

DE WARE TIJD – January 30, 2008

NATIONAL ICT INSTITUTE A MUST

By Martin Redjodikromo

PARAMARIBO – The ICT sector is eagerly looking forward to the National ICT Institute announced by President Ronald Venetiaan. He did so at the beginning of the 24th annual meeting of the CANTO, the Caribbean Association of National Telecommunication Organizations, held in Hotel Torarica and organized by Telesur. Three companies in the ICT sector with whom *de Ware Tijd* spoke are excited that such an institute will be established. “Except that the sector will be further developed and people will get connected, I hope that the ICT Institute will also act as a regulator in the sector,” says Jimmy Algoe of computer hardware company PJ’s Computer Service. What bothers him is that some parties within the sector apply a hit-and-run approach and quit after some months when they succeed in selling equipment far below cost price to the consumer in the most unthinkable of ways.” “No after sales service for the consumer!”

For Marciano Stuger, sales & marketing manager of Four Points, the notion to set up the institute is the first step in the right direction. “Even though we are behind in ICT, it can still bring positive benefits.” He clarified that the modern world cannot flourish without ICT. “Look at all the sectors that are connected in one way or another and are managed by means of ICT programs.”

Computer & Office Supplies mainly takes offense at the way in which import duties must still be paid on computers and parts. “I can never compete with people who offer the same laptop at a lower price, while we paid the same price for it in America.”

The extra costs for ICT equipment are 5 percent import duties on the total value inclusive of transport costs. In addition, license and statistics duties of 2.5 percent are levied. As if this is not enough, a 10 percent value added tax is payable. “Imagine,” says Algoe, “if we remove those duties, how many people would be able to own a PC, have access to the Internet, would be connected to one another and obtain knowledge via ICT!” He knows that no duties are payable for this in Guyana.
