

Conference calls on ITC firms to go green

Telecommunications companies should apply environmentally friendly programs to preserve nature and reduce the effects of climate change, according to a conference on information and communication technology (ICT) on Monday.

The keynote speaker at the ICT for Green Asia Summit, Information and Communication Minister Tifatul Sembiring, said that ICT industries played a major role in accelerating awareness on global warming and lifestyle effects on the environment.

"Green ICT is an accelerator toward green everything. When ICT industries are aware of environmental effects, they can start creating ways or new technology to help other industries reduce industrial effects on the environment," he said.

Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI) chairman Luis Neves cited GeSI's report, "SMART 2020: Enabling a low-carbon economy in the information age", which showed that the ICT sector contributed around 2 percent of all global emissions.

However, he said, ICT solutions could enable global carbon reductions of up to 15 percent, create up to 15 million green jobs globally by 2020 and become a powerful economic driver.

"In Indonesia alone, it is estimated that a 10 percent increase in broadband and mobile penetration may boost national gross domestic product by 2 percent," he said.

Despite that potential, there are only 5.1 fixed broadband users per 100 people in the Asia Pacific region compared to 23.8 per 100 users in Europe, said International Telecommunication Union (ITU) telecommunication standardization bureau director Malcolm Johnson.

Besides broadband penetration, Johnson said that electronic waste was one of many great concerns in developing a greener ICT industry.

Johnson pointed to ITU's breakthrough in reducing electronic waste by offering ITU's standardized universal mobile charger.

"No longer will you need to buy a charger with every mobile phone. It is estimated that this alone will reduce e-waste by 82,000 tons a year," he said.

Anindya Novyan Bakrie, president director of PT Bakrie Telecom (BTEL), which hosted the conference, stated that his company was the first mobile network operator in Indonesia to launch a green handset collection and recycling initiative.

Anindya said BTEL implemented various environmentally friendly policies including reducing the amount of materials used in talk time vouchers, standardized handset chargers, providing ambient cooling for its base stations and designating 64 percent of its capital expenditures to environmentally friendly vendors.

BTEL expected a total savings of more than Rp 20 billion (US\$2.23 million) throughout 2011 after the policies were implemented.

Research and Technology Minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta, who also attended the conference, said ICT was crucial to help people function better, faster and cheaper.

"If Indonesia has the second-most Facebook users, the third-most Twitter users and the third-most-used language on Google and Yahoo, then Indonesians know how Facebook, Twitter, Google and Yahoo can improve their technology and services, including how to be greener and more profitable," Gusti said.