

Govt to help fund 'access for all' drive

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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Government will add to the private sector's contribution to the Universal Services Provision (USP) fund, which aims to roll out affordable communications access to under-served areas and groups, said Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk **Amar** Leo Moggie.

The ministry last June directed the Communications and Multimedia Commission (CMC) to formulate a system that would deliver affordable telecommunications services to all segments of Malaysian society.

The CMC is the country's telecommunications industry regulator and authority.

Currently, Telekom Malaysia Bhd is the sole universal service provider. Licensed network operators in the country have been contributing to the USP fund since Jan 1, 1999, to help bring telecommunications services to under-served areas and groups.

They include Celcom (M) Sdn Bhd, **Maxis** Communications Bhd, **Digi** Telecommunications Sdn Bhd, **TTdotCom** Sdn Bhd and Time Wireless Sdn Bhd.

Universal services was one of the focus areas identified in the Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3) unveiled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently.

The OPP3 identified nine major thrusts to develop Malaysia into a K-Economy. Two of them are accelerating the development of the country's "infrastructure" and bridging the digital divide.

According to Moggie, there are several areas which the government has highlighted to help accelerate the development of an **infrastructure**, or information **infrastructure**.

OPP3 will **first** focus on upgrading the communications and multimedia infrastructure to provide "accessible information flow at competitive prices," he said after opening **IBM e-fair 2001 (see P41)**.

The government, in partnership with the private sector, will also introduce ICT (Information and Communications Technology) literacy programmes targeted at specific groups of the population. —

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