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Anwar: Schools to emphasise IT

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PENANG, Tues. - Malaysia will redouble its efforts, including changing the school curriculum, to produce "knowledge workers" proficient and adaptable in the area of information technology, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

He said tertiary institutions would emphasise courses on technical, engineering and design capabilities in line with this move.

"Some of the world renowned universities such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have agreed to set up campuses here."

Anwar was delivering the keynote address at the Dell Asia Pacific Platinum Summit attended by about 80 top officials of companies having dealings with Dell and top Dell officials.

Also present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Dell Computer Corporation chairman and chief executive officer Michael S. Dell.

Anwar said: "Together with the ongoing plans to develop Smart schools and to link all schools to the Internet by the turn of the century, we hope to produce enough manpower to cater to the needs of the IT industry.

"Malaysia is keen to establish itself as an effective and efficient hub for the IT industry and as a distribution centre for IT products.

"We feel our central location in the Asean region and our multicultural links with other parts of Asia provide us with distinct advantages."

The Deputy Prime Minister said the commitment of the country to developing the IT industry was evident in the fact that the Prime Minister himself was playing the major role in its development.

He said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was chairing the International Advisory Panel to oversee the development of the Multimedia Super Corridor.

"The development of the MSC is one of the most significant efforts in IT ever embarked upon by Malaysia or any country in the world," he said elaborating on construction work going on in the MSC area and related projects.

He said these centres under construction and to be constructed, such as Putrajaya and the Cyberjaya City, would be designed and built for the pursuit of creativity and Information Age technologies.

He pointed out that cyberlaws aimed at facilitating the legislative aspects of the MSC such as amendments to the Copyright Act, Computer Crime Bill, Digital Signature Bill and the Telemedicine Bill were currently being debated in Parliament.

Others such as the Electronic Government Bill and the Multimedia Convergence Bill are being worked out.

"We are committed to creating an environment that will pave the way for the growth and development of the IT industry and we are committed to changing laws and policies that impede the ability of companies to capitalise on the benefits brought about by the Information Age."

Anwar said the response to the MSC had been most encouraging with more than 500 companies showing interest. Of these, 122 are international companies.

He said four companies - Mimos Berhad, Telekom Malaysia Berhad, NTT Corporation of Japan and Sun Microsystems of the US - had been given MSC status.

Asked later by reporters if the interest shown by the 500 companies was genuine, Anwar replied in the affirmative, adding that many of them were

committed to playing a role in the MSC.

He hoped Dell would continue to collaborate and help Malaysia achieve her vision.

Dell's Asia Pacific Customer Centre, which manufactures and sells built-to-order desktop and notebook computers, is located in Penang.

Dell Computer Corporation is the world's leading direct computer systems company. It reported today that net income grew 170 per cent in the last quarter to US\$188 million this quarter ending Feb 2.

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