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SIX AGREEMENTS FOR MULTIMEDIA PROJECTS SIGNED

By: K.C. Leong

LOS ANGELES, Jan 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysian companies signed six agreements and two memoranda of understanding with their American partners to collaborate in multimedia projects, including one for electronic commerce by CommerceNet Sdn Bhd.

The signings were witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who arrived here yesterday evening on a working trip to California and Japan to promote the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Representatives of the Malaysian companies involved in the signing are part of the business delegation accompanying the prime minister who is undertaking the mission just days after heralding the new year with a message which underlined the government's commitment to promoting the use of information technology and of IT-based enterprises.

The agreements signed today were between CommerceNet and Open Market Inc (OMI), Barn Technologies Sdn Bhd and Silicon Graphics Malaysia, Utusan PNMB On/Line Sdn Bhd (UPOL) and Excalibur Technologies, KUB IT Sdn Bhd and Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC), Arab-Malaysian Corporation Bhd and Media-SuperCollider Inc. and Cambro Technology (M) Sdn Bhd and Oracle.

The two MOUs were signed by Infra Kekal and Todd-AO Studios and by Quantum Parallel Sdn Bhd and Thomson Sun Interactive.

CommerceNet Managing Director Encik Zait Isa told Malaysian newsmen that the company was established specifically to venture into electronic commerce to take advantage of the fact that borderless trade has been identified as one of the seven flagship applications of the MSC.

The company has set up operations at the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia-MTDC Technology Incubation Centre One on the UPM campus at Serdang from where it will offer Internet-based financial, trading and investment systems as well as Internet-based catalogues for home shopping, bill payment and other services.

As the electronic commerce market is very large and requires the participation of partners, the company plans to invite suitable ones such as the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC), MTDC, Telekom Malaysia and other relevant and interested parties.

Encik Zait is also the managing director of Barn Technologies and Utusan PNMB On/Line. He said that although the agreements signed by these two companies also involved in CommerceNet's electronic commerce project, they were not participating in it as a consortium.

The two companies would be taking on various projects of which CommerceNet's was only one.

Barn Technologies, which also operates from the same barn-like structure which also houses CommerceNet and which gives it its name, was set up to select and analyse technology projects for their successful launch and operation within the MSC.

It also identifies partners and investors prior to any project going into full commercial implementation and has set up an office in Silicon Valley here in California to serve as a funnel for channelling technology providers to promote projects in the MSC and to act as a conduit for Malaysian companies wishing to access American multimedia technologies and companies.

Its partnership with Silicon Graphics will enable it to provide support for the CommerceNet electronic commerce project but it has also spawned

other projects for MSC implementation including high-end graphics and multimedia training facility, digital post-production studios and a text, graphic and picture-based databank for electronic government and catalogue shopping for the Internet world.

UPOL, a subsidiary of Percetakan Nasional Malaysia Bhd which claims to be the first company to move into the MSC, carries out Internet publishing of Malaysian legal information, including those on Acts of Parliament and amendment Acts as its main activity.

It has negotiated with Excalibur Technologies for exclusive appointment as reseller of its two main products -- Retrieval Ware (WR) and Electronic Filing System (EFS), both of which provide for World Wide Web versions.

UPOL, which also intends to include publishing of the Hansard once its database of its legal information is completed, uses the WR software as its database text search engine.

It feels its expertise could be most relevant in another of the MSC's flagship applications -- for an electronic/digital government -- and says its reseller agreement signed today would enable it and Excalibur to provide text, image and picture data base systems to meet the total needs of this digital government initiative.

The partners plan to establish a digital government system prototype and demonstration centre in their offices, also at the UPM-MTDC centre, and plan to invite government agencies to train their staff there.

The Amcorp agreement is to subscribe for a controlling stake in Media SuperCollidor, a Los Angeles-based company developing games and multi-user content for the Internet founded by a Malaysian, Encik Shahril Ibrahim, who most recently was director of research and development at Boss Film Studios where his group developed software systems for special effects used in such Hollywood blockbusters as Outbreak, Multiplicity and Species.

The KUB IT-SAIC agreement calls for the partners to work together in pursuing business opportunities in information technology and systems integration, including such activities as distance learning, electronic government, electronic commerce, telecommunications, intelligent buildings and information protection.

Details of the other agreements and MOUs were not immediately available.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir attended a briefing given by EDS, the electronic data systems company founded by Ross Perot 34 years ago and which he sold to General Motors for US\$2.0 billion (about RM4.96 billion). The company was sold to investors and management last year.

EDS, which already has established businesses in Malaysia, including companies like Petronas, Binariang, Proton and Bank Bumiputra as well as government agencies and companies, hopes to become a strategic partner in the MSC's development, especially in the field of electronic government. --
BERNAMA

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