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Mahathir-Net

PM AGREES TO THE SETTING UP OF MULTILINGUAL COMPUTING INITIATIVES

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 26 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is receptive to the setting up of the Multilingual Computing Initiatives (MLCI) to develop language-based computing for major Malaysian languages.

He said the MLCI should have a steering committee to look into the development of language-based computing for major Malaysian languages including the national language, Bahasa Melayu.

He said that the MLCI ideally should be a sub-set of the National Information Technology Council (NITC) and the current ICT development suggests that Malaysia should extend the mastery of these languages in the Internet and computing in general.

Opening the Tamil Internet 2001 Conference and Exhibition at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here today, Dr Mahathir said he was impressed with the MIC's proposal to have a special scheme started at the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) for Malaysian Indians to groom new talents for Tamil software.

He said the MSC has the provision for companies to set up and develop software and it was a good idea to set up a scheme for the Indian community.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is the home to some of the widely spoken languages in the world and has competitive advantage in the economy, saying that not many countries have such advantage.

"Malaysia should build on this area and MLCI should be a sub-set of the NITC and go into on-line collaboration with other different languages to cut across geographical boundaries," he said.

He said that Malaysian research and development (R&D) institutions should embark on conversational linguistics and translations if converting data and even voice from another language becomes a simple activity.

"One can imagine the potential for collaboration for international market," he said.

For instance, he said, a single website in simplified Chinese language could deal with 30 million Chinese who go on-line everyday and similarly the Tamil website in Malaysia has the potential to reach five million Tamil-speaking net users.

He said the Malay website could transcend the region and reach more than five million people who speak Malay and other related languages on-line.

Dr Mahathir said with such collaboration, the MSC could then open its door to language-based IT projects both in the domestic and international markets.

He also said he firmly believed that Malaysia has the real opportunity to emerge as a regional if not a global centre for language-based computing and all races have a clear role to play in that aspect.

"What is needed now is some level of organisation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said industry pundits were claiming that non-English contents account for more than 50 per cent of that found on the Net and Malaysians should not wait to seize the opportunity to expand language-based computing.

Earlier, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu proposed that the Multimedia Development Corporation work on a special scheme to unearth more ICT talents within the Indian community and develop them into international

technopreneurs.

He said such a move could initiate bilateral working relationships with other Tamil communities around the world.

Samy Vellu, who is the conference organising committee chairman, said that Malaysian Indians have produced not less than three-world class Tamil software.

He estimated that more than one million people worldwide are currently using Malaysian-made Tamil software and 75 million Tamils worldwide know Malaysia for its Tamil software.

Some 800 delegates from 13 countries are taking part in the conference where 50 international technical papers will be presented by a panel of experts from Australia, India, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, Singapore and Malaysia.

About 50 exhibition booths are also showcasing the latest products and services in areas such as Tamil computing, Internet, E-learning and E-business during the three-day conference period.

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