

# PM: Competitive workforce needed

**PETALING JAYA:** Focus must be given to the nation's talent and resources, capacity building and skill enhancement programmes in private and public sectors.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad hoped that the country could produce a competitive, productive and relevant workforce tailored to meet the needs of the industry, as well as present and future needs.

"The government has put in place new initiatives and programmes for the nation to move forward. Young people figure prominently in all aspects of it, either participating directly or that the initiatives are specifically aimed at empowering them.

"My hope is that we can harness positive values of the youth — their idealism, enthusiasm, commitment and dedication," he said at the Malaysia Trailblazers Foundation (MyPerintis) fourth anniversary and fundraising dinner here last night.

He launched the MyPerintis Kurnia's Adiwira programme, which focused on educating children and parents about road safety, and helped distribute more than 50,000 motorcycle helmets.

Present were Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik and MyPer-

intis founding president Datuk Lawrence Low.

Dr Mahathir said to inculcate these values, the younger generation must be prompted and to do this, quality education must be promoted.

He said young people should be competitive and prepared to go the extra mile in pursuing their dreams and ambitions, with good core values.

"They have to realise that there's no shortcuts to success."

He said the government hoped that the younger generation could rise to the challenge, explore their potential and make an impact.

"I hope to see more programmes that prioritise education, employability, entrepreneurship, arts and culture, as well as volunteerism."

Dr Mahathir, who is MyPerintis patron, said the initiatives undertaken by the foundation were consistent with the government's "Shared Prosperity" vision that aspired to ensure that the nation's wealth and development were enjoyed by all Malaysians.

He said the vision was pursued to ensure Malaysia continued on its path of sustainable development, which would in turn ensure harmony and stability.

He said the government would

study a United Nations representative's claims on the nation's poverty rate.

He said the government would review the methodology to determine poverty levels.

"We will study what they said to find out whether it is true."

Philip Alston, a UN human rights expert, claimed that Malaysia's poverty level was far higher than reported. He said official figures were vastly inaccurate and did not reflect realities on the ground.

The special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights said the official numbers relied on outdated measures, with the poverty line remaining at the same level for decades despite increasingly high costs of living.

He claimed that analyses done by independent groups had suggested that Malaysia had "significant poverty" and that its actual poverty rate was 15 per cent.

Alston urged Malaysia to reassess its methods for measuring poverty and take into account vulnerable groups excluded from the data, such as stateless families, migrant workers and refugees.

Malaysia's official poverty rate was at 0.4 per cent in 2016.