



BRAIN BRATS

21st century knowledge rockers

IT TELECOM REPORT

Sajeed, a student of class IV of The Aga Khan School, has just arrived home from school. On his way home, he animatedly kept telling his mother how surprised he was to know that his class friend Maha had not heard about Machu Picchu, Pratik borrowed three books from the library on the topic of medieval age and Ridwan had already memorised the birthdates of 2010 Academy Award Winners.

Even before having his lunch, Sajeed turned on his elder sister Simin's computer, but not to browse on Facebook or play games. Instead he logged on to champs21.com, his new obsession to participate in 'Brain Brats', the first ever online knowledge combat in Bangladesh.

His last ranking among his peer-group was third. He was trying hard to beat Pratik from his own school and Barnali from Sunbeams School to make it to the top.

"I've been playing Brain Brats every day ever since it started on February 7 to improve my scores," said Sajeed. "I have played it at least three hundred times, and have beaten my own highest score almost every time! I think answering the science and math related questions is a breeze for me, but the real tricky ones are the questions on the topic of general knowledge and IQ. I have picked up the habit of reading the 'Brain Brats Knowledge Corner' in The Daily Star, and that helps a lot!"

Brain Brats is an inter-school competition conducted online, where students from Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Rajshahi log on for free, and compete with each other to win a study tour to Kuala Lumpur with their mothers.

Jointly organised by The Daily Star and Champs21, this is the first Bangladeshi e-assessment service. A

total of forty-five English medium schools are participating in the competition nationwide. Brain Brats 2011 consists of three rounds: online round, school grooming round, and the grand finale where students are tested on three different subjects: math, science and general knowledge. The first round lasted for almost a month, while the grooming round by the schools ends today. One or two top performers per class from each school will have the opportunity to take the final test tomorrow at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, and win the title for themselves and their schools.

During the first round the students from 45 schools took more than 150,000 test attempts to prove their wits among the peers.

"I have been selected for the grand finale and I am practicing in champs21.com everyday to be the champion under the supervision of our teacher," said Nafeez, a student of HURDCO International School. "I want to be one of the Champs to win the study trip to Kuala Lumpur. I don't mind being the 1st runner up though! An ASUS laptop sounds equally cool!" said Nafeez with a huge grin. "But seriously! The best part of the contest is challenging myself and my friends based on how much we know about the world. Nothing makes me happier than to see my top score beating my previous top score!" he added.

"Due to the huge response from students and active participation of the schools we decided to extend the duration of the first round," said Russell T Ahmed, CEO, Champs21. He also added "Every student proved to be a champion, and it has been very difficult to choose the top students among them. "We also thank the schools for encouraging their students to break the walls of conventional education system."



The schools that participated in the contest were highly involved in the selection and grooming process. "It is very prestigious for our school, and that is why we are allocating resources such as computer lab, school library, special teaching sessions and enthusiastic teachers to groom up our kids. On behalf of Bangladesh International Tutorial, I would congratulate my students for their active participation in Brain Brats and also thank The Daily Star and Champs21 team for such a great initiative," said Lubna

Chowdhury, principal of Bangladesh International Tutorial (BIT).

She also mentioned that the real champions are not the ones who win the flashy awards, but the ones who tried to learn more outside the textbook, and will keep the appetite for knowledge undying.

During the online round, The Daily Star and Champs21 team went to the participating schools to answer all the queries of the participants and give them a live demo of the contest. These visits were named "School Activation Session". According to Tasmina, a stu-

dent of South Breeze International School, the session had been very helpful to her, as her parents are not internet-savvy enough to help her with the needed guidance.

Since its launch in October 2010 champs21.com has been working towards popularising e-learning and self-assessment through internet. It primarily offers an online assessment service for the students from class 3 to class 10 of both Bangla and English medium schools, where students can assess their own strengths and weaknesses in Mathematics and Science

towards stronger academic foundation.

This also allows students to know their position among all peers country-wide, and opens up opportunities to share lessons, tips, and solutions with students from the same class. Self-learning and peer-learning are thus encouraged through the web portal. The interactive portal is a great tool for academic preparation allowing students to take test anytime, anywhere, at their own pace.

An instant result with performance feedback and answer analysis is provided with a graphical presentation to both the students and their parents. Students can also brush up their co-curricular learning through free Bangla and English literature, art/craft lessons, General Knowledge, IQ, and e-entertainment. Champs21 aims to help the students of Bangladesh be at par with global education delivery, and prepare them for the future world with complete awareness of the 'self' and unique cultural identity.

The grand finale of the "Brain Brats" Knowledge Combat will be held on March 12. Students and schools are all warming up for the gala event with great enthusiasm.

