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Wednesday August 11, 2010

EU envoy: Malaysian broadband connectivity needs to be expanded

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's existing pockets of broadband connectivity need to be expanded, according to the head of the European Union delegation to Malaysia Vincent Piket.

"It is vital that nationwide access to broadband becomes a reality in the shortest possible time. Failure to quickly respond will result in lost business opportunities and Malaysia's relative competitiveness will inevitably decline as the broadband momentum grows in neighbouring countries," he said at the EU-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (EUMCCI) roundtable discussion on *Broadband as an Enabler of Growth* here yesterday.



Vincent Piket

Piket said the realisation of social targets would be undermined and the digital divide exacerbated particularly as effective applications and services which foster development could only be delivered through broadband.

"The Government's New Economic Model and its drive for greater inclusiveness should help propel an adequate response to the country's broadband imperative," he said, adding that further liberalisation of the telecommunication sector would stimulate flow of foreign direct investments.

Piket believes broadband is the new instrument for development.

"Broadband enables growth, but broadband itself must be part of a broader strategy if it is to bring Malaysia the development dividends it deserves," he said.

According to Piket, Malaysia is a direct beneficiary of the Trans Eurasian Information Network programme that supports the connection of research communities in Asia and the EU through a dedicated, high speed and high capacity broadband network.

Panelists present at the roundtable were TIME dotCom Bhd chief executive officer Afzal Abdul Rahim, DHL senior vice president, Asia Pacific information service Heinz Luck, ING Insurance Bhd president and chief executive officer Datuk Dr Nirmala Menon, DiGi.Com Bhd chief executive officer Henrik Clausen, and Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission senior director MyICMS division Zamani Zakariah.

All the panelists agreed that broadband was an economic enabler. Nirmala said broadband was not just an enabler of growth but also an enabler of anything one can think of, even marriage.

Clausen said competition was good for the industry and that celcos could look at areas in which they were able to collaborate to lower the cost of infrastructure and gain economies of scale. Azhar highlighted some challenges in the sector, such as exchange rate, density of household, cultural and consumer behaviour.

Zamani revealed that the MCMC had problems trying to explain broadband to some people in rural areas. “That’s a problem to us. We still have quite a (high) percentage of people who still who do not know what broadband is,” he said. “We went to some rural areas to explain about *jalur lebar* but all they know is our *Jalur Gemilang*.”

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