

26/07/2002

PM: Review EPF computer scheme

Firdaus Abdullah; Shahrum Sayuthi

PASIR GUDANG, Thurs. - The Employees Provident Fund scheme for computer purchases should be reviewed as it had been clearly abused for monetary gains, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said people had made money instead of buying computers as had been envisaged by the Government.

"Yes. We have the evidence (on the scams) and we will review it. If it is possible we want people to buy computers with their own money," he said when asked if the scheme should be reviewed or scrapped due to rampant abuse.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was in favour of the people having their own computers but preferred them not to use EPF savings.

"But they appeal to us that they don't have money, and they want us to allow them to take money from EPF (to buy the computer).

"We actually don't like people to use their EPF money because it is for their retirement.

"If they spent their money now, later on when they retire they don't have any money to spend," he said, adding that he was personally saddened by the actions of people who "cheated themselves".

He said there were people who withdrew RM3,000 from their EPF savings under the scheme and readily gave computer dealers up to RM2,000 for the purchase of fake purchase receipts.

"But, actually they don't buy a computer and instead only take RM1,000. So stupid!"

He told a Press conference after a working visit to the Johor Port here that the Government was going all out to make Malaysians IT literate and be able to own computers.

However, there were those bent on gaining immediate "monetary gains".

Dr Mahathir said the people should realise they did not have to spend huge amounts to buy a computer.

"It's not that expensive, only RM50 a month. there is no need to use their EPF money," he said, referring to computers made by DRB-Hicom priced at RM2,000 which could be bought by instalment.

Asked about land reclamation by the Singapore government in the Tebrau Straits, he said the Government had made its grievances known to the latter.

He said Malaysia would continue to monitor the situation.

"We are not happy because their reclamation is causing the Straits to narrow. The water is flowing faster and this will hamper shipping activities, particularly those of our naval ships."