READERS respond

Amer Chowdhury, London

Good decisions on the prime minister's part. However, considering the insurmountable economic hurdles facing Bangladesh, I am still not convinced that a new airport should be a priority. Power and economic infrastructure that would drive growth must take precedence.

Nihar

On extra judicial killings, prime minister said it started with operation clean heart launched by BNP government, which later formed Rab to continue the killings. The news omitted this.

FQ, a well wisher from US

I think the prime minister deserves our thanks for admitting the fault and also the demand of the people and the opposition party on the proposed airport issue.

I am surprised to see the planning ministry and the project's commission are keeping mum. What is the status of this project in their planning book? Project idea or something else?

Imtiaz

Congrats prime minister for the change of site but we still need to think whether we need a new airport now.

Md Azim Uddin

We hope that this instance of considering public's logical demands will be followed in all other fields of our national life.

Md Sanoar Hossain

The government could develop Ishwardi Airport.

SNH

I do not mind if the prime minister desperately wants a new airport with the following conditions: 1) the new airport must be utilised for complete civilian purposes. No exceptions will be overlooked. 2) No foreign country's agency or security station should be installed. 3) Not to be named after any leaders' name. Both are deceased and were important to us. 4) You have to build shuttle train and bus service network from the airport to Dhaka. 5) The airport's Tk 50,000 crore contract must be given to at least a dozen domestic and foreign companies.

A view of the stall of champs21.com at the country's flagship software fair -- BASIS SoftExpo 2011 -- at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Champs21, an online self-assessment service for students, is a joint initiative of The Daily Star and Teamcreative.
PHOTO: **STAR**

BASIS SOFTEXPO

Youths keen on e-quiz contest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visitors flocked in thousands to BASIS SoftExpo 2011 on the fourth day yesterday.

The visitors, especially youths, are expressing keen interest on different aspects of the exhibition held at the fairground of Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city. The exhibitors said they are getting good response from visitors as well.

Kawser Jannat Momo, a marketing executive of Champs21, said visitors to Champs21 stall are showing interest on their e-learning offer and the competition, Brain Brats.

Champs21, in partnership with The Daily Star, is organising the nationwide online quiz competition, the first ever in Bangladesh for class III to VIII students of English medium schools across the country.

Momo said the initiative was taken to divert children from spending most of their times using different social networking websites to learn and prepare themselves for the tougher competitions ahead in the future.

"Thirty-three schools from Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet have registered so far by logging on to www.champs21.com," said the marketing executive.

The competition will be held in three phases and it will focus on science, math, and general knowledge as per curriculum of the English medium schools.

The second round will be offline. Ten students from each class of each school will be selected for the second round. The grand finale will take place on March 12.

An important event of the day was "BASIS Freelancer of the year 2011". From a total of 140 competitors, Basis awarded 10 freelancers for their contribution to upholding Bangladesh's image in the global IT outsourcing arena.

BASIS honours IT movers and shakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's 12 top freelancers, including an SSC examinee, were awarded last night for their contributions to upholding Bangladesh's image in global information technology.

Bangladesh Association of Software Information Services announced the Freelancer of the Year 2011 awards at a ceremony on the sidelines of BASIS SoftExpo 2011 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The awards were split in three categories, with four winners in each. Pixel Net Technologies, Alpha Digital, Sentinel Solutions Ltd, and Alam Soft won awards in the group category, while Mohammad Al-Amin Chowdhury, Faisal Farukh, Enayet Hussain Rajib and Md Zakaria Chowdhury were awarded in the individual category.

Abdullah Al Zahid, an SSC examinee from a city school, won an award in the student category. Other awardees were Md Shabbir Hossain, Shaon Bhuiyan and Md Khairul Alam.

Bangladesh has about 30,000 freelancers, with some earning between $1,000 and $5,000 a month.

The organisers also handed the BASIS Digital Championship award to Bangladesh Bank.

In IT innovations, a four-member team led by F M Mahbubul Islam emerged as the champion for developing software that can translate Bangla text into Braille for the visually impaired. AppRain Content Management Framework became the first runner-up and Finder Ultimate the second runner-up.

Mustafa Jabbar, who pioneered computers and IT in the country, won the BASIS Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Code Warrior Challenge awards went to Team Dark House (student) and Team Galileo (professional). Team FreeFall and Team Matrix became the first runner-up in the student and professional categories respectively. Team Anonymous and The A Team became the second runner-up.

Yeafesh Osman, state minister for science and ICT, Md Nazrul Islam Khan, national project director of Access to Information Programme, and BASIS President Mahboob Zaman were present at the ceremony. The fair ends today.

SAU to run 5 new courses

Bss, Dhaka

South Asian University (SAU) based in Indian capital, New Delhi will introduce five new programmes from the next academic year 2010-11 beginning from July this year.

The programmes are MSc in biotechnology, MSc in computer science, MA in sociology, MA in international relations (IR), and LLM.

SAU's Chief Executive Officer Prof GK Chadha told the news agency that the admission test under the next academic session is scheduled for May 21.

The admission examination will be held in capitals of eight Saarc countries simultaneously on the same day, he added.

"Currently 50 students are studying in two programmes -- MA in development economics and master of computer application (MCA)."

SAU will draw students from all eight Saarc nations in proportion to their population, but at least four percent from each country and not over 50 percent from host India, he said.