

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Domestic mobile market set for a Blackberry blast

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BLACKBERRY is going in for a makeover to ramp up its presence in India. To break new ground, Waterloo (Ontario)-based Research in Motion (RIM) plans to dramatically increase its presence in the country. It will open a marketing and

support centre in Delhi, and rapidly multiplying its headcount in India from the current half-a-dozen. The company is scouting for experienced customer and marketing managers, as well as technical support staff.

RIM has simultaneously drawn up specific plans targeting Indian companies, small & medium enterprises as well as individual consumers. "A large number of Indian companies are already using BlackBerry," says RIM vice-president for Asia Pacific Norm Lo, adding, "So, enterprise is a core market. But we're increasingly looking at growth from small businesses and individual users."

Straight off the block is a series of seminars planned in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai in the next month or two for CEOs, CIOs and IT administrators. The objective: to educate India Inc about BlackBerry as well as enterprise products such as the BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES)—the BlackBerry backbone for push deliver—the mobile data system (MDS) and unified messaging. "We will begin with core messaging then start talking applications," says Dave Werezak, vice-president, business marketing.

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Recognising the price sensitivity of the Indian market, especially small enterprises, RIM already offers BES Express, small yet robust software that acts as the centralised link between wireless devices, enterprise applications and wireless networks. With a small initial investment, the software enables one person in an SME to experience the capabilities and benefits of the BES in a pay-as-you-grow approach.

"The product is meant for companies in emerging markets like India," adds Werezak. Individual consumers will not be ignored, either. As reported earlier by FE, RIM is already in advanced negotiations with Reliance Communications, which would add the CDMA network platform to round out its existing relationship with GSM carriers Bharti Airtel and Hutch.

Once that happens, subscribers could look forward to RIM's state-of-the-art CDMA-based BlackBerry 8830 World Edition Smartphone, which was launched at the Wireless Enterprise Symposium in Orlando this week.

Indeed, so aggressive is the India game-plan that senior RIM executives have already urged BlackBerry suppliers in the US to set up shop in the country in anticipation of sustained double-digit growth.

Says Pinakin Dinesh, CEO of Alexandria (Virginia)-based online wireless superstore fommy.com, "I'm setting up a warehouse in Noida; I'm excited about prospects in India."