

European debut for '\$100 laptop'

BBC, Online

The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) organisation is planning to sell the devices via online store Amazon's European outlets from 17 November.

The machines will be sold under the Give One, Get One scheme that the OLPC organisation has already run in the US.

Under that scheme, buyers get one machine for themselves and the other is donated to a school child in a developing nation.

The plan to put the distinctive green and white XO laptops on sale in 27 European nations was revealed by OLPC founder Nicholas Negroponte in a speech to the World of Health IT Conference in Copenhagen.

When it goes on sale the XO laptop is expected to cost £268 (313 euros) and should be available in 27 EU nations as well as Switzerland, Russia and Turkey.

The Give One, Get One programme was first run in the US in November and December 2007. The OLPC organisation claims it sold almost 190,000 machines via the scheme.

Despite the success of the scheme, it drew criticism because the OLPC group had trouble delivering machines to those who had ordered one. In a bid to resolve these issues, it signed up with Amazon in September 2008.

The original idea for the OLPC was to create a small, powerful laptop for school children that would sell in the millions yet cost less than \$100.

The final version of the machine ended up costing about \$188 and

the OLPC group has only sold about 600,000 of the machines.

Many nations have expressed an interest in using the XO but few have signed up to buy them in the numbers expected by the OLPC organisation. Most recently the Caldas region of Colombia signed up to buy 65,000 XO machines.

The XO has also faced competition from Intel's Classmate laptop. In September, Venezuela ordered one million Classmate laptops for its school children.

Human ancestors born big brained

BBC, Online

A new Homo erectus fossil suggests that females had large, wide pelvises in order to deliver large-brained babies.

Being born with a larger brain meant our ancestor became independent far more quickly than modern human infants.

The new finding, published in Science magazine, conflicts with earlier ideas that suggest they had a tall, thin body shape adapted for running.

Homo erectus is thought to be the first human-like creature to move out of Africa to colonise the world.

The now extinct hominid species may also have been the first to control fire.

The near-complete 1.4 million-year-old female pelvis was found near Gona in northern Ethiopia. As it was pieced together, the archaeologists were struck by the unusual width of the pelvis.

4-party

FROM PAGE 1

the upcoming parliamentary election because of internal conflicts and organisational disputes, recently suggested that the government defer the election because the hajj pilgrims would miss it.

Sources said a negotiation process is going on among the authorities concerned, a group of BNP leaders, a group of "reformists" and the leaders of a BNP ally to make the December 18 election a success.

Meanwhile, many political leaders said they are confused by the recent activities of a few foreign diplomats who they think may play a vital role in delaying the election.

Most diplomats held meetings with the Awami League and BNP chiefs in the last two weeks. Some of them even openly supported holding of the election under the state of emergency, which all political parties have been demanding to be lifted without further delay.

Sidr havoc

FROM PAGE 1

country on November 15 with over 200-kilometre wind speed per hour. In the aftermath, thousands of people became homeless and millions of trees in the Sundarbans were uprooted.

The devastation was so massive that initially it was feared death toll would definitely cross 10,000. But later the government account of death toll was around 4,000 with more than 800 missing, mostly children.

Different national and international organisations came forward to take care of the cyclone-hit people.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) estimated last December the number of injured were 40,000. They also estimated 564,000 houses were completely destroyed.

The UN Central Emergency Response Fund has disbursed \$14.7 million as part of a broader \$143 million contributed by international donors towards relief and recovery activities.

Still, the majority of the Sidr victims could not rebuild their houses in many areas.

Panna Farazi of Bogi village in Bagerhat said several hundreds of Sidr-hit families have yet to get help from the aid agencies to rebuild their houses, reports our Khulna correspondent.

The survivors who lost their homes were made victims of discrimination in relief and rehabilitation benefits as most of them did not get any house-building material, alleges schoolteacher Asgar Ali of Uttar Southkhali.

Sharanakola UNO Kazi Zahirul Islam said different aid agencies had been appealed to provide financial assistance to those Sidr victims waiting for rehabilitation.

3 killed

FROM PAGE 16

from Khorsheda Begum, their former neighbour.

Indrajit had filed a general diary about his missing mother. Jatrabari police yesterday filed a murder case and arrested Khorsheda. But she refused her involvement with the incident.

