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Media 'neglected' the science fair

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THE call by our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for local scientists and industries to be more involved in research and development has been heard loud and clear.

The country's education policy has been tailored to get more students into science at the high school level.

The policy emphasises the need for a science-based society, where more research and development is required to create a knowledge-economy. To this end, the Ministry of Science Technology and Environment has to be commended on its recent Science and Technology Exposition 2001.

The move is in line with Vision 2020.

But it is sad to note that while the organisers may have spent millions of ringgit to make the expo a success, there was a lack of support from the media for publicity before, during and after the media.

This event should have been a great draw for students interested in scientific endeavours in the country, especially those of the tertiary institutions who are the major recipients of public funding.

It should and could have provided some inspiration to budding scientists by featuring research on the new emerging sciences and provide them with role models. It could be used as a platform to inform the public about scientific research.

Unfortunately, these were not achieved as, apart from the advertisement by the company organising the expo, there was hardly any information on what the visitors could expect.

Most newspapers paid no attention and as for television, all I saw (unless I missed it) was a one-minute extract of the PM's speech and a feature on a robot created by a Japanese company.

It is an irony that in this new age of Information and Communications Technology, when the dissemination of information and knowledge is of utmost importance, this could not be achieved.

Surely, the organisers could have negotiated with the media to run features of the expo during the four-day period.

Some stations felt it was more important to talk about research in the United States rather than those from local varsities.

As a result, millions of people, especially the youngsters from outside the Klang Valley and the rural community, missed out on what was supposed to be a milestone in the history of the research in the country.