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Policy-Japan

M'SIA NOT TURNING AWAY FROM JAPAN IN LOOK EAST POLICY

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TOKYO, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is not turning away from Japan in its Look East Policy although it is now looking more at South Korea and China.

Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Malaysian Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Isis) Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee said Malaysia would continue to look at Japan because there were still a lot of lessons to learn from the country.

"Malaysia is now much more looking at South Korea and China, but this does not mean we are turning away from Japan.

"It means spending more time to understand what we can learn from South Korea and what we can learn from China. We have just begun our interlectual journey of learning from Japan," he said during the panel discussion at the seminar of the 20th anniversary of the Look East Policy, here today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad delivered his keynote address at the seminar.

During the panel discussion, Prof Toshio Watanabe of Takushoku University, said that the Japanese position in the Look East Policy was rapidly declining.

He said after seeing the last decade of the Japanese economy in the 1990s, Dr Mahathir's view on the policy seems to have undergone significant change.

Malaysia, he said, was now looking more at South Korea and would also look at China under the Look East Policy.

Elaborating on the lessons learnt from Japan under the policy, Dr Noordin said they included an idea which Malaysia had used in its Vision 2020 plan of turning the country into a developed country.

The vision, he said, was inspired by a Japanese expert who was involved in the Japan income doubling plan.

"Vision 2020 is actually an income doubling plan, whereby over 30 years, every 10 years you double (the income) so that at the end of 30 years, you are eight times richer than you were in year one," he said.

Another lesson that Malaysia had learnt was that for the first time, it understood that modernisation did not mean Westernisation.

"By looking at Japan, we understood that there is more than one way to modernise and this is an incredibly important lesson because for most of us we must mordernise, we must advance but on the basis of our own cultural values without destroying the values that we must have," he said

Dr Noordin said Japan was not a Western country and it had proven to the rest of the world that it could become a developed nation in its own way.

"The Look East Policy, without any doubt, has always been a success. I think it goes beyond the 6,600 people who were trained in Japan under this policy.

"If you come to Malaysia, you will know that we are quite different from what we were 20 years ago.

"Twenty years ago, our economy was essentially based on agriculture and petroleum. Today by most measurement, Malaysia is the third most industrialised economy in the world," he said.

The Isis chairman said although the position was not very good because real wealth comes from the post-industrial economy, Malaysia was only halfway to where it was going.

Dr Noordin said Malaysia had also recently formulated its knowledge-economy master plan based on the way the Japanese managed things - the bottom-up approach.

For hundreds of years, people only knew that the best way to do planning was to put the smartest people in a room and then make them work very hard so that

they came forth with a wonderful plan, submit to the government for approval and then sell it to the people, he said.

"What we learnt from the Japanese is that there is another way of doing it.

"In working out the k-economy master plan, we went to the people first, although we knew what we want to recommend and what we want to do, it was brought to the people and it was a travelling show in every state in the country, so that by the time the government adopted the plan we don't have to sell it any more," he said.

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