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Mahathir - Granite

GRANITE INDUSTRY HAS POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH, SAYS PM

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SUNGAI PETANI, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- The granite processing industry is still in its infancy stage in Malaysia and has potential to grow, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He pointed out that the first of four companies approved to venture into the industry started operation only at the end of 1991.

"The industry can cut imports and increase Malaysian export goods," he said when opening the Prime Granite (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd processing factory at the Bakar Arang industrial estate here.

He said the government offered tax incentives to encourage the production of granite tiles and slabs.

Polished granite slabs sourced locally qualify for pioneer status or investment tax allowance, conditional on the producer sourcing at least 50 per cent of the granite locally. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said marble tiles and slabs were previously preferred in construction of houses, hotels and commercial buildings but they were found not lasting and also needed proper care.

In contrast, buyers now wanted granite tiles and slabs which lasted longer and needed less care as well as being durable and suitable for exterior use and as wall decoration, he said.

He said engraving of designs on granite commemorative plaques would enhance their value and improve their marketability within and outside the country.

On the progress of the manufacturing sector, Dr Mahathir said it had achieved a level to make Malaysia proud and the envy of other developing nations.

The sector grew at 12 per cent annually since 1991, contributing 26.9 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1990 and rising to 30.1 per cent last year chiefly from export-oriented industries. -- more

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As well, he said, industries producing goods for the domestic market such as building materials also recorded strong growth as higher private sector profits enabled companies to pay for luxury items like granite for their buildings.

In line with the general upturn in construction activities, output of building materials also grew in 1993.

"Latest estimates show the demand and supply of building materials grew at a rate of between 15 and 20 per cent annually. The performance of the construction sector is also forecast to improve this year with output value expected to rise 11.7 per cent," he said.

Among those present at the factory opening were Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali and Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Osman Aroff.

The Prime Minister, who was on a one-day working visit to Kedah, earlier visited the Sime Tyre International (M) Sdn Bhd plant at Mergong, Alor Setar.

He spent an hour touring the factory and was briefed on its operations by managing director Ahmad Zuber Murshid. The Menteri Besar and Sime Tyre International chairman Tunku Abdul Malik accompanied the Prime Minister. --
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