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'Crucial to have strategies for skills enhancement'

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - It is more crucial than ever for government agencies, training institutions and players in the industrial sector to work out strategies to enhance skills of the country's human resource, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said this would ensure that the country did not lag behind developed nations.

Speaking at the presentation of the Prime Minister's Golden Hands Award 2003, he said the unsatisfactory performance by participants was reflected in their inability to measure up to the projects' benchmark set according to international standards.

"This is a great challenge for us and a reminder that there is a lot more to be done if we do not want to be left behind," he said.

Abdullah added that enhanced skills would determine the advancement of the country's industrial sector.

He said even if the Government were to provide the most modern of technologies, facilities or incentives, it would not bring much benefit to the country if its human resource lacked skills.

"If our manpower is not prepared with expertise and lacks competitiveness, this would cause the country to lose out as the results would be far from desired."

Praising organisers of the competition for using world standards as a benchmark in the adjudication process, he said those in the sector should aim to meet the requirements and emulate the dynamism of others to enhance their skills.

Abdullah said the Government had embarked on various initiatives to produce a workforce for the industrial sector and gradually lessen the country's dependence on foreign labour.

This, he said, included the setting-up of training centres equipped with the latest technologies.

In the increasingly challenging industrial world, he said it was up to the players in the sector to remain competitive and continuously enhance their skills or face being left far behind.

"There is no room for incompetence, complacency or a lackadaisical attitude if we want to see the country move forward," he said.

On the competition, which was the brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Abdullah said it would continue to serve as a benchmark for training and industrial skills of those in the sector.

Since last month, participants had competed in 27 skills categories.

Recipients of the Golden Hands awards were Haizulizuan Mat Yunan (Outstanding Artist), Cassian Tan (Outstanding Pastry Chef) and Ng Say Siong (Outstanding Chef). The Kuantan branch Pusat Giat Mara won in the best institution category.

Present was Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.