

Netbooks, broadband mobile centre stage in Taipei trade fair

June 2 2009, by Benjamin Yeh



A woman displays a latest Acer UX-30 notebook at Computex Taipei, Asia's biggest information technology trade show, June 2. The show opened on Tuesday, with the spotlight on low-priced notebook computers and advanced broadband Internet mobile technology.

Asia's biggest information technology trade show opened in Taiwan Tuesday, with the spotlight on low-priced notebook computers and advanced broadband Internet mobile technology.

The event was given extra significance this year by the participation of 36 Chinese exhibitors in the Computex Taipei, the first time since its launch 29 years ago.

Their participation has been made possible by the rapid improvement in ties between Taiwan and its former bitter rival China since President Ma

Ying-jeou came to power on the island in May last year.

The five-day event will also enable Taiwanese [notebook](#) PC companies to grab the spotlight ahead of competitors as they showcase their new "netbook" models -- laptops designed primarily for web browsing and emailing.

With many netbooks weighing less than a kilogram (2.2 pounds) and costing as little as 250 US dollars, the crowded market is heating up as the cheaper products gain traction over higher priced computers in the economic downturn.

Worldwide demand for netbooks is expected to more than double this year to 32 million units from 13 million units last year.

Asustek Computer Inc, known for its popular "Eee PC" family launched in 2007, demonstrated its latest items shortly after the opening of the exhibition.

Equipped with a 10-inch (25 cm) display, Asustek's Eee PC Seashell 1008HA touts a 18 mm profile and weighs only 1.1 kilograms (2.42 pounds), making it easy to carry. Its battery lasts up to six hours.

Asustek's rival Acer Inc, the world's number two PC vendor behind Hewlett-Packard, meanwhile unveiled its first Aspire One netbook featuring the partly Google-developed Android operating system and faster Internet speeds.

Analysts say Taiwanese computer makers are expected to take a 60 percent share of the global netbook market in 2009.

However, they will do so in a year when the overall information communication technology industry is forecast to contract by nine

percentage points, according to Taiwan's private think tank Topology Research Institute.

"The emergence of the netbook... brings new growth opportunities to matured markets," it said in a recent report.

The other big talking point of the trade fair was the cutting-edge mobile broadband technology WiMAX (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access).

Offering a higher data capacity, it operates across greater distances and allows for voice, video, Internet and other mobile services.

Starting from Tuesday, the technology will begin testing on a train running on Taipei's metro rail network for a year, offering real-time image transmission services to commuters.

"Perhaps there are still flaws with the technology (but) it is becoming commercially viable after years of development," said Lin Chih-ching of the Taipei Computer Association.

Potential WiMAX operators in Taiwan say that for a monthly fee of 800 Taiwan dollars (25 US dollars) mobile phone users can make calls, play online games, browse the Internet and watch high quality television.

One local operator has already started to provide a WiMAX service while five other Taiwanese companies, including Far East Tone and Global Mobile, have been licensed by the government to launch competing services.

Organisers said more than 1,700 exhibitors have 4,500 booths for the five-day fair, which is expected to greet around 100,000 visitors, including 35,000 international buyers.

The fair last year generated around 20 billion US dollars in business, they said.

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