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Mahathir-Portal

A PORTAL TO MARKET GOODS PRODUCED BY SMIS TO BE SET UP - DR M

KUCHING, July 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today a portal to help sell goods and services of small-and medium-scale industries (SMIs) in the international market through the Internet would be set up.

The Prime Minister said this was agreed to at the National Information Technology Council (NITC) meeting here today as SMIs do not have the expertise and financial resources to do so.

"Big companies may have the means to market their goods and services through the Internet but for small-and medium-sized ones, their expertise may be limited or none at all. They also may not have the required capital," he told a media conference after chairing the 10th NITC meeting here.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, all Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers except those from Kelantan and Terengganu. Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali also attended.

Dr Mahathir said it would be better if SMIs could introduce their products and services through one portal so that all the required information could be provided by the people managing the portal.

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

"Our companies will collapse because the e-commerce website is not managed efficiently," he said.

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

"We also fear that if we tried to impose restrictions, they will carry out their transactions from overseas," he said.

He said the government hoped that those doing business through the website would practise good business ethics and culture so that Malaysia would not earn a bad reputation.

Dr 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.

He said anyone could now set up a commodity bourse given the easy access to the Internet.

"We cannot avoid from competing with the world. We can no longer assume that since we are a rubber producer, the market for the commodity is in Malaysia," he said.

He said some non-commodity producing countries might become the trading centre for the commodities and this might cause producing countries to incur losses.

Among the steps that must be taken to spare the country from suffering losses is to market the commodities fast, he said.

"Whether our market or the market of others are used depend on the services provided and how fast we can deliver the goods to the buyers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the NITC meeting also decided that there should not be a too obvious digital divide within the country and between Malaysia and other countries.

He said several proposals made to check the digital divide would be incorporated into the Eighth Malaysia Plan for implementation.

Among them are a number of core programme areas to be carried out to further enhance development of the people, infrastructure, content and application as embodied in the National Information Technology (IT) Agenda.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting was also briefed on the progress made by Sarawak government towards setting up an electronic government.

He said the state government was in the forefront in that effort.

"What is being done by Sarawak serves as a model to other states. I congratulate Sarawak for being an exemplary in developing an electronic government," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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