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ALAM TEKNOKRAT TO OFFER ONLINE NEWS FROM BERNAMA

By: Salbiah Said

KUALA LUMPUR, June 26 (Bernama) -- Alam Teknokrat Sdn Bhd (Altek) and Malaysia's national news agency, Bernama, today signed an Internet News Service agreement that will enable Internet users access the latest news and updates.

Under this agreement, Bernama will provide Altek with the latest on-line news and news update summaries for Altek's news headline section called Skali.

Skali is Altek's new Asian Content Site which also host its first web service, AltaVista Asia-Wide Mirror Site.

Altek is the owner and operator of this AltaVista Asia-Wide Mirror Site, which is the third mirror site worldwide after Sweden and Australia. The Asian mirror site is AltaVista's first mirror. Telefonica of Madrid, Spain and AltaVista will be launching the Iberian and Latin American mirror sites tomorrow.

Altek's AltaVista Asia-Wide Mirror Site was officially launched by Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed earlier today.

At the signing ceremony, Altek was represented by its chief executive officer Mohd Hisham Isa while Bernama was represented by General Manager Mohd Raus Borhan.

Speaking at the launch, Altek's Chief Executive Officer, Hisham Isa, said that the introduction of the site was timely given that Internet usage growth in the region was forecast to grow to about 21 million by the year 2001.

"The establishment of this Asian mirror site signifies our commitment to facilitating and developing the growth and use of the Internet in Asia. As we grow, we continue to search for new partners that would help us to further enhance our products and services that ultimately benefit Internet users."

Its core businesses, Internet media and wired enterprise services had received tremendous response from around the world during the one-month Beta test period, he added.

"The business enquiries received from North America and Europe also attest to the interest the world has towards the growing economies of Asia, and these enquiries go beyond the basic banner advertising services we provide and include partnership proposals and investment enquiries."

On its partnership with soon-to-be corporatised Bernama, he said it was a significant step towards its promise of putting Asian content in the forefront of the global village, and the partnership it had fostered was also the beginning of a host of opportunities for Alam Teknokrat as it opened the door for other opportunities.

Digital Equipment Sdn Bhd Chief Executive Officer Graeme Shorter said that the timely decision was in line with the rapid growth of the information technology industry in the region in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) initiatives.

AltaVista Internet software itself is a business unit within Digital and the AltaVista search engine and related technologies were developed by Digital Equipment Corporation at the western research lab in Palo Alto, California, he added.

The AltaVista search public service has the capability of indexing 15 billion words from 30 million web pages on over 275,600 web servers around

the world, plus four million articles from 14,000 USENET newsgroups. It is recorded as the world's fastest and most powerful search engine on the Internet, responding to more than 33 million queries daily in weekday peaks from only 20 million last September.

Altek, a wholly-owned bumiputera company, began operations in January 1997, and as Asia-wide Internet content organiser, it provides leading edge technology centred products and services which a broad range on Internet tools and solutions to enable businesses to gain dramatic improvement in their interaction with their customers.

Altek can be found on the Internet at <http://www.altek.com.my> while the AltaVista Asia-Wide Mirror Site is located at <http://altavista.skali.com.my>.

Altek is operating at the Universiti Putra Malaysia-Malaysian Technology Development Corporation (UPM-MTDC) incubation centre, within the vicinity of Malaysia's MSC.

The News Headlines section of Skali began its one-month Beta testing phase (or trial run) last month. Initially the news summaries provided by Bernama will include not only local and regional news and updates but also those from the rest of the world. However, Asian news items will soon take priority and be Skali's main focus.

Speaking to newsmen later, Hisham said that when fully operational by the middle of next month, the site was expected to draw 150,000 hits per day from 70,000 currently before the launch from the Asian region, and this was expected to touch one million hits a day within the next two to three months.

Several partnerships with other parties were being planned to further enhance the visibility of its web site, he added.

Bernama general manager, Mohd Raus Borhan said that Bernama would provide summaries of business, economic, sports and political news items to Skali.

Digital Equipment's Shorter also said that its parent company, Digital Corporation, was also planning to submit a series of proposals to the Multimedia Development Corporation on further investments in Malaysia, taking advantage of developments in the MSC.

Altek's Chief Operating Officer, Mohd Reza Shafee, who said that the company had been approached by companies from the U.S., Europe and various countries in Asia on its advertising services, had also received numerous enquiries for its server and Intranet hosting services. -- BERNAMA

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