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Mahathir-Excellence

CONTINUE TO BE COMPETITIVE TO PROGRESS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that Malaysia must possess IT-based competitive edge to be successful in the trade and industry sector.

He said that a comparative advantage based on input or natural resources alone was no pre-condition for industrial and commercial success.

What is more important is the ability and efficiency of a country in mobilising input and resources from various sources and coming out with products in the most competitive manner, he said at the Industry Excellence Award presentation ceremony, here.

He said that other important aspects that needed focus to ensure the success of an organisation were suitability and capability of manpower.

Each organisation had to ensure that its workforce was knowledgeable, skilled, efficient and dedicated in carrying out their functions and responsibilities, he said.

"Opportunities should also be given to them to upgrade their knowledge and skills as well as equip themselves with new knowledge required for the organisation to achieve excellence," he said.

Among the new skills and expertise that would be required by the industries were in the areas of product design and processes, development and management of IT, and market and strategic planning.

Dr Mahathir said that there should be a continuous process to improve oneself and achieve excellence and this should involve all members of an organisation.

He said the motto of "wait and see" could no longer be practised if one wanted to avoid being left behind in IT.

"If companies are only looking at foreign companies participating in e-commerce, which is expected to grow tremendously, the companies themselves will lose their clients and the market.

"We need to be ready to face the risk and together participate in a new competitive arena," he said.

As for research and development (R&D), he said it was an important element for any industry in its quest to improve existing products and introduce products which could compete in the markets.

"Compared with developed countries, Malaysia's expenditure in the area of R&D is very low at only 0.3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product.

"Local companies are lagging far behind in their efforts to upgrade local R&D and are still too dependent on foreign technology transfer."

Therefore, he said, it was the responsibility of all manufacturing companies to focus on the advancement of their R&D, so that the companies could maintain and enhance the competitiveness of local products in the country as well as in the international markets.

Turning to making inroads into markets, Dr Mahathir said the majority of local manufacturers were more focused on contract basis manufacturing.

He said that this approach did not guarantee the sustainability and expansion of a market in the long term, but would create dependence on the main manufacturer who could end the contract at any time.

Therefore, the time had come for local manufacturers to plan their short and long-term strategies to produce and market their own manufactured products, Dr Mahathir said.

He said that it was not easy to come out with a product and to promote it, but this was not impossible.

To convince potential consumers of Malaysian-made products, manufacturers should aim for an international certification for their products and look at efforts to promote locally-made products as a long-term investment.

They should be prepared to set aside resources, ideas and energy together with public bodies and private organisations like the Malaysian External Trade and Development Corporation (Matrade) and industrial organisations in the formulation and implementation of suitable strategies to produce Malaysian-brand products which were accepted internationally, he said.

At the Industry Excellence Award, several companies received awards under various categories including product excellence, trade, services and quality management.

Under the Industry Excellence Award (Product), the three companies which emerged winners were Professional Golf Company Sdn Bhd, UPHA Group of Companies and Britannia Brand (M) Sdn Bhd.

Three other companies received special awards for product excellence including that under Innovative Product Development of Malaysian Brand Name: Hydropot First - Technology Sdn Bhd and Adabi Consumer Industries Sdn Bhd, Acson Malaysia Sales & Services Sdn Bhd and Silverstone Bhd.

Decorplus Sdn Bhd and Sharp Electronic (M) Sdn Bhd each received an award under the local design and open design category, respectively.

Companies awarded under the Industry Excellence Award (Export-Merchandise) were S.G.G. Furniture Sdn Bhd, BSA Manufacturing Sdn Bhd, Leader Cable Industry Sdn Bhd and S.M. Chemical Sdn Bhd.

Under the Export Services category Technip Geoproduction (M) Sdn Bhd and Henry Goh & Co Sdn Bhd were the winners.

The Industry Excellence Award for Quality Management was won by Ipoh Specialist Centre Medical Associates Sdn Bhd, Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd and Advanced Micro Devices Export Sdn Bhd while the Special Award for the small and medium industries was taken by Unilon Packaging Sdn Bhd.

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