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Mahathir-NHK (Interview)

MALAYSIA WILL AVOID JAPAN'S MISTAKES, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, July 27 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Japan will still be Malaysia's role model in its nation building process.

However, Malaysia would be cautious and avoid making the same mistakes that Japan had made, the prime minister said.

"You can learn also from the mistakes of others. What we are seeing in Japan today is a lot of mistakes, and we are going to avoid those mistakes," he said in an interview with Japanese television, NHK, aired over Astro last Tuesday.

The interview in conjunction with the prime minister's 20th year in office was held at Putrajaya. A recorded copy of the interview was made available to Bernama.

Dr Mahathir said, however, that at the moment, Japan was not a good role model for Malaysia.

He was asked whether he still wanted Japan to be Malaysia's role model for its Look East Policy now that Japan was struggling to revive its economy which had stagnated for the last 10 years.

The prime minister said Japan should eventually change and harmonise with the rest of the world. However, it should not do so in a hurried manner just because it was being criticised by others.

"Japan has decided that it must change the way it does things, it must follow what the West says is the best practice. When you try to change things, you always create destruction," he said.

On Japan's role in Asia, Dr Mahathir said the country should continue to show interest in the region, be sensitive to the needs of the small nations as well as willing to help them with the new technology.

The 20-minute programme also showed some clippings of events which made news headlines, including the ones on Dr Mahathir and international financier George Soros exchanging heated debates over currency trading and on the recent Umno general assembly when Dr Mahathir recited a poem to remind the Malays of their roots and the struggle to achieve independence.

The prime minister was asked how the establishment of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) and the Asian Development Fund, which he had proposed, would be beneficial to the Asian countries in facing globalisation.

He said that if each country were to try to influence the cause of globalisation on its own, it would have no impact at all.

"But if we are able to talk to each other first and determine the kind of globalisation that is beneficial for the whole world then I think people will listen because it is a very big entity, it's one third of the world's market, and therefore people are bound to listen," he said.

He also answered questions on the Umno general assembly last month, saying that he wanted to remind the Malays of the country's pre-independence days so that they would not make the same mistakes.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on his next big task of transferring power smoothly to his successor.

"If I can, I would like to step down now, but I am not allowed to. I'm not even allowed to talk about it by my colleagues because they say that this is disruptive. You talk about it, the market reacts, people worry, and things like that, so I don't talk about it. But I'm prepared to go whenever people want me to go, I don't want to overstay my welcome," he said.

On his next target for Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said he would like to keep

the country peaceful and stable and exert Malaysia's independence even if
the world is globalised.

-- BERNAMA

RAZ ZS JK