

Dr M expresses appreciation for Japan's consideration of Yen credit

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PUTRAJAYA, July 12 (Bernama) --Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has expressed his appreciation for Japan's consideration of a Malaysian request for soft credit assistance which Japan is now looking into.

He conveyed the appreciation during his meeting yesterday with Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono who called on him at Perdana Putra here during a two-day working visit to Malaysia from yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, during his visit to Japan last month, had asked Japan to extend a yen credit to Malaysia in the form of a soft loan, and his counterpart Shinzo Abe said he would consider the request. Part of the loan may be used to retire old loans to offset the high borrowing costs.

Wisma Putra, in a statement released today in conjunction with Kono's courtesy call, said Dr Mahathir was pleased with the outcome of his meeting with Abe on June 12 in Tokyo where both prime ministers agreed to rejuvenate and further enhance Malaysia's 'Look East' Policy which was launched in 1982 when Dr Mahathir was also the prime minister.

"For more than three decades, Malaysia and Japan have benefited from this policy and it is believed that it would continue to benefit both countries, especially through education and human resource development," Wisma Putra said.

Wisma Putra also said that Dr Mahathir, at the meeting with Kono, reiterated his offer for Japan to open a branch of a Japanese university in Malaysia to give more opportunities for Malaysian students to have access to the Japanese education system.

According to the Wisma Putra statement, the students, at the same time, could also learn the Japanese language and, more importantly, the Japanese values and cultures which have proven to be the foundation of Japan's remarkable success.

Wisma Putra said that according to Dr Mahathir, the university would be more accessible and would be able to attract international students not only from the nearby regions but as far away as Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East.

The Foreign Ministry said Kono responded that he would work internally with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technologies on the offer.

Wisma Putra said Dr Mahathir and Kono were pleased with the current state of bilateral relations and looked forward to continuing to strengthen the ties and fostering greater cooperation in many areas.

Malaysia and Japan have agreed to elevate the relationship from an enhanced partnership to a strategic partnership in 2015.

Wisma Putra said Dr Mahathir also welcomed Japan's readiness to send its experts to Malaysia to look at methods to optimise the utilisation of the railway lines, especially the double track system.

"As Malaysians have gradually embraced the usage of public transport, the optimisation of the railway lines would further ease traffic congestion in the city centre," Wisma Putra said.

Wisma Putra said Dr Mahathir and Kono also discussed matters related to regional developments, including issues pertaining to the situation in the Korean Peninsula.

"The Prime Minister and Kono concurred that the international community should support

efforts towards the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and, at the same time, remain committed to the implementation of sanctions under the United Nations Security Council resolutions," it said.

On developments in the South China Sea, Dr Mahathir and Kono agreed that ASEAN should play a leading and active role in managing the situation and conflicts in the South China Sea.

"Japan has expressed its interest to cooperate with ASEAN on this matter," said Wisma Putra.

Wisma Putra said Japan had also informed that its chief negotiator for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) would be coming to Malaysia to explain the agreement to the Malaysian government.

Dr Mahathir also expressed his deepest condolences to Kono over the recent flash floods and landslides triggered by heavy rains in western Japan.

The floods and landslides occurred in Hiroshima, Osaka, Shiga, Hyogo, Okayama, Kyoto and Fukuoka, and caused the deaths of more than 100 people while many are still missing.

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