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Right step towards an Asean K-economy

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IT was recently reported that Malaysia has proposed the creation of an Asean Network Security Co-ordinating Centre to counter the rising incidents of cyber crime and misinformation through the Internet in the region.

This augurs well for the growth and the development of web and e-commerce businesses and transactions as Asean has now shown its commitment in stamping out cyber crimes such as unauthorised access of credit card information, creation and illegal dissemination of viruses and worms, on-line child pornography, get-rich-quick scams and copyright violations.

Undoubtedly, it would be ideal to think about a global initiative, not a regional initiative - each and every government in the world must participate in stamping out cyber crime, as the web is borderless.

However, Asean is determined to set its own agenda in moving towards the K-economy. This is a step forward because Asean must have a unified plan to move into the K-economy, in the face of competition from the West and countries such as India, Israel and China.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad stated that instead of following development models by industrialised nations, Asean should play the game according to its own rules.

One way Asean can do this is by developing world-class software and ICT corporations in Asean. That is a huge task which requires hardworking and visionary strategists and workers.

These companies have to challenge corporate behemoths like Microsoft, Oracle, SAS Institute, Yahoo.com and i2 Technologies. Can we do this?

I believe so. Asean has the concepts and the people to make it work. Malaysia's MSC, Singapore's "wired island network", people like Malaysia's Al-Ihsal Ishak of Neuroweb, Looi Hoong Thoong who created the V-Buster anti-virus programme, and Singapore's Creative which is famous for its Sound Blaster sound card and which is listed on the Nasdaq, should be displayed as world-class concepts, people and corporations for others in Asean to emulate.

Another endorsement given by Asean countries recently is that of the creation of the Asean Regional Internet Exchange (Arix).

Its creation would definitely be advantageous for Asean people and corporations because without appropriate bandwidth, the corporations in Asean cannot deliver their products and/or services speedily enough to their customers and clients, who can be in any corner of the world.

Similarly, without appropriate bandwidth, the masses in Asean cannot get to enjoy the benefits and advantages of the Internet as people in the West would.

Additionally, Asean members must enact laws to govern ICT and to ensure that they are regionally harmonised. Undoubtedly, the web is borderless and the ideal would be a global harmonisation of cyber laws.

However, without concerted efforts, especially from the Western countries, global harmonisation may take decades. If Asean were actually to harmonise cyber laws regionally, this could be used as a blueprint for other regional groupings to study, and if the circumstances are right, to emulate.