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Mahathir-Visit

DR MAHATHIR TO RELOOK 'LOOK EAST POLICY' DURING TOKYO VISIT

From Harlina Samson

TOKYO, Dec 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will, among others, re-evaluate and assess the 'Look East Policy' which has been adopted by Malaysia since early 1982, during his two-day official visit here beginning tomorrow.

Briefing Malaysian journalists covering the Prime Minister's visit, Malaysian Ambassador to Japan Datuk Marzuki Mohammad Noor said that Dr Mahathir's visit is at the invitation of Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the policy.

Koizumi felt that after 20 years, Malaysia and Japan should take a look at the 'Look East Policy' and assess its achievements, he said at the briefing held at the Malaysian embassy here today.

Marzuki said that the policy, introduced by Dr Mahathir soon after he assumed office, has benefited both nations especially in human resources training for Malaysia while for Japan, it has improved and provided better understanding and promoted closer contacts among people of the two countries.

The policy, which essentially emphasises the need for Malaysians to emulate what are considered exemplary eastern work ethics, morale, values and management quality and skills, is aimed at learning the secret behind Japan's and South Korea's success.

Marzuki said that Dr Mahathir, who arrives with Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali tomorrow afternoon, is scheduled to deliver his keynote address at a seminar on the 20th anniversary of the 'Look East Policy', organised by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Nihon Keizai Shinbun.

About 400 participants including Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda and a Malaysian delegation led by Public Service Department Director-General Tan Sri Jamaluddin Damanhuri will attend the seminar.

Dr Mahathir has a very tight schedule which includes an audience with Emperor Akihito, a meeting with Koizumi, and a meeting with Japanese Finance Minister Masajuro Shiokawa. A meeting with Japanese businessmen and corporate leaders is also slated.

Of importance will be a breakfast with Japanese corporate leaders who will include the president and chief executive officers of Mitsubishi Sumitomo, Hitachi, Sharp, Matsushita and Daihatsu, on Friday.

"Hopefully, during the meeting, the Prime Minister can discuss with the corporate leaders on how we can cooperate further and how they can enhance their participation in the Malaysian development and economy," said Marzuki.

Dr Mahathir is also scheduled to visit the Tokyo Disney Sea, the first theme park of its kind in the world, to observe the latest innovations, new technology and animation products.

In the afternoon, the Prime Minister is scheduled to deliver a keynote address at a symposium entitled "Islam: Fostering Peace and Dialogue in an Interdependent World," to be held at the United Nations University.

This is a very important symposium, the first to be held in Japan, said Marzuki.

The symposium is organised by the United Nations University, ambassadors of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) member countries and the Diet (Japanese Parliament) Committee of Islam, which was established after the Sept 11 attacks on the United States, to deal with

issues and matters on Islam.

"All OIC ambassadors here have requested that Dr Mahathir deliver the keynote address. This is a clear testimony of respect of Dr Mahathir's views, to articulate on Islam," he said.

Marzuki said that participants of the symposium are mostly the Japanese public, right from the Diet members, corporate and business leaders to academicians and the ordinary people.

"Dr Mahathir's views on Islam and Islam in the modern world have been taken seriously by the international world," he said, adding that the response for the symposium was overwhelming, having exceeded the 400 seating capacity of the hall.

Marzuki said that Dr Mahathir would also hold a dialogue after delivering his keynote address.

The Prime Minister is then scheduled to leave for Sendai, north Tokyo, for a private visit.

He is expected to fly home from the Sendai Airport on Tuesday.

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