

Dr M: Take in foreign scientists to boost R&D

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PENANG: Malaysia must take in foreign scientists to improve the country's research and development (R&D) in view of the shortage of local scientists, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"If we don't take them (the foreign scientists), others will.

"Some countries with populations larger than Malaysia trust foreign scientists to do sensitive research work," he said, adding that the foreign scientists were treated well and even given citizenship.

Dr Mahathir said this during a luncheon talk at a hotel here in conjunction with the 9th Multimedia

Super Corridor IAP meeting yesterday.

He said countries that succeeded in producing new products through R&D were those who were hospitable to foreign researchers.

Dr Mahathir, who is the International Advisory Panel (IAP) emeritus member, also said the Government must be willing to spend money.

He said those in charge of the funds must accept that failure rate in R&D could be as much as 90%.

Calling on officials in charge of research funds to change their mindset, he said, R&D should never be

regarded as a business venture.

"R&D is not like doing business. There can be no projection on returns on investment. Much of the money would probably go down the drain.

"But if we can strike gold, then we will really make it," he said.

He also said that parents must not undermine their children's future by objecting to the Government's move to teach Mathematics and Science in English.

"We must accept the fact that it is tedious and time-consuming to translate scientific works. It is better for students to master English so that they

can have direct access," he said.

On another matter, Dr Mahathir said that Malaysians generally lacked good communication skills.

"This is due to the examination system in the country which placed emphasis on multiple choice questions," he said.

On Proton, Dr Mahathir said that Volkswagen should only acquire a share in the company and not take over the company.

"By acquiring a share, Volkswagen can benefit from the lower cost of labour, while Malaysia can benefit from Volkswagen's technology," he said.