

IT & TELECOM

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A glimpse into digital life

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It was only the second day and importantly a weekday, when the four-day BCS Digital Expo 2010 that started at Dhaka Sheraton on Wednesday, was already busy with a colossal curious crowd.

The venue was buzzing with a huge turnout even on a hot, humid day. It was the craze for the IT gadgets that are increasingly getting low-priced and becoming a must for many.

Most of the visitors, regardless of age and profession, were enquiring about the essentials of laptops and netbook that are increasingly gaining popularity mainly among the youth, corporate professionals and businessmen.

Rubaba Naoshin, an MBA student at North South University, came to the fair to get an idea about the configurations and price of a netbook.

"I need a laptop for my class presentation and assignments. So I prefer a netbook, as it's portable and the price is also within my reach," she said.

Azibur Rahman, who works for International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, was also enquiring about a netbook.

"In fact, I am looking for something that I can carry always with me in my bag and get connected with the internet whenever I need to do," he said.

"And that's why I want to buy a netbook," he said.

Visitors were also concerned about the power backup of netbooks or laptops, as frequent outages are looming large in the city.

According to industry people, netbook was introduced to the local consumers in 2007 and gained popularity among businessmen and students shortly, mainly for its portability and prices.

And the sales are going up fast, as around 2,500 netbooks of different brands were sold in 2007, which



PHOTO: RAHIM SHUJON

increased to around 5,000 in 2008, and 7,000 in 2009, said Giasuddin Ahmed, a member of Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS).

All top brands such as HP, Compaq, Asus, Dell, Acer, Fujitsu, Hasee, Gigabyte, Lenovo, Toshiba, Great Wall, BenQ and Apple were displaying netbooks along with laptops at the show.

The size of the netbooks that were brought to the fair ranges from 10.1 inches to 12 inches and those weigh between two and three pounds, while the average price is Tk 23,000 to Tk 40,000 each.

Besides netbooks, laptops are still on the top of visitors' list of choice -- many of them were planning to get one.

Apart from that, they were also looking for locally made voltage stabilisers, as these devices attracted

many visitors mainly for its low price.

"We have received more than 10 spot orders for voltage stabilisers for using with refrigerators," said Tapan Pal, marketing officer of Grameen Bitek Ltd.

Colors of Bangladesh, a local distributor of information technology (IT) 'kiosk' -- used as a complete information centre -- was displaying colourful booths designed mainly for government and corporate offices.

"We have started selling these from 2007, and already we have sold 25 units to different ministries, private universities, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and airports," said Bappy Rahman, assistant product development officer of Colors of Bangladesh.

The average cost for installing such kiosks starts from Tk 2 lakh, he

said.

Generally, kiosk is a small shop or store, open at the front, where newspapers, drinks, etc. are sold.

The visitors at the show were also enthused about digital cameras, where low-priced ones were topping the sales.

Besides all these, Southeast Bank Ltd, a private commercial bank, came to the fair to create awareness about their 'consumer credit scheme', which provides loans for a wide range of consumer products including car, television, computer, kitchen utensils and camera.

However, many a participant in the fair expressed frustration over low sales, as a number of visitors came to the show only to get idea about prices of different products and discount that were on the offer. They were not buying then.

Atom smasher opens 'new era' for science

AFP, Geneva

Scientists at the world's biggest atom smasher on Tuesday started colliding particles at record energy levels, opening a new era in the quest for the universe's deepest secrets.

The European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) said it had unleashed the unprecedented bursts of energy on the third attempt, as beams of protons thrust around the 27-kilometre (16.8-mile) accelerator collided at close to the speed of light.

"This is physics in the making, the beginning of a new era, we have collisions at 7 TeV (tera-electronvolts)," said Paola Catapano, a CERN scientist and spokeswoman, referring to the record energy levels achieved.

CERN Director General Rolf Heuer could barely contain his excitement by video conference from Japan: "It is a fantastic moment for science."

Within an hour, physicists from dozens of countries around the world were marvelling at their initial observations, rendered graphically as colourful bursts of energy.

"What we saw within the detector was really a firework, a lot of energy, something completely different from what we have seen until now," said Fabiola Gianotti, spokeswoman for one of the biggest parts of the experiment.

The success came after a faltering start at the giant 3.9 billion euro (5.2 billion dollar) machine under the Franco-Swiss border near Geneva, which is aimed at unravelling some of the outstanding secrets of the universe.

But collisions among the 20 billion protons emerged in the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at 1:06 pm (11:06 GMT), creating powerful but microscopic bursts of energy mimicking conditions close to the Big Bang that created the universe.

"We're within a billionth of a second of the Big Bang," CERN spokesman James Gillies told AFP.

Cheers and applause erupted in separate control rooms as the detectors recorded the collisions of sub atomic particles on computer screen graphs.

"We're certainly going to do the same thing several times over the coming week and hundreds of times over the year," said Steve Myers, CERN's Director for Accelerators and Technology.

Myers had likened the attempt to firing needles from either side of the Atlantic and getting them to collide half way, while the particles sped around the ring more than 5,000 times a second.

Khondoker Khaled Bin Ahmed, product management executive of Global Brand Ltd, a distributor of Asus brand, said they sold only 10 laptops on the opening day.

"This is frustrating. We sold almost double the number on the opening day at the laptop fair in January this year," he said.

However, he was hopeful about getting expected sales on the two public holidays -- today and tomorrow.

Giasuddin Ahmed of Bangladesh Computer Samity said around 3,000 laptops were sold at the last year's fair, and they hope to sell more than 5,000 units this time.

