TOGGLE

WEEKEND LIVING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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JCI Smart Bangladesh Summit 2023
Towards a smarter future

DX Group introduces ten international lifestyle brands in Bangladesh

RIDWAN SAKIB ADNAN

DX Group, a Bangladeshi conglomerate, held an event called 'Grow with DX' last week, where they introduced ten international lifestyle brands - BoAt, QCY, Amazfit, 1More, Promate, TAGG, Ezviz, Riversong, Energizer, and Xiaomi - into the Bangladeshi market.

During the event, attendees got a glimpse of their hero products, which included wearables, audio devices, and gadgets. DX Group also addressed various market challenges by ensuring consistent product availability through an online exclusive model, maintaining competitive pricing, sourcing directly from manufacturers to combat counterfeit products, and implementing an official warranty claim system.

The company's vision, as expressed by Chairman Engr. DM Majibor Rahman and CEO Dewan Kanon, revolve around bringing innovative products to tech enthusiasts and making world-class lifestyle products accessible to the young generation.

At the event, DX Group also announced three new ventures: Life Plus, a health and personal care retail chain, the digital lifestyle retail chain, and Shuttle Cafe, a multi-cuisine chain restaurant. Among the new products announced were QCY GTC Smartwatch, Amazfit T-Rex Pro Smartwatch, BoAt Airdopes 141 Earbuds, 1More Piston Buds Pro, Promate Torq 10 Power Bank, etc.

Google offers free Generative AI courses

Popular search engine Google is offering a free learning path for Generative AI, with 10 separate courses aimed at improving the overall understanding of the latest in Generative AI technology. The learning path guides users through a curated collection of lessons on Generative AI products and technologies.

The following courses are currently being offered through the

Google Cloud Skills Boost platform: Introduction to Generative AI, Introduction to Large Language Models, Introduction to Responsible AI, Introduction to Image Generation, Encoder-Decoder Architecture, Attention Mechanism, Transformer Models and BERT Model, Create Image Captioning Models, Introduction to Generative AI Studio and Generative AI Explorer - Vertex AI.

Infinix launches HOT 30i in Bangladesh

Infinix has recently launched the latest addition to their HOT 30 lineup of smartphones, HOT 30i, in Bangladesh. Infinix HOT 30i comes with a 6.6-inch HD+ display, a 90Hz refresh rate, and a 180 Hz touch sampling rate. It runs on the 12nm Helio G37 Octa-Core gaming processor and has 4 GB RAM, 64 GB storage, and a 5,000 mAh battery.

In terms of camera, the phone features a 5 MP front camera and a 50 MP main camera with VGA lens, which supports high-resolution photos and videos. The phone also supports 10W Type-C charging and has a side-mounted fingerprint sensor alongside a diamond-patterned plastic finish.

Infinix HOT 30i is available in three colours: glacier blue, mirror black, and diamond white. It is currently priced at BDT 13,499 for the 4 GB + 128 GB version and BDT 14,999 for the 8 GB + 128 GB version.

Phones that will not support iOS 17

PALASH DAS

At the latest Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC), Apple announced their new operating system, iOS 17, along with several products and features. Apple has stated that significant changes will come to the phone, messaging, and FaceTime features in this brand-new iOS 17.

While iOS 17 is expected to be globally released in the upcoming month of September, not all iPhone models will have the ability to use this new operating system.

The phones on which iOS 17 can be used:

iPhone XS, iPhone XS Max, iPhone

XR, iPhone SE, iPhone 11, iPhone 11 Pro, iPhone 11 Pro Max, iPhone 12, iPhone 12 Mini, iPhone 12 Pro, iPhone 12 Pro Max, iPhone 13, iPhone 13 Mini, iPhone 13 Pro, iPhone 13 Pro Max, iPhone 14, iPhone 14 Plus,

iPhone 14 Pro, and iPhone 14 Pro Max.

The iPhone models on which it cannot be used:

iPhone 8, iPhone 8 Plus, iPhone 7, iPhone 7 Plus, iPhone 6, iPhone 6 Plus, and the new software version of iPhone X will not support iOS 17.

