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Anti-poverty plan's success depends on country's continued growth

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The anti-poverty agenda of a country can only succeed with the continued expansion of its economy, said Rural Development Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid.

He said economic expansion required a stable political system as this was necessary to attract foreign investment.

Speaking tonight at the opening of an international poverty alleviation course entitled "Localising the Anti-Poverty Agenda: The Malaysian Experience", he said this was Malaysia's formula for poverty alleviation.

"To eradicate poverty, especially among the rural people, 70 per cent of whom were poor, Malaysia found it necessary to set up the Rural Development Ministry.

"Much success has been achieved in lifting the rural poor and the Government emphasis has been in providing education."

He said the result was that the economic and professional standing of people from rural areas had been significantly raised.

He said it was notable that 33 per cent of doctors and a vast proportion of top civil servants in the country were originally from rural areas.

"My ministry, in particular, the Institute for Rural Advancement, is thankful for being given the responsibility to run this international course for participants from 14 countries. As Malaysians, we are prepared to share our experiences in developing the country with other developing countries."

The course participants are from Burkina Faso, South Africa, Nigeria, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Sri Lanka, Uruguay, Egypt, Yemen, the Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia and Malaysia.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had always stressed the need for dialogue among nations to help each other based on the "prosper thy neighbour" concept.

He said Dr Mahathir's call received good response from developing countries with the holding of Langkawi International Dialogue in 1995, Southern African International Dialogue (SAID) in Botswana followed by the SAID dialogue in Namibia in 1998, Zimbabwe (1999), Mozambique (2000), East African International Dialogue (Uganda) and Global 2002 dialogue in Langkawi.

He said through the dialogues, many warring nations, especially in Africa, had improved relations leading to economic co-operation and poverty eradication.

He said through the poverty alleviation course starting today, participants would make site visits to villages to study rural development programmes and attend briefings.

He called on participants to evaluate the success of Malaysia's rural development during their three-week stay and hoped the experience would lead to better rural development programmes for their countries.