

# Fine-tuning for Look East Policy.

STAR 29 AUG 2002

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Look East Policy, implemented 20 years ago to spur the country's growth, will be maintained because it has speeded up development.

However, approaches in implementing the policy would be reviewed and shortcomings identified and addressed to enable the country to attain its vision of becoming fully industrialised by 2020.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government was convinced that the work ethics and basic philosophy of Japan and Korea were still relevant

today although many harsh questions had been raised about the management principles and practices.

"Many have gleefully asked us whether we are still looking east. Well, the answer is: We are still looking east in order to learn from their mistakes as much as from the right things that they do," he said at a dinner to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Look East Policy at the Palace of the Golden Horses near here yesterday.

Looking east, he said, was also not exclusively about copying everything that was being done in the eastern countries, but also learning what wrong steps or things

which they had done and to avoid them.

Dr Mahathir said that while Malaysia realised that it needed to change along with the current development to enable it to become fully developed, it would do so very cautiously and selectively because rapid changes could be disruptive.

He said the east still offered Malaysia the best value systems to help it develop compared to the western work culture which would not work for the country because it was confrontational in nature.

Western principles and work culture, he pointed out, were based on the winner taking all, adding that if there was

a dispute between employers and employees, a test of strength would be carried out.

"The employers will lock out and the employees will go on strike. After extensive damage to the business and one side or the other gives in, the dispute is considered settled, but the damage will be done and the settlement reached invariably increases the cost of business.

"If profitability is to be achieved, then products must be increased in price and this may result in an ability to compete in the market or reduced sale and profitability.

"In some cases, the business suffers so much that it has to be closed down and both the

employers and employees lose, as will the country's economy," he said.

He said another western solution was to lay off workers and for governments to provide benefits to help support the unemployed workers.

The problem with this, he said, was that it made people lazy and dependent as more and more people preferred to live on the dole instead of working to generate wealth for the country.

Dr Mahathir said the results of the Look East Policy had vindicated Malaysia's strategy, as the most productive of workers in the country were the product of training under the policy.