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MSC flagship applications: PM advises States to wait

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today State Governments should wait for certain flagship applications of the Multimedia Super Corridor to achieve considerable success, before implementing them.

This, he said, would prevent the States from adopting flagship applications which might not be beneficial or full of defects.

Dr Mahathir said the MSC would house research and development activities to improve the flagship applications, which include the digital Government, smartcard, electronic kiosks and telemedicine.

"Teething problems and mistakes at the early stages are inevitable because we are venturing into a very new area which is not totally free from defects.

"But as time goes by, the defects will be corrected," he said.

He was speaking at the Prime Minister's Department during a two-hour video-conferencing with 28 locations nationwide to promote the MSC.

The Prime Minister was replying to questions posed by students, businessmen, civil servants, teachers, parents and politicians at the various stations nationwide on how the MSC would benefit Malaysia.

With an audience of 13,000, it was the biggest teleconferencing link-up held so far in Malaysia.

Of the 28 locations, 14 were interactive, allowing the participants to pose questions to the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said other flagship applications like the smartcard which would contain all information about the holder and serve, among others, as a credit card, identity card, bank accounts and pre-paid card for travelling, would have to be made uniform.

"Otherwise, the card can be used in certain areas and not in others.

"People living in other areas will have to use a different card," he said, adding that this would defeat the purpose of having a single card for all purposes.

Dr Mahathir said, however, electronic kiosks where government transactions could be carried out would be implemented earlier.

"We cannot wait to perfect this particular system because the number of government transactions with the people are far too pressing and too many.

"So we need to implement this early," he said, citing the issuance of passports, as an example.

Dr Mahathir said such kiosks could be used to issue passports because the number of passport applicants was constantly rising.

"Last year alone, there were 16 million departures by Malaysians going abroad."

Dr Mahathir said it was necessary to initially limit IT and multimedia applications only to the MSC to contain undesirable effects in that area.

"We don't want the multi-media (technology) to be applied nationwide lest there are adverse effects.

"If there is something adverse we can control it since we are limiting it to the MSC."

Dr Mahathir said the MSC could be expanded nationwide upon acquiring the know-how to check negative impacts.

"Through the MSC, the Government will seek to overcome such impacts including finding ways to filter out pornography sent via the Internet.

"Although such a system is currently available, it has flaws that need

to be fine-tuned."

Dr Mahathir said there should be an international convention to control information sent out through the Internet.

Nonetheless, the public should accept the fact that it is difficult to control information sent through the Internet.

"The public should exercise wisdom in putting the technology to good use by reinforcing self-control."

The MSC, a 750sq km zone devoted to the development of IT and multimedia products and services, covers the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang and the new administrative capital in Putrajaya.

A guarantee of no censorship over information obtained through the Internet within the MSC is among the 10 guarantees the Government commits to companies operating there.

Also present at the video-conferencing was Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie.

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