

23 APR 1997

MIGHT OFFICIAL CALLS FOR SHOCK TREATMENT APPROACH TO PROMOTE R&D

KUALA LUMPUR, April 23 (Bernama) -- The government was asked to consider imposing a clause which stipulates that approval for new projects would only be given if local businesses upgraded their research and development facilities and provide for the latest technology applications.

The call came from Dr Ahmed Tasir Lope Pihie, chief executive of the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), who said his suggestion was based on an emerging trend among local firms to outsource their R&D requirements abroad.

He said such shock treatment would jolt the whole industry and force businesses to re-evaluate the use of high technology in their day-to-day operations.

He made these remarks in MIGHT's annual report for 1996 which was released today in connection with a special luncheon with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here. The prime minister also launched MIGHT's official website, PrimeNet, and MIGHT's membership directory.

Dr Ahmed Tasir said although overseas outsourcing was necessary in some cases, efforts should be made to transfer this R&D capability as well as capacity locally and to encourage its application among various other related industries.

Given the high cost of R&D, he said the big players in the industry should start the ball rolling.

"Once they have made progress, perhaps they could form joint ventures with the smaller players to help raise the standard of the industry," he said.

Earlier, Dr Ahmed said despite the necessary infrastructure and incentives being in place in the country, there was still a lack of clear support for the development of science and technology.

Business entities and fast developing corporations in Malaysia were not making the necessary decisions to increase their R&D allocation.

The lack of commitment by industry in the pursuit of high technology was also reflected in the fact that the majority of research efforts were conducted primarily in laboratories.

Few companies actually included strategic planners with research backgrounds and expertise at board level, he said.

Dr Ahmed said decisions on the progress and future of any company should be based on technology, particularly in the context of its development, application and diffusion, a feature sorely lacking in Malaysia.

Most corporations, he said, appeared to be too far removed from the intricacies of science and technology, adding that merely transferring or allocating a set budget annually for R&D was also not sufficient.

There should also be a firm commitment and long-term plan to integrate science and technology into the business plan of the company and greater involvement in R&D by local manufacturers and producers.

Meanwhile, MIGHT is also in the process of developing a technology depository which will list new and emerging technologies for the benefit of industry and academia.

This database was set to position Malaysia in the global context, said Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli and Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman, the joint chairmen of MIGHT, in their annual review.

They also said the MIGHT Interest Group (MIG) in Telecommunications was

in the process of preparing a Cabinet paper on the strategy for local manufacturing of telecommunications equipment in line with the nation's aspiration to promote the development of Own Brand Manufacturers.

With the advent of the information revolution and the emergence of the digital economy, they said the MIG in Telecommunications would prepare itself to support the growth and development of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Tajudin and Dr Omar also said the MIG in Aerospace had also completed a blueprint on aerospace which outlined recommendations and strategies aimed at spearheading the industry in Malaysia.

Altogether, MIGHT has six MIGs which also cover pharmaceuticals, advanced materials, construction and road haulage. -- BERNAMA

SHY GC