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Mahathir-Mapen

MALAYSIA NEEDS TO PRODUCE WORLD CLASS ENTREPRENEURS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia needs to produce world class entrepreneurs with entrepreneurs from all races complementing each other to achieve global success.

"If the New Economic Policy and the National Development Policy in the past focused on producing bumiputera entrepreneurs, it is time we look into producing Malaysian, including bumiputera, entrepreneurs who are world class," he said.

Launching the Second National Economic Consultative Council (Mapen II) here today, Dr Mahathir said the economic crisis had affected not only bumiputera entrepreneurs but non-bumiputeras as well.

Mapen II, chaired by former Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, is to submit a report to the Cabinet by September next year.

Mapen II is designed to be a crucial part of the process of formulating Malaysia's national development policy for the first decade of the new millennium. Council members are drawn from a wide spectrum of groups and interests to ensure that the views expressed are representative of all Malaysians.

Dr Mahathir said the economic crisis had shown that non-bumiputera enterprises too were fragile and thus needed to be strengthened.

"Bumiputera and non-bumiputera entrepreneurs must cooperate with and support each other in order to enhance their capability to face global challenges.

"If we are united, we will be able to produce Malaysian entrepreneurs who are strong, competitive and resilient," he said.

The Prime Minister also wanted to see Malaysia's competitive edge enhanced in the era of liberalisation with an increase in the country's market share.

This effort requires competitive products and increased national productivity through improvements in human resource efficiency.

"We need to master the capacity to innovate and to make the changes ourselves," he said.

Dr Mahathir urged manufacturers and consumers in the country to change their attitude by accepting Malaysian designed and made products in order to see further progress in research and development (R&D).

He said R&D has been less successful in the country as manufacturers and consumers were generally not willing to accept approaches and products that came from Malaysians.

He also wanted Mapen II to identify new sectors to pursue which could contribute to economic growth in order to overcome the economic crisis.

"For example, information technology could be used to develop new IT based industries. The Multimedia Super Corridor offers great potential and training in this sector must be enhanced," he said.

Dr Mahathir said an industry based on composite materials, which are increasingly being used in automobiles and aircraft, could contribute to the manufacturing sector.

He said the agriculture sector needed a new development approach such as introducing large-scale estate management methods in vegetable, fruit productions and fish farming and adopting new fishing techniques.

The approach could help increase the incomes of farmers and fishermen

while the country could avoid the outflow of foreign exchange in importing food.

"The agriculture industry could be developed further with this approach, not only in reducing food imports but also to export surplus production," he said.

Dr Mahathir said smallholders would not lose out if estates for vegetable and fruit production are established as like in the oil palm industry, estates buy the produce from smallholders to be graded, processed and marketed even when the produce are out of season.

Fishermen too needed to be trained and to adopt new techniques to improve their catch in order to increase their earnings.

He said the agriculture sector had previously not been given much attention as the country focused on developing the manufacturing sector. The attention in agriculture was mainly on the development of rubber, oil palm and cocoa estates.

"We know the food import bill accounts for the biggest portion of our foreign exchange outflow...on the other hand, revenue from the production of vegetables, fruits and flowers far exceeds that of rubber, palm oil or cocoa," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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