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Mahathir-Jactim

JACTIM SHOULD CONTINUE SERVING JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN - DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- Expressing confidence that Malaysia will continue to be a good friend of Japan, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hoped the Japanese Chambers of Trade and Industry Malaysia (Jactim) will continue its role to serve the needs of the Japanese business community in this country.

The Prime Minister said Jactim had played an important role in serving the Japanese business community, enabling the Malaysian Government to provide what was needed by them.

"We hope to continue working closely with Japan and I am sure Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the incoming Prime Minister, will continue to work closely with Jactim.

"And Malaysia will continue to be a good friend with Japan and to benefit from the Japanese business and industry.

"We may not be able to be a country like Japan, but to a certain extent, we have gained and continue to gain," said Dr Mahathir at Jactim's 20th anniversary dinner at a leading hotel in Seri Kembangan, near here, tonight.

Congratulating the team for achieving its second decade in Malaysia, he said Jactim had played a vital role that enabled Malaysia to be known as one of the developing industrialisation country.

Noting that Malaysia's industrialisation had been made possible by the Japanese investments and keenness of its business people and their companies in the country, Dr Mahathir said many countries were initially doubtful that Malaysians could work.

He said it was the Japanese business community who discovered that Malaysian workers could work almost just as well as the Japanese.

"Since then, there are many Japanese investments in Malaysia, and practically, Japanese big companies are here. Of course, they initially came here to trade, but later decided to invest in Malaysia. That coincides with Malaysia's own plans for its development," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia, being an agriculture-based country and with no expertise in manufacturing and knowledge in management skills, the Japanese, who came to invest here, taught Malaysians to become industrialised.

Being a special friend to Malaysia, he said Kuala Lumpur had very good relations with Japan all along.

Recalling that Japan had progressed tremendously, he said Malaysia was actually motivated by the quick recovery of the Japanese after the devastation in the World War II.

"I was in Japan very early after the war and at that time, much of Japan was still not built up and was devastated by the war. Japanese companies were making their mark very slowly.

"At that time, there was still this belief that Japanese goods were cheap and inferior, but Japan slowly overcame that bias over its products and very quickly we noticed how Japan was able to not only recover, but also to develop very fast and catch up with the industrialised countries of the west," he said.

Having watched this, he said Malaysia decided to emulate and knew that it could learn a lot on how Japan developed and overcame the losses from the war which helped change the image of Japanese products.

This is an achievement that marked Japan's recovery after the war and

because of that, Malaysia decided to adopt the "Look East Policy" principally to learn its business philosophy and particularly its work ethics.

Believing that the Japanese recovery was due to its work ethics and its business philosophy, Dr Mahathir said it was therefore "logical for Malaysia to look at Japan and emulate it."

"We know that the Japanese way of doing business is different from that of Europeans and Americans. The Japanese seem to focus more on getting market share and having low margins compared with the Europeans who prefer high margins with getting a big market share not mattering very much." he said.

Dr Mahathir also expressed gratitude for the Japanese government's responsiveness towards the Look East Policy and being ready to accept Malaysia which wanted to learn from them.

Meanwhile, Jactim President Tan Sri Dr Kazumasa Suzuki said the chambers had fostered good relations between Malaysia and Japan.

He said in 1993, there were only 121 Japanese companies, but they increased to 544 by end of last year.

He said there were about 220,000 Malaysian workers working in Japanese companies which represented 10 per cent of the working population in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in Malaysia brought by Japan accumulated to RM40 million at the end of last year, which is 20 per cent of the accumulated FDI in Malaysia.

Suzuki said Japanese companies enjoyed the benefits and liberal foreign equity policies, especially in the manufacturing sector provided by the government.

In conjunction with Jactim's 20th anniversary celebrations, the Jactim Foundation donated RM100,000 to Bakti, the Association of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers, as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance the living standards and quality of life of the underprivileged.

The cheque for the amount was handed over by Suzuki to the Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, who is also Bakti President.

Jactim, established in 1983, was set up to promote economic relations between Malaysia and Japan in international trade, commerce, industry and investment as well as projecting the interests of Japanese companies and promoting mutual friendship and cooperation among member companies.

Dr Mahathir is the founding father of Jactim together with the then Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

-- BERNAMA

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