

The Japan Times

AEC Special

Friday, January 29, 2016



The 18th ASEAN-Japan Summit was held in Kuala Lumpur in November. CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE



Contributing to Southeast Asian development

Koichi Aiboshi
AMBASSADOR OF THE MISSION OF JAPAN TO
ASEAN

ASEAN is currently attracting much attention as a major growth center in the global economy. With a market of more than 600 million people and an abundant young labor force, whose working-age population will peak in the second half of the 2040s, ASEAN has achieved remarkable economic growth with its GDP expanding threefold over the past ten years. As the ASEAN region has grown economically, Japan-ASEAN economic relations have steadily deepened.

By 2014, ASEAN became Japan's second-largest trading partner trailing only China. Likewise, Japan comes second only to the European Union in terms of foreign direct investment with Japanese companies based in ASEAN numbering more than 8,000. It is clear that Japan and ASEAN have built a robust economic relationship over the past decades.

The ASEAN Community (AC), consisting of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), was established on Dec. 31. This community building is a continuous and evolving process with ASEAN adopting a road map at the ASEAN Summit in November to further its integration over the next ten years.

The government of Japan has utilized official development assistance (ODA) and the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) to assist the community-building process through such areas as strengthening connectivity and narrowing the



development gap in the region. One such example is Japan's assistance to the Mekong region. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced at the Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting last July that Japan would provide ¥750 billion of ODA to this region over the next three years. Additionally, the "New Tokyo Strategy 2015 for Mekong-Japan Cooperation" was adopted to substantiate Japan's cooperation with the Mekong region.

Japanese businesses in the region are also contributing to ASEAN's development not only through commercial activities, but also by providing support to improving the regional business environment. One example of that support is the annual dialogue between the Federation of Japanese Chambers of Commerce and Industry in ASEAN (FJCCIA) and the Sec-

retary-General of ASEAN where they exchange views on issues that need to be addressed and resolved to attract foreign investment and develop small and medium-sized enterprises in the region.

In the political and security realm, rising tensions in the South China Sea have tested ASEAN solidarity. Among ASEAN member states, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam have made sovereignty claims over maritime territories in the South China Sea. Regarding this and subsequent related issues, Japan continues to uphold freedom and peace at sea. Abe has called for strict abidance to the "Three Principles of the Rule of Law at Sea"; to make claims based on international law; not to use force or coercion; and to settle disputes by peaceful means. He has also urged the concerned parties to exercise self-restraint and has supported arbitration procedures. To assist in maintaining peace and stability, Japan has participated in cooperation activities, which include capacity building through the provision of patrol boats for maritime law enforcement.

In light of this, the East Asia Summit (EAS) provides a useful framework for regional powers and ASEAN countries to discuss regional concerns. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration issued at the EAS in November, reaffirmed that the EAS would continue to be "a leaders-led forum for dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia." Permanent Representatives and ambassadors to ASEAN from the 18 EAS participating members in Jakarta are expected to play a key role

Increasing competitiveness, fostering human resources

Khenthong Nuanthasing
AMBASSADOR OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC TO JAPAN

Since its foundation in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has made extraordinary progress. It has been transformed into an increasingly well-regulated, dynamic and the world's fastest-developing economic region. Its member states grew from six to 10 and today include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

As identified by ASEAN leaders, 2015 is a key milestone on the ASEAN integration agenda. On Dec. 31, ASEAN became the official ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Now the AEC is the third-largest market — behind only China and India — in the world with a population of 622 million. In terms of economy, the AEC is a highly competitive economic region with a combined GDP of \$2.6 trillion, the seventh-largest economy in the world and the third largest in Asia. ASEAN is a world-class investment destination that attracted foreign direct investment of \$136 billion in 2014. In terms of connectivity, ASEAN is a well-connected community with tourist arrivals of 105 million in 2014. ASEAN has become a unique example of 10 diverse nations that have come together under the AEC and the Lao PDR is proud to be a part of this community of nations.

Since its accession to ASEAN on July 23, 1997, Lao PDR has actively participated in the ASEAN community building process. While resuming the ASEAN chairmanship this year, Lao PDR stands ready to move forward a resilient community consisting of three pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The Lao chairmanship is expected to be important and meaningful as it is the first year of the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and its blueprints for the three community pillars.

The overall vision articulated in the AEC Blueprint 2015 remains relevant as the AEC Blueprint 2025 is built on the 2015 version and contains five interrelated and mutually reinforcing characteristics. These are a highly integrated and cohesive economy; a competitive, innovative and dynamic ASEAN; an enhanced connectivity and sectoral cooperation; a resilient, inclusive, people-oriented and people-centered ASEAN; and a global ASEAN. The immediate priority is to complete the implementation of measures unfinished under the AEC Blue-



print 2015 by the end of 2016. The continuing commitments of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam under the AEC Blueprint 2015 up to 2018 are also incorporated into the AEC Blueprint 2025.

In future efforts, ASEAN will also provide a new emphasis on the development and promotion of micro, small and medium enterprises in its economic integration efforts. At the same time, ASEAN will likewise embrace the evolving digital technology as leverage to enhance trade and investment, provide an e-based business platform, promote good governance, and facilitate the use of green technology.

For the ASEAN chairmanship in 2016, Lao PDR has introduced the theme of "Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community," with the aim of maintaining and promoting a peaceful, stable and outward-looking ASEAN region, with a highly integrated and cohesive regional economy, enhanced connectivity and strengthened efforts in narrowing the development gap. For this purpose, Laos has identified possible priorities under its chairmanship focusing on the four areas of small and medium enterprises, tourism, connectivity and trade facilitation.

The establishment of the AEC provides both opportunities and challenges to the Lao PDR. In order to reap benefits and respond effectively to the challenges of joining the AEC, Laos has focused on addressing some priority issues such as promoting awareness and understanding of the Lao public on the AEC; establishing mechanisms and improving coordination systems between line ministries and local authorities; conducting studies

on production projects; listing of products and services in line with the Lao PDR's potentials and improving quality of products to be able to compete in the ASEAN market. Additionally, focus has been on improving laws and regulations related to the establishment and operation of business in order to enable the business sector to continuously improve the capacity and increase their competitiveness, as well as on human resource development and capacity building in line ministries and local authorities involved in the global economic integration process.

As far as the Lao PDR is concerned, the government has set up its development strategy based on the potentials that are available in the country such as rich land and plenty of water. The land is suitable for growing rice and many kinds of vegetables and is a foundation of the country's food security. The abundance of water is suitable for agriculture and hydroelectric plants to generate electricity for domestic consumption, as well as for export.

In addition, the Lao government has turned the challenges of being land-linked into opportunities by being "land-linked" through transport infrastructure improvements such as upgrading its roads from north to south and east to west into ASEAN highway routes and its airports into ASEAN hubs, serving ASEAN connectivity in the region. Furthermore, in order to realize the Kunming-Singapore Railway as part of the Trans-Asian Railway network, a groundbreaking ceremony to begin construction of a 418-km high-speed railway linking Vientiane, the capital of Laos to Kunming in China's Yunnan province took place in Vientiane near end of last year. The train line is expected to begin operations by 2020.

To lay down a foundation for transforming the country into an industrialized nation, the Lao government has established 11 special economic zones (SEZs) throughout the country, including the Pakse-Japan SME Industrial Park, which provide a favorable climate and benefit for local and foreign businesses. At present there are 258 companies and 225 shops registered to invest in the SEZs, with 44 percent from the service sector, 31 percent from the industrial sector and 26 percent from the trade sector.

