

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	17 NOVEMBER 2016

Najib: Japan's twin gifts to Malaysia reflect strong ties

Nst- 17/11/2016

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TOKYO: The two patrol vessels are part of the huge fleet of the Japan Coast Guard, a highly respected force that operates more than 400 vessels and 70 helicopters.

But under the deal signed yesterday, the two offshore patrol vessels will be handed to Malaysia to help increase the capability of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA).

Both vessels, larger than any boats in the existing MMEA fleet, will be deployed in Kuantan and Kota Kinabalu to patrol Malaysian waters.

The two vessels, with helicopter decks, are almost a frigate class.

Japanese diplomats said the increased capability of MMEA would help lead to stability of the South China Sea.

The two vessels will be refurbished by the Japanese at their own expense before they are handed over to the MMEA.

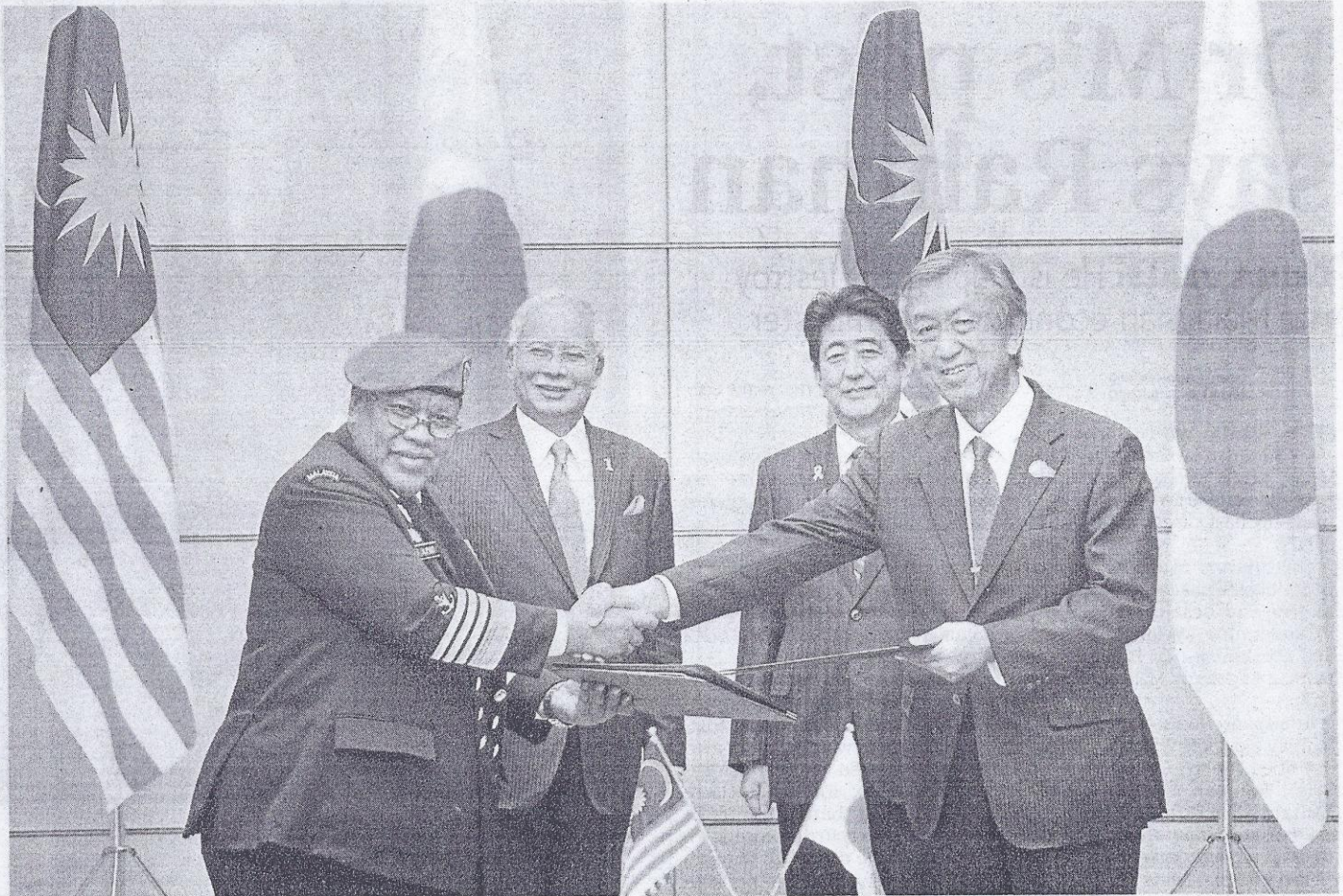
The first vessel is due to be delivered by the next Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition in March and the second one will follow suit soon after.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe witnessed the signing of the handover after their meeting here yesterday.

Abe, who described Malaysia as an important strategic partner, said at a joint press conference the issue of South China Sea had a bearing on all countries that enjoyed the freedom of navigation and overflight in the region.

He said this had direct links to regional peace and stability.

He said Japan would further promote cooperation among defence



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** and his Japanese counterpart, **Shinzo Abe**, witnessing the exchange of agreement documents for the two **Japanese patrol vessels** between Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency director-general **Admiral Datuk Seri Ahmad Puzi Ab Kahar** and Japanese ambassador to Malaysia **Makio Miyagawa** at Abe's office in Tokyo yesterday. **Bernama pic**

area of maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Najib said Malaysia appreciated the Japanese handover of the two

reflected the strong bilateral relations and Japanese commitment to ensure peace, security and prosperity in the area

willing to hand over two decommissioned patrol vessels to our maritime enforcement agency — shows the nature of our relationship is now

“Malaysia continues to play its part to ensure the South China Sea will be an area of peace and stability, without which we cannot achieve