

Lieutenant General Datuk Ahmad Norihan bin Jalal, Director General, Defence Intelligence,
Excellencies, Members of the Armed Forces,
Members of Military Attaché Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our great pleasure to hold this reception with the presence of so many distinguished guests to celebrate our 68th Self Defence Forces' Day after a few years of interval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am particularly happy to hold this reception when Japan and Malaysia are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Look East Policy and the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Japan's modern military forces were established in 1871, soon after the feudal Samurai era ended. The forces were transformed into the present form with the Ground, Maritime and Air Self-Defence Forces in 1954. Since then, the tenacious activities of our Self Defence Forces and the personnel have led to better understanding about their significance in the political arena. I am encouraged by how firmly their roles and responsibilities are supported, internally and externally, and under the current diplomatic and security environment. The mission of our Self Defence Forces has become ever more crucial amid the turbulent security environment surrounding Japan and East Asia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Japan-Malaysia defence co-operation has been expanding, year after year, as an integral pillar of our strategic partnership. The Malaysian Defense Minister visited Japan in 2018 and concluded an MOU to reinvigorate our bilateral defense

co-operation. An agreement for the transfer of defense equipment and technologies was also signed in the same year.

For the past several years before the pandemic, our vessels and aircraft had frequent visits to Malaysia. Japanese destroyers and Malaysian frigates have conducted friendship exercises off the coast of East Malaysia and the Peninsula Malaysia on a number of occasions.

Personnel exchanges in the security field have also been deepened. Four Malaysians have graduated from the National Defence Academy of Japan, including Brigadier General Ahmad, and five are currently enrolled at the academy. From Japan, 14 students have studied at the Malaysia Armed Forces Staff College, including defence attachè colonel Morita, who is present here. As we are coming out from the pandemic phase, we hope to see return of exchanges of people and activities between the two countries. Let's hope that trend will continue and will be back to pre-COVID time as soon as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Russia's aggression against Ukraine started when the world was on a road towards economic recovery from the pandemic. No country or region in the world can shrug this off as "someone else's problem." It is a situation that shakes the very foundations of the international order, and every country needs to regard the problem as their own affair. Also in the East China Sea, we still witness unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in violation of international law. Japan is taking a firm stand against such attempts together with like-minded countries.

Asian countries are experiencing economic growth and coming to political maturity, but it is at crossroads in terms of security. Our Self Defence Forces have been working diligently towards the peace and stability of Southeast Asia as well

as of Northeast Asia. We should keep in mind that peace is not something to be given, but is something we must construct by ourselves and maintain through our own strenuous efforts in defence and diplomacy. Japan looks forward to working together with Malaysia in this regard.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The conviction that I have gained during my diplomatic life with my wife, Mami in Kuwait after the second gulf war early 2000 is that food is an indispensable component in the circles of diplomats as well as among military officers and soldiers. An array of Japanese and international cuisines and beverages are on the buffet tables, waiting for your big appetite. I wish you enjoy yourself this evening.

Thank you very much for coming and Bon appetite!