

25/03/1998

Applications to join virtual club breach 500 mark

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - More young Malaysians have indicated their interest in the Microsoft-New Straits Times Young Programmers Club (MyPC), with over 217 membership applications received as at 4pm today. This brings the total applications past the 500 mark.

The majority of the entries came by post but a sizeable number was faxed and e-mailed.

Among the more interesting applications received were those sent by four girls, all of whom have experience in Microsoft Visual Basic programming.

The application that raised eyebrows was the one from 12-year-old Sophia Wong Chin Ee of Sarawak. She has her own PC and e-mail address, as well as her own Website on the Internet.

The other interesting application was from 11-year-old Andriyani Mohd Ghazali of Raub, Pahang. She too has her own PC and accesses the Internet from home.

Then there is the entry from 13-year-old Tan Shu Qing of Teluk Intan, who is a PC owner with her own e-mail address. Fourteen-year-old Neerajini Nallathamby, who also has her own PC and e-mail address, is the fourth girl.

MyPC, launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Microsoft chairman and chief executive officer Bill Gates last week, is an attempt to discover and nurture young Malaysian programming talents aged 15 and below. The title sponsors are Microsoft Malaysia Sdn Bhd and the New Straits Times.

A "virtual" club, MyPC's activities will be conducted largely over the Internet and is expected to start its operations in May. There will also be field trips and regular face-to-face meetings for members to exchange ideas and collaborate on projects.

MyPC is expected to complement the Multimedia Super Corridor by drawing the attention of parents of young children to the abundant opportunities that will be created by Malaysia's rush into the Information Age.

The programme is managed by MyPC creator Derrick Khoo, chief executive officer of Brave & Bold Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Patimas Computers Berhad.

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