

Mid-range PCs all the rage

Computer fair comes to an end

MEHDI MUSHARRAF BHUIYAN

The country's biggest IT showcase -- BCS ICT World 2010 -- ended in Dhaka yesterday, with the local market witnessing a shift towards mid-range personal computers.

Better configuration, rather than the price range, became the determining factor in laptop sales during this year's gala event. Top vendors hailed this change as a significant uplift in consumer behaviour within the local IT market.

The Intel Core i3 and Core i5 laptops were top choices among prospective computer buyers, as hi-tech enthusiasts bank on the latest range of microprocessors to ensure speed and an efficient computing experience.

"Surely, the Core i series is the hottest deal now," said Shafiul Alam Shohag of Computer Source, a leading IT vendor that showcased a range of HP, Dell and Apple notebooks at the event.

"People don't look for prices any more; they look for superior performance. And if they cannot afford the highest range, they opt for the mid-range varieties," said Shohag.

"For example, in case of HP notebooks, the most coveted models are the HP Compaq CQ42-168TU, Probook 4420s and HP Pavilion DV6-3016TX, most of which are priced between Tk 45,000 to Tk 60,000, but quite essentially, they feature Core i5 or i3."

"Credit also goes to Intel's aggressive marketing worldwide for promoting its i series, which made the i core processors the most obvious choice for the tech savvies," said Salauddin Mohammad Adde of Flora Ltd.

"The Core i logo was everywhere -- on billboards, cable TV channel advertisements. As a result, even those who work with the simplest of operations, they know and opt for the Core i series," he added.

Apart from the shift towards the higher priced varieties, top retailers observed a relative decline in the popularity of the ultra portable netbooks, which took the local computer market up by storm a couple of years back.

"This is because local buyers are now more cautious about getting optimised performance from their personal computers, instead of just portability and light weight," said a vendor.

A wide range of printers, scanners, optical hard drives, motherboards and other IT accessories, including an exclusive range of sound systems, are other major attractions at the fair.

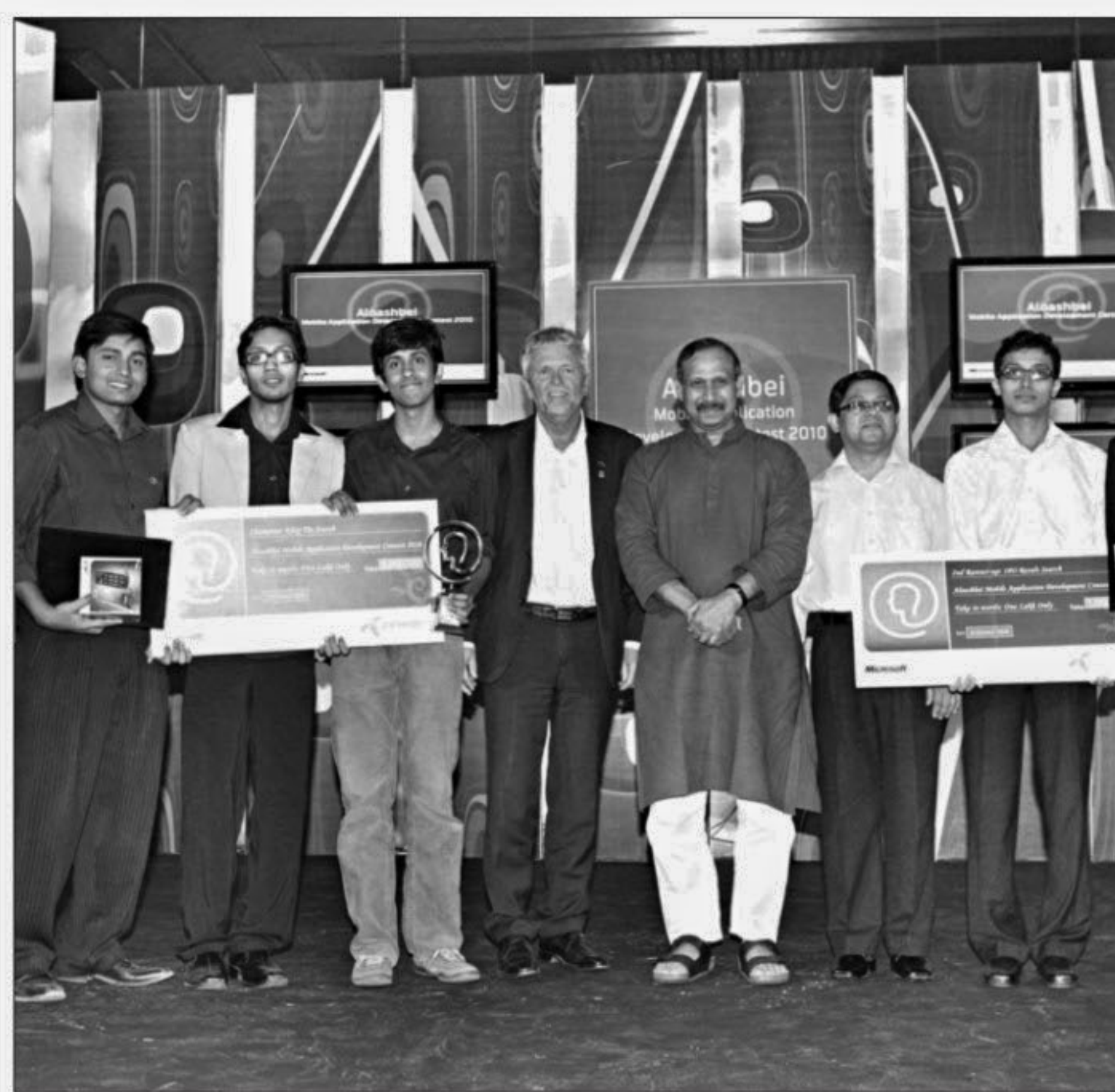
Beginning Saturday, the four-day annual event drew in huge crowds, especially from the younger segment of customers. Organisers termed the event a major success.

