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LID-Mahathir (Talk Shop)

SMART PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE NOT JUST TALK SHOP, SAYS DR M

LANGKAWI, Aug 3 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in dismissing the notion that the international smart partnership dialogue is merely a talk shop, said today it is a forum that gives participants a chance to have meaningful interaction with each other.

"I believe we are not just a talk shop," the prime minister said in his concluding remarks at the Global 2002 Langkawi International Dialogue (Global 2002 LID) here today.

The Global 2002 LID dialogue proper which ended today saw the participation of 18 heads of state and government and over 400 participants from 36 countries.

"We learnt from the reports that we have and when we go back, we'll try to implement not all but some of the ideas that have emerged in this forum," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Global 2002 LID patron, said dialogue participants were "forced" to attend meetings as early as 7.30 in the morning which he himself was not accustomed to.

In jest, he said: "You (must) have heard of a slave driver called (Datuk) Dr Mihaela (Y. Smith, chief executive of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management) who gets us to work at 7.30. We do work and not just talk."

Dr Mahathir said he hoped leaders, who had attended the dialogue, would not regret their presence because so many ideas and suggestions were thrown about that might even confused them.

"We have had such a big feedback that probably we'll go back with terrible indigestion. I think we can survive and hope we'll survive until the next meeting in Southern Africa (to be held in Swaziland)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he noted that interest in the smart partnership dialogues was gaining momentum with a rising number of participating countries.

Starting with those, who were members of the Commonwealth, the dialogues had now expanded to those outside the grouping, he said.

This year's Global 2002 LID saw participation for the first time by Mauritius Prime Minister, Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, Ghana President John A Kufuor, Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev and Rwanda President Paul Kagame.

Dr Mahathir also said the leaders' attendance at the dialogue was more meaningful as compared to that of the Davos World Economic Forum as they got to participate rather than being mere spectators.

On the issues to be deliberated at next year's smart partnership gathering in Swaziland, he said besides old subjects that might be discussed again, there would be more current issues that participants could dwell on.

"It has been suggested that we need to address the global imbalance and insecurity through the promotion of cooperation; and imbalanced development between the rich and the poor based on the smart partnership principle," he said.

In addition, the Swaziland meeting would also discuss the promotion of cultural tolerance and the provision of support for new partnership in Africa, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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