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Founders hail KL's contribution

FOUNDERS and flagbearers of the smart partnership concept among emerging economies have made a special mention of Malaysia's contribution to the initiative over the past five years.

On the eve of the Global 2000 Smart Partnership Dialogue in Langkawi, they have also stressed that the initiative has been embraced not merely by participating countries.

Initially adopted by a few Caribbean countries and over 10 nations in Southern Africa, the smart partnership idea has caught the interest of Uganda, Algeria, Ghana, Jordan and several Mediterranean nations.

Sir Ketumile Masire, former president of Botswana and one of the founders of the smart partnership concept, believes Malaysia has contributed immensely in spurring the concept of "prosper thy neighbours".

"We like to thank Malaysia for its role in promoting the smart partnership idea among developing economies," Masire said, singling out Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the architect in making this a reality.

"Normally when someone is better than others, he tends not to share his success.

"Malaysia is unselfish. It tries to make other countries as good as it is, if not better. Again, we thank Malaysia for taking the lead in promoting the forward-looking idea."

Masire spoke at the dialogue's Press briefing yesterday.

He noted that smart partnership, which has been a pillar of Malaysia's success, has been made the thrust of Botswana's 2016 vision to improve its economy and making the nation more competitive and efficient.

A tangible proof of the smart partnership success in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Lesotho - four founding members of LID's sister dialogue Southern Africa International Dialogue - is the setting up of smart partnerships hubs in each country.

The hubs, being facilitated by the centralised hub in London managed by the Commonwealth Partnership For Technology Management, allow all quarters access to the smart partnership idea.

Giving Uganda's perspective on Malaysia's role and success, Ugandan Foreign Affairs Ministry director James Baba said the country was amazed at how Malaysia had evolved over the past years.

"In 1962, Uganda's per capita income was on par with that of Malaysia, but now the latter's is 50 times better. We want to know how Malaysia achieved this remarkable growth."

Baba described the LID and SAID forums as "the factories" that generate ideas to solve problems in emerging economies, especially the African countries. Uganda will host SAID 2001.

Malta bureau of standards chairman Professor Noel Zarb-Adami has raised the prospect of some Mediterranean countries joining the emerging economies' smart partnership fraternity.

"Malta, Cyprus and even Jordan are keen to foster the idea."

Meanwhile, Houston University economist Thomas De Gregori pointed out that the smart partnership idea has "spread like fire worldwide" and that the agendas of this year's forum are relevant to the current global issues.

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