

18 MAR 1996

Mahathir-Economy

BUSINESS-FRIENDLY POLICY, KEY TO ECONOMIC SUCCESS SAYS MAHATHIR

KULIM, March 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's business-friendly policy has enabled it to set up Southeast Asia's first high-technology park here, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Launching the Kulim Hi-Tech Park - The Science City of the Future, here, he said the park was testimony to the close relationship between the government and the private sector in line with the concept of Malaysia Incorporated.

The government was right in its perception of the concept and this was evident from the increase in the people's per capita income from US\$300 (about RM800) when the country gained independence to US\$4,000 (RM10,800) now.

"Malaysia has actually pioneered the idea of (introducing) incentives for (foreign) investments. When other countries were busy chasing out investors because they want to control their economy, we decided the other way round, that is, to have foreign participation in our economy," he added.

Dr Mahathir said a lot of money and energy had been spent for the benefit of investors with the government even willing to forgo certain taxes to attract them.

He said, initially, he had no confidence that a remote place like Kulim could become a hi-tech centre.

The 1,448-hectare park, a specialised industrial park, caters for sophisticated industries which require sophisticated technology.

Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff, who is the park chairman, said the government planned to make Kulim a triple centre of excellence for Asean, especially in the areas of high-tech industries, Research & Development (R & D) and Design & Engineering, and technology training.

For a start, Kedah-ISR Technology Sdn.Bhd. -- a joint venture between Kedah and an Australian software development company -- had won a contract from the Philippines Education Ministry to supply software and train Filipino workers.

The park, sited near the intersection of the North-South and East-West highways, was designed with assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

It consists of three specific areas -- industrial, R & D facilities and a new township with full amenities, including a shopping centre, medical and educational institutions and recreational facilities.

Thirteen companies, among them Kedah Wafer Emas (Hualon Corporation), MEMC Electronic Materials Inc, Fuji Electric and Intel Products (M) Sdn.Bhd., have received approval to build their plants in the park.

In conjunction with the ceremony, Dr Mahathir and Osman witnessed the signing of three lease and joint venture agreements between MEMC and Khazanah Holdings, MEMC and Kulim Technology Park Corporation (KTPC) and Penang Development Corporation (PDC) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir also laid the foundation stones for two pioneer factories belonging to Intel and Akashic Kubota Technologies Sdn.Bhd., both US-based companies, in the park.

He also witnessed the exchange of documents between KTPC and Universiti Sains Malaysia for the establishment of an Information Technology Centre at the park.

Among those present were Pulau Pinang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu

Koon, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Works Minister Datuk
Seri S. Samy Vellu and Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng. -- BERNAMA
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