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Help one another to be computer-literate

Luke Teoh

I REFER to T.G. Goh's letter, "Make school administrators computer literate" (NST,May 22).

I feel that everyone should try to become computer literate. This would fulfil the aspirations of our beloved Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who has gone all out to promote the Multimedia Super Corridor in Malaysia.

I believe many of us are left behind by new technology, just like people in the USA were during the initial stages. I would like to quote from an article by Anita Manning in USA Today (Jan 16, 1990) featured in the book, Follow the Yellow Brick Road by Richard Saul Wurman. She says:

"Millions of intelligent people - people who manage to drive their cars to work every day and read a book a week - are stopped in their tracks when faced with programming their VCRs. They can argue fine points of law, but can't boil water in the microwave oven. They can calculate taxes for major corporations but can't change the message on their answering machines.

"They're the technologically disabled of our society. They are we."

According to Link Resources, a market research firm:

* Almost a third of VCR owners never set the timer to record from the TV.

* Of the 20 million households that have personal computers, 2.2 million (11 per cent) use them less than once a month. Another 2.2 million use them once or twice a month.

"These are not stupid people. They're uninformed, intimidated, confused, and overwhelmed.

"They use their electronic devices; but they just don't use them fully.

"People buy US\$3,000 (RM7,500) computer systems because they need a super typewriter.

"Experts worry that a society of techno-idiots can't make informed decisions. How can we understand global-warming when we can't come to grips with call-waiting?"

Let us then answer the call of our Prime Minister and try not to be left behind. Friends and colleagues should help each other become computer-literate.

Computer dealers should be more responsible and customer-friendly.

They should not only think of making a fast buck by palming off about-to-be-obsolete hardware to ignorant consumers.

There have also been cases of first-time computer buyers being charged for training with lessons being rattled off at super speed, making them incomprehensible and meaningless.

Please be fair to these computer-illiterate first-timers so that they will be able to progress further with hands-on experience.