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LOOK EAST POLICY, A BOOST TO JAPAN-MALAYSIA TIES

By: M.Jegathesan

TOKYO, Sept 28 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's Look East Policy continues to remain the main pillar of the existing strong relationship between Japan and Malaysia, a senior Japanese foreign affairs official said.

"The policy symbolises the close affinity between Japan and Malaysia as many young Malaysians come to Japan for training," Ministry of Foreign Affairs Southeast Asia division second deputy director Naoto Hisajima said yesterday.

He was speaking to Malaysian journalists who are here under the Foreign Press Centre Asia-pacific Fellowship Programme.

The Look East Policy was introduced in the early 1980's by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad with the aim of inculcating positive work ethics among Malaysians by looking to Japan and South Korea.

On the economic front, Hisajima said investment and trade were expected to expand since Malaysia adopted liberal policies.

Japan remains Malaysia's largest trading partner, accounting for 19 percent of Malaysia's total trade.

In investments, Japan is a major source of Malaysia's foreign direct investment. From 1990 to September 1995, approved Japanese investments in the manufacturing sector totalled RM15.1 billion or about 20 percent of the total approved foreign direct investments of RM75.5 billion.

Hisajima said the Japanese expatriate population in Malaysia had been increasing since 1993, a "testimony of growing investments into Malaysia."

The figure stood at 10,366 in 1995, 9,223 in 1994 and 8,196 in 1993.

Statistics showed that in June 1994, the total number of Malaysians living and studying in Japan was 5,544.

In education and other social areas, Malaysia continued to send its students to Japan.

Hisajima also said Japan had agreed in principle to cooperate with Malaysia in the reconstruction of war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Asked if Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda would hold formal talks on the matter with his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, he said it was possible it would be discussed when they meet at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in the Philippines in November.

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