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#### JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN URGED TO FORM PARTNERSHIPS WITH M'SIANS

By: Syed Jamil Jaafar

TOKYO, March 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today suggested that Japanese businessmen team up with their Malaysian counterparts to seek out trade and investment opportunities in third countries.

He said Malaysia with its excellent relations with many developing countries could open doors for Japanese business.

He urged the powerful Keidanren (Federation of Japanese Economic Organisations which comprise top Japanese corporations) to establish contacts with Massa (Malaysia South-South Association).

Set up five years ago, Massa through its corporate arm MassCorp had carried out activities aimed at connecting Asian firms and entrepreneurs looking for international partnership opportunities in countries seeking foreign direct investment.

"Partnership in investments brings about greater energy with the combination of the expertise and experiences of respective country-partners," Dr Mahathir said at a luncheon meeting organised by six Japanese economic organisations.

As far as Malaysia was concerned, the country with its Vision 2020 and various development projects in place, offered abundant opportunities for trade and investment.

Inviting all Japanese business organisations to take a keener interest in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said while some countries might have cheaper land prices, lower rentals and lower wages, Malaysia offered a stable, strong and business friendly government, consistent policies, a safe and healthy environment and a forward-looking economic regime to help investors succeed.

He said Malaysia had reached a stage where its industrial policy and strategies had to be revised because of the success of industrialisation.

The initial objective of creating jobs through labour intensive industries had resulted in full employment and a shortage of labour.

"We now have to go in for capital and technology intensive industries to give our people better incomes and avoid reliance on foreign labour," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia intended to move manufacturing operations beyond mere production to include research and development (r and d), design capability, development of supporting industries, packaging, distribution and marketing activities.

The manufacturing sector's share of GDP (gross domestic product) was forecast to increase from 33.1 percent in 1995 to 37.5 percent in 2000 and the end of the second Industrial Master Plan period in 2005, the sector would probably achieve 38.4 percent share of GDP.

The Prime Minister also briefed the luncheon gathering on the Multimedia Super Corridor.

Dr Mahathir is on a four-day official visit to Japan. -- BERNAMA  
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