The great software show

MUSA IBRAHIM

Computing in Bangla should be the driving force to pave the way to realising the vision of 'Digital Bangladesh'. All our daily, official and activities at home, work, business and other development sectors should be facilitated by Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

This is the theme for the ongoing SoftExpo 2010, the highest-level of razzmatazz in the software sector in Bangladesh, which was arranged by the Bangladesh Association for Software and Information Services (BASIS). The five-day fair kicked off on February 10 and will continue till February 14 at the Bangabandhu Friendship Conference Centre.

The fair enjoyed large crowds from the very beginning, as software developers, buyers, ICT enthusiasts, professionals, development sector activists, academicians and students thronged the different stalls. A total of 77 local and international companies are participating at the fair with 112 stalls.

The students of United International University are displaying a 'robotic hand' that can carry objects from one place to another. They are also showcasing two robotic cars -- one can move along a metal-paved path automatically while the other can change its direction if there are any obstacles in front.

The students also came to the fair with an intelligent unmanned radio-controlled vehicle, developed by the students of the department of computer science and engineering, (Robotics and AI Systems), and a Smart Traffic Signal System, facilitated with software developed locally to ease traffic and provide better traffic management for Dhaka city.

Reve Systems is displaying

A radio controlled unmanned vehicle system caught much attention at the SoftExpo 2010.
PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

mobile VOIP solutions through which the company has been representing Bangladesh worldwide. Onkur and Bangladesh Open Source Network are participating in the fair with Bangla computing solutions. Databiz Incorporated is showcasing 72 local software service centres across the country while Leads came up with banking software. Computer Ease Ltd is showcasing mobile phone and PDA based survey systems.

Computer and Telecom Bichitra, a monthly computer magazine, is selling a documentary on a blood cancer patient, Rubel, a student of Sirajganj Government College, through which,

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the magazine is helping him collect money for his treatment.

Computer Jagat, another monthly computer magazine, is

webcasting the seminars and events of Softexpo 2010, live through their website, comjagat.com.

A numbers of seminars have been organised in the fair that are drawing in a good number of IT experts, academicians, businessmen and others.

Munir Hasan, a consultant to the Ministry of Science and of ICT, presented a keynote paper at a seminar titled 'New Business Opportunities After Opening Digital Payments'. He said if digital payments begin, the extent of e-commerce, e-transaction and the volume of e-business will expand and many e-shops will start opera-

tions.

In addition, the ICT boom will help the rural population enjoy the paid service at local IT centres, without commuting to the cities, he added.

Softexpo 2010 is also facilitating visitors with free internet through WiMax technology.

The entry fee to the fair is Tk 20, while students are enjoying free entry from 10 am to 5 pm. Any Grameenphone subscriber can also purchase the entry ticket through his mobile phone by typing BASIS in the message option and sending it to 2777.

Nevertheless, the fair is drawing mixed reactions among the participants and visitors. Jewel Rana, a third year student of Mirpur College, said a company said they are providing electronic survey systems, but they are not showcasing the real thing. Many exhibitors are here only with a PC or two, but they could showcase many more of their products and services, such as software development procedures and entertainment-based software.

Bhuiyan Inam Lenin, a veteran IT journalist of the country and editor of the monthly Computer Bichitra, said though IT business leaders in the pre-fair press conference declared that Bangladesh's IT market is now worth Tk 1,000 crore and the local software market is worth between Tk 600 and Tk 700 crore, hardly any software developing companies declare or reveal their software export figures.

If this is the situation, then the software sector would not flourish, as the government will not be interested in it, he said.

He admitted that the government should create a business-friendly atmosphere to make software vendors speak up.

Portal for every district

SHAHED MUSTAFA

Bangladesh has got its own 64 web portals for each of its 64 districts. The prime minister inaugurated the web portals on January 6. These web portals contain almost all the information a citizen requires.

These are unique in design and maintained by the local authorities. The addresses of the portals are easy to find. Each of the district web portals follows the same address path which is dc:(district_name).gov.bd.

The web portals contain information as district at a glance, geographical profile, industries & commerce, local newspapers, sports & recreation, culture & languages, transportation facilities, famous persons of the districts, public representatives, upazila & union information etc.

People can get an overall idea and information about their districts. Besides, information of the deputy commissioner's office, local government, zila parisad, upazila parisad, union parisad, poursava information is presented in the portals.

People can get current information about their districts in News & Advertisement section. Moreover, emergency telephone numbers, address of the important websites are also given.

Information about four important sectors as Education, Health, Agriculture, Tourism & Heritage of the districts are given in the portals. In the health section the visitors will get the telephone numbers of doctors, hospitals, clinics and health assistants.

In the agriculture section, the information of the fertilizer dealers and block supervisors are given. In the Tourism and Heritage section, information of the district hotels and accommodation facilities, tourist places, district heritage and maps of the districts are available.

For the visitors who want to comment or express their views, a comment book and an opinion & advice section are placed. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section is also there for those who want to get instant answers from the service providers.

These 64 web portals are constructed in Bangla for the time being and steps to make their English version is going on.

These portals are constructed under the 'Access to Information (A2I)' programme with the assistance of the UNDP. The step of building 64 web portals by the government will help people to get information at their doorsteps.

