



Another significant machine announced in 1981, although first sold widely in 1983, was the Epson HX-20. A simple handheld computer, it featured a full-transit 68-key keyboard, rechargeable nickel-cadmium batteries, a small (120x32-pixel) dot-matrix LCD display with 4 lines of text, 20 characters per line text mode, a 24 column dot matrix printer, a Microsoft BASIC interpreter, and 16 KB of RAM (expandable to 32 KB).



TECHVIEWS

Budget 2009-10 What's in for IT, telecom and science?

MAHDIN MAHBOOB

ON June 11, Finance Minister AMA Muhith unveiled the proposed budget for fiscal 2009-2010. In addition to the pressure of having to meet demands of different key sectors with limited resources and great expectations, the minister also had to take into account the demands of the people from ICT industry, and anyone and everyone remotely or directly connected to it.

The promise of a digital Bangladesh by the year 2021 made the expectations even higher from this year's budget. In this issue of *StarTech*, we have looked into the pros and cons of the proposed budget and what experts are thinking about it.

The proposed budget for fiscal 2009-10 aims at making technology accessible to all and this was sharply reflected by the allocation of Tk 563 crore in ICT and telecommunication sectors, which is a giant leap from the Tk 265 crore in the revised budget for fiscal 2008-09. The allocation includes Tk 142 crore in Annual Developed Programme for science and ICT ministry, Tk 221 crore for post and telecommunication ministry, a special allocation of Tk 100 crore for ICT development and Tk 200 crore for equity and entrepreneurship fund for ICT promotion.

The finance minister also said that automated system would be introduced in the administration, educational institutions, land and health sectors and tax administration phase by the phase within a few years. If successfully implemented, an automated system would increase transparency and reduce corruption and hence fulfill the government's pledge of a digital Bangladesh.

The commitment to connect the country with the second submarine cable for providing internet service to more people is likely to give ICT a major boost.

"We have to use information and communication technology extensively for accelerated development. Therefore, we are moving ahead with a dream of establishing digital Bangladesh by 2021. The transition to digitisation process will, on one hand, help accelerate production and on the other hand, facilitate curbing corruption," said Muhith. The minister was also hopeful that the employment in ICT sector will rank second only to textile sector by 2021.



Mustafa Jabbar



Habibullah N Karim

Mustafa Jabbar, president of Bangladesh Computer Society, has termed the proposed budget a milestone -- a great achievement of Bangladesh for being able to leap from the 'Agricultural Age' to the 'Digital Age', bypassing the 'Industrial Age'. He was particularly impressed by the government's massive plans for power sector, the current state of which many consider to be the single largest obstacle to bringing about digital Bangladesh. The finance minister informed the government's decision to increase power generation by 950 MW this year and 2810 MW more by 2013 under different public and private initiatives. Jabbar appreciated the decision of withdrawing tax from internet usage at educational institutions but failed to understand why it did not apply for home users. The increased taxes on monitor, printer, toner and refill

have also worried him and he suggested that they should immediately be withdrawn.

The proposed tax on mobile handsets and non withdrawal of tax on SIM cards is likely to hinder the growth of the fast growing telecommunication industry in Bangladesh, fear industry people and experts. In the proposed budget, a whopping 25 percent customs duty has been imposed on the import value of each set, scrapping the existing flat import duty of Tk 300 on each set. Bangladesh Mobile Phone Importers' Association (BMPA) has opposed the new duty structure saying they will have to pay at least Tk 800 for import of each low-priced handset. This decision will make a new handset and connection more expensive and perhaps deter first time buyers availing this service, people who need it the most.

Habibullah N Karim, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services, has welcomed the allocation of Taka 500 crore for ICT development but hoped to see the allocation of more Tk 500 crore in the revised budget.

"We are happy to see that the finance minister has rightfully emphasised the use of indigenous

software and IT enabled services for the sustainable development of this sector. We also hope that the government will undertake all possible e-government projects in line with the action plan given in the ICT Policy 2009," says Karim.

