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SMK-Dagang*Net to be expanded nationwide

DEPUTY Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the Royal Customs and Excise Department and EDI Malaysia Sdn Bhd will extend their electronic data interchange (EDI) SMK-Dagang*Net network to other entry and exit points in the country following the successful implementation of the system at Port Klang and the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang.

He said negotiations are on-going to introduce the system at the KL International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, West Port in Port Klang and the second link and Pasir Gudang Port both in Johor.

The SMK-Dagang*Net interface is a network which allows electronic transmission of data and funds in a structured format based on the UN EDI for Administration, Commerce and Trade standards.

There are currently two cargo-based community systems, the Port Klang Community System (PKCS) and the Malaysia Cargo Network (Macnet).

"With all indications pointing to this region as the trade hub for the 21st century, the presence of a sophisticated and efficient trade facilitation system will enable us to capture a large amount of international trade," Anwar said when launching EDI Malaysia's Financial EDI services in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The Customs Department and EDI Malaysia have teamed up with 15 commercial banks to provide Financial EDI services which allow end-users such as freight forwarding and shipping agents to transmit funds and duty payments electronically.

Anwar said the launch of Financial EDI services marks the completion of the SMK-Dagang*Net interface module at the PKCS and the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport Community System.

He said rapid economic development has significantly increased the importance of airports and ports in Malaysia and the world in general.

"In this respect, projects such as the PKCS and the expansion of related services such as Financial EDI are indeed welcome," he added.

"Furthermore, the completion of this project will enhance Malaysia's credibility ahead of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC)," Anwar said.

The MSC, the brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is a test bed for Malaysia's future development of Information Technology (IT) and multimedia industries.

"The success of the PKCS proved the feasibility of the Prime Minister's ideas in relation to the MSC.

"PKCS has, for instance, already implemented a version of the paperless administration visualised by Dr Mahathir and this should increase efficiency, productivity and accessibility," Anwar said.

The introduction of electronic transactions through SMK-Dagang*Net to facilitate business is very much in line with the Government's desire to increase collaboration with the private sector through the application of new technology.

"The partnership of the Royal Customs and Excise Department, EDI Malaysia and 15 banks in developing and delivering an invaluable service to customers has not only benefited Port Klang but boosts the country's reputation as a regional trailblazer.

"The facts speak for themselves in the business alliance. There are currently more than 130 forwarding agents using the system."

He said during the first month of implementation last August, some RM4 million worth of electronic financial data transactions took place via the

PKCS and to date RM232 million worth of duty has been paid electronically through the SMK-Dagang*Net.

Anwar said this demonstrates increased confidence in the use of the system to facilitate business and added that he hopes it will be the start of further use by similar services and infrastructure.

On the security of such financial transactions, he said cyberlaws will be in place soon. "With the Digital Signature Act, participating banks should now be able to extend their services to other customers without fear."

Anwar also said EDI Malaysia and VADS Sdn Bhd, the other company providing EDI services in Malaysia should integrate their systems to ensure inter-operability as well as overall efficiency.

"They should follow the example of the Malaysian Electronic Payment System and Electronic Fund Transfer, the two automated teller "switch" companies which have agreed on inter-operability, thus ensuring service availability throughout the country," he said.

Meanwhile, EDI Malaysia and the Customs Department said they are ready to extend their services to other ports and airports in the country as and when instructed by the Government.

"Our priority before this was to build up the infrastructure, get the PKCS moving and build up confidence in users," EDI Malaysia chairman Tunku Kamel Tunku Rijaludin said.

"We have to make our physical appearance by September at the KLIA. The Macnet system will be transferred from Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport to the KLIA when airport operations are shifted in January 1998," he added.

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