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Mahathir-Doctorate

MEIJI UNIVERSITY CONFERS HONORARY DOCTORATE ON DR MAHATHIR

TOKYO, June 7 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was today conferred with an honorary doctorate by Meiji University here in recognition of his contribution towards peace, stability and development of Asia.

Meiji University president Prof Yuichi Yamada conferred the honour on Dr Mahathir, the 18th recipient of the award since the university was set up in 1881.

Dr Mahathir is the fourth prime minister to receive such honour after Takeo Miki (Japan), Tomiichi Murayama (Japan) and Jean Chretien (Canada).

In his acceptance speech Dr Mahathir said the Japanese government had extended substantial help to Malaysia when the country introduced the Look East Policy although Malaysia did not ask for assistance.

Dr Mahathir introduced the policy in the mid-80's to inculcate in Malaysians the Japanese work ethics especially relating to dedication and striving for perfection.

As the result of the policy the work ethics of Malaysians have changed and they are a more confident lot now, he said.

When he first visited Japan in 1961, he saw how the Japanese work ethics succeeded in rebuilding a nation recovering from war.

"I felt if Malaysians could have the same spirit, the country could be developed too and that is why when I became prime minister I turned to the east," he said.

"If we could not be as developed as Japan certainly we can be better than other developing countries," said Dr Mahathir, who is on a four-day working visit to Japan starting today.

The prime minister said that before the war, Japan was known for its inferior and cheap products that did not last long.

"I can still remember when Japan produced its first car, the remarks given by the Time magazine was that now Honda knew it was not easy to build car than motorcycle," he said.

However, Honda could produce high quality cars comparable to other car-makers currently, he said.

"It clearly illustrated that it can be done. Malaysia has a Malaysia Boleh motto now to show that we too can do what others can do," he said.

Malaysia, he said, produced its first car in 1985 with the help of the Japanese and now it could develop car from design to testing and this showed Malaysians could do what they believed they could not do previously.

Dr Mahathir said apart from sending Malaysian students to western countries, Malaysia would continue sending them to Japan and hoped the Japanese government and Japanese universities would continue accepting them.

Malaysia was also indebted to Japan as it was the only country to extend financial help to Malaysia during its financial crisis, he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was also convinced that Japan, now experiencing an economic downturn, would recover soon as the Japanese have the skills for recovery.

"We will look at how Japan's economy recovers," he said.

Also present were the prime minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and the Malaysian ambassador to Japan Datuk Marzuki Mohamed Noor.

-- BERNAMA

JM RYN