

Time to focus on east coast

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KUANTAN: The Government is committed to developing the east coast and will encourage the setting up of heavy industries related to gas, petrochemicals, oleochemicals and steel there, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said such industries were suitable in the east coast because of the vast land area there in addition to the existence of a port.

The east coast also had a lot of raw materials, he added.

"The Federal Government is committed to developing the whole country and the time has come for the east coast to be developed with the creation of the east coast corridor," he said at a news conference.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would provide the infrastructure, including roads for better communication between the east and west coasts.

"The private sector must also play their part to assist in the development of the east coast," he said.

On pollution caused by factories, he said that simply closing down factories was not the way to resolve the problem.

The Prime Minister said the proper way was to treat the waste produced and make it harmless instead of closing down the factories.

"If there is a problem, we have to find a solution but we must not do anything that will drive away foreign investments," he said.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on a newspaper report that Syarikat Song Cheng Enterprises (M) Sdn Bhd, in Pekan, which reared eels for the world market, had polluted the environment.

Mahathir said environmentalists should not have the concept that if a factory was not pollution-free, then it should be closed.

"If that is the case, then all the industries in the country must be stopped. Even the electronics industry is not good and must be closed because it produces toxic waste," he said.

"It is easy for environmentalists to talk," he said, adding: "We must be level-headed and the interests of the environment and workers must also be considered."