

21/10/1998

7,000 microchip designers needed by next year

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The country needs to produce more microchip designers and technicians to meet a target of 7,000 by next year, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

Najib said the country needed 5,000 designers and 2,000 technicians but currently there were fewer than 100 of them in the country.

"More must be done to develop the microchip design industry. We are now essentially doing only assembly and testing of semi-conductors."

He said by developing the industry, the country would see foreign exchange savings of RM24 billion per year within five years and RM60 billion per year within 10 years.

"These astounding figures demand that Malaysia look at developing this industry at the fastest possible time," Najib told reporters after launching a project by Amica Technologies (M) Sdn Bhd to develop the computer-aided design (CAD) and integrated circuit (IC) design industry in the country.

Najib said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had stressed numerous times that Malaysia needed to produce original products and brands to be marketed globally.

"Developing the microchip design industry will definitely lead to that. Malaysia now depends on design work from outside and is confined to component manufacturing.

"By developing this industry, Malaysia can design its own products, carry out its own research and development, and manufacture and market these products globally.

"It is estimated that once this industry is established, over 50,000 high paying jobs will be created downstream within five years and over 120,000 jobs within 10 years."

The project by Amica Technologies will see courses in CAD and IC design being introduced at local public and private higher educational institutions.

An advanced design training centre would also be set up. Amica Technologies would facilitate the forging of relationships between microchip design researchers and manufacturers.

(END)