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More Malaysians for studies in Japan

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MORE Malaysian students are expected to enrol in Masters and PhD programmes in Japanese universities this year as the old Look East Policy enters a new phase after 20 years of existence.

Malaysian Embassy counsellor (politico-economic affairs) Dr Hasrul Sani Mutjabar said Japanese tertiary institutions had developed programmes that would encourage entry of more post-graduate students.

The Malaysian Government, he said, was encouraging more private students who had excelled in their studies to do post-graduate studies in Japan.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had made efforts to persuade the Japanese Government to accept more Malaysian students.

"They (the Japanese Government) are generally receptive. But they have limitations over the number of students they can accept.

"If they are agreeable (to the Malaysian request), we will certainly see more Malaysians studying here this year and in the future," he told the New Straits Times.

He said the increase may be reflected in both Malaysian Government-sponsored and private students.

Hasrul, who completed his Masters and PhD degrees in Japan before assuming his current post, said the Look East Policy was a resounding success despite criticism Japan should not be emulated following the prolonged economic recession.

"Personally, I am very satisfied with the progress of the Look East Policy. From my experience (as a student and counsellor at the embassy), I feel it is a success.

"I would like to see the entry of more Malaysian students here despite criticism that Japan is over the hill. There are still so many things we can learn from them," he said.

The Look East Policy was initiated soon after Dr Mahathir took over as Prime Minister in 1981. More than 13,000 students have enrolled at Japanese tertiary institutions since then.

There have also been hundreds of trainees who have received certificates from Japanese educational institutions.

Hasrul, who felt that the scope of the policy could be enhanced in future, said 2,000 Malaysian students, half of whom were sponsored by the Malaysian Government and its agencies enrolled at Japanese institutions of higher learning last year.

The rest were private students including those sponsored by the Japanese Government, prefectures or religious organisations like Buddhist associations.

He said agencies like Mara and the national oil company, Petronas, send a sizeable number of students to Japan.

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