Vendors reported a boom in sales during this year's fair, as officials at some of the big stalls and pavilions said that they sold 50 laptops on average a day.

"This year's IT event, if nothing else, proves one thing. That is -- our local consumers are now more inclined to adopting the latest technology despite their limited income capacity," said Mustafa Jabbar, president of Bangladesh Computer Samity, the national organisation of IT companies.

"Especially, our younger generation -- they are not ready to compromise on quality for quantity, when it comes to technology."

Mehdi@thedailystar.net



Yeafesh Osman, state minister for science and information and communication technology, and Oddvar Hesjedal, chief executive officer of Grameenphone, pose with the winners of Aloashbei contest in Dhaka on Sunday.

'Aloashbei' winners awarded

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The winners of Aloashbei, an online talent hunt programme for mobile application developers, were awarded at a ceremony in Dhaka on Sunday.

Grameenphone, in association with Microsoft, introduced the contest in June.

Yeafesh Osman, state minister for science and information and communication technology, handed over the awards.

Oddvar Hesjedal, chief executive of Grameenphone, Feroz Mahmud, country manager of Microsoft Bangladesh, and Mahboob Zaman, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), were also present.

The team of three lecturers of American International University-Bangladesh -- Md Avishek Ahmed, M Parvez Rashid and Khalid Mahmood -- were the champions. They developed the application 'KhojThe Search'.

Shiblee Intiaz Hasan, a final year undergraduate student in computer science of BRAC University, came in second with 'Finder Ultimate'.

A team consisting of Sheikh Shaer Hassan, Fuad Bin Omar and Md Fattahul Alam from Nascenia Ltd stood third with the application 'Initial public offering result search'.

Along with crests and certificates, the winner received Tk 5 lakh, the first runner-up Tk 2 lakh and the third runner-up got Tk 1 lakh.

The winners will get a chance to commercialise their applications with Grameenphone, subject to commercial attractiveness, the telecom operator said.

Social business summit starts in Germany tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The second Global Social Business Summit, a two-day conference designed for the academics, businessmen, technology leaders and young people practicing and promoting social business, starts tomorrow in Germany.

The November 4-5 summit will dwell on social business experiences, its structure and management, lessons learnt from the existing social businesses around the world.

Expert meetings, social business panels and a marketplace for social businesses will be the main attractions of the event, where approximately 250 persons from all over the world are expected to attend.

Social business, championed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, is a cause-driven business, which allows the investors or owners to gradually recoup the money invested but not to take any dividend.

The purpose of the investment is purely to achieve one or more social objectives through the operation of any company, and no personal gain is desired by the investors.

