Assistant Judge Syed Azad Sobhan ruled: "The defendant no 37 (government side) is hereby directed to appoint an administrator to take over the function of the executive committee of BGMEA consisted of defendants no 9-35."

The BGMEA leaders told The Daily Star that the judgement was delivered in their absence and that they were neither given a hearing nor summoned. "We even don't know what prompted the court ruling," wondered BGMEA President Anisul Huq. "We urge the prime minister to withdraw the administrator," he added.

Insiders say the move was orchestrated to prevent 'pro-opposition' panel leaders from taking the BGMEA leadership with the election scheduled for February 17.

Two top panels, namely Sammilito Parishad and Forum, were only days away from announcing their full panel to contest in the upcoming ballot.

Sources said the incumbent president is likely to spearhead the Forum panel while Tipu Munshi is expected to lead the Sammilito Parishad panel. Both panels share between them the executive committee, the policy-making body of the BGMEA, and have huge popularity in the association.

Insiders say the Forum and the Sammilito Parishad were likely to

Road crashes

FROM PAGE 1 performing their annual winter exercises in the Goral-Hatubhanga forest in Tangail.

Later, the lorry was salvaged and taken to Savar Cantonment. Traffic on the highway remained disrupted for nearly half an hour after the accident.

In Sirajganj, a Nagarbari bound passenger bus from Hatikurnul in Sirajganj crashed into a roadside ditch at Chaitrashika in Ullapara upazila at around 2:00pm, killing three people on the spot and injuring 24 others.

Two of the dead were identified as Abdur Razzak, 25, and Madina, 12, of Chaitrashika village under the upazila. Identity of the other could not be known.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them to Sirajganj General Hospital for autopsy. The injured are undergoing treatment at the same hospital.

UNB adds from Faridpur: Monwara, 32, and her daughters Babita, 5, and Kohinor, 3, were killed when as a bus knocked their rickshaw at Shibrampur on Dhaka-Faridpur highway yesterday afternoon.

Another daughter of the ill-fated woman, Julekha, and the rickshawpuller were injured in the accident and admitted to Faridpur Medical College and Hospital.

Another UNB report says: A woman and her daughter were killed and her two other children critically injured in a road accident on the Cox's Bazar-Chittagong highway at Kalghar in Ramu upazila at noon.

Identity of the victims could not be known. Police said a bus hit the woman and her three children while they were crossing the road, killing the woman and one of her daughters on the spot and injuring two others.

The injured were admitted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital. Police seized the bus.

Our Sathkira correspondent reported that a road accident on the Sathkira-Assassuri Road left two people killed.

The dead are Alif Uddin, 50, of village Bara Kamar and Kabir Hossain, 10, of village Ellarchar in Sadar upazila.

An unidentified man died on the spot when a Dinaipur bound passenger bus hit him at Baglajpur point on the Rangpur-Dinaipur Highway under Rangpur Sadar upazila in the afternoon.

Little headache

FROM PAGE 12 family has already spent over Tk 16,000 for various medical tests.

According to an estimate by the neurosurgery department, about 15 to 20 percent of the patients admitted to the department are child and female patients.

"About 25 to 30 head and spinal injury cases come to our department a day through the emergency wing, and they get beds, even if those are extra beds. The main problem is scheduling their surgery. It takes long before surgery can be performed on them due to a long list of such patients," said Shafiq Uddin.

Asked about the bed crisis, a justice official at the hospital said, "Most of the head and spine injury cases are of the males and we have allocated more beds for them. Female and child patients are less than one-fourth of the patients admitted."

Shafiq Uddin said, "I have requested the DMCH authorities several times to allocate more beds for the female and child patients with no response as yet."

Rights body

FROM PAGE 12 magistrate's court freed the woman from judicial custody of the deputy commissioner following an appeal on behalf of the organisation. The court also ordered the police to conduct a fresh medical test of the victim.

Two fresh tests were carried out at Khulna Medical College and Hospital on December 29 and January 3. The results of the tests, however, are yet to be had.

