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Mahathir-Computer

ACT NOW BEFORE "MILLENNIUM BUG" STRIKES, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed concern over the lack of serious action by small-and-medium scale companies in tackling the "Millennium Bug".

He said the companies were not focusing on the problem and as such would have to immediately sort out the "Millennium Bug" or "Y2K" which is a year 2000 software problem that refers to the inability of many computer systems to read the data correctly in the new millennium.

"We have another two more years to go...and if they don't (take the necessary steps), then of course they are going to get into very serious trouble," he told a news conference after chairing the sixth National Information Technology Council meeting at the Prime Minister's Department here.

Dr Mahathir said the government on its part had already engaged major computer companies to tackle the computer records in all its departments.

"But we fear that the small companies, the small-and-medium companies, are not doing anything," he said.

The problem occurs because the programmes and electronic devices, for example, use "00" to present the year 2000, the same number that represents the year 1900 in the two digit systems.

The Prime Minister said many people have misconceptions about the Y2K problem by assuming that it was just a computer problem.

"All computers in the world will face problem simply because the 00 digits (in the year 2000) is less than 99 (1999). Actually, 00 represents 2000 while 99 represents 1999," he said.

Dr Mahathir said many people tend to write just the last two digits of a year like 98 or 99 instead of 1998 or 1999 when storing records in their computers.

"So if you refer to the records that are kept in the computer before 1999 in the new millennium, you are going to get things wrong. All calculations will go wrong.

"The computer, being 'intelligent', probably won't recognise or cannot make it out (to get the information required) and may go backwards instead of forward," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said only people with good computer software knowledge would be able to tackle the computer problem.

In view of the seriousness of the problem posed by the Y2K, the NITC today considered the Y2K Task Force's recommendation to establish a Y2K bureau and disband the task force.

The NITC secretariat in a statement after the meeting said the bureau would work with regulatory authorities to ensure that organisations under their charge were dealing appropriately with the Y2K problem.

Companies could no longer remain silent about Y2K and the statutory declaration in their audited accounts must either say that their company has not begun to deal with the problem but would do so in the next accounting year.

The statement said the bureau would also work with Malaysian organisations by providing resources and monitoring their progress.

It has arranged for the organisations to get free use of IBM's Assessment 2000 tool on the Internet to enable them to assess Y2K's impact on them.

"The issue of Millennium Bug is not just a computer problem but the

survival of the organisation well into the next millennium. The nation should realise how serious this is," the statement added. -- BERNAMA
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