

## Google launches new Pixel 9 phones as AI race heats up

AFP, Mountain View

Google on Tuesday unveiled new Pixel 9 smartphones, its latest salvo in the scramble by Big Tech to corner the market on nascent artificial intelligence.

The Silicon Valley search giant has been racing against Microsoft, OpenAI and others to lead in AI since the 2022 release of ChatGPT ignited intense interest in the technology.

Pixels account for a tiny sliver of the global smartphone market dominated by Samsung and Apple, but Google argued its new line is a chance to answer what – after all the hype – AI can actually do for customers.

“I understand people’s skepticism,” Google senior vice president of devices Rick Osterloh said at company’s campus in Mountain View, California.

“There have been so many promises, so many ‘coming soon,’ and not enough real world helpfulness when it comes to AI – which is why today we’re getting real.”

But AI-infused Pixels also raise questions about how well Google is safeguarding personal data, and how regulators will react to the tech giant’s push to make users even more dependent on its platform.

A US judge last week handed Google a major legal blow, ruling in a landmark anti-trust case that it has maintained a monopoly with its dominant search engine.

The court decision against the tech giant could alter how the sector operates in the future.

The Pixel weaves users more tightly into Google’s online services, taking a page from Apple’s strategy with the iPhone and App Store.

Pixel 9 models use Google’s Gemini AI capabilities, offering consumers an alternative to the iPhone’s “Apple Intelligence” AI, as well as the company’s alliance with ChatGPT-maker OpenAI.

The phones can help with daily tasks like booking appointments or finding old files in the mountain of data people tend to save, according to Pixel senior director of product management Shenaz Zack.

A Pixel might be used to take a photo of a concert poster, for example, then check whether that calendar date is open and draft a message inviting friends to join.

## Sonali Life staffers demand IDRA chief’s resignation after directors faced fund embezzlement charges

SUKANTA HALDER

Some 200 officials of Sonali Life Insurance Company, whose former chairman and family members were earlier found to have embezzled at least Tk 187.84 crore, staged a demonstration yesterday bringing corruption allegations against the insurance regulator’s chairman and demanding his resignation.

Chanting slogans on the premises of the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA), they also demanded the withdrawal of an administrator, who the regulator appointed earlier to improve the health of the insurer.

This was the second time Sonali’s employees demonstrated at the IDRA headquarters after August 11, when protesters hurled abusive words at IDRA Chairman Mohammad Jainul Bari, a senior IDRA official told The Daily Star.

The situation had turned so volatile that Bari had to request the army to escort him back to his home that day, the official said.

The demonstration took place after Sheikh Hasina resigned from the post of prime minister on August 5 following a mass uprising. Mohammad Rabiul Hassan

Rasel, a manager of Sonali Life, confirmed that he and his colleagues were present at the demonstrations.

“He [Bari] is a corrupt chairman. He was appointed as an administrator [at Sonali Life] with ill intentions, due to which the company’s business is decreasing day by day,” he said.

“Therefore, we demanded the removal of the administrator and chairman. Also, we demanded the withdrawal of a case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission against company directors,” he added.

Contacted, Bari said the demonstrators have created a chaotic situation.

“I did not go to work on August 12 and 13 for this reason,” he added.

Bari also said the protestors should provide some evidence to prove their allegations.

The IDRA had appointed Brig Gen (retd) SM Ferdous as administrator of Sonali Life last April following an audit commissioned by the insurance regulator in December 2023.

Hoda Vasi Chowdhury and Co, a chartered accountancy, was appointed for the audit. The auditor had examined 17

allegations of irregularities, including the appointment of Mostafa Golam Quddus as chairman in 2023.

It found that Quddus and six of his family members, who were also directors of Sonali Life, embezzled at least Tk 187.84 crore, according to the IDRA.

Quddus, also a former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, earlier denied any wrongdoing.

As per the IDRA, the audit found evidence of fund embezzlement through different means, including illegal payments to companies owned by Quddus.

A huge amount of money was also pocketed through the illegal purchase of luxury cars and payment of additional dividends to said directors as well as travels abroad and medical bills, according to the IDRA.

The ACC filed a case on July 25 this year against Quddus, his six family members and one other relative over the embezzlement of Tk 187 crore.

Established in 2013, Sonali Life has 204 branches with 26,693 agents across the country.

Golam Quddus could not be reached for comment.

