

PM: Policy to ensure country acquires compet

Liberal education

itive edge in IT era

strategy

By Vijayan Menon

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Government will continue to liberalise its approach to education so that it becomes a vital component of the country's strategy, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"In this era of information technology, knowledge, skills and ideas are new sources of competitive advantage. The 21st century definitely belongs to people with imagination and knowledge.

"Since the business of tomorrow is the education industry, Malaysians must work towards developing the country as a centre for education, that is the educational hub of Southeast Asia.

"Malaysia welcomes the participation of foreign universities and training providers to not only come here to train our nation of 19 million people but also use the country as a base for Southeast Asia, a thriving region of 300 million people, needing new skills, knowledge and technology."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the opening of the World Leadership Conference at the Legend Hotel here. The two-day conference is jointly organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute and Blanchard Training & Development Inc of the US.

He said leadership was a vital aspect of organisational development that seldom got sufficient attention.

"We know that the leadership dimension must be given greater emphasis in our organisations. Companies and countries must renew themselves through carefully planned leadership development and succession planning."

He said organisational renewal would enable companies to stay successful even with the changing of the guard.

"Likewise, nations too must undergo leadership renewal from time to time.

Here, in Malaysia, we are fortunate that leadership renewals have been smooth and leadership transitions peaceful and orderly."

He said another key dimension of leadership that needed to be sufficiently addressed was business or management ethics.

He said it was equally important that managers and corporate leaders possessed high moral and ethical standards in line with the traditional values of inculcating moral integrity.

Dr Mahathir said it was estimated that in the 1990s, growth in Asia would be twice as fast as that in North America and 50 per cent faster than in Europe.

"Malaysia, with its estimated eight per cent growth in 1994, will hopefully continue its track record of sustainable rapid growth. The dynamism and robustness prevailing in East Asian economies will continue to make them major players in the global economy.

"However, we have to accept that the road ahead is not going to be paved with gold. We must continue to work hard. We must protect the gains we have achieved by maintaining peace and stability within our own borders."

In this regard, he said, there could be no compromise on law and order as without stability there could be no long-term economic growth, and without national consensus there could be no stability.

"We hope that whilst Western experts study the remarkable growth and progress of East Asia, they will not try to impose on us their norms and standards."

He said that as young nations, evolving their own system of values and practices, they needed to maintain their rapid progress.

"We should always be ready to learn from others, but the choice should be ours to make."

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