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Master I.T. for survival

LEARNING is a life-long process that need not be confined to the classroom. Its results are not obvious overnight but the process can be nurtured so that when opportunities come a-knocking, you have the necessary skills at your disposal. The acquisition of knowledge is a long-term investment that provides not just gainful and fulfilling employment, but enriches the intellect and boosts self-esteem.

In an increasingly borderless world dominated by deregulation and global information explosion, only the fittest, fastest and savviest will survive.

Globalisation brings new competitors to the doorstep as well, armed with new and innovative technologies. Staying ahead of the pack has never been an easy task but the acquisition and mastering of knowledge and marketable skills will go a long way in contributing towards some success in tomorrow's virtual marketplace.

But sadly, not many Malaysians are making enough or any effort to learn how to use computers as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad lamented at the launch of the IT Literacy Gathering for K-economy in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday.

His exhortation to Malaysians to start now so that they will not be left behind is understandable, considering the furious pace of the information revolution.

In the last few years, the Government has been drumming into the populace the importance of mastering information and communication technology and making them aware of its efforts in working towards a knowledge-based economy to be in step with the rest of the world.

The learning curve is always easier at a tender age, given the opportunity. Then again, having to start from scratch in the mature years is not impossible if you push yourself to succeed. Knowledge is power, and knowledge cannot be acquired in a closet. Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; but teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime. From primary school students to housewives and fishermen, the understanding of ICT using electronic technology and computers is a must.

More than half of Malaysia's population is below 50 years of age and their youthful profile should be a useful asset if only they have the discipline and the right outlook to respond to changing situations and needs. If there is little commitment to learning, the apathetic attitude will negate the Government's efforts in updating education and training programmes as well as introducing new ones to meet current needs.

In the national budget each year, allocations for education and training are among the highest. Every effort is made to equip teachers with the latest IT-related teaching methods, and plans to narrow the IT gap between rural and urban schools are underway. Parents and teachers have a crucial role to play in instilling in the young the propensity to learn, analyse and rationalise, and these are crucial elements in the struggle for survival.

Considering the impact IT has on our life, the knowledge gained has to be used smartly for it to be effective. In the information superhighway, competition is just a mouse-click away. Consumers are becoming increasingly well informed, and only the smart and innovative entrepreneur who collaborates with strategic partners can satisfy their discerning needs. Only when he has mastered the competitive skills can the

entrepreneur use his know-how to retain an edge over his competitors.
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