

Be sincere in whatever you do

LAST year was an eye-opener as I was fortunate enough to be a fellow for the Asia Leadership Fellow Programme (ALFP) in Japan. I found out about it through the Universiti Malaya information list.

It was a tedious and competitive process as only seven Asians, including one Japanese, were selected. Since 1996, when the programme was conducted, of the 109 participants Asia wide, only 10 were from Malaysia. I was the 10th recipient. The ALFP is prestigious in the sense that there is a minimum age limit (35 to 59 years) and it is meant for Asian intellectuals who are rooted in and committed to civil society beyond their own cultural, disciplinary and geopolitical backgrounds.

The participants get to stay in Japan for two months for exchange activities. This year's theme, "The Future of Asia, The World And Humanity After Development And

Growth", is interesting and suits all nations, including Malaysia. In the ethics and moral perspective, when growth and development take place, one becomes rationale, possess higher-order thinking skills for themselves and those around them.

But when local and international issues such as the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 or the leakage of Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah papers take place, there is a need for reflection of how we perceive growth and development in our nation.

Are we on the right path of wisdom, moderation, integrity and professionalism or are we side tracking towards greed, self importance and religious and political extremism.

We had a Look East Policy in the 1980s and, having stayed in Japan several times, I saw a strong foundation of values and culture, which the Japanese seek preserve in spite

of globalisation and international youth culture.

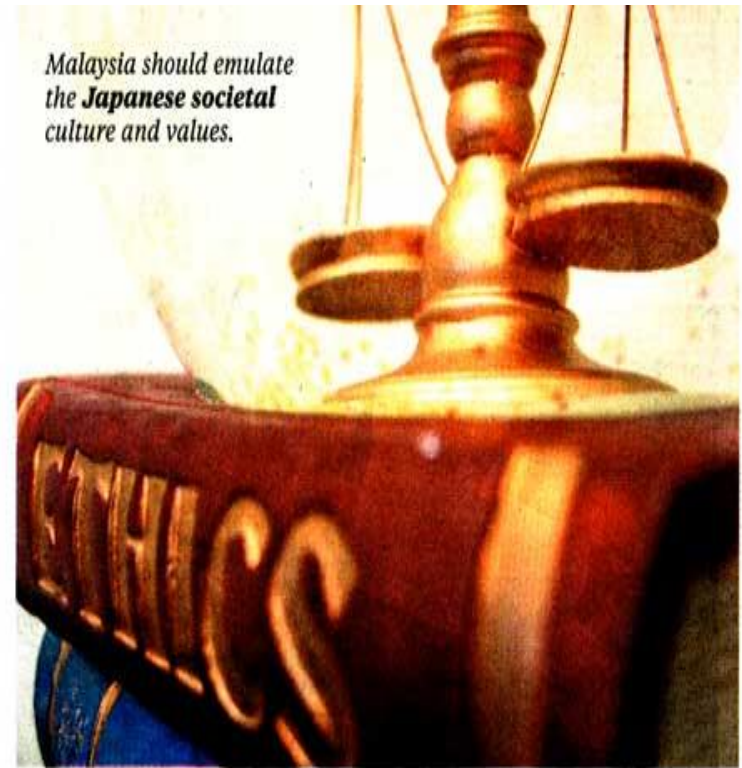
It's high time that the Malaysian government uses the skills and expertise of its academics, economist and sociologist because they are welcomed all over the world.

Japan is a mono-ethnic society, just like Korea and China. But there is plenty that Malaysians can learn from them, especially in education, integrity and honesty.

We claim to be a nation grounded on spirituality but issues in our nation are paint a different story.

Dishonesty, corruption, extremism and hate speech are not exactly ingredients of a spiritual nation with civil society.

For the Japanese, religion is a very personal matter. My acquaintances with the Japanese which started more than 30 years ago show that with or without religion, Japan is a civil society as its growth and development are sustained with strong family and societal cul-



*Malaysia should emulate the **Japanese societal** culture and values.*

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I hope to learn as much as I can and vice versa for the next few weeks of my stay in Tokyo and Nagasaki.

We can never be like them as we started as a multicultural society since independence but we have great pluralistic values that the Japanese always cherish and hope to learn more about.

The final message is to stay strong in times of challenges but be sincere in whatever you do, that's the Japanese way. Unity in diversity.

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