

12th Japan-Singapore Symposium

23 – 24 October 2017 • Singapore

Organised by
Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), National University of Singapore
and
The Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA)

PRESS RELEASE

(25 October 2017)

The 12th Japan-Singapore Symposium (JSS), a one-and-a-half-day meeting of thought leaders and opinion makers of both countries to exchange views on issues of mutual interest, was held in Singapore from 23 – 24 October 2017. It was the first meeting of the Symposium since it was upgraded from a biennial to an annual event in 2016, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Singapore and Japan.

2 More than 40 officials and ex-officials, scholars, business leaders and journalists attended the closed-door meeting on 23 October, as members of the respective Japanese and Singapore delegations. About 150 individuals from the public and private sectors attended the Public Forum on 24 October 2017.

3 The Singapore delegation was headed by **Dr Mohamad Maliki OSMAN**, Senior Minister of State for Defence and for Foreign Affairs. The Japanese delegation was led by **Mr Iwao HORII**, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. Dr Maliki and Mr Horii each delivered a Keynote Address at the Public Forum. Both leaders noted the close relationship between Japan and Singapore. Building on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations in 2016, Dr Maliki noted that there was potential to expand cooperation in the aviation sector, in upgrading the Japan-Singapore Economic Partnership Agreement, in deepening the Japan-Singapore Partnership Programme for the 21st Century (which provides joint technical assistance to third countries), and in Japan's engagement of ASEAN. The two leaders looked forward to future cooperation, both bilaterally and within the regional context of promoting the development and stability of ASEAN, particularly in the areas of economic cooperation and trade liberalisation.

4 The two co-Chairmen of the 12th JSS are Professor **Tommy KOH**, Chairman of the Centre for International Law of the National University of Singapore, and Ambassador **Yoshiji NOGAMI**, President of The Japan Institute of International Affairs. In their Welcome Remarks at the closed-door meeting, both Professor Koh and Ambassador Nogami noted the significance of 2016 for bilateral relations. Both countries celebrated the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations with several initiatives and high-level visits, including by then President Tony Tan, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan to Japan, as well as several Ministerial-level visits from Japan to Singapore. Singapore deeply appreciated Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Singapore to attend the Lying-in-State of our late President Mr S R Nathan in 2016. With the stable political leadership in Singapore and Japan, and shared interests in regional development and stability, it was noted that both countries were in a good position to pursue further cooperation, including the successful conclusion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)-11.

5 The co-Chairmen and delegates also noted the several positive developments in ASEAN and the region. These included ASEAN's 50th anniversary and its progress in building an ASEAN Economic Community. The economies of ASEAN member states and Japan, China, South Korea, and India were strengthening, and the region remained firmly committed to trade liberalisation. However, they also noted with concern the growing protectionist and nationalist sentiments around the world, as well as threats to regional security, which the region would have to manage moving forward.

6 There were three sessions in the closed-door meeting on 23 October:

Session I: The changing Security Landscape in the Asia-Pacific

Speakers -

Dr William CHOONG

Shangri-La Dialogue Senior Fellow for Asia-Pacific Security
International Institute for Strategic Studies, Singapore

Mr Hiroyuki AKITA

Commentator
Nikkei Shimbun, Japan

Dr YEO Lay Hwee

Director
European Union Centre in Singapore

Session II: The Regional Economic Architecture: Prospects and Challenges

Speakers -

Mr Manu BHASKARAN

Partner and Member of the Board
Centennial Group Inc, Singapore

Professor Shujiro URATA

Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies
Waseda University, Japan

Session III: Prospects of Bilateral Relations between Japan and Singapore

Speakers

Ambassador TAN Chin Tiong

Ambassador-at-Large
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore *and*
Director
ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

Associate Professor Ken JIMBO

Faculty of Policy Management
Graduate School of Media and Governance
Keio University, Japan

Ambassador Gopinath PILLAI

Ambassador-at-Large
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore *and*
Chairman
Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore

7 The participants discussed recent developments in the Asia-Pacific region, in the economic, political, and security spheres, and their implications for the region. They agreed that countries in ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific needed to press on with trade liberalisation. The conclusion of the TPP-11 and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) would be of critical importance. They supported continued progress in efforts to promote regional integration, including the ASEAN Economic Community, Greater Mekong Sub-Region, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Partnership for Quality Infrastructure Initiative, and the Belt & Road Initiative, all of which offer opportunities to enhance the region's connectivity and economic development.

