

PM: Abe keen to inform investors about Iskandar

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THE Iskandar Development Region (Iskandar) has captured the attention of Japanese premier Shinzo Abe, who gave a personal undertaking that he would inform Japanese companies to get them to invest in the project.

Abe, according to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, described the project in southern Johor as a "brilliant idea".

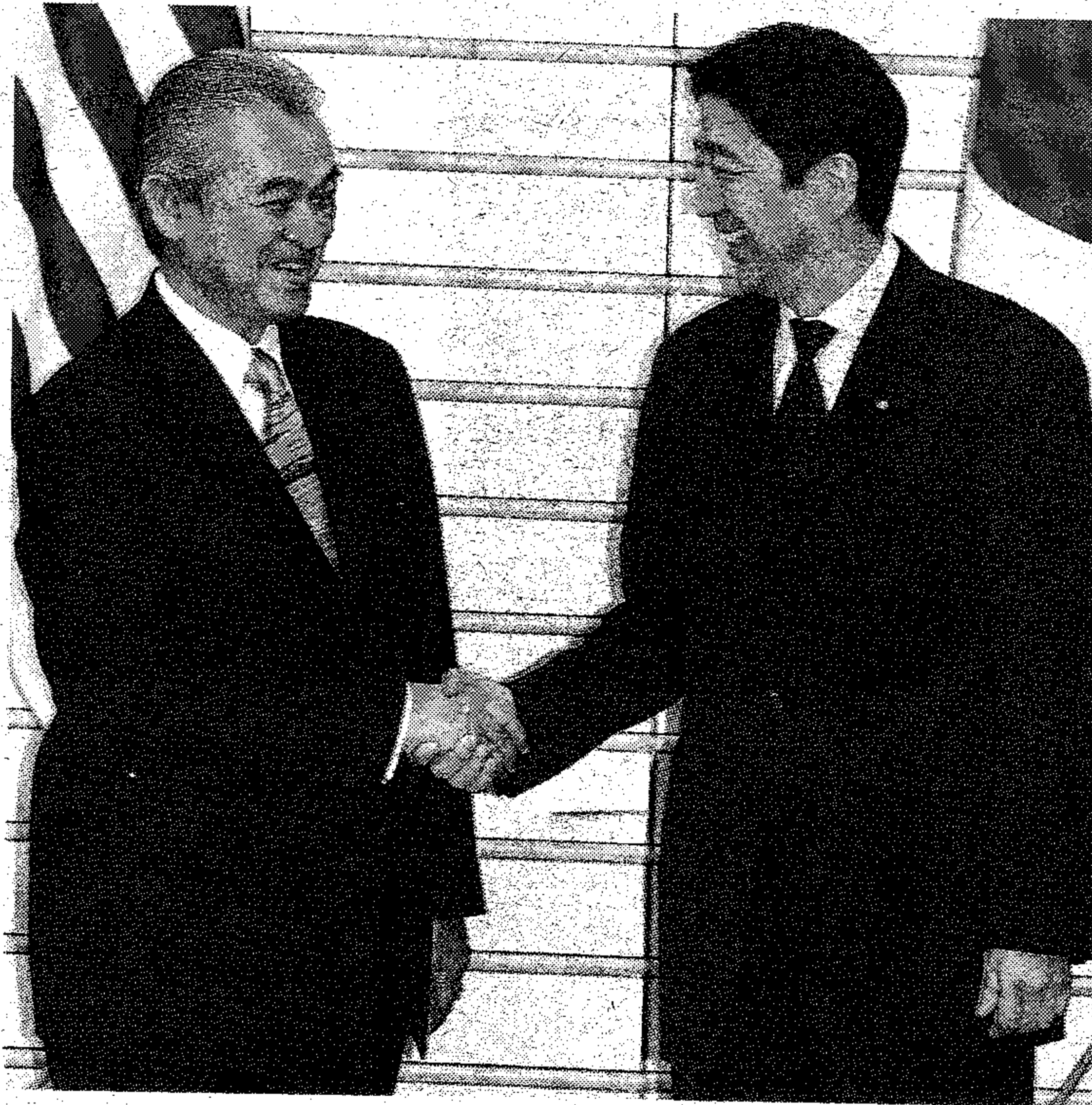
Abdullah said that in his briefing to Abe on Iskandar during their meeting yesterday, he had likened southern Johor's role and proximity to Singapore to that of Shenzhen in China and Hong Kong.

"It had not only been successful but also strategic."

The prime minister, who is on a five-day visit here, said Iskandar was one area where Malaysia and Japan could co-operate further after half a century of progressive relations between both countries.

"We need to look into new projects and programmes to enhance our relations."

Abdullah said there were many areas yet to be explored beyond the 25-year-old Look East Policy, in which a total of 14,000



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi exchanging greetings with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo yesterday. — AP picture

Malaysians had undergone training and studied in Japan.

"There is no shift in our emphasis on the policy. What it has done is to develop our human capital and we want this to be taken further."

Earlier, Abdullah had witnessed the signing of a memorandum of

understanding between Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and Meiji University for a student exchange programme.

He said he had also requested that the setting up of the International Technology University, a joint Malaysia-Japan project, be expedited as a symbol of the two

countries' friendship.

Abdullah said Abe also touched on the role Japan desired to play in Asean+3 (together with China and South Korea) and the southern Philippines.

He said he was heartened by Tokyo's interest in the Middle East, which he described as a "theatre of conflict".

"The Middle East issue is no longer an Arab issue nor an Islamic one. It has become an international issue and attention should be given to resolving the problems there."

Abdullah said he extended two invitations to Abe; one for an official visit to Malaysia, and the other for the country's Independence Day celebrations on Aug 31.

Besides Abe, invitations had been extended to heads of governments of Asean nations and countries celebrating 50 years of relations with Malaysia.

On Monday, Malaysian Ambassador to Japan Datuk Mohd Radzi Abdul Rahman said the Japan-Malaysia Economic Partnership Agreement, which took effect last July, may have lifted Japanese investment in Malaysia.

Japan was the country's largest foreign investor last year, with RM4.41 billion invested in the Malaysian manufacturing sector.

In the first quarter of the year, Japanese direct investment totalled RM1.1 billion, mostly in machinery and equipment manufacturing.