New Kindle tablet expected at Amazon Calif. event

The Associated Press

Amazon.com Inc. is expected to update its Kindle Fire tablet computer on Thursday. It will be an effort to take a larger share of a tablet computer market dominated by Apple's iPad. It could help Amazon boost sales of digital goods such as e-books and movies.

The event came a day after Nokia Corp. and Google Inc.'s Motorola Mobility division announced five new smartphones between them. The two from Nokia will be the company's first to run the next version of Windows.

Consumer electronics makers are trying to generate interest in their products now, before Apple announces a new iPhone and possibly a mini iPad next week.

The Amazon event took place at a former airplane hangar in Santa Monica, Calif., with CEO Jeff Bezos presiding.

Here's a running account of the event. All times are PDT.

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11 a.m.

The first of the products Amazon unveiled wasn't the Fire tablet, but a stand-alone e-book reader. It has a black-and-white screen and is called Paperwhite.

It promises 25 percent more contrast. Bezos said "the whites are whiter, and the blacks are blacker."

The Paperwhite has a light source. Bezos says the device is "perfect in direct sunlight." Tablets such as the iPad and the Fire don't work as well in bright light because they are lit from the back. Bezos says the light on the Paperwhite is directed down at the display.

The device promises eight weeks of battery life, even with the light on.

It costs $119 and starts shipping Oct. 1. Amazon says it will start taking orders Thursday. There's also a model with 3G cellular connections for $179.

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10:50 a.m.

Bezos has begun to talk about the Kindle Fire. He called it a service rather than a gadget — a reference to the fact that the tablet is about selling movies, TV shows and other digital content from Amazon's store. Just a few days earlier, Amazon had announced a new content distribution deal with pay-TV channel Epix.

"People don't want gadgets anymore," Bezos said. "They want services. They want services that improve over time. They want services that get better."

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10:45 a.m.

The music stops. An Amazon ad appears on screen, and Bezos appears on stage wearing a dark blue suit and a white shirt, with no tie.

"We love to invent," Bezos declared.

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10:30 a.m.

The hangar is crammed with about 200 journalists awaiting the announcement. It's draped in black velvet as "Show Me The Light" by the Mystery Jets plays. Amazon's logo is on a huge screen at the front.

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