

Miyazawa praises Dr M's leadership

Reports by Syed
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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa said Malaysia has made phenomenal economic progress while consolidating political stability during the last two decades.

He said this came about through the strenuous efforts of the people guided by hard-nosed and clear headed political leadership.

Miyazawa also paid special tribute to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He pointed out that the Malaysian Prime Minister had courageously managed the dynamism of a diverse society and steered Malaysia to sail smoothly along the treacherous course of national development through difficult times.

He said in the fields of trade, investment and development assistance, the relationship between the two countries could be called a model case of mutually beneficial bilateral co-operation.

"The Look East Policy, which was initiated by Dr Mahathir, has just passed its first successful decade and more than 3,000 Malaysian youths have studied in Japan. The policy now symbolises the friendship between our two countries,"

he said at a dinner in his honour hosted by Dr Mahathir at Seri Perdana.

Miyazawa said Vision 2020 provides a future design of Malaysia reflecting the people's aspirations.

He hoped the unshakable friendship and trust between the two countries which had been nurtured and strengthened would play an important role in ensuring the challenging and promising Vision 2020 programme is realised.

"I hope that building on the success of our bilateral ties, we will be able to enhance our relationship to become a mature partnership for a broader economic and political co-operation which will benefit the peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and the world in the next century."

Earlier Miyazawa, who visited the Forestry Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) in Kepong, said he was impressed with the environmental concern underlying Malaysia's forestry policies.

FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Salleh Mohd Nor told reporters after the visit that Miyazawa was impressed by the policies which kept half the country forested including estates and plantations which provided nearly 75 per cent of the country under tree cover.

Salleh said that Miyazawa also inquired about Malay-

sian commercial hardwoods and the measures used to replenish and conserve the natural forests.

Japan is the biggest importer of Malaysian tropical hardwoods, buying about RM4.5 billion a year.

Salleh said the Japanese Premier had also shown interest in sustainable programmes, particularly that of rubberwood, which now accounted for about 70 per cent of Malaysia's wood furniture exports.

Exports of rubberwood furniture brought in RM600 million in 1991. The rubber trees were cultivated on a 25-year rotation, he added.

Deputy Finance Minister Abdul Ghani Othman, who was Minister-in-attendance, and Malaysian Forestry Research and Development Board chairman Tan Sri G.K. Rama Iyer accompanied Miyazawa and the Japanese delegation.

Later, speaking to the Japanese community here at the Kuala Lumpur Hilton, Miyazawa called on the Japanese not to urge their Government to make drastic changes to overcome the current economic downturn.

He said the downturn was partly caused by slackening domestic demand for Japanese goods. This phenomenon was due to the fact that the Japanese were at a stage where most of their needs had been satisfied.