Nokia eyes rural China wireless market

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Nokia is reportedly moving into rural China to cash in on what the company sees as a promising market for low-cost mobile phones.

A Nokia official told the China Daily the country's urban wireless market has become saturated, but small towns and the countryside offers the potential for further growth if the price is right for consumers.

"Mobile phone subscriber growth in big cities is continuing to slow since market penetration is already high," said David Ho, president of Nokia (China) Investment Co. "However, third and fourth-tier cities are providing big opportunities for mobile operators since they are signing on a growing number of new subscribers."

Ho said Nokia was in the process of building up its sales force in smaller cities to court first-time phone subscribers.

Ho predicted that China's total number of mobile subscribers will grow from 370 million currently to 650 million by 2008.

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