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Mahathir-ICT

POOR NATIONS TO LOSE OUT IF THEY FAIL TO EMBRACE ICT NOW, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that nations which do not jump onto the information and communications technology (ICT) bandwagon now will be left behind by countries which do so and suffer great consequences in the future.

"They will be left far behind, lacking in knowledge and information and they cannot make decisions because they won't have information. The countries which have access to information will be the ones that will benefit most from this information age," he said.

He said the reluctance of some nations to embrace ICT would increase the disparity between the rich and poor countries of the world as most countries which are not taking ICT seriously are the poorer ones.

"One thing we learnt from the Multimedia Super Corridor project is that to bridge digital divide we need a lot of money," he told reporters after launching Asiaspace Dotcom Sdn Bhd at the Prime Minister's Department here.

Asiaspace Dotcom is a private limited company registered in Malaysia licensed to provide access to the WorldSpace system in the country. The WorldSpace system is primarily a satellite digital audio broadcasting service.

He said richer nations could easily spread the use of the Internet, computers and satellites because they could afford it, but Malaysia is not badly off from other developing nations.

Dr Mahathir said the cost to overcome the divide is high because computer hardware and software do not come cheap.

"To change people it is very easy but without the hardware it will be difficult. So the main problem in overcoming the digital divide is one of cost," he said.

On the role of the private sector in helping Malaysians to be ICT conversant, he said that they also had a role to play in helping the people to become more computer and technology literate.

He said they should understand that the more people conversant with ICT the better it is for them in terms of productivity and quality.

"The government is spending a lot of money to make the people more computer literate but companies too must realise that the society which is computer literate will be good for them because their business will be better with knowledge workers," he said.

Asked how he saw Kuala Lumpur in the future with the convergence of technologies, he said it would become a city equipped with all the necessary infrastructure for communications.

"We will have people who are very knowledgeable and I am afraid there will be people walking around carrying their latest cellular phones with something hanging on their ears and they would be talking to themselves most of the time...it will look a little bit strange but they will be communicating," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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