The reason behind this compatibility issue, as per Apple, is that iOS 17 will run only on iPhones with an A12 Bionic chipset or its succeeding generation processor. As such, some older models, notably iPhone 8 and older, will not be able to run the new operating system.
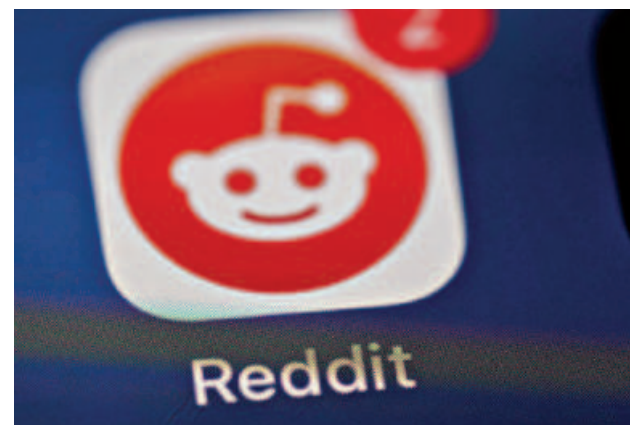
Reddit to fire 5% of their workforce

Reddit, the popular news discussion and social media platform, is planning to fire 5% of their total workforce, according to a company letter sent by Reddit CEO and co-founder, Steve Huffman. As per a report by The Wall Street Journal, this will

amount to about 90 employees fired from the company, and is a part of Reddit's recent plans to restructure their workforce.

The report adds that Huffman also plans on reducing the hiring of new employees to about 100 people for the rest of the year,

whereas initially, the company had planned 300 new employees. With over 430 million monthly users and over 130,000 sub-forums on active discussion of a range of topics, Reddit consistently ranks among one of the most visited websites in the world.

The twin cam dreams

ARFIN KAZI

Toyota Corolla is a popular name known for guaranteed comfort, fuel economy and an overall hassle-free experience for years of ownership. Bangladesh has had a great relationship with the car and its various models, starting with the AE80 chassis with the more popular AE90 chassis.

AE90 cars have histories of mods among local car enthusiasts, including ones with the street-swamping E120 chassis, which is widely known as the X/G Corolla. Amongst the plethora of AE90 Corollas that roam the street, today we take a look at one of the most well-done 90s that we have laid our eyes upon. Tanjimul Hasan, a workshop owner in Chittagong, had this car passed on to him by his father - which he has been working on to make as good as new.

The car started as a humble SE Saloon with a 1.3L 2E inline four-carbureted engine paired with a 4-speed manual gearbox, meant to run the daily commute and get groceries. After years of service, the brakes gave out one day, which caused an unlucky crash that, fortunately, did not get the car totalled. Soon after, the owner went to service the brakes, which is where the idea of a project on the car started to take shape. After many trials and errors and pushing the car to the limit over the years, we see the car as it stands today.

As of now, the car has been swapped with a 4AGE Blacktop, Toyota's top-of-the-line Twin-Cam 20-valve engine at the time, paired with a C160 6-speed gearbox, with the optional helical limited-slip differential. When it comes to the handling department, the car sits on Zerone three-way adjustable coil-overs which can be adjusted from soft to stiff, 13-way Ultra Racing bars for chassis rigidity and 13-inch brakes from an ST203 Celica, which have been converted from a five-hole to a four-hole setup for an extra OEM point. As far as the exhaust goes, the car has got a full Fujitsubo cat back setup from the manifold to the end box, which makes the engine sound fantastic, highlighting the top notes with some added resonance on lower RPMs.

The exterior on the other hand is kept fairly stock, apart from the Zenki tail lights from the late AE90s, a grille with a beautiful twin cam badge, and a Corolla Sprinter bumper with OEM square fog lamps. The car also sports a set of genuine Rays GTR-06 monoblock wheels, with a staggered setup, where the dish on the rear wheels is more pronounced than the front wheels. The interior department has the same deal going on, mostly stock, with an addition of two Recaro Alcantara bucket seats for extra cushioning.

