Israelis win PayPal Battle Hack grand prize



airhop, battle hack

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Roy Goldenberg, California

Shai Mishali and Pavel Kaminsky developed AirHop, making it possible to send messages in areas with no cellular reception.

Israel has long been considered Start-up Nation, but it seems even in a head-to-head competition, Israeli programmers hold their own in real-time. Last night, a pair of Israeli programmers, Shai Mishali (27) and Pavel Kaminsky (30), won the grand prize of $100,000 at the global hackathon competition held by PayPal at its company headquarters in San Jose, California.

Programmers from 14 cities around the world, including Singapore, Istanbul, Berlin, Miami, and Toronto, competed in final round of the Battle Hack hackathon, following local hackathons held by PayPal, in which 3,000 programmers from around the world participated. All the teams came to San Jose over the past weekend, and, over the course of 24 consecutive hours, they had to develop an entirely new product or service from scratch, with the primary objective being for the product to have positive applications, and to use PayPal's, and its subsidiary Braintree's, development platforms.

Mishali and Kaminsky developed a service called AirHop, to enable mobile phone communication in areas with no cellular reception, or on devices with no SIM cards. Using the technology they developed, text messages and voice messages can be sent, with communication that relies upon nearby devices that do have reception. "The product is based on communications protocols that make it possible to hop between nearby devices, in order to find the device from which the desired means of communication can be obtained, and to send the message," explains Mishali.

The two explained that the program can be used in areas that have suffered natural disasters, where cellular reception is problematic, in tourist areas where tourists have no local SIM cards, and even at performances and music concerts, where, on account of the crowds, cellular communications become overloaded, making it difficult to send messages.

The Israeli team won the final round after 24 hours of intensive programming, but with additional planning time before the event. In other words, they did not sleep for 38 hours, but they had plenty of gourmet food, some massages, and the support of mentors.

In awarding the prize check to the winning pair, Braintree CEO Bill Ready said, "This idea is like Airbnb for communications. There is a development here that a lot of people will want to use. I hope that the winning team will use the money to advance their development." There is no business model yet (Mishali: "We made up a model just for the hackathon, we need to think how it will look in the real world"), and they don't know what they will do with the money yet. Kaminsky said, "We want to develop this product into something. We will return to Israel, and we will seriously think about which way to take it."

Until a year ago, the two Israelis did not even know each other. Miraculously, they met at a different hackathon, and became friends. They then joined the PayPal hackathon that took place in Israel in February together, and won. There, they developed an app called Socializer, which makes it possible for people to have some quality time when they meet, and not to use their smartphones during meetings. Using Socializer, whoever picks up his or her phone for more than five seconds, pays for doing so, via PayPal, and the funds are transferred to a charity of his or her choice.

The other technologies developed at PayPal's global hackathon were no less interesting than the Israeli team's. The Canadian team from Toronto came in second place, with a product that combines photo editing and Apple's voice command program, Siri, making it possible for the visually impaired and the blind to easily identify products at supermarkets and stores, and to pay for them with ease.

The Boston team placed third, with a platform that makes it possible to locate local charitable organizations around the world, and to donate money to them based on the help they provide in areas in need. Thus, for example, one can donate to charities in Africa, based on their proximity to areas in which people suffer from Ebola.

The author was a guest of PayPal

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The Herzliya-based company's platform allows authors to upload their manuscripts to the platform, where the company's AI agents edit and proofread the text, design the cover, and handle the book's layout.



Citibank registers Mizrahi Tefahot ADRs for trading in US

According to the document filed last Thursday, Citibank is registering up to 50 million ADRs with each ADR representing one-fifth of a standard share of the Israeli bank.



Israel's fiscal deficit widens

Israel's fiscal deficit for the 12 months until the end of October 2026 was 3.3% of GDP, Ministry of Finance accountant General Michal Abadi-Boiangiu reported today.



Partner set to distribute huge dividend

The NIS 500 million dividend will be financed through the issue of new bonds. The company has reported its best profitability figures in fourteen years.



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Abu's Ari Real Estate and Avni Saplrim have sold a 50.1% stake in the planned Orot Yitzhak power plant to Rapac.



Israel Tax Authority proposes air travel tax

The Tax Authority has proposed a tax of up to NIS 100,000 per outbound flight depending on the size of the aircraft and the distance being flown.



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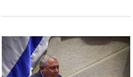
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Finland will pay €84.5 million for RGW110 anti-tank missiles produced by Rafael's German unit Dynamite Nobel Defence.



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President tasks Gadi Eisenkot with forming new government

Eisenkot will have 28 days, plus a possible 14-day extension, to present a government. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called for a unity government.



S&P leaves Israel's credit rating unchanged

The international credit rating agency has reaffirmed the rating at 'A' with a stable outlook.

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