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Mahathir-technology

NEW TECHNOLOGIES VITAL FOR A PROGRESSIVE MALAYSIA, SAYS MAHATHIR oversees trips

From Abdul Rahman Sulaiman 94

ST NAZAIRE (France), July 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says Malaysia's efforts in acquiring new and sophisticated technologies will come to naught if the people are not keen to learn them.

This will in turn retard the nation's progress and slow down the process of transforming Malaysians into a respectable and progressive race, the prime minister said.

Speaking at a press conference here at the end of his four-day official visit to France, he said that for a technology transfer to be possible, two sides must be involved -- that making the offer of the technology and that accepting the offer.

"While we keep on saying that people must transfer their technologies to us, such a transfer can never happen if our people are not interested in them," he said.

The prime minister spent the last two days of his trip attending briefings and visiting sophisticated high-technology industrial plants such as the Airbus factory and the Aerospatiale plant in Toulouse and the French shipyard, Chantiers de Atlantique, here. -- more

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Dr Mahathir, who appeared dissatisfied with the current progress in technology transfer to the country, said Malaysians generally lacked interest in new technologies. Because of this lack of interest, they would not strive hard to acquire them.

"There is nothing difficult or magical about these technologies. If only we have deep interest in them and make efforts to acquire them, we will be able to make it. If we strive hard, it is not impossible for us to acquire the technology to build spacecraft or rockets," he said.

Asked who should make the effort towards this, the prime minister said everyone, including the workers, entrepreneurs and the government, should make such an effort.

To a suggestion that it might be easier to talk about it rather than do it as such an exercise needed large capital, the prime minister said such a remark was only an excuse for not wanting to do it.

Money or capital, he said, should not be a problem as some technologies could be acquired cheaply. -- more

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"Those who can afford expensive and more sophisticated technologies can invest in them but those who don't have large capital can go for the cheap ones," he said.

On the outcome of his visit, Dr Mahathir said he was happy with it. The visit was generally a success in terms of enhancing bilateral relationship with France and improving further economic ties.

He said that from the discussions he had with the French leaders, businessmen and entrepreneurs, it was clear that there was good potential for the expansion of trade and investments between the two countries.

He also disclosed that the French government had agreed to abolish the visa requirement for Malaysians wishing to visit France.

The date of implementation would be decided later, he said, and advised Malaysians not to abuse the facility.

He did not want to see what was now happening in Japan to happen here later.

He said the gesture would not serve its purpose if Malaysians abused it by getting involved in unlawful activities such as overstaying, getting employment illegally or other irresponsible acts. -- more

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~If this happens, it would cause a lot of problems to genuine visitors, he said, citing cases of Malaysians getting into trouble in Japan for working unlawfully or involvement in vice activities.

As a result, the Japanese authorities had to scrutinize even genuine travellers.

The prime minister, who is accompanied on the visit by his wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, and several ministers and senior officials, also met French President Francois Mitterrand and Prime Minister Edouard Balladur.

During the visit, he also witnessed the signing of several memoranda of understanding between the two sides.

One of the memoranda paves the way for the development of relations between companies of the respective countries in third countries.

It is meant to further enhance and strengthen the existing cooperation between Malaysia and France not only at official level but also among members of the private sectors of both countries, particularly in promoting and implementing joint-venture projects.

The cooperation will synergise French technology and expertise with the Malaysian network in third countries, especially in the South. -- Bernama

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