

MALAYSIA, JAPAN UPGRADE TIES

PM tells Kishida
Malaysia wants to
continue the Look
East Policy with new
programmes

TOKYO

MALAYSIA and Japan have agreed to upgrade bilateral relations to a more comprehensive level while continuing with the Look East Policy (LEP) by establishing new areas of cooperation.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, in his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo on Friday, had proposed that Malaysia-Japan ties be upgraded to "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" and stated Malaysia's readiness to continue with the LEP, which was well-received by Kishida.

"Malaysia and Japan will draft out a clearer outline of the closer relations," he said in a media conference in Tokyo at the end of his official working visit to Japan.

According to Ismail Sabri, Kishida, who took over as Japanese prime minister in October last year, had visited Malaysia in 2015 as foreign minister.

That year the status of Malaysia-Japan ties was raised from "Enhanced Partnership" to "Strategic Partnership".

Ismail Sabri and Kishida had their first meeting at the Japanese Prime Minister's Office on Friday. They held discussions on strengthening Malaysia-Japan ties.

The prime ministers had made contact via telephone on Dec 2 last year, and on April 20 to discuss enhancing bilateral relations, as well as regional and international issues in which Japan and Malaysia have common interests.

This year is also the 65th anniversary of Malaysia-Japan diplomatic relations and the 40th anniversary of the LEP.

Ismail Sabri said he had also expressed appreciation to Kishida for Japan's support in the context of the implementation of the LEP.

"We have stated Malaysia's



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob speaking during a press conference at the end of his official working visit to Japan, yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

readiness to continue the LEP with Japan via new cooperation programmes such as in energy, smart city, environment and climate change."

Ismail Sabri said both of them also agreed to step up economic, trade and investment cooperation.

Japan has been Malaysia's fourth-largest trading partner since 2015.

The value of trade last year was US\$35.9 billion, 20 per cent more compared with US\$29.6 billion in 2020.

Japan is also the third-largest investor in Malaysia in terms of projects in the manufacturing sector.

Investments from 1980 to last year totalled US\$27.6 billion, involving 2,709 projects.

Last year US\$1.81 billion in investments were recorded, involving 25 projects in the sector.

Ismail Sabri said he also assured Kishida that the setting up of Tsukuba University's branch campus in Malaysia would be finalised soon.

He said the Higher Education Ministry had said a technical problem in establishing the university has been resolved.

The proposal to set up the branch campus was made in 2018 to give Malaysian students expo-

sure to the Japanese education system.

Meanwhile, Ismail Sabri said Japanese businessmen and investors are still confident in Malaysia as an investment hub and destination.

He said that he had a friendly session with almost 30 leading Japanese companies, which expressed their desire to explore trade opportunities and increase investments in Malaysia.

He said a Japanese company is interested in and has identified a location in Malaysia to produce contact lenses for the regional market.

Another company is also interested in producing batteries for electric cars in the country.

"This is a great potential to create employment opportunities for Keluarga Malaysia," he said.

"I am happy with this meeting in Japan as the captains of industry still see Malaysia as the best investment hub."

He said based on his interactions with Japanese investors, as well as investors that he had met on visits to Qatar and the United States, Malaysia was still a preferred investment destination due to its political stability.

"We are confident that Malaysia will continue to be the destination of choice." **Bernama**