All in all, when we got a ride in the car, it is safe to say not a single rattle could be heard from the inside, which is a rare sight for a car which is nearly thirty years old, and the comfort levels inside make the car feel like riding a brand new vehicle. Being around many AE90s, the one built by Hasan's own hands—and not just under another supervised mechanic—is truly a 'petrolicious' piece of work, where nothing similar is rarely ever seen.

Throwing bare money on a car can make it fast, but standing up to the quality of the work is something only time, research and dedication can achieve.

PHOTOS: **ARFIN KAZI**

JCI Smart Bangladesh Summit 2023
Towards a smarter future

Smart Bangladesh - the vision for the nation's future in culminating the advancement of modern technology for the benefit of everyone. The goal embodies the power of innovation, digitalisation and connectivity, embracing a society where technology enhances every facet of life, fostering economic growth, empowering citizens and promoting sustainable development.

From smart cities to digital governance, this comprehensive strategy aims to position Bangladesh as a global leader in the digital age, harnessing the immense potential of technology to create a prosperous and inclusive nation. JCI Smart Bangladesh Summit 2023, putting forward this very concept of a smart nation, invited policymakers, leaders and experts from various national and international sectors, to discuss the steps needed to push this vision further and truly make the dream of Smart Bangladesh a reality.

Day 1

On the opening day of the two-day-long summit, the discussions brought

forward a diverse array of opinions and perspectives from local and foreign speakers, converging to share their insights on the transformative journey ahead. These experts, ranging from business to technology to media, brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table, thus igniting a sense of inspiration to effectively embody the goal of a technologically smart nation.

During the inaugural session titled 'Empowering Responsible and Tech-Savvy Citizens', esteemed individuals emphasised the crucial aspects of building a smart Bangladesh. The speakers included Manik Mahmud, Programme Specialist Innovation, a2i, ICT Division; Rayana Hossain, Founder and Managing Director, ISHO and Director, Dekko Isho Group; Yahia Amin, President, Lifespring Foundation; Dr Abdun Noor Tushar, media personality, writer, activist; and Yasir Azman, CEO, Grameenphone. This session was moderated by Barrister Wolora Afrin, Managing Partner, Wolora Ashfaque and Associates.

The second session, titled 'Driving Economic Growth through Innovative Financial Strategies', featured Seyed Mosayeb Alam (Eikiyo), Chief of Staff,

Shopup; Md. Forhad Zahid Shaikh, Chief Strategist (e-Governance), a2i, ICT Division; Khalid Hossin, Head of Digital Banking Division, Mutual Trust Bank Ltd; Sayma Rahman, Founder & CEO, SR Ventures & Consultancy and Mentor, Stanford Seeds; Pranav Mittal, Senior Investment Analyst, Flourish Ventures; Mamun Rashid, Country Clients and Markets Lead, PwC Bangladesh; and Md. Altamis Nabil, author, trainer & social activist and Founder, B Positive Foundation, as the moderator. They talked about the fact that being an entrepreneur is not solely about gaining financial standing, it entails having the right idea and mindset geared towards progress.

The third session was titled 'Tech Infrastructure and Capacity Building', and had a lively discussion on the indispensable nature of collaborative efforts across all sectors when it comes to developing technology infrastructure. This session had Fazle Munim, Manager, Government and Public Sector, Ernst & Young as the moderator; with speakers being Mohammad Oli Ahad, Founder and CEO, Intelligent Machines Limited; Pribadi Surjanto Marshall, Founding CEO, Privy; Md. Hafijur Rahman, Technology Analyst, a2i, ICT Division; Tasnuva Ahmed, Director and Chief Operating Officer, Astha IT & Founder and CEO, Cloud Convoy; Ishtiaque Sarwar, Founder & Managing Director, aamarPay; Lt Col Rakibul Hassan, Sigs (Retd), Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Link3; and Sharful Alam, Chief Executive Officer, Felicity IDC Limited & Chief Strategy Officer of Fiber@Home Limited. This session highlighted how no single sector can achieve the goal of Smart Bangladesh in isolation, stressing the importance of partnerships, knowledge exchange, and

collective action.

