

# Lecture Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Look East Policy

President Datuk Daud,  
Rector Dzulkifli,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
and all of those who are watching on YouTube here in Malaysia and in Japan,

Salam Sejahtera, Good morning. I am Abe Shinzo. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the warm welcome I received from the people of Malaysia, including all involved at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), who made efforts to realize this lecture despite the challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yesterday, I received the honorary doctorate degree from His Majesty King Abdullah. It was a great honour for me, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude.

## 1 Introduction

[Bonds with Malaysia]

This may be out of blue, but let me start by asking three questions as we have some students joining us today.

Question 1.

In 1957, looking back to 65 years ago, the then Prime Minister of Japan made the first official visit to Malaysia immediately after its independence. Do you know the name of the Prime Minister?

The answer is Kishi Nobusuke, my grandfather. He was the first foreign leader that Malaysia hosted after the independence.

During the meeting with Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, the father of Malaysia's independence, the two leaders held a future-oriented discussion on trade and economic cooperation. Thus began the close economic relations between Japan and Malaysia that have been carried through to the present.

Next, Question 2.

Who was appointed as Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1982, the year when the Look East Policy began?

The answer is Abe Shintaro, my father. When Prime Minister Mahathir visited Japan back in 1983, Foreign Minister Abe witnessed the historic moment, in which the leaders of Japan and Malaysia confirmed that they would work together on the Look East Policy for the first time.

My father served as Minister for Foreign Affairs for approximately four years until 1986, and worked to build the foundation for a new Japan-Malaysia relationship at the dawn of the Look East Policy.

Lastly, Question 3.

Do you have any idea about Japan's Prime Minister who visited Malaysia in 2007, when the two countries celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Look East Policy and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan-Malaysia diplomatic relations?

If you are quick-witted, you might have guessed the answer even before I finished the question. That Prime Minister was me, Abe Shinzo.

"Everlasting Friendship and Far-reaching Partnership: Towards a Common Future." This is the title of the joint statement Prime Minister Abdullah and I announced together.

The elements enshrined in the statement, including our support for the Look East Policy, the establishment of the Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology (MJIT), cooperation for maritime

safety, and contribution to peace in Mindanao have all been put into action in a steady manner, building a common future in a steady manner.

This year is a milestone year for Japan and Malaysia, marking the 40th anniversary of the Look East Policy as well as the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations.

I feel a strong affinity with Malaysia over three generations of my family, from my grandfather, my father to me.

As such, I am delighted and honoured to have this opportunity to give a lecture today in this memorable year.

I sincerely hope that today's lecture will deepen your interest in the Look East Policy, as well as Japan and its values, and then, motivate you to "Look East, Look Japan." It would be more than I can dream of.

## **2 History to the present day (Roles of the Look East Policy)**

[Objectives of the Look East Policy]

Let's begin with our main subject, the Look East Policy.

On December 15, 1981, Prime Minister Mahathir assembled Malaysia's ambassadors stationed around the world and said, "Let's look East. The model for Malaysia's economic development is Japan." It was in the following year, 1982, when the Look East Policy, including the "Look East" exchange student program, was launched.

The objective of the Look East Policy was not just for gaining skills and knowledge. The policy also aimed at learning Japanese values, such as our work ethic, enthusiasm for learning and working, and morals.

Since then, the policy has been fadeless through successive administrations in Malaysia for 40 years.

Now I would like to draw your attention to a distinguished person who grasped the importance of Japanese values and brought them back to the Malaysian society through the Look East Policy.

Mr. Abdul Razak, also affectionately known as “Razak-sensei” in Malaysia, meaning “Professor Razak”, was the father of Rector Dzulkifli of the International Islamic University Malaysia.

Razak-sensei, as a Southeast Asian special exchange student, came to Japan to study during the Second World War. As early as in the 1940s, he was a forerunner of the Look East Policy.

While he was studying at Hiroshima University, he miraculously survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. After returning to Malaysia, he greatly contributed to Japanese language education at home, utilizing his experiences in Japan.

Upon the inauguration of the Look East Policy, he was selected as one of the officials responsible for the policy, and established various programs including Japanese-language training programs. Razak-sensei was truly a central figure in realizing the Look East Policy.

Neither coming late to class nor failing to do one’s homework was tolerated. Malaysian students said that he was even stricter than Japanese. He instilled in them the values of punctuality, dedication, politeness, and integrity.

In praise of those achievements, the government of Japan awarded Razak-sensei the Order of the Sacred Treasure in 1983, and Hiroshima University conferred on him an honorary doctorate degree in 2013.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest respect to Razak-sensei, who loved Japan from the heart and fulfilled a role of a bridge between Japan and Malaysia.

