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Commercialise research results further: Dr M

Kamarul Yunus

THE private sector not only does not carry out much research, they do not even use findings of research done by others, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

"(They) find it better to build and sell houses, which do not require a brilliant mind," he said in Bangi, Selangor yesterday.

The Prime Minister said many research findings by government agencies or research laboratories are left idle because the private sector tends to seek easy money and profits such as developing housing estates and buildings which do not require much skills.

"To convert research results into something that can be marketed and commercialised is something that needs unique skills," he told reporters after launching the Research Tech-Park of the Malaysian Institute for Nuclear Technology (MINT) Research Tech-Park.

In contrast, the Japanese are efficient in applying the research findings by others.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said companies need to strengthen cooperation and forge close relations with government research institutions to make full use of the research findings.

"Some of the technology and expertise available can be used by companies to improve competitiveness in the industry. There may come a day when local technology replaces foreign ones," he added.

Dr Mahathir also urged government agencies to undergo a paradigm shift to tackle the problem to market the research findings and ensure close cooperation with the private sector in the research field.

To a question whether research institutions will also be affected by the Government's call for a reduction in expenditure due to the present economic problem, Dr Mahathir said they, including those in the private sector, will have to learn to be more efficient and cost-effective.

"Like the government agencies, we have also asked them (research institutions and private sector) to trim their expenditure.

"Sometimes, there is also a waste in conducting research ... there are many things that we need not do but we still do because we lived lavishly before.

"Now, we don't have the money. The private sector must learn to be more prudent and reduce cost," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the private sector should also not be too dependent on incentives to market their research findings.

"This is for their own good. The incentive is the profit that you make from the research findings. (The private sector) will make profits if they use the technologies available in the country," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the ability to produce own technologies and master the latest ones is vital for Malaysia to realise the vision of becoming a developed country by the year 2020.

"Malaysia's ability to compete in the international market depends on its technological capability," he said.

He added that the Government has allocated a substantial budget to finance research programmes as well as research and development projects, especially those conducted by the public sector.

In praising the MINT, Dr Mahathir said the government agency specialising in research and development has a role to improve the country's infrastructure technology.

Established 25 years ago, MINT provides research facilities for products that have the potential for marketing. The agency earned RM23 million selling its finding and research results to companies and industries.

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