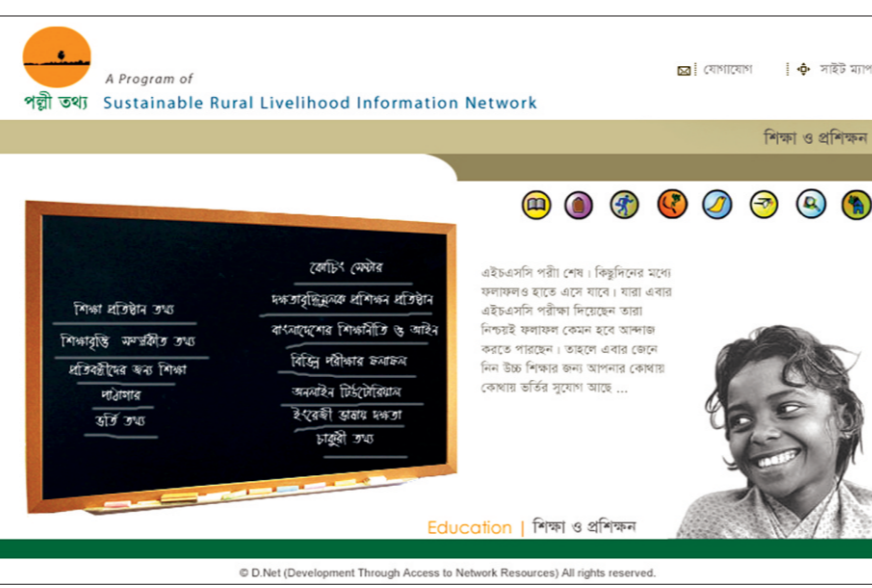


The MareNostrum is Europe's most powerful (and the world's fifth most powerful) supercomputer as of June 2005 according to the LINPACK benchmark. It was announced by IBM and María Jesús San Segundo, the Spanish Minister of Education and Science. The supercomputer consist of 2,282 compute nodes, each with dual IBM 64-bit PowerPC 970FX processors running at 2.2 GHz, 4,564 CPUs in total.



### TECHSPOTLIGHT



## 'Pallitathya Kendra' Dnet opens village info centre

SAAD HAMMADI, back from Mongla

PEOPLE living in the rural areas of the country must be benefited with information technology, which in term may improve the quality of their every day life and help poverty alleviation. A number NGOs and development organisations have taken up the initiative to enrich the diversified rural people with information technology.

Dnet has appointed information workers and 'Mobile Ladies' who have been assigned to serve the village people with information aid. 'Mobile Ladies' are assigned to move into villages and arrange a sitting with the villagers to find out their problems and provide them with solutions through 'Pallitathya Kendra' where the information workers sit to serve the villagers with their required information from computers.

The response on the first day of its launch witnessed 15 people. Dnet will serve the information centres at their own cost for one full year and after that the fund would be raised from the income generated from these centres for which 'Pallitathya Kendra' charges its customers a nominal amount much lower than the local market price.

Abolombon.org, another Dnet website talks about legal and human rights whereas gunjan.org carries information about eminent personalities under different fields. When asked about the financial aspects of their projects he said, "At Mongla, Bagerhat, we have used our own resources and investment to build up our first information centre at a cost of Taka 3,20,000."

Dnet has developed a software for 'Pallitathya' with MySQL at the back end and PHP at front end. They have also developed a Bangla search engine and encryption process with Bangla innovation through open source (Bios) targeting the NGOs working for rural development.

Such an initiative has been undertaken by Development through Access to Network Resources (Dnet), who launched its first project under the name 'Pallitathya' at Shelabunia in Mongla, Bagerhat.

The research for 'Pallitathya Kendra' started back in 2003, which has come into reality in 2005 and the research is still on for further development", said Mahmud Hasan, programme director, Dnet.

He also briefed on how villagers could be benefited out of this information centre as this would provide them suggestions regarding their health problems and also recommend the suited doctors and their location along with information of how to reach them.

