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Gateway

THAILAND, CAMBODIA AND LAOS GIVE NOD TO INFO GATEWAY

PHNOM PENH, Aug 21 (Bernama) -- A Malaysian Information Ministry team has secured in principle agreement from Cambodia, Laos and Thailand to participate in the proposed South-South Information Gateway (SSIG).

This was in sum the outcome of the team's three-nation tour since Aug 13 to sell the SSIG idea to Phnom Penh, Vientiane and Bangkok and to obtain their commitment towards realising the gateway, which will be based in and funded by Kuala Lumpur.

At the end of the tour, team leader and Deputy Information Minister Datuk Khalid Yunus told Bernama here before returning home today: "The mission is a successful one and has accomplished what it sets out to achieve."

While here, Khalid held talks on the proposed SSIG and deliberated on the provisions of the draft Memorandum of Understanding on the gateway with Cambodian Information Minister Lu Lay Sreng.

The Malaysian ambassador here, Datuk A.H. Anuar, took part in the deliberations alongside Malaysian and Cambodian broadcasting and news agency officials.

Khalid conducted a similar exercise with his Laotian counterpart, Phanduangchit Vongsa, with Malaysian ambassador to Vientiane Daud M Yusoff also participating.

In Bangkok earlier, Thai Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Somsakdi Thepsuthin also conveyed to Khalid Bangkok's support for the SSIG besides raising what the minister described as prohibitive costs and restrictive Malaysian laws affecting foreign film promotion.

While Vongsa expressed land-locked Laos' desire for training and Malaysian private sector investment in his country's broadcasting infrastrucutral development, Lay Sreng looked forward to getting more scholarships for Cambodian journalists and broadcasters later under the SSIG ambit.

Barring hitches, Kuala Lumpur has envisaged making the SSIG operational as a hub for the exchange of news and television programmes for south countries by early 2003.

A brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the SSIG was mooted during the 1999 Langkawi International Dialogue.

-- BERNAMA

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