

ZEN Mobile launches feature phones

IT & TELECOM DESK

Targeting consumers from emerging markets, Indian mobile manufacturer Zen Mobile (Telecare Group) one of the top mobile brands in India, has announced their entry into Bangladesh with the launch of three new feature phones- M72i, M72+ and M72S.

Announcing the launch, Ravi Bashyam, director of Zen Mobile, said they will roll out 20-25 models of ZEN hand phones in the country by the end of this year and price will be vary from Tk 1,100 to Tk 20,000.

Maximising on productivity, the dual SIM M72+ bar phone captures high-quality blur free photos with a 1.3 megapixel flash camera. It features a QVGA screen size of 2.6-inch. The handset also features Bluetooth, GPRS, FM Radio, Image Viewer, Video Player, Music Equalizer, Music Player and expandable memory up to 16 GB. The device also offers a powerful torch, music box, amplifier with long-lasting battery lif. The phone has price tag of Tk 2,499.

The M72i is also a dual SIM phone with QVGA, 2.4-inch screen. The feature phone has a 1.3 megapixel flash light camera. Its li-ion battery has a capacity of 2000mAh and standby time of up to 1080 hours. The phone allows users to keep all their music, games using phone's external memory which is expandable up to 16 GB. The handset also features Bluetooth, GPRS, FM Radio, Image Viewer, Video Player, Music Equalizer and Music Player. The phone is available at Tk 2,399.

The third offering from ZEN is the dual SIM, M72S QVGA, 2.4-inch, feature phone. Like the other two models from the series, The M72S features a 1.3 megapixel camera, Bluetooth, GPRS, FM Radio, Image Viewer, Video Player, Music Equalizer, Music Player and a powerful torch. The phone is priced at Tk 2,999.



Ravi Bashyam displays Zen mobile sets at launch event.

Banglalink Grandmaster-Season 3 begins

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Banglalink at a press conference yesterday announced the opening of the Grandmaster-season3, the idea generation competition among students for developing best apps.

Project theme of this year is 'Mobile Applications that Make a Difference in People's Lives'.

The major selection criteria of the ideas are number of people to be benefitted, innovativeness, user friendliness, technical feasibility and commercial feasibility.

The contest stated receiving entries from yesterday which will end on July 30, giving all prospective participants a long window of time for their idea.

Following the submission stage, the top 15 teams will be short-listed by August 25 and will be groomed and trained for presentation of their projects.

The winner of the Grandmaster will receive Tk 2,00,000 and the 1stand 2nd runners Up will receive Tk 1,50,000 and Tk 1,00,000.00 respectively.

At the event, Shihab Ahmad, chief commercial officer of Banglalink said Grandmaster was wildly successful in the first two years, which is why it is back.

Students willing to participate need to form groups and register and submit their ideas through Banglalink's Facebook fan page 'Banglalinkmela'.

Ahmad also hoped some truly amazing apps will come out through this competition.



Microsoft woos developers with 're-blended' Windows

AFP, San Francisco

Microsoft on Wednesday courted application makers with a "re-blended" version of the overhauled Windows 8 operating system released late last year.

Windows 8.1 incorporated feedback from users and developers, and came with the promise that the US software giant was speeding up its release cycle to adapt to the dizzying pace of innovation in consumer technology.

"We pushed boldly in Windows 8 and got lots of feedback," Microsoft chief executive Steven Ballmer said while kicking off the company's BUILD developers conference in San Francisco.

"Users said 'Why don't you go refine the blend?,' he said. 'We will show you a refined blend of our desktop experience and our modern experience.'"

Cheers burst from the audience when Ballmer assured them that changes in Windows 8.1 included a return of the "Start" button icon on screens that provided shortcuts to commands and applications.

Microsoft made a preview version of Windows 8.1 available for developers online at preview.windows.com and said this was just the beginning of a shift to "rapid release" cycles for software.

