

COMBATING FINANCIAL CRIMES BY INFO SHARING

PM launches public-private link led by BNM to share intel on financial crimes

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THE newly-launched public-private partnership initiated by Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) involving enforcement agencies and financial institutions will help the government combat financial crimes.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the initiative to share intelligence between enforcement and financial bodies would turn the aspirations of the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 into reality.

He said it was important for public and private institutions to be transparent as financial crimes, such as money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing, had prevented people from reaping the fruits of prosperity.

"The public-private partnership is a collaboration and cooperative initiative between BNM, the Securities Commission (SC), law enforcement agencies and financial institutions to better combat financial crimes.

"Public-private partnerships promote synergy in anti-money laundering measures or countering financing of terrorism. This is achieved through effective, timely and seamless sharing of financial intelligence from financial institutions for the purpose of crime prevention and law enforcement.

"Its more effective detection of suspicious transactions by financial institutions and other reporting institutions will go a long way to eradicate financial crimes," he said at the International Conference on Financial Crime and Terrorism Financing at Shangri-La Hotel here.

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Yesterday's launch of the public-private partnership, known as the Malaysian Financial Intelligence Network (MyFINet), was witnessed by Dr Mahathir.

MyFINet involves BNM, the police, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, Customs Department, SC, as well as 17 financial institutions.

The conference, which is in its 11th year, is organised by the Asian Institute of Chartered Bankers and its Compliance Officers' Networking Group, with support from BNM, SC and the Labuan Financial Services Authority.

To achieve targets in the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 blueprint, Dr Mahathir said people need to reject corruption by adopting shifts in behaviour and expectations in favour of transparency and accountability.

He illustrated the worsening levels of corruption in the country before Pakatan Harapan came into power.

Rampant corruption and greed, he said, had marred the country's reputation and prevented Malaysia from standing on a par with growing Asian economies.

"I used to say that previously, when corruption was an 'under the table' act, it was a scourge to our nation's future. But the last few years saw corruption becoming an 'over the table' act, committed openly by top leaders. Others will then do the same without fear.

"From an act viewed with disgust, it became acceptable and, before long, those not participating in it would be considered stupid. It almost became a lifestyle and that was when cash was heralded as the new king.

"This must not happen again. Our reputation has been diminished and discredited. We need to regain our reputation and credibility in the eyes of the world."

Under the present administration, Dr Mahathir said, Malaysia had made improvements through institutional and governance reforms.

Among them included the rolling out of the National Anti-Corruption Plan 2019-2023, and

the National Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Centre.

Last month, he said, the government tabled the National Anti-Financial Crime Centre Bill in Parliament, which enabled the establishment of the centre to co-ordinate operations and centralise information relating to financial and related crimes.

It was also proposed that the centre would take on a centralised role in managing seized and forfeited assets.

Such measures, Dr Mahathir said, had increased public's confidence in the government, which was reflected in the Edelman Trust Barometer.

The report said the level of public confidence in the government increased from 46 per cent last year to 60 per cent this year.

Malaysia, said Dr Mahathir, also rose three steps from seventh place in 2016 to fourth place last year, out of 12 Asia-Pacific countries in the Corporate Governance Watch Report.

"While these are highly commendable improvements, it is ultimately the people who will decide Malaysia's fate.

"To put it bluntly, New Malaysia cannot happen if we do not shed and remove the old mentality that compromised and tolerated corrupt practices."