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Abdullah-Japan
PM ARRIVES IN JAPAN FOR NIKKEI CONFERENCE

By: Azman Ujang

TOKYO, June 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi arrived tonight for a one-day trip to Japan which a Malaysian diplomat says has aroused a lot of interest here.

Abdullah, fresh from a five-day visit to China, is the keynote speaker

at an annual international conference organised by the Nikkei newspaper

group here tomorrow, which this time will discuss Asian regional integration.

Malaysian Ambassador to Japan Datuk Marzuki Mohd Noor said there had

been "a lot of expectations" from the Japanese public, corporate sector,

government officials and politicians about the visit.

He said Japan looked at the recent leadership change in Malaysia from

22 years of the prime ministership of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Abdullah

"very positively".

Speaking to Malaysian reporters at the embassy here ahead of Abdullah's

arrival, Marzuki said because this would be Abdullah's debut at the conference as prime minister, there was a lot of expectations from

among

the Japanese to listen to his views and perceptions on Asia's future.

The 10th Nikkei International Conference on the theme "The Future of

Asia" will also hear speeches from Dr Mahathir, Vietnamese Prime Minister

Phan Van Khai, former Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos, Singapore's

Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew and former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro

Nakasone.

The prime minister is also scheduled to meet his Japanese counterpart

Junichiro Koizumi shortly before leaving for home in the evening.

The ambassador said both leaders last met in December last year but

their meeting this time would enable Abdullah to review the state of bilateral relations and to explore new avenues to enhance ties.

"Malaysia-Japan relations are very matured.

"We have excellent relations at the political, business, government and

people-to-people levels," he said.

Trade between the two countries is also balanced at about US\$1 billion (RM3.8 billion) each monthly.

"That is huge and it has been very consistent. Foreign direct investment from Japan to Malaysia has also been very consistent," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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