

Malaysia National Day Special

Working together to uphold regional peace and stability

SHAHRIL EFFENDI ABD GHANY
AMBASSADOR OF MALAYSIA



Aug. 31 marks the 68th anniversary of Malaysia's National Day, a moment for Malaysians worldwide to celebrate their nation with pride and gratitude, regardless of background.

This year also commemorates the 68th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Japan. Under the theme "Malaysia Madani Rakyat Disantuni" ("People Cared For"), the occasion underscores the government's commitment to the welfare of its people, in line with the Madani aspiration that champions unity, prosperity and inclusivity.

Over the decades, Malaysia and Japan have enjoyed a strong and multifaceted partnership. Our cooperation spans many sectors, including economic relations, science and technology, tourism, education and people-to-people exchanges. The 1982 Look East Policy was the basis for this partnership. In 2023, our relationship was elevated to a comprehensive and strategic partnership, unlocking fresh opportunities for closer and broader collaboration.

This year, the commitment to strengthening bilateral ties was further demonstrated by Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's official visit to Malaysia. Marking his first official overseas trip since taking office in October 2024, the occasion highlighted Japan's determination to deepen engagement with Malaysia and reaffirmed its standing as one of Malaysia's most valued partners.

In 2024, bilateral trade reached \$34 billion, dominated by liquefied natural gas and the electrical and electronics sector. Agricultural trade surged by 45.4%, rising from \$488 million in 2023 to \$700 million in 2024, fueled largely by demand for palm oil and palm oil-based products. Similarly, Malaysia's halal

exports reached \$825 million, up 32.9% from \$621 million the previous year.

Japan remains one of Malaysia's top 10 investors, contributing \$1.02 billion in sectors such as electrical and electronics, machinery and equipment, chemicals, and services. Japan also ranked as the third-largest foreign investor in terms of implemented manufacturing projects. As of 2024, a total of 2,838 manufacturing projects with Japanese participation have been implemented with a total investment worth \$30.54 billion. These projects have generated employment for 344,996 people.

Looking forward, opportunities for Japanese businesses are poised to grow under the 13th Malaysia Plan (2026 to 2030), recently tabled by Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim. This \$144 billion socioeconomic road map aspires for Malaysia to become a high-income nation by 2030 and to lead Southeast Asia in artificial intelligence, digital technology and renewable energy. Malaysia stands ready to serve as a strategic springboard for Japanese companies seeking to expand their footprint in Southeast Asia.

Malaysia has also made a strong impression at the Osaka Expo. The Malaysia Pavilion has secured potential trade and investment worth \$3.24 billion, surpassing its initial target of \$3 billion. The pavilion has also drawn more than 2.5 million visitors, well above the projected 1.5 million. These milestones underscore the strong global interest in Malaysia's strengths, opportunities and achievements. With the expo continuing until October, Malaysia is poised to project its vision, growth and global competitiveness.

As a leading regional hub for education, Malaysia continues to be a popular study-abroad destination for Japanese students, attracting those pursuing university degrees, as well as participants on educational trips. The establishment of the University of Tsukuba, Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur is expected to further increase these numbers, offering Japanese students

enhanced access to high-quality academic programs in a multicultural setting, supported by English-language instruction.

Tourist arrivals from Japan surged to 367,182 in 2024, a 52.2% increase over the previous year. As Malaysia prepares to launch the Visit Malaysia Year 2026 campaign under the tagline "Surreal Experiences," the country hopes to welcome 47 million international visitors and generate \$78 billion in tourism receipts.

On the regional stage, Malaysia's leadership as chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations this year underscores its pivotal role in fostering regional stability and cooperation. Guided by the theme "Inclusivity and Sustainability," Malaysia strives to ensure no one is left behind while charting ASEAN's shared future through the ASEAN Community Vision 2045.

This same spirit of collaboration is reflected in over 50 years of ASEAN-Japan relations. In an era of global uncertainty, partnerships with trusted and like-minded nations are more vital than ever. Malaysia stands ready to work alongside Japan to uphold regional stability, security and prosperity, and looks forward to welcoming world leaders to the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in October.

Looking ahead, Malaysia presents a wealth of opportunities as a preferred trade and investment partner for Japanese businesses, while further strengthening ties. I also invite everyone to visit Malaysia during the VMY 2026 to experience the country's rich cultural heritage, breathtaking landscapes and world-class attractions.

On this auspicious occasion, I wish all Malaysians and friends of Malaysia in Japan Selamat Hari Kebangsaan ke-68 (Happy 68th National Day). May this celebration strengthen our unity, deepen our partnerships and inspire continued progress for our nation.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.



Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim welcomes Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya on Jan. 10. MALAYSIA PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE



Sibuan Island is ready to welcome tourists for the Visit Malaysia Year 2026 campaign. TOURISM MALAYSIA



Anwar and ASEAN leaders attend the 46th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur on May 26. MALAYSIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Trade, investment continue to grow

TSUYOSHI NAGANO
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-MALAYSIA
ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION



On behalf of the Japan-Malaysia Economic Association, I would like to express our sincerest congratulations to the government and people of Malaysia on the 68th anniversary of their independence.

This year, Malaysia is carrying out a significant responsibility as the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We trust Malaysia to show strong leadership, as the international influence of ASEAN members has grown in recent years.

Let me take this opportunity to briefly introduce JAMECA. It was established in 1977 under the endorsement of both countries' prime ministers for the purpose of enhancing mutual understanding and goodwill between our economic circles and promoting trade, investment, economic cooperation, tourism and culture. Since its establishment, we have been holding annual conferences with our counterpart, the Malaysia-Japan Economic Association, and exchanging opinions on various topics on Malaysia-Japan relations. The Joint Conference between JAMECA and MAJECA has been held alternately in Japan and Malaysia almost every year since 1977.

This year, we are going to hold our 42nd Joint Conference on Sept. 2 in Tokyo. The main theme of the event is "Strengthening Malaysia-Japan Economic Relations amid

Global and Regional Conflicts and Trade-Tariff Disputes."

Within this theme, we will focus on two important topics for plenary sessions: artificial intelligence and agricultural innovation.

For each topic, we will hold a panel discussion and invite panelists from both the private and public sectors of related fields from both countries. I am sure that these panel discussions and other programs will provide a very fruitful opportunity for all participants and contribute to better mutual understanding and stronger economic bonds in Malaysia-Japan relations.

Once again, I would like to extend my congratulations to Malaysia on the 68th anniversary of its independence, along with my sincerest wishes for Malaysia's further development and prosperity in the future.

Congratulations on the Anniversary of the Independence of Malaysia



President: Tsuyoshi Nagano
Vice President: Masayuki Hyodo

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Congratulations on the Anniversary of the Independence of Malaysia

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