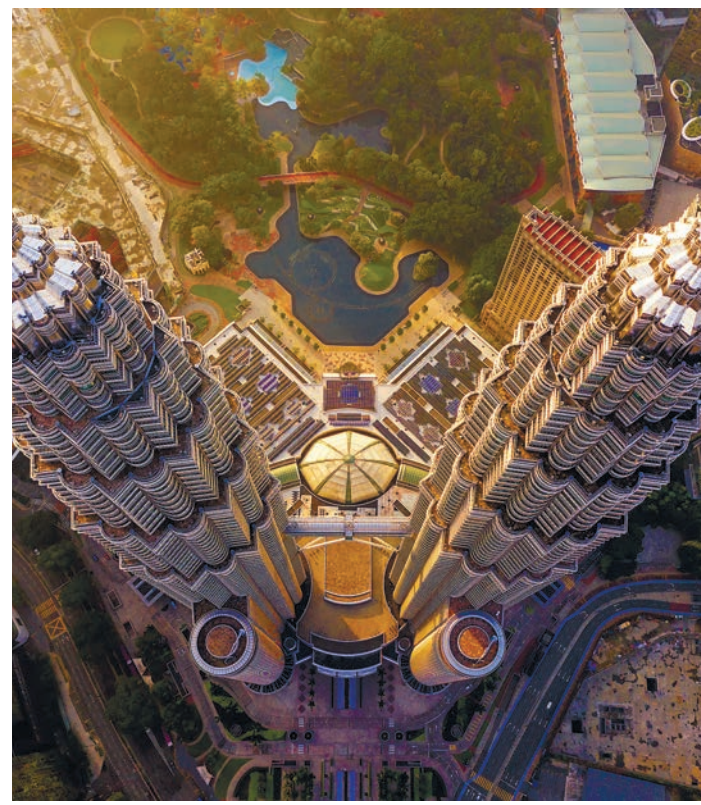


# ASEAN-Japan 50th anniversary Special

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2023



Left: The sun rises above the Mekong River in Don Khong, Laos. Above: The Petronas Twin Towers dominate the Kuala Lumpur skyline.

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## Trusted partners to co-create the future of the Indo-Pacific

FUMIO KISHIDA  
PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

In closing the year of 2023, we will celebrate the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation by hosting one of the biggest high-level events of the year, the Commemorative Summit in Tokyo.

Japan's relationship with ASEAN started half a century ago, when we decided to begin official dialogues with ASEAN countries ahead of the rest of the world. Since then, Japan and ASEAN have expanded and deepened relations to become not only major trading and investment partners, but also true friends with "heart-to-heart" connections based on a wide range of "people-to-people" exchanges.

Today, the international community is at a historic turning point and the international order based on the rule of law is under serious challenge. We also face complex and compounding challenges, such as climate change, global health and social disparities.

Looking to the next 50 years, we will diligently continue to work closely together based on mutual trust and respect we nurtured over the years. We will jointly address existing and new challenges and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region and provide pros-



perity for all of us.

Through the Commemorative Summit, I, with my fellow leaders from ASEAN, will set out a vision from Tokyo that will build on the "heart-to-heart" relationship that has been nurtured over the past half century, and hand the bond of trust to the next generation. This vision will show the world that Japan and ASEAN are strongly trusted partners in co-creating a sustainable and prosperous future together, not only for the region, but for the world as a whole.

Strengthening connectivity networks in ASEAN is key to maintaining stable global supply chains.

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Makati, a city in the metro Manila region, serves as the financial hub of the Philippines.

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The Japan-funded Tsubasa Bridge spans the Mekong River in Neak Loeng, Cambodia.

KYODO



Thai officials prepare to board a Japanese-built train for its first full trial run on Bangkok's Purple Line on May 10, 2016.

KYODO

## Close alliances crucial as regional power balances shift

SAYURI DAIMON  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Southeast Asia has experienced a dramatic change in the past half-century. Once regarded as a group of developing countries, the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations has grown to become a driving force of global economic growth. And Japan, which recovered from the ashes of war to become one of the world's leading economies, has played a pivotal role in assisting the development of this region.

This year, Japan and ASEAN mark their 50th anniversary of friendship and cooperation. Japan's formal relationship with ASEAN began when the Japan-ASEAN forum on synthetic rubber was established in 1973 to address trade friction over inexpensive synthetic rubber, which Japan had begun to produce in large quantities, and natural rubber from countries in ASEAN.

However, experts agree that more drastic shifts in demographics, economics and geopolitics will come in the next 50 years, which may affect the region's relationship with Japan.

For example, ASEAN's gross domestic product reached \$3.62 trillion in 2022, which is equivalent to about 86% of Japan's GDP of \$4.23 trillion and about 22% of the total GDP of the European Union, according to the World Bank.

A report by Goldman Sachs says that the booming population and economy of Indonesia will turn it into the world's fourth-largest economy in 2075, while Japan's position will likely drop to 12th in terms of GDP.

"In the world around 2075, Indonesia's GDP alone will probably be twice as large as Japan's, and ASEAN will have a GDP three or four times bigger than Japan's.



In a sense, it means our positions will be reversed," Maya Horii, senior partner of McKinsey & Co., told a recent Japan International Cooperation Agency symposium commemorating the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation. "Many Japanese may not imagine so, but I think such a significant change could well happen in the next 50 years."

### Improving ties

Commemorating the half-century of friendship, Japan is hosting a three-day summit in Tokyo through Dec. 18, and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has already expressed hope to unveil a new vision for cooperation with ASEAN.

Their relationship, however, has not always been smooth.

In the early 1970s, a surge in cheap exports resulting from Japan's economic dominance of the region triggered a backlash, with anti-Japanese riots breaking out in Jakarta and Bangkok during Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's tour of the region in 1974.

But in 1977, Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda visited the Philippines and delivered a speech known as the Fukuda Doc-



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (fifth from left) and his counterparts from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations pose for a group photo at the beginning of the Japan-ASEAN summit on Nov. 12, 2022, in Phnom Penh.

POOL PHOTO / KYODO

trine, which later became a cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy toward Southeast Asia. In his speech, Fukuda emphasized that Japan would never become a military power and would build a heart-to-heart relationship of mutual trust with ASEAN. He also stressed that Japan and ASEAN are equal partners.

Since then, Japan has contributed significantly to the development of the ASEAN region through foreign direct investment, official development assistance and other financial aid. Thanks to such efforts, Southeast Asian sentiment toward Japan today seems to be quite favorable.

According to the State of Southeast Asia 2023 Survey conducted by the ASEAN Studies Centre at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Japan remained the most trusted major power among Southeast Asians with

an overall trust level of 54.5% when asked, "How confident are you that Japan will 'do the right thing' to contribute to global peace, security, prosperity, and governance?"

Among those who believe in Japan, 41% responded that Japan is a "responsible stakeholder that respects and champions international law."

While the survey also found that China is regarded as the most influential economic and political power in the region, 61.1% of respondents chose the U.S. over China if forced to align with either of the two.

"Although ASEAN does not want Japan to completely replace China or the U.S., they would like to keep Japan as one of the choices to work with from the security perspectives as well as economic perspectives," said Mie Oba, a professor of international relations at Kanagawa University.

### Regional balance of power

Citing the emergence of China, the relative decline of U.S. hegemonic power and Japan's smaller economic presence, Oba stressed that the region's balance of power has changed, and Japan seriously needs to think about building an equal partnership with ASEAN.

"For ASEAN countries, there are many other partners. Not only Japan, but also China, Australia, New Zealand, India and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) now," Oba said, adding that ASEAN and the six Arab nations of the GCC held their first summit in Riyadh in October.

To win favor with ASEAN, Yose Rizal Damuri, executive director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Indonesia, said Japan should provide development assistance in areas such as digital transformation and green technologies.

The Tokyo summit between Japan and ASEAN is expected to cover wide-ranging issues, including challenges to a free and open international order based on the rule of law. Promotion of digitalization and support for innovation in enterprises, including start-ups as well as small and mid-sized companies, will also be on the agenda.

"If you rely on market mechanisms, it will remain financially unfeasible and costly. However, development assistance can help jump-start this transition to make it more financially feasible and more sustainable," Damuri said at the JICA symposium. "It can also make the development more inclusive to reach out to a lot of people."

In addition to economic ties, many ASEAN watchers point out the need for Japan to update its perception of Southeast Asia from the time when Japan was the top economic power in Southeast Asia. There

are so many things Japan should learn from the region, from its entrepreneurship to rich human resources to its utilization of new technologies. Many see Japan as a slow adopter of change.

"Unless we change such old perceptions, the relationship between Japan and ASEAN will not be a stable one," said Kanagawa University's Oba, adding that Japan must promote exchanges across various sectors and layers in society, especially among younger generations to foster mutual understanding for the future.

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# Leader profiles

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The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Japan

## Secretary-General of ASEAN Kao Kim Hourn

Kao survived the Khmer Rouge genocide and moved to the U.S. with his family at the age of 15. He returned to Cambodia in 1993 to run a think-tank dedicated to ASEAN and international affairs. He later joined the government of Cambodia, where he had served in a variety of posts, including secretary of state of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. He established the University of Cambodia in 2003 and continued to serve as the university president until he stepped down in October 2022.

He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, master's degrees in political science and international studies from Ohio University and a bachelor's in Asian studies from Baylor University.



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## Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Manet

Hun Manet, 46, took office in August following the nearly four-decade rule of his father Hun Sen, who was one of the world's longest-serving leaders.

Before his nomination as candidate for prime minister from the ruling Cambodian People's Party in 2021, Hun Manet had little political experience, having worked primarily in the military.

Born in 1977, Hun Manet joined the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces in 1995. He also graduated from the prestigious U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1999, becoming the first Cambodian to do so.

He earned a master's degree from New York University in 2002 and then a doctorate from the University of Bristol in Britain in 2008, both in economics.

After returning to his home country, Hun Manet took up key military posts, including lieutenant general and commander of the Royal Cambodian Army. He was promoted to four-star general earlier this year.

Despite his rigid image as a military man, Hun Manet showed a human side during his election campaigns by posing for selfies with supporters. Hun Manet has a son and two daughters with wife, Pich Chanmony.



POOL PHOTO/KYODO

## Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida

Kishida is eager to successfully host the Japan-ASEAN Commemorative Summit to celebrate 50 years of cooperation and friendship, seeking to outline Tokyo's future direction in the regional bloc.

Kishida, who considers himself a key diplomatic figure on the world stage, has extensively interacted with ASEAN's members, including trips to the Philippines and Malaysia in November.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker represents a constituency in Hiroshima. Dedicating his life's work to pursuing denuclearization, Kishida, who took office in October 2021, hosted the Group of Seven Summit in Hiroshima in May.

Kishida served as foreign minister for more than four years from 2012 and played a role in realizing then-U.S. President Barack Obama's historic visit to Hiroshima in 2016.

A graduate of Waseda University, the 66-year-old was a banker before being elected to the Diet in 1993. The third-generation politician is an avid fan of the Hiroshima Carp baseball team and has three sons with his wife, Yuko.



KYODO

## Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah

Bolkiah, who was crowned 56 years ago, became the world's longest-reigning living monarch upon the death of England's Queen Elizabeth II in September last year after more than 70 years on the throne.

The 77-year-old also serves as prime minister, defense minister, finance and economy minister, and foreign minister of the nation, which was a protectorate of Britain before gaining independence in 1984.

After studying in his home country and Malaysia, Bolkiah received training as an officer at England's Sandhurst military academy from 1966 to 1967.

In 1961, he was installed as the crown prince at the age of 15. Following the voluntary abdication of his late father Omar Ali Saifuddin, Bolkiah became the 29th sultan of Brunei in 1967.

Bolkiah enjoys polo, squash and badminton, and is a qualified aircraft and helicopter pilot. He has ranked high on lists of the world's richest monarchs, with his fortune derived from Brunei's oil and gas reserves. His nephew Faiq Bolkiah is a Brunei international soccer player who plays professionally in Thailand.



KYODO

## Indonesia President Joko Widodo

Widodo, also known as "Jokowi," is in his final year in office but still maintains broad popularity following his ascension a decade earlier as the first person to become Indonesian president with no military background nor ties to the political elite.

Born into the poor family of a carpenter in Solo, Central Java province, he studied forestry at university and ran a successful furniture exporting business.

After serving as mayor of Solo and governor of Jakarta, Widodo won the presidential election in 2014 and was re-elected in 2019 for another five-year term, backed by his populist appeal based on his humble roots and prioritization of infrastructure development.

With Indonesia's prominence growing as an emerging and developing economy in the Global South, Widodo hosted the Group of 20 leading and developing nations summit in November last year and came away with a leaders' declaration in difficult circumstances due to a rift over Russia's war on Ukraine.

The 62-year-old's presidency will end in October as the Constitution bans leaders from running for a third term.

Widodo enjoys riding motorcycles and listening to heavy metal music.



KYODO

## Laos Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone

Sonexay became prime minister in December 2022 after his predecessor, Phankham Viphavanh, who stepped down due to health issues as the nation was emerging from the global economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sonexay was born in 1966 and is the son of former President Khamtay Siphandone, who played a significant role in the revolutionary era that led to the current socialist rule established in 1975.

After serving as the governor of the southwestern province of Champasak, near the borders with Thailand and Cambodia, Sonexay was appointed deputy prime minister in 2016.

He is also a politburo member of the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party, now headed by President Thongloun Sisolith.

Sonexay will assume the role of rotating chair of ASEAN in 2024, taking over from Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

The 57-year-old politician visited Tokyo in 2022 to attend the state funeral of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was fatally shot at a political event earlier that year.



KYODO

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## AJC: Fostering youth diplomacy and leadership skills

The ASEAN Foundation Model ASEAN Meeting Plus Japan 2023, sponsored by the ASEAN-Japan Centre, was held at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta from Nov. 6 to 9 to celebrate the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.

As both ASEAN and Japan are committed to the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which upholds the association's key principles of centrality, openness, inclusiveness, transparency and respect for international law, the main theme of the Model ASEAN Meeting Plus Japan was "Advancing the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific through ASEAN-Japan Joint Cooperation."

The meeting saw 72 student and youth delegates between the ages of 18 and 25, selected from more than 1,000 applications gathered from the 10 ASEAN member states and Japan, represent countries other than their own in a diplomatic role-playing exercise at which they debated such panregional issues as cyber-crime, post-COVID recovery and how to empower young leaders to promote education.

At the end, they drafted a Chairman's Statement and submitted it to the ASEAN Secretariat and the Mission of Japan to ASEAN. The program provided the delegates with unique insights into how ASEAN works as an intergovernmental system and opportunities to practice building mutual understanding, network and enhance ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation. The young delegates were also able to learn about decision-making, public speaking, communication, team-building and leadership, as well as ASEAN-Japan affairs.

What motivated the youths to apply for spots at the Model ASEAN Meeting Plus



The 72 delegates to this year's Model ASEAN Meeting Plus Japan pose during the event, which gathers students from all ASEAN member states and Japan to participate in simulated debates. AJC

Japan varies according to each student.

Ayrtton Leon Krithin Anupama Singh Deol from Malaysia said the reason she joined was "to engage with other ASEAN nationals and learn about their perspective towards regional issues," while Cyril Karl Carandan from the Philippines said it was "to challenge my knowledge about international relations." Japanese delegate Rei Sugimoto said she wanted to interact with students who had different knowledge and values from different countries. After participating, Sugimoto said she found the simulation to be an event that "embodies the strong connection between ASEAN countries and Japan."

In the Chairman's Statement issued at the end of the conference, the delegates referred to the bonds between ASEAN and

Japan and reaffirmed their importance as stated in Clause 3: "We celebrate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. This commemoration is testament to the commitment to further strengthening the equal partnership between ASEAN and Japan, a partnership that is built on mutual trust and deep people-to-people, heart-to-heart relations. This will be underpinned by in-depth discussion in the areas of political security, the economy and society and culture."

H.E. Masahiko Kiya, ambassador of the Mission of Japan to ASEAN, attended the awards ceremony on the final day. Reflecting on his own experience participating in the Model U.N. in New York as a university student, which led to his career in diplomacy, he expressed hope that the delegates would one day be able to represent their respective countries or play important roles in a wide range of sectors.

The AJC was established in 1981 and is a unique intergovernmental organization based in Tokyo. The AJC is dedicated to realizing a shared vision between ASEAN and Japan by aligning strategic efforts with ASEAN Vision 2025. Its focus areas include promoting inclusive and sustainable practices in trade, investment and tourism, as well as strengthening people-to-people connections across the ASEAN member states and Japan. The voice of youth as stated in the Chairman's Statement is heard by the AJC, which will continue to further its efforts to serve for the benefit of the people of ASEAN and Japan.

Delegates to the Model ASEAN Meeting Plus Japan discuss key issues at simulated sessions, including the ASEAN Ministerial Plus Japan, ASEAN Community Council Plus Japan and ASEAN Sectorial Bodies Plus Japan meetings. AJC



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# Leader profiles

## Malaysia Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim

Anwar, 76, took power following a turbulent political career that included years of imprisonment.

Born into a political family, Anwar led an Islamic youth movement before joining the then-ruling United Malays National Organization in the early 1980s at the invitation of then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Anwar, seen as a potential successor to Mahathir, quickly ascended the political ladder, assuming significant posts, including deputy prime minister.

However, his relationship with Mahathir soured over the government's response to the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, leading to his ouster and more than nine years of imprisonment over allegations of sodomy and corruption, which he, as well as various international human rights organizations, characterized as political conspiracies formulated to ruin his career.

While behind bars, Anwar became a symbol that united the opposition. He received a royal pardon after the 2018 general election ended the ruling coalition's six decades in power.

He was appointed the nation's 10th prime minister in November 2022.

He and his wife, also a former deputy prime minister, have six children. His fifth daughter's husband is a Japanese national.



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## The Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Marcos has served as president since June 2022, sealing his family's return to power 36 years after his father's rule ended in a 1986 revolution.

The 66-year-old, also known as "Bongbong," has pursued closer ties with the United States, a long-standing treaty ally, in a shift from his pro-China predecessor Rodrigo Duterte.

In February, Marcos made his first visit to Japan since taking office.

He is the only son of the late former President Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda. The family fled to the United States to live in exile following the end of his father's 21-year rule, including a period in which the Philippines adopted martial law. His father died in Hawaii in 1989.

The family returned to the Philippines in 1991. Marcos served as governor and senator before running for the highest office.

Until recently, Marcos served as secretary of agriculture in addition to holding the presidency.

He has visited Japan many times in a private capacity. He is a Beatles enthusiast and a basketball fan, and known to enjoy eating king crab.



KYODO

## Thailand Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin

Srettha is a real estate tycoon who was elected in August. Domestic expectations are high that his business acumen will help drive Southeast Asia's second-largest economy to further heights.

The Bangkok native studied at the University of Massachusetts and obtained a master's degree in business administration from Claremont Graduate University in the United States. He worked in U.S. consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble Co.'s Thai unit for four years from 1986.

Srettha helped a family real estate business grow into one of the country's leading property developers, named Sansiri Public Co. He served as president and CEO before being elected prime minister, representing the Pheu Thai Party, which formed a coalition government with 10 parties following a general election in May.

While having no experience in government, the 61-year-old is known for his close ties to former prime ministers Thaksin Shinawatra and Yingluck Shinawatra, with whom he maintained business connections. Srettha doubles as finance minister.

His wife is a physician, and they have three children. He loves soccer and is a supporter of English club Liverpool, according to local media reports.



GETTY / VIA KYODO

## Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

Min Aung Hlaing, as commander in chief of Myanmar's armed forces, seized power following a military coup in February 2021 that toppled the government of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The 67-year-old has served as prime minister of the caretaker government\* since August 2021.

Born in Dawei in southern Myanmar and graduating from what is now the University of Yangon, Min Aung Hlaing took over the position of commander-in-chief in 2011 from Than Shwe, who had occupied the post for nearly two decades. Myanmar was at that time transitioning to democracy after decades of military rule.

Since the 2021 coup, the junta leader has not attended regular ASEAN summits.

Japan is known for having connections with both the Myanmar military and Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy, with the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe meeting Min Aung Hlaing in 2017 and 2019 in Japan.

\*Japan is among the countries that do not recognize the Myanmar junta as a legitimate government.



REUTERS VIA KYODO

## Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

Lee has steered the city-state that developed into a global trade and financial hub under his late father and the country's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew since 2004.

He is only the third prime minister since Singapore's independence from Britain in 1965, succeeding Goh Chok Tong, who was handpicked by the elder Lee and passed the baton to the younger Lee 14 years later.

Lee, 71, has accelerated the nation's digital transformation. To attract foreign tourists, Singapore has legalized gambling, with Japan looking to the Southeast Asian nation's success as it moves to build casino resorts of its own.

While maintaining close ties with China, Singapore has been a key U.S. security partner in Southeast Asia. Singapore is also the sole ASEAN member to have imposed economic sanctions on Russia following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Lee plans to step down and hand power to his deputy, Lawrence Wong, next year. Earning a diploma in computer science from the University of Cambridge, Lee's hobbies include programming. In 2015, he used Facebook to post code he wrote to solve sudoku puzzles.



