

## LAPTOPS, INTERNET DATA PROVISION TO SUPPORT OUR NATION'S ONLINE LEARNING

By Corporate Communications Division, Ministry of Education

The third wave of COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges on the physical teaching and learning in the nation. Some classes are interrupted and school doors have to be closed due to the increasing number of cases. Thus transition to online learning has never been more crucial and pertinent.

With the consent of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, a contract on the provision of laptops and internet data to all teachers and underprivileged students has officially been signed between the Ministry of Education and Unified National Networks (UNN) on 9 March 2022, granting a three-year period to the Consortium of UNN together with telecommunication companies namely Datastream Digital Sdn Bhd (DST), Imagine Sdn Bhd and Progresif Sdn Bhd. The initiative, which portrays His Majesty's care and attentiveness towards our nation's growth and education development, is instrumental to support home-based teaching and learning so that it can be implemented effectively.

With this collaboration, it is also hoped that the affiliated companies will be able to provide integrated services and at the same time support the Wawasan Brunei 2035 to drive towards an educated, highly skilled and successful population.

### Laptops, Internet Data Crucial Facilitator to Online Learning

Technology now is an important aspect to facilitate online learning for teachers and students. The laptops and internet data provision has made the access to information easier, bringing new and dynamic options to teachers and students. To ensure educational continuity, teachers now can use the provided technology to address their instructional needs and accommodate their online teaching.

Cikgu Noor Nela binti Haji Awang of Pusat Tingkatan Enam Meragang lauded the Ministry's initiative as the purpose of the provision of laptops and internet data initiative is also aligned with what has been envisioned towards teachers, that is to familiarise them with the use of technology and digital devices, and integrate them with traditional instructor-led classroom activities, which is also known as blended learning.



A teacher receiving the laptop and internet data from the principal at Pusat Tingkatan Enam Meragang



A teacher using the laptop and internet data provided for online teaching and learning activities

"In ensuring the success of online and blended learning, the foundation of having the basic infrastructures such as the laptops and internet data needs to be strengthened first. Access to such digital devices will make this goal within reach," she added.

According to Cikgu Ahmad Waridi bin Haji Ahmad, Headmaster of Sekolah Rendah Selapon in Temburong, the provision of such digital devices can assist educators in performing their main role - teaching.

"Alhamdulillah, I am pleased that such provision can help students in need to be able to access virtual learning. Moreover, they will not feel left behind, neither in learning nor in terms of having advanced IT tools," Cikgu Ahmad Waridi said.

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*A mother, Dayang Hajah Siti Rasidah binti Abu Bakar, expressed her highest appreciation and gratitude towards His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan's Government and non-government stakeholders involved for the provision of laptops and internet data. She said, "I will make sure my child will utilise them effectively as well as take good care of them in accordance with the guidelines provided by their teachers."*

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## Easing Re-transitioning to Online Study

Apart from most of the Pra and primary schools in the nation still undergoing online learning since August 2021 up to present, for the other schooling age, online teaching and learning activities had resumed on 7 March 2022 as it had been a challenge for all students to attend classes physically due to the pandemic. This is also to ensure everyone's safety and for teachers to be able to give their complete focus on their students. Moreover, the availability of laptops and internet data supply could not have come at a better time. It has eased the re-transition to online study and overcoming teachers' and students' technological barriers such as poor internet and obsolete hardware.

Cikgu Ahmad Waridi also added, "The supplied IT devices are valuable to us because of their advanced features and up-to-date specifications. They are useful for multi-tasking; whether for online classes or reviewing students' work."

Meanwhile, Cikgu Asmah Ahmad from Sekolah Menengah Pengiran Anak Puteri Hajah Rashidah Sa'adatul Bolkiah was pleased with the applications and softwares installed in the laptop. She said, "The softwares installed in such laptops are very useful for the subjects I teach this year, particularly ICT and Business, Art and Technology (BAT). The free internet data is also beneficial for me, especially for communications applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams I have been using for teaching and learning activities."

Students today may rely on the internet to do their research and gain more knowledge. Slow and weak connectivity can interrupt their learning which may cause them to fall behind in their studies. Student Nurul Aqilah Al Syakirah binti Haji Awang Jefri AlSalas of Sekolah Menengah Pengiran Anak Puteri Hajah Rashidah Sa'adatul Bolkiah said, "With the provision of laptops and internet data, more students who have difficulties in joining online classes will now be able to keep up with online education."

"I, as one of those students, am now able to do my research, classwork and attend online classes accordingly. In places where internet connections are weak, I would still be able to use the internet data that is provided."

For Awang Md Danial Muzaffar bin Khairol Kamshar, a sixth form student from Maktab Duli Pengiran Muda Al-Muhtadee Billah, the provision of laptops and internet data initiative is helpful and convenient for his home-based learning. He said, "The initiative helps us to be a better-connected society and will improve interaction between students and teachers."

"The initiative also benefits us, students, as they can be used for online exams and we also do not have to worry about running out of internet data and slow connection. Online classes will be conducted at ease more effectively." Awang Md Danial Muzaffar added.

Also sharing her thoughts was a mother, Dayang Hajah Siti Rasidah binti Abu Bakar, saying "I believe students' learning performance can easily improve via the use of laptops rather than with mobile phones, which have limited functions."

"I, representing all parents, would also like to take this opportunity to express my highest appreciation and gratitude towards His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan's Government and non-government stakeholders involved for the provision of laptops and internet data. I will make sure my child will utilise them effectively as well as take good care of them in accordance with the guidelines provided by their teachers. I also hope such assistance will become a motivation for our children to achieve success," Dayang Hajah Siti Rasidah added.

In addition to this collaboration, other initiatives to support the Ministry of Education Digital Transformation Plan include Development of Digital Literacy Standard, Online Resources and Digital Citizenship Framework, ongoing Professional Development for Teachers related to online teaching and learning and many more. The Ministry of Education and its public and private stakeholders are continuously making every effort to ensure the continuity of education in sustaining the nation's development.



A parent receiving the laptop and internet data for her child's online learning