

Malaysia scores firsts with two new ventures

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IT was a day of significant firsts for Malaysia yesterday.

The Government announced that it was setting up an international centre in Cyberjaya to fight cyber-terrorism.

To be funded and supported by governments around the world and the private sector, the body will provide an emergency response to a cyber attack on the economy or trading system of any country.

It will be modelled after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta which provides expertise on the handling of viruses and outbreaks of diseases around the globe.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi launched this initiative at the close of the World Congress on Information Technology yesterday.

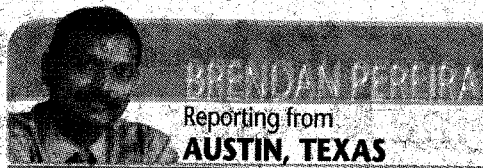
Later, during a visit to the headquarters of Dell Inc, there was more good news for the country.

The IT giant said it would set up a technology and development centre in Cyberjaya, picking Malaysia over India, Ireland and the Philippines.

The facility will employ as many as 1,000 people over the next few years, and its range of activities will cover process design and software development.

But more important than the number of potential jobs is the fact that this centre will help Malaysia move up the value chain in IT.

These two pieces of news capped



a successful trip by Abdullah to the congress.

Speaking at the close of the meeting, which Malaysia will host in 2008, Abdullah told the audience that cutting-edge technology was a double-edged sword: it could do much good but also be used to harm humanity.

The threat posed by cyber-terrorism was something that governments could not ignore, Abdullah said.

"The potential to wreak havoc and cause disruption to people, governments and global systems has increased as the world becomes more globalised.

"Today, governments must be prepared to deal with threats in cyberspace. Even if one were to exclude the risk to life and limb, the economic loss caused by a cyber attack can be truly severe, for example, a nationwide blackout, collapse of trading systems or the crippling of a central bank's cheque clearing system.

"It is imperative that countries throughout the world work in concert to wipe out this danger."

He announced that Malaysia would set up and host the "International Multilateral Partnership

Against Cyber-terrorism (Impact)".

By doing so, he noted, Malaysia would be providing a platform for governments to exchange ideas and share skills on how to combat the changing threat of cyber-terrorism.

This initiative was warmly received by the audience, which included former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Abdullah said some of world's leading names, such as Symantec Corporation of the United States, Japan's MICRO and Russia's Kaspersky Lab had agreed to be partners and serve on Impact's international advisory board.

"We expect more such world-class companies to follow suit."

Abdullah added that he was going to write to heads of governments and inform them of this centre to fight cyber-terrorism.

For a start, the centre will focus on training and skills development. Together with leading ICT companies, the centre will conduct training and seminars for governments on the latest trends, potential threats and emerging technologies.

Over time, the plan is to turn Im-

pact into a global forum.

It will also provide a global emergency response system to help governments who face an imminent cyber threat or those already in an emergency situation.

Its database of international experts can be called upon to serve any government at short notice.

The Internal Security Ministry will provide the policy guidelines for Impact and the day-to-day operations will be handled by a private sector consortium led by Ascendsys Sdn Bhd and GTN Sdn Bhd, a fully-owned subsidiary of Telekom Malaysia.

In his speech at the congress, Abdullah spoke about the widening digital divide between developed and developing countries.

From his unique vantage point of being the chairman of Asean, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, he observed a number of pressing issues facing developing countries, many of which depend on access to technology.

Earlier, Powell spoke about how the flow of information was changing the global landscape from China to Africa.

He sprinkled his hugely entertaining presentation with kind words for Malaysia.

Congratulating his "good friends from Malaysia" for winning the right to host the next congress, he cracked up the crowd with this quip: "Who knows, perhaps I may be invited there?"