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PIKOM TO SUPPORT GOVT IN TACKLING "MILLENNIUM BUG"

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 17 (Bernama) -- The Association of the Computer Industry Malaysia (Pikom) is willing to support the government in helping the small-and-medium scale companies (SME) in tackling the "Millennium Bug."

Its executive director Alan Fung said here today that the association is now closely monitoring the latest development in this matter and, at the same time, identifying ways how Pikom's existing 250 members can co-operate to help.

Y2K or Milleneum Bug is a year 2000 software problem that refers to the inability of many computer systems to read the data in the new milleneum.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in chairing a recent National Information Technology Council (NITC) meeting, said the government is taking a closer look at SMEs, as they may face serious problems with the "Milleneum Bug" or "Y2K".

"I think Pikom can at least assume an indirect role, as we have a good relationship with several foreign Y2K software manufacturers, with whom we can discuss this issue," he said.

Alan was speaking to newsmen after Professor Ian O. Angell of the London School of Economics delivered a talk on "Information Technology (IT) and Its Future: Implications for Malaysia" organised by Pikom and Mimos Bhd.

Pikom, Alan said was awaiting the latest details on the Y2K task force recommended to be established by the Y2K bureau.

The NITC Secretariat in a recent statement said the bureau would work with regulatory authorities to ensure that organisations under their charge will deal appropriately with the Y2K problem.

According to Alan, the bureau's task force might comprise a team of IT experts who are actually international Y2K software suppliers.

The Y2K problem is expected to occur because the programmes and electronic devices, for example, use the digits "00" to represent the year 2000, the same number that represents the year 1900 in the two digit systems.

However, many people have misconceptions about the Y2K problem as they assume it just to be an ordinary computer problem.

All computers in the world will face this problem as many computer makers and users tend to use the last two digits of a year like 96 or 97 instead of 1996 or 1997 when storing data in their computers.

"So, if people refer to records that are kept in their computers before 1999 in the new milleneum, they will be retrieving "wrong" information while calculations will not will accurate.

Earlier, Prof Angell said it was a blessing in disguise for Malaysia as it had the ability to create the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), which he described as a bold idea.

He said the MSC for him was like an "experimental hub" building around the hot spots of Kuala Lumpur.

The international community, he said should not overly criticise Malaysia as the country, although small is not prevented from attaining bigger goals.

He quipped: "If you do not buy a lottery ticket, you will never know if you will win the first prize." -- BERNAMA

RIZ DVS