

08 DEC 2000

PEG-APEC

PEG MOVES AHEAD TO LESSEN DIGITAL DIVIDE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 8 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian-proposed Partnership for Equitable Growth (PEG) has launched the second phase of its Apec IT initiative programme in Bangkok, wiring up rural schools and small businesses.

Chief executive officer of Apec's PEG, Dr Shafiq Abdullah said the launch with the schools in Lopburi province in Thailand is a step in the right direction for the large corporations which had pledged to assist the development of IT programmes in rural areas.

In a PEG statement Shafiq said it was important that children get some degree of access to information and knowledge available on the internet wherever they were.

"The PEG has already implemented this scheme in numerous schools in Malaysia, Indonesia and elsewhere in the Apec region. We will be working with the top ICT companies to also wire up rural schools in Russia, Chile and Peru.

"The success of this project can be seen by the strong support which we are getting from companies such as Oracle, HP, Ingenuity Microsystems and Acer," he said.

The Apec IT initiative is modeled after the Multimedia Super Corridor testbed in Cyberjaya as a means to leapfrog the digital divide for developing countries aiming to catch up with the larger industrialised economies.

The PEG was set up in 1988 following call by Apec leaders for an organisation which will pursue capacity building initiatives in the Apec region particularly to help out small businesses in the lesser developed Apec economies.

The other main projects of the PEG are the Apec Asian Gas Grid project which will link the natural gas resources of Natuna Alpha D of Indonesia to consumers in North Asia via a gas pipeline.

This project has passed the feasibility stage and is now moving onto the negotiation stage with the main parties, and the Apec SME Automotive Apprenticeship Scheme.

For Indonesia, the value of the Asian Gas Grid project in terms of future revenue stream from the sale of gas is estimated over RM50 billion.

The founding patron of the PEG is the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. -- BERNAMA

MAD KTC