

**Malaysia Embarking on Digital Malaysia Masterplan, says Najib
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NEW YORK, May 18 (Bernama) -- The government is embarking on an innovative digital economy framework that will culminate in the development of a Digital Malaysia Masterplan, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak here today.

He said this was a centralised approach the country was adopting to harvest key opportunities arising from the global shift from analogue to digital.

"With the rapid growth of broadband penetration to cover 100 per cent of all households by 2020, the Malaysian digital population is playing an increasingly significant role in the socio-economic development of the country," he said at the opening of the Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council (GSIAC) inaugural meeting at the New York Academy of Sciences.

The meeting was attended by 35 members, comprising well known scientists and experts in various fields, including Ellis Rubinstein President and Chief Executive Officer of the academy and a Pulitzer prize winner in science journalism.

Najib, who earlier launched the "Invest Malaysia New York 2011" forum at the New York Stock Exchange, said Digital Malaysia would accelerate growth across all sectors of the economy and create a climate conducive to innovation, investment and talent.

"We will build an ecosystem that promotes the pervasive use of ICT in all aspects of the economy to create communities connected globally and interacting in real-time," he added.

The GSIAC is expected to provide valuable input and a fresh perspective to uplift Malaysia's economy by hastening innovation, leverage on the nation's

strength in information and communications technology and improve science and engineering education and skills.

Najib said the government knows that innovation was critical in ensuring prosperity and promoting both environmental and societal well-being, adding that it was committed to advancing Science, Technology and Innovation and making it the driver for economic development and sustainability.

"This requires bold steps to build and leverage science and technology and harness the existing strengths of our nation," he added.

Najib also said Malaysia has successfully transformed itself from an agriculture-based economy to one that was straddled on manufacturing and services.

"And now we are committed in working towards realising the goal of Vision 2020 - a high-income economy that is based on innovation and knowledge generation - through our Economic Transformation Plan or ETP," he added.

The initiatives and reforms of the ETP are designed to deliver growth that would benefit Malaysians and transform Malaysia into a developed country by 2020.

Najib said this required total investments of US\$444 billion and an annual growth of six per cent, generate some 3.3 million mostly high-income jobs and skills training.

"It will lift Malaysia's Gross National Income (GNI) from US\$6,700 in 2009 to US\$15,000 in 2020," said the premier who mooted the idea to set up the council during his visit to New York last September.

The plan, he said, would be private sector driven and account for 92 per cent of total investments required, adding that some 27 per cent of investments

would be sourced from foreign direct investment.

The 12 sectors identified as Malaysia's National Key Economic Areas are oil, gas and energy, palm oil and related products, financial services, wholesale and retail, tourism, information and communications technology, education services, electrical and electronic, business services, private healthcare, agriculture and Greater Kuala Lumpur.

Najib said Malaysia needed to generate high-value economic activities by connecting its cities and villages to the future through information and communication technologies.

But the country's goals are not merely technological advancement and economic growth, but included improvement in the quality of life and well-being of all Malaysians, he said.

On the advisory panel, Najib said he was looking forward to receive value-added advice and active support as Malaysia moved forward.

He said the council would serve as a platform to achieve objectives such as providing advice on Malaysia's aspirations of becoming a high-income country based on science and innovation. It will also benchmark Malaysia's ranking and competitiveness in science and innovation against other technologically advanced countries and improve its capabilities in this field as well as collaborate with world experts and global leaders. Najib was confident the council would come up with recommendations and specific action plans geared towards achieving the desired end-results.

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