

## Malaysia national day

## Toward a strategic partnership

Dato' Ahmad Izlan Idris  
AMBASSADOR OF MALAYSIA

On the occasion of the National Day of Malaysia, which falls on Aug. 31, I have the great honor to convey my heartfelt greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and the friendly people of Japan.



During his official visit to Japan in May, Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that Malaysia and Japan have agreed to elevate their bilateral relationship to a "strategic partnership." The announcement is a manifestation of the commitment and determination by both leaders to further enhance the strong bilateral relationship, as well as to recognize the deepening of relations that we have been enjoying over the last 58 years.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1957, Malaysia-Japan relations have expanded steadily and substantively. Our cooperation has matured over the years and we have widened our cooperation to include areas such as maritime security, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

#### Economy

Economic cooperation has remained as one of the strongest pillars in our bilateral relations. Japan has contributed significantly to the economic and infrastructure development of Malaysia. As one of the first countries to invest heavily in Malaysia, Japan has introduced technology and expertise that have helped spur the econom-

ic development of Malaysia. Japan has consistently ranked among Malaysia's biggest trading and investment partners. Last year, Japan was Malaysia's third-largest trading partner with trade volume of \$42 billion. Japan was also one of Malaysia's largest investors with investment worth more than \$3.2 billion in 2014.

In the first half of this year, our total trade is \$15.5 billion while investment from Japan in Malaysia in the first quarter of 2015 stood at \$400 million invested in 18 projects.

We will continue to encourage the Japanese private sector to further expand and deepen their engagement in Malaysia to take advantage of our national agenda under the Malaysian Transformation Programme. For 2015, Malaysia's economy is also expected to remain strong and resilient due to our strong fundamentals.

Malaysia remains an attractive investment destination and this trend is expected to continue in the coming years. Our strategic location, supported by the government's ongoing commitment in pursuing pro-business and pragmatic policies, has continued to be the catalyst in making Malaysia an attractive destination for global businesses to set up their regional business hubs in the country.

#### Look East Policy

In 1982, Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad initiated the Look East Policy (LEP). Under the policy, Malaysians have been sent to study in countries such as Japan to learn the work ethics, practices and policies that have helped them advance in various industrial and economic sectors.

Thirty-three years later, and after more than 15,000 Malaysian citizens have benefited from the policy, our two gov-

ernments have decided to embark on a new phase of the Look East Policy, better known as LEP 2.0. Under LEP 2.0, we will continue our cooperation in training and education, but with stronger economic focus and in line with Malaysia's transformation agenda.

A guiding document for LEP 2.0 was adopted by our leaders last May and a bilateral coordinating committee will be formed to facilitate the discussion, implementation, review and promotion of LEP 2.0 programs and projects. We envision that LEP 2.0 will help to promote closer bilateral ties that will eventually act as a catalyst for the growth of both countries.

#### People-to-people ties

Malaysia and Japan maintain strong people-to-people and cultural ties. Both countries continuously promote cultural and people-to-people exchange through tourism, education exchange and dispatch of students. Some of the ongoing and future programs for our youth includes the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths 2015, Japanese language education assistance and the Sport for Tomorrow program. On education, Malaysia and Japan cooperate in various programs such as the Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology. This year we signed a memorandum of cooperation on education which is an extension to the existing cooperation in higher education. Many Malaysian students have also benefited from the provision of scholarships by the Japanese government.

#### ASEAN and Japan

This year will be significant for Malaysia and ASEAN as the ASEAN Community will be realized under our chair-



Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak (left) meets with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo on May 25. CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

manship. As chair of ASEAN this year, Malaysia will play a key role in forging ASEAN's future. We will do our part to build a stronger, more prosperous and more open Southeast Asia.

In the coming months, Malaysia will continue to work closely with other member states to ensure that ASEAN delivers on key initiatives that have been identified and to come up with ASEAN's post-2015 vision. We value the support and cooperation from our dialogue partners, including Japan, as we work at building the ASEAN Community.

After 40 years of relations, Japan has consistently proven to be one of ASEAN's most active dialogue partners. Among others we have established cooperation mechanisms relating to transnational crime, energy, small and medium-sized enterprise development, connectivity, information and communications technology, the environment and disaster management. We hope our relations will continue to flourish and strengthen.

On this special occasion, I wish to reiterate that Malaysia will continue to work closely

with the Japanese government, parliamentarians, industry players, academia and other institutions to further advance our friendship and cooperation for the mutual benefit of our countries.



The Petronas Twin Towers and other skyscrapers in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia and one of the most vibrant cities in Southeast Asia. TOURISM MALAYSIA

## Expecting further and stronger economic cooperation

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 58th anniversary of the Independence of Malaysia.

In recent years, Malaysia has achieved vibrant economic development through the joint efforts of the public and private sectors. According to Bank Negara Malaysia and the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the country recorded 6 percent growth in real gross domestic product last year, the highest in four years.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is accelerating moves to set up

the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The AEC's foundation will expand and develop the integrated supply chain network, in terms of both quality and quantity. I am aware that Malaysia, which serves as the ASEAN chair in this milestone year, will play a central role in realizing the AEC.

For 38 years since it was established in November of 1977, JAMECA has sought to expand trade and investment between our two countries, improve infrastructure, develop human resources and promote tourism. To this end, JAMECA has held joint conferences with our counterpart, the Malaysia-Japan Economic Association. Additionally, we have arranged meetings with high-ranking government officials from Malaysia, including Prime Minister Najib Razak, and investment seminars attended by numerous Japanese companies with an interest in investing in Malaysia.

We held a joint conference with the Malaysia-Japan Economic Association last November in Kuching in the state of Sarawak in Malaysia, making it our first joint conference in eastern Malaysia. Thanks to the cooperation of the state government of Sarawak, we were able to discuss the second stage of the "Look East Policy" in considerable depth. Also, JAMECA held a round-table meeting on the occasion of Prime Minister Najib's visit to Japan in May, where the prime minister spoke about the government's focus in the future.

I am confident that JAMECA's activities will help to strengthen economic cooperation and diplomatic relations between Japan and Malaysia.

In closing, let me extend my best wishes to Malaysia on her 58th anniversary, and my sincere hopes that Malaysia will grow and prosper for many years to come.



The one-meter-wide Rafflesia, the world's largest flower, is found in nature-rich Malaysia. TOURISM MALAYSIA

## Congratulations on the 58th Anniversary of the Independence of Malaysia



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