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Mahathir-East

LOOK EAST POLICY STILL RELEVANT, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By Khairdzir Yunus

TOKYO, June 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today dismissed insinuations that Malaysia's Look East Policy has outlived its purpose.

He said the policy was very much misconceived by many thinking that by looking east, Malaysians would discard the west.

It was not so and Japan could still be a role model for Malaysia, he told a group of Japanese editors at a meeting here.

However, the prime minister said, Malaysia would be very selective in copying either the east or the west.

"We only copy the good things, but other things we do not copy," he said.

He said Malaysia would also be looking at mistakes made by countries in the east so as not to repeat them.

"Look East Policy is an on going thing," he said.

On whether Malaysia would still send students to Japan, he said: "We still think we send too few students to Japan."

He said the number of Malaysian students sent to Japan was still small compared to 12,000 to 15,000 sent to the Britain and a similar number to the United States.

Because of escalating costs of sending students overseas, the prime minister said the government could reduce cost by setting up twinning programmes with American institutions.

"However, with Japan, we would still like the students to come here to expose them to the Japanese work culture and practices," he said.

In the hour-long meeting with the editors, Dr Mahathir answered various questions on issues in Asia.

Koike Hirotgusu, Foreign News Editor of Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei) acted as moderator for the session.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a seven-day visit to Japan, arrived here from Nagoya this morning.

He is scheduled to meet Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi tomorrow evening after addressing an international conference on "The Future of Asia" organised by Nikkei here. -- BERNAMA

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