"Rapid release cadences are absolutely essential to what we are doing," Ballmer said.

"It is about the transformation that we are going through as a company to move at an absolutely rapid release cycle; our transformation from a software company to a company building software-powered devices and services."

Windows 8.1 remains true to the vision of an operating system tuned for touch-screen controls and multi-gadget lifestyles increasingly revolving around tablets



Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer speaks during the keynote address during the Microsoft Build Conference in San Francisco, California. PHOTO: AFP

and smartphones, according to Microsoft.

"When we rolled out Windows we talked about touch, touch, touch," Ballmer said, noting that when people went to stores there was a dearth of Windows-powered touch computers.

He said there would be a "proliferation" of small Windows tablets released in the coming months.

Microsoft used the keynote presentation before BUILD's six thousand attendees to showcase Windows-powered devices ranging from Nokia Lumia smartphones to Lenovo and Acer devices as well as Microsoft's own Surface Pro tablet.

"You will see an outpouring of new devices that are notebook computers in every respect yet have touch fully integrated and usable," Ballmer said.

Microsoft also announced that it was opening its Bing Internet search engine to developers so they can harness its capabilities to power features inside applications.

Microsoft is keen to tap into the creative talent of software developers behind hip, helpful, or fun 'apps' that can dictate the success of failure of smartphones, tablets and other Internet-linked consumer gadgets.

New-generation Apple software for iPhones, iPads, iPods, and Macintosh computers was showcased at a Worldwide Developers Conference here earlier this month, just weeks after a Google event starring Android and Chrome.

Ballmer said that the number of apps in the Windows Store will top 100,000 this month, while downloads have climbed into the hundreds of millions.

Bittersweet Apple

Apple is the greatest eyebrow raiser in the tech industry, be it for a newly released product, an advertisement or a lawsuit; no one can elicit a reaction out of the general public quite like the Cupertino based company. People either absolutely love them or its complete detestation towards the company and its products, and there is no middle ground whatsoever. This trend is not starting to, or much less going to change either. So with the recent announcement of iOS 7 putting Apple back on the spotlight again warrants a closer look as to why people have such strong opinions about this tech giant.

THE GOOD

Marketing: Apple has always been miles ahead of its competition when it comes to advertising its products and services – from using terms like 'magical' to describe its products, to bashing the competition through adverts, to making people buy into the hype of its product features – the late Steve Jobs and co must be applauded for their success and unforeseen heights achieved by a tech company. There is innovation in their marketing and it should be a must-know for any marketing student.

Innovating: While many may argue that Apple just steal from the competition, and that argument will hold water, there should be no doubt that Apple has innovated in the way they have implemented some features to near perfection, and set trends for the rest of the tech world to follow. The fluid touch based interface, the premium glass build quality, and the retina screen of the iPhone 4 are just some of the innovations that made it such a success and paved the way for other cell phone companies. Those that did not, like Nokia and Blackberry, suffered.

The developers: Apple has to owe its gratitude for becoming the most valuable company in the world (from 2011-2012) because it always had and has a great base of developers who have worked tirelessly at producing premium apps in quantity, always putting it ahead of the competition. Apps are at the core of the Apple 'ecosystem' that is so highly touted and it's still one of the main selling points for its devices. One of the biggest attractions for iOS app developers has been the significantly higher revenue they can attain from developing for iOS than from other competing OS's.

The Devices: Let's face it, the iPad, iPod, iPhone and iMac are all excellent products in their own right. The iPhone started the touchscreen smartphone revolution while the iPad single-handedly ate into the netbook market; to the point where they are now on the verge of being extinct. It can be said that these products are the perfect marriage between hardware and software complimented with stunning aesthetics.

