

Tech Fest

DU's vibrant IT fest

RIDWAN A KABIR and SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

THE Information and Technology (IT) festival organised by the Dhaka University (DU)'s Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) Department was appreciated for its multiplicity of events. Apart from the hardware and software exhibition the programming competition, debates and quizzes on tech topics, also turned out to be quite exciting as the faculties, students and visitors played a part in them.

"We need to invest into the ICT sector more willingly than thinking about the financial profit at present, so that we can bring in success in the long run," said Science and ICT Minister, Moyeen Khan while unveiling the three-day event at DU's TSC auditorium on March 1.

Comparing the present conditions of the western countries to that of the emerging countries, Khan pointed out the farsightedness for knowledge and development over our own.

"In order to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the government has to invest into more ICT projects," the Minister informed.

He also urged the CSE Departments of the public and private universities to come forward with valid demands, through which the overall ICT scenario of the nation can be strengthened. He also mentioned that the CSE department of DU has received a grant worth Taka 3 Crore for equipment and research purposes.

Marking the 12th anniversary of DU's CSE department, the IT festival was divided in four segments, all of which were held at

CSE department grounds.

Shah Mostafa Khaled, media-coordinator of the event and also a fourth year student of the department informed StarTech that the target of the software-hardware showcase was to create a link between the student efforts and the existing related industries.

"On this matter, we invite relevant companies from the private sector, so that they become aware of the capacity at which students from different universities are enthusiastically working on practical products," said Khaled.

This is the first time such an attempt to create an exposure of student efforts to the industry took place. Other public and

private universities of the country should create a potential ground of interaction between the industry and the students prior to their graduation.

Any public or private University (or institute) of Bangladesh offering at least bachelor's program in Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Computer Science and Engineering, Computer Science and Information Technology or equivalent subjects, were eligible for participation in the contests. Altogether 26 universities, 2 colleges, 4 institutions, and 2 companies took part in different competitions of the festival.

Each participating team having three contestants associated with a faculty member.

Dr M Lutfar Rahman, founder of the CSE department, DU and convener of the event recalled the year 1997, when for the first 'International IT Festival' was arranged by Dhaka University, which has gained a tremendous popularity in time. He was sharing his thoughts at the event.

Post and Telecommunications Minister Barrister Aminul Haque emphasised on the importance of education and its credentials at being the key driving force behind the progress of the nation, while chairing the closing ceremony of the festival on March 3.

"We should start preparing for an IT outburst to take place right here in Bangladesh within a few years, and the local academicians and students will play the most

fundamental part," Haque said.

He also urged for more teacher-student interactions in the university levels in order to bring these plans to fruition.

Recently DU is working towards building its own software lab in its Center of Excellence, where graduates from the department may conclude their six-month long post-graduate internships.

"We are also counting days towards the establishment of DU's own fiber-optic backbone in the campus, which will create a better flow of open-information at all ends of the university," stated Dr AFM Yusuf Haider, pro vice-chancellor (DU). The university authorities hope to build a better ground for research opportunities within the university infrastructure.

Mentioning how the world of IT has entered into a very competitive abode, Dr SMA Faiz, vice chancellor (DU), advised students on preparing a domain of their own in the IT-sector.

"You must be designed and fabricated with IT and its attributes to survive in today's world," Faiz said.

The event came to an end with the announcements of the names of the winning teams. Host DU managed to keep the first-prizes for the quiz and debate, while BUET Explorers snatched the top position in programming contest. *Griffindor* (DU) came in second in programming competition and *Loopers* (BUET) took the third position. The three winning teams received prize money worth Taka 21,000, Taka 15,000, and Tk 12,000 respectively while the rest in the top ten lists were awarded Taka 3,000.

Overall it was a collection of successful happening events that boosted these budding techies of the nation and took them one step forward in achieving their goals.



Convener of the event Dr M Lutfar Rahman, who is also the founder of the CSE department, Dhaka University, speaks during the closing ceremony of DU IT festival 2005, at TSC Auditorium.

Tech Fair

Port city goes net crazy

SAAD HAMMADI back from Chittagong

REALISING the overwhelming response at Dhaka's Browsing Fair 2003, the Cyber Café Owners Association of Bangladesh (CCOAB) continued their effort to take internet in every part of the country. The first outcome of CCOAB's attempt was the second national browsing fair at Chittagong's CJKS indoor stadium that started on March 4 and continued till last Sunday. Co-organised by the Ministry of Science and ICT and CCOAB, once again the fair had retained its glory of success.

The fair, being the first of its kind in Chittagong, earned great attention of the visitors providing special discounts on internet connections, high speed solutions for corporate clients, web services, and a jam-packed free internet browsing space backed by 15 cyber cafes. The port city being a newer consumer segment in the country for internet business has proved to have a good demand.

