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PM: Look East policy still on

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BUKIT MERTAJAM, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today said the Government would continue with the Look East policy in its pursuit to further develop the nation.

He said the policy, mooted by his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1982, had played an important role in the progress attained by Malaysia.

"It has helped equip Malaysians with greater knowledge and skills by exposing the local workforce to sophisticated technology and more efficient work processes," he said when opening the Japan-Malaysia Technical Institute at the Bukit Minyak Industrial Park here.

Present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn and Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia Masaki Konishi.

Citing an example, Abdullah said during the Meiji Restoration in 1880s, the Japanese Government sent its youths by the thousands each year to study in the United States.

"They learnt new technologies and later returned to Japan to help in the country's nation building.

"This is what we are trying to emulate from the Japanese experience. We have sent many of our students abroad and to Japan then, but now with JMTI, we are able to equip more of our youths with the necessary technical knowledge and skills," he said.

Grateful for the Japanese Government's contributions in helping realise JMTI, set up in 2000 to produce skilled industrial technologists in manufacturing, electronics and information technology, he said the institute would serve as a centre of excellence in technical education for the country and Southeast Asia.

"I hope other institutes in the country will learn from the JMTI experience so that they can also help meet the country's needs for more skilled workforce," he said.

Earlier, Konishi said the JMTI had helped foster closer relationship between Malaysia and Japan.

"Indeed, Japan and Malaysia are great and close partners."