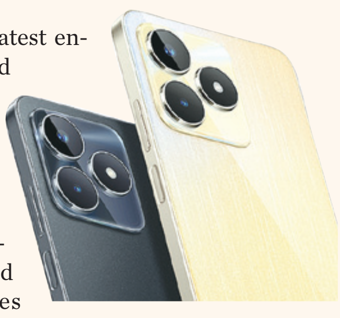
Review: realme C53



THE realme C53 is the brand's latest entry-level smartphone. It is priced at just P7,999 and is touted as the fastest-charging phone in its price segment. It is also realme's thinnest phone to date at just 7.49 millimeters (mm).

The phone comes in two colors, namely Champion Gold and Mighty Black. It has 6 gigabytes (GB) of RAM with 6GB RAM Expansion technology and 128GB of storage expandable up to 2 terabytes.

PROS:

1. The C53 is very comfortable to hold despite being a pretty large phone sporting a 6.74-inch screen. A lot of it has to do with its build, as it has a glass screen but a plastic frame and back, as well as a squared off body. Still, even with the use of plastic — obviously to keep it at its price point — the phone feels sturdy enough. It's stable even while using with just one hand. However, the Mighty Black version's matte back does accumulate fingerprints, which made me keep the phone's silicone case on.

2. It supports fast charging, a feature not found on a lot of phones that cost below P10,000. The realme C53 ships with a 33W SUPERVOOC fast charging adapter that can get its 5,000mAh battery from 0% to 100% in a little more than an hour, and in my experience, it charged well within the promised 85 minutes. The battery has enough juice for about half a day of moderate use.

3. The display is large and performs well. While the 6.7-inch LCD screen only has HD+ resolution (we'll talk about this again later), it does offer a maximum brightness of 450 nits, a refresh rate of 90Hz and a touch response rate of 180Hz. The phone also has a 90.3% screen-to-body ratio.

4. The cameras do well in ideal conditions. The phone has a 50-megapixel (MP) main AI camera plus a 0.8-MP lens, and while those are not really eye-popping specs, at P7,999, I can't really complain. Image processing is okay, and the main lens focuses fast with good lighting. I mostly took test shots on Auto mode and color and detail reproduction was decent. However, as with most smartphone cameras, shooting at night is a different challenge. As for its 8-MP selfie lens, I liked how it captured skin colors.

5. Its Unisoc T612 processor is reliable enough for moderate use. While I encountered a few software bugs here and there, the C53 can run most often-used apps smoothly.

CONS:

1. The C53's single-speaker system is just okay. Like other budget smartphones, this feels like a trade-off for the low price, and that's something I can live with. Fortunately, the phone comes with a 3.5-mm audio jack, so those who consider audio quality nonnegotiable can just plug in their preferred earphones. You can also just use Bluetooth earbuds, of course.

2. While its screen is big, bright and vivid, the HD+ resolution will leave those looking to watch high-quality videos on this phone wanting because these days, consumers are spoiled for choice by devices offering higher resolution displays. Again, this seems like a decision made to keep the C53's price the way it is.

3. The phone comes with a bunch of preinstalled apps. As an Android user, I've grown accustomed to bloatware and I know you can just delete them, but having to deal with them when getting a new device isn't fun.

All things considered, the realme C53 performs decently for an entry-level smartphone and is a great option for those looking for an all-rounder device at a relatively low price point. It's sleek and works smoothly while being easy on the pocket — literally and figuratively.

Grab brings in-app solutions to small businesses in provinces

ONLINE food delivery service GrabFood has introduced new features and merchant partnership packages to help businesses across the Philippines meet their goals, its director for deliveries said.

These include Find & Dine, an in-app resto guide for those seeking to dine in new places, and Marketing Manager, a digital marketing management portal exclusive to merchant partners with no added cost.

"What happened during the pandemic — as a function of the lockdowns with businesses not able to cater to dine-in — is we really did see explosive growth in number of merchants in that period," Greg Camacho, Grab Philippines director for deliveries, told reporters last week.

"Based on the data we've seen, there are still a lot of markets outside Metro Manila that are underserved," he said.

GrabFood's merchant partner packs, which have three tiers — Basic, Platinum, and Premium — come with varying services tailored for micro, small, and medium enterprises' (MSMEs) specific needs.

Mr. Camacho explained that each pack has a designated delivery area, optimized delivery fees for consumers, Grab-funded promotional campaigns, and visibility in Grab users' subscription GrabUnlimited.

Though there are "tens of thousands of merchants" now on the app, GrabFood will continue to expand to more cities, he said.

Five more will be added within the year, including Panabo, which is north of Davao, and Tanauan and Sto. Tomas, both located in Batangas, said Mr. Camacho. There are also areas of interest in Northern Luzon.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, MSMEs coming on the app have grown by 60% annually on average, he said.

"The growth rate will potentially normalize, but it doesn't mean that it's not going to be there. It's going to continue growing because of the expansion to these new areas," he added.

Consumers also now anticipate "the ability to explore, interact, and make purchases through some form of digital touchpoint," according to a regional survey conducted by Grab in 2022.

