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MAHATHIR-KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS TO ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY TO TAKE 18 MTHS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says that the whole process of national consultations, brainstorming, drafting, and mobilisation to come out with a national strategic plan on Knowledge-economy (K-economy) is expected to be completed within 18 months from now.

"A series of concrete plans of action in key strategic areas will be completed within one year," the Prime Minister said in his opening address when launching the "2nd Global Knowledge" conference, being participated by over 1,000 international delegates.

Dr Mahathir said that through the shift to K-economy, where the knowledge content and knowledge contribution would see a quantum leap in every area, the Malaysian economy and society would not be quite the same again.

"Our K-economy masterplan would not be drafted by the best and brightest, cloistered behind closed doors. The K-economy -- the maximum application of knowledge to every Malaysian economic and business endeavour in every economic sector, is not an elitist process but one involving every Malaysian."

In order to succeed with the paradigm shift to the K-economy, he said all Malaysians including the young "wawasan" generation, would have to be fully involved.

"The K-economy Master Plan must be a masterplan for the entire nation, a personal masterplan for every citizen and must belong to and be owned by all Malaysians," he said.

He said that Malaysia was now ready for the second step into the information age, "if Vision 2020 was the first strategic step."

Dr Mahathir said that the country was now ready for a concerted, comprehensive and committed quantum leap which would remake Malaysian corporations and reinvent Malaysian society.

"This second step will be called 'strategic initiative one' of the 21st century," he said.

He also said that an explanation of 'the new economy' and 'K-economy,' was necessary because of a surplus of vague words, wonderful jargon, novelistic concepts and bombastic verbiage which only confound rather than clarify.

"Malaysia's 'strategic initiative one,' the second step on which we are now embarking does not mean the abandonment of our industrial backbone which today contributes more than 37 percent of our gross domestic product, and provides 30 percent of all jobs," he said.

He said that "Malaysia is among the most industrialised economies and is not going to fall down the industrial ladder, nor matter how many would try to push or pull it off."

"The country is also one of the most open economies in the world, living and dying on trade," he said, adding that last year, more than 85 percent of its exports were manufactured goods.

Among other things, he said Malaysia should

\*dramatically enhance the quality of its industrialisation and ensure much higher domestic value-added;

\*ensure that every sector of its economy be made world class and globally competitive;

\*and ensure the success of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Despite all this, the basic structure of the Malaysian economy would not be fundamentally altered in the short and medium term, he said.

For the information age and K-economy, Malaysia must have a first rate national media system.

The Internet and other information technology innovations must be a large and critical part of this national media system, he said.

"But let me stress that newspapers and magazines and books remain important. Broadcasting and narrow casting television and radio remain extremely important," he said,

"Indeed, this medium would be even more important in the information age and the K-economy's future, even though they would increasingly be accessed through the Internet," he said.--BERNAMA

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