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Mahathir-Dinner

MALAYSIA HOPES JAPAN WILL IMPORT MORE MALAYSIAN GOODS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hopes that with the on-going liberalisation and deregulation in Japan, its import of Malaysian products, especially manufactured goods, will increase.

He said Japanese companies and joint-venture firms in Malaysia should also be encouraged to source more local materials for use in their products here.

This would, hopefully, balance the trade between the two countries, he said at a dinner in honour of Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at his residence, Seri Perdana, here, tonight.

"Japanese investments, particularly in the hi-tech and capital-intensive small- and medium-scale industries producing sophisticated components will be very welcome, especially when they are in partnership with Malaysian companies," he said.

"In particular, we look forward to the participation of Japanese IT (information technology) companies in our Multimedia Super Corridor."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was currently undergoing tremendous changes as a result of its rapid economic growth and hoped to benefit from Japan's economic and technical superiority.

He said that trade between the two countries had more than doubled from RM31.6 billion in 1990 to RM76.5 billion in 1995.

"Japan today is Malaysia's biggest trading partner and accounts for about 20 per cent of our global trade. It is also our third largest export market," he said.

He added that Japanese investments in Malaysia continued to grow although the balance of trade was in Japan's favour.

He said Japan today was Malaysia's biggest foreign investor with a total cumulative capital investment of RM25.3 billion for the period 1980 to October 1996.

The prime minister said another significant aspect of Malaysia-Japan cooperation was in the area of human resource development and Japan's support for its "Look East Policy" had enabled some 5,000 Malaysian students and trainees to study as well as acquire practical skills in Japanese institutions.

These students had not only benefitted Malaysia but also the Japanese companies in Malaysia who found them very good employees.

Malaysia intended to continue with the "Look East Policy" and hoped that Japan would make available more places in Japanese universities and training institutions, he added.

He said that despite Malaysia's deliberate attempt to "Look East", it had only about 2,000 students at any one time in Japan compared with more than 60,000 students in western and other countries.

Dr Mahathir also said that in relations between Malaysia and Japan the private sector had played a very significant role, holding constant dialogues and highlighting areas needing government attention.

He hoped that Japan would continue to be Malaysia's partner for progress and help it attain its goal of becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020.

Hashimoto said he was impressed with the phenomenal economic development and the solid political stability enjoyed by Malaysia.

He also expressed his admiration for the leadership of Dr Mahathir and

for the never-ending efforts of the Malaysian people.

"Watching from my car window, I noticed the splendid Kuala Lumpur skyline with the world's tallest twin towers, constructions going on everywhere in the city, and also the smiling faces of people in their colourful national costumes," he said.

Hashimoto said that since Malaysia advocated the "Look East" Policy in 1981, the cooperation between Tokyo and Kuala Lumpur have deepened tremendously, especially in the economic field.

"In line with the increasingly economic exchanges, our bilateral political cooperation and cultural exchanges have also expanded. The close and heartfelt ties between our two peoples, cultivated through the "Look East" Policy are indeed valuable assets for both our countries," he said.

Speaking on Asean, Hashimoto said it was becoming increasingly important for Japan to widen and deepen its cooperative relationship with the association as Japan expanded its relations from the traditional economic area into other fields.

"I firmly believe that peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region of the 21st century, as well as those in the world, can be achieved through close cooperation between Japan and Asean,".

"In building its partnership with Asean, Japan will maintain close contact with Malaysia, especially since Malaysia holds the Asean presidency this year, when Asean celebrates its 30th anniversary," he added. --

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