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Rpting with headline

Mahathir

MALAYSIA HAS NOT ABANDONED THE LOOK EAST POLICY, SAYS MAHATHIR

From Abdul Rahman Sulaiman

bm

PARIS, July 8 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today denied that Malaysia has abandoned the "Look East" policy and beginning to turn again towards the West as the policy has failed to reach the desired objective. *overseen in p's*

The Prime Minister said that there was no truth whatsoever in the allegation as Malaysia had never severed relations with any Western countries.

Instead, he said, it had been Malaysia's policy to establish relations with any country keen to be friends with it.

"The more countries that we have good relations with, the better. it will be for us," he told Malaysian journalists here.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a four-day official visit to France, said that Malaysia's move to foster close relations with countries with which it did not have traditional ties like France was part of its efforts to ensure that the country did not depend only on one party in future. -- more

ARES RM

08/07/12-50MST

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Mahathir 2 Paris

He was commenting on allegations by some Western media that Malaysia has abandoned its policy to look to the East and turn again to the West which was frequently criticised.

The Prime Minister said that it was true that previously Malaysia only foster close relations with English-speaking countries with which it had traditional ties like Britain.

Later, the policy to look to the East was introduced so that Eastern noble values could be emulated, he said.

"But I have also always said besides the evils of the West, there are some good things that we can learn from the West," he said.

He said that Malaysia had now been able to achieve a balance in terms of acquiring of knowledge and business opportunities in the East and West.

He cited as an example the Malaysian-French relationship through which Malaysia could derive various benefits in aspects like investment and education.

Indicating that Malaysian-French bilateral relations would now be even closer, the Prime Minister said that incidentally, France had just set its policy to have closer ties with Asean countries. -- more

ARES RM

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Mahathir 3 Paris

"As our country is regarded by them as dynamic in terms of economic development, they wish to have close ties with us and keen to have greater participation in our development efforts," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who for the past two days have had discussions with President Francois Mitterrand and Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, said that France had agreed to offer places to Malaysian students besides offering post-graduate courses in medicine.

He said that in discussions with French firms, they also agreed to provide training for Malaysians in efforts to transfer their technology.

"My concern is the preparedness of our youngsters to come here to study. This is because they have to learn the French language first," he said. -- more

ARES RM

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CNS0368

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Mahathir 4 Paris

The Prime Minister said that he had always reminded Malaysia's younger generation on the importance of acquiring at least one foreign language besides their mother tongue so that the country would be more progressive in future.

"We want to have Malaysians proficient in English, French, Arabic and other languages. This is our policy but it has received poor response," he said.

He felt that the problem arose as a result of lack of self confidence to the extent that there were some who felt there was a need to build up self identity through the Malay language.

"If we have self confidence, we can learn any language and acquire knowledge in that language without any fear of loss of self identity."

"When we have acquired knowledge on various fields, we can become progressive and we will be highly regarded and others will want to learn the Malay language for their dealings with us," he said. -- more

ARES RM

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Mahathir 5 (last) Paris

Earlier, the Prime Minister was entertained to lunch by Balladur. It was also attended by French businessmen.

He was bombarded with questions on Malaysia's economic policy and his objection to efforts to link the question of workers' wages with international trade.

Dr Mahathir said that in the olden days developed countries including France had child labourers who were paid meagre wages.

Malaysia may now be at that stage in its development process and as such it was unfair to link wage rates with international trade.

He said that the competition between small and large nations should not take place at the same field as it would be like a match between a dwarf and a giant.

Although the field was level, the dwarf would surely lose, he added. --

Bername

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