The Lao government has attached great importance to Japanese investment. I would like to take this opportunity to invite Japanese investors and businesspeople to invest in Laos' SEZs, particularly in the Pakse-Japan SME SEZ, purpose-built for Japanese small and medium enterprise investment.



Japanese companies see opportunities in the ASEAN region, which is moving toward closer integration. NIFCO INC

Index

Page 2

▶ Interview with ASEAN-Japan Centre

Page 3

▶ Trade, investment between Japan and ASEAN

Page 4-5

▶ Educational exchange between Japan and ASEAN

Page 6

▶ Touristic sites in ASEAN

AEC Special

Working to optimize relationships

Japan welcomes the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community, or AEC, as the prosperity of the Association of South East Asian Nations is expected to also benefit Japan, the world's third-largest economy.

"Japan and ASEAN should be in a win-win relationship," said Secretary-General of the ASEAN-Japan Centre Masataka Fujita, who assumed the post in September.

The AEC, formed at the end of last year, basically means that ASEAN became a more cohesive organization and consolidated regional economic integration. ASEAN member states had already eliminated many tariffs and other barriers among ASEAN member states prior to the creation of the AEC, but will accelerate activities to further ease doing business.

"Multinational companies, including those from Japan, optimize their operations in various production stages such as research and development, manufacturing, marketing and sales within the region, and ASEAN has been assisting them by promoting liberalization. The AEC will work to ensure this trend continues," Fujita said.



Secretary-General of the ASEAN-Japan Centre Masataka Fujita poses at the center's office in Tokyo's Minato Ward on Dec. 15. YOSHIKI MIURA

Reducing trade barriers

ASEAN is already quite far along in terms of reducing trade barriers. For trade within the region, 96 percent of goods are already tariff free. Therefore, the formation of the AEC will not change much in terms of trading goods.

Fujita said ASEAN could be proud of its commitment to economic unity, referring to the high percentage of tariff-free goods, considering how diverse the level of economic development is among the 10 member countries — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are designated as least-developed countries by the U.N. and receive different treatment under various international agreements including those at the World Trade Organization. Even for those countries, as well as Vietnam, 90 percent of their trade is via tariff-free goods within ASEAN.

Services, personal mobility

Although trade barriers have been reduced, liberalization of services and

personal mobility have not reached satisfactory levels, he said.

"Services can be a sensitive area and each country may have some areas they do not want to liberalize. For example, if large foreign retailers enter domestic markets, it could threaten small local businesses," he said. Under the philosophy of the AEC, regulations that protect local businesses from the entry of larger

'The AEC will guarantee predictability and transparency in the market ...

Masataka Fujita

foreign rivals will gradually be eliminated.

Liberalization of services will also entail the elimination of tedious administrative processes for foreign companies to acquire various certifications from local governments, something each member state is currently working on.

Regarding the liberalization of personal mobility, each member state has reached a basic mutual understanding that engineers, medical doctors, archi-

ects and other highly skilled people should be able to move to other member states more freely, but they are slow in implementing concrete measures to realize this, he said.

One of the reasons ASEAN member states find it difficult to reach consensus on some issues is that they require getting the approval of all 10 member states on each issue.

Additionally, in principle they do not intervene in each other's issues. This implies that a member state exerts less pressure on others to prevent it from objecting to issues that most of the member states agree on, he said. This contrasts with the European Union, where peer pressure is more prevalent.

Japan-ASEAN relations

Japan and ASEAN members enjoy amicable relationships and will likely con-

tinue to do so. But the relationship was not necessarily smooth during the 1970s due to Japan's overreaching presence in Southeast Asia, Fujita said. During that time, Japan was overrepresented through investing in, and exporting heavily to, Southeast Asia.

"Japan was not necessarily welcome then. When Japanese prime ministers went to Southeast Asia, they were often booed and experienced some bashing," he said. "Southeast Asia was generally weaker than Japan and the people felt Japan was taking advantage."

For example, Japanese chemical companies that were criticized at home for the negative environmental impact of their factories built factories in Southeast Asian countries with looser environmental standards, drawing heavy criticism.

"Both Japan and ASEAN suffered heartache. To fix the situation, then-Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda made a speech in 1977 that became known as the Fukuda Doctrine," he said.

Fukuda made the speech in Manila in 1977, saying, in essence, that Japan and ASEAN are equal partners and both parties will pursue "heart-to-heart" relationships of mutual trust in various fields and seek solidarity with ASEAN on the basis of equal partnership.

"Since then, Japan-ASEAN relations have been moving in a positive direction," Fujita said, adding that the foundation of the ASEAN-Japan Centre in 1981 was based on the Fukuda Doctrine. "Japanese companies became more responsible within ASEAN," he said.

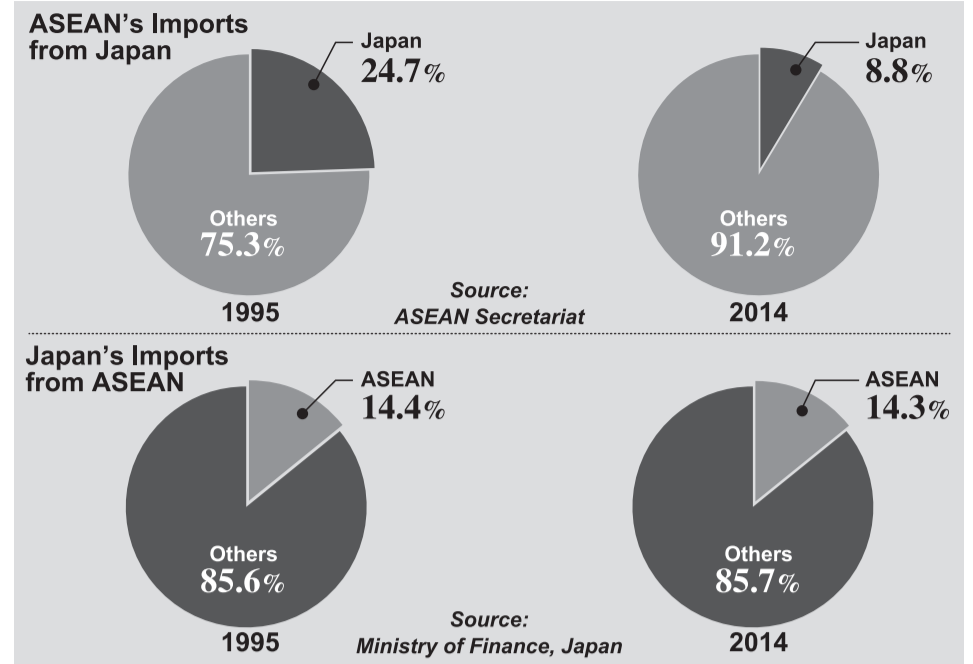
Also since that time, Japan and ASEAN have moved closer toward economic equality.

In the 1980s, Japan's gross domestic product was roughly 10 times as much as ASEAN's 10 member states combined, while today the ratio is 2:1.

This is more a result of ASEAN's economic position becoming relatively stronger, rather than that of Japan's becoming weaker.

ASEAN imports from Japan fell to 8.8 percent of total imports in 2014 from 24.7 percent in 1995. Over the same period, Japan's imports from ASEAN were almost unchanged at 14.3 percent versus 14.4 percent.

Fujita said it is hard to measure the economic impact of the formation of the AEC on Japan, but it will probably not affect Japan immediately because no



drastic change was implemented at the time of formation. The creation of the AEC is a part of the process toward ASEAN's comprehensive integration.

Nonetheless, "the AEC will guarantee predictability and transparency of the market, which should have a positive impact on Japan," he said.

