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Mahathir-ECommerce

FRAMEWORK ON E-COMMERCE NEEDED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has proposed the setting up of an Asean Framework on Electronic Commerce (E-Commerce) to provide the platform for a collective vision of the emerging digital market place and outline the key issues as the world enters the new electronic age of commerce.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today such a regional initiative may be necessary to address the prevalent issues brought about by the rapidly advancing "digital economy" and E-Commerce.

While reiterating the government's commitment to support the growth of E-Commerce, Dr Mahathir said the framework would also provide the basis for discussions to facilitate the development of an Asean position to catalyse the growth of E-Commerce.

Speaking at the opening of a Roundtable on Electronic Communities in Asia here, he said although the growth of E-Commerce was essentially private-sector driven, there was a need to monitor and regulate its development to create the right environment for E-Commerce to flourish.

"Many issues need to be examined and traditional barriers have to be overcome," he told the audience attending the gathering organised by the London-based Economist Group, an information provider for companies establishing and managing operations internationally.

Several members of the International Advisory Panel (IAP) for Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) who are attending the second IAP meeting in Cyberjaya near here also took time off to attend the conference.

The Prime Minister said through the MSC, Malaysia was dedicated to the development of multimedia technologies that would remove the barriers for doing business and promote borderless marketing.

"We'd like to invite our Asean neighbours as well as everyone interested in ironing out possible wrinkles in the progress towards the electronic world to join us in this endeavour," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said countries with established infrastructure to support E-Commerce in terms of human resource and quantity of service suppliers, as well as a bigger market share and better access to the market, would, no doubt, have an edge over the others.

"However, the opportunity to develop E-Commerce also presents itself to other countries in the Asean region which are in a good position to leapfrog into the Information Age.

Dr Mahathir said developments in E-Commerce spawned many related issues which challenged common and established practices, laws and systems.

He said with this new digital economy, business activities would be possible with minimal physical movement of people, money and in many cases, products.

Contracts and the transfer of value and accumulation of assets would be conducted by electronic means and information technology would continue to develop at a rapid pace and influence the volume and the direction of economic activities.

As such, the Prime Minister said many of the existing rules in today's economy could no longer be applied in the digital economy.

"Whether we like it or not, statistics show that E-Commerce will become part of our lives -- very soon in the future.

"We should all prepare ourselves to embrace it, or we will be left behind and lose out as increasing portions of the economy and the world

business will be electronically-transacted," said Dr Mahathir.

Sharing Malaysia's experience, he said the government had taken a pragmatic approach by experimenting and trying out in near real life situations "rather than be swept along by transient technologies and fads."

He said Malaysia has developed an Information Technology Agenda to support the country's vision to become a fully-developed nation by the year 2020.

To start building a knowledge society through the agenda, the MSC was created. The high-tech multimedia hub covers a zone of 750 sq km south of the Malaysian capital.

Dr Mahathir said to spearhead the development of the MSC, seven flagship applications have been identified, one of which was to create the framework and infrastructure to support E-Commerce initiatives for borderless marketing application.

Dr Mahathir said the fundamental requirement for the successful take-off of E-Commerce was trust and the guarantee that transactions can take place safely and securely.

"It is therefore imperative to develop a proper system of governance to manage this movement of information - and knowledge-based resources with the growth of electronic commerce globally," Dr Mahathir added. -- BERNAMA

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