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Mahathir urges traders to discard negative thinking

Kamarul Yunus

IN HIS efforts to promote national economic recovery, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday urged businessmen to discard negative thinking and have confidence in the Government.

He said the country's economic recovery can prevail if all Malaysians work together to tackle the problems faced by the country due to the depreciation of the ringgit and the fall in the stock market.

Speaking at the launching of the Malaysia-British Business Council in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Dr Mahathir said Malaysian businessmen should also have a clear vision of where they want to progress in the future.

"Having a clear vision is important as it provides a roadmap of the route to take in the future," he said, adding that only a few business leaders or corporations in the country have a vision of where they want to be in the future.

Dr Mahathir also reminded businessmen that short-term and shallow negative thinking will not get Malaysians out of the present economic difficulties faced by the country.

"Our businessmen must be able to conceptualise and articulate a clear vision of where they want to go. Merely depending on the Government for hands-outs is not the way to succeed.

"Neither is blaming the Government. It can be so easy to be negative, and to apportion blame. It is so much more difficult to right wrongs, to build and to create.

"Yet, as we progress towards the next millennium, we must build and create a new and better world for all our people," he added.

To succeed, Dr Mahathir said there is need for a Smart partnership between the Government, business, the workforce and foreign friends, who can work together to develop the nation and bring it to new heights of achievement.

With close cooperation, a clear vision and proactive strategies, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia can emerge again to be a regional economic powerhouse.

"It will be difficult, it will take time but we will triumph finally," he said, adding that with good friends from other countries like Britain, Malaysia's economy can recover quite fast.

On the business council, Dr Mahathir said the move was apt and timely because it builds on the solid and dependable relationship between both countries, and demonstrates that despite the current Asian economic crisis, British businessmen are still interested in Malaysia.

"I am confident that the business council will further deepen bilateral partnership between our two countries," he said, adding that the statement made by British Prime Minister Tony Blair that Britain is not a fair-weathered friend is appropriate and appreciated. Blair made the remarks during the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) in London early this month.

Through the setting up of the business council, Dr Mahathir said, this will encourage two-way trade and investment between Malaysia and Britain.

"The council can also play a useful role in facilitating business partnerships and joint ventures in third countries," he added.

Being the fulcrum of Asia, he said, Malaysia is well-placed for foreign investors to enter the Asean market of 500 million people as well as the Chinese, Indian and West Asian markets because of the country's historical, cultural and religious linkages.

Dr Mahathir said he was also encouraged by the council's objectives of developing opportunities for small and medium enterprises which are also consistent with the Asem objectives.

Calling for a drop in the "colonial baggage of historical injustices", Dr Mahathir said both Malaysia and Britain should now work together to create a better future for their respective countries and their people.

Meanwhile, Britain has reiterated its confidence that Malaysia will emerge from the current economic difficulties and will work together to solve the economic crisis.

This was contained in a five-paragraph message read out by the British High Commissioner to Malaysia David Moss during the launching of the council.

Besides Malaysia, Moss said in the past three years, similar joint business councils have been established with Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Comprising 15 business leaders on each side, the Malaysia-British Business Council is being co-chaired by Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute president Mirzan Mahathir and Standard Chartered Bank Plc group chairman Patrick Gillam.

Bernamea reports: Dr Mahathir held talks with Gillam at the Prime Minister's office in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Gillam discussed with Dr Mahathir the bank's investments in Malaysia where it has 35 branches.

Standard Chartered currently has more than 700 offices in over 50 countries.

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