

Broadband push to drive economy

By **HAMDAN RAJA ABDULLAH**

newsdesk@thestar.com.my

MUAR: Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin wants the people to understand the positive impact and importance of broadband towards economic growth and the need to expand its use, quality and service.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said Malaysia's penetration rate of 36.1% was far behind Singapore, South Korea and Japan.

"The capability of a country to compete on the global stage largely depends on the use of ICT and broadband by the private sector and government," he said after launching the Digital Pagoh-Muar 1Malaysia campaign in Pagoh yesterday.

Based on studies in Asean countries, a 10% increase in broadband penetration could lead to a 1%

increase in a country's gross domestic product growth, he said.

Also present was Information Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim.

"In a world that is moving forward rapidly, everything depends on speed and ability in managing communication, providing information and carrying out transactions," Muhyiddin said.

He added that the Digital Pagoh-Muar was the second digital district in the country after the Digital Pekan initiative launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak recently.

Muhyiddin called on Malaysians not to oppose the construction of telecommunication towers which were meant to provide faster broadband access to homes.

"There have been no security or health-related problems arising from having such towers in residential areas," he said.

He also said the Government



Encouraging ICT: Muhyiddin presenting a free laptop to SM Sungai Abong student Gan Ling Sim during the launch of the Pagoh-Muar Digital 1Malaysia programme yesterday. With them is Rais.

would look into amending building laws to make broadband structural needs mandatory.

He said up to now, some 2,143 community broadband centres had been set up throughout the country and 383 more would be

built soon.

Rais, in his speech, said the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Com (MCMC) mission hoped the household penetration level in Malaysia would reach 50% by the end of the year.