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MAHATHIR-INVESTMENT

AMERICAN MULTINATIONALS TO INVEST IN MSIA

By: Michael Raj

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

The Prime Minister said the companies, among which include Eastman, the petrochemical group and highly-diversified Proctor & Gamble, are 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.

Dr Mahathir said this to newsmen upon his arrival here at the Okura Hotel to begin a 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 (whereby) they were not just confined to electronics but have diversified to petrochemicals as well.

Tomorrow, Dr Mahathir would 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 would be followed by a question and answer session.

On Wednesday, the Prime Minister would 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 would deliver another keynote address at the "Nikkei International Conference" which is themed "Future of Asia" in the afternoon.

The same night, he would 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 would return on Friday. -- BERNAMA

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