

Mahathir calls on Japan to set up vocational varsity

STAR - 7 NOV 2001

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Malaysia has asked the Japanese Government to consider setting up a university in the region offering vocational training to students.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Japanese had a lot of highly skilled people who were not gainfully employed at the moment.

"They should use these people to run training schools for all kinds of engineering (disciplines).

"We even suggested a university should be set up by Japan because the cost of sending students (overseas) is very high. If they set up a university in Malaysia, for example, they can take in students from Asean countries and, of course, the fees will be much lower."

Asked how Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi responded, Dr Mahathir replied: "He thinks this is a very good idea."

Dr Mahathir said this after attending the Asean + 1 meeting with leaders from Japan, South Korea and China yesterday.

The meeting was held after the annual Asean summit and the Asean + 3 summit with the three East Asian countries that saw the 13 leaders meeting for the fifth time.

On the Asean-China Free Trade Area proposed by Beijing, Dr Mahathir said it would take 10 years for the idea to take off.

China suggested the FTA as a means to strengthen trade and investment links, covering a market of about 1.7 billion people.

Host Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah in a statement at the end of yesterday's meetings said that the 13 leaders endorsed the proposal to establish the FTA within 10 years.

The leaders also identified agriculture, information technology, human resource development, investment and the Mekong River basin development as five priority areas of co-operation.

The statement said Asean leaders had asked Japan to explore the possibility of setting up training and education institutions.