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Dr M: I concur with most of Toffler's views

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said he concurs with Alvin Toffler, who said that there is a need for a change in the political philosophy of the present administration to cope with the present information technology age.

Dr Mahathir met Toffler, a member of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) international advisory panel, at the Prime Minister's Department yesterday.

"He (Toffler) said the existing philosophy is outdated. It is no longer suitable now, especially to cope with the rapid development in the information age whereby we are getting too much information.

"I agree with most of his (Toffler) views," Dr Mahathir told reporters after launching the "Made-In Malaysia Products" exposition in Subang Jaya yesterday.

According to Dr Mahathir, Toffler said the present information age demands speediness such as in making decisions.

"This is because the Government still thinks that it is in the industrial age, whereby it will have ample time to make a decision," he added.

In contrast, Dr Mahathir said the administration will not have ample time to decide because the volume of information being disseminated is either not certain or fixed at any one time.

"Thus, if we want to plan a policy, it will be much more difficult for us because the present administration or the time taken for the Government to make a decision will tend to be slower," he added.

Apart from this, Dr Mahathir said he also discussed with Toffler on the present economic problems and the MSC.

Bernama reports: Alvin Toffler says it is wise on the part of Malaysia to continue with the MSC project despite the current economic turmoil.

Toffler also believes that other large scale projects should be delayed but the MSC project should be accorded top priority.

"The issue is not just to build an information technology corridor but to prepare the whole country for a new kind of economy which is knowledge and information-based," he told reporters after meeting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

Toffler was in Kuala Lumpur to have a closer look on the latest developments in the project before flying to Kuching for a conference.

He said countries which do not participate in this global development would find themselves totally blocked out from the world economy.

Toffler commended the MSC for having a broad development framework, which included not only technology but also legal, education and cultural components.

He admitted that it was obvious that companies would think twice now to participate in the MSC because of the current Asian financial turmoil.

"But the decline in currencies makes it less expensive for the participation of foreign companies in the project and there may be ways to take advantage of that fact," he added.

He said the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has provided billions of dollars in assistance to countries like Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea, has much to answer for the political and social strife in the region arising from its economic difficulties.

"The IMF tends to have the same set of medicine for every disease so you

can predict in advance what they are going to recommend," he said.

Describing the IMF as a "not well-loved institution", he said criticisms against the IMF are also very strong in the US as it is viewed as a tool of American policy.

However, Toffler was confident that Asia will bounce back from its difficulties but admitted that he did not know when this will happen.

"There are certain issues that are very important right now which Malaysia or Washington or anybody else have no control of, like whether the Chinese will devalue the yuan, will Japan pull out of its recession, or will the New York Stock Exchange crash.

"Any of those could have an enormous consequence for Malaysia and Asia in general," he added.

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