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PM: Visit to Japan has given me many ideas

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PETALING JAYA, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said his one-week visit to Japan had given him many ideas which he hoped could be implemented in Malaysia.

"I visited many industries that are relevant to Malaysia and which have given me many ideas. I hope they can be used here," he said at a Press conference at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah airport upon his arrival.

Dr Mahathir said he also had discussions with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, Dr Eisuke Sakakibara, a former Vice-Finance Minister known as "Mr Yen" for his influence over financial markets, and others who had shown interest in taking part in economic activities in Malaysia.

On the response from Japanese investors towards the Multimedia Super Corridor, Dr Mahathir said they had shown a lot of interest although he did not meet all of them.

"I believe they will be more active (in investing in MSC)."

The Prime Minister was also asked on the Sipadan hostages issue and the Philippine immigration chief Rufus Rodriquest's statement which backed the kidnappers' demand that Kuala Lumpur investigate human rights violations against the 500,000-strong Filipino population in Sabah.

Dr Mahathir replied: "This is domestic politics."

When pointed out that Rodriquest's statement was contrary to the stand of the Philippines Government, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would not give consideration to unsound proposals.

On whether Malaysia would propose new measures towards securing a speedy release of the hostages, Dr Mahathir said it was still not clear what the kidnappers wanted.

"Some say they want money but we are worried that the Philippines Government might not be happy if we give the money.

"What can we do? This situation is something extraordinary, like someone pointing a gun at us and asking us to make a decision. It's going to be a bit difficult."

Later, commenting on Rodriquest's statement, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said no one should dictate to Malaysia what it should do.

"The matter must not be politicised. What's important is for everyone to place the safe release of the hostages as priority."

On his visit to Manila tomorrow, Syed Hamid said he hoped to obtain a clearer picture of the situation.

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