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Mahathir-University

MALAYSIA EMBARKS ON RADICAL CHANGE OF ITS EDUCATIONAL OUTLOOK

CYBERJAYA, July 9 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has embarked on a radical change of its educational outlook so as to harness the full power of technology and intellectual capital to bring about sustained growth, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the process had already started at the grass root level with the introduction of Smart Schools which is one of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) flagship applications.

"We must now extend this upwards into tertiary education with the MMU as the vanguard of our initiative," he said at the opening of the Multimedia University (MMU) here today.

As such, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's investment in the MMU was necessary both because of the need to catalyse change in its education system and also to create economic benefits.

The MMU built on a 80-hectare site at a cost of RM350 million, is the intellectual nerve centre of Cyberjaya which is one of the two intelligent cities in the MSC.

The MSC is a 750sq km zone south of Kuala Lumpur designated as a hub for the development of multimedia products and services. Cyberjaya was launched yesterday by Dr Mahathir.

The launching today was also witnessed by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, cabinet ministers and members of the MSC International Advisory Panel (IAP) who are here to attend the IAP's third annual meeting which began yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said becoming a learned society meant that Malaysia had to make a conscious effort to eliminate cultural or societal barriers that had served as a stumbling block for innovative thinking and pursuits in the past.

"Only then will we be able to develop the intellectual capital and achieve the competitive edge needed to compete in the next millennium."

He said innovation alone was not enough as there was a need to produce individuals who are able to leverage on intellectual capital in order to move from concept to explicit knowledge and production of next generation products and services.

The MMU, said the Prime Minister, was not an ordinary university since it would become the cultural heart and intellectual nerve centre of the learned society to be created within the Cyberjaya community.

Dr Mahathir said he was confident the MMU having been built on a strong foundation would allow it to be at the forefront of Malaysia's effort in developing a knowledgeable society.

As it is one of the first of its kind, its path would be a short cut to the development of a world class institution that is able to meet the changing needs of the new Digital Age.

"I am glad to note that the MMU is already involved in collaborative efforts with more than 60 companies with cutting edge technologies, including NTT, Alcatel and Lucent Technologies," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the MMU was designed to spawn creative ideas and technopreneurs -- very much like the role that Stanford University plays in the success of Silicon Valley.

It's opening signifies the readiness and capability of the MSC to generate a critical mass of quality knowledge workers for the MSC-status companies.

He hoped the MMU would one day become a leading centre for knowledge for the Digital Age.

Malaysia encouraged institutions even those using foreign languages as the medium of instruction to be based at the university.

The MMU's pioneer batch consists of 600 students at the "Alpha" level and 2,800 students at the "Beta" level programme. It is projected to have about 6,000 students by 2002.

The students are taking up various courses including engineering, telecommunications, information technology and management.

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