



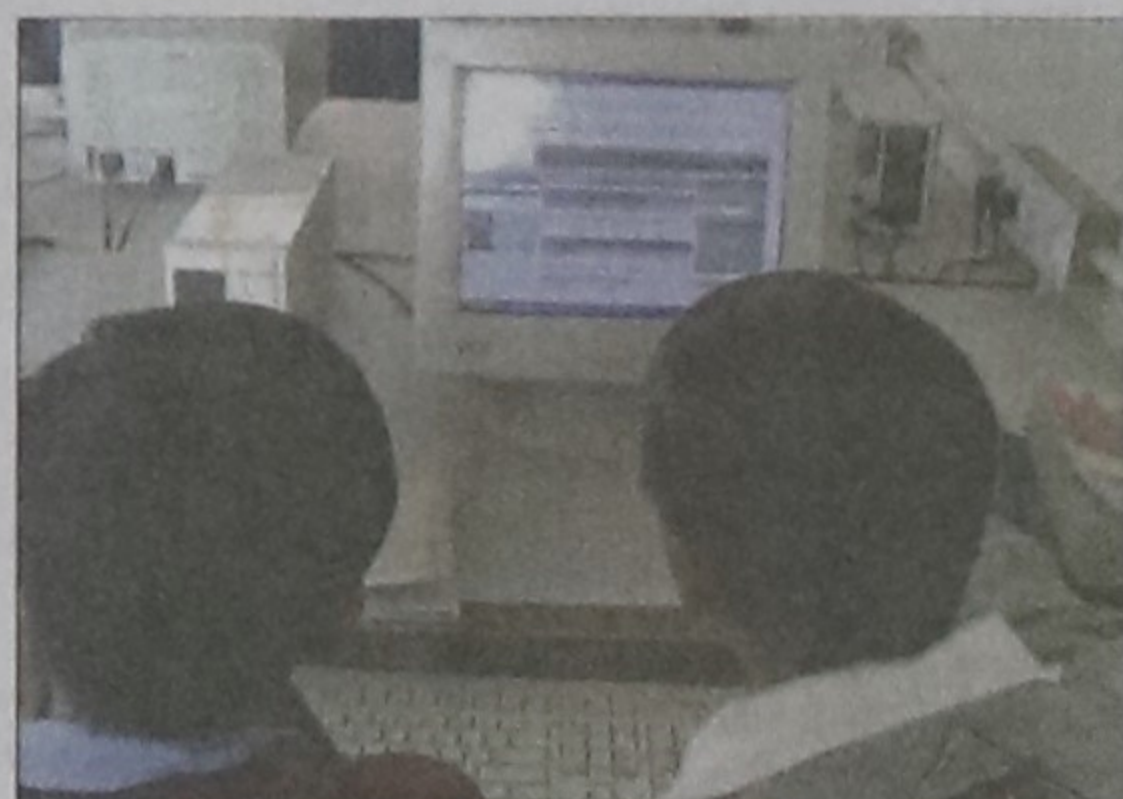
## TECH INTERVIEW

### Cisco Networking Academy

# Fostering Bangladeshi skills the Cisco way



Lokesh Mehra



INFORMATION technology (IT), networking technology in particular, is providing high-growth career opportunities for students, thanks to the rapidly expanding Bangladesh economy. Cisco Networking Academy (CNA) a.k.a. NetAcad initiative has touched many students in Bangladesh with huge year-on-year growth. The last one year has seen a particular growth in need for networking professionals.

Lokesh Mehra, regional manager for corporate responsibility of Cisco South Asia, who is visiting Dhaka to organise a National Skills Competition for Cisco networking academy students across Bangladesh scheduled to be held on July 5, tells Nafid Imran Ahmed about NetAcad and Cisco's initiatives to develop talent from the huge human resource pool that Bangladesh provides.

**Q: Please tell us briefly about the Cisco Networking Academy Programme in Bangladesh?**

**A:** The Cisco Networking Academy is an educational initiative which is being run worldwide in 167 countries and the idea is to train students on how to build, design, operate and maintain computer networks. We started the network academy initiative in the SAARC region back in 2001 and Bangladesh was among the very few countries which started the programme during the same timeframe. The initial faculty who went to Australia for training was from BUET, and they returned to start the programme at BUET followed by other institutions. Till 2005 we signed up another 8 institutions such as Dhaka University of Engineering and

Technology (Duet), AIUB, BRAC, Daffodil and as of today we have about 16 institutions across Bangladesh, which are pretty widespread. Apart from the 10 institutions in Dhaka we have academies in Sylhet, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, and Gazipur. We have just signed up with MIST (Military Institute of Science and Technology), which is the first military institute in South East Asia to become a part of the network academy.

