

'Speed up efforts to improve Internet access for students'

IT is impossible to solve Malaysia's digital divide overnight.

But the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (Mapcu) hopes the government will speed up efforts to improve Internet access for the benefit of students.

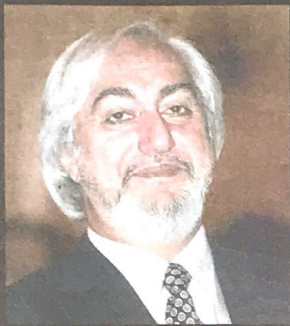
"We need to acknowledge that there are still areas in Malaysia that still lack proper and reliable Internet access, particularly in the remote villages," says Mapcu president Datuk Dr Parmjit Singh.

He was commenting on Veveonah Mosibin, a Universiti Malaysia Sabah student, who posted a video on YouTube of her climbing a tree in her village in Pitas, Sabah, to get an Internet connection to sit for her online examinations.

Dr Parmjit says Mapcu applauds Veveonah's resilience and determination in finding solutions to her problems, but such digital divide simply cannot be eradicated overnight.

"I am sure that Veveonah's poignant situation is not unique to her village or even to Sabah, and that there are thousands of students throughout the country who still face similar difficulties.

"We hope and trust that the Government - working closely with telecommunication companies - will speed up efforts to



Datuk Dr Parmjit Singh

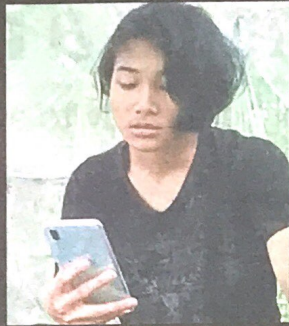
expand access.

"It's certainly not an easy undertaking due to the remoteness of some areas," he acknowledges.

However, while this happens, Dr Parmjit says other students should not be deprived of learning opportunities.

"Higher learning institutions need to demonstrate flexibility by enabling students with difficulties to undertake alternative modes of learning and assessment.

"For example, this could include moving away from insisting on having online live exams towards encouraging lecturers to implement other forms of assessments.



Veveonah Mosibin

"After all, the focus should be on learning outcomes, and not the methods by which those outcomes are assessed," he says.

Meanwhile, some university students admit facing problems with Internet connectivity at times, but in general, they enjoy the hybrid learning experience.

Business administration student Reshmi L. Kennedy, 18, says poor Internet connection and speed has caused disruptions during her online lectures.

"I would frequently get disconnected and have to leave the session to subsequently try to join back in.

"So I will definitely feel a bit lost as some time would have passed before I am reconnected," she says, adding that she attends face-to-face tutorial lessons once a week per subject.

Fortunately, her lecturers are understanding of the issue and would repeat if students have missed a certain part of the lesson.

Engineering student P.H. Saheli, 18, recalls having to move from one room to another at home to improve the connection before being able to see and hear the lecturer.

"I like attending classes physically, but I have found perks in online learning.

"For example, I get to rewatch lessons and go through them thoroughly to understand a particular subject matter," she says.

Foundation year student Tisha Jamie D'Cruz, 18, says laptops are a necessity because some of the apps and websites used in lesson may not be compatible on phones or tablets.

"Phones are also quite small which will cause strain to the eyes.

"I still prefer physical classrooms as I'll be able to focus and interact with my peers when having discussions rather than through a screen," she says.

