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Mahathir-Strategy

MANY WAYS TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SAYS MAHATHIR

By: Mokhtar Hussain

DAMASCUS, Aug 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has gained much respect for being the driving force behind Malaysia's recovery from the 1997 financial crisis, said on Monday that there are many strategies that could be adopted to achieve economic development.

Sharing Malaysia's experience in dealing with the financial crisis with the think-tanks of the Syrian government, the Prime Minister said: "The problems are many and the solutions are numerous. There is no one single thing that can ensure economic growth and development for any country."

He said although Malaysia's experience was based on its unique assets and environment, many of its strategies could be modified and adopted by other countries in order to achieve economic development.

He said three major factors which led to quick recovery of the Malaysian economy were capital controls and pegging of the Ringgit; strengthening banking and corporate sectors as well as fiscal expansion.

"As a result of its policies, the government managed to stabilize the Malaysian economy. Consequently, confidence among consumers and investors were greatly improved and the economy rebounded," he told the Members of Parliament, Cabinet ministers, think-tanks of the Syrian government, senior government officials, scholars and CEOs of the leading private companies at Al-Assad Library here.

In his speech titled "The Malaysian Experience in Nation-Building and Development and the Management of the Financial Crisis of 1997", Dr Mahathir explained that strong support for the government party was important in sustaining stability.

The Prime Minister also stressed the need to make adjustments for globalisation, adding that equal tariff had to be applied to products from all countries.

"As our corporations are small and weak, the likelihood is that they will be swallowed up or be pushed aside by foreign companies. Our ability to control the direction of our economy would be lost," he said.

According to Dr Mahathir, Malaysia was doing very well economically before globalisation.

At a dialogue session with the business community earlier, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of pursuing business relations that was founded on strong business fundamentals, which he added should be constantly reviewed, improved and modified to reflect the ever-changing business environment.

He called on businessmen from Islamic countries to gather in Putrajaya during the 10th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in October to pursue this objective.

"We should go beyond merely indulging in exchanges of views and experiences. We should aim for substantive results and to realize actual business transactions," he said.

On trade, Dr Mahathir hoped that Syria would do more trade with Asia, especially Malaysia in future as currently the majority of Syria's trade were with Europe.

During the visit, 12 MoUs and agreements were signed between both the governments and the private sectors.

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