KYODO

## Vietnam Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh

Chinh, 65, had a long career in the fields of intelligence and security before taking center stage in national politics in the socialist country.

Born in the north-central province of Thanh Hoa, he studied civil and industrial construction engineering. He served as an intelligence officer at the Ministry of Public Security for years and eventually became the head of the Party Central Committee's Organization Commission in 2016.

In April 2021, Chinh was elected prime minister, one of the four top positions in the political hierarchy along with the ruling Communist Party general secretary, president of the state, and National Assembly chair.

Chinh was president of the Vietnam-Japan parliamentary friendship group, having visited Japan multiple times and meeting with prime ministers.

As Japan seeks to forge closer ties with Vietnam, Chinh became the first foreign leader hosted by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida when the Japanese leader took office in 2021.

Chinh also worked in the Vietnamese Embassy in Romania, where he spent time as a university student.



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# ABeam Consulting a real partner in responsible growth

MAIKO MURAOKA  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

ABeam Consulting, based in Tokyo with 28 offices worldwide, clearly defines how it wants to help its clients grow by being a real partner.

"The first focus is the success of Japanese and other Asian enterprises in their domestic markets. The second is their growth in the global market, and the third is successful entries of non-Asian enterprises into the Asian market," President and CEO Takahiro Yamada said in a recent interview with The Japan Times. "We aim to be the first choice in Asia by maximizing our strength of being able to provide services that fit the Asian market's values, commercial practices, structure, characteristics and diversity of human resources."

One example of ABeam Consulting's ongoing projects is its management of human capital for a global trading company, leveraging its expertise in management, marketing, logistics, financing, risk management and digital transformation.

The project involves more than just a database on the company's employees in Asia for evaluation purposes. Its goal is to use the database to determine how to train each person and identify who to assign to a particular role or project. "Through effective management of human capital, you can visualize human resource information and optimize staffing, making it possible for especially talented workers to take leadership roles across countries and regions," Yamada said, stressing that using untapped abilities increases corporate value and leads to business growth.

ABeam Consulting also engages in

projects that utilize various cutting-edge technologies to create innovations and improve operations by focusing on regional characteristics. "Our role as a consulting firm is to connect companies with technology startups and to create plans of how technologies can be used to maximize the client's potential," Yamada said. He explained that the uniqueness of the Asian region is that it has a large population, especially of youths who are trend-conscious and shop actively. "A lot of technology startups are emerging in Asian countries such as India, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia that provide solutions to develop new customer experiences, taking advantage of the market characteristics," he said.

In the field of social infrastructure, ABeam Consulting has been engaging in projects in Southeast Asia, including the construction of a subway in Jakarta aimed at easing chronic traffic jams. "The project employed Japan's subway system almost entirely — from facilities, train cars, ticket vending machines and ticket gates to the IC card system. Our assistance extended from improving the user interface for better convenience to ensuring that the operation is sustainable and profitable by establishing an operating company and its structure," he said.

In Thailand, ABeam Consulting is involved in a project to introduce electric vehicles to public services and the transport sector, starting with the postal service. Similar examples of yen-loan-financed projects that the company has been part of can be found in countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and the Philippines. In all of these projects, the company has been especially conscious of taking approaches that are



Takahiro Yamada, president and CEO of ABeam Consulting HIROMICHI MATONO

well-accepted by the communities and self-sustaining in the long run.

To keep pace with the changing needs of companies and industries and provide optimum consulting and support, ABeam Consulting gleans insights on companies' interests and priorities from what they have committed to do in their corporate purposes and visions.

"Firstly, many companies speak of 'future creation,' which involves identifying their existing values and enhancing them to match the direction of social change. This is especially apparent in the fields of health care, energy and urban planning. The second point is what and how to transform, in order to create the future that they envision. And the major subject of transformation is the value

chain, which consists of the engineering chain, the supply chain and the demand chain," Yamada said. He pointed out that the manufacturing sector is faced with the need to accelerate various kinds of transformation, from implementing new technologies to promote smart factories and improving operational efficiency to enhancing digital marketing and creating new customer experiences.

The third point, he said, is sustainability, which involves the disclosure of non-financial information related to current greenhouse gas emissions plus plans and progress on reducing them, as well as data representing diversity among workers, such as the ratio of women in leadership positions and the proportion of multinational employees. "Many companies are

seeking to find out how these things will impact their corporate values, and what more they can do to accelerate their sustainability efforts and connect them to growth and profit," he said. "But for companies that are serving the Western European market, sustainability is already the top agenda that can make or break their businesses, depending on how they deal with it."

The fourth point is innovations based on digital technologies. "There is a wide range of new technologies, from those that contribute to the improved efficiency of management and operations, to the metaverse, which can create new business models and customer experiences of moving freely between the real and virtual worlds. Metaverse technology can also be used for the transfer of skills and technologies," Yamada said. Exploring new technologies and technological collaborations across industries can reinforce the effects of companies' efforts to address their issues from diverse aspects, which is also where the power of consulting comes into play.

These agendas are intertwined with each other. The issue of carbon emissions should be addressed collectively across value chains rather than by each company individually. Environmental, social and governance data allows companies to demonstrate how nonfinancial information will impact their future value. This is connected to impact-weighted accounting, which calculates and reflects a company's financial, social and environmental performances. ABeam Consulting offers a Digital ESG Platform that collects ESG-related information from inside and outside of a company and analyzes the accumulated data, which enables a quantitative understanding of ESG factors. This is expected to contribute to the utilization of ESG factors in maximizing corporate values and further acceleration of ESG pursuits.

At the same time, as ABeam Consulting provides comprehensive support to companies in all industries on these top-priority agendas, it also makes its own sustainability efforts. It is a member of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures consortium, established in Japan in 2019 with the aim of promoting the disclosure of climate-related information and its use by financial institutions



ABeam's new offices are located within walking distance of Tokyo Station. ABEAM

under the framework of the international TCFD. It has signed the United Nations Global Compact, which helps businesses worldwide fulfill their corporate responsibilities from the perspective of sustainability. It is a member of the Global Compact Network Japan, which aims to realize the compact's principles through contributing to national policymaking and participating in U.N. projects. ABeam Consulting also publishes an annual sustainability report.

"We are making these efforts not for the purpose of disclosure, because we are not a publicly listed company, but because we believe that maximizing our own sustainability will become a value of our own. We nurture our own human resources who can create innovations and harness technologies to digitalize our business. These efforts make it possible to create economic value while fulfilling our social responsibilities, leading to the sustainability of society and the universe. This is what we call our Value Creation Story," Yamada said.

Under the brand slogan "Build Beyond as One," ABeam Consulting is committed to developing human resources — both for itself and its clients — to build a collaborative ecosystem of diverse talents capable of leading transformations in various sectors and across society. "We are not just talking about the collaboration between ourselves and our clients, but a larger ecosystem where various stakeholders gather to create new values that benefit them all as well as society. To do that, we are taking both opportunities and risks together with our clients and tackling their challenges as our own, which is the attitude expressed in our slogan," Yamada said.



"Our role as a consulting firm is to connect companies with technology startups and to create plans of how technologies can be used to maximize the client's potential," Yamada said.  
HIROMICHI MATONO



# ASEAN-Japan partnership

(Sponsored content)

## Initiatives bearing fruit in Southeast Asia economies

### Japan-funded projects bolster infrastructure, improve connectivity of Indo-Pacific region

Japan and ASEAN are celebrating the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Over the past half century, Japan has built strong partnerships with each of the ASEAN countries, as well as with ASEAN as a whole. To conclude this commemorative year, Japan is hosting ASEAN leaders at a commemorative summit in Tokyo on Dec. 17.

### Free and open Indo-Pacific

Earlier this year in New Delhi, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced the Japanese government's plan to continue to pursue its Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative. According to his policy speech, the fundamental concept of FOIP is to "enhance the connectivity of the Indo-Pacific region, foster the region into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, free from force or coercion, and make it prosperous."

He also stated that FOIP "is becoming more important than ever toward the goal of leading the international community in the direction of cooperation rather than division and confrontation." The Indo-Pacific region, with more than half of the global population, is having increasing importance and impact over the rest of the world.

Against this backdrop, FOIP's visionary and holistic concept is gaining growing endorsement not only among the countries in the region, but also from the international community. Diverse efforts have been made and cooperation sought for the realization of FOIP in various parts of the world, based on the common understanding that the dynamism of the Indo-Pacific region is a driver of the global economy and that order based on the rule of law in the region needs to be reinforced.

### FOIP's foundations

Four pillars have been set forth to realize the concept of FOIP. The first is Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity, which aims to ensure the recognition of fundamental principles of peace and peace-building, create a free, fair and just economic order while keeping up with the changing of the times, and promote rule-making to prevent opaque and unfair practices.

The second pillar is Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way, a concept that will focus on the protection of common global issues, such as climate, the environment, cyberspace, global health, food and energy and the enhancement of the resilience and sustainability of societies.

The third is Multilayered Connectivity, which aims to improve connectivity among the Indo-Pacific countries from various aspects to support the collective growth of the entire region and build stronger relationships with countries outside it.

The final pillar is Extending Efforts for Security and Safe Use of the Sea to the Air, based on enhancing the security and safety of these two public domains.

Of all the pillars, Multilayered Con-



Left: Japanese and Cambodian representatives conduct a final inspection of National Road No. 5 in Kampong Chhnang province in November 2022.

Below: Munineath Sor (left) and his colleague during road embankment compaction trials on the Kampong Chhnang Bypass in February 2019

SUMITOMO MITSUI CONSTRUCTION CO.

tivity is considered the core element of cooperation for FOIP, and there are various initiatives to achieve connectivity. One example is the Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative, which is aimed at further facilitating the integration of the ASEAN community — something Japan has long contributed to. The initiative consists of projects focusing on transport infrastructure development, enhancement of digital connectivity, maritime cooperation, improvement of supply chain resilience and electrical connectivity, as well as human and knowledge connectivity.

### Improving road transport

The transport infrastructure development projects are designed to provide better connectivity both within each country and among neighboring countries in the region and with the rest of the world by creating

**This experience made me realize that people with different cultures and backgrounds can work together as one.**

land, sea and air corridors. This includes technical cooperation as well as promotion of institutional and people-to-people connectivity. One of the projects under the initiative is the National Road No. 5 Improvement Project in Cambodia. NR 5 is part of what is called the Southern Economic Corridor that stretches

between Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam and Dawei in Myanmar. The project, which started a decade ago to cover a distance of 366 kilometers between Prek Kdam near Phnom Penh in the southern-central part of the country and Poipet near the border with Thailand, is intended to contribute to the economic development of Cambodia and the Mekong River basin. Through the project, NR 5 has been widened and improved with new bypasses intended to raise efficiency for the rapidly growing logistics sector.

Munineath Sor, a civil engineer at Katahira Engineers International who was involved in the project from an early stage and is now working on the completion report, explained how the road has changed.

"It was mostly a dirt road 30 years ago. Some of it had been paved or repaired over the years, but the poor quality made it vulnerable to heavy vehicles and repeated



floods. Cars, trucks, motorcycles, bicycles and tractors all drove in the same lane, causing frequent accidents," he said.

Sor said the project has brought a number of benefits to both the community and local industry.

"Before the project started, it could take one to two days to travel from the border with Thailand to Phnom Penh, but now that you can drive at 90 kph in some sections, the travel is shortened to only one day or less," he said.

In addition to making travel safer, easier and faster for residents and businesses via additional lanes, bypasses and high-quality paving, new road signs are helping tourists get to their destinations. Thanks to the increased convenience, people started to build houses on what used to be rice fields and farms, lifting land values. This has led to new shops and businesses being launched along the road, invigorating the economy wherever it goes.

There are also many benefits that are less visible, Sor explained.

"Transportation costs went down thanks to the shortened travel time and less need for car maintenance. The trees and bushes planted along parts of the road and the bypasses mitigate noise and pollution. The project used local people, which helped them acquire new skills.

"I personally gained a lot from the project, which I joined when I was fresh out of college. Although I had majored in civil



Above: Cambodia's National Road No. 5 passes through an irrigation reservoir after being widened in August 2022. Left: Construction work on the Kampong Chhnang Bypass continues during the rainy season in June 2021. SUMITOMO MITSUI CONSTRUCTION CO.

engineering at university, the project made me realize that what you learn at school is one thing, and what you are expected to do on a real construction project is quite another," Sor said.

There were things that he learned especially by working under Japan's initiative.

"In addition to the advanced infrastructure technology, the noise, dust and air and water quality were constantly monitored during construction, and there were rules about waste disposal, which is why I believe in the quality of Japan's infrastructure," he said. "I did learn about environmental measures to be taken in construction sites in general at university, but the project was a perfect example of how such knowledge should be put into practice."

He also said working in a diverse environment was a valuable experience.

"Throughout the project, I worked with many people older than me who taught me new things, as well as with project members from other countries including Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines. This

experience made me realize that people with different cultures and backgrounds can work together as one," he said.

Besides the quality of the road itself, safety awareness plays an important role in reducing traffic accidents and maintaining convenience and efficiency in traffic and logistics. Japan has also launched its Project for Improvement of Road Traffic Safety on Trunk Roads, which is intended to plan, execute and assess traffic safety measures and share know-how related to accident prevention and investigation.

### Port upgrades

The Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative also includes maritime cooperation, such as port improvement projects. A series of development projects for Sihanoukville Port, the only international deep sea port in Cambodia, has supported the country's economic growth, especially in logistics and trade.

Japan is also helping Indonesia develop Patimban Port, a new international port including container and car terminals in the eastern part of the Jakarta metropolitan area. It is intended to solve the capacity issues by meeting increased cargo demand and reducing excessive traffic congestion in the capital. The first part of the project, financed by a ¥118.9 billion loan from the Japanese government, is complete and the car terminal has been run by Japanese companies since December 2021. The second part, which is intended to expand the port area, is ongoing and financed by a ¥70.2 billion loan also from Japan.

Dian Wahdiana, head of the Class II Port Authority Office of Patimban, is coordinating all stakeholders while managing the port operations. Wahdiana said the new port will also strengthen economic resilience and contribute to the green transformation

of transportation by bringing production centers closer to the port, resulting in fuel savings and the use of renewable energy to maintain port operations.

The port authority has been involved since the earliest phases of construction, and Wahdiana has witnessed some challenges during the process.

"Patimban, on the north coast of Java, is known for its shallow water and required dredging to allow large vessels to enter. It required soil improvement to use as a backup area for the port and related businesses," he said.

He said the people of West Java and the residents of Subang Regency in particular, have welcomed the development of Patimban Port with the hope that it can increase the potential for developing community competence. "Six villages around the port, for example, have seen an increase in trading activities and residential tenancy corresponding to the increase of workers involved in the project," he said.

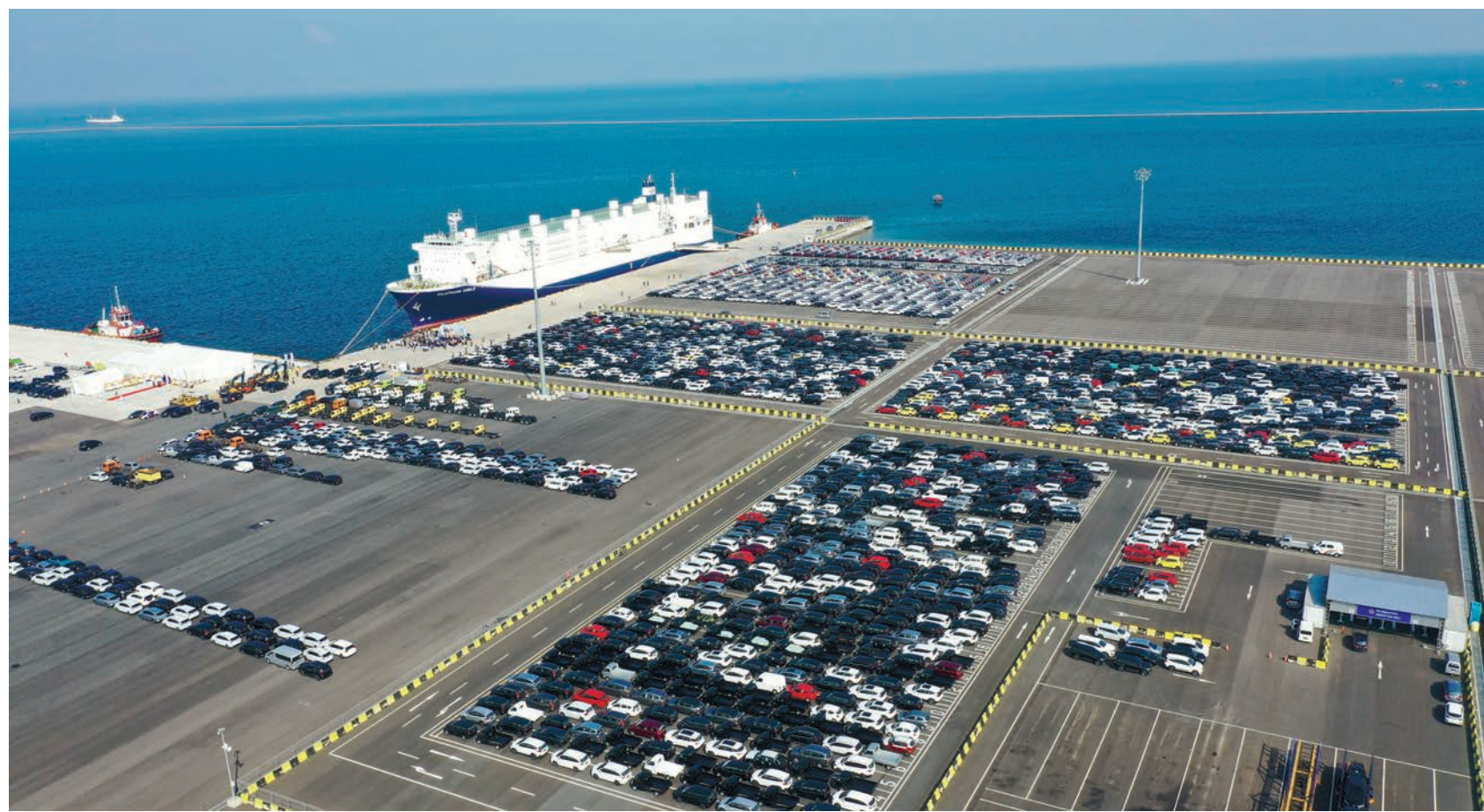
Local participation has also been encouraged. "The project upholds the manpower optimization target of achieving the engagement of the local labor force to account for a minimum of 30% of the total," Wahdiana said.

### The value of people

As seen in both of these projects and all other activities carried out under FOIP, human resource development has always been the key element in Japan's support to the region. Japan plans to provide capacity-building projects that span areas ranging from transport infrastructure, electrical and digital connectivity and maritime cooperation to human and knowledge connectivity for 5,000 individuals over the next three years under the Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative.

Various projects worth ¥2.8 trillion are being implemented in transport infrastructure development alone. Japan's capability to build quality infrastructure, which is a must in providing a powerful foundation for continuing economic growth, can be maximized by forming a strong partnership with the recipients of its support.

There are also diverse ongoing projects that will facilitate the mutual development of ASEAN and Japan as equal partners based on trust. These multilayered collaborations will not only bring peace, prosperity and sustainability to the region, but also pave the way to achieve the FOIP that the global community aspires to.



The sprawling Patimban Port Car Terminal is capable of accommodating thousands of cars. JICA



Dian Wahdiana (left) and other Indonesian officials update Japan International Cooperation Agency staff on the progress of the Patimban Port project in March at the Patimban Port Office in West Java, Indonesia.

CLASS II PORT AUTHORITY OFFICE OF PATIMBAN



# ASEAN-Japan partnership

(Sponsored content)

## Tomorrow's leaders ready to take on pressing problems

### Programs help prepare youth for coming issues affecting society

Forming connections to share insights on common challenges has been a central aspect to the 50 years of friendly relations between Japan and ASEAN that are being celebrated in this golden anniversary year.

Of special importance, perhaps, is helping these connections to be made among the next generation of leaders who will sustain those ties between ASEAN and Japan into the future.

Toward that end, among all the half-century commemorative events and programs held this year in Japan and elsewhere, two separately focused on undergraduates and young professionals in leadership roles. The goal to these cohorts was to provide an opportunity to think together with their peers about such societal challenges as aging and climate change, and to help foster shared understandings and build relationships among them.

### Envisioning a better world

The first of these saw 30 undergraduates from all the countries combined take part in an event titled, "ASEAN-Japan Youth Forum: Take Actions for Social Change (TASC) 2023." Organized by the Japan Foundation and the Kamenori Foundation in cooperation with the ASEAN University Network, the program was created to bring together undergraduates "who wish to take concrete actions to solve social issues under the common interest of co-creating a better world in 2050."