Mobile phone operator Robi is the title sponsor of the exposition, while Acer, Asus, HP and Lenovo are the co-sponsors.

Around 45 tech-based service providers are showcasing their products, including computer accessories, cameras, USB (universal serial bus) devices, printers, laptops, netbooks, software, CDs and magazines, at the fair.

Bangladesh Computer Samity in association with the ICT Business



Council of the commerce ministry has organised the show.

The fair will remain open for all from 10am to 8pm with an entry fee of Tk 20 per person.

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New ASUS notebook hits market

IT.TELECOM DESK

Global Brand Pvt. Ltd, authorised distributor of ASUS, one of the leading computer hardware and accessories maker in the world, introduced its latest ASUS K40IJ-T4400 notebook in the local market, says a press release.

The notebook is designed to provide a no-frills computing experience to users on the go.

Boasting the muscle to provide cinematic audio and visual enjoyment, users can experience immersive entertainment anytime, anywhere in comfort and style.

It comes with a 14" high definition LED backlit display and a 16:9 golden aspect ratio which provides high contrast rate and color saturation. An Altec Lansing speaker complemented by SRS Premium Sound technology with virtual surround sound offers high definition audio enjoyment.



Designed to provide users with a comfortable mobile computing experience, the ASUS K40IJ-T4400 features Intel Dual Core 2.2 GHz processor, 2 GB DDR-2 RAM, 250 GB hard disk, DVD writer, webcam, Wi-Fi (IEEE 802.11b/g/n), card reader, external Bluetooth etc.

The product has a price tag of Tk 39,500.

iPad set for launch tomorrow

AFP, San Francisco

The Apple iPad launches in the US on Saturday with an apparent deluge of early online orders indicating that the tablet computers will be another big hit for the company.

The iPad "connects users with their apps and content in a far more intimate and fun way than ever before," Apple chief executive Steve Jobs said Monday in a statement.

"We can't wait for users to get their hands and fingers on it this weekend."

Apple promised that its latest creation will be available in the company's retail shops and at Best Buy consumer electronics chain stores beginning at 9:00 in the morning in respective US time zones.

People who ordered iPad devices early should receive them on Saturday as well.

Demand for iPads has evidently blasted past Apple expectations and as of Monday notations at the online Apple Store alerted buyers that new orders would not be shipped until April 12 or "late April" depending on models.

"It does have the appearance that Apple has another pretty big hit on its hands," Altimeter Group partner Michael Gartenberg told AFP on Monday.

"It never hurts initially to have demand outstrip supply by a little bit. As a general rule, people want what they can't have."

Apple likely wants to make certain that there are iPads on store shelves for people that show up on Saturday wanting to get their hands on a device that Jobs said must be held to be truly appreciated.

Apple has not released details of how many iPads will be available for the Saturday launch but some estimates put the figure as high as a sev-



eral hundred thousand.

"My guess is that the numbers are going to be pretty impressive," Gartenberg said of the iPad sales debut.

"This is significant considering these are people who haven't seen or touched an iPad and are simply going on Apple's word."

Jobs unveiled the iPad in San Francisco on January 27, billing it as a "revolutionary" device that will carve out a home between smartphones and laptop computers.

Facts: The new Apple iPad
The iPad allows users to watch video, listen to music, play games, surf the Web or read electronic books.

The iPad also runs most of the 150,000 applications made for the iPod music player and the iPhone. Apple has promised that the device would come with "12 new innovative apps designed especially for iPad."

While Apple is making a powerful debut in the tablet computer market "everyone and their brother" will be fielding competing devices by the end of this year, according to analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group in Silicon Valley.

A major Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas early this year was rife with companies showing off new tablet computers. The iPad poses an

immediate threat to Amazon.com's popular Kindle electronic readers.

"It isn't certain Apple will dominate the tablet market," Enderle said. "The key part will be content. If Apple doesn't get the content deals, the iPad stays with Apple fans."

YouTube redesigns website

AFP, California

Google-owned YouTube on Wednesday rolled out a major redesign aimed at clearing out visual noise and capturing the attention of viewers at the super-star-video-sharing website.

"We really felt like we needed to step back and remove the clutter," Google product manager Shiva Rajaraman said as he provided an in-depth look at the revamped YouTube home page to be fully rolled out by late Wednesday.

"Changes are based on how people actually use YouTube."

YouTube engineers said they studied the way people behave at the website and modified the home page accordingly. The number of links on the page have been cut by more than half.

Information about videos is grouped in one place and one side of the page is devoted to viewing recommendations personalised to what visitors are evidently seeking.

There is a cleaned up "actions bar" for sharing, flagging or embedding videos. Modified playlist tools make it easier to queue

up videos for viewing or skip from one to another.

YouTube eliminated a five-star ranking system and replaced it with a simple "likes/dislikes" choice for viewers.

Makers of videos will get spotlights in



YouTube comment forums and be able to add brand names to titles of their works.

YouTube has been testing the new page design with some users for about two months but the changes will spread across the entire video-sharing service by the end of Wednesday.

TECHPHOTO
Robosaurus
Robosaurus, a five storey, 27 tonne, fire breathing, car eating robot, sets fire to a car before dropping it to the ground during a Sydney Royal Easter Show media preview on March 30. More than 30 high tech companies took two years to create this state-of-the-art hydraulic electrical and mechanical monster, which will be one of the high-lights of the Easter Show.



PHOTO: AFP

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