

# ASEAN-Japan Centre

## ASEAN speeds up integration toward the ASEAN Community

By the end of this year, ASEAN member states are expected to have established three communities: the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

The establishment of the three communities will take ASEAN into the next phase of regional integration. ASEAN has been working on strengthening ties among the 10 member states since its inception in August 1967.

Stronger bonding among the member states will have a major impact on the economies of the world because ASEAN as a whole would represent a huge economy with over 600 million people, a market larger than either the EU or North America.

The AEC aims to eliminate import duties on all products, except for certain sensitive items. It also looks to dispose of nontariff barriers such as complexities surrounding procedures on direct investment with government organizations.

In the AEC, member states aim to achieve higher levels of economic dynamism, sustained prosperity, inclusive growth and integrated development of ASEAN, by transforming itself into a single market and production base, with people, products and money freely moving within the region. The AEC also plans to fully integrate the ASEAN into the global economy.

The APSC will promote political development in adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, as well as the respect, promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It aims to hold various exchange events on these and other issues.

The ASCC intends to contribute to realizing an ASEAN Community that is people-oriented and socially responsible, with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the peoples and ASEAN member states. It also hopes to form a common identity and build a caring and sharing society that is inclusive and where the well-being, livelihood and welfare of the people is enhanced.

As ASEAN accelerates its preparation to establish the ASEAN Community, there are growing needs for information on the ASEAN integration



Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Alicia Dela Rosa Bala delivers the keynote speech at the "ASEAN Update Seminar Series: ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Seminar" in Tokyo on March 20. ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE

among the general public, as well as the business community in Japan. To address the information needs, the ASEAN-Japan Centre has been organizing the ASEAN Update Seminar Series, which provides information on the latest move on the ASEAN Community throughout Japan, since 2014, inviting high-level officials of the ASEAN Secretariat and prominent intellectuals to speak. The seminars have provided opportunities to obtain firsthand information on the ASEAN Community from those who are engaging in and researching on the topic on the front line.

For the sixth and most recent seminar of the series, which was held in Osaka and Tokyo on March 19 and 20 respectively, the center chose the topic of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Alicia Dela Rosa Bala, deputy secretary-general of ASEAN for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community was invited to deliver the keynote speech.

In her speech titled "Framing the ASCC Post-2015, the Way Forward," Bala mentioned that at the 23rd ASEAN Summit in 2013, the Declaration on the ASEAN Community's post-2015 vision was adopted, in

which the leaders agreed to develop the ASEAN Community's post-2015 vision with the aspiration of a Southeast Asian region bound by One Vision, One identity and One Community. It was followed by the adoption of the central elements of the ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision at the 25th Summit Meeting in 2014.

Bala illustrated the five characteristics and elements that would make up the ASCC 2025: inclusive, sustainable, resilient, dynamic and engaging and benefiting the people.

Motoko Shuto, professor of Tsukuba University's Master's Program in International Area Studies, Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, who was also a main speaker of the seminar, responded to The Japan Times interview that as unity in the AEC progresses, the degree of unity in the APSC and ASCC would also accelerate. "ASEAN member states are putting themselves together in creating these communities. That is very significant for the APSC and ASCC in terms of strengthening interregional trust and identity," Shuto said.

**Japan-ASEAN relations**  
Japan and ASEAN have long enjoyed a close relationship,

with the country being the third-largest trading partner of ASEAN, behind China and the EU (ASEAN Secretariat). For Japan, ASEAN is the second-largest trading partner after China (Ministry of Finance, Japan).

Japan is the second-largest direct investor in ASEAN, while ASEAN is Japan's third-largest investment destination after the U.S. and the EU (ASEAN Secretariat). Japan's direct investment into ASEAN has been rising steadily and is expected to continue to increase.

Japan's diplomacy to ASEAN is based on five principles mentioned in a speech Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made in Jakarta in January 2013.

The first principle is protecting freedom of thought, expression and speech in the ASEAN region. The second is ensuring that laws and rules govern the sea, which is the most vital common area for all, not might. In connection with these two goals, Japan welcomes the U.S. rebalancing of the Asia-Pacific region.

The third principle is pursuing free, open and interconnected economies as part of Japan's diplomacy. The fourth is bringing about ever more fruitful intercultural ties

among the peoples of Japan and ASEAN. The fifth is promoting exchanges among younger generations.

Noting the five principles, leaders of Japan and the ASEAN member states adopted the "Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation" at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting in December 2013. In the vision statement, the leaders declared the strengthening of ASEAN-Japan cooperation in the fields of "Partners for Peace and Stabil-



### ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)

ASEAN is the first regional cooperative organization in Southeast Asia. It was established in August 1967 with the signing of the "Declaration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Bangkok Declaration)." The organization aims to promote peace and stability and to accelerate economic growth in the region. The five original member coun-

tries are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Later, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia also joined, bringing the total number of member countries to 10. ASEAN covers a total land area of approximately 4.5 million sq. km and sustains a total population of around 620 million people.

ity," "Partners for Prosperity," "Partners for Quality of Life" and "Heart-to-Heart Partners," and reaffirmed their commitment to enhance the relations.

ASEAN has been the most important partner for Japan in terms of economy and diplomacy since the 1970s as Japa-

nese companies have been building supply chain networks throughout the ASEAN region.

Japanese companies are increasing their presence in the ASEAN region. The number of member companies of the Federation of Japanese Cham-

bers of Commerce and Industry in ASEAN (FJCCIA) rose to 6,092 as of June 2014, from 5,647 in the same month in 2013 and 5,034 in 2012. In 2014, the most Japanese companies were in Thailand (1,552), Vietnam (1,323) and Singapore (801).

