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Govt officers urged to be receptive to new ideas

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says government officers must be open-minded and receptive to ideas, even those which may seem absurd, and follow them through until they become reality.

Addressing members of the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (Might) in Seri Kembangan yesterday, he said Malaysia may miss out on opportunities if ideas are quickly dismissed as being unworkable.

"We don't have to do many things. We have to concentrate on a few things and follow it through until it happens.

"Having too many projects can be debilitating because you disperse your energy and don't get your final results. We should focus on a few things with real potential, and go at it in a very systematic way," Dr Mahathir said.

He said over a period of time the idea may even result in loss of money, as is the case with the country's venture into composites technology.

"We are not yet out of the woods. More new proposals are coming in, and we will spend more money. In order to get something out of an idea, you have to follow it through until you realise the end results. If you stop halfway and then start something else, you will not get anywhere," said Dr Mahathir, who is a patron of Might.

He was earlier briefed by Might chief executive Dr Ahmed Tasir Lope Pihie on initiatives undertaken and contributions made by Might, which was established in February 1993 to prospect for high-technology business opportunities.

Dr Mahathir said Might should accept even the most ridiculous ideas, apply their minds to the ideas and see them become reality.

"I am one of the sources of ridiculous ideas. As Prime Minister, I am able to force people to do ridiculous things, and some have turned out to be not so ridiculous.

"It is good to have some authority, and to use your authority to force through certain things which otherwise could not be forced through," Dr Mahathir said.

High technology can be defined as something not available before that has come about simply because there are people brave enough to think of them.

"Some of the things we are doing today are quite amazing, and which would not have been dreamed of by people 10 years ago," Dr Mahathir added.

He said Might is also a good example of the Malaysia Incorporated concept, where both government and the private sector work together towards a common objective.

"It is better to work together than to confront one another. Confrontations are not worthwhile," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister further said currency trading is an example of how confrontation can cause more damage, and in the end not really benefit anyone.

"In currency trading, the idea is to destroy somebody and his wealth so that you make profit for yourself. The amount of wealth you destroy is really much bigger than the profit made for yourself," he added.

Malaysia had lost US\$250 billion (US\$1 = RM3.80) in 1998 due to attacks on the currency and stock market. In contrast, the profit made by these traders could not have been more than US\$10 billion, Dr Mahathir said.

"This is a clear example of what is not a win-win situation. You destroy

US\$250 billion of wealth in order to make US\$10 billion for yourself. That is very stupid.

"If you had enriched the people, you may not have made US\$10 billion for these speculators, but we may have bought more Boeing aircraft and more products from America, so that both Malaysia and America would have become enriched," he said.

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