An autopsy of the body at Sir Salimullah Medical College Morgue found several marks of injury.

Khaleda-Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

Nothing to do with BNP's decision on the polls. Their party will opt to participate in the long-stalled election as soon as the government meets their seven-point demand including withdrawal of the state of emergency.

Talking to reporters at his Nam flat yesterday afternoon, Delwar said BNP has all preparations to go to the polls. Now it is the responsibility of the government and the Election Commission (EC) to clear the way for his party's participation.

Earlier in the day, the education adviser said the caretaker administration is optimistic that it would be able to resolve the current political crisis through discussions with political parties. He said he hopes the parties would make their decisions in the public interest.

He was talking to reporters at a city hotel after a seminar organised by Soviet Alumni Association in Bangladesh.

Zillur said, "Now that the two leaders have agreed to sit, we are ready to take a formal initiative."

AL BRIEFING

Speaking to newsmen after a meeting between the AL president and Iranian Ambassador Hassan Farazandeh, Hassan Mahmud restated that the proposed talks must be broadcast live.

BNP has already said there is no need for the discussions to be televised.

The AL chief's aide said, "BNP and Jamaat were behind the August 21 grenade attack. They killed 21,000 of our men during their rule between 2001 and 2006. And this is why our leaders and workers do not approve of any talks between our president and Khaleda Zia."

About the meeting between Hasina and Iranian envoy, he said current political situation and the national election, among others, came up for discussions.

Farazandeh told reporters that he hopes the elections would be held on schedule and in a free and fair manner.

Prof Muzaffer

FROM PAGE 16

in the marketing process of agricultural products.

"To increase agricultural production, the farmers must get due price of their products. But unfortunately it's the wholesale businesses and middlemen who buy products at low cost and sell at much higher prices, depriving the farmers," said the economist.

Farmers also have little access to credit and therefore have no alternative to cooperatives to get running capital, Prof Ahmad said, adding once marginal farmers get some land and are provided with credit, production will automatically go up.

"At the same time, we have to concentrate on our indigenous knowledge instead of importing fertilisers from other countries. Through waste management we can produce huge natural fertilisers similar to urea and potassium," he added.

Expressing his concern that most of the country's rivers have already dried up, Ahmad said saving the rivers and other water bodies is a matter of utmost importance for irrigation, instead of mechanised irrigation that poses ecological threats.

Agriculturists at the seminar suggested modernising agriculture on the basis of locally developed crop varieties and natural fertilisers to ensure sustainable agricultural development instead of depending on imported hybrid varieties and chemical fertilisers.

Soil Research and Development Institute Principal Scientific Officer Dr Anisur Rahman said an important part of agriculture is cultivating crops according to the nature of soil.

If farmers can scientifically identify the nature and capacity of soil, they can accordingly cultivate and get the best yield, he said, adding authorities must concentrate on educating the farmers on crop management.

Prof Dr SM Imamul Haq of

Indian probe

FROM PAGE 16

moon at 8:34pm (1504 GMT), 25 minutes after it was ejected from an unmanned spacecraft orbiting the moon, a spokesman said.

Kathmandu

FROM PAGE 1

entrepreneurs to invest in Bangladesh.

Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, during his meeting with the CA, said his country wants to share its surplus hydroelectric power with the neighbouring countries including Bangladesh.

Dahal showed keen interest in sharing the experience of Bangladesh's success in the garments sector. He requested to raise the number of scholarships to Nepalese students to study in Bangladesh.

Agreeing to his proposals, the CA assured him of considering raising the number of scholarships.

He said Nepal could use Mongla port to expand bilateral trade between the two countries.

Dahal appreciated the performance of the caretaker government under the leadership of Fakhruddin.

The IPHN, which is the authorised body to look after everything about infant and baby formula, could easily take legal actions against the violators under the Breast Feeding Ordinance-1984. Similarly, BSTI also should have acted immediately, he said.

"We hope the authorities will rise to protect consumers and their rights," Malek observed.

EC legally bound

FROM PAGE 1

to be not reasonable," said the HC in its verdict.

The HC observed that the EC has violated the constitution by not holding the ninth parliamentary election within 90 days since the dissolution of the previous parliament.

