

Asian ICT Council Newsletter



Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of
Commerce and Industry

INSIDE

Message from the Chairman

We are pleased to publish the fifth edition of the Asian ICT Council Newsletter.

This issue contains feature stories and reports on the recent ICT sector development in countries such as China, Myanmar, Taiwan, Philippines, and Pakistan. We hope that you will find this issue informative, and can provide you with discussion points when we meet at the 28th CACCI Conference on September 17-19, 2014, in Kuala Lumpur.



This year's Asian ICT Council breakout session will be co-organized with the Asian Council on Health and Education. The session will have the theme "*The Digital Economy: Transforming the Marketplace*" and will tackle several issues at hand. From mobility, cloud computing, business intelligence, to social media— it will encourage an exchange of ideas on how information and communication technology has been transforming the many aspects of the marketplace, including but not limited to telecommunications, entertainment, media, banking, retail, education, and healthcare.

I look forward to an insightful discussion at this year's breakout session. See you at the 28th CACCI Conference in Malaysia!

Dr. Gwo Jiunn Huang
Fellow, Institute for Information Industry

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Informatizing China's countryside

China's central and provincial governments have launched a number of rural informatization initiatives over the years. These interventions aim to reduce the gap in information and communications technology between urban and rural areas. A workshop was held recently to showcase several interventions and seek ways to scale-up successful and sustainable models. Organized by China's National Development and Reform Committee (NDRC) and the World Bank, the workshop was attended by over 100 participants from a range of central and provincial government agencies involved in rural ICT as well as researchers and the private sector. The workshop also featured the launch of a report compiled by the State Information Center covering 21 cases of rural ICT interventions by central ministries, local governments, enterprises and farmers.

Featured presentations included: The use of wireless technology to provide "triple-play" services in Hunan province where geographical conditions inhibit the use of traditional wired technologies. The wireless service provides television, voice and Internet access to millions of rural inhabitants. The development of the Beijing Rural Management Information Project.

Launched in 2000, the platform has networked government offices at the city, district, county, town and village level and is used by almost 7,000 officials to support rural government

management and decision making.

The Association of Suichang Shops was established in 2010 to exchange experience and best practice among the 1,000 online shops operated by citizens in the county. The association has worked to garner government support for the online merchants and reached an agreement with TaoBao, China's largest business to consumer e-commerce site, to create a special channel for rural products and services from Suichang. China's first traditional medicine e-commerce platform was launched in 2012 and has attracted 280,000 registered users, 2,400 enterprises and 9,000 traders. The platform employs more than 400 people in 300 branches nationwide and aims to stabilize prices for medicinal herbs by networking growers and wholesalers.

The workshop concluded that there were common factors leading to successful interventions. This includes clearly understanding the needs of rural residents and developing ICT solutions to satisfy them. With an eye to future, there are still some challenges with urbanization and advances in information technology requiring rural ICT models to adapt accordingly.

The event culminated several years of research led by the World Bank to better understand rural ICT access and use at the grass root level and recommend key directions for policy makers based on domestic and international best practice. Studies include a survey about ICT access and use in villages, an

investigation of China's public libraries and the role they are playing in offering access and training to computers and the Internet and an analysis of how ICTs could help enhance the well-being of China's growing elderly population.

The ICT Demand Survey covered over 3,000 households in more than 200 villages in Guizhou, Jilin and Shandong provinces where only around a quarter of the villages surveyed had their own public facility for Internet access. The Library Landscape study shows that in these same provinces, over half of the villages have a library or a reading room and almost a third of them are connected to internet. But just over five percent of the villagers surveyed said they visited library in the previous year. The study on Elderly, ICTs and Libraries in China found that only six percent of China's elderly use the Internet.

A key obstacle to rural informatization is the lack of IT skills among villagers. Further, there are few suitable venues available to acquire digital literacy. Public libraries are used in a number of countries to successfully teach digital skills and provide Internet access. Once acquired these skills can enhance livelihoods for the rural population through better access to market information, online sales and employment possibilities, delivery of online public services and access to health and educational information.

World Bank Feature Story

Myanmar moves toward connectivity for all



The World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors recently approved a \$31.5 million credit from the International Development Association (IDA) for a Telecommunications Sector Reform Project in Myanmar.