It found that 9 out of 10 consumers across Southeast Asia express a strong preference for brands that offer an integrated online-to-offline experience.

Anton Bautista, Grab Philippines' senior director for deliveries, said in a statement that its Scan-to-Order and Self Pick-Up solutions are proof of "the shift to a hybrid lifestyle in the post-pandemic environment."

Mr. Camacho added that Grab has been focused on MSMEs as they make up over 99% of businesses in the Philippines.

"We try to enable them with these self-serve tools we've launched, and we really made sure that any merchant can have access to them regardless of size," he said. — **Brontë H. Lacsamana**

Unlocking a new era of security: Embracing the Zero Trust revolution

By Dhilip R

WHILE the concept of Zero Trust emerged in 2010, it has recently gained significant relevance in the Philippines, particularly in light of the country's rapid digital transformation and expanding connectivity landscape. As organizations in the Philippines have shifted to remote work policies, the need to secure sensitive data accessed from outside the network is paramount. Traditional security measures designed for a single location is proving inadequate to address the unique challenges presented by the country's evolving digital landscape.

Administrators have had to adapt and enhance security protocols to mitigate vulnerabilities arising from remote work arrangements. In this context, Zero Trust has emerged as a crucial framework that goes beyond traditional security models, providing a more robust approach to protect sensitive data and combat cyberthreats. By implementing Zero Trust principles, organizations in the Philippines can establish a strong cybersecurity foundation, aligning with the country's pursuit of a secure and resilient digital environment.

Zero Trust has changed the age-old security axiom "trust, but verify" to "never trust; always verify." Zero Trust is a security concept that assumes any user, device, or application seeking access to a network is not to be automatically trusted, even if it is within the network perimeter. Instead, Zero Trust requires verification of every request for access, using a variety of security technologies and techniques such as MFA, least privilege access, and continuous monitoring.

The Philippines' rapid growth in the business process outsourcing industry, coupled with handling of sensitive data on behalf of global clients, further emphasizes the significance of implementing Zero Trust principles in the country. Adopting a Zero Trust approach ensures that every access request, whether from within the organization or by external sources, undergoes rigorous verification, safeguarding valuable data from potential breaches and unauthorized access. By embracing Zero Trust, Philippine companies can demonstrate their commitment to maintaining a secure and reliable environment, fostering trust and confidence among global partners.

Why should Zero Trust be a part of your disaster recovery strategy?

Disaster recovery is a critical component of any organization's IT strategy, helping to ensure that business operations can continue even in the event of a major outage or cyberattack. In recent years, the concept of Zero Trust has emerged as a powerful new approach to cybersecurity, and now plays an important role in disaster recovery planning.

At its core, Zero Trust is all about ensuring that only authorized users and devices can access a network or application. In the context of disaster recovery, by adopting a Zero Trust approach, organizations can ensure that only authorized personnel can initiate or modify backup tasks and perform restorations, and that the access granted to them is revoked once the operation has been completed.

One of the key benefits of Zero Trust is that it can help minimize the risk of insider threats. This is because Zero Trust assumes that all users and devices are potentially compromised, and each of them requires continuous authentication and verification in order to access resources.

How to implement Zero Trust in your disaster recovery strategy

Implementing Zero Trust in your disaster recovery strategy is a complex process that requires careful planning, execution, and ongoing maintenance. Here are some key steps that organizations can take to implement Zero Trust and improve their disaster recovery capabilities.

Dhilip R is a product consultant for ManageEngine.

FULL STORY

Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link <bit.ly/Trust062923>

US space agency sees moon mining trial within the next decade

BRISBANE — The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is looking to develop resources on the moon that initially include oxygen and water, and eventually may expand to iron and rare earths, and has already taken steps toward excavating moon soil in 2032, a scientist said on Wednesday.

The United States (US) space agency plans to return Americans to the moon as part of its Artemis mission, including the first woman and person of color by 2025, and to learn from the mission to facilitate a trip to Mars.

A key part of the mission is advancing commercial opportunities in space. The agency is looking to quantify potential resources, including energy, water and lunar soil, as a goal to attract commercial investment, said Gerald Sanders, a rocket scientist at NASA's Johnston Space Centre for 35 years.

Developing access to resources on the moon will be key to cutting costs and developing a circular economy, Mr. Sanders said.

"We are trying to invest in the exploration phase, understand the resources... to (lower) risk such that external investment makes sense that could lead to development and production," he told a mining conference in Brisbane.

"We are literally just scratching the surface," he said. NASA will at the end of the month send a test drill rig to the moon and plans a larger-scale excavation of moon soil, or regolith, and a pilot processing plant in 2032.

The first customers are expected to be commercial rocket companies who could use the moon's resources for fuel or oxygen.

The Australian Space Agency is involved in developing a semi-autonomous rover that will take regolith samples on a NASA mission as early as 2026, said Samuel Webster, an assistant director at the agency.

The rover will demonstrate the collection of lunar soil that contains oxygen in the form of oxides.

