

Asustek to launch low-cost laptop



Jonney Shih, chairman of Taiwan's Asustek Computer.

Photo: AP

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Asustek Computer, a leading Taiwanese computer maker, will launch its much awaited low-price computer next month, becoming one of the first companies marketing an ultra-mobile laptop for the developing world.

Developed with Intel Corp., the Asustek laptop with a 18cm screen will also come in a more sophisticated version that will target the developed world, said company Chairman Jonney Shih.

"It will be a laptop that's easy to learn, easy to play and easy to work with ... one targeting both the emerging and mature markets," Shih said in an interview.

More than 500 engineers, mostly from Asustek's bases in Taiwan and China, were involved in the development of the low-price laptop, Shih said.

A simple model of the product will be priced at \$US199 at the retail level, while one with more features will sell for between \$US245 and \$US299, he said.

The laptop, which will run the Linux operating system, will carry the company's ASUS brand.

Chuck Mulloy, an Intel spokesman, said the project is part of the company's "World Ahead" program - which involves investing \$US1 billion over five years to deliver low-cost computers around the world.

Asustek said early this year the company hoped to produce half a million of the low-price laptops this year. Officials later said the volume could be sharply cut because of the late launch and the shortage of a few key components.

Asustek is the world's largest maker of computer motherboards. Of the 138 million desktop personal computers sold worldwide last year, 56 million units, or about 40 percent, were built on ASUS brand motherboards.

A latecomer in making laptops, Asustek is now among the world's top 10 laptop makers.

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