

Digital gap concerns Malaysia PM

Global Knowledge Partnership 3, Kuala Lumpur

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Article blurbLack of local content for developing countries and the dominant use of the English on the Internet are key factors widening the global digital divide. These are concerns raised by the Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in a speech read on his behalf by deputy, Dato Najib Tun Razak.

Lack of local content for developing countries and the dominant use of the English on the Internet are key factors widening the global digital divide. These are concerns raised by the Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in a speech read on his behalf by deputy, Dato Najib Tun Razak.

The conference theme *Emerging People, Emerging Markets, Emerging Technologies* focuses on issues related to knowledge for development (K4D) and Information Communication Technology for Development (ICTD4) within the context of our evolving societies, economies and technologies worldwide.

Premier Badawi said that if the problem of local content is not addressed immediately, developing countries may find themselves in a critical situation, falling further behind in the development curve. "Adapting currently available technology and localising them to suit specific community needs is a good starting point," he said. "I am confident that such efforts can help bridge the technology divide between countries and ensure more sustainable development."

Besides a paucity of local and relevant content, other key factors contributing to the digital divide are high infrastructural costs and poor technological support.

Badawi noted that GK3 is both critical and timely as it focuses on the challenges of how and to what extent Information Communication Technology (ICT) can be used to achieve social goals and economic growth.

As a leader of a developing country, Badawi said he is deeply aware of the challenges faced by countries seeking to modernise and develop. He pointed out the lack of access to knowledge and technology as one of the pressing issues.

He added that developing countries also face challenges in the form of wider access to quality education, healthcare and housing, as well as the provision of effective government services. He emphasised that poverty remains a fundamental challenge. He said once poverty is effectively addressed, other development objectives become easier to achieve.

"I am deeply concerned that although we live in a time of advanced sophisticated technologies that can provide for solutions to many of our problems, there are still too many poor nations unable to take advantage of these tools to advance themselves", he added.

The conference is organized by the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), an organisation that focuses on sharing knowledge and building partnerships in order to maximize the benefits of ICTD4.

The three-day conference has attracted over 2000 participants from different sectors, including governments, private companies, international institutions and civil society groups. Since its inception in 1997, GKP has previously held two conferences, the first in 1997 and the second in 2000.



Deputy PM of Malaysia Najib Razak addressed the opening of the GKP3 on behalf of Premier Badawi
Pic: Angella Nabobwe