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Mahathir-Britain

BUSINESS COMMUNITY MUST DISCARD NEGATIVE THINKING, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, April 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Malaysian business community must have a clear vision of where they want to go and discard negative thinking to promote national economic recovery.

"Neither depending on the government for handouts, nor blaming the government, should be the way to succeed," he said when launching the Malaysian-British Business Council here.

Noting that Malaysia and Asean have adopted Vision 2020 while the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) has established a vision group to develop a long-range shared vision for Asia and Europe, he said having a clear vision was important as it provided a road map to take in the future.

"Sadly, in business, few of our business leaders or corporations have a vision of where they want to be in 10 or 20 years' time.

"Short-term and shallow negative thinking will not get us out of our current difficulties," he said.

To succeed, Malaysia needed a smart-partnership of government, business, employee and "foreign friends", working together to bring the country to new heights of achievement.

"With close co-operation, a clear vision and a pro-active strategy, we can emerge again to be a regional economic powerhouse. It will be difficult, it will take time but we will triumph finally," Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister also promised foreign investors that they would find a hospitable business environment in Malaysia as the government recognised it could not develop Malaysia on its own.

"While we promote self reliance, we also know that in an inter-dependent, globally inter-connected world, we need to work with foreign friends to develop our nation," he said.

With the depreciation of the ringgit and the currency fluctuations having somewhat stabilised, now is the right time to invest in Malaysia, he said.

Dr Mahathir believed that besides encouraging two-way investment, the business council could also play a useful role in facilitating business partnership and joint ventures in third countries.

"Being the fulcrum of Asia, Malaysia is well-placed for foreign investors to enter the Asian market of 500 million people as well as the China, India and West Asian markets because of our historical, cultural and religious linkages," Dr Mahathir said.

He also said that he was encouraged with the objective of the Malaysia-British Business Council of developing opportunities for small and medium enterprises which was also consistent with the objective of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Dr Mahathir reiterated that Malaysia welcomed foreign investments and it had always adopted a pro-market liberal and open economic system in which foreign participation in its economy was welcomed and encouraged.

Meanwhile, British High Commissioner to Malaysia David Moss, in reading a message from his government, said Britain was convinced that Malaysia would soon emerge from its current economic difficulties and now was the time "when friends like Malaysia and Britain must stand together and be seen standing together."

He said the launching of the joint business council underlined the

message and Britain's continued willingness to play a part in the Malaysian economy.

"The Council will also open new doors for Malaysian enterprises in Britain which is already an important market for Malaysia and where we have seen significant Malaysian investments in recent years," he said.

He also said the British government intended to play its part in helping the new council to grow from strength to strength.

Britain is Malaysia's ninth largest trading partner accounting for three per cent of total trade or RM11.92 billion in 1996.

At the launching ceremony, Dr Mahathir also presented appointment letters to Malaysian members of the business council. -- BERNAMA

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