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Two MoUs to boost telecoms research (HL)

Ahmad A. Talib; Rashid Yusof in London

LONDON, Mon. - Telekom Malaysia today signed memorandums of understanding with Italian companies Marconi SpA and GEC-Marconi Ltd, witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The MoUs are aimed at enhancing Malaysia's research into advanced telecommunication networks.

Both MoUs were related to research opportunities offered by the Multimedia Super Corridor.

The signing took place soon after Dr Mahathir arrived here this morning to start his two-month leave.

Dr Mahathir's itinerary was just as busy as in some of his wellknown working visits abroad.

Soon after touchdown at Heathrow Airport, Dr Mahathir was flown in a helicopter to Caswell, about 100km from the British capital. Caswell is the home of GEC-Marconi Materials Technology whose function is to develop key material technologies.

These include semiconductor materials for microwave and optoelectronic systems, electroceramics for acoustic components and radar absorptive materials for Stealth applications.

Asked to comment on the significance of the agreement, Dr Mahathir said:

"It is very important. They will result in transfer of technology and businesses.

"And it is related to the MSC."

Telekom Malaysia chief executive officer Datuk Mohamed Said Mohamed, GEC-Marconi Ltd's George Simpson and managing director of Marconi SpA Dr Sandro Gualano were the signatories.

The first MoU involving Telekom Malaysia and Marconi SpA would see the setting up of a laboratory at the MSC to carry out research and develop advanced technologies for telecommunication networks.

Speaking to newsmen just before the signing, Gualano said the two companies would, among others, work towards the commercial application of the optical amplifier developed by Telekom Malaysia.

The product was developed fully by Malaysian engineers and Gualano said he was very impressed when he first saw it.

With such ground-breaking inventions in an industry which constantly strives to upgrade and improve technologies, he said the MSC venture would start on a sound footing.

It would be able to tap from Telekom Malaysia's and Marconi's expertise.

Gualano said the product would be needed by any big telecommunications operator, and Marconi attached great importance to the venture.

This MSC operation will also pursue the development of special devices to enable the use of copper cables to transmit video images, which is now a problem.

Gualano said Marconi, which established its first Malaysian operations in Kulim 12 years ago, would assign 10 Italians, and 25 to 40 Malaysians for the MSC research venture.

On the second MoU involving gallium arsenide, Mohamed Said said Telekom Malaysia and GEC-Marconi would look into the possibility of setting up a US\$115 million (RM287.5 million) plant at the MSC.

He said usages of this semi-conductor were for very high technologies and transfer of signals at high frequency.

It is used in microwave, satellite and in smart cards, requiring power

at low levels.

"This is a product which we believe will have a huge demand," said Mohamed Said.

Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie and Telekom Malaysia general manager (research and development) Dr Zainal Aripin Zakariah were among those present.

Tomorrow, Dr Mahathir will speak at the Investors Conference promoting the MSC at the Imperial College which is expected to be attended by about 1,000 participants from mainland Europe and the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister will also meet British Prime Minister Tony Blair whose Labour Party was voted in with a resounding majority during the May 1 general election.

Dr Mahathir will be the third head of Government to meet Blair, after Irish Prime Minister John Bruton and Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok.

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