In an exclusive interview, Ashfaquddin Mamun, general secretary, CCOAB, told StarTech that unity between the cyber café owners in order to eradicate the misuse of cyber cafes is one of their main objectives alongside creating the awareness for internet among users in the remotest part of the country. "We want to provide training sessions in schools and colleges through our member cyber cafes in different parts of the nation so that no one from our future generation gets deprived from the benefits of internet", stressed Mamun.

The fair being inaugurated by Science and ICT Minister Moyeen Khan, also held a seminar that was accompanied by Akhteruzzaman Manju, president, Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB), SM Iqbal, president,



Science and ICT Minister, Moyeen Khan launching CCOAB's website while inaugurating the fair.

Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS), Johurul Islam, president, CCOAB, Abdullah H. Kafi, former president, BCS and Hasnur Rahman, deputy secretary, ministry of science and ICT.

"I appreciate the initiative of CCOAB for creating such an opportunity for the youths of this country to get familiar to the internet. Private sector organisations lead the role in developing the nation in to an ICT based society that is clearly visible as their contribution for the purpose of ICT Incubator in Dhaka was ten times higher than that of the government investment", said Khan.

"We have also authorised the first ever cyber law in the country and set them in practice since the last two weeks. Using the internet service can facilitate you with updated news every hour instead of waiting for news on television channels", added Khan.

Sponsored by Banglalink, the fair included a number of regional ISPs, web firms, technical institutions and product distributors like, Computer Home, NIIT, Soft Solution,

Chronicle Computer Ltd., Chittagong Online Ltd., Spider.net, ClickOnline, Rapid InfoTech, Easynet.com, Webbangladesh.com, E-way, DNS and many more.

Chittagong Online Limited introduced caller ID enabled authentication for the first time in the country that allows users to restrict phone numbers from where they can access the internet. Another new feature they have introduced is the EI technology that lets the dial up users to enjoy 56Kbps full duplex connectivity.

"One service that we could adopt quite cheaply but still lacking is the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) which could allow the users to make optimum use of the telephone lines that currently leave two third of the total frequency unused which could be utilised on internet and data transfer along with telephone service at the same time", the Minister explained.

This fair at the port city witnessed almost twice as much as response that it had received in Dhaka in 2003.

Tech Fair

BCS showcase goes beyond capital



VIP Tower, the venue for the BCS Show, did not see too many visitors as there were two other fairs taking place in the port city simultaneously.

STARTECH CORRESPONDENT, back from Chittagong

DHAKA'S largest IT exposition, BCS Computer show went beyond the capital to the port city, Chittagong. Organised by Chittagong ICT Forum and Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS), the fair kicked off on February 27 and went on till March 6.

State minister for civil aviation and tourism, Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin inaugurated the fair. "The government is interested to build a computer city in Chittagong like the one in Dhaka", the minister informed while speaking at the event.

Chittagong's VIP tower was the venue for the fair and it included 26 pavilions and 13 stalls. Some of the major participants at the fair were Techno Village Pvt. Ltd. Akij Online Ltd. Khan Jahan Ali Computers Ltd., PC Park, Smart Technologies and Flora.

Chittagong ICT Forum informed StarTech that initiatives for the fair had to be taken by them, whereas most renowned companies favour the capital for their product launch and promotions. They invited the companies to come forward and serve the customers at this part of the country. Consumers should be provided with proper demonstrations and purposes of these companies' products along with reliability.

They also mentioned that consumers have become so dependable on Dhaka that sometimes they make their payment in the capital and receive the computers and accessories from Chittagong. The companies distributing the products should eliminate this sort of obstacle.

"Due to the clash between three fairs, which are being held at the same time, our customer response was just at a satisfactory level", said Mohammad

Nizam Uddin, president, Chittagong ICT Forum.

Free online browsing, game competition, children's painting project competition, everyday raffle draw were part of the activities at the fair.

Samsung introduced two latest notebooks weighing just about 3kg at the fair. Making its size slimmest in the world for notebooks, it has been highlighted with its body made of magnesium alloy that prevents the notebook PC from scratches and carry on its silver glaze.

"You'd be happy to know that Samsung plans to set up its service center at Dhaka. We can ensure you to replace your product with a new one in case of any problems except physical damages till two years and 11 months from the date of the purchase," said Sharfuddin Anik, business manager, Smart Technologies (BD) Ltd. while speaking at a product brief to journal-

ists. "We have already started a service called 'onestop' for hard drives with problems including bad sectors except external abuse where the customer would be able to take a new product in replacement for the existing at one sitting."

When representatives of different brands were asked about their experience and marketing plans in Chittagong, they all made a positive response and spoke about future marketing plan.