**Q: So far how many students in how many institutions have received CNA education?**

**A:** In total we have about 4800 students of which 2600 are currently enrolled. Till now 1296 students have already graduated from the network academies. The typical computer science or IT batches are pretty small in size. So I would say we have done a decent job in training these students. The good part is 16 per cent are girls. From a gender perspective the diversity is pretty good.

**Q: What are the benefits of CNA**

**education? What will the future hold for these students?**

**A:** If we look at Bangladesh today, it is ranked as 124th in the network readiness index. The biggest impediment that Bangladesh is facing today is skilled manpower and if the country wants leverage, it needs to build a skilled resource set to tap the overseas market.

Network academy is training people in a specific domain, which is networking and ensuring that these people can find opportunities within the country as well as abroad. The advantages are that along with the regular curriculum the students get a hands-on practical exposure as well as work on practical issues faced by the industry on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, the students do not have to go through any additional training when they go back into the workforce. Moreover, they are industry ready when they pass out which is our primary objective. The second advantage is that

students have lifelong access to the curriculum, irrespective of when they graduate or the version of the curriculum they are running. Other minor added benefits are that they have access to job sites, technical lectures and updates on new technologies. In a nutshell, the key benefits include international certification, hands-on experience and access to technology updates.

**Q: How is the course implemented and how does it work?**

**A:** Cisco ties up with an educational institution and offers this programme either for the institute to integrate within their curriculum or offer it as an elective. Students are required to complete this course, which is approximately 280 hours long with about 50 per cent practical hands-on experience and at the end of the course they are eligible for various certifications such as the CCNA, which is the most popular one. We are now also

looking at network security and wireless courses, which are already being offered by many institutions. CCNP (Network Professional) is another course and IP telephony also known as Unified Communication is on its way.

**Q: Apart from education does Cisco have any other CSR initiatives in Bangladesh?**

**A:** I would say it was an ad hoc corporate social responsibility and this happens typically when disaster happens. When we had the floods coming in, CISCO personnel pooled in their resources and offered assistance monetarily as well as in terms of consulting and connectivity. That was the kind of CSR initiative that has happened, but on a regular basis as of now, it has been education.

**Q: What are your views on the IT education standard in Bangladesh?**

**A:** I am kind of disappointed that IT education has been given as fourth subject for school students. Bangladesh is trying to become a knowledge-based economy. Why then should you look at IT education as a fourth subject? I believe the Chief

Adviser is doing a lot of work in terms of collating the primary schools into a database and there are over 30,000 schools. Focus on vocational and school education needs to be enhanced, connectivity needs to be provided, infrastructure cost needs to be lessened and the internet tariff needs to be reduced.

**Q: Are all the universities well equipped for state of the art technology education?**

**A:** I think they are at that stage where they are trying to think of grappling the twenty first century skill sets required. A few of the proactive private universities have actually gone ahead and tried to use technology to enhance productivity. Things like using Virtual Private Networks (VPN), archiving lectures and showing them to their students, aspects for using a single converged network for voice video data should be adopted.

## TECH NEWS

### Digital Gaming and Multimedia Untapped zones of Bangladesh

IMRUL KAYES CHOWDHURY

MANY of you must have played videogames. Imagine you are playing games that are created by your countrymen! Yes you've heard it right. Days are not far away when you can play world-standard games made by Bangladeshis.

Co-financed by European Commission, a project 'IT Upgrade Bangladesh: a partnership' is underway with Universität Bremen (Universität De Brême Institute De Technologie), Chember de commerce et d'industrie de Paris and BASIS (Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services).

Selected by BASIS, 26 persons from 26 local companies are being given training by experts under the project. The project will train them on multimedia and videogames.

Alexandre Topol, Emmanuel Guardiola and Pedro Martins Alessio—three experts on game programming, designing, graphics, animation and multimedia from France—were here to impart training in the second phase of the training session which was held from June 7 through June 12. Two of them have experience of working with world-renowned videogame making



company UbiSoft.

In an interview with StarTech they said they've seen lots of potential in the trainees. All they need is guideline and practice.

They also said that Indian and Chinese companies are only producing mostly graphical assets and some tools for games. US and European game-making companies are not ready to outsource technical and important coding for games but they might outsource the designing part. These kinds of works can be easily done in Bangladesh.

For example they said they have visited one of the Bangladeshi companies which is working for a Japanese company and they were very pleased to see that the Bangladeshi company is able to fulfill the high requirements of the Japanese company. If such companies can reach this

level of requirements it's a good sign for Bangladesh.

That said, the gaming market is growing everyday as gamers are increasing in numbers, since everybody is now playing on PCs, consoles and online. If one could get creative and innovative enough, it's a good chance to capture the market.