Recently, Dnet received the Gender and ICT Awards for 2005 for their 'Pallitathya' Help-Line (Call Center for the Poor and Underprivileged) project. Dnet will receive a cash prize of USD 8,000 in the Gender and ICT Awards ceremony that will be held during the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) Forum on October 27-30, in Bangkok, Thailand.

While discussing the progress of their next three information centres in the country, Raihan believes their next programme would be on

Under this project, Dnet covers 40 villages comprising 2 unions and a pauroshava where the populace of the area will be able to access Dnet's 'Pallitathya Kendra' (information centre), which will provide them with information on agriculture,

health, education, handicraft, disaster management, legal governance, awareness and employment opportunities.

Moreover as Dr Ananya Raihan, executive director of Dnet exemplified, fishermen in some locations of India consult such information centres regularly to spot the area of river where they can anticipate fish throngs, which these information centres locate through satellites.

International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has provided Taka 1,89,83,225 to Dnet for the content development of education, appropriate technology, disaster management, rural employment and non-firm economic activities for which Dnet itself has invested Taka 5,50,000.

developing money transfer system for the domestic migrant workers who struggle to reach their earned income to their villages as far which could be solved through this.



Screen shots of the 'Pallitathya' homepage and education page, above, the agriculture section and the disaster management portion of the webportal is also seen, below, and the 'Pallitathya Kendra' at Mongla, extreme right.

Database of individual villages and districts along with their resources are being collected and maintained by Dnet at their headquarter in Dhaka from where they will operate their 'Pallitathya Kendra' which they plan to introduce in three more districts, which are Noakhali, Nilphamari and Netrokona.

In an exclusive conversation with Dr Ananya Raihan, executive director for Dnet said, "We have been working on the content development and research for the purpose of 'Pallitathya' since 2003. There is also a Computer Literacy Programme (CLP), which we have started in 2004 along with 'Teletathya' that we have based on

Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) and Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP). In an exclusive conversation with Dr Ananya Raihan, executive director for Dnet said, "We have been working on the content development and research for the purpose of 'Pallitathya' since 2003. There is also a Computer Literacy Programme (CLP), which we have started in 2004 along with 'Teletathya' that we have based on

developing money transfer system for the domestic migrant workers who struggle to reach their earned income to their villages as far which could be solved through this. Asked about the water problem that the locals had stressed, he said, "We have spoken to the NGO Forum for Drinking Water regarding this matter requesting them to concentrate on water purification but we have not received any response yet."

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### TECHNEWS

## Microsoft Bangladesh focuses on education

NAFID IMRAN AHMED

SINCE its inception in Bangladesh in November 2004, Microsoft is committed to working with educators, educational organisations and industry partners to expand the world of learning through technology.

"Microsoft has started training teachers as a part of the 'Partners in Learning' programme, which is a global initiative that seeks to enable a worldwide community of students and educators to realise their full potential. It aims to equip teachers and their students with the necessary ICT skills," said Feroz Mahmud, country manager of the Microsoft Bangladesh while sharing views with the press at the Spectra Convention Centre on September 27.

"Our programs help educators connect with each other, prepare students for tomorrow's careers, and increase access to technology and training for learners in classrooms, campuses, and the larger community," said KM Imran Al-Amin, education program manager of Microsoft Bangladesh.

Imran also mentioned that they have already put forward a proposal to the education ministry in April for signing a memorandum of understanding for the Partners



(From left) KM Imran Al-Amin, education program manager, Feroz Mahmud, country manager and Ismat Shereen, chief operating officer of Microsoft Bangladesh at the press meet.

in Learning programme to train up teachers and students of class 1 to class 12.

rather than the open source programme."

"Microsoft has allocated a huge fund for the global Partners in Learning programme, which will be available until June 2009 and around 99 countries have already signed agreement with Microsoft to utilise it," Imransaid.

Microsoft hopes that at least the corporate houses would take the initiative to stop using pirated software and use licensed ones.

Piracy is one the major competitors of Microsoft in the Bangladesh market, mentioned Feroz. While asked if open source is also considered as a threat to the software giant, Feroz said,

Microsoft has already taken the initiative to create massive awareness among the people regarding the use of pirated software with Basis (Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services) and hopes to launch mass campaign soon.

