

17/03/1999

All forms of censorship will be removed, says MDC head

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - All forms of Internet censorship, including the requirement for cybercafes to register their users, will be removed, Multimedia Development Corporation executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Othman Yeop Abdullah said today.

"Many in the industry see the requirement to register cybercafe users as a form of Internet censorship," Othman said at a Press conference called to refute claims in an article in an American business magazine about the MSC.

In the Bill of Guarantees under the MSC, the Government had agreed not to impose, among others, any censorship or licensing of Internet usage.

Othman said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad decided to direct the Housing and Local Government Ministry to withdraw the instruction to register all cybercafe users after he was briefed on the concerns of MSC companies last week.

"Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Leo Moggie will be making a statement soon on the matter."

Othman said while the Internet itself would not be censored, the present laws could be used to make the down-loading and dissemination of unlawful material and offence.

"When we say there is no censorship, it means the Government will not intervene any accessing or transmission of the Internet. The moment you download and disseminate any material, you will then be governed by existing laws," he explained.

In December last year, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh announced that all cybercafes must register their customers or risk losing their permits.

The directive, Ting said, was issued to all State Governments on Dec 3, making it mandatory for all cybercafes to maintain a register containing details of a customer's name, identity card number and home address.

(END)