IoT on the rise in local market

IoT or Internet of Things is the application of the internet and software technology in more traditional sects of our lives, such as, door locks, security cameras, LED lights, etc. And while, Google Home and Amazon Echo are the most famous IoT devices in the world, there are others being manufactured as well with some big local players involved in distributing and creating devices which can significantly change how we use the internet in our day to day lives.

We are seeing an increasing shift in terms of adoption of IoT devices. DataSoft, Grameenphone, and many other IT firms have stepped into the IoT production and development sector. And BTRC too have officially backed the usage of IoT devices, issuing a directive on April 24, 2018. The instructions published by BTRC states that it would be legal to import IoT devices and that they are all for the manufacturing, research and development of devices which can be used to build a smart city. This is why more and more institutions and businesses have been adopting smart-lock systems, Face ID and fingerprint scanners in their compounds. And this has also allowed for a lot more consumers to know about Google Home devices, such as, the Google Home Mini and other smart speakers, like the, Amazon Echo and Echo Dot. But more than anything, the implementation of these devices have helped to motivate companies like DataSoft which are not only making products for the local market but extending their influence in foreign territories as well. In late 2017, DataSoft signed an agreement with Japanese company Smart Life to develop and implement smart-home technology in 10,000 homes in Tokyo. The

Smart Attendance System by GP & Inovace Technologies (left) and Narrow Band IoT devices of Hexing (right)

company are also installing IoT-based toll management systems for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and its Matadi Bridge. And to mitigate the water supply shortage facing the people of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, DataSoft have developed an IoT device with the device shipping from July 31, 2018. All of this has made DataSoft a well-known name in the rest of the world and with a production plant located in Gazipur, the company aims to make IoT devices for both local and foreign consumers. DataSoft stated that they are currently working on four IoT devices which would send alerts to the user's smartphone in the case of a gas and water leakages, smoke and intrusion in the house. These devices will be available from next month and users will have to pay Tk. 7,999/-

for the first year and Tk. 2,999/- onwards from the next year.

Grameenphone are another major player in terms of the development of IoT services. The telco provides its own Smart Home, Smart Security and Smart Attendance services alongside the Vehicle Tracking Service. Grameenphone also introduced the country's first IoT-based digital livestock management solution Digi Cow for livestock farmers on December 7, 2018. And it's not just with their own products, Grameenphone also works in conjunction with other IoT development companies. BanglaTrac are currently developing IoT solutions for vehicles and Grameenphone is marketing the device. Chinese company Hexing are also working with Grameenphone in demonstrating its own

NB-IoT enabled Gas meter and NB-IoT enabled Smart Prepayment Energy Meter. Hexing are well-known in China for their work with electricity meters. On October 21, 2018, they signed a joint-venture deal with the state-owned West Zone Power Distribution Company (WZPDCL) to create the company "Bangladesh Smart Electrical Company Limited".

There are also many up and coming companies working with developing IoT devices, with one such company being Inovace Technologies. The company has developed a device which will send automated alerts to guardians regarding their children's attendance in school. The company also helped Grameenphone in developing its Smart Attendance device and its own fingerprint

attendance service called "TipSoi 21".

And Grameenphone aren't the only telco to take part in IoT initiatives. Robi launched their own Smart Homeand Smart Attendance systems. They also launched Industrial IoT services which focuses on modernizing construction. In August 2017, Robi signed an agreement with Sri Lankan start-up nCinga to create an IoT solution focused on helping the RMG industries of Bangladesh. Banglalink have their own Vehicle Tracking Service and the Watchmaniss Security Service, a security service for corporates.

Alongside these developments, there are also retail stores which are importing smart locks and security cameras from China. But there's still a lot of confusion amongst consumers as to how these IoT devices operate, a lot of them finding the prices of these products off-putting. And so the key ingredient for long-lasting development and growth of the IoT development sector is to make sure consumers understand these devices. And a lot of corporations, with its implementation of smart-locks in the office are bringing the use-case of these devices to an employee level.

There are also ongoing attempts to train employees for the IoT sector and institutions like BRAC University, Grameenphone in collaboration with IEEE, Datasoft, Bangladesh Skill Development Institute, Global Skills Development Agency are already providing such training and solving the issues with existing knowledge gaps regarding this newly emergent sector.

ASIF AYON

FACEBOOK PASSWORD FIASCO

The Daily Star

On March 21, Facebook disclosed during a routine security review they discovered 'some' user passwords were being stored unencrypted, but the passwords were not visible to anyone outside of Facebook.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Set up 2-factor authentication
- Use a password manager if needed
- Turn on alerts for sign-in from unknown devices
- Stop using same password for multiple services

"We have a responsibility to protect your data, and if we can't then we don't deserve to serve you"

Concerns over Google's Stadia

When it was announced that one would need a 25 Megabit connection to achieve lag-free 4K 60Fps gaming with the Stadia, the rest of the world (including Bangladesh) breathe a sigh of sadness. This led people to ask more questions further compounding on the initial concerns over Google's future cloud gaming service. And, so the concept which could ultimately change the landscape of gaming, has also left a lot of important things unanswered.

Firstly, this isn't the first time a major company's taken a crack at cloud gaming because that title goes to Nvidia's GeForce Now and PlayStation TV. But there were three big drawbacks – the necessity of a fast internet connection, the lack of games and the need for proprietary hardware. Google, in their press briefing, touted the Stadia's server capabilities, showcasing how gamers wouldn't need any extra hardware and that they could stream their games from any device. And so the question then becomes whether or not publishers and developers are willing to back this idea.

We know for sure that Google has Ubisoft's blessing, seeing how they showcased the Stadia with Assassin's Creed Odyssey. Id Software are also on board since Doom Eternal is slated to launch on the platform. But the list runs pretty dry after that. No major developer has commented about the prospects of the Stadia yet and with a TBA 2019 launch date, Google needs to make their argument compelling.

Google's main focus is to take away the hassle of hardware, for both developers and manufacturers – take gaming to the clouds

supposedly. The key goal being the urgency to become a singular platform. The problem is that this has been tried before, and it didn't work out then either. The Panasonic 3DO wanted to achieve something similar, but in 1994 no major game developer or publisher except for EA was on board with the idea. The idea was to make one single hardware and that game-makers would make games for that one piece of hardware; Panasonic would keep the profits from hardware, developers would keep software sales and publishers would collect their profits from distribution. But at the time, Sega and Nintendo had their own hardware, their own exclusives and there was a console war they were tending to, till Sony showed up and changed the status quo entirely.

And the situation is somewhat similar still, with Xbox and Sony competing with each other

on a hardware level, buying out small studios, having different studios make exclusive games for them. And while Google will eventually make some leeway and get a couple of developers on board, they need to make a compelling case for the Stadia and those would be exclusives.

And so, despite the number of games the Stadia brings onto their supercomputer server, people will just prefer the reliability of owning the game and loading it from their console, as opposed to relying on Google's server. Lag, latency and performance aside; Google has to work out how to convince developers first only then will customers follow.
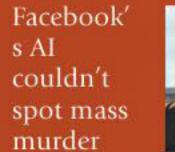
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