ASEAN-Japan Centre role

Amid improving economic unity between ASEAN member states, the ASEAN-Japan Centre will continue to promote the parties' relationships in four categories: trade with Japan; ASEAN investment; tourism; and exchange.

"Right now, there is an economic rebalancing going on. Amid such global conditions, we will conduct various activities with a view to achieving sustainable development," Fujita said, referring to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. These are intergovernmental agreements made at the U.N. in September 2015 to tackle various global issues, including eradicating poverty and ensuring healthy lives and education.

For example, one of the activities of the ASEAN-Japan Centre is to hold business-matching events in which Japanese companies meet Southeast Asian craft makers and other manufacturers to discuss business opportunities.

In another project, the ASEAN-Japan Centre arranged for students from the Tokyo-based Bunka Fashion College, a prestigious fashion school, to visit ASEAN member states to seek out fashion materials that are not yet widely

known in the Japanese market. The young Japanese designers used the materials to create and develop new clothing, accessories and shoes.

Various other events see the center inviting business executives and high-level government officials from Southeast Asia to hold seminars for Japanese companies on investment opportunities in their countries.

The center plans these activities to optimize relationships as Fujita said he wants to conduct results-based management of the center.

"We are not only responsible, but also accountable for our activities because we operate with taxpayer money," he said.

"We should ask ourselves, 'what benefit does what we are doing achieve?' If there is no clear benefit, we shouldn't be doing it," he said.

Before taking his current position in September 2015, Fujita worked as an economist for the U.N. for more than 30 years. He was involved mainly in economic research and policy analysis, and was a lead author of the World Investment Report and other publications on foreign direct investment.

He wants to stress that the ASEAN economy has strong growth potential.

Fujita pointed out that ASEAN accounts for 9 percent of the global population and 7 percent of global trade, but only 3 percent global GDP. This occurs because local demand and companies are weak, he said.

"This means that there is definitely growth potential there," he said.

Your Gateway to ASEAN and Japan

A regional centre of excellence in trade, investment, tourism and exchange of persons

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



www.asean.or.jp/en/



Shin Onarimon Bldg. 1F, 6-17-19 Shimbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0004
 TEL: 03-5402-8001 FAX: 03-5402-8003 E-mail: toiwase_ga@asean.or.jp Office Hours: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. / Monday - Friday



Beyond the Boundaries



We Are Beginning the Next Era.

The Oji Group has survived various changes in eras during its 140-year history. Today, global-scale changes in the economic climate have once again prompted us to make structural reforms in preparation for the next era. With an open mind, free of conventional constraints and preconceived notions, we are promoting further globalization, developing high value-added products, cultivating new resources and producing products that satisfy lifestyle and industrial needs through the customer-in approach, as we embark on a new journey into the future.



AEC Special

Experts see expansion of Japanese firms in ASEAN states

The emergence of an integrated market with a population of 600 million — third largest in Asia following China and India — is expected to encourage Japanese companies to accelerate direct investment into the countries that make up the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Upon formation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the expected further integration of the ASEAN economies, Japanese companies are likely to expedite development of markets there and realign production bases, according to researchers.

Under the AEC, formed at the end of last year, ASEAN member countries — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — are to proceed with further integration of their economies, aimed at the creation of a single market and production base by securing a free flow of goods, services, investment and workers.

When this economic community is finalized, member countries will guarantee liberalization of the flow of people, products and money within the organization, much like the European Union, albeit without a unified currency.

The population of ASEAN countries stood at 604.8 million in 2010 and is forecast to grow to 706 million by 2030, according to U.N. estimates. That compares with the 1.34 billion

population of China in 2013 and India's 1.24 billion.

"A growing market offers business opportunities not only to large companies, but also to medium and small-sized companies as well," said, Ryo Ikebe, director, the Asia and Oceania Division of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). "In addition to automotive-related companies, those engaged in processed food have shown strong interest in either starting businesses or expanding current operations in the region."

Immediate beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the integrated economies and the unified market are not only manufacturers, but also those engaged in service sectors, regardless of industry. Ikebe said a wide variety of service industries such as restaurants, beauty salons, wedding coordinators and specialty retailers of private label apparel are moving into the region.

While opening service sector markets in the region is somewhat lagging, researchers say the most immediate near-term beneficiaries of the integrated economies are manufacturers thanks to faster administrative process and reduced tariffs on trade. The thing Japanese companies engaged in business in ASEAN want is simpler administrative and customs processes.

In a JETRO survey for the fiscal year ended March 2015, 71.3 percent of Japanese manufacturers doing busi-

nesses in the region said they expect the AEC to simplify customs procedures, in particular those in Indonesia and Laos.

The final phase of the plan — complete free flow of goods, money and people — will be achieved through several steps, a preliminary one being the elimination of tariffs by member countries. ASEAN had already abolished many tariffs and other barriers between member states, and as for trade between them, 96 percent of the products are already tariff free.

This would encourage Japanese manufacturers to realign their existing production facilities, or concentrate them in one specific country to make the best use of geographical or infrastructural advantages of each of the member countries, researchers said.

Reshuffling production facilities

One example of such moves can be seen in Vietnam's auto market, where there are high tariffs on imported cars.

After Vietnam abolishes the tariff in 2018 as planned, Japanese carmakers may shift their car production and assembly bases in the country to Thailand, where the Japanese auto industry has already built up an advanced industry cluster. This is because the elimination of high tariffs in Vietnam would make Thai-made cars cheaper than those made in Vietnam.

The auto industry cluster in Thailand is a typical example of Japanese companies' years-long investment in the country. According to the balance of payment statistics released by the Bank of Japan, Japan's accumulated direct investment in Thailand alone totaled ¥3.92 trillion at the end of

pointed out in a report released in October.

There are transport machinery clusters in Indonesia, which sustain robust domestic demand, clusters of chemical and pharmaceutical industries in Malaysia where relatively advanced infrastructure is available, and electric machinery clusters in the Philippines and Vietnam that have direct geographic access to southern China, a region regarded as a source of electronics parts and components, according to Sako's report.

"After the formation of the AEC, Thailand is likely to raise its presence as a core factory site in the ASEAN region," Sako said. "At the same time, further investment increases are expected in business fields where industry clusters progresses."

Frontline of exports

Some researchers insist those existing integrated facilities should be used as the frontline of Japanese companies to manufacture products for export to developing nations outside the ASEAN region.

"Japan's sustainable growth in the future requires development of new markets in emerging and developing countries, but it's expensive to export from Japan to those markets," Keiichi Oizumi, a senior researcher at The Japan Research Institute Ltd., said in a report issued in November. "Japanese companies should consider utilizing the production bases in ASEAN to export to those markets."

For that goal, Japanese companies need to make further investment to build new, or improve existing, infrastructure and product supply chains

'... the type of infrastructure needed in the region is changing in accordance with the improving economic level.

Ryo Ikebe, JETRO

2014, compared with ¥8.46 trillion in China.

In fact, Japanese companies have been building up similar industry clusters in other ASEAN countries for years, Koji Sako, a senior researcher at Mizuho Research Institute Ltd.,

in cooperation with local companies and governments.

"As represented by high-speed trains, the type of infrastructure needed in the region is changing, in accordance with the improving economic level," JETRO's Ikebe said. "Fur-



Workers from the ASEAN region work at a factory in Indonesia. NIFCO INC.

ther infrastructure upgrading is needed in the region, along with Japanese companies' technology."

Emergence of new market

The AEC brings the emergence of a new market with cheaper supply and distribution networks to reach the large population, in particular to wealthier consumers in major cities in the region such as Bangkok, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, researchers said.