Using separate equipment sent to the moon with the rover, NASA will aim to extract that oxygen, he said.

"This ... is a key step towards establishing a sustainable human presence on the moon, as well (as) supporting future missions to Mars," he said at the conference. — ***Reuters***

Hong Kong filmmakers say censorship law spooking investors and actors

HONG KONG — Two years after screening an internationally acclaimed documentary on the democracy movement in Hong Kong, director Kiwi Chow has been forced to complete a new movie with fresh financing after political concerns scared off some investors.

The fears spiked after Hong Kong adopted a new censorship law in October 2021 to bar films that "might endanger national security," but directors say they now face difficulties lining up funding and even actors, while others have shifted overseas.

"Actors under the Hong Kong film companies are very afraid, and this fear shadows everything," said Mr. Chow, who felt the situation had made performers, and investors, apprehensive about crossing ill-defined "red lines" concerning national security.

"This is what makes it scary, it doesn't need to suppress you directly, but it has already made all these people scared," he added.

Mr. Chow, feted at the Cannes film festival in 2021 for his documentary, *Revolution of Our Times*, said it was clear when the new law came in that film makers would have to steer clear of political topics.

But he did not realize then that people would be so risk-averse, even if he had not been found guilty of anything.

The censorship measure, which follows a national security law China imposed on the Asian financial hub in 2020, means directors now need to steer clear of some topics to avoid putting investors and actors at risk, some filmmakers said.

At least 21 movies and short films have had scenes cut or their release blocked by Hong Kong's Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Association (OFNAA) since October 2021, a Reuters tally showed.

In an email statement, the office said it had processed about 5,000 applications for film classification since January 2021, denying approval for public exhibition to six of them. But it declined to comment on individual films.

Since 2005, the former British colony has injected HK$1.54 billion into the Film Development Fund. But in February, its culture secretary, Kevin Yeung, warned that funds would not be allocated to film projects that might infringe the 2020 law.

It is not immediately clear how much censorship measure has affected such funding.

Replying to a Reuters query, Hong Kong's Film Development Council, which is mainly responsible for government funding of the industry, said in an email it would have to look into the matter before responding.

Yet filmmakers see little room for maneuver.

Mr. Chow scrambled to complete his new film after investors pulled 80% of its HK$8 million ($1 million) funding and the main actor withdrew.

Although his film, *Say I Do To Me*, a love story about a young woman who embarks on a journey of self-discovery, is far from political, Mr. Chow said investors told him they could not take the risk as they still had to do business with China.

"For them, *Revolution of Our Times* is a very sensitive movie," Mr. Chow added. "They think they have business with China, so even if there is little risk, they all find it unacceptable, not to mention that in their eyes, this is a very high risk."

In response to a Reuters query, a police spokesman declined to clarify whether watching or downloading the film was illegal, however.

FRESH FUNDING

About 40 to 50 supporters injected fresh funding to help him complete it, he added.

"*Revolution of Our Times*' made me lose a lot of things, but it has also attracted some other new funding."

Some actors who wanted to participate in the new film were either pressed not to do so by their management companies, or told by producers that scenes featuring them would be cut from other movies, Mr. Chow said.

Some told Mr. Chow they had signed contracts barring them from making speeches that violate the national security law or co-operating with people considered a political risk.

"These contracts use economic pressure to restrain them, so that they cannot speak up," he said.

The makers of three short films screened at the Fresh Wave International Film Festival in June "had chosen to replace the deleted parts with black images and muted sound" after they were censored, organizers said.

Rex Ren and David Chan, co-founders of independent production group Phone Made Good Film, said they had no plan to seek government funds and would keep to small budgets instead.

"It's because we need to create, so we persist in Hong Kong," Mr. Ren said.

The day before their Loose Narratives short film festival began in April, censors denied approval for their short film *Wake in Silence*, citing "possible seditious intentions."

The scene in question showed a flag of the now disbanded pro-democracy party Demosisto with the slogan, "100% Freedom."

The tale of a girl who misses her boyfriend after he left the city was the third film censored in the festival.

"I already feel that the need to be safe has increased a lot, and there are some topics that have become taboo," said Ho Cheuk-Tin, adjudged Best New Director at this year's Hong Kong Film Awards for his film, *The Sparring Partner*.

Mr. Ho, who has been busy promoting his second movie, *Over My Dead Body*, a comedy about the frenzied real estate market, has chosen to stay on, however.

"I consider myself more commercial, but I still hope to have lots of Hong Kong elements in my movies," he said.

Others, in contrast, have moved abroad to take Hong Kong films to the diaspora communities and global audiences in Britain, Canada and the United States.

"We are scared of the disappearance of the culture and arts of Hong Kong," said Ching Wong, who founded Hong Kong Film Festival UK along with director Ng Ka Leung in 2021. It held more than 60 screenings across seven British cities in March.

Still, for those at home, the scenario remains bleak.

"At this moment, the chance of me finding funds in the Hong Kong market and the Hong Kong government seems to be close to zero," filmmaker Mr. Chow said. — ***Reuters***