

Headline **Mak-Cik to bridge divide**
Date **04. Dec 2007**
Media Title **The Star**
Section **Nation**
Circulation **293375**
Readership **1026812**

Language **ENGLISH**
Page No **32**
Article Size **299** cm2
Frequency **Daily**
Color **Full Color**



Mak-Cik to bridge divide

New PC can be plugged into TV and is affordable

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PETALING JAYA: Mimos Bhd, the applied-research body, sees its "Mak-Cik" personal computer helping to bridge the digital divide between the technology haves and have-nots in the country.

The PC, currently at the prototype stage, is a lightweight device that is plugged into a TV and can access the Internet wirelessly. It will be priced at about RM500.

As its name suggests, the Mak-Cik's designers probably want the device to be so easy to use that even *makciks* (aunties) will be able to operate it. It is operated by touching icons on the screen.

However, Datuk Abdul Wahab Abdullah, president and chief executive officer of Mimos, declined to confirm or deny the rationale behind the colourful product name.

"It is designed to be easy to use and mobile," is as far as he would go. He said the Mak-Cik would be targeted at users in the rural areas where cybercafes were not as many, as well as at any elderly folk who may find the typical PC too complicated.

The Mak-Cik can be used for surfing the Web, sending and receiving e-mail messages, and making phone calls over the Internet.

Users will also be able to receive Internet-based TV programmes, as well as information such as government announcements, weather forecasts, religious instruc-



Breakthrough: The Mak-Cik is a lightweight, easy-to-use PC which anyone can learn to use.

tions and other educational content.

Mimos said farmers would also be able to access the "agribazaar", an online marketplace, to sell their products via the Mak-Cik.

The device will support both the WiFi (Wireless Fidelity) and WiMAX (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access) standards for wireless broadband access.

Mak-Cik does not have a hard disk, as do typical computers. Instead it uses Flash memory to store its operating system and applications, which helps reduce its weight and form factor.

"The low-cost device is expected to be available by the second quarter of next year," Abdul Wahab told *The Star* in an e-

mail interview yesterday.

Mimos is working with Universti Teknologi Mara to develop the product.

"We are also collaborating with telecommunications companies and technology providers," Abdul Wahab added.

According to him, Mimos received the mandate from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the National Information Technology Council meeting in August to look for solutions to reduce the digital divide.

An Economic Planning Unit/United Nations Development Programme 2005/2006 study of ICT (information and communications technology) penetration rates found that the digital divide was highly pronounced in Malaysia.