

Security is Govt's top priority, says Dr M

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KUANTAN: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad assured both foreign and local investors that the Government placed the utmost importance in safeguarding the country's existing conducive investment climate.

Dr Mahathir said that following the slowdown in the global economy, which is anticipated to prolong following the current situation in the United States, the challenge to attract a steady stream of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) into the country would be much more daunting.

"Apart from maintaining a conducive environment for investors, security remains the top priority and the Government will continue to be proactive in ensuring that businesses operate in a safe and secure environment," said Dr Mahathir, in his speech before opening the BASF-Petronas integrated chemical complex at Gebeng yesterday.

Dr Mahathir added that the economic uncertainties that continue to surround the global economy had resulted in the competition for a share of the FDI pie even tougher with more countries wooing a contracting pool of capital funds.

"Central to our efforts to enhance the investment climate in the country is the provision and continuous upgrading of logistics and infrastructure facilities.

"In the case of the petrochemical industry, the Government has allocated substantial funds to upgrade existing infrastructure and also build new ones.

"To this end, the East Coast

Highway can be seen as a major advantage for petrochemical players, including the BPC integrated chemical complex," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the vigorous expansion of the petrochemical industry had contributed significantly towards the further broadening of the country's economic activities, particularly the manufacturing sector which continues to

be the major contributor to the national coffers.

"Through export earnings and foreign exchange savings from import substitution, the first half of this year recorded an income of RM7.8bil generated from exports of chemical and chemical products.

"This accounts for 5.4% of the total exports of RM144bil compared to 4.8% for the same period last year."