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Mahathir-Langkawi

DR MAHATHIR INVITES SMART PARTNERS TO LID 2004

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

EZULWINI (Swaziland), Aug 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that Swaziland is a beautiful kingdom but he feels that he is missing something because he has had little opportunity to see the country due to the programme for the smart partnership dialogue which it hosted being too cramped.

"Although it is a beautiful country, the problem is that over the past four days and until this afternoon, I thought Swaziland is just one great big white marquee," he said, taking a jibe at organisers for not giving free time for sightseeing and recreational activities, at the closing dinner hosted by King Mswati III of Swaziland here Saturday night.

Some 800 participants from 16 countries huddled for three days under a US\$1 million marquee, the biggest ever used for the smart partnership dialogue.

As such, the Prime Minister, in extending an invitation to the smart partners to convene again for the Langkawi International Dialogue, said next year's dialogue would have to have at least one free day to enable participants to take the island's beautiful sights.

The dialogue is organised by the London-based Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM).

However, Dr Mahathir said that he was not able to give the exact dates for LID 2004 as he would not be able to decide it as he will no longer be the Prime Minister.

"The other thing is that in 2004, Malaysia would have to hold its general elections.

"And if I tell you the dates for the dialogue, the great journalists in Malaysia will calculate and determine the date of the elections," he said to roaring laughter from the audience for whom he is among the most popular leaders who attended the dialogue.

"So, you must excuse me if I am inviting you without telling you when," he said.

According to the "Euzulwinin Statement" issued after the dialogue containing the key issues discussed at the three-day gathering, the Langkawi dialogue would be held either in July or August.

"Today, I absented myself, with permisison of course, and I was able to see the capital Mbabane as well as the great big rock which I heard about so much," he said.

According to the locals, the large rock crop is located in Slebebe just outside Mbabane and is a sight to behold.

Reiterating his enjoyment of the beautiful sights and the nice cool and sunny blue skies in Swaziland, he said, "you really have a great country (but) the only problem is you're so far away from us, otherwise I'll be here every weekend."

"Since I have enjoyed your hospitality, I would like you to enjoy our hospitality in Langkawi next year," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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