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Sabah



Awang Samad Sijual showing other recipients the devices he got through the initiative by the four companies aimed at bridging the digital divide.

Learning anew with a 'telephone'

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KOTA KINABALU: Awang Samad Sijual is looking forward to opening an email account now that he has got broadband service at home.

Having attended a course on basic computer knowledge late last year, the 79-year-old from Sembulan Baru wants to put what he had learnt to practice with a little help from his 7-year-old grandson, Aizat Maksul.

Awang Samad, who retired from the State Postal Department in 1986, yesterday received free Mimos WiWi and JEN-ii units to access the Internet from four companies — REDtone International Bhd, Mimos Bhd, Pernec Corporation and Nadi Ayu Technologies.

He was one of 30 recipients of the Internet access devices in a programme aimed at bridging the digital divide with people who have minimal or zero knowledge about computers or the Internet.

In a ceremony here yesterday, state Resource Development and Information Technology Minister Datuk Dr Yee Moh Chai presented the units to the recipients who lived around the state capital.

"Until I attended the course last year, I had only heard of the word computer or Internet. I knew nothing about it except that many people were using it.

"During the course I attended at UMS (Universiti Malaysia Sabah), however, we were told that we could do a lot of things with it.

"I am just happy that I have been given this device, which, to me, is like a 'telephone' to learn new things.

"Maybe I can even get some tips from my grandson, Aizat, who is always playing with the computer," said Samad.

Another recipient, Halima Sulaiman, 53, said that for her, it was just a matter of having enough courage to try something new.

"I heard of things like Facebook where people can get in touch with friends and family, get latest news or just pay bills by using computers at home.

"I want to learn all that. If I make a mistake, I will try again," said Halima, a housewife from Taman Semipelang.

"What's stopping most people is

their fear of trying something new.

"That was how I felt, too, before but now that I have attended the course in UMS, I want to learn even more."

Meanwhile, Dr Yee said broadband Internet penetration in Sabah was at 12 per cent, adding that it was an encouraging sign where the people were ready, willing and able to embrace the information and communications technology.

"To match the country's goal of reaching 50 per cent broadband penetration by the end of this year, and 30 per cent for Sabah, we have to be more aggressive to promote regular and widespread use of the ICT to a wider populace and in delivering the access infrastructure," he said.