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Mahathir-Industry

GO HIGH-TECH FAST, MAHATHIR TELLS LOCAL INDUSTRY

KUALA LUMPUR, April 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the sooner local companies switch to high-technology, the lesser the need for Malaysia to bring in foreign workers.

He said the country would no longer need to depend on foreign workforce as going high-tech would mean less manpower requirement.

"What we are doing now is to move into high technology because the (local) industry now depends too much on manual workers," he said at a luncheon with members of the Malaysian Industry-Government for High Technology (MIGHT) at Carcosa Seri Negara here.

MIGHT, launched by Dr Mahathir in 1993, is a joint initiative by the government and private sector to promote prospecting activities in technology and business at the domestic and international market-place.

Dr Mahathir said presently local companies were not only labour-intensive but their existing manpower also lacked the skills to switch to high-tech.

"We have to understand how to reduce dependence on manual labour," he said stressing the need for Malaysians to upgrade their skills to cope with technological changes.

Dr Mahathir said he was confident that Malaysia had the capacity to develop a high-tech workforce.

"But we must have the determination and the effort to acquire the skills that involve high-tech," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia has slowly reduced the use of manual labour by using robotic technology and that it should emulate the Japanese who have managed their manpower better.

Citing an example, Dr Mahathir said during his visit to Japan, he noticed that many restaurants had employed locals although there were a few foreigners hired as well.

But the number of foreigners employed there was very small compared to Japan's population, said Dr Mahathir who later launched the Homepage and the Might directory.

Also present were Might joint-chairman Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman, who is Science Adviser in the Prime Minister's Department, and Technology Resources Industries Bhd chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli -- BERNAMA

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