

Forum on Malaysia-Japan relations:

Japan's foreign policy evolution, Global South aspirations and Malaysia's perspective

Opening Remarks

Yg Bhg Datuk Prof Dr Mohd Faiz Abdullah, Chairman of ISIS Malaysia,

Esteemed role players,

Professor Minohara Toshihiro, my friend of Japan and Chairman of Research Institute for Indo-Pacific Affairs (RIIPA), Japan,

and

Professor Dato' Dr Zakaria Ahmad, Pro-Chancellor of HELP University Kuala Lumpur,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, おはようございます, Selamat Pagi.

First and foremost, I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to ISIS Malaysia for organising this "Forum on Malaysia-Japan relations: Japan's Foreign Policy Evolution, Global South aspirations and Malaysian perspectives".

As the world is at its crossroads, Japan places significant importance on fostering closer cooperation with Global South countries, including Malaysia. This collaboration aims to uphold and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law, ensuring a world where human dignity is respected and protected.

Today's forum promises insightful discussions from esteemed speakers on significant topics such as Japan-U.S. relations following the recent U.S. presidential election, Japan's engagement with the Global South, and its special relationship with ASEAN. Moreover, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight recent developments in Japan-Malaysia relations, as well as in the context of the ASEAN framework.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Malaysia has been a key partner for Japan since the establishment of our diplomatic relations in 1957. In 2022, it marked the 40th anniversary of the "Look East Policy," a

cornerstone of Malaysia's development and a testament to the strong ties between our two nations. It is inspiring to note that approximately 27,000 Malaysians have studied in Japan and are now contributing to further deepening our ties across various fields, serving as vital bridges between our countries through their unique experiences. We should strive to further strengthen this bilateral relationship by updating this cornerstone policy to address the common challenges we face today.

In December 2023, Japan-Malaysia relations were elevated to a "Comprehensive and Strategic Partnership," leading to wide-ranging collaborative initiatives. For instance, this year saw the opening of University of Tsukuba Malaysia, further strengthening our educational and human exchanges. I believe it is desirable that many more Japanese students would come to Malaysia to study at excellent Malaysian educational institutions.

In the area of diplomatic and security cooperation, the first meeting of deputy foreign ministers in nine years was held, and a strategic dialogue between foreign and defense authorities will take place soon. On maritime law enforcement issues, the Japan Coast Guard and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) are now stepping up our cooperation. Notably, Japan has selected Malaysia as one of the first beneficiaries of its Overseas Security Assistance (OSA) programme, which includes the provision of maritime patrol aircraft. This equipment will directly enhance Malaysia's maritime surveillance and monitoring capabilities, contributing to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

On the economic front, our cooperation continues to thrive. Japanese companies are not only creating jobs for many Malaysians but also offering innovative solutions with their cutting-edge technologies to address common challenges such as climate change. We are eager to step up our cooperation with Malaysia on critical areas such as sustainable energy transitions, smart city, digital transformation, cybersecurity and supply chain resilience. In this regard, I think that there is a good prospect of elevating "Look East Policy 2.0" to the next higher stage, in line with the MADANI policy which Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim has been energetically promoting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Next year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the East Asia Summit (EAS). As Malaysia assumes the ASEAN chairmanship during this historic milestone, Malaysia will play a crucial role in advancing regional and global peace and stability, tackling issues such

as the situation in Myanmar and the South China Sea. On the Middle Eastern issues, Japan is also working to reactivate CEAPAD, Conference on Cooperation among East Asian countries for Palestinian Development launched in 2013, with the aim of actively tackling the Palestinian humanitarian recovery and reconstruction needs. We wish to even more closely collaborate on these challenges with Malaysia as ASEAN Chair. Over the years, Japan and ASEAN have built a strong partnership rooted in trust through extensive cooperation and exchange. Japan will continue to support Malaysia in its role as ASEAN Chair and proactively assist in the integration of the ASEAN community.

Under its theme of “Inclusivity and Sustainability”, Japan is committed to working more closely with ASEAN Chair of Malaysia to address emerging challenges such as Green Transformation (GX) and Digital Transformation (DX), both of which are the priorities for ASEAN. I would also like to highlight the “Asia Zero Emissions Community (AZEC)” vision. Malaysia, as a trusted partner, was the first country to support the AZEC concept. Now I find more and more Japanese companies are investing in Malaysia in the GX sector. Such investments could be models for the rest of ASEAN countries. Together, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and sustainable future. Let’s work together to achieve this brighter and sustainable future!

Thank you and terima kasih.