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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today launched the Malaysian Business Council and stressed the necessity of productive cooperation between the public and private sector to make Malaysia an advanced country.

Malaysia must strive to be a developed country at par with those of Europe and North America, the Prime Minister said at the launching here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is the council chairman, said collaboration that resulted in negative social consequences and frustrated the achievement of national values and aspirations must be fought against.

He added: +In many areas there must be more than an arm's length relationship. On many issues, there must be productive regulation.

+What is good for the business sector may not always be good for the people as a whole.+

The Council was one of the mechanisms intended to contribute further to the good relations between the two sectors, he added.

The council is made up of nine other ministers, eight leaders from the public service and 44 leaders from the private sector.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said under the Malaysia Incorporated concept, based on a partnership between the government and the private sector, both were together tasked with ensuring its success and were entitled to share the benefits. -- more

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He added that despite initial criticism, the idea had caught on and, today, government officers were more helpful towards the private sector and constantly improving service through innovative ways.

They now accept and appreciate that the private sector did not only make profits for itself but contributed towards economic growth and, therefore, towards the betterment of all, including themselves.

He said the private sector which welcomed the concept of Malaysia Incorporated must not only expect better service from the government but must also contribute towards its realisation.

They must make it easier for the government to serve them by understanding the regulatory role of government and its concern for social and economic justice for all, he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: +To expedite the attainment of our goal we must set new standards and make quantum leaps -- in terms of all the key institutions of our country, in terms of our economic culture, adjustments and innovations.

+Above all, we must understand our goal and the road towards it. We, here, means all of us -- the government, the private sector, workers, management and all the institutions which are directly or indirectly involved in the development of the nation. -- more

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+This national aspiration must be shared by all at every level. It is not a grandiose dream that we are targetting at. It is an achievable vision, provided of course that we all pull together.+

He added that for the council to be effective, there must be free and frank exchange of view and ideas.

+There can be no in-depth examination or discussion if there is not this commitment to candour. We cannot remove misunderstanding and roadblocks to productive cooperation if we fail to communicate clearly.+

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said the council was a small one because it was essential that the members could discuss in an atmosphere of candour and intimacy.

He said two of the four primary objectives of the council was to facilitate a free flow of information and ideas between the public and private sector and to address problems pertaining to industrial and commercial development and to remove impediments to economic growth.

The other objectives were:

+to create better understanding and to enhance the relationship between the public and private sector, and

+to identify and promote areas of cooperation and collaboration between them. -- more

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After the launching, the Prime Minister chaired the first meeting of the Council and presented a policy paper.

In his speech, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, also touched on the country's current economic situation, especially the consequences of the Gulf War.

The Prime Minister said the country was not totally insulated from the effects of the war but, as a net oil exporters, it was able to balance somewhat the effect on oil supply and oil prices.

He added that already Malaysia was feeling the effects of reduced air travel, diversion of ships for war purposes, increase in transportation and insurance costs, reduced economic growth and possible recession among its principle trading partners.

He said the government had done a comprehensive study of the effects and possible effects of the Gulf War on Malaysia.

He later told reporters the government had obtained a guide on what further action to take arising from the study.

The matter was discussed at the councils's meeting today.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said membership of the council would be increased if necessary. -- Bernama

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