

Malaysia set to be big exporter of optic fibre

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By Syed Nadzri

PETALING JAYA, Tues. — Malaysia is poised to be a major exporter of optic fibre, a high-technology telecommunication component, with the opening of an optical fibre and cable producing plant here, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"The formation of this company will directly bring Malaysia a step closer towards achieving a fully developed country status," the Prime Minister said when opening the \$60 million Optical Communication Engineering Sdn Bhd plant here this morning.

Although Malaysia had been using the optic fibre cable system since 1985, its use had been rather limited, with only 182 lines costing a total of \$70 million up to last year.

"For the next three years, 300 optic fibre cable lines, costing between \$199 million and \$130 million, are expected to be launched by Syarikat Telekom Malaysia.

"Compared with the total world sales of optic fibre cables totalling tens of billions of dollars, it is clear that this project will pave the way for optic fibre cables to be supplied not only for the country's need, but also for the world market, especially Asia which has tremendous development potential."

The cable has unique characteristics like high transmission capacity, being free of electromagnetic disturbances and having "stable chemical and mechanical features". It can also carry 10,090 times more voice channels than the normal coaxial cable.

"There is strong possibility that optic fibre cable will replace the present communication cable in the near future."

One of the ways to improve competitive edge of the Malaysian manufacturing sector in the world market is to concentrate on producing sophisticated goods with high added value. This way production could be integrated with the needs of the developed countries.

"This objective can only be met if the manufacturers are committed towards exploring new areas like advanced materials and information technology. Both

are closely linked to optic fibre."

He urged local entrepreneurs to consider venturing into these fields. The government will always give its support to applications to set up such projects.

He said one of the factors which had contributed towards the country's success was the government's concern for the development of a comprehensive infrastructure system.

This is in line with the

government's objective of ensuring that the people, whether in town or the kampung, enjoy the basic amenities. "One of the pointers of a developed country is the existence of a comprehensive basic infrastructure system which could be enjoyed by all levels of society as well as a sound and efficient management to go with it."

Also present at the opening ceremony was Health

Minister Datuk Lee Kim Sai, Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Deng and Deputy Minister of Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Datuk Tajol Rosh Ghazali. Dr Mahathir and the dignitaries were later taken on a tour of the plant by OPCOM chairman Datuk Tiong Hiew King, the company's advisor Professor Chen Ying Tian and other senior officials.