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Dr Mahathir dares Malaysian entrepreneurs

PENANG, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today issued a challenge to Malaysian entrepreneurs to produce their own brand name products for both the local and export market.

"I have confidence that they can succeed. But many of them do not have the confidence, they are not daring enough," he added.

The Prime Minister said at present there were several local entrepreneurs who were producing goods under their own brand names. This included MEC and Pensonic which were producing electrical and household goods, he said.

However, Dr Mahathir wanted more made-in-Malaysia products to hit the shelves, including the export market.

Malaysia had many entrepreneurs who could produce sophisticated products, he added. He was speaking at the opening of Unico Technology Berhad at the Prai Free Industrial Zone.

Also present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and his deputy Datuk Mohd Shariff Omar.

Dr Mahathir said local entrepreneurs must be prepared to produce sophisticated computer parts too.

"Sometimes, we ask entrepreneurs to go into the field of supplying components to multinational corporations and they ask for guarantees that the MNCs will buy all their products.

"The companies cannot do this because you are untested and they do not know if you will be able to supply quality products on time. They cannot just cut off their original suppliers."

He said the number of Malaysian companies supplying sophisticated parts and equipment to MNCs were increasing.

"Sometimes, they even produce the final product but the brand name under which it is marketed belongs to an established company.

"I am certain if they produce under their own brand names, they will receive support from Malaysians.

"We are not rejecting foreign investment but we would like to see more Malaysians putting out made-in-Malaysia products for both the local and foreign market."

He said about RM60 billion worth of electronic and related goods were exported by the country and all of these were produced by foreign companies.

"If Malaysian companies can produce such goods for export, it will add to our nation's earnings. It will also be a source of pride for us.

"I hope local entrepreneurs will be brave enough to enter into electronic components manufacturing especially end-product manufacturing."

He urged them not to wait to get contracts before setting up operations or buying manufacturing equipment. They should start small and slowly build their ability to win the trust of the large companies such as Intel and Motorola which would then be able to buy from them. From there, he said they should slowly improve their quality and performance to manufacture final products with Malaysian brand names.

The Prime Minister said he was glad to see co-operation between the Malay and Chinese chambers of commerce in joint industrial projects.

"When I became Prime Minister, I suggested co-operation between the two chambers of commerce to grab opportunities in the industrial sector but for some reason the Malay chamber did not want to work with the Chinese

chamber.

The Chinese chamber then set off on its own to establish Unico, Dr Mahathir said.

"However, after the late Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad took over the Malay chamber, there was good co-operation," he added, referring to the late DRB-Hicom Group chairman who died in a helicopter crash near Kuala Lipis about two months ago.

Dr Mahathir later toured the company which produces computer parts.

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