

24/03/1998

Dr M urges banks to be venture capitalists for IT projects

Fadzil Ghazali

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday called on local banks to become venture capitalists and invest in research and development (R and D) activities, particularly in information technology-related areas.

This way, the bankers will also be able to understand technology better and assess the viability of projects in areas related to their own sector, he said.

"They have to invest in this area... otherwise they will miss the opportunity and other parties will benefit instead," he told reporters after launching Iris Smart Complex at the Technology Park in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

In his speech earlier, he said there is a need for the finance sector and venture capitalists to keep an open mind.

"While it is true that investors have to exercise prudence before they put a single ringgit into their ventures, it is advisable that they also understand emerging technologies and their impact on the future.

"New and emerging technologies have the potential to bring tremendous rewards to investors, and also to the country," he added.

"If they do not invest, not only will they eventually lose out, but the country will have also missed an opportunity to increase its wealth, raise gainful employment, educate the people and pursue profitable follow-up technologies and corresponding products.

"Perhaps it would also help if potential investors realise that Malaysians are capable of innovating, inventing, designing, manufacturing and delivering on their promises."

Dr Mahathir reminded investors not to yield to the inherent inferiority complex which rejects everything local, urging them not to disregard Malaysian skills and talents.

"We should take note that technology is intellectual property conceived far ahead before any product gets manufactured or produced, and that nobody has a monopoly on ideas," he added.

For too long, the country has overlooked talented people in its midst because of a belief that only foreigners are competent, he said.

"But I believe that intellectual capabilities are not restricted according to region. Malaysians, too, have the capacity to design, innovate, develop and apply technologies and products that can be used both in the country and overseas.

"We have had several success stories, where Malaysian technology and products have reached the international markets. And as a Malaysian I am very proud of these achievements and of the companies concerned," he added.

In this day and age of the microelectronic processor, the Internet and satellite communications, there are so many opportunities to bring forth new ideas to be developed into products and services that can propel the country into the Information Age, the Prime Minister said.

On the Multimedia Super Corridor, Dr Mahathir said while it is formulated to attract foreign investment and facilitate the transfer of technology, it is also intended to identify and encourage creative Malaysians, people who have the ability to anticipate global needs and, using homegrown technology, develop products and services to meet them.

(END)