Asked about the significance of the verdict, Sohul said, "Now it's a very important legal evidence. We cannot deviate from the electoral roadmap. We have announced the schedule for holding the polls on December 18 as we want to abide by the court order."

Some legal experts said if the EC does not face any uncontrollable circumstance, the commission cannot renege on its commitment which has become a legal evidence following the court verdict.

"If the Election Commission willingly deviates from the electoral roadmap under normal circumstances, it might be tantamount to contempt of court," an eminent jurist told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

They said the EC has no way to defer the polls on its own. If it wants to do so, it must consult with the Supreme Court.

However, former chief election commissioner (CEC) Justice Abdur Rouf did not agree with this view.

"If the election is not held in December, the commission will not be responsible for it," the for-

Sub-jails

FROM PAGE 16

of the republic where representatives of the people discuss and determine the future of the nation. Judicial or executive offices cannot be established in the parliament areas," he said.

He thinks it was wrong on the part of the government to set up the sub-jails and special courts on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises.

"It's the people's desire that the courts and the sub-jails be immediately relocated from the parliament complex," former SCBA secretary and law secretary for the BNP advocate Zainul Abedin said.

"The Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban is meant for lawmakers and the buildings being used as sub-jails are for the Speaker and deputy Speakers. Since the next general election is near, the Sangsad Bhaban and the sub-jails should immediately be freed for parliament members and the Speaker and deputy Speakers," he said.

He said there is no legal bar to shifting the special courts and the sub-jails elsewhere.

Enayetur Rahim, former SCBA secretary, says announcing some particular places of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex as sub-jails and setting up special courts there after issuance of the emergency is unfortunate, unbecoming and condemnable.

"The image and dignity of the Jatiya Sangsad are not less than that of the Bangabhaban and the Supreme Court, he said, adding setting up courts and sub-jails at the parliament complex is a blow to the sanctity, image and dignity of parliament.

Judicial powers

FROM PAGE 1

have amassed wealth through illegal means is a judicial power. "But the commission was not declared a judicial body [at the time of formation]. I think this is the main reason why the High Court has declared it illegal," he said.

Barrister Shafigue Ahmed said the HC declared the Tac illegal because it was formed through an ordinance violating articles 35 and 112 of the constitution.

"Article 35(4) of the constitution states that no person shall be compelled to be a witness against himself and article 112 of the constitution says all authorities, executive and judicial, shall act in aid to the Supreme Court," he explained.

Termining the Tac a "fluid body" of the government and the idea of its formation "utopian", advocate Khan Saifur Rahman said, "All criminals are liable to be convicted. But in this system thieves have been released in exchange for their illegal money without any trial."

"There is no rule of such system in the law anywhere in the world," he said, adding that this is not at all a system in the eye of the law let alone a quasi-judiciary one.

Advocate Towfiq Newaz, counsel for the petitioners of the writ, told newsmen on November 13 that the Tac was formed as an extra-judicial system.

Attorney General Salauddin Ahmed said the government would file an appeal with the SC against the HC judgment and the Appellate Division would determine whether the commission can function after filing of the appeal.

The legal experts said the money taken by the Tac from people who earned the money through illegal means would be considered state property.

US missile

FROM PAGE 16

Another official put the toll at 13 and said 10 of the dead were foreigners.

The officials cited reports from agents and informants in the area and the different tallies could not be reconciled immediately. All of the officials asked for anonymity because they are not authorised to speak to the media.

The US-led coalition in Afghanistan did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The spokesman for the US Embassy in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, could not be reached.

Washington has stepped up the strikes since March, when a civilian government took over from General Pervez Musharraf, who turned Pakistan into a close US ally in the "war on terror."

President Asif Ali Zardari warned the new US commander for Iraq and Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, last week that the attacks were "counterproductive" and could harm the battle for hearts and minds here.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and the country's military leadership also told the general that the United States should respect Pakistani sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Pakistan's army chief General Ashfaq Kayani is scheduled to undertake a three-day visit to Brussels from Tuesday for talks with senior Nato officials about US missile strikes on Pakistani soil near the Afghan border.

US and Nato officials say that the rugged tribal US coons have become safe havens for militants linked to Taliban and al-Qaeda who fled the US action against the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan in late 2001.