Fourteen police led by camp-in-charge Abdul Kuddus and a Havildar Rokonzaman gang-raped the housewife at the camp on December 18 last year. The victim later named all the 14 police who raped her.

District police administration in the face of countrywide protest suspended five of the accused and arrested them. They are Kuddus, Rokonzaman and constables Harun, Sakib and Hurunur Rashid.

Biman unionists

FROM PAGE 12 At the meeting, the committee rejected a plan to procure two new generation aircraft for Biman after frontline ministers blasted the airline authorities for the poor performance.

But the union leaders said Biman's financial performance is on the up and it earned Tk 17 crore operating profit during 2003-04 fiscal year.

They agreed that Biman counts huge loss on the Dhaka-New York route, but said the government had introduced the flight ignoring the employees' protest.

Biman counts Tk 50 lakh in loss for each flight on this route and it incurred a loss of Tk 144 crore on this single route in the last three years.

About the cabinet committee's observation that Biman has huge excess manpower, the union leaders said Biman still has staff shortage. Against 6,761 approved manpower, Biman is running with 5,232 staff, they said.

Biman is currently operating a fleet of 14 aircraft and it has 373 staff for each aircraft, which is very high by international standards, sources said.

The union leaders will sit again tomorrow (Saturday) to chalk out a plan to give vent to their dissatisfaction. Fakhrul Alam Bhuiyan, convenor of BSC, presided over the meeting.

Zimbabwe sent on cherry chase

FROM PAGE 1 dismissed just six runs short of what would have been his fourth Test century leaving Rajin Saleh (60 not out) and Aftab Ahmed batting on six.

Bangladesh, eyeing their maiden Test victory in 35 appearances, will go into the second day with a desire of batting two more sessions to push for a first innings lead.

Bashar did not hesitate to elect to bat first after winning the toss and the Tigers' had their best opening partnership ever to spoil Zimbabwe's return to Test cricket after seven-and-a-half months.

However, the country's premier batsman had the best partnership of the day, 119 in less than 30 overs, with Rajin.

Having raced to his 18th half-century in 56 balls with eight hits to the fence, Bashar slowed down but still exhibited his trademark pull shots and square cuts.

The Bangladesh skipper looked dangerous towards the end of the innings and had hit six more boundaries to reach 94 off just 128 deliveries.

But one loose shot brought

disappointment to a 5,000-strong crowd. Bashar glided an outswinger from Christopher Mpofu to the hands of Taibu to give the debutant seamer his first Test wicket.

Inspired by Bashar's 204 minutes of pure entertainment, Rajin cracked seven fours and the only six of the day when he lofted Stuart Matsikenyeri over long-off.

Rajin also had a touch of luck after Zimbabwe took the new ball after 80 overs. The diminutive batsman, gaining confidence from an 82 against India in the last match of the one-day series, hooked Chigumbura in the air but Graeme Cremer could not hold the ball at square-leg.

Rajin, then on 41, did not look back and completed his fourth Test fifty in 94 balls.

Earlier, the foundation came from Javed Omar and Nafees Iqbal who put on a record 91 runs or the opening stand -- Bangladesh's fourth 50-plus effort in Tests. On way to surpassing Al Shahriar and Javed's previous best 73 against the same opposition at the same venue in November 2001, they took the

score to 72 at lunch.

It was also the first time a Bangladesh opening pair has lasted a full session's play.

Dropped on nine, Nafees notched his second half-century seven overs after lunch when the local lad drove medium-pacer Elton Chigumbura through the covers. The young local batsman, who made a fluent 56 off 122 balls, joined Javed in the dressing room shortly afterwards while trying to push paceman Mluleki Nkala from the crease and Vusi Sibanda took an excellent catch at the second attempt at short-leg to make it 93-2.

Javed (110-ball 33) was undone by a short delivery from Chigumbura that kissed the handle of his bat to the gloves of Taibu.

