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Mahathir-Multimedia

MSC AN ATTEMPT TO DISCERN INFORMATION INFLOW, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project is a plan to tackle anticipated problems arising from the shift to the information technology era from the industrial age, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The prime minister said information technology (IT) age brought with it both good and bad information and admittedly it could not be kept away from the people.

As such, the MSC, he said, was an attempt to explore means on how undesirable external information could be intercepted and at the same time to allow the inflow of acceptable information.

Dr Mahathir acknowledged that the MSC was a new undertaking and not many people understood or knew where it was heading.

"Hence, we should embark on a nationwide experiment. If it is detrimental, then it will be quite difficult for us to control it.

"On the other hand, if we set aside a zone where we can have a controlled experiment, then we can minimise the dangers it can to the nation," he said over RTM's television interview programme, "Bersama Perdana Menteri", which specially focussed on the MSC.

He said the designated zone encompassed an area 15km by 50km stretching from Kuala Lumpur to the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang.

"Our undertaking will cover all aspects of community activities which involve IT to enable us to discern the pros and cons and choose ways to avoid the undesirable and accept what is good," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked whether the infancy stage of the MSC itself would compound the nation's existing social problems, the prime minister said: "The fact is we can't repel the external onslaught. So, whether we like it or not the IT age will flood us with all sorts of information."

While lamenting that information inflow could not be blocked by whatever means, Dr Mahathir said: "Actually we don't have a choice. Whether we like it or not, the information inflow will still take place."

"Thus, we have to seek ways so that we can handle such deluge of information so as not to further add to our detriment," said the prime minister.

He said the MSC would serve as a guide in determining which information was acceptable and also how it could be disseminated to benefit the people.

In the programme, Dr Mahathir was interviewed by Utusan Melayu group editor-in-chief Johan Jaaffar and New Straits Times assistant group editor Ahmad A.Talib.

Asked whether Malaysia could do without the MSC, Dr Mahathir said the people must understand and master changes so that "our independence and freedom can be preserved since we are aware of what is attacking us."

Dr Mahathir said the government was gradually preparing the people not only physically and with the infrastructure to deal with the multimedia but also mentally.

On the advantages of the MSC to the people and how it could improve their lives, he said information is vital for mankind and the more information they had the more they could take on the challenges with confidence and success.

There were various other applications for the multimedia, he said, and the people would need information before making decisions and they could

obtain this through the MSC.

"For example, we may not know where danger lurks...but if we have information that such a place poses hazards to us, then we can chart our course to avoid the danger," he said.

The prime minister said the government too needed the multimedia technology to downsize its increasing manpower needs and facilitate government-to-people communication.

Citing the Immigration Department as an example, he said the government had to think of a way of overcoming the problems that the department faced in serving 16 million Malaysians who travelled abroad.

On whether countries should possess the multimedia technology to maintain competitive edge in facing future challenges, Dr Mahathir said:"If we don't seize this opportunity, we are allowing them to be far ahead of us, and then catching up with them will be a daunting task."

The prime minister said Malaysia was in fact much more advanced than other developing countries although it was still behind the industrialised nations in the computer field.

Expressing dissatisfaction with computer usage in the country, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia should try and not belittle its own ability "because we don't know unless we try." -- BERNAMA

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