

Look to automation, robotics to ease labour problem, makers told

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants manufacturers, industrialists and entrepreneurs to improve their performance and product quality through automation and higher capital investment.

The Prime Minister said that greater use of automation and robotics would eventually solve the labour problems of industries.

He said the business community should play an effective role in improving their performance so that they would not have to depend so much on labour as Malaysia moved towards achieving developed nation status by the year 2020.

Dr Mahathir hoped such efforts would help them to produce goods of international standard.

He also hoped that more business scholars would contribute their expertise to enhance business management in this country.

The Prime Minister said this at the presentation of the Industry Excellence Awards 1994 by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry here.

He said it was true that initially the Government emphasised labour-intensive industries because its objective then was to create job opportunities for the people.

"However, we succeeded too well and we find ourselves without the necessary labour force to man our industries," he said.

Some quarters, he said, were bent on taking the easy way out by resorting to immigrant labour.

"But the country already has more than a million foreign workers and they may eventually create problems," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that though the Government would allow others to share the nation's wealth, it was more interested in enabling

Malaysians to enjoy the fruits of its development.

He hoped the Industry Excellence Awards Council would respond positively to his call by making the ability to improve productivity using a smaller workforce as a criterion for future excellence awards.

Dr Mahathir said the use of more robots and improving performance without using additional workers would help both industries and the Government.

"This is how some countries, though having a smaller labour force than Malaysia, export more than our country," he said.

He was glad that as a result of Malaysia's capability to produce high-quality goods, the country was able to penetrate the international market and increase its exports.

Congratulating the recipients of the awards, Dr Mahathir hoped this would encourage them and others to intensify efforts to achieve greater heights of excellence.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said there were 130 participants for this year's awards, compared to 56 last year, an indication that the awards were gaining interest.

There are four types of awards — Product Excellence, Export Excellence, Quality Management Excellence and the newly-introduced Services Export Excellence.

They are presented to the private sector in appreciation of their roles in achieving excellence in their respective fields.

They are also to encourage manufacturers and exporters in producing high-quality goods and services to meet the demands of the competitive and rapidly-changing international markets.

In the Product Excellence

Awards, Tube Home (M) Sdn Bhd won the first category, followed by Dewina Food Industries Sdn Bhd (second category), DMIB Bhd (third category) and Unichema Asia Pacific Sdn Bhd (fourth category).

In the Export Excellence Awards, Tube Home and Dewina Food again won the first and second categories respectively, Sapura Holdings Sdn Bhd (third category) and Sime Tyres International (M) Sdn Bhd (fourth category).

In the Services Export Excellence Awards, International Islamic University won the first category, Sapura Holdings (second category), Public Bank (fourth category) and Technip Geoproduction Sdn Bhd (fifth category).

There was no winner for the third category.

In the Quality Management Excellence Awards, Cenpak Paper Products Sdn Bhd won for the first category, Hasu Industries Sdn Bhd (second category), Asean Bintulu Fertilisers Sdn Bhd (third category) and Siemens Semiconductor Sdn Bhd (fourth category).

The first category is for local companies with shareholders' fund of RM2.5 million and less, the second category for those with between RM2.5 million and RM20 million and third category for those over RM20 million.

The fourth category is an open one.

Participation is open to all Malaysian manufacturers who have been manufacturing their products continuously for at least three years.

The Hotel Excellence Award was discontinued this year as it was felt the award given by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism annually to the hotel industry was sufficient. $\text{\$}$

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