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## Malaysia appreciates Japan's help in technology transfer

TOKYO, Fri: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, pleased with the continued support from Japanese investors towards Malaysia's industrialisation programme, said the transfer of technology from Japan will enhance the country's competitive edge in the global market.

"We appreciate the transfer of technology to companies in Malaysia," he said at the signing of a joint venture and technical cooperation agreement between Premier Choice Sdn Bhd, Usra Tampi Sdn Bhd and Japan's Metro Denso Ltd, here today.

The agreement will pave the way for the setting up of a joint venture company Metrodenso (M) Sdn Bhd that will manufacture combination switches for the automotive industries in Malaysia, as well as for export purposes.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here last night for a two-day working visit to Japan, said although there may be competition in the market, even between partners in the joint venture and the main companies in Japan, such competition is considered healthy.

"Malaysia appreciates Japanese companies' willingness to share their technology, particularly in high-technology industries, with the Malaysian partners, contrary to belief that Japanese manufacturers are reluctant to do so in certain sectors," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian-Japanese joint ventures will also help Malaysia to overcome the economic difficulties faced by most South-East Asian countries.

"Such cooperation will bring companies in Malaysia and Japan much closer. The Government will always be supportive of any new joint venture between Malaysian and foreign companies and hope they will achieve success."

Premier Choice chairman Datuk Mohd Saleh Sulong represented the company at the signing, while Usra Tampi executive chairman Datuk Abdul Shukor Mohamed and Metro Denso president M. Tanaka signed on behalf of their companies.

Speaking to reporters later, Abdul Shukor said the joint venture company will initially operate at Usra Tampi's facility in Shah Alam.

Metrodenso, with an initial paid-up capital of RM1 million, is expected to begin producing combination switches in April next year and start deliveries two months later.

"The company will have an initial production capacity of 2,000 combination switches a month," Abdul Shukor said, adding it will start supplying the items to Malaysia Truk dan Bas Sdn Bhd (MTB), the manufacturer of the national truck called HICOM Perkasa, which is also currently sourcing the components from Isuzu, its 20 per stake holder.

Usra Tampi currently obtains combination switches from Isuzu through MTB.

Usra Tampi will hold a 51 per cent stake in Metrodenso Malaysia, Metro Denso of Japan 40 per cent and Premier Choice, a consortium of 12 leading Malaysian corporations, the remaining 9 per cent.

The 12 companies in Premier Choice are Berjaya Group, Diversified Resources Group Bhd, FACB Bhd, Malaysian Helicopters Services Bhd, Permata Peremba Sdn Bhd, Permodalan Terengganu Bhd, PKENJ Ventures Sdn Bhd, Renong Overseas Corp Sdn Bhd, Sime Darby Holdings Bhd, Usra Sdn Bhd and YTL Corp Bhd.

Usra Tampi is a subsidiary of Usra Sdn Bhd, a pioneer in the relatively

new field of thermoplastics and elastomers which use a high-technology injection moulding process.

Mohd Saleh described the forging of the joint venture by Premier Choice as timely. Through such collaboration, he said, Metrodenso Malaysia will provide savings of about RM14 million in imports of wholly-assembled units or components for assembly in Malaysia.

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