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Ericsson hub to showcase 3G future

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CYBERJAYA, Fri. - Malaysia will house the first Asian hub to showcase all 3G (3rd Generation) technologies at the RM80 million Ericsson@MSC hub to be launched here next week.

Ericsson Malaysia president and country manager Mats H. Olsson said Ericsson was committed to the development of the information communication technology industry in Malaysia and that the hub would serve as a regional expertise centre in 3G technologies.

High-tech services and applications in 3G include multimedia messaging (MMS), video calls, real-time video streaming, live television and the Kiblat finder, all of which provide convenience for users on the move.

"We are happy and proud to locate this hub here. It will allow us to have a lot more developed operations and better chance to serve our customers," he said at a briefing on the hub, which will be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 29.

The hub will house a flagship showcase of live networks, charting the evolution of mobile standards from GSM to 3G technologies and will provide a platform to test the latest mobile Internet applications.

The live networks are the four commercially-operational systems (GSM, GPRS, EDGE, WCDMA) and its locally-developed applications that are ready to be deployed.

GSM (global system for mobile communications) is the world's main digital mobile standard, GPRS (general packet radio service) is a packet-based technology that enables high speed wireless Internet and data communications, EDGE (enhanced data rates for global evolution) is an enhanced version of GPRS and WCDMA (wideband code division multiple access) is a technology that is powerful enough to handle moving images with sound.

Olsson said Malaysia was the logical choice for the hub as it was among the region's first to embrace 3G technologies.

Three years ago, mobile network operators in Malaysia were given the choice to implement either GPRS, EDGE or WCDMA technologies or all three, one of the two main evolutionary paths towards 3G, he added.

"Malaysians also have a high interest in these applications. Besides that, the Government's focus in this area with its Vision 2020, the establishment of the Multimedia Super Corridor and Multimedia Development Corporation shows a very strong concerted effort."

He said the current developments of these technologies were encouraged by various government initiatives in ICT.

The Ericsson@MSC hub will be the headquarters for Ericsson's 500 employees, with more than half of them supporting the company's operations in the Asia Pacific region.

There will be 3G experts providing relevant support to customers and training given to regional engineers.

Olsson said with almost 40 years of history in Malaysia, Ericsson's establishment of the hub reflected its confidence in and support of the MSC as well as re-affirming its commitment to the country.

On how soon end users in Malaysia could use 3G applications, he said it would be around seven years before it was mass-marketed, but it would be introduced in the Klang Valley before that.

The reason for this, he said, was that although 3G technologies and

applications would grow rapidly over the next few years, there was always a socialisation period for any new technology.

"The 2G or 21-G, GPRS and EDGE are far from exhausted. GPRS has been around for a while but there is a lot more mobile Internet applications that can be done with it," he said, adding that WCBMA would be introduced in urban and suburban areas in a year or two.

He said there were different users with different needs, with some people happy to spend thousands of ringgit monthly, but others preferring to spend much less.