"The reform of Myanmar's telecommunications sector is an integral part of lifting millions of people out of poverty. Today, Myanmar has one of the lowest rates of telecommunications and internet access in the world. The vast majority of people face high costs, poor service or a complete lack of access. This affects poor people and remote communities the most," said Ulrich Zachau, World Bank Country Director for Myanmar.

The project takes an integrated approach to the development of the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) sector by creating the enabling policy, and the regulatory and legal environment for a competitive telecommunications market. The goal is to expand quality mobile phone access and affordable communications in Myanmar.

At the same time it will reform the government-owned Myanmar Post and Telecommunications (MPT) to separate the policy and operational functions of the government to create a more level playing field. It will also help develop and pilot a universal service strategy to ensure the expansion of service to remote communities.

The project will also begin to put in place the foundation for 'eGovernment'

by developing the Myanmar National Portal which aims to provide citizens, businesses and visitors (including foreign workers, investors and tourists) with a single on-line window for government information and services. Over time the national portal will become a mobile friendly tool for users to find information in Myanmar language and in English, provide suggestions and feedback about poor service delivery



or incidents of corruption, and transact services in a safe and convenient electronic environment.

The Government of Myanmar has already taken concrete steps to reform the telecommunications sector. In October 2013, the Telecommunications Law was approved and in January 2014, two new operators were licensed— Telenor from Norway and Ooredoo from Qatar to provide service in Myanmar. The project will also provide technical assistance to conduct a due diligence review of laws covering privacy, data protection, cyber-crime, and access to and freedom of information. It will identify gaps in these laws and recommend a legal and

regulatory framework consistent with international good practice.

Once the sites for piloting the universal service strategy in rural areas are identified, the project implementing agency, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, (MCIT) will organize public consultations. These sessions are expected to begin in late 2014 and input from participants will inform the pilot design. Two public consultations meetings, organized by the MCIT, were held in Yangon in November.

"We support the government-led public consultations and we believe that future consultations will provide civil society organizations, local communities, and ethnic groups with opportunities to engage meaningfully in project development and implementation," said Kanthan Shankar, World Bank Country Manager for Myanmar.

The US\$31.5 million IDA credit in support of Myanmar's telecommunications reform is part of the World Bank Group's rapidly growing program support for the country. During his visit to Myanmar at the end of January 2014, President Jim Yong Kim announced the World Bank Group's plans for a \$2 billion multi-year development package for Myanmar. This will include projects to help improve agriculture, access to energy and health services, and to provide support for other key development priorities. ■

World Bank Feature Story

Afghanistan moves to connect with each other and *with the world*



Preparing for an important role in that new society are Spozhmay Ikhlas, 22, and Somaya Mahbooby, 20. Both are fourth year computer science students at Kabul University who recently took part in a three-month IT skills development program for young professionals.

Story Highlights:

- Use of mobile phones and Internet services is increasing dramatically within a short period in Afghanistan thanks to several initiatives to update the country's communications and IT capabilities.
- Projects, supported by the World Bank and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), are expanding connectivity as well as building capacity in the public and private sector to use ICT.
- Mobile phone subscriptions alone cover well over 60 percent of the population.

The phone on Wais Payab's desk is ringing, and so is his mobile. An ironic smile spreads across his face as the 33-year-old director of technology and innovation for Afghanistan's Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology juggles two calls between incoming SMSs and email.

"Sorry, I guess this is my fault a little bit," says Payab with an apologetic grin. "My work makes it easier to reach people in my country now."

This wasn't the case just 10 years

ago. Three decades of conflict left Afghanistan far behind during the global communications revolution. In 2002, there were fewer than 60,000 phones in use across the country.

By 2010, mobile phone subscriptions alone connected more than 13 million people and covered at least 60 per cent of the population. Internet services are expanding as well, and a wide range of other IT improvements are underway.

"We went from almost zero to the modern age here in no time," says Payab. "This is an incredible, dramatic change for our country. We've been very fortunate to have the World Bank and the ARTF supporting us for so many key projects."

Since 2003, the World Bank has funded numerous initiatives to help update the country's communications and technological capabilities. First, under the Emergency Communications Development Project, at a cost of some \$24 million, connectivity was established between all 34 provinces. Voice, internet, fax and video conferencing facilities were created for all provincial capitals.

Under the ARTF support, microwave links to the eastern provinces and Pakistan were created at a cost of \$2

million, a satellite earth station was built in Kabul, and new billing systems were supported.

