

Intel to give ICT education to students of Bangladesh

Chairman announces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Intel Corporation Chairman Dr Craig Barrett yesterday announced introduction of its Intel World Ahead Programme aiming at providing information and communication technology (ICT) education and its access to the general population across the country.

"We are excited about bringing in our global experience to Bangladesh," Barrett said at a news conference in the city during his brief visit to the capital. The World Ahead Programme, which Intel has been running worldwide for many years now, will be implemented jointly with Grameen Solution in collaboration with the government.

Dr Barrett noted that ICT brings four impacts on the society -- education, economic development, healthcare, and e-governance. "I visit 30 countries each year and all of those countries

share the same vision of a future where ICT would play its due role," said Barrett, who also chairs the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development.

To attain the impacts, the Intel programme aims at improving four basic foundations ensuring access to information and communication technology (ICT), Internet connectivity, development of the content of local education, and training teachers in using the technology in educating children.

"Education is vital in developing a skilled workforce," Barrett said adding that Intel has committed to donate about 1,000 computers to schools over the next three years. Intel will work with the government to implement the programme and will donate enough personal computers (PCs) next year to set up a PC lab in all 64 districts of the country.

Dr Craig Barrett pointed out that

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Introduction of ICT in education accelerates the learning process and excites the youth in education.

"Korea is an example, which aggressively educated teachers on ICT to teach the children. Korea has trained over 4,50,000 teachers and it also has one of the highest broadband connectivity in the world," he said.

Barrett and Grameen Solution's founder Prof Muhammad Yunus have been running education programmes in developing countries for a few decades, and in the last decade they have spent 1 billion US dollars. "We believe Intel will continue this programmes for decades," Barrett said.

Intel and Grameen will jointly introduce several programmes to help the people access the vast resources of medical, educational, and commercial knowledge on the Internet. They will offer low cost PCs on easy monthly instalments and

will launch a project to set up telecentres across the country. The telecentres will generate employment opportunities for rural citizens, who will offer services like Internet access, photocopying, printing, and PC usage for e-government and e-commerce. The centres will be financed through micro-loans.

Intel and Grameen have planned to launch the Intel powered Classmate PCs available for students. Those PCs are affordable and full-featured student laptops -- well suited for promoting project based learning in primary schools.

Intel is also developing plans to launch its education initiatives in Bangladesh, including Intel Teach, and Intel Learn programmes. The Intel Teach programme trains teachers in how to integrate technology in a curriculum to enhance classroom learning. The community based Intel Learn programme aims at enlightening unserved children aged between 8 and 16 about technology, critical thinking, and collaboration skills.

Intel will also work with software companies in Bangladesh to develop localised Internet content and software for the government, schools, and telecentres.

"A farmer in Bangladesh is interested in information about fertiliser or insecticide -- not about Wall Street," Barrett pointed out.

Intel will work with local companies to introduce Intel's Skool Learning and Teaching Technology. The interactive learning website will provide math and science lessons tailored to meet local needs.

Intel and Grameen plan to collaborate through public and private partnerships on the deployment of WiMAX technology -- which provides a cost effective and efficient way for delivering broadband Internet access to rural communities.

"Broadband and wireless connectivity in Bangladesh will ensure ICT

access for all -- using which the people will get education, health facilities or e-governance," Barrett pointed out.

"We will work closely with the government and other agencies to bring in the experience of five million teachers. Our experience includes how to work with wireless technology, provide contents through translations, and bringing ICT to all," he quipped.

Barrett noted that Intel had no plan to invest in manufacturing in Bangladesh at the moment. He had arrived in Dhaka on Monday night and left for India yesterday afternoon.

Dr Yunus, who could not be present at the news conference, said in a message, "All human beings have enormous potential inherent in them. The problem is that the poor people do not get the opportunity to ever discover their own potential because of the social and economic barriers built around them. I firmly believe that information and communication technology can play a dramatic role in the fight against rural poverty."

Being present at the news conference, Adviser to the Ministry of Science and ICT Tapan Chowdhury noted, "The Intel World Ahead programme is a holistic programme which will help build everything -- the right systems tailored to local needs, critical connectivity, and sustainable local capabilities through quality education."

Chief Executive Officer of Grameen Solution Kazi Islam, and Intel Bangladesh Chief Zia Manzur also spoke.

The Intel Foundation pledged to donate US \$50,000 to the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund to help with flood relief.

In December 2005, during a visit to Bangladesh, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates had announced that his company would train over 10,000 teachers and 2,00,000 students in information technology in Bangladesh in the next three years, and already donated \$1,00,000 to that end.

Microsoft sources told The Daily Star yesterday that so far, through five divisional training centres in Bangladesh, Microsoft trained more than 3,000 teachers. Besides, Microsoft is providing a package of vital licensed software -- Windows XP Starter Edition, Microsoft Office, and Learning Essential Package -- for just three dollars -- for each of the government donated PCs in schools.



PHOTO: STAR
 Chairman of Intel Corporation, world's largest semiconductor company, Craig Barrett visits a stall at an ICT exposition at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.