## ASEAN-Japan Centre fosters closer ties

The ASEAN-Japan Centre, established in 1981 by the governments of ASEAN member states and Japan, is a bridge between the two parties that has been contributing to the prosperity of the bilateral relationship.

The center was established based on the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN Promotion Centre on Trade, Investment and Tourism signed by the governments of ASEAN member states, then consisting of the Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Later Brunei, (June 1990), Vietnam (February 1998), Cambodia (June 2001), Laos (March 2002) and Myanmar (April 2006) officially acceded to the agreement. Today all 10 ASEAN member states and Japan are involved with the center.

Its main objectives are to: promote trade from ASEAN to Japan; accelerate the flow of investment between ASEAN and Japan; vitalize tourist traffic between ASEAN and Japan; and expand exchanges of people between ASEAN and Japan.

The Secretariat of the center consists of the Planning & Coordination Office, the Trade & Investment Division and the Tourism & Exchange Division, which hold various events to promote their respective areas of interest, including exhibitions of ASEAN products, seminars and workshops, dispatch and invitation of missions,



The General Information Corner, located on the first floor of the same building as the ASEAN-Japan Centre in Tokyo's Minato Ward, is open to the public, who are free to read books and materials about ASEAN member states. ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE

publication and information services, as well as other functions.

Located next to the Secretariat office in Tokyo's Minato Ward, the center has a multi-purpose hall named the ASEAN-Japan Hall, in which the center holds various events to promote trade, investment, tourism and intercultural understanding between the ASEAN region and Japan. It

can be also utilized by external organization for events to promote ASEAN-Japan relations when it is not in use.

The General Information Corner beside the hall is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on weekdays.

Everyone is welcome to visit the corner to read books and other materials on tourism, as well as ASEAN businesses in a relaxing atmosphere.

*The ASEAN-Japan Centre is located at Shin Onarimon Bldg. 1F, 6-7-19 Shimbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo; one minute from Onarimon Station, exit A4, eight minutes from Daimon Station, exit A6, and 10 minutes from the North Exit of Hamamatsucho Station.*  
Tel: 03-5402-8001  
Web: www.asean.or.jp

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# ASEAN-Japan Centre

## Supporting ASEAN's trade

The ASEAN-Japan Centre helps promote ASEAN countries' exports to Japan.

The center, established in 1981 by the governments of ASEAN member states and Japan, holds various events to promote trade flowing from the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to Japan, including hosting exhibitions at its ASEAN-Japan Hall, which is conveniently located on the first floor of its headquarters in a busy area of Tokyo, as well as participating in international exhibitions in Japan.

The center also provides information and consultation on exports from ASEAN member states to Japan.

In hosting exhibitions, the center has 10 to 15 companies from ASEAN countries visit for about a week for possible business matching opportunities with Japanese companies.

The center dispatches Japanese experts to ASEAN member states to assist their trade promotion organizations in selecting products that have market potential in Japan. Those experts visit factories and interview company presidents, designers and craftsmen.

The center has been hosting exhibitions under broad themes such as food, furniture



Reiko Yamaguchi, project officer (trade), Trade and Investment Division, ASEAN-Japan Centre (left) and CITEM's marketing officer Queenie Cristalle Bernardo SATOKO KAWASAKI

and other goods from all 10 ASEAN member states. However, it has been undertaking a new approach to focus on one country at a time.

The reason for introducing the new approach is that different countries have strength and weakness in different product categories and they had requested, in the interest of fairness, that the theme be a country to allow companies from a single country exhibit a variety of goods, rather than companies from many ASEAN countries exhibiting a single type of product, explained

Reiko Yamaguchi, project officer (trade), Trade and Investment Division, ASEAN-Japan Centre.

The center has already hosted exhibitions for all 10 ASEAN member states over the past two years.

Besides exhibitions, the center is engaged in a project to promote ASEAN materials to the fashion industry in Japan in collaboration with Bunka Fashion College, a prestigious fashion school in Japan.

Another example of the center's activities to promote trade is to team up with the Japan In-

stitute of Design Promotion (JDP) to create the "Mekong Design Selection," a special award of good design, in fiscal 2013, for Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, in a bid to support the Mekong countries to attract not only Japan, but also generate attention from the global market through the creation of high-end merchandise.

### Philippine exhibition

In the most recent event, the center hosted "ASEAN Showcase Philippine Exhibition: Innovation, Creativity, Naturally Philippines" from Feb. 17 to 19, in collaboration with the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, or CITEM for short.

Fourteen companies displayed their mainly handmade, natural and ecological products, including bags, shoes, cushions, carpets, wallets, vases and plates from Philippines.

Exhibitions visitors are typically wholesale companies and shop owners. The three-day event saw 950 visitors and 140 companies secured 140 meetings with potential buyers.

"We would like Japanese buyers to know that ASEAN member states can offer prod-



The "ASEAN Showcase Philippine Exhibition: Innovation, Creativity, Naturally Philippines" was held in Tokyo from Feb. 17 to 19. SATOKO KAWASAKI

ucts combining excellent design and quality," Yamaguchi said.

She also emphasized that Japanese buyers are very strict about quality and the key to succeed in the Japanese market is to focus on providing that. Therefore, for this exhibition, she added that the center sent a Japanese trade expert, Hironobu Sugihara, to the Manila FAME, the Philippines' premier trade fair, in October 2014 to select companies suited for the Japanese market.

CITEM's marketing officer Queenie Cristalle Bernardo boasted of the quality and eco-friendliness of the displayed Philippine goods.