More private sector participation

In 2011, the World Bank approved a further grant of \$50 million for the Information and Communications Technology Development Project (ICTDP), run by the Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology. The ICTDP is further expanding connectivity and linking the central and northeastern provinces to the country's existing fiber optic backbone, which already connects 20 provinces and most neighboring countries.

ICTDP is also supporting a service delivery platform for mobile 'e-Government' initiatives, running an innovations support program, enrolling about 1,500 young IT professionals in a skills development program, and providing intensive training to public officials.

Also key to the country's progress is the international community's support for the creation of policies, procedures, and regulations for the mobile sector and IT industry, enabling more private

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sector participation. Already, the market has four mobile phone companies and seven internet service providers. State-owned Afghan Telecom operates fixed and mobile phones, internet, domestic and international networks. The aim is to develop a sustainable system with Afghan Telecom already generating revenue.

“Since the beginning the World Bank has supported us in so many ways, so now we are standing on our own feet,” says Gul Ahmad

Rastman, Afghan Telecom chief executive officer and president. “For this, we are very appreciative.”

Another figure at the helm of these changes is Baryalai Hassam, deputy minister, technical, for the Ministry of Telecommunications and IT. “I can’t even compare these times to before 2002. It is like another world,” says Hassam. As a child, Hassam remembers only a few pay phones scattered around Kabul city. “There were always very long queues, and you couldn’t even call outside Kabul,” he says.

“Back then, there was no communication system in place in Afghanistan. Our people went hundreds of kilometers, even to neighboring countries like Pakistan and Iran, when they wanted to talk with relatives. Now everything is possible with mobile phones and computers.”

“We are bringing development to our country, changing the lives of people and creating a new society,” says Hassam.

Support for innovation

Preparing for an important role in that new society are Spozhmay Ikhlas, 22, and Somaya Mahbooby, 20. Both are fourth year computer science students at Kabul University who recently took part in a three-month IT skills development program for young professionals.

They are members of the first group of 450 participants who attended classes run by private contractors to develop a pool of skilled, qualified IT specialists in Afghanistan.

Clutching her cell phone as she

chatted, Somaya couldn’t imagine the world without advanced technology. “It would be so boring and difficult.”

Spozhmay says she is determined to use her IT skills to help her country because “when there is no communication, you can’t reach out and solve problems. With technology today, we can all share knowledge and ideas very easily.”

Originally from southeastern Paktia province, Spozhmay says she frequently phones her cousins and other relatives there. “We could not do this before, but it is very important because I can’t go to them but we can still communicate and know they’re okay.”

Meanwhile, at the National Data Center, Payab is overseeing development of the e-Government initiative aimed at streamlining and sharing infrastructure by various ministries, and using mobile phone applications to broaden their reach and improve public services.

Eventually, Payab hopes new mobile applications might issue SMS alerts about polio inoculation clinics, weekly advice on pre-natal care for pregnant women, or crop disease tips for farmers. “We are hoping to have 10 new apps up and running later this year, and they should be very exciting,” promises Payab.

In addition, the Innovations Support Program is running a competition for Afghan citizens to submit innovative ideas and solutions for nine government challenges. A winning idea will receive a \$2,000 prize, while a solution could net \$5,000.

One challenge involves using mobile phone technology to get Class 12 exam results to students in remote villages, says Payab.

“We are trying to encourage our people to think innovatively and help us with these developments,” says Payab, who spent his early career in Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

“This is why I came back to Afghanistan because it is like a green field here with so many possibilities. If we put the cornerstones in the right places, we should have a very bright future.” ■

World Bank Feature Story

Microsoft becomes innovation center partner: AIT

Microsoft Taiwan has officially become the first “Innovative Partner” of the American Innovation Center (AIC), the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) announced on June 18.



“The AIC is a modern data center which focuses on creativity and design. The center allows young people to use digital tools to empower themselves in entrepreneurship, to learn English and to obtain the latest information about the United States,” Joseph Bookbinder, AIT public diplomacy section chief, said at a press event convened to announce the news.

Welcoming Microsoft Taiwan in becoming the first innovative partner and “infusing new energy into the center,” Bookbinder said he believes the AIC can provide even more diverse and up-to-date resources to visitors with the establishment of more similar innovation partnerships in the future.

AIC Taiwan is the first of its kind in Asia, established by the U.S. State Department and beginning operations in January. It houses computers, 3D printers, scanners, e-books, audio-visual materials and more than 280 English-language books. Since its inception in January, AIC has already offered over 70 courses, according to the AIT.

