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ASEAN NO LONGER DEPENDENT ON JAPAN, SAYS JAPANESE TRADE OFFICIAL

KUALA LUMPUR, April 17 (Bernama) -- Japan should not be arrogant but should be humble enough to realise that Asean is no longer dependent on it, a Japanese trade official said today.

President of the Japanese Chamber of Trade and Industry in Malaysia Tan Sri K. Suzuki said Japan still possesses an awareness that "Asean is supported by Japan and that Asean still depends on Japan".

On the other hand, the awareness held by the Asean countries looking at Japan has been changing in recent years to the understanding that "Japan is one of the influential countries that surrounds Asean," he said.

"Japan must start afresh by understanding the existence of this perception gap," he added.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Kuala Lumpur bureau office of the Japanese financial newspaper, Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei), Suzuki said the perception gap is one of the two imbalances which exist between Malaysia and Japan, the other being the trade imbalance.

He said the mass media has an essential role to play to resolve the perception gap.

The ceremony was officiated by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Also present were the president of Nihon Keizai Shimbun Inc, Takuhiko Tsuruta, and the Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia, Issei Nomura.

Tsuruta said the new bureau would play an important role in terms of coverage to enrich the paper's new resources.

He said there is a big demand from Japanese readers for information concerning Malaysia's economy and business activities.

He pointed out that there are about 1,400 Japanese enterprises operating in Malaysia, lead by the electronic industry.

"With the establishment of the new bureau, we are fully determined to make further efforts on the gathering and distribution of news from Asia. We will also continue with our contribution in the exchange between Asia and Japan through the International Exchange Conference, The Asean Future, which began in 1995," Tsuruta said.

He said the KL bureau, Nikkei's 12th in Asia and the 31st globally, is equipped with the most resourceful new network system among the Japanese newspaper companies. -- BERNAMA

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