"Philippine goods are very

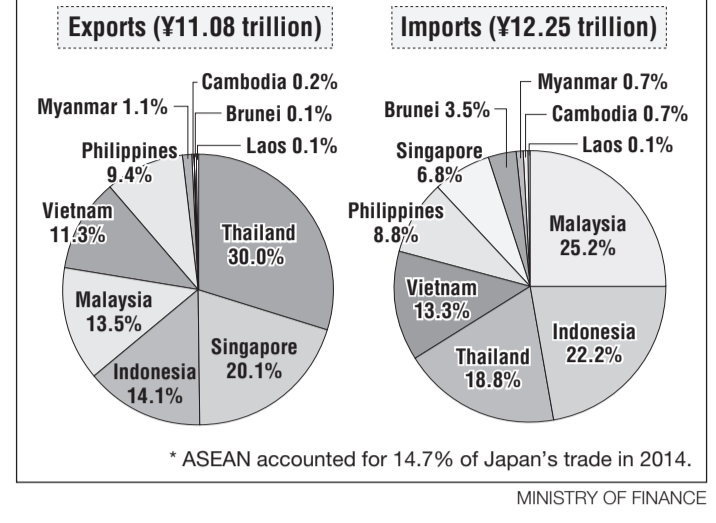
versatile," Bernardo said. The goods on display are made from materials such as bamboo, "abaca" (a banana-like plant), "pina" (a textile made from pineapple) and NuCast and NatureCast recycled paper.

"Filipinos are very creative, using these materials to make bags and accessories and our craftsmen prioritize quality," she said.

"Japan is an attractive market, but hard to penetrate. It's fair because everybody is given a chance, but the consumers are very particular," she said.

One of the 14 exhibitors, Nature's Legacy Eximport Inc., displayed vases and other home accessories made from

### Japan's trade with ASEAN member states in 2014



## Japan's investment helps regional development

In order to promote direct investment by Japanese companies to ASEAN member states, the ASEAN-Japan Centre holds investment promotion seminars for Japanese corporations, mass media and economic industrial organizations. These feature the latest investment policies and incentives provided to incoming corporations.

The center also plans and dispatches investment observation missions from Japan to the respective investment-related institutions, Japanese corporations that are already operating locally and local industrial complexes of the respective ASEAN member states.

For ASEAN member states, the center provides opportunities for government officials and industry representatives to learn about Japan's investment and industrial policies and the latest industrial trends, while building relationships with their Japanese counterparts.

Corresponding to the recent ASEAN boom, there is a sharp increase in Japanese expatriate personnel traveling to ASEAN member states. Due to this situation, the ASEAN-Japan Centre has started providing advance training to such people, including lectures on the legal system, labor, distribution, taxation, accounting, politics, history, cul-

ture and free trade agreements (FTA) of each ASEAN country. In those sessions, the knowledge of experienced Japanese corporations is shared, together with views on the local Japanese community and the living environment.

Furthermore, the center issues investment guides and related materials by country, while a database has been consolidated to offer various information on ASEAN member states, including their economy, investment-related legal systems, FTA within and outside the region, information on industrial complexes, as well as specific information that corresponds to relevant needs.

Since 2014 the ASEAN-Japan Centre has been holding ASEAN Community Seminars throughout Japan. Most recently, a seminar on ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community was held in March with the deputy secretary-general of ASEAN.

To promote country-level investment, a seminar on Laos was held on March 5 at the Hotel New Otani in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward. Celebrating the 60th anniversary of Japan-Laos diplomatic relations, the seminar was held by the ASEAN-Japan Centre and the Embassy of Laos to Japan, and co-organized by JETRO and the Ministry of Plan-



Laos Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong delivers the keynote speech at a "Seminar on Laos" at the Hotel New Otani, Tokyo, on March 5. YOSHIKI MIURA

ning and Investment of Laos.

In his opening remarks, Hiroyuki Kishino, Japan ambassador to Laos, noted the close relationship between the two countries. "Partnerships are growing in all areas. Business and trade are also expanding, along with the interest of Japanese corporations," he said.

He further noted that the fertile soil of Laos is good for farming, reasonable labor costs are attractive for collective labor investments, and that the investment environment is improving

especially in the Mekong area.

Khenthong Nuanchasing, ambassador of Laos to Japan spoke next. He stated that the 60-year friendship provides great benefits for the citizens of the two countries, saying, "Japan has contributed greatly to the socioeconomic development of Laos and we look forward to Japan's continuing investment in Laos."

Thongsing Thammavong, prime minister of Laos, delivered the keynote speech. Commending highly the bonds

between the two countries both on the government and citizens' levels, he remarked that Japan has been the top provider of official development assistance to Laos for many years and enterprise investments have ranked within the top 10 over that time.

"With a population of 6.9 million, Laos is very attractive as a single market, but its appeal increases as ASEAN member states consolidate, especially in the Mekong area," he noted.

Retaining a high economic growth of 8 percent even during

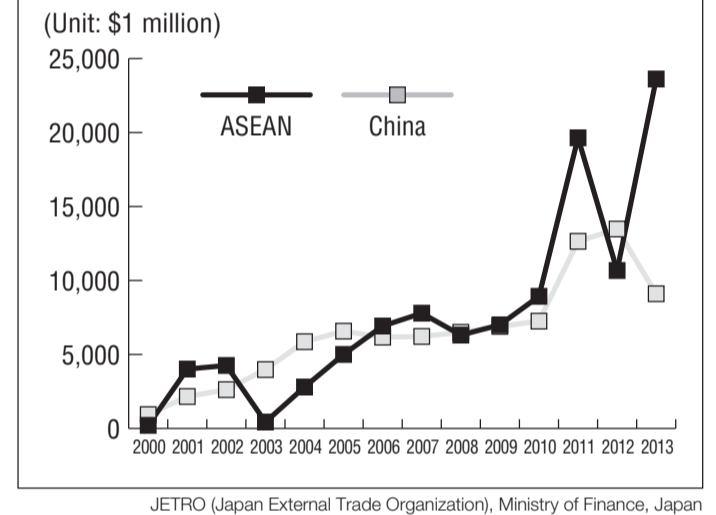
times of global economic downturn, "Laos has demonstrated great potential in areas of agriculture, hydroelectric power generation and tourism," Thongsing said. He said that Japanese investors increased their investments by 15 times from 2012 to 2013, and said "we expect Japan to invest further in Laos, as a 'China plus-one' or 'Thailand plus-one' destination."