"Wealthy consumers in those areas are able to buy products in the same price ranges as those Japan," The Japan Research Institute's Oizumi said in his report. "Additionally, the number of such wealthy consumers is expanding faster than we expected."

Even so, Japanese companies should not regard the ASEAN region as "a single" market, because there remain many differences in religion, race, culture and language. This requires Japanese companies to follow



a strategy of segmentation in marketing their products, as well as the need to select the right target in the right place with the right price, researchers said.

"The size of economies and business practices vary from country to country, and Japanese companies should remember that each of those countries and areas has its own unique market," JETRO's Ikebe said.

Nifco's group companies span industrial and national boundaries

Using its fastening technology as a base, Nifco has successfully incorporated different fields, products and technologies into its business. Continually expanding by "connecting, bundling and joining" different technologies, Nifco has grown beyond its beginnings as a fastening company and is now a global player in many areas. Nifco's principle of "Value Fastening" focuses on combining an array of existing values to create new value. With an increasing number of international customers, Nifco continues to overcome challenges and seek out new fields of business.

Nifco's group companies in ASEAN



■Nifco Vietnam Ltd.

Lot #90, Linh Trung EPZone and Industrial Park III, Trang Bang Dist., Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam
Tel +84-(0)663-89-7451
Fax +84-(0)663-89-7455

■Nifco (Thailand) Co., Ltd.

Amata Nakorn Industrial Estate 700/420 Moo 7, Bangna-Trad Road (KM.57), Tambol Don-Hua-Roh, Amphur Muang, Chonburi, Chonburi 20000 Thailand
Tel +66-(0)38-45-4165
Fax +66-(0)38-45-4173

■Union Nifco Co., Ltd.

99/11 Moo 5, Bangna-Trad Road (KM.38), Tambol Bangsamak, Amphur Bangpakong, Chachoengsao 24180, Thailand
Tel +66-(0)38-84-2130~5
Fax +66-(0)38-84-2129

■Nifco Manufacturing (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.

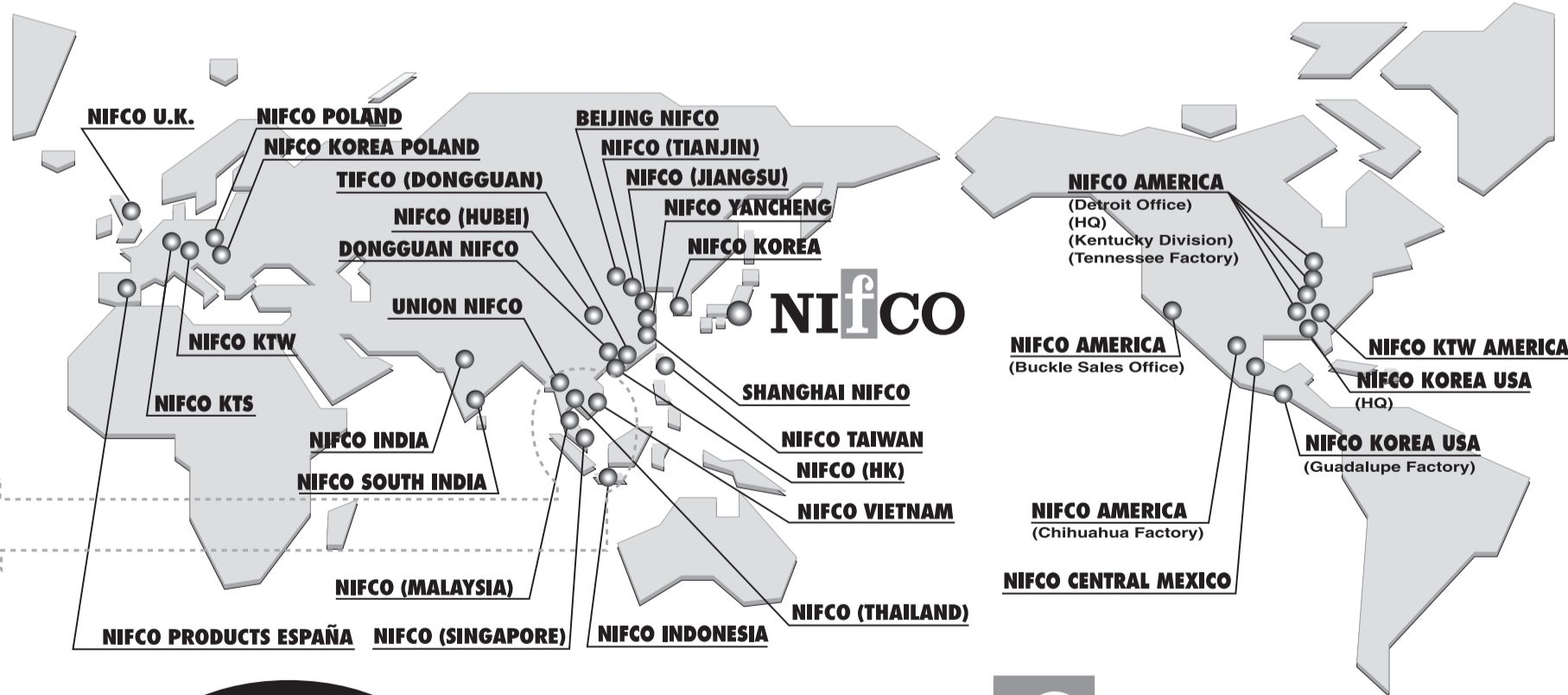
No.46, Jalan Keluli 2, Taman Perindustrian, Utama Bukit Raja, 41720 Klang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel +60-(0)3-33412103
Fax +60-(0)3-33412107

■Nifco (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.

11 Woodlands Close, #05-38, Woodlands 11, Singapore 737853
Tel +65-6273-9123
Fax +65-6273-9150

■PT. Nifco Indonesia

Jl. Harapan II Lot KK-5b, Kawasan Industri KIJC, Desa Sirnabaya, Kec. Telukjambe Timur, Karawang 41361, Jawa Barat, Indonesia
Tel +62-21-8911-4296
Fax +62-21-8911-4295



For more details...

**SEE OUR
WEB SITE**

Official Sites

[Japanese]

<http://www.nifco.co.jp/>

[English]

<http://www.nifco.com/>

NIFCO

Head Office:

5-3 Hikarinooka, Yokosuka-shi, Kanagawa, 239-8560 Japan
Tel: (046) 839-0255, Fax: (045) 824-4781

Tokyo Headquarters:

4-5-4 Shibaura, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 108-8522 Japan
Tel: (03) 5476-4850

The Nifco Group, domestic subsidiaries and affiliated companies:

Nifco Yamagata Inc.

Nifco Kumamoto Inc.

The Japan Times, Ltd.

Simmons Co., Ltd.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/>

<http://www.simmons.co.jp/>

Universities working to foster closer relationship

The ASEAN region is increasing in importance as a market for Japanese companies because its member states are getting wealthier and accelerating their development. Hence, increasing the number of students from the region studying in Japan is essential to nurture future businesspeople or politicians to work between Japan and ASEAN member states.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology aims to increase the number of foreign students to 300,000 by 2020, from about 200,000 currently. ASEAN is driving the rise of foreign students.

As of May 1, 2014, Japan had 184,133 foreign students, up 9 percent from 168,145 a year earlier, according to the Japan Student Services Organization, or JASSO.

Students from ASEAN member states increased at a higher pace than those from other parts of the world. Over the same period, Vietnamese students increased to 26,439, the second largest number of any country following Chinese, and almost double the 13,799 from a year earlier. Thai and Indonesian students, with the sixth and seventh most respectively, saw 13 and 14 percent jumps, while Myanmar, the Philippines and Singapore, in the 10th, 15th and 29th spots, enjoyed respective 21, 12 and 22 percent hikes, according to JASSO.

