



Net users grow, contents not

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Country's number of internet users has shot up sharply in the last couple of years thanks to an all-powerful nationwide presence of mobile technology.

There are over 80 lakh internet users in the country, which will soon cross one-crore mark, keeping pace with the boom in mobile users, according to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

Mobile subscribers base recorded nearly 31 percent growth in 2010 to take the total user number to 6.86 crore, according to the industry regulator.

But Bangladesh's internet usage has been confined to only social networking, chatting, browsing for jobs, scores for a cricket match or reading news reports due to dearth of local contents on the powerful World Wide Web.

Low-cost nature of handsets owned by most Bangladeshi also limits them to voicing, messaging or playing games, unlike smartphones and other handhelds that offers a range of options.

Meanwhile, the number of Bangladeshi users on various social networking sites has also increased sharply, with popular social networking site Facebook reaching the 1 million mark last year. But the development of mobile phone applications for local users has not happened significantly.

Mozharul Islam, a university graduate, spends four to five hours a day in front of his personal computer screen.

"I only use my personal computer for playing games, for chatting with friends and sharing updates on facebook. I also search sites for jobs," he said.

The 28-year-old is not alone; rather he represents the country's growing clan of internet users.

Industry people also admit that the country is still in its infancy when it comes to internet usage, due to lack of local contents.

Rashed Amin, joint secretary general of Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh, said there are about 60 ISPs in the country, providing over 2 lakh connections.

"These connections are regular. I think these connections have taken internet facilities to at least 6 lakh people," he said.

Amin said internet penetration rate in Bangladesh has shot up after mobile operators introduced internet modems.

Grameenphone, leading mobile operator in Bangladesh with 2.9 crore active connections, also maintains about 2.5 lakh modem users, becoming

the largest internet service provider.

Citycell, the lone CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access) technology-based mobile phone operator in Bangladesh, is ranked fifth out of six operators. But the oldest mobile operator has outpaced most of its competitors by introducing modems for internet users. Currently, it has over 1.5 lakh Citycell Zoom users, according to officials.

Abu Saeed Khan, secretary general, Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh, said Bangladesh has already been brought under internet coverage thanks to mobile technology.

"It is not necessary that we have to have wired

"People will be interested in internet if they can find details about land and records, can apply for bank loans, pay income taxes or apply for jobs."

He said there is no alternative for the government but to allow 3G license if it really wants to take internet facilities to the people and achieve the vision of 'Digital Bangladesh'.

Jabber said the government also needs to reduce price for bandwidth to deepen internet penetration. "Mobile penetration in the country has boomed because of its low cost, and also the call charge is lower. The same can be true for

