ISSUES IN MALAYSIA-JAPAN RELATIONS UNDER THE ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI'S ADMINISTRATION

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Introduction
On October 31, 2003 Abdullah Ahmad Badawi succeeded Dr. Mahathir Mohammad as the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia through an organized process of transformation of power in a politically stable situation. Malaysia’s encouraging economic growth, coupled with a trade surplus balance inherited since taking over the reigns of power, enabled Abdullah to further build upon economic and trade policies that had been laid the tracks by Dr. Mahathir. Although Abdullah does not have a distinct foreign policy on Japan like Dr. Mahathir’s “Look East Policy”, nonetheless since Malaysia has already cultivated a positive and amicable relationship as well as sound bilateral trade and investment linkages with Japan for the past decades, it is believed that Kuala Lumpur-Tokyo relations will continue to strengthen. In the four years of Abdullah’s administration, Kuala Lumpur-Tokyo bilateral relations is seen as a continuation of the policy brought forth by Dr. Mahathir and in sustaining the existing status quo. This article discusses some important issues in Malaysia-Japan relations under the Abdullah’s administration focusing on politics and diplomacy, trade and investment as well as the socio-cultural relations between the two countries.