

'Manufacturers should diversify'

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PUTRAJAYA, Fri. — The manufacturing sector, a major contributor to the country's gross domestic product, should shift its emphasis away from electronic products. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the sector should strive to innovate and diversify its products, based on local resources, to offer high quality products that were competitively priced to meet the needs of consumers.

Opening the second session of the 2003 Budget Dialogue, Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said Malaysians must enhance efficiency and encourage creativity and innova-

tion. "We need to penetrate new markets that offer huge potential. We should not merely concentrate on traditional markets such as the United States, Japan and Europe.

"We should strive to penetrate other markets such as China, West Asia and Africa," he said, adding that this was a greater imperative with China's entry into the World Trade Organisation.

Speaking to government officials and representatives from 46 professional organisations and companies, Dr Mahathir said the tourism sector also had to be further developed.

He said tourism could be a huge revenue earner with the inclusion of

products such as health, education, sports and environmental tourism.

"The tourism industry has recorded an encouraging performance despite the setback following the attacks on the United States on Sept 11," he said.

On the education sector, Dr Mahathir said the country could become an international centre for educational excellence, while in the transport sector, Malaysia had the edge to be a hub for shipping and airline services.

"This is in line with our aspirations to be a global player," he said, adding that the agricultural sector could also be expanded through bio-technology research and development.