



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

## Bite-sized internet packages empowering freelancers in remote villages

ZAMAN KHAN

Like many industries and communities, the freelancing community in Bangladesh has also been hit hard by the pandemic. When the pandemic and the lockdown forced many job-seekers, students and freelancers to move to their homes in remote parts of the country, finding seamless connectivity posed to be a major threat in moving forward with internet-based works.

Ruman of Jhenidah is one such freelancer who wanted to learn graphic designing. But the lockdown forced him to move to his village where broadband internet was not available. He had to learn. And the mobile internet was slow and costly. Ruman was in trouble. Until he came to know about WiFi Haat.

WiFi Haat is an initiative by Carnival Internet where local brick and mortar shops in villages are supplied with internet package cards starting from only BDT 7, which users can use according to their needs. There are other packages available as well. For example, for BDT 15, one can use unlimited high-speed broadband internet for the entire day.

WiFi Haat is a part of Carnival Internet's ongoing commitment to empower the remote parts of the country with seamless internet connectivity, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. Internet cards from WiFi Haat enable users to seamlessly use high-speed internet at a low cost, enabling freelancers, students and job-seekers in remote villages to empower themselves by learning new skills and putting them to good use by freelancing and earning.

Before, people would spend time for the purchase of only tea-biscuits or small daily necessities or maybe a cup of tea at a grocery or tong, but now the tables have

turned wherewith the establishment of Wi-Fi haat allows them to enjoy 2 hours of unlimited internet for only 7 Tk. So, people are spending more time in the store buying cards than before.

Due to the pandemic, many educational institutions in Bangladesh have not been able to run regular classes for a long time. Many educational institutions are now taking classes online. At present a large part of the students are living in villages, there are many areas in the villages where it is difficult to get an internet connection. Even if there is a broadband connection in the village, in addition to the monthly fee, the router and the connection cost up to 3,000 Tk at a time, which is quite difficult for most families to afford.

Carnival aims to solve problems like these. Carnival Internet has already reached 11,500 villages in 182 Upazilas of 48 districts of the country. And is committed to reaching 20,000 more villages by 2021.

Carnival hopes that internet connectivity will reach the remotest corners of the country and the entire country will be connected to the world so that in an age of globalisation, no one from Bangladesh is left behind.

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## Mixed Reality and users' mixed feelings surrounding it

SAIM AHMED SHIFAT

For many years now, Virtual Reality (VR) has been a buzzword among tech communities. Over the years, it has led the way for Augmented Reality (AR), a new technology that enhances users' reality by introducing digital objects to it. Based on the possibilities both AR and VR can unleash, tech moguls see these as indispensable parts of the future. A combination of these gives us Mixed Reality (MR), where one can play a video game virtually, grab his/her coffee in real life, and throw that coffee on someone in that virtual game. The world saw this technology at play in February when Microsoft hosted their Ignite digital conference through holoportation, a technology that uses 3D technology to create lifelike images of everything into a virtual world.

### WHAT IS MIXED REALITY (MR)?

MR is a step ahead of Augmented Reality. It creates a world where one can see the physical and virtual worlds interact. According to Microsoft, MR can leverage two mechanisms. Holographic instruments can create digital projections and place them in a real environment. Holographic headsets can have features like see-through displays containing digital content. Immersive devices, on the contrary, can take objects from the real world and replace them with their digital counterparts. Immersive headsets or VR glasses can modify a person's view of the physical world and put only the digital one in his/her view.

### APPLE'S UPCOMING MR HEADSET GETS THE INDUSTRY BUZZING

Although holographic and immersive devices use two different technologies, companies like Apple are working on devices that can leverage a mixture of both these technologies. Based on a research note by Ming-Chi Kuo, an Apple analyst, the company's awaited MR headset could weigh less than 150 grams. This weight makes the device lighter than its competitors like Oculus Quest 2 (503 grams), Microsoft HoloLens (645 grams), and Valve Index (809 grams). However, users have to wait for the headsets to hit the market until 2022 at least, as reported by Bloomberg.

### THE REALITY

As promising as everything sounds so far, the reality in 2021 is that consumers are still not quite interested in MR. Some of it has to do with the need for a massive transition from mobile or reinventing being mobile altogether. Giants like Facebook and Apple have been working on getting MR products into the real world. However, problems persist in introducing MR as hardware, existing platforms, and developer skills are not ready, and users are still not sure yet if they want it.