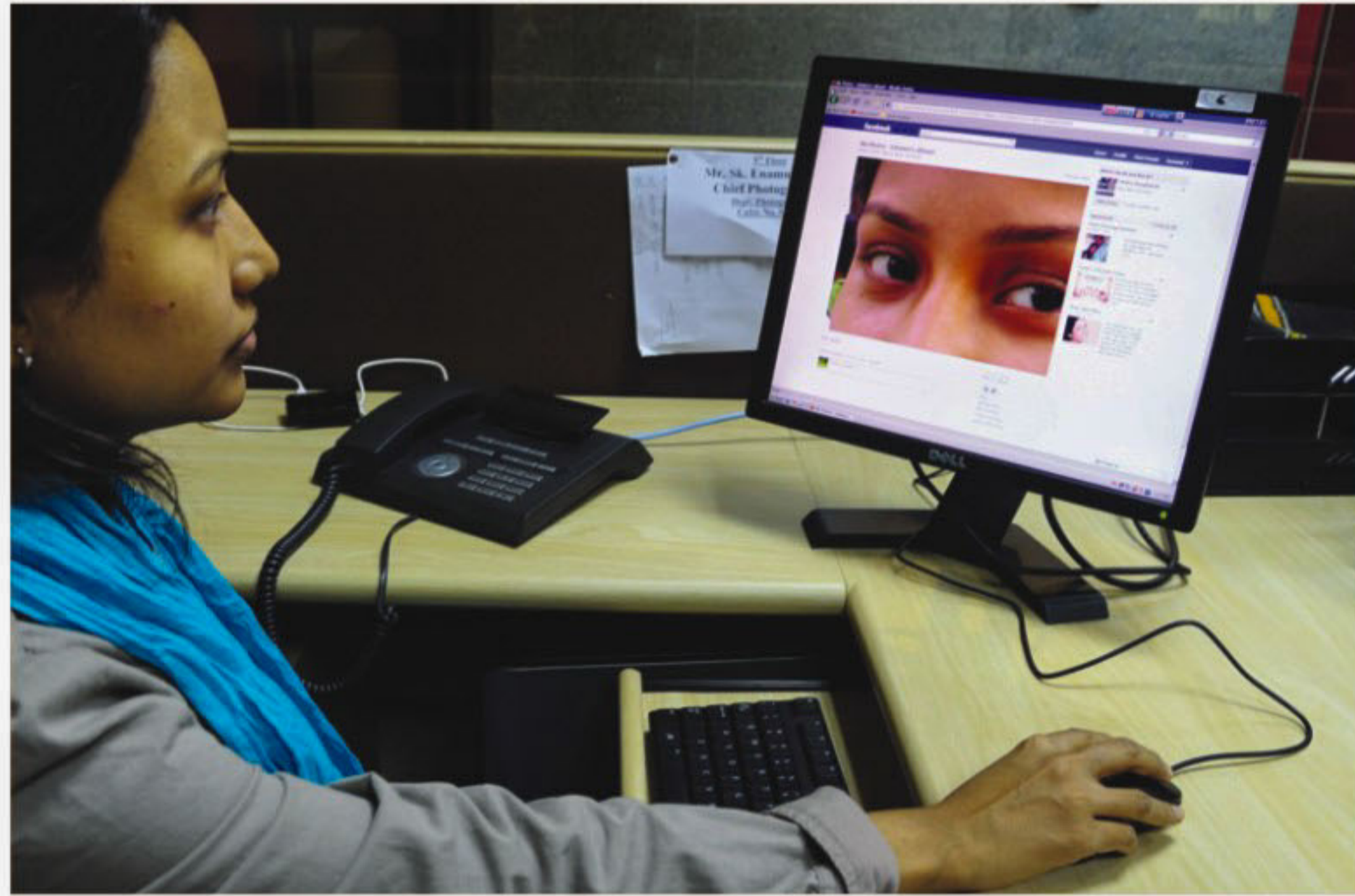


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

connections for internet penetration. The further reach of the internet now depends on the government's decision on spectrum allocation," he added.

BCS President Mustafa Jabber said there must be contents for the prospective local internet users to take the internet penetration rate much higher.

"We have to understand why a farmer will browse on the net. A student cannot take internet connection just to chat with friends on facebook," he said. "So, we have to develop contents in the areas of education, agriculture and health."

internet penetration."

He also urged the mobile operators to spend money in developing contents for local users.

Bangladesh also lacks in developing online contents for school children although the segment is going to be the main internet users in the near future.

Amin of ISPs Association said the number of local contents on the web is increasing gradually keeping pace with the penetration rate. He however said there is nothing for the children on the web other than gaming.

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Can Apple thrive without its visionary CEO?

AP, San Francisco

If investors were as visionary as Steve Jobs has proved to be during his 35 years of tech wizardry, they might be able to figure out whether Apple can still thrive if its founder and CEO doesn't return from his indefinite medical leave.

But Jobs' prescience is a rarity, which is why doubt and anxiety will probably hang over the company until his fate is clearer.

