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Club to groom young computer software programmers launched

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Microsoft-New Straits Times Malaysian Young Programmers Club which was launched today, will provide the youngest and keenest of minds the tools to create computer software.

Led by mentors who are professional software developers, they will be nurtured to form the next generation of leaders in the local IT industry.

The club was launched by Bill Gates, chairman and CEO of software giant Microsoft Corporation, who himself started computer software programming at the age of 11, and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Prime Minister's Department.

MyPC, is a virtual club targeted at children aged 12 to 15 who are interested in writing computer software programmes.

It is believed to be the first of its kind in Malaysia and, possibly, the world.

Gates, in a statement said: "MyPC is a timely investment in the younger generation of Malaysia who are critical to the future and success of the MSC and the nation."

Through the club, youngsters will be given guidance on how to write and create software programmes by qualified volunteers from the local IT industry who will act as their mentors.

"It provides a great opportunity to discover hidden talent in young Malaysians interested in programming and software development.

"Graduates from this programme will almost be ensured of a headstart in software application development, and they will help propel Malaysia into becoming a multimedia test bed and originator of technologies, as opposed to merely a manufacturing or distribution base for IT."

Gates was in Kuala Lumpur on a one-day visit as part of a regional tour.

MyPC aims to discover and groom local applications' software developers from a young age, by having members and mentors of the club communicate over the Internet.

Besides being virtual, the club will also conduct programming camps to allow members and their mentors to meet and exchange ideas.

The club is sponsored and organised by the New Straits Times Sdn Bhd, Microsoft (M) Sdn Bhd and Brave & Bold Sdn Bhd (a subsidiary of Patimas Computers Bhd). NST will support the club's activities and provide a wide audience reach through the nation's flagship daily, the New Straits Times.

Microsoft Malaysia has pledged to invest RM1 million in software and training resources for MyPC over the next three years, while Brave & Bold, an interactive content developer and MSC-status company, will manage the club.

During the Press conference, New Straits Times group editor Datuk A. Kadir Jasin also announced that RHB Bank had pledged RM50,000 towards the management of the club. The pledge was made by executive chairman of Rashid Hussain Bhd, Tan Sri Rashid Hussain, this morning.

Kadir said he was confident there are many talented children who are prime candidates for the club and hoped more sponsors will join the programme.

He added the organisers hoped to attract up to 1,000 members.

Kadir added that membership of the club will reflect the ethnic composition of the country, allowing talented children from both rural and urban backgrounds to join MyPC.

Club members will be selected by the organisers from the forms submitted

by interested candidates.

Aptitude tests will be conducted and membership fees will be imposed. The entry form will be carried daily in the New Straits Times for a week, after which it will appear weekly in the Life & Times section of the paper for a month.

Informed of the formation of the club in Malaysia, senior vice-president of data architecture at US-based MCI Communications Corporation, Dr Vinton G. Cerf said via e-mail:

"I think this (the club) is terrific ... it is the right time to involve kids in the business of programming - we need more programmers than we have right now."

Dr Cerf, a co-inventor of the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol technology, is recognised by the IT industry as being the father of the Internet.

Software programme developers keen on joining the club's mentoring programme can e-mail infomsia@microsoft.com or mypc@bebold.com.my.

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