

Ringling in the elderly

By **VICTORIA HO**

WITH the launch of an updated mobile phone for the elderly, homegrown phone maker Foresight Technologies hopes it can corner a niche market in the region.

This Saturday, Foresight launches its iNo Mobile F12 device. Like its predecessors the CP09 and CP10, released last year, the phone is targeted at the silver-haired, with its large buttons and simplified functions.

Built on the momentum from last year's launches, Foresight appears to be coming in the market more aggressively. For one thing, it is launching the F12 exclusively with local operator StarHub, a move aimed at delivering a more concerted marketing effort than with previous models.

Foresight has also teamed up with another Singapore company, Agis, which makes GPS software, to sharpen the device's location awareness.

When the SOS button on the device is activated, the phone broadcasts the user's location within a radius of 100m to a pre-set list of contacts, so help can be sent.

The company also seems to have refocused its portfolio towards the elderly. While it has made other more conventional devices under its brand name, these have since been tak-



For the silver-haired: *The iNo Mobile F12, which has large buttons and simplified functions, is priced at \$138 and comes with a pre-paid StarHub card worth \$15*

en off the listing on its website.

Foresight's managing director Kenneth Lau said that 30,000 sets of the CP09 were sold in Singapore, with another 100,000 reportedly in Southeast Asia.

He expects a "similar response" for the F12, noting that Singapore's aged population of one million still provides a largely untapped market for the device.

"When we launched, people laughed, saying how

come it (looks) like a calculator. But we've been successful," he said.

While the response to the device was deemed positive, the company has not made "much" on the previous models, he admitted, declining to comment on whether it broke even on them.

The two-year old company is also on the move to secure its foothold in the region. It plans to launch the F12 in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Taiwan.

It has also established agreements with providers in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and China for the Agis GPS function. The location-based software determines a user's position by a combination of triangulation methods, including cell tower location, and thus needs cooperation from operators in order to make it work.

Another investment Foresight is making in the elderly will be in a round-the-clock concierge service, to be launched ear-

ly next year, he said.

The service will be run as a social enterprise, and will include an emergency hotline. Mr Lau said personnel could also be dispatched to visit an elderly person's home after the SOS button is triggered, in the event of a fall or accident where the user is unable to call for help.

He pointed to Hong Kong's Senior Citizen Home Safety Association (SCHSA), which provides a 24-hour service to the elderly, as an example of a similar service which has been well-received.

In the United States, a mobile service called Jitterbug provides a 24-hour operator service that can provide directory assistance and update the subscriber's phone contact lists remotely. Additional subscription tiers provides a nurse on-call or roadside assistance.

Jitterbug is available only in the US, on three basic phone models also targeted at the elderly.

Mr Lau said the company will continue to sniff out niche markets. He said the next might be in making phones for military personnel.

The iNo Mobile F12 is priced at \$138 and comes with a pre-paid StarHub card worth \$15. The older CP09 was launched at \$88 last year.