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TALK TO US

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Mediatek Launches India-Specific Soc, Vows Smartphone Design Support

Indian handset manufacturers are striving to move beyond the ODM model, and MediaTek and Qualcomm are here to help them create original smartphone designs.

The smartphone design is quickly becoming a test case for the "Make in India" push and MediaTek Inc. wants to make the best of it. The Hsinchu, Taiwan–based chipmaker, which reshaped China's mobile landscape by providing makers with handset-specific design support, is now eying India as its next mega design win.

India, the world's fourth-largest smartphone market, is at crossroads. The traders that started as distributors of Nokia and Samsung handsets eventually became mobile phone manufacturers in their own right by the early 2010s.

Intel Updates 5G, LTE Roadmaps

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Intel released a few bullet points from the roadmap for its cellular baseband chips. Its plans for 5G and advanced LTE chips aim to close the gap with its rival Qualcomm.

Specifically, Intel said that its customers will ship systems in 2018 with an upgraded XMM 7650 baseband that supports CDMA and Gbits/s downlinks. An XMM 7660 will ship in products in mid-2019 supporting 3GPP Release 14 with 4x4 MIMO and data rates up to 1.6 Gbits/s.

In 5G, Intel completed a 28-GHz call using a dedicated silicon implementation of the Verizon 5GTF spec. It plans to have XMM 8060 chips in customer systems shipping in mid-2019 that support the still-emerging 3GPP New Radio standard, the first in a series of 5G XMM 8000 products.

Startup Breathes Life into Bio IoT

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Nano Global hopes to enable a kind of Internet of Biological Things. The startup struck a partnership with ARM to design a family of SoCs that can monitor and maybe even scrub pathogens in products that range from smartphones and toys to fans, bandages and medical devices.

Nano (Austin, Texas) aims to make the world a kind of living lab for drug and disease research. In the process, it hopes to create a digital marketplace where consumers and researchers buy, sell and share molecular data.

As if those plans are not ambitious enough, Nano’s approach will use optics and artificial intelligence at the chip level to identify organisms. It will tap blockchain authentication to secure transactions for its open, global molecular database.

Siemens Acquires Solido Design Automation

Siemens announced it agreed to buy Solido Design Automation, a Canadian provider of variation-aware design and characterization software to the semiconductor industry. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The deal is the first acquisition in the EDA arena for Munich-based Siemens since it bought Mentor Graphics for $4.5 billion earlier this year. Solido will become part of Mentor's IC verification solutions division.

"We see a great opportunity to expand the reach of Solido's technology across our customer base," said Ravi Subramanian, vice president and general manager of Mentor’s IC verification solutions division, in an interview with EE Times. In addition to continuing to support Solido's existing customers and bring Solido's machine learning-based design and characterization software to existing Mentor customers across its product lines, Mentor intends to package tools from both firms to target new customers, Subramanian said.

MEMS Design Shrinks Speakers To Chip Scale

LAKE WALES, Fla. — Microelectromechanical-system-based audio speakers for earbuds, smartphones, wearables and other Internet of Things (IoT) devices have proved a tough row to hoe. But USound GmbH (Graz, Austria) now says it will be first to market with a family of MEMS audio speakers, with production volumes planned for the first quarter.

USound calls its MEMS speaker Ganymede and says it will offer a reference design, called Magaclite, by the end of this year. The devices have been fitted to high-end sunglasses and are being developed for earbuds; smartphones; and multidriver, high-fidelity above-ear speakers.