

19/03/1998

## RM1m Microsoft boost for nation's young programmers

Adeline Ong

MICROSOFT Corp has pledged to invest the equivalent of RM1 million for the first three years of the Malaysian Young Programmers' Club (MyPC).

The investment will include software, training resources, collateral and the accessibility to a network of Microsoft partners.

Together with Microsoft (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, New Straits Times Sdn Bhd and Brave and Bold Sdn Bhd (a subsidiary of Patimas Computers Bhd), young Malaysian software programmers will now be able to find an outlet for their creativity and innovation by enrolling in the MyPC.

"We will need some money to support the programme. RHB Bank has agreed to be the first corporate sponsor (with a donation of RM50,000) to start the club," said New Straits Times Sdn Bhd group editor Datuk A. Kadir Jasin yesterday.

He spoke at a press conference after the launch of MyPC by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Microsoft president and chief executive officer Bill Gates.

Kadir said MyPC is an initiative to provide an environment and structured programme to discover and nurture talent in programming and software development for children aged between 12 and 15 years.

"We target about 1,000 children to be part of the programme. We are optimistic that there are many young talented children around.

"However, in the current economic situation, the number of children may not be 1,000. If we need RM1,000 to support one member, that will cost quite a lot," Kadir said.

He added that application for membership will be published in the New Straits Times from today.

Kadir said under the MyPC programme, each member will be assigned to a qualified mentor who will give them special assignments based on their intellectual, analytical and programming skills.

"They will be provided with computer peripherals by Microsoft to enable them to produce their own software. The idea is to encourage them to come out with various programmes like educational and entertainment programmes ... to become future software programmers," he said.

Bill Gates described MyPC as a timely investment in Malaysia's younger generation who are critical of the future and success of the MSC and the nation.

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

"Graduates from this programme will almost ensure themselves a kick-start 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 said in a statement issued in Kuala Lumpur.

The first programme of its kind in Malaysia, MyPC will also highlight to the younger generation and their parents that software development is one of the key professional careers for the future.

"MyPC is ideal for a first step into what I refer to as the Connected Community, linking educators, students, parents and the larger community to experience the empowering benefits of technology.

"With the support of our parents, the programme will harness Malaysia's best talent in technology, and these youngsters will lead the nation on a journey into a connected community.

"Once that happens, Malaysia will be in good stead to become a centre of cutting-edge technology innovation," Gates said.

Meanwhile, chief executive officer of Brave and Bold Mr Derrick Khoo said that this programme will be significant in terms of enabling young people with an ardent interest in technology to finally join a group of like-minded peers and achieve a common goal.

"Activities will largely be conducted over the Internet. There will also be group meetings that will take place at selected venues in the country," Khoo said.

Khoo added that no fees will be imposed as each child under the programme will be fully sponsored.

"If a particular child has the programming ability, money will not be a problem for him or her as we will seek financial assistance for them," Khoo said.

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