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Hashimoto-Visit

HASHIMOTO'S VISIT TO PAVE THE WAY FOR A NEW JAPAN-MALAYSIA PARTNERSHIP

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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 6 (Bernama) -- Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's two-day official visit to Malaysia Wednesday is set to open a new dimension in Tokyo-Kuala Lumpur cooperation that will be based on "partnership".

Japanese ambassador Issei Nomura said today Japan and Malaysia, which have mutually inter-dependent relations, should now strive to build a "partnership cooperation".

"Japan and Malaysia will have to work together as partners in the future," he told Bernama in an interview at the Japanese embassy here.

Stressing that Japan had a lot to learn from Malaysia, Nomura said Tokyo's relations with Malaysia should no longer be confined to "giving aid" but as "cooperating partner".

He was confident that Hashimoto's visit would reinforce the strong bilateral relations.

"Prime Minister Hashimoto also wants to strengthen personal acquaintance with Dr Mahathir," he said, adding that the two leaders last met in Tokyo last February.

Nomura said the Japan-Malaysia ties should reflect the political, economic and social changes in the two countries over the last few years.

"We cannot continue with the same way as we used to do, you know," Nomura said.

He said Hashimoto and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would discuss how to further strengthen bilateral ties during their talks on Wednesday.

Nomura said Hashimoto's decision to go ahead with his trip to Malaysia and four other Southeast Asian countries, namely Brunei, Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore, beginning tomorrow despite the Peru hostage crisis demonstrated his strong determination to strengthen ties with Asean countries.

The hostage crisis erupted on Dec 17 when the left-wing Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) seized the official residence of Japanese ambassador to Peru Morihisa Aoki during a reception to mark Emperor Akihito's birthday.

Nomura said Hashimoto would also get Dr Mahathir's views on various regional and international issues of mutual concern. "I must say Dr Mahathir has been prime minister for 15 years and Hashimoto would very much listen to Dr Mahathir's views," he said.

Hashimoto might also discuss with Dr Mahathir how to strengthen Japan-Asean ties since Malaysia will host the 30th Asean ministerial meeting and the second Asean informal summit this year, he said.

He added that the two prime ministers might also discuss the question of Myanmar, the Korean peninsula, environment, terrorism and peacekeeping operations.

On the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC), Nomura said Japan was satisfied that it had become a reality through various dialogues involving east Asian countries.

He said Japan supported the concept of East Asian dialogue and cooperation in various fields "(but) we did not say we never supported (the EAEC)".

"The question is on the formalisation of the EAEC...some countries are looking at it suspiciously and so there is no formalisation. This is what

Hashimoto will have on his mind (during his talks with Dr Mahathir)," he said.

Asked to comment on criticisms levelled at Japanese companies for slowness in transfer of technology, he said that in recent times new Japanese companies coming to Malaysia were bringing in new technology.

"They are doing it (transferring technology)," Nomura said, adding: "I wish the private sector will do more."

He also dispelled fears of Japanese companies pulling out of Malaysia because of rising wages in Malaysia. "Japanese companies are committed to keep their investments here," he said.

Nomura also said that Japanese multinational companies such as Matsushita were aggressive in promoting able Malaysians to key positions in their organisations.

He added that the time was right for Japanese and Malaysian companies to establish joint-venture partnership to seek investments in third countries.

On the future of the Japanese economy which saw the "bubble" bursting in the early 1990's, Nomura said, the economy was steadily improving. --  
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