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Look East policy lauded as best

Researcher: It has been a pillar of relationship between Malaysia and Japan

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PUTRAJAYA: As he stood up to address Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, no one in the audience expected Takashi Kawabata to speak in Bahasa Malaysia.

But the 36-year-old researcher's fluency impressed both the former prime minister and other Malaysians at the 30 Years Celebration of the Look East Policy international seminar here.

Kawabata was among three delegates who posed a question to Dr Mahathir on the Look East policy, which was introduced in 1982.

"The policy has been a pillar of the relationship between the two countries," noted Kawabata, who is a steering committee member of the Japan Association for Malaysian Studies.

He said he took two years to master the national language at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Mayumi Suzuki, 27, a PhD student from Kyoto University, said Japan, although largely homogeneous, was becoming more multi-cultural.

Mayumi Ono, 33, said Japanese senior citizens loved to retire in Malaysia due to the low cost of living while Ayu Mitsunari from Tokyo



Great minds: Dr Mahathir having a chat with the presenters of the seminar yesterday. Looking on are Dr Pil-Eon (right) and Nakamura (second from right). - Bernama

University said Malaysia could help to forge a link between Japanese manufacturers and the Islamic market.

The four researchers were pre-

sented at the seminar under the banner of JENESYS (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) Programme.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir said the

Look East Policy should be continued as the nation would prosper by emulating the work ethic of the Japanese and Koreans.

The former prime minister, who



introduced the policy during his premiership, said Japan and South Korea recovered from the war and emerged as formidable economies due to their value systems and work ethics.

Similarly, he said, Malaysia would be able to achieve Vision 2020 and become a developed, high-income nation if its people learned from these eastern countries instead of the West, which had "lost its way".

"Much of the West's achievements came through colonisation and their empires. When they lost their empires, they had problems keeping the momentum of their development and growth going," he said.

Dr Mahathir suggested that Japanese and South Korean universities be established in Malaysia.

Also present at the event organised by Universiti Malaya were Japanese ambassador to Malaysia Shigeru Nakamura and South Korea's Public Administration and Security vice-minister Dr Seo Pil-Eon.