

Dr M: Learn new technologies

By K.P. Waran

SHAH ALAM, Sat. — Malaysians must endeavour to be proficient in the latest computer-aided techniques for the nation to attain the desired industrialised status, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the people should acquire sophisticated techniques and use them regularly until they become well-versed with these new technologies so that they become part of the people's culture.

He said experience has shown that when a craft becomes a culture of a particular race, the expertise in the field would be inherited by the following generations.

He cited as examples the sculpturing skills of the people of Bali, the plaster sculpturing techniques of the Moroccans and Uzbekhs, the excellent ballet dancing of the Russians and the scientific inventions of Western countries.

Speaking at the simultaneous opening of the Proton casting plant and the launch of Proton's corporate mission statement, he said it was not impossible for future Malaysians to be known for their expertise in the field of sophisticated engineering as a result of efforts made now.

"Anyone can master whatever knowledge or skills if he and his community are willing to acquire them through dedication over the years," he said.

Among those present at the launch were Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, Japanese ambassador to Malaysia Taizo Nakamura, Proton chairman Tan Sri Jamil Mohamed Jan and Proton managing director Datuk Mohamed Nadzmi Mohamed Saileh.

Dr Mahathir also urged Proton to improve its capability to design its engine components and added that in this modern era, with the use of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing, acquiring such new technologies was easier.

He said Proton's move to provide training to its personnel in sophisticated computer-aided design was essential as expertise in the field would not only benefit Proton in design and manufacturing but also the other industries.

He said Proton should venture into acquiring expertise in transmission, engine design and manufacturing and thanked Mitsubishi Motors Corporation for assisting it in the field of design.

He said Proton would require expertise to compete in engine designing, testing and manufacturing if it intended to maintain its share in the passenger car market in future.

"Although we will continue to co-operate closely with Mitsubishi Motors and other parties, eventually we must have the expertise in basic design and the capability to produce all blue-

prints for the components required to produce passenger car engines," he said.

Describing the setting up of the casting plant as another milestone for Proton in the automotive industry, he said the skills in precision casting were vital in industrialisation and Proton's preparedness to venture into the challenging field was proof of its commitment to venture fully into the automotive industry.

He commended Proton's success in producing new models and hoped that it would strive to be self-sufficient by fully utilising domestic resources in its production.

He said Proton has been able to increase the use of local components, expertise and labour and if not for the surge of the yen, the percentage of local input would be much higher than the current 80 per cent.

Jamil, in his speech said the casting plant at the Hi-com-Glenmarie Industrial Park was the first factory manufacturing engine parts and it was equipped with the latest generation equipment and machinery.

He said the plant was set up to upgrade Proton's capability in the production of raw materials for components in order to become a self-sufficient car producer.

The RM260 million plant will focus on the production of cylinder blocks, bearing caps, brake drums and brake discs. Production of crank shafts will begin in mid-1996.