

# Dr M: Keep EPF for retirement

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PUTRAJAYA: Savings from the EPF are for contributors to finance their livelihood when they retire and not to be used on computers that are always getting obsolete, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Commenting on the scrapping of the scheme that allowed EPF contributors to withdraw money to buy computers, Dr Mahathir said he was upset that some people misused their own money for other things instead of using it for their retirement.

"I agree that the scheme

should be stopped. It was not what the EPF was set up for.

"It's fine if the money is used to purchase a house, which lasts a long time. But computers are always getting out of date by the time we manage to obtain them.

"If your computer is obsolete, where are you going to get more money to buy it? Certainly not from your EPF savings," he added.

On whether the scheme might slow down the one-computer for each home campaign, Dr Mahathir said the

Government would study other measures.

In Malacca, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said a new way would be studied to promote the use of computers.

An alternative way would be by installing computers at public places

to ensure that the people were not left out in the digital age, he said after closing the convention of the Malaysian Former Elected Representatives Council.

In Kuala Lumpur, Deputy

Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Tan Chai Ho said the "One Computer, One Home" campaign will not be derailed.

He said the Government now offered civil servants a RM5,000 loan to purchase computers at a very low interest of 4%.

The private sector should follow suit now that the EPF computer scheme has been scrapped," he said.

Pos Malaysia and OdaSaja (M) Sdn Bhd, the agents for the EPF scheme, strongly felt

that it was a good way to encourage the use of computers for the country's information technology development.

In a joint press statement, they said the scheme should be resumed hand in hand with a rural IT development programme.

It said the scheme made up nearly 30% of the total computers shipped into the country each month and that scrapping it might lead to the relocation of the manufacturing operations to other countries like China.

However, the Consumers

Association of Penang welcomed the announcement to scrap the scheme.

"The fact is that the majority of EPF members do not have much savings and if they are allowed to withdraw their savings under any more new schemes, there will be little left to pay for their needs in old age," CAP president SM. Mohamed Idris said in a statement yesterday.

Sharing this view, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress said that it was common knowledge that the scheme had been abused by members.