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Mahathir-Nobel

MAHATHIR CHALLENGES MALAYSIAN SCIENTISTS TO WIN NOBEL PRIZE

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight issued a challenge to the Malaysian scientific community to produce a Nobel Laureate by the year 2020, calling on them to transform Malaysia into one of the world players in science and technology.

The Prime Minister said that over the years, local scientists have achieved major breakthroughs in various fields of science, engineering and technology (S.E.T).

Speaking on "Science and Technology -- The Foundation To Our Economic Growth and Prosperity" at the Academy of Sciences Malaysia dinner here, Dr Mahathir said the country would benefit if the academy could take up the initiative to document all the breakthroughs.

"Although these breakthroughs are sporadic, it indicates that Malaysia possesses scientists and researchers who are capable of performing high-level research.

"Having said that, I challenge the Malaysian scientific community to produce a Nobel Laureate by the Year 2020," the prime minister said.

He called on the scientific community to innovate and create; to continuously challenge old thinking with new ideas; to continuously search for new knowledge and solve problems.

"We have to strive for excellence and in the process transform Malaysia into one of the world players in science and technology," Dr Mahathir said.

He said scientists and researchers should capitalise on the government layout infrastructure and facilities to deliver their results.

Dr Mahathir said the government remains committed towards promoting S.E.T.

"We have formulated the policy, built the infrastructure and allocated the financial resources. But beyond that, we need the scientific and industrial community to push it further," he said.

The prime minister also called on the scientific community to develop Malaysia's own technology and engineering innovations to reduce the cost of technology and possibly allow the innovations to be exported to reverse the flow of royalties paid.

"Malaysia would do well to spend money on research, especially applied research. The economic recovery can be speeded up and we may emerge from the turmoil stronger," he said.

Dr Mahathir said as Malaysia was a developing country and has inadequate funds for research both original or applied, the royalty paid by Malaysia for imported technologies yearly was very high.

"This is of course a drain on our foreign exchange earnings. At this time of economic turmoil, we cannot afford this outflow of funds," he said.

He said the latest effort by the government to strengthen the country's economic position was the establishment of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) through which Malaysia would compete in the new information era.

Dr Mahathir also said while there was a great deal of pressure for the opening up of countries and markets to everyone today, there was not that much pressure for science, engineering and technology to be made available to every country and everyone.

"In fact the pressure to protect intellectual property is greater today than at any time in history. The machinery of international institution and those of powerful national governments are mobilised to protect intellectual property as never before.

"There seems to be something wrong in this. Why is it that while markets cannot be protected, markets which may be the sole asset of poor countries, intellectual properties must be protected at all costs?" he said.

Saying that "a choice must be made here", Dr Mahathir said "if we want to protect intellectual property then we must also protect markets."

The prime minister said alternatively, the world should insist on markets and intellectual property to be equally free for everyone.

-- BERNAMA

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