

22/01/1997

Govt will try to issue smart card by next year

Mustapha Kamil in Tokyo

TOKYO, Tues: The Government will try to issue the proposed multi-purpose smart card by next year, although initially, it will most probably be limited to commercial use.

The card, as part of the development plan towards achieving a paperless Government, will however, have the features of an identity card. The Government however, has not decided when it will replace the existing identity cards.

Speaking to reporters here, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said although one person performs a multitude of transactions in his daily life, the card will not have all the required applications in its initial stage of introduction.

The multi-purpose card also forms an integral part of the development of Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). It is also expected to eventually act as an identity card apart from serving other purposes.

"I have personally seen smart cards issued by two Malaysian companies that can carry a lot of data, enabling several transactions," he said.

On security features of the card, Dr Mahathir said while the Government is concerned of such, there are already technology available to ensure that the system is not easily beaten.

There remain, however, the possibility of unscrupulous people who would be out to beat the card's security features, he said.

"However, with our existing practice, there are disadvantages too. People who carry cash can be robbed and important documents can be lost," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Government would like to deal with a system that does not require people to queue for services. The card, he added, would enable them to interact with computers in the areas of services they require.

He said this is also why the electronic Government is to be introduced. The Government, he said, is occupied with a lot of work at present, citing the Immigration Department as an example, where issuance of travel documents have increased tremendously in recent years due to the increased overseas travels by Malaysians.

He added that unless it is computerised, the Government will not be able to work efficiently and effectively. "Unless we want to have half the entire population working in Government departments, issuing licences and others to the other half of the population."

Bernama reports: Siemens Nixdorf Information Systems Malaysia Sdn Bhd (SNI) is interested to offer solutions, consultancy, products and implementation of a multi-purpose smart card.

Its managing director, Mr Rolf A. Mugrauer, said yesterday the company would form a committee for the purpose as well as survey the retail and services sector to see would be needed for the card.

Announcing the company's fiscal results for 1995/1996, Mugrauer told a press conference at its head office in Kuala Lumpur, SNI Malaysian operations recorded the highest personal computer (PC) sales compared with SNIs around the world, with 8,500 units sold since their launch in March 1996.

The company targeted 69% growth in revenue to between RM115m and RM130m for its financial year ending September 30 1997 compared with RM73.2m in 1995/96.

Net results for 1995/96 totalled RM4.479m and this is expected to improve by between RM0 and RM2.0m for 1996/97.

Mugrauer said SNI's next target is to become one of the top five PC distributors and dealers in the country.

(END)