

Turn copy-cats, Dr M tells firms

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Industrial corporations should turn copy-cats for an easier approach to technology, transfer and advancement, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said there was no need to be embarrassed with this "reverse-engineering" method as industrialised countries had used it during their early days.

"If we know how these products are made, then we can improve on them and produce these goods by taking advantage of the abundant and cheap local labour.

"We may fail in the beginning but eventually we will achieve success from this reverse-engineering method."

"Research institutions should set up special units catering to the reverse engineering of products that can be manufactured here," Dr Mahathir said when launching the third National Science and Technology Week at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Later, speaking to newsmen, the Prime Minister said there was no risk of Malaysia infringing on the copyrights of the original products so long as the al-

terations and improvements gave them a Malaysian identity.

As an example, he cited the Proton Saga which, though copied from a Japanese model, was now a Malaysian product through alterations and improvements.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said the willingness by scientists to contribute to research and development, the Government support for these efforts and entrepreneurs' readiness to produce new products from the research would ensure the development of science and technology.

He hoped corporations would set aside at least 25 per cent of their budgets for research and development, adding they could do this alone or by co-operating with Government research institutions and universities or awarding research contracts to individual researchers or institutes.

He suggested researchers focus their research on meeting the needs of industrial development.

"It is pointless to spend millions of ringgit when the people and country don't benefit," said Dr Mahathir.

He also said major contributions by the manufacturing sector to the economy did not imply that the country had made great strides in science and technology.

"On closer examination, most of the contributions from the manufacturing sector came from foreign-owned concerns. Locals contributed very little.

"While we welcome the manufacturing sector's contributions to the economy, we should realise we have not got all the technology in our hands."