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MAHATHIR-TECHNOLOGY
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BANGI, NOV 2 (BERNAMA) -- MALAYSIA WILL NEVER MASTER ANY NEW TECHNOLOGY IF THE PEOPLE CONTINUE TO WAIT FOR FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY TO FALL INTO THEIR LAPS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE PEOPLE MUST MAKE EFFORTS TO SECURE TECHNOLOGY AND NOT TO REGARD THE PROCESS OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AS A RESPONSIBILITY OTHERS MUST FULFIL.

HE SAID THAT WAS WHY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE COUNTRY HAD FOR A LONG TIME BEEN PRODUCING SUCH CONSUMER GOODS AS SOAP, JEANS, RADIOS AND CALCULATORS, THE KNOWHOW OF MALAYSIANS HAD NOT GONE BEYOND THE STAGE OF MERE ASSEMBLY OF COMPONENTS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS OPENING THE WORLD'S FIRST PILOT PLANT PRODUCING DIESEL FROM PALM OIL AT THE PALM OIL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF MALAYSIA (PORIM) HERE.

HE TOOK LOCAL ENGINEERS TO TASK FOR WHAT HE CALLED THEIR PREFERENCE FOR SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE JOBS TO TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH WORK THAT COULD YIELD INVENTIONS OR DISCOVERIES TO BENEFIT THE PEOPLE. -- MORE

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HE SAID SOME LOCAL ENGINEERS DID NOT EVEN HAVE A GRASP OF THE WORKINGS OF A CIRCUIT BOARD THAT WOULD ENABLE THEM TO PRODUCE A HOME-GROWN RADIO OR CALCULATOR.

THIS CONTRASTED GREATLY WITH ENGINEERS IN SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN AND TAIWAN WHOSE QUICK MINDS ALLOWED THEM TO UNDERSTAND TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT QUICKLY, HE SAID.

THROUGH +REVERSE ENGINEERING,+ THEY WERE ABLE TO COME UP WITH GOODS THEY COULD CALL THEIR OWN, HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID BECAUSE OF THIS, WHILE MALAYSIANS WERE LAMENTING THE RELUCTANCE OF FOREIGNERS TO TRANSFER TECHNOLOGY, OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHICH HAD THE SAME SOURCE OF TECHNOLOGY HAD PROGRESSED TO BECOME NEWLY INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES.

AS SUCH, HE URGED ALL CONCERNED, INCLUDING THE PRIVATE SECTOR, TO GIVE GREATER ATTENTION TO RESEARCH TO DERIVE NEW TECHNOLOGY THAT WOULD ALLOW THE COUNTRY TO MAXIMISE THE USE OF LOCAL RAW MATERIALS. -- MORE

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HE SAID THE PROJECT TO CONVERT PALM OIL INTO DIESEL SHOWED GREAT POTENTIAL FOR SPAWNING VAST OPPORTUNITIES IN PALM OIL-BASED DOWNSTREAM PRODUCTION OF GOODS.

HE SAID STUDIES BY PORIM HAD IDENTIFIED SEVERAL USEFUL AND HIGH QUALITY BY-PRODUCTS SUCH AS GLYCEROL.

AN EVALUATION OF THE PRODUCTS AND THEIR APPLICATION WAS BEING CONDUCTED AND WOULD BECOME SPINOFFS TO THE DIESEL-FROM-PALM-OIL PROJECT.

HE SAID THE PRODUCTION OF VITAMIN E FROM PALM OIL FATTY ACIDS, BASED ON THE LATTER'S PRODUCTION THIS YEAR, WAS ESTIMATED TO BE VALUED AT \$64 MILLION.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SUGGESTED THAT A STUDY BE CARRIED OUT TO INCREASE THE ALLOCATION FOR RESEARCH AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT SINCE ONLY 0.64 PERCENT OF THE GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT WENT TO SUCH ACTIVITIES CURRENTLY. -- BERNAMA

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