

Locally made smartphone available in SA soon

Access to smartphones may be elusive to most South Africans, but a Limpopo company has taken it upon itself to resolve this problem.



South African company, CZ Electronics is making affordable smartphones and tablets specifically aimed at the African market. Image: adamr [Free Digital Photos](#)

Mint Electronics will launch the first South African-made smartphones and tablets in July following a deal in which Mint Electronics, a subsidiary of Sekoko Holdings, has acquired a 75% shareholding of CZ Electronics.

Founded by Limpopo-born businessman Tim Tebeila, Sekoko Holdings is a South African black-owned mining and energy company based in Limpopo.

Its head office is in Johannesburg.

CZ Electronics invested close to R10m in research and development over the past two years to enable them to manufacture smartphones and tablets.

Research pointed out that 20m cellphones are imported into the country annually, but only 18% of South Africans have smartphones.

Sagran Pillay Chief Executive of CZ Electronics says its smartphones and tablets will have leading-edge specifications that will be affordable to a broader spectrum of the population.

"The smartphones and tablets will be sold through major retailers, operator stores and our branded shops. The branded

shops will launch in all major malls by the end of 2014," he said.

Prices range from R600 to R1,499

Pillay adds that prices will range from R600 to R1,499. Tablets will be available in both seven-inch and 10-inch screen sizes.

Online and technology expert Arthur Goldstuck says that for a South African-made cellphone to succeed, it will have to have the same appeal as an international brand. This means it will have to look as good, and have the same specifications or better, at a lower price.

He adds that if locally made phones are seen as poor relations of the imported versions, and cost more, they will fail.

"The biggest challenge facing new brands is getting the buy-in of the networks. You cannot simply produce a new phone and expect to start selling it. If the networks don't 'range' it, then you have no chance in this market," Goldstuck adds.

"It is a network-driven market, rather than a retail-driven one, so if you haven't done your homework with the networks, and haven't got a commitment from them, you really are gambling with investors' money," he said.

The company's aim is to roll out manufacturing plants in other African countries and sell the smartphones and tablets across the continent.

The company currently employs 250 people, and hopes to increase this by another 20.

Source: Sowetan via I-Net Bridge

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