

14/01/1998

PM's advice to private sector on partnerships

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday called on the private sector to form smart partnerships with the Government in the commercialising of new technologies, saying such collaboration would help speed up the process.

The Prime Minister said the participation of the private sector was needed as the Government had limited funds.

Calling on them to enhance co-operation with government research agencies, Dr Mahathir said the many technologies and expertise developed by such institutes could be used to enhance competitiveness in various industries.

He was speaking at the launching of the Technology Park of the Malaysian Institute for Nuclear Technology Research near Bangi, Selangor. The institute celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

The park's main activity focuses on developing viable technology for international market and carry out tests to determine the ability of new and commercial technologies to benefit the private sector, particularly the small and medium scale industry.

Later at a Press conference, when asked whether he was happy with the present level of participation of the private sector in research and development, Dr Mahathir expressed disappointment that many findings and products of Government research agencies had received no response.

Dr Mahathir said: "Our experience so far is quite disappointing. They (private sector) are more interested in obtaining profit the easy way like constructing houses and buildings which do not require much skill."

He said this differed with efforts to convert research results into something that could be marketed.

"This is a special capability like the Japanese who are competent in utilising R&D of others.

"In Malaysia, not only we do not conduct research ... we also do not use research findings of others."

On whether government research agencies would be affected by the cost-cutting measures, the Prime Minister said they had been told to trim their spendings and stop wastage.

"If we really look at it, there are lots of things that need not be carried out. Previously we could because we had the money but now we have to learn to be more efficient and cost-effective."

On whether the Government planned to offer incentives to the private sector for collaborating with Mint, Dr Mahathir said the habit of asking for incentives before doing anything should be stopped.

"This (technology) is for their own good. The incentive is the profit they will gain if they make use of the technology."

The park comprises five plants - Sinagama (radiation and sterilisation services for medical devices); Alurtron (sterilisation services and services to improve the quality of wires and cables); Raymintex (using nuclear technology for the process of vulcanisation of rubber latex); Sterifeed (process palm tree trunk to feed ruminant animals); and thermal oxidation (incineration of waste disposal).

The Raymintex plant, built at a cost of RM6 million, is the sole plant in the world using nuclear technique for the process of vulcanisation of rubber latex without using chemical ingredients to produce "surgical and examination gloves" for export purposes. It has a production capacity of 6,000 tonnes annually.

Commenting on the vulcanisation technology, Dr Mahathir said its discovery was significant because Malaysia was the main supplier of latex-based products, particularly the gloves.

He said the country dominated 70 per cent of the world's market for such products, adding that the gloves netted RM3 billion in revenue last year.

Touching on the park, Dr Mahathir said it also possessed various technology excellence centres which could benefit the private sector.

Dr Mahathir said the centres provide products and services to Government departments as well as private companies, adding that the radioisotop products produced by Mint had been widely used at Government and private hospitals.

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