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A snapshot of celebrations from around the world

Malaysia

Drumming a way across the digital divide

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), together with industry, launched a month-long celebration of World Telecommunication Day in May 2002. The celebrations kicked off with a gala dinner on 17 May, and were attended by, among others, Malaysia's Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia, Datuk Amar Leo Moggie. Malaysia' s Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, was on hand to officiate the celebrations. ITU was represented by Roberto Blois, Deputy Secretary-General, Michael Calvano, Head of the ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok (Thailand) and E. Behdad, ITU Area Office Representative in Jakarta (Indonesia).

ITU 020161/MCMC

The Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister launches WTD 2002 in Malaysia

Using the best of Malaysian communications and multimedia technology, guests at the gala dinner were treated to a pageantry display, which included a real-time big screen transmission of four drum orchestras playing simultaneously in four different locations across the country. The event was also broadcast live on national television.

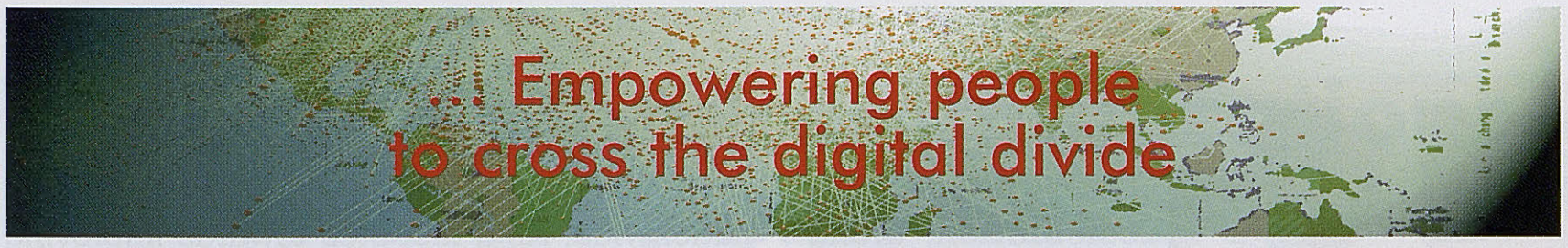
Tan Sri Nuraizah Abdul Hamid, Chairman of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission said it had been five years since World Telecommunication Day was celebrated on a large scale in Malaysia. In 1998, Malaysia enacted new convergence legislation with the Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA), which came into effect on 1 April 1999. As regulator, MCMC has spent the past three years migrating licensees to a new convergence-based licensing structure and putting in place procedures for implementing the CMA. She added: "Now that the migration process has been completed and the Act is being implemented, I believe that it is appropriate to reflect on, and celebrate, the achievements of the industry and to use the opportunity to inform and educate the public about developments in the industry."

ITU 020162/MCMC

Roberto Blois meets the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and the Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia

A guest from the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) Forum commented: "The magnitude of this programme very clearly demonstrates the support that the Malaysian Government has for the development of this converging sector. The programme is a clear testimony to the strong collaboration between the Government, regulator and industry in Malaysia."

A month-long programme of events, organized to mark this year's celebrations, included an APT Forum on "Telecommunications policy and regulation", the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) programme on "Broadband access and multimedia", and a nationwide consumer awareness programme. All delegates of the APT Forum and CTO programme attended the launch of World Telecommunication Day Malaysia 2002, along with 800 other guests from the diplomatic community, and the country's Government agencies and the corporate sector.



Botswana: The then Minister of Works, Transport and Communications, Tebelelo Seretse, graced the occasion. In her keynote address she pointed to lack of good telecommunication infrastructure and access to information and communication services, low levels of literacy and poverty as some of the factors impeding the development of telecommunications in the country. Botswana Telecommunications Authority donated seven computers and a printer to the country's Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), where the Day's celebrations were held. YWCA runs programmes with particular emphasis on the advancement of women and the girl child. Lobatse Teachers Training College (LTTC) received one computer from *Botsnet* (an Internet Service Provider). LTTC trains primary school teachers, the majority of whom are women.

ITU 020163/BTA

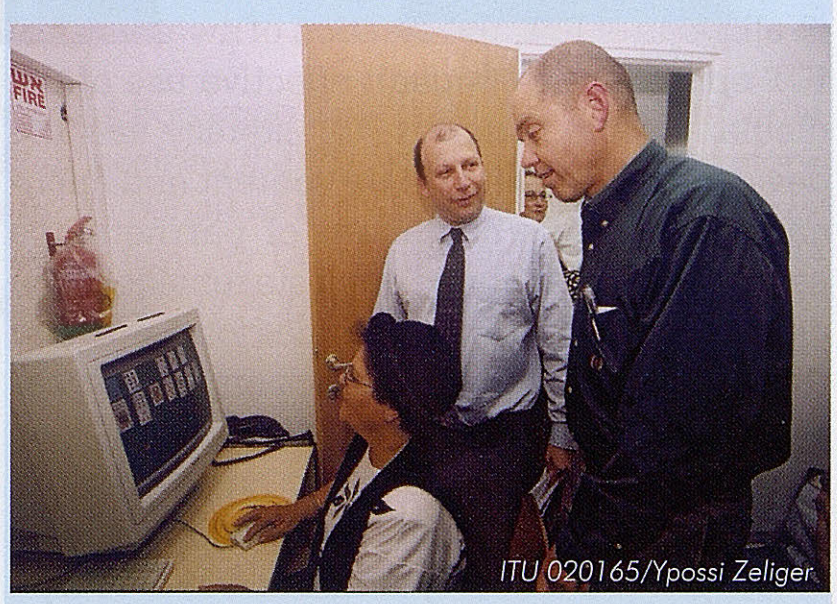
The then Minister of Works, Transport and Communications, Tebelelo Seretse, launched the BTA website

