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LID-REVIEW

SMART PARTNERSHIP, A BOLD EXPERIMENT THAT WORKS

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, July 15 (Bernama) -- In July 1995, a bold experiment on what is now popularly referred to as "smart partnership" was orchestrated on the legendary island of Langkawi.

Some 130 international and local corporate chieftains and government leaders, the latter mostly from developing countries, sat down then to brainstorm on how to make collaborative connections for the future.

It was aimed at "generating benefits beyond the constant pie-approach of win-lose gamesmanship," says Dr Zulaiha Ismail, the dean for the Centre for Graduate Studies at the Mara Institute of Technology.

"Thus the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) was born and the smart partnership concept became its doctrine," she said in a paper presented to the Malaysian Industry-Government Group For High Technology (MIGHT).

Now, after three LIDs, the next one from July 25-28, 1999, promises to be even more invigorating with emphasis on the financial crisis where no less than 11 heads of state and almost 250 international participants would converge in Langkawi.

"Most apt was the unrelenting zeal of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in bringing the idea of a dialogue based on smart partnership to fruition," she said.

Kudos also should go to MIGHT which together with the London-based Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM) have been organising the highly-successful event since 1995.

Besides grappling with what sometimes would seem insurmountable logistics, having to deal with people from all over the world, they have worked tirelessly to share this methodology cum ethos with the world.

"To orchestrate the meeting of minds was not an easy task. For a generation of leaders steeped in the tradition of competition, this certainly was a daunting agenda.

"But the challenge of seeking out new opportunities in the creation of a larger commonality and a new order of relationships was too inviting to these participants," said Zulaiha.

There is no doubt that smart partnership works, as evident by the many dialogues of a similar nature to the Langkawi International Dialogue which has spawned in other parts of the world.

International dialogues for Southern Africa and Barbados as well national dialogues in mostly African states have been held consistently after LID made its 1995 debut.

If not for the death of Jordan's King Hussein, the Petra International Dialogue would have been held this year for West Asian countries, but they would convene next year to forge greater linkages on an equal basis.

Dr Mahathir's initiative through the LID quickly gained momentum because government and business, business and business and society and business have all clearly gained from a win-win situation.

Its not just about clinching contracts, which undoubtedly is a beneficial by-product, but more importantly, smart partnership has enabled the small and the big to work for the common good in a spirit of mutual trust.

"It is aimed at removing the disadvantage of smallness as more often than not, it is not a partnership of equals," said Dr Zulaiha.

"Smart partnership goes beyond joint ventures and strategic alliances and corporate mergers," said Dr Zulaiha.

"At the same time, it is not a takeover as the partners maintain their separate identities. Intending partners have to be compatible as the relationship depends on values that are shared alongside a joint will.

"It challenges the assumption that we progress only through conflict and dominance. Indeed, a smart partnership transports us from competitive advantage to collaborative purpose," she said.

Langkawi laid the foundation for a new business wave for the future based on "prosper thy neighbour" philosophy and a win-win situation, which has become the clarion call of the LID.

This is all the more important given that numerous economies in Asia are reeling from the financial crisis no thanks to speculative attacks by currency traders, which is why they need to pull together to ward off such dangers.

MIGHT chairman Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman said recently that from feedback received, leaders mostly from African countries were keen to know how Malaysia dealt with the economic crisis without disrupting its socio-economic fabric.

Dr Zulaiha said that "in an era of unrelenting domination principles with the will of the mighty imposed on the weak in a world of unequal competition, the smart partnership philosophy is indeed a breath of fresh air - a harbinger of better times in the next millenium." -- BERNAMA

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