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InfoSTI@MOSTI

the one-stop centre for science, technology and innovation



WE WANT TO EDUCATE
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— Datin Madinah Mohamad
Science, Technology
and Innovation Ministry
secretary-general



Science, Technology and Innovation Deputy Minister Fadillah Yusof, who launched the Petra Jaya centre on Feb 22, witnesses via webcast the simultaneous opening of the Kota Marudu centre by Minister Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili.



The ICT community class enables youths to gain unlimited knowledge, from basic computer literacy to advanced applications.

IT IS excusable if many have not heard about "InfoSTI@MOSTI", as this community project by the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry was launched only several months ago.

Nevertheless, the project, aimed at training and producing skilled information communication technology (ICT) volunteers among the rural youth, has already made an impressive impact.

Currently up and running in Kota Marudu, Sabah, and Petra Jaya, Sarawak, the two centres are providing ICT community classes for more than 1,000 people, ranging from basic ICT literacy to advanced applications.

Subjects offered are basic computing and Internet, agri-bazaar, Microsoft applications (Word, Excel and Powerpoint), telecentres, awareness of cyber threats and volunteerism outreach programmes.

"We want to educate more rural youngsters to become skilled ICT volunteers, thus making them assets to the development of their communities," ministry secretary-general, Datin Madinah Mohamad, enthuses.

This one-stop centre for science, technology and innovation is one of the ministry's efforts to reach the populace, especially in rural areas.

And, according to Madinah, this corporate social responsibility project has helped boost IT literacy among the rural youth.

"Its strategic intents are aimed at stimulating local capacities for informed decision-making and enhancement of personal, institutional and community development in the areas of agriculture, youth development and socio-economic progress.

"This is achievable through one-stop applied Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) information dissemination and application. It also places the youth as partners in community-building and development programmes."

Madinah said the objective was to have an IT/STI-literate population among the younger generation of the remote and rural population.

The centre provides unlimited opportunities and knowledge in agriculture, ICT and industrial solutions, funding opportunities, youth and ICT for development, S&T awareness, internal and external social communication of the communities.

"One flagship application to be introduced is an agri-bazaar where people can buy and sell products through the Internet," she said.

On methodologies, the target is to leverage and upgrade existing infrastructure and contents from agencies under the ministry and Demonstrator Applied Grant Scheme (DAGS) funded and e-content projects.

A team from the ministry is also working closely with the local youth to understand and further enhance the needs of the communities.

"It can also be a platform for online learning to take place, which is envisaged to become a standard format for future projects planned by the ministry," said Madinah.

Recalling the planning involved before the project was rolled out, she said several meetings were held last November with the the local authorities and communities in Kota Marudu and Petra Jaya.

"Improvement to the project will be continuously made based on feedback from the local communities."

The project owner in Kota Marudu is its Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association, while the Kampung Semariang Batu development and security committee owns the one in Petra Jaya.

Kumpulan Yayasan Sabah, through its Yayasan Sabah College, has been appointed the secretariat to support the Kota Marudu project, while Yayasan Sarawak is responsible for Petra Jaya.

The signing of a memorandum of understanding was held during the 2008 National Innovation Council meeting, which was chaired by the then prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The project launch was held simultaneously on Feb 22 by webcast. In Kota Marudu, it was officiated by Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili while his deputy, Fadillah Yusof, did the honours in Petra Jaya.

Astronautic Technology (M) Sdn Bhd, an agency under the ministry, has been appointed as InfoSTI@MOSTI project management team, assisted by Mimos Berhad, MSC Malaysia, CyberSecurity Malaysia, .my DOMAIN REGISTRY, National Science Centre, Academy of Sciences Malaysia and Mimos Smart Computing Sdn Bhd.

Microsoft Malaysia has also supported this project through training material. There is also the participation of non-governmental organisations such as Cyber Development Corps Malaysia and Yayasan Kemajuan Sosial Malaysia.

Madinah said the centre was run by volunteers trained by InfoSTI@MOSTI partners through the "Train of Trainer" programme for 20 days.

Besides teaching ICT applications for social development, volunteers are also taught interpersonal and entrepreneurship skills. Interpersonal skills include teaching and facing the community of different age groups and handling communities' expectations. Entrepreneurship skills comprise utilising ICT skills for financial growth.

Upon completion of their training, volunteers are certified as InfoSTI@MOSTI skilled volunteers by Microsoft Malaysia and the ministry under the Cyber Development Corps initiative of the United Nations —

Global Alliances and ICT for Development.

Madinah said ICT knowledge had a great impact on the standard of living and social life of the local communities as they become IT literate communities and gain the benefits of ICT.

With the success of the two centres, it will just be a matter of time before more such facilities are set up by the ministry.