Bashar and Mohammed Ashrafu took the total to 153 before the latter was out for an uncharacteristically 19 off the last ball of the second session.

Ashrafu tried to flick the ball down the leg side but Hamilton Masakadza held a fine catch at leg-gully to give Nkala his second wicket.

BNP meet sings Rab praises

FROM PAGE 1 criminals and keep the law and order under control.

BNP organised its second grassroots level conference at Kushtia Stadium where around 2900 union and ward level representatives from Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Magura and Kushtia districts converged. The first such conference was held in Thakurgaon on January 4.

A series of 19 conferences of the ruling party will be held across the country as part of its drive to strengthen the party ahead of the next general elections.

Union and ward level leaders and activists of the ruling party gathered at the conference and talked about the successes and failures of the party in the last three years with the central leaders.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman presided over the conference.

Prior to the conference, Tarique went round the audience and shook hands with a number of representatives.

The day-long conference started at 9:00am and continued till afternoon where over a hundred party representatives put forward their suggestions for the development of the party as well as the country.

Describing the conference as the conference of old and young people, the young BNP leader said, "We can do a lot for the welfare of the people and the country if we can work as members of a BNP family, putting behind all the differences."

BNP Vice-Chairman and Minister for Forest and Environment Tariqul Islam urged the grassroots level BNP leaders to remain alert to the conspiracy against the party and said, "We'll have to foil any conspiracy against the politics of production and development."

A number of ministers, lawmakers and BNP senior leader, including Abdullah al Noman, Shahjahan Siraj, Barkatullah Bulu, AKM Mosharrar Hossain, Amanullah Aman, Advocate Ruhul Kuddus Taukder Dulul, RCC Mayor Mizanur

Rahman Minu, Joynal Abedin Faruk MP, Moshir Rahman MP, Advocate Moazzem Hossain Alal, Mofiqul Hasan Tripti, Syed Emran Saleh Prince and Hawa Bhaban spokesman Ashik Islam attended the conference.

Taking part in the discussion, some of the party representatives said the government should continue OMS and VGF programme round the year.

The local leaders addressed the conference in line with the 18-point agenda.

All the representatives were given an audio cassette and different types of books and documents each containing party founder late president Ziaur Rahman's major activities, party philosophy, information about the BNP and Bangladesh politics, the country's agricultural development and prospect, the government's role in alleviating poverty, opposition's "negative programmes that are hampering development activities", and pens and pads.

JS body

FROM PAGE 12 satellite towns, including two at Savar, one at Gazipur, one at Keraniganj and one at Sonargaon in Narayanganj.

It discussed various issues relating to rehabilitation of the floating and lower-middle class people at Bhashantek in the capital.

The meeting stressed safeguarding the interest of the common man, steps to recover illegally occupied government land and formulating laws to oversee the activities of private sector entrepreneurs engaged in real estate business.

Chairmen of Bhumil Appeal Board, Bhumi Sangskar Board and Rajuk and senior officials were present.

Chairman of the committee Mahbubur Rahman chaired the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Committee members Enamul Hoque, Mohammad Nurul Huda, Mohammad Abdul Karim Abbasi, Mohammad Kabir Hossain, Promode Mankin and Mohammad Golam Habib Dulal attended the meeting. State Minister for Land Ukil Abdus Sattar attended it on special invitation.

RU recruits

FROM PAGE 1 Rafiqul blamed the prevailing situation on 'ignorance' of the RU authorities' legal adviser and law cell. "Our appointments are legal as the RU Syndicate approved that," he said.

Akhas said Advocate Abu Aslam, who filed the case challenging the recruitment, is an 'enemy of people'. RU Registrar Abdus Salam said Pro-Vice-chancellor KAM Shahadat Hossain Mondol, also appointment committee chairman, has ordered advertisement against 255 vacant posts.

He mentioned the 546 employees, whose recruitment was stayed by the High Court, cannot apply for the posts as long as the stay order is in force.

Shahadat Hossain said, "We are trying our best for the employees".