## [Japan's Cooperation with the Look East Policy]

I believe that creating the future always starts with education in any era and in any countries around the globe.

On certain occasions, looking abroad is also important in education. This was the case during the time of the modernization of Japan. Approximately 150 years ago, the young Japanese spent several months travelling across the sea to the Western countries to learn what defines modern states. After returning home, they built new Japan.

To create the future of Malaysia, the Look East Policy turned its eyes toward Japan. As Japan underwent the same experience, we deeply understand its meaning and significance. Japan has been advancing cooperation in numerous ways to help Malaysia pursue its ambitions.

Let me introduce some of our efforts that might appeal to future candidate students who are interested in Japan.

In order to fully leverage the utility of studying in Japan, acquiring basic knowledge about Japan and the Japanese language before the departure from Malaysia is critical. To enhance the learning environment in Malaysia, the government of Japan has supported the establishment and operation of four education facilities, and dispatched a total of 801 faculty staff members and Japanese language instructors to Malaysia.

Once Malaysian students arrive in Japan, we also support them at the grassroots level.

One example is the work of Ms. Shimozono Seiko of Hioki City in Kagoshima prefecture. Ever since the first group of the Look East exchange programs arrived in Japan, Ms. Shimozono has been taking care of Malaysian students as if she were their mother. She looked after hundreds of students up to now. Her activities led Hioki City to become a sister city of Subang Jaya City. Ms. Shimozono, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest respect to you.

To all those who are interested in studying in Japan, please remember that the people of Japan will warmly welcome you with deep affection.

On top of that, the Look East Policy is not limited to student exchange programs. JICA, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, has invited many Malaysians to Japan to undergo diverse training programs, in line with Malaysia's current needs, including in the fields of health and medical care, natural resources and energy, as well as urban and regional development.

[Results of the Look East Policy]

What has the Look East Policy brought about?

Approximately 26,000. This is the total number of the students that the Government of Malaysia dispatched to Japan with its own funding and the trainees that JICA invited under the Look East Policy. This figure comprises 8,800 exchange students and 17,500 trainees. Each individual has studied or received training in Japan, acquired advanced skills and knowledge, and become acquainted with Japanese values. They are currently playing important roles in various sectors.

These alumni have further nurtured mutual understanding between Japan and Malaysia dramatically, and work as a firm bridge between the two countries.

Indeed, the number of people who had studied or gone through training in Japan before taking on a leading role in the public and private sectors in Malaysia is too numerous to count.

In fact, I heard that the almost half of the 32 Secretary-Generals of Malaysia's ministries experienced studying or training in Japan. In Malaysia, the conference of the Secretary-Generals might be conducted in Japanese.

In industrial circles, Mr. Shamsairi Mohd Ibrahim, Vice President of Petronas is also one of such figures. Right after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, when LNG supplies ran short in Japan, Petronas quickly supplied the affected areas with LNG.

“A friend in need is a friend indeed.” Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those at Petronas, and to Vice President Shamsairi.

Over the last 40 years, Malaysia’s economy has grown dramatically ever since the inauguration of the Look East Policy.

The Petronas Twin Towers are a symbol of the development of Malaysia. However, during my stay this time, I saw many skyscrapers comparable to the Twin Towers, which made me firmly believe in the further development of Malaysia in the future.

In terms of business, individuals with skills of the Japanese language and Japanese values who studied or joined training in Japan are catalysing further investment by Japanese corporations.

Such investment leads to greater human resource development including job creation and skills transfer, creating a mutually beneficial virtuous cycle for both Malaysia and Japan.

The achievements of the Look East Policy spread beyond Malaysia. Have you ever heard of the Japanese word *kaizen*?

The Japanese term *kaizen*, which means “improvement” in English, is now part of the international vocabulary. Essentially, *kaizen* aims to improve productivity and reduce the number of faulty products by leveraging the ingenuity and creativity of those working on production lines. Such labour customs enabled Japan’s spectacular economic growth.

The Japanese government supports to spread the concept of *kaizen* to improve productivity in developing countries, such as those in Africa. Probably, few are aware of this, but third-country training for African countries is also taking place here in Malaysia.

This is truly because *kaizen* practices are firmly established in Malaysia through the Look East Policy and the advancement of Japanese enterprises into Malaysia.

The people-to-people exchanges and ties between Japan and Malaysia in a various level are the fruit, which the Look East Policy has been cultivating for well over 40 years.

### 3 Future Outlook - Future of the Look East Policy, Japan-Malaysia relations, regional and global cooperation

[Future of the Look East Policy]

Next, I would like to share with you my thoughts on the future of the Look East Policy, and the way forward for the Japan-Malaysia relations anchored by this policy.

First of all, I pledge that Japan, as a running mate, will continue to give full support to the Look East Policy.