Hiroyuki Ishige, chairman and CEO of JETRO said the opening of the JETRO Vientiane office in 2014 has greatly enhanced Japanese companies' understanding of entry into Laos and the Mekong area.

Ishige further introduced the Lao-Japan Design Project that combines the Lao traditional techniques with Japan's refined designs. "This is a good case exemplifying JETRO's dedication to enhance the win-win relationship between Japan and Laos," he said.

Motoyoshi Suzuki, a JICA expert and executive adviser to the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), Laos, coordinated a panel discussion. The first two panelists were from the Laos government sector: Somdy Douangmy, minister of Planning and Investment, and Khemmany Pholsena, minister of Industry and Commerce.

### Japan's investment to ASEAN and China



Somdy noted how Laos is promoting infrastructure consolidation, especially in the area of law. He stated that capital investment is being promoted by the Planned Investment Institution, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and by the 10 special economic zones.

Khemmany stressed the reinforced cooperation among legal offices, and suggested people visit their website. "We welcome questions, and hope you look at the vast 500 million people in the ASEAN market," she said.

Presentations by four Japanese investors in Laos followed: Yoshiharu Watanabe, ex-president of Lao Tsumura; Isamu Kaburagi, CEO of TSB Co., Ltd.; Ichiro Ando, CEO of Ando Co.,

Ltd.; and Naoyuki Ochi, of Mitsubishi Materials Corporation, spoke about conditions in Laos.

They had high praise for the politeness and loyalty of Lao-tians, and looked forward to further infrastructure and logistic improvements in Laos.

The event closed with remarks from representatives from three Laotian enterprises and one Japanese governmental assistance organization. They were Sisavath Thiravong, president, Lao Nation Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Khemasath Philaphandeth, president of K.P. Co., Ltd.; Vannada Phommasthit, president of Swan TVS Consultant and Hiroshi Hanaoka, advisor for SMEs JBIC.

## Tourism needs to adapt as middle class grows

Over the years, the ASEAN-Japan Centre has promoted tourism between Japan and ASEAN member states. Since its establishment, the center has been promoting outbound tourism from Japan to the ASEAN member states, and has held seminars for tourism-related business operators both in Japan and respective ASEAN member states, and exhibited at various tourism fairs to showcase the attractiveness of ASEAN tourist spots.

In addition to outbound tourism promotion, the center has started to undertake inbound tourism promotion from the ASEAN member states to Japan a few years ago.

As the middle class has expanded with ASEAN's economic growth, Japan today has become a popular tourist destination among ASEAN people. This trend has been accelerated by the emergence of LCCs and changing lifestyles.

Consequently, the number of tourists from ASEAN member states has jumped from 592,793 in 2009 to 1,629,060 in 2014. About 40 percent of the ASEAN population are Muslims, and thus the number of Muslim visitors is expected to increase. In light of this, the ASEAN-Japan Centre has start-



Travel agents from South East Asia enjoy a traditional meal in Beppu, Oita Prefecture, in March. ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE

ed to provide basic information on how to welcome Muslim tourists at various tourist destinations throughout Japan.

Visitors from ASEAN typically visit the so-called Golden Route, connecting Tokyo, Hakone, Kyoto, Nara and Osaka. In order to promote Kyushu, which has relatively low recognition among ASEAN people, the center organized the Fam Tour from March 1 to 7, in which it invited a total of 16 travel agents from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam to touristic spots in

Kyushu.

Major places visited included the Nanatsuboshi (Seven Stars) Train Lounge at Hakata Station in Fukuoka; the Ibusuki hot springs; the Flower Park Kagoshima; the Sunamushi Hot Springs; Kumamoto Castle; Mount Aso; the Yufuin area with its Japanese traditional inns; a strawberry-picking farm outside Beppu City; and shopping in each locality.

As a wrap-up, a panel discussion was held on March 6 at the Solaria Nishitetsu Hotel in Fukuoka. Dananjaya Axio-

ma, the ASEAN-Japan Centre's director of Tourism & Exchange Division, served as the moderator.

The speakers were Theresia Magdalena, deputy general manager of Panorama Tours and Widy Yastuti, branch manager of SHILLA Tour Jakarta-Indonesia from Indonesia; Hon Ruey Tan, senior sales executive of Apple Vacation and Mohd Safwan Bin Fital, senior travel consultant of HIS from Malaysia; Wui Ming Simon Yim, president of the Sparkle Holidays & Travel Corporation, and Nellie Tee Ten, director general manager of the Mulan Travel Services Corp., from the Philippines; Thi Ngoc Nguyen, sales executive of the VT-Tour and Sport Company Ltd., and Thanh Nguyen Thi Kim, deputy general director of Vietnamtourism-Hanoi, from Vietnam.

The two Indonesians said they were impressed with Kagoshima and Kumamoto Castle, especially its historic appeal.