Expert body

FROM PAGE 12 laundering following increased pressure from the US government and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the context of the recent terrorism boom.

The UNSC also offered a fund for technical assistance to carry out the task, prompting the Finance Ministry to ask the BB in October last to assess its assistance needs.

The ministry also asked for a draft plan for forming the central bank's financial investigation unit that needs to be approved by parliament.

ABB source said the central bank will finalise its draft amendments to the Amla, passed in 2001, in consultation with the Anti-Money Laundering Taskforce headed by its deputy governor.

18 Iraqis found dead in a field

AP, Baghdad

The bodies of 18 young Iraqi Shia taken off a bus and executed last month while seeking work at a US base have been found in a field near the volatile city of Mosul, police said yesterday.

Police said the insurgents shot the men, who ranged in age from 14 to 20, on December 8 after stopping their two mini-buses about 30 miles west of Mosul.

Their hands were tied behind their back and each was shot in the head, police said. All of the men were Shiite Muslims from Baghdad's northern neighborhood of Kadhimiya who had been hired by an Iraqi contractor to work at a US base in Mosul.

The bodies were discovered Wednesday, the same day a suicide attacker blew up an explosives-laden car outside a police academy south of Baghdad in Hillah during a graduation ceremony, killing 20 people.

A second car bomber killed five Iraqi policemen in Baqouba bringing the death toll to at least 90 so far this week in surging violence aimed at derailing this month's elections.

In a separate execution-style incident, the bodies of three Jordanian truck drivers shot in the head were discovered on the outskirts of Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad, an AP photographer at the scene said yesterday. "This is the fate of anyone who cooperates with the Americans," said a note placed on one of the bodies.

A Marine belonging to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action Thursday while conducting operations in the Al Anbar province in western Iraq, the military said in a statement that did not give further details.

Despite the mounting attacks and death toll, Iraq's interim leader again insisted the ballot would go ahead as planned.

"We will not allow the terrorists to stop the political process in Iraq," Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said. "The elections process is the basis for the deepening of the national unity in Iraq."

While Allawi and US military commanders insisted parliamentary elections must be held as scheduled on Jan. 30, interim President Ghazi al-Yawer, who holds only ceremonial powers, left open the possibility that the vote could be postponed.

"I think that we should continue working on how to hold the elections on schedule, but we should not lack the courage if we see that this is impossible," said al-Yawer, a Sunni Muslim tribal leader.

If the election takes place, it is expected to shift power to the Shiite Muslim community, an estimated 60 percent of the population that has been dominated by the Sunni Arab minority since modern Iraq was created after World War I.

The insurgency is believed to be led by Sunnis and Saddam Hussein's supporters. US officials believe the violence is aimed at blocking the elections and driving out the US-led military coalition. They say postponing the vote would be tantamount to conceding victory to the militants.

The car bomb outside the police

11 AK47s

FROM PAGE 1 barrels, 7,199 bullets of AK47, 2,700 bullets of 7.62mm rifle and 2,400 bullets of 9mm pistol.

On November 24, the BDR seized two 60mm and two 2-inch mortars, three British-made LMGs and its 49 magazines, 32 magazines of self-loading rifle, 11 magazines of AK47 assault rifle, and 2,000 bullets of British-made LMG.

Tsunami survivors

FROM PAGE 12 "Asian grief is our grief," European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso told a news conference in Jakarta.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in an opening speech, called for a tsunami warning system in the Indian Ocean, similar to one set up in the Pacific after a 1960 quake in Chile triggered a tsunami that ravaged Japan's coast.

Koizumi said Japan, which has had "countless experiences" with earthquakes and tsunamis, was willing to freeze debt payments for affected countries and called on others to do the same.

Powell told the conference the United States "in all likelihood" will increase the \$350 million in aid it has already pledged "as the full effects of this massive tragedy can be better assessed."

In addition to the aid, the Pentagon has contributed 14,000 military personnel, 19 naval vessels, 40 aircraft and 50 helicopters to the relief effort.

