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MAHATHIR-NTT

M'SIAN FIRMS SHOULD LEARN FROM OTHERS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

CYBERJAYA, July 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Malaysian companies have much to learn from a company like NTT Corporation of Japan, not just as a global telecommunications leader, but as a very successful business entity.

"With close collaboration, we (local companies) can learn from its (NTT's) experience and emulate its success," he said when he officiated at the opening of the NTT MSC Centre here.

The RM50 million centre is the first operational research and development facility located within the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and NTT's first research centre outside Japan and the United States.

Dr Mahathir hoped that through close collaboration and networking with NTT, local companies could learn from the Japanese approach known as "knowledge creation", which is quite different from the Western method.

He referred to a book co-authored by Ikujiro Noinaka and Hirotashi Takeuchi, in which they analysed how Japanese companies created the dynamics of innovation or "The Knowledge-Creating Company."

Their book reveals on what had set Japanese companies apart in terms of bringing about continuous innovation and highlighted the linkage between the outside and inside of an organisation.

"Knowledge that is accumulated from the outside is shared widely within the organisation, stored as part of the company's knowledge base, and utilised by those engaged in developing new technologies and products," he said.

Dr Mahathir explained that the "conversion process" in Japanese companies that took place would see knowledge from outside being converted and would go out again in the form of new products, services or systems.

"According to them (Noinaka and Takeuchi), it is the effectiveness of this conversion process that fuels continuous innovation within Japanese companies, which in turn leads to competitive advantage," he said.

Dr Mahathir said another unique feature of Japanese companies, as the authors had observed, was the fact that no one department or group of experts had the exclusive responsibility for creating new knowledge.

"Front-line employees, middle managers and senior managers all play a part, although there is a differentiation among the three roles," he said, adding, the creation of new knowledge, therefore, was the product of a dynamic interaction among them.

Touching on the NTT MSC Centre, Dr Mahathir noted that the centre would be the corporation's telecommunications hub for activities such as the value-added "Arcstar" global network. It will also offer total solution services for multinational companies in terms of top quality and reliable frame relay, managed leased line and Internet Protocol (IP) network services.

"I am also glad with the areas that have been identified for research, including next-generation Internet, machine translation covering English, Bahasa Malaysia-Japanese-Chinese, and digital data indexing, among others," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the centre has gone a step further in identifying areas for joint research, in which some had already started, for instance, R&D on lightning-surge protection.

Those at evaluation stage, Dr Mahathir said, included improved network management systems for telecommunications companies and next-generation

Internet joint experiment under the framework of Asia-Pacific Advanced Network (APAN).

With all these advanced technologies criteria in place, he said the MSC has now all the necessary prerequisites to be the testbed for wireless telecommunications technology.

In this respect, he said Malaysia should actively support R&D in wireless technology in local universities and research institutes, and provide a conducive environment for companies to conduct field trials, especially in next generation wideband-CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access).

"Our vision is to create the first internationally-focussed R&D cluster in Asia, driven by strong governmental support and guarantees so that the MSC will lead the region's initiative into the Information Age," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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