We believe the wide use of pirated software is one of our largest competitor in Bangladesh

Among others, Ismat Shereen, chief operating officer, and Bakhtiar Rasul Shah, marketing manager of Microsoft Bangladesh, were also present at the event.

### TECHSEMINAR

## Seminars@BCS Computer Show

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

BESIDES attracting the youth and computer enthusiasts from all over the country with an array of innovative software and state-of-the-art computer products and accessories, the recently concluded BCS Computer Show 2005 was also noteworthy for its impressive line-up of seminars on various issues.

"Due to the inappropriate government policies, most electronic companies and related firms of the local industry are currently suffering. Some of them have even closed down while others are on the verge of following them," said Rabbani, in his speech.

Limited. M H Faruque Ahmed, system administrator of the organisation presented the keynote paper at the event.

Around 10 seminars were organised at the show discussing Information and Communication Technology and other related issues. The seminar sessions started

He also urged everyone to patronise and encourage the local talents in the ICT sector. Rabbani claimed that with proper guidance, Bangladesh has the potential to establish its electronic industry as one of the major export earning sectors.

The only seminar organised on the fourth day of the Computer Show was titled 'Discover with ASUS'. ASUS organised the seminar featuring their latest technology products.

Dr. Abdul Matin Patwari, Vice

Two seminars were organised on September 26. Global Brand Technologies organised the first seminar of the day titled 'The Beauty of Digital World'.

Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (Ispab)



From left: Sarwar Alam, president of Basis, Dr Abdul Matin Patwari, vice-chancellor, University of Asia Pacific, SM Iqbal, president, BCS, and Dr K Siddique-e-Rabbani, faculty, physics department of Dhaka University at the seminar titled 'Prospects of Hardware-Software mix in Bangladesh'.

From Day 2 of the event on September 23. The first seminar of the day, 'A perfect fusion of Style and Technology' was organised by LG Electronics Inc. while Flora Limited organised the second seminar of the day titled 'Epson Digital Photo studio' where both the companies featured their latest product line-ups.

Chancellor, University of Asia Pacific was the chief-guest at the event. Sarwar Alam, president of Basis (Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services) was the Special Guest while S M Iqbal, president, BCS was also present at the seminar.

arranged the second seminar of the day titled 'Technical Problems and Solutions for ISPs' that focused on the various technical problems faced by most Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

The highly informative seminars were presented from the third day of the event where three seminars took place at a go.

"Software Piracy & Copyright Act: Steps for implementation" was the title for the second seminar of the day. The seminar was organised by ICT Bangladesh. Maruf Ahmed, the editor of ICT Bangladesh presented the keynote paper.

'Convergence of Telecom Technology VAS & Applications' was the title of the last seminar at the BCS Computer Show 2005. The seminar organised by Inforev Limited focused on the past and potential value added services and applications that can be provided through telecommunication technology.

The first seminar that started around 11a.m. was titled 'Prospects of Hardware-Software mix in Bangladesh' and was organised by the host Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) itself.

Ahmed pinpointed the various problems regarding copyright protection in Bangladesh. "The problem is quite serious and will take considerable time and effort in order to be solved," he said. Mostafa Jabbar was the moderator of the seminar.

The seminars were all highly appreciated with most visitors actually complimenting the various products and technologies showcased. As most of the visitors at the Computer Show were mostly young and teenagers of the country, BCS should dedicate their efforts toward organising a higher number of informative seminars, next year.

### PHOTO TECH



## MIND TELLER

Japanese electronics giant Hitachi researcher Kuniaki Ozawa wears an optical sensor on his forehead to measure the blood flow rate in the brain as Hitachi developed an input device "Kokoro-gatari", means "mind-teller" for completely locked-in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) patients at the company's office in Tokyo on September 26. The device has been developed for ALS patients to express their intentions as the PC displays "yes" or "no" on the screen, when a patient is asked a question of "yes" or "no", relaying what's on the patient's mind.

PHOTO: AFP