Former Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton are heading up a private donation drive that so far has garnered \$200 million from individuals and corporations, Powell said.

Indonesia said almost 100,000 people had been counted dead so far and 600,000 people in worst-affected Aceh province were now homeless -- up from the last estimate of half a million.

As the smell of rotting corpses hung over Banda Aceh, hundreds queued on Thursday outside a

academy in Hillah, about 60 miles south of Baghdad, was the latest in a series of attacks on Iraqi security forces. More than 1,300 policemen were killed in the final four months of 2004, the Interior Ministry said Wednesday.

Police Capt. Hady Hafei in Hillah said the blast occurred during a graduation ceremony at the academy and killed at least 20 people, including civilians, Polish Lt. Col. Artur Domanski, a spokesman for the multinational force in Hillah, said at least 10 policemen were among the dead and 41 people were wounded.

In Baqouba, 30 miles northeast of Baghdad, a suicide attacker rammed his car into a joint police and Iraqi National Guard checkpoint, killing five policemen and wounding eight other Iraqis, a US spokesman, Maj. Neal O'Brien, said.

In a separate attack, gunmen killed police Col. Khalifa Hassan and his driver as they headed to work in Baqouba, said Dr. Ahmed Fouad at Baqouba General Hospital.

Abbas pledges to talk peace with Israel

REUTERS, West Bank

Just two days after branding Israel the "Zionist enemy", Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas has pledged to pursue peace talks following the January 9 presidential election he is widely expected to win.

"After the elections and the appointment of the cabinet, we will negotiate with the Israelis," Abbas told reporters on Thursday during a campaign swing through the West Bank city of Nablus.

Asked if he would talk with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who is viewed with deep mistrust by many Palestinians, Abbas replied: "I cannot say he is not a partner. He is elected and we will negotiate with him."

As Palestinian prime minister, Abbas met Sharon at the Israeli leader's Jerusalem office in May 2003 and a month later at a Middle East conference in Jordan that affirmed an internationally backed peace "road map".

Abbas, who has called for an end to violence in a 4-year-old Palestinian uprising, has spoken often since Yasser Arafat's death on November 11 about hopes for a resumption of peace negotiations with Israel.

But after an Israeli tank shell, which the army said was aimed at militants who launched mortar bombs at a Jewish settlement, killed seven Palestinian youths in Gaza on Tuesday, Abbas characterised Israel as the "Zionist enemy".

Sharon's deputy condemned the use of the term as intolerable, and in what appeared to be a far-reaching gesture, Abbas extended his hand in peace in an interview published on Thursday in Israel's Maariv daily.

"We are interested in negotiations, out of a belief they will succeed. We are ready, and if Israel is interested, let's do it," he was quoted as saying.

Abbas has urged Palestinian fighters to cease mortar bomb and rocket attacks, saying they only drew heavy Israeli retaliation.

Militant groups have rejected the call and Abbas's Fatah faction accused the Hamas movement on Wednesday of sedition that threatened the first Palestinian presidential elections since 1996.

makeshift aid station, once the provincial capital's flashiest shopping mall.

But the latest of dozens of after-shocks since the 9.0 magnitude struck on Dec. 26 sent them scattering before the queue quickly reformed.

"We don't have anything. Everyone is like this, the rich and the poor. Now everybody has to queue," said Yusri.

Much of the city has been looted, and people are forced to scavenge among the rubble, littered with dozens of boats tossed from the sea, as Indonesian troops patrol the streets.

"This is more than a curse," said Sudirman, a butcher and one of the very few people to reopen a business. "Allah is very angry. And we must be resolute."

UN emergency relief coordinator Jan Egeland said that the United Nations needed to plan on caring for as many as 800,000 tsunami survivors in Indonesia alone for the next year.

UN officials said orphaned or lost children might fall prey to criminal gangs bent on selling them into slavery.

On an orphanage in southern India, 15-year-old Sitha, her sister Sitha Lakshmi, 10, and