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Mahathir-Knowledge

M'SIA NEEDS WORLD CLASS HUMAN CAPITAL, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia needs to build its human capital by producing and nurturing its own leaders benchmarked against the best in the world.

"We need to continuously strive to bring about a paradigm shift in the mindset of Malaysians so that we can become a more responsible, modern and progressive society, with sharp thinking skills, proud of our achievements and confident in our abilities in line with the information age," he said.

The foundation of the knowledge-based economy, which is the bedrock of the nation's Vision 2020, was based on having a stream of well-trained people managing key assets of the country, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who will retire in two days, said that Malaysia also needed to build systems and institutions that encourage learning at all levels and this should be a continuous effort.

The Prime Minister said this when launching the International Centre for Leadership in Finance (ICLF), a non-profit organisation under Bank Negara Malaysia aimed at accelerating the development of a stellar pool of top management talent for the financial sector and corporations here.

Also present were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz.

Dr Mahathir also said that having outstanding leaders both in the private and public sector was a pre-requisite for achieving Vision 2020.

"We are now midway towards our Vision 2020 of being a fully developed nation in our own mould. We have taken important strides towards it but in these uncertain times, we cannot afford to be complacent and let things just roll along," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia needed to look back at "where we are now" and how the nation had reached this stage of development as this was important to correct mistakes made in the past.

He said that when Malaysia became independent in 1957, the population was only five million with per capita income of US\$300 but today, the nation's population was 25 million and its per capita income had increased to US\$4,000.

"All these have not happened by accident. Malaysia planned, strategised, introduced policies and methods which are largely market-oriented throughout the various national development plans and more importantly, has effectively implemented these plans," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said that such was the success of the nation's strategy that today 82 per cent of Malaysia's exports of nearly US\$100 billion was made up of manufactured goods.

He said that industrialisation spurred the growth of the Malaysian economy, creating jobs and increasing disposable incomes and also creating a need for adequate modern infrastructure.

"But throughout we have been careful in the management of our money, expanding only at a rate that we can afford, and borrowing only what we can pay," the Prime Minister said.

He also said that the government had always followed the technological advancements in the world and had encouraged acquisition of new technologies for new industries.

"When IT (information technology) looked like being an important source for growth, the government immediately responded and encouraged IT by

providing money and incentives for local and foreign investments in this area," he said.

He said that with the country's capability to successfully develop and manage its economy, Malaysia was now regarded as a model for developing nations.

"These achievements require a shift in the mindset of Malaysians towards the adoption of positive values and attitude, especially perseverance and determination, willingness to compete, self-confidence, resilience and readiness to innovate," he said.

On a different note, Dr Mahathir said that the Malaysian government had initiated efforts to promote and implement programmes for lifelong learning of its people.

He said that affordable accessibility to training courses and education programmes through the Internet or other ICT-related media was being provided so that Malaysians had the opportunity to acquire new competencies and qualifications for career advancements.

"More IT kiosks and cyber centres will be set up by the government, especially in the rural areas, to increase accessibility to education and training," he said.

In addition, the establishment of community colleges, open universities and distance education will provide avenues for Malaysians to pursue tertiary education and upgrade their skills and qualifications, said Dr Mahathir.

He said that the establishment of community colleges would also provide opportunities particularly to those who leave the school system to join the labour market, to further their education and training.

"Financial institutions will also be encouraged to provide soft loans to working adults to continue their education," the Prime Minister said.

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF), said Dr Mahathir, provided an avenue for Malaysians to finance their education.

"Employers will be encouraged to promote lifelong learning and retraining to equip workers with new skills and knowledge so that they can keep up with the steady stream of technological advances," he added.

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