

**Speech at the Self-Defense Forces Day Reception**

Lieutenant General Dato' Tengku Muhammad Fauzi bin Tengku Ibrahim,  
Deputy Chief of Army,  
Malaysian Armed Forces,  
Ambassadors, Excellencies,  
Members of the Armed Forces,  
Members of the Military Attaché Corps,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assallam alaikum and Good evening,

It is a great honor to welcome so many distinguished guests to this reception celebrating the 70th anniversary of Self-Defense Forces Day.

In 1954, the current Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces of Japan were established. Since then, trust with foreign countries and the Japanese people has been a constant endeavor of the Self-Defense Forces.

I would like start by addressing the current international security environment. The continuing Russia's aggression against Ukraine is an outrageous act that threatens the fundamental basis of the international order, impacting not only Europe but all over the world including Asia. In the Middle East, amid prolonged fighting, Japan is seriously concerned about the critical humanitarian situation in Gaza. Japan has been implementing humanitarian aid of over 100 million US dollars for support for Palestine including Gaza since last October. Japan welcomes the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2735 on the situation in Gaza on 10<sup>th</sup> of June. Support from Malaysia on this resolution was also encouraging. Japan and Malaysia, together with international community, need to work for the better future of the Palestinian People. Looking at this region, unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in violation of international law are still being witnessed in the East and South China Seas. Furthermore, North Korea has declared its absolute refusal to abandon its nuclear weapons and continues to launch missiles with unprecedented frequency including this morning, despite series of Security Council resolutions.

In such a challenging security environment in the Indo-Pacific region, Japan is promoting the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," or FOIP, to lead the international community towards cooperation rather than division and conflict, and to establish a rule-based international order. The Self-Defense Forces plays a crucial role in realizing FOIP by enhancing deterrence and response capabilities and strengthening security cooperation.

In this situation, cooperation with ASEAN countries is indispensable. The "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific," or AOIP shares fundamental principles with FOIP, and Japan is keen to support it. Japan also aims to engage in the region through frameworks such as QUAD. In 2025, Malaysia will play an even greater role as the chair of ASEAN to address the challenges the region faces, and Japan stands ready to support Malaysia in exercising its leadership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Relationship between Japan and Malaysia is steady and robust. Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Anwar have had three bilateral summit meetings in 7 months from November last year to May this year. Most importantly, they decided to elevate the bilateral relationship to "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" last December.

In the field of security, the first bilateral Exercise between the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Royal Malaysian Navy was conducted this year. As stated in the Japanese "National Security Strategy" announced in 2022, we enhance the security cooperation with ASEAN countries. As part of this strategy, we established a new framework for Official Security Assistance or OSA. We chose Malaysia strategically as one of the first four recipient countries of the OSA last year. Additionally, Japan's Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology have been revised to enable the transfer of defense equipment overseas, which will facilitate smoother defense equipment cooperation between our countries. I look forward to see tangible results with Malaysia in this area as well. Today we asked Japanese companies to show what they can offer to Malaysia, and I hope you to have a look at them.

People to people exchanges in the security field are also deepening. Now a team from National Resilience College is paying a visit to Tokyo. From the Japan's National Defense Academy, four Malaysians have graduated, including Brigadier General Ahmad, and at present nine are enrolled. And fourteen Japanese students, including Defense Attaché Arita, who are here with me, graduated from the Malaysia Armed Forces Staff College. We have also invited participants to the professional airmanship program, ship rider program, HA/DR seminar, and the Japan-ASEAN Cybersecurity Capacity Building Program. This type of exchange will continue to grow across various fields.

I would like to conclude my remarks by asking for your continued support and cooperation with Japan's policy and its joint efforts with Malaysia and other ASEAN countries to maintain peace and security. Furthermore, I believe that food is an essential element for both diplomats and military personnel. A Japanese proverb goes "You can't fight on an empty stomach." A wide selection of food and beverages are waiting to satisfy your hearty appetites.

Thank you very much for your attention and please enjoy the rest of the reception.