



The Vatican will soon have its own channel on the video sharing site YouTube where the Catholic faithful or the curious will be able to see Pope Benedict or Church events.

Advanced Micro Devices will eliminate 1,100 jobs, cut salaries and take a new \$622 million charge for its acquisition of graphics chip maker ATI, bringing total writeoffs for the deal to \$3.17 billion.



The European Commission accused Microsoft of stymieing competition by bundling its Internet Explorer Web browser with Windows systems, firing the latest salvo in an expensive, years-long battle.



The LCD industry has hit a bottom and TV panel prices are expected to recover in coming months on solid demand for small-sized flat screen TVs, the head of LG Display said.

technomics

Infosys eyes rural banking

New Delhi, Jan 18: After consolidating its position in the traditional banking segment, the banking product division of Infosys Technologies, Finacle, is now diversifying itself to develop a software product suite for the rural operations in the financial sector.

"In today's financial environment accessing the bottom of the pyramid has become a key business as well as social imperative for banks. With increased reach, Regional Rural Banks can become principal vehicles for financial inclusion in the country," Infosys Technologies (Finacle) head Haragopal M said.

There is a great opportunity in the segment, which has started picking up in the domestic market, he added. The company has already bagged a beta client. Besides adding to the bottomline, the product suite would help banks enable financial inclusion in a cost-effective manner, he said. Last month, Punjab National Bank awarded a contract to Infosys to power its core-banking initiative for the rural market.

Under the agreement, Finacle will be implemented across the bank's six Regional Rural Banks covering 1,300 branches.

Speaking about the December quarter performance of Finacle, Haragopal said the revenues of the company witnessed a growth of 25.8 per cent to USD 50 million against the same quarter last year. PTI

Business important: tech gurus

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU
Jan. 18: At a technology conference in India's silicon valley, it was time to debate what was more important to Chief Information Officers (CIOs) — technology or business. CIOs run IT systems in organisations and tend to be more technical in outlook. However, IT also plays a pivotal role in business, in improving employee productivity and thereby, a company's bottom line. Experts said there is a stress to be technically equipped and this should not overshadow a business itself. Technology must be a part of the business.



Virtual, the new reality

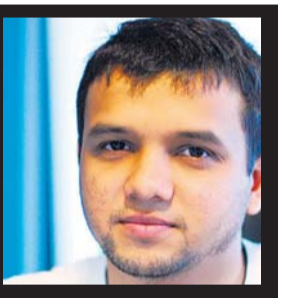


A start-up firm, Indusgeeks, has created 3D solutions where students can go on virtual field trips — for instance, tours into historical periods, ocean floors and outer space.

BY SANGEETHA CHENGAPPA BENGALURU

Jan. 18: The teacher is droning on and on about ancient Rome, Julius Caesar, the Colosseum, gladiator fights and chariot racing... none of which seems to capture attention. What if you could actually be a gladiator and fight your opponent to death in an ancient Roman amphitheatre? Or, what if you could don the role of an archaeologist and start excavating the ruins of ancient Rome. Be prepared to learn your history, geography, science or any other subject of your choice, like never before. Mumbai-based startup Indusgeeks Solutions has come up with 3D immersive, virtual world solutions that would serve the education and enterprise verticals. It all started when 27-year-old founder and CEO of Indusgeeks Siddharth Banerjee read a newspaper

report in 2006 about a new kind of online game — Second Life. "It totally intrigued me and I logged onto it the same day to see what it was all about," he says. Banerjee was then interning at a financial audit firm, preparing to be a chartered accountant, but gave it all up to start this company in April 2007. He and his 12-member team now believe that virtual worlds would revolutionise not just the Internet, but the way we communicate and interact with the world. While 'immersive' space on the web has been used for playing games and socialising, more recently global corporations such as Dell, IBM, Sun, Cisco, and Accenture among others are using it for training, learning and collaboration. Indusgeeks has developed a solution for enterprises to conduct virtual events and conferences, which help in



Indusgeeks' virtual solutions will be offered as licensed software as well as on the SaaS model, says founder Siddharth Banerjee

reducing travel costs for organisations with a distributed workforce. The solution allows corporate executives to create digital replicas of themselves and meet in a branded, customised environment. They can attend trade fairs, seminars, conferences and even attend to customer com-

plaints from anywhere in the world with a broadband connection. "Virtual worlds, when used correctly for marketing, ensure great return on investment as well as media exposure," says the founder who is now a global ambassador for the Association of Virtual Worlds and is on the Second Life Solution Provider's Council. "We have created customised virtual marketing campaigns on platforms like Second Life, Multiverse, Flash, Shockwave, Torque etc., to suit each client's needs. Brands like Coca Cola, Orange, MTV, Lego and Barbie have successfully used virtual worlds for branding and community building," he says. The company has also hosted its solutions on Second Life that enables students to go on virtual field trips and experience environments which may not be feasible in the real world.

Wipro in a consulting overdrive

BY GOUTAM DAS BENGALURU

Jan. 18: Indian IT services firm Wipro says its consulting division could narrow the advantage multinational companies have in business consulting by focusing on big industry issues. "We don't strive to be all things to all people, but when we do place our focus on big industry issues, we plan to be the best in the world," the company's newly appointed global head of consulting Kirk Strawser says.

