

PM wants Internet portal for SMIs

SUN 18-7-2000

KUCHING, Mon: An Internet portal should be set up to allow small- and medium-scale industries (SMIs) to benefit from e-commerce and market their products, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the SMIs can form a company which would manage the portal for a small fee.

In this way, the SMIs can expand their market and compete with the big companies in e-commerce, he said after chairing the 10th National Information Technology Council (NITC) meeting here.

Mahathir said the portal for SMIs was one of the new approaches discussed at the meeting.

He said at present, only big companies can afford to market their products and services through the Internet, adding that the small budgets of SMIs prevent them from venturing into e-commerce.

He, however, cautioned the SMIs, saying they must ensure they can supply the services or products before venturing into e-commerce as their reputation would be affected if they fall short of the standards.

He explained that if many companies create their own portals, there would be too many for Malaysia and they may not be managed properly.

Mahathir also explained that the government could not afford to keep tabs on all activities related to e-commerce and would not impose restrictions to advertise goods and services.

"We also fear that if we try

to impose restrictions, they will carry out their transactions from overseas," he said.

He said the government hopes that those doing business through the Internet would practise good business ethics and culture so that Malaysia would not get a bad reputation.

Mahathir also said the

government was monitoring the setting up of a commodity bourse through the Internet to ensure Malaysia, a leading producer of important commodities, did not suffer losses.

Except for Terengganu and Kelantan, which sent representatives to the meeting, all the states were represent-

ed by their mentris besar and chief ministers.

Mahathir, who is the NITC chairman, said the main agenda at the meeting was to find ways to narrow the digital divide between the information-rich and information-poor. The meeting also proposed new approaches to narrow the gap.