The fourth session, named 'Cashless Society: Building Smart Economy', focused on how Bangladesh can be a cashless society. As digital transactions are becoming more and more popular around the world, the speakers in this session highlighted how the cashless system in this country should be simplified, including reducing levies on some online transactions. The speakers were Mohammad Aminul Haque, Executive Director, Nagad Limited; Md. Kyser Hamid, Managing Director & CEO, Bangladesh Finance; Mamoon Mahmood Shah, Managing Director, NRB Bank Limited; Syed Mohammad Kamal, Country Manager, Mastercard; Md. Motasem Billah, Director (PSD), Bangladesh Bank; Debdulal Roy, Executive Director, Bangladesh Bank; and Zeeshan Kingshuk Huq, Director & Group COO, Agile Minds Solutions Ltd, as the

moderator.

The fifth session was titled 'Startupverse', and the discussion revolved around how local entrepreneurs can navigate the dynamic landscape of startups and how innovation can lead to effective transformation in the global sphere known as the 'startup-verse'. The moderator for this session was Biplob Ghosh Rahul, Founder & CEO, eCourier Ltd. The speakers were Rezwanul Haque Jami, Head (Commercial Strategy), a2i, ICT Division; Tanvir Sourov, Co-Founder & CEO, Socian AI; Monowara Chowdhury, Founder, Wellness and Growth Hub by Moon; Waseem Alim, Founder & CEO, Chaldal; Eshita Sharmin, CEO, Bikroy. com; Noor Elahi, Managing Director, Wagely Bangladesh; and Shomi Kaiser, President, e-CAB.

The sixth and final session of Day 1 was about 'Environment, Agriculture & Healthcare', with special emphasis on how Bangladesh can adopt smart solutions for a greener tomorrow while ensuring sustainability in the aforementioned national sectors. Md Sariful Islam, Development Professional & CCO, IOM Bangladesh, moderated this discussion, which consisted of Arafat Amin, Advisory Product Manager, Huawei South Asia; Arefeen Raafi Ahmed, Executive Director, Techno Drugs Limited; Dr. Sayedul Ashraf, Managing Director, Lifespring; Mohammad Abdul Matin Emon, Chief Strategy and Product Officer, Praava Health; Rashed Mujib Noman, Country Director, Augmedix Bangladesh; Jamil M. Akbar, Co-Founder & COO, iFarmer; and d Bushra Afreen, Chief Heat Officer, Dhaka North City Corporation, Bangladesh & Arsht-Rock.

Day 2

The second day of the event started with the session 'Igniting Innovation and Collaboration for Smarter Industry', which was moderated by Irfan Uddin, Director, FARR Ceramics Ltd. The speakers, which included Eazaz Mohammed, Managing Director, Orchard Group; Kazi Fahad, Director, Bangladesh Apparel Youth Leaders Association; Md. Muiz Tasnim Taqui, Director, Deloitte; Hadi Chowdhury, Head of Retail Operations, Yellow, Beximco Textile Industry Limited; Selim H. Rahman, Chairman & MD, Hatil Furniture; and Abul Kasem Khan, Vice Chairman, A.K. Khan & Company Ltd, discussed that if Bangladesh lags in the use of innovative technology, we might suffer financially and be unable to present products in the global market. As such, the country needs to increase the use of all types of modern technologies, including AI and machine learning, to boost production

and management.

The second session of the second day, with the topic 'Financing the Future: Capital Market', talked about how the capital market is transforming recently, which is enabling new ways to drive sustainable growth. Asif Khan, Co-Founder, EDGE Ventures Limited, moderated the session, which had Rizwan Rahman, Former President, DCCI; Asif Ibrahim, Chairman, Chittagong Stock Exchange Ltd; Arif Khan, Vice Chairman, Shanta Asset Management Limited; and Dr Shaikh Shamsuddin Ahmed, Commissioner, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC), as speakers.

