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Millennium-Bug

RM8 BILLION ESTIMATED TO OVERCOME MILLENNIUM BUG

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- A staggering RM8 billion is the price estimated to tackle the issue of the Millennium Bug (MB), a problem caused by the inability of computer software to recognise the year 2000 in its date-keeping functions, locally.

The billion-ringgit estimate, derived from the annual expenditure on information technology, would cover everything including buying new hardware and equipment in order to replace existing ones, said Task Force 2000 Transportation and Communication Industries chairman Datuk Alex Lee today.

Task Force 2000 was set up by the National Information Technology Council (NITC) at the directive of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to deal with the problem.

The estimated budget to be borne by all sectors, both public and private, would be for a two-and-a-half year transition period from middle of last year, he told reporters after a media briefing on the MB by the assistant director of the Task Force 2000 United Kingdom, Dr Margaret Joachim.

Lee said while the private sector was slower in taking steps, several government organisations had already begun work to resolve the problem since middle of this year.

The Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and Social Security Organisation (Socso) were among those which have embarked on the exercise, he said.

He advised all sectors involved to start their preparations for the change.

Lee said most private companies with less than 40 staff seemed to be neglecting the threat.

Dr Joachim arrived here two days ago at the invitation of the national Task Force 2000 for a week-long visit to speak to various industry and government groups about the MB.

She said MB could affect at least 80 per cent of computer systems and millions of embedded chips in videos, process controllers, sensors and various other equipment.

It would also cause malfunctions in electricity supply, telecommunications, cash transfers failure, manufacturing plants shutdowns, credit cards not to work and emergency services paralysed, among others.

Unless systems are revamped, the year 2000 will be signified as "00" in computer records that would cause software to recognise it as the year 1900. -- BERNAMA

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