

02/10/1998

Emphasis on social development, quality of life

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Malaysians' social development and quality of life are very much on the Government's mind in its efforts to realise the National Information Technology Agenda, a National IT Council official said.

NITC permanent secretary Tengku Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen said the National IT Agenda, or Nita, was not just an agenda about technology but was concerned with the country's overall development in the Information Age.

"This is reflected in the five thrust areas identified by the NITC as needing special focus - E-Community, E-Public Services, E-Learning, E-Economy and E-Sovereignty.

"Some of them do not fall within the traditional boundaries of IT but are part of Nita and the country's development," he told the New Straits Times during the Multimedia Asia '98 conference and exhibition at the Mines Exhibition Centre yesterday.

The NITC has set up working groups to formulate programmes addressing these five thrust areas.

Tengku Azzman said E-Sovereignty was one example where IT and the so-called "borderless world" could challenge a nation's traditional boundaries and affect the people's culture and identity.

"As a country dependent on traditional borders, your homogeneity becomes threatened by the fact that information is coming in and going out at will.

"The effect on business, as some people find economic value outside the country while others find it inside, can extend to political issues," he said.

He said it was important for Malaysia to find new ways to emphasise its sovereignty and reinforce the national and cultural identity of its people.

In E-Public Services, he said, the Government wanted to make sure that the benefits of IT were translated into better quality of service to the people.

"That makes E-Public Services different from E-Government, which is more concerned about the internal processes of the Government itself.

"People think of the Multimedia Super Corridor as a Federal Government effort, but we want to bring it to the local level."

Tengku Azzman said the Government's "social agenda" aspect was also clear in the lineup of the NITC's new panel for the 1999 to 2001 term, announced by its chairman, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, on Sept 24.

"The new lineup includes many representatives from a cross-section of society, especially from the community interest sector like women's, consumers and environmental groups."

He said the lineup was aimed at allowing the three constituencies emphasised in Nita - the Government or public sector, the private sector and community interests - to interact for balanced discussion and formulation of programmes.

(END)