



21st century Babylon

Over 300 girls and boys from all over the world gathered yesterday for a training session in Hall 11 of International Fair Plovdiv where the competition computers are installed. The competitors met each other for the first time although all of them are staying at Hotel Novotel Plovdiv. Their arrival times and breaks, however, did not match because of the different distances they had to travel and the different time zones they crossed. With no time to get any sleep, the team of Chilly was the last to head for the Hall after an intercontinental flight and a 10-hour stopover at Frankfurt Airport. The Technical Committee, with many professors and students from Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“ on board, kept a close eye on the hardware. „At IOI, there are both very strong teams and novices,“ commented the Chair of the Scientific Committee Velin Tsanov. „The tasks differ in terms of difficulty - there is one that is not much of a challenge. For the good players it will be a piece of cake and they will not waste too much time over it. By solving it, those that are not so well prepared, will be encouraged to carry on with their training. The team members can check on the spot how well they have done.“

The working conditions are excellent, made a quick judgement Vladimir Kiryuhin, leader of the Russian team and IOI veteran. Of all IOI editions since 1989, he has not missed a single one of the big competitions so far.

Away from the workstations, the teen Babylon, masters of the language of algorithms, were soon immersed in active conversations in English. Some of the young people already know each other from other big competitions. The teams from the Balkans and the Baltic region have information about each other from the regional Olympiads. The adults in charge of the hardware and software infrastructure for the competition were already making comments on the



likely future medalists. The teams of China, Russia, and the USA are the favourites and will definitely top the rankings. According to the doyen of the Bulgarian schools for champions - Professor Stoyan Kapralov, now Plovdiv is the hot spot for the most astounding talents who are due to play a key role in shaping the future.

The youngest contestant - an African Olympiad favourite



Am I the youngest team member of all? 14-year-old Abdul Malik of Nigeria was surprised, being unaware that all other con-

testants are at least a year older than him. The young charming boy went through three preparation camps before he was invited to join the team of his country, which takes part in the IOI for the first time, and despite all has decided to count on the young talent. Malik lives in Lagos - the largest city of Nigeria. Has two brothers and two sisters, like most

Nigerian families. His father is a banker and insists that all his children receive good education. This is why, instead of going to a state school, Malik was enrolled in a private school, where the quality of education is a lot higher. Unless he is at the computer, he likes playing football or chess. For two years now he has been involved with informatics more profoundly, and last year he won the gold medal at the African Olympiad.

He has not made up his mind yet whether he wants to be a programmer or a footballer, but he is happy that he had the chance to come to Bulgaria. Travel is his other passion. So far he has been to Turkey and England.