

**'Go beyond housing,
rubber and oil palm planting'**

PM: Venture further afield

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Malaysia may never enter the world of sophisticated manufacturing technology if entrepreneurs continue to limit themselves to housing, planting rubber and oil palm.

"Malaysians are not very enterprising. This is my sore point," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Our entrepreneurship here is limited to housing, planting rubber trees and oil palm."

But when it came to manufacturing, particularly products using new and sophisticated technology, Malaysians were usually uninterested or unwilling to participate.

"If Malaysians don't want to manufacture, then we will remain an underdeveloped country and will never become an NIC (newly-industrialised country)."

He pointed out the example of entrepreneurs and manufacturers in NICs such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea, who were producing all kinds of high technology goods.

"We need entrepreneurs like them."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to newsmen after visiting the Malaysian Insti-

long as we don't have the knowledge, we will never be able to enter the new manufacturing areas such as computers, robotics and bionics."

One of the steps taken to assist Malaysian entrepreneurs in obtaining the proper and latest sophisticated technical knowledge and expertise is the establishment of MIMOS.

MIMOS, which started operations in January as a unit in the Prime Minister's Department, organises seminars, courses and workshops for engineers and scientists in all sectors. It also conducts research and development for both public and private organisations and companies involved in micro-electronic work for domestic and international use.

The institute, given a launching grant of \$5 million, also aims at encouraging and supporting the creation of new micro-electronic-based industries.

■ Making our own
chip: P4

tute of Micro-Electronic Systems (MIMOS).

The Government could provide all kinds of incentives, back-up services as well as the infrastructure necessary for the new technology manufacturing sector, "but we cannot literally pull the entrepreneurs by the neck and force them and tell them, here you must manufacture this."

He admitted however, that while Malaysia was the third largest producer of micro-chips — after Japan and the United States — its knowledge in terms of research and design was still rather shallow.

"We need to know exactly what we are doing so that we can design and produce micro-chips ourselves."

On the possibility that Malaysia could become overly dependent on the electronics industry, which suffers from constant fluctuations, Dr Mahathir said demand for electronic goods would always exist as long as people could think of new and innovative ways of utilising them.

"This is an intelligent industry and it depends on how people use micro-electronic devices.

"There is no limit to human intelligence. If people can think up more uses for them, then there will be bigger demand."

At the same time however, workers employed in the electronics industry face insecurity with increasing automation.

Dr Mahathir said there would naturally be less demand for manual labour when companies automate their production lines.

However, there are other related and manufacturing industries further down the line which will be able to sustain employment of these workers who are displaced by automation.