COVID-19 is raging around the world. Despite the fact that new entry of foreign nationals to Japan was denied in principle, Japanese stakeholders in the public and private sectors, who highly value the Look East Policy, enthusiastically worked to achieve the acceptance of 375 exchange students over the past two years, through implementing thorough infection prevention measures.

I am sure that some students are listening to my lecture from far away in Japan. I hope you will learn a great deal of things, even outside your academic field, and bring them back for the future of Malaysia, as well as further closer ties between Japan and Malaysia. It is my sincere wish.



Thanks to the high growth of Malaysia as well as the deepening and expansion of the bilateral relations, the Look East Policy entered a new phase in 2012, taking the opportunity of its 30th anniversary. The government of Malaysia announced the “Look East Policy 2.0,” which focused on cooperation in the following three areas: (1) advanced technology in such fields as agrotechnology, the automobile industry, disaster risk reduction, and the environment; (2) creative industries and service industries including education; and (3) organization management skills such as business solution and leadership.

Upon the request of then Prime Minister Najib, Japan accelerated the acceptance of trainees in these fields.

It is natural to adapt the fields of focus to the changes in the times. The Look East Policy and Japan’s cooperation on the policy need to respond flexibly to such changes.

I would like to express my hope that cooperation under the Ismail Sabri administration will develop to a further extent.

Of course, there is no guarantee that everyone who wants to study in Japan will be able to grab such an opportunity.

To satisfy the needs of such individuals, the Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology (MJIT), which was established in 2011, offers the Japanese-style engineering education.

The University of Tsukuba, one of the most prominent national universities in Japan, is also planning to open a branch campus in Malaysia. This will be the first case for a Japanese university to open a branch campus overseas.

It will be in Malaysia where the first-ever Japanese university’s branch campus will be established. This is the very embodiment of cooperation

and trusted relationship between the two countries underpinned by the Look East Policy.

In collaboration with the Look East Policy, the MJIT and the branch campus of the University of Tsukuba will develop human resources who will lead the future of Malaysia. Furthermore, these universities, as a foundation for knowledge and exchanges based on mutual understanding in the same way as International Islamic University Malaysia, will create new values through attracting international students from all over the world.

In Malaysia, diverse cultures and ethnicities coexist peacefully. I ardently hope that the MJIT and the branch campus of the University of Tsukuba will be a place of learning that symbolizes such diversity.

#### [Future Outlook for Bilateral Relations]

From a global perspective, there are multitudes of issues worldwide including the global challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, actions threatening universal values such as the rule of law, freedom, democracy, and human rights, as well as increasingly severe security environment in the region.

As strategic partners sharing basic values and strategic interests, it is time for Japan and Malaysia to broaden the horizon of cooperation.

First and foremost, tackling the COVID-19 pandemic is urgent. In order to support the Malaysian government's response to COVID-19, Japan has provided vaccines; developed the cold-chain to deliver vaccines to vaccination sites; and offered medical equipment. Japan will spare no effort to offer support whenever necessary.

The spread of COVID-19 throughout Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, has revealed the vulnerability of the regional supply chains and greatly affected the production activities of Japanese companies. In

view of the post-COVID era, we would like to create a resilient economy together with Malaysia.

Going forward, social and economic digitalisation will also be of key importance. The most crucial point in digitalisation is developing communication infrastructure, and Japan is supporting Malaysia in this sphere, too.

For example, Japan's NTT is currently laying down high-speed submarine cables to Malaysia. The speed of Malaysia's broadband network at home is expected to become much faster soon. So-called "smart cities" leverage the accumulation and analysis of big data to promote higher efficiency of and advance the functions and services of cities and regions. Japan is assisting such projects in Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, and Kuching.

In the field of climate change, Japan will support, mainly in Asia, the transition to clean energy in accordance with each country's situation to realise a carbon-free society.

Japan's petroleum company ENEOS has started discussions with Petronas on the construction of carbon free hydrogen supply chains. IHI is coordinating with Petronas and Tenaga Nasional to assess the feasibility of introducing technology for mixed combustion with ammonia at coal-fired thermal power plants in Malaysia.

Some of the cooperation in the field of climate change are not new. The Japan-Malaysia Association, a Japanese public service group, has worked closely with the state government, local universities, and local residents mainly in Sarawak State to regenerate the tropical rainforest since 1995 by planting trees. These activities have resulted in the planting of a total of 750,000 trees. I heard that these initiatives have

gained tremendous levels of trust from local residents, who say, “You are the only ones who don’t cut down the trees after planting them.”

Building upon what I mentioned, I am confident that Japan and Malaysia can work together to tackle a range of issues according to the demands of the day. To that end, it is the trust between the peoples of the two countries that always counts.