The iPod-iPhone-iPad revolution that Jobs unleashed over the past decade should ensure that Apple's revenue and earnings keep growing for at least the next two to three years, according to analysts. What's more, Jobs has assembled and trained a savvy, hard-driving management team that should be capable of following his road map for the company.

The question is whether Apple can remain a step ahead and develop products that reshape technology, media and pop culture if Jobs isn't around to divine the next big thing.

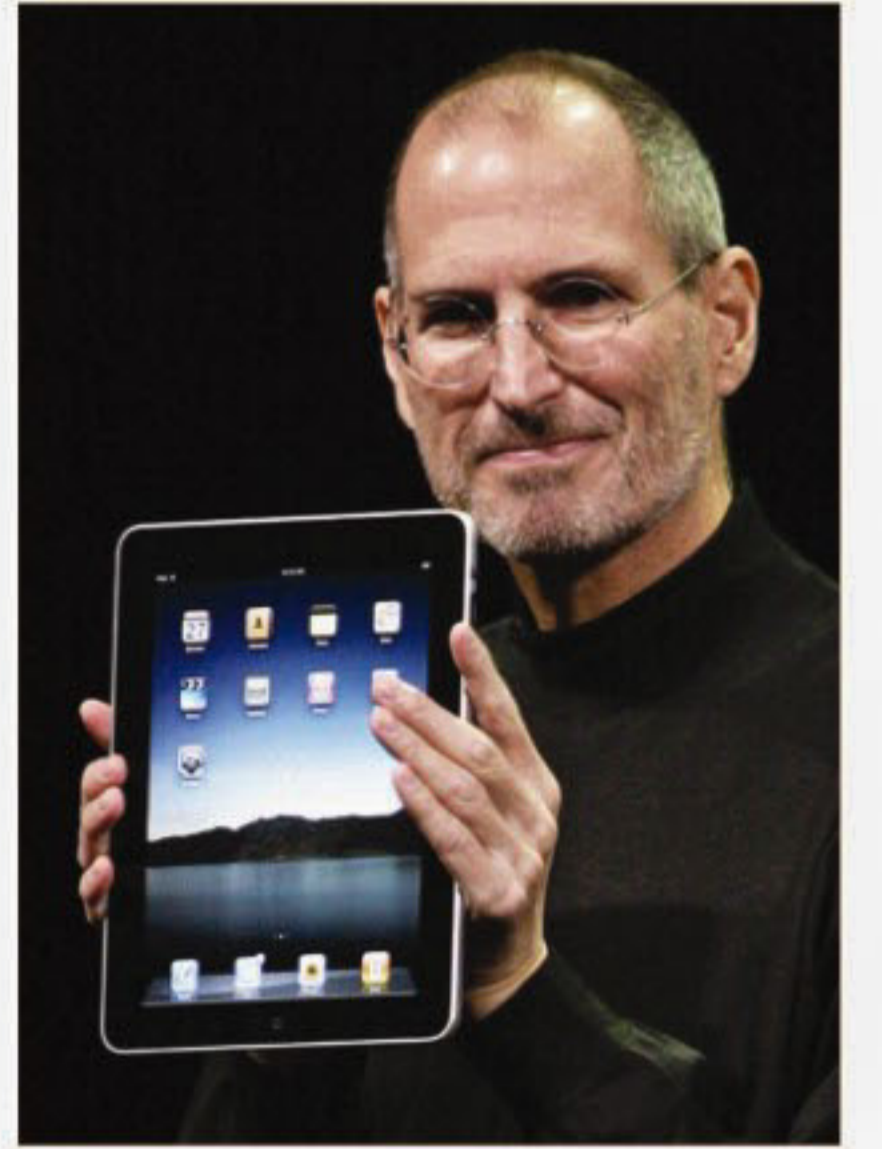
Without Jobs, "Apple is a lot more like other companies. Its extraordinariness fades," says technology analyst Roger Kay of Endpoint Technologies Associates.

