

**Speech by Ambassador of Japan
At the National Day Reception (15 February, 2023)**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to thank all of you for joining the celebration of the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, which we host face-to-face for the first time in three years.

Although COVID-19 still lingers, life has turned to normal in many aspects. Japan resumed visa-free travel for Malaysian nationals last October, and it is attracting more Malaysian tourists to visit Japan. I hope this trend continues with increase of more flights connecting the two countries.

Also last year, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Look East Policy, or LEP, and high-level visits were exchanged between the two countries. All those visits featured our achievement of past 40 years of LEP and way forward. I would like to express my deepest appreciation on this occasion to many of you here for hosting and taking part in the 40th anniversary celebrations. Our embassy approved more than 180 projects as official commemorative events. You can see some of those events on the screen tonight.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 40th anniversary of the LEP effectively highlighted the Japan-Malaysia relationship and I want to keep the great momentum this year to boost the relation. The world we are living in today is not the same as 40 years ago. We should take the changes into account and update the areas as well as approaches of LEP for the benefit of both countries.

Speaking of anniversaries, this year marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Strengthening the Japan-ASEAN relationship will lead to promotion of a rules-based order in line with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, or FOIP and contribute to stability and prosperity of the world which is now facing lots of challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Tonight, we set up a number of booths featuring Japanese food, beverages and products in this ballroom as well as around the foyer area. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the sponsor companies and organizations.

At the foyer, they are Nippon Designer School, Almex System Technology, UMW Toyota Motor, Sony EMCS, Panasonic, UPR Solution and Hisamitsu Pharmaceutical.

At the Ballroom, Otafuku Sauce, Ajinomoto, DOKA, CHITOSE, HOKTO, CHOYA, AWA Sake Association, TMI Trading, Gekkeikan, KIRIN, Yakult and Shizuoka Prefecture.

Please join me to give them a big applause.

I would like to conclude my remark by renewing my resolution to further deepen the friendship between our two countries, Japan and Malaysia. It can not be done without your support. I am looking forward to collaborating with you all throughout the year.

Thank you, ありがとうございます and terima kasih.