

PM: Create an 'inventive' society

By MERGAWATI
ZULFAKAR

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia must create an "inventive" society so as to contribute to the development of science and technology in the world.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday this would also ensure that local technology could penetrate the international market.

He told inventors and designers of the need to take into account that what they produced must not only be marketable in Malaysia but globally.

"Local scientists and technology experts should give attention to techno-entrepreneurship and customers' needs," he said when opening the National Students Living Skills and Innovation Expo at the Technical Teachers Training College in Cheras.

Dr Mahathir said while the Government encouraged technology transfer, efforts to develop its own technology expertise was important.

"If we want to succeed as an industrialised nation, local scientists and technology experts should upgrade their expertise to be equal if not better than their foreign counterparts," he said.

He said Malaysia's objective in achieving developed nation status depended on its ability to sustain high economic growth and a competitive edge in world markets.

"The development of a strong technology foundation to speed up industrial and economic growth is important towards this end," he said.

He noted that Malaysia was lagging behind developed nations in the ratio for research and development workforce.

Science education was becoming more relevant if Malaysia wanted to increase the number of researchers to 1,000 for every one million people, he added.

Dr Mahathir called on the private sector and NGOs to assist the Education Ministry and other government agencies to instil interest among

youths.

He also said the country's younger generation should continue to strive in their studies especially in maths, science and the communication fields.

Dr Mahathir later presented prizes to the winners of the competition on innovations.

The first prize in the Innovation Competition (Mechatronics and Automation) section went to SM Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Gemas students Chan Chin Kiong, Andrew Tong Ann Lock and Tan Tuan Liang.

Concerned over the high accident rate among motorcyclists, they came out with a special safety helmet with signal and third-brake lights and a buzzer.

The *Visual Endorser TK 2000*, operating on radio waves, will buzz to alert a motorist when his head droops as he falls asleep and lights up when the motorcyclist turns or applies the brakes.

"We realise that accident rate for motorcycles is always higher and my own experience as a mo-

torist prompted us to invent the helmet," said Form Five student Chan, the group leader. They were guided by teacher Mohamad Pauzi Othman.

"We spent about RM158 and a week to install the lights," he said, and it would only cost RM100 if commercialised.

They won RM3,000 for their school, RM750 for the team in addition to RM100 each, trophy and certificate each.

A total of 30 secondary schools selected from states competed in the competition held for the first time by the Education Ministry.

Second prize went to SM Teknik Ipoh students Asrul Hamdi, Mohamed Sharizal and Shamsul Hairee Mohamed Mokhtar, who invented an automatic food feeder for fish in ponds.

They won RM2,000 for their school, RM600 for the team and RM70, trophy and certificate each.

The third prize winners from SM Sultan Ahmad, Kuala Terengganu, invented a robot fire extinguisher.