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Mahathir-Deficit

PM SAYS MALAYSIA WILL NOT STOP IMPORTS FROM JAPAN

KUALA LUMPUR, July 22 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will not stop imports from Japan although by doing this it can reduce the current account deficit, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"To reduce the deficit, we should reduce imports particularly from countries which have a very big balance of payment surplus with us and Japan has a very big balance of payment surplus with us.

"In fact, it (the trade surplus) is bigger than our national deficit. If we reduce our imports from Japan alone, we can resolve this problem," the Prime Minister said when opening Hotel Nikko Kuala Lumpur which is wholly-owned and managed by Japanese companies.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia will continue to import from Japan as it has all the products that are essential to the development of the Malaysian economy.

However, he hoped Japan, especially its tourism industry, would help Malaysia reduce the current account deficit by encouraging more Japanese to visit Malaysia.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would like to see more Japanese tourists visit this country as the current number constitutes only a very fraction of the total Japanese travelling abroad annually.

"We get only 250,000 Japanese tourists out of a total of 30 million Japanese tourists who go abroad every year.

"I don't know what is so unattractive about Malaysia that we get such a small number of Japanese tourists," he said.

He said Malaysia understands there are not enough seats on flights from Japan.

As such, he said, Hotel Nikko, being a subsidiary of Japan Airlines (JAL), could assist Malaysia to overcome the problem by flying more Japanese tourists to this country.

"Now that they have their own hotel in Kuala Lumpur, we don't mind if they send them to stay in Hotel Nikko which is Japanese-run and I am quite sure the standard will be maintained," he added.

The 30-storey hotel has 470 rooms, including 14 suites, with rates ranging from RM390 to RM6,000 per night. It was developed by MTJ Development Sdn Bhd, a joint venture company between Toyo Real Estate Co Ltd and Japan Airlines Co Ltd.

-- BERNAMA

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