Strawser, who in his last role was the president of consulting services at Capgemini Americas, believes it is necessary firms have an integrated consulting model to address big client challenges. This is exactly where Wipro could be a winner. "Consulting services working closely in tandem with IT services and BPO is the key. Many of our competitors have all the three capabilities. The difference is in how these three work together to deliver value to clients. We believe that Wipro has the best model in that regard," he says.

So what are the big issues? The firm says it is working with its clients to understand where they want to be making investments when the economic recovery occurs. "We call these 'big issues' and they are industry focused around business problems. An example is Human and Knowledge Capital optimisation in the Energy industry. We are working closely with other Wipro entities to identify these issues and then we vet them with our industry clients. Big issues will require big solutions and Wipro has the business consulting, IT services and BPO capabilities to handle large industry issues," the new consulting chief says.

On an earlier occasion, Wipro had commented how it has been seeing a spurt in demand for its consultancy business, especially for cost

optimisation and business transformation services. That is not surprising considering that during a recession many companies undergo restructuring and therefore require advisory services. Wipro's customers had been asking for higher levels of advisory services to complement its IT and BPO services. "Business advisory services or consulting services are needed to communicate with the business side of our customers, diagnose their issues as well as design and deliver solutions," says Strawser. The icing on the cake could be cross-selling of service lines. In order to deliver complex solutions some level of technology is almost always required. Many times BPO is also desired, says Strawser. "For example, if we are doing a supply chain procurement project for a client it will, in many cases, require the implementation of an advanced planning and scheduling system as a follow on assignment."

Rival Infosys, too, has been aggressively investing in its consulting subsidiary hoping that it would contribute to the company's downstream revenue. The subsidiary is still in the red and the company expects it to turn around in the next one year.

Wipro's consulting division now has more than 1,200 experts based out of Europe, North America, Asia Pacific, Australia Middle East and India.

From a delivery perspective, Wipro plans to drive its consulting model in a manner similar to its IT services business. It would hire top talent from Indian and Chinese business schools, train them in its methods and solutions, before deploying them along side local geography teams to deliver. "A lot of people have talked about executing this type of model for some time. At Wipro, we are doing it today," Kirk Strawser says.

Is Steve Jobs indispensable?

BY STEVE LOHR NEW YORK

Jan. 18: Indispensable? No one is, we're told. Times change, people move on and the notion of the irreplaceable individual is a myth. That is irrefutable, at least in the cosmic sense of Charles de Gaulle's grim reminder: "The cemeteries of the world are full of indispensable men." Yet there are moments in history, or institutions, that are so shaped by the extraordinary contributions of a single person that it is hard to imagine one without the other. So the indispensable-man debate was fueled anew last week when Steven Jobs said he was taking a leave from Apple until July because his health problems were more complicated than he first thought. Since he returned to Apple in late 1996, Jobs has been the product team leader, taste arbiter and public face of a company that has been a stylish breath of fresh air in the personal computer business. With the introduc-

tion of the iPod, iTunes and the iPhone, Apple has shaken up the music and cellphone industries. What is it, then, that makes someone a candidate for the cloak of indispensability? The indispensable individual rises at certain turning points in the history of a country or company. Sometimes, they step back from the stage shortly afterward, though few move with the speed or self-effacing equanimity of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, a statesman-farmer who returned to his plow within a few weeks of being appointed dictator of Rome in 457 B.C. "Nobody is indispensable indefinitely," said John Kao, a jazz musician and innovation consultant to corporations and governments. "The 'great man' theory does hold water, but mainly at times of transition when a charismatic leader lends what psychologists would call an individual's ego strengths to the organisation or country as a whole, to allow it to regroup and move forward." Institutions often thrive after

visionary leaders, once seen as irreplaceable, make their exit. In the mid-1980s, Sam Walton was seen as the personification of Wal-Mart Stores, a chain he founded. He was Mr. Sam to employees, known for personally patrolling stores and attending to the smallest details. But after he retired in 1988, Wal-Mart did not miss a step. At one time, Bill Gates was as much the face of Microsoft as Jobs is of Apple today. Yet Gates consciously and gradually stepped back in recent years. Apple, according to some, is far from a one-man show, and Jobs is taking a leave from a company in good shape. "I think of Apple as like a great jazz orchestra," said Michael Hawley, a computer scientist who once worked for Jobs. "Steve did a superb job of recruiting a broad and deep talent base. When a group gets to be that size, the conductor's job is pretty nominal — attracting new talent and helping maintain the tempo, adding energy here and there." — NYT



Cancer may have recurred

Jan. 18: Pancreatic cancer experts say they are puzzled by what is ailing Apple Inc chief executive Steve Jobs, because it is not clear how serious his health problems are or how directly they relate to his bout with cancer. Last week, Jobs said he had an easily treatable "hormonal imbalance" that was robbing his body of the proteins it needs. Then, on Wednesday, the 53-year-old CEO said his problems were more complex than originally thought, and he would take a medical leave of absence for six months. Doctors who have not treated Jobs say they can only speculate but said the tumor he was treated for in 2004 could have spread to another organ or resurfaced in the pancreas, requiring surgery or other treatment. — Reuters