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NITC-Gap

NITC DRAWS UP FRAMEWORK TO NARROW DIGITAL DIVIDE

PUTRAJAYA, April 23 (Bernama) -- The National Information Technology Council (NITC) and the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Department will draw up a framework to narrow the digital divide among the various strata of the society.

NITC member Prof Datuk Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin said this was one of the important matters decided upon at the council meeting chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his office here today.

She said several groups comprising the rural folk, residents of Sabah and Sarawak, the poor, women, the youth, senior citizens and the disabled had been identified as needing attention in this aspect.

Speaking at a media briefing after the meeting, she said the NITC members felt that there was potential for the society to be split into two -- those with access to information communication technology (ICT) and those who lacked access due to the absence of opportunities to get information from various sources.

"If this (digital divide) is allowed to go on, the society may be sidelined and we will not be economically competitive. So it's important to take this initiative," she said.

Dr Sharifah Hapsah said there was an initiative to narrow the digital divide before this but there was no mechanism to coordinate the effort.

"So the EPU will ensure that it is systematic and there's no over-lapping," she said.

She said emphasis would be given to ensuring that information obtained by the development of ICT was put to beneficial use by the society to increase their skills and knowledge and to contribute to nation building.

Towards this end, the NITC had decided to set up a steering committee to study the issue.

She said the small- and medium-scale industries (SMIs) would also be involved in the development of ICT to enter the world supply network in the electronic and electrical fields.

Two pioneer projects would be conducted in Penang to build various applications for use by the SMIs.

Sr Sharifah Hapsah said that at today's meeting Dr Mahathir stressed that the responsibility to reduce the digital rested with all strata of society.

He also said that without ICT the country would be left behind and would not be able to compete.

"The prime minister said we have the potential to be leaders in this and we can build it together," she said.

-- BERNAMA

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