

MATICHON INFORMATION CENTER	Subject Heading :
Source : BANGKOK POST	51597736
Date : 3 DEC 2008 Page : D3	No :

NTC enables WiMAX for 8 Chiang Rai schools^{D3}

Supports Mae Fah Luang University

DON SAMBANDARAKSA

CHIANG RAI: The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), Mae Fah Luang University, Jasmine, TT&T and TTT Broadband have launched a WiMAX network connecting eight schools in the far north of Thailand as part of a 70 million baht NTC-funded project. Some 21 schools are connected and provided with 400 PCs to the Moodle-based MFL hosted e-Learning system in a three year project through WiMAX, ADSL, Fibre and IPStar.

Mae Fah Luang University President Assoc Prof Wanchai Sirichana said that the project was envisioned as part of His Majesty the King's 80th birthday and finally came into being when the university sat down with the NTC Chairman Gen Chuchart Promprasit.

He stressed that the private sector vendors would be giving the equipment to the NTC and that MFL would be receiving it from the commission as the university could not receive gifts from the private sector directly.

He said that society was facing the problem of a lack of quality students. This stemmed from a lack of quality teachers and had been a weakness that everyone had been talking about for a long time, but nothing was being done, he said. The pilot project is aimed at using tele-education to develop teachers, schools and communities. He thanked the vendors for providing equipment at a lower than cost price for the project.

He said it had caused a stir when people had heard that they would be using WiMAX. " 'Why not use normal fixed lines?' they asked. 'Mae Fah Luang and the NTC thinks differently,' I replied," he said.

Gen Chuchart said that by law the NTC had to provide access, especially for education. He said that in the past, the TOT had tried to provide universal access with wired technology and had spent billions of baht while not succeeding. For this trial, Gen Chuchart said



Students at the Mae Khao Tom Ta Sud school, one of eight schools in Chiang Rai now connected to the Web over a WiMAX link.

that the current trial pilot was amazingly cost-effective as you could not do much for 70 million baht these days..

He also said that he hoped that this project would not fizzle out and disappear after the trial was over and hoped that the Ministry of Education would take the ball and carry it forward.

TT&T Executive Vice President Terasak Jerauswong said his company became involved in June and that the project is done at a loss for TT&T to help society. The network went from an agreement to be up-and-running in three months and carried data, voice and video, he said.

Dr Thongchai Yuyartiwong from Mae Fah Luang University said that the three-year project had five milestones: basic infrastructure, human capacity development, content development, reaching out to social networks and creating a sustainable network into the future.

The technology is a combination of WiMAX, Fibre, ADSL and IP Star satellite.

The university has developed eBooks and documentaries for teachers and students which are made available through the Open Source Moodle learning management system.

The university is now engaging the local community and teaching farmers of the benefits of ICT to agriculture.

TTT Broadband's Sukhum Laolitikul explained the network topology. Two Cisco WiMAX base stations connect directly to the TTT gigabit fibre backbone network. One station covers seven schools and the other just one. Each school has a Cisco WiMAX router and two WiFi spots to serve its 21 PCs. The project set a minimum of 3Mbps per school, but was getting between 4.3 to 5 Mbps reliably.

TTT sees this as a commercial project, but done for MFL University. So, if some-

one in the cellsite's area and wants a connection, they would have to go to MFL and not TTT to get connected. Sukhum said that if given a WiMAX licence, TTT could probably offer commercial services within three months.

He noted that the 2.5 GHz band they were using had less interference from some MCOT-licensed stations, less than the 2.3 GHz band which conflicted with a lot of CAT issued equipment. The 20 MHz slice of spectrum used is licensed to the NTC and given to MFLU to use.

Cisco Thailand's General Manager for Service Providers Pornprom Ketudat, said Cisco base stations had eight separate dipole antennas in each array, capable of beaming signals as well as using MIMO (multiple in, multiple out) technology to increase range and in-building coverage. Together this means three times the range, or the ability to cut 25 base stations down to nine.