

Help set up IT centres, says PM

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JITRA, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the private sector, concerned members of society as well as donors to help the Government set up information technology education centres nationwide.

Taking the Kubang Pasu Community Education Centre here as a model, Dr Mahathir said the country needed more of these to educate people in this crucial field.

"The Government is working hard to set up Smart schools but can only provide facilities for 90 schools at the moment.

"It will aid the effort to create an informed population capable of meeting and overcoming the challenges of globalisation," he said after opening the community cen-

tre here.

The brainchild of the Prime Minister's wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, the centre was set up entirely on funds and computers donated by private companies and individuals.

Among donors and sponsors of the centre and its facilities were the AlBukhary Foundation, Singapore-based company New Star, Sun Micro Systems, Rhythm Consolidated Berhad, Universiti Utara Malaysia and O.Y.L Manufacturing Company Sdn Bhd.

With at least 40 computers, the centre is open to any Kubang Pasu resident who becomes a member and it will offer computer courses from the most basic to the advanced level.

The centre will also allocate a portion of its space and manpower for community activities.

Dr Mahathir also advised the centre's administrators to ensure students and teachers did not misuse its facilities, especially the Internet.

Earlier in her speech Dr Siti Hasmah said at present 65 per cent of computer users were urbanites.

Centres like the one in Jitra would help bridge the information technology divide. It will be managed by the Kelab Penggerak Masyarakat whose members include UUM, Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah, Institut Perguruan Darulaman, the Kubang Pasu district office and the district education office.