Tan thought the Seven Stars Train and the history of Kyushu were impressive, and found the sand bath hot spring very different from other places. "But Malaysian people don't know much about Kyushu, so you need to advertise

more," he said.

Mohd Safwan liked the nature of Fukuoka, the sand bath and JR Kyushu railways. He also noted the warmth of the people, and said he had no trouble with the food from a Muslim viewpoint. "But you should offer spicier food for Indonesians and Malaysians," he noted. "Another weakness of Kyushu is there are no direct flights from Malaysia," he added.

Yim said he found Kagoshima, Oita and Beppu most appealing, and enjoyed the good food, fine drinks and beautiful scenery. "Furthermore, Kyushu is not as crowded as Honshu," he said. However, accessibility is a drawback, since there currently is only one flight to Fukuoka. He also added that there was a lack of information on Kyushu, especially compared to Tokyo or Osaka.

Meanwhile Tee Ten said, "I really found the people well-trained, disciplined and welcoming."

Kim said hotel accommodations were good, and the sightseeing and food were all interesting and satisfying. "Kyushu could become a new destination for our company, but currently, I guess we only have three flights per week from Ho-

Chi Minh City. We hope to increase the number of flights to five," she said.

Nguyen said, "I was impressed by the cherry blossoms and Mount Aso. We also received good service at the hotels, but I couldn't eat some of the meat they served."

Dananjaya then asked what kind of Muslim-friendly services should be provided.

Mohd Safwan said: "First, you should serve halal food with halal mark in the restaurants, and provide explanations in English. Second, you should put prayer rooms inside shopping centers."

Yastuti said hotels should have arrows (Kibla) in guest rooms to indicate which direction to face when praying.

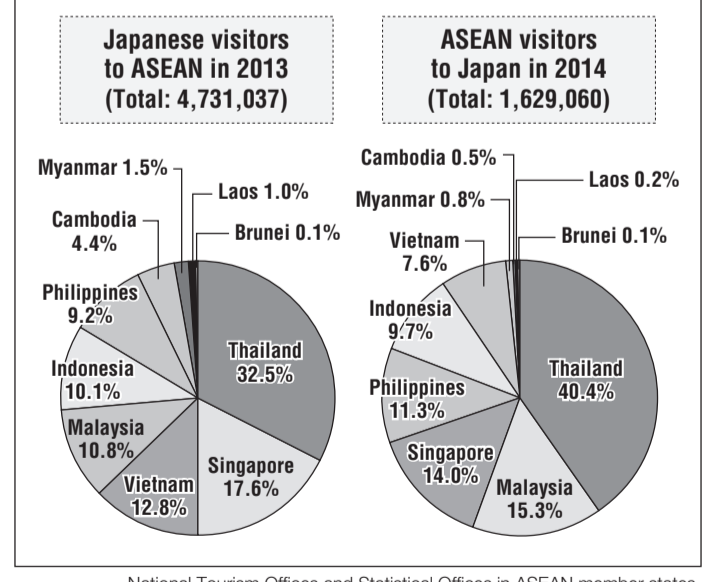
Dananjaya further asked what could appeal to each country to sell Kyushu as a tourist destination.

Tee Ten said the Seven Stars Train was lovely, but having to wait a year for a reservation was unacceptable.

Yim said all Kyushu prefectures should conduct a PR tour in the Philippines to convey the appeal of Kyushu. "You must show the travel agents and the people what you have, and they'll come to you," he said.

Nguyen and Kim both

### Tourism between Japan and ASEAN



agreed that more information on Kyushu is definitely needed.

Magdalena said Indonesians visit Japan seeking a unique experience. "So perhaps a 10-day Kyushu-Tokyo or Kyushu-Osaka combined tour could be created," she said.

Tan noted the need for English signage, especially for FITs (free, independent travelers). He thought the fruit, scenery and Saga pottery could be good draws for groups of 100 or more. For the Malaysians, he said the kimono-wearing photo sessions would be well-

received. The panelists were then asked about Kyushu promoting onsen (hot springs).

Kim said hot springs are very special for Vietnamese. Magdalena acknowledged that there are many different onsen in Kyushu. However, Tan thought the best ones were in Hokkaido, and it was a setback for Kyushu's onsen to not operate 24 hours a day. Yim further added that focusing only on onsen limits the opportunity to promote Kyushu as being a more vibrant place with other attractions to offer.

# ASEAN-Japan Centre

## Women entrepreneurs meet to share stories

In light of a sharp increase in flow of people between Japan and the ASEAN member states, exchanges of people became one of the ASEAN-Japan Centre's mandates a few years ago to further deepen and promote partnership between the two parties. The center has been providing opportunities for people-to-people exchanges at various levels with fresh approaches.

In 2014, a cultural exchange event was held at the center between elementary schools in Japan and ASEAN member states. In September 2014, the center organized an exchange program in Japan for tourism majors in Japan, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

On the business level, more Japanese companies are becoming eager to employ ASEAN overseas students. However, due to the unique employment system of Japan, those students face difficulties in finding jobs with Japanese corporations. To help find the best match between employees and employers, the center has started to directly approach both parties through the cooperation of experts.

Specifically, the center conducts "career development support workshops/seminars"

to provide ASEAN students with advice and the chance to participate in interview simulations. Employment seminars allow Japanese corporations to provide employment information and practical advice to the students.

Recently, the ASEAN-Japan Centre held the ASEAN-Japan Female Entrepreneurs Roundtable Meeting on March 18 at the Tokyo Prince Hotel in Tokyo's Minato Ward. Thirty-two participants joined the event from Japan and all 10 ASEAN member states.

