

23 APR 2002
Korea-Policy
SOUTH KOREA WANTS TO INITIATE LOOK SOUTH POLICY

KUALA LUMPUR, April 23 (Bernama) -- South Korea, inspired by the remarkable success of Malaysia's Look East Policy (LEP), is initiating a similar policy -- Look South Policy -- to acquire positive points from the Malaysian model.

South Korean ambassador to Malaysia Rhee Young-Min said today the Look South Policy was expected to further promote the transfer of applicable values and experiences between his country and Malaysia as well as Japan.

He also suggested that the LEP, which he said had brought the desired results and accelerated Malaysia's development in its 20 years of existence, now adopt a two-way rather than a one-way approach.

"I think the foreign relationships among the three countries should be on a reciprocal basis. Not only can you learn from Japan and Korea but the people of the two countries can also learn from Malaysia," he told Bernama at the sidelines of the International Conference on Malaysia's Look East Policy: Challenges and Contributions, here.

The two-day conference, which began yesterday, was opened by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman. It is part of the policy's 20th anniversary celebration and is to discuss its strengths and weaknesses.

The LEP, initiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1982 soon after he assumed office, essentially emphasises the need for Malaysians to emulate what was considered exemplary eastern work ethics, morale, values and management qualities and skills.

The policy, which was aimed at learning the secret behind Japan's and South Korea's economic success, had considerably strengthened Malaysia's diplomatic relations with both countries, Rhee said.

On the other hand, he said, Malaysia's success in overcoming the challenges and the economic downturn in 1997 was an achievement which Korea and Japan could learn from.

He said Malaysia had been under the strong influence of the Western countries since the 16th century.

"Although you (Malaysia) are in the Orient, you are not genuinely Oriental people, but you have become westernised people especially, in the ways of thinking.

"So, we can share that kind of knowledge and management," he said.

Rhee also recommended that South Korean officials and those from the private sector visit Malaysia and exchange experiences with their counterparts on how to overcome the economic difficulties.

Asked whether the LEP should be continued, he replied in the affirmative.

Rhee, who was one of the speakers at a session entitled "Look East Policy: Prospects in the 21st century", said in his working paper that given the changing environment that South Korea and Malaysia are currently facing, there was a need for a rethink on the objects and roles of the LEP.

"Our many common challenges and complementary resources call for mutually beneficial cooperation and exchanges," he said.

The fast pace of today's rapidly changing socio-economic environment also required a change in both the values and roles of the LEP, he added.

He said the policy should also be further developed with more emphasis on producing adequate knowledge-skilled workers to meet the demands of well-educated and innovative human resources in knowledge-based industries.

"Throughout the Look East Policy, Korea and Malaysia are expected to draw up a stronger Human Resource Development Programme for Knowledge workers on the basis of existing programmes.

Rhee said the LEP should also serves as a catalyst for comprehensive regional cooperation in East Asia to cope with the challenges of globalisation, particularly in developmental and technical cooperation, deemed pivotal to narrowing the gaps among East Asian nations.

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