

Two Years of Free Wi-Fi for Singapore

Come 2007, Singaporeans will be ushering the new year with at least 24 months, or two years, of free (basic tier) wireless connectivity at up to 512 kbps speeds almost everywhere - thanks to IDA's 'Wireless@SG' programme.

Wireless@SG is Singapore's new wireless broadband programme that will be developed and run in the next two years by three local wireless operators. This October, IDA accepted the proposals from iCELL Network Pte Ltd, QMAX Communications and Singapore Telecommunications Ltd to the government's two-year Call-For-Collaboration (CFC) to kick-start the nation's progressive deployment of a widely-available wireless broadband network by Sep 2007. This network will complement and extend broadband access currently available in the homes, offices and schools, to public places.

Today, while Singaporeans on-the-go have ready access to voice connectivity (e.g. through mobile phones), connectivity for data-centric devices (e.g. PDAs and laptops) is readily available only in Wi-Fi hotspots run by individual service providers. The CFC changes this. With the two-year Wireless@SG programme, the number of public 'hotspots' will grow 5-fold from the current 900 to about 5,000. The three operators will bump up the number of Wireless@SG 'hotzones' in high-traffic, public areas, such as the Central Business District, downtown shopping belts like Orchard Road, and HDB Town Centres, to make wireless broadband a ubiquitous access mode by September 2007. With this, Singaporeans can truly enjoy seamless broadband on-the-go - we need not be home or in the office to now access all our favorite Internet-based services like emails, instant messages, online games and VOIP calls.

The three operators are extending this two-year free offering with unlimited usage to all residents and visitors in Singapore, including tourists and business travellers. The sign-up details will be made known from December 2006 by the operators.

Meanwhile, Singaporeans and other users in Singapore will be pleased to know that they do not have to be existing subscribers of these operators to enjoy the free service. In fact, they can choose to sign up at any time with any one of the three operators, and be able to access all the three operators' networks with one account.

Premium Services

For those hungrier for bandwidth beyond 512 kbps or connectivity options with higher quality of service, the three operators will also offer premium services at a fee. These will come with differentiated value-added operator-based services such as premium contents, bundled video conferencing, VoIP and video streaming applications, online gaming and location-based services. More details of these will be made available by the operators by the end of this year.

About the Call-For-Collaboration (CFC)

IDA called the Wireless Broadband Market Development (WBMD) CFC in March 2006, to invite interested operators to deploy the Wireless@SG networks and services for two years. Through the CFC, IDA seeks to grow Singapore's wireless broadband market and catalyse broadband adoption. Recognising that true nation-wide, pervasive wireless connectivity can only be achieved progressively as wireless technologies mature¹, the CFC is just the first

phase towards this goal. In the meantime, the CFC utilises existing wireless technologies such as Wi-Fi, to meet the needs of the growing number of data-centric device users that require wireless access to Internet.

The three operators will be investing about \$100 mil over the next two years to deploy Wireless@SG. IDA is prepared to defray up to \$30 mil of the deployment cost.

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Note:

1. Other wireless technologies, e.g. WiMax, potentially provide more extensive coverage. However, WiMax is expected to be available for widespread commercial rollout only from 2008. There is also already a large number of Wi-Fi enabled devices like notebooks, tablet PCs, PDAs and increasingly mobile phones with built-in Wi-Fi capability today, with Wi-Fi support built into many operating systems. In addition, many offices and home users are already accessing office and home applications over private Wi-Fi networks.