

Ten-fold increase in use of rubber by 1990

yesterday. **2.4M**
KUALA LUMPUR,
Thurs. — Malaysia plans to increase by about 10 times the amount of natural rubber consumed locally between 1980 and 1990, Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed said today.

At present only about 30,000 tons, out of the 1.6 million tons of rubber produced in the country annually, are used for manufacture in Malaysia, he added.

Dr. Mahathir was speaking at the opening of the \$10 million Technology Centre of the Rubber Research Institute at Sungai Buloh near here.

He said Malaysia was confident that her industrial growth would benefit from the manufacture of rubber-based prod-

ucts.

"In the light of the Malaysian Government's policy of promoting employment and expanding its manufactured exports, the possibilities for developing rubber-based industries cannot be over-emphasised," he said.

Home market

"Indeed, viable and dynamic industrial development dictates that Malaysia with its advantages in rubber must exploit these opportunities to the full.

"Therefore, while we would continue to export raw natural rubber in 1980s and 1990s in even greater quantities than today, the planned approach is to increase our present utilisation of raw rubber from 30,000 tons to something of the order

of 300,000 tons in the 1980-1990 period."

He said that apart from the abundance of cheaper raw material, there was an availability of skilled and semi-skilled labour, a reservoir of technical expertise already acquired, and technical advantages of integrating production with manufacturing.

Referring to the technology centre, he said it was set up to spearhead rubber-based industrialisation.

"The centre that we can see before us is ample testimony to Malaysia's determination to promote a viable rubber product manufacturing industry," he said.

The centre was equipped with the most advanced facilities for processing, fabricating, product testing and technological research.

He said that it would not only catalyse and accelerate developments,

but also provide troubleshooting and advisory services to rubber industrialists.

He said that apart from the utilisation of indigenous raw materials, the centre was in an advantageous position to foster and promote the creation of an Asian-oriented rubber product technology.

In view of the relative smallness of the domestic market, any expansion of the rubber product manufacturing industry must be export-oriented.

He said the centre was fully attuned towards providing the necessary facilities to ensure the quality of Malaysian rubber products.

He said the Malaysian Rubber Research and Development Board (MRRDB) had commissioned a professional market survey team with Malaysian counterparts to study the potential markets and market development strategies for Malaysian-made rubber products.

He said the study was being made in view of the limited domestic market and the fact that the marketing of finished rubber products was a complex process involving far more distributive steps than the marketing of raw rubber.

Education

"The Malaysian rubber bureaux abroad are also geared to assist in the industrialisation effort. Jointly with Fida, the MRRDB will hold seminars in selected centres overseas on rubber-based industries in Malaysia," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister added that the prospects for accelerated growth of the country's economy were bright.

There were large areas of potentially productive agriculture land. Therefore, there was substantial scope for expanding agricultural production and raw material-based industrial development.

He said the country had also substantial reserves of oil and natural gas.

Earlier, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Musa Hitam said the centre, the most foremost rubber research technology centre in the world, was operated wholly by Malaysians.

"This is indicative of

our education policy that had all along attempted to stress the importance for the country to develop an education system based on science and technology," he said.