Although highly applauded by ICT people, Prof Haseena Khan of the department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of the University of Dhaka has described the proposed budget by saying "Our frustration stems from the fact that to our policymakers ICT is the only science and technology worth pursuing" and like to see specific allocations in the biotechnology research sector in the revised budget. She said it was high time to grow this promising technology which could improve the quality of human life by leaps and bounds.

All in all, the proposed budget for fiscal 2009-2010 has had a mixed bag of responses from people related to ICT and other scientific fields and industry. With recommendations and suggested changes from the experts and people the final budget is expected to bring about positive change in the country.

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TECHNEWS

FICC: An opportunity to show off talents

ADIL MAHMOOD

IN an effort to create opportunity for the young and talented minds, a talent-hunt contest called 'Financial IT Case Competition' or FICC has been launched for students from various university and institutions to show off their talents in developing software and information system.

At a press conference on Wednesday at the University of Liberal Arts (ULAB), also the university partner of the event, Professor Dr Syed Akhter Hossain, declared the official launch of the contest.

Dr Ananya Raihan, executive director of D.Net, Pervez Murshed, head of Global Transaction, Citi Bank, Muhammad Atiqur Rahman, contest manager, Rafiqul Islam, governing body member of D.Net, Professor Dr Farhad Anwar of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) and Dr Imran Rahman, pro-vice chancellor of ULAB, were present at the press conference.

The competition, funded by Citi Foundation and organised by D.NET, will be the first of its kind in Bangladesh with aims to devise software solution for financial institutions and enhance sharing knowledge about business technology and management.

Fifty-four teams from 20 universities and institutions are participating in the contest. Teams are from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), the University of Dhaka, BRAC University, Daffodil Institute of IT, Daffodil International University, East West University, Eastern University, Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University, Institute of Business Administration (IBA) of DU, Institute of Science and Technology, International Islamic University, Chittagong, Jahangirnagar University, Khulna University, Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, North South University, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, South East University, The University of Asia Pacific, United International University, and the University of Liberal Arts.

Dr Syed gave a brief presentation to the audience about the contest and highlighted various aspects of the competition.

Dr Ananya Raihan said D.Net highly always appreciated innovative IT structure. The participating students can link industry

deployment with academia.

Pervez Murshed, head of global transaction of CitiBank, said Citi is one of the largest financial institutions in the world and it will always be a part of such kind of events.

He added that the future belongs to the next generation and they are happy to become a part of it.

Dr Farhad Anwar said IT people and business people together would try to develop business model technologies to enhance the betterment of the financial world.

The organisers notified the audience that account transfer through web/SMS, agricultural information and banking system through web and mobile technology, CHURN Analysis: Consumer Behaviour Prediction Model in banking, Credit Information Bureau (CIB) Report manager for loan eligibility checking via web, data mining in SMS banking, debit card facilities from mobile account electronic payment system through SMS, e-SMS Banking, establishing strong platform for loan repayment tracking through mobile telecommunication, financial irregularity management in banking institution, financial management for MFIs and many other topics related to a financial IT infrastructure had been selected scopes for FICC.

On whether the organiser, specially Citi Bank, has any plan to patronise the winner or the close contenders of the competition, Pervez Murshed said they would seriously consider the prospective of the participants by evaluating actual potential.

Contest Director Dr Syed Akhter Hossain said intellectual property ownership of the models and software of the participating teams would belong to only themselves and the organisers had no intention to violate the ethics.

The competition will consist of two preliminary rounds and one final gala round.

A separate jury panel had been formed comprising members from industry and academia to assess the development works based on the project evaluation guideline during the preliminary rounds and the final round.

Top three teams will contest in the final round and the champion team will be awarded \$5,000.

TECHNEWS

Microsoft patch for daylight saving

STARTECH DESK

MICROSOFT Bangladesh has announced a patch-based fix to address the Day Light Saving Time (DST) which will be effective in Bangladesh from tomorrow at 11PM, says a press release.

Users of the Microsoft operating systems can download the fix from Microsoft's corporate website (<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/972423>).

It is applicable to Computers running on Microsoft operating systems (Windows Vista, Windows XP, Windows Server 2008 and Windows Server 2003).