TASC participants were divided into three groups, with each assigned a specific issue area and sent this past August and September on field trips to one of three countries — Thailand, Indonesia or the Philippines. In the country to which they were dispatched, they studied their team's assigned issue together on the ground based on questions and themes they had developed in advance.

"The issue areas in the program were aging society, diversity, and environment and disaster education," said participant Shane Ubana, a student in her third year at Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. "I am a development studies major in my university, and I want to tackle development from a global perspective. These are all significant issues to tackle today, and that interested me."

Aging was the topic for the team to which Ubana was assigned. An Asian Development Bank report, for example, explains the issues at stake. "With longer life expectancies and decreased fertility rates, rapid aging in Asia and the Pacific has put the region at the forefront of one of the most important global demographic trends. By 2050, one in four people in Asia and the Pacific will be over 60 years old. ... This demographic transition will have wide social and economic consequences on the region with implications ranging from the ways cities and communities are built and organized; the delivery and organization of health and social services to work, employment and social security as well as support-

ive fiscal policies." TASC participants were afforded the opportunity to gain a wider understanding of the challenges such issues present that are common to their home countries, Ubana said.

"The Philippines in particular is not yet an aging society unlike other countries such as Japan or Thailand," she said. "The program allowed me to be more open-minded to different issues that the Philippines may not be facing just yet. ... In the Philippines, we lack a concrete system of family planning, and sometimes there are too many births every year for families to handle on their own. Meanwhile, an aging society is the main problem in, for example, Japan. So, having people come together to learn from each other to solve their problems ... is a learning experience from which everyone can benefit."

### Widened perspectives

Bringing young people together of diverse backgrounds was another organizing principle behind the TASC project. Meeting, studying together and working collaboratively with other people who have diverse values and different cultural backgrounds was meant to expand the participants' perspectives and increase acceptance and tolerance of different cultural environments.

"In Thailand, most of the elderly (we interacted with) didn't know how to speak English, but there was still a kind of camaraderie between us ... (an awareness that) we were all working for the betterment of society," she said. "It's not only us who learned from them. It was a learning experience also between us, because we got to immerse ourselves in a different culture apart from our own."

### The program allowed me to be more open-minded to different issues that the Philippines may not be facing just yet.

This phenomenon also extended to the participants themselves, Ubana said. "What I learned from my fellow Thailand delegates is that we're all so different yet so the same," she said. "For most of us, English was not really our first language, so we were trying to communicate with one another. Sometimes I would unconsciously slip into (Tagalog) because it's my home language. Yet, somehow we just made it work because we know we're working together for something. We were definitely like-minded individuals coming together to fight for something."

After completing the online meetings and field work, the teams gathered in Tokyo in November to present their findings and ideas for action to address their assigned issue area. The Action Plan Final Presentation was held on Nov. 24 in front of an audience of about 80 that included officials from the ASEAN member states' embassies in Tokyo, the Foreign Ministry as well as academics, students and representatives from nonprofit organizations and foundations. The participants successfully delivered their presentations on each theme, identifying the issues and analyzing the current situation after spending four



Participants in the ASEAN-Japan Youth Forum: Take Actions for Social Change 2023 pose during a field trip to Thailand from Aug. 27 to Sept. 1.



TASC participants hold a group discussion in Chiang Mai during a field trip to Thailand between August and September.

months working together as a team.

On a personal level, Ubana said, the program "sparked inside me ... that I'd love to take into account the different perspectives of development from each country, because it's very, very subjective for each one. I will ... definitely be open to much more in the future."

### The business generation

While the TASC program focused on the generation that is just completing its higher education, the ASEAN-Japan Young Business Leaders' Summit (YBL Summit) spotlighted an older cohort.

Sponsored jointly by Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, the Japan External Trade Organization, and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council, this event brought together "promising human resources expected to become future business leaders in ASEAN and Japan."

Held this December, its goal was to provide participants with opportunities to jointly discuss and propose solutions to societal challenges in both regions, with the hope that doing so would "build and fortify mutual understanding and a trusting relationship between ASEAN and Japan."

The YBL Summit brought together 40 young business professionals aged under 50 (a parallel Generation Z summit was held for those under 30). The attendees came from 10 countries and worked in fields ranging from finance to agriculture. It's worth bearing in mind that, graying populations or no, the members of this cohort are now entering or well into their active years and taking the lead in their fields.

One such participant was Thailand's Tanit Chearavanont. A Harvard University graduate, the 35-year-old Chearavanont is currently the chief executive officer of cash-and-carry wholesaler Siam Makro. One year into his post as CEO, the question of simply how to be a leader is an issue that has been on his mind.

"Being a good leader first of all means leading from the front. ... By going down to the stores, I could see firsthand and actually understand what the issues were," he said. "But it's also about balancing. Sometimes when you are very hands-on, you get into the very minute details. But when you get too deep into the minute details, you forget about the macro topics, the big strategic topics. It's about balancing the tactical and the strategic. A good leader is able to strike a balance between the two."

### Energy, climate beckon

Societal challenges were also on the agenda for the YBL Summit. Chearavanont raised the rapidly graying societies in, for example, Japan and Thailand, and the spinoff effects they will have on the labor force that business leaders will have to cope with in the near future.

"There are certain roles or types of jobs where we have to hire people from neighboring countries," he said. "We also see that the government is going to be raising the minimum wage in coming years. With rising labor costs, does that mean we are going to have speed up automation?"

Energy consumption and climate change were also areas for discussion. In terms of the former, Japan, for example, is dependent on imports for more than 90% of its energy supply. But ASEAN is likewise exposed. New technologies like artificial intelligence that require data centers con-



Shane Ubana (left) attends the TASC Action Plan Final Presentation on Nov. 24 in Tokyo. KENICHI AIKAWA

suming vast amounts of energy will be a concern for all going forward, Chearavanont said. "What I understand is that as we use more AI, data centers will consume three to four times more energy than before," he said.

As to the issue of climate change, ASEAN has stated that it "is a major concern to

### What I think is important about being a younger business leader is that you're able to bridge the gap between traditional management and the new generation.

ASEAN, as Southeast Asia is one of the most at-risk regions in the world to the impacts of climate change." The topic of meeting the United Nations' sustainable development goals is indeed an area of concern, Chearavanont said.

"Many big companies are adhering to U.N. SDGs. We see that many are pledging that by 2030 they will achieve carbon neutrality and by 2050 they will be carbon net zero. We, too, have a lot of things to do by 2030 to get us to that stage," he said.

### Definition of young

Both the TASC program and YBL Summit specifically focused on attendees within age brackets defined as "young." Chearavanont, however, thinks that, regardless of age, being young in mindset and progressive in terms of thinking are also important.

"The definition of young varies. Sometimes I feel that I am not young anymore ... when I am conversing with younger employees, I feel like I am already a different generation. So, the word young is quite arbitrary," he said. "But what I think is important about being a younger business leader is that you're able to bridge the gap between traditional management and the new generation that is entering the workforce."

He continued: "The definition of young just keeps moving. I think it's the mindset. When I first joined (Siam Makro), my late grandfather was the chief executive offi-

cer of the group. This was eight years ago, but he was saying the company needed to move fast on e-commerce. E-commerce was still minuscule, but his thinking was already very advanced."

When asked about his expectations for the YBL Summit to be held a short time after this interview, he expressed hope that contacts with lesser-known companies and exchanges of technology would be facilitated between each region.

"Japan always had a strong relationship with the ASEAN (members). But often its relations are quite dependent on the large Japanese conglomerates or the trading companies. But at the same time, there's a lot of good talent in Japan in the MSME (micro, small, and medium enterprises) level that doesn't really have that exposure to the ASEAN market," he said.

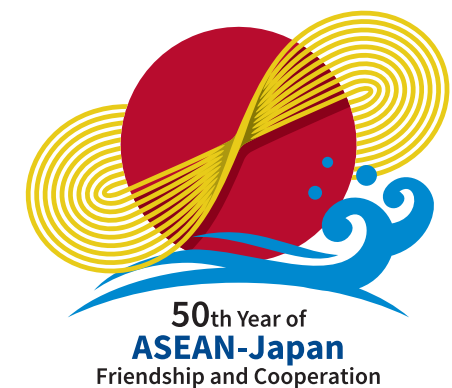
"There's a lot of good technology innovation that is happening in Japan that I feel like it has always been sort of clustered in Japan purely for domestic consumption and hasn't really been sort of exported out," he added. "I think through this type of dialogue it is possible to bring about that type of technological advancement or manufacturing practices to the ASEAN countries."

Over the past 50 years, Japan and ASEAN have built a relationship of trust as important partners. Looking ahead to the next 50 years, the younger generation has already begun to exercise leadership and search for a future of further mutual development.

Pages 4 and 5 are sponsored by the government of Japan.



Makro Thailand's Food Solution booth showcases food from six international cuisines with ingredients imported from over 25 countries worldwide at the Makro HoReCa (hotel, restaurant and catering) event in Bangkok in November.





# Brunei Darussalam



Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque is a timeless architectural work of art and features a replica of a 16th century royal barge. EMBASSY OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

## Expanding cultural ventures serve to bolster understanding

**HAJI SHABUDIN HAJI MUSA**  
AMBASSADOR OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



My warm greetings to esteemed readers from the Embassy of Brunei Darussalam in Tokyo.

At the outset, I would like to convey my thanks to The Japan Times for arranging special

supplements for each Association of Southeast Asian Nations member state as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation this year in the lead-up to the Commemorative Summit in December.

With origins tracing back to Japan's postwar reconstruction and its focus on fostering diplomatic ties in Asia during the 1950s and 1960s, the relationship between ASEAN and Japan has evolved significantly over the past five decades into a robust partnership that encompasses political, economic and cultural dimensions. Since the beginning of ASEAN-Japan diplomatic engagement in 1973, Japan's use of its economic strength, technological advancements, and willingness to invest in the region have been instrumental in building trust, goodwill and strong cooperation.

Over the years, the ASEAN-Japan partnership has grown steadily, based on common interests and shared values. Japan's commitment to peace, stability and development in the Southeast Asian region has made it an important partner for ASEAN. In 1977, Japan joined the ASEAN Regional Forum, further solidifying its presence in regional security discussions.

Brunei Darussalam has maintained a unique and progressive relationship with Japan, a regional and global powerhouse, both bilaterally and multilaterally as a member of ASEAN, a regional organization formed in 1967 with the aim of promoting economic and political cooperation, as well as stability in the Southeast Asian region.

Japan's engagement with ASEAN as a whole is driven by its interest in promoting regional stability and economic growth. In this context, Brunei Darussalam has been a constructive partner.

Brunei Darussalam and Japan have developed multifaceted relations that



Spanning 30 kilometers, the Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien Bridge is the longest bridge in Southeast Asia. EMBASSY OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

encompass economic cooperation, political partnerships and cultural exchanges. Brunei Darussalam's relations with Japan are anchored in economic cooperation, with trade forming a crucial component of the partnership. Japan is one of Brunei Darussalam's top trading partners, and economic ties have grown significantly over the years, particularly in the form of exports of oil and liquefied natural gas to Japan, while Japan exports a variety of manufactured goods and machinery to Brunei.

Japan's interest in Brunei Darussalam's energy resources, particularly LNG, is of strategic importance to its energy security, and Brunei Darussalam's reliable supply of LNG has helped to reduce Japan's dependence on less stable regions for energy sources.

Investment is another key aspect of economic cooperation between the two nations, with Japanese companies having made substantial investments in Brunei Darussalam's energy sector. These investments have not only strengthened economic ties, but also facilitated technology transfers and local skill development.

Within the ASEAN framework, Brunei Darussalam and Japan have also cooperated on various political-security issues. Japan has continually expressed its support for ASEAN's efforts in maintaining a rules-based international order and addressing regional issues through diplomatic means. Japan's commitment to ASEAN's principles aligns with Brunei Darussalam's interests in preserving regional peace and stability.

Cultural exchanges between Brunei

Darussalam and Japan have also played a vital role in the strengthening of relations. Both nations have sought to deepen their understanding of each other's cultures and traditions. These exchanges have fostered people-to-people connections and enhanced mutual respect, understanding and cooperation.

This includes tourism and educational exchanges, where the two-way flow of visitors has been growing. In terms of education, Bruneian students have pursued their higher education in Japan, benefiting from the country's world-class institutions. Programs that host people from ASEAN across various fields of cooperation, such as the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths, continue to play pivotal roles in developing closer people-to-people ties.

Looking to the future, there are many more opportunities for Brunei Darussalam and Japan to work together, including those that come with the evolving regional geopolitical landscape and the need to ensure the sustainability of economic ties amid the challenges presented by climate change.

In conclusion, Brunei Darussalam greatly values Japan's support and commitment to ASEAN based on heart-to-heart understanding, trust and respect. As a member of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam looks forward to commemorating this auspicious occasion to advance the golden friendship shared with Japan and seize golden opportunities to further advance the ASEAN-Japan partnership.



Visitors to Ulu Temburong National Park view the 50,000-hectare expanse of undisturbed primary rainforest from the canopy walkway. TOURISM BRUNEI

# Cambodia

## Cross-border trade sees growth across a wide variety of sectors

**TUY RY**  
AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA



On the special occasion of celebrating the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, I have the great pleasure and honor of extending my warmest greetings and a hearty welcome to all of the leaders and delegates from ASEAN, particularly Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, to the Commemorative Summit being held in Tokyo through Dec. 18.

I am pleased to acknowledge that ASEAN and Japan, built upon mutual trust, understanding and benefit, have evolved to participating in a wide range of cooperation spanning the political-security, economic and socio-culture pillars through various ASEAN-led mechanisms, with a common determination to maintain regional peace, security, stability and prosperity for the people of both ASEAN and Japan. Among others, significant progress in the ASEAN-Japan partnership has been made through the full and effective implementation of the Revised Implementation Plan of the Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation: Shared Vision, Shared Identity, Shared Future.

This year, we celebrate the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation with the establishment of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. We look forward to the joint adoption of a new vision statement and implementation plan at this summit to chart our future direction in this new chapter of our partnership.

We highly appreciate Japan's unwav-



Preah Vihear Temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that was listed on July 7, 2008. MINISTRY OF TOURISM

ering support for ASEAN centrality and its commitment to working together to strengthen our inclusive, open and fair multilateralism and the international order. Cambodia is committed to working with all ASEAN members and Japan to further promote synergies of cooperation between the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific initiative, and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative for mutual benefit in enhancing peace, cooperation and tangible benefits based on the AOIP's four priorities, via the ASEAN Plus One mechanism.

On this note, I thank Japan for its contribution of \$100 million to the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund 3.0 to support the implementation of the AOIP. We also highly commend Japan's commitment to mobilizing more than \$75 billion from public and private funds in the Indo-Pacific region by 2030, and hope these funds can be used to support the implementation of

the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the development of high-quality infrastructure.

As Japan is one of ASEAN's largest trading and investment partners, we value economic ties with Japan and view them as critical to our long-term economic growth. Therefore, we are determined to continue implementing the ASEAN-Japan Ten-Year Strategic Economic Cooperation Roadmap 2016-2025 and the ASEAN-Japan Economic Resilience Action Plan.

With the entry into force of the first protocol to amend the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership, I would like to encourage the full utilization of this agreement to effectively enhance trade in services, movement of people and investments between ASEAN and Japan.

We have acknowledged the remarkable achievement that ASEAN-Japan trade in

*Continued on page B7*



Top: Angkor Wat, Siem Reap; Above: Aspara dance is a Cambodian tradition. MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**Welcoming**  
the Cambodia delegation  
and wishing for their success  
at the ASEAN-Japan  
Commemorative Summit

**MARUHAN GROUP**

**សម្ព័ន្ធស្ថាប័ន**  
**SATHAPANA BANK**

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# Cambodia



**Baphuon Temple** MINISTRY OF TOURISM

→ **Continued from page B6**  
2022 reached \$268.5 billion, while total foreign direct investment from Japan amounted to \$26.7 billion. This ranks Japan as ASEAN's fourth-largest trade partner and second-largest external source of FDI among the ASEAN dialogue partners in 2022.

The ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership have helped exporters and importers to scale up their activities to benefit from the pacts. Under these two frameworks, Cambodia exported \$1.09 billion worth of goods to Japan in the first seven months of 2023. From January to July, Cambodia imported goods worth \$296 million from Japan. The movement of people, goods, money and information across our borders is becoming increasingly active.

It is also auspicious that this year, Cambodia and Japan are holding commemorative events to celebrate our remarkable

70th anniversary of diplomatic ties, which have also been elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

Cambodia and Japan maintain frequent high-level exchanges and communications at various levels, as evidenced by the ASEAN summit and other related summits last year in Phnom Penh. In early September in Jakarta, our leaders discussed ways to further deepen our long-standing bilateral relations and increase cooperation in a number of key areas, including trade, investment and security. Moreover, on Oct. 30, H.E. Sok Chenda Sophea, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation, had a productive telephone conversation with his counterpart H.E. Yoko Kamikawa, and noted with satisfaction the growing cooperation across various sectors, particularly in economic realms. They reiterated their joint commitment to further strengthening and expanding wide-ranging areas of mutually beneficial cooperation and interests.

It is well known that the Cambodian-Japanese partnership, based on friendship, trust and mutual respect, has been steadily fostered with the invaluable assistance and facilitation of the governmental agencies of Japan, including the ASEAN-Japan Centre, the Japan External Trade Organization and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Both countries have used their comprehensive strategic partnership to attract more Japanese investment and open the market wider for Cambodian products.

In conclusion, while extending my heartfelt appreciation to the government and people of Japan for their continuing support for the socioeconomic development of Cambodia, may I wish the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation great success, with productive outcomes, setting out a new vision for a greater future enhancing our relationship and cooperation.



**Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and then-Prime Minister Hun Sen co-chair the 25th ASEAN-Japan Summit on Nov. 12, 2022, in Phnom Penh.** ROYAL EMBASSY OF CAMBODIA IN JAPAN



**Above: Independence Monument is one of the landmarks of Phnom Penh. Below: The Royal Palace in Phnom Penh is illuminated at night.** MINISTRY OF TOURISM



**The Sihanoukville Autonomous Port is the sole international and commercial deep-water port in Cambodia.** MINISTRY OF TOURISM



## *Welcoming the Cambodia delegation and wishing for their success at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit*

**The Honorary Consulate of the Kingdom of Cambodia in Fukuoka is honored to have developed the following activities:**

- ❖ Visa issuance
- ❖ Promotion of two-way tourism
- ❖ Organizing cultural events in Fukuoka to showcase Cambodian arts and culture
- ❖ Introduction of Cambodia to young people in the Kyushu and Okinawa regions to promote their interest in building bridges between Japan and Cambodia



**Haruhisa Handa**  
Honorary Consul of  
the Kingdom of Cambodia in Fukuoka,  
Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia  
with the rank of Senior Minister



### **Honorary Consulate of the Kingdom of Cambodia in Fukuoka**

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# Indonesia

## Another 50 years of friendship, heart and regional prosperity

**HERI AKHMADI**  
AMBASSADOR OF INDONESIA



2023 commemorates the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. With the spirit of "Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities," ASEAN and Japan are in the driver's

seat to bring the interests of our region forward.

The year 2023 also highlights the leadership of our two countries in the region; Indonesia is the chair of ASEAN and Japan is the chair of the Group of Seven leading industrial nations. The theme of Indonesia's ASEAN chairmanship is "ASEAN as the Epicentrum of Growth," which is inclusive, resilient and sustainable. There are three pillars under this theme: ASEAN Matters; the Epicentrum of Growth; and the Implementation of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific; and each has distinct objectives.

On the ASEAN Matters pillar, Indonesia intends to strengthen ASEAN unity, ASEAN centrality and ASEAN capacity to address current and future challenges toward 2045.

Under the Epicentrum of Growth pillar, Indonesia plans to solidify ASEAN regional mechanisms to manage external shocks and their implications for health, food security, energy and financial resilience in the region.

Finally, regarding the Implementation of AOIP pillar, Indonesia sees the need to build better connectivity and a more inclusive regional architecture.

### Heart-to-heart ties

In our view, each pillar is closely linked to and complements the others. For this reason, ASEAN Matters would not only strengthen ASEAN's centrality, but also contribute to our vision for peace and security in our backyard.

Japan is ASEAN's first partner. And for the past 50 years, ASEAN and Japan have



**Ambassador Heri Akhmadi (second from left) opens the Indonesia Japan Friendship Festival in Tokyo's Yoyogi Park on Oct. 14.**  
EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

been working together to create peace, stability and prosperity in the region. If I may quote Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's remarks at the International Symposium on the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, Japan and ASEAN are "true friends with 'heart-to-heart' relations." I believe the key to guiding our relationship for the next 50 years is for us all to work on nurturing the hearts of our peoples.

### 65-year relationship

2023 also marks 65 years of Indonesia-Japan diplomatic relations. During this span, we have successfully deepened our relationship and expanded our cooperation in various areas of mutual strategic interest.

The theme of our 65th anniversary is "One Heart," which is "Kokoro Hitotsu Ni" in Japanese. This theme was inspired by the song "Satu Hati" by Japanese singer Hiroaki Kato. The song's lyrics brilliantly capture the essence of synergy and harmony that characterizes the friendship between Indonesia and Japan.