Confirmed speakers at the summit include among others Prof Yunus, Danone Group Co-chief Executive Officer Emmanuel Faber, Adidas CEO Herbert Hainer, chemical giant BASF CEO Dr Humbrecht and Otto Group Chairman Michael Otto.

Brazilian author Paulo Coelho,

Indian film director Shekhar Kapur and Grand Duchess Maria-Teresa of Luxembourg will also attend the global event, said organisers.

Delegations, including ministers, governors and mayors, from several countries will attend the summit to be held at the conference centre of the Volkswagen car company in Wolfsburg, Germany.

The Grameen Creative Lab, a joint venture between Prof Yunus and serial entrepreneur Hans Reitz, which aims to raise awareness about social business, will host the summit, as part of Grameen's efforts to share and address the impact of social business.

The first-ever such summit took place in Germany in the same month a year ago.



Shafiqul Alam Khan, deputy managing director of Pubali Bank, opens the second electronics showroom of Rahimafrooz Distribution at Tangail in Dhaka recently. Niaz Rahim, group director of Rahimafrooz, was also present.

BMW 5 series car hits Bangladesh market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The world-class BMW 5 series motor vehicles have hit Bangladesh market with an aim to tap the growing demand for luxury cars here.

The acclaimed automobile, a trademark product of German automaker Bayerische Motoren Werke AG, has been touted for its sporting and elegant looks as well as aesthetic designs and superior driving experience.

The state of the art motor vehicle was formally launched through a ceremony held at Radisson Water Garden hotel in the city on Monday night.

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, German Ambassador in Bangladesh Holger Michael and Managing Director of BMW Group Asia Johannes Seibert were present at the event.

To begin with, the BMW 520d Sedan model of BMW 5 series will be available in the local showrooms from today, followed by 523i varieties in months to come, according to representatives of Executive Motors, the sole distributor of BMW vehicles in Bangladesh.

The new 520d models will be priced at Tk 1 crore 6 lakh in the local market.

"The introduction of the luxury brands like BMW 5 is a proof of the rising income level and growing economic capacity of Bangladesh", Commerce Minister Faruk Khan told the launching ceremony.

"Despite global recession, Bangladesh posted a significant rise in its export last year and the country has been dubbed as 'next eleven' by the global pool of economists".

Nevertheless, noting the sorry state of the road and communication infrastructure in the capital, the minister said, "The government is planning to build at least one elevated expressway and a

number of flyovers adjoining various part of the capital within the next two to three years".

Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director of BMW Group Asia Johannes Seibert said, "Bangladesh and the whole Asia-Pacific region has turned out to be a robust growing market for BMW vehicles in recent decades".

"In China alone, German car sales went up by almost 40 percent last year", Seibert added.

"Each year, we're selling 50 to 100 units of BMW vehicles in Bangladesh market alone", he said.

German Ambassador in Bangladesh Holger Michael said, "Soccer and automobile are the two integral parts of German culture and almost 70 percent of the German cars are exported, which are known worldwide for their quality and elegance".

"In the recent months, we've seen a significant influx of prospective German investors in Bangladesh, which bears the testimony of growing economic relations between the two countries".

With the longest wheelbase in the segment, a long and sleek engine compartment lid, short overhangs front and rear and a graceful roofline, the new BMW 5 Series Sedan stands out from competition, BMW officials said.

"Already, we've received booking for almost 20 such BMW 5 vehicles from Bangladesh customers", Steibert said.

The latest BMW 5 Series Sedan, which is in its sixth generation, comes with a four-cylinder turbo diesel with an aluminium crankcase and common-rail direct injection. Average fuel consumption in the Eu5 test cycle is just 5.2 litres per 100 kilometres, while CO2 emission rate is 137g/km.

DSE commends govt move to offload shares

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday greeted the government's move to offload its holdings in eight listed companies within 20 days, saying it will strengthen the supply side of stocks in the market.

"We welcome the move by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Finance Minister AMA Muhith to intervene in the market and offload the government's holdings in eight listed companies within 20 days," said Md Shakil Rizvi, president of DSE, at a press briefing.

"The additional shares will strengthen the supply side in the market, which will help the capital market achieve sustainable growth," added the DSE president.

The landmark decision came after the prime minister assured clearing the years of bureaucratic tangles in offloading shares.

The eight companies are: Titas Gas, Atlas, Desco, Powergrid, Meghna Petroleum, Padma Oil, Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) and National Tubes.