"It is a great initiative and Brain Brats is just the beginning. There is a lot more to come with Champs21," said Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star adding, "The Daily Star will always spearhead any initiative that has to do with true learning. Champs21.com and events such as Brain Brats have just opened the door for that. It is indeed a great feeling to be pioneering something so great! With a two-pronged vision of bridging the digital divide and preparing the future generation for an increasingly global battle of minds, Champs21 will hopefully be an example for many such local initiatives in the near future."

New Chrome ready for the world

AFP, San Francisco

Google on Tuesday released a finished version of its speedy new Chrome Web browsing software for desktop or laptop computers.

The latest version of Chrome promised quick and responsive handling of software running in the Web browser.

"We realize that speed isn't just about pure brawn in the browser," Google engineer Tim Steele said in a blog post announcing the latest Chrome release.

"It's also about saving time with



simple interfaces."

Google improved settings for bookmarks, passwords, searches and home pages as well as enhanced protection from websites booby-trapped by hackers with malicious code.

The latest Chrome browser software is available free online at google.com/chrome. Earlier versions of the Web browser already being used in computers will be automatically updated, according to Google.

Microsoft's Internet Explorer is the most widely used Web browser in the United States followed by Firefox, Chrome and Apple's Safari.

Google purges tainted apps from Android phones

AFP, San Francisco

Google has remotely purged Android smartphones of applications tainted with a malicious code that could take control of the handsets and steal information. Mobile phone security firm LookOut said the purpose of the "DroidDream" code was to "download additional applications and install them silently as system applications on the device."

"DroidDream could be considered a powerful zombie agent that can install any applications silently and execute code with root privileges at

will," it said.

Google was patching the vulnerability that cyber crooks could exploit and adding measures to prevent applications containing the "malware" from getting into the Android Market of programs for mobile devices.

Google yanked the contaminated applications from the Android Market and then took the unusual step of hitting a "kill switch" that remotely removed from smartphones any of the more than 50 applications containing the dangerous code.



Review: With iPad 2, Apple one-ups itself



RACHEL METZ, Ap

With the original iPad, Apple brought an attractive, easy-to-use tablet computer to the masses at a reasonable price a feat numerous companies are trying to top.

With Friday's release of the iPad 2, Apple is pulling further ahead, with improvements that make an already excellent tablet even more enticing. It goes to show that when it comes to tablets, Apple refuses to be bested.

The new iPad is skinnier, faster and slightly lighter. It comes with cameras for video chatting and snapping photos, while keeping the same prices, ranging from \$499 to \$829 depending on the configuration.

Competitors such as Motorola Mobility Holdings Inc. and Samsung Electronics Co. sell good tablets of their own, with many of the same features. Motorola's new Xoom even has a higher-resolution screen than the iPad. Still, nobody has been able to match the iPad's simplicity, innovation and style.

The iPad 2 looks much like the first iPad, though it has a sleeker, lighter body with a curved back. All this helps the tablet fit more naturally in my hands, and the modified shape makes it easier to hold for extended e-reading sessions, for example.

Among the most noticeable changes is the inclusion of cameras, one on the front and one on the back.

This is something I've been hankering for, as the iPad's crisp display, measuring 9.7 inches diagonally, seemed like the

ideal canvas for video chat. The subsequent arrival of several tablets with front and rear cameras made it practically a necessity for iPad 2.

Fortunately, Apple thought so, too. Both cameras on the iPad 2 work with the company's FaceTime video chat application and the back camera shoots high-definition videos.

The new iPad has Apple's new dual-core A5 chip, which helped applications open more quickly than on the older iPad. The original never felt slow, but the faster I can start a new game of "Plants vs. Zombies," the better.

Add to that a new version of Apple's iOS software. The new processor and the new iOS combined to improve Web surfing, as I could load up pages noticeably faster over my home Wi-Fi network. As expected, videos loaded quickly and generally streamed flawlessly.

The updated iOS comes with iPad 2 and is available as a free download for the original iPad and the two most recent models of the iPhone and iPod Touch. Like the first iPad, the iPad 2 is rated for up to 10 hours of battery life, and it performed like a champ. Playing a mix of videos streamed from YouTube over Wi-Fi and saved on the iPad itself, I got a bit more than 10 hours of entertainment before it died.

Without question, the iPad 2 is a great tablet. Still, this doesn't mean the first iPad is ready for the trash can. It's still a stellar gadget, and now it's cheaper (while supplies last) with the arrival of a successor.



TECHPHOTO

The Tech Expo

A visitor plays computer game at a stall at the BCS Digital Expo which is being held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka from March 9. The fair will continue until March 13.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

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