Changing the web forever?

Tech giants protest against two online anti-piracy US bills

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Those of you who visited Wikipedia's English page, Google, Mozilla, Wordpress or Reddit on January 18 might have thought that they have changed the outlook and black was the in thing in web designing, but these major websites censored their own sites to observe the "blackout" protest against two online anti-piracy US bills SOPA and PIPA- currently under consideration on Capitol Hill.

The websites censored their pages with black bars and blacked-out pages.

You now must be wondering what SOPA and PIPA actually are? What is the big deal about these anti-piracy bills that such big online players had to protest it in such a way?

Imagine posting a video online of your cousin's wedding, where the young ones put on a dance show to current super hit movie songs or tunes and you want to show relatives and friends in Sylhet or Sydney or wherever who couldn't make it and say anybody in the world interested in checking out what goes on in a Dhaka wedding.

The site, where you posted the video, is accused of copyright infringement and gets a notice to shut down, along with its sources for operating costs because of the background music.

Although the video is non-commercial for users, it's a commercial asset to the site, which uses ad revenue to cover operating costs, make profits, etc.

With SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) and PIPA (Protect IP Act), the accuser has the power to cut the site's funding, leading to shutdown, not just the video posting site, but any sites like it.

SOPA and PIPA are the two US bills that are intended to strengthen protections against copyright infringement and intellectual property theft, but internet advocates say they would suppress expression on the internet.

Those who support the bills say the SOPA and PIPA will protect the intellectual property (IP) rights of music, movie and TV studios.

The bills would give the US Justice Department the power to go after foreign websites willfully committing or facilitating intellectual property theft -- "rogue" sites like The Pirate Bay for an example. The US government would be able to force US-based companies, like internet service providers, credit card companies and online advertisers, to cut off ties with those sites.

Quite a few companies including the music and film industries are supporting the bills.

Content groups like the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and business representatives like the US Chamber of Commerce, say that innovation and jobs in content-creating industries are threatened by growing internet piracy. Foreign websites are safe haven for internet pirates profiting off their content, they say.

On the other hand the websites and tech giants against the bills argue that SOPA and PIPA would allow for a censoring of the internet that would forever alter the web.

Those who are opposing the bill say SOPA has a vague language which would create devastating new tools for silencing legitimate speech all around the web. And they are sure that the vague language will be abused.

According to EFF (Electronic Frontier Foundation), the bill targets nearly any site that hosts user--generated content, or even just has a search function, by failing to provide protections for legal speech.

The opposition of the bill includes civil liberties and human rights organisations, tech industry leaders, security experts, legal scholars, bipartisan legislators, and many more.

When asked, Sumon Ahmed Sabir, managing director and director, BD Com Online Ltd said if the bills are passed, along with others, Bangladeshis may also face problems getting information on internet. For example, he said, if Wikipedia, the largest information source on the internet, gets shut down people around the globe will have problem in information gathering. However, Sumon hoped the bills would be withdrawn.

Huawei debuts mobile devices

IT & TELECOM DESK

Huawei, a leading global brand in the mobile broadband and convergence device field, on Wednesday for the first time unveiled a suite of world class mobile devices including Android smartphones, Android tablet, touch phones, messaging phones and music phones in the country, which are designed to give users a simple and enjoyable mobile experience.

The products include Huawei S7 SLIM, Huawei U8800 Pro, Huawei U8650 Sonic, Huawei U8520 Duplex, Huawei G7206, Huawei G6150, Huawei G5510, Huawei G3620 and Huawei G2800s.

Alan Wong, CMO, Huawei Device, South Pacific Region, in his welcoming speech said "150 million people around the world are now using Huawei products and we have gained almost 90% of the market share in Asia, we also intend to become among the top three brands in coming two years" He also gave a brief description about the products.

"The philosophy for Huawei Device is to embrace the user-centric approach in creating smart, ubiquitous and converged mobile experiences that simplify our customer's lives", said Wong.

Huawei officials at the event said their products and solutions have been deployed in over 140 countries, serving more than one third of the world's population. The company also creates green solutions that enable customers to reduce power consumption, carbon emissions and resource costs.

Huawei officials pose with models during the event.

Online bookstore launched

IT&TELECOM REPORT

Rokomari.com, an online shopping portal, was launched in the city yesterday with a view to help both readers buy books without physically visiting any store and pay the bills upon receiving the delivery.

Noted litterateur Anisul Hoque and Munir Hasan, general secretary of Bangladesh Math Olympiad, inaugurated the store at a ceremony at a school in the city.

The site is planning to put 20,000 books up for online sale by February 1. Besides, books published at the upcoming Ekushey Book Fair will also be up for sale.

The site offers "Cash on Delivery" meaning buyers will not be needed to pay in advance to buy their books. They will pay the money once they receive the delivery.

Mahmudul Hasan Sohag, chairman of OnnoRokom Group, that owns the site, said that the site would help bring together writers, readers and publishers under one platform. This will take books to readers both at home and abroad.

He said readers would be able order for books online or via phone and can get the delivery of any amount of books at a delivery cost of only at Tk 30.

The young entrepreneur said they would deliver books within Dhaka city on the same day or the following day the order is made and three to five days if orders are made from outside of Dhaka.

People will be able to buy books from February 1 this year.

Guests at the launching of rokomari.com

BASIS SoftExpo on Feb 22-26

IT & TELECOM DESK

SoftExpo 2012, the largest exposition of software and ICT enabled services (ITES) will be held on February 22-26. Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), the organizers of the show announced that the event will take place at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

The theme for this year's softexpo's is 'Empowering Next Generation'.

BASIS officials at a press briefing on January 17 at its office said that this would be the 10th edition of SoftExpo, which they said will be relatively larger than the previous events with the participation of over 150 exhibitors.

