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Mahathir-Human Resource

HUMAN CAPITAL KEY TO NATION'S FUTURE, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that human capital is the key to the future of the nation and creating a globally competitive workforce is fundamental to enhancing competitiveness and attracting new investments.

"In this regard, human resource development will focus on three dimensions, namely, developing knowledge, acquiring skills and inculcating positive values," he said when tabling the Mid-Term Review of the Eighth Malaysia Plan in the Dewan Rakyat here.

Dr Mahathir said that developing highly educated and multi-skilled workers does not necessarily ensure higher productivity as it was equally important for workers to internalise good work ethics at all levels.

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By 2010, he said, about 35 per cent of the labour force would have tertiary level education, double the present level of 17.1 per cent.

Dr Mahathir said as the capacity of the public sector was limited, the private sector must further expand its involvement in the provision of education and training.

The Prime Minister, who steps down tomorrow after being at the helm of the country for 22 years, said that in almost every country, fluency in English was regarded so important so much so that learning the language was given priority and if Malaysians wish to compete to get jobs, they too had to do so.

"Mastery of other languages is also encouraged. In this age anyone wishing to succeed must be fluent in at least two languages," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that while Malaysia was already well poised to receive global knowledge, local inventiveness was still lagging.

He said that the government was committed to introduce appropriate incentives to promote and improve science and technology (S&T) and innovative capability so that more Malaysian firms could make the technological transition to become inventors.

"To ensure adequate supply of quality S&T human resource, high achievers among students will be encouraged to pursue studies in pure sciences, including at the post-graduate and post-doctoral levels.

"Additional scholarships and other forms of financial assistance will be provided for this purpose. We will also continue to relax procedures for the hiring of highly skilled foreign workers in technology intensive sectors," he said.

On the incidence of poverty in the country, Dr Mahathir said it declined to 5.1 per cent in 2002 and the government expects to totally eradicate poverty in 2005.

"As for household income, the mean household income of all Malaysians grew almost three-fold from RM1.098 per month in 1983 to RM3.011 per month in 2002. The increase is not seen in any other country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that from these figures it was clear that the

government development plans had succeeded in achieving their objectives.

He also said that the government was formulating more focused programmes to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life of the people living in the interior and remote areas of Sabah and Sarawak and the Orang Asli in the peninsula.

To complement the efforts of the government in poverty eradication, the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector should further expand their activities and coverage of their programmes in assisting the poor, he said.

"The most important thing is to create job opportunities, to provide education and training. Providing subsidies will erode self-confidence and undermine the creation of a resilient Malaysian society. The government will reduce subsidies in phases," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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