

FAIRER SPREAD OF HIGH-TECH

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PM: Distribute the industries

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BANGI: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called for a fair distribution of high-technology and high-value-added industries without confining them to only a few states.

The Prime Minister said states such as Penang, Johor and Selangor were already facing a shortage of land and workers.

He urged investors to spread out their choice of locations and added that it was time for them to move on to the deprived states.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would provide infrastructure facilities in these states — including Kedah, Malacca, Pahang and Terengganu — to attract investors.

“Factories here are short of workers with investors actually having to go to Pahang and Terengganu to recruit them,” he told newsmen after opening the Hitachi Electronic Products (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd and Hitachi Air Conditioning Products (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd factories here yesterday.

Hitachi Air Conditioning Products manufactures room air-conditioners and rotary and scroll com-

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pressors while the other factory produces video recorders and VTR chassis.

Dr Mahathir said there were housewives who wanted to work in factories but preferred their work place to be near their homes.

He said the Government had long advised investors to spread out but they still preferred the more popular states.

"It is the policy of the Government to ensure, that the industries are established in all states," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia no longer needed labour intensive projects which produced low-value-added goods because unemployment was no longer a problem.

"We are more interested in high capital and sophisticated industries, in line with the times," he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the country had a bright future in the electronics field as proven by the achievements of several manufacturers here like Hitachi, Matsushita, Motorola and Intel.

He said Malaysian workers in these companies had showed that they could compete with their Japanese and American counterparts in terms of quality and productivity.

Dr Mahathir also said that the Government hoped that factories dealing in sophisticated technologies would be located at the technology park in Kulim.

"I believe that with this approach, coupled with

the right guidance of all quarters concerned, Vision 2020 will become a reality," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had emphasised the manufacturing of electrical products for export in the 1970s to generate thousands of jobs for the unemployed.

"Now, two decades later, after the implementation of the strategy, we have not only succeeded in reducing unemployment but also in uplifting the sophistication of the (electronics) industry," he added.

Dr Mahathir praised the Hitachi Group for their faith in the future of Malaysia, which grew along with its successes.

He said the group's commitment was reflected in the setting up of 13 factories in the electrical and electronics field, valued at millions of ringgit.

Hitachi Ltd chairman Katsushige Mita had said the group now had 13 manufacturing companies and four sales-and-service companies in Malaysia, with a workforce of 8,800.

He said the group first set up a semiconductor manufacturing plant in Penang 19 years ago.

"Hitachi was the first company to build a plant in the Bangi industrial area, in 1980, producing television electronic components," he said.

Hitachi Electronic Products (M) Sdn Bhd managing director Sadanori Watanabe said most of the products manufactured in Malaysia were exported worldwide, with total exports reaching \$1.2 billion last year.