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Mahathir-IT

IT INFRASTRUCTURE WILL CONTINUE TO BE DEVELOPED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, April 22 (Bernama) -- The government will continue to develop and expand the information technology (IT) infrastructure to create a technology-based industry and inculcate the IT culture among the people, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Towards this end, a strategic agenda covering five main areas -- E-Economy, E-Public Service, E-Learning, E-Community and E-Sovereignty -- would be studied to prepare Malaysia to face the needs of an information-based economy.

He said the rapid development in the telecommunication network, especially the use of the Internet, worldwide would speed up the application of electronic commerce (e-commerce) in a bigger market.

"I'm pleased to say that three years from now we will have a strong user base for e-commerce when we achieve the objective of having one million Internet users," he said when tabling the mid-term review of the Seventh Malaysia Plan in the Dewan Rakyat, here.

He said the government would draft a master plan to ensure a systematic development of e-commerce.

Dr Mahathir said the rapid changes in IT and multimedia would create opportunities for new businesses and e-commerce which would pose a challenge on the domestic front, especially in the services sector.

"Under this mid-term review, the government has increased the allocations for the ministries and agencies involved in the Information Technology (IT) programmes and projects to RM4 billion," he said.

He said the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) would continue to spearhead the IT development, with the development of Cyberjaya, Malaysia's first "smart town", now proceeding rapidly.

To strengthen the field of science and technology (S&T), the prime minister said the government had increased the allocation for research and development (R&D) to RM1.1 billion to enhance the local capability in scientific and technological innovations.

He said the private sector's participation and investment in R&D was important because they must that appropriate and competitive technology was provided to meet the needs of an expanding economy.

Dr Mahathir said that to enhance the development of the services sector, the government would intensify efforts to achieve the target of creating a modern and outward-oriented services sector to strengthen and broaden the nation's economic base.

He said the impetus to the growth of the services sector would be the air and sea transportation, ports, insurance, finance, tourism, education, health and consultancy services sub-sectors.

Malaysia would be developed into a regional transportation hub through the promotion of Port Klang as a transshipment and load centre and the KL International Airport as a regional hub airport, he said.

Besides that, the government would turn the country into a regional educational centre of excellence and promote health-tourism through private health centres which are capable of providing state-of-the-art facilities and world-class specialist services.

The prime minister said the government would continue to develop the tourism industry and encourage eco-tourism, sports and adventure tourism.

It would also promote the country as a centre for international conference, conventions and exhibition as well as sporting events,

facilitated by the Bukit Jalil Sport Complexs, golf facilities and the Sepang Formula 1 Circuit.

"To complement the efforts of the private sector, the development and maintenance of tourism infrastructure such as transport and recreations facilities will continue to be supported," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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