Thirty technology companies from the Netherlands, Denmark and UK will also take part in the expo.

Code Warriors' Challenge, IT Innovation Search Programme, BASIS Freelancer of the year award, IT job fair and the gala award night would be the highlights of the SoftExpo.

There will also be 12 seminars, 12 technical sessions and 30 open discussions at the event.

Kaspersky: product of 2011

IT & TELECOM DESK

AV Comparatives, a renowned independent AV (anti-virus) software testing body declared Kaspersky as the product of the year 2011, says a press release.

In the summary report for 2011, AV Comparatives confirmed Kaspersky as the only AV software to have received the advanced+ award in every single test of all nine tests.

Kaspersky is also the most popular AV software in Bangladesh with the largest market share.

KASPERSKY ANTIVIRUS
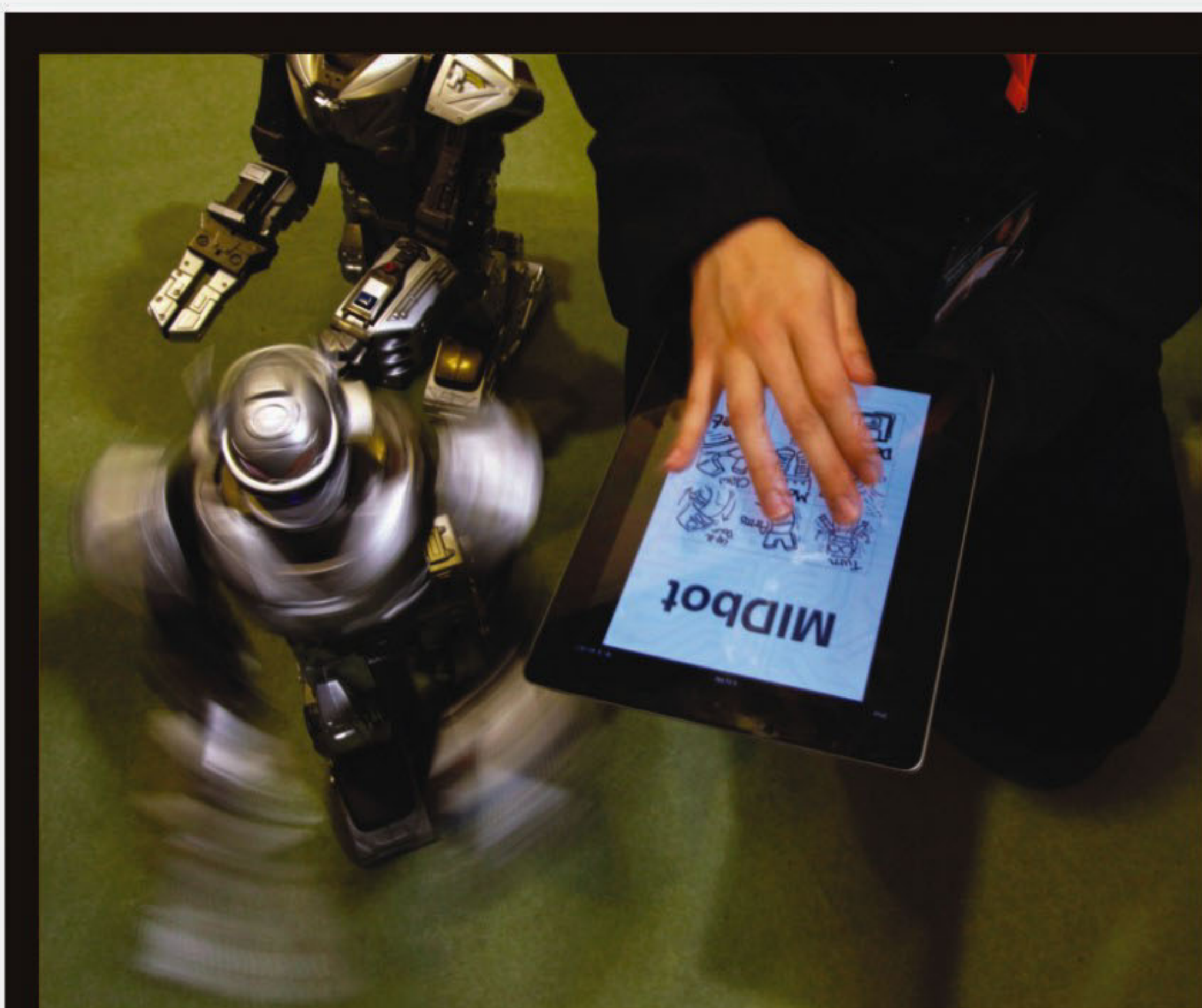
TECHPHOTO

Smart bot control

A robot moves while being controlled by a tablet computer app via bluetooth during the Hong Kong Toys and Games Fair January 10. The robot, claimed by the Hong Kong manufacturer to be the first toy to be controlled by bluetooth as compared to infra-red technology used in such toys in the past, which requires an extra device to be attached to the smartphone or tablet, is expected to sell between $200 and $250.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Akhoni.com launches new C&E section

IT & TELECOM DESK

Akhoni.com, an e-commerce venture of Bangladesh has launched computers and electronics (C&E) section on its website, says a press release.

Yeafesh Osman, state minister for science & technology ministry launched the section at the Qubee Laptop Fair.

Eminent ICT personality Mustafa Zabbar, Munir Hasan, general secretary of Bangladesh Math Olympiad and BCS Secretary General Shahid Al Munir were present as special guests on the occasion.

Shameem Ahsan, CEO of Akhoni.com gave a brief presentation on the new feature.

This new feature of the Akhoni.com will help customers order computers and electronics products online at deep discounts and get it delivered to their homes.