

27/03/1997

Hashimoto hopes for closer and stronger relationship

QUOTING the Malay proverb `besar kapal, besar gelombang', Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto expressed confidence that Japan-Malaysia relations will continue to grow closer and prosper despite the difficult challenges ahead.

The proverb, quoted in Bahasa Malaysia, literally means the bigger the ship, the higher the waves. It was used by Hashimoto as a maxim for future lessons to be learnt from the bilateral relationship.

"The lesson of this maxim is this: as the ship gets bigger or as trade increases and exchanges expand among nations," he said, "the waves grow higher or those nations should face harder and more challenging issues to handle and shoulder more extensive responsibilities.

"Here we turn to the Japan-Malaysia relationship. Just as the proverb says, both countries having had more expanded roles and responsibilities in the international community, our relationship has grown closer."

Hashimoto was speaking at a banquet in honour of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datin Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali at his official residence.

As a result, Hashimoto said Japan and Malaysia were now required to discuss a wider spectrum of issues, leading to necessary consultations and dialogues already held through a variety of channels in constructive fashion.

"I am confident that working hard through such consultations and dialogues, Japan and Malaysia will ride out the waves of any size to keep discovering the right course to follow."

Hashimoto praised the Look-East Policy, saying it was a symbol of the friendly Malaysian-Japanese relations.

Expressing his appreciation that Dr Mahathir had made it clear that the policy will continue beyond 2000, he pledged Japan's full commitment to further cooperation to the greatest extent possible.

The Look-East Policy, he said, was highly commendable.

Referring to the official talks he held with Dr Mahathir earlier, Hashimoto said the exchange of views were forthright and fruitful.

"Having now held three bilateral meetings," he said, "I truly feel that our mutual trust has grown deeper on each occasion."

(END)