

Malaysia independence day

'1 Malaysia' provides building blocks for unity, prosperity

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On the occasion of the 52nd anniversary of the independence of Malaysia, I have the great honor to convey my heartfelt greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the government and people of Japan. I would also like to extend my warm greetings to all Malaysians, friends of Malaysia and readers of The Japan Times.



In April, Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak was sworn in as the sixth prime minister of Malaysia. During his inaugural speech, the prime minister stated that his life had been dedicated to public service. Inspired by the positive im-

pact of public service in the example of his late father, Tun Razak, the second prime minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak expressed his commitment to the goals of tackling poverty, restructuring society, expanding access to quality education and inspiring a new generation of young Malaysians to work on behalf of Malaysia. He urged all Malaysians to rise to the challenge of building and living up to the concept of "One Malaysia, People First, Performance Now."

The initiative "1 Malaysia" put forth by the prime minister serves as the guide and goal for his premiership, to take this young nation of 27 million to new and greater heights; to forge a new level of nationhood out of the various races that comprise Malaysia. This goal will not be achieved without greater understanding of what it means to be a nation united and the sacrifices

necessary to achieve it.

Despite the last 50 years of rapid development, relative peace and prosperity, Malaysia admittedly has a long way to go before it can call itself a nation united. There are those who say that the peace that exists is fragile; that all it takes is one major incident to reignite the racial riots of 1969. However, it is not fear of such a tragedy that drives the quest for "1 Malaysia." Rather, it is the knowledge that to achieve this goal of being a nation united and on a par with the global community, Malaysia must rely on its people — all of them — and make full use of its human capital to achieve its potential. Only when this occurs can an achievement like Vision 2020 become a reality.

The assumption of office by Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak came as the world was facing a difficult time. Developed and developing countries alike are in a state of financial and economic disarray due to the global economic and financial crisis. The immediate priority of Dato' Sri Najib's administration therefore was to provide a decisive response to blunt the impact of the global economic downturn. To this effect, Malaysia has put together two stimulus packages amounting to 67 billion ringgits, or roughly 9 percent of GDP, to be spent over two years beginning 2009. These financial packages comprised comprehensive measures aimed at easing the hardships of affected individuals and businesses, stimulating aggregate demand in the short term and building the long-term capacity of the economy.

As of June this year, projects worth RM9 billion have been awarded under the stimulus packages, of which RM3.0 billion have been paid. Given the stepped up progressive payments to be made as these projects are rolled out, the government remains confident that this spending injection into the domestic economy and the related multiplier effects will help cushion the impact of the sharp external

downturn, and set the stage for economic recovery in the second half of the year.

As for ties with Japan, Malaysia continues to enjoy excellent relations with this country, which has been a strong supporter and partner in Malaysia's economic development. The relationship at the highest levels continues to be excellent as evident from the regular exchange of visits at ministerial and senior official levels. This active exchange has forged a close working relationship between the two governments.

The same can be said of the private sectors. Despite the global economic downturn, Japan continues to maintain its position among Malaysia's main trading partners, a key source of foreign direct investment as well as an important source of tourist arrivals. Trade between Malaysia and Japan, which consists of semi-finished and finished products, chemicals and commodities, has demonstrated a high level of resilience, maturity and interdependence forged over these many years of mutually beneficial ties.

Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Japan for the past five years has recorded continued growth. Exports especially have been trending upward since the implementation of the Malaysia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (MJEPA) in 2006. For 2008 alone, overall trade with Japan amounted to RM136.9 billion, a 13.4 percent increase over 2007. This comprised exports to Japan valued at RM71.8 billion and imports from Japan worth RM65.1 billion — the first trade surplus with Japan in the last two decades.

As regards investment, Japan was the third-largest source of foreign investments in 2008, with investments of RM5.6 billion in 63 projects. Of the investments approved, RM3.9 billion, or 69.6 percent, were for 22 new projects while RM1.7 billion, or 30.4 percent, were for expansion/diversification projects. Tourist arrivals from Japan continue their

upward trend with 433,462 arrivals, a record high, compared to 2007 arrivals of 367,567, recording an increase of 17.9 percent.

As we celebrate 52 years of independence, Malaysians everywhere should feel proud that their country has achieved tremendous economic and social progress in an environment of peace, prosperity, and interracial and interreligious harmony at a time when instances to the contrary all over the world are not difficult to notice.

Finally, I wish to extend my gratitude and appreciation to The Japan Times for giving me the opportunity to address its esteemed readers who have contributed to the promotion of the ties of friendship and cooperation between Malaysia and Japan. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the sponsors for their generous contributions.



Lifetime of service: Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak is sworn in as the sixth prime minister of Malaysia in April. MALAYSIAN NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY



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on the 52nd Anniversary
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