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Mahathir-Conference

MALAYSIA TO HOST GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE CONFERENCE NEXT YEAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will host the second World Bank Conference on Global Knowledge next year, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Speaking at a news conference after chairing the sixth meeting of the National Information Technology Council (NITC) at the Prime Minister's Department here, Dr Mahathir said the government had agreed to host the biennial conference which was initiated by the World Bank in Toronto last year.

When asked to elaborate on the conference, Mimos Bhd president and chief executive officer Datuk Tengku Dr Mohamed Azzman Shariffadeen said it was a new conference series initiated by the World Bank because of the changing economic, social and political structure of the world driven by the knowledge paradigm.

"They wanted a developing country to host the next event and that's why Malaysia was considered and because of our prominence in the MSC (Multimedia Super Corridor) initiative, Malaysia is seen to be an appropriate country. So we have taken up that challenge," said Tengku Dr Mohamed Azzman, who is also the permanent secretary of the 21-member NITC.

He said the key issue at the first conference in Toronto last June was that proper access and equity were vital in order to have a stable world.

On the progress of the MSC, Dr Mahathir, who is also the NITC chairman, said the 15x50 km cyber zone located south of Kuala Lumpur would not be affected by the current austerity measures taken by the government.

"What we are putting in is merely the infrastructure and basic facilities while the rest will be the investment on the part of those people who will take up a stake in the MSC," he said.

The Prime Minister said 17 of the 41 MSC's International Advisory Panel (IAP) had so far confirmed their participation in the panel's next meeting here next month.

He said the small attendance at the panel's meeting since its formation last year did not mean that they have lost interest or not functioning as advisers.

"We don't expect everybody to attend. You must remember that the IAP is a very big panel. At any one time we cannot have the whole lot of them to attend and that is quite normal.

"But they do come to see me. Even those who did not attend the last IAP meeting in California...subsequently they came to see me and we have a long session to hear their views on the MSC," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Microsoft chairman and chief executive officer Bill Gates will not attend the IAP meeting next month but will meet him in March. -- BERNAMA

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