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8MP-FOREWORD

PM: MAKE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE A LIFE-LONG PURSUIT

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia must make the acquisition of knowledge a life-long pursuit and develop the indigenous technological and innovative capabilities.

The Prime Minister said this was necessary for the Malaysian economy to deal better with the changing global economic landscape and accelerate its transformation to a high technology and knowledge based economy.

"Greater efforts will have to be made to reduce the cost of doing business, raise productivity and increase the knowledge content of products, services and internal processes," he said in his foreword in Mid-Term Review of the Eighth Malaysia Plan (8MP) released by the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department here.

"The experience of the past three years underscores the importance of being constantly prepared to face challenges that come our way," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the rapid globalisation of the world economy together with the emergence of other players on the global scene would make it imperative to strengthen the nation by increasing its resilience, competitiveness and innovative capability.

While pursuing higher economic growth, he said: "We must also ensure that ethical and moral basis of our actions is not eroded. Any diminution of our value system will negate the economic gains and render our success hollow."

He said that although the Malaysian economy grew at a lower rate than was targeted, it achieved creditable growth given its openness and high exposure to electronics exports and particularly in comparison with the performance of other economies in the region.

Its economic base has become broader with increased contribution from the promoted services sectors and the shift of the manufacturing sector into high technology and knowledge-intensive activities.

"We also made good progress towards creating a more equitable society in terms of poverty eradication, income distribution and bumiputera employment in strategic and modern economic sectors," he added.

He also said that national development could not be the sole responsibility of the government as the government could only set the broad parameters of national policy and make available the necessary funds.

Dr Mahathir said the private sector, which played a crucial role in providing the economic dynamism, should take advantage of the incentives provided by the government to expand existing investments and pioneer into niche areas and new sources of growth.

The Prime Minister said that individual Malaysians had a major role to play.

"We must all realise that the country's rapid development and the billions of ringgit in investments by the government and private sector have raised the quality of and accessibility to infrastructure and amenities that we now enjoy," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the last two decades of development had witnessed a tremendous rate of transformation.

"I am convinced that the success of Malaysia is not due to any fortuitous act but the result of the collective efforts of all those entrusted with the responsibility of planning and managing the nation's economy," he added. -- BERNAMA

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