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Promoting IT literacy and its use (HL)

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CYBERJAYA, Mon. - The National Information Technology Council has formed a high-powered committee to map out a plan of action to promote information technology literacy, fluency and its utilisation at all levels.

This is in response to the urgent need for a comprehensive and national effort to establish a strong IT-mindset in the country.

To be called the NITC Strategic Thrust Implementation Committee (STIC), it will be chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the STIC has been formed following recommendations by working groups for the urgent need to build the capabilities, in terms of knowledge and skills of individual Malaysians, to live and work in the electronic-world.

"It is also aimed at developing and strengthening the capacity of organisations and institutions so that they function efficiently and effectively in the emerging networked global society," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after attending a four-hour meeting of the NITC here today.

In a statement later, NITC said the emphasis of the plan was to encourage creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship to enable Malaysians to claim the full benefits of interconnectivity in business, education, community development and public services delivery.

"Underpinning this is the NITC's commitment to evolving an IT culture based on Asian values and a strong sense of national identity," the statement said.

Dr Mahathir said five working groups had been set up to look into the main thrust areas which include e-economy, e-community, e-public services, e-learning and e-sovereignty.

The e-community grouping would be chaired by Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Leo Moggie, e-public services by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, e-learning by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, e-economy by International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and e-sovereignty by Institute of Strategic and International Studies chairman Tan Sri Dr Noordin Mohd Sopiee.

Their co-chairmen are National Council of Women's Organisation vice president Professor Datin Dr Sharifah Hapsah Shahabudin (e-community), Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations president Hamdan Adnan (e-public services), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Zawawi Ismail (e-learning), Third World Network director Martin Khor (e-economy) and former Securities Commission chairman Datuk Dr Munir Majid (e-sovereignty).

The other members of the STIC include NITC members and other relevant individuals who would be appointed later.

The tasks of the groups include to facilitate the delivery of public services to the citizens and businesses more efficiently and effectively via electronic means and to increase the capability of organisations and individuals to acquire and develop knowledge, skills and values via electronic interaction.

It is also to encourage e-commerce and e-business activities which support the development of a knowledge economy and to enhance the identity and integrity of the nation in an increasingly borderless world.

The NITC has recommended seven measures for immediate implementation by the STIC. These include:

- * formulate a national Culture Change Agenda for ownership by the public, private and community-interest sectors;
- * implement a nationwide grassroots Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) acculturation and diffusion programme involving public, private and community institutions;
- * implement a national programme to mass-produce ICT-fluent educators of the 21st century involving schools, colleges, universities, ICT training institutions, mobile ICT training units and other virtual institutions of learning;
- * provide support and incentives for "new value creators" or "networked entrepreneurs" to create e-economy activities with new economic value for international competitiveness. This is to encourage the development of new economic front-liners and mobilise them into a critical mass driving towards an e-economy; and,
- * provide accurate information on Malaysia's current events to the public and foreign media through a website to be maintained by the National Unity and Social Development ministry. This website would provide accurate information on current events based on the consensus of a tri-sectoral committee and would be linked to other websites that provide alternate views or analyses of events; and,
- * initiate an education and acculturation programme on the concepts of e-sovereignty and e-vigilance as well as threats and opportunities resulting from ICT development.

This programme would be prepared by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations for Malaysian diplomats, negotiation teams and all public, private and non-profit nationals who deal with transnational relations.

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