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Mahathir-Teleport

PM SEES MORE EQUITABLE WORLD WITH GLOBAL INFORMATION NETWORK

By: Tham Choy Lin

TOKYO, May 13 (Bernama) -- The sharing of information and knowledge through a global network will create a more equitable world and a higher quality of life for humankind, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said information technology, when shared more widely, can produce a high level of synergy between global communities to address national and international issues.

"This immense potential of a networked global society should be used in the creation of a one-world society which places a premium on the quality of life for all," said the Malaysian Prime Minister in his commemorative address at the 12th general assembly of the World Teleport Association (WTA) attended by 1,000 participants at the Tokyo International Exhibition Centre.

However, such sharing will only be possible if there were no artificial barriers erected either by governments or the private sector to obstruct the free flow of information or to link them with extraneous political and economic issues, he said.

He called on developing and less developed countries to be bold enough to participate in the formation of an information-rich society because the availability of information infrastructure was the only way to "leapfrog" the development process and to run after the rest.

"I strongly believe the developing and less developed nations must regard it as vital to join the global effort in the formation of the Information Society as it will open windows for quantum leaps in technology development," he said.

The paradigm shift for such countries, however, required a helping hand from rich nations in view of many constraints such as financial, trained manpower and access to advanced technologies.

On the other side of the story, Dr Mahathir said, information technology can accentuate social imbalances and poor countries may lose their chance of getting a piece of the action even in their own countries because huge telecommunication companies of the developed nations are already grabbing huge segments of the networks worldwide.

However, he was optimistic that if properly guided, information technology can bring closer the "haves and the have-nots".

For instance, information technology-based social services such as telemedicine, distance learning and the provision of services over the network can be used to bring the less privileged and more remote communities into the mainstream of social and economic development.

His residence in Jitra has been swarmed by his people although he has not been officially sworn in as senator.

It is clear that his appointment is lauded by Malaysian Thais and in appreciation of that, 65 Thais will be present at the Dewan Negara to witness the swearing-in ceremony tomorrow.

Charern, who is also Thai Community Association chairman, hopes to bring together the Thai community scattered in several northern states of Peninsular Malaysia under the association.

He said a census will be carried out to determine the actual number of Thais in Malaysia as there has been no comprehensive and accurate statistics on their population to facilitate future planning for the community.

On the Thai community in Malaysia, he said they are well-treated by the

state government and are given equal opportunities like other races.

"The local cultures does not differ much from that of ours. We are of the same stock," he said.

For the Thai community, Charern, who is also Kota Giam-Sungai Baru Umno branch chairman in the Kubang Pasu division, is their hope to chart the course for a better future for them in this country. -- BERNAMA

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