

15 AUG 1999

Abdullah-Scientists

BRING REAL COMMITMENT AND PASSION TO WORK, MALAYSIAN SCIENTISTS TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysian scientists and technologists have to be competitive on the global stage in order to make Malaysia part of the global innovation process, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said tonight.

He said they have to bring real commitment and passion to their work.

"In asking for commitment and passion, we are not asking for the impossible. Without an outstanding level of commitment and passion, one cannot be ranked among the top performers in any field of human endeavour," he said at the annual dinner of the Academy of Science Malaysia here.

Abdullah said therefore commitment and passion should be even demanded from practitioners of science and technology.

He said studies on international development have shown that the gap between the rich and the poor countries had been widening.

"If we think of this gap as a wealth gap, nothing can be done, because the wealthy having money to invest will become more wealthy. The poor, having nothing to invest will get poorer. The truth is that the widening gap is fundamentally a gap in innovative ability and this is something we can and must address," he said.

Abdullah said Malaysia had a strong basis for embracing a knowledge-based economy and located in one of the major trading cross-roads of the world.

The average Malaysian who was culturally tolerant, open-minded and quick to adapt to technological change is one of Malaysia's great national strength, he said, adding that the country also has well-established system of research institutions and a rapidly-growing university system.

"Among our shortcoming is perhaps the tendency to picture ourselves only as supporting actors on the world stage. The idea of playing major roles tends to frightens rather than inspire the average Malaysian," he said.

Abdullah said sending students to study abroad had been useful but too passive and active roles need to be taken to speed up the opening of the intellectual and scientific horizons.

He said international collaboration was one of the major avenues that could be used and the secondment of Malaysian scientist to the technical agencies of the United Nation could be expanded and extended to younger scientist.

Abdullah said that in setting the nobel prize, as challenged by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for scientific community to produce a Malaysian Nobel Laureate by 2020, Malaysia has accepted the universal measure of scientific performance as our own.

"The acceptance of the universal measure makes it necessary for us to focus on what is needed to bring our science up to standard. Many things may have to be upgraded," he said.

He said the national Science, Engineering and Technology (S.E.T) policy review undertaken by the academy would further address the policy issues and implaction pertaining to achieving a cultural of excellence which is fundamental in pushing SET development in Malaysia.

Abdullah also urged the academy to help the Education Ministry to prepare a dynamic school curriculum to attract more students and eventually prepare them to take up science and technology, currently offered by many universities in the country.

During the function, the Deputy Prime Minister launched the Malaysian R&D Programme in the Antarctica which is to be implemented in October this year.

Tonight, four senior fellows were elected and entitled to be called academicians, based on their outstanding contribution and achievement in the areas of SET for the benefit of the nation and mankind.

They are academicians Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman, Datuk Ir. Lee Yee Cheong, Dr M.K. Rajakumar and Tan Sri Dr Augustine S.H.Ong.

Academy of Sains Malaysia Presiden Dr Omar, in his speech, said the academy this year elected 10 new fellows bringing the number of fellows of the academy to 77.

--BERNAMA

nhd abg