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Mahathir-Computer

MAHATHIR LAMENTS OVER MALAYSIANS' RELUCTANCE TO LEARN COMPUTERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today lamented that many Malaysians were not taking the trouble to become adept with computers.

"I am not happy because too many people are just not making any effort in terms of how to use the computer," he told reporters after launching the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy for K-economy assembly at Putra Stadium in Bukit Jalil, near here, today.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether he was happy over progress made to make Malaysians computer literate.

He said Malaysians should not wait until they become computer owners before they start to acquire computer skills.

"You must start learning from now. Otherwise, we are going to be left behind," he added.

He was also asked if an imbalance existed in the country as, while the government was encouraging the people and students to become computer literate, there are still students who were unable to pay their examination fees.

Dr Mahathir said, "No, there is no imbalance. If he (the student) says he cannot pay, then we can make some arrangement.

"There is many people who are willing to help. Don't make up sad stories like as if the world does not care."

A total of 650 students in Gua Musang, Kelantan, recently reported that they were unable to pay their examination fees as their families were poor.

This drew the attention of the government and many quarters came forward to help these students overcome their plight.

Earlier, in his opening speech, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians should pool their knowledge and technological capability to produce quality products, made from natural resources, for export at competitive prices.

He said although Malaysia was rich with natural resources like petroleum, gas, rubber, palm oil and cocoa, higher returns from the sale of these commodities cannot be expected unless Malaysians learn to use knowledge to give added value to these resources.

Dr Mahathir cited the example of Japan and countries North of Europe which have been able to use their technological expertise to enrich their countries although they were not richly endowed with natural resources.

"They import natural resources and use their knowledge to turn them into value-added products until they become very rich .. It's clear that knowledge gives higher returns than natural resources," he said.

However, he also said this did not mean the country was going to neglect resource based industries.

Dr Mahathir said to meet the challenges of the knowledge-based economy, every Malaysian should master the use of computers and become information and communication technology literate.

"I urge all of you, Become wise and avail yourselves of a "computer licence" today," he said.

About one thousand people including workers, students and housewives took part in what was dubbed the largest computer tutorial event in the country organised by the Human Resources Ministry.

The record-breaking attempt was endorsed by the Malaysia Book of Records.

In his speech, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said a

similar event would be held in Malacca next month.

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