

## **Spotlight set to shine on Dr Mahathir at 2018 Nikkei Conference**

**BERNAMA**

**09/06/2018**

**From Abdul Muin Majid**

TOKYO, June 9 (Bernama) --To say that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is fond of Japan is an understatement.

After all, he was the man who looked into Malaysia's own backyard for role models of success, hence incorporating the Look East Policy into the the country's development agenda way back in the 1980s when he first became prime minister.

And Dr Mahathir, who is scheduled to arrive in Tokyo tomorrow for a three-day working visit to Japan, is set to breathe new life into the policy which, according to Malaysian ambassador to Japan Datuk Ahmad Izlan Idris, had contributed immensely to Malaysia's progress.

Dr Mahathir's first visit overseas after becoming Malaysia's seventh prime minister last month is to attend the 24th International Conference on the Future of Asia, or Nikkei Conference, at the invitation of Nikkei Incorporated.

Envoy Ahmad Izlan said Dr Mahathir was a regular attendee at the prestigious event, skipping it only four times - the last one in 2014. He is scheduled to deliver a keynote address at the gathering of top political leaders as well as business executives and other notable guests.

Dr Mahathir's appearance at the conference this time around is generating a lot of interest as participants eagerly await what he has to say after being credited with dislodging his predecessor Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak of Barisan Nasional, the party which was in power in Malaysia for over six decades.

"It will be a platform for Dr Mahathir to air his views on developments in Malaysia as well as the region," the envoy said of the June 11-12 gathering with the theme of 'Keeping Asia Open - How to Achieve Prosperity and Stability'.

In a statement on the visit issued in Kuala Lumpur, the Foreign Ministry said the prime minister's attendance at the Nikkei Conference would provide an opportunity for Malaysia to engage in initiatives aimed at greater economic cooperation between countries in the region.

Also on Dr Mahathir's radar during the Tokyo visit are efforts to bring in more Japanese investments to Malaysia.

To this end, the 92-year-old prime minister is scheduled to engage with Japan's captains of industry from business entities such as the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Japan External Trade Organisation and Japan-Malaysia Economic Association.

Dr Mahathir's talks with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe and their joint press conference is another highlight of the visit.

In previous comments, the Malaysian leader had said that he was keen on strengthening Kuala Lumpur-Tokyo ties and would touch on the Look East Policy.

Ambassador Ahmad Izlan said: "It's a fact that it is one of the most successful foreign policies in developing Malaysia-Japan relations. It has shaped our ties in various sectors such as education, trade and investment as well as people-to-people exchanges."

He said Japan was appreciative of Malaysia's acknowledging its role in the latter's nation-building process.

The Foreign Ministry statement said that the working visit would enable Malaysia to highlight its current policies towards Japan and other countries in the region, especially

related to foreign investments and trade.

Dr Mahathir's itinerary also includes delivering a special lecture before elected representatives at Japan's House of Councillors.

"It's my understanding that not many heads of government are given such an honour," Ahmad Izlan said, adding that the Japanese were showing deference to Dr Mahathir by according him the privilege to do so.

Dr Mahathir will be accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Foreign Ministry officials.

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