

Thousands queue for iPad 2 across Asia

April 29 2011, by Joyce Woo

The iPad 2 went on sale in countries across Asia and beyond Friday as Apple's updated gadget entered an ever more crowded market.

Apple's original iPad defined the tablet computer market and was swiftly followed by offerings from the tech industry's main players, from Samsung and Dell to BlackBerry maker RIM and Toshiba.

A late arrival to the tablet party was Sony, which only this week announced its own tablets a full year after the original iPad went on sale.

Now Apple is moving into round two of the battle of the tablets with a lighter, thinner, camera-equipped version of their original machine.

First in line in a queue of around 400 rain-soaked people outside an Apple store in Hong Kong was 16-year-old mainland Chinese student Dandy Weng, who travelled to the city from neighbouring Guangdong province for a device.

"I have waited for over 12 hours and haven't slept in 48 hours -- I'm very tired but excited," he told AFP. "I will be the first in China to have the iPad 2! I'm speechless, it's so exciting."

A queue snaked around the Apple shop in a major shopping centre, with some shoppers loading trolleys with as many as a dozen iPads, priced from HK\$3,888 (\$500) for the 16GB Wi-Fi only model to HK\$6,488 for the 64 GB Wi-Fi and 3G model.

Those trying to buy an iPad 2 online via Apple's Hong Kong site, however, will have to wait a little longer -- all versions of the gadget were already out of stock before midday.

At an Apple authorised retail shop in Singapore, only 100 devices were available for sale and most official Apple retailers in Malaysia quickly sold out of the iPad 2.

"Each of our flagship stores had 600 devices each on sale and they ran out just like that," an official with a major Apple retail chain in Kuala Lumpur said.

Trade in "grey market" second generation iPads remained brisk in computer malls in the city such as Low Yat Plaza.

"We can charge more because there is a lot of demand and there is still not so much supply in Malaysia," seller Ang Chee Wei, 34, told AFP, adding that he had sold more than 20 of the devices so far.

"I bring in my iPad 2 from the US so I can still make some money until there are more iPads on the market."

Queues also formed outside retailers in the Philippine capital Manila.

John Quindo, 39, was first in line after standing patiently outside an Apple reseller for three hours.



The iPad 2 was launched in Japan on Thursday after a month's delay caused by the devastating quake and tsunami. A Wi-Fi only version of the iPad 2 will be available in China on May 6. It was first released in the United States on March 11.

"I'm excited because the Philippines is usually late (with Apple product releases)," he told AFP.

In India, over 150 outlets across the country opened their doors to Apple lovers seeking a new gadget, with the firm reporting a "phenomenal" initial response from customers.

Nishant Shah, director of research at the Centre for Internet and Society in the southern city of Bangalore, said he expected demand for the iPad 2 to be "huge", with Indian consumers increasingly brand-conscious.

Shilpa Malhotra was on the hunt for an iPad in Mumbai, but at an Apple outlet in the upmarket area of Breach Candy she was told that she could not buy one off the shelf immediately.

"I'm going to check to see if any other stores have got it in stock," she said, getting into a taxi.

The shop had taken orders and pre-payment for nearly 50 of the new iPads since Thursday, meaning dozens more customers wanting to buy the gadget on Friday were placed on a waiting list.

Anyone booking on Friday would get their device in 15 days' time, a store worker said.

In South Korea, 100 invited customers lined up from midnight at the central Seoul branch of KT, a local partner for iPhones and iPads.

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It also hit stores Friday in Israel, Macau, South Africa, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, after being first released in the United States on March 11.

The California tech firm sold 15 million iPads last year following the original device's launch in April, generating \$10 billion in revenue.

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