

JAPAN ASEAN ROUNDTABLE

Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Shifts: Impacts and
Implications on Multilateral and Bilateral Relations

Ambassador Takahashi's Opening Remark

Prof. Dr. Mohd Faiz Abdullah, Chairman of ISIS Malaysia,

Mr. KIYA Masahiko, Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN,

Esteemed speakers,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Malaysia for their warm sympathy and condolences in the wake of disasters and accident that occurred in the beginning of this year in Japan.

And thank you, ISIS Malaysia, for organizing this Roundtable. Last year marked the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation, and we achieved

significant outcome throughout the year. It is really meaningful to have an event that focuses on ASEAN-Japan relations soon after the summit meeting to commemorate the 50th year in Tokyo last month.

Today, I will not cover details about Japan-ASEAN relations because my colleague Ambassador Kiya is about to elaborate on that topic. As Ambassador of Japan to Malaysia, I would like to touch on the progress of Japan-Malaysia relations with the context of ASEAN in mind.

What is noteworthy about the bilateral relations last year was Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Malaysia in November and Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar's visit to Japan last month. In particular, it was a historic step for the two countries to upgrade their relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in the Joint

Statement issued at the summit meeting during Dato' Seri Anwar's visit to Japan. Also impressive was the 'durian diplomacy,' in which Prime Minister Kishida ate durian at a luncheon hosted by Dato' Seri Anwar in November. It was an indication of the closeness between the two leaders as well as the two countries. It may be the case that the durians Prime Minister Kishida ate solidified the bilateral foundation further to raise the relationship to the comprehensive and strategic partnership.

During Dato' Seri's visit to Japan, the Exchange of Notes for the Official Security Assistance, or OSA, was signed. The Philippines, Bangladesh and Fiji are the other countries selected as the recipients for the first year of OSA. I think you've noticed that two out of the four recipient countries for the first batch of OSA are ASEAN countries. This proves that Japan attaches

importance to ASEAN as a partner in maintaining and strengthening the international peace and security.

The launch of a strategic dialogue between the foreign and defense authorities as well as the conclusion of a comprehensive inter-agency cooperation agreement in the space sector also symbolize the progress in both deepening and broadening bilateral relations.

I would also like to draw attention to one of the three pillars listed in the Joint Vision Statement adopted at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit in Tokyo last month, namely “Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations.” Japan has consistently emphasized people-to-people ties in its relations with ASEAN. In case of the relations with Malaysia, heart-to-heart ties have been forged through more than 40 years of the Look East Policy. The Policy has been evolving as time

goes by, and the people-to-people ties will remain the cornerstone of Japan-Malaysia relations for many more years to come. One of the upcoming outcomes is an opening of a branch of the University of Tsukuba in Malaysia, which is scheduled to be in September this year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Malaysia is assuming the ASEAN chairmanship next year, so myself and the Japanese government are looking forward to cooperate and collaborate with the Malaysian Government towards a successful chairmanship of Malaysia.

Thank you and terima kasih.