

Towards a scientific Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today spoke of a Malaysian nation that would become more scientifically inclined.

Opening the First Asean Science and Technology Week, he said to realise this dream, Malaysians would be educationally and psychologically prepared to receive new technology.

This would be done through Government policies and a number of activities.

Science would be de-mystified by exposing the man in the street to the scientific basis and explanations of everyday happenings.

The Prime Minister said this would be achieved through informal exposure to exhibits at science centres, botanical and zoological gardens, science museums and simple planetarium.

The people should be exposed to science as early in life as possible.

"It is hoped that eventually Malaysian society will consist of people with inquiring minds and a desire to search and research their environment."

Dr Mahathir said the vulnerability of the Malaysian economy to changes in external demand for its primary commodities had made the nation realise the need for further diversification into manufacturing for export.

Research and development (R & D) activities, therefore, had to be directed towards increasing

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productivity and diversifying the industrial base to ensure that Malaysia had a competitive edge in overseas markets.

Greater emphasis would be placed on R & D activities in processing Malaysia's primary products and adding value to exports.

The Prime Minister added that in order to strengthen the indigenous technological capacity and capability, serious efforts would be made to transfer technology from abroad.

"In order to achieve maximum results, Malaysians will be educationally and psychologically prepared to receive new technology," he said.

Dr Mahathir also pledged that Malaysia would continue to contribute to the development of Asean in all spheres of common interest, including the field of science and technology.

The Prime Minister later took part in a 45-minute tele-conference during which he asked a computer scientist, Dr Raymond Kurzweil in Washington, — via a satellite link-up — questions on artificial intelligence.

A panel comprising one representative from each of the Asean countries also participated in the tele-conference.