Pakistan rejects accusations that it is not doing enough to tackle the extremist threat within its own borders.

World leaders head

FROM PAGE 1

financial regulations. "We must recognize that government intervention is not a cure-all," Bush said. "Our aim should not be more government. It should be smarter government."

Bush put forward his own prescription, which includes bolstering accounting rules, reviewing anti-fraud provisions for trading in stocks and other securities, and improving regulatory coordination among countries. But he stopped short of the more far-reaching oversight and regulation that Europeans leaders want.

"We want to change the rules of the game in the financial world," said French President Nicolas Sarkozy said prior to the gathering.

The Europeans want to close loopholes that allow some financial institutions to evade regulation, and ensure supervision for all major financial players, including credit ratings agencies or funds carrying high amounts of debt.

"There is a need for urgency," said British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who is seeking a new network of global regulators who would scrutinize the world's largest financial institutions.

Europeans also are advocating an early warning system that would watch for financial bubbles like the one that enveloped the US housing market. The housing bubble eventually burst and created the mess the world leaders are now trying to clean up. They also want a pledge for concrete changes in just 100 days.

Critics blame lax oversight and failures by regulators in the United States and elsewhere to detect problems as one of the prime reasons behind the financial crisis.

The crisis, which erupted in the United States around August of last year as mortgage investments soured with the housing market's collapse, quickly spread to other countries. Banks and other financial companies suffered huge losses and foreclosures skyrocketed. Troubles then snowballed to other areas crimping, auto and student loans and locking up lending for many consumers and businesses worldwide.

All the fallout has pushed the global economy to the brink of recession. Unemployment in the United States booted to 6.5 percent in October, a 14-year high.

Still, Bush put up a stout defense of capitalism.

"It is true that this crisis included failures, by lenders and borrowers, by financial firms, by governments and independent regulators," Bush said. "But the crisis was not a failure of the free market system. And the answer is not to try to reinvent that system."

Steven Schrage, a former Bush administration trade official and now an international business expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said embarking on a massive regulatory

revamp at this time when economic and financial conditions are so fragile would be like "in the middle of a five-alarm fire calling together the fire chiefs and trying to restructure the fire department."

With Europe, as well as parts of Asia and North America, suffering, leaders of the G20 developed and emerging countries travel to Washington to try to find ways to ensure the crisis, started by a US housing market crash, is not repeated.

But agreement among the G20, which represents 85 percent of the world's economy and two-thirds of its population, is unlikely over whether more regulation of markets can protect consumers, savers and companies from the fall-out.

Washington says there should be no return to greater state control of financial markets. Much of Europe says without more regulation, a repeat of the last year's turmoil is inevitable.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown called for more coordinated measures to spur economic growth, a policy area where there may be more consensus.

"By acting now we can stimulate growth in all our economies. The cost of inaction will be far greater than the cost of any action," he told reporters in New York late on Thursday.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said he hoped to draw more emerging economies into global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, saying Europeans were ready to lower their representation to make more room for countries such as China.

"There is an openness to accommodate an increased role of the emerging economies," the International Herald Tribune quoted Barroso as saying.

Some in the West say they hope that countries with large reserves, notably in the Gulf, will help fund the IMF, which has offered loans to economies laboring under heavy debts.

Rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1

Eastern University in another rejoinder said it does not provide any BEd or MEd degrees and the university has never applied to the University Grants Commission (UGC) for such programmes.

OUR REPLY

The Daily Star report was based on an investigation of the education ministry and a survey report of Teacher Quality Improvement project which mentioned that the two private universities along with 93 other institutions provided poor-quality training and education.

The NUB itself admitted in its rejoinder that it provided BEd and MEd degrees till 2007. We stand by our report.

Obama eyes Hillary

FROM PAGE 1

after Obama named several former aides to President Bill Clinton to help run his transition effort.

The two Democratic officials who spoke Thursday did so on the condition of anonymity to avoid angering Obama and his staff. Hillary Clinton spokesman Philippe Reines referred questions to the Obama transition team, which said it had no comment.

Other people frequently mentioned for the State Department job are Sen Chuck Hagel, R-Nebraska, Sen John Kerry, D-Massachusetts, and New Mexico's Democratic governor, Bill Richardson.

