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Bringing children into tomorrow's world

FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE ... The Information Technology Awareness Campaign launched by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad aims to bring today's children into tomorrow's world.

Prompted by a robotic voice and watched by Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, Dr Mahathir pressed a button on the keyboard to start a hi-tech IT presentation, complete with laser beams.

Beginning with the various modes of communication through the ages, the presentation went on to humorously demonstrate the use and relevance of IT to Malaysians - from the shopkeeper, coffeeshop owner and farmer to the housewife and student.

The skit was followed by IT-themed songs and dances, beginning with schoolchildren who strode in with laptops in their schoolbags followed by another group in space-inspired costumes. The presentation was hosted by popular compere Azwan Ali.

Dr Mahathir also launched a reader-friendly booklet explaining various IT concepts like multimedia, its importance and applications.

Speaking to reporters later, Mohamed Rahmat said the three-year campaign hoped to overcome the IT phobia.

He said there was a perception being spread about IT being immoral because of the easy access to pornography, violence and deviant information on the information superhighways. "We don't want to look at it negatively. The positive side is greater than the negative," he said.

He said it was particularly important to educate parents who were worried because they did not understand IT and who, therefore, thought their IT-literate children were up to no good.

The campaign will be carried out through the media and public activities. IT terms will be also be introduced into daily use.

Mohamed Rahmat said the Government had approved an allocation of RM800 million to the Information Ministry for next year.

"We will also invite the co-operation of computer companies. The cost will not be high if the private sector participates."

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