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Mahathir-donation

CABINET TO DISCUSS SPECIAL BODY FOR APPROVAL

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 10 (Bernama) -- The setting-up of a special body to collect public donations aimed at boosting the country's reserves would be discussed by the Cabinet tomorrow for approval.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who disclosed this today, said he was very gratified that there were so many people wanting to donate since his announcement two days ago on the government's plan to form the body.

"I will have to seek the Cabinet's approval as to the body which will be competent to accept the donation," he told reporters after witnessing the signing of an agreement for the planning and construction of Telekom Malaysia's Multimedia University at Carcosa Seri Negara here.

He said the collection has to be done by a proper body as it involved valuable things that might be "in the form of money, jewellery and hopefully property."

Asked about the launching of the "Tabung Setia Negara" (national loyalty fund) by the Information Ministry for the purpose, Dr Mahathir said he welcomed the move but all such efforts would have to be consolidated.

"We can't have too many bodies collecting because this is dangerous," he said.

"If it falls into the hands of irresponsible people, things might disappear and the donors will be very dissappointed, very angry...we cannot allow that to happen," he said.

Asked about the claim by some people that donations were sought because the country's reserve was dwindling, the prime minister said the question did not arise.

"It's not a question of dwindling...the bigger our reserve is, the better," he said.

He said every country needed to build up its reserves in order to protect itself.

"The stronger we are, the less prone we are to being attacked by others.

"Don't jump to the conclusion that this is because we are 'papa kedana' (down and out)," he said.

On the Multimedia University, he said it would concentrate on the new subject of multi-media which had evolved because of the development in technologies and the convergence of the different technologies.

This required special knowledge, training and qualification, he said.

While the university would try to get as many locals as possible for its teaching staff, it would still need to have foreign lecturers.

Dr Mahathir said with the many universities coming up in Malaysia, the demand for locals would be very great and thus foreign lecturers would be required.

He also said the country would have to produce knowledge workers quickly as the demand would increase.

He said the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) alone would need 7,000 knowledge workers a year to cater for its need of about 25,000 knowledge workers.

Under the agreement signed today, a consortium of four companies would design and build the Multimedia University situated in Cyberjaya. The project is expected to cost RM350 million while Telekom Malaysia would fork out another RM250 million to equip the university.

The first phase of the project is expected to be completed by August this year with 2,000 students moving in by October. -- BERNAMA  
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