

15 AUG 2003

Cooperation-IT

SABAH TO EXPLORE IT COOPERATION WITH SARAWAK

KUCHING, Aug 15 (Bernama) -- Sabah is exploring the possibility of cooperating with Sarawak in the fields of information technology (IT) and human resource development in efforts to bridge the digital gap, especially in the rural areas.

Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Tham Nyip Shen said today that such a collaboration, in terms of manpower and infrastructure, could help bring about better and cheaper IT accessibility in both States.

"Sabah and Sarawak share similar problems. It is difficult to put up fibre optic or satellite transmissions because of the high costs involved due to the scattered population and vast territories," he told reporters after calling on Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr George Chan at his office at Wisma Bapa Malaysia in Petra Jaya here.

Tham, who is also Sabah Resource Development and Information Technology Minister, said the digital divide in Sabah was getting worse as the higher demand for internet content and advanced technology available in urban areas meant that the rural areas lagged behind in IT.

At present, the Sabah Government's intranet or Sabahnet is available to any internet user with a telephone line hooked to the website, he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Chan proposed that the Federal Government subsidise or fund the cost of satellite transmission to rural areas, such as the ongoing IT projects in Bario and Long Bedian, in efforts to create an IT literate society.

For instance, he said, the State Government spent RM140,000 annually on satellite transmission alone in these two remote areas, excluding other facilities like computers and schools.

He suggested that the State Government should instead look after the ground operations aspect of the programmes, including training locals keen on IT, to take care of transmission problems and computer break-downs.

The matter was brought to the attention of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his recent visit to Sarawak, he said.

He said Sains, an IT company owned by the Sarawak Government, was set up in 1992 to look into the on-line system of the State civil service.

-- BERNAMA

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