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Intensify smart partnerships: PM (HL)

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MALAYSIA owes much of its prosperity and high economic growth to the smart partnership developed among the Government, private sector and workers, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

The country, he said, has also benefited from such a partnership among the various races as embodied in the New Economic Policy, the National Development Policy and the privatization programme.

"This must not only continue but also intensified. We may not need to grow at the old rate for a recovery but we must ensure that reasonable and sustainable growth is achieved," he said at the first National Smart Partnership Dialogue 98 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"Anything that stands in the way of smart partnership must be eschewed, rejected. That way, we will recover sooner and we will all benefit," Dr Mahathir said in his keynote address.

Smart partnerships, he said, demand sacrifices but "by caring for the interests of our partners and helping them, we will hasten the economic recovery and reap the benefits. Clearly by helping others, we will help ourselves."

For this reason, Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange investors should resist taking profits once prices appreciate. Depositors too should not withdraw their savings in local banks on mere suggestions of weakness despite the Government's guarantee.

"We must not put our money in other countries or in foreign banks because we would be depriving our fellow businessmen of credit. Instead, we should support businesses in every way. We should support the 'Buy Malaysian' campaign and reduce foreign travel," Dr Mahathir said.

The Government has formulated policies which may appear restrictive but in the long term, Malaysians will benefit from the minor sacrifices required of them now, he said.

For continued success, "we must cling to our high values, morality, honour, honesty and caring for each other. We must not get selfish and act in our own interests."

Changes in the global economic culture have seen "the old ethics of mutual help and mutual gains" being replaced by "aggressive attacks and hostile acquisitions."

The old ideas of ethics, honour, equitable sharing and caring for others are supplanted by the belief that openness and transparency in business dealings are sufficient to ensure that unacceptable practices such as corruption and cronyism will be kept at bay, the Prime Minister said.

This "new creed" of dominance and winner takes all is the very anti-thesis of smart partnership, he added.

Dr Mahathir said the governments of the developing countries have been made out to be corrupt and prone to crony capitalism, and that "only a chosen few had benefitted from the sterling performance of these countries."

The fact that clearly all the people have benefited is dismissed as an illusion. So to force these countries to change their "evil ways", they are drastically impoverished through currency devaluation, and reduce "the tigers to whimpering kittens", he said.

"The effects of currency devaluation coupled with the conditions exacted by international agencies would make it almost impossible for these countries to recover economically. Any ideas that they may have to catch

up with the developed countries has to be jettisoned," he added.

Some 300 participants including Cabinet ministers, political leaders, top government officials, corporate captains, trade union leaders and non-governmental organisation representatives are attending the dialogue.

The two-day event is jointly organised by the Malaysian Industry-Government Group For High Technology (Might), the Academy of Sciences Malaysia, the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology and Management, the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (Isis), the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research, the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysia and Technology Park Malaysia.

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