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Mahathir-Electronics

M'SIA NEEDS TO USE ELECTRONIC METHODS IN ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS, SAYS20PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 31 (Bernama) -- There is a need for Malaysia to switch to the use of electronic equipment to facilitate government and public interaction even before the electronic government is introduced into the new administrative capital in Putrajaya, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister said the switch was needed so that the public need not queue up to do business with the government.

"They will need only to go through machines which look like the ATM and transact with the government through them thus hastening the process of doing business with the government," he said during a teleconference with Japanese information technology (IT) experts here tonight.

Dr Mahathir said that was just the first stage which would later be followed by ministries and government departments communicating with each other via the multimedia such as computers and the Internet.

"We will try as much as possible not to use paper or hard copies," he said during the three-corner teleconferencing with the experts who were in Tokyo and Monterey in the United States.

Later, when interviewed by the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia felt that it was important to establish information technology (IT) related industries as embodied by the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project now to prepare itself for the changes in the next century.

"We think that we might as well start now because next century will bring a lot of changes and you must prepare yourself early," said the Prime Minister.

The MSC, designed specifically to attract leading developers of multimedia technologies, will be equipped with the most advanced computer and telecommunications network and a new international airport. Covering an area of 15 km by 50 km, the MSC runs from the world's tallest building in the Kuala Lumpur City Centre down to the airport.

He said Malaysia was taking a step that it thought was only logical in line with its aspirations to achieve the target of becoming a fully industrialised nation by the year 2020.

When asked which country would gain the supremacy in IT and emerge as the hub state of information in the 21st century, he said that every country would soon catch up with each other.

He said: "There is really not much nationalism involved in the information age because things cross borders very easily.

"... But we have no doubt that they (IT investors) can't operate only out of Malaysia as they will have to communicate with other countries and other countries will have to develop similar facilities."

Asked whether Malaysia would overpass Japan and the US with regards to IT, he said Malaysia would need Japan to make the MSC project a success and expressed the hope that Japan would need Malaysia too.

"We will have the facilities and we hope that Japan will come here to experiment, to find out what is good for Japan at the MSC," he said. --

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