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Malaysia-Satellite

MALAYSIA INVITES AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO PARTICIPATE IN SATELLITE VENTURE

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

KAMPALA, Aug 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has invited African countries to participate or share in the Africa-Mea Sat (A-M Sat) satellite to be launched in mid-2004 at a cost of US\$200 million, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced today.

The A-M Sat will cover Africa and Europe.

The Prime Minister said this at the Global 2001 Smart Partnership International Dialogue in the Ugandan capital.

The A-M Sat has been designed to interconnect with the existing Measat Satellite Network through Measat-3, which is to be launched in early 2004.

The Measat-3 will cover Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Asia and Australia.

The satellite will be owned and operated by Binariang Satellite System Sdn Bhd.

Dr Mahathir said Binariang had established a consortium with Astronautic Technology Sdn Bhd, a Malaysian government agency established to develop national capability in satellite technologies, to launch the Measat-3 satellite into the Malaysian orbital slot of 5.7 degrees East longitude.

The A-M Sat satellite will enable African countries to connect seamlessly with each other through a cost-effective intra-Africa network and will provide global inter-connectivity through the Measat system.

Dr Mahathir also said the consortium would be expanded to include African institutional and private sector interests and Malaysian interests with operations in Africa.

"Our experience in Malaysia has confirmed the importance of owning and operating our own broadcasting and telecommunication infrastructure to ensure control of our future and ensuring that the content delivered is consistent with our own values," he said.

A-Mea Sat will employ a payload of 24 C-Band and 12 KU-Band transponders (each providing 36 mhz of bandwidth over its 15 year operational life).

The satellite will provide premium broadcast and internet and telephony services throughout Africa and Europe.

Dr Mahathir said it would bring Africa closer to Southeast Asia through such communications.

Given the high cost of the satellite, it would be good if African countries shared the cost, he said.

The Prime Minister also announced that next year's Smart Partnership Dialogue will be held in Langkawi, Malaysia, at a date which will be announced later.

Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali left for Kuala Lumpur after the dialogue.

-- BERNAMA

MR HS SD YBY