

PM: Upgrade skills to meet challenges

PENANG, Tues. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on workers in the country to upgrade their skills in preparation for the challenges of the future.

The Prime Minister said workers must realise that only through the improvement of skills could they upgrade productivity as well as their income.

"Skilled workers can also help to improve competition of goods for export," he said when opening the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) at Bayan Baru here.

He said with PSDC, efforts to make Penang and other States in the north as industrial centres would be more successful.

Also present were Chief Minister Dr Koh Tsu Koon and several other Cabinet Ministers and State dignitaries.

Dr Mahathir said in view of the importance of skilled development, the Govern-

ment had allocated 13 per cent of the development budget under the Sixth Malaysia Plan for education and training.

"For a developing country, this is a big figure," Dr Mahathir said, adding that the Government would continue to pay serious attention to the development of the work force as it realised that skilled workers are an important asset."

As such, the establishment of PSDC was a very appropriate measure.

He said the country's economy was expanding rapidly and this healthy growth was expected to continue in years to come.

"In this situation, work opportunities for those who are trained are ample, especially in the industrial and manufacturing sector."

Dr Mahathir also praised PSDC for launching scholarship funds to encourage students to take engineering as

a career.

"The launching of this fund is a good step taken and I hope it will be supported by the people."

He said he was made to understand the State Government provided an operating grant of RM120,000 annually and the Federal Government RM7 million for the equipment at PSDC.

All the laboratories and workshops at the PSDC were built with grants from the private sector, which also provided training resources, identifying the needs of training and providing other facilities.

"This is a good example of Malaysia Incorporated concept at work," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the Government believed the people were important human resources. To achieve economic success the quality of the workers is an important factor.

Dr Mahathir reminded

the people that the responsibility to train and provide skills to the people was not only the responsibility of all parties but also employers, workers, union, training institutes, schools and parents.

"It is very sad that there are still quarters who assume that skills development and training is the sole responsibility of the Government.

"However, I am glad that the establishment of the PSDC shows that there is a realisation that the responsibility has to be shared together between the Government and other parties.

The establishment of PSDC was a good move which will provide facilities for all parties.

As the training programme and other equipment at PSDC are "industry standard", all training programmes are latest and geared to fulfill the needs.