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Mahathir-policy

LOOK EAST POLICY BOOSTED JAPANESE INVESTMENT IN MALAYSIA, SAYS MAHATHIR

PETALING JAYA, Nov. 18 (Bernama) — The "Look East Policy" introduced in 1981 and the 1986 Foreign Investment Act were the impetus for the increase in the number of Japanese investors in Malaysia, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

With the increased investments, the number of Japanese personnel and their families also grew dramatically and made educational facilities for their children essential, he added.

"When these facilities were made available, this made Malaysia even more attractive to Japanese investors," he said when officiating the new building and facilities of the Japanese School of Kuala Lumpur in Subang, near here.

Dr Mahathir said the new school, which boasts of teaching facilities for over 1,000 students, reflected the ever-closer relationship between Malaysia and Japan.

It also reflected the important role of Japanese investors in the country, he added. — more

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▼18/11/14-38MST

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In retrospect, Dr Mahathir said, it was also under the "Look East Policy" that the number of Malaysians studying in Japan increased dramatically from a mere 147 students in 1982 to 3,400 students and trainees last year.

With the country launching its Vision 2020 in February 1991 to make Malaysia an industrialised nation with a caring and wholesome society, there was a lot that Malaysia could learn from Japan, he added.

As such, the setting up of the Japanese school here would not only provide Japanese education for Japanese children in Malaysia but would also enable cultural exchanges to take place between Japanese and Malaysian children through sports and cultural and exchange activities.

Dr Mahathir said the Japan Club was also considering to set up a Japanese training centre for Malaysian youths wishing to study in Japan.

"A specialised technical training centre at the old school site in Taman Seputeh will be a further contribution to the Malaysian society," he added.

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In respect of Japan-Asean ties, Dr Mahathir said the setting up of Japanese schools in every Asean member country, except Brunei, clearly showed that they were very close.

This, he said, meant that Japan had a certain role to play within the region.

"I have been made to understand that the Japanese education system, in line with the globalisation of Japanese business, is now being applied to 88 Japanese schools in 55 countries and two regions," he added.

He also noted that of the more than 18,000 students in Japanese schools abroad, about 70 per cent of them were in Asia.

The Prime Minister then planted a "Jambol Merak" (Jacaranda Soleil) tree to mark the occasion.

Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia Taizo Nakamura said the school provided a good opportunity for Japanese children here to interact with the local community.

The school organised cultural and sports activities with schools in the area in an effort to nurture goodwill among the children and this would be expanded, he added. -- more

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Nakamura also said the old school site in Taman Seputeh would be converted into a specialised technical training centre for Malaysian youths bound for further studies in Japan.

He hoped with the existence of such facilities, more Malaysians would be able to study in Japan to increase the number of technical experts in the country.

The school's management committee chairman Koichi Kitani told reporters the RM40 million campus was equipped with 71 air-conditioned classes for more than 1,000 children attending kindergarten, primary and junior high school classes.

There were also two swimming pools, gymnasiums and open fields.

Kitani said the school also opened its doors every Thursday evenings to Malaysians interested in learning Japanese.

"We conduct the lessons free of charge and those interested to join the new class next May can register in April," he added.

At present, about 150 students were taking lessons at various levels.

-- Bernama

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