During the ASEAN-Japan Summit on Sept. 7, Indonesia's President Joko Widodo and Kishida agreed to elevate bilateral relations to the status of comprehensive strategic partnership. The two leaders embraced the progress of bilateral cooperation at various levels, including the Japan-Indonesia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting,

and cooperation in infrastructure, trade, investment, labor, energy, the environment, disaster management, education and the strengthening of people-to-people contacts.

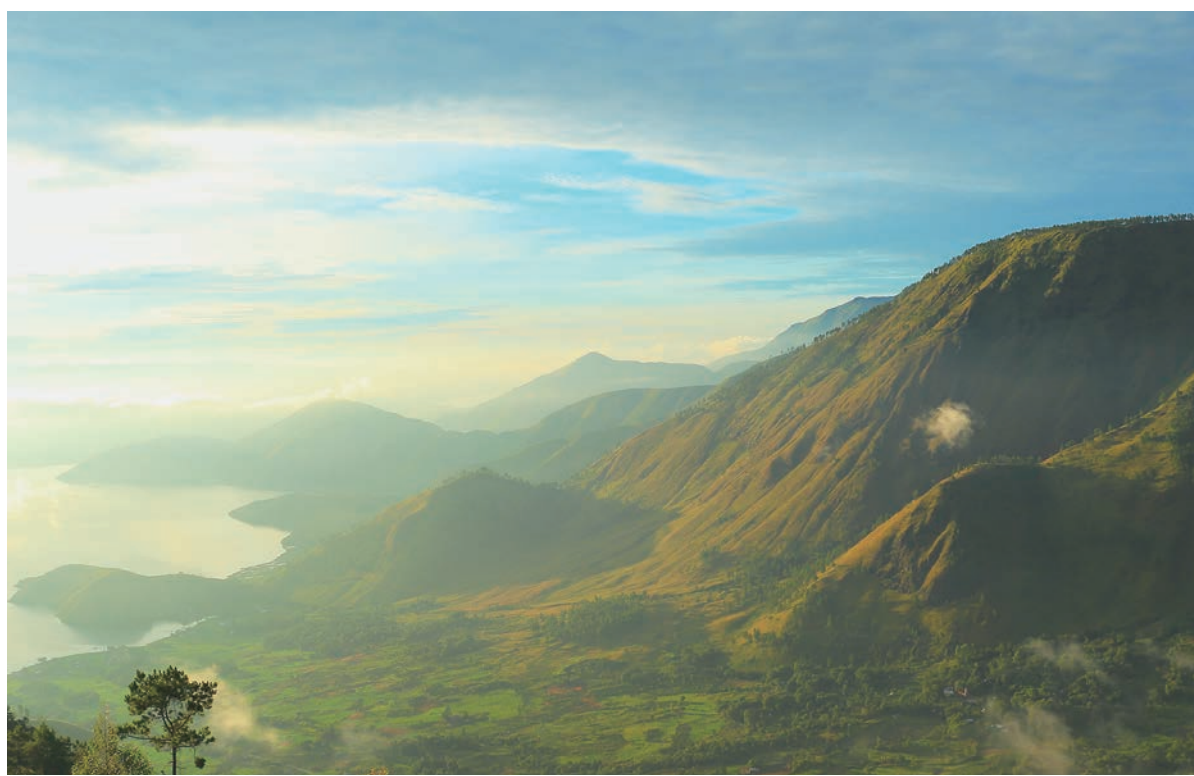
The visit of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako to Indonesia in June was historic and reflected the deep friendship between our peoples. This visit is also a symbol of dedication to the progress and welfare of both peoples.

### Beacon of peace and growth

As we celebrate the golden anniversary of ASEAN and Japan, I do hope this golden momentum will bring the people of ASEAN and Japan even closer. With Indonesia as chair of ASEAN, and Japan as chair of the G7, both countries should be beacons of peace and growth in the region.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us how much we need to prepare for the uncertainties of the future. We are confident that ASEAN can positively contribute to regional and global prosperity. ASEAN and Japan have accomplished and endured many things together. For this reason, we celebrate our optimism, mutual trust and respect in solving our common challenges.

Through collaboration, understanding and commitment to shared values, we can ensure that the friendship between ASEAN and Japan continues to develop into a carrier of hope, growth and unity for the region.



**Lake Toba is a scenic crater lake on the island of Sumatra.**  
EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

## Welcoming the Republic of Indonesia delegation and wishing for their success at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit



**PERTAMINA**

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**A Komodo dragon walks across an island in the Flores archipelago.**  
EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

# Laos



**Wat Xieng Thong in Luang Prabang is one of the most important Lao monasteries.** LAO PDR MINISTRY OF INFORMATION CULTURE AND TOURISM

## Economic growth invites further opportunities as ties deepen

**PHONGSAMOUTH ANLAVAN**  
AMBASSADOR OF LAOS



On behalf of the Embassy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, it is my great honor to take part in the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and

Cooperation and express my best wishes for the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, scheduled to run through Dec. 18 in Tokyo.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1955, the Lao PDR and Japan have enjoyed long-standing, friendly relations and good cooperation for almost seven decades. I am delighted to note that the existing friendship, a strategic partnership since 2015, has broadened in many areas.

There are regular exchanges between dignitaries of our two countries. Even during the outbreak of COVID-19, our leaders maintained online discussions and consultations. 2023 represents a remarkable year as our leaders have returned to face-to-face visits, including the meeting of the two heads of state on the occasion of the president of Laos visiting Japan in May. Our foreign ministers conducted reciprocal visits within a month of each other, and several ministerial-level exchanges covering several sectors of our countries also took place this year.

The symbolic exchange of gifts between our countries (elephants in Kyoto Zoo and cherry trees planted in Houaphanh province) attract many visitors.

Japan has been the largest provider of overseas development assistance to the Lao PDR since 1991. Those that have a chance to visit Laos will see various infrastructure development projects supported by Japan. Recently, an exchange of notes regarding a grant to implement the project for the reconstruction of Chao Anouvong Stadium was signed by our foreign ministers.

Apart from the bilateral framework, there are more assistance projects led by Japan under ASEAN, including the Mekong-Japan Cooperation and other



**The enigmatic Plain of Jars is a megalithic archeological UNESCO World Heritage Site.**  
LAO PDR MINISTRY OF INFORMATION CULTURE AND TOURISM

international programs. All assistance has significantly contributed to the economic and social development of the Lao PDR and enabled it to meet many of the criteria set out under the U.N. sustainable development goals. Moreover, both sides have supported each other in the regional and global arenas.

As the ambassador to Japan, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the government and people of Japan for all of their assistance over the past decades.

In terms of bilateral economic cooperation, the volume of trade and investment has increased considerably, with over 160 Japanese companies operating in Laos to date. To attract more foreign direct investment and visitors, the government of Laos has regularly improved the investment environment through both regulatory changes and infrastructure, including the development of special economic zones. In this regard, our embassy has worked closely with the ASEAN-Japan Centre, the Japan External Trade Organization and other related agencies to conduct public awareness events, investment promotion seminars and other business-related activities.

I also observe that Laos and Japan have much potential for cooperation, particularly in the areas of agriculture, food pro-

cessing and manufacturing, and the green energy sector.

Hydroelectric energy is one of the main exports of the Lao PDR. I think both sides could further work together under Japan's Asia Zero Emission Community initiative, with a summit on AZEC scheduled for later this month in Tokyo. The promotion of tourism, people-to-people contacts, including youth exchange programs, and establishing direct flights is strongly supported by both countries.

In 2024, the Lao PDR will assume the ASEAN chairmanship and promote a "Visit Laos Year" campaign. Many cultural events and traditional festivals will be arranged throughout the year. On behalf of the Embassy of the Lao PDR, I would like to invite all readers to visit Laos to experience our culture and traditions, world heritage and other tourist sites and taste the unique flavor of our cuisine, as well as explore potential business opportunities.

2025 will be another meaningful year for bilateral relations and the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties will be commemorated with even more interesting symbolic activities. I hope the strategic partnership between Laos and Japan will develop further and reach even greater heights in the future.



**A cherry tree basks in the sunshine in Lao-Japan Friendship Sakura Park in Viengsay.** ADPP



# Malaysia

## Companies encouraged to widen investments in new growth areas

SHAHRI EFFENDI ABD GHANY  
AMBASSADOR OF MALAYSIA



ASEAN, which was established in 1967, formalized its external relations when Japan became its first dialogue partner following the ASEAN-Japan Forum in 1975. The congregation of

ASEAN leaders in Tokyo through Dec. 18 at the 50th ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit marks the golden jubilee celebration of these excellent relations.

ASEAN has benefited tremendously from its relations with all dialogue partners. Japan has contributed significantly not only to peace and stability in the region, but also to the economic development of ASEAN's members, including Malaysia.

In 2022, Japan's total trade with ASEAN was valued at \$252.6 billion (about ¥37.3 trillion), representing 15.3% of Japan's trade with the world. From January to September this year, ASEAN-Japan trade was valued at \$170.2 billion. Japan's ASEAN-related exports and imports in 2022 were valued at \$118.2 billion and \$134.4 billion, respectively, underlining that ASEAN and Japan have successfully formed an interdependent economic relationship.

Among all ASEAN countries, Malaysia was Japan's fourth-largest trading partner at \$42.5 billion, accounting for 16.8% of its trade with the region in 2022. Malaysia was also Japan's fourth-largest source of imports and third-largest export destination in ASEAN, at \$26 billion and \$16.5 billion, respectively, with trade being in favor of Malaysia.

For liquefied natural gas alone, Malaysia is Japan's second-largest source and the largest LNG provider in ASEAN, with a 65.7% share of exports.

Aggressive foreign direct investment from Japan aimed at turning ASEAN into a production hub for electrical and electronic products also contributed significantly to trade in such products and components.

Other key products Japan imports from Malaysia include plywood, palm oil, plastic films, rubber gloves, furniture and more. Major Japanese products exported to Malaysia include electrical and electronic products, machine tools, vehicles and vehi-



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida reacts after tasting the "King of Fruit" while participating in Malaysia's Durian Diplomacy initiative. EMBASSY OF MALAYSIA

cle parts, and flat-rolled steel.

In 2022, Malaysia recorded approved investments totaling \$56.9 billion, which translates to 4,454 projects, with 140,370 job creation opportunities. The services sector is the major contributor and is valued at \$34.8 billion, followed by the manufacturing sector (\$19.1 billion) and the primary sector of mining, construction and plantation (\$6 billion). Japan ranked fifth in terms of approved investments at \$2.6 billion. Japan's \$2 billion investment participation in approved manufacturing projects, ranking third, is expected to create 4,659 jobs.

With more than 1,500 projects with Japanese participation in Malaysia at present, Japan has consistently been among the nation's top 10 investors since the 1980s. From January to June, Malaysia attracted \$28.4 billion of all approved investment from global investors in the services (\$17.6 billion), manufacturing (\$9.6 billion) and primary sectors (\$1.2 billion). At \$2 billion, Japan ranks second in spending on approved investments in Malaysia.

As far as trends are concerned, Malaysia is actively seeking Japanese investors to explore opportunities in our electronic vehicle, specialty chemicals, digital economy and green technology sectors, which is in line with achieving a sustainable economy. Supported by a strong local ecosystem and well-developed infrastructure, Malaysia will continue to attract more Japanese high-technology companies.

Strategically situated in the middle of

Southeast Asia and with a strong commitment to achieve zero emissions by 2050, Malaysia welcomes more Japanese corporations to explore opportunities in its new growth areas, such as electric vehicles, smart factories employing 5G technology, the digital economy, supply chain ecosystems, specialty chemicals and green technology, all of which are in line with Malaysia's New Industrial Master Plan 2030.

As part of Malaysia's continuous efforts to improve the ease of doing business and to facilitate both foreign and domestic direct investment, the government has introduced several initiatives, including the Strategic Investor Pass and the Digital Nomad Professional Visit Pass. In addition, issuance of the Resident Pass-Talent by the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry will allow investors to work and live in the country for up to 10 years.

In terms of people-to-people relations, Japan's outbound tourism is considerably low compared with pre-pandemic levels. As of June, Malaysia was attracting 9% of all Japanese arrivals in ASEAN.

Japan has always been one of Malaysia's vital tourism sources. From January to July, Japanese tourists accounted for 110,904 arrivals to Malaysia compared with 24,316 recorded in the same period in 2022. Although improving, it is hoped that with the lifting of travel restrictions in both Malaysia and Japan, coupled with continuous promotional efforts and enhanced air connectivity, the numbers will continue to grow.



Left: Malaysia is the world's second-largest source of palm oil and a leading proponent in fostering a sustainable industry. Right: The Embassy of Malaysia in Tokyo features a mix of Malaysian and Japanese architecture. EMBASSY OF MALAYSIA



# Myanmar



Dhammayangyi Temple is the largest temple in Bagan. MINISTRY OF HOTELS AND TOURISM OF MYANMAR

## Bilateral relations bring mutual benefits to private, public sectors

SOE HAN  
AMBASSADOR OF MYANMAR



Since establishing diplomatic relations in December 1954, Myanmar and Japan have been enjoying cordial relations and close cooperation based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and

mutual benefit. The year 2024 will mark the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our nations. Strong people-to-people relations have also contributed to consolidating the long-lasting bonds of friendship and cooperation we have cherished.

Japan plays an important role in the socioeconomic development of Myanmar. Japan is the ninth-largest investor in Myanmar and the fourth-largest market for Myanmar exports. According to the Myanmar Investment Commission, foreign direct investment from Japan reached \$2 billion as of September, accounting for 2% of Myanmar's total FDI.

Promoting bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and Japan brings mutual benefits to both the public and private sectors of the two countries. The Thilawa Special Economic Zone is one of our flagship projects. After officially opening in 2015, more than 100 investment projects have been approved to operate in the Thilawa SEZ. Accordingly, it has generated many employment opportunities for the Myanmar people.

To attract foreign investors to the Thilawa SEZ, the government of Japan and the Japan International Cooperation Agency helped build the legal framework for SEZ schemes, namely the Myanmar SEZ Law, which was enacted in January 2014, and the Myanmar SEZ Rules, which were adopted by the Cabinet in August 2015.

A private developer, Myanmar Japan Thilawa Development Ltd., built the comprehensive internal infrastructure, such as an industrial water supply system, a sewerage system, and wastewater and solid waste treatment facilities, to attract quality investment.



Above: Cocks Comb Island, also known as Emerald Heart Island, is a popular diving site in the Myeik Archipelago. Right: Built around 1850, U Bein Bridge near Mandalay is the world's longest teak bridge. MYANMAR MINISTRY OF HOTELS AND TOURISM



The Thilawa SEZ connects Yangon with Mandalay and other parts of Myanmar. It can be considered a gateway to the East-West corridor of Southeast Asia, which connects Myanmar to Vietnam via Thailand. I strongly believe that such cooperation programs will highly contribute to our government's efforts to narrow the development gap between rural and urban areas.

One of the three main economic objectives of the Myanmar government is to develop a stable market economy and promote international investment to enhance the economic development of the people. Myanmar's geostrategic loca-

tion in the region provides the opportunity to become a new manufacturing base and logistics hub in Southeast Asia. Myanmar has ample room for economic growth, and as such, we hope Japan's public and private sectors will continue to invest in Myanmar.

Myanmar highly values its relations and cooperation with Japan. Therefore, as the ambassador of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Japan, I would like to express my firm commitment to further strengthening the existing friendship and cooperation with both the public and private sectors of Japan, thereby increasing the mutual benefits to our countries and peoples.



A novitiation ceremony in front of Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon. MYANMAR MINISTRY OF HOTELS AND TOURISM

## Welcoming

the Malaysia delegation and wishing for their success at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit

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# The Philippines

## Steadfast relationship continues to develop across multiple fields

MYLENE J. GARCIA-ALBANO  
AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES



Over time, the partnership between the Philippines and Japan has evolved into a robust and enduring friendship. This bond has further strengthened through the collaborative efforts

between ASEAN and Japan, not only to implement concrete projects for mutual benefit, but also to realize the shared and unwavering commitment of both to regional peace, security and development.

The stability and prosperity they engender reverberate across the broader Asia-Pacific region. Throughout the years, the ASEAN-Japan partnership has flourished in various domains, including economics, defense and security, leaving an indelible mark on the regional landscape.

### Historical foundations

The lasting relationship between Japan and ASEAN started in 1973, with the establishment of the ASEAN-Japan Forum on Synthetic Rubber. Since then, Japan and ASEAN have worked together to advance peace, stability and prosperity in Southeast Asia. A watershed moment came in 1977, when speaking before the Philippine Congress, Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda unveiled the Fukuda Doctrine.

Japan's pursuit of a heart-to-heart relationship with ASEAN has since animated our interactions for close to five decades since its articulation. It has driven the way the two parties conduct dialogue and the consultative decision-making process that pervades the region. More critically, a deep well of trust was nurtured by such an approach.

Through the ups and downs of our times, ASEAN and Japan have always been steadfast partners. Japan's know-how and innovations complement ASEAN's youth, drive and huge market for a truly win-win relationship.

Moreover, ASEAN and Japan have never wavered in their focus and belief that only mutual help can strengthen this region. From the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s to the global outbreak of COVID in 2020, this commitment never wavered.



A pair of hikers admire the sunset over the Tanon Strait on the island of Cebu. BEAUTIFUL DESTINATIONS

More recently, Japan's promotion of quality infrastructure investment through the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure: Investment for Asia's Future, the very salient Japan-ASEAN Connectivity Initiative, which envisages projects in almost all Southeast Asian countries, the announced initiatives to leverage the synergies of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, as well as support for ASEAN centrality and unity, are a testament to true friendship.

### People-to-people ties

One of the key pillars of the Philippines' engagement with Japan within the ASEAN framework is the ASEAN-Japan Centre. The center plays a pivotal role in strengthening our economic ties and people-to-people exchanges, significantly contributing to common economic growth and cultural understanding. The center also provides a networking platform for ASEAN and Japanese public- and private-sector officials, leading to increased goodwill. This, in turn, has helped elevate ASEAN's profile in Japan as a favorable investment, trade and tourism destination.

### Defense and security

In recent years, the defense relationship between the Philippines and Japan has gained momentum, including within the ASEAN framework.

In our joint statement during the official visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to Japan in February, the two countries shared the view that a free and open international order based on the rule of law has become more important than ever.

Marcos and Prime Minister Fumio

Kishida reaffirmed that the Free and Open Indo-Pacific and ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific initiatives share fundamental principles. Marcos emphasized ASEAN centrality and the AOIP as the core of the Philippines' approach to engaging partners in the Indo-Pacific region, and expressed ASEAN's call for more collaboration with Japan on the AOIP under ASEAN-led mechanisms.

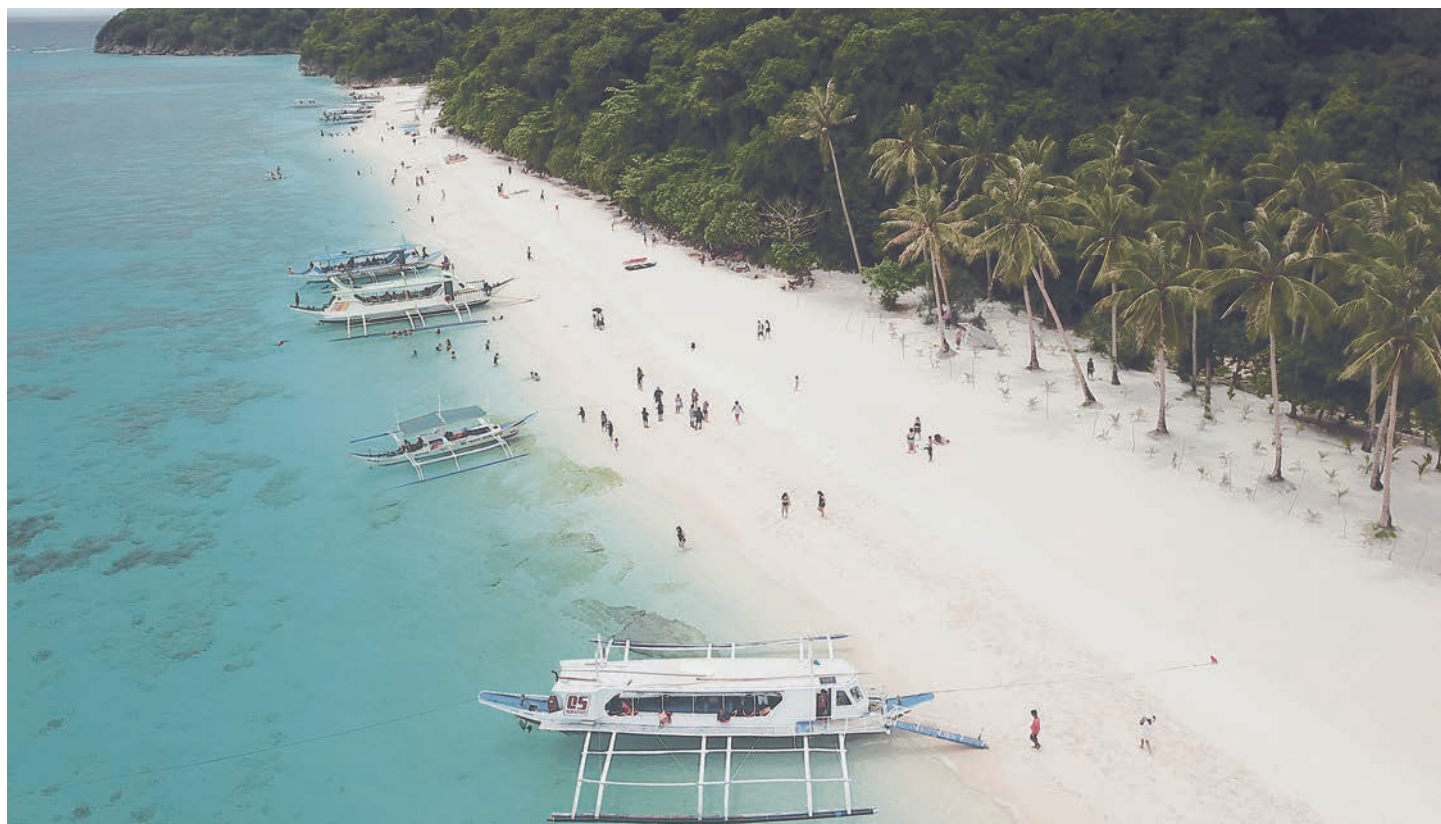
The continued progress of ASEAN-Japan cooperation, as outlined in the Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific in 2020, reflects a shared vision for the region's future. As a member of ASEAN, the Philippines plays an integral role in advancing this vision, ensuring that the partnership between the Philippines and Japan remains a linchpin for regional stability, growth and prosperity.

