

PM outlines three strategies for space industry development

By Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, saying that the Government plans to invest in the space industry, tonight outlined three strategies towards its development:

- the involvement of Malaysian companies and institutions in selected space programmes overseas which are on par with local scientific and industrial strength;

- the establishment of official ties with space agencies in Europe, Asia and the United States to enable Malaysian scientific and industrial participation in projects which are in line with Malaysian scientific and industrial strategies; and,

- the promotion of closer Government-to-Government relations among countries in the region which could ensure mutual benefits in promoting lasting sci-

entific and commercial activities in Malaysia's scientific and industrial fields.

Dr Mahathir said space-related activities and technology would play a more important role in social and economic development in the 21st Century.

"The space industry will be supplying important information to mankind in the exploitation of natural resources without any adverse effects on the environment," he said at the official launching of the National Planetarium.

He said the new era in international relations had enabled a more comprehensive co-operation programme in space-related activities.

These, he said, included the use of space technology in environmental supervision and in ensuring greater effectiveness in diplomatic and peace activities.

On the Government's

plan to invest in the space industry, Dr Mahathir said the sector was poised to play an important role in social and economic development.

He said the Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Ministry planned to launch three communication satellites, each costing RM600 million, over a three-year period.

There were also plans by the Science, Technology and Environment Ministry to launch a satellite for remote sensing and weather forecasting.

Dr Mahathir said that a comprehensive policy and programme would be required to enable the industry to develop and prosper in the country.

"This is in view of the fact that Malaysia will face increasing demands for services provided through the use of space and related technology," he said.

The services included environmental supervision,

exploration of raw materials, defence, surveying and mapping, research, education, search and rescue operations and telecommunications.

Dr Mahathir said the future of space technology was bright, adding that there was no choice but to venture into the space industry if the nation wanted to have a successful future.

He said space technology should be used for the benefit of the people.

Proper steps should also be taken to ensure optimum utilisation, especially from the economic and social point of view.

The setting up of the Space Science Research division and the National Planetarium was one way of realising this objective, he said.

Earlier, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid said

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Council to consider applications

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RM3 million had been allocated for remote sensing and atmospheric studies.

He said the National Science and Research Development Council would consid-

er applications from universities and research institutions for allocations to undertake research in space science on a joint-venture basis with the National Planetarium.

Ahmad Sarji also thanked

the Japanese Government for contributing towards the installation of RM5.5 million worth of equipment at the planetarium and Sony Malaysia for its R600,000 contribution.