The moderator was Nguyen Thi Bich Hang from Vietnam. Session I, "Business Circumstances of Female Entrepreneurs," featured five guest speakers: Puspawati Putri from Indonesia, Daravan Phonekeo from Laos, Mary-Ann Maceda Montemayor from the Philippines, Lyn Tsen-yi Lee from Singapore, and Tomomi Sugahara from Japan.

Puspawati now heads the Indonesian Business Women's Association (IWAPI) for Bali region, and leads over 10 corporations. She is devoted to using IWAPI to empower and strengthen women, and to turning it into the best women's organization at national and international levels.



Participants discuss women's roles in business in the ASEAN-Japan Female Entrepreneurs Roundtable Meeting at the Tokyo Prince Hotel in Minato Ward on March 18. ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE

Daravan talked about her struggle in building and operating a quality private school in Laos. The only funding she got was from her friends, and she has come to acknowledge the importance of having business management and marketing skills.

Montemayor noted how Filipino women hold significant leadership positions in all types of business. "Today, 51 percent of all entrepreneurs are females," she said. But she admitted that there still is a

need for adequate financing, training, incentive, and micro financing for rural women.

Lee revealed her experience in opening a chocolate shop with a unique philosophy. Awfully Chocolate's first store opened in Singapore — and now the company is expanding to Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. "Our unconventional way of doing business and standing out from others was the success factor," Lee stressed.

Referring to the extremely

low female entrepreneurship figures of Japan, Sugahara explained it led her "to establish the Emerald Club and encourage female corporate managers in every possible way."

Session II focused on the social influence of female entrepreneurs, and took up such related issues as work-life balance and stress management.

Chaw Khin Khin from Myanmar revealed that in 2014, after many difficulties, she almost went through with a divorce, but overcame the family troubles by a change in perception: She positioned herself as the product, her husband as the consumer and her children as stakeholders.

Nur Fatin Ibrahim from Malaysia said she includes her family members in her company events, and listens even to her mother's comments. "We stay close and spend time together," she said.

Sumie Ishiyama from Japan originally started her own company with her French husband while bringing up two children. "But you should spend extra money in times of need, such as having a nanny to stay on late at night," she noted.

Rika Nakanishi from Japan said she could continue working while bringing up her chil-

dren by breaking through the existing mindset. "I now have my husband doing all the housework," she said.

Tomiko Fukushima started her business 10 years ago on the advice of her husband. "I'm really grateful for my husband's understanding," she said.

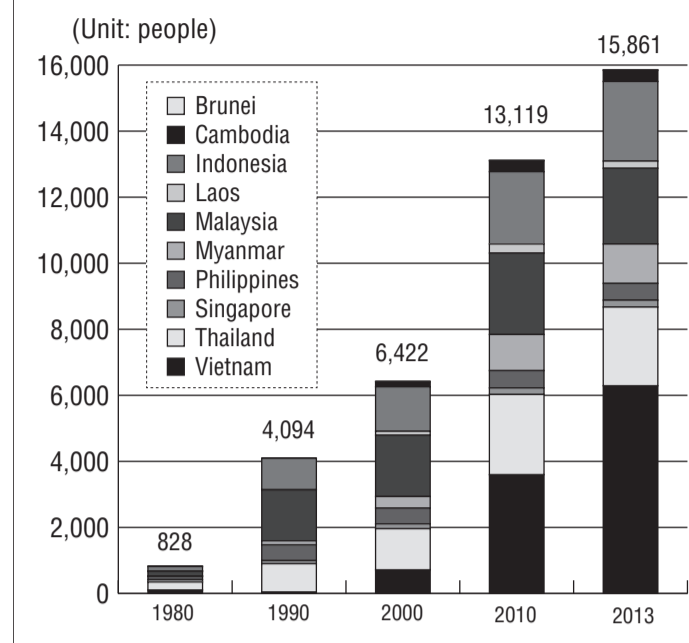
Nivana Cheng from Cambodia noted how a woman often has to sacrifice her life for her children and husband. "Women must overcome many obstacles and change the attitude of those around us," she stressed.

Samol Chakattadukul from Thailand noted that happiness in the family is most important. Maki Hosokawa from Japan responded by saying, "Ultimately, such happiness counts on everybody being independent but respectful and supportive of each other."

Montemayor of the Philippines noted the difficulty of multitasking and balancing everything, despite having chosen to spend more time with her family. Naoko Harakawa from Japan agreed and said, "My personal work of running a talent agency often restricts me from helping out with my husband's farm work."

In response, Sumie Ishiyama from Japan stated that it is

Number of students from ASEAN in Japan



Japan Student Services Organization, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

alright to challenge a lot of things and find out what is most important. Yukari Horie from Japan added that she often scrutinizes what she thinks is most important in her everyday work.

In terms of age and work, Hosokawa said that her way of thinking changed as she turned 40. "I now want to become a role model in creating a bright, cheerful world," she noted. Siti Zaleha Kaprawi from Brunei said that when

you turn 60, entrepreneurship brings more stress than happiness. Cheng agreed and commented: "By that age, you want to slow down and seek companionship."

Hiromi Nishiki from Japan noted the importance of balance. "But it is for you to find and define your own work-life balance," said Lee. Sumie Misawa from Japan agreed with Lee and stated, "Give top priority to what you really want to do."

## Enhancing ASEAN-Japan partnership

Yoshikuni Ohnishi  
ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE  
SECRETARY GENERAL



Recently The Japan Times had an opportunity to sit down with outgoing ASEAN-Japan Centre Secretary General Yoshikuni Ohnishi to discuss the launch of the ASEAN Community later this year and the effect it will have on the region.

