

Too many. jabbers spoiled lab project: PM

SUN 24 JUL 2003

by Maria J. Dass
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PIJTRAJAYA: Multiple sub-contracting and the lack of supervision have been identified as reasons for the shoddy workmanship on school computer labs.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is quite disappointed and saddened over the matter.

"When the government gives out such contracts, it takes into account the estimated costs, including that of good building materials, and ensures that contractors receive a proper profit margin."

However, some of these contractors pass down the contracts to sub-contractors, who pass it down to another . . . who passes it on to another, and another, until there are five contractors involved in the building of just one lab.

Speaking at the 24th annual general meeting of Malaysian Malay Contractors Association, he said: "By the time the fifth contractor receives the task, the profit margin is not much. However, to ensure that he, too, makes some money out of the project, he resorts to cost-cutting, including utilising inferior building materials."

"However, when the building collapses, the contractor has the gall to blame the government," he said.

On enforcement, Mahathir said the Public Works Department (PWD) does not have enough manpower to supervise the 10,000 projects all over the country, which is why it has appointed a consultancy firm, he said.

"However, it is surprising to note that the firm, which has two supervisors, is carrying out the job which 2,000 PWD workers have been assigned to do," he said.

PWD supervisors on the other hand, use excuses such as exhausted monthly allowances as excuses not to carry out their

supervisory work at the construction sites, he added.

In the future, district officers and the relevant ministries will also be called in to carry out supervisory work, he said.

Mahathir called on contractors to be honest in carrying out their task.

"Do not wait for the supervisors to turn up before you start to buck up," he said.

"If you are professional and carry out the project well, your work will speak for itself and it will be easier for you to garner contracts in the future," he added.

He said the irresponsible actions of a few bumiputra contractors may mar the reputation of other contractors in the community.

Many have heavy debts and ended up as bankrupts. This reflects badly on other aspiring contractors in the community as the reputation of the community is tarnished by these few bad hats.

"When you fail, do not try to find excuses for yourselves and put the blame on others, this will do no good.

"Look within yourself and examine your faults and rectify them," he said.

Mahathir also urged aspiring contractors not to hastily plunge into the business without learning the basics.

"Go out and work for construction companies, it doesn't matter if you are treated like a labourer because you have to use the opportunity to learn the tricks of the trade.

"Emulate the Chinese," he advised the youth. "They came into the country as labourers, but worked their way up slowly"

Now three to four generations later, they are wealthy, unlike the Malays who made it big in half a generation, he said.

However, it is important for youth especially to learn and pick up the skills of the trade before they take the plunge, he said.