

**OPENING ADDRESS BY YB DATUK MAHADZIR MOHD. KHIR,
PARLIAMENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
ON THE OCCASION OF OFFICIAL OPENING OF
E-LEARNING CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2001
ON 8 JUNE 2001, AT 9.00 A.M.
AT THE SUNWAY PYRAMID CONVENTION CENTRE,
PETALING JAYA**

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and a very Good Morning.

Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Johari Mat,
Ketua Setiausaha, Kementerian Pendidikan

Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Dato' Dr Hj Abdullah Sanusi bin Ahmad,
Executive Chairman, Multimedia Technology Enhancement Operations
(METEOR) Sdn Bhd

Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by congratulating the organiser i.e. Multimedia Technology Enhancement Operations (METEOR) Sdn Bhd (a consortium of 11 public universities) for their initiative in hosting this premier e-educational event. I wish to extend my warmest welcome to all honourable guests and the press who are represented here this morning to witness the official opening of e-learning 2001 Conference and Exhibition. Your presence here today is very much appreciated and with your support, we hope that the event will be a great success.

The theme chosen "Towards Building e-Learning Society" is very appropriate in the light of the effort of the Malaysian Government to establish a knowledge driven society, as part of the agenda in preparation for the Knowledge Economy (K-Economy).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

E-learning is still a fairly new term to the people in Malaysia and Asia, although similar concept has been developed and propagated in the west for the past 10 years. ^{Information and Communication Technology or} ICT is now regarded as a global communication enabler. Education can now capitalize on leading-edge technologies to explore new ways of teaching-learning and training. The conventional study environment needs to be restructured to be more interactive to accommodate to the changing trends of new emerging educational challenges.

The increasing importance and pervasiveness of ICT in the world, its transformative impact on society and its dynamism are just some of the features that demand expression of a deeper meaning for ICT than is necessary for other traditional technologies. This requires a process of information acculturation which goes beyond awareness creation to changes in attitude and behavioral patterns. Therefore, a shared vision of IT must be created.

The launching of e-learning 2001 is timely as it is ~~conceptually intended to~~ ^{will help to create} ~~produce a new generation of Malaysians who are intellectually competent and~~ ^{greater awareness and understanding among all sections} ~~of our community of the need to be ICT-competent.~~ ^{of the need to be ICT-competent.} This is in consonant with the Government's mission to develop a world-class quality education. With the break-through in ICT, we are on the route towards the institutionalization of ICT in ^{the} education system. This appreciation ^{has} resulted in the emergence of the Smart School Concept ^{where} ~~to~~ the students will be adapted to the internet technologies and able to access and manage the information explosion. I hope to see both the public and private sectors play a more proactive role in developing the education environment towards greater academic excellence through the use of ICT. The public/private universities can help by developing educational softwares and coursewares which are at forefront of technology and knowledge.

I am glad to know that this conference has received overwhelming support from both the public and private education sectors. The participating companies in the exhibition are showcasing the latest educational technologies, emerging ICT applications and IT training solutions and IT education. The public, especially the parents and the students, should grab this opportunity to appreciate the importance of e-education.

the internet, and the internet, as all of us know, is a source of information without borders. For better or worse, this is an undeniable fact. Knowledge is power and there is no knowledge that is useless.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The days of a traditional economy are fast drawing to an end. The exchange of information, knowledge and technical know-how between nations is fast gaining primacy in the global scene. Malaysia is steadily moving towards a knowledge-based manpower in which intellectual capital will determine our competitiveness in the global market. As far as accumulating intellectual capital is concerned, ~~what is more sensible than to highlight and focus on the very basis of learning, which is education itself!~~ *The prime focus for all of us should be the educational sector.* The key to building a premium stock of intellectual capital can be achieved through e-learning, ~~coupled with a revitalized form of traditional learning.~~ *concurrently the education sector must be revitalized its traditional learning environment.* This is where this conference and exhibition come in. It aims to fully explore the future directions of e-learning in Malaysia, and intends to achieve this end by bringing together universities, e-learning solution providers, regulators and courseware providers.

Learning is a lifelong process and with the advent of technology, certain issues will need to be reevaluated. ~~E-learning is~~ *can be* ~~surely~~ the new engine of growth for ~~education.~~ *the sector.* ~~E-learning~~ is essentially the use of information and communication technologies or ~~ICT~~ to deliver a broad array of solutions in the delivery of teaching and learning. Unbounded by space and time,

communication via ICT is more dynamic and fluid. It renders learning more accessible, ~~and~~ flexible, ~~plain and simple~~ ^{and fast}. Information stored in the web or CD-Roms can be retrieved at anytime and anywhere with a ~~minimum of fuss~~ ^{steadily}.

As such, the technology renders learning more readily available for ~~non-~~ students, ~~for example~~, working adults or housewives, perhaps even retirees.

They can proceed at their own pace, for the computer is infinitely patient and non-judgmental. This will very likely cultivate in them a true thirst for knowledge.

A point of caution here, however, ^{is that} e-learning can never entirely replace conventional methods of learning. It remains pertinent, ^{but} that students ^{must} learn to ^{source} effectively and efficiently ^{source} for information, ^{effectively and be able to} to critically evaluate

information, to make decisions and to solve problems. Towards this end, there

is a need to modify the learning culture among students, ^{from passive listeners} primarily the "being ^{to active knowledge seekers — knowing "how-to-learn".} taught" attitude. This attitude has to be molded into a "how-to-learn" attitude.

Traditional methods of learning and teaching are no longer adequate. In these changing times, there is a definite need to revamp teaching and learning methods if we are not to be left behind. Since e-learning requires a lot of independent self-study, we are in fact talking about how we can revitalize traditional methods of learning, rather than completely doing away with them.

We must find the most effective ways to integrate e-learning into traditional learning methods.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a lot of work to be done if we, as a nation, are to move towards an e-learning society. We need to start with the building of an e-learning strategy, a master plan perhaps which would have a greater possibility of success. I foresee that the relevant organizations would need to consider the following issues ^{in order to pursue appropriate} in the light of ensuring the fruition of any strategies pertaining to e-learning:

- New approaches to e-learning. These would include fresh, new and creative instructional strategies in regards to the provision of courseware and business simulations, and the knowledge management that provides informational databases and performance support tools.
- Learning architecture. This would serve to coordinate e-learning with the rest of the organization's learning and training efforts.
- Infrastructure. This pertains to the use of the organization's technological capabilities to deliver and manage e-learning. This must surely include general web access to learning management systems. The repercussions of an inferior infrastructure can never be underestimated.
- Learning culture, management ownership, and change management. These include the creation of an organizational environment that actually

encourages e-learning. This must be supported by the commitment of senior management of the training organisation. An e-learning champion and role model ^{must emerge} will ~~certainly work wonders~~ for the process of integrating e-learning in any organization.

- Reinventing the training management. This entails the adoption of an organizational and business model which will support rather than hinder the growth of e-learning.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The launching of this event is ^{significant and laudable.} ~~consistent with the government's mission towards the actualization of Malaysia into a fully developed nation by the year 2020. We have, without a doubt, the means to achieve this vision. Geographically, we are strategically located, and we possess the political leadership and high literacy rate to bolster our goal.~~ I strongly believe that the E-Learning 2001 will be a successful event which will benefit all of us. Once again, to all the distinguished exhibitors we thank you for your strong support. With that, I am pleased to declare open the E-Learning Conference & Exhibition 2001.

Thank you.