

Malaysia independence day

Commitment to national unity, growth

Datuk Shahrudin Md. Som
AMBASSADOR OF MALAYSIA

Aug. 31 marks the 56th anniversary of the independence of Malaysia. On this auspicious occasion, 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 the friendly people of Japan. I would also like to extend my warm greetings to all Malaysians, friends of Malaysia and readers of The Japan Times.



Prime Minister Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak of Malaysia

ence from Britain in 1957, Malaysia has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last 56 years. Following self-rule, we were highly dependent

on a limited range of primary commodities and much of the populace lived below the poverty line. Today, after decades of robust growth and sound government planning, Malaysia has a diversified upper-middle income economy, along with a stable multi-party democracy that allows the nation's diverse ethnic groups, such as Malay, Chinese and Indian, to be encompassed within the political system.

As a sign of this political maturity, both the government and opposition are based on coalitions that seek to weld Malaysia's diverse ethnic and religious constituents into united forces. Consensus and cooperation, along with pro-business and pro-foreign-investment stances

are widely shared values across the political spectrum. Indeed, this focus on diversity and coalition buildings are among the main factors that give Malaysia some of its unique strengths. On May 5, Malaysia successfully held its 13th General Election, where the ruling party, Barisan Nasional, under the leadership of Prime Minister Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak was returned to power. The election was held in a peaceful, orderly, free and fair manner that is true to the spirit of the democratic system of government practiced by Malaysia since its independence.

The continued success of the ruling coalition of Barisan Nasional led by Prime Minister Najib in the recent 13th General Election could be very much attributed to the tremendous economic and social progress achieved by the Government during the last parliamentary

term of 2009-2013. Despite the challenging global environment, in particular in the last two years, the Malaysian economy has remained surprisingly resilient. In 2012, the economy has enhanced to 5.6 percent after registering 5.1 percent in 2011. The traditionally low unemployment rate also declined further from 3.4 percent in 2011 to 2.8 percent in 2012 while the average monthly income rose from \$1,341 in 2009 when Prime Minister Najib assumed the leadership to \$1,666 in 2012. In addition, Malaysia also continues to enjoy the lowest inflation rate in Southeast Asia last year, which was registered at 1.2 percent for the year 2012. The strong domestic economic environment has also boosted the encouraging performance of the capital market in Malaysia, whereby the Bursa Malaysia Kuala Lumpur Composite Index (KLCCI) reached a record high of 1,688

points on Dec. 31, 2012. These positive economic results have in fact been evident since Malaysia embarked on a transformation journey two years ago under the administration of Prime Minister Najib.

Following its 13 successive returns to lead Malaysia, the ruling Barisan Nasional under the leadership of Prime Minister Najib reaffirmed the commitment of the ruling coalition to ensure the nation's economic growth continues to flourish in the years to come. Prime Minister Najib also reiterated the importance for the government to maintain continued stability, peace and harmony and in this regard stated that his administration would next undertake the process of national reconciliation that would in specific reject extremism in favor of moderate and accommodative politics, so as to



Continued closeness: The King and Queen of Malaysia the Yang di-Pertuan Agong XIV (left) and the Raja Permaisuri Agong XIV (center) are welcomed by Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the Imperial Palace on Oct. 3 during the state visit of Their Majesties to Japan. EMBASSY OF MALAYSIA

Anticipating expanded business opportunities

Mikio Sasaki
PRESIDENT, THE JAPAN-MALAYSIA
ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION

On behalf of the members of the Japan-Malaysia Economic Association (JAMECA), I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations on the 56th anniversary of the independence of Malaysia.

The world economy is enjoying a recovery, albeit a very gradual recovery, in the developed countries and elsewhere, despite some destabilizing factors. In this context, Malaysia has seen its economy driven by growth in the construction industry — particularly large-scale public transport and energy-related infrastructure

projects — as well as by booming domestic demand, achieving robust growth of 5.6 percent last year and over 4 percent in the first and the second quarters of this year.

Malaysia is pursuing its Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) for sustainable economic development with the aim of joining the ranks of the developed countries by 2020. With the ruling coalition's victory in the recent general elections, we are expecting that further efforts will be made to implement the ETP and maintain stable economic growth, and that this will create even more business opportunities for Japanese companies.