Students from ASEAN's 10 member states more than doubled to 38,970 as of May 1, 2014, from 15,095 in 2010, according to JASSO.

ASEAN is moving toward closer integration and more economic prosperity, and amicable relations with Japan, the world's third-largest economy, would be a big plus. Japan, with an aging society and low birthrate, is seeking new markets besides China, making the geographically close and growing ASEAN market attractive. As such, Japanese universities are looking to attract foreign students, including those in the ASEAN region, while the college-age population shrinks rapidly in Japan.

Under such circumstances, the edu-

cation ministry selected 11 universities in seven groups as recipients of subsidies — tens of millions of yen annually for five years from fiscal 2013 — to participate in its ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) program. The universities use the money to run exchange programs with ASEAN counterparts.

AIMS was initiated by the South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Higher Education and Development, to promote academic exchanges between ASEAN members and other countries.

"ASEAN was trying to integrate and Japan committed to contributing to ASEAN. When Japan offered to cooperate on AIMS, it was the only country in East Asia to do so," an official from the Japanese education ministry said. "The program is beneficial for both Japan and ASEAN."

Participating countries are Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei and Japan, according to the education ministry website. The program applies to a variety of academic disciplines, including hospitality and tourism, agriculture, language and culture, international business, food science and technology, engineering and economics.

Participating Japanese schools are the University of Tsukuba, Hiroshima University, Sophia University, Waseda University, Ritsumeikan University, a consortium of Hokkaido University, the University of Tokyo and Rakuno Gakuen University and another consortium of the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, Ibaraki University and Tokyo Metropolitan University.

Under the program, students spend one semester in their foreign counterpart universities and the instruction is in English, except for Japanese language classes, and earned credits are transferable between participating universities.

The Hokkaido University consortium's program is dubbed "Collabora-

tion on Veterinary Education Between Japan and Thailand: For the Sound Development of Asia." It aims to train vets, as well as veterinary researchers and educators, to confront various problems facing Asia such as emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, food safety, animal welfare and environmental conservation from a global perspective with the goal of contributing to the sound development of Asia.

Their Thai counterparts are Kasetsart University and Chulalongkorn University. For four years from fiscal 2014, 25 Japanese and 25 Thai students will spend a semester in the other countries' universities.

The University of Tsukuba won the AIMS subsidy with its project, dubbed "Trans-ASEAN Global Agenda Education Program." The purpose of the project is to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, both initiated by the U.N. to promote international cooperation in tackling global issues such as hunger and environmental problems, by providing specific information aimed at solving such issues.

Students study food science, agriculture, international business, language, culture and hospitality and tourism.

The university has four partner universities in Malaysia, three in Indonesia, five in Thailand, one in Vietnam and four in the Philippines. It also has non-AIMS partner universities, with two in Australia and one each in Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos.

The Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology (TUAT) consortium's project is called "ASEAN Initiative to Foster Next-Generation Talents to Lead Environmentally Friendly Food Production, Technological Innovation and Regional Planning."

The courses offered in the three Japanese universities are "Advanced Agro-environmental Science/Food Technology" and "Environment-Oriented Innovation Engineering" by TUAT, "Regional Sustainability Science" by Ibaraki University and "Regional Development with Tourism"



Japan and ASEAN are increasing academic exchanges. JOSAI UNIVERSITY

by Tokyo Metropolitan University. The exchange program also includes fieldwork, internships at companies and lab work.

The three Japanese schools have two counterparts in Thailand, three in Indonesia and two in Malaysia.

Hiroshima University named its project "Core-Human Resource Education Program for Economic Development, Trust-Built and Peace in Asia."

Based on its guiding principles "The Pursuit of Peace" and "Collaboration with the Local, Regional and International Community," Hiroshima University offers advantages of educational and research resources in each academic discipline and fosters core human resources contributing to peace-building based on the common economic development of Asia and the establishment of a relationship of mutual trust.

Students study in the disciplines of food science and technology and agriculture; engineering; economics; and Japanese language and culture.

For this project, Hiroshima University is working with universities in Indonesia and Thailand.

Sophia University's "Trans-Disciplinary Human Development Education Program Aiming for Harmonized Diversity" aims to establish a new model for international higher education through collaboration between Japan and Southeast Asian countries. This program provides an educational platform for students from Southeast Asia and Japan to study together and analyze global issues affecting Asia and the world.

Students take a mandatory "Introduction to Trans-Disciplinary Human Development" course and several from electives, including "Basic Environmental Science," "Culture and Society" and "Global Affairs."

Sophia University has two counterparts each in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, as well as one in Malaysia.

Waseda University's project is called "AIMS7 Universities Consortium Plurilingual and Pluricultural Program," which will foster cosmopolitan people

Number of foreign Students as of May 1, 2014

Country	Number of students	previous year	percentage	previous year
China	94,399	97,875	51.3%	58.2%
Vietnam	26,439	13,799	14.4%	8.2%
South Korea	15,777	17,283	8.6%	10.3%
Nepal	10,448	5,807	5.7%	3.5%
Taiwan	6,231	5,660	3.4%	3.4%
Thailand	3,250	2,876	1.8%	1.7%
Indonesia	3,188	2,787	1.7%	1.7%
Malaysia	2,475	2,378	1.3%	1.4%
U.S.	2,152	2,275	1.2%	1.4%
Myanmar	1,935	1,598	1.1%	1.0%
Mongolia	1,548	1,402	0.8%	0.8%
Sri Lanka	1,412	1,054	0.8%	0.6%
France	957	894	0.5%	0.5%
Bangladesh	948	899	0.5%	0.5%
Philippines	753	649	0.4%	0.4%
India	727	649	0.4%	0.4%
Rest of world	11,516	10,260	6.3%	6.1%
Total	184,155	168,145	100%	100%

JAPAN STUDENT SERVICES ORGANIZATION

active on the international stage and pursue success at both global and local levels.

The seven participating universities are Waseda University and six others in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Brunei.

Waseda University offers specialized courses in sociolinguistics, language policy, geopolitics, international relations, history, security theory, anthropology, folklore, civilization, urban studies, comparative religions, environment studies, international business and economics. It also offers Japanese, Filipino, Indonesian, Malay and Thai language courses.

There are also courses on plurilingualism and pluriculturalism.

Ritsumeikan University is conducting a project, titled "Global PBL Program for Innovative Mind and Intelligence," which is to promote collaboration at the undergraduate level with AIMS partner universities and provide students with the capability to think across engineering, business, society and design.

The university is partnered with Thammasat University in Thailand and Mahidol University, Universitas Gadjadara, Institut Teknologi Bandung and University of Indonesia, all of which are in Indonesia. The courses to be taught at Ritsumeikan University for the project are engineering, international business, economics and language and culture.

Going international with 'Rikkyo Global 24'

Rikkyo University is one of the most global universities in Japan, and under its Top Global University Project, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) designated the university as a Global Traction Type school.

MEXT started the Top Global University Project in 2014, with the goal of enhancing the international compatibility and competitiveness of higher education in Japan by supporting universities executing decisive reforms and thorough internationalization.

Upon being designated under the MEXT project, Rikkyo University, whose educational philosophy is to focus on language skills and liberal arts education to nurture globally minded people, began a campaign to promote the school's 24 globalization projects, dubbed Rikkyo Global 24.

There are six projects in the four areas of increasing study abroad placements; expanding the number of international students; improving the education and research environment; and strengthening governance for international advancement.

