

12/07/2002

Malaysia a showcase for others

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PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. - Malaysia has managed to develop itself into a showcase for other developing nations despite its Third World status, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said Third World leaders, especially those from the African continent, were so impressed with Malaysia's progress that they did try their best not to miss a chance to come here.

"Here, they can see results. If they stay in their own country, they don't see results.

"A long time ago, I tried to persuade them to visit Malaysia, but they were not too keen as they believed that we were also a Third World country similar to them.

"So, (they thought) there would be nothing much to learn from... but after they visited us during the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting in 1989, they saw that a Third World country can actually progress. Subsequently, they wanted to learn how that is done," Dr Mahathir said.

Speaking at the Smart Partnership and Pre-Dialogue briefing for the Global 2002 (Langkawi) International Dialogue at his department here, he said leaders of African nations were also against the idea of confining the hosting of the dialogue to African nations.

"This dialogue is very much appreciated, especially by leaders from developing countries.

"When we suggested that we stop the Langkawi International Dialogue and have dialogues only in Africa, there was a loud protest because they said that they would like to come here... I can appreciate their view point," he said, adding that Malaysia was ever willing to share its experience with any nation.

On private sector participation and support for the International Dialogue to be held in Langkawi from Aug 1 to 4, Dr Mahathir said their support was vital for the success of the talks.

Thanking the private sector for its contributions, Dr Mahathir said the dialogue had proven to be mutually beneficial to participating Governments and private companies.

"For instance, Malaysian businesses are well received everywhere they go, especially in Africa and the Middle East due to the Government actively working to promote goodwill.

"Of course, the Government plays marketing roles but, on the whole, they (Malaysian businesses) are well received... Petronas has done extremely well in a host of countries."

Dr Mahathir, who received contributions and sponsorship from the private sector during the function, advised them to embrace the smart partnership and win-win concept effectively as it would bear results in the long run.

"A friendly attitude is very necessary. We have gained much from our partnership with the African countries... so we must be patient with them and lead them on the right path," he said.

He said both the Government and the private sectors of Third World nations were keen to take part in the Langkawi International Dialogue as it had been established as an appropriate forum to exchange ideas on nation building.

"LID is motivated by decisions to exchange ideas on how to develop a country... ideas towards the general good of everyone.

"It strives to make everyone understand the process of developing a

nation in clarity," Dr Mahathir said.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng, senior officials from the Malaysian Industry-Government Group For High Technology (MIGHT) and corporate leaders.