

27/07/1997

Smart Partnership philosophy wins accolades

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TWO years ago, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad coined the Smart Partnership, a new business concept for global prosperity which made it as the theme of the inaugural Langkawi International Dialogue.

Even the best minds in the business sector then were blur on the new concept.

But it attracted 135 participants, including GEC chairman and CEO Lord Prior. Despite their high profile, they considered the Langkawi meeting as a platform to learn the new concept.

They had been doing business for decades. Their success had given them a respectable international repute. Despite their global success and reputation, they believed there was still room to discover new dimensions which could bolster business.

Except for a brief note from the organisers on the objective of the concept, they walked into the meeting room eagerly waiting for the moment for an answer to their curiosity on how the new business idea would work.

The organisers, the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Technology Management (CCGTM) and Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), then had hoped that the meeting would initiate interaction of ideas and practices in the application of smart partnerships internationally at all levels of economic life.

The only information they had divulged to the participants on the new concept was that it would create productive collaboration, especially between companies, public and private sectors.

It would also be based on ethical co-operative networking, and creating synergy between formal and informal systems.

They were also told that the concept would complement the formal private and public sector organisations and added an innovative and flexible element to create successful new businesses, leading to businesses being conducted by maximising the opportunities where all would be winners.

Finally, they found the answers to the puzzle on smart partnership when Dr Mahathir delivered his keynote address at the opening of the dialogue.

Dr Mahathir's speech stressed on the need for a smart partnership between Asia and the developed world in the West and that a win-win situation was best served by the "Prosper thy Neighbour" philosophy.

The "Beggary thy Neighbour" attitude must be done away with as it did not benefit anyone.

"Beggary thy Neighbour is never a good policy," the Prime Minister had said. "And today, all the countries of the world are neighbours."

"By impoverishing neighbours, a price will have to be paid, including the country which practices this policy," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister's remarks set in motion the new business concept. It laid the foundation for a smart partnership between businessmen in Asia and the West.

Impressed by the new concept, the participants, mostly high profile captains of industry, were convinced that the smart partnership concept would be a suitable mechanism towards global prosperity.

It was easy to gauge the acceptance of the participants towards the concept.

The much larger participation in last year's Langkawi International Dialogue reflected the acceptance of the concept as a workable mechanism for a business partnership.

Last year's dialogue took a step forward by bringing in what was viewed as a "winning combination" in business between nations and private sector internationally.

A big number of heads of Government, especially from the African nations and 12 senior ministers from Commonwealth countries, including officials of multi-national chieftains from Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries, too took part in the dialogue.

The theme was maintained but the focus was more towards the role of Governments in smart partnership.

The dialogue had succeeded in establishing channels for personal interaction between business leaders and Government representatives.

And last year's dialogue also helped the Government and the private sector identify the trend for future development of trade, business and technology transfer.

Another achievement which should not be ignored is the success of the dialogue in bringing businessmen and Government to the round table to understand each other's needs and visions.

As a result, the dialogue ended on a sweet note, with both sides reaching a consensus to work collectively towards global harmony and cooperation.

After two years of scrutinising the smart partnership concept, this year's dialogue should be more interesting. Participants could expect to hear positive stories about the workings of smart partnerships.

First timers can learn from the experiences of others how smart partnerships succeeded in making partners and neighbour prosper, and how Government and businessmen work together towards global prosperity.

The theme of this year's dialogue has been aptly named "Smart Partnership in Action".

Similar to previous two years, the Prime Minister's keynote address would be something to ponder.

All the participants, including the heads of Government, will look forward for that vital speech that would certainly benefit their nations and companies.

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