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#### Weekend training to enhance IT literacy

THE next time you see a busload of people at the multi-purpose hall in your neighbourhood, don't assume that there is a festival going on or the passengers are voters in a by-election.

The bus is actually sent by the Human Resources Ministry to transport the people to the Industrial Training Institute (ITI) for computer training sessions.

According to Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn, the ITIs throughout the country have started to conduct computer training courses during weekend.

"I have asked ITI in every state to allow the public to use their computer facilities for free training during the weekend. "I've also asked them to provide some refreshment and transportation for the rural people," he told a news conference after chairing the ministry's weekly post-Cabinet meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"We want every Malaysian to at least have basic knowledge in information technology (IT), while at the same time we want to upgrade the ICT (Information Communications Technology) literacy among the people to assist the country's move into the knowledge-based economy," he said.

The computer penetration rate in Malaysia is about 10 per cent, which is far behind other countries like Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan which have achieved nearly 50 per cent computer penetration among their population.

He said computer training for the public is a follow-up from the ICT rally, which was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on February 17 at Stadium Putra in Bukit Jalil.

More than 1,000 Malaysians - comprising students, the handicapped, orphans, housewives and workers - have participated in the rally.

The free computer training sessions was made possible by the contribution of 1,000 personal computers by private firms. IT trainers from private and public sectors were around to guide the participants. The event - which was recognised by the Malaysian Book of Records for the largest computer tutorial - is part of the campaign to enhance ICT literacy among Malaysians.

Fong said a series of similar rally at the state level has begun since March 1.

He said the ministry is targeting to train between 4,000 and 5,000 people in each state every year.

So far, he said more than 1,000 Malaysians have benefited from the ICT training sessions conducted by the ministry.

On another question, he said all the ministry's ICT programmes are self-funded and the ministry has not ask for special allocation from the Government for such programmes.

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