

MAHATHIR-PLYWOOD 2 79

KUCHING, MARCH 17 (BERNAMA) — DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY SUGGESTED THAT THE KOREA, MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE PLYWOOD ASSOCIATIONS (KOMASI) MAKE FURTHER EFFORTS TO SEEK BETTER MARKET FACILITIES FOR THEIR PRODUCTS.

HE SAID THEY MUST BE PREPARED TO DO SO TO THE EXTENT OF GOING TO THE EEC HEADQUARTERS IN BRUSSELS TO SECURE MORE CONCESSIONS FOR THE PRODUCTS OR PERSUADE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO REMOVE ITS EXISTING TRADE BARRIERS.

OPENING AN \$18-MILLION PLYWOOD FACTORY HERE, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ALSO URGED MAJOR IMPORTING NATIONS, PARTICULARLY THE EEC COUNTRIES, THE UNITED STATES, AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN, TO POSITIVELY RESPOND TO MALAYSIA'S REQUEST TO REMOVE THEIR TRADE BARRIERS.

HE REGRETTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT EFFORTS SO FAR TO SEEK AN EXPANDED MARKET FOR ITS FOREST PRODUCTS HAD BEEN FRUSTRATED BY THE RESTRICTIVE MEASURES ADOPTED BY THESE COUNTRIES.

— BERNAMA MORE 1956/A1

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HE ASSURED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION BILATERALLY AS WELL AS AT INTERNATIONAL FORUMS TO SEEK TRADE LIBERALISATION AND IMPROVED MARKET FOR THE COUNTRY'S TIMBER AND TIMBER PRODUCTS INCLUDING PLYWOOD.

HE SAID THE PLYWOOD TRADE HAD BECOME ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT INDUSTRIES IN THE COUNTRY.

THE EXPORT OF PLYWOOD FOR THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF LAST YEAR HAD CONTRIBUTED TO 1.1 PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL EXPORT EARNINGS WHILE THE VALUE HAD ALSO INCREASED BY 13 PER CENT COMPARED WITH THE CORRESPONDING PERIOD THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

DESCRIBING THIS TREND AS +ENCOURAGING+, HE STRESSED THAT EVERYTHING POSSIBLE MUST BE DONE TO SUSTAIN AND INCREASE ITS EXPORT. — BERNAMA MORE 2001/A1

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+IN THIS CONTEXT, IT IS MY FERVENT HOPE THAT THE PLYWOOD INDUSTRY WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY ITS ROLE IN REALISING THESE OBJECTIVES, BEARING IN MIND THAT EXPORT IS EXPECTED TO GROW BY 1.9 PER CENT ANNUALLY DURING THE THIRD MALAYSIA PLAN PERIOD AND FORM 38.1 PER CENT BY VALUE OF MALAYSIA'S TOTAL EXPORTS BY 1990.+

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ALSO FELT THAT THERE WAS A NEED FOR THE PLYWOOD INDUSTRY ITSELF TO TAKE APPROPRIATE MEASURES IN A CONCERTED WAY TO ENSURE A CONTINUED MARKET FOR MALAYSIA'S PLYWOOD.

THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY WOULD ALSO CONTINUE TO RENDER EVERY POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO FACILITATE THE EXPORT OF THE PRODUCT, HE ADDED.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ALSO NOTED THAT MALAYSIA WAS STILL ONE OF THE LARGEST SUPPLIERS OF TROPICAL HARDWOOD PLYWOOD TO THE UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE, WITH 40 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL EXPORTS BEING CHANNELLED TO THE EEC COUNTRIES AND OVER 36 PER CENT TO THE UK.

HE ADDED THAT WEST ASIAN COUNTRIES WERE BECOMING AN IMPORTANT OUTLET FOR MALAYSIA'S PLYWOOD. —BERNAMA MORE 2006/AH

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CHIEF MINISTER DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI HAJI ABDUL RAHMAN YAKUB IN HIS SPEECH URGED BUMIPUTRA COMPANIES TO TAKE ACTIVE PART IN THE TIMBER TRADE TO STEP UP PRODUCTION OF THE STATE'S FOREST RESOURCES.

THEIR PARTICIPATION WOULD ALSO HELP TO PROVIDE MORE JOBS, HE ADDED.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT WHILE IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR LOCAL OR FOREIGN INVESTORS TO BE GIVEN INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE THEM SET UP INDUSTRIES, SUCH INCENTIVES SHOULD BE OFFERED WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION.

+OTHERWISE, IT WOULD GIVE RISE TO PROBLEMS THAT COULD HINDER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS IN THE STATE,+ HE SAID.

EARLIER, THE COMPANY CHAIRMAN, DATUK HAJI BUJANG MOHAMAD NOR SAID THE FACTORY WHEN FULLY OPERATIONAL COULD PRODUCE 8,000 PANELS OF PLYWOOD A DAY AND PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT FOR 500 PEOPLE.

SIXTY TO 80 PER CENT OF THE PRODUCTS WOULD BE EXPORTED, HE ADDED9 — BERNAMA 2008/11