

25 MAR 1997

LEAD Parliament-Cyberlaws

CYBER LAWS TABLED IN PARLIAMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, March 25 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor took another giant step when the first two of six cyber laws were tabled in Parliament today to encourage and protect multimedia commerce in the country.

The Computer Crimes Bill and Digital Signature Bill were presented for first reading by Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie.

The tabling of the Bills underlined Malaysia's commitment to transform its legal and regulatory environment for information technology to flourish and as a follow-up to the untiring efforts of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to promote the MSC world-wide.

The Computer Crimes Bill, among others, will make it illegal the unauthorised access of information through computer networks including hacking.

It provides for penalties ranging from fines between RM25,000 and RM150,000 or imprisonment of between three and 10 years.

The Digital Signature Bill enables businesses and the community to use electronic signatures instead of handwritten in legal and business transactions using computers.

Two more cyber bills -- Copyright (Amendment) Act 1997 and Telemedicine Act

-- would be tabled in the current session while the remaining two -- Electronic Government Act and Multimedia Convergence Act -- would be tabled at the next parliamentary session.

Today's sitting, held a day after the opening by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar, witnessed an active question-and-answer session on the MSC with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim answering nine queries from both Barisan Nasional and Opposition MPs.

Anwar said the extensive cyber laws as well as incentives and specific policies were introduced to ensure maximum benefits could be derived from the setting up of the multimedia/information technology and facilities.

He said all six cyber laws would be formulated this year to encourage electronic commerce and to provide protection to MSC tenants.

A total of 583 companies comprising 122 international and 461 local have applied to participate in the MSC and four have already given "MSC Status" -- Malaysian Institute of Microelectronics Systems (Mimos) Berhad, Telekom Malaysia Bhd, Nippon Telephone & Telegraph (NTT) and Sun Microsystems.

"It is clear that the commitment of Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and his visits to San Francisco and Tokyo recently have succeeded in introducing the MSC to the world and attract the interest of investors," he said.

"The MSC will bring tremendous benefits to the people and country. The presence of world renowned multimedia corporations in the MSC will provide opportunities for local companies to participate in the multimedia industry through consortiums or joint ventures," he added.

The MSC is a zone of 15km x 50km encompassing the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC), Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, the new Federal administrative capital of Putrajaya, and Cyberjaya.

The cyber bills will be later presented to the Senate which sits from May 12.

Anwar also said the government was grateful with the positive attitude shown by the opposition parties to make the MSC a success.

The government shared the view of the DAP that skills and training in engineering and multimedia expertise must not only be confined to the MSC but also developed on a nation-wide basis. -- BERNAMA

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