Apple Inc. announced Monday that Jobs, who co-founded the company in 1976, would take an indefinite medical leave for unspecified problems. The leave could be related to his previous bout with pancreatic cancer or his 2009 liver transplant.

Jobs' value is difficult to gauge because of the sheer force of his personality, said Robert Sutton, a professor of management science at Stanford University who has studied Jobs and Apple. "Anyone who thinks they can estimate that is probably lying," Sutton says.

Apple barely missed a beat the last time Jobs was gone, and its stock climbed more than 60 percent as sales of the iPhone and Mac computers surged, even as the recession dragged on. That's a testament to Apple's chief operating officer, Tim Cook, who will be in charge while Jobs is away once again.

In a Tuesday conference call to discuss Apple's earnings, Cook predicted Apple will still shine.



City IT Fair ends tomorrow



said A L Mojhar Imam Chowdhury (Pinu) convener of the fair, expressing his satisfaction.

Digital cameras are seemed to be on the top of the priority lists of the visitors this year. Beside cameras, consumers are also keen on buying LCD and LED monitors.

Renowned ICT companies and brands are taking part in the fair. Apart from the hardware and software products, the fair has various quiz, painting, gaming, photography contests and debates going on every day.

"Knowledge Management Zone" is the new addition to the fair, where important information and breakthroughs in the ICT sector of the country are being presented to the audience.

The fair is open from 10am to 8pm. The entry fee is Tk 10. However, the fee is not required for the students and disabled persons.

IT.TELECOM DESK

The City IT fair 2011, the biggest hi-tech exposition in the country will end tomorrow that started on January 13 at the BCS Computer City in the capital.

"Visitors are responding as expected",

Spectrum, D-Link honour consumers

IT.TELECOM REPORT

Spectrum Engineering Consortium Limited and popular IT networking device manufacturer D-Link recently jointly organised a programme to honour their consumers.

Latest edition of D-Link writers, storage solutions, IP surveillance cameras and smart networking switches were also showcased in the programme as well.

High-ups from both the organisations spoke on the occasion held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.



Nintendo 3DS out in March

AFP, San Francisco

Japanese videogame titan Nintendo on Wednesday announced that the hotly anticipated glasses-free 3-D version of its DS handheld gaming gadget will hit Europe and the United States in March.

Nintendo 3DS devices will be priced at \$250 in the United States and at comparable prices in European markets, according to the firm.

"Nintendo 3DS is a category of one -- the experience simply doesn't exist anywhere else," said Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime.

"You have to see Nintendo 3DS to believe it. And it's like nothing you've ever seen before."

The gaming gadgets feature the trademark dual screens (DS), but only one of them can be controlled by touch with a stylus because "it turns out a touch screen and a 3-D screen don't get along very well," Nintendo President Satoru Iwata

said while unveiling 3DS at a major US videogame show last year.

Nintendo 3DS devices are built with twin cameras on the outside so users can also take pictures in 3-D.