In one of the projects, Rikkyo is aiming to create a global campus with

more than 2,000 international students in 2024, an increase from 500 in 2014.

It also offers double degree programs with overseas universities and plans to continue expanding them with more partner institutions.

The university also offers a Master of International Business with instruction in English for all subjects. Additionally, the university plans to increase the number of subjects taught in English and launch English-taught degree courses not only at the graduate level, but also at the undergraduate level.

To cater to foreign students wishing to study Japanese language and culture, Rikkyo's Center for Japanese Language Education has created nine levels of Japanese language courses for foreign students.

The university is also looking to increase its number of overseas part-




Rikkyo University has been selected for the education ministry's Top Global University Project. RIKKYO UNIVERSITY

ner institutions from 133 in 2014 to 300 in 2024. The school also plans to increase the proportion of foreign faculty members from 14 to 20 percent over the same period. To this end, it will invite prominent researchers from abroad by promoting its establishment of an internationally competitive environment.

Liberal Arts Education

Producing Global Leaders

The Evolution of Rikkyo as a World-Class University



Established in 1874

RIKKYO UNIVERSITY

<http://www.rikkyo.ac.jp>
3-34-1 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo, Japan



Undergraduate Program

Information Sessions
Feb. 14 & Mar. 13

Application Deadlines
Summer Semester: **April 1**
Fall Semester: **July 15**
(For those seeking a student visa through TUJ, please contact us.)

The American University in Japan

Majors
International Business Studies / International Affairs / Communication Studies
Asian Studies / Art / Japanese Language / Economics / Psychological Studies
Political Science / General Studies

www.tuj.ac.jp/ug
0120-86-1026
E-mail: ac@tuj.temple.edu
2-8-12 Minami-Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0047

For graduate schools and non-degree programs, contact tujinfo@tuj.temple.edu

Online English guide to Japanese universities



Ready to expand your horizons and study in Japan?

The Japan Times Online presents your resource for locating the educational institution and curriculum best suited to you and your future career goals.

- ◆ Directory of over 500 universities and graduate schools in Japan
- ◆ Overviews, admissions information of leading universities
- ◆ Advanced searches by location, faculty, programs
- ◆ Students' voice, guide to Japan, and other useful content

The Japan Times Crossmedia Sales Div.
E-mail: universities@japantimes.co.jp
www.japantimes.co.jp/universities

AEC Special

Sophia exchange program offers expanded horizons

Eighteen students, including those from Southeast Asia, Japan and other parts of the world, were divided into four groups to hold intense discussions in English about various global sustainability issues. They were creating a rough draft of a poster they would use for next week's presentation.

"I think economic development makes water political. People fight over it," one woman in a group whose presentation theme was "Water Supply in China," said to her group in a classroom of Sophia University in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward. She wrote it down on the draft of the poster.

The class is the "Introduction to Trans-Disciplinary Human Development," part of SAIMS, a one-semester program at Sophia for exchange students who come from universities in ASEAN member states.

Sophia University is one of 11 Japanese universities that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology selected as recipients of subsidies for participants of AIMS, or the ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programme, in 2013.

Sophia University has named its own program under the government's program SAIMS, for Sophia AIMS.

"It's very important to increase exchanges with ASEAN in many areas as Japanese companies do a lot of business with ASEAN, and Japanese and ASEAN academic researchers should exchange more. Thus it's very meaningful that students participate in exchange programs," said Tak Watanabe, assistant professor of cultural anthropology, Faculty of Liberal Arts, who taught the class, which was also supervised by Mikiko Michelle Sugiura and Davisi Boontharm, both of whom are associate professors at Sophia University.

Sugiura enjoys having students from ASEAN member states as they can interact with Sophia students in a positive manner.

"Those students are very smart and their English skills are excellent. They also learn Japanese very well and many of them can write sentences in kanji by the end of a semester," she said.

The SAIMS is a trans-disciplinary program focused on human development.



Students discuss their presentation. MASANORI DOI

Students from ASEAN region and Japan study together in a program that combines the disciplinary frameworks of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities.

The universities participating in the SAIMS are Bogor Agricultural University and Gadjah Mada University from Indonesia; Chulalongkorn University and Mahidol University from Thailand; Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University from the Philippines; and the National University of Malaysia.

Students from those universities attend Sophia University in the spring semester from April to July or the autumn semester from late September to January. They take exams at the end of the semesters.

During their semester, the students take a compulsory course, "Introduction to Trans-Disciplinary Human Development," and some elective courses.

In the course, professors from natural sciences, social sciences and humanities share ideas about how each academic field approaches key issues in human development such as education for sustainable development, the environment and development, aquatic ecosystems, environmental conservation and food and agriculture.

World Food Programme Japan Director Stephen Anderson came to lecture the SAIMS students in the class in the latest spring and autumn semesters.

The students have more than 100 choices in elective courses from Faculty of Science and Technology, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Department of Education, Faculty of Global Studies, Center for Global Discovery (Faculty of Foreign Studies) and the Center for Language Education and Research. They can take classes including physics, Japanese popular culture, Southeast Asian politics, globalization and cultures, environmental change and human development and Japanese language.

The students can also participate in fieldwork seminars from the end of July to mid-August, in which they take a field trip to Hokkaido to learn the ecological systems of a protected wetland in the Kushiro region. They can also take various summer classes on campus.

Also, Sophia University offers all SAIMS students housing during the program at Sophia Soshigaya International House, in Tokyo's Setagaya Ward, a co-ed dormitory for international and Japanese students with 362 well-equipped rooms and other facilities that ensure comfort and safety.

Sophia University has advantages over other Japanese universities for success in AIMS because of its long history of focus on language education and globalization. Its Faculty of Liberal Arts has long been known for offering English-only courses to accommodate foreign students and educate Japanese youth with



Tak Watanabe, an assistant professor in the Faculty of Liberal Arts, explains to students participating in the SAIMS program how to prepare presentations during a class in the "Introduction to Trans-Disciplinary Human Development" course. MASANORI DOI

English skills in a multilingual environment. It also has many English-speaking teachers and a long history of faculty exchanges with overseas universities.

"Sophia must be one of the few Japanese universities that have a Western-style evaluation system such as participation points and mini quizzes," Sugiura said.

ASEAN students also find it easy to transfer credits between their universities and Sophia University, she added.

Watanabe also stressed the merits of educational exchanges, saying that students with cross-cultural experiences will be successful in various businesses as Japanese and foreign companies find it beneficial to hire people with talent regardless of their nationalities.

"In ASEAN today, emphasis has been placed on the importance of 'People to People Connectivity.' Central to this goal is the notion of harmonization, in which people living in the same era join together to form a unified regional society," Sophia University Vice President for Academic Exchange Miki Sugimura said in a pamphlet. "The SAIMS program run by Sophia University is a future-oriented program that attempts to do so."



Students make a rough draft of a poster for their presentation. MASANORI DOI

Students appreciate college's international surroundings

Students from ASEAN member states are enjoying their learning experiences at Sophia University and their daily lives in an international environment provided by the most international university in Japan.

Those students participate in SAIMS, Sophia University's program to accept Southeast Asian exchange students for a semester. SAIMS stands for Sophia's AIMS, and is conducted under the ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programme initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

Setiadi Putra Muhamad Haris Zamaludin, a male student from Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia, learned about SAIMS from a Sophia student who was then studying at Bogor.

"SAIMS covers airfare and accommodation, so it's a good opportunity for me to study abroad," Setiadi Putra said.

"Indonesia now has many young people and I have to compete with them. So, having a unique experience is a big plus," he said as a reason he decided to study abroad, adding that Sophia is the

right choice for him for its internationalism.

