



TOKYO: Nintendo's new video game console Switch is displayed at a presentation in Tokyo yesterday.—AFP Photos



TOKYO: Visitors play Nintendo's new video game console Switch during its presentation in Tokyo yesterday.

NINTENDO REBOOTS WITH NEW SWITCH GAME CONSOLE

'AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE WITH REALISTIC PHYSICAL SENSATIONS'

TOKYO: Nintendo unveiled its new Switch game console yesterday, which works both at home and on-the-go, as it tries to offset disappointing Wii U sales and compete with Sony's big-selling PlayStation 4. The hybrid device which goes on sale March 3 for \$299.99 comes as Nintendo also dips its toe into the mobile gaming market following its big brand win after Pokemon Go's worldwide success. At a Tokyo media briefing, the company said the console is packed full of Nintendo's "entertainment DNA", taking elements of earlier devices including the 3DS handheld and motion-sensor Wii.

Switch has a removable screen that lets players dock it at home and also use it on the go like a tablet computer with detachable controllers called Joy-Con on both sides. It uses cartridges rather than discs. The idea is to give users a more immersive experience with realistic physical sensations matched to

what is happening on-screen, the firm said. A remote control feature means players don't always have to keep their eyes on screen while punching the air in a boxing game or getting into a gun duel. Only eight games will be available when the system goes on sale in March including a Legend of Zelda offering. But there are some 80 more games in the pipeline, Nintendo said.

Yesterday's launch is "a key turning point for Nintendo's earnings and share price", Daiwa Securities said before the event. Similar briefings were held in Paris, London, Frankfurt and New York later yesterday. Switch got off to an inauspicious start in October when a sneak peak at the console left gamers and analysts underwhelmed and with many unanswered questions. Nintendo's Tokyo-listed stock dived after it released a three-minute video about the product on YouTube. Yesterday, its shares

dropped 5.75 percent to 23,750 yen.

'Nintendo-esque'

Switch will be crucial for Nintendo, which needs a hit product to offset the flagging fortunes of the Wii U and 3DS, as rival Sony racks up huge sales of the PS4 — it has sold more than 50 million units globally since its debut in late 2013. In November, Sony started selling the \$400 PS4 Pro, which promises even sharper graphics than earlier versions. Switch underscores how Nintendo tends to look at gaming as fun play while Sony's big focus has been on visuals, said gaming specialist Hirokazu Hamamura. "It's a Nintendo-esque game console that shows how the company sees gaming as 'play' rather than image arts," Hamamura said at the event.

After struggling to fix its weak finances, Nintendo abandoned a long-held consoles-only policy and decided to enter the smart-

phone game market. Last year, the Super Mario and Donkey Kong maker released "Miitomo"—a free-to-play and interactive game-as-it tries to compete in an industry that has increasingly gone online. It scored another hit with the Pokemon Go app released in July, but the impact on Nintendo's profits will be limited.

The company is the creator of the Pokemon franchise but does not own the license for the game, which was developed and distributed by US-based Niantic, a spinoff of Google. Last month, Nintendo released the Super Mario Run game for iPhones, which topped download charts and drew more than 40 million downloads globally in the first four days after its release, according to the company. But analysts warned its popularity could be hampered by a relatively high \$10 price tag for access to the full game, since many online offerings are free.—AFP



TOKYO: People make line up for Nintendo's new video game console Switch during its presentation in Tokyo yesterday.



TOKYO: President of Nintendo Tatsumi Kimishima speaks during a presentation event of the new Nintendo Switch in Tokyo, yesterday.