

22 OCT 2001

Mahathir-Japan

JAPAN KEEN TO HAVE CLOSE TIES WITH MYANMAR, SAYS MAHATHIR

By: Mohd Kamel Othman

QING DAO, (China) Oct 22 (Bernama) -- Japan is keen to have a closer relationship with Myanmar, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today

Dr Mahathir said this was indicated by his Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi during a bilateral meeting in Shanghai earlier in the day.

The two leaders were in Shanghai to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit which ended yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said Koizumi had also wanted to know about the relationship between Malaysia and Myanmar, both Asean members.

"I told him about the conditions in Myanmar and why the process of democratic recovery will take time," he told Malaysian reporters in Qing Dao, a city in north China which is about an hour's flight from Shanghai.

After his one-day visit to the city, Dr Mahathir will depart for Cheju Island, South Korea tomorrow.

The prime minister said Koizumi expressed regret that he had been unable to visit Malaysia but promised to do so as soon as possible.

Dr Mahathir said Koizumi also wanted to know Malaysia's stand as an Islamic nation on terrorism.

"He understands our stand concerning Afghanistan," he said.

The Japanese Prime Minister was also keen to know about the arrests of several people in Malaysia believed to be involved in militant activities.

"He asked whether we had proof and I explained that we have sufficient proof," Dr Mahathir said.

As to the economic recovery following the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Dr Mahathir said that his counterpart was confident of turning round the Japanese economy through a planned approach.

"We hope that the efforts succeed as a major factor causing the recession was the recession in the US," he said.

Concerning the effects on the global economy, Dr Mahathir said all parties including the US agreed that the Sept 11 incident had jolted the confidence of the international community.

Dr Mahathir said people no longer wanted to travel and when air travel was affected, many related industries were similarly affected.

"Airlines, the hotel and service industries will suffer. Many industries will feel the pinch given the contraction in the airline and tourism industry," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the travel industry is the biggest contributor to an economy.

Last year, Malaysia chalked up RM17 billion from the industry and the amount is expected to increase this year, but currently, there was a decrease in the number of travellers.

-- BERNAMA

MKO ZK MR/FR SK