

# Dr M: Use Malaysia as springboard to region

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CARACAS, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Venezuelan businessmen yesterday to use Malaysia as a springboard to expand their business interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Speaking to a group of leading industrialists at a dinner here, the Prime Minister, who is on a five-day visit to Venezuela, said that within Asean "Malaysia stands as a growth centre offering an investment environment of stability, confidence and dynamism."

He said Malaysia also had political stability, a sound administration, a trainable and responsive work force, well-developed infrastructures and a highly-efficient banking and financing system.

"Malaysia has always welcomed foreign investment ever since it achieved independence in 1957.

"Malaysia offers a package of tax holidays and a series of export and other incentives. Malaysia also offers a quality of life attractive to foreigners as they are to locals," Dr Mahathir said.

Touching on Malaysia's

manufacturing performance, he said the sector contributed export earnings in excess of \$34 billion or 54 per cent of exports.

Today, it is the world's largest exporter of electronic semiconductors and also of latex-dipped goods such as gloves and catheters. It is also the second largest exporter of room air-conditioners in the world.

"Within the next two or three years, Malaysia may well become one of the world leaders in the export of TV sets and video cassette recorders," Dr Mahathir added.

"Malaysia thus sees itself poised to face the challenges of the 1990s with an increasingly important role assigned to the export-oriented manufacturing sector.

"Malaysia is moving into an area of high-technology industry not only in the electrical and electronics fields but also in products based upon our natural resources.

"Malaysia's engineering sector will also experience high technology growth, both in precision-engineering industries

and in heavy industries as exemplified by the success of the Malaysian car — the Proton Saga.

The Proton Saga has been well-received in the markets of Europe and is targeted to achieve 80 per cent local content by 1992."

Dr Mahathir said many companies from leading industrialised nations had identified Malaysia as a springboard to meet the challenges of the expanding markets in the Asia-Pacific region and also as a centre for exports to the developed nations of Europe and America.

For long, he said, developing countries had looked towards developed nations as the only source and salvation for their economic development.

"However, today, while we continue to look towards developed nations, there is great potential for economic co-operation between the countries of the South," he said.

"Both our countries, I am confident, have something to offer to each other. We can make a modest beginning and build on this new relationship."