

Dr M: Malaysians drifting apart but future bright
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BRIGHT FUTURE FOR MALAYSIANS: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned Malaysia that it is lagging in the IT stake compared to its neighbours, who will be fierce competitors in the next decades. (From left) Berjaya Corp Bhd chairman and CEO Tan Sri Vincent Tan, Petroliam Nasional Bhd chairman Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan and Dr Mahathir mingle after he delivered his closing address at the CEO Forum 2013 organised by Perdana Leadership Foundation at Berjaya Times Square Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur (Pic by Hafzi Mohamed)

Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned Malaysia that it is lagging in the IT stake to its neighbours, who will be fierce competitors in the next decades.

Speaking at the Perdana Leadership Foundation CEO Forum 2013 yesterday, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians will need to work together to face this new challenge, which is the latest in the long list of challenges it has faced in the past.

“Malaysia bucked the trend many times in the past. It may do it again and it will progress further, though I may not be here to see it,” Dr Mahathir said.

He said Malaysia’s move to become a cohesive nation took a beating in the last general election when people voted based on racial background rather than issues.

The former prime minister also said the one national culture based on Malay culture also failed, while religion acted as a barrier that did not bring the people together in the country.

Fellow of Academy of Sciences Malaysia Tengku Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen Tengku Ibrahim said Malaysia is lagging behind in ICT though the sector has reduced transaction costs to almost zero.

“The challenge is competitiveness. We are not competitive enough and we are not producing innovative solutions and ICT personnel,” he said at the same event.

He said Malaysia should focus on IT and provide cheaper and more reliable Internet networks, adding that Malaysia was placed 25th on the global index on competitiveness and 30th in network readiness.

Malaysia's external challenges were also the focus of 35 CEOs, who agreed that the country's declining competitiveness needed solutions that will enhance the country's status as a global economic player.

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