

09 JAN 2002

Koizumi-Visit

JAPAN TO HELP BOOST MALAYSIA'S LOOK EAST POLICY

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 (Bernama) -- Japan is committed to help enhance Malaysia's "Look East" policy with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi expected to raise the matter during talks with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here tomorrow.

Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia Masaki Konishi said he believed this would be among matters discussed between the two prime ministers shortly after Koizumi's arrival for an overnight visit.

"When our Prime Minister meets Dr Mahathir, he will discuss many issues from a broader points of view as Malaysia is a major country in the region.

" If I dare say (the discussion) is not only (about) bilaterial cooperation including the future undertaking of the Look East Policy, but also various international issues such as terrorism," he told Bernama in an interview here.

Koizumi, who turned 60 yesterday, is on a week-long visit to the region aimed at expanding relations with Asean countries.

This is his first trip to the region since becoming prime minister last April. He had planned to embark on the trip in September last year, but had to postpone it following the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

The Look East policy was introduced by Dr Mahathir during the early years of his premiership in the 1980's for Malaysian workers to emulate the work ethics and productivity of their Japanese counterparts and thousands of Malaysians have been sent to Japan for this purpose.

Konishi said the Look East Policy had been instrumental in strengthening bilateral relations between Japan and Malaysia over the years.

Apart from holding talks with Dr Mahathir, Koizumi will meet representatives of the Alumni of the Look East Policy, he said.

Konishi said Koizumi's trip to the region would reflect the spirit of what is known as "Fukuda Doctrine" mooted by former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda.

"25 years ago in Manila, Fukuda made a historic speech outlining his foreign policy for South East Asia on the basis of equal partnership and heart to heart contact," he said.

The idea, he said, had promoted mutual understanding and trust between Southeast Asian countries and Japan.

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