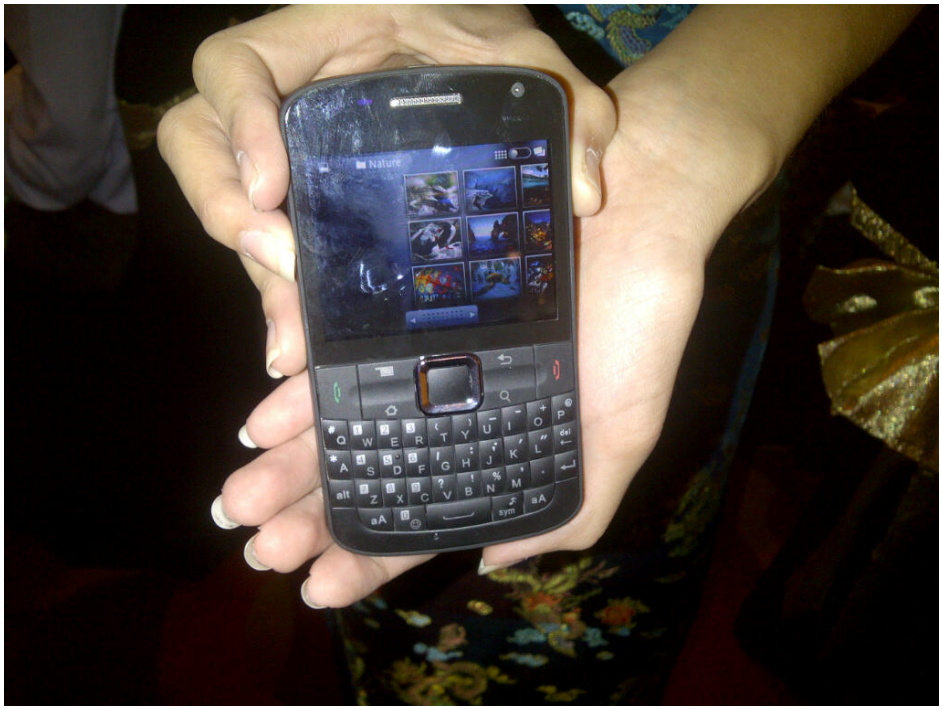

A virtual unknown DMD Mobile Sdn Bhd mere hours ago, has launched a Malaysian made

Android smartphone with built in Near Field Communications (NFC) capability in a QWERTY type form factor - all that for less than RM500. DMD was established in 2010.

According to Dato' Dr. Mohammed M. Daud, DMD's executive chairman, it plans to start selling the M3 Communicator (the first flagship model) locally by April and in Sri Lanka by May. It will be officially launched at the upcoming Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. DMD has plans to sell the M3 in other South Asia and Middle East markets as well.

According to Herve Jegou, Founder and CTO of DMD, the total investment for R&D and optimisation of the device is RM10 million. He also says that DMD will eventually have Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich on the M3. DMD is also planning to launch a model with a 1GHz processor sometime by middle of the year.

On the question whether the NFC is a full blown version or just a simple information sharing version, Jegou says that the NFC in the M3 can support RFID, secure transactions and services such as Touch & Go.

Deputy minister of information, communications and culture, Dato' Jospeh Salang was also present at the launch.

Prepaid services

To make the phone usable and affordable, DMD has announced that it will provide affordable online communication package along with the phone, starting at just RM10 per month. In its press release, DMD says that mobile operators can start providing more innovation to prepaid users with a mobile communications platform that is bandwidth optimised, so it does not require more infrastructure investments.

First Looks

The DMD M3 Communicator has a nice solid feel when held, although it doesn't seem heavy at only 98 grams. The black version had a matte rubberised finish. The white one seemed smooth glossy plastic. When briefly testing out the phone it seemed surprisingly responsive for an Android device powered by a 650MHz processor. Jegou claims that this is thanks to the graphics accellerator doing its job. Even pinch zooming on the capacitive screen was smooth enough. The middle navigation pad however is not an optical trackpad - you need to click down on the directional bezel; easier still, just use the touch screen instead.

The units available for demo at the launch seem to be running on a stock version of Android 2.3.4 Gingerbread with no real tweaks or changes save a social-centric hub interface. We need to wait for a loan review unit to sure about all this though. Until then, these are the specifications so far:

CPU: 650MHz (416MHz baseband)

OS: Android with Hub Interface

Memory: 512MB Flash memory, 256MB SRAM and 2GB microSD card (32GB maximum)

Dimensions: 113 x 63 x 11.5mm, 98 grams

Display: 2.6-inch, 320 x 240 pixels, capacitive screen

Network: 3.75G HSPA WCDMA, 850/2100MHz, GSM/GPRS/EDGE, 850/900/1800/1900MHz

Connectivity: 3.5mm audio jack, micro USB, Bluetooth 4.0, WiFi (a/b/g/n), GPS, FM, NFC

Cameras: 3MP with Extended Depth of Focus (EDoF) and LED flash, VGA front camera

Battery: Lithium-ion, 1,150 mAh.