

LOOKING EAST TO DEVELOP THE NATION



Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir...
"Malaysians should emulate the Japanese"

By CHRISTINA THOO

IT can be said that Malaysian history took a turning point for the better when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the new government Look East policy in December, 1981, just six months after taking office of the premiership.

He said that it was now time for Malaysia to seek a more suitable country than its colonial master, Britain, to emulate.

And the most suitable countries for Malaysia to model itself on are the fast developing countries in the East, particularly Japan and South Korea.

One prime factor which influenced Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir to decide that Japan was the most suitable country for Malaysia to emulate was its remarkable recovery following its defeat in World War II.

Another factor was its consistently strong economy even during the recession period, which



badly hit many western industrialised nations.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir cited three main ingredients for Japan's success in nation-building. They are:

- Good work ethics;
- Technology; and
- A management system which emphasises on group achievement

Unlike Malaysians, whose work ethics are based on western practices — less work for more pay — the Japanese, with their more-work-less-pay principle, are generally disciplined, hardworking and dedicated to their jobs.

The Japanese are also

often loyal to their employers and would put their companies' interests before their own.

EMULATE

Malaysians, the Prime Minister said, should emulate the qualities of the Japanese workers to help build the country into a strong and stable nation.

However, as in the implementation of any new policy in a country, the Look East policy drew its fair share of adverse reactions.

It is important to note that the policy does not

mean total "Japanisation" or a complete break with the West.

The policy was implemented to enable the development of a more balanced attitude towards both the East and West, and to eliminate total dependence on the West.

Adopting the policy does not mean that Malaysia is going to become a satellite of the Japanese but to enable Malaysians to learn from them the qualities necessary to develop the nation.

The policy should not stop businessmen from investing in the West. Neither should they give contracts solely to the East as the country's requirements need to be met from both the East and West.

Malaysia has taken various steps to implement the Look East policy, including sending youths to South Korea and Japan for training in technical, industrial and management courses.

In return, the Japanese Government, under the

patronage of the Japan International Corporation Agency, has sent more than 60 experts and volunteers here to help with our various technical and development projects.

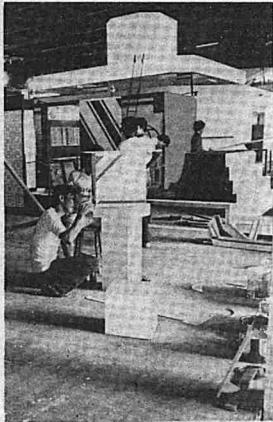
Seminars and forums have also been organised to explore the implications of the policy.

One such forum was "The Japanese Experience" on Japan's experience in industrialisation and development, which was held in Penang in May.

Government agencies and the private sector are also helping to implement the policy.

RTM has in store a series of documentaries on Japanese industrial techniques and Japanese firms here have started programmes geared towards the policy.

Certain government office and private firm workers even exercise before they start work every morning — the Japanese way for a healthy and longer working life.



Workers putting together the stalls for the exhibition