

# Mahathir: Focus more on R&D

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia should focus more on the development and application of existing technologies rather than on original research to upgrade its technological capabilities, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

This was because "the returns on these are faster and better than from basic research" he said in his keynote address at the First National Competitiveness forum organised by the Malaysian Business Council and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

He also believed the skills of basic and original research tended to develop naturally as the skills in the application of existing advanced technology.

He noted that with the exception of research into certain agricultural crops like rubber and palm oil, Malaysia was "lamentably weak" in research and the application of new technologies.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said local businessmen still did not appreciate the role of research and development (R & D) and preferred to follow others in

successful areas.

"If we show them new technologies, they are not interested even if we demonstrate its possibilities.

Such attitude was a problem, he said, adding that this was the reason for the Government's repeated calls to the business sector to take an active role in R & D.

In the afternoon, Dr Mahathir presented the awards of the National Skills Championship 1993.

He urged skilled workers to upgrade their technological know-how to be competitive at world lev-

el.

"Our country aspires to become a developed nation and everyone must upgrade their skills so that we will be able to compete and not be left behind," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped Malaysia would one day be in the number one spot of the International Youth Skills Olympics.

Malaysia took the 16th position at the 32nd International Youth Skills Olympics in Taiwan last month. Twenty-four countries took part in the competition.