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DRB-HICOM ventures into PC industry

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DRB-HICOM Bhd, a giant in the local automotive industry, has signalled its move into the ICT industry by introducing the national computer or Komnas Twenty20 through its subsidiary DRB-HICOM Information Technologies Sdn Bhd (DH Info Tech).

However, unlike most PC players in the market, DH Info Tech relies on the Linux operating system (OS) to power Komnas. Most PCs marketed in Malaysia operate under Windows OS or Macintosh OS.

'This is the first initiative in Asia, if not the world, in which a full Linux-based desktop solution and Internet-ready computer is offered on a mass deployment model at an affordable price,' says DatukYatina Yahaya, chairman of DH Info Tech.

By using Linux OS, DH Info Tech is hoping to roll out affordable PCs to capture the local low-to-mid income market. This is because as Linux OS is based on an open source platform, its usage does not involve any licensing fees. Traditionally, licensing fees make up 20-40 per cent of a PC's total cost. The Komputer Nasional PC retails at RM1,899.

It is also unique because its applications are bilingual, in Bahasa Malaysia and English. Furthermore, it comes pre-connected with a TM Net account for Internet access. Purchasers will enjoy 50 hours of free Internet access on a prepaid model with an option to reload more Internet surfing hours.

When launching the national PC, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says the roll-out of the affordable PCs will go a long way in helping to reduce the digital divide in the country. He applauds DRB-HICOM for taking the initiative to launch an affordable PC as it is in line with the National Information Technology Agenda (NITA), which was launched in December 1996. 'While the government can only do so much in promoting the use of the personal computer and the Internet, we need more initiatives such as this to realise our vision of becoming an information- and knowledge-rich society,' he says.