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Dialogue-Smart (Preview)

DOING BUSINESS THE "SMART PARTNERSHIP" WAY

By: Azman Ujang

LANGKAWI, July 28 (Bernama) -- The buzz word in Langkawi over the next three days is "smart" as several heads of government, top corporate leaders and senior ministers meet in an informal dialogue here to articulate what has been billed as the new business wave of the future -- Smart Partnership.

Even the dress code for the meeting in the Berjaya Langkawi Beach Resort has the word smart -- smart casuals.

"Suits are banned, participants can wear slippers or without socks and in short sleeve," organising chairman Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman told a press briefing this evening.

The Langkawi International Dialogue, to be opened tomorrow night by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is organised by the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), the London-based Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM) and the Kuala Lumpur-based Commonwealth Foundation For Technology Management (CFTM).

Dr Omar, who is also chairman of CPTM and joint chairman of MIGHT, said 250 people had confirmed their attendance, 100 more than for the inaugural dialogue last year.

There is particularly top-level participation from the Southern African region with President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, President Sir Ketumile Masire of Botswana and Dr Sam Nujoma of Namibia.

Smart partnership, which means forging a business relationship to achieve a long-term win-win situation, is a new concept of doing business which originated in Malaysia in 1993 following a dialogue between MIGHT and CPTM.

Dr Omar said the dialogue is a private sector initiative to build linkages to match individuals, industry and government to increase trade, investment and useful and mutually beneficial research.

" It is to appraise the changing aspirations of countries given the changing business scenario globally," he said.

Dr Omar, who is also Science Adviser to the Malaysian Prime Minister, cited this example of smart partnership -- countries which are buying black boxes or aircraft flight recorders are now no longer satisfied with knowing just how to switch them on or off. They also want to know how to service, maintain or modify them.

Malaysia Airlines (MAS) chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli is one of the strongest exponents of Smart Partnership in Malaysia.

In January this year, he struck a deal with Rolls-Royce of the United Kingdom under which MAS, which is buying Rolls-Royce engines for its latest order of 15 Boeing 777 aircraft, will also be acquiring the expertise and technology as well.

Rolls-Royce, in turn, could develop its engine market and expand its business partnerships in Malaysia.

And Tajudin will cement further his smart relationship with Rolls-Royce chairman Sir Ralph Robins over the next three days here when both will be co-chairmen of the dialogue.

Dr Omar said one of the most compelling elements of Smart Partnership is Dr Mahathir's frequent call for a "prosper thy neighbour" philosophy, which means it is not beneficial for one country to prosper without its neighbour being prosperous too. Likewise, it is not good for one country to be stable if its neighbour isn't.

Dr Mahathir, in his message in the souvenir programme of the dialogue said the "prosper thy neighbour" philosophy is a welcome change to the prevailing

business ethos of competitiveness propounded by economic gurus of the developed world.

"The spirit in which competitiveness is being carried out, that is the domination of the powerful and weeding out the smaller players gives rise to concern. It threatens global harmony and stability by precipitating trade wars and protectionist policies.

"Now is the opportune time to promote Smart Partnership as modern communication facilitates access to global information database and information exchanges," said the Prime Minister who arrived here this evening for the dialogue. -- BERNAMA

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