



■ Taib: Coastal areas to be e-linked using wireless mode

Mukah to have telecentre

by Toman Mamora

KUCHING – In line with the Government's effort to extend IT services to the rural areas and increase the level of computer literacy, a telecentre will be set up in Mukah this year while plans are afoot to extend similar service to other areas along the coastal belt.

The telecentre in Mukah would be directly linked to the hub in Sibul using the wireless mode and in turn would be connected to Balingian and Matu-Daro through a local network, said Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Dr Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud yesterday when closing the Third International Conference on Information Technology in Asia (CITA'03) here yesterday.

The ICT exercise, which will be implemented in collaboration with Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), costs about RM2 million.

Explaining why a wireless mode had to be used to electronically link Mukah and the coastal area with the main centres, Taib said: "The fibre optic links were installed along the main trunk road, and because of that Mukah was bypassed.

Now that Mukah has become a Division and that economic activities are going to accelerate in about 4 to 5 years from now, we need an e-link since installing fibre optic links is expensive and takes time."

Taib also pointed out that the only solution to overcoming the problem of spreading out IT services in the coastal area was to develop the existing wireless technology so that the services rendered would be both effective and cost-efficient.

"We have to seriously take a close look at the development of wireless technology in our effort to spread out ICT as it's been proven now that wireless technology can accommodate more lines than before," he said.

He added: "The coastal area is not as difficult as the interior to link up, as it is easier for the wireless airwaves to reach most areas along the relative flat coastal plain."



HI-TECH IMAGES ... The Chief Minister viewing the print-outs of digitised images at an exhibition held in conjunction with CITA'03, while Tan Sri Bujang Mohd Nor, Tan Sri Dr George Chan and Professor Datuk Dr Yusuf Hadi look on. PHOTOGRAPH: TH LU

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Spreading out ICT services

Despite the difficult terrain, the Government was committed to setting up e-centres in the interior to enable the rural population to be connected to the mainstream of ICT, said Taib, who alluded to e-Bario as an exemplary model of a telecentre that had brought rural villagers closer and to be in touch with the world outside.

On the telemedicine service, the Chief Minister said the rural areas would be linked to telemedicine centres in Kuching, Sibul and Miri and would have access to medical specialists on illness requiring their advice and supervision.

However, he cautioned that it was important at the beginning to overcome the misconception of telemedicine among people who had grown used to the conventional approach in seeking medical treatment and health services.

Taib was pleased to note that Sarawak was already ahead of many other states in the applications of ICT and development of indigenous technology. He cited the Syariah Court ICT system developed by the State as an exemplary model that had been adopted by several states in Peninsular Malaysia.

He also called on the local ICT fraternity to develop new indigenous technologies that could be used to upgrade existing applications and create new ones.

On CITA'03, Taib said the annual conference had sustained as a cohesive force for collaboration and interchange of ideas to develop systems for the region since it started three years ago.

The Chief Minister was also pleased that Unimas was expanding its role consistent with the expansion of ICT. He commended the university for assisting the Government and society to develop telecentres under difficult conditions.

The focus of CITA'03 was on knowledge management and was reflective of the desire of the organisers to draw special attention to the importance of technology, system and environment in supporting the empowerment of people to create value for what they do for society.

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