

Mahathir warns of media imbalance

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The development of modern communications technology may bring about an imbalance in the flow of news and information, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said today.

He expressed fears that such development, though it undoubtedly had its benefits, might enable the countries that controlled the technology to dominate those which did not.

"For us, this would really undermine our aspirations and dreams to strengthen our philosophy and our way of life," he said when opening the four-day symposium on *Towards a National Communications Policy*.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the most crucial implication would be a situation in which those in indirect control of information also had the power to use the communications technology for their own ends without considering the interests of others.

He also said the satellite, computer and electronic age was a challenge to Malaysians as "we are in the age of communications and information revolution."

It was, therefore, imperative for Malaysia to also take part in the race to control information in all areas.

"We must then accelerate development of the existing media, the facilities and training to operate a new communications and information system. We must work hard so we can afford to operate our own system without having to depend on developed nations as we are doing now," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was still far behind in the field although preliminary efforts had been made.

The Prime Minister, expressing the need to strengthen the national news agency, said it was vital Malaysia involved

itself in regional co-operation with other developing countries to upgrade efficiency and to protect regional identity and interests.

He said it was indeed unfair that the news agencies of developed countries were able to acquire profits from the distribution of news but countries like Malaysia could not get media clients from such countries.

"It is plain injustice that money is flowing from the poor to the rich," he said.

Concept

Earlier, Information Minister Datuk Seri Adib Adam said while the development of communications technology was indeed welcome, there was a need to be aware of its effects on society.

He said the use of satellite in the broadcast of news or entertainment films through television had enabled developed countries to dominate those less developed.

Datuk Seri Adib also said the Western concept of "the right to communicate" could not be accepted by Third World countries, particularly Malaysia, because the country was dealing with issues, problems and objectives different from those in the West.

The National Communications Policy should, therefore, reflect the national objectives in harmony with Malaysia's developmental needs.