

## Ambassador Shikata's Speech at the Self-Defense Forces Day Reception on 24 June 2026

General Tan Sri Dato' Sri Haji Malek Razak bin Sulaiman,  
Chief of Defence Forces, Malaysian Armed Forces  
Excellencies,  
Members of the Armed Forces,  
Members of the Military Attaché Corps,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Salam sejahtera and good evening,

It is a great honor for me to welcome so many distinguished guests as we commemorate the 72nd anniversary of Self-Defense Forces Day.

This evening, we celebrate the men and women of the Self-Defense Forces who safeguard peace of Japan and the region, and we celebrate the friendships—especially with Malaysia—that give our region strength. Thank you all for being here.

This gathering comes at a meaningful moment. Earlier this month in Japan, Prime Minister Takaichi and Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim reaffirmed our shared determination to further deepen our strategic cooperation, with defence and security at its core.

Their message was clear: Japan and Malaysia will face the future together. In this context, Prime Minister Takaichi's Growth Strategy identifies the defence industry as a strategic sector—strengthening Japan's industrial and technological base and enabling responsible international collaboration.

This creates new opportunities to enhance Japan–Malaysia security cooperation, including joint research and development, co-production and maintenance, training, and resilient supply-chain linkages that bolster our shared readiness and interoperability.

For 72 years, the Self-Defense Forces have earned the trust of the Japanese people and forged partnerships around the globe. From disaster relief to peacekeeping and maritime security, their service reflects a steady commitment to stability beyond our shores—always in partnership, always in the spirit of international responsibility.

Yet we meet at a time when the global security environment is testing all of us. Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine shakes the foundations of the international order. In the Middle East, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has raised profound concerns for global security and energy supplies. Closer to home, attempts to change the status quo by force in the East and South China Seas, in ways inconsistent with international law, threaten the peace and prosperity on which our peoples rely.

In the face of these challenges, Japan is working closely with like-minded partners—including Malaysia—to support de-escalation, uphold international law, and keep the seas open and secure.

For the past decade, Japan has championed a Free and Open Indo-Pacific—a region anchored in rules, openness, and opportunity for all. Our updated FOIP emphasizes two pillars: resilience, and the freedom of each nation to decide its own path across economic, social, and security domains.

During Prime Minister Anwar's visit to Japan, our leaders agreed to deepen the synergy between FOIP and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific or AOIP. Two currents are becoming one tide—moving the region toward greater stability and shared prosperity. A priority within this vision is enhanced security cooperation, and Japan stands ready to work even more closely with Malaysia.

To that end, Japan has reviewed the Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology so we can better support the capabilities of like-minded countries. As the security environment grows more complex, no nation can safeguard its peace alone. Japan's Growth Strategy's focus on the defence industry complements this approach by encouraging innovation, standardization, and partnerships that can directly benefit Japan-Malaysia capacity-building and interoperability.

Regional partners are increasingly looking to Japanese defense equipment—such as the Mogami-class frigate to Australia, air surveillance radar systems to the Philippines, and used JMSDF vessels to the Philippines and Indonesia. Meeting these needs helps strengthen our partners' defense capabilities and deters conflicts before it starts.

I am also proud that Japan and Malaysia elevated our relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2023. Prime Minister Anwar's recent visit to Japan underscored our momentum. As we look ahead to the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic ties next year, I am committed to taking our cooperation to the next level in every field, including defence and security.

Our forces are already training shoulder-to-shoulder. The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Royal Malaysian Navy regularly conduct the bilateral exercise MALPAN in the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca.

In April, MALPAN included the Royal Malaysian Air Force, further deepening our cooperation in maritime and air domains. These are practical steps that build trust, sharpen interoperability, and keep our sea lanes safe.

We are also expanding our security cooperation through Japan's Official Security Assistance or OSA, launched in 2023. Malaysia was among the very first recipients.

Last year, Japan provided UAVs and rescue boats. Under OSA 2025, Japan has provided equipment for ceasefire monitoring to the ASEAN Observer Team and will provide a diving support vessel to the Royal Malaysian Navy. These are our concrete contributions to regional stability—and to Malaysia's important leadership role.

Our defence industries are building bridges as well. Ten Japanese companies participated in Defence Services Asia, DSA 2026 in KL, showcasing advanced technologies and equipment. During that event, Japan and Malaysia signed the Terms of Reference to launch a bilateral defence industry dialogue. This dialogue is a timely platform to translate Prime Minister Takaichi's Growth Strategy into practical cooperation—exploring co-development, joint testing and evaluation, lifecycle support, and talent exchanges between our industries and armed forces.

I am pleased that you can also explore Japanese defence technologies at tonight's industry booth.

Just as important are the people who will carry our partnership into the future. In May, students from Malaysia's National Resilience College visited Japan; recently, students from the Advanced Course of Japan's Joint Staff College visited Malaysia. We continue to welcome Malaysian students to Japan's National Defense Academy, and this August, the Royal Malaysian Navy will send a student to our Advanced Course for the first time. We have also invited Malaysian Armed Forces participants to the professional airmanship program, the ship rider program, and the Japan-ASEAN and Indo-Pacific countries cybersecurity cooperation project.

These exchanges build friendships, skills, and strategic understanding that last a lifetime.

On a lighter note, many of us will wake up early this Friday morning to watch the World Cup match between Japan and Sweden. Whatever the score, it is a reminder that friendly sporting rivalries can bring nations closer together—just as our security cooperation does—through respect, fair play, and shared aspiration.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Indo-Pacific is our shared home. From the Strait of Malacca to the Pacific, our prosperity depends on peace, openness, and the rule of law. Japan and Malaysia will continue to stand together to uphold these principles—calmly, steadily, and resolutely.

Thank you for your partnership. Thank you for your friendship. And thank you for joining us this evening. Please enjoy the reception—including the defence industry exhibition, the Tea Ceremony, Ikebana, and of course, Japanese cuisine.

Thank you. ありがとうございます。Terima kasih.