

Nokia launches 3 mass-market smartphones

MATTI HUUHTANEN - Associated Press - Associated Press

Nokia on Wednesday unveiled three mass-market smartphones, as the troubled handset maker struggles against top-end competitors and cheaper producers in a market it once ruled as the innovative technology bellwether.

The new models, based on the Symbian platform, include what the Finland-based company calls the world's smallest touch-screen smartphone and one with an exceptionally bright display.

The launch of the Nokia 600, 700 and 701 comes five months after Nokia introduced its first smartphones to run on the updated Symbian software, with new icons, enhancements and a faster browser. It said they were made with an "extensive use" of eco-friendly materials, have long battery life and include power saving features.

Nokia is being increasingly squeezed in the low end market by Asian manufacturers like ZTE and in the high end by the makers of smartphones like Apple Inc.'s iPhone and Research in Motion's BlackBerry.

It is hoping to regain momentum with the Windows Phone 7 — to be launched later this year — after teaming up with Microsoft, whose Windows Phone operating system will become the main platform for Nokia cellphones.

Symbian technology, seen by some developers as clumsy and dated, was surpassed by Google's popular Android as the world's No. 1 smartphone software at the end of last year. But Nokia said it is not scrapping Symbian anytime soon.

"Symbian Belle and the three new handsets we are launching today show our commitment to continue delivering Symbian products," Ilari Nurmi, a Nokia vice president, said. "These will not be last products or updates we will deliver on Symbian."

The new models, which include NFC — or near-field communication — technology, enable the use of stereo Bluetooth headsets and speakers and content to be shared between devices.

Nokia said its 700 model, weighing 3.5 ounces (96 grams), is the "most compact touch monoblock smartphone in the world," with a 1Ghz processor, 3.2 inch screen and two gigabytes of inbuilt memory.

Nokia shares closed up 1 percent at €4.15 (\$5.99) on the Helsinki Stock Exchange.

Based in Espoo near Helsinki, Nokia employs 132,500 people worldwide. It claims 1.3 billion daily users of its devices, and has said it hopes the partnership with Microsoft will lead to capturing the next billion users to join the Internet in

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Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

developing growth markets.

Source URL (retrieved on 10/22/2014 - 8:58pm):

<http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2011/08/nokia-launches-3-mass-market-smartphones>