

Google chairman Eric Schmidt to visit Myanmar

March 16 2013



US Internet giant Google executive chairman, Eric Schmidt, pictured during a visit to Paris, on October 29, 2012. Schmidt will visit Myanmar next week, highlighting increasing Internet freedom in the former pariah state just weeks after a controversial trip to communist North Korea.

Google chairman Eric Schmidt will visit Myanmar next week, highlighting increasing Internet freedom in the former pariah state just weeks after a controversial trip to communist North Korea.

Schmidt will speak in Yangon on March 22 as part of an Asian tour, the [Internet giant](#) said, aiming to boost web access in the country, ruled for decades by a repressive military junta.

Under the military regime the Internet was strictly controlled, with access to anti-government sites and sites such as [YouTube](#) blocked.

As major economic and political reforms roll back decades of repressive rule, increasing numbers of people are going online to air their views.

But [Internet penetration](#) remains poor in Myanmar, long cut-off from the rest of the world by sanctions, and those with web access have to put up with painfully slow connections.

Schmidt's visit aims "to connect with local partners and Googlers who are working to improve the lives of many millions of people across the region by helping them get online and access the world's information for the first time," the company said in a statement.

He will give an hour-long speech at the Myanmar Information and Communication Technology Park, according to Thaung Su Nyein, secretary of the Myanmar Computer Professionals Association, with hundreds expected to attend.

"Computer professionals, businessmen and youth leaders will come. [Google](#) is one of the biggest IT companies in the world.... We are very proud and glad that their executive chairman would come and visit us."

Myanmar is one of Asia's last untapped markets, with overseas technology companies desperate to sell products such as mobile phones and laptops to its people as they attempt catch up with their neighbours.

Schmidt made a private visit to North Korea in January, warning after

his trip that the nation, which last week threatened a nuclear strike against the United States, will not develop unless it embraces [Internet freedom](#).

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Citation: Google chairman Eric Schmidt to visit Myanmar (2013, March 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-03-google-chairman-eric-schmidt-myanmar.html>

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