At present, the government owns a 75 percent stake in DESCO, 76.25 percent in Powergrid, 70 percent in Meghna Petroleum, 75 percent in Titas Gas, 51 percent in Atlas Bangladesh, 50.35 percent in Padma Oil, 87.5 percent in BSC and 52.94 percent in National Tubes.

The DSE president contended the misconception that the government would lose controlling power if it did not hold a 51 percent stake at the least.

The governments of many countries, such as India and China, are holding controlling power with just 10-20 percent in holdings, he added.

Rakibur Rahman, the immediate past president of DSE, welcomed the government move and said it will stabilise the market.

Rahman, also a DSE director, recently met the prime minister and briefed her on the steps the government should take to stabilise the market.

In addition, DSE will organise a roadshow to encourage entrepreneurs to come to the capital market by December, added Rahman.

Turkish Airlines to connect Dhaka next month

PM Erdoğan due Nov 13

UNB, Dhaka

Turkish Airlines will launch its Istanbul-Karachi-Dhaka flight next month.

This was disclosed when newly appointed Bangladesh Ambassador to Turkey Zulfikar Rahman presented his credentials to President Abdullah Gül Monday.

Rahman thanked the Turkish president for his initiative and hoped that a direct flight between Istanbul and Dhaka would be introduced soon.

Putting emphasis on air connectivity between the two countries, President Abdullah Gül said such connectivity will stimulate trade and investment.

He assured Bangladesh envoy of a direct

air link with Dhaka soon.

During the meeting with the Turkish president, the ambassador pointed to the increasing trade and investment.

He requested the president to encourage Turkish entrepreneurs to invest in Bangladesh taking advantage of Bangladesh's investor-friendly environment.

Rahman said all sectors were open to Turkish investment, but Dhaka will appreciate investment in agro-food processing industry, as desired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for ensuring food security.

The ambassador also discussed the forthcoming two-day visit of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Dhaka from November 13.

Debate competition on poverty starts today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A six-day college debate competition kicks off in Dhaka today in a bid to create awareness among youngsters about eliminating extreme poverty from the country.

This was disclosed at a press conference at Bangladesh Asiatic Society yesterday.

Eleven colleges and five madrasas in the capital will take part in the 'Inter-College Debate Competition 2010' to be held at the Bangladesh Asiatic Society hall.

In association with Dhaka University Debating Society, BRAC Advocacy Unit is organising the event.

Around 40 percent of the country's about 160 million people live under the poverty line who fail to afford 2,122 kilocalorie in their daily food intake.

The competition aims at creating awareness among the current generation about the disadvantaged segment of the society, said Sk Mojibul Huq, manager of BRAC Advocacy and Human Rights Unit.

REHAB fair opens tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A five-day housing fair is set to kick off tomorrow in an effort to revive the housing sector from the impact of global recession.

The Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) is organising the event.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the fair, REHAB Vision Fair 2010, at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

"The country's housing market has experienced a 'go slow' spell due to global recession because a major segment of our buyers are non-resident Bangladeshis. As a result, the local realtors are suffering with low revenue," said Nasrul Hamid, president of REHAB.

"At the fair, developers will get a chance to offer products and services that would give consumers a clear idea of the accommodation facilities available at affordable prices," he said.

"This time, participants intend to mainly showcase medium- and low-priced apartments for the middle and lower-middle income groups of people," he told a press conference at the National Press Club in Dhaka yesterday.

The size of the local housing market stands at Tk 20,000 crore a year and the sector contributes 15 percent to GDP, said the REHAB boss.

The exposition will take place at the international trade fair grounds at Agargaon. A total of 306 participants, including 304 REHAB members, will showcase their products at the fair. Two financial institutions will also attend, offering housing loans.

The fair will remain open from 10am to 9pm with an entry fee of Tk 20 a person.

Sultana Shaheda Islam, senior vice president, and Murad Iqbal Chowdhury, general secretary of REHAB, were also present.



City Bank and American Express (Amex) have recently signed an agreement with Banglalion Communications in Dhaka to provide Banglalion USB at Tk 999 and indoor device with WiFi at Tk 1,450 to Amex credit and corporate cardholders. City Bank Deputy Managing Director Ehsan Khashru and Chief Commercial Officer of Banglalion Md Shafiul Haque Chowdhury inked the deal.