In conclusion, the Philippines and Japan's partnership within the ASEAN framework serves as an outstanding example of how two nations can harmoniously work together to pursue shared objectives. This cooperative venture has solidified our relationship and made significant contributions to the overarching objectives of ASEAN as well, particularly in advancing peace, stability, development and understanding in the region.

As these ties continue to strengthen, they stand as a testament to the enduring dedication of both nations to regional peace and prosperity. Our partnership with Japan within the framework of ASEAN underscores the impact that strong international partnerships can exert in shaping the future of the region and fostering peace and prosperity.



Divers drop in on a sea turtle in the waters off Apo Island. JAN ACOSTA



Boats sit along the white sand beach of Boracay. EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES

# Singapore



Singapore's waterfront is decorated with the iconic Marina Bay Sands and Singapore Flyer. GETTY IMAGES

## Equal partnership is crucial for bolstering regional development

ENG CHUAN ONG  
AMBASSADOR OF SINGAPORE



On Dec. 16, the leaders of Japan and ASEAN will gather in Tokyo to commemorate 50 years of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Our relationship started in 1973

with the launch of a forum on synthetic rubber. Our high-level exchanges were subsequently regularized in the first ASEAN-Japan Summit held in Kuala Lumpur in 1977.

Then-Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda visited the Philippines that year and announced the Fukuda Doctrine, which shaped ASEAN-Japan relations in the following decades. Fukuda called for a heart-to-heart relationship between ASEAN and Japan as equal partners. This was a remarkable declaration, especially at a time when the ASEAN economies were lagging far behind Japan's. These principles paved the way for a constructive relationship starting with significant Japanese investment in ASEAN's economic development.

Fifty years on, Japan has grown into one of ASEAN's closest partners. Japan was ASEAN's fourth-largest trading partner and second-largest external source of foreign direct investment last year. We share a high-quality Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, and Japan and the ASEAN member states are also members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Our cooperation spans many domains, from economic relations to culture and people-to-people exchanges. The ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute Annual State of Southeast Asia Survey has found Japan to be ASEAN's "most trusted major power" over the past few years.

The breadth and quality of ASEAN-Japan relations today is cause for celebration. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. There is an ever-greater need for a strong and future-ready ASEAN-Japan partnership to meet today's regional and global challenges, as well as the demands of the future.



Above: Prime Minister Fumio Kishida shakes hands with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at Changi Airport in May; Right: Singapore was the chair of the 2018 edition of the ASEAN-Japan Summit.

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION, SINGAPORE



As a comprehensive strategic partner, Japan is uniquely placed to work with ASEAN in co-creating solutions to some of these challenges. Our strong economic relationship provides a good foundation for us to meet regional investment needs, such as those in connectivity and infrastructure. We also have many cutting-edge areas to expand to, such as the digital and green economies.

On the strategic front, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and its four priority areas of maritime cooperation, connectivity, the U.N. sustainable development goals, as well as economic and other

possible areas of cooperation, provide a basis for ASEAN to work with Japan to strengthen regional peace and stability and the international rules-based order.

Singapore will chair the ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting in 2024. We will also take over as the country coordinator for ASEAN-Japan relations from 2024 to 2027. We look forward to working with Japan to deepen our existing areas of cooperation, and expand our collaboration in new areas of mutual interest.

Let us work together to build the next 50 years under the catchphrase "Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities."

The 50-meter-tall vertical gardens of Supertree Grove are a feature of Singapore's Gardens by the Bay. EMBASSY OF SINGAPORE





# Thailand

## Robust and growing enthusiasm in tourism and cultural exchange

PRANGTIP KANCHANAHATTAKIJ  
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THAILAND



I am honored to contribute this message to celebrate the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan relations. Thailand and Japan have forged friendship and mutual trust, as

well as a resilient economic relationship, over 600 years of exchanges since the time when trade was conducted between Siam and the Ryukyu Kingdom (Okinawa). On Sept. 26, 1887, Thailand and Japan signed the Declaration of Amity and Commerce, formally establishing their diplomatic relations. In fact, Thailand was the first country in Asia with whom Japan established diplomatic relations.

Over the years, Thailand and Japan have collaborated on various cultural exchanges, economic partnerships and educational programs, fostering a deep mutual understanding and respect. Japan is an important trade partner and has been the largest investor in Thailand for many decades. At present, there are approximately 6,000 Japanese companies in Thailand. Furthermore, during times of crisis, such as natural disasters or economic downturns, both countries have consistently supported each other, further strengthening their bond. "A friend in need is a friend indeed" perfectly captures the relationship between Thailand and Japan.

Last year, to celebrate the 135th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations and the 10th anniversary of the strategic partnership between Thailand and Japan, both sides announced the elevation of bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership during a visit by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to the Kingdom of Thailand for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum's economic leaders' meeting.

This elevation signifies the commitment of both countries to further strengthening cooperation in various fields, including politics, economics,



Ban Nong Bua Elephant Village in Surin province is part of Thailand's diverse ecotourism scene. TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

security and culture. It also highlights the shared vision of Thailand and Japan to promote regional stability and prosperity through enhanced collaboration, including co-creating economic relations as equal partners.

The pillar of people-to-people exchanges is also a good example of our deep relations and shows the strong and growing interest in cultural exchange and tourism between Thailand and Japan. After the pandemic, travel between our countries has resumed to match previous levels. From January to September, there were approximately 630,000 visitors from Thailand to Japan and 575,000 visitors from Japan to Thailand.

In the ASEAN framework, ASEAN-Japan relations have made remarkable progress since 1973. Over the past five decades, ASEAN and Japan have worked closely together to foster economic growth, promote peace and stability, and enhance cultural exchanges. The visit by Japanese Foreign Minister H.E. Yoko Kamikawa to Thailand and three other Southeast Asian countries in October illustrated Japan's pledge to further deepen ties with this region.

For ASEAN, Japan was the fourth-largest trading partner and second-largest external source of foreign direct investment in 2022. ASEAN also appreciates Japan's continued support for ASEAN centrality and unity, as well as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. This support shares relevant fundamental principles in promoting peace and

cooperation with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative.

Represented by the catchphrase "Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities," this year is a historic milestone for ASEAN and Japan as we celebrate the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. This milestone serves as proof that we are dedicated to building a prosperous and interconnected region for the benefit of all member countries.

Furthermore, relations between the two sides have made great progress. During the ASEAN-Japan Summit in Jakarta in September, the leaders agreed to establish an ASEAN-Japan comprehensive strategic partnership that will further deepen our cooperation in various areas, advance our long-standing and equal partnership and ensure durable peace and prosperity in the region and beyond. The cooperation areas that ASEAN and Japan can support and learn from each other are, for example, development, smart cities, health, science, education and disaster management.

I believe that the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit in Tokyo scheduled through Dec. 18 will be an occasion to further strengthen our joint efforts toward a heart-to-heart partnership. We look forward to the adoption of a new joint vision statement together with its implementation plan, which will be a guide for the future direction of our relations.

Thailand, as the country coordinator, will do its utmost to facilitate cooperation between ASEAN and Japan.



Thung Thale Luang is a reservoir in Sukhothai province with a heart-shaped island featuring a temple. TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND



A wispy early morning fog blankets Phu Langka Forest Park, established in 2008. TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

# Vietnam



One of Vietnam's most impressive natural spots, Ban Gioc Waterfall in Cao Bang province is 30 meters tall and 300 meters across. EMBASSY OF VIETNAM

## Strong, long-lasting relationship continues to be a valuable asset

PHAM QUANG HIEU  
AMBASSADOR OF VIETNAM



2023 is a special year in Vietnam-Japan and ASEAN-Japan relations, marking a milestone of 50 years of development of our extensive and increasingly strong friendship and cooperation.

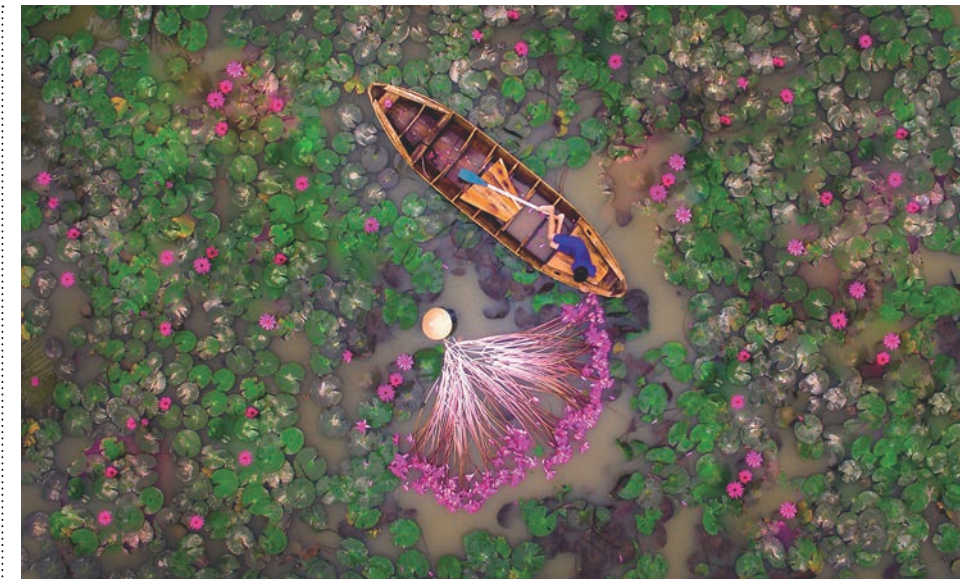
Vietnam and Japan officially established diplomatic relations on Sept. 21, 1973. Since then, despite numerous fluctuations and changes in the global and regional landscapes, as well as within each nation, the friendly relations and collaboration between our countries have witnessed rapid, extraordinary and all-encompassing development. Over these five decades, both nations have evolved into vital partners, sharing many common strategic interests.

Japan and Vietnam's Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia and the World sets a robust foundation for both countries to further strengthen our enduring bond amid rapid global and regional transformations. Japan consistently remains Vietnam's top partner in areas such as trade, investment, infrastructure development and technical support.

In recent times, Vietnam's economy has deeply integrated with the global economy and has become an integral part of the global supply chain. Vietnam is a dynamic and rapidly growing economy with a large labor force, a stable economic and political environment, and favorable conditions for investment and business. These factors make Vietnam an attractive and trustworthy investment destination.

The prospects for Vietnam's economic growth are opening numerous opportunities for cooperation with companies from Japan, a country that is considered a developed industrial country with advantages in capital, technology and management.

As a responsible member of ASEAN, Vietnam is always proactive in promoting the consolidation and enhancement of ASEAN-Japan relations, contributing to deepening the relationship and developing it in an effective, substantive and mutually beneficial manner. When Japan proposed to organize a commemorative summit and establish the ASEAN-Japan comprehensive strategic partnership in 2023, Vietnam



Above: Water lilies bloom from April to June. Right: The Dong Van Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark is home to 17 ethnic minority groups. EMBASSY OF VIETNAM



quickly supported it and always actively and promptly contributed to efforts to concretize these proposals, ensuring compliance with the road map that ASEAN and Japan set out at the beginning of the year. The Vietnamese delegation led by Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh will continue to contribute to the success of the ASEAN-Japan summit, creating a new milestone in ASEAN-Japan relations in general and Vietnam-Japan relations in particular.

During the most stressful period of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the role of coordinating ASEAN-Japan relations in the period from 2018 to 2021, Vietnam implemented coordination work creatively, in accordance with the situation and the need for cooperation, bringing real benefits to both sides.

I am truly honored to have assumed the role of ambassador of Vietnam to Japan in May. In a relatively short time, I have felt the widespread support of Japanese leaders, politicians, the business community

and the people of Japan for the robust development of the Vietnam-Japan relationship. I hope to elevate our bilateral ties to new heights, especially as 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our countries.

Amid the rapidly changing global and regional landscape, the enduring and strong relationship between Vietnam and Japan has been, is and will continue to be a valuable asset, delivering substantial benefits to the people of both nations.

I firmly believe that the alignment of strategies, long-standing cultural exchanges, the high complementarity of our economies and the connection and support between the Vietnamese and Japanese people are the foundation and driving force for the continued robust development of our relationship, while at the same time making a positive contribution to peace, stability and development within the region and across the world.

The Ma Pi Leng Pass cuts through mountainous Ha Giang province. PHOTO HUNG CUONG





# JICA support

## Inter-regional cooperation based on Fukuda Doctrine

**AKIHIKO TANAKA**  
PRESIDENT OF THE JAPAN  
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY



Southeast Asia was the starting point for Japan's international cooperation. Japan joined the Colombo Plan in 1954 and began providing technical cooperation to Asian countries,

which marked the beginning of Japan's official development assistance program.

In parallel with postwar reparations, Japan also began to provide economic cooperation in the form of development loans in 1958 and grant aid in 1969. During Japan's rapid economic growth in the 1960s, predecessor organizations of the Japan International Cooperation Agency — the development-cooperation agency of the Japanese government — were created, leading to an expansion in Japanese ODA to Southeast Asia.

In the early 1970s, the export of Japanese products swept through Southeast Asia, which led to the spread of anti-Japanese sentiment. In 1977, during his visit to the Philippines, then-Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda announced the Fukuda Doctrine, which contained the three core principles of Japan's diplomacy toward Southeast Asia: contribution to peace and prosperity in the region, a heart-to-heart relationship with ASEAN countries, and equal partnerships. This doctrine became the operational philosophy of JICA, which was established in 1974.

Some examples of projects that originated in the early years of JICA include the Brantas River Basin development in Indo-



**JICA President Akihiko Tanaka became the first foreign person to speak at the Bangsamoro Transition Authority Parliament, while celebrating the advancement of regional peace and prosperity on Jan. 18 in Cotabato, Philippines.** JICA

nesia, which changed the basin into a major rice-producing area; the eastern seaboard development in Thailand, which turned the waterfront district into the country's second-largest industrial zone after greater Bangkok; and our support of the Look East Policy of Malaysia, which has seen more than 26,000 Malaysians enter universities or training programs in Japan.

In the early 1990s, the end of the Cold War greatly expanded the field of international cooperation. Increasing efforts have been made to address global issues, such as peace-building, the environment, and the issue of human security.

In Southeast Asia, the 1991 Cambodian peace agreement opened the door for Japan to extend full-fledged cooperation to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Along with support for infrastructure, which was ravaged by war or underdeveloped, JICA

extended so-called intellectual cooperation to the three countries to promote a shift to a market-oriented economy. A joint study on economic development policy in Vietnam known as the Ishikawa Project, led by professor Shigeru Ishikawa, was a prime example of intellectual cooperation.

During this project, the practice of "learning from each other" was prioritized, displaying the type of relationship that JICA wanted to cultivate in its future cooperation with ASEAN.

Japan's support for the Philippine peace process in Mindanao since the 1990s should also be highlighted. JICA was involved in peace-building after the ceasefire agreement in 2003. When negotiations came to a deadlock and fighting resumed in 2008, JICA, under the leadership of then-President Sadako Ogata, continued its support rather than withdraw, to con-



**Indonesia's Brantas River Basin is now a fertile rice-producing area.** NIPPON KOEI CO.

tinue pursuing greater human security. In 2011, the Japanese government sponsored a secret summit in Narita, Japan, which led to the signing of a historic comprehensive peace agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 2014.

Since the 2000s, regional development as well as the establishment of the ASEAN Community and the deepening of its integration have drastically changed the economic landscape surrounding Japan and Southeast Asia.

The total gross domestic product of the ASEAN members has grown significantly in the past two decades — from \$660.7 billion in 2002 to \$2.5 trillion in 2012 (a 3.8-fold increase over 10 years), before reaching \$3.6 trillion in 2022 (a 5.5-fold increase over 20 years), making it a major economic zone now referred to as "the growth center of the world."

The members of ASEAN have become more important to Japan because peace and prosperity in ASEAN leads directly to peace and prosperity for all of East Asia, including Japan.

Today, when we direct our eyes to the world, we find ourselves in the midst of a series of "compound crises." These involve three layers — the outermost layer being the physical system, as typified by climate change and natural disasters; followed by

the living system, as exemplified by infectious diseases; and the innermost layer, our social system, where armed conflicts and geopolitics erupt.

As we deal with stagnation in the global economy in the wake of the pandemic, we should consider social systems that interact with physical and living systems as well as human beings. While competition and conflict exist between nations, I believe that all humankind — including conflicting parties — must work together to build a system of cooperation to address these compound crises.

In this context, Japan has been promoting the Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative for the region, while ASEAN has been promoting the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Japan will continue to contribute to the implementation of the AOIP with ASEAN, which is at the center of the Indo-Pacific region.

On this occasion of the golden anniversary of the Japan-ASEAN relationship, I reflect on the Fukuda Doctrine. When it was announced 46 years ago, it represented words of admonition with which we disciplined ourselves when associating with ASEAN. Today, we have seen those words become reality.

More ASEAN members have already initiated development cooperation for other countries in and outside the region. JICA



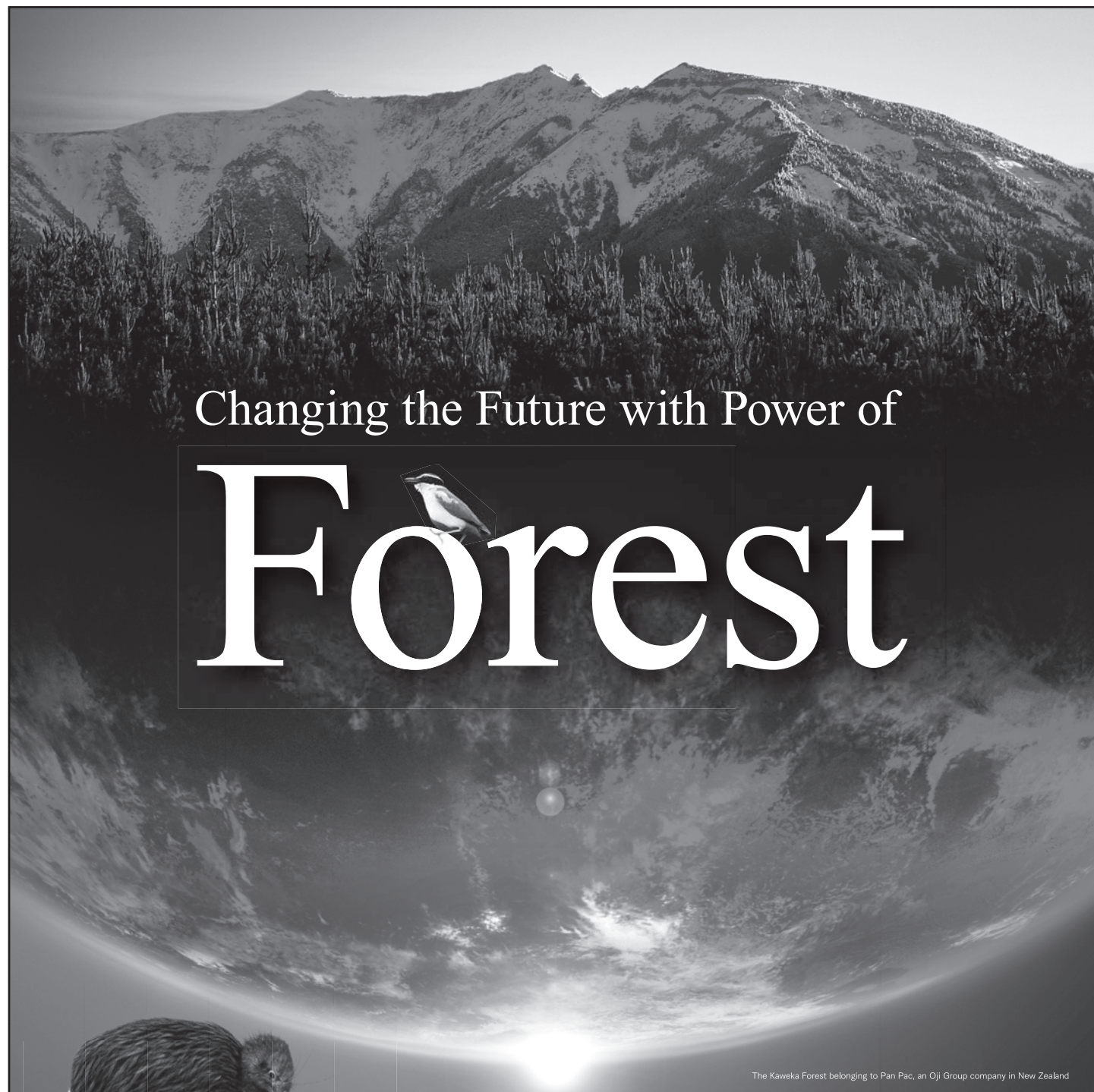
**Above: JICA supports Malaysia's Look East Policy by providing educational programs. Below: Thailand's eastern seaboard has become a major industrial zone.** JICA



and its ASEAN partners are now jointly working to address conventional as well as newly emerging regional issues, as well as global challenges, such as climate change, infectious diseases, disasters, rapidly graying societies, the environment, food security and connectivity. Recent technical cooperation programs provided by JICA are focusing more on mutual learning and co-creation rather than just transferring Japanese knowledge and experience.

