

Latest News

GOOGLE

Google opens local search site, partial access to Google Play in Myanmar ahead of Eric Schmidt visit

March 21, 2013 - 7:01 pm

This article was published on **March 21, 2013**





STORY BY

Jon Russell



Jon Russell was Asia Editor for The Next Web from 2011 to 2014. Originally from the UK, he lives in Bangkok, Thailand. You can find him on T (show all)

Google has launched a local search domain in Myanmar and opened partial access to its Google Play store in the country on the eve of Eric Schmidt's visit, the first from a high-profile tech executive.

Schmidt, who made a much-publicized [trip to North Korea in January](#), was last week [confirmed to be visiting Myanmar](#), a country that was — until recently — a similarly isolated state, to encourage wider access to the Internet and the benefits of technology.

Preparations have already begun as the Internet giant launched a top level domain name — [Google.com.mm](#) — for local Internet users today. In addition, [as noted by Android device owners](#) in the country, it has also opened access to the Google Play app store, although it initially appears that content cannot be downloaded.

can now access @googleplay but still can't download or update anything. keep getting #403 error. cc: @eric Schmidt @android #myanmar — david madden (@davidmadden) March 21, 2013

Thanks for joining us!

[See the highlights of TNW Conference 2022](#)

[Check the video](#)

It remains to be seen if downloads will be enabled and other services opened in conjunction with Schmidt's arrival. We've reached out to Google for clarification.

Schmidt — who spent Wednesday and Thursday in India, where he spoke at [the Big Tent event](#) arranged by Google and The Guardian — is expected to arrive in Myanmar on Friday. Secretary general of the Myanmar Computer Society, Zaw Min Oo, [told Reuters that the Google Executive Chairman will give a speech at the Myanmar Information and Communication Technology Park in Yangon.](#)

He is also slated to meet top business executives and politicians, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

Google last week confirmed Schmidt's visit will also see him "connect with local partners and Googlers who are working to improve the lives of many millions of people across the [Asian] region". The company emphasized Schmidt visit was aimed at helping to increase Internet penetration, and bring information on the Web to wider audiences.

That mission statement bears similarities to the visit to North Korea. Despite being taken in a person capacity — and against the advice of the US government — Schmidt's trip has already impacted the country in some way, after [his comments](#) led to North Korea's mobile operator [opening mobile data services](#) for the first time. The wider goal of increased Web access is a more difficult one, however.

Myanmar recently opened up under the quasi-civilian government of President [Thein Sein](#), formerly its Prime Minister and a military commander. A series of political reforms saw media censorship relaxed, some political prisoners released and freer elections, but concerns still remain and the adoption of technology is far from widespread.

In an interview with The Guardian's Alan Rusbridger in India on Thursday, Schmidt explained his determination to help bring the benefits of the Web to untapped countries like North Korea and Myanmar.

"The Internet was built for everyone, including North Koreans. If there's anyone who needs the Internet, it's people who don't have the ability to develop critical thinking skills...or understand the choice that they, as citizens, face...The quickest way to get economic growth [for these countries] is to open up the Internet," he said.

Related: [Google's Eric Schmidt calls on India to stop policing the Web and focus on innovation](#)

Image via [AFP / Getty Images](#), Hat tip [Global Voices](#)

Also tagged with

GOOGLE PLAY ERIC SCHMIDT

Published March 21, 2013 - 7:01 pm UTC

[Back to top](#)

Popular on TNW

- 1 The future of dark matter research will ultimately be decided by politicians
- 2 You can buy this flying car, but should you?
- 3 This startup wants you to test its latest flying machine
- 4 [A beginner's guide to the AI apocalypse: The democratization of 'expertise'](#)
- 5 DeepMind feuds with Russian scientists over quantum AI research

Related Articles

BASICS

Google Street View now lets you ‘time travel’ on your phone.
Here’s how

NEURAL

A Google s
sentient. If

The heart of tech

More TNW

Media

Events

Programs

About TNW

Partner with us

Jobs

Terms & Conditions

[Spaces](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Deals](#)

[Cookie Statement](#)

[Privacy Statement](#)

[Editorial Policy](#)

[Masthead](#)

Copyright © 2006—2022, The Next Web B.V. Made with <3 in Amsterdam.