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LID-Abdullah (Media)
ABDULLAH HAPPY TO CHAIR LID FOR FIRST TIME

LANGKAWI, July 29 (Bernama) -- Chairing the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) for the first time, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today expressed happiness that the smart partnership dialogue is taking place with him at the helm.

In thanking leaders and representatives from developing countries for their presence in Langkawi, he pledged continued commitment of the Malaysian Government to the ideals of the Smart Partnership movement.

"When we had the last dialogue in Langkawi (in 2002), I was asked by some people at the closing session what is going to happen after (former Prime Minister Tun) Dr Mahathir Mohamad retires.

"At that time, I gave my promise that we'll have the LID and today, I am happy that it has become a reality," he said at the Heads of State/Government Meeting the Media session on the first day of the three-day day LID, also known as Global 2004.

"The Malaysian Government remains committed to having this dialogue whenever it is our turn to do so," said Abdullah who took over as Host Patron of this year's smart partnership talks from King Mswati III of Swaziland.

As this is the first time he is chairing the Langkawi talks, Abdullah sought the advice and cooperation of LID participants in ensuring the success of the event held at the seafront Pelangi Beach Resort.

Since the LID has been in existence for about 10 years, Abdullah said he expected dialogue participants to offer some suggestions as to what needed to be done for the next 10 years towards enhancing the lot of developing countries of the South.

He congratulated King Mswati for having hosted the Global 2003 smart partnership talks in Ezulwini and with whom he had met two months ago in preparation for the seventh edition of the LID.

Abdullah said discussions in Langkawi would generally focus on

the
issues of poverty, development and security.

The smart partnership concept was pioneered by Malaysia when it hosted the inaugural LID in 1995. It has subsequently spawned similar events in the form of the Southern Africa International Dialogue and the Eastern Africa International Dialogue.

Alluding to the LID theme "Towards a Smarter Globe: Reconciling Development Challenges with Global Security Through Dialogue," Namibian President Dr Sam Nujoma said one of those challenges was poverty faced by people in all corners of the world.

He stressed on the need for unity, teamwork, sharing of ideas and transfer of technology so that countries which were behind particularly in the developing world could catch up with the rest.

"We welcome ideas from the business community and we also invite trade unions to join us in the battle against poverty," he said.

Former President Sir Ketumile Masire of Botswana heaped praises on Malaysia's leadership of the developing South.

"We fear no evil for you will always be with us. We have been very favourably impressed by the way Malaysia has been providing leadership (to other developing countries)," he said.

Stressing on this point, he said: "I think we need Malaysia more than Malaysia needs us. You have put in more than perhaps all of us put together (in terms of advancing the interests of the South).

-- BERNAMA
MAM TOM