

By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR
Venue : WISMA PUTRA, PUTRAJAYA
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Title : STATEMENT ON THE OCASSION OF THE SIGNING CEREMONY AND EXCHANGE OF NOTES CONCERNING THE JAPANESE CULTURAL GRANT AID TO MALAYSIA

Her Excellency Yoriko Kawaguchi,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan

His Excellency Ambassador Masaki Konishi

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. I have the honour to represent the Government of Malaysia on this auspicious occasion of the Signing and Exchange of Notes with Her Excellency Yoriko Kawaguchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan. This Exchange of Notes is related to a grant worth 17.5 million yen (approximately RM0.56 million) awarded to the Residential School, Sekolah Menengah Sains Miri, Sarawak, for the supply of Japanese language learning equipment to the school.

2. As a background, the recipient school, Sekolah Menengah Sains Miri (SMS Miri), was founded in 1990. The school runs four core Departments namely the Language Department, the Vocational and Technical Department, Science and Mathematics Department and Humanities Department. The Language Department, teaches five languages namely Bahasa Melayu, English, Japanese, French and Arabic. The teaching of the Japanese language by the Department commenced in 1997 with the help and technical support from the Japan Foundation. SMS Miri had since recorded considerable successes in its mastering of the Japanese Language, among them are:

- i. Finalist in the 17th (2001), 18th (2002) and 19th (2003) Japanese Language Speech Contest at the National Level;
- ii. Recorded 100% passes in the Fully Residential School Form Four Japanese Language Achievement Examination in 2002;
- iii. Awarded the consolation prize for the Japanese Film Festival in "A Class to Remember";
- iv. Awarded 2 Gold Prize winner and one silver prize winner in the Japanese Language Essay Competition for the year 1999, 2000 and 2001.

These achievements fully demonstrate that SMS Miri is highly committed in the teaching of Japanese Language to their students. Hence, the school is well deserved to receive this cultural grant.

3. Since fiscal year 1978, the Japanese Government has been providing cultural grants to Malaysia with the objective of further promoting cultural exchanges between the two countries. To this end, many parties have benefitted from this aid programme. I am certain that Sekolah Menengah Sains Miri welcomed the Grant as it will assist the students in learning the Japanese language and meeting the objective of the programme. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation to the Japanese Embassy in Kuala Lumpur for the active role it has played in promoting the programme as well as nourishing the close rapport between our two countries.

Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Malaysia and Japan have long enjoyed substantive and cordial relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1958. Undeniably also, Japan has over the years played an important role in the economic development of this country. While trade and economics largely dominate our ties, there are many other major components including the Cultural Grant, a programme under Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) that has successfully enhanced this strong bond of relationship. Further, as testimony of its strong cooperation and good relations, Malaysia and Japan saw active exchanges of visits at the highest level.

5. With this grant to Sekolah Menengah Sains Miri, the total amount of contribution received from the Japanese Government under the Cultural Grant Aid programme has reached approximately RM50.56 million. I hope that Japan will be extending cultural grants to Malaysia for other projects particularly proposals from Penang Culture and Arts Department, Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism, Sekolah Alam Shah and the Faculty of Arts and Music, University Pendidikan Sultan Idris for fiscal year 2004.

6. Finally, on behalf of the Government of Malaysia, the Ministry of Education and Sekolah Menengah Sains Miri, I wish to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of Japan for its generous assistance.

Thank you.