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Mahathir-IT

MASTER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR OUR FUTURE, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight called on all Malaysians, young and old, rural and urban, alike to answer the "call of arms" to support the government's initiative to harness the power of information technology (IT).

"Let us resolve to face the globalised world together. Let us strive to realise all that we wish for and not wait for it to happen," he said in his televised address to the nation when launching the national IT awareness campaign at Angkasapuri.

The launching ceremony was carried "live" by RTM, TV3 and radio.

In rallying the support of the opposition as well, the Prime Minister said Malaysia was now in a good position to take advantage of IT.

Apart from having 25 years of experience in developing a formidable electrical and electronics industry, Malaysia has a well-educated, trainable workforce and a relatively well-developed IT infrastructure.

"A nation must always think about tomorrow. It is in thinking about tomorrow that we have decided to harness the power of IT," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government would not only provide the necessary top-down leadership to promote IT development but also orchestrate a societal push for it.

Through this dual-approach, the government would serve as the enabler of IT development.

"It is for this reason that we adopted the National IT Agenda (NITA) as a national development strategy," he said.

NITA, which provides the framework for a national response to IT and to the information revolution, calls upon all Malaysians to do their part to ensure that Malaysia is ready to enter the Information Age.

"We can do this by understanding IT, harnessing it, realising its potential, and applying it in the most productive way to benefit our people and our country," he said.

The ultimate goal of NITA is to evolve a civil society in the Malaysian mould, a society that is empowered by knowledge and infused with our own distinctive value system.

"With our future at stake, we cannot afford to be a mere spectator of the information revolution," said the Prime Minister who likened it as the third of its kind in human history after the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

The information revolution is accelerating the process of globalisation, reshaping economies and influencing work and life of the people at a speed never seen before.

"We need to be a part of it; we need to lead it even. This is why we are spending so much time and effort to grow a local IT industry that is world class," he added.

This is why projects for the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) will proceed as planned despite the recent currency crisis, said Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Minister said the current global trend required the nation to switch from its economic base again, from one reliant on cheap labour to one that is driven by knowledge workers.

"Anyone can be a knowledge worker. We do not need to be a computer scientist to become one," he said.

A taxi driver can become a knowledge worker if he can use information and technology to do his job better.

"A seller of kuih who adds cholesterol-free ingredients that have more nutrition to traditional recipes becomes a knowledge worker because he uses knowledge," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir said only when both manufacturing and service sectors are manned by knowledge workers and powered by IT can the country sustain the required per capita GDP growth rates to attain Vision 2020.

"Current projection indicate that, through through an information and knowledge-based economy, we can increase our GDP levels by fourfold within 20 to 25 years," he said.

This will mean that, on average, Malaysians can expect to earn four times their current incomes in the future and enjoy a quality of life comparable to that of developed countries.

"Our strength in tackling future challenges lies not only in our experience in initiating and managing change in the past, but also in our willingness to do even more in the future," added the Prime Minister. --

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