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LID-Mahathir

DR M PLEASED WITH ABDULLAH'S COMMITMENT TOWARDS LID

by Jamaluddin Muhammad

LANGKAWI, July 29 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir

Mohamad today said he was pleased that his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah

Ahmad Badawi, was committed towards the Langkawi International Dialogue

(LID) and thanked him for it.

He said when LID was first held in 1995, he thought that it would be a one-off affair.

But the participants found the smart partnership dialogue to be useful as it enabled them to understand each other better and this led the dialogue to be held once a year or once every two years since then, he recalled.

"This (smart partnership) movement has taken off, is gathering speed and beginning to show results," he said during the Heads of State/Government Meeting the Media session on the first day of the three-day LID here. The session also invited former Heads of State and Government.

Dr Mahathir, who was invited by Abdullah to speak at the session, said the dialogue at LID had helped participants to understand each other better as well as learn about each other's problems and how they were solved.

Some of the participating countries had adopted similar approaches that had been successfully undertaken by other countries, he said.

Dr Mahathir said he also learnt quite a lot from other participating countries through the smart partnership movement, in particular, about smooth power transition when President Sir Ketumile Masire of Botswana decided to retire to give way to a new leader some years ago.

"I have stepped down and I understand that two others will be following suit," he said in reference to Mozambican president Joaquim Alberto Chissano and Namibian President Dr Sam Nujoma impending retirement next year.

A smooth passing of the baton was an important thing, he added.

"I think that not many countries in other regions can you find leaders willing to step down," he added.

Dr Mahathir said a smooth transition of power was important for a country's stability and for it to move ahead with its development.

A different scenario would come about if leaders were changed through a power struggle as this could even entail accusations that the former leaders were corrupt and there should be a discontinuation of policies and agreements made under the previous administration, he said.

Such discontinuation or termination of agreements had a destabilising effect on a country and would also discourage foreign investment, Dr Mahathir said.

"People who invest in a country would like to see that once they have entered into an agreement, that agreement should be valid even if the government changes. It may be that the agreements are not fair or one-sided but if there needs to be any change, it should be for the future and not for the past," he stressed.

Dr Mahathir said when there was a smooth transition from one leader to another, then there would not be any disruption on stability.

This would also contribute towards attracting foreign participation in a country's economic growth and development, he said.

-- BERNAMA

JM SHY