

13 JULY 2001

Mahathir-Security

PM CALLS FOR INCREASED NET SECURITY TO CURB CYBERCRIMES

KUALA LUMPUR, July 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that greater attention should be given to matters concerning network security in view of the rising number of cybercrime incidents and the increased use of the Internet for misinformation.

He said it was imperative that adequate measures be taken to formulate a comprehensive and foolproof regulatory and legislative framework particularly for the conduct of e-commerce activities.

"While governments, multinational corporations and other interested institutions are doing everything possible to jump-start and push their k-economy plans forward, there are also many people, organised or otherwise, who are trying to do everything possible to disrupt and thwart these efforts," he said when opening the Asean Telecommunications Ministers Meeting (Telmin), here.

These included international criminal syndicates, amateur hackers, virus-pranksters and e-money conmen whose actions had caused catastrophic effects on the information infrastructure that formed the basis and conditions of a knowledge-based society.

Dr Mahathir's speech was read out by Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Amar Leo Moggie.

In this respect, Dr Mahathir proposed that the ministers consider seriously the establishment of an Asean Network Security Coordination Centre which could serve as the focal point for management of information and network security issues.

The centre could play an important role in assessing the e-security readiness of Asean member countries and facilitate training and exchange programmes for network security enforcement, he said.

"The misuse of the Internet for propagating and disseminating information detrimental to both national and societal interests are on the rise. The number of websites dedicated to hate information and pornography is mushrooming and becoming more easily accessible especially to the younger generation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although many countries had attempted to address the issue via legislative and regulatory measures, these had largely been ineffective due to the global character of the Internet.

For example, he said, those responsible for disseminating offensive information on the net could not be prosecuted in a particular country if the website was hosted outside its border.

He said this was where regional cooperation in Asean could be vital.

Dr Mahathir urged the gathering to not only deliberate on the issue from the perspective of the region but also to develop a common consensus in addressing the problem at the international fora.

He also asked the ministers to help narrow the digital divide among Asean countries which could be done by ensuring a more equitable distribution of communications and information infrastructure.

"Central to this is the need for further enhanced interconnectivity and interoperability among Asean countries by promoting and establishing common regional standards for information infrastructure," he said.

In this regard, he said, it would be good if there was intra-Asean investment by telecommunications companies (telcos) of the region.

Dr Mahathir believed there was opportunity for Asean countries to

cooperate in skills and expertise development in the field of information technology which could be achieved through the establishment of regional centres of excellence.

He said it was vital for Asean to determine its own agenda while moving towards k-economy as Asean could no longer be dictated by the richer world in this new field characterised by the digital revolution.

Dr Mahathir said instead of following developmental models perpetuated by industrialised nations, Asean should play the game according to its own rules.

"The rules of these models only ensure that we remain subservient to the dictates of the richer world," he added.

-- BERNAMA

NM MAM RM