

PM's mementoes sold for RM97,903 in Net auction

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — What's hot in Malaysia this month? Tickets for a Backstreet Boys concert this November. Traditional Chinese moon-shaped cakes. A dinosaur theme ride in Johor.

Add Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's old computers to that list — memorabilia from Asia's longest-serving leader fetched scorching prices in a just-concluded Internet charity auction, officials said today.

"There is something about the Prime Minister's name that attracts Malaysians," said Richard Tan, managing director of Interbase Resources, which operates Malaysian trading portal Lelong.com.my.

Tan said that Dr Mahathir's mementoes — two personal computers, a printer, a laptop, and 10 autographed copies of his books — raised RM97,903 in a 10-day online auction which ended on Saturday.

The items sold well despite the website's warning that all the computer gear, mostly used by Dr Mahathir for up to five years in the early 1990s, was "not operational, only for display".

Officials earlier predicted that

the items would raise up to RM70,000 — to finance a scholarship at Multimedia University, which opened two years ago to train a new generation of cyber-savvy workers.

The highest single bids were RM25,000 apiece for a personal computer and laptop that served Dr Mahathir, who has led Malaysia since 1981, for preparing his speeches and juggling his daily schedules.

Some of the winning bidders were corporate juggernauts — including Datuk Shahril Shamsuddin, president of the Sapura Group, and Mohamad Hishamuddin Harun, chief executive officer of health information provider Medical Online.

The auction, aimed at promoting Internet business transactions, was jointly organised with the Multimedia Development Corporation, which runs the Multimedia Super Corridor.

Tan said that Lelong.com was willing to undertake a similar auction in the future.

The website, which has more than 30,000 registered members, claims to attract 10,000 visitors every day and trade goods worth RM1 million. — AP