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(P)

KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 18 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY STRESSED THE URGENT NEED FOR MALAYSIA TO HAVE MICROELECTRONICS EXPERTISE TO VENTURE INTO HIGH-TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRIES.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE MICROCHIP WAS A VITAL COMPONENT IN THE REGULATION OF MECHANICAL OPERATIONS.

+AS LONG AS WE DO NOT MASTER KNOWLEDGE OF MICROCHIPS, WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO ENTER FIELDS LIKE THE COMPUTER FIELD AND ROBOTICS,+ HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER OPENING THE MALAYSIAN INSTITUTE OF MICROELECTRONICS SYSTEM (MIMOS) HERE.

HE ALSO SAID THE SUCCESS OF EFFORTS TO TURN MALAYSIA INTO A NEWLY-INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRY (NIC) DEPENDED ON THE INITIATIVE OF ENTREPRENEURS TO VENTURE INTO HIGH-TECHNOLOGY FIELDS.

THE GOVERNMENT COULD ONLY PROVIDE THEM ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE BUT COULD NOT FORCE THEM INTO THESE FIELDS.

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID MALAYSIAN ENTREPRENEURS AT PRESENT WERE NOT BRAVE ENOUGH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR FULLY LIKE THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA, AND THEIR ACTIVITIES WERE MOSTLY CONFINED TO TRADITIONAL AREAS LIKE HOUSING AND PLANTATIONS.

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO SAID MIMOS WAS SET UP TO UPGRADE MALAYSIA'S KNOWLEDGE IN MICROELECTRONICS.

HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH MALAYSIA WAS THE BIGGEST PRODUCER OF MICROCHIPS AFTER JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES, THE COUNTRY STILL LACKED KNOWLEDGE IN THIS FIELD.

THEREFORE THROUGH MIMOS, THERE WOULD BE GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF MICROCHIP PRODUCTION, HE ADDED.

THE INSTITUTE WOULD ALSO DETERMINE WHETHER MALAYSIA COULD DESIGN ITS OWN MICROCHIP FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION OR EXPORT. -- MORE

1717MST 18 05 85

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TOWARDS THIS END, MIMOS WOULD PROVIDE COURSES ON MICROELECTRONICS FOR GOVERNMENT ENGINEERS AND THOSE FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION ON THE EFFECTS OF THE NATION'S DEPENDENCE ON THE ELECTRONIC INDUSTRY, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID FLUCTUATING DEMAND FOR MICROCHIPS WAS NORMAL.

UTILISATION OF MICROCHIPS WAS BECOMING WIDESPREAD AND THEIR DEMAND WOULD INCREASE AS EXPERTS DISCOVERED MORE USES FOR THEM.

THE PRIME MINISTER DENIED THAT THE MICROELECTRONIC INDUSTRY FLOURISHED IN THE COUNTRY DUE TO WHAT WAS SAID TO BE AVAILABILITY OF CHEAP LABOUR.

HE POINTED OUT THAT MALAYSIA HAD TO COMPETE WITH CHINA WHICH OFFERED CHEAPER LABOUR.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR EARLIER SIGNED A MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION ON BEHALF OF MIMOS WITH THREE FIRMS, FROM BRITAIN, SWEDEN AND ITALY.

THEY ARE ERICSSON, MARCONI DAN TELEFONAKTIEBOLAGET.

HE SAID A SIMILAR MEMORANDUM WOULD BE SIGNED SOON WITH TWO FIRMS FROM JAPAN.

MIMOS, SET UP AS A UNIT UNDER THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT, BEGAN OPERATIONS ON JAN 1 THIS YEAR. -- BERNAMA

1337MST 18 05 85