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Anwar-Multimedia
ARCHAIC LAWS SHOULD BE REPEALED

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- Archaic laws should be repealed and new laws formed to garner intensive information technology application in the construction of the Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

Anwar, who was chairing the first panel discussion on "Critical Success Factors for the Multimedia Super Corridor", at the Multimedia Super Corridor Conference and Exposition (Multimedia Asia '96), agreed with panel members that laws had to be revised to suit the coming of the new age of multimedia.

The objective of Multimedia Asia '96, which was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today, is to get feedback and derive ideas from major multimedia players and experts for the establishment of the MSC.

The MSC is a 15km by 50km area encompassing the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC), the KL International Airport in Sepang (KLIA) and the new government administrative capital and IT City in Putrajaya.

"I think it makes sense to just introduce a new set of laws and repeal the old ones," Anwar said, adding that many parties also had the same proposal.

Anwar said that nevertheless, revamping old laws entirely would require reformation of specific guidelines and legal framework, which meant tonnes of legal procedures.

He said that to speed up the construction of the MSC, new guidelines and legal frameworks should be made.

By not involving the reformation of general laws, it would be easier for the public to deal with the changes, he added.

One of the panelists, Diana Dougan, senior advisor to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, United States, said cyberlaws governing the MSC should be simple and not overly restrictive and anticipatory.

She said it was not useful to anticipate the problems that the MSC would face and there was no single right answer to governing the MSC.

Dr Kenichi Ohmae, a renowned IT consultant from Ohmae and Associates, Japan, said things had to happen more naturally instead of being confined to restrictive laws that had not been revised for centuries.

Citing the example of Japan, Ohmae said that there were still laws that are too restrictive which had hindered an intensive multimedia application in that country.

For instance, he said, members of a board in a company had to be in the same room to vote. Thus, voting and board meeting teleconferencing could not be applied extensively for businesses like in the United States.

Another interesting example was the fact that contractual agreements in Japan had to be written in red ink--which does not transmit in fax machines, said Ohmae.

Citing the change in the education system as a critical factor for the MSC's success, Ohmae said the objective of the education system in the IT age should no longer be "to learn the answers but rather to learn how to learn".

"People need to ask questions, probe into the truth and figure out the approach to get into the best solution," he said.

In response, Anwar said that the society and parents should no longer

depend on the government to impose regulations on the use of multimedia to extract information from the cyberspace.

He said it had become the responsibility of parents and schools to instil good values in their young so that they could choose the right information.

Another critical factor highlighted by the panel was the need for a low flat rate charge, if not free, for telecommunication transmission in the MSC.

Bill Gates, founder and CEO of the Microsoft Corporation, who was to join the panel via teleconferencing, cancelled the plan at the last minute because of technical problems.

Anwar later spent more than one hour visiting the Multimedia Asia '96 exposition at the Putra World Trade Centre and tried out some of the products.

Among others, he communicated through video conferencing with Frank Johnson and Connie Corrigan at the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) offices in Mclean, Virginia, USA.

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