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Mahathir-Investment

AMERICAN MULTINATIONALS TO INVEST IN MALAYSIA

By: Michael Raj

TOKYO, June 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia is getting large-scale investments from American multinational corporations particularly in the chemical and petrochemical sectors.

He said the companies, which include Eastman, the petrochemical group and highly-diversified Proctor & Gamble, were keen to invest in a big way in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

"We are getting a lot of big investments from America keen to undertake downstream petrochemical value-added activities," he said when asked whether Malaysia was concerned over the possibility of Japan reducing its foreign direct investment in Malaysia due to its economic problems.

He was speaking to reporters at the Okura Hotel here where he will be staying during his five-day working visit to Japan.

Earlier, he was received at the Narita International Airport by Malaysian ambassador to Japan Tan Sri H.M. Khatib.

Eastman is a leading international chemical company producing more than 400 chemicals, fibre and plastic products while Proctor & Gamble, among others, deals in personal healthcare products, food and beverages and laundry products.

As for the possible decline in investments by Japan, a major investor in Malaysia, he said: "I think we will be affected to a certain extent as there is no running away from it, but I hope it will be minimal."

"The big companies...they are still interested and they are still coming in, but now we are getting investments from America," he said.

He said that the trend of foreign direct investments was quite different from before, not just confined to electronics but diversified to petrochemicals as well.

Tomorrow, Dr Mahathir will deliver a keynote address at the fifth symposium of the Institute for International Monetary Affairs on the "Revitalisation of the Japanese Economy and the Future of Asia" which will be followed by a question and answer session.

On Wednesday, the Prime Minister will have a private programme where he is expected to meet top business executives from Japan.

Dr Mahathir said he would use the private meetings to meet as many businessmen as possible from Japan to push for continued Japanese investments into Malaysia.

On Thursday, he will deliver another keynote address at the "Nikkei International Conference" which is themed "Future of Asia" in the afternoon and later he will join Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at a conference dinner where both leaders are expected to deliver further presentations on the Asian economic crisis.

Dr Mahathir will return on Friday.

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