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Malaysia still behind in terms of readiness

Malcolm Rosario

ALTHOUGH Malaysia is moving aggressively in tackling the Y2K issue, it is about 12 and 18 months behind major countries in the world in terms of its readiness to face the millennium bug, said Unisys Asia and South Pacific Year 2000 programme vice president, Mr Phil Dodd.

He said the US, Australia, Denmark, Canada, UK and Sweden are the only countries that can claim to have taken sufficient steps to minimise risk. Even then, they still have a lot of work to do, he added.

"The fact that even these countries have to take further steps to confine the millennium bug issue should provide Malaysia with an idea of how much work it needs to do to achieve Y2K compliancy", Dodd said.

Even though the country has only ten months to prepare itself, it is not a lost cause, he said. Dodd believes a lot can be achieved in this time frame if the right help is obtained.

"The first step is to convince the nation's leaders of the seriousness of the Y2K issue and Malaysia is far ahead of many countries in this aspect.

"I have spoken to the leaders of many different nations and have found that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia Datuk Leo Moggie have a better grasp of the issue than many of the world's leaders," Dodd added.

However, he felt that although the Malaysian Government has announced its intentions to ensure the Y2K compliance, the efforts must be supported "down the line".

As for corporate leaders, he said it is also wrong for a leader to pass responsibility to their subordinates, adding that the problem must be addressed from top to bottom, not from the bottom up.

This means that not only must the corporate leaders themselves get involved in the process, they must also ensure that the people under them are involved as well.

Another issue that he feels is restricting work on the Y2K issue is the fact that people just won't admit they have a problem, or even if they do, they think they can deal with it tomorrow.

"I cannot remember the number of times I was told 'everything is under control' or 'we still have time'. This attitude would only mean that everyone suffers later," Dodd said.

On which industries are moving in the right direction, he said that in most countries, the banking and finance industry is leading the way and is closely followed by the transportation industry, mainly the airlines.

The areas that are dangerously lagging behind are the utilities industry, those involved in water, electricity and gas supply, and sewage management.

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