**Question:** The ASEAN Community is going to be launched later this year. What will this mean for Japan and the rest of the world?

**Answer:** The establishment of the ASEAN Community at the end of this year is comprised of three pillars: the political-security, economic and socio-cultural communities. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in particular is drawing wide attention. The AEC is expected to have an enormous impact not only on the economies of ASEAN member states, but also on those of Japan, China and South Korea and other nations with close ties to ASEAN.

The AEC has four aims: the free movement of goods, services, investments and skilled workers in a common market; to nurture a competitive economic zone; to achieve balanced economic development by promoting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises and improving the productivity and competitiveness of CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam); and to work on the development of economic frameworks in East

Asia, retaining its position in the driver's seat of regional economic cooperation.

ASEAN member states are important production bases for Japanese companies. Goods produced there are shipped to Japan and areas outside the region. Tariffs on goods were eliminated among six advanced ASEAN member states in 2010 and almost all tariffs are to be abolished in intraregional trade this year. This is expected to elevate the status particularly of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam as production sites. It should also be noted that the dynamic growth of the ASEAN member states' economies should expand the ranks of the middle-income class, turning ASEAN member states into major consumer markets.

To date, foreign companies have dealt individually with the 10 ASEAN member states. Now, they will have to devise their business strategies vis-a-vis ASEAN as a single economic entity. They will have to work

out management strategies to deal with free trade agreements involving various economic groups, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which covers all of ASEAN plus six other countries, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. This is how the AEC will transform the ASEAN region.

**Q:** What will be the benefit of expanding into the ASEAN markets for Japanese companies?

**A:** It will become more convenient to have production bases in the ASEAN member states thanks to the establishment of the AEC. Anticipated growth of consumer markets will be the most attractive aspect of doing business in the ASEAN region for Japanese firms. ASEAN member states are politically stable and many of them are seeing high economic growth. They also have a large, young workforce. Except for Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, the benefit of a growing population is expected to last in the ASEAN member states until 2030 and it is estimated to last for another 50 years in the Philippines. Amicable relations between ASEAN member states and Japan merit viewing the region as an investment destination.

Due to the graying of society and the declining birthrate in Japan, Japanese markets are contracting and it seems the choices Japanese companies have are limited. The negatives for Japanese firms not doing business in the ASEAN are

large.

Still, investment always carries risk even though there are abundant merits of going into business in the ASEAN and the region is serving as an important engine of global growth. But there are 10 member states in ASEAN and there is great diversity among these countries, which are in differing stages of economic development. This offers many choices to investors. Japanese companies should carefully weigh their investment plans for the region by examining how infrastructure is being developed in these nations in the run-up to the establishment of the AEC.

**Q:** How has the relationship between Japan and ASEAN evolved? What activities has the ASEAN-Japan Centre engaged in?

**A:** When the ASEAN-Japan Centre opened in 1981, Japan's gross domestic product was 10 times greater than that of the ASEAN member states combined. The relationship between Japan and ASEAN was said to be vertical as Japan assisted ASEAN member states through official development assistance and loans. Japan also helped them in such basic sectors as education and health care and in areas of economic infrastructure development and the consolidation of legal systems. Japan also assisted ASEAN member states attract investors, offered personnel training and transferred technical know-how to them, thus contributing to their economic development. Over the past 40

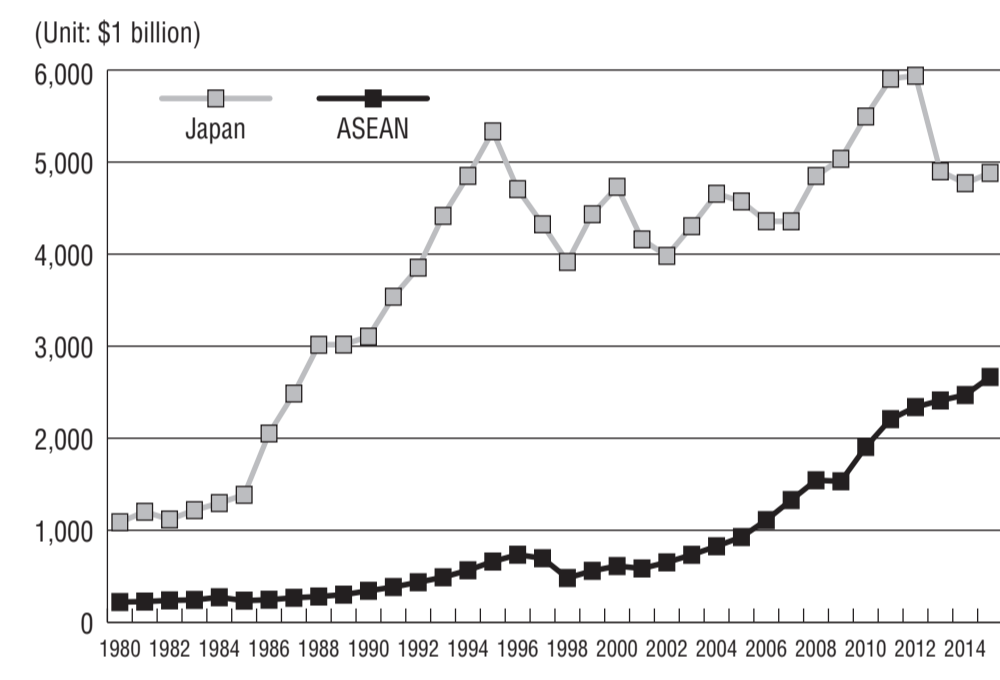
years or so, the ASEAN countries achieved rapid economic gains, giving rise to the region being dubbed "the world's growth center." ASEAN member state's GDP expanded to \$2.4 trillion in 2013, nearly half of Japan's \$4.9 trillion.

