

PM: Master English to gain from IT

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today it is important for Malaysians to learn the English Language if they wanted to benefit from the Internet and Information Technology.

He added that the information received through the information superhighway was massive and it would not be possible to translate everything into Bahasa Malaysia.

"It would therefore be easier to master the English Language. If we do not learn it, we would not be able to produce Malay computer magazines. Those who produce the magazines must be proficient not only in English but also in the technological aspects of information technology."

"This is why we stress the importance of the English Language. If not we would cut ourselves off from information which is indeed beneficial."

Dr Mahathir said this in

reponse to a question on whether those who were not proficient in English would be the 'have nots' in information technology.

He was speaking to reporters after launching the INFOTECH 95 conference at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

On the accessibility of the Internet for the financially handicapped, Dr Mahathir said the cost would definitely go down.

"As you know whenever you have economies of scale, the cost would go down very much and there can be ways of sharing accessibility to the Internet."

"So I do not think this idea of haves and have nots will last for long with respect to accessibility to IT."

Asked why many corporations did not give sufficient emphasis to developing IT, Dr Mahathir said some people were probably scared of their personal computers.

"This is a problem. The younger staff love their computers and cannot go

anywhere without their PCs. But the problem of older staff overcoming their fears can be solved because using the computer is becoming easier and easier and even people like me now can push a few buttons and gain some information."

Asked why the Government's stake of 32 per cent in Hicom Holdings Berhad was sold, Dr Mahathir said: "We find that whenever a company is partially owned by the people managing it, the performance is better."

"Some of the companies in Hicom Holdings Berhad are not giving us the amount of returns we expect."

He said the amount of money from the sale was quite attractive. "We can put the RM1.7 billion received to better use."

The sale was sealed between Khazanah Holdings Berhad, the Government's investment arm, and Mega Consolidated Sdn Bhd in the middle of last month.