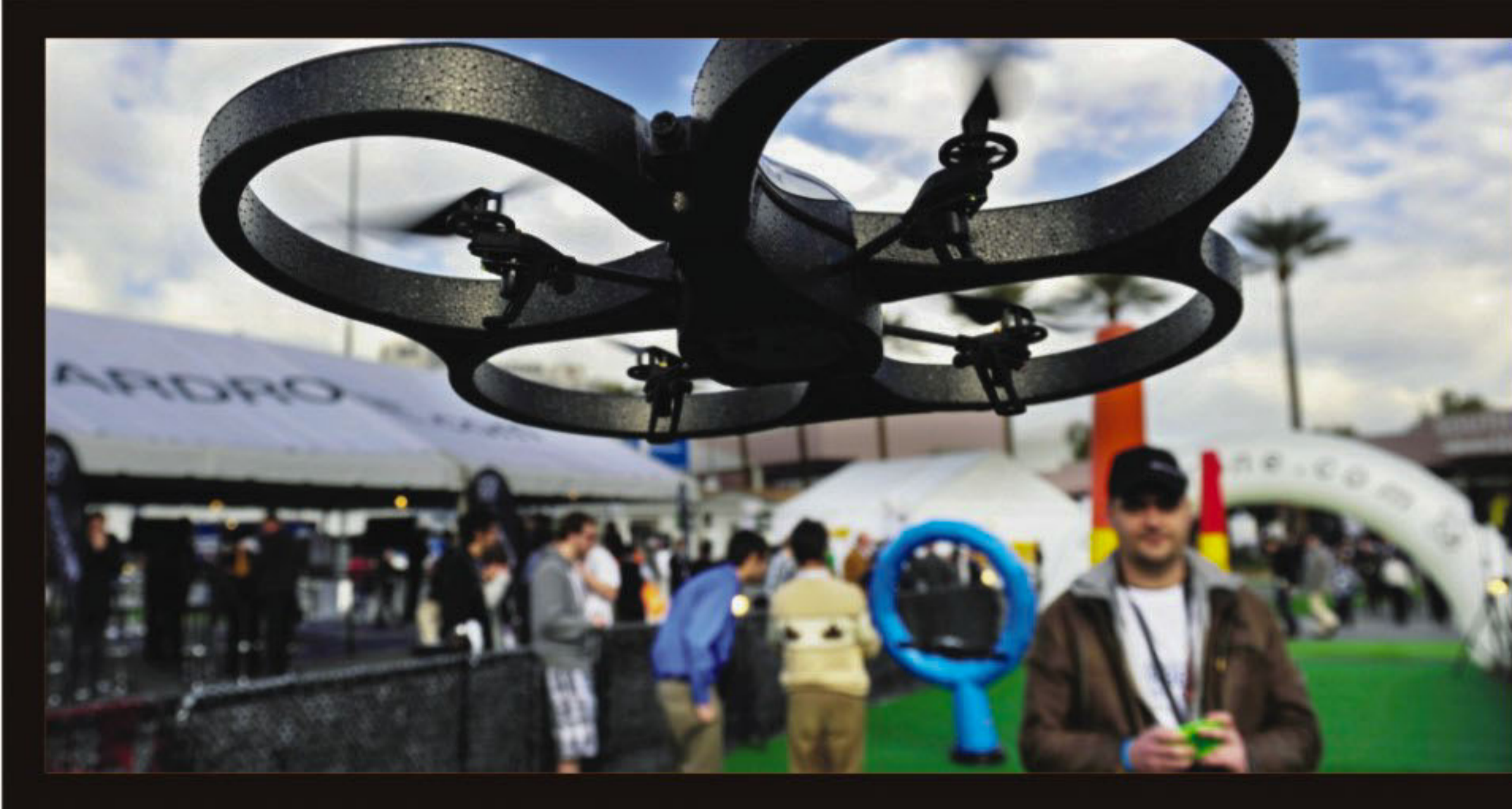
3-D movies are also watchable on the gadgets, according to Iwata.

Nintendo 3DS has built-in motion sensors that the Japanese videogame giant hopes will inspire software makers.

More than 30 games tailored for play on the 3DS will be released by early June, according to Nintendo.

French videogame maker Ubisoft announced on Wednesday that it will have eight titles including "Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell" and "Rayman" available for the 3DS in the first half of this year.

"Ubisoft's creative teams have developed a rich and diverse line-up of games that take advantage of the amazing innovations that Nintendo has designed with its new handheld platform," said Ubisoft chief executive Yves Guillemot.



TECHPHOTO Parrot AR.Drone

An attendee uses a iPhone to control a Parrot AR.Drone at the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. The AR Drone is a remote-controlled helicopter equipped with two cameras and controlled over Wi-Fi from an iPhone. Parrot introduced at CES its newest AR.Drone dogfighting game, "Flying Ace" which features augmented reality machine gun and missiles.

PHOTO: AFP



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