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PM CALLS ON PRIVATE SECTOR TO ~~GET~~ INVOLVED IN R AND D

KUALA LUMPUR, June 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the private sector to follow through on research and development efforts undertaken by the government.

With the government having allocated \$400 million for R and D, it was time the private sector reciprocate such efforts by involving themselves more effectively in such activities, he said.

He said this to reporters after witnessing a signing agreement between Sime Darby Berhad and Sumitomo Rubber Industries Limited (SRI) of Japan to set up a \$100 million regional tyre technology centre in Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

He also witnessed another signing between Sime Tyres International, a member of the Sime Darby group, and SRI to undertake full commercial production of crossply car and light truck tyres for export.

The government, he said, would do all it could to encourage R and D as evident by the \$400 million allocation for research institutions to be used for private sector R and D.

Besides Japan, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia has had R and D arrangements with several western countries including the United States which has facilitated technology transfer to this country.

Earlier, commending the agreement between Sime Darby and SRI, he said it represented an ideal joint venture between a company from a developed industrial world and an expanding regional organisation from the developing world.

This was in view that the Sime Darby group was bringing three tyre factories from two Asean countries into the agreement and which in addition offers the prospect of practical working experience for ultra-large earthmoving natural rubber tyres in many development projects and mining operations in countries spread throughout the region.

Dr Mahathir said the project was a genuine transfer of technology involving NR, a basic commodity resource from the developing world which combines joint research and development on the improvement of existing products-for markets throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

He also said that the extent of technology transfer, and the benefit to be gotten depended largely on the efforts each side would make. +A good working relation is absolutely essential if the agreement is to mean anything at all,+ he said. -- Bernama