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PM: DIVERSIFY SOURCES OF TECHNOLOGY

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysia ought to diversify its sources of technology to help it achieve industrialised status by 2020 and cited Russia as one of the countries which could provide assistance, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia must have more partners and suppliers of technology.

"Partnership with Russia will certainly assist to extend and enrich our technology as well as create more techno-entrepreneurs. Such a rare opportunity should not be missed," he said in his speech at the opening of TechXchange '97 at the MINES near here. It was delivered by Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Dr. Mahathir said trade between Malaysia and Russia intensified significantly in 1994 with the former's purchase of 19 MIG-29 jets worth over RM1 billion.

"Technology transfer was arranged through the offset programme to enable Malaysian companies, research & development agencies as well as institutes of higher education to receive training in the aircraft, avionics as well as aerospace sector," he added.

In the first seven months of this year, Malaysian exports to Russia amounted to RM110.17 million while imports from Russia totalled RM434.68 million.

In 1996 Malaysian exports to Russia were valued at RM284.6 million while imports from Russia totalled RM667.88 million.

The major export items to Russia include television receivers, sound recorders, natural rubber, office machines, telecommunication equipment, palm oil and cocoa while imports from Russia include manufactured fertilisers, iron and steel, base metal ores and edible products.

TechXchange '97 is the first high-technology exhibition and conference to highlight the latest sciences and technologies from Russia in the Asia-Pacific region.--BERNAMA

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