

PM: Important to industrialise all areas

NST 27 AUG 1993

CUKAI, Thurs. — Malaysia's industrialisation efforts will become complete when investors shift their attention to the east coast States and Sabah and Sarawak, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said there was a new trend emerging among investors in the west coast to expand their operations to the east coast to take advantage of the cheaper labour and lower land costs there.

"Now more investors are turning to the east coast States. Those, who invested in the west coast, are now feeling the effects of high land cost, difficulty in getting labour and having to pay high salaries.

"Eventually, when investors disperse to the new growth areas in the east

coast States and Sabah and Sarawak, the whole country will be industrialised."

Speaking to reporters after opening the Pesama MK Furniture Sdn Bhd factory at the Jakar I industrial estate near here, Dr Mahathir, however, said that what was more important was that the people wanted industrial growth.

"If the people in a particular area like fighting or the workers there like to picket or stage strikes, then the investors won't come. But in areas where the people like to work, investors will come."

Dr Mahathir added that the people in the east coast States were known for their craftsmanship and they should use their skills, which are an important asset, to the fullest.

On the plans to improve the infrastructural facilities in the east coast States to attract more investors, he said the Federal Government planned to build a highway linking Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan.

"The highway may not be of the same standard as the North-South Highway. Nevertheless, it's the effectiveness of the highway in bringing in progress that matters."

He said when it was necessary to upgrade the highway, it could be turned into a dual carriageway and eventually a six-lane highway like those in the developed countries.

On the utilisation of timber wastes, he said the timber industry should look into ways to increase the

value of the raw material as much as they can to prevent wastage.

He said the Pesama MK Furniture factory was a good example because it had ventured downstream and was making full use of the raw material to produce furniture for export.

"This is what we want others to follow because we cannot continue to become exporters of logs and sawn timber. It looks very primitive, as though we have no ability."

Dr Mahathir said it would require someone with vision to see the opportunities and advantages of increasing the added value of the raw materials.

He added that another opportunity had been presented to the wood-based industry in the form of oil palm

timber, which could be used to make quality furniture.

Earlier, he said Malaysia was able to attract investors because of its political stability and conducive labour environment. Labour unrest was not common in the country because workers wanted to work and not create trouble.

He reminded the people that a company would not achieve success if there was no co-operation between the investors, management and the workers.

"It is difficult to say who is more important because they need each other. We are lucky that in Malaysia, the investors, managers and workers are aware of the need to work in harmony to ensure success. Otherwise, our industrial growth will become stagnant."