As part of the latest cooperation efforts, Microsoft Taiwan will launch a summer camp this August using KUDO, a visual programming language for creating games developed specifically for and by children, so that they can learn how to write programs with pictures and cultivate their logical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Microsoft Taiwan is also scheduled to launch a series of courses at the AIC this September.

The China Post ■

PCCI urges members to maximize business exchange portal

Members of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) nationwide can now access a two-billion strong market in ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea, through the East Asia Business Exchange (EABEX) Portal, an initiative of the East Asia Business Advisory Council (EABC) in partnership with the various chambers of commerce across East Asia.

PCCI Immediate Past President Atty. Miguel B. Varela announced that the EABEX portal was presented to PCCI members at the 39th Philippine Business Conference (PBC) held on October 23, 2013 at the Manila Hotel.

EABEX is a platform that enables companies, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to connect and do business with their counterparts in East Asia through online business matching and trade.

“We are glad that EABC has initiated this project to support chamber members across East Asia to seamlessly connect and transact with one another through the online portal. This is something our members should fully utilize to expand their market in the region,” Varela said.

Under this scheme, Varela explained that PCCI members will be provided with a free membership account that will allow them to engage with members of top business chambers in ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea; connect to verifiable and reliable suppliers in the region; promote products for free and with value added services such as the optimization on the use of free trade agreements (FTAs) and tariff database.

Meanwhile, the Tariff Commission (TF) has recently launched the Philippine Tariff Finder (PFT), an online facility that houses all eight existing tariff schedules of the Philippines and incorporates a search engine that permits tariff searching by keyword or by ASEAN Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature (AHTN 2012 product code). *PCCI News Release* ■

Booming Philippine outsourcing industry faces work shortage



The Philippines’ outsourcing industry faces a shortage of trained personnel after a decade of rapid growth which saw it become a pillar of the economy, the industry association said in a report released on October.

The country’s outsourcing industry, second only to India, is suffering from “growing pains” as booming demand overtakes the supply of trained workers, said Jose Mari Mercado, president of the IT-Business Process Association of the Philippines.

The industry, which includes call centers, software design, animation and other functions that foreign companies find cheaper to farm out abroad, has grown by about 20 percent annually since 2007, he said.

“We’ve been so successful that our clients are asking us to do more work but the work they are asking us to do requires certain skills we don’t normally have,” he told AFP on the sidelines of an industry summit.

There is a growing demand for financing and accounting personnel, and even for experienced middle managers that the industry cannot immediately meet, he added.

Mercado projected the industry

would have 960,000 direct employees and earn \$16 billion overseas in 2013, up from 777,000 direct employees and \$13 billion in 2012.

The industry now accounts for eight percent of the economy and this could rise to about 10 percent by 2016 with 1.3 million direct employees and \$25 billion in overseas earnings, he said.

The Philippines is the world’s top location for call centers but is finding it difficult to fill more technical jobs.

“What is stopping us from growing faster is that our skills and competences have to develop faster to meet the global demand,” Mercado said.

“You can’t just say you will hire a middle manager with five years of experience. There are very few people (like that). Definitely it is part of growing pains,” he added.

The industry group is working with government and academic circles to develop courses to produce graduates who can meet the demand, he said.

Government and industry are also moving to expand the talent pool by setting up more outsourcing centres outside Metropolitan Manila, which now hosts 72 percent of all such companies, he said. ■

Agence France Presse

Putting Peshawar at the Helm of Digital Age: Youth, Technology, and Innovation

“In Peshawar?” was a common reaction by confused members of the Pakistani and international technology community when told about the location of the country’s first Digital Youth Summit (DYS). The city’s reputation is often unfairly dominated by insecurity, yet over 300 young men and women from across Pakistan showed up to the two-day conference this week, making it the largest youth tech conference in the country and marking Peshawar’s emergence as a hub of innovation and technology.

More than 60% of Pakistanis are under the age of 30 and while unemployment is rising, it is not possible for the government to provide jobs in the public sector to this huge mass of youth. On the other hand, a youth-led national and organic movement is growing, changing perceptions about “secure” public sector jobs and creating an ecosystem for entrepreneurship, freelance jobs, and technology. Peshawar is at the helm of this change.

