

Dr M receives honorary doctorate from Japanese varsity

FUKUOKA: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been conferred an honorary doctorate by the International University of Japan (IUJ) in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the relationship between Malaysia and Japan.

He received the Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy from IUJ president Hiroyuki Itami in a ceremony held here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir is here on a two-day working visit to the prefecture.

At the ceremony, Itami emphasised that the Look East Policy, which was mooted by Dr Mahathir, had a major impact on higher education in Asean countries.

"It is recognised and appreciated that many young Malaysians who studied in Japan have contributed to today's development in Malaysia under this (Look East) policy," he said in an IUJ statement.

Itami said the Look East Policy had served as the bedrock of the strong relationship between Malaysia and Japan.

Under the policy, the Malaysian government had sent hundreds of students and corporate trainees to Japan.

"Upon returning to Malaysia after graduating from universities or finishing their programmes at companies in Japan, these students have played an active and leading role in developing Malaysia and served as a bridge between Japan and Malaysia," he said.

The IUJ, he said, had taught more



Recognised: Dr Mahathir receiving his doctorate from Itami during his visit to Fukuoka, Japan. — Bernama

than 20 such Malaysian students since the 1990s.

Itami said the IUJ had launched a programme called Japan-Global Development Program last year, offering learning opportunities to future top leaders from Japan, Asia including Malaysia, Africa and Latin America about the Japanese experience in economic and societal development.

He also expressed his hope that an even stronger bilateral relationship between Japan and Malaysia would grow under the Look East Policy in the new era.

"We believe that the International University of Japan will play an important role in Tun Mahathir's Look East Policy, and in strengthening the relationship between Japan and Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir, in his acceptance speech, said he was merely carrying out the duties of a leader.

"Any leader, given the opportunity and power, would do what I have done. Malaysia was a poor agricultural country but because of the need to create jobs, we had to create infrastructure to facilitate that (demand).

"I am grateful for being recog-

nised for doing something that is regarded as unusual (turning an agricultural country into an industrial nation), and for playing the role of a leader," he said. - Bernama