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NITC-TERM REPORT

NITC PRESENTS ITS FIRST TERM REPORT

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 24 (Bernama) -- The National Information Technology Council (NITC) today presented its 1st Term Report at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In the report, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians will have to adjust and take advantage of the phenomenal development in information technology as the country's industrialisation strategy alone is not going to help it achieve a fully-developed nation status by 2020.

"The sudden upsurge of information and communication technologies is changing the way in which business is done and industry behaves. We have to adjust and take advantage of this phenomenal development," he added.

The Information Superhighway, he said, is traversing the globe, enabling all kinds of transactions and relationships to take place that were not possible before.

For instance, huge flows of funds can take place in seconds, crossing borders and ignoring exchange rates and other regulatory barriers.

This, as was seen in Asia, can have massive repercussions on national and regional economies.

International competitiveness can also be significantly enhanced as companies and entrepreneurs use the Internet to reach a huge global market and link directly with suppliers, manufacturers and distributors, diminishing time and space.

Electronically-linked networks of small and large companies can bring capital, new technologies and sophistication into the country, enabling Malaysian entrepreneurs to develop world-class products and services.

Mahathir said Malaysia sees in all these an opportunity to move ahead at an unprecedented pace.

"We cannot afford to just keep up with other developments, other technologies, other nations. We have to find a way to launch ourselves into the frontline of global progress.

"IT will provide us with this launch pad. IT will empower Malaysians so that they can catch up with the developed world and so improve the quality of their lives," he added.

As such, there is a need to create a clearer understanding of the information revolution and how it can improve the quality of lives. And hence the formation of NITC in 1994.

Mahathir said key issues to be considered by NITC over the next few years are the role of government and the private and voluntary sectors, the need to ensure universal access to information, the development of technological competence and ways to facilitate electronic commerce.

In a changing economic landscape where political and geographical barriers are rapidly disappearing, there is this requirement to re-invent government, he explained.

This means improving the way government administers its business and delivers its services to the public by taking advantage of the new information and communication technologies.

"So Malaysia has made the first important move towards a fully networked government. Putrajaya, the new federal government administrative centre, when fully completed in 2005, will reflect a radically new approach to make public sector services more people-centred.

"In building a culture of information, interconnectivity is fast becoming a fact of life as more and more people realise the value of being

able to find instant answers to many of their urgent needs.

"Therefore, over the next decade, one of the most important tasks is to make sure that the benefits of network computing are made available to every Malaysian, rich or poor, able and disabled, to schools, hospitals, clinics and voluntary organisations as well as businesses."

All this, the Prime Minister pointed out, will contribute towards the building of a civil society where all Malaysians have equal and affordable access to information and learning to enable them to be more deeply aware of their unique strengths and clear-sighted about how best to improve the quality of Malaysian life.

"In today's information revolution, knowledge is in the driver's seat. Our children will be part of the Net-generation of the future. Network literacy must be a standard for this generation," he said.

The government, he added, is re-designing the education system and at the same time retraining and re-orientating the education professionals to become motivators and catalysts for change.

Under the MSC initiative, both the government and private sector are working together to set up smart schools where children from all walks of life will be provided with the facilities, teaching techniques and environment that foster the highest possible levels of achievement.

Also, as the IT wave gathers momentum, businesses are being swept into a highly competitive electronic "marketspace," where there are no borders and boundaries.

Mahathir said the businesses' very success hinges on their ability to get into shape for the global game of electronic business and the NITC has a critical role to play in managing the country's transformation to a knowledge-rich society.

But in its effort to move Malaysia into the Information Age, he added, the NITC must be mindful of the need to preserve and strengthen the intrinsic Asian values.

In creating a "Virtual Commonwealth," it is important to find a way of using today's technologies to facilitate debate and discussion among leaders of nations, transnational corporations and non-governmental organisations as well as representatives of citizens' groups, academia and the mass media, he said.

"This forum for smart dialogue and networking will enable all of us, rich nation or poor, developed or developing, to work together to manage our world better so that we can share the common wealth," he added. --

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