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Mahathir-MSK

DR MAHATHIR SAYS TECHNOLOGY MUST NOT DE-HUMANISE PEOPLE

By: Syed Jamil Jaafar

FUKUOKA, March 28 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will strive to ensure that in embracing new technology the country does not lose the human element, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He cautioned that people who were so much taken up by technology might forget that they were human beings and lose their sense of values.

"We hope it will not happen but in order to see that it will not happen, we have to think about how to deal with means of communication where we don't look at each other and yet know that there is a human being at the other end to whom you must not be rough or rude," he said.

"We have to avoid this and that's why Malaysia from early on emphasises on the human element," he said during a question and answer session with participants of the Fukuoka Dialogue, an international forum attended by Japanese and Malaysian corporate leaders, professionals and government officials.

"Technology must be applied for the good of humanity and not just for making money or for convenience," he said.

Dr Mahathir had earlier devoted a large part of his keynote speech to explain Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) which among other things envisages a paperless or electronic government.

He said Malaysia actually had no choice but to go for an electronic government as government's workload had increased tremendously.

For example, he said, the number of Malaysians travelling abroad had increased from about 15,000 a year at one time to about 16 million a year now out of a population of about 20 million.

If in the past 15,000 passports had to be issued, now 16 million had to be given out.

"Japan with a population of more than 100 million has only about 13 million people going overseas every year," he said to illustrate the need for government's workload to be lightened through the application of technology instead of employing more and more government clerks.

Dr Mahathir said that while initially some government employees might be apprehensive of a paperless government, it must be remembered that the world in fact had paperless governments before, that is before the advent of paper.

He said that an electronic government would shorten the time needed for dealings with the government and at the same time make the administration more transparent and thus help reduce corruption.

-- BERNAMA

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