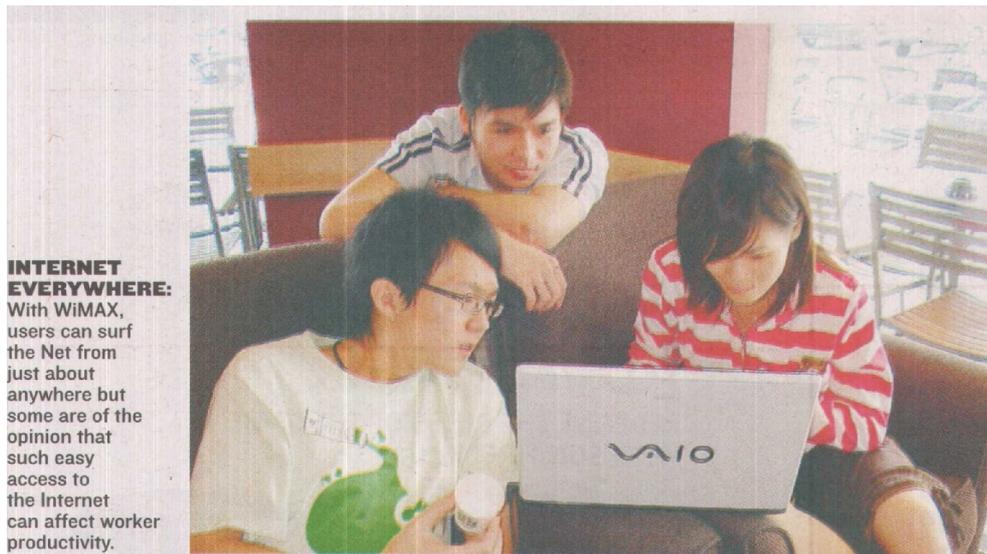
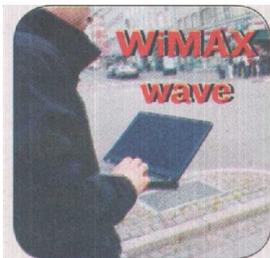


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WiMAX BRINGS GOOD AND BAD BITS



INTERNET EVERYWHERE: With WiMAX, users can surf the Net from just about anywhere but some are of the opinion that such easy access to the Internet can affect worker productivity.

WORLDWIDE Interoperability for Microwave Access is being touted as the next megatrend among users of the Internet, including governments and businesses.

Applied research body Mimos Bhd is keen to see how the technology can help spur the growth of local industries.

"Our mission is to help indigenous industries grow competitively in the global market," said Dr Mazlan Abbas, head of the wireless communications sector at Mimos in an e-mail interview with *In.Tech*.

WiMAX looks to be a "saviour" to this end, according to Mazlan. He said Mimos has been carrying out research on WiMAX since June last year to see how local industries can benefit from the technology.

»I like that employees will be able to access their e-mail from anywhere but at the same time I don't want them to become slaves to their gadgets«

AIMI AIZAL NASHARUDDIN, ALAM TEKNOKRAT PRESIDENT

Mazlan believes WiMAX is a god-send to companies that are looking to conduct wireless transactions and Internet-based businesses.

It offers broadband connectivity, with speeds of between 2Mbps (megabits per second) and 10Mbps. Comparatively, wired broadband speeds now are between 2Mbps and 4Mbps.

Downloading e-mail, browsing the Internet and accessing huge

office files from outside will no longer be an issue," said Mazlan.

And for businesses operating from the home, he said, WiMAX will level the field with office-based businesses. Currently home users are given slower access to the Internet, compared to corporate service subscribers.

"WiMAX is the way to go. There will no limitations in accessing multimedia, entertainment and

education sites, even those that are heavy on Flash animation which is taking a toll on bandwidth now," he said.

National service

Mimos also sees WiMAX as one of the significant technologies that will help Malaysia achieve its target of 50% broadband household penetration by 2010.

"In addition to that, high broadband speeds will spur the growth of new multimedia content and lead to the creation of new businesses," Mazlan said.

For Alam Teknokrat Sdn Bhd (Skali) president and co-founder Aimi Aizal Nasharuddin, WiMAX will definitely do well if it takes off now.

He also thinks the rivalry between WiMAX and the other wireless technologies, such as WiFi and 3G, will be a close fight.

"You think that just because there's WiMAX, WiFi will stop evolving. I don't think that's the case," he told *In.Tech*.

He said there are various aspects of WiMAX that need to be ironed out before it can be properly deployed.

These concerns include online security and the pricing of the service, although the service providers have assured water-tight security and affordable prices.

Aimi isn't convinced. "I think it will take about two years before WiMAX can really take off," he said.

But he sees the potential of the technology. WiMAX will definitely open more revenue streams for tech businesses like Skali, he said. "Businesses will always benefit from better technologies."

Does he see it helping Skali employees to be more efficient? Aimi said this brings both positive and negative impacts.

"Too much of a good thing might lower productivity," he explained. "I like that employees will be able to access their e-mail from anywhere but at the same time I don't want them to become slaves to their gadgets."

He cited the example of people who nodded and fiddled with their handheld gadgets during conversations. "That's irritating and it's rude but it's happening already," he said. — **JO TIMBUONG**