## Gold hovers near all-time high

REUTERS

Gold prices hovered near record highs on Wednesday, steered by hopes of US interest rate reduction and persistent Middle East tensions, while the spotlight shifted to US inflation data.

Spot gold was up 0.2 percent to \$2,469.35 per ounce by 0827 GMT, shy of the record high of \$2,483.60 scaled last month.

US gold futures steadied at \$2,508.40.

If data confirms the slowdown in US prices, bets of a 50 bp rate cut in September will increase and it is very possible that the price of gold will reach an all-time high, said Ricardo Evangelista, senior analyst at ActivTrades.

The US consumer price index data is due at 1230 GMT. Economists expect month-on-month inflation to rise 0.2 percent, with the annual core slowing a tick to 3.2 percent.

US producer prices increased less than expected in July, data showed on Tuesday, indicating that inflation continued to moderate.

STOCKS		
	DSEX ▲	CASPI ▲
	1.44% 5,952.77	0.77% 17,142.03

COMMODITIES		
	Gold ▲	Oil ▼
	\$2,474.07 (per ounce)	\$78.54 (per barrel)

ASIAN MARKETS				
	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
	▲ 0.19% 79,105.88	▲ 0.58% 36,442.43	▲ 0.72% 3,258.57	▼ 0.60% 2,850.65

## Crisis in banks deeper

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“In an independent country, why am I not able to use technology freely?” he questioned.

He emphasised the disclosure of all types of software used to violate human rights and civil rights, adding: “A white paper is required to explain how civil and human rights have been curtailed.”

He further mentioned that the entire banking sector had been tailored to support corporate entities, depriving small and medium enterprises.

Legal and constitutional reforms to prevent the return of injustice, corruption, and authoritarianism were sought by Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary at SHUJAN: Citizens for Good Governance.

He said three crimes occurred during the past government’s tenure: crimes against humanity, criminal offences, and financial crimes. He added that the government should be given the chance to defend its actions in a fair trial.

Majumdar also lamented the use of law enforcement as a tool of the ruling party, he said. One of the coordinators of the Anti-Discrimination Movement, Nusrat Tabbassum, said the interim government should reform law enforcement agencies which were destroyed by the past government.

She further said the interim government should work to restore the country’s reputation, which was lost when the government imposed a five-day internet blackout in mid-July to quell protests that left more than 500 people dead as of August 7.

Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury, convenor at Bangladesh Health Watch, said the interim government should form a health commission to make a roadmap and look into existing healthcare services.

Through this commission, it can leave a legacy for future governments, he said.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the CPD, demanded justice for recent injustices and loss of lives.

“We need a platform or framework with students and general people. They will work as guarantors of the expected reforms, which help an inclusive society,” he said.

“The country has fallen into a vicious cycle. We have deviated from economic progress due to high inflation, low investment and anarchy in the banking sector.”

In the last 53 years, Bangladesh has overcome many first-generation challenges. But we still have not overcome second-generation challenges, he added.

## Inflation

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The meeting was also attended by the central bank governor, secretaries of the finance, commerce, and food ministries as well as senior officials of other relevant ministries.

After the meeting, the new central bank governor said it would be possible to work on the domestic market from three angles, one of which is the supply side.

“This relates to how we can increase supply by increasing production and create a positive impact on the market,” he added.

Second, issues like extortion that have come to the fore need to be addressed. The third will be addressing demand-side issues.

Bangladesh Bank is already working to this end and there will be a review to know whether more can be done, Mansur said.

He said another important challenge is the dearth of foreign currency, as a result of which Bangladesh is currently unable to import as per previous levels, impacting the overall market.

Mansur said keeping inflation at a tolerable level will be possible within five to six months if issues like foreign currency reserves, extortion and lower production are addressed adequately.

“We are hoping for that but we need time to work,” he added.

He also said it is not possible to solve the foreign currency crunch overnight.

Apart from that, Mansur said the reserves cannot be

reduced illogically and that a minimum level has to be maintained. This is because an illogical decline would lower investor confidence in the market.

So, the central bank needs to maintain the minimum reserve level in sectors where US dollars are used for imports, he said, adding that calculated steps should be taken in this regard. He also informed that they would discuss the issue with development partners.

## Dollar pinned near one-week low

REUTERS, Tokyo

The dollar hovered near a one-week low on Wednesday as traders bet US consumer price data later in the day will keep the Federal Reserve on course to cut rates next month, while sterling eased after softer than expected inflation numbers.

