

Making competitiveness a Malaysian characteristic

NST 17 AUG 1993

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — There is a need for Malaysians to accept openness, liberalism and free competition to enable the country's products to be competitive and penetrate a wider international market, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"The goal to establish a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient is one of the nine critical challenges of Vision 2020.

"Thus issues and questions on how to achieve and maintain competitiveness should be a major concern for all Malaysians," he said when opening the "First National Competitiveness" Forum jointly organised by the Malaysian Business Council and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry with the collaboration of ISIS Malaysia.

The Prime Minister said being competitive should

become a thoroughly Malaysian characteristic, embraced by all segments of society, since it was the country's best hope of exporting its products when faced with protectionist barriers.

"Competitiveness is particularly critical in this era where economic prowess, and not military power, measures the strength and standing of nations. As a result, trade and industrial issues, export performance and trade balances have now become the major pre-occupations of governments.

"Unfortunately, this often results in calls for protective and restrictive policies to safeguard domestic producers from the full force of foreign competition," he said.

Among those who attended the forum were International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Domestic Trade and

Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Abu Hassan Omar, members of the Malaysian Business Council and invited local and foreign participants.

Dr Mahathir pointed out that Malaysia's success in attaining and sustaining the competitiveness of its exports has resulted in the

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country being regarded as one of the industrialising countries deserving coverage in the World Competitiveness Report.

"Our current high ranking in that group, behind Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan and better than some of other dynamic countries of the East Asian region, no doubt is a source of pride to Malaysians.

"It is also a big challenge for Malaysia as it attracts

the attention not only of those who wish to take advantage of our competitiveness, but also those who wish to reduce our competitiveness," he said.

He said the forum served to highlight the growing realisation among Malaysians of the importance of maintaining a strong and competitive economy.

Dr Mahathir stressed that increases in wages must be matched with higher productivity, either quantitatively or qualitatively or through moving into the higher value-added economic sectors.

He said Malaysia would have to continuously upgrade its industrial capabilities so as to be competitive in increasingly more sophisticated activities and industries.

He said human resource development and upgrading

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Change your attitude, businessmen told

FROM PAGE ONE were important and called for enhancement of research and development capabilities.

Later speaking to reporters, he said, Malaysian businessmen should change their attitude about research and development

and at least attempt to apply known technology to enhance the value-addedness of their products.

He said although the Government offered many incentives, many preferred to make quick profits instead of re-investing in research and development.