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8MP-FOREWORD

8MP TO EMPHASIZE ON STRONG HUMAN RESOURCE BASE TO SUPPORT K-ECONOMY

KUALA LUMPUR, April 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Eighth Malaysia Plan (8MP) will emphasize on the creation of a strong human resource base to support the development of a knowledge-based economy and enhanced productivity and competitiveness.

He said during the 8MP, Malaysia will be faced with even greater challenges from globalisation and liberalisation as well as the rapid development in the information and communications technology.

"We will have to enhance the competitiveness of the economy, strengthen our economic resilience and improve our total factor productivity," he said in his Foreword for the 8MP released by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department.

The prime minister said that to achieve the goals, the country will have to shift the growth strategy from being input-driven towards one that is knowledge-driven.

Emphasis would be given to improving management and organisational techniques, upgrading R&D and science and technology, as well as strengthening innovative capacity.

This would enhance potential output growth and accelerate structural transformation within the agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors, Dr Mahathir said.

"We will also have to enhance the value added of all productive activities through knowledge utilisation and also create new knowledge-intensive industries," he added.

Dr Mahathir said efforts would be undertaken to develop an efficient and responsive education and training system to meet the demand for a labour force that is knowledgeable, highly skilled and equipped with positive values.

The prime minister also urged Malaysia not to become complacent with the significant progress that has been made in the past five years.

Instead, the country needs to respond to the changing patterns of trade and investment arising from an increasingly competitive global economy, he said.

Malaysians will have to cultivate the right mind-set and value system to develop a culture of high productivity and excellence and ensure that success is sustainable, he said.

"We will have to work hard at meeting the challenges of establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society in which all Malaysians are free to profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs.

"Only then, we will be truly on our way towards forging a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common shared destiny, a nation at peace with itself, ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership made up of one Bangsa Malaysia, loyal and dedicated to the nation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said as Malaysia developed, the integrity of family structures, communities and efforts at social integration would be tested.

"We will have to ensure that society remains resilient, able to withstand any negative influence that may affect social harmony and tolerance.

"We will have to continuously foster the spirit of neighbourliness and harmonious living among the various communities as we go about building a resilient nation through fostering unity, inculcating the spirit of

patriotism, cultivating a more tolerant and caring society and raising the quality of life of the people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government would ensure that all segments of society, particularly, the rural society, enjoy and benefit from the opportunities available including education, employment and access to social services.

He said every effort would be made to ensure better coverage and improvement of social amenities including improved working conditions as well as better health and environmental quality.

To ensure social and political stability and the achievement of national unity, the strategy of developing an equitable society would be continued, he said.

The poverty eradication programmes would be more target-specific to address pockets of poverty in rural and urban areas, he said.

The distributional strategy would emphasize reduction of economic disparities among ethnic groups and improving bumiputera corporate equity ownership.

The ultimate effort, however, would have to be made by bumiputera themselves in developing the requisite values, skills and capabilities to take advantage of the innumerable opportunities available and emerge as successful entrepreneurs, he said. -- BERNAMA

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