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MODULAR CORP DEVELOPS WORLD'S FIRST MULTI-PURPOSE SMARTCARD

By: S. Durga Varma

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7 (Bernama) -- A local information technology company, Modular Corporation (M) Sdn Bhd, and its partner, Bull Information Systems of France, have developed in what they describe as "the world's first multi-purpose smart card".

The card has already become a hit among several local universities, a canteen operator and a bank.

Bull is the founder of the smartcard technology and 60 percent of smartcards in operation worldwide use Bull's operating system.

A smartcard is a plastic card, similar to a credit card, but has a microchip embedded in instead of a magnetic stripe on the back which holds information in electronic form that can be easily, securely and accurately accessed by all sorts of electronic data processing equipment.

Modular's co-founder and vice president Abdul Wahid Abu told Bernama that about 200,000 smartcards have been sold to customers over the past five years and they include Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd, which uses smartcard to operate auto teller machines, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia for students and staff, and to Sajibumi Sdn Bhd, a canteen operator at Universiti Islam Antarabangsa.

"With the technical backing from Modular, Bank Islam Malaysia has become the firstbank in the world to carry customers savings passbooks on their smartcards," he added.

The company plans to sell a minimum of 100,000 smartcards this year alone but believes that the real potential for the card would be tapped with the onslaught of the Multi Super Corridor mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdul Wahid said Modular has been approached by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti Malaya and even Edaran Otomobil Malaysia (EON) Bhd and the Road Transport Department to explore the possibility of using smartcards in their businesses for various applications with the view of becoming more cost effective and efficient.

He said current users of Modular's smartcards, which are called ID-MAS, have reaped immediate benefits in that the use of paper correspondence and cash had been reduced.

Abdul Wahid said a team of computer specialists formed Modular 10 years ago and had spent millions of ringgit in research and development with the goal of becoming a regional leader in smartcard technology.

He added that the Malaysian mutli-purpose card project is unique due to the number of applications to be included on a single card and that it could become a new trend in the world of smartcards.

"Even Bank Negara Malaysia has expressed interest to check out how the smartcard can be applied to carry out other banking functions such as clearings house functions," he said, adding that the company is optimistic that it can even export its expertise to the Asean region.

The company offers expertise in smartcard technology, re-engineering solutions, consultancy, networking, application development, research and development services and hardware development. -- BERNAMA

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