

Looking East to solve rubbish woes

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WAN HAMIDI HAMID

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MALAYSIA hopes to learn from Japan on solving its mounting rubbish problem.

As less than 13 per cent of the country's solid waste is recycled, further studies are continually being done to ensure the feasibility of having a proper system of solid waste incineration.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's official visit to Japan this week may offer an opportunity for the authorities to look further into resolving the problem of too much rubbish in the country and the best solutions.

And included in his delegation for the four-day visit starting yesterday was Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting. The team will visit Chuo city's incineration plant later today.

Although no details are available, it is learnt that Ong will get a briefing from the incinerator's administrators and city officials.

Malaysian ambassador to Japan Datuk Mohd Radzi Abdul Rahman said the delegation would look into all aspects of the incineration plan.

"As far as we know, the incinerators in Japan, particularly in Tokyo, are built in a heavily populated area that takes into account the environment, the gas emission and the safety and health of the

people," he told the Press at a briefing at the Malaysian embassy, here, yesterday.

Malaysia's plan to build an incineration plant in Broga, Selangor, was met with fierce opposition from activists and residents. With such an opposition, health and environment were at risk anyway.

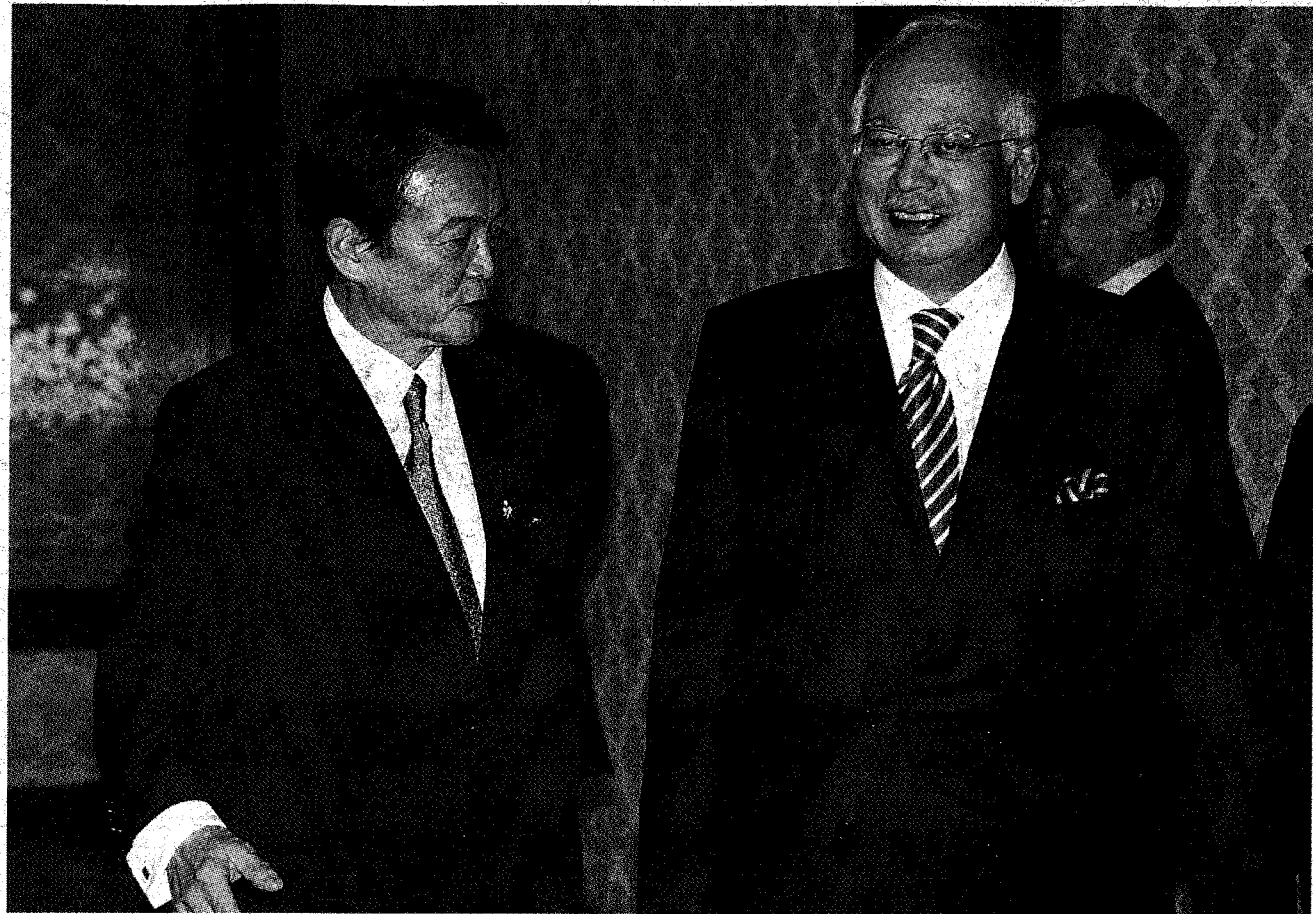
It was reported that in 2005, about 7.34 million tonnes of solid waste was generated in Malaysia, enough to fill up 42 buildings the size of the Petronas Twin Towers.

Radzi, however, pointed out that the visit to the incineration plant here was not the main agenda as there were other important areas concerning bilateral relations.

He said the main purpose of Najib's visit was to enhance an already close relation between the two countries, especially in trade and investments, information and communications, technology, biotechnology and development of human capital.

"The visit is to ensure Malaysia's continued attractiveness for Japanese investors while encouraging existing investors to expand their businesses, and also to attract new investments," he added.

Malaysia's trade with Japan stood at RM115.7 billion last year, 10.8 per cent of the country's global trade.



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak with Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Aso (left) at the Ikura House yesterday. Najib and his delegation are in Japan for a four-day working visit. — Bernama picture

Exports to Japan increased by about eight per cent, from RM49.9 billion to RM52.2 billion last year. Malaysia's largest export item was electrical and electronic goods, with a value of RM16.9 billion, followed by liquified natural gas (RM13.6 billion).

Malaysia's largest import was also electrical and elec-

tronic products amounting to RM25.8 billion.

Radzi said Najib was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Defence counterpart Fumio Kyuma later today, with focus on bilateral relations and current issues like terrorism and safety of the Straits of Malacca.

Najib will also address the

Japanese business community and politicians, as well as deliver a lecture on East Asian security tomorrow.

Before leaving for South Korea on Thursday, also for an official visit, Najib will visit Kobe, the Japanese city hit by an earthquake more than a decade ago, to learn more about disaster reduction.

Besides Ong, others in Najib's delegation include Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Jamaluddin Jarjis and Entrepreneur and Co-operative Development Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, as well as Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam.