The power to do more

The Daily Star
DHAKA, MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2015
e-mail: bytes@thedailystar.net

INFORMATION | GADGETS | TECHNOLOGY

BYTES

Bitdefender®
WORLD'S NO.1 ANTI VIRUS TECHNOLOGY

HANDS ON REVIEW

WINDOWS 10: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

For the past one year, we've been keeping track of Windows 10 and every little feature they introduced with each new update of the beta. But at the end of the day, it was still buggy and unstable. We're glad that that phase is over as Microsoft rolled out the consumer version of their new operating system on 29th July. We tried it out and here's our first impression on Windows 10.

We've been reading about how Windows 10 booted faster that 8.1 or 7 and turns out all those Internet people weren't bluffing. My computer went from a clean boot to fully up and running in 6 seconds. That's almost half of what Win7 used to take.

First up, the Start Menu's back and that's one of the sensible changes Microsoft made. It looks beautiful. You've got the metro apps on the right and all the usual options on the left. You can change the orientation of the apps and configure the size of the start menu by simply clicking and dragging. One other change we really like is a list of all the apps we added recently or use most.

Right beside the Start icon is Cortana. This is one of the biggest features on Windows 10 and it works flawlessly. Cortana was easy to set up and it pulled up a few burger places in the area and ironically showed a news article from Verge regarding Windows 10. Plus the football match schedules were on point and reminded us of Chelsea's next game.

What makes Cortana's interface so interesting is that, you can search for anything on the web or on your PC. While on Windows 8, we had to drag the mouse to the corner of the screen, wait a few micro seconds for a window to pop out and then search for an app or something, here in Windows 10- we have that option always on the taskbar on the desktop without any extra hassle. The search engine is set to Bing by default but you can change it to Google through Settings.

What sets Cortana apart from Siri and Google Now is that, now you can see what it knows about you and select individual options to help it provide you with the information you need. For example, you can select your favorite cuisine or your favorite football team or even what particular topics you're interested in the news section.

Then there's the Action Center which gives a modern desktop experience by giving out real time notifications about reminders, new mail and everything. Personally, I would have liked it better if Cortana and Action Center was merged together but what we have now isn't bad either.

But for someone who has a lot of windows and different apps open at the same time and is constantly multitasking, the biggest attraction will be Task View. This makes virtual desktops very easy to navigate through and control. You click on the small white icon and instantly get an organised card style view of all your open windows. At the bottom right you've got a plus sign captioned New Desktop. You can drag any window you want to that and see them clutter up on different desktops- all of which are viewed as thumbnails on a bar at the bottom.

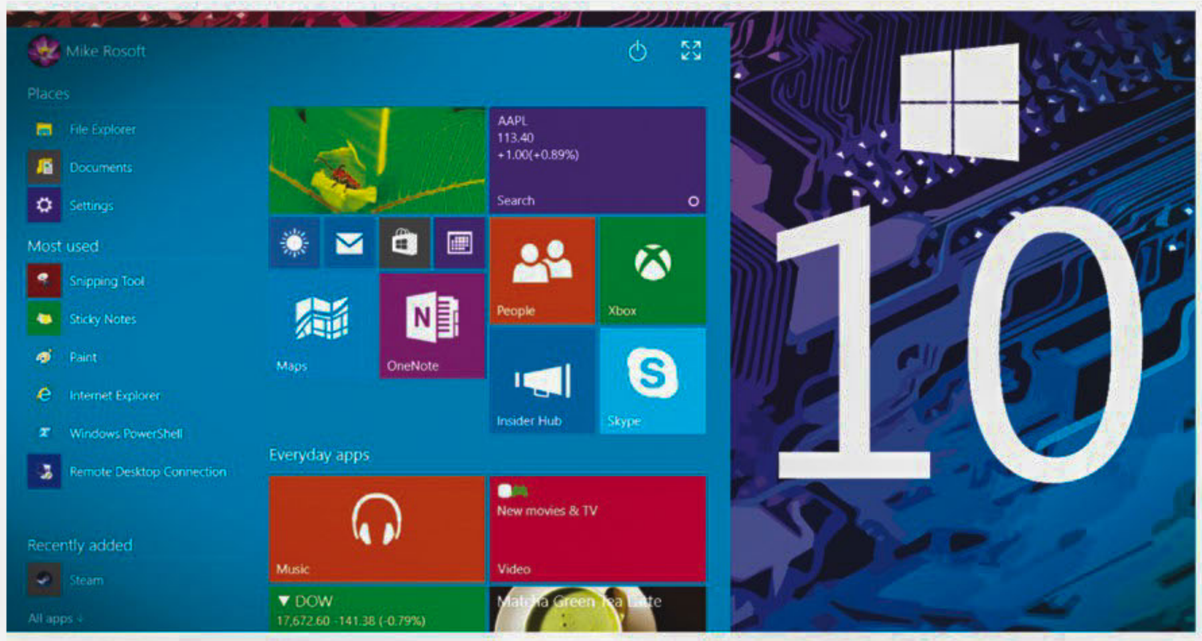
The split screen multitasking view is on point too. You can drag a window on either the left or the right side and it will automatically snap into position to take half of the screen, while on the other half you will see an option to choose another running app to take up the rest of the space. If you drag a window to any one of the four corners it'll take up quarter of the screen instead of half and with that you can work on four at the same time. This definitely adds to the sweet experience Windows 10 is turning out to be.