The third session, titled 'Smart Bangladesh in the Eyes of Youth', featured some individuals who had made the 'Forbes 30 Under 30 Class of Asia' list in the past few years. Among them, Zafir Shafiee Chowdhury, Co-Founder & CIO, Bondstein Technologies Limited, was the moderator. The panel discussants were Diptha Saha, Co-Founder & COO, Agroshift; Aziz Arman, Co-Founder & CEO, Jatri; Rubaiyat Farhan, Co-Founder & COO, Marcopolo.ai; Saraban Tahura Turin, Co-Founder, Turtle Venture Studio; Shuvo Rahman, Founder & CEO, MyAlice; Mir Sakib, Co-Founder, Cramstack; Mir Shahrukh Islam, Co-Founder & CEO, Bondstein Technologies Limited; and Tasfia Tasbin, Co-Founder & CEO, Marcopolo.ai.

The fourth session of Day 2 was called 'Smart Education', with the topic of smart employment and how it is shaping the future of learning in the current smart era. The moderator was Md. Tajdin Hassan, Chief Business Officer, The Daily Star; with the speakers being Shubasish Bhowmick, Country Director (Bangladesh) at ATEC; H.M. Asad-Uz-Zaman, Strategy & Innovation Specialist, a2i, ICT Division; S M Zubayer Al Masud, Director, Cloud Core Solutions, Huawei South Asia Rep Office; Rasheda K Chowdhury, Advisor of Former Caretaker Government, Executive Director, CAMPE; and Ashim Kumar Ukil, Member of Parliament of Netrokona-3.

The final session, titled 'Creating Sustainable and Resilient Smart Cities: The Role of Real Estate', discussed the topic of sustainable real estate. Aysha Siddiqua, Executive Director (Brand), BTI, was the moderator. Tamanna Rabbani, Vice President, Ananta Real Estate Ltd.; Mashid Rahman, Managing Director, Rangs Properties Limited; Rafiq Azam, Architect; Engr. Tanveerul Haque Probal, Managing Director, Building for Future Ltd.; F R Khan, Managing Director, Building Technology & Ideas Ltd. (BTI); were the panel discussants.

Why VAT on imported software does not make any sense

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

In the latest budget proposal for the fiscal year 2023-24, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal proposed an increase in the import duty on imported software, from 5% to 25%. Additionally, the proposal includes a 15% VAT on the import of foreign-made software, while such a VAT was nonexistent in previous fiscal years.

Officially, the 'software' mentioned in this particular part of the proposal includes the following: database, operating system, development tools, security software (used only for data or information protection), word processing, spreadsheet, internet collaboration and presentation tools.

While there isn't a definitive list of all the individual software that are included under this umbrella, some obvious inclusions are Windows operating systems, antiviruses such as Kaspersky and Avast, online workplace tools such as Zoom and Google Meet and of course, the ever-popular Microsoft Office apps such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

It goes without saying that this whopping 20% increase in import duty for software is a massive one. Not only does it mean an increased price tag for essential software like Word and Windows OS, but it reduces the accessibility of premium, full versions of such software for local users. This ends up affecting large organisations and local workplaces that are dependent on data management and word processing tools, as they have no other option but to pay extra to install these absolutely necessary tools to keep their work going.

The intention of this VAT increase, despite the apparent consequences, is

clear. In his proposal speech, the finance minister stated that this increase stems from the government wanting to protect the domestic software industry and "to prevent false declaration and duty evasion". Imposing a rule to avoid tax evasion of course makes sense, but the other part of the reasoning, i.e. "protecting the domestic software industry", can have unintended double-edged effects.

While it may be true that the VAT has been imposed to incentivise local production of such software, the fact remains that Bangladeshi tech companies are not yet at the stage to produce software to the level of Microsoft Word or Kaspersky Antivirus - software that are downloaded and used in nearly all computers in the world. As a result, even the local companies attempting to improve the domestic software industry will have to buy these programs at an increased price, which, undoubtedly, causes notable harm over any intended good.

