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MAHATHIR-SWEDEN

DR M: M'SIA TO LEARN FROM SWEDEN IN PRODUCING HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS

By: Jackson Sawatan

STOCKHOLM, Sept 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is keen to emulate the examples of Swedish companies in producing high-quality world-class products, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Citing the example of the Swedish automotive industry which possessed high engineering inputs, he said although Sweden was a small country with just 8.9 million people, they have a high standard of living based on the premise of producing quality products.

"The Swedes have this philosophy where they have come to terms that although they are a small country, they have to compete in the world market by producing quality products. This is one approach that we should give attention to because if we can produce world class products, our markets will also expand," he told reporters here today at the end of his three-day visit to this Scandinavian country before leaving for New York.

Dr Mahathir said Sweden was also successful in research and development (R&D), especially in medical science, and cited the example of the Karolinska Institute, a well-known medical science R&D centre.

Dr Mahathir, who had visited the Karolinska Institute which was also responsible for selecting Nobel prize winners in the physiology or medical categories, said research by the institute was of commercial value.

"At Karolinska, they receive help from the government as well as private sector to undertake research so that in the end it could be marketed. We are keen to have co-operation with them."

The prime minister said the development of R&D in Malaysia had depended on funding availability.

However, he said the government was committed to developing R&D, especially in priority areas in producing quality and highly-competitive goods.

On his visit to the Ericsson complex late Tuesday, Dr Mahathir disclosed that he was briefed on the integration of the communications system among security forces in Sweden.

"I am told that if they (the systems) are not integrated, then there could be a possibility of a situation similar to the aftermath of the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York (on Sept 11, 2001) when the (New York) police department was trying to contact the fire department to get its members out of the building.

"But they were not able to make contact and this caused more than 100 fire brigade personnel to be killed (when the building collapsed). As such, they (Ericsson) have proposed that communications between these forces be integrated and this is being done in Sweden," he said.

On the reluctance of telephone service operators in Malaysia to apply for the 3G licence, Dr Mahathir said this was based on the experiences of companies outside the country which suffered losses when they operated 3G services.

"Although the 3G capability is sophisticated, it is not as good as expected. So we have to wait and see what happens. There are three or four major telecommunications in Europe which suffered heavy losses because they had bought 3G licences at very high prices," he said.

On his meeting with Swedish corporate leaders, Dr Mahathir said they expressed their intention to co-operate with Malaysia.

"They are also keen to invest in Malaysia and have promoted their products in areas like electronics, power generation and research," he

added.

On bilateral relations with Sweden, Dr Mahathir said, "We don't have any problems with Sweden. We have a world view which is more or less the same...they have this socialist ideology but this is not a problem in our relations with them." -- BERNAMA

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