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Bringing Net content to rural folks



At the recently concluded *National Innovation Conference and Exhibition 2007* held at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Mimos Berhad showcased a number of exciting products. Interestingly, the products are designed for rural folks and the education market. **SUBASHINI SELVARATNAM** checks out the products.

THE Cyberwind, also known as the Mak-Cik PC, is designed for rural folks. It is a low-cost digital gadget that acts as a mediator to the internet, bringing internet content to TV.

This proof-of-concept gadget is designed to be lightweight, mobile and work with any TV. It is also equipped with Wi-Fi (and soon, WiMax) capabilities to enable remote connectivity.

Interestingly, it has built-in flash memory instead of a large hard disk capacity to achieve the desired form factor and lightness.

According to Mimos Berhad's senior manager, product strategy **Abdul Razak Ahmad**, the beauty of the Cyberwind is that it brings internet content to the living room TV at the user's convenience. This means that the Cyberwind "brings" the internet to rural folks without the complications of the PC.

Moreover, this gadget is easy to operate, rugged and lightweight—all the features needed to ensure that rural folks are comfortable using the gadget.

Abdul Razak said although there are many

initiatives to reduce the digital divide, many tend to benefit the younger population, leaving rural and elderly folks underserved.

To address this issue as well as to promote greater information and communications technology literacy among rural elders and the ICT illiterate, the Cyberwind was born.

The content and applications built into the Cyberwind are divided into four categories: communication, information, community and learning.

Under communication, there are the PC/TV browser (e-mail, Web and messaging), softphone (voice over Internet protocol/VoIP) and video conferencing while under information, there are free broadcast TV, special broadcast (Government news) and trading (Bazaar), among others.

Under community, there is K-Masjid while under learning, there are AgriBazar and K-School.

The K-Masjid, for example, is an initiative of the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry aimed at enabling knowledge exchange and sharing among mosques through the effective use of ICT. It is envisioned to be the platform to link up all the mosques in the country, thereby creating a virtual network of mosques.

Using the latest Web communications tools, Mimos is creating a means for the latest information and knowledge from the mosque to reach every home with internet access. For example, housewives now have the ability to access a Friday Shuhbah from home in real time.

K-Masjid also provides a forum for discussion and knowledge sharing between ummahs.

K-School, on the other hand, provides parents with real-time access to their children's academic performance such as exam results and attendance. In fact, those who cannot attend classes may be able to access the classroom teaching real-time online.

Besides the Cyberwind, Mimos is currently

working on a low-cost Tablet PC called the CyberTablet. The gadget will cater to both students and teachers.

The CyberTablet, which is said to be the thinnest in the world and weighs less than 900 grams, is envisioned to house the latest communications and knowledge technology developed by Mimos. It serves to enhance the teaching and learning experience in the smart school environment by providing interactivity, on-demand, customised and personal information retrieval.

To achieve this, Mimos, together with the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry, is working closely with the Education Ministry and content providers to make the content accessible through the Mimos Grid.

Mimos believes that by providing an easy-to-use gadget, it will enable students to be involved, leading to more active participation in the construction of knowledge which creates an environment for high-level cognitive processes such as analysis synthesis and evaluation.

The CyberTablet will be equipped with Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and WiMax connectivity, flash memory, a softphone (VoIP phone), virtualisation software to allow software applications to be downloaded on the fly from the Mimos Grid, personalisation software developed by Mimos, and the latest social networking tools.

This Tablet PC is expected to cost between US\$160 (RM45) and US\$300.

According to Mimos' director, technology portfolio management **Ahmad Helmi Abdul Halim**, the stripped-down PC offers simplicity and ease of use to help enhance the teaching and learning experience in schools.

The CyberTablet, which is awaiting patent approval, is expected to contain up-to-date communications technology and communications software such as VoIP, among others.

Ahmad Helmi says the stripped-down PC offers simplicity and ease of use.



A closer look at the Cyberwind.

Saharudin Rusli, designer of the CyberTablet.

Abdul Razak demonstrating how the Cyberwind works.

Mimos' head of research of next-generation Internet communications networks and solutions **Dr Gopi Kurup** showcasing the applications that can run on IP version 6.