This review would be incomplete if we didn't bring up the new browser, Microsoft Edge. While it's nothing out of the ordinary, it is without a doubt a huge improvement from those dark Internet Explorer days. Mind you, IE still exists as an app in Windows 10 because a few sites prompt you for Internet Explorer for certain pop-ups or options. But Edge reminds me of Apple's Safari because it's so easy to use and visually pleasing. We loved the small icon labeled "Hub" that pops out a tab from the right side and we can see bookmarks, downloaded files and stuff on the reading list. Ah yes, the reading list is another laudable feature of Edge that Chrome still doesn't have. We also found the option to scribble anywhere on a page and share it instantly on social media or through mail, very useful.

Speaking of mail, Microsoft made their default metro apps better than ever. Mail and Calendar have become two apps that you'll find yourself using a lot on Windows 10.

There are however a few new changes on Windows 10 that some might disagree that aren't exactly features and more of an extra burden. Such as automatic updates that you can't turn off but can control or the constant prompts to connect your Microsoft account for getting a "better experience". But these are arguably minor problems doesn't turn out to be much of an issue.

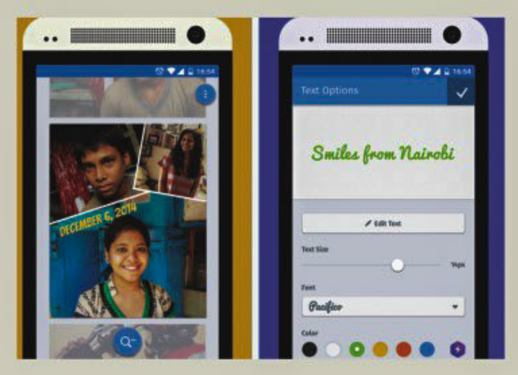
This is more or less everything we thought about the new Windows 10 and our verdict is that you should most certainly upgrade.



ABHIK HASNAIN

APPS ON THE FLOOR

Webmaker



Publisher: Mozilla
Genre: Education

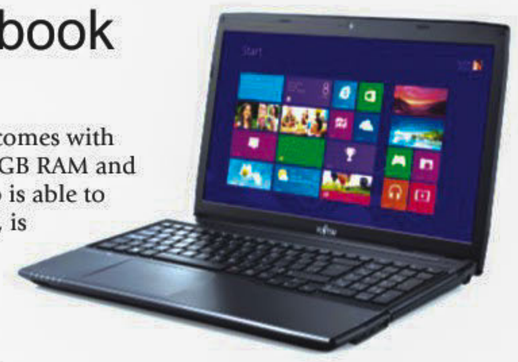
Mozilla Foundation recently has launched the Webmaker app in Bangladesh. By downloading the app for free, Bangladeshi Android users can now easily develop online content according to their preferences.

Most Bangladesh local content and website developers have a steep learning curve mostly due to a language barrier as well as a limited number of tools for content development. To in informed that the Webmaker app has been launched. Webmaker is now available in four languages- Bangla, Indonesian, English and Brazilian Portuguese. Webmaker users will be able to develop games, memos and even comic strips from a large archive of content-interactive photo gallery and scrapbook. It comes with a user-friendly design and the app is really easy to use. The finished project can then be shared through email as well as social media platforms. The app also has a 'Discovery' feature which will show what other developers are sharing and/or working on. The app also allows you to mashup several projects together.

Rating: 8.5/10

JUST IN

Fujitsu Lifebook Eid Offer



Fujitsu AH544 Lifebook comes with Intel Core i3 processor, 4GB RAM and 750 GB HDD, The laptop is able to deliver high performance, is durable really good. Customers will also be getting attractive gifts with each purchase of AH544 Lifebook laptops.

PRICE: TK. 43,000/- plus free eid gift: Fujitsu Backpack, Apacer Power Bank and Star Cineplex Movie ticket

NEWS BYTE

Jim McDonough, a Scottish fisherman, built a 1:40 scale Lego model of the famous World War II US battleship, the USS Missouri. None of the Lego bricks are glued to each other, so the whole model can be disassembled. Its 24 feet long, 3 feet wide and 4 and a half feet tall.

