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## Curbs on sale of replicating machines

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government will control the sale of replicating machines to curb the illegal production of intellectual property here.

Admitting that such activities were rampant, Dr Mahathir said the authorities have concluded that this was a more effective way to deal with the problem of piracy.

"We have decided that to check the problem, we need to control the sale of such machines. For example, we will decide who is allowed to buy the CD-ROM replicating machines, and why he needs to buy it," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after chairing a four-hour National Information Committee Council meeting in Cyberjaya today.

"The Government would take action against those who violate the law," he said adding that at present, such activities were rampant as it was difficult to check all outlets which sold such items.

"We know that this (piracy problem) is not only causing losses to Microsoft, but our artistes are also badly affected," he said adding in jest that even proceedings of Umno meetings were not spared from piracy.

Last week, Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Leo Moggie said the ministry would introduce new legislation by the end of the year to curb the illegal production of intellectual property.

It will also strengthen existing provisions in the Copyright Act to provide for stricter enforcement and penalties against producers of pirated works.

On another question, asked whether there had been a slowdown in applications for Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status from companies since the government introduced exchange controls last September, Dr Mahathir said there was not.

With the exchange control measures in place, investors were more interested as they knew the cost of doing business and the returns from investment as the Malaysian ringgit was pegged to the dollar.

"Previously, they (investors) had to hedge, they had to do all kinds of things because they really do not know what the cost of doing business is in Malaysia. Today, they know exactly the cost of doing business here," he said.

Asked whether the Singapore One information technology hub would pose a competition to the MSC, Dr Mahathir said: "No. What we have here is a very comprehensive plan that involves a whole area complete with a set of new cyber laws, new practices, new facilities designed to cater for all the new developments in information age technology.

"So, there is no other country that can devote....certainly Singapore cannot have a 55km by 15km area that we have here.

"Ours is a very comprehensive project, it is not just confined to one role or one particular activity."

The Government, in developing the corridor, targeted 50 world-class companies to be sited in the MSC by the year 2003.

"It is now 1999 and we already have 29 companies, more than half of our target.

"So, it is obvious that people are still attracted to the MSC," he said.

So far, the Government has approved 205 companies for MSC status out of 270 applications.

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