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Mahathir: Give leaders time to implement policies

Kamarul Yunus in Okayama City

OKAYAMA CITY (Japan), Sun: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said leaders should be given ample time to set their ideas and policies in motion for the benefit of the people or the organisation that they lead.

The Prime Minister said if there are frequent changes in leadership, including in politics, the leaders concerned will not have a chance at all to show results.

"One should not look at the office as a prize," Dr Mahathir said during a dialogue with Okayama Prefecture Governor Masahiro Ishii and Mr Katsumi Sasaki, the chairman of Keizai Doyukai and president of Sanyo Shimbun, here today.

The two leaders from Okayama prefecture had asked for Dr Mahathir's comments on his ability to remain Malaysia's Prime Minister for 16 years.

The Prime Minister said that when holding the highest position, a leader must work hard to implement programmes that benefit the nation or organisation.

"While a country such as Malaysia needs a leader who can stay in office for a long time, of course I also want to deal with a leader from another country who stays for quite sometime. This will enable us to expect more from him," he said.

Asked on his secret for Malaysia's success, Dr Mahathir said that as a former doctor who turned politician, he is able to diagnose and analyse the problems in the country.

"We have to know and study the problems in our country before we can solve them," he said, adding that his experience as a doctor and six years as deputy prime minister has helped him to solve problems faced by the country.

However, he admitted that he faced difficulties in implementing his ideas during his early years as Prime Minister.

On relations with Japan, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia still adopts the "Look East" policy because the country has high regards for Japan's success.

"If we want to be successful, we must follow successful countries, and Japan is one of the most successful countries," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia will continue to look towards the East while looking at the West because it believes in learning from everyone, not from a single country or location.

"What is important is that there is something to learn from that country and we think we can learn from Japan and South Korea and other successful Eastern countries," he added.

In the one-hour long dialogue, the Prime Minister touched on the role of women in Malaysia, especially in politics; the Government's efforts to promote the Multimedia Super Corridor; and the Government's intention to foster close relations with other prefectures in Japan.

Dr Mahathir is on a six-day working and private visit to Okayama and Toyama prefectures that started on July 17.

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