

# The pace of technical education

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**JOHORE BARU:** When Dr. Mahathir Mohamed opens the secondary technical school in Jalan Larkin here today, he will give cognizance to the fact that we have come a long way in our efforts to expand industry for the purpose of reducing Malaysia's dependence on imports and providing employment.

The Education Ministry has its own part to play in this scheme — by answering the need for training facilities to equip the unskilled with the skills required by industry.

Today, the Ministry has 20 vocational and nine technical schools under its aegis — all geared to providing technical education not only at the professional level but at the lower craftsmen levels.

The schools are the fruits of the Ministry's technical division set up in '64. The following year, four new elective subjects (industrial arts, agricultural science, commerce and home science) were introduced at the lower secondary level.

by MILLICENT DANKER

ing to an education department spokesman, is not so much on acquiring trade skills as on building the necessary foundations for higher technical education.

The objectives of technical schools are namely:

- To enable students to seek employment in industry or to further their education in higher institutions.

- To provide scientific and technical education to students with an aptitude for such subjects, and

- To raise the level and standard of skilled manpower in the expanding industrial and commercial sector.

To qualify for entry, pupils must have obtained a creditable grade 'A' in the Lower Certificate of Education or Sijil Rendah Pelajaran and show an aptitude for such education.

What, one might ask, are the avenues open to technical school-leavers? Says the Education

ban, Malacca, Johore Baru, Kuantan and Kuala Trengganu.

"The schools are equipped with specialised facilities," he says. "Fully equipped laboratories are there to meet the requirements of the current syllabus for the teaching of chemistry and physics.

"Hostel blocks are provided to accommodate between 160 and 400 students in each school. They are strictly for students from other states or rural areas."

## Scholarships

There are also, according to him, nine different types of scholarships made available to students. A total of 229 students have benefited from these. The Federal minor scholarships heads the list with 112.

The Johore Baru Technical School which the



● Dr. Mahathir Mohamed

batch of 112 students sat the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination and the overall passes was 84.8 per cent. Twenty-five candidates obtained grades one and two.

In the MCE, 61 out of 79 passed making 77.2 per cent.

This year, for the first time, the school will be providing sixth form classes with Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction.

Principal, Encik Omar bin Abdul Rashid, 37, says the school has been most fortunate in getting the services of the State Public Works Department, who advice on technical matters has been of immense help to the students.

Vocational secondary schools are different from technical ones in that they are concerned with equipping students with "employable" skills.

Students who successfully complete their

"Home science students may become welfare assistants, nurses, stewards while agricultural students can find employment as field assistants or junior research assistants," said the spokesman.

Students, he said, sit the Vocational Education Certificate which is equated with the Malaysian Certificate of Education in terms of job opportunities.

"It is worth noting that when vocational and technical education was first introduced in Malaysia, the schools were mainly conversions of the junior technical schools which were the main source of technical training in the country prior to 1968.

"Following the implementation of the new system, foreign technical advisors were recruited to assist the Ministry's technical division and qualified local teachers and in-

## Aptitude

Technical secondary schools were set up in 1963. They provide a technically-biased education with a view to developing aptitudes in engineering.

Besides academic subjects, students are introduced to subjects basic to mechanical and civil engineering. These include engineering workshop practice, geometrical and mechanical drawing, surveying and building construction.

The emphasis, accord-

Ministry spokesman: "On completion of their Malaysian Certificate of Education or Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, they may be employed as draughtsmen, clerks of work or go for further studies in the polytechnic or the University of Technology.

"Those who intend making their career may enter the technical teachers' training college."

According to him, there are now over 5,000 students enrolled in the nine technical schools in the country.

The schools are in Alor Star, Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Serem-

Deputy Prime Minister will officially declare open is located three miles away from town and occupies an area of almost 30 acres.

The school was financed by loans from the World Bank and cost nearly \$2 million.

Completed in April, 1974, the school specialises in building, mechanical and agricultural courses. A total of 438 students, about 79 per cent of whom are from Johore, make up the student population.

There are facilities for 80 girls.

Last year, the first

form three may elect to join vocational schools depending on their results.

Students are given general education besides which they have to choose one vocational course in the engineering trades, agriculture, commerce or home science.

"On completion of their two-year course, students may find employment as junior technicians, draughtsmen, laboratory assistants, welders, bricklayers (trade courses), clerks and typists (commercial courses).

structors sent abroad for training.

## Courses

"Industrial arts teachers from academic schools were provided with inservice courses and posted to vocational and technical schools," he said.

Equipment and spare parts were initially supplied by Canada under the Colombo Plan, after which they were furnished by world bank loans.

"We in providing vocational and technical education are constantly challenged by problems in determining the needs of industry," says an education official.

"We have to be aware of new needs and how to respond to them. But we are confident that our vocational and technical schools are geared to meet the challenges ahead and play their roles accordingly," he added.