

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF H.E. SHINZO ABE,
PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN
AT KUALA LUMPUR
24 AUGUST 2007**

His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

Madam Akie Abe,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. Prime Minister, my wife and I take great pleasure to bid you and Madam Akie Abe, as well as all the members of your delegation, a very warm welcome to Malaysia.

2. We are very pleased that Your Excellency is able to make this official visit to our country. We consider it very significant because it reaffirms the importance that Japan attaches to Malaysia. On our part, we consider our relations with Japan as one of the most important to Malaysia.

3. First of all, relations with Japan is one of the longest we have had with other countries. Your visit, Mr. Prime Minister, comes at a time when we are also celebrating fifty years of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Japan.

4. Indeed, your country became one of our most important international partners after we focused our attention on Japan through Malaysia's Look East Policy as early as twenty five years ago. This policy has enabled Malaysia to have a pool of Japanese trained, high quality human capital. Japanese companies and organizations, particularly those established in Malaysia, have also benefited by having access to these trained personnel.

5. But more than that, our Look East policy has contributed in no small measure to creating the bonds of friendship at the people to people level. Malaysia certainly values these special ties that we have with Japan.

6. Mr. Prime Minister, I am therefore very pleased that, today, we had the opportunity to continue the conversations that we have always had wherever we have the opportunity to meet. I remember very well the very substantive talks I had with you in Tokyo in May this year. Our discussion this morning was no different, which I consider most productive in identifying ways to move the relations between our two countries to higher levels.

7. You have indicated Japan's commitment to enhance further our bilateral relations and cooperation. Malaysia on its part is equally determined to expand and build upon the already strong foundations of friendship between our two countries. In fact, we

already have very substantial relations not only in trade and investment but also bilateral cooperation in education and training; science and technology; cultural exchanges, and tourism. I am confident that the Japan-Malaysia Economic Partnership Agreement, which came into force in July 2006, will further elevate our trade, investment and other areas of cooperation to greater heights.

8. I am very happy to note that a sizeable high-powered Japanese business delegation has joined Your Excellency on this visit. I hope they will use this visit to see for themselves the abundant opportunities for investing and doing business in this country.

9. We also wish to invite the people of Japan to come as tourists. We are certain that they will find many interesting things to do and see in Malaysia. In fact, we would like individuals from Japan to come and spend a longer time in Malaysia under our "Malaysia - My Second Home" programme.

10. We do wish to make our linkages more permanent. Thus we have established the Malaysia-Japan University Centre in December 2005, located at the Malaysian University of Technology. We also have plans to expand this centre to become the Malaysia-Japan International University of Technology. Such institutions of higher learning would indeed mark a new level, and a new era of cooperation between our two countries. We hope these projects will benefit not only Malaysians but also the young people from other ASEAN countries*

11. Malaysia is fully appreciative of Japan's role as an important dialogue partner of ASEAN. We see great value in this dialogue relationship not only for engendering economic and social development, but also for maintaining regional peace and stability. In this connection, Malaysia continues to be committed to the establishment of an East Asian Community and we hope Japan will also continue to give its support to this endeavour.

12. After fifty years of friendly and productive relations, it is only logical that Malaysia and Japan should continue to strive to infuse more substance into our bilateral ties, to deepen and strengthen these ties, as part and parcel of a mutually beneficial and dynamic partnership.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. Let me conclude by reiterating our warm welcome to Prime Minister Abe, Madam Akie Abe and the Japanese delegation and wishing all of them a very pleasant stay in Malaysia. It is our fervent hope that this visit would further nourish the warm and friendly relations that exist between Malaysia and Japan.

Thank you.