

India to have 230 mn 3G subscribers by 2013

With prices of third generation (3G)-enabled mobile phone handsets coming down to \$50 (Rs.2,000) levels, India should have around 230 million 3G subscribers by 2013, a top industry representative said here Friday.

'The cost of 3G handsets have come down from \$200 levels to \$50 levels and our projection is that there will be 230 million 3G subscribers in India by 2013,' Irwin Jacobs, chairman of wireless and data products major Qualcomm Inc., said while delivering the theme address at a seminar.

At the seminar on 'Diffusion of wireless innovation - enriching lives' organised by industry lobby Confederation of Indian Industry, Jacobs said his company's Wireless Reach initiative was aimed at developing technologies that would provide tools to boost inclusive growth.

Qualcomm has, for example, developed an application called Fisher Friend through which fishermen can quickly access crucial information such as weather conditions, where they can and cannot fish, and market prices - all in their local language.

In 2007, the company gave mobile phone handsets to tsunami-hit fishermen in Tamil Nadu to increase their safety, besides providing other crucial information concerning their livelihood, Jacobs said.

Fisher Friend is the result of a collaboration with M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Tata Teleservices and the Indore-based Astute Systems Technology Pvt. Ltd.

MSSRF is a non-profit organisation and was instrumental in providing information about the fishing communities.

Telecom operator Tata Teleservices provided the handsets and 3G CDMA coverage in the fishing communities, while Astute developed and created the BREW programme on which the Fisher Friend application runs.

CDMA stands for code division multiple access, a mobile phone technology while BREW stands for Binary Runtime Environment for Wireless, a programme that can be used for developing various wireless applications.

Azim H. Premji, the chairman of Indian information technology major Wipro, said Wipro Foundation had taken up a major project to upgrade the quality and reach of elementary education in rural India using information and communication technologies including wireless technology.

'More than 90 percent of all schools in rural India are government-funded and we are using structured innovation to develop and transform the quality of education in these schools,' Premji said.

'We are taking a comprehensive view of what wireless technology can do for rural India,' he said, adding: 'For example, one job in the mobile industry creates four support jobs, that means employing one person in the industry really means employing five persons.'

In the inaugural address, Subas Pani, the Planning Commission secretary, said the government was looking to use wireless technology extensively to deliver services to the people at a low cost.

'Inclusive growth requires inclusive banking and only wireless technology can do that,' Pani said

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