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## UUM in satellite technology project

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UNIVERSITI Utara Malaysia (UUM) is embarking on a computerisation project to install a satellite communication system at its main campus in Sintok as an alternative means to access the Internet.

Its vice chancellor Kol Datuk Prof Ahmad Fawzi Mohd Basri said the project started last month and installation is expected to be completed by this month. He said through this project, UUM will be able to expand its capabilities in terms of teaching, education and research activities by having more comprehensive access to the World Wide Web.

"With this facility, geographical boundaries will also be a thing of the past for UUM and the campus community. We will now

be able to better exploit the open-sky concept in the global village context to fulfil our academic and administrative requirements," he told *Computimes* on Monday.

Ahmad Fawzi said the decision to use satellite for Internet access was mainly because the normal route via Jaring was already congested. "We had been encountering problems accessing the Internet because the two megabits per second (Mbps) bandwidth over Jaring could no longer support the increase in users."

The project involves integration of the satellite route with UUM's Integrated Sintok Local Area Network (ISLAN) whereby users can use the satellite facility or Jaring, or both.

The installation involves two satellite discs - one and two-way sys-

tems. The first system downloads information to UUM's user while telecommunications and Jaring routes are used for uploading or making a request for accessing a specified Web site. The two-way system meanwhile, uses downlink and uplink via satellite entirely.

With the satellite facility, UUM can receive three-Mbps of Internet bandwidth through one or two nodes only as opposed to at least five to 10 nodes via Jaring.

Ahmad Fawzi said transit campuses or private institutions of higher learning which have working relationships with UUM will be equipped with the satellite facilities for cyber learning and teaching.

"This would save a lot of travelling costs and time on the part of lecturers who need to conduct lectures outside the main campus in Sintok. It will also provide a boost to distance learning programmes which have been constrained by air fare increases," he said.

The satellite project is part of UUM's ongoing computerisation programme aimed at positioning itself as a premier in-



Ahmad Fawzi: Saving on travelling costs and time.

stitution of higher learning through the use of innovative technologies.

Ahmad Fawzi said under the programme, UUM is also enhancing its campus-wide networking infrastructure by expanding the fibre-optic network to cover a wider area that includes student hostels and other new buildings currently under construction.

The networking project had started since 1990, along with the development of the main campus.

So far, the faculties, administrative buildings and lecture halls have been wired up under the previous phase. "With the extended facilities, students can access information at their hostels at any time. Previously, they could only do so within their lecture halls and computer labs," Ahmad Fawzi said.

The fibre-optic project, which started in July this year, is scheduled for completion next month.