

'GO WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD'

MAHATHIR: CHASE THE TECHNOLOGY

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Prime Minister today challenged Malaysians craving for new technology to "summon enough guts" to search abroad, buy it whole and come home to do business.

"Go where the angels fear to tread, stake your claim and return

to do things never done here before," said ~~Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad~~ when launching the first made-in-Malaysia computer — Accent 2001 — at the Putra World Trade Centre.

The personal computer is manufactured and sold by two subsidiaries of the Melewar Corporation which last May acquired the technology and manufacturing rights from Accent Technology Inc. of America.

"It was brave of Melewar to do what it had done today by buying the whole system, the rights and technology in a fast changing field.

"We (tend) to think that the duty to transfer technology rests with the people who own the technology. In reality that is not the case.

"No individual, group or country would gladly and unreservedly hand over what it has acquired through perhaps painstaking and expensive development and research.

"Malaysia is not spared this sentiment and had assumed similar attitudes before. Primary commodities rubber and palm oil are clear examples.

"We are proud of our

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vast experience and superb knowledge on rubber and palm oil which are evidently the very best and which we zealously guard.

"If somebody wants to buy or requests we impart the technology that we had perfected, we will naturally hesitate, fearing that it be put to use against our interests."

Generally, even when the technology is actually transferred, the giver will hold something back as something exclusively his. This is a trait that he has observed among Malaysians.

However, the Prime Minister made it clear that he did not advocate the other extreme of a total clamp on all technology transfer, which he said would render all the gained knowledge completely useless.

"It is better in certain cases to sell or transfer the technology for the widest possible use so that more people can benefit from it.

"Others might be better positioned economically and socially to implement what you have discovered or invented.

"A product does not become a product until it is marketed. In more and

more cases today the marketers have become more important than the inventors.

"That is why inventors who work in research for big corporations never become extremely wealthy from the fruits of their work. It was the presence of the company to market and promote his work that had made it workable in the first place."

Dr Mahathir reminded Melewar and other similar companies that the computer industry was growing by leaps and bounds.

They must keep pace

with these developments or face the danger of being left behind if they relaxed.

"What you sell today may be obsolete just next year. To survive, you must chase the technology."

Earlier, Melewar managing director Tunku Iskandar Tunku Abdullah said the group had hired Lingemann Design Corporation of USA as consultant to establish the manufacturing facility at Kampung Pandan.

The plant will reach a production capacity of about 5,000 units next year, of which 70 per cent will be exported.