

27/06/1998

PM happy with progress of local hi-tech companies

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is happy that Malaysian companies have been able to produce sophisticated precision products for the world market.

The Prime Minister said this during a visit today to the Malaysian Technology Development Corporation which promotes commercialisation of research and technology.

Dr Mahathir, who was briefed on work done by companies under its arm and saw examples of commercialisation and research findings from local universities, said that some of the local firms had international companies dealing in high-tech as their clients.

"They have done quite well and are making progress. I am very happy," Dr Mahathir said during the visit to MTDC's Rumah Teknologi.

MTDC was formed in 1992 as a venture capital company. Its expanded activities include fund management, finance and corporate services and technology and industrial consultancy. It also invests in technology.

The corporation registered a pre-tax profit of RM20.8 million for the year ended Dec 31, 1997 against RM600,000 in 1992. This was achieved on the back of an income of RM42.2 million from RM900,000 that same year.

Its shareholders' fund is now RM133.9 million.

Chairman Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman said MTDC had invested RM173.6 million in 48 companies, dealing in high-tech areas such as IT, electronics and advanced materials.

Omar also, for the first time, announced a five per cent dividend for 1997 to MTDC's shareholders which include Berjaya Singer Bhd, Permodalan Nasional Bhd, MIDF Bhd, Petronas and Tenaga Nasional Bhd.

Dr Mahathir was also briefed on the experience of some local firms.

For example, J.K. Digital Technology Malaysia Sdn Bhd managing director C.O. Hung was a former lecturer in Singapore, who came home in January 1995 to start a Malaysian-designed home entertainment product venture.

He told the Prime Minister of how he had problems raising RM15 million until he met a senior official of MTDC which provided him with the start-up cost, albeit with a scaled-down capital of RM1 million.

"Although the company is now in the red, we hope (with MTDC's help) to go global by 2000," Hung said.

Dr Mahathir also launched J.K. Digital Technology's Home Multimedia System. The video cassette recorder-like device operates through a remote control or remote keyboard.

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