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Smart partnerships set to usher in new business era

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THE Third Langkawi International Dialogue (LID '97), held on the legendary island from July 27-31, has taken the concept of smart partnership another step further.

The first LID in 1995, attended by over 150 business and government leaders from more than 30 countries, introduced and debated the concept of smart partnership.

It is based on partnership among government, business and the workforce nationally and internationally for enhancing equitable growth based on prosper-thy-neighbour and win-win principles.

The second LID in 1996, this time with about 250 participants, focussed on the role of Government in smart partnership, the place of technology in smart partnership, and smart partnership within an organisation.

For LID '97, the number of participants swelled to about 350 from Australia to Zimbabwe, stretching the facilities at the Berjaya Langkawi Beach and Spa Resort to its limits.

For most of the functions at the resort's Matsirat Ballroom for instance, the media and even some participants watched the proceedings through close circuit television as the hall was completely full.

The features of LID '97 were the sharing of experiences and developing new perspectives through interactive sessions, facilitating the formation of self-organising multi-cultural groups, and creating opportunities for networking among individuals from the public and private sectors.

The dialogue was once again co-organised by the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management Ltd (CPTM) and the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), who should be commended for a job well done.

The theme for LID '97 was "Smart Partnership in Action". This was discussed in the context of real life experiences at the level of company and inter-company, and cooperative frameworks beyond national borders.

Issues related to successful application of technology management through smart partnership was also discussed in the context of technology for emerging economies, and technology and financial services.

A common theme prevailed throughout the dialogue, a tone set by LID patron and adviser Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad from his opening address to his concluding remarks - that smart partnerships maximise and balance the benefits for both and for all, even if the contribution towards the partnership may not be equal.

"Too often in the past, competition meant that one out of two parties must emerge as the winner while the other had to accept the role of loser, in accordance with the concept of 'winner takes all'," he said.

The combination of high technology and globalised markets, however, has created the need for a revolutionary business ethos and principles such as smart partnership, which are based on prosper-thy-neighbour and win-win philosophy, he added.

The impact of such an idea can be far-reaching, because smart partnerships can take place between many entities. Apart from Government and the private sector, and nations in a region, there can be smart partnerships between individuals, between companies, between cities and a host of others, Dr Mahathir said.

The fact that smart partnership has caught on is evidenced from similar initiatives which have taken shape in other regions, including the

Barbados International Dialogue (BID) for small states, and the highly successful Southern Africa International Dialogue (Said).

"Other regions will follow suit. This will help usher in a new understanding between regions and groupings which will contribute to an era of global peace and prosperity, a Commonwealth of the World where wealth will truly be common," Dr Mahathir had said.

The true test of LID's success, however, will be long after the last delegate has left the island. After all the interaction and dialogue, the challenge now is to put into action what they have learned over the course of LID '97, either on the part of the Government, or Government-private sector interaction.

Members of the private sector, too, must create opportunities to work together in smart partnerships in various investment fields in order to realise the objectives of the dialogue, which is to show the way in which partnerships can be beneficial to both sides.

"It is not a partnership in which one dictates the other, where one gets everything and the other is only giving. We expect, because they are leaders in government and the private sector, that they would have appreciated the contents of the discussion to the point where they can make use of the idea in their dealings with each other, with the Government and within Government," Dr Mahathir said.

Now wouldn't that be smart?

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