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## Japan to help boost region's human resources development

JAPANESE Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto said yesterday it will accept trainees from the Asean region in an effort to boost human resources development in the region.

"To allow this region to enjoy sustained economic growth, it is necessary to further elevate the socio-economic structure (of the region) to a higher level," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday after the Japan-Asean Informal Summit.

To this end, he said human resources development becomes all the more important and added that Japan has agreed to accept 20,000 trainees from Asean over a five-year period as well as promote small- and medium-sized and supporting industries.

The Japanese premier said he was gratified by the active support from Asean leaders on the proposed Japan-Asean human resources development programme and added this will surely "lay new foundation for Japan-Asean relations".

He said while some Asean countries have experienced economic turbulence, he expressed faith in the economic fundamentals and growth potential of East Asia.

"And if countries maintain sound open macroeconomic policies and regional cooperation, I am sure these countries will return to a stable and robust state," he said.

By building on the economic fundamentals of East Asian countries, he said this will lead to a recovery of confidence in the region's economies.

At the meeting, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and other Asean leaders had expressed hope for Japan's economy to be more robust in order for Japan to lead the Asean countries, said Hashimoto.

To this end, the Japanese premier said efforts are being taken to stabilise Japan's financial system.

Japan will not be allowed "to be the source of a worldwide depression", he said.

These efforts include economic structural reforms, the stimulation of efficient land use, the nurturing of small- and medium-sized industries and the provision of an attractive business environment, he said.

"All these reforms will remove uncertainties in Japanese economic outlook and allow the economy to move to self-sustained growth with increased domestic demand," he added.

He said as far as Japan's financial system is concerned, the Government will act to bolster its financial system, including the issuance of 10 trillion yen (100 yen = RM3.03) state bonds.

He also stressed the importance of the "support provided under the core of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and for the Manila Framework to be implemented steadily".

The role of the IMF, he added, is crucial as it will be able to induce capital from the developed countries, be it the US or Japan, into the region.

Candid views, he said, were also exchanged on the issue of security and in Japan's view the American presence in the Asia-Pacific region is indeed necessary.

He added that 25 years after normalised relations with China, there has been rapid progress in dialogues with China.

These dialogues will serve to minimise misunderstandings between the two

countries, he said.

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