

PM: We can learn a lot from Japan

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By Adlin M Zabri

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Japan's close relationship with the Asean countries means that it has a certain role to play within this region, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today. — Opening the Japanese School of Kuala Lumpur in Subang, about 18km from here, the Prime Minister said Malaysia, which launched Vision 2020 in February 1991, wanted to achieve the status of an industrialised country with a caring and wholesome society.

"I am sure there is a lot we can learn from Japan," Dr Mahathir added.

He said the building of this Japanese school was especially reflective of the growing relationship between Malaysia and Japan.

"It also reflects the important role of Japanese investors in this country," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that following the appreciation of the yen, triggered by the Plaza Accord of 1985, Japanese business operations began to be based in East Asia.

Malaysia became particularly attractive with the introduction of the preferential clause for foreign investments in September 1986, he said.

study in Japan.

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

He said the number of Malaysians studying in Japan had also increased dramatically.

"From a mere 147 students in Japan in 1982, the number increased to 3,400 students and trainees in 1992."

Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, later toured the RM40-million school.

They were accompanied by Japan's ambassador to Malaysia Taizo Nakamura, school principal Hiroyuki Tateishi and members of the school board.

Dr Mahathir later planted a tree, *Jambul Merak* (*Jacaranda filicifolia*), to commemorate the opening.

Later, chairman of the school management committee Koichi Kitani said the school and its facilities, occupying a 17-hectare site, was funded by a combination of a grant from the Japanese Government, donations from Japanese companies and the Japan Club of Kuala Lumpur.

Describing the facilities as among the finest by any

This enabled foreign investors to own up to 100 per cent equity, he added.

"With the increased investments, the number of Japanese personnel and their families increased dramatically."

Dr Mahathir said the setting up of such a school in Malaysia would not only provide education to Japanese children, but also enable cultural exchanges between Malaysian and Japanese children.

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

He added that the availability of such an educational facility would make Malaysia even more attractive to Japanese investors.

Dr Mahathir said he was informed that the Japan Club was considering establishing a Japanese training centre for youths wishing to

standards, he said the school would cater for pre-school, primary and junior high school pupils.

The school has two swimming pools, two gymnasiums and two playing fields.

Kitani, who is Ajinomoto Malaysia managing director, said that after completing their compulsory primary and junior high school at the Japanese school, pupils could opt to continue their education at a local high school or at an institution in Japan.

The Japanese school of Kuala Lumpur was established in 1966 at Jalan Kia Peng with just 14 primary school pupils.

Today, the school boasts of a student population of 1,200.

Kitani said the school, as part of its community programme, offered free lessons in Japanese to Malaysians.

At present, some 150 Malaysians are attending the weekly class.