

Leverage on STI to pull country forward - Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia needs to leverage on science, technology and innovation (STI) to fuel economic advancement, societal progress and new sources of growth.

The prime minister underscored that the country had to raise its game to be competitive.

"To bring Malaysia's economic sector to the next level, we must ensure the proliferation of knowledge intensive enterprises that leverage on science and technology," he said when addressing the conferment of fellowship of the Academy of Sciences Malaysia and announcement of the country's top research scientists here today.

The nation's innovation ecosystem, he said, needed to be re-engineered for STI to thrive not only now but also in the future.

Dr Mahathir cautioned that the gap between Malaysia and developed countries was widening and the potential of catching up with these countries was increasingly challenging.

On the other hand, he said, countries at a similar development stage as Malaysia were intensively developing their innovation ecosystems and were competing for the same markets, skilled workforce and foreign direct investments.

"The potential of some of these countries overtaking and even surpass Malaysia is very high," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia needed a fully functioning innovation ecosystem that was able to

bridge the innovation chasms that currently existed.

He said collaborative innovation networks must be forged between the public sector, business and industries, research and development and civil society.

"By this, rapid restructuring of the economy can be achieved, initiating widespread social transformation with the participation of all concerned," he said.

In stating that STI could pave the way for new sources of growth and help the country attain global prominence, Dr Mahathir said focus going forward would be given to priority areas such as biotechnology, digital technology, green technology and nanotechnology.

Elsewhere in the speech, he expressed hope that the National Policy on Industry 4.0 that he launched yesterday could be well implemented to usher in a new era of knowledge intensive value creation for industries.

In this regard, he said the third national car project would be a good start to feature some of the strategies outlined in policy.

"I believe Malaysia is well positioned to take on this (new national car) challenge as the automotive industry is a pace-setter due to the knowledge intensity and innovation capacity built up over the years since Malaysia first embarked on car manufacturing," he said.

Today's ceremony marked the conferment of 29 new ASM Fellows. The academy to date has 352 Fellows including 28 Senior Fellows.

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