New Zealand’s dollar dropped more than 1 percent after the Reserve Bank of New Zealand reduced the key cash rate and flagged more cuts to come in a sharp dovish shift.

Traders were largely cautious ahead of US inflation data at 1230 GMT (8:30 a.m. ET), which is expected to show consumer prices increased 0.2 percent in July, on a month-on-month basis, following a 0.1 percent decline a month ago.

## Power supply

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reciprocal fulfilment by BPDB,” the statement reads.

An internal federal power ministry memo, dated August 12 and seen by Reuters, amends 2018 guidelines governing generators supplying electricity “exclusively to a neighbouring country”.

Currently only one plant in India – Adani Power’s 1,600 megawatt (MW) Godda plant in eastern Jharkhand state – is under contract to export 100 percent of its power to Bangladesh.

The memo states that “the government of India may permit connection of such generating station to the Indian grid to facilitate the sale of power within India in case of sustained non-scheduling of full or part capacity”.

The sale of power to the local grid might also be allowed if there is a delay in payments, it said.

## Extortion, vandalism

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Rahman Mugdho,” said AK Azad, another former FBCCI president and chairman and CEO of Ha-Meem Group.

“The countries where we export our products are worried sickover whether we can properly reach them their goods. Because there have been incidents of vandalism and arson in many factories,” he said.

“We told them that the army has taken up the responsibility of providing security. All the problem will be resolved after some days. There is nothing to be worried about. But they still can’t believe it,” he added.

In this situation, about 20 percent of the potential work orders has been cancelled, he said.

“I would like to request the business leaders to discuss the matter with the interim government as

soon as possible,” he added.

Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals PLC and director of Square Group, said business and trade would continue to suffer until businesspeople stop resorting to political cronyism.

“Business is passing through a transitional period but we are yet to come out of political cronyism,” he said.

Ashraf Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), emphasized the restoration of law and order for the return of normalcy to business.

Showkat Aziz Russell, president of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, said, “The duty of the police is to ensure our security as well as protecting us from various dangers. But they were never on our side.”

“The police have never been our friend. They harassed us in various ways. This aspect should change,” he said.

A number of businesspeople demanded abolishing the boards of directors of all trade bodies as those people had lost the moral grounds to keep holding on to their designations.

The event was presided over by Mahbubur Rahman, president of the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh.

Jashim Uddin, a former FBCCI president, Kamal Uddin Ahmed and Abul Kashem Haider, former FBCCI vice presidents, Quazi Moniruzzaman, a former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, and Md Sabur Khan, a former DCCI president, addressed the conference.

**GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT**  
**KHULNA**

**TENDER NOTICE NO: 01/EED/KHU/DEV/MADRASHA/2024-25, DATED: 14.08.2024**  
**Procurement Method : Open Tendering Method (OTM) (NCT)**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.e-procure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following works:

SI No	Tender ID	Name of Works	Last Selling (Date & Time)	Closing / Opening (Date & Time)
1.	1006526	Construction of 4-Storeyed Academic Building With 4-Storeyed Foundation In/c. Sanitary, Water Supply & Electrification With Pile Works at Works at Bisha Islam Mission Dakhil Madrasha, Sadar, Khulna (Category- Gp Co-Education)	18.09.2024 16:00	19.09.2024 11:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.e-procure.gov.bd>) is required. The fee’s for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited, online through any registered Bank’s branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@e-procure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@e-procure.gov.bd))

(M. Mustafizur Rahman)  
Executive Engineer  
Education Engineering Department  
Khulna.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
**Local Government Engineering Department**  
**Office of the Executive Engineer**  
**District: Dinajpur**  
**[www.lged.gov.bd](http://www.lged.gov.bd)**

Memo No. 46.02.2700.000.07.59.01.23-3147 Date: 13/08/2024

**Corrigendum on e-Tender Notice-01/2024-2025**

Due to unavoidable circumstances the e-Tender notice Invitation Memo No. 46.02.2700.000.07.59.01.23-2890 Date: 09/07/2024 will be changed as follows:

SI No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Existing		Changed	
			Last selling date & time	Closing & opening date & time	Last selling date & time	Closing & opening date & time
1	999698	LGED/SSWRDP-2/BD-P-98/23-24/75137-Structure	07-08-24, 15:00	08-08-24, 11:00	28.08.24, 15.00	29.08.24, 11.00

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 28 August 2024, 16:00.

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