

Singapore-Japan Bilateral Relations Strengthened at 13th Japan-Singapore Symposium

Tokyo, Japan, 19 March 2019 – Bilateral ties between Singapore and Japan were strengthened when officials, scholars, business leaders and journalists met in Tokyo for the annual Japan-Singapore Symposium (JSS). Held for the 13th time, the JSS is a platform which brings together opinion makers from the two countries to exchange views on their bilateral and other issues. After 24 years, the JSS has succeeded in creating a community of friends who enjoy a high level of mutual trust. Singapore is the only ASEAN country with which Japan holds a regular dialogue.

2 Held across 1.5 days on 18 and 19 March 2019, the 13th JSS was co-chaired by Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman of the Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore, and Ambassador Yoshiji Nogami, Vice-Chairman, Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA). The 13th symposium was co-organised by the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA). The symposium consisted of a full-day closed door session on the first day and a public forum on the second morning. The forum was attended by about 100 members of the public, academia and private sector.

3 The Singapore delegation was led by Dr Tan Wu Meng, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Japanese delegation was led by Mr Norikazu Suzuki, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.

4 In their Opening Remarks, the Co-Chairmen noted that the bilateral relationship was strong, substantial and trouble free. However, they face a very challenging external environment.

5 The programme of the closed-door meeting is contained in the Annex.

6 The first session focused on the true nature of the current relationship between the US and China and its implications for Japan and ASEAN. The consensus was that the two countries have entered into a new era of strategic competition, involving trade, technology, military power and global influence. The participants also had a good discussion on the comparative merits of the concept of Asia Pacific vis-à-vis the new concepts of Indo-Pacific and Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The Singapore participants expressed the view that any new proposal on regional architecture should be open and inclusive, have ASEAN as its centre and must bring tangible benefits to the region.

7 In the afternoon session, the participants turned their attention to the economic dimension. They examined the challenges posed by protectionism, nativism, xenophobia and the assault on multilateralism. It was agreed that Japan and Singapore should stand together to defend free trade, open economies, the multilateral trading system and economic integration. Participants also agreed to strengthen the Comprehensive and Progressive

Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and, in a cautious way, to expand the membership. Japan and Singapore would also seek to conclude the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations expeditiously. At the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Japan and Singapore would work with other like-minded countries to reform but not to undermine the organisation.

8 Themed, “Japan-Singapore Partnership: Ascending A New Peak”, the JSS public forum started with keynote speeches by Mr Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Secretary General, Japan-Singapore Parliamentarians’ Friendship League; Mr Norikazu Suzuki, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ministry of Japan and Dr Tan Wu Meng, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Trade and Industry.

9 In his keynote speech, Dr Tan suggested the following three areas for our attention:

- Japan-Singapore Partnership Programme for the 21st Century (JSPP21) should be greatly expanded;
- Infrastructure Development – Singapore and Japan can cooperate in furthering the “Japan for Partnership Quality Infrastructure” by using Singapore’s Infrastructure Asia; and
- New Economy – Deepen collaboration in the new economy, e.g. e-commerce, digital economy, big data and IOT (Internet of Things).

10 Mr Suzuki echoed similar sentiments and added two areas in which Japan and Singapore can work together –

- Collaboration between the port of Singapore and port of Yokohama as LNG container ports
- Japan to participate actively in the ASEAN Smart City Network

11 Speaking at the public forum were –

- Dr Tsutomu Kikuchi
Vice-President, Aoyama Gakuin University, Senior Adjunct Fellow, JIIA
- Dr Lam Peng Er
Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore
- Mr Toshiya Tsugami
Director, Tsugami Workshop, Adjunct Fellow, JIIA
- Prof Simon Tay
Chairman of SIIA

12 The public forum reached the conclusion that, while the bilateral relationship is already comprehensive and substantial, there were new areas and opportunities for the two countries to harness. We should be ambitious and be determined to climb to a higher peak.

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More Information

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 Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA)

The Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) is a non-profit and independent think tank dedicated to the research, analysis and discussion of regional and international issues.

Founded in 1962, the Institute is Singapore's most established think tank. Throughout its history, it has played a key role in Track II diplomacy, supplementing official dialogue between governments. The SIIA is also a found member of the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS), a regional alliance of think tanks.

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/.

Topic	Speakers
Session One: Developments in US-China Relations: Implications for Japan and ASEAN	Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Tsutomu Kikuchi, Vice-President, Aoyama Gakuin University, Senior Adjunct Fellow, JIA • Dr William Choong, Senior Fellow, International Institute for Strategic Studies
	Discussants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Ken Jimbo, Professor, Keio University • Associate Professor Bhubhinder Singh, Coordinator, Regional Security Architecture Programme, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, National Technological University • Mr Akira Muto, Visiting Fellow, Stanford University • Mr Hiroyuki Akita, Commentator, Nikkei Shimbun • Ms Lee Huay Leng, Head of Chinese Media Group, Singapore Press Holdings
Session Two: Economic Outlook in Asia: Challenges on Free Trade, Globalisation and Regional Economic Integration	Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Manu Bhaskaran, Senior Adjunct Research Fellow, Institute of Public Policy • Dr Yukiko Fukagawa, Professor, Waseda University
	Discussants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Tan Khee Giap, Co-Director, Asia Competitiveness Institute, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, Chairman, Singapore National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation • Ms Lee Chen Chen, Director of Policy Programs, Singapore Institute of International Affairs • Dr Junji Nakagawa, Professor, University of Tokyo • Mr Hajime Takata, Managing Executive Office, Mizuho Research Institute