In particular, I would like to encourage those of the young generation of the both countries, who will lead the future of the Japan-Malaysia relations, to be interested in the country and the people of the other. Such interest can start from anything like sports. As for badminton, hailed as national sport in Malaysia, I am aware that Japanese player Momota Kento is very popular in Malaysia.

Alternatively, you might be interested in Japanese comics, or manga, which gains excellent popularity worldwide. When Live Spectacle NARUTO, a theatrical production based on a popular manga came to Malaysia in 2016, tickets were immediately sold out and the theatre was a full house. Around July this year, an event will be held as part of the celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of the Look East Policy, at which visitors can listen to songs from Japanese animation, or anime. I hope that you all will come and enjoy it.

The Pagoh Campus of the International Islamic University Malaysia has a Japanese language study facility called the “Razak Room,” named after Razak-sensei. It opened in 2019 supported by the Japanese government.

With assistance from the Japan-Malaysia Association and its member companies, this facility houses many Japan-related books including manga. It also has the complete series of the internationally popular

anime series “Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba,” which was released last year in Malaysia. I recommend you drop in at the Razak Room next time you go to the Pagoh Campus.

[Free and Open International Order]

The 21st century has long been dubbed as the “Asian Century,” and nobody now doubts that Asia is driving the world economy.

Japan has built amicable relations with countries in the region. With ASEAN, Japan has closely worked together since its foundation and offered various forms of support for community-building efforts.

In recent years, however, the security situation in the region is becoming increasingly severe. Japan and Malaysia are both democratic nations, trading nations, and maritime nations. What made the development of both countries possible is nothing other than the free and open international economic system and maritime order based on the rule of law. I am convinced that reinforcing such an order will bring about regional peace and prosperity.

With this recognition, Japan has taken a lead in CPTPP and RCEP negotiations. Following the enactment of CPTPP in 2018, RCEP entered into force on January 1 this year. It is my understanding that RCEP will become effective in relation to Malaysia soon following its ratification in the middle of January. Furthermore, I am aware that Malaysia has been undertaking efforts toward the early conclusion of CPTPP. Let the two of us protect and further enhance a free and fair regional economic order.

To ensure free and fair trade and regional development, it is essential that oceans, which convey people, goods, capital and wisdom, remain free, open and governed by rules.

Japan is promoting concrete cooperation with various partners including Malaysia to realize both a “free and open Indo-Pacific” and “ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific” that share a number of fundamental principles in common.

For instance, I learned that two patrol vessels transferred from Japan to Malaysia in 2016 are now in full operation in order to secure the waters surrounding the country. Besides, since the inauguration of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency in 2005, Japan has provided capacity building programs for maritime security officers. Today, maritime security officers in Malaysia are taking up a leading role in conducting training programs in the third country. Japan is willing to continue to support these efforts.

In order to prevent geographical vacuum in such initiatives, we have been strengthening coordination with the East ASEAN Growth Area, or BIMP-EAGA, in which Malaysia is participating, and boosting our cooperation in the Sulu and Celebes Seas and their surrounding areas.

In this milestone year, and here in Malaysia, which is the confluence of the Indian and the Pacific ocean, a driving force of the world growth, let me express Japan’s determination to realize further cooperation as strategic partners in order to maintain and strengthen a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law.

The crisis we see in Ukraine today is a unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force, and poses a serious threat against the rule-based international order. Its ramification will go beyond Europe. Also in Asia, unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and economic coercion constitute serious threat for Japan and Malaysia. We should raise voices against this, in accord with like-minded countries including Malaysia.

#### 4 Conclusion

As the International Islamic University Malaysia kindly allowed me to be present here today, I would like to conclude my lecture by mentioning my relationship with Islam.

During my tenure as Prime Minister, I attached great importance to the relations with Islamic countries, and had opportunities to visit those countries and meet with their leaders. The creed I always conveyed to them was “The Best Way Is to Go in the Middle”. This is because the creed reflects the commonalities between the noble spirit of Islam, including harmony, tolerance and honesty, and the faiths maintained in Japan, such as respect for others, spirit of humility and cherishing harmony among people.

Come to think about it, those in Malaysia who accepted Japanese values through the Look East Policy may have already noticed the commonalities between Islam and Japan. Japan is committed to continuously deepen bonds and work with Malaysia, a country respecting cultural and ethnic diversity, to contribute to peace and prosperity in the world.

In this important milestone year for Japan and Malaysia, let us cordially celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Look East Policy and the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan-Malaysia relations.

Lastly, to all of you who will lead the future of Malaysia, please once again turn your eyes to the Look East Policy and the Japan-Malaysia relations with a great potential. Japan always stands by you who will build the future of Malaysia.

Thank you for your attention.

Ribuan Terima Kasih.