

ROYAL ADDRESS BY
HIS MAJESTY TUANKU SYED SIRAJUDDIN IBNI
AL-MARHUM TUANKU SYED PUTRA JAMALULLAIL
THE YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG XII OF MALAYSIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE STATE BANQUET
HOSTED BY THEIR MAJESTIES EMPEROR AKIHITO AND
EMPRESS MICHIKO OF JAPAN

ON MONDAY, 7 MARCH 2005

Your Majesty Emperor Akihito and

Your Majesty Empress Michiko,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Raja Permaisuri Agong and on Our own behalf, We would like to express to Your Majesty, Our deep gratitude for your kind and warm words of welcome. We would also like to express Our sincere appreciation for the generous hospitality and excellent arrangements extended to Us since the day of Our arrival. We are delighted and honoured to pay tribute to Your Majesties who are indeed no strangers to Malaysia. We recall vividly how privileged We were to have Your Majesties visiting Our country twice, firstly as the Crown Prince and Crown Princess in 1970 and later as the Emperor and Empress in 1991.

Today, it is Our earnest hope that Our first official visit to Japan would not only rekindle the sweet memories of Your Majesties' visit but

would also serve to deepen the close and cordial ties between our two countries.

The charm of this land of cherry blossoms with its industrialization and modernization but with the preservation of its unique culture has always made this country a fascinating place to visit. Its miraculous economic growth and its resurgence during the "miracle" period in the 1980s, have continued to inspire Us. Despite the difficult challenges of the last decade, We believe Japan is poised to be more competitive than ever before and regain its strength as a leading nation in the region and indeed the world once the economy is fully revitalized.

Your Majesties,

We can take pride that the relationship between Malaysia and Japan since the establishment of our diplomatic relations in 1957 has continued to be friendly and strong. There are hardly any political problems that could undermine the existing relations. Japan's constructive contributions towards enhancing bilateral relations are

commendable in many conceivable aspects. Japan has been one of the top important trading and investment partners for Malaysia for decades. Technical and human resource development programmes under the Look East Policy (LEP) since its inception in 1982 continue to be relevant as Our country strive to achieve Vision 2020. Mutual understanding between people-to-people through cultural exchanges and other contacts such as tourism and education, are fast gaining momentum.

Today, the profound relations have entered a new phase when both countries began negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). We place great importance to having this Agreement and it is Our belief that upon its conclusion, wide areas of cooperation could be further intensified in the years to come. With the ongoing cooperation, our two countries bear witness to the evolving dynamism of our relationship and the vast potentials that exist for further improvement in a fast changing world.

Your Majesties,

As a member of ASEAN, We are pleased to note that Japan regards the Association as an important strategic partner. The signing of the Tokyo Declaration and the ASEAN-Japan Plan of Action signed at the ASEAN Commemorative Summit in Tokyo in December 2003 and Japan's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia in 2004, were highly significant.

We also noted with satisfaction and gratitude that Japan was among the first few countries to offer substantial assistance and relief teams when the Tsunami hit the ASEAN region on 26 December 2004. "Tsunami" is perhaps the most known Japanese word in the world today.

Regional stability has been a key factor in influencing the growth and prosperity of the East Asian countries. As common regional members, Malaysia is fully aware that the steady momentum of our growth and success can only be maintained in tandem with the overall stability of region in particular and the world as a whole.

Malaysia hopes that Japan would continue to play its role in preserving regional peace and stability.

Our visit to Japan which forges the links at the highest level, heralds a new phase in the history of our bilateral relations. We would like to take this opportunity to personally extend Our invitation to Your Majesty, the Empress and members of the Japanese Imperial family to pay a visit to Malaysia in the near future.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With those words, may We invite all present, to join Us in a toast, to the good health and happiness of Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and to the continued friendship between the peoples of Malaysia and Japan.

Thank you.