

THE SANTIAGO TIMES



CHEAP LAPTOP MAKES COMMERCIAL WORLD PREMIERE IN CHILE

(March 16, 2007) Intel's most cost-effective and compact notebook computer, the "Classmate PC," makes its world premiere on the commercial market this week in Chile.

The notebook – designed for children and marketed in "emerging markets" – is meant to compete with the famed "US\$100 PC" introduced by technology guru Nicholas Negroponte and his organization One Laptop Per Child (OLPC).

Both models were designed to enable the wider distribution of PC technology to students who would not normally be able to afford laptops. However, the Classmate PC is notably more expensive than the OLPC model, fitting only into the "under US\$400" price bracket.

Intel announced late last year the availability of initial prototypes of the product and said they had already received orders from the governments of Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria and India. India had previously inspected the OLPC model and decided to pass on what some in the tech community called a "gadget."

One notable advantage of the Classmate PC is its compatibility with commercial software. Intel's The World Ahead Program – their charitable branch which aims to "enhance lives by accelerating access to uncompromised technology for everyone, anywhere in the world" – is working with software companies to provide free or lower-cost access to children's computer programs.

The Classmate PC is a durable, compact and light-weight machine designed for daily use by children and comes with its own carrying case. It is also pre-installed with children's educational programs, has a 7-inch color screen, is equipped with Wi-Fi capabilities and has a full keyboard. Though these things may not be of immediate interest to the children who use them, the Classmate PC also has four hours of battery life and uses solid-state flash drives of 1 gigabyte to 2 gigabytes, depending on the specific model.

The kid-friendly computer is not actually manufactured by Intel. Rather, Intel is the creator of the unique processor that runs the machine. This is a strategic move for Intel because other manufacturers have the possibility of designing their own version of the economic PC, for which Intel will provide the processors.

Currently, the units are only manufactured in China by Uniwill. The machines are marketed independently in each country and, in Chile, are currently available for sale to educational institutions through government agency ChileCompra.

While projections have not yet been made as to how many Classmate PCs are expected to sell in Chile, this past year has shown that computer purchases in the country are leaning more towards laptops than ever before. There were 239,000 notebook sales in 2006, a full 40 percent of total PC sales (ST, March 12, 2007).

By Laurel Bernstein (editor@santiagotimes.cl)

Copyright 2000-2005, All Rights Reserved — Design by The Chiron Group, Inc.