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Mahathir-Okayama

MALAYSIA WILL CONSIDER PROPOSAL FOR MAS TO FLY TO YOKOHAMA, SAYS PM

By: D. Arul Rajoo

OSAKA, Jan 20 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will consider a proposal by the Okayama prefecture for Malaysia Airlines (MAS) to fly to Okayama, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the proposal was put forward to him by the governor of Okayama prefecture during their meeting here.

"They are very anxious to have MAS fly to Okayama. This is something that we should consider," Dr Mahathir told Malaysian journalists covering his four-day visit to Osaka.

The governor was even willing to collect as many tourists and businessmen to visit Malaysia, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here on Thursday, delivered a keynote address at the Mainichi International Symposium and also attended a reception to commemorate the publication of his book "Reflections of Asia", a compilation of his articles in the Mainichi Daily News from February 1999 to June, last year.

On the response to his articles from the Japanese leaders and business community, Dr Mahathir said they were prepared to listen to his views and quite a number of them agreed, including on his opposition over the westernisation of Japan.

"That's why we had the teleconferencing today with the Tokyo governor and two others on their views and mine regarding Japan's and Malaysia's policies towards the economic regime that is now being promoted by the West," he said, referring to a forum recorded by the Fuji Television Network to be aired on Tuesday.

He said that the most important thing was that the Japanese were willing to listen and it was a different matter whether they agree or not, compared to others who were not prepared to listen.

Besides Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara, the others panelists were Kenichi Takemura and Jitsumo Terashima who joined Dr Mahathir from Tokyo through teleconferencing.

Dr Mahathir, who has visited Japan more than 50 times as stated by the host of the forum, said that there were still many good things to be learnt from the traditional Japanese system even though it was clear that the country was now trying to copy the West.

On Ishihara's proposal that Japan sends its workers to acquire certain skills in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said they felt that Malaysia had a more planned development like the Multimedia Super Corridor and the information technology.

This was different from Japan where companies venture on their own and their development was not integrated and this was something that could be learnt from Malaysia, he said.

He also said that Malaysia would still focus on the old economy even though the government had given greater focus on the new economy based on technology and knowledge.

"Many people talk of the new economy but the new economy by itself will not supply products. We still need business, trading, manufacturing and other activities which supply goods and services," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the old economy could be improved through technology and knowledge.

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