

## BUSINESS News

# Mobile Net unit for rural schools



**Pilot programme;** Abdullah on board the cyber coach at the launch of the MIU pilot.

By Nur Aida Mustaffa

TWENTY rural schools in Selangor have been selected as pilot recipients of the mobile Internet unit (MIU) programme, initiated by Mimos Berhad under the electronic community (e-community) project.

According to Mimos' president and chief executive officer Tengku Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Sharifadeen, the programme will provide an opportunity for teachers and stu-

dents in the rural areas to access the Internet and learn more about computers and other related aspects.

"We hope the programme will be expanded to other States, and we are most willing to form a smart partnership with other parties on a similar venture," he said at a Press conference in conjunction with the launch of the pilot MIU programme at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Seafield in Subang Jaya last week.

The event was officiated by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The pilot programme is a collaborative effort between Mimos, the Education Ministry, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Automotive Corporation (M) Sdn Bhd.

Automotive Corporation has donated a bus or cyber coach while Mimos contributed 21 units of multimedia computers, a Web server and a team of Cyber Tour guides.

UNDP meanwhile contributed about US\$75,000 (RM285,000) for the hardware, software and operation cost.

Total investment for the pilot project is estimated at RM1.6 million.

Tengku Azzman said Mimos would donate a multimedia computer with Internet access to each school. The schools will also each receive a Jaring account and five megabytes of memory space for the Jaring server.

Under the programme, students will be taught basic computing, basic Internet and integration of information technology (IT) in classrooms via the cyber coach which will make its rounds within the next six months.

There will be two ses-

sions during each visit. The morning session, which takes up five hours, will cater to Form One students while the afternoon session, which takes up two hours, is for teachers and other students.

Tengku Azzman highlighted a number of challenges which need to be overcome with the advent of the information communication technology (ICT), one of which is the increasing gap between the info-rich and info-poor community.

"As we are migrating into the electronic world, there is a great need for us to convince the community that ICT is here to help them improve their daily lives," he said.

Hence, the next challenge is to create the awareness among the community as failure to do so will result in a community with low self-esteem and little self-confidence, he added.

In his speech, Abdullah said there was a need for other bodies such as the Education Ministry, National Library, and Information Department to orientate their existing services such as the mobile libraries based on the MIU.

"This is a positive effort in creating a knowledge society especially those in the rural areas," he said.