8 Participants also noted the strong relations between Japan and Singapore, but agreed that the two countries should not take these for granted. The participants urged both governments to continue strengthening exchanges at the leadership level, and among respective ministries and departments. A greater push should also be made

to further people-to-people ties. For instance, the youths of both countries could be encouraged to pursue their studies in Singapore and Japan respectively, and cultural associations could be formed and sustained to enhance the warm personal ties that have been built up over decades of exchanges. There was also potential to increase tourist flows between Japan and Singapore, and further afield, to ASEAN.

9 The theme of the JSS Public Forum on 24 October 2017 was “Japan and ASEAN: Toward Next 50 Years”, in keeping with ASEAN’s 50th anniversary this year. It featured the following speakers:

Ambassador ONG Keng Yong

Ambassador-at-Large
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore *and*
Executive Deputy Chairman
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Professor Tsutomu KIKUCHI

Department of International Politics
School of International Politics, Economics and Communication
Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan *and*
Senior Adjunct Fellow
The Japan Institute of International Affairs

Professor HENG Yee Kuang

Graduate School of Public Policy
University of Tokyo, Japan

Dr Tomoo KIKUCHI

Senior Research Fellow
Centre on Asia and Globalisation
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
National University of Singapore

10 The Public Forum provided an overview of the economic and political relationship between Japan and ASEAN, and opportunities for deeper cooperation in the next 50 years, particularly in the economic sphere, to sustain continued stability and prosperity in the region.

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Media Contact:

Choo Kia Ming
Senior Executive (Public Affairs)
Institute of Policy Studies, NUS
Email: choo.kiaming@nus.edu.sg; DID: +65 6516 8391

ABOUT THE JAPAN-SINGAPORE SYMPOSIUM (JSS)

The JSS was launched in 1994 by then Prime Minister of Japan Mr Murayama Tomiichi and then Prime Minister of Singapore Mr Goh Chok Tong. It began as a Track 1.5 forum between Japanese and Singapore government and business leaders, and scholars, focusing on business and economic cooperation and bridge-building between the two countries. Held biennially since 1995, the JSS provides opportunities for representatives of different sectors from both countries to exchange views on issues of interest, and get to know one another better. On 26 April 2016, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Japan and Singapore, both countries announced that the JSS would be upgraded to an annual event.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES (IPS)

IPS was established in 1988 as an independent think tank to study and generate public policy ideas in Singapore. It became an autonomous research centre of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore in 2008. Today, IPS continues to analyse public policy, build bridges between thought leaders, and communicate its findings to a wide audience. The Institute examines issues of critical national interest across a variety of fields, and studies the attitudes and aspirations of Singaporeans through surveys of public perception. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in its analyses and takes the long-term view in its strategic deliberation and research. For more information about IPS, visit www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips.

ABOUT THE JAPAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (JIIA)

JIIA, founded in 1959, is a private, nonpartisan policy think tank focused on foreign affairs and security issues. In addition to conducting a wide range of research projects, the Institute promotes dialogues and joint studies with other institutions and experts at home and abroad, examines Japan's foreign policy, makes proposals to the government, and disseminates information on international relations to the public. JIIA, together with its large network of affiliated scholars, aims to serve as an indispensable resource on international affairs in a complex world. For more information about JIIA, visit www.jiia.or.jp/en/.

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