THE BAD

Lawsuits: No one likes an overly litigious company and that is exactly what Apple has been. Claiming something they introduced as something they invented and then suing a competing company, for instance Samsung, for creating a successful product has become the norm in the business ethics for Apple. Even though that trend has somewhat decreased and a new lawsuit from Apple has not been heard of so far in the Tim Cook era, they are already mired so deep in a black hole of lawsuits and

counter lawsuits, that it's difficult to ever see that trend changing. Apple already is the richest tech company in the world and has the highest profit margins with their products and still they find it necessary to exploit the flawed patent system and demand even more money via lawsuits from the competition.

Disrespecting competition publicly:

When it was found that the iPhone 4 had an antenna that was prone to signal loss as a result of gripping the phone with your left hand, the company, instead of owing up to the defective design, went on to show other phones that had a similar problem, although none of the phones Apple showed had such a significant signal drop as the iPhone's or cost nearly as much. 'Antenna-gate', as it is commonly called is just one of the public stunts it has pulled over the years to demean the competition in order to make up for its own deficiencies.

Apple elitism: Whether it is the lack of proper Bluetooth transfer to other non-Apple branded devices, or having a proprietary port for data transfer instead of a universal one, or the over dependence on a resource heavy, lagging iTunes for simple file transfer, or even having a card slot for storage expansion - Apple has been known to be stubborn with making these changes to allow users more freedom and customisation with monetary gains being strictly in mind. As a result Jail-breaking iOS devices has become mandatory for the tech savvy.

So perhaps having the ire and the adulation of the public isn't entirely what Apple was going for but going by how they have managed to maintain their strict regulatory policies, high profit margins, managed to keep their devices selling and shareholders happy – Apple are living in a space of their own, Applesphere as it could be called, and they are doing things their way. The share prices might have fallen a tad, after reaching record heights, but life is good for the guys over at Cupertino.

BY SHAHNOOR RABBANI



Microsoft Bangladesh signs MoU with British Council

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Microsoft Bangladesh has signed an agreement with British council to support the global commitment from both organisations to combine the expertise in order to increase innovative teaching and learning practices.

British Council Bangladesh will be Microsoft's teacher training partner in Bangladesh. Both the organisations will use resources based on Microsoft's Partners in Learning (PiL) teacher training content and the British Council's Connecting Classrooms face to face teacher training content.

Through Microsoft Partners in Learning Network, educators and school leaders will register themselves proactively in the PiL network and utilise the free assets, professional development curriculum, and communities of practice on the Partners in Learning Network.

Google maps malicious websites

AFP, San Francisco

Google expanded its Transparency Report on Tuesday to include maps of spots around the world where hackers are laying traps or baiting Internet users.

"Two of the biggest threats online are malicious software that can take control of your computer, and phishing scams that try to trick you into sharing passwords or other private information," Google engineer Lucas Ballard said in a blog post.

"So today we're launching a new section on our Transparency Report that will shed more light on the sources of malware and phishing attacks."

Information for the new section comes from a Safe Browsing program Google launched in 2006 to warn Internet travelers when they were heading for trouble such as bogus bank websites or pages booby-trapped with computer viruses.

"We're currently flagging up to 10,000 sites a day, and because we share this

technology with other browsers there are about one billion users we can help keep safe," Ballard said.

The new section added at google.com/transparencyreport included a map that showed that "malware" hotspots include India and Central Europe.

Google's Transparency Report also provides information about government requests around the world for information from the California-based Internet giant and demands for removal of content from online properties.

Last week, Google said that it asked a special US court handling national security investigations for permission to publish more open with the public about numbers of requests.

The court filing in Washington came amid a firestorm of protests over revelations that the National Security Agency had accessed vast amounts of data in a surveillance program under the supervision of the secret court.



Arild Klokkehaug, chief executive officer of CellBazaar.com hands over its Thailand Trip Competition prize to the winner Showkat Ali. Ali sold his used treadmill on Cellbazaar.com and won a 3 night vacation, inclusive of air tickets, hotel and an additional pocket money.

PHOTO: CELLBAZAAR.COM