This VAT increase and subsequent price increase also means many local users, instead of legally buying the software, will be more likely to resort to illegal methods. A modern internet user is perfectly capable of using torrent sites to get cracked versions of premium softwares. While it goes without saying that such

methods are unethical, the ease of using the latest version of a popular software without spending a dime is something many people would resort to, granted they had the option to do so.

Besides, a main reason why many opt to resort to pirating such important software is because in Bangladesh, premium software are already hard to come by and even when available, are generally expensive. Now, with added VAT that will hike the prices further, piracy of these products are more likely to be on the rise.

This, in turn, not only hurts the global tech industry but the local one as well, as local companies are unable to release software that local users would want to use. Ultimately, not only are sales being affected but overall development and growth too - something that the budget proposal was expressly trying to avoid.

Perhaps, in a perfect world, local tech companies will be able to come up with user-friendly, everyday-use software that will resonate with local users for both professional and casual purposes. We don't need a Bangladeshi Microsoft Word - anything remotely close would do. Until then, Bangladeshi users will either have to unfortunately depend on illegally obtaining these important digital tools or, simply, just pay up extra.

Everything announced at
Apple's WWDC 2023

Apple kicked off their annual Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC) last week, unveiling a plethora of new products and tech on the first day of the 5-day event. If you have missed the latest announcements, here's a quick rundown of everything Apple has shown us in this year's WWDC so far.

APPLE VISION PRO

After several years of rumours, Apple has finally confirmed dipping their toes into the VR headset game - revealing their upcoming Apple Vision Pro, an AR (artificial reality) and mixed reality headset. The last time Apple introduced a brand new line of products was back in 2015 with the Apple Watch.

The Vision Pro headset will run on Apple's M2 chip and a new OS (operating system) called visionOS, which Apple says is a unique, spatial platform built just for the new mixed-reality headset. The headset can be navigated by using eyes, hands and voice, and can run apps on a 3D-like environment using facial gestures.

Similar to an iPhone, this headset can answer FaceTime video calls, send messages and browse the web, and features Apple's first 3D camera, which the company says can capture both photos and videos in 3D. The headset also has a custom micro-OLED display system, which has 23 million pixels, alongside a three-element lens that will create a display-like feeling everywhere the user looks.

Apple's Vision Pro is priced at US$3,499 and will be officially launched early next year.

15-INCH MACBOOK AIR

After years of rumours, Apple is finally releasing a 15-inch version of the MacBook Air. With a 15.3-inch display, 11.5 mm thickness and weight slightly over 1.3 kg, the new MacBook Air is being claimed by Apple as 'the world's thinnest laptop'.

15-inch MacBook Air will retain the MagSafe charging connector and headphone jack from previous iterations and will have two USB-C Thunderbolt ports with support for up to 6K external display. It will also have 18 hours of battery life, a six-speaker sound system, a fanless design and a Liquid Retina display with up to 500 nits of brightness and support for 1 billion colours.

The new MacBook Air is priced at US$1,2999 with four available colours: midnight, starlight, space grey, and silver. The laptop will be officially available for purchase starting next week.

Additionally, Apple has adjusted the pricing of the 13-inch MacBook Air, which is now available at US$1,099.

THE NEW MAC PRO AND MAC STUDIO

Apple's new computer announcements don't stop with just the new 15-inch MacBook Air. Last night, Apple also unveiled the latest addition to their high-end desktop lineup with the new Mac Pro, equipped with the M2 Ultra Chip.

With the new 5-nm M2 Ultra Chip, the revamped Mac Pro features a 76-core GPU, 24-core CPU, 192 GB memory, eight built-in Thunderbolt ports and six open PCIe Gen 4 slots for additional expansion. According to Apple, a fully specced new Mac Pro will be three times more powerful than the previous Intel version.

The new Mac Pro will be priced starting at US$6,999 and will be available for physical purchase from June 13.

