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LID-CRISIS

SMART PARTNERSHIP CRUCIAL EVEN DURING CRISIS

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

LANGKAWI, July 23 (Bernama) -- Some 300 participants from 38 countries including heads of government will begin to arrive here tomorrow for the 4th Langkawi International Dialogue (LID '99) to further brainstorm on how smart partnership can be used for the betterment of society.

Uppermost on their minds would be to learn to harness the concept not only for shared prosperity during the good times, but also to delve into ways where smart partnership can be used to tackle problems during an economic crisis.

"We believe that smart partnership has a role to play in times of both boom and bust," Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman, the chairman of the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), told Bernama recently.

MIGHT and the London-based Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM) are once again jointly organising the Langkawi dialogue which has spawned similar dialogues in Africa.

Conceptualised at the First Langkawi International Dialogue in 1995, LID is the brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has consistently been emphasising that smart partnership is the way to achieve socio-economic and political stability.

As participants converge on this resort-island for what promises to be fruitful session, they would find LID '99 different from previous dialogues due to its relevance to the countries plagued by the economic crisis.

LID '99 will focus on the crisis and the consequent economic recovery process with countries like Malaysia and Thailand sharing their experiences; the former without the tutelage of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the latter with financial assistance from the Fund.

Dr Omar said economies like Malaysia, Thailand and Taiwan could share with the developing countries, mostly from Africa, their experiences on the "nitty-gritty" of the economic recovery process.

The four-day LID '99 from July 25-28 is thus aptly themed "Managing the Economic Recovery - The Smart Partnership Approach."

Dr Omar, who is also Science Advisor to the Prime Minister, said that "when we (Malaysia) look at the initiative we have taken ourselves in terms of economic recovery, we know that government alone cannot make it happen."

For that matter, "government and the business sector alone also cannot make it happen, it involves the participation of everybody," he said.

"Therefore, it would require the understanding of the population at large including labour movements which need to know what the government wants to achieve.

"And of course, each will have to play their role, so there is a smart format there with all pulling together in one direction," said Dr Omar, who is also co-chairman of CPTM.

And when it comes to the international perspective, "we know very well a single country, especially from the developing world acting alone, is not going to be effective.

"But emerging economies working together using the smart partnership approach can have a formidable impact (and) more importantly, a more equitable outcome can be expected," said Dr Omar.

As such, he said LID '99 would be more of a smart partnership dialogue on how the economic crisis was dealt with rather than a dialogue on the concept of smart partnership as was the case in the three previous

dialogues.

"We promote the idea that the smart partnership approach should be the preferred way for galvanising national action as well as international interaction to solve problems and achieve prosperity. Smart partnership can also be useful in conflict resolution," he said.

LID '99 is also significant for it would feature a dialogue among the First Ladies at their own request on relevant topics, including social issues and how they could contribute to economic recovery efforts.

First Ladies are leaders in their own right and can contribute significantly during interactions in Langkawi, he said.

Dr Omar said there would also be a presentation on Formula 1, the world's premier motor racing event to be staged at the Sepang F1 circuit this October, and the bearing it would have on accelerating Malaysia's economic recovery.

He said the event brings together four variables into the recovery equation

-- business opportunities, facilitating technology transfer and development,

promoting tourism and enhancing publicity for Malaysia.

The full list of leaders and ministers attending LID '99 are President Festus Gontebanye Mogae of Botswana, President John Atta-Mills of Ghana, Jordanian Finance Minister Dr Michel Marto, Kyrgyz Speaker of Parliament Mukambayev Usup, Prime Minister Dr Pakalitha Mosisili of Lesotho, Dr Mapop Chipeta of Malawi, Prime Minister Fenech Adami of Malta, President Caseem Uteem of Mauritius, President Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique, President Dr Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Vice-President James Alix Michel of Seychelles, New South African Vice-President Jacob Zuma, Sudanese President-General Lt Gen Omar Hassan Ahmad, King Mswati III of Swaziland, Taiwanese Finance Minister Dr Paul Chiu Cheng-hsiung, President Benjamin William Mkapa of Tanzania, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi, Zambia's Minister of Finance and Economic Development Dr Katele Kalumba, and President Dr Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

International companies being represented at Langkawi comprise British Aerospace Plc, Hyundai Engineering & Construction Co. Ltd., Dresdner Kleinwort Benson Ltd, U.K., Marconi Communications of Italy, Merrill Lynch, U.K., Salomon Smith Barney Inc, U.S., and Rolls-Royce, U.K.

There would be also be a large representation from the Malaysian corporate sector such as Telekom Malaysia -- the main sponsor for LID '99, Tenaga Nasional Bhd, Malaysia Airlines, Shell, as well as top officials from the regulatory authorities from the financial sector.

Cabinet ministers expected to attend LID '99 include among others Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Leo Moggie, as well as Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid. -- BERNAMA

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