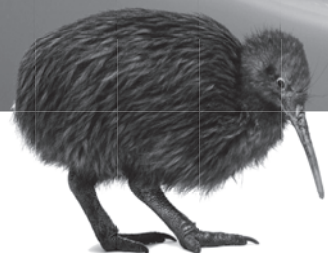
It is time that Japan learned from the ASEAN countries how to advance together with them. Thus, JICA's cooperation with ASEAN is rapidly evolving.

Among all the things that are changing, there is one thing that JICA should continue to uphold: the spirit of the Fukuda Doctrine. When I reflect on the past half century of JICA's cooperation, I find that what the agency always aimed to achieve was the heart-to-heart bonds that truly cultivated trust between the peoples of ASEAN and Japan. With JICA's vision of "leading the world with trust," we will always aspire to be a reliable partner and true friend of the people of ASEAN for the next half century, and beyond.



Changing the Future with Power of

# Forest



An Oji Group company is supporting activities to protect the native Kiwi, a rare New Zealand bird.

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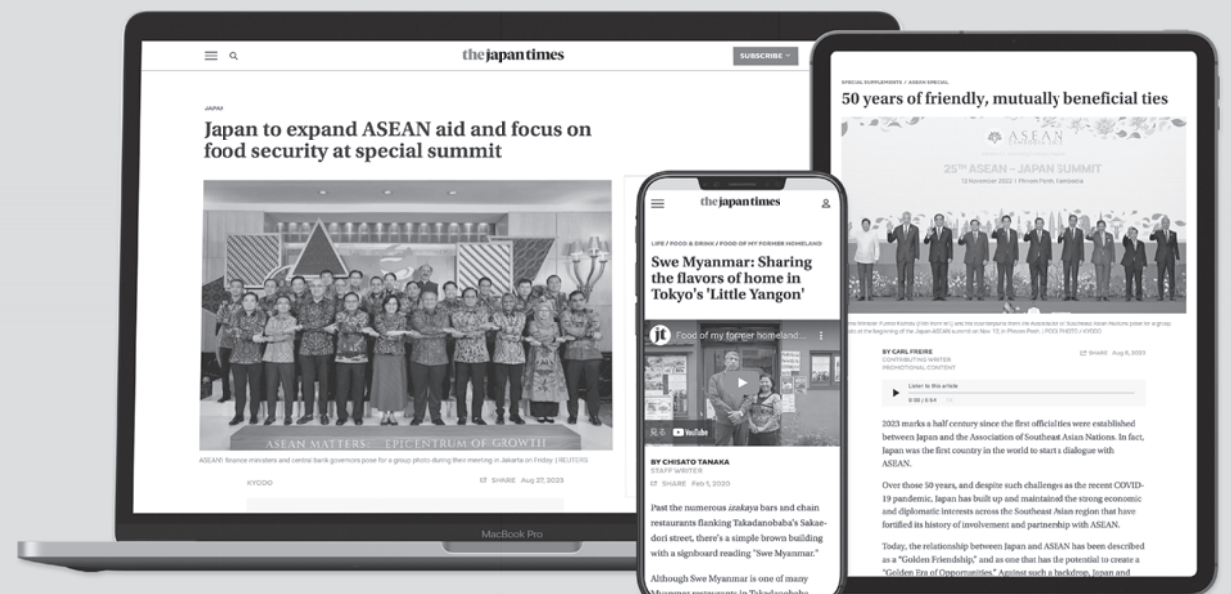
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# Global education

## Seeking eager scholars from abroad, with a focus on ASEAN

Japan was successfully attracting students from around the world for half a century before the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly applied the brakes. Now the government is ramping up study assistance and other programs to woo them back, appealing to keen learners from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other regions by using a strategy that's also designed to revitalize Japan itself.

Back in August 1983, Japan laid out a big welcome mat for international students and has been making it bigger and more sophisticated ever since. It set a national goal that year of drawing 100,000 students to its colleges and universities by the beginning of the 21st century. Five years after achieving that tenfold rise in 2003, the country tripled its target to 300,000 by 2020 — exceeding this goal a year early, in 2019.

To realize that lofty 300,000-student goal, the country broke away from its traditional official development assistance concept with a strategy designed to boost university competitiveness, simplify enrollment and immigration, and improve Japanese-language education overseas.

Inherent in the plan, however, was a drive to promote employment among international students and revitalize Japan. A key facet of the 2016 version of the Japan Revitalization Strategy was designed to boost the domestic employment rate of foreign students to 50% from 30%. By 2019, before COVID hit, the figure stood at 47.6%.

Since July 2022, a different aspect of Japan's global policy has focused on the recovery of international student exchanges, which fell drastically during the pandemic from a high of 312,214 to 231,146 that year. The goal is to get study abroad activities back to at least pre-coronavirus levels by 2027, regardless of nationality.

Competition for the hearts, minds and tuition fees of top international students is intense worldwide. Back in 2013, the

government began seriously ramping up Japan's appeal as a study destination, with the greater purpose of encouraging students to settle here, help Japanese companies expand globally, strengthen the country's competitiveness and serve as bridges for facilitating intercultural understanding.

To ensure this happens, Japan's recent policies have evolved to include providing Japanese-language education to international students, supporting promotional measures for each university to establish special programs — including medium- to long-term internships and career education — and issuing certifications based on other aspects, such as schools' track records on corporate collaborations and internship implementation plans. Collaborations with government, academia and local communities are also key.

Cooperative exchanges between universities here and elsewhere have become a priority as well. Following global trends in virtual study abroad programs, Japan is looking to promote and expand the use of online platforms and practices.

Chief among the interactive online practices that Japan is pursuing is Collaborative Online International Learning. COIL promotes international exchanges and virtual collaborations through information and communication technology tools. Students can work on projects in various fields while staying in Japan, learning and collaborating with students at universities overseas. Local companies, governments, economic organizations and other entities are working together on program development.

Japan's relative share of international students in undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs trails other OECD countries. At present, the ratios stand at approximately 3%, 10% and 21%, respectively, all lower than the OECD average.

Effective overseas initiatives have likely made the difference. They include the Turing Plan in the U.K., which provides

special support for students from low-income backgrounds; Germany's Study Bridge, which targets high school grads with strong science, technology, engineering and math results; and Erasmus+, a pan-European program that supports cross-border mobility and collaboration in education, vocational training, youth development and sport. The latter extends to countries and regions outside Europe.

In regard to online offerings, France's Open Classrooms offers free content with individualized instruction, the U.S.-based Coursera Plus plan provides content from participating institutions for a monthly or annual fee, and in February 2022, ASEAN began offering Virtual Exchange plans funded by EU grants to implement VE/COIL at universities in the region.

While COIL should help Japan's numbers, it still has room to grow.

The majority of foreign students in Japan are from elsewhere in Asia, with Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand among the top 10 contributors.

Japan's strong and continuous ties with ASEAN foster the most active people-to-people exchanges. As Japanese companies seek expansion in this region, it's vital for Japan to uphold educational quality, considering each country's unique context. Japan is actively working on building a system to achieve this goal and aims to expand its offerings quantitatively.

While tuition for students studying abroad in countries such as the U.S., Australia and Canada can be up to double what their own students pay, Japan's institutions charge everyone the same. In general, tuition in Japan is also less expensive.

Adding to the appeal of Japan as a study abroad destination — most students say they want to live here and dive into the country's language and culture, with an eye to working in a Japan-related profession in the future — Japan offers solid support programs.



International students in Japan are able to interact with students and instructors from around the world. PEKELS

One such program is the Honors Scholarship for Privately-Financed International Students, which is underwritten by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. It covers universities, graduate schools, junior colleges, technical colleges (for third-year students and above), specialized courses at vocational schools, or educational institutions that have courses that provide preparatory education for entering Japanese universities. The program provides a scholarship to privately financed international stu-

dents scheduled to enroll with pre-arrival admission.

In addition to this, the Japan Student Services Organization offers a monthly stipend of ¥80,000 to a similar range of students. JASSO provides information about studying in Japan, support in finding accommodations, and career advice for those looking to work here. The organization also maintains several offices in Asia, specifically in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea and Vietnam, to supply prospective students with information on

Japan-based study programs.

With a current intake target of 400,000 international students, Japan will need to supercharge its already attractive offerings to bring in more learners with high aspirations from ASEAN and elsewhere. This initiative is aimed at not only increasing the number of highly skilled human resources, but also retaining them within Japanese companies and communities after graduation, which will contribute to addressing Japan's declining birthrate and fostering diversity for the nation's future.

Sponsored by Osaka Electro-Communication University

## Navigating the future via ICT and innovation

Osaka Electro-Communication University is an institution that offers degrees in a wide range of fields, including electrical and electronic engineering, information and communication engineering, medical science, mechanics, architecture, sports, games and media, and computer science, with two campuses in Osaka Prefecture.

"As our name implies, our university was established to train specialized technicians in electrical communications," said OECU President Kuninari Shiota. "Our school's origin dates back to 1925 with the establishment of an electro-communication engineering school around the time laws requiring wireless communication in maritime transport were enacted in response to the Titanic tragedy, and NHK began radio broadcasting in Japan. It was a time when there was domestic and global demand for electro-communication specialists."

### Foreseeing the future

In 1961, the school established a university, with just one faculty with one department — the Electronic Engineering Department of the Faculty of Engineering. OECU now offers degrees in 14 departments within four faculties and three graduate schools, all with information education at their core.

The university plans further expansion with the Faculty of Architecture and Design in spring 2024. It aims to leverage its strength in information and communication technology to produce the next generation of

architecture and spatial design specialists by integrating creativity and technology.

"In this fast-paced era of information technology, the demand for specialists constantly evolves. Throughout the decades, we have been aware of the need to adapt to these changes to prepare for the future," Shiota said.

From its early years, OECU has recognized the importance of information education and has actively incorporated it in its curriculum. In recent years, OECU has emphasized the importance of specialized education using ICT and its implementation spans all faculties and departments. ICT applies to all fields, from mechanical engineering to environmental sciences, and its importance cannot be emphasized enough. For example, the medical field utilizes ICT to assess the effectiveness of therapies and develop optimal treatment plans for patients.

In another university-wide initiative, the university launched the Mathematics, Data Science and AI (artificial intelligence) Education Program for all students in 2021, which aligns with the digital transformation of education promoted by the government. "These skills should not be just for those who major in that field but for all students, regardless of their major. It should become fundamental knowledge for everyone in this modern era," Shiota said.

### Beyond the classroom

OECU sets itself apart from its academic

counterparts through the pioneering Department of Digital Games, which focuses on both academia and the industry. Established in 2003, this department boasts a cadre of faculty members who are accomplished professionals within the gaming industry, affording students invaluable real-world experience through industry-academia collaborations. Focused on game development, 3D, computer graphics and visual effects, art and design, and game management, this department equips students with comprehensive skill sets that prepare them for competitive careers in the gaming sector.

A testament to their prowess was evident at this year's Tokyo Game Show, one of the world's premier gaming exhibitions, drawing over 243,000 attendees from across the globe. In preparation, students engaged in rigorous evaluations, with faculty members serving as discerning judges, providing feedback on world-building, gameplay and responsiveness. Five select teams were privileged to present at this esteemed venue, captivating over 1,300 attendees, including those in the gaming, advertising and television industries. This experience undoubtedly represents an invaluable steppingstone for budding game developers.

OECU envisions the application of game strategies beyond traditional gaming realms. Shiota noted, "The application, expansion and adaptation of game technology into various facets of society

constitute the essence of 'gamification' — a significant field that our university continues to work on."

For instance, the Faculty of Architecture and Design aspires to equip students with the proficiency to harness ICT for contextually responsive architectural and urban planning, ultimately contributing to realizing a sustainable society. Gamification in conjunction with virtual reality is an innovative and unique avenue for simulating architectural and urban planning dynamics, offering a novel perspective on these domains.

Central to the Department of Digital Games is the Joint Institute for Advanced Multimedia Studies, a pivotal facility facilitating industry-academia collaboration at OECU's Shijonawate Campus. Students enjoy firsthand exposure to industry professionals through active joint research and partnerships with external entities.

The state-of-the-art facilities provided, including an extensive motion capture studio, workrooms catering to video, audio and CG production, and a versatile multipurpose hall capable of accommodating up to 950 people, are operated and managed by industry experts. This on-campus, on-the-job experience allows students an unparalleled opportunity for content creation and fosters valuable experiential learning.

One of the cornerstones of OECU's long-term vision is the internationalization of practical learning. OECU graduates



Osaka Electro-Communication University President Kuninari Shiota

OSAKA ELECTRO-COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY

are poised to enter a globalized workplace characterized by technical documentation and manuals in English, alongside a workforce comprising individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. OECU's approach to internationalization distinguishes itself by emphasizing the cultivation of soft skills encompassing language proficiency and adaptability to empower students to achieve success in a dynamically diversifying work environment.

As an initial step, OECU revamped its International Exchange Center in 2022, strategically relocating the facility to a prominent position on campus. This strategic move has catalyzed increased interaction between the university's domestic and international students, fostering exchange programs with esteemed institutions such as the University of Florida in the United States and Mapua University in the Philippines. In pursuing the university's internationalization goals, OECU plans to broaden its international student enrollment and facilitate outbound student exchange programs.

"We remain resolute in pursuing the institution's guiding principle: 'A University That's Considered Useful to Society Rather Than a University That Stands Out,'" Shiota noted. "It's crucial for the country's future to focus on educating the younger generations, reskilling current employees and internationalizing the workforce. As part of our mission of higher education, we want to tackle these issues head-on. To achieve this, we will continue to evolve as a university, which includes restructuring and modifying our faculties and departments."



Students work on a project at the motion capture studio in the Joint Institute for Advanced Multimedia Studies. OSAKA ELECTRO-COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY



Students and faculty members from the Philippines' Mapua University participate in an OECU tour in July. OSAKA ELECTRO-COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY

Osaka Electro-Communication University



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# Akita University

(Sponsored content)

## Embracing global education for the region and the world

Long a powerful national force in mining technology, medicine and education, Akita University is stepping boldly onto the global stage with high-tech offerings that should prove very appealing. The university seeks to serve the Tohoku region as well as the world, and hopes that its ambitious research activities will help define the university's brand and attract more international students, particularly from ASEAN.

### Flexing its muscles

Situated up in northern Honshu, Akita University began its evolution as an institution of higher learning over a century ago as two normal schools and a mining college that merged and earned national university status in 1949. The school has since branched out into areas such as medicine, liberal arts, mechanical and aerospace engineering, artificial intelligence and resource sciences. Becoming more globally relevant is a primary goal.

"Our Faculty of International Resource Sciences is at the forefront of our internationalization drive and has seven bases in five countries overseas," President Fumio Yamamoto said. Established in 2014, this program offers over a century of university expertise in disciplines such as mining technology, applied geophysics, paleoenvironmental geology, resource management and many other fields. The curriculum includes the Resource Sciences Fieldwork Abroad program, in which students gain hands-on experience in resource exploration and development best practices outside Japan.

"The idea is to draw international students from resource-rich countries, educate them and have them take that knowledge back to their home countries. At the same time, our domestic students also engage in fieldwork and other exchanges overseas. We also want to transfer cutting-edge technologies such as exploration using AI."

One example is the university's Smart Mining Program in Southern Africa, a coursework-based undergraduate and master's program that focuses on information engineering involving AI, the Internet of Things, big data and so on. Graduates will gain a base for multilayered enterprise development and contribute to smart mining, bridging traditional and cutting-edge approaches for global impact.

The faculty also provides a global environment within the campus where students typically communicate in English. They enter an intensive university English program during the first and second years, and all specialized subjects during the second year are taught in English.

The school established its Global Center for Higher Education in 2019 and continues to pursue various global-oriented initiatives. Its newest international strategy, crafted in 2021, has four pillars. "The first pillar is to develop human resources with a rich international mindset," Yamamoto said. "The other three are to promote collaborations with overseas universities, foster international joint research, and upgrade our courses as well as the qualities and abilities of faculty and staff in response to internationalization."

He notes that the country's population of 18-year-olds has been declining significantly, so the most basic question is how the university can survive and even thrive. "Our international strategy was conceived against this background," he continued. "We need to raise the number of international students we accept and promote globalization by sending Japanese students from our university to study abroad."



Akita University President Fumio Yamamoto AKITA UNIVERSITY

They have plenty of options. As of October 2023, the school's interuniversity agreements on academic and student exchanges cover 73 universities in 35 countries and regions, and interfaculty agreements cover 40 faculties in 23 countries and regions. Many of these options include ASEAN members such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and the Philippines.

It should be noted as well that Akita University graduates have a good reputation. In an image survey conducted in 2017 by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun and Nikkei HR targeting listed companies, for example, AU was ranked No. 1 among universities.

### Let's be clear

According to Yamamoto, there is still an issue with language when it comes to bringing in international students. As a result, AU is working to upgrade the English-language proficiency of its faculty and staff, and to conduct more business in English. Since the university's slogan is "Students come first," it is placing greater emphasis on English proficiency so it can better help students on campus.

"We are providing assistance for this," Yamamoto explained. "For example, if you want to prepare for a presentation in English at an academic conference, the university will pay you a tuition fee so that you can receive that kind of instruction. Similarly, you can ask an English specialist to show you how to teach a class in English. We also provide financial support for individual lessons tailored to each teacher's English-language proficiency and goals."

"In addition, we've made TOEIC a requirement for advancement in the Faculty of International Resource Studies, and our exam scores have already risen tremendously," he continued. "I believe our other

faculties should do the same, so that will start in 2024. A score of 400 will also be a requirement for students entering the 2024 academic year to advance from the second to the third year in all faculties. We encourage faculty and staff to take the TOEIC as well."

### Comfort factor

Living conditions on campus and the overall support system can be a make-or-break proposition for international students, which Yamamoto readily acknowledges. The university has set about improving the dormitories, he said, including upgrading the information and communication technology facilities and creating an environment where they can easily maintain privacy and security. A 24-hour hotline is ready to respond to student troubles.

As another concrete measure to promote the acceptance of international students, the university has translated the syllabus into English and made a PR video covering various aspects of campus life. On the financial side, the school has established the Akita University Future Creation Fund, which provides financial assistance and scholarship programs.

International and Japanese students basically have the same curriculum for classes and extracurricular activities. At the grassroots level, the university wants both types of students to interact more closely with each other, so they hold a regular event called Let's Meet Up. "They enjoy discussing things in multiple languages," Yamamoto said. "We try to introduce international students to Japanese culture as well as our regional customs, and students introduce their own as well."

When it comes to current affairs, Yamamoto felt the university had to do some-



Above: Akita University's Tegata Campus; Left: Akita University provides several venues for students to interact and learn about each other's culture and customs.

AKITA UNIVERSITY

Telemedicine is another promising offshoot. Akita is Japan's sixth-largest prefecture and has a large population of elderly people. The university's renowned medical school and hospital are addressing issues such as the nation's rapidly graying population, declining birthrate and acute shortage of doctors in a modern and sustainable way with its new Telemedicine Promotion Development and Research Center.

