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Mahathir-Culture

DR MAHATHIR EXPLAINS 'OPEN HOUSE' CONCEPT

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

EZULWINI (Swaziland), Aug 15 (Bernama) -- African leaders and participants at the ongoing smart partnership dialogue are now more clear on Malaysia's 'open house' concept.

Thanks to a briefing by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who told his captive audience that the Malay culture of allowing people to freely come and visit their houses has now transcended across race and religion to evolve into a popular Malaysian culture.

The Prime Minister was taken up by the term 'open house' used at a session at the Global 2003 Smart Partnership International Dialogue which wanted delegates to engage in frank discussions allowing a free flow of ideas.

Dr Mahathir said this was similar to the age-old 'rumah terbuka' (open house) custom of the Malays allowing all and sundry to visit each other's homes during the Hari Raya festivities to celebrate the end of the Ramadan fasting season.

He said that the 'open house' was so successful in helping to foster a spirit of understanding especially in Malaysia with its multiracial and multireligious background that other cultures and religions quickly adopted what has surely become a Malaysian way of life.

"Now, even the Chinese, Indians and indigenous people such as the Ibans and Kadazans practise the open house concept and during all festivals, be it religious or cultural," he said.

He said even political opponents had no qualms about visiting each other during the festivities and this had become a norm among Malaysians allowing people to get to know each other better. But Dr Mahathir was not the only one who imparted some knowledge on culture.

Later that night, the dialogue's host, King Mswati III of Swaziland, gave a brief lesson on stage to Dr Mahathir on how to play the Swazi drum as part of a cultural performance prior to the launching of the Endowment Fund project for the Commonwealth for Technology Management (CPTM) whereby some 5.7 million pounds was already raised towards a targeted 11 million pounds.

The crowd applauded when Dr Mahathir very quickly took to beating the drum along with the Swazi king for about 10 minutes on stage.

A statement issued by CPTM at the launch said that the centrepiece of the project is raising funds to purchase an income-generating property in London where the Smart Partnership headquarters or hub is located.

The Endowment Fund appeal got off to a flying start in October 2002 when Dr Mahathir announced a Malaysian government contribution of no less than one million pounds, while Uganda pledged 250,000 pounds.

Malaysian companies were among major private sector contributors with a total sum of 4.4 million pounds from 22 Malaysian companies with additional pledges from half a dozen others.

Major contributors include Petronas (500,000 pounds), Resorts World and Tenaga Nasional (400,000 pounds each) and Malaysia Mining Corporation (300,000 pounds).

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