

PM: Apply skills innovatively

By HARPAJAN SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: The pace of development can only be stepped up if local industries absorb foreign technology and venture into innovative downstream products, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said local industries must generate skilled manpower capable of absorbing the principles of modern technology and applying them innovatively to manufacture value-added product for global markets.

"Through joint ventures we have secured in the sector with foreign and multi-national companies, we are exposed to management skills, engineering and research development and mechanisms.

"All this is aimed at facilitating technology transfer and not sharing the trademark alone. This technology can be used for other electronics products as well and not just telecommunications.

"We do not want to carry on with the practice of having only investors or, worse still, people who only let us borrow their name," he said after opening the Sapura-Nokia telecommunications complex in Wangsa Maju.

Dr Mahathir said he had noted some progress in technology transfer to locals in certain sectors

but felt the people seeking to learn technology must also be capable of receiving and understanding the knowledge.

He said there were many locally-owned electronics firms now which were capable of manufacturing goods for other foreign concerns, which showed some technology transfer had taken place.

"We cannot stop learning from foreigners as technology is not static. So, anyone who wants to excel must follow developments and find ways to master the field.

"Once we have acquired the basis of technology, we can then follow research developments and start inventing our own downstream products besides enhancing product quality," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was now able to export its technology know-how to lesser developed countries but still needed to acquire more expertise to be able to compete globally.

Earlier in his speech, he said the Government would continue to provide infrastructure to support the rapid industrial growth experienced by the country.

He praised Sapura for venturing boldly in the telecommunications sector, which had grown over the past two decades from 169,000 subscribers in 1975 to 2.3 million now.