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Mahathir-University

UNIVERSITIES SHOULD BE AGENTS OF DISCOVERY- DR MAHATHIR

JOHOR BAHRU, Aug 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today local institutions of higher learning should take on the role of agents of discovery in keeping with the rapid development of the country's industrial sector.

The new millennium would require institutions of higher learning to change their direction in the development of knowledge to one in line with the developments in the industrial sector, he said.

"The role of the university has changed from the conventional one of being a storehouse of knowledge to one of generating technology," the Prime Minister said when launching the "Discovery University" the new motto of the University Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) at Skudai near here.

Dr Mahathir arrived here yesterday for a two-day visit to Johor.

He said society looked upon the university as a form of commercial venture which needed to come up with products which satisfied the need of customers and that would be applicable to industry in particular the manufacturing sector.

The Prime Minister said industry was moving in the direction of high-technology based ventures and needed more "market-driven" products.

"Hence apart from producing trained manpower, research findings are also among the products of an institution of higher learning in keeping with current developments," he said.

Dr Mahathir said developments in the field of science and technology needed sound research activities.

He said the UTM's effort in launching the "Discovery University" motto was a right move in enhancing the process of generating products -- skilled manpower and the latest technology -- suitable for use by present day society.

"A country's people will progress if it has the skills, scientific expertise and high technology not just for modifying but for inventing, adding and renewing the needed technology," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said the UTM's move to stress on new findings or discoveries was a positive step in the direction of becoming a developed nation.

"To achieve this objective, rapid economic growth is vital and this is closely linked to the manufacturing sector, trade, investment, competitiveness, quality of the workforce and the ability to face challenges," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister commended the UTM for pioneering into various fields of technology with the latest being marine technology which had won recognition from the "International Towing Tank Conference."

"This recognition proves that the international community has confidence in our abilities and it is my hope that marine technology will see rapid development in this country," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the Marine Technology Laboratory which he opened at the UTM today, represented a plus factor in the university's efforts in the field of marine research and further enhanced the nation's skills in the marine industry.

Dr Mahathir also congratulated the UTM especially the academic staff who had worked hard to produce more than 45,000 graduates in the field of science and technology particularly in engineering since 1972.

"The university's contribution towards the supply of manpower to

develop the economy particularly in the field of industrialisation is very relevant in national development," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said the government had provided large allocations to raise the standard of education in the country.

Students who entered institutions of higher learning formed an important section of the country's workforce.

"This is because the country needs more manpower with knowledge and skills in the field of science and technology."

"University students can bring success to the country if they understand their responsibilities as students," he added.

The Prime Minister earlier attended a briefing on the UTM's development from the Vice Chancellor Datuk Dr Ahmad Zaharudin Idrus and inspected the Einstein Laboratory and then opened the Marine Technology Laboratory.

The RM30 million lab undertakes research in design, ship performance and other marine structures.

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