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Mahathir-Japan

JAPAN SHOULD LEAD, BRING BACK THE WORLD TO ITS SENSES, SAYS MAHATHIR

By: Harlina Samson

TOKYO, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Japan, with its size, wealth and world class technologies, can be successful and do many things if it decides not to follow but to lead the others, particularly East Asian nations.

He said that with globalization and today's war, which is more economic than military might, Japan could help bring the world back to its senses and revive the world's economy if it takes on the leadership role.

"East Asia and indeed the world needs Japan, its dynamism and its single-minded dedication. Today's world is in shambles.

"The abuses of the free trading system, the unlimited greed of a considerable number of speculators, the fumbling and incompetence in the handling of problems have resulted in the world losing its way," he told participants of a seminar on the 20th anniversary of the 'Look East Policy' here.

The seminar was organised by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Nihon Keizai Shinbun (Nikkei) to commemorate the 20-year-old policy, adopted by Malaysia.

The 'Look East Policy', introduced by Dr Mahathir in 1982, soon after he assumed office, essentially emphasizes the need for Malaysians to emulate the exemplary eastern work ethics, morale, values, management qualities and skills, aimed at learning the secret behind Japan's and South Korea's economic success.

The Prime Minister said that no one could dispute that Japan achieved a miracle when it rebuilt itself after World War II. It did it in its own way, without being advised by other people, he said.

Noting that it was a feat that reflects the character of the Japanese, he said that the only advice Japan accepted was to produce high quality goods, of world standards, so as to be accepted by the world markets.

"As a foreigner from a small country, it is not for me to tell Japan what it should do in order to again become a model for us. But with apologies, I would like to put in my penny's worth of comments," said the outspoken and the longest serving Asian statesman.

Expressing concern over the sluggish economic recovery of Japan, Dr Mahathir said that although Japan had tried many of the ways suggested to boost its economy, results had been hard to come by so far.

Saying that Malaysia understands the Japanese desire to westernise its system, the Prime Minister said that the existing system should not be suddenly changed, even if it is for the better, as it would cause severe disruption.

"It is far better to stick to the system which works. And the Japanese system has worked very well for the Japanese...it made Japan the second most powerful economy in the world," he said.

He said that if Japan must change, it could change slowly to avoid mass disruptions.

Dr Mahathir said that as Asians are looking east at Japan, they would prefer to learn from its success than its mistake and in this context, Japan must rise.

Reminding the Japanese of their post-war recovery through its own way, the Prime Minister said that as a whole, they must wake up and appreciate that the disaster they faced now was of their own making.

He said that the rapid changing of government, for every two years, was

not the best way in managing recovery, even during a normal situation, as a government could not understand problems, execute plans properly, correct mistakes and achieve success.

"I am not trying to advise you. But these are critical times. Globalization needs to be handled properly," said the Prime Minister, who at the same time urged East Asian leaders to work together.

Speaking at length on the way today's world fight against terrorism, he said that the world is living in an age of fear and being frightened, it reacts blindly.

"We try to fight terrorists as if we are fighting a conventional war. We erect barriers around us, we invent new security measures, we break our own codes of behavior...we are back in the stone age when might is right," he said.

Condemning travel advisories which urged people not to travel, the Prime Minister questioned the good of great technologies and free trade if people could not travel to the world to do business.

He reiterated that terrorism would stop only when the causes were remedied.

As today's struggle was more of the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors, more oppression is not going to stop the struggle, he said, adding that terrorists could be anywhere, even in one's own backyard.

"The world has truly lost its way. The anger of the terrorists is there and will remain there. But we can control our anger, we can be rational. Only rationality can win us the battle against the terrorists.

"This then is the challenge for Japan in a globalized world. To lead and not to be led," said Dr Mahathir.

-- BERNAMA

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