"We will be operating a medical 'Maas' (mobility as a service) clinic within this fiscal year to support the medically vulnerable," Yamamoto said, "providing remote medical treatment by connecting it with Akita University Hospital."

### Power of attraction

While China had the largest number of international students at Akita University in the 2021 academic year with 88, ASEAN members such as Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia are well represented in the student body, with 65 students in total.

Yamamoto has a message for students from ASEAN: "Even if you are a graduate, you can always come back whenever you need our support or want to further pursue your studies. That's how I run the university, and I convey that feeling to the faculty and staff. I hope that by setting such educational goals, we can create an inviting environment for international students to join our university."

Akita University is dedicated to providing all its graduates with opportunities for continuous learning and skills enhancement through cutting-edge research and appealing programs, thereby encouraging young talent to return to the region. Yamamoto also believes that his university can show the world how to deal sustainably and sensitively with a graying population while revitalizing local communities and exerting a broader societal impact.

This page is sponsored by Akita University.

### Akita University

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AU students pose with certificates in September after completing the summer intensive English program in Singapore, part of its English Marathon initiatives. AKITA UNIVERSITY



Students from the Faculty of International Resource Sciences conduct field work in the Philippines in 2022. AKITA UNIVERSITY



Akita University President Fumio Yamamoto (front row, fourth from left) poses with Japanese Ambassador to Indonesia Kenji Kanasugi (fifth from left) and the Trisakti University staff in Jakarta in September after agreeing to set up a Cooperation Research Office there. AKITA UNIVERSITY



# The University of Electro-Communications

(Sponsored content)

## Efforts underway to successfully realize 'Society 5.0'

The University of Electro-Communications is a national university in the city of Chofu in Tokyo's Tama area. Unlike many institutions, all of its divisions, including the graduate school, are housed on a single campus, ensuring a unified presence.

The sinking of the British luxury liner Titanic in 1912 underscored the vital importance of radio communications for maritime safety. The impact was so profound that the installation of radio equipment on ships became mandatory in 1914. Recognizing the need for expertise in this field, the Technical Institute for Wireless-Communications was established in 1918. This institute later developed into what is now known as the University of Electro-Communications.

The university originated as a school for telecommunications, but has evolved with the times. While its name might suggest a sole focus on electricity and telecommunications, it now encompasses a broad spectrum of scientific and engineering disciplines. These range from basic to applied research in fields such as materials science, life science, optical science, electronics, robotics, mechanical engineering and media, with a core foundation in information, electricity and telecommunications.

### Toward 'Society 5.0'

As the world steps into an era where groundbreaking technologies pave the way for transformative societal shifts, the government has embraced a vision of a future supersmart society where cyberspace and the real world will be intricately merged. Actively supporting a series of initiatives to bring this vision to life, the government has dubbed it "Society 5.0" and is dedicated to its continual evolution. In line with this, UEC President Shunichi Tano articulated his aspirations, saying, "We aim to be an institution in supporting the realization of Society 5.0."

The fundamental and core technological domains required to construct this envisioned future society largely align with UEC's primary academic disciplines. Leveraging this alignment, UEC has laid the foundation for both nurturing the requisite human talent and undertaking the essential research to build Society 5.0.

### Exchanges with schools

With the coronavirus pandemic now under control, the travel and behavioral restrictions that lasted for over three years have finally been eased. UEC has been proactive in welcoming students and researchers from many countries, especially from the ASEAN region and beyond. Given that ASEAN represents a potential global partner for Japan in collaboratively addressing various challenges, UEC will continue to deepen these exchanges in the coming years.

Over the years, UEC has forged robust



University of Electro-Communications President Shunichi Tano UEC

relationships with universities across the ASEAN region. As of now, UEC boasts partnerships with 19 universities in the region, with three in Indonesia, five in Thailand, 10 in Vietnam and one in Malaysia. Additionally, UEC is hosting a diverse group of 41 international students: 14 from Indonesia, two from Thailand, 14 from Vietnam, nine from Malaysia and two from Cambodia.

### JUSST program

To enhance student collaborations with partner universities abroad, UEC offers the Japanese University Studies in Science and Technology short-term exchange program. Under JUSST, students from its global partner universities, particularly from eight affiliated institutions in the ASEAN region, are given the opportunity to study at UEC for a duration of up to one year.

While participating, these international students can enroll in specialized science and engineering courses taught in English. They also have access to courses on aca-

demical skills that sharpen their proficiency in writing papers and giving presentations, as well as classes focusing on Japanese culture and language. Furthermore, they can affiliate themselves with specific laboratories, delving into research activities guided by a faculty adviser.

### International programs

UEC has launched the Special Program for Priority Placement of International Diplomat Students, a Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology initiative, to welcome exceptional international students. This program fosters collaboration with government-sponsored students by inviting both self-financed and Japanese students to join specific events and courses. The goal is to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, shaping students into globally engaged individuals.

Previously, two distinct programs were offered. The Multifaceted International Collaboration Hubs human resource development program was designed with the aim of nurturing engineers and researchers with versatile expertise and promoting a global perspective among its participants.

Meanwhile, the Fusion of AI and Quantum Sciences program presented an intersection of quantum science and artificial intelligence. With a forward-thinking approach, it sought to cultivate international engineers and researchers who weren't just limited to their core areas of expertise.

Marking a new chapter, UEC inaugurated the Self-Evolving Smart Societies program in October. This initiative is dedicated to developing individuals capable of addressing and offering solutions to pressing global energy challenges.

### Links with ASEAN countries

UEC actively collaborates with government agencies across the ASEAN region, focusing on the training and exchange of



Participants from across ASEAN take part in the annual UEC Seminar in Bangkok in September. UEC

government officials and researchers.

In a collaborative initiative with the Vietnam Government Information Security Committee, UEC has welcomed five government officials into its doctoral program. These students have demonstrated exceptional research outcomes during their tenures.

Similarly, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communication of Indonesia, UEC annually accepts two scholarship students, targeting young researchers and engineers in sectors related to information and communication technology within the government. Once admitted, these scholars can advance to a master's degree program. Currently, there are four master's students and two research students from this initiative enrolled at UEC.

UEC collaborates with the governments to co-sponsor the education expenses for those incoming students. While UEC offers waivers for tuition, as well as admission and examination fees, the respective governmental agencies provide scholarships and additional financial aid. This joint effort significantly reduces the financial strain on international students, enabling them to concentrate wholeheartedly on their academics and research.

UEC's international outreach also encompasses Malaysia. Via the Malaysian Government Personnel Authority initiative, UEC has been welcoming students from that country. This program aims to nurture the next generation of Malaysians who will drive their nation's development and modernization by affording them an education at Japanese institutions. After completing two years of foundational education in Malaysia, students who meet the ministry's standards in the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students, along with the final assessments of their preparatory institutions, qualify to commence their first year of undergraduate studies at a Japanese national university. At present, UEC is the academic home to four such Malaysian government-sponsored students.

### UEC ASEAN Research Center

In 2014, to support its cooperation with universities and companies in the ASEAN region, UEC set up the UEC ASEAN Research Center. This center is located in the Knowledge Exchange for Innovation

Center at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi in Bangkok, a partner institution of UEC.

Following the establishment of the center, the annual UEC Seminar in ASEAN was inaugurated in 2015, attracting representatives from universities, businesses and government agencies throughout the association. In addition, from 2019 onward, the ASEAN-UEC Workshop on Informatics and Engineering was introduced in the ASEAN region. This workshop was created specifically as a platform for students and faculty from both UEC and the ASEAN region to collaboratively present and discuss their research findings.

These seminars and workshops serve as invaluable platforms for networking and information exchange between UEC and educational and research institutions, businesses and government agencies in the ASEAN region. Each event significantly contributes to the enhancement and expansion of educational and research collaboration between UEC and ASEAN.

### International internships

In cooperation with top-class research institutions, universities and private companies, UEC has developed a substantial international internship program. Annually, approximately 10 students immerse themselves in real-world learning through internships across the ASEAN region. In a notable move in December 2010, UEC forged an agreement with the National Science and Technology Development Agency in Thailand, enabling students to undertake internships at esteemed research centers like the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, the National Nanotechnology Center and the Thailand National Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology. This program garners significant interest, with a high volume of applications received each year.

In Indonesia, UEC collaborates with the Ministry of Information and Communication and the Institut Teknologi Bandung to offer internships. In Vietnam, UEC collaborates with institutions such as the Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and leading companies like Financing and Promoting Technology Corp. to offer internship opportunities for students. Similarly, in Malaysia, UEC joins hands with Multimedia University, Telekom Malaysia and others to furnish students with invaluable on-the-job learning opportunities.

### UEC alumni

Many international students have pursued their studies at UEC and returned to their home countries, ascending to positions as university professors or industry leaders. Consequently, UEC alumni associations can be found globally, cementing an expansive international network. One of the standout initiatives is the UEC International Ambassador System. This system appoints international students who have graduated from UEC as ambassadors. Through these ambassadors, UEC amplifies its international exchange activities in their respective countries and encourages exceptional international students to choose UEC for their academic pursuits. These ambassadors actively promote the UEC's study abroad programs at their alma maters and also participate in international gatherings, such as the UEC Seminar in ASEAN.

### Employment support

The International Education Center at UEC offers job placement assistance specifically tailored for international students who have attained sufficient proficiency in the Japanese language. At the IEC, students are exposed to content that enhances their comprehension of Japanese society, corporations and culture through academic courses and advanced Japanese classes. Depending on the academic term, specialized Japanese sessions might be organized to equip students for the job-hunting process, which includes tasks like drafting entry sheets and preparing for interviews. Recognizing the need for inclusivity, starting from 2022, seminars in English have been made available for students whose Japanese-language capabilities are still developing.

A majority of Japanese firms mandate Japanese-language proficiency when recruiting international students. Given their specialized expertise in fields like science, engineering and information technology, UEC students equipped with Japanese-language abilities generally have a smoother path to employment within Japan. By familiarizing themselves with the Japanese job-hunting process and its timeline, and by diligently following through with the requisite activities, these students stand a strong chance of securing employment in the country.

The alumni association plays a pivotal role in facilitating job searches, offering an array of services including mock interviews, sector-specific information sessions and internship assistance. A standout feature is the availability of seasoned engineers from the alumni base who provide career advice. This distinguishes the alumni support from the university's employment assistance. Being engineers with extensive industry experience, these alumni mentors can offer precise advice on technical interviews and insights into the industry's unique dynamics, showcasing the strength and value of UEC's alumni network.

### Toward a smart society

At present, UEC researchers and students are vigorously engaging in collaborations with domestic and international industries, as well as research and development institutions. Their goal is not only to amplify their research and academic prowess but also to make diverse societal contributions, such as bolstering local industries.

Tano expressed UEC's eagerness to persistently welcome joint research ventures with international firms that resonate with the vision of co-creating an evolutionary smart society.

*This page is sponsored by the University of Electro-Communications*

### The University of Electro-Communications

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Tano exchanges a gift with the Executive Vice President of Thailand's National Science and Technology Development Agency Uracha Ruktanonchai in September. UEC



A delegation from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Informatics visits the university in December 2022. UEC



University staff members participate in a Study in Japan Fair held abroad in August. UEC



# Japan Women's University

(Sponsored content)

## Nurturing women to better prepare for leadership roles

Around 9% of Japan's roughly 800 four-year institutions of higher learning are for women only. This ratio is the highest in the world. Yet, despite the societal outcomes one might expect from educational opportunities created specifically for women, Japan still ranks 125th out of the 146 countries covered by this year's Global Gender Gap Report that covers health, education, economics and politics.

In short, while educational opportunities specifically for women may exist in Japan, the availability and outcomes still do not necessarily lead to the gender parity that is increasingly sought in contemporary society. The question these women-only institutions face, then, is what role do they have to play now?

### Free to explore potential

One problem, Japan Women's University President Satoko Shinohara observes, is that in Japan, there is little social recognition of women playing an active role in society, particularly when it comes to training and advancement of women as leaders. Even highly educated women are poorly represented in the business executive and management classes. This, she argues, is where women-only institutions have a crucial role to play.

"I believe it is very important that the final educational environment our students go through before they enter the workforce is one where a bias toward 'men as leaders' does not exist," Shinohara said. "Our students are neither assigned tasks nor refused tasks just because they are women. It's meaningful that they can learn in an environment that does not call for sex-based yardsticks. They can go out into the workforce without these preconceived notions. I believe this is the reason why graduates from women-only institutions, including ours, can thrive without being bound to fixed ideas about their own potential."

There is a difference, Shinohara says, when women play a leadership role. "My sense is that male-led projects and organizations tend to have a tidy top-down pyramid-like structure. Decisions are made quickly, but it is hard for them to reflect the consensus opinion of their members. Conversely, when women lead they tend to create flattened structures that take in everyone's views to build a consensus. Societies that stress sustainability premised on slow growth might well need such female-led initiatives."

### Pioneer in education

JWU was established in 1901. Japanese society at the time was not one where there was equality between the sexes; nor was there a belief that women needed higher education. In light of this social reality, JWU was truly a pioneering institution. University founder Jinzo Naruse, noting that half of the Japanese population was made up of women, argued, "If women do not receive an education and cannot play a role in society, then this country will have no future." Moreover, he wanted a comprehensive educational institution with a wide range of courses. At present, JWU is the only private women-only institution of higher education with a Faculty of Science, and it continues to offer an educational environment that fuses the humanities and the sciences.

### Three dynamic pillars

Japan today is a developed country facing various issues, such as having the world's most rapidly graying society. To address new issues as they emerge, a university



Japan Women's University President Satoko Shinohara JAPAN WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY

likewise needs to grow and evolve. To maintain its competitiveness and remain an institution that prospective students will want to select and whose graduates companies and public institutions want to hire, JWU has been moving forward on implementing several reforms.

First has been a reorganization of the campus to create an environment where students in both the humanities and the sciences can learn across departmental and disciplinary boundaries. Toward that end, JWU has integrated each undergraduate faculty and program, as well as its graduate school, at its Meiji Campus in the heart of Tokyo. The purpose is to encourage close interdisciplinary collaboration and interaction among students.

Second, JWU has reorganized its faculties to make the university's structure more understandable to outsiders, and is continually establishing new ones. One of these is the Faculty of Transcultural Studies, which was established this year with the goal of cultivating global human resources.

"The faculty will train global human resources who, through the lens of culture, will have the ability to see into a society and form connections with people," Shinohara explained. "This is premised by a respect for foreign cultures that differ from Japan's."

Students will be required to undergo two weeks of training abroad, and to gain practical experience through off-campus programs, all with the goal of cultivating human resources with a multicultural perspective. The faculty's unique learning experience, which will have students conveying the fruits of their practical, off-campus and out-of-classroom training in multiple languages via the internet and other electronic means, will foster human resources who can help to solve social

issues anywhere in the world based on a cultural perspective.

JWU is also set to inaugurate the Faculty of Architecture and Design in April 2024. It will be formed by spinning off the Department of Housing and Architecture, which has already produced many female architects, from the Faculty of Human Sciences and Design.

"We thought that there should be a separate faculty focusing on architecture with a broader and more multifaceted perspective, while also maintaining an education that emphasizes how people live and the environments that surround them," Shinohara said. The faculty will provide a variety of learning experiences, such as integrated exercises that entail designing architecture through joint efforts with university students in other countries.

Additionally, JWU is scheduled to launch the provisionally named Faculty of Food and Nutritional Sciences in 2025. Its students will learn broadly about food from a scientific perspective, so they can acquire the ability to address global food issues and make future contributions to society.

"I see the three pillars that encompass what will bring people from around the world to Japan as being *culture, architecture and food*," Shinohara emphasized. "We already have overseas students on campus who have come to study architecture and engage in transcultural exploration. In the future, I want to build a joint platform within the Asian region and increase the number of students who come from abroad to study at these new faculties. We will also deepen our exchanges with Asian countries by enabling our students to travel to Vietnam, Thailand and China to study, and get students from those countries to come here to learn about Japan."



Above: Shinohara and JWU students participated in a joint architecture workshop over the summer at Tamkang University in Taiwan. Left: Students conduct fieldwork for the workshop in Taiwan.

JAPAN WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY



that, Asia being an area rich with possibility, the university should work within the region to foster women leaders.

### Vision for the future

The expectations for the female workforce are growing higher than ever, with hopes that it will help to solve issues in business and in life, while playing a part in creating a sustainable society. Shinohara wants JWU to continue to promote an education that will increase its students' levels of expertise, provide them with opportunities to understand the cultures of other countries and regions, and give them the wherewithal to cope with whatever challenges they may face.

In May, JWU set down a new motto that condenses the message conveyed to all the university's stakeholders, including prospective and current students. That message is, "I move, and the world opens." Shinohara explained it as follows: "First, if I don't move, then nothing about the current situation will change. So, if I take ownership and move on my own, then the world will open up. We should work together, both with friends close at hand and people in foreign lands."

This new motto carries on in the tradition of the three policies set down by Naruse over 100 years ago — Conviction, Creativity and Cooperation — and sends a message, JWU hopes, that will resonate with future generations.

Shinohara adds that it is important for women to take leadership roles and create new value precisely at this moment when the global framework is going through tremendous change. JWU will contribute to society by training skilled individuals who can create the value that the times demand.

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### High placement rates

JWU boasts an extremely high job placement rate of 99.1% (as of May 2023). One of the reasons for this success, explains Shinohara, is that JWU has a superb career guidance system with an individual focus on each student that functions quite well with a support network that has been organized by the graduates themselves.

The university also redesigned its career support efforts in 2021 to help students better identify earlier in their studies what their goals for the future might be and how to achieve them.

Such advice is important, given the changing nature of the workforce. Many students will naturally go on to work as professionals in their areas of expertise. And whether they work in a specialist job or in a generalist one, many will be pursuing career tracks that offer opportunities for advancement within the company. "I think it is very important that there are diverse female role models actively engaged in such work, and that there are graduates of the same sex to provide guidance," Shinohara said. "One of the great benefits of JWU is that students can actually see such older alumni playing active roles in society in a variety of settings."

JWU has produced many entrepreneurs and business executives. According to a survey this year by Tokyo Shoko Research, the university ranks seventh in Japan and second among women's universities in female graduates who are company presidents.

Shinohara said: "The driving force behind this is the university's culture. A mindset is cultivated during the students' time here

that helps them understand that they can take risks and not be afraid to fail. This, it seems to me, leads to entrepreneurship when they head out into the workforce. Additionally, JWU produces graduates with a high degree of expertise, and that lays a foundation that makes it easy for them to launch businesses in line with those areas of expertise."

### Expanding exchange in Asia

JWU has a long history of international exchange and many students sent abroad have gone on to become pioneers in their fields. The university has student exchange agreements with prestigious universities worldwide, including famous women's colleges in the United States like Wellesley College and Mount Holyoke College. Every year, JWU students go abroad to study at these and other partner institutions.

In recent years, JWU has also been expanding its agreements with universities in Asia. Of the 10 agreements concluded between 2021 and 2023, nine are with universities in Asia. As a result, students from Taiwan, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand have been visiting JWU to participate in various programs ranging from short-term workshops to one-year exchanges.

JWU has been entering into these agreements with institutions around Asia because it believes helping to develop Asia as a whole is crucial. The physical proximity means there are also shared cultures and backgrounds, and this should facilitate collaboration.

JWU also believes it is very important



Japan Women's University plans to establish a faculty of food and nutritional sciences in April 2025. JAPAN WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY



The Hyakunijunenkan Building at JWU's Meiji Campus was completed in February 2021 as part of the university's 120th anniversary project. JAPAN WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY



A participant in JWU's Study Abroad Program at Hertford College, University of Oxford in the United Kingdom, gives a debriefing session in September at JWU. JAPAN WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY

### Japan Women's University

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# Kanazawa University

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## Aspiring to offer a fresh learning perspective to the world

Situated in central Honshu not far from the Sea of Japan, Kanazawa University is a research powerhouse with big new ideas in fields as diverse as evolutionary medicine, tourism and nanoscience. "Kokorozashi," which means aspiration in Japanese, is K.U.'s motto and is typified by a move into in-house venture capital. Much of the university's outreach extends to the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

### Farsighted beginnings

What would one day become Kanazawa University began in 1862 as a smallpox vaccination center in Hikoso, Ishikawa Prefecture, supported by the feudal lords of the Kaga domain. Farsighted even then, the area's leaders emphasized Western-style learning and launched an array of educational institutes that included a medical school, pharmacology department, industrial college and many other institutions before they were all merged in 1949 into the university that exists today.

President Takashi Wada took office in April 2022 and quickly established a reform strategy office staffed evenly by administrative employees and faculty — mainly younger people with a 1-to-1 ratio of men to women — under his direct control. "We have a history that connects innovation to current traditions," he said.

Wada's interpretation of the two worlds he and the university must deal with is clear-sighted and literally visionary. "We humans have two eyes. If you look at a region with your left eye and at the world with your right, you can see the whole picture by combining them," he said. "We contribute to society by having multiple perspectives, compound perspectives and insights while looking at both the local situation and the world, as well as offering top-level education and research."