Starting with a civic hackathon in January 2014, 150 young techies from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KP) demonstrated their energy and creativity for solving prevalent civic issues through technology. Twelve winners of the hackathon became fellows

at the government of KP’s Information Technology Board (KPITB) and began developing their own civic startups. Their prototypes from the hackathon are now turning into full-fledged apps.

“Traditionally we wait for governments to solve citizens’ problems. This helps citizens solve government’s problems, which hurt all of society,” said Muhammad Ibraheem, one of the fellows. His team’s app, No Kunda, allows citizens to take pictures of electricity theft they see in their community and report them to authorities. Another, DocSeek, aims to be a “Yelp for government health facilities in KP”, enabling residents to easily find nearby government health facilities, complete with user reviews. The fellows presented their apps and experiences at the Digital Youth Summit as one of the summit’s 28 sessions over two days.

Over 66 speakers from across Pakistan and the world converged to engage with local youth on topics of fostering innovation, startups and freelancing jobs through the digital economy. The participants included innovators, entrepreneurs, and an exciting group from emerging startup communities.

Youth interested in building digital livelihoods heard from investors on

how to attract funding, practical tips on writing proposals, and the opportunities available to become part of a global digital economy, such as through micro-work. Along with the sessions, there was an expo of digital innovators showcasing their products.

The attendees cherished the opportunity to meet successful entrepreneurs, with sessions consistently running out of time for questions, and speakers swamped after the sessions by aspiring young innovators.

Many of the attendees (as well as some speakers) were university students, and common questions touched on the practical tools and networks required to set up their own ventures, particularly in an environment where many people do not consider freelancing and digital work to be ‘real jobs’.

One session, on enterprise planning proved so popular that it was repeated for those who could not attend the first time. In addition to youth meeting inspirational role models, they also met each other to share ideas.

Madiha Hassan founder of Pakistan’s first ridesharing app, Savaree, and described as a local digital ‘rock star’, said, “I attend tech conferences around Pakistan where I see amazing people,

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Haitian students develop life-saving software

To prepare for natural disasters, the necessary data must be up-to-date. In the case of Haiti, which is vulnerable to earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods, this is a matter of life and death.

Which communes are more at risk? What infrastructure should be put in place to respond to a disaster? It is virtually impossible to make a sound decision without having the data in hand.

Until now, this information, which was updated and evaluated each year, was available in hard copy only and it was difficult for the Department of Civil Protection to update it in real time and peruse it quickly.

Very soon however, with a mere click, these officials will be able to locate the risks facing a commune or department on an interactive map. This map will also allow the level of preparedness of local institutions to be viewed. The data will be entered directly by the communes and this system will therefore make the process of updating information more efficient.

“(This software) will allow us to adjust our responses to the needs of residents even in the most remote areas of the country. We could have spent a great deal of time developing software of this nature but Haitian youth have made the task easier for us,” says Roosevelt Compere, the Prevention Coordinator at the Department of Civil Protection.

This new software copped first place at a recent Hackathon, where Haitian students met for two days and one night to develop a technological tool to improve



The winning team “Premium” with Anne-Martine in the middle. - World Bank

data collection in communes and to create a database through which information recorded on maps can be viewed.

Anne-Martine, 22 years old, is the only woman in the winning group, “Premium,” which she heads. A fifth-year student at Haiti’s State University, she galvanized her fellow students and encouraged them to participate. “Programming facilitates problem-solving,” she states. “Each project presents a new challenge.”

Haiti and innovation—a bright future

On Sunday evening, with tired faces after 48 hours of work that included one sleepless night, the competitors submitted their software to a jury composed of representatives from the Department of Civil Protection, IBM, Surtab (a local developer of the first tablets made in Haiti), UNDP, and the World Bank.

“Haiti and innovation: these two words are rarely used together. Haiti

does, however, have a vibrant community of programmers who are willing to offer new ideas and new perspectives,” stated Michel Matera, a World Bank Disaster Risk Management Specialist.

Anne-Martine is living proof of this. She has already developed software for the private sector and, in a few years, sees herself heading a company that provides technological services.

Stephen Claxton, the representative from Surtab, a Hackathon partner, states confidently that “if we encourage young people to remain in Haiti, the country will prosper. The future begins now.”

This Hackathon was organized on the margins of the Forum “Understanding Risk—Haiti 2014.” “Premium,” the winning team, can participate in an international competition to showcase its project to the “Understanding Risk” international forum, to take place in London. *World Bank Feature Story* ■

Putting Peshawar... from page 7
but it’s always the same, established people.” The DYS she said, allowed her “to see entrepreneurs my age and connect with them.”

