CHAPTER 3

FIVE DECADES OF MALAYSIA-JAPAN RELATIONS

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Introduction
The Malaysia-Japan diplomatic ties were formed on August 31, 1957, on the very same day Malaysia achieved its independence. Looking back into almost 52 years of diplomatic relations between both countries, it can be deduced that Japan is an important ally in Malaysia’s foreign policy. Japan was the first amongst Northeast Asian countries to have diplomatic ties with Malaysia. It was nine days post Malaysia independence, on September 9, 1957 when Japan opened its embassy in Kuala Lumpur. Only much later, on February 23, 1960, did Malaysia start another diplomatic relationship with one other Northeast Asian country, South Korea, followed by North Korea on June 30, 1973 and China on May 31, 1974. The irony was that the first diplomatic relations with a Northeast Asian nation that Malaysia formed was with Japan, having been under Japanese invasion and occupation since December 8, 1941 till August 15, 1945. This further emphasized Malaysia’s acceptance towards Japan as a close ally. The Kuala Lumpur-Tokyo bilateral relations which were initially a ‘recipient-donor’ type of relations later evolved into a ‘strategic partnership relations’ by the 1980s when both countries benefited after having started diversifying economic cooperations with each other.

Initial Stage of Malaysia-Japan Bilateral Relations
Having achieved independence, Malaysia started forming diplomatic ties with her Southeast Asian neighbors, Commonwealth countries and several nations outside of the Commonwealth. Being a former British