Earlier it was really hard to let others know if you had any good product as internet was not available. But nowadays it's easy to exhibit your products with the internet, they said.

They also said it's like a supermarket; if you can showcase what you have got, people will come. Bangladesh should do this to mark its footsteps in this field.

The experts left Bangladesh on June 13. The next phase of training session of the project will be held in August-September.

### A Tête-à-tête on Acer India

STARTECH DESK

IN an exclusive interview, WS Mukund, managing director of Acer India, let us in on his perception of the Bangladeshi IT market and its relevance to Acer India. The interview, held at the office of Executive Technologies Limited, distributor of Acer in Bangladesh, provided an insight into the company's foresight, both globally and for the Bangladeshi market.

According to Mukund, development in every field, be it agriculture, business, production or even state security, is becoming more and more dependent on the use of technology. Interestingly, to make a strong ground in technology, financial backup or muscle power is not much of a requirement. What is of utmost importance is education and training in various fields of information technology. And the benefits of this technology should be spread out to grass-root levels to ensure significant development.

Such is also true for Bangladesh. If farmers could be equipped with the benefits of technology, revolutionary changes could be brought about in the Bangladeshi agriculture. The world economy could also benefit from



Bangladeshi manpower skilled in the various fields of technology. To achieve this, however, it is necessary to provide wider access to this technology. Although getting everybody a computer may not be possible, to begin with, every village could be provided with at least one computer. Moreover, students

should be provided with computers at cheaper cost.

Mukund informed that at present, Acer has a world market share of 15.7 percent and the growth rate is 75 percent. This growth rate is more than 90 percent in different countries of Asia including Bangladesh and India. In other words, Acer has been able to earn the trust of computer users quite fast.

In Bangladesh, Acer plans to increase sales and service centres. They are already providing faster post-sale services on Acer products. Acer has also introduced their laptops, desktop PCs and servers keeping in mind the affordability of the customers.

Mukund emphasised that Bangladesh has a promising computer market as more and more Bangladeshis are interested in acquiring the latest technology. If the facilities of information technology could be extended to the rural population, with internet access, this could provide a significant contribution to Bangladesh's development.

## PHOTO SALES



Bill Gates along with Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen.



### BYE BYE BILL..

William Henry Gates III, popularly known as Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft, the man who had brought to us the world's most popular Operating System, 'Windows', and several times ranked as the 'richest man in the world', has retired from service last Friday. The Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Gates has sighted reasons of concentrating harder on charity work as the cause of his retirement. Relating to Spider-man's most popular dialogue known to all of us, Gates has been quoted as saying, "Great wealth brings with it great responsibility." Today, in StarTech we try to reflect through some pictures on the illustrious life of this great software developer, business entrepreneur and above all, a foreseer, who saw much ahead of his time.

TEXT: MANDIN MAHMOOD



Bill Gates along with Slash while launching the Xbox 360 Guitar Hero.

### Bill Gates Facts

- William Henry Gates was born on October 28, 1955, in Seattle, Washington, USA.
- His father William was a corporate lawyer, and his mother Mary was a schoolteacher.
- By the age of 17, Gates had sold his first computer program, a time-tabling system for his high school, for \$4,200.
- Gates scored 1590 on his SAT standardized test. The top score for the test is 1600.
- Gates told his university teachers he would be a millionaire by age 30. He became a billionaire at age 31.
- While at Harvard, Gates co-wrote Altair BASIC, which became Microsoft's (then called Micro-Soft) first product.
- He met his wife, Melinda French, in 1987 at a Microsoft press event in Manhattan while she was a worker for the company. They would go on to get married on New Years Day in 1994.
- In 2002, Bill Gates was considered more idolized than Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-tung in a poll of teenagers in Hong Kong and China. The survey was conducted by the City University of Hong Kong.
- In 2005, Gates was honored

with the title Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II of England.

- As of the March 2007 issue of Forbes magazine, Bill Gates has been listed as Number 1 on "Forbes' Richest People" list for 13 years in a row. His current net worth is about \$56 billion.
- Gates has recently announced that he will be reducing his involvement at Microsoft and will be devoting more time to his charity work.
- He is currently having a building named after him at Carnegie Mellon University, called the Gates Building of Computer Science.

- Gates is the current owner of the Codex Leicester a 72-page collection of Leonardo da Vinci's scientific writings. The writings are a mixture of observations on water properties, astronomy, and rocks and fossils. Gates puts the Codex on public display once a year in a different city around the world.
- Bill Gates earns \$250 every SECOND; that's about \$20 million a DAY and \$7.8 billion a YEAR!
- If he drops a thousand-dollar bill, he needn't even bother to pick it up because in the four seconds it would take him to pick it up, he would've already earned it back.