He described his experience at Sophia as "fascinating."

"I thought it would be crowded with many Japanese people, but Sophia has people of so many nationalities," he said. "Also, I live in Soshigaya (International House) and there are many people of different nationalities there, too."

All SAIMS students are eligible to live in Sophia Soshigaya International House during the program.

Another reason he chose to come to Japan is that he wanted to learn the Japanese culture of dedication to work.

Setiadi Putra, who majors in communication and community development science, is the president of a debate club in his home university and was able to participate in an English debate in Tokyo.

Rabbani Naufal Shidqi is a member of a band who plays guitar and also from Bogor Agricultural University.

Rabbani, whose major is food technology, had opportunities to go to Taiwan, Thailand and Japan, but chose

Sophia because SAIMS has a focus on sustainable development, he said.

One of his good memories about life in Sophia University is that he played traditional Indonesian music at a Sophia festival and he was able to speak with other musicians about traditional music.

He is also happy that not only can he now sing in Japanese, but he is also able to ask for directions in Japanese when he gets lost; a remarkable improvement from when he first arrived in Japan.

Afriani Anindita Lintangdesi, is a female student from Bogor Agricultural University. She had never left Indonesia before coming to Japan, but she chose Sophia for its strength in social studies.

"Life at Sophia is interesting. I am a Muslim and Sophia is a Catholic school, but there is a prayer room for me and food is marked as being halal, so I can survive here," she said.

She also said she enjoys a class required for all SAIMS students, "Introduction of Trans-Disciplinary Human Development."

In the class, professors from the natural sciences, social sciences and human-

ities share ideas about how each academic field approaches key issues in human development such as education for sustainable development, the environment and development, aquatic ecosystems, environmental conservation and food and agriculture.

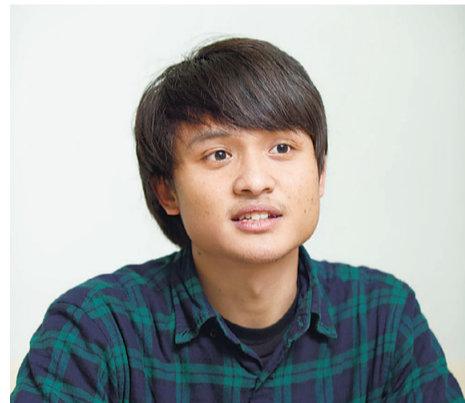
"I learned the other side of science," Afriani, who is majoring in communication and community development science, she said.

Ahmad Lutfi Najihah, a female student from the National University of Malaysia, is enjoying her time at Sophia University very much.

"I like everything here. I like mingling and my best friends are from Mexico, Indonesia and Germany," she said. "At Soshigaya, I can try Mexican and German foods. And I have a Japanese friend who has been to Malaysia and I promised I'd cook for her because she misses Malaysian food so much."

She goes sightseeing on weekends with her friends.

"My life in Japan is simple; I go sightseeing and everything I see is interesting," she said.



Clockwise from top left: Setiadi Putra Muhamad Haris Zamaludin; Rabbani Naufal Shidqi; Afriani Anindita Lintangdesi; Ahmad Lutfi Najihah MASANORI DOI

Sophia University

A Japanese University with a Global Mission

Undergraduate Faculties and Departments

JAPANESE PROGRAMS

- Faculty of Theology
- Faculty of Humanities
- Faculty of Human Sciences
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Economics
- Faculty of Foreign Studies

- Faculty of Global Studies
- Faculty of Science and Technology (Program in English is available)

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

- Faculty of Liberal Arts
- Faculty of Science and Technology

Graduate Schools and Programs

JAPANESE PROGRAMS

- Graduate School of Theology
- Graduate School of Philosophy
- Graduate School of Humanities
- Graduate School of Human Sciences
- Graduate School of Law
- Graduate School of Economics
- Graduate School of Languages and Linguistics

- Graduate School of Global Studies
- Graduate School of Science and Technology
- Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

- Graduate School of Global Studies
- Graduate School of Languages and Linguistics
- Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies
- Graduate School of Science and Technology

Sophia University Yotsuya Campus

Address: 7-1 Kioi-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8554 Japan
Undergraduate Admission: +81-3-3238-4018 Graduate Admission: +81-3-3238-3517
http://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/e_top

Sophia ASEAN Hub Center

Address: Room 1109, Kasem Utthayanin Building, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Henry Dunant Road, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand
aseanhub-ofc@sophia.ac.jp



上智大学
SOPHIA UNIVERSITY

AEC Special

Tourism on the rise across ASEAN region

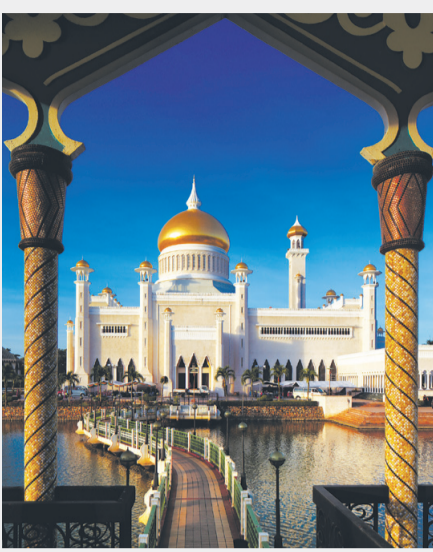
ASEAN is enriched with attractive tourism destinations that include renowned resorts in breathtaking natural surroundings and historical places that are designated as World Heritage sites. Additionally, thanks to little time difference with Japan, ASEAN countries are popular destinations for Japanese tourists as one can casually enjoy overseas travel. As a result, more than 3.7 million Japanese tourists visit ASEAN nations per year. Since tourism is an important industry to ASEAN, various promotional activities are being implemented such as upgrading hotels and Japanese-language training for tour guides, to improve the quality of service

in the countries and to entice more tourists to the region. Meanwhile, tourists from ASEAN member states marked 1.1 million in 2012 and the number is expected to increase. Japanese pop culture such as anime and J-pop is popular among ASEAN people. There are many people eager to learn the Japanese language in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, while the number of ASEAN students studying in Japan is also increasing.

Information from the ASEAN-Japan Centre



Children are the future of ASEAN countries. ISTOCK; ALL PHOTOS IN THE ASEAN TOURISM COLUMNS ON THIS PAGE ARE FROM ISTOCK.



Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque in the capital Bandar Seri Begawan

Bountiful nature in Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is a small, prosperous, stable, safe, wholesome and peaceful oil-rich kingdom located on the northern shores of the island of Borneo. Largely covered in luxuriant and immaculate tropical rainforests rich in exotic flora and fauna, Brunei is a paradise for nature lovers and for nature tourism in general. A cherished cultural heritage, deep-seated Islamic values and the uniqueness of the ancient and revered Sultanate institution make Brunei a country with a strong identity, where tolerance is a cultural norm and hospitality is common courtesy. For more information, visit www.bruneitourism.travel



Angkor Wat is the most famous temple of the Angkor complex.