Google's e-mail gets social

AP, San Francisco

Google Inc. opened a new social hub in its e-mail service on Tuesday, leaving little doubt that the Internet search leader is girding for a face-off with Facebook.

The new Gmail channel, called Google Buzz, includes many of the features that have turned Facebook into the Web's top spot for fraternizing with friends and family.

The Google Buzz features won't reach all of Gmail's estimated 176 million users worldwide for several more days. A link to the service will appear on the top left of the page, in a prominent position just under Gmail's inbox tab.

Like Facebook, Google Buzz will let Gmail users post updates about what they are doing or thinking and share those with the rest of the world or with only a select group of people. Gmail users also will be able to track other people's updates and instantly comment on them for everyone else in the social circle to see.

And, just like Facebook, Google Buzz can serve as a showcase for video, photos and Web links to interesting stories.

Google Buzz also shows similarities with Twitter. A mobile phone application of Google Buzz is particularly Twitter-like: It allows people to see the public updates of other people in the same vicinity.

Going 3GS way

IT.TELECOM DESK

When Apple unveiled the iPhone 3GS, one of our friends, a diehard iPhone fan, asked what's the point of buying a new iPhone which looks exactly like the old one? Well we guess many of you have the same question specially those who already own an iPhone 3G. Well all we can say is that you wont know unless you start using it, it's the speed that will amaze you.

In fact that is the reason why it's called iPhone 3GS. Apple calls it the fastest, most powerful iPhone yet, and also mentioned that it's packed with incredible new features including improved speed and performanceup to twice as fast as iPhone 3Gwith longer battery life, a high-quality 3 megapixel autofocus camera, easy to use video recording and hands free voice control.

The iPhone 3GS includes the new iPhone OS 3.0, which according to the company is the world's most advanced mobile operating system with over 100 new features such as Cut, Copy and Paste, MMS, Spotlight Search, landscape keyboard and more.

From the outlook perspective the 3GS is exactly the same as the 3G. It's slightly heavier and has glossy text on the back. The screen is slightly more reflective because of the new fingerprint resistant coating, which works in preventing a good deal of fingerprints and face grease.

The 3GS features a new 3 megapixel autofocus camera that takes pictures as well as videos. The new autofocus camera adjusts focus, exposure, color and contrast for the best possible

image and includes an automatic macro focus for extra close up shots.

The voice control feature in iPhone 3GS is new and offers hands free operation for both iPhone and iPod functions. Simply speak the appropriate commands into the built-in microphone or headset microphone to dial by name or number. With voice control you can play your favorite music by artist, album or playlist and activate the feature by saying "play more songs like this." You can also tell iPhone to pause the music, play the next track, turn on shuffle or ask, "What's playing right now?"

iPhone 3GS features a new built-in digital compass for instant navigation. The Compass app shows you which way you are headed and rotates as you change direction. You can orient yourself to true north or magnetic north, and iPhone's built-in GPS automatically displays the coordinates of your current location.

So how fast the iPhone 3GS is? The video really shows, so does built in applications such as Safari, Email and Camera. Even booting the phone takes about half the time. Apps with long loading time also works faster in the 3GS compared to the older version.

The iPhone 3GS runs on a 600MHz CPU with 256MB RAM, so the processes are much faster. With improvement of all these features, one would think the battery life of the new iPhone has been compromised, but surprisingly that's not the case. In fact it has become better.

Intel unveils all new Core processor family

IT.TELECOM DESK

Laptop, desktop and embedded device users are going to get integration and smart performance by Intel's turbo boost technology as Intel Corporation introduced its new 2010 Intel Core i7, i5 and i3 processors in the local market on February 10.

Intel's South Asia's Director of Sales and Marketing Group Sandeep Aurora in the launching event said Intel has launched the products simultaneously in all countries across the world.

He also said the energy saving processors would help users with 8-10 percent less power usage, fast mobile broadband usage, multi-tasking facilities and brilliant graphic capabilities. The 32 nanometre technology based processors are capable to integrate all new and old software that would support the PCs for faster video, photo and music downloading, he added.

Intel Corporation's Country Business Manager of Bangladesh Zia Manzur said the Core i7 and Core i5 processors were built with Intel turbo boost and hyper-threading technology that would also help ATMs, travel kiosks and digital displays to perform better.

Asked about the position of Bangladesh in PC penetration in the context of South Asian countries, Sandeep Aurora said SA countries are

lagging behind in PC penetration as the private and public sectors are yet to play its role in it. He added that the government should make the information flow free with the help of Information and Communication Technology, the village people should be educated with proper ICT service and the connectivity should be increased to fill up the gap between the urban and rural sector.

Addressing to a query of launching Intel's PC production in Bangladesh for the school goers, Zia Manzur said the Magellan Project is now in the government table for consideration. He added if the project is initiated, then the government has to have readiness in connectivity, local content development and also in training for the teachers and students.

Binary Logic, Ryans Computer, Rishit Computer and Flora PC are already showcasing PC and laptops with Intel's new core 2010 family processor. The cost ranges from Tk 42,000 to Tk 58,000.

TECHPHOTO

ACTING BOTS

A handout shows South Korea's android robot "EveR-3" (Eve Robot 3) (C) wearing a traditional costume performing a Korean musical in Seoul on February 18 last year. These robots are set for more leading theatre roles this year, a scientist said on February 10.

PHOTO: AFP