The economic ties between Malaysia and Japan are becoming closer all the time through expanded trade and investment,

and the Japan-Malaysia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) that went into force in 2006 has also been effective in promoting investment and trade. Japan was the largest investor in Malaysia last year and the year before and Japan is Malaysia's third-largest trading partner in both imports and exports.

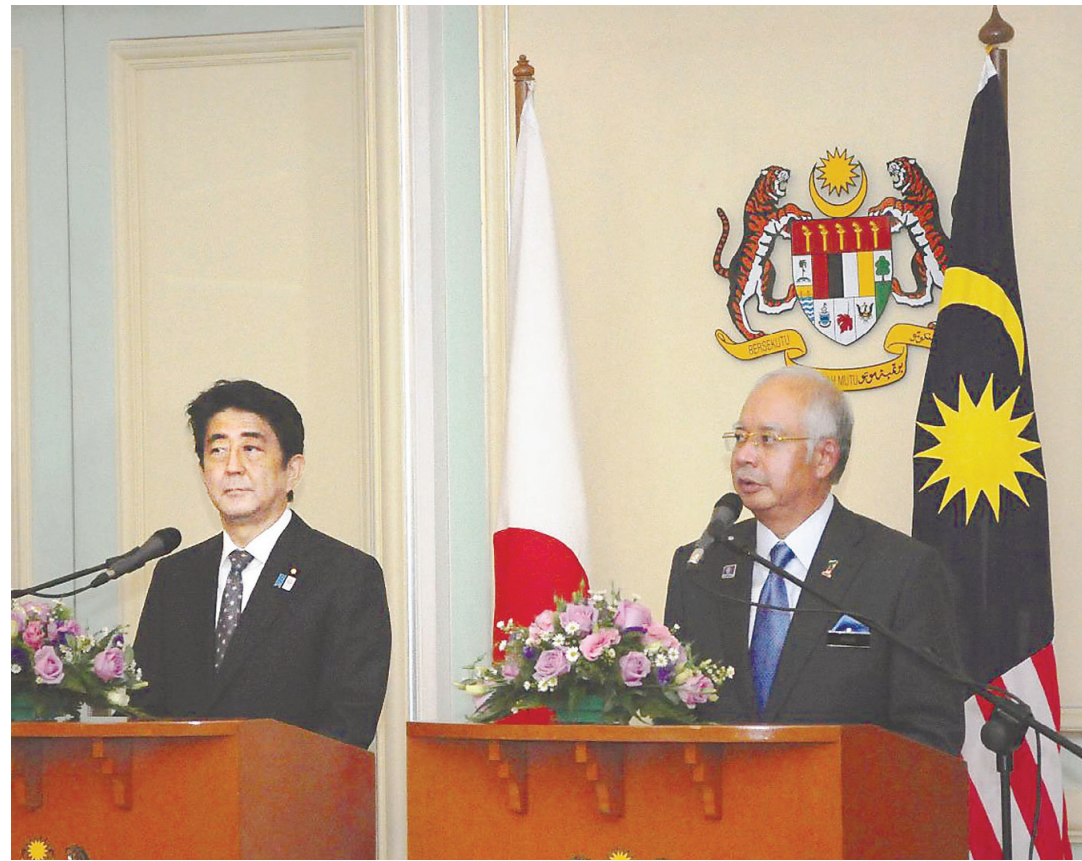
In addition, there are many government officials and businesspersons in Malaysia, particularly those who studied in Japan as part of the Look East Policy that celebrated its 30th anniversary last year, who are friendly toward Japan and who can speak Japanese fluently; indeed, day-to-day communication with Japanese companies operating in Malaysia as well as Japanese residing there has a reputation for being smooth. We have high expectations that business be-

tween small and medium-size enterprises, which is expected to steadily rise in the future, will develop on the basis of good two-way communication.

