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Marzuki-Abdullah

JAPAN VIEWS POSITIVELY CHANGE OF GUARD IN M'SIA, SAYS MARZUKI

By: Hafizah Kamaruddin

TOKYO, July 9 (Bernama) -- Japan views as "very positive" the impending change of guard in Malaysia's leadership in October, with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad stepping down as Prime Minister and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi succeeding him, Malaysian Ambassador to Japan Datuk Marzuki Mohammad Noor said today.

He said the Japanese expect Abdullah to continue Dr Mahathir's pro-business policies and enhance existing bilateral relations between Kuala Lumpur and Tokyo.

Marzuki said Abdullah, who served as Foreign Minister for a long time, had built a strong and good rapport with Japanese leaders, and was "no stranger to Japan."

"Abdullah, who is taking over Malaysia's premiership in four months' time, has also been involved in the implementation and enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries, including the "Look East Policy" that was established in 1981 to emulate the positive work cultures of the Japanese," he told Malaysian journalists at a press conference at the Malaysian Embassy, here.

He said the three-day official visit by Abdullah to Japan beginning tomorrow would further accelerate the existing "high comfort level of relationship" to a greater height.

Abdullah's visit is at the invitation of the Japanese Government. The Deputy Prime Minister, who will arrive here tonight, is expected to touch base not only with Japanese leaders and politicians, but also Japan's corporate figures.

Abdullah, who last visited Japan in September 2000, has a packed programme, meeting the country's top leaders, parliamentarians, corporate leaders and media representatives, besides renewing ties with past Japanese foreign ministers.

Asked whether Abdullah's visit was to reaffirm the Japanese that he would continue the existing foreign policies and relations, Marzuki said: "I suppose so. Datuk Seri Abdullah is no stranger to Japan. He has been the Foreign Minister for a long time and knows a lot of leaders around the world."

Abdullah, who is leading a high-powered delegation, will start his visit by delivering a keynote address to about 200 Japanese and 150 Malaysian businessmen and representatives from the private sector at a business forum organised by Malaysia's Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) and Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro) tomorrow.

This will be followed by lunch with 16 Japanese corporate figures, an opportunity for Abdullah to interact and exchange ideas with them.

"The meeting will provide the avenue for the Deputy Prime Minister to interact and get their views and to know them," he said.

Abdullah is expected to meet Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi tomorrow evening at "Sori Kantei", the Prime Minister's official residence, to further enhance the excellent ties both countries are enjoying, he said.

Marzuki said: "We (Malaysia-Japan) don't have any outstanding issues. Japan is still Malaysia's important source of Foreign Direct Investment and an important source of technology transfer.

"Under the Look East Policy, Japan has become a major source for training our human resources. We have been utilising the Yen loan to

finance our development projects."

Abdullah is also expected to receive courtesy calls from Japan's Finance Minister Masajuro Shiokawa, and Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Takeo Hiranuma tomorrow evening at the Imperial Hotel where he would be staying.

Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi would host a dinner in honour of Abdullah.

Abdullah's discussions with Kawaguchi would centre on bilateral relations, regional and international issues, he said.

Abdullah's delegation comprising five ministers, two deputy ministers, three menteri besar and 149 businessmen will have breakfast meeting with Kyosuke Sinozawa, the Governor of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation on Friday.

He is also scheduled to receive a courtesy call from Nihon Keizai Shimbun Inc (Nikkei) President and Chief Executive Officer Ryoki Sugita and have lunch with Japanese Diet members or parliamentarians.

Marzuki said about 150 first-and second-year Malaysian students would be attending the dinner-cum-dialogue with Abdullah.

There are currently 1,500 Malaysian students studying here.

Marzuki said Abdullah would also visit the Chiba University on Friday evening to have a closer look at the agriculture research being carried out at the Horticulture Faculty in line with his wish to see a modernised agricultural sector.

Abdullah will leave for home on Sunday.

-- BERNAMA

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