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Mohamed-IT

INFO COUNCIL TO EXPOSE PEOPLE TO IT NEXT MONTH

KUALA LUMPUR, July 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will launch a national-level campaign next month to familiarise Malaysians with the Information Technology (IT).

The National Information Council has been assigned to generate the people's interest in IT by updating them with the latest development in that field, said Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat today.

The campaign, which carries the theme "IT our culture", would be a continuous one extended to district and village-levels, he said after chairing the council's annual meeting here.

The campaign's objectives are to:

- * remove the people's phobia and negative attitude towards IT;
- * explain the real opportunities for national political, economic and social development arising from IT; and
- * spell out the society's role in making the most out of IT.

As a start, Radio and Television Malaysia would introduce computer terms for the lay man to understand, he said.

Mohamed said the campaign would be carried out in cooperation with MIMOS (Malaysian Institute of Micro-electronic Systems) and the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC).

Mohamed also announced that RTM has taken steps to convert its analogue transmission system to digital one hopefully during the Eighth Malaysia Plan period.

The digital system now in use in the country by Astro (All Asia Satellite Television and Radio Company) is among the world's best.

"Even developed countries are converting to the new system," he said.

The digital system saved costs because transmitters only need changing after 10 to 15 years, he said.

"Changing a transmitter alone costs about RM500 million," he said.

The digital system could also overcome the frustration of people in the interior and mountainous regions over poor quality radio and television reception.

The problem now was how to make digital transmission affordable by all, he said.

"Notwithstanding the high costs of converting to digital, RTM would have to do it for the sake of providing the people with quality transmission," he said.

Mohamed also said the government expected a reduction in monthly subscription for Astro satellite television viewers by the end of the year or early next year.

The ministry was now finalising discussions with Measat Broadcast Network System Sdn Bhd, the operator of Astro, on the new subscription fee.

The government was aware of the need for a reduced Astro subscription fee as presently only a tiny segment of the community could afford the satellite television service.

Astro presently charged RM1,680 for receiver and decoder installation besides a RM80-monthly subscription.

Mohamed said while recognising the people's right to enjoy television programmes, Astro's investment and returns should also be taken into account.

Even at the present subscription rates and related costs, Astro had to subsidise the service to the tune of RM 200 million a year, Mohamed added.

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