ITU 020164/BTA

WTD 2002 served to highlight some of the problems facing women and ICTs. The occasion was an opportunity for the Botswana telecommunications fraternity to pledge its support towards helping women to bridge the digital gap that currently isolates them from enjoying the full benefits of ICTs. A major challenge of mobilizing women and encouraging them to exploit ICT opportunities for the betterment of their lives rest with policy-makers, service providers, regulators, financiers and most importantly, women themselves. The minister launched the BTA website (www.bta.org.bw).

Czech Republic: Visitors to the website of the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC) were able to enjoy not only basic information on World Telecommunication Day 2002, written by MTC's Telecommunications Department, but also watched the special video film message of the ITU Secretary-General, Yoshio Utsumi. The May 2002 issue of the leading telecommunication magazine "Convergence" featured the original messages of the ITU Secretary-General, and of the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan, on the theme of "ICT for all: empowering people to cross the digital divide". The ideas expressed in the messages are receiving permanent attention in all telecommunication roundtables, seminars and conferences.

Israel: The celebration took place at the *Hatikva Neighbourhood's Elderly Citizen's Day Center*, where a project of teaching and enabling the use of computers and the Internet was introduced a year ago. The Director General


ITU 020165/Ypossi Zeliger

ITU 020166/Yossi Zeliger

The Director General of the Ministry of Communications, Uri Olenik, at the Elderly Citizen's Day Center

of the Ministry of Communications, Uri Olenik, attended the celebration, along with other senior ministry officials. Dozens of the neighbourhood's elderly residents have been taking advantage of this special initiative, the goal of which is to create a countrywide project to enable senior citizens to have access to, and learn to use the Internet and computer software through training. A large number of the senior citizens who come to the current Day Center are socio-economically disadvantaged, some of them cannot read or write. It is a population that could not otherwise gain access to a computer or the Internet.

Suriname: The *Telecommunicatiebedrijf Suriname* (TELESUR) organized a workshop especially for youth, in close collaboration with the Minister for Education, to raise awareness on ICT issues. ITU articles on the theme of the Day were published in the country's daily newspapers. The Managing Director of TELESUR, Iris Marie Struiken-Wijdenbosch, emphasized the importance of involving youth in ICT matters. Youth discussed, in working groups, ways of breaking down the barriers in ICT access, particularly with respect to their needs. Workshop participants adopted a resolution recommending more government policies to address ICT issues; more basic infrastructure that allows access to ICT products and services; the development of technology to prevent cybercrimes; the promotion of training opportunities for youth in all areas of ICT; the creation of awareness of ICT opportunities through effective use of the media; the promotion of ICT literacy and the development of appropriate content and applications; the establishment of partnerships among government and other stakeholders, the development of ICT programmes for youth, and the holding of regular seminars on ICT issues.

Swaziland: Lack of policy and regulation and high costs of ICT infrastructure and countrywide e-illiteracy were cited as the major setback towards bridging the digital divide. Lack of coordination among the various units in the country were said to impede ICT development nationwide. As a first step towards improving coordination, a Steering Committee on ICT was established. This committee requires an expert to coordinate its activities on a full-time basis say for a period of up to a year, but external funding may be required to carry out the mission.
The Minister of Tourism, Communications and Environment, in his keynote address at the *Ezulwini Convention Center*, remarked that for everyone to have the basic skills required to fully participate in the information society, care must be taken to ensure that there is an education component to enhance ICT literacy. "It is important for all countries to cooperate in seeking solutions to ICT issues, in order to establish an information society that respects economic, social and cultural diversity," the Minister also said. A large section of the population has problems meeting basic requirements such as access to clean water, electricity and basic telephony. Consequently, this section of the population sees ICT only as a dream. It was recognized that first and foremost, it will be necessary to: develop a clear policy on ICT roll-out; introduce a regulator to level the playing field and facilitate the liberalization process; identifying and developing ICT community access points; make ICT gadgets more affordable accompanied by low tariffs. To achieve this, it would be necessary for government to waive some taxes on ICT-related equipment.

Uzbekistan: An agreement was signed with the US Trade and Development Agency for a feasibility study with a view to financing a "Centre for Women's Training in Telecom and IT" — a Project that would be attached to *Tashkent Electrotechnical Institute of Communications*. The creation of such a centre is expected to increase opportunities for higher education for Uzbekistan women (and women in other Central Asian countries) in the ICT sector; promote their professional progress — faculty members in the centre; provide financial resources and fellowship programmes, which will enable Uzbekistan women (and other women in Central Asian countries) to be enrolled in the Centre.