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CNS0083

R GE 25-11 00191 EA935

aae tbe

Mahathir-plant (With pix)

MALAYSIA CAPABLE OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRIES, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

bm

KUANTAN, Nov. 25 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia's success as a leading exporter of high technology goods among developing countries in the region reflected its high capability.

The Prime Minister said the country's capability in using high technology helped change the country's export structure from one of merely exporting raw materials to that of valued-added goods within 10 years.

"This proves our success in attracting high technology industries to the country," he said when opening two plants producing industrial chemicals at the Gebeng Industrial Zone here.

The Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether (MTBE)/Propylene and Polypropylene plants are owned by MTBE Malaysia Sdn.Bhd. (MMSB), a joint venture between Petronas, Neste Oy from Finland and Idemitsu Petrochemical Co.Ltd. of Japan.

Dr Mahathir said although Malaysia was on the right track in terms of policy, management and administration, measures were needed to step up efforts to acquire selected technology so that the country would be more competitive. -- more

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CNS0118

R GE 25-11 00203 EA938

aae tbe

Mahathir-plant 2 Kuantan

To ensure continued growth, emphasis should be given to industries producing value added goods through greater utilisation and processing of domestic natural resources, he added.

"These must be accompanied by an increase in income for workers and the people as we also need to strengthen the local market to purchase goods produced in the country," he said.

He also stressed the importance of this being achieved to increase productivity without causing inflation.

"All this appears not to be easy but it is not something that is impossible if we act according to plan," he said.

He said Petronas's involvement in producing petroleum products on a massive scale would not only carry the country towards industrialisation but also speed up the process of making Malaysia a developed nation which was efficient, dynamic and possessing high technology.

Such efforts needed to be taken as the petrochemical industry in Malaysia was still in its infancy although the country had huge reserves of natural gas totalling about 76.7 trillion standard cu.ft. which was most suitable for feedstock to produce petrochemical products, he added. -- more

JO MTA LDB

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CNS0125

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aae tbe

Mahathir-plant 3 Kuantan

Dr Mahathir said in the drive to become a developed nation, Malaysia needed to preserve the environment by taking suitable measures to balance development and the need to preserve the quality of the environment.

The setting up of MTBE was timely in view of government efforts to reduce air pollution because besides replacing lead in gasoline MTBE, an octane booster, would increase the quality of non-lead gasoline sold in the country, he added.

Several countries acknowledged the positive contribution of MTBE as an oxygenate, he said, citing the United States which introduced the Clean Air Act which set a minimum of oxygenate use in non-lead gasoline.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia also took pro-active steps by reducing the price of non-lead gasoline which was cheaper than ordinary petrol by three sen to encourage use of environment-friendly fuel.

"Other measures include abolition of import duty of 35 per cent and sales tax of 10 per cent on catalytic converters to encourage use of appliances to control smoke emission," he added. -- more

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aae tbe

Mahathir-plant 4 Kuantan

He said with the polypropylene plant, Petronas would play an important role as a full-fledged producer of monomers and polymers and boost the growth of the domestic plastics industry.

Malaysia's per capita use of plastics was still low compared with that in developed nations, he added.

With the completion of the ethylene and polyethylene plants in 1995, the country's plastics industry would be geared to enter a new phase of expansion, he said.

"With an assured supply of raw materials, it is expected that Malaysia can maintain its competitiveness in producing plastic-based goods," he added.

Manufacturers and fabricators would have more opportunities not only to produce substitutes but also value added goods and finished products.

Dr Mahathir, who described the MTBE plant as another important milestone in development of the country's petroleum industry, said it would spur development of industries at the Gebeng industrial site. -- more

JO MTA LDB

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CNS0150

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aae tbe

Mahathir-plant 5 (last) Kuantan

Earlier, Petronas chairman Tan Sri Basir Ismail said the MTBE plant, built in 1990 on a 55-hectare site at a cost of RM1.27 billion, contained two factories -- one for MTBE/propylene and the other polypropylene.

MTBE, a gasoline blending component, is used to compensate the octane deficiency caused by reduction or elimination of lead in gasoline.

The MTBE/propylene plant could produce 300,000 tonnes of MTBE and 80,000 tons of propylene a year.

It is believed to be the first plant in the world able to simultaneously produce Propylene and Isobutylene which were combined with Methanol to produce MTBE, he said.

"The plant began production in December last year and the first cargo of 2,700 tonnes of MTBE was exported to Singapore early this year," he added.

To-date, it had exported 161,000 tonnes of MTBE. -- Bernama  
JO MTA LDB

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