TOWARD AN E-ASEAN

The ASEAN leaders, at their summit meeting in Manila in November 1999, endorsed the e-ASEAN initiative.

The project was initiated by the ASEAN Economic Ministers in September 1999.

E-ASEAN aims to develop a broad-based and comprehensive action plan including physical, legal, logistical, social and economic infrastructure needed to promote an ASEAN e-space, as part of an ASEAN positioning and branding strategy. E-ASEAN would cover the economy, society and government.

A high-level e-ASEAN Task Force comprising government and private sector representatives has been working on concrete ways to realize the initiative.

The e-ASEAN Task Force has identified pilot projects for each of these sectors and is working on guidelines to clarify policy issues involved in the establishment of an electronic marketplace in ASEAN.

While focusing on encouraging and facilitating the growth of e-commerce, e-ASEAN would include prescriptive measures to narrow the digital divide within the region.

In an effort to localize Internet traffic within the region to encourage the growth of indigenous content and services, the Task Force is also working on establishing an ASEAN Information Infrastructure (AII) and has initiated consultative dialogues with the private sector to explore short- and long-term plans for the AII.

The Task Force has formulated plans to accelerate the development of e-commerce across the region and identified key factors, such as cyber laws, secure messaging infrastructure, payment gateways, and on-line services and products for regional development.