The Summit’s presence was felt widely in the Pakistani digital community with its hashtag, #KPDYS14, trending as number one nationally on Twitter.

Many young participants from outside Peshawar asked how they can organize DYS and similar events in their own cities, including many from Karachi and Lahore, traditionally seen

as Pakistan’s technological hubs.

The Summit, driven by a partnership between KPIT, the World Bank and local digital innovation and entrepreneurship group, Peshawar 2.0, has helped to kick start efforts to build a new ecosystem to boost jobs and innovation focusing on young people.

“Youth in Pakistan need jobs that are easily accessible, creative, and are not bound by geographical location,” said Ahsan Mukhtar, Google Business Group Manager in Islamabad. The digital economy can provide quick results to engage

youth, which is key to development and stability.

With the DYS, Peshawar took a step towards establishing a reputation for technological innovation.

“All the speakers and attendees are well known and connected on social media. They are getting the word out to the public which can alter perceptions. I have a lot of friends who did not want to come to DYS but after seeing tweets and pictures, they have reconsidered,” said Anusheh Ashraf, a presenter from Invest2Innovate. ■

World Bank Feature Story

Far EasTone unveils new mobile commerce platform

FarEasToneTelecommunications Co., Taiwan's third-largest mobile provider, on October unveiled a mobile commerce platform powered by technology from Seattle-based Sirqul Inc.

Called FET SoLoMo, the platform will enable developers, merchants, brands and retailers to offer customers mobile ads and digital coupons integrated into mobile apps and tailored to users' real-life habits, including their current physical location.

Far EasTone is the first Asian telecoms operator to launch the all-inclusive mobile commerce platform, which is expected to increase monetization for developers and directly increase revenue for merchants and brands, according to the company.

Far EasTone said it is inviting local developers, retailers and brands to join the platform, which is scheduled to hit the market in the first quarter of 2014 with an expected 1,200 retail partners, 3,000 mobile apps and 5,000 digital coupons.

"We are thrilled to be the first mobile operator in Taiwan to offer an integrated social, local and mobile commerce platform," said Charlene Hung, executive vice president of Internet and commerce at Far EasTone.



"Sirqul's history of mobile and technical commerce expertise has brought to life our vision of interconnectedness and we stand impressed by their ability to seamlessly integrate with our mobile infrastructure," she said in a press release.

David Liu, Sirqul's chief operating officer, said that Taiwan is a key market as the company expands overseas into the Asia-Pacific region.

"We value this partnership to power one of the largest, most forward-thinking mobile operators in Taiwan and look ahead to future expansion

opportunities into surrounding Asian markets," Liu said.

Robert Frederick, Sirqul's founder and chief technology officer, told a media briefing in Taipei that Taiwan is one of the top markets for both mobile apps and people who are interested in using those apps for entertainment or consumption.

Sirqul will continue to seek other Asian partners that will share the same vision as the company to build a mobile commerce ecosystem with developers, retailers and consumers, Frederick said.

■
The China Post

Worldwide sales of gadgets to slowdown this year: report

The global sales of smartphones, tablets, personal computers and video game consoles are expected to slow down starting this year as consumers are less eager to snatch up new products, according to a recent report published by Deloitte.

This year, the worldwide sales of these five items are expected to reach US\$750 billion, stalling at around US\$800 billion for the next five years.

This compares with the dramatic double-digit growth of the past decade, the report said.

By sector, the smartphone market

is expected to rise to US\$375 billion, up 12 percent from 2013. However, sales in 2018 are only expected to rise to US\$430 billion, a 15 percent increase over four years.

The report mostly attributed the slowdown to the handset upgrade cycle, indicating how long consumers hold onto their phones before upgrading to new devices.

The cycle lengthened by over 25 percent from 19 months in 2007 to 24 months in 2013.

■
Asia News Network

About CACCI

Established in 1966, the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) (www.cacci.org.tw) is a regional grouping of apex national chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises from 26 Asian countries.

About AICTC

Organized under the CACCI umbrella, the Asian ICT Council (AICTC) provides CACCI members and other businessmen in the ICT sector the opportunity to meet and interact with industry players from other countries and participate in the Council's regular meetings and activities to discuss common problems and issues, and explore possible areas of cooperation.