

10 APR 2004

Mahathir-Computers

GREATER COMPUTER LITERACY TO BE ON PAR WITH DEVELOPED NATIONS

MUKAH, April 10 (Bernama) -- Malaysia can be on par with the developed nations by 2020 if present efforts to develop computer literacy among the people are not only sustained but intensified, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We will be able to access the best knowledge from the best local and foreign experts and even from long distance through such sophisticated method." he said when launching SRK Datuk Awang Udin's Cambridge ICT Starter programme here.

The programme, an introduction to the world of information communication technology (ICT), provides a framework for computer skill and knowledge to be acquired and developed in an environment tailored to particular age groups and surroundings.

It is brought to the school by Danawa Resources Sdn and the Mukah foundation and the state government.

Dr Mahathir said computers would make for very comprehensive and real assistance in the country's education process.

Even those living in isolated areas without the presence teachers could access and master knowledge through their computers, he said.

Computers could help narrow the gap in standard between the rural and urban students and as such, it was very important that the government took ICT development very seriously.

He congratulated the state government for its efforts in introducing fibre optics to bring and spread better education in the rural areas.

This would not only benefit the schoolchildren but would also help teachers to upgrade their skills, especially in the teaching of English where immediate reference could be on the correct pronunciation of certain words, he said.

In his speech, Chief Minister Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud said the state government was banking on better ICT facilities to transform

its
workers into a knowledgeable and skilled workforce.

"We have to transform our workers to facilitate our efforts in eradicating poverty among certain sectors of our population like here and in Tanjung Serik where we still find the hardcore poor.

"But this is no easy task as there are more than 5,000 widely scattered longhouses and villages and about 60 per cent of them have only 100 families each," he said.

He said it was the government's aim to introduce similar ICT education programmes to more rural schools in the state.

"We are looking into using fibre optics to establish links with such schools but the absence of good infrastructure is a major problem," he said.

He said that while a broadband wireless network was suitable for flat areas, a satellite link, though very costly, was suitable for highland areas.

Meanwhile, state Education Director Dr Adi Badiozaman said the department had received an allocation of RM356 million for the development of rural education.

This included funds for building 1,610 teachers' quarters and bringing water and electricity supply to the rural schools, he told reporters before the launch of the ICT programme.

He also said that RM142.2 million had been received to buy equipment for the teaching of Science and Mathematics.

A total of 164 computer laboratories out of the targeted 200 had been completed at a cost of RM35.5 million and were waiting to be handed over while 110 primary schools had been equipped with ICT facilities through the satellite-based Universal Service Provision System, he added.

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