Cambodia showcases ancient temples

The Kingdom of Cambodia is a Southeast Asian nation that borders Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and the Gulf of Thailand. The capital is Phnom Penh. The ruins of Angkor, located in thick jungle, are now a UNESCO World Heritage site. There are over 1,000 temples ranging in scale from nondescript piles of rubble scattered through rice fields to the awe-inspiring Angkor Wat — the best-preserved temple. For more information, visit www.tourismcambodia.org

Island paradise to be found in Indonesia

Indonesia, a tropical archipelago comprised of more than 14,000 islands, is the fourth most populous country in the world. As probably the most famous island in Indonesia, Bali blends spectacular mountain scenery and beautiful beaches with warm and friendly people, a vibrant culture and out of this world resorts. For more information, visit www.indonesia.travel



A traditional Balinese dance performed at Uluwatu Temple in Bali

Laos offers peace, tradition and culture

Laos is a peaceful country as yet untouched by the modern demands and stress. Its beauty lies in the Lao people, century-old traditions and heritage and its lush, pristine landscape. Situated in the center of northern Laos, the ancient capital Luang Prabang is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its outstanding cultural, historic and architectural values. It remains to serve as the country's spiritual and religious center. Every day very early in the morning, hundreds of monks walk the streets of Luang Prabang to collect alms and offerings. For more information, visit www.tourismlaos.org



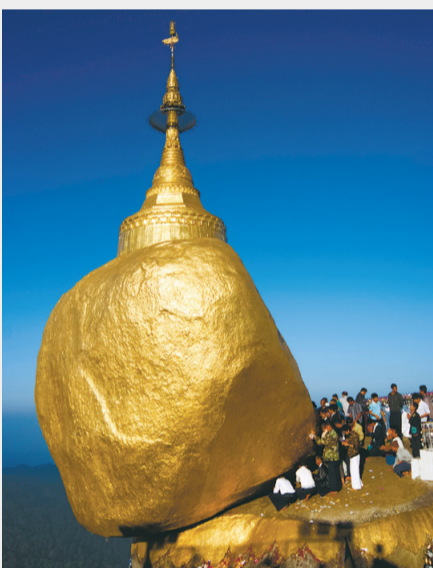
Monks on the streets of Luang Prabang



A night view of the Petronas Twin Towers and the As Syakirin Mosque in Kuala Lumpur

A magnificent and diverse Malaysia

To know Malaysia is to love Malaysia — a bubbling, bustling melting pot of races and religions where Malays, Indians, Chinese and many other ethnic groups live together in peace and harmony. The multiculturalism has made Malaysia a gastronomic paradise and home to hundreds of colorful festivals. Among Malaysia's key attractions are the extreme contrasts which further add to this theme of diversity. Towering skyscrapers look down upon wooden houses built on stilts while five-star hotels sit just meters away from ancient reefs. For more information, visit www.malaysia.travel/en



Pilgrims gather around the Golden Rock at the top of Mt. Kyaiktiyo.

Myanmar enjoys long history of Buddhism

Myanmar is bordered to the north by Tibet; the east by China, Laos and Thailand; the south by the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal; and the west by the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh and India. Myanmar has a long history dating back to the early 11th century when King Anawrahta unified the country and founded the First Myanmar Empire in Bagan more than 20 years before the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. Over 80 percent of Myanmar people practice Theravada Buddhism. Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, also known as Golden Rock, is one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Myanmar. For more information, visit www.myanmar-tourism.org

Tropical beauty plentiful in the Philippines

The Philippines is the third-largest English speaking country in the world. Composed of 7,107 islands, the Philippines is readily accessible to the different capitals of the world. Known as the country's last frontier, Palawan has managed to preserve its natural habitat through the years. El Nido features black marble caves, tabletop coral, fantastic marine life and the beautiful white sand beaches. For more information, visit www.experiencephilippines.org



El Nido in Palawan is one of the best beach destinations in the Philippines.

Singapore boasts something for everyone

The Republic of Singapore is a leading global city in Southeast Asia and the world's only island city-state. Suitable for nature lovers, culture buffs or thrill-seekers, Singapore, which is a cultural melting pot and garden city, offers a blend of old and modern architecture and a wide variety of memorable leisure options, all within easy reach. The Merlion fountain spouts water in front of the Marina Bay Sands Hotel. The Merlion is a fictional creature with the head of a lion, often seen as a symbol of Singapore. For more information, visit www.yoursingapore.com



The Merlion fountain spouts water in front of the Marina Bay Sands Hotel.



The Red Lotus Sea is one of the most fascinating scenes in Thailand.

Unprecedented natural beauty in Thailand

Thailand is a kingdom of wonder, filled with spectacular natural, cultural and historical attractions. In northeast Thailand, there is an otherworldly attraction that combined the beauty of a tropical flower garden and the serenity of a lake. This spectacular site is home to millions of lotus flowers and appropriately named the Red Lotus Sea, or Talay Bua Daeng. For more information, visit www.tourismthailand.org

Ever-changing views in Vietnam's Ha Long Bay

Vietnam is located in both a tropical and a temperate zone. It is characterized by strong monsoon influences, but has a considerable amount of sun, a high rate of rainfall and high humidity. Regions located near the tropics and in the mountainous regions are endowed with a temperate climate. Ha Long Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a popular travel destination, in Quang Ninh province. The bay has been called by the great national poet Nguyen Trai: "a marvel of the earth erected towards the high skies." While exploring the bay, tourists will feel lost in a legendary world of stone islands which shapes change depending on the angle and the light. For more information, visit www.vietnamtourism.com



Junks sail around Ha Long Bay among spectacular karst formations and isles.

SAKURA HOUSE

SAKURA HOUSE is a real estate agency in Tokyo providing Apartments, Share Houses and Dormitories to the foreign community.
Phone Number: +81-3-5330-5250 (From Overseas)
www.sakura-house.com





¥1,400/Day~ (Minimum Stay: 30 Days)

For your accommodations in Tokyo, JAPAN




SAKURA HOTEL & HOSTEL

Affordable and Friendly Hotels in Tokyo
4 convenient locations in central Tokyo
www.sakura-hotel.co.jp

For Daily & Weekly Stays

Sakura opens doors for ASEAN visitors

Sakura House, a real estate agency specializing in providing services to foreign residents, and Sakura Hotel & Hostel, an operator of three hotels and a hostel in Tokyo, have seen a definite increase in tourists and residents coming from ASEAN member states. "Both tourists and students from ASEAN are on the rise. I have heard on many occasions that they first came to Japan for sightseeing, and returned to Japan as they grew more and more interested in the country," a Sakura House official said. The two companies, under the same group, have employees with very multi-national backgrounds, including those who are from — or those who have lived in — ASEAN countries. This means that they can not only offer services in a variety of languages, but most of the hotel and real estate staff are fluent in English. Among the three hotels and the hostel, Sakura Hotel Hatagaya, in Shinjuku Ward, has a prayer room and a restaurant boasting a halal menu. The other two hotels — in Ikebukuro and Jinbocho — and the hostel — in Asakusa — have signs indicating the direction of Mecca and information about halal bento meal boxes. Guests will certainly enjoy exchanges with other guests and authentic Japanese experiences.

The hotels and the hostel occasionally host events for guests, such as a shodo calligraphy experience, visits to sumo stables to watch wrestlers train and going to horse races. Sakura Hostel Asakusa has such events every day, including tours to local small shrines and parties featuring sukiyaki beef pot meals for a modest ¥1,000 fee. Sakura House residents are also welcome to participate in these events. "We'd like to offer opportunities to casually introduce Japanese culture, while deepening bonds with people from ASEAN nations," the official said. Sakura Hotel & Hostel can accommodate tourists with various needs — not only ordinary tourists, but also long-term stays for students in study-abroad programs and company employees in Japan for training. "There has never been a time when



Sakura House and Sakura Hotel & Hostel have many fun events for visitors from overseas.

Japan and ASEAN have worked this hard to build strong connections than now. Japan is sincerely awaiting tourist visits," she said.

For more information, see <http://www.sakura-house.com/en> for Sakura House and <http://www.sakura-hotel.co.jp/> for Sakura Hotel & Hostel.