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Varsity

UNIVERSITY TUN ABDUL RAZAK - MALAYSIA'S FIRST VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY

By: Salmy Hashim

MCLEAN, Virginia, Feb 15 (Bernama)--Tun Abdul Razak University, Malaysia's first virtual university, will offer its first course on-line by next year, Assistant Vice-President of SAIC (Science Applications International Corporation), Michael Corrigan, said here Friday.

SAIC, an R&D firm and one of the top systems integrators in the United States, which has formed a partnership with KUB Malaysia Bhd, has applied for MSC status with the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) in the Multimedia Super Corridor.

Corrigan said, the Malaysian Ministry of Education had invited SAIC and KUB to apply for a licence to operate the fully-accredited university in Malaysia.

"We hope to form our first class within the next 18 months - in the form of electronic distant education," he told Bernama following a business briefing by MIMOS and Putrajaya Holdings on "Putrajaya: the World's Most Exciting Smart City."

The one-day conference, attended by nearly 100 American companies, was jointly organised by the US Trade and Development Agency and Booz-Allen and Hamilton, a consulting firm.

The private university, which would initially be opened to students around the Klang Valley, would later expand its distant learning concept to cities outside Kuala Lumpur like Kota Baharu, Kota Kinabalu and Penang.

Courses to be offered by the full bachelor's degree programme include, Computer Science, Information Technology, Mathematics, Software Development and Management Science.

Corrigan said the university would not have a main campus like a regular university. But students anywhere can learn as long as they own a computer. However, students who do not own computers could go to "virtual classrooms" or study centres and gain knowledge through video teleconferencing, e-mail, live and pre-recorded video demonstrations, animation and interactive software.

"We will provide a whole slew of multimedia technology to deliver the best educational content to students," he added.

SAIC and KUB signed a Smart Partnership agreement in Los Angeles on Jan 13 during a mission to promote the MSC led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The non-exclusive agreement covers broad areas of IT and systems integration including planning, systems design and development, and implementation. Under the agreement, SAIC and KUB will pursue projects in distant learning, telecommunications, intelligent cities, intelligent transportation, intelligent buildings, and information protection, among others.

SAIC is one of the largest employee-owned high-technology companies in the US with more than US\$2 billion in annual revenue and more than 21,000 employees. The KUB Technology Group of Companies is a Malaysian-owned conglomerate offering highly specialised IT services.-- BERNAMA

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