

20 MARCH 1998

Mahathir-Internet

M'SIA TO COUNTER INACCURATE INTERNET INFO THROUGH RIGHT INFO

By: Yong Soo Heong

HANNOVER, March 20 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will counter the dissemination of inaccurate information on the Internet by distributing its own accurate information on the Web, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

Speaking at a question and answer session after delivering a paper at the Multimedia Super Corridor Investors Conference here, he said that the government was aware of inaccurate data being disseminated on the Internet.

This was especially so in terms of the country's economic performance and other economic data, he said, adding that the government hoped to put things right but sending out accurate information.

When asked to explain what he had meant in his address earlier when he said those who distributed illegal material in Malaysia would be subjected to the laws of the country, Dr Mahathir said the government, in the first place, would not censor information on the Internet.

One could look at the information on the Internet but if he were to download and distribute certain information which was subversive in nature, then it would be considered an offence in Malaysia, he said.

For instance, there could be information that could cause political upheaval in the country, he said.

"Of course that would be very difficult to define because to some people, they think it is just information, but if you stir up people to fight each other...then we would consider it as wrong."

He said Malaysia, being a multiracial country, has to be on guard against information that stirred up racial hatred among its population.

Referring to the enactment of cyberlaws in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said they were drawn up to address new kinds of criminal activity that could be perpetrated on the Internet.

When asked how Malaysia would attract knowledge workers needed by the MSC project, he said local institutions of higher learning were expected to produce 7,000 knowledge workers annually.

He also said working conditions would be made conducive to attract such skilled workers to work in Malaysia.

When one participant asked whether the MSC was "American-driven" as reflected by the high number of US firms in the project, Dr Mahathir, while admitting that there was low participation from European firms, said probably it was due to the fact that American and Japanese firms heard about the MSC first.

"But now we are making up for it (the lack of European participation). That is why I am here. Looking at CebBit 98, I think there is great scope for more European firms to be in the MSC. I think they (Europeans) will be coming." -- BERNAMA

SHY AAM