Since it was established, the ASEAN-Japan Centre has promoted ASEAN exports to Japan and encouraged Japan's investment in the region and worked for the growth of tourism in the region. In view of the changing economic environment for both Japan and ASEAN, as well as increased exchanges of people between the two, the ASEAN-Japan Centre, at the request of the member states, has recently expanded its activities to boost investment and tourism from ASEAN to Japan and promote further exchanges of people.

The center always seeks to meet the changing needs of its member states and is now working in four areas: improvement of productivity and competitiveness; redressing economic disparities within ASEAN; quick response to needs and priorities; and raising public awareness about the importance of the relations between Japan and ASEAN member states in line with the vision statement on ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation, which was adopted at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting in 2013.

**Q:** How do you think the relations between Japan and ASEAN will evolve from now? What role is the ASEAN-Japan

Nominal GDP of Japan, ASEAN



IMF World Economic Outlook Database October 2014

Centre going to play?

**A:** The ASEAN secretariat aims to halve the poverty rate within 10 years following the launch of the AEC and also intends to double the GDP of ASEAN member states by 2030. The economic growth of ASEAN is quite dynamic so the region is expected to log growth of 5 to 7 percent the coming years. In contrast, the mature Japanese economy should average growth of 1 to 2 percent. It is not unrealistic to think that ASEAN's GDP would match that of Japan by 2030. Some people believe ASEAN's GDP will surpass that of Japan's. So by around 2030 the relationship between Japan and ASEAN should be more horizontal than vertical. The equal partnership between ASEAN and Japan,

something former Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda called for in 1977, will become reality.

The ASEAN-Japan Centre will strengthen its role as an information hub of ASEAN in Japan as the relations between Japan and ASEAN become ever closer. We step up our efforts to meet the needs of the member states while maintaining the quality, creativeness and innovativeness of our activities.

The center will step up cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASEAN-China Centre and the ASEAN-Korea Centre. The three ASEAN centers will meet regularly to explore joint projects.

The ASEAN-Japan Centre will also try to raise the profile of ASEAN in local cities in Japan

and promote cooperation between businesses in such cities and companies within ASEAN. The Hiroshima-ASEAN Association was set up at the initiative of private entities in April 2013 and I hope other major cities outside Tokyo will follow suit.

I will step down as secretary-general of the ASEAN-Japan Centre at the end of this month. I believe the center will play an important role in strengthening the partnership between Japan and ASEAN by promoting mutual understanding and exchanges as the relations between the two assume greater importance after the launch of the ASEAN Community. I hope that the public will extend further support to the center.



Your Gateway to ASEAN

# ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE

(ASEAN Promotion Centre on Trade, Investment and Tourism)

The ASEAN Information Hub in Japan

The ASEAN-Japan Centre is an intergovernmental organization established by the Governments of ASEAN Member States and Japan in 1981. It has been promoting exports from ASEAN to Japan while revitalizing investment, tourism as well as people-to-people exchanges among the ASEAN region and Japan through organizing exhibitions of ASEAN products, seminars and workshops, implementing two-way missions, publication and information service, among others.



Trade Mission with Business Meetings



Investment Promotion Seminar



Seminar on Welcoming Muslim Tourists from the ASEAN Region



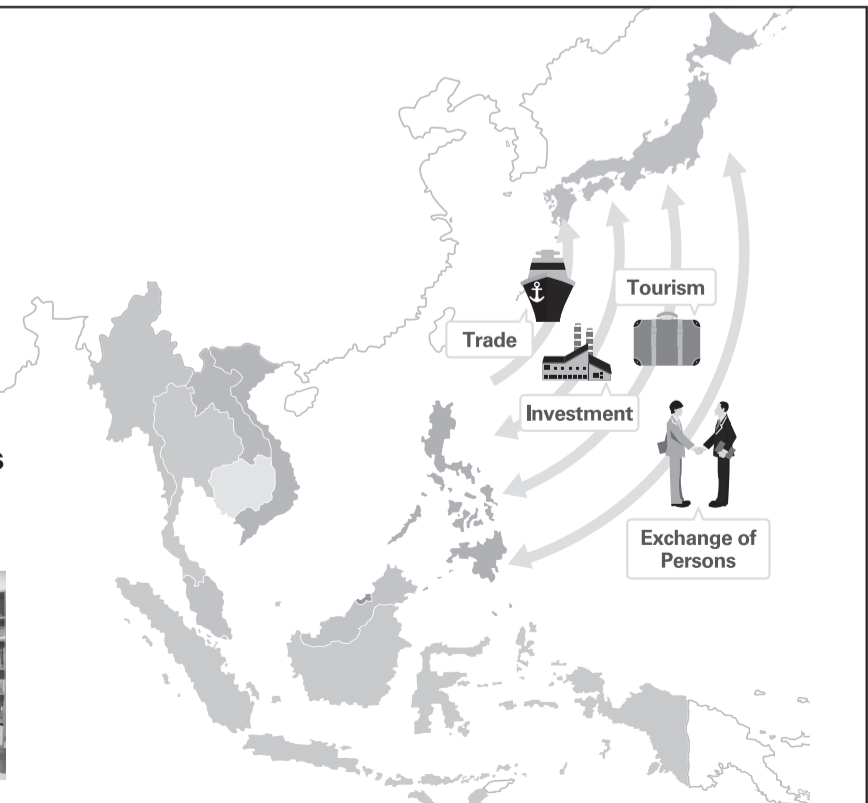
People-to-people Exchange Event



ASEAN-Japan Hall



General Information Corner



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