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Partnership with Moscow will enrich our technology

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Malaysia must reduce sole dependence on certain industrialised countries' technology and instead establish more partners and suppliers if it is to succeed as a fully industrialised country.

In his speech at the opening of the TechXchange '97 exhibition, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said partnership with Russia would expand and enrich Malaysian technology and create more techno-entrepreneurs.

He said Russia was recognised as one of the few developed nations which had acquired the status of a technological powerhouse.

"Malaysians must take the opportunity offered by this exhibition to update their knowledge on the state-of-the-art and latest achievements in Russian technology as well as developments in Eastern Europe.

"Malaysians must also take this opportunity to update themselves on the advanced and frontier technology development and incorporate these to gain the competitive edge for their organisations and nation," he said.

His speech was read by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Chong Kah Kiat who said Dr Mahathir was having a bout of flu and had been advised to rest.

The Prime Minister was scheduled to open the exhibition, which focuses on developing and establishing Malaysian-Russian technology collaboration.

TechXchange is jointly organised by Le Proton Exhibition Services Sdn Bhd, the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology and Novotek Group and Machinoexport of Russia.

It is supported by Sirim Bhd, while Telekom Malaysia Bhd is the official telecommunications provider. The New Straits Times is the official newspaper.

Also present at the opening was Le Proton Exhibition Services chairman Datuk Radzi Manan, Russian Ambassador Vitali Vorobiev and Telekom chief operating officer Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Daud.

Dr Mahathir said between 1981 and July last year, Japan, Taiwan and the United States invested a total of RM28 billion, RM21 billion and RM16 billion respectively in Malaysia.

"However, investments by the Russian Federation in the Malaysian manufacturing sector were small.

"In the same period the Russian Federation had invested a total RM22.7 million, making it the 37th largest investor in Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir said total exports to Russia increased from RM97.72 million in 1993 to RM284.6 million last year and RM110.17 million between January and July this year.

Total imports, meanwhile, increased substantially from RM155.46 million in 1993 to RM667.88 million last year and RM434.68 million in the first seven months of this year.

Dr Mahathir said the major export items to the Russian Federation included television receivers, sound recorders, natural rubber, office machines telecommunication equipment, cocoa, palm oil and vegetable oil.

Imports, meanwhile consist of fertilisers, iron, steel, base metal ores, aluminium, zinc, edible products, cotton and pulp.

He also said trade between Malaysia and Russia intensified significantly in 1994, with the purchase of 18 MiG-29 fighter jets worth more than RM1 billion.

He added technology transfer was arranged through offset programmes to

enable Malaysian companies, research and development agencies as well as institutes of higher learning to receive training in aerospace.

"Bilateral trade and co-operation between Malaysia and Russia is in consonance with the emphasis that Malaysia is putting in terms of developing strategic sectors identified in its five-year development plan, first and second industrial masterplan and Vision 2020."

Earlier, Radzi said some 90 Russian companies were participating in the exhibition, which ends on Friday.

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