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## Agreement to offer high-tech courses

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THE Open University of United Kingdom and Time Multimedia Sdn Bhd signed an agreement recently to offer high technology courses by next year.

Sir John Daniel, the vice-chancellor of Open University, said: "The courses are tailored for people who have completed their degrees and have worked at various companies and hold responsible positions, particularly those located within the Multimedia Super Corridor."

"Working with Time, we aim to offer post-graduate programmes in high technology areas, such as management of manufacturing technology, software engineering and computer applications in industry."

The signing of the partnership agreement was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad after he launched the four-day Asian Association of Open Universities Conference and Exhibition at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

Open University was represented by Daniel, Time by its chief executive officer Indra Gunawan Alamshah while Time Telekom was represented by its executive vice-chairman Kamarudin Abu Bakar.

Time is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Electronic Data Interchange Sdn Bhd and Time Telecommunications Sdn Bhd.

The New Straits Times is the official newspaper for the conference.

Daniel said the agreement will bring together two organisations with complementary skills.

"We are obviously big and good at distance learning and Time is good at telecommunications network multimedia, so we want to work with it to take part in the expansion of distance learning in Malaysia," he said.

The high technology programmes that will be available here have been offered in Europe.

"But what we want to do is offer the courses in a new way using the networking capabilities that we have here. It is not going to be another use of the same product.

"It is an opportunity for us to rethink the product. Working with Time will focus us on how to use telecommunications in the most effective way.

"In the UK, we have narrow band links.

The problem we have is that some of our students do not have computers at home, therefore, we have to work with something that fits both."

Only one-fifth of Open University's 150,000 students have access to computers, modems and phone lines, so sending of course materials back and forth depends extensively on postal services.

However, a pilot project to send materials electronically will take place soon.

In Malaysia, Daniel said, post-graduate programmes are starting with the assumption that there is high technology support.

"So we will probably start with having all submission of work and other aspects done electronically. Details of the programme will be worked out between now and Christmas when results of an on-going research to determine the type and range of courses to be made available locally are ready."

Under the agreement, Open University will send self-study learning materials to students via Internet and multimedia applications so that they can study at their own time and pace.

One reason Open University is taking part in partnerships is that the relationship often results in the import of courses from other countries

into Britain and Europe.

"We hope our relationship with Time will help us develop electronic techniques for our courses in the UK and across the world."

In Singapore, Open University has about 5,000 students.

It will take back to Britain some of the courses being developed there.

"Many courses are offered in Singapore but one that has been redeveloped and used in the UK is that on Teaching of English.

A lot of our students were teachers who looked at our courses and showed us what could be added and removed," he said.

Open University has about 10,000 post-graduate students.

This figure includes the Master's in Education and MBA courses, which the university will not offer to students here now.

In the future, Open University may offer undergraduate programmes in science and technology.

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