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Mahathir-Universities

UNIVERSITIES URGED TO KEEP ABREAST OF CHANGES

CYBERJAYA, July 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that there is a need for local universities to introduce new subjects and disciplines as Malaysia embarks on the information age path.

"Local universities must get away from traditional subjects that are not relevant in the new millennium and information age," the Prime Minister told a news conference at the end of the third Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) International Advisory Panel (IAP) meeting here.

He said although the number of universities in Malaysia had increased, many of them still focussed on "old types" of learning and disciplines.

Instead, Dr Mahathir said local universities should move on to relevant subjects such as computer and microchip technology which would enable new things thought impossible before to be done.

"Things like animation, data, information about people, companies and government that can be used in doing business," he said.

He said there would not be an immediate revamp of the education system but the people must learn to understand that radical changes would take place including in the way the country was administered.

He said students should be exposed to new approaches in education as the old method of rote learning would not be enough in the information era and that they would need to keep an open mind regarding new technologies.

"For example, what I learned in the university is almost completely useless now because there are new technologies and new things...you can do surgery using remote control now," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the three-day IAP meeting had enlightened him on the future of information technology (IT) and its impact on the economy.

He said the government was prepared to make the necessary adjustments as eventually, the country would have to accept knowledge-based economy and its ramifications.

The IAP, comprising multimedia industry leaders and gurus, was formed to advise the government on the MSC which is a 750 sq km area south of Kuala Lumpur designated as a hub for multimedia products and services.

Dr Mahathir said he learned a lot about the importance of IT from the IAP participants, futuristic thinkers who could make things happen.

He said Malaysia would take note of their inputs made during the various sessions and would brief his Cabinet colleagues to make them more attuned to the changes that would be taking place.

"We can't apply old laws...for example, in the old days we can censure or ban a newspaper. Today we have lost that power to ban anything because they keep on coming through...so how do we deal with it," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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