

07/09/2002

PM: Asia needs regional forum for networking in information technology

PETALING JAYA, Fri. - Asia needs a regional forum for networking in information technology to create a culture of risk-taking and knowledge sharing, and to nurture creativity among its youth.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said such an environment was needed for the region to benefit from a knowledge-based economy.

He added that such a culture was also essential to nurturing creativity among the region's youth and to bring back Asian talent which had migrated to Western countries.

Dr Mahathir identified the lack of creativity among Asian youth and the absence of a conducive environment for researchers as key challenges for the region.

"There may be an urgent need for an Asian-wide intellectual forum to enable our researchers to constantly network, exchange ideas and collaborate with each other.

"Such forums will ensure that our researchers are not confined within the boundaries of their own universities or countries," he said in his speech at the Second Asia Pacific ICT Awards ceremony at the Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel tonight.

His speech was read by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok.

Dr Mahathir said these forums were common in the West and focused purely on the latest research and intellectual findings.

He also called on Asian corporations to follow the private sector in the West, which initiated its own research and development and shared knowledge by patenting its intellectual property.

Unfortunately, a lot of Asian corporations do not provide adequate support for ongoing research and development. They tend to inhibit the creative culture by emphasising shortterm gains for the company.

Significant findings are often not shared for fear of losing one's competitive edge or due to unwillingness to risk new ventures.

He noted that Asia was hampered from a more rapid shift to a K-economy because of its low number of researchers.

The most advanced Southeast Asian countries had between 30 and 50 researchers per 10,000 population, while a country like Finland had close to 100 researchers, he said.

Dr Mahathir added that Asian governments had to collaborate in protecting intellectual property across the region, harmonising cyber laws and enhancing co-operation between research centres.

In Malaysia, he said, more local companies had started research and development in ICT.

He said to encourage ICT entrepreneurship, a critical mass of technopreneurs with the aim of making them global players had to be created.

To start Malaysians young, a Smart School programme has been implemented to foster creativity and innovation in children.

Dr Mahathir said the Asia Pacific ICT Awards were a platform for ICT researchers to network and benchmark their products against regional standards.

The awards were introduced last year to encourage innovation among the region's small-and-medium enterprises and individuals in the ICT industry as well as help them penetrate the world market.

Malaysia won three of the 13 Apicta 2002 awards today. The winners were Globetronics Multimedia Tehnology Sdn Bhd in the industrial applications category, Asiatravelmart Sdn Bhd in the tourism category and Victoria Institution's Lee Teck Hua in the secondary school student project category.