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SHAH ALAM, July 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said trained and skilled manpower alone would not help make Malaysia a developed country by the year 2020.

To achieve the objective, Malaysian workers should cultivate excellent work ethics, discipline and efficiency in their work and make quality their top priority, he added.

+Trained and skilled manpower alone is not sufficient... they should have more than that,+ he said when opening the Saga Academy, a \$5 million technical training school set up by Edaran Otomobil Nasional Bhd (EON) here today.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said efforts to produce more trained and skilled manpower should be stepped up to meet future needs.

The nation was experiencing a shortage of trained manpower in the blue collar professions as more than 90 per cent of the students in schools were being channelled to the academic stream and only 10 per cent entered vocational institutions, he added. -- more

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+In a country heading towards industrialisation, those trained and skilled in the technical fields will be able to secure jobs faster,+ he said.

While urging local workers to equip themselves with skills and knowledge in modern technology, he also suggested that the private sector emulate EON by becoming more active in training programmes to enhance the capability of workers.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Saga Academy would become the nerve centre for training mechanics in various fields. The academy also placed emphasis on excellent work ethics and thrift, which were essential in business.

He reminded trainees at the academy that they also required management skills in order to start their own business.

+I hope the graduates from this academy will not straight away open their own workshops. They should work for others first to gain further skills and experience,+ he said.

Earlier, EON Chairman Tan Sri Jamil Mohamad Jan said the setting up of the academy was aimed at enhancing the skills of local mechanics and producing trained mechanics for EON.

So far, 80 trainees in four batches had been taken in for a two-year apprenticeship course, he added.

The academy, on a 0.6-hectare site, was build by Petronas while its operation is financed by EON with a contribution of \$850,000 from Proton.

It offers three types of courses -- a two-year apprenticeship course for school leavers, two to five days specialist programme for working mechanics and two-day basic course for members of the public, especially Proton Saga owners.

At the function, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir received cheques totalling \$1.1 million from six companies to help finance the operation of the academy. -- Bernama

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