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IMP: GROWTH OF MATERIALS INDUSTRY TO BE ACCELERATED

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 28 (Bernama) -- Development of Malaysia's fledgling advanced materials sector would be accelerated in three phases under the Second Industrial Master Plan (1996-2005) as it had a strategic advantage in the nation's industrialisation programme.

The accelerated efforts would be made through a more concerted and focused programme in research and development (R&D) and the development of specialised skills and other support facilities, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry said in the IMP2, unveiled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here today.

The four mineral- and petrochemical-based sectors with good potential for development in the realm of advanced materials were polymers, metals, composites and ceramics which now provide strong support for the electronics, transportation, construction, sporting goods and consumer goods industries in Malaysia.

In the polymers sector, the emphasis for the short term would be to improve and further develop basic polymers.

In the medium term, the focus would be in the intensification of R&D activities and human resource development, and the acceleration of commercialisation activities of prototypes through bigger funds allocated during the plan period.

The long-term strategic action would be to support and promote investments in world class polymer projects that meet international standards and quality.

For the metal sector, the plan of action would start off with upgrading skills and R&D, and establishing a Malaysian metals standard of international repute.

In the medium term, the metals cluster was expected to restructure and move into the production of higher value-added and higher end products.

Future development of this industrial cluster would rest on the successful development of human resources and the adequate supply of the required infrastructure at competitive cost.

For the composites sector, apart from human resource development, the government would assist companies venturing into the manufacture of composites and advanced composite products by providing an attractive package of incentives.

In the medium term, the government would support expansion of current R&D programmes and promote production of intermediate materials such as glass-fibre and carbon-fibre internationally.

Current schemes on commercialisation of prototypes and research findings through venture capital would also be further improved.

The ministry said the plan of action for the ceramics sector for the short term included improving and modernising production technology to increase output and enhancing its competitiveness in pressure-casting technology, rapid drying and firing, automated handling operations and computer-aided design.

For the medium to long term, the development of an advanced ceramics sub-sector would depend on the successful human resource and development programmes with a comprehensive and focused provision on specialised infrastructural needs of the sector. -- BERNAMA

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