In the 35 years since JAMECA was established in November 1977, JAMECA has sought to expand trade and investment between our two countries, improve infrastructure, develop human resources, and promote tourism by holding joint conferences with our counterpart, the Malaysia-Japan Economic Association (the next, the 32nd joint conference, is scheduled to be held in Japan this year) and round-table discussions between JAMECA members and Prime Minister Najib Razak and other high-ranking government officials from Malaysia during their visits to Japan, as well as by conducting investment seminars

attended by numerous Japanese companies with an interest in investing in Malaysia. On the second of last month, we held a Malaysia investment seminar attended by Minister of International Trade and Industry Mustapa Mohamed, and, with an all-time high of about 1,000 participants, the event proved a great success. It reaffirmed for us the significant interest that Japanese companies have in Malaysia. Given this positive trend, we are hoping that business opportunities among companies from our two countries, and above all among small and medium-size enterprises, will expand still further.

In closing, let me once more congratulate you on the 56th anniversary of the independence of Malaysia and wish your country continuing prosperity.



Forging ties: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe attends a press conference with Malaysia's Prime Minister Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak on July 25 in Kuala Lumpur. EMBASSY OF MALAYSIA

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on the 56th Anniversary
of
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Malaysia independence day



Tourism: Sri Pinang Kampung Stay offers a traditional home-stay experience in Malacca. TOURISM MALAYSIA

Close relationship with Japan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

effectively address polarization in society.

Aside from the firm devotion to uplift the nation's economy, the new administration of Prime Minister Najib is also committed to continue nurturing the close relations that Putrajaya has already relished with our neighbors in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as other friends all across the globe, including Japan. The strong ties between Malaysia and Japan have indeed been in an excellent state and continue to broaden in all areas of mutual benefit over the past 56 years. The closeness between Putrajaya and Tokyo, despite being geographically apart by 5,317 km, is in evidence, including from the relationship at the leaders' level. This continues to be excellent as manifested from the regular exchanges of visits at the ministerial and senior officials' level, such as the recent State Visit of Their Majesties the Yang di-Pertuan Agong XIV and the Raja Permaisuri Agong XIV (the King and Queen of Malaysia) to Japan on Oct. 1-5, 2012, as well as the official visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Malaysia on July 25, 2013. This active exchange of visits has certainly forged a closer working relationship between the two governments.

Our multifaceted relationship is also manifested vibrantly in trade and investment, education and human resource development, capacity building, science and technology, cultural exchanges as well as tourism. Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Japan has been on a continued growth path, with the exception in 2009 due to the global economic and financial situation. Exports especially have been trending upward since the implementation of the Malaysia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (MJEPA) in 2006. For 2012, overall trade with Japan amounted to \$50.53 billion, which is a 2.57 percent increase over that of the previous year. This comprised exports to Japan valued at \$32.83 billion and imports from Japan worth \$17.7 billion, making Japan the third largest trading partner of Malaysia for the year 2012. Japan also continues for the second consecutive year to be the largest source of foreign

direct investments in Malaysia in 2012, with approved investments of \$912.7 million in 62 projects. Similarly, tourist arrivals from Japan in 2012 also recorded an upward trend with 470,008 arrivals, an increase of 21.5 percent from the previous years.

It is the expectation of Malaysia that over the years ahead, the already strong ties between Putrajaya and Tokyo will be further strengthened. Earlier this year, our two nations embarked on a yet another important journey to further strengthen our ties as we advanced into a new era of Malaysia's Look East Policy (LEP) following the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the LEP in 2012. The policy, first introduced by the then Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad on Feb. 8, 1982, with the main aim to call on Malaysians to look toward Japan and other eastern nations for inspiration, method and skills in our attempt to further develop Malaysia, has certainly contributed immensely to Malaysia's development and technological advancement. Malaysia shares the belief that as both nations move into a new era of the LEP, it is indeed timely for us to revisit the policy by introducing new and innovative areas where Japan can share its expertise as well as where both nations could collaborate in elevating our existing relationships toward new heights.

Today, as Malaysia celebrates its 56 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 inter-racial and inter-religious harmony. Malaysians can further be proud today of demonstrating that with political stability and economic development, as well as the right leadership, the nation has prevailed in the face of many challenges, overcame many barriers and achieved success.

In conclusion, 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 thanks to the sponsors for their generous contributions.

***Congratulations
on the 56th Anniversary
of the Independence
of Malaysia***

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