The KU Top Global University project and its own global human resource development standards are driving much of this. The former is a project of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology intended to support universities that carry out research at the world's top level and at universities that drive globalization.

This year marks the 10th since the KUTGU project started. Wada shared some of the top-line results. "We've increased the number of students scoring 760 or higher on the TOEIC to about 30% of the total," he said. "And before the pandemic hit, we had 1,200 international students, with around 1,000 now. The number of subjects we teach in English is 27 times more in undergraduate courses, and about 12 times more in our graduate schools. In addition, the ratio of foreign or Japanese faculty who possess overseas degrees or out-of-country research experience has risen 17 times."

The Kanazawa University Global Standards is an initiative designed to produce



Kanazawa University President Takashi Wada KANAZAWA UNIVERSITY

human resources with the Kanazawa University brand who can gain the "future-oriented intelligence" needed to explore and overcome current and upcoming challenges.

"To become a true international citizen, it is important to be aware of your own country's culture and be proud of it, and also to understand and respect other countries' cultures," Wada explained.

As for Kanazawa itself, Wada said the city takes great care of students and that students find it very easy to spend time there. "We are aiming for a global campus that blends into everyday life," he said.

### New mindset, future funding

Wada indicates that the university is also intent on creating a new academic field that blends various elements such as literature, science and medicine. One example is the Sapiens Life Sciences, Evolution and Medicine Research Center, which mixes archaeology and medicine. "We aim to elucidate the human evolutionary process and disease pathology by integrating ancient

human genome research, data science and medical life science research," he said.

On an entirely different aspect of life, the university's School of Tourism Sciences and Design focuses on business development centered around tourism, as well as scientific and technological approaches that focus on "Society 5.0." This term refers to a human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space.

"Kanazawa has the image of being a leader in tourism, so studying it makes a lot of sense," Wada said. "I think this is easy for people in ASEAN to grasp as well."

Beyond that, the School of Entrepreneurial and Innovation Studies in the College of Transdisciplinary Sciences for Innovation has the aim of developing human resources who will lead social transformation in creating innovation. Students gather new knowledge and co-create with others in a diverse environment through project exercises. Collaborating with teachers and people outside of the university, students learn how to engage with the status quo and future issues in practical ways.

The university values the core technology of basic research as a starting point, and provides full support for the entire process of applying it to future society. "To implement basic research and core technologies in society, though, it is necessary to bridge the gap through empirical research," Wada stated.

To ensure it can pursue that research, Kanazawa University established its wholly owned venture capital firm Vision Incubate Co. in August 2023. This marks the first time in Japan that a national university has launched a venture capital company with its own funds.

"The previous mechanisms were public-private funds. In other words, money was coming in from the government," Wada said. "We are taking the next step to bring our empirical research closer to social implementation via the venture capital system."



### Bonding with ASEAN

"We consider ASEAN to be an important partner," Wada said. "In our Collaborative Professor System, for example, 30% of the instructors are from ASEAN."

There are Kanazawa University satellite offices in five locations in ASEAN — one in Indonesia, three in Thailand and one in Vietnam — to help students coming from Japan and those leaving to attend university.

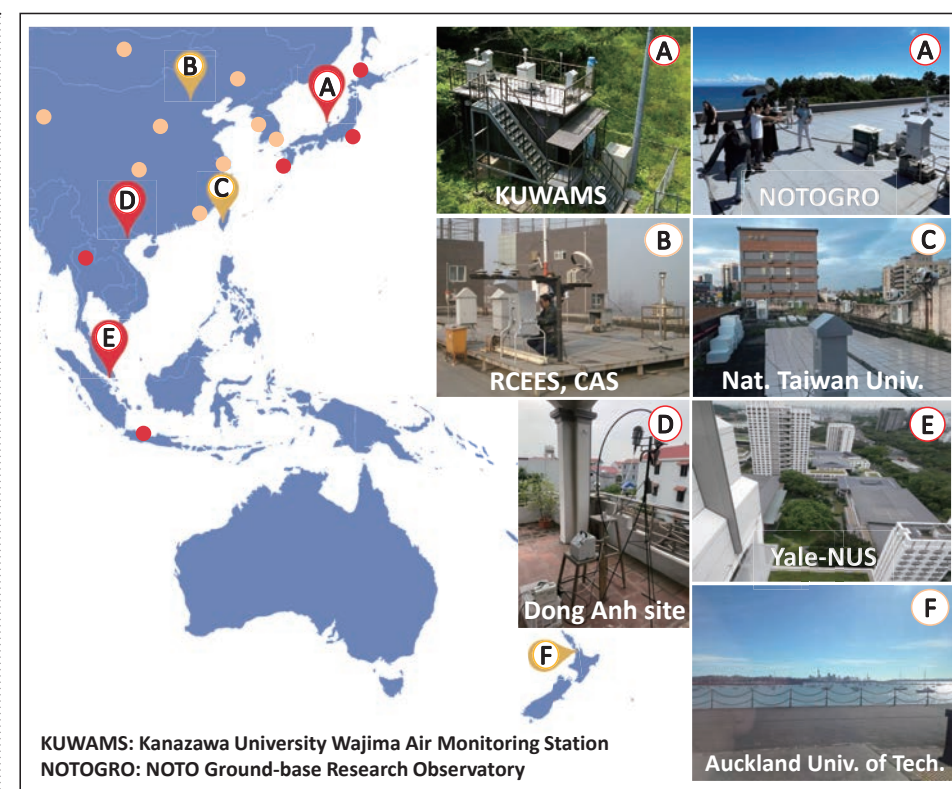
Outreach at a high level is crucial. The university's Nano Life Science Institute (NanoLSI), established as part of the World Premier International Research Center Initiative, is a unique facility investigating nanodomains and revealing the mechanisms of biological phenomena at the atomic and molecular levels. Almost 40% of the institute's researchers are foreign, and it is actively reaching out to ASEAN for more. Most recently, it cosponsored a mid-September symposium in Vietnam that focused on nano biotechnology, biosensors and computation for tackling problems in the life sciences. Ten NanoLSI researchers and 10 students from the Nano Life Science Division of the Graduate School of Frontier Science Initiative held lectures and talks.

On the reverse side, the short-term study abroad programs at the university sent 867 people to ASEAN members between 2016 to 2022. "There are many schools conducting joint research and partner schools in ASEAN," Wada said. "We also offer the First Step Program, which is a short-term and inexpensive program for first- and second-year students to gain overseas experience, allowing them to build confidence and then move on to long-term study abroad."

### Attractive propositions

To entice both foreign researchers and students to come to Kanazawa, the university offers generous assistance, including school admission support and Japanese-language programs for foreign children. "More and more people are thinking of studying at Kanazawa University because they feel confident that the university really supports them not only in their studies, but also in their daily lives," Wada noted.

In April 2022, the school established its Graduate School GS Basic Subjects/Advanced Subjects program. "Graduate students with a high level of expertise understand the importance of liberal arts," Wada said. "This is a liberal arts program



The Institute of Nature and Environmental Technology at Kanazawa University uses an extensive air-monitoring network to address common and emerging air pollution problems in Asia and Oceania. KANAZAWA UNIVERSITY

that fosters a comprehensive perspective. It is unique in that it has been introduced not only in university departments, but also in graduate schools. Students can also rotate laboratories so that they can acquire new perspectives outside of their specialty."

In December the same year, Kanazawa University created the Promising Researcher position. "As a preparation and training period for promising students to build their careers after completing their doctoral program, we've prepared a three-year position as a special lecturer. This year is the first year, and as of June 2023, we had hired four people — all women — as researchers."

### Targeting global youth

The university is also appealing to high school students in the ASEAN region to consider the school as a prime education destination.

In late September, for example, Kanazawa University hosted the Study and Work in Japan Fair for Thailand 2023 in Bangkok. This fair was held as part of the Study in Japan Global Network Project (ASEAN) commissioned by Okayama University. This initiative, launched in 2019, is meant to promote study abroad from Thailand to Japan and help integrate international students with Japanese society. This year's fair marked the first time the event has taken place onsite since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taking place at the Knowledge Exchange for Innovation Center, one of Kanazawa University's liaison offices in Bangkok, 31 organizations exhibited and provided a wide range of materials and information about universities and companies to about 440 Thai high school and university students and working adults. Many participants showed great interest in studying and working in Japan or at Japanese-affiliated companies in Thailand, and obtained useful information from both participating institutions and individual consultants.

The university also presents what is known as the Kagayaki Award, a highlight at the above-mentioned fair. The award provides an opportunity for high school students to present their research and

receive awards. At the 2023 fair, 124 teams participated.

On the project side of things, the university is deeply involved in many initiatives that affect ASEAN members. One involves research into transboundary pollution analysis by the Institute of Nature and Environmental Technology. Since the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea border one another, the university jointly monitors environmental pollution with many collaborating organizations in ASEAN. Another is the Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development, a project to solve air pollution problems and develop human resources in Cambodia in collaboration with the Japan Science and Technology Agency.

During the recent G7 education ministers' meeting in Toyama and Kanazawa prefectures, education ministers from various countries gathered at Kanazawa University to discuss the future of education with high school students, university students, graduate students and others, including those from ASEAN.

As is apparent, Kanazawa University's programs continue to gain in scope and sophistication. So does its outreach to ASEAN. The school's ambitious goal — to deliver innovative research and an education that fosters the ability, strength and human resilience to succeed in global society — is bound to attract learners from abroad, and to create future-oriented intelligence.

This page is sponsored by Kanazawa University.



Participants pose at the first International Symposium of Nano Life Science: Nano Biotechnology, Biosensor, Computation in Quy Nhon, Vietnam, in September. The event was supported by Rencontres du Vietnam, Nong Lam University and Kanazawa University's Nano Life Science Institute. KANAZAWA UNIVERSITY



Kanazawa University has a long history of hosting exchange students from ASEAN and has produced many graduates from the region. KANAZAWA UNIVERSITY



Kanazawa University hosts the Study and Work in Japan Fair for Thailand 2023 in September for students seeking to study or work in Japan, as well as the Kagayaki Award research contest for high school students. KANAZAWA UNIVERSITY

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# The University of Tokyo

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## Diverse student body key to addressing current problems

By its 150th anniversary in 2027, Japan's oldest national university intends to have built a brand-new interdisciplinary institute and invite the brightest undergraduates from around the world to come and design the future from Tokyo. University of Tokyo President Teruo Fujii says the envisioned College of Design will foster an end-user scholarship based not on what the faculty wants to teach, but on what the students want to learn.

"We are at a point now where a perspective change is necessary. Many systems or public services developed in the 20th century were essentially done so from the point of view of suppliers; the general idea was that if people bought whatever was mass-produced or manufactured, then everything was fine. Now, however, as we've seen from a lot of big tech companies, it is important to have an end product that is as close as possible to what the users want. It is equally important in other areas, such as education or medical care or public service, to provide service that matches student, patient or citizen needs. The terminology that captures that overarching concept is 'design,'" Fujii explained.

### No entrance exams?

The administration of the College of Design will also depart from the usual. It will forgo entrance exams typical of Japanese universities and instead have an admissions system based on applications to attract talented students of diverse backgrounds from all over the world. In addition, to align the school year with that of the overseas institutions from which it is hoping to attract what the president calls "future shapers," classes will start in the fall, not April as is customary in Japan.

Hoping to start with 100 core students and additional "affiliate" students, the college's English-taught curriculum will have a strong focus on global issues. Pressing issues such as sustainability require a practical set of solutions, and the students aiming to formulate those solutions will have varied interests and values as well, Fujii said.

"There is technology-driven sustainability, but what kind of economic system should be developed to encourage people to think about and act on sustainability? I think there is a lot of interest in that kind of solution," he said. "Some of today's students may want to work for international organizations, while others may want to go to a manufacturer and work in the field of technology, and of course there are those who want to work in science, climatology, and so on."

### Creative autonomy

Though the future College of Design's row of towers will stand tall on the university's Hongo Campus in the middle of the metropolis, it is only one aspect of the president's plan to bolster the university's capacity and offerings so that it simply becomes a place that people want to join. Fujii, who took office in 2021, has released a new set of guiding principles and ideals called UTokyo Compass. Its theme: "Into a Sea of Diversity: Creating the Future through Dialogue."

"I intend for UTokyo Compass to be a call for everyone at UTokyo to build a common vision for our university and to ensure that we make steady progress along a shared course over the coming decades, all the while earning the understanding of the university community and of our stakeholders in society," Fujii said in a booklet explaining the principles.

UTokyo Compass has 20 goals outlined under four pillars, including Establishing Management Capacity for Autonomous



University of Tokyo President Teruo Fujii RYOICHI SHIMIZU

and Creative Activity. The president is putting forward a new model of university administration that is not based primarily on government subsidies, but on independent fundraising. For this to happen, it is necessary to build groundbreaking research and business partnerships.

"In order for the university to truly fulfill its role on a global scale, a significant number of resources are necessary. Research and other activities generated by the university create a lot of value, and we need to make that value widely understood by people outside the university. If these different sectors agree with and support our objectives and activities, they will make resources available to us for further work. We can then use those donations for the next set of activities. If we can create such a virtuous cycle, then the university can, for example, have an endowment fund, from which we can invest in the markets, and use the earnings to carry out the next activity, and so on. This is possible now because various legal restrictions on what national universities could do have been gradually lifted. So the government is also supporting this move toward universities themselves managing their operations in a manner they determine, and generating their own resources. This is what we mean by being autonomous in building capacity for creative activity," Fujii said.

### Educating global students

This April, the university launched the Center for Global Education as one part of its drive to cultivate dialogue across borders and offer students a global education. The center, dubbed GlobE, features English-medium courses named Global Liberal Arts Courses that are focused on the U.N. sustainable development goals and offered to juniors and seniors as well as to gradu-

ate students. On its website, the center says its aim is "to offer robust support for the internationalization of all students from the time of their entry to graduation." Fujii said GlobE intends to eventually increase the GLA program's current 30 courses to 75. At the same time, attesting to the university's commitment to diversity, 70% of its teaching faculty are non-Japanese.

"Globalization of education is also important. About 30% of our graduate students are international students, but the number of international undergraduates is quite small, around 2%. One of the reasons for that is that there weren't many classes they could take in English. We already had a number of faculty who had been teaching active-learning English-language classes with a focus on critical thinking, research or presentation skills, or topics related to their fields of specialization. We, therefore, decided to create new courses related to the SDGs, where our faculty would actually teach in English," Fujii said.

In addition to GLA courses for registered students, Global Unit Courses, a set of English-taught summer courses offered to undergraduates from anywhere in the world, has been developed. These include in-person and online courses on topics ranging from artificial intelligence and advanced technologies to capitalism and writings about Japan and are already attracting a significant number of students. Basic to advanced Japanese-language courses are also offered.

### Planetary health pledge

To an onlooker, UTokyo's pioneering stance might seem only natural. After all, it was the first national university in Japan and remains among the most prestigious and best-known. Its graduates have become Nobel laureates, prime ministers and busi-



Above: UTokyo will, in the years ahead, steadily make its campuses energetic places that anyone in the world would want to come to. Left: The University of Tokyo, Japan's oldest national university, will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2027. THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO



ness leaders, as well as influential artists and critics. It was founded in 1877 through the restructuring and consolidation of Tokyo Kaisei School (originally the Institute for Western Studies) and Tokyo Medical School, which were established in the two previous decades. Today, the university's 10 faculties, 15 graduate schools and numerous research institutes are spread across its three core campuses, in Hongo, Komaba and Kashiwa, and elsewhere in Japan.

To continue carrying out its responsibility to create value, the university has been forging partnerships with the world's leading research institutes, corporations, start-ups and universities. Most recently, it signed a letter of intent with France's Institut Pasteur to build a Japan-based research counterpart that will include the Planetary Health Innovation Center, which is expected to strengthen international collaboration in a wide range of fields such as global health and life sciences.

The University of Tokyo's engagement with the emerging field of planetary health, which tackles the effects of human interaction with the Earth, is also evident in its 100-year tie-up with East Japan Railway Co. (JR East). Under the agreement, the university will use JR East's stations and facilities essentially as laboratories for creating future lifestyles. The collaborative creation project, called the Planetary Health Design Laboratory (PHD Lab.), will aim to realize a fulfilled life for every individual. The UTokyo Gateway Campus, a cutting-edge facility that will be built in Takanawa Gateway City, will function as a base for the PHD Lab.

"In June 2022, I took part in an international meeting called Stockholm+50 (so

named as it took place 50 years after the first U.N. environmental conference in Stockholm.) It was the first opportunity to make me realize the need to think seriously about 'planetary health,'" Fujii said.

"In 1972, the first environmental conference of the United Nations was held in Stockholm. The theme at that time was the human environment. Last year's theme was planetary health. Today, we are thinking about issues such as sustainability, climate change and biodiversity, which concern the health of the Earth. We've also experienced a pandemic, which concerns human health, and we have to remember that various living creatures are on the Earth as well. Therefore, we need to think about the health of the entire planet. So when it comes to considering how we can carry on our duty for the next 150 years, planetary health is very important."

### Pressing issues

Apart from creating facilities to strengthen its own research capacity, UTokyo has contributed to advancing research in such fields as quantum computing and semiconductor technologies. The University of Tokyo acts as an entry point or hub, facilitating the work of various companies and universities on cutting-edge technologies with internationally leading companies, including IBM and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co.

As it moves toward another 150 years of excellence, the university remains bound to a multifaceted role that extends beyond the borders of classroom or nation. Participating in the global conversation on the use of AI is, therefore, necessary. AI House Davos is a platform that will bring together indus-

try, academia and government for this dialogue, and UTokyo has a seat at the table. In addition, significant numbers of researchers from the university are participating in the discussions regarding the G7-led Hiroshima AI Process, an effort toward developing a framework for the development and use of generative AI.

"To further contribute to the development of AI research and the realization of a better world, the Institute for AI and Beyond, a collaborative initiative by the University of Tokyo and SoftBank, is advancing AI research and pioneering new sciences and businesses while pursuing solutions for AI-related social problems," Fujii said in a press release on the matter.

The president also hopes to increase opportunities for students to interact with global leaders on a regular basis. In the past year, leaders such as former Unilever CEO Paul Polman, Stanford University President Emeritus and Alphabet Inc. Chairman John Hennessy, and World Trade Organization Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala have had sessions at the university. Beyond interactive sessions, the university is aiming to create social entrepreneurship ties with developing nations to find collaborative solutions to the issues facing the world.

### Designed future ahead

In its season of celebrating 150 years, the University of Tokyo can look back on a past that has established it as nothing less than a pillar of the Japanese nation, and forward to a future with challenges both inside and outside its walls. However, in a proactive and inclusive approach that forms its foundation, the university is taking steps to ensure that a future that benefits all humankind is designed there.

This page is sponsored by the University of Tokyo.

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The Center for Global Education, launched in April, features English-language studies on the U.N. sustainable development goals for undergraduate and graduate students. THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO



Fujii says the Center for Global Education aims to offer robust support for the internationalization of all students throughout their time at the university. THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

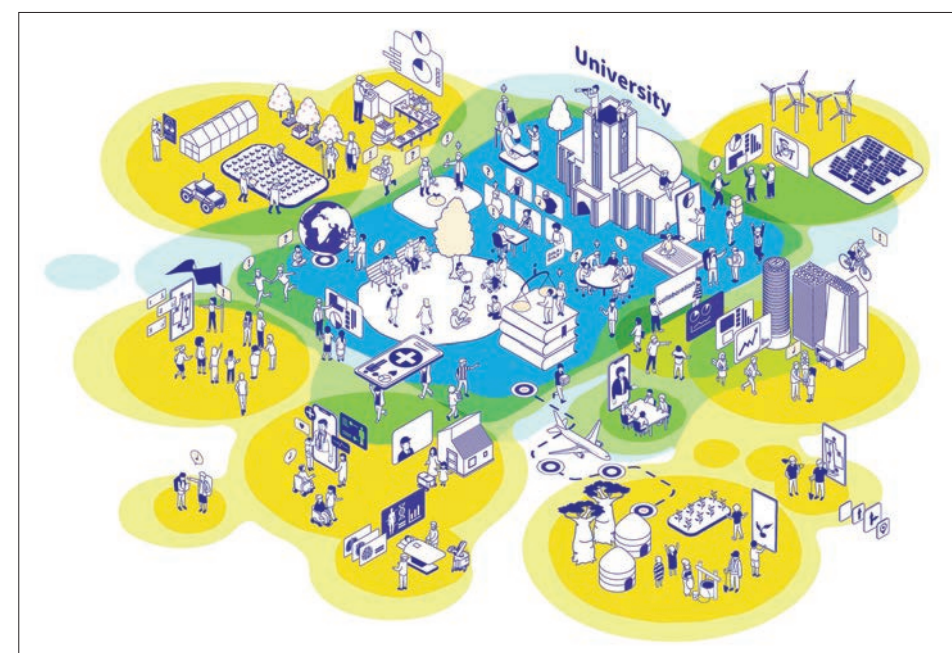


Image of a new model of the relationship between the university and society, based on the UTokyo Compass announced in 2021. THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO