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MAHATHIR-DIALOGUE

TAP FULL POTENTIAL FROM SMART PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUES, SAYS MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, July 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said that the private sector must fully tap opportunities arising from contacts made during international smart partnership dialogues such as the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID).

Such dialogues enable businessmen to make contacts with the current leaders of developing countries as well as their future leaders, he said at a pre-dialogue discussion on Global 2002-LID here.

"You may have noticed that when they (leaders) know you, it is much easier for you to gain access to these countries. In a way the dialogues serve to open the door," he said.

Saying that the private sector's interest in the dialogues might have waned of late, he expressed the hope they would realise the benefits arising from the upcoming LID, scheduled for Aug 1-4, which also incorporates the South African International Dialogue (SAID) and the East African International Dialogue (EAID).

The dialogues, which started with the 1995 LID, was motivated by the desire to have governments and private sectors from developing countries sit together to exchange views and ideas on how best to develop their countries, he said.

Dr Mahathir noted that some businessmen now felt that they were not getting much progress from the dialogues, especially in relation to their experiences in African countries as a result of problems in implementing the approaches and ideas suggested during the dialogues.

Such problems, he said, were caused by the fact that these countries often did not have the stability in government and consistency in leadership like those found in Malaysia.

With their leaders being changed over a short period of time, most of the ideas and plans brought up during the dialogues were unable to be carried out, Dr Mahathir said.

Although these might frustrate businessmen, he said they should look at the bigger picture and continue to show interest in the dialogues which would afford them with useful contacts and greater access to business opportunities.

"We have to be patient, we have to learn to help develop their countries, to ensure that they have the necessary laws in place so that investors can become attracted to their countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he himself had continued to impress upon African countries on the need to be consistent in their policies and putting in place the right legal framework.

LID, which promoted smart partnerships and win-win situations, should be practised by the Malaysian private sector when they conducted their investments in other developing countries, he said.

"Whatever we do, we must never forget that we are guests in the host countries. It is for the guest to share with the host whatever he gets from his involvement in the host's economy," he stressed.

The prime minister pointed out that the warm reception that Malaysian businessmen often received whenever they went to many foreign countries, including those in Africa and West Asia, was because the government had actively promoted goodwill in other countries.

Dr Mahathir also said he had led many trade and investment missions which had "opened doors" for many Malaysian businessmen.

Many corporations from Malaysia had benefited from this strategy as it had helped them in their investment overseas, he said. "Petronas, for example, has done extremely well," said Dr Mahathir.

"We want to be very friendly with these people so as to get their goodwill. we hope to gain something and we also hope in the process that they will gain something," he said.

Dr Mahathir later received mock cheques from several corporate sponsors of Global 2002-LID.

The pre-dialogue discussion today was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng.

Earlier, corporate captains attending the function were briefed by the convener of Global 2002 joint dialogue and advisor to the board of the Malaysian Industry-Government Group High Technology (MIGHT), Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman.

-- BERNAMA

MAD SHY