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ICT-SWAZILAND

M'SIAN ICT FIRM IN DEAL TO DEVELOP SWAZI NATIONAL ICT BLUEPRINT

By Mikhail Raj Abdullah

EZULWINI (Swaziland), Aug 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's information technology company, Applied Information Management Services Sdn Bhd (AIMS), has signed a memorandum of understanding with Swaziland to develop a national blueprint for the Swazi ICT sector and develop the kingdom as a potential ICT hub in the southern African region.

AIMS is a subsidiary of public-listed ICT group, MY-Infotech Bhd, and a operator of Malaysia's leading data centre-cum-telehousing facility.

The company will undertake to consult and share knowledge for ICT infrastructure development in Swaziland via the development of the blueprint.

Besides this, AIMS, with annual revenues of RM150 million, will promote and enhance telecommunications and Internet infrastructure and services, Internet-enabled solutions and technologies for the government and private sectors in Swaziland.

AIMS, which also operates Malaysia Online, the country's first private Internet Service Provider (ISP) since 1995, will also promote call centres to service the southern Africa region and develop ICT-related businesses between the Malaysian and Swazi private sectors.

AIMS, whose core business is in the area of convergence between traditional information technology and telecommunications, is strategically positioned to take advantage of the convergence between the two sectors, said company officials here.

The MOU was signed on Saturday at the Global 2003 Smart Partnership International Dialogue hosted by Swaziland. It was inked between Senator Lutfo Dlamini, Swaziland's Minister for Enterprise and Employment, and AIMS' Chief Operating Officer, Afzal Abdul Rahim, at the Club 29 hub within the dialogue.

Club 29 is the youth link within the dialogue comprising young professionals and entrepreneurs and focuses on ensuring the continuity of the ethos and values of the smart partnership movement.

Also present at the ceremony was King Mswati III of Swaziland, who is the patron of the club, and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Afzal told Malaysian journalists that the Swazi ICT sector was ripe for development and stood to gain from the kingdom's strategic location in southern Africa.

AIMS Director Gan Te-Shen, who is upbeat about Swaziland as a springboard to the region, said the company is keen to share experiences with the Swazi government and private sectors on ways to kickstart the ICT industry in southern Africa.

Neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, South Africa and Mozambique are just a stone's throw away while Mbabane, the Swazi capital, is only three hours away from Johannesburg in South Africa by road, giving excellent access to the critical urban market, he said. -- BERNAMA

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