Meanwhile, the Washington rumour mill has gone into overdrive this week with speculation that Defence Secretary Robert Gates could be asked to stay in his job by president-elect Barack Obama.

While some see Gates' experience in dealing with conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan as an advantage to a fledgling administration, others believe such a move would ultimately betray the incoming Democratic president's message of change and his promise to end the war in Iraq.

So far the Obama transition team has remained tight-lipped and no announcements are expected any time soon as the president-elect huddles in Chicago with his top advisers preparing for his January 20 inauguration.

Gates, who is conveniently abroad on a foreign visit, is also playing his cards close to his chest.

Asked during a trip to Estonia on Wednesday if he had had any discussions with Obama's team, he smiled mischievously and said: "I have nothing new to say on the subject."

His future has been a subject of intense speculation since a top Obama foreign policy adviser, Richard Danzig, said last month that Gates had been a good defence secretary and "would be a better one in an Obama administration."

According to the Wall Street Journal on Tuesday, Obama is leaning towards keeping Gates in office for at least a year even though other names have been thrown into the mix such as Danzig himself, or John Hamre, former assistant secretary for defence under then president Bill Clinton.

Senate Majority leader Harry Reid has said he had no qualms about having Gates in the cabinet and stressed the importance of a "good transition there."

"Why wouldn't we want to keep him? He's never been a registered Republican," Reid told CNN on Sunday.

Gates, 65, has made no bones about the fact that he is looking forward to retiring back to his home in Washington state once his term is over, and says he even has a calendar on his desk counting down the days to January 20.

But close colleagues said that he would not refuse to stay on, out of a sense of civic duty, if Obama asks him to.

"He learned never to say never," said Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell.

Seen as an open, impartial official with an eye for detail, Gates has occupied the post since taking over from the controversial Donald Rumsfeld, who resigned following the Republican rout in the 2006 Congressional elections.

Gates shares Obama's belief that more troops need to be sent to Afghanistan to fight the war on terror, and has also called for the closure of the Guantanamo Bay US military camp in Cuba.

But he is opposed to setting a rigid timetable for the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq. Obama has said he wants most US troops to return home within 16 months, although he said any withdrawal would depend on conditions on the ground.

Anti-war groups remain staunchly opposed to prolonging Gates' term.

"Any individual policymaker from the Bush administration is really not interesting to us at all. I just don't trust the same old guard," said Gael Murphy, co-founder of the pacifist group CodePink.

"We would like a fresh perspective, fresh faces, fresh thinking, somebody like (Senator Chuck) Hagel, who was strongly against the war, who has a military experience, who is a credible voice."

"Obama's victory is seen by many as a mandate for change... Not exactly conducive to keeping the same person in charge of the Pentagon who is overseeing the Bush administration's unpopular foreign policy," she added.

Anti-graft drive

FROM PAGE 1

gotten wealth with the state exchequer to be exempted from prosecution.

Sources said the army-led National Coordination Committee on Corruption and Serious Crime (NCC) thought it up on realisation that it might not be possible to have all the graft suspects behind bars before the general election and ultimately the entire drive might go awry.

Legal experts said the aim with which the Truth Commission was formed could not be achieved, as politicians and high-profile businessmen did not apply for voluntary disclosure.

Only low-tier government officials and their wives, and small businessmen have applied to Tac.

The reason might be the provision that debars individuals from election once they confess to corruption.

As of Wednesday, 389 people have applied for voluntary disclosure. They include over 270 government officials and 30 businessmen.

Of them, over 200 applied through ACC, 167 through NCC, 10 through courts and 20 on their own.

So far, 259 people have admitted to possessing ill-gained assets worth around Tk 27.79 crore. Of the amount, Tk 14.46 crore has already been deposited with the public exchequer.

The commission, which began hearing the petitions on September 1, has disposed of around 60 percent of the ACC-sent cases and almost all NCC-sent cases.

Meanwhile, ACC has around 30 cases in hand to forward to Tac. The anti-graft body has been sending cases in phases following applications from those accused of graft.

NCC sources said at the moment the Committee has no cases to send to Tac. In the event of new applications from graft suspects, it [NCC] would take decisions in line with Tac's legal status at the time of application.