

Speech (Draft) by Ambassador Takahashi Katsuhiko  
At the webinar “The 40th Anniversary of the Look East Policy  
– A Conversation with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad”  
on 18 May (WED), 2022 (5 minutes)

His Excellency Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, former Prime Minister of Malaysia;

Mr. Herizal Hazri, Chief Executive of the ISIS Malaysia;

Mr. Kumagai Satoru, Director of Economic Geography Studies Group at IDE-JETRO;

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen;

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in this significant webinar that marks the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Look East Policy or LEP .

I am especially delighted to welcome the presence of His Excellency Tun Dr. Mahathir, the institutor of the policy, in joining us today.

Serving as the Ambassador of Japan to Malaysia in conjunction with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the LEP is a unique and meaningful opportunity for me. As I started my tenure here last November, I thought it would be one of my major missions to make the coming year a successful milestone in the history of the friendly relationship between Japan and Malaysia.

Since 1982, more than 26,000 Malaysians have studied or received their trainings in Japan under the LEP. Even during my stay in Malaysia less than half a year, I have come across numerous occasions that demonstrate the importance of LEP in developing Malaysia and connecting the two countries by trust.

The Embassy recently produced a brochure featuring the anniversary, in both printed and softcopy formats. The softcopy is available at the Embassy's website, and I hope you to have a look at the brochure. I am sure that you will be impressed by the dedication of the LEP alumni, in contributing to the Malaysian society, by leveraging on the knowledge and skills that they learned in Japan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have witnessed changes in the situation surrounding the two countries and the international circumstances over the past 40 years. These changes of

course have impacts on Japan-Malaysia relations.

This anniversary year is a great opportunity for us to discuss in what context we should reposition the LEP after 40 years, so that we can further strengthen the bilateral relationship between Japan and Malaysia for the years to come.

I believe that LEP will remain relevant as it has always been, but specific programs under the policy should be updated in light of the changes in the global and social circumstances.

In relations to that, I wish to briefly propose four aspects that may be interesting to consider in order to update the LEP.

First, I would like to propose giving a greater focus on the recovery from COVID-19. Malaysia is in the transition into the endemic phase, and economic revival remains a key concern. Japan may be able to work with Malaysians in the new technology areas; such as “digital” and “green.” These new technologies are needed to tackle global challenges such as environment and climate change, and it will bring about greater business opportunities.

Second, we should deepen discussion on the areas with greatest potential of cooperation between the two countries. I propose focusing on the mutual challenges that Malaysia is currently facing and Japan has some advantages on, such as disaster-risk reduction, water resources management and aging society. I also believe that Japan and Malaysia can be partners in tackling peace and security issues like Ukraine, Afghanistan, Myanmar, North Korea and the Middle East peace process.

Third, Japan can learn a lot from Malaysia about managing its diversity, which is rapidly becoming a core social issue in Japan. It is encouraging to learn that Malaysia as a moderate Muslim country with multiple ethnic groups coexist side by side, manages to achieve economic development and social stability to a large extent.

Fourth, I also wish to see more Japanese people coming to further their studies in Malaysia and gaining greater exposure to the Malaysian culture. I believe that this will expand the significance of the LEP, and its benefit will

be sustained much longer.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, I sincerely hope the LEP to continue toward its 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, and to be further enhanced to underpin the Japan-Malaysia bilateral relationship that contributes to the development of both countries.

The Embassy will continue to collaborate with various sectors including the Malaysian government and the ISIS Malaysia to conduct intensive discussion on our way forward.

Thank you for your attention. Terima kasih. Arigatougozaimashita.