

Penang's WiMAX coverage to hit 70% in 18 months

GEORGE TOWN: The first batch of the seven locations for Wireless@Penang WiMAX coverage commenced with a test drive launch yesterday of Packet One Networks (M) Sdn Bhd's fast-speed wireless broadband.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, who launched the WiMAX test drive at a hotel in Gurney Drive, said the service also would be rolled out at other locations in the next six months, and over the next 18 months, 70% of Penang Island and Seberang Perai would have WiMAX coverage.

P1 WiMAX authorised dealers will set demonstration points from Feb 9 at locations around Perak Road, Burmah Road, Magazine Road, Transfer Road and Bukit Mertajam.

The plug-and-play WiMAX wireless broadband is said to be priced similar to other broadbands, including Streamyx, but gives three times the speed.

P1 CEO Michael Lai said the test drive would make Penangites among the first in the world to experience next generation wireless broadband.

Lim said the state government hoped the test drive would help educate Penangites on the true benefits of WiMAX broadband.

"In the constant strive to elevate Penang's status as an international hub for business and tourism, having quality broadband infrastructure, equal access to information via the Internet and giving people the ability to participate in the emerging Malaysian cyberspace, is the key to being the number one in info highways in the region, if not the world.

"Time and again, we have emphasised that the Internet is now so much a basic utility in life as it is in the same category as water and electricity. The P1 WiMAX network is crucial for the state government to establish the "i-land" (i stands for Internet and invest) by 2010.

"In the next 18 months, the wide availability of WiMAX covering the state and supported by free WiFi, Wireless@Penang will evolve into a critical catalyst to the existing and future industries here," Lim said.

— **By Regina William**