

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER: WHAT IS NEEDED

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The acceptance of new technology requires a certain degree of discipline and desire for change and self-improvement, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He also listed three prerequisites before transfer of technology and application of the new-found technology by the recipient country can succeed.

These were:

- The cultural adaptation to new technology;
- The provision of trained manpower; and
- Properly defined research and development.

The Prime Minister was opening the *International Symposium on Technology, Culture and Development* at the University of Malaya here.

The three-day symposium is jointly sponsored by the Centro di Ricerca e Documentazione Febbraio '74 of Italy, Honda Foundation and International Association of Traffic and Safety Sciences (IATSS) of Japan and the University of Malaya.

The participants comprise professionals and professors from Japan, Italy, Singapore and Malaysia.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said a society was the result or the product of its culture, particularly the value system aspect, which is influenced by the society's environment.

He pointed out that environment, however, could affect different societies in different ways — continuous hardship might either reduce a society to passive fatality or induce hardiness.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said that in a society which was passive or fatalist in its philosophy, the value system would be such that innovation and inventiveness would be rare.

"In the really bad cases, the society is given to extreme self-pity and dependence on others... (which) is, in fact, a characteristic of a lot of underdeveloped or developing countries.

"There is no reaching out for knowledge and advancement. Rather, there is a continuous clamour to be given everything in the ready-to-use state," he said.

Pointing out that in such a society, technology transfer was not possible or, at least, not easy to achieve, he said that cultural resistance must be overcome before technology can be transferred successfully.

The Prime Minister said this could only be done if there was an understanding of the culture of the recipient community or the differences between those transferring the technology and the recipients.

He also said that trained manpower would be needed in recipient countries before they could absorb imported technologies.

"This principle seems to be commonsense yet it is often forgotten in the surge of national pride and personal greed that lead to an excessive absorption of foreign technology.

"Absorption of foreign technologies implies and involves cultural changes. If the cultural changes are incompatible with the existing culture, then disorientation and confusion results," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also stressed that there was no real substitute for sustained research and development done locally.

"In a world dominated by national self-interest, it would be naive to expect any country to carry out research and development for the benefit of another country.

"We must carry out our own research and development to meet our own needs. Any work done by other countries should be regarded as a bonus," he said.

He added: "Our primary problem is to identify areas in which we wish to disburse our limited research funds. Research results are the tasks of scientists. Priorities for funding are the business of the policymakers. Harmony between these two parties will optimise progress."