Additionally, Apple also introduced the new Mac Studio, with the M2 Max chip that is six times faster than the most powerful Intel-based 27-inch Mac, and up to three times faster than the previous Mac Studio with the M1 Ultra chip. The new Mac Studio will have enhanced graphics editing support, and with 8K resolution and 240 Hz framerate, will support high-end 3D animation much better than past iterations of Mac Studio.

The new Mac Studio will be priced starting at US$1,999 and will be available for physical purchase from June 13.

IOS 17

WWDC events are known for introducing new releases of iOS, with this year being no exception. The newest iOS focuses on upgraded communication features alongside new options to better cater iPhones to everyday use.

iOS 17 introduces the personalised 'Contact Posters' feature, which will now display a full-screen photo of the contact during incoming calls. Apple says this feature can be customised freely, including being able to adjust the font type and colour, and will be available for third-party calling apps as well.

As for other communication features, Live Voicemail will now allow real-time transcription of received voice mails; FaceTime will have support for both audio and video messages; the Messages app will come with an expanded menu and a check-in feature to alert friends and family; and a new AirDrop system which will allow contact sharing between iPhones and Apple Watches by simply bringing them close together.

Additionally, iOS 17 will feature improvements to autocorrect, including sentence-level corrections to fix grammatical mistakes. Dictating to type will be easier on iOS 17 thanks to a more accurate speech recognition system. Furthermore, iOS 17 is introducing two new features, StandyBy - which gives a full-screen experience with glanceable information while the iPhone is charging, and Journal - which will act as a digital diary with automated suggestions based on the user's personal information.

OTHER NEW OS

Apple announced new operating systems for their non-iPhone line of products, now jam-packed with updated apps and new accessibility features.
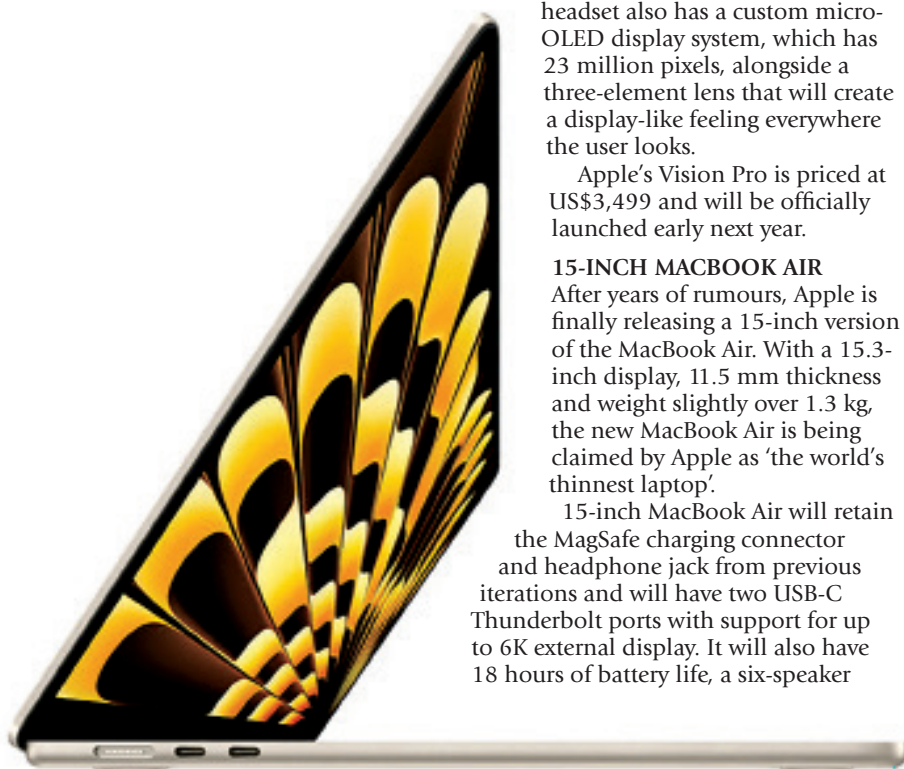
iPadOS 17 for iPads comes with a new Messages feature and will give users access to AirDrop, which can let users quickly share files across devices or with other users.

