

Ceramic industry has great, ^(B) potential: 'Dr M

By PAUL GABRIEL in Alor Star **S 17 JAN 1992**

THE government wants the ceramics industry to expand as the products, marketed exclusively worldwide, can enhance Malaysia's image as a quality producer, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Most ceramic figurines produced locally, the Prime Minister said, were sold in Disneyland, and in exclusive outlets in the United States, Europe, Japan, Australia and Canada.

Dr Mahathir said the industry had great prospects as exports were rising, from \$50.6 million in 1990 to nearly \$70 million last year.

Investments in the industry from 1980 to November last year totalled \$166.4 million. Foreign investments, mostly from Japan, accounted for \$118.5 million or 71.2 per cent.

"These figures may not represent much, but the spin-off effects are tremendous. More significantly, Malaysia's image in the world as a quality producer has been enhanced by the breakthrough of the ceramics products in the exclusive world market," Dr Mahathir said.

He said this before officiating Takagi (M) Sdn Bhd factory in the **Bandar Darulaman** industrial estate in Jitra.

Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Osman Aroff, Takagi managing director Jun Takagi and Takagi Corporation Ltd in Japan president Koichiro Takagi.

The factory, which produces ceramic toy products — mainly ceramic figurines, musical boxes and novelty tableware — is fully-owned by Takagi Corporation.

The products are all for export, mainly to the US, Japan and Europe.

Takagi Corporation invested \$12 million to set up its plant at the two-ha site in **Bandar Darulaman**.

Construction of the factory, one of the pioneers at the newly-developed industrial estate, was completed in August.

Takagi commenced operations in October 1990 with 275 workers.

Dr Mahathir said the ceramics industry in the country could thrive as kaolin deposits, the main raw material, were said to be found in **Bidor-Tapah** in Perak, Jemaluang, in Johor and in Sarawak.

"We must now act fast to make the Perak government's initiative to set up a Ceramic Technology Centre (CTC) a reality.

"Necessary infrastructure, such as a specific industrial site for ceramic products, and research, and development facilities, would portray the government's commitment towards the development of the industry," he said.

He added that nearly 4,000 jobs were created by 15 projects approved since 1989.

Dr Mahathir said the growth of the local ceramics industry would support clay processing factories to be set up locally to cope with increased demand. Most of the clay are now imported after processing.