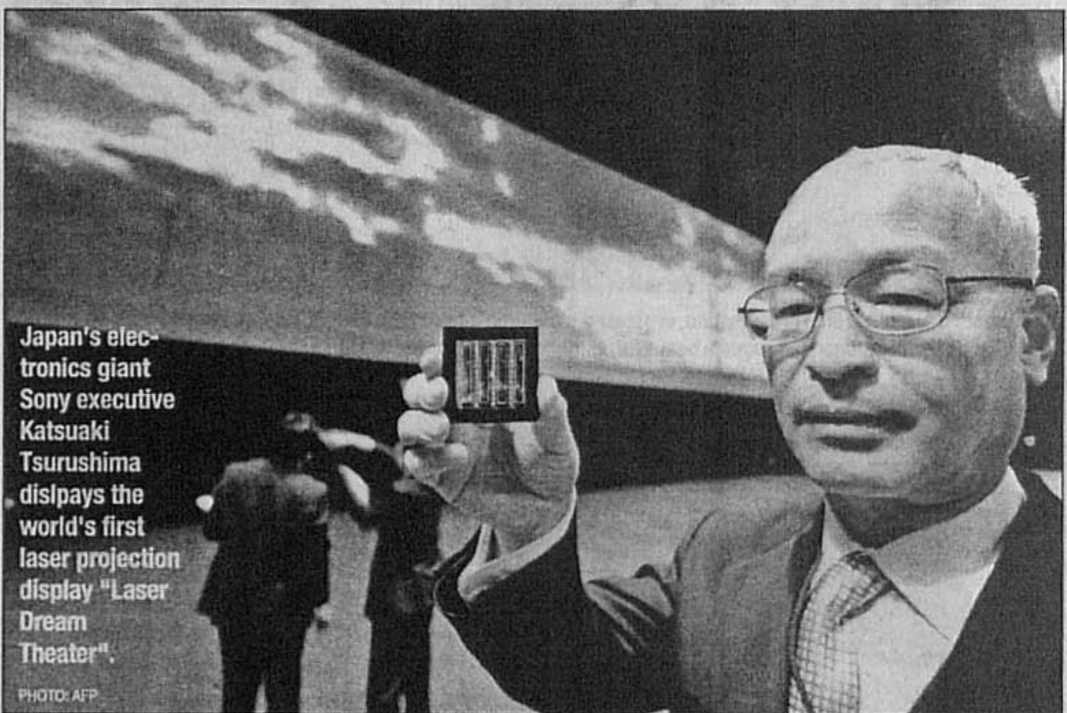
"Twinmos has set up its own office at Dhaka recently, and we have already marketed our product in Chittagong. The response from the customers here is very impressive as we found out from our dealers at here and we would set our office here as soon as we find a green signal from our Dubai office," said Abdullah Al Mamun, marketing representative, TwinMOS Technologies Middle East.



Children engrossed in a Paint Competition at BCS Fair-2005 in Chittagong.

Tech News

Sony to debut flash-based audio players



Japan's electronics giant Sony executive Katsuki Tsurushima displays the world's first laser projection display "Laser Dream Theater".

AP San Jose

HOPING to regain some of its luster in a market dominated by the iPod, the company that brought us the Walkman is coming out with a big lineup of portable music players.

In unveiling nine new players, Sony Corp. is taking particular aim at Apple Computer Inc.'s slim new iPod Shuffle.

That's because, like the Shuffle, the new Sony players use flash memory, a storage medium more durable, lightweight and compact than its larger-capacity cousin, the hard drive.

The new Sony players also support the generic MP3 audio format, which is what most people use when converting their music CD collections to digital files. That's a major concession for Sony, which had tried until recently to persuade consumers to only use its proprietary audio format, called Atrac.

Industry analysts seemed impressed by Sony's latest move.

"It's like the empire strikes back," said Richard Doherty of The Envisioning Group. "Sony has taken a lot of quiet and loud criticism and has turned it into a brilliant line of players."

The lineup includes a set of cigarette lighter-sized models, a bit more expensive than the iPod Shuffle but with a much longer advertised battery life: 50 hours of playback time with a rechargeable battery compared to Apple's 12 hours.

And unlike the Shuffle, the Sony players have bright, 3-line screens to display song information.

A 512-megabyte model costs \$130 and a 1-gigabyte model costs \$180. Models with an FM tuner each cost \$20 more. By comparison, Apple's shuffle is priced at \$99 for 512 MB and \$149 for 1 GB. The models will be available in May.

A second set of players, set to ship later this month, are roundish, with a diameter slightly larger than a poker chip. They run on AAA batteries, which Sony says will give the user 70 hours of playback time

on a single battery. The prices range from \$90 for 256 MB of memory to \$150 for 1 GB of memory.

A third design is water-resistant, costing \$130 for 256 MB of memory.

"We know we've been behind a bit," acknowledged Kelly Davis, a Sony product manager for digital players. "But we definitely want to be a strong contender in 2005."

In another product launch Sony unveiled world's first laser projection display "Laser Dream Theater", 50m wide and 10m in height, and its GxL device at the global house pavilion of the 2005 World Exposition Aichi near Nagoya, central Japan on March 7. The laser projection display system enables to display high-definition images like movie with technology to project laser beams to screen with Sony's newly developed grating light valve devices "GxL". The Aichi Expo, expecting to draw some 15 million visitors, will officially open on March 25 and ends in September 25.