

# Emphasis on human capital development

By SUSHMA VEERA

KUALA LUMPUR: Human capital development is one of the main thrusts in the 9th Malaysia Plan (9MP) announced yesterday by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The focus is on a holistic approach and the inculcation of strong moral and ethical values. The education, training and lifelong learning delivery systems will also be improved to enhance the quality of human capital and produce the "towering individuals" to meet the challenges of development and drive a knowledge-based economy.

Public institutions of higher education will also establish centres for continuing education and offering more places with flexible entry requirements of up to 10 per cent of intake at diploma and degree levels.

Both Open Universiti of Malaysia and Universiti Tun Abdul Razak will be encouraged to offer more programmes at masters and doctorate levels to cater to the needs of working people.

*The Malay Mail* sought the views of several organisations. They acknowledged that pressure on students to score straight As had cost them in analytical skills.

They also supported the Government's plan to improve the system to enhance the quality of human capital. Below is a sampling of their views:

● **Shamsuddin Bardan**, Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), executive director:

"The school-leavers' working



skills are as good as nil. They can read and write but when it comes to problem-solving, they fail.

"Students tend to memorise to score straight As instead of understanding the subject. Revamping the curriculum is a good move. It would be good if the schools can provide technical education and let the students learn hands-on skills. However, these skills should not be fully exam-oriented.

"Employers should also provide the staff with on-the-job training. By doing so, the staff is able to acquire new skills to contribute to the firm's productivity.

"The Human Resource Development Fund plays a vital role in encouraging employers to promote this."

● **Dr Lee Fah Onn**, Inti College, senior vice-president:

"In general, students coming to Inti College are well-qualified although some of them lack communication and thinking skills.

"I agree that our school system emphasises memorisation of facts rather than understanding of concepts and issues.

"This is aggravated by the obsession with examination results.

"The present higher education system is prescriptive in subject selection and limits the ability of



**Shamsuddin:** *Let students learn hands-on skills*

students in the choice of courses and subjects.

"Related to this, is the continuation of habits brought forward from secondary school. As a result, university students today generally do not display critical thinking skills."

● **Kamariah Mohd Noor**, Open Universiti Malaysia, registrar:

"We have a system that emphasises students' ability to assess.

"We encourage our students to provide answers that apply to the real world. We do not want them to give us recall answers."

"They also learn through a self-managed learning system, in which they are required to read up before a tutorial.

"During tutorials, they must actively participate in all discussions."



**Lee:** *Obsession with exam grades*

● **Ng Su Onn**, McDonald's Malaysia, executive vice-president:

"We have a significant number of school-leavers working with us either part-time or full-time. They are fast-learners and able to pick up skills easily.

"McDonald's has developed a systematic approach, whereby training is staggered in such way new workers are able to gradually adapt to the system.

"We provide intensive on-the-job training to ensure our staff are equipped to work in our restaurants and maintain standards set by the organisation.

"At McDonald's, it is a priority to develop our people by providing them the right training and exposure.

"We have a number of senior managers who started their career as crew members."