The Mac lineup is getting a new operating system called macOS Sonoma, which will come with new features such as desktop widgets, newer versions of Safari and Messages, and a dedicated 'Game Mode' that redirects the CPU and GPU power to enhance gaming performance.

Apple TV is also getting an updated OS in tvOS 17, which will now support FaceTime to be usable on TVs. This means that Apple TV users can conduct video calls from their iPhone or iPad to the TV screen.

The new watchOS 10 for the Apple Watch introduces a cleaner widget-based UI, including the option to turn the digital crown to show widgets for apps such as calendar and weather. Rotating the digital crown will show a full-screen display. As for new apps, there's a world clock app now that changes colour based on the time of the day.

UIU places 1st among Asian teams in University Rover Challenge 2023

HASAN MAHMUD ABDULLAH

TELOS, a Mars rover prototype and ICARUS, the companion aerial subsystem, developed by the UIU Mars rover team, have recently secured first place in Asia in the University Rover Challenge 2023.

This is the second consecutive year UIU has become 1st among Asian teams in Universal Rover Challenge (URC), with their rover named MAVEN also ranking 1st in Asia in last year's URC. This year, the UIU team has also reached 9th overall out of 37 global finalists. Last year, they were 13th out of 36 global finalists.

The University Rover Challenge is an international rover showcase competition hosted by the Mars Society, a nonprofit organisation that encourages the exploration of Mars for research and development. This year, 104 teams from 15 different countries participated in the international competition, with the final round taking place at the Mars Desert Research Station in Hanksville, Utah, USA from June 1 to 3.

In the initial round, the team had to submit a compelling System Acceptance Review (SAR) video, which highlighted the rover's capabilities in performing various missions such as terrain traversal, equipment servicing, scientific exploration, and autonomous operations. Additionally, TELOS showcased its proficiency

in conducting scientific tests, and analysing soil and rock samples to detect signs of potential life.

The SAR video presented TELOS's core electronic and communication systems, as well as its robustness in testing and operation. TELOS attained a SAR score of 93.06 out of 100, securing its position among the 37 finalists from around the globe.

In the final round, participating teams were required to demonstrate their rover's prowess through four challenging missions in front of a jury of experts. These missions encompassed science exploration,

autonomous navigation, extreme delivery, and equipment servicing. The UIU team ended up placing 2nd worldwide in the 'Extreme Delivery' section of the competition, dethroned only by West Virginia University.

The UIU Mars rover team consists of over 25 students from different disciplines, including computer science, electrical science and business operating its various activities in space robotics since June 2021. The team members, divided into six sub-teams pertaining to different areas of rover designing, have hands-on experience in robotics and automation, as well

as fields such as 3D simulation, detection of life in space, drones, and autonomous navigation.

The team is directed by Akib Zaman, Lecturer at the Department of Computer Science & Engineering, United International University. The student team leader was Md Abid Hossain from EEE, UIU. The other members of the visiting team were Ahmed Junaed (CSE), T M Al Anam (CSE), Suraiya Afroz Maria (CSE), Sheikh Sakib Hossain (CSE), Shah Mehrab Hossain Fahim (CSE), Md Yasin (CSE), Abdullah Al Masud (CSE), Shorower Hossain (CSE), and Md Bodiuzzaman Shikder (EEE).

"This achievement is a source of immense pride for the team, as it demonstrates their ability to compete on a global stage and showcases the talent and potential that resides within their university and the entire Asian region," says Akib Zaman. According to him, the team hopes that this accomplishment will inspire future generations of students to pursue careers in STEM. "Hopefully, this will also instil in them the belief that they can achieve great things through dedication and hard work," adds Akib.

Five other universities from Bangladesh - BRAC, AUST, MIST, AIUB and BUET - also took part in this year's University Rover Challenge.