Users have to download the ".msi" file from the given website, run it. After running the fix users have to choose "(GMT+06:00) DHAKA" option from the



"Time Zone Settings" instead of "Astana, Dhaka" and check on the "Automatically adjust clock for day light saving changes" to enable DST. This would automatically adjust the clock on June 19th at 11:00PM from when the DST would be effective.

TECHNEWS

Symantec joins hands with CSL

STARTECH DESK

SYMANTEC, a leading brand in security software in world has announced its partnership with Computer Source Ltd (CSL) in Bangladesh to distribute Norton product lineup across the country.

Symantec officials in a press briefing said partnership with CSL, Bangladesh's largest technology distributor will help Symantec to expand its footprint across the South Asia region. And it will also help Symantec to fulfill its commitment of protecting consumers from ever increasing malicious code activity.

"As the web-based attacks continue to evolve, consumers are increasingly looking for security software that effectively addresses today's internet threats as well as protects them from malicious code threats," said Effendi Ibrahim, Consumer Business Lead, Asia South Region, Symantec.

CSL will distribute Symantec's entire suite of Norton security products including Norton 360 and Norton Internet Security.

The Norton 2009 products are designed with a "zero-impact" performance goal, supported by more than 300 improvements that span nearly every aspect of the product from scanning engines to user interface.

"We are confident that our partnership

with Computer Source will enable us to penetrate the market deeper and raise the overall awareness level of online security in Bangladesh. This alliance will provide a considerable impetus to our efforts to tapping the market potential and ensuring online security for consumers in Bangladesh," he also said.

"These are exciting times for consumers in Bangladesh. The increase in adoption of broadband brings along security concerns and higher exposure to online threats. At a time like this, the availability of world class products from Norton present a viable option for the consumers to protect their information and online lives," said Asif Mahmood, Director-Sales, Computer Source.

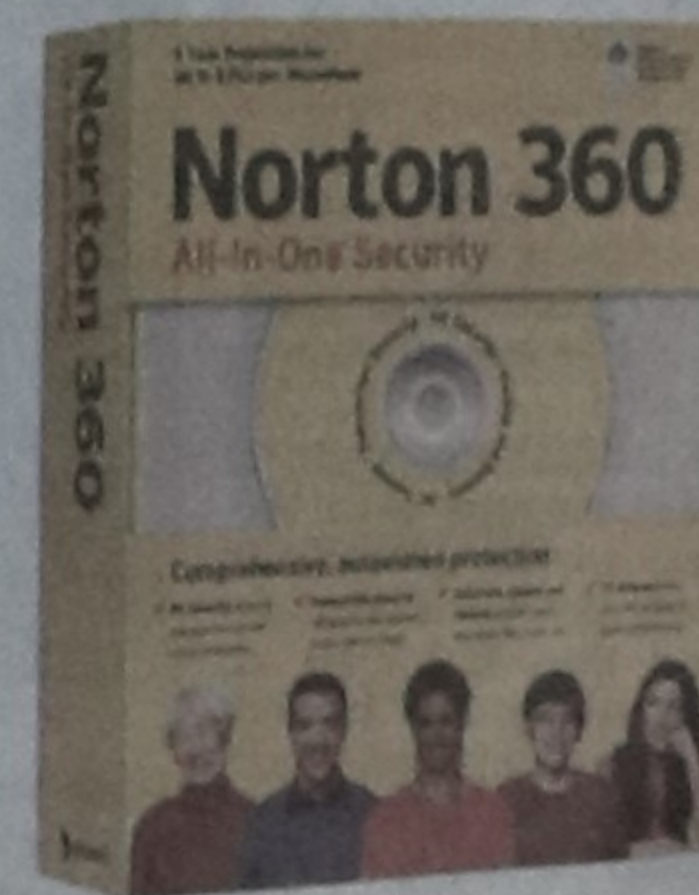


PHOTO TECH



WANNA PLAY BEATLES

Attendees play the video game for Microsoft Xbox 360 "The Beatles: Rock Band" in the MTV games booth during the Electronics and Entertainment Expo (E3) on June 3 in Los Angeles, California. The 2009 E3 Expo features over 200 leading-edge computer, technology and video game publishers and developers, according to organizers. The industry-only trade show came to an end on June 4 at the Los Angeles Convention Center (LACC).

PHOTO: AFP