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Mahathir-Industry

MALAYSIA NOT IGNORING LABOUR-INTENSIVE PROJECTS, SAYS MAHATHIR

From Abdul Rahman Sulaiman

PARIS, July 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's current emphasis on capital and technology-intensive industries does not mean it is completely ignoring labour-intensive projects, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the switch was a normal process in the industrial development of any nation. *overseas trips*

In the case of Malaysia, the process was accelerated in view of its current shortage of labour, he added in response to queries on the future of Malaysia's industrialisation policy by French industrialists during a dialogue session here.

The Prime Minister had earlier urged them to invest in Malaysia and consider relocating their research and development (R&D) activities there to take advantage of the country's rapid economic growth.

He said Malaysia wanted more capital and technology-intensive industries.

"Nevertheless, we still welcome labour-intensive industries, especially among those who want to expand their existing operations," he said. -- more

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He said while he was happy the country had achieved full employment as a result of its industrialisation programme, he was concerned over the continuous influx of foreign workers.

The presence of foreign workers had caused numerous social problems to the country, he said.

Dr Mahathir estimated that more than one million foreign workers from various countries were currently in Malaysia.

With Malaysia's small population, the influx had definitely caused some problems, he said.

"As a result, we now feel the time has come for us to concentrate on attracting capital and technology-intensive industries and pay less attention to labour-intensive industries," he added. -- more

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On whether Malaysia intended to change its foreign exchange policy in the future to allow foreign investors easy access to the Malaysian ringgit, the Prime Minister said the government was always willing to consider any innovative suggestion on foreign exchange policy.

However, he said, foreign exchange was a "tricky thing" and the government must be careful in managing it.

"We do not want people to buy the currency for speculation," he said.

-- Bernama

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