TECH HAPPENING

Workshop on open government data sensitization held

A three day long workshop titled Open Government Data (OGD) Sensitization, Gap Assessment and Strategic Planning was launched today at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Novotheatre. The main aim of this workshop is to inform officials in both public and private offices about OGD, its importance in ensuring good governance and finally to encourage them in implementing the concept. Implementing OGD- a universal concept of free resource exchange and improving public service through making information easily accessible will help realize the Vision 2021 of a Digital Bangladesh. Yafes Osman was the chief guest at the workshop while Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Secretary of Prime Minister's Office was the special guest. Nick Beresford, Deputy Country Director of UNDP Bangladesh and Mr. Jason Smith, Deputy Director of Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID were also present. The workshop is being jointly organized by Access to Information (A2i) program and

'Kids Go Coding' initiative kicks off

BetterStories, a Bangladeshi startup incubator and accelerator, launched a project to teach school children programming in collaboration with Jaago. The event kicked off last week at Jaago's Rayer Bazar School, where the classes will be held on full week from this week.

Over 20 school-going students participated in the event to attend the first batch of the training. Several prominent IT professionals attended the event and shared their story on how they got passionate about programming and computer science as children. They also shared how huge the potential of learning to code can be. Despite being naturally shy, the children were visibly excited to learn programming and do great things with it. The program is being sponsored by Microsoft Bangladesh, Aamra Technologies, World Bank Group and Fusion. HiFi Public is the official media partner of the Kids Go Coding initiative.

Govt. announce plans to convert Post offices to e-Centres

The government has announced its plans to turn the existing post offices into E-centres. Teletalk, the state owned telecom operator will be sharing their offices in these post offices as part of this project. Telecom State Minister Tarana Halim stated, "The government is working to make internet accessible to all under the Digital Bangladesh vision. This move to rejuvenate the post offices is part of that vision. Moreover, to facilitate video conferences in the district administrative offices, high speed internet will be provided within the next 3 months."

These plans were discussed by Telecom State Minister Tarana Halim at a program organized by FBCCI to inaugurate the video conferencing network established between the 64 district chambers and FBCCI. Ekhoni.com, a popular e-commerce portal, will be collaborating in this project. Primarily, the district chambers of Rangpur, Natore, Tangail, Sylhet and two other districts will be connected to FBCCI. Gradually, the other districts will be joined to the network as well.

FBCCI President Abdul Matlub presided over the program and State Minister for Post and Telecom Tarana Halim was the chief guest. Zunaid Ahmed Palak, State Minister for ICT Division was the special guest. Apart from them, FBCCI officials, representatives from district chambers and associations were also present.

KASPERSKY SECURITY UPDATE

Darkhotel's attacks in 2015

Darkhotel APT attacks dated 2014 and earlier are characterized by the misuse of stolen certificates, the deployment of .hta files with multiple techniques, and the use of unusual methods like the infiltration of hotel Wi-Fi to place backdoors in targets' systems. In 2015, many of these techniques and activities remain in use. However, in addition to new variants of malicious .hta, we find new victims, .rar attachments with RTLO spearphishing, and the deployment of a 0day from Hacking Team.

The Darkhotel APT continues to spearphish targets around the world, with a wider geographic reach than its previous botnet buildout and hotel Wi-Fi attacks. Some of the targets are diplomatic or have strategic commercial interests.

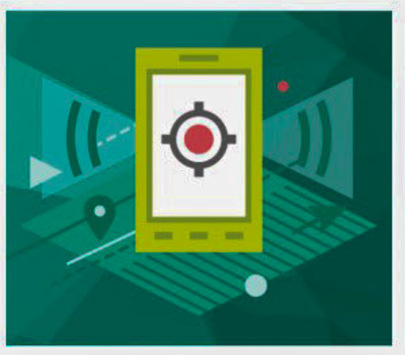
The location of Darkhotel's targets and victims in 2015:

- North Korea
- Russia
- South Korea
- Japan
- Bangladesh
- Thailand
- India
- Mozambique
- Germany

Whether the infection is achieved through spearphishing, physical access to a system or the Hacking Team Flash 0day, there frequently seems to be a common method for a newly-infected system to communicate with Darkhotel's c2:

A lightly obfuscated (double escaped set of javascript variable values) script maintained within an .hta file writes an executable to disk and executes it.

It is interesting that this particular group has for years now deployed backdoor and downloader code in the form of .hta files. In 2010, we observed it re-purposing articles on North Korea by the US think-tank, Brookings Institute, in order to attack North Korean-related targets with malicious code buried in .hta files. It also emailed links to its malicious .hta files to North Korean tourist groups, economists with an interest in North Korea, and more. It's somewhat strange to see such heavy reliance on older Windows-specific



technology like HTML applications, introduced by Microsoft in 1999.

The Darkhotel APT will relentlessly spearphish specific targets in order to successfully compromise systems. Some targets are spearphished repeatedly with much the same social-engineering schemes. For example, the attachment "schedule(2.11~16).rar" could be sent on February 10th, with Darkhotel returning to the same targets in late May for a second attempt with attachment "schedule(6.1~6).rar".

KASPERSKY lab | THINK SECURITY