

Eleventh Japan-Singapore Symposium Keynote Speech
by Mr Seiji Kihara, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore, Dr Vivian
BALAKRISHNAN,
Professor Tommy Koh,
Ambassador Yoshiji Nogami,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of the people of Japan and the government of Japan, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for warm-hearted words of sympathies extended by people in Singapore, including Minister BALAKRISHNAN, in face of the recent Earthquake in Kumamoto.

It is my great pleasure to have the opportunity to deliver a keynote speech on the occasion of the 11th Japan-Singapore Symposium together with Minister BALAKRISHNAN, especially on the commemorative day when Japan and Singapore established diplomatic relations exactly 50 years ago.

It was in 2006 when I first visited Singapore with Mr. Yoshimasa Hayashi, Member of the House of Councillors, as a member of Japan-Singapore Parliamentary Friendship League.

It is Singapore Founding Father, His Excellency Mr Lee Kuan Yew that opens up our diplomatic relations and he said as follows;

“The future is as full of promise as it is fraught with uncertainty.”

“The industrial society is giving way to one based on knowledge. The new divide in the world will be between those with the knowledge and those without.”

This Symposium is to bring together this knowledge and to open up the future filled with hope.

In 1995, former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama of Japan and former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore agreed to convene this Symposium during the Summit Meeting. Since then, as a pillar of the intellectual exchange between the two countries, this Japan-Singapore symposium has been held continuously with the leading figures of the two countries to discuss regional and world issues.

I understand that yesterday at the closed session unfettered discussion on politics and economy in Asia-Pacific region was carried out. I hope lively discussion to be held today on the subject of “Future and Prospect of Japan - Singapore Relationship.”

Today, I would like to touch upon the history of development of this bilateral relationship, then, its current situation, and lastly, its future prospects.

Looking back 70 years ago during the Second World War, what we did brought suffering to many people and precious sacrifice in Singapore. We have never averted our eyes from that and have walked with the memory in mind in the postwar era.

We established our diplomatic relationship with Singapore on 26th of April in 1966, just 50 years ago from today, and one year after independence of Singapore. Since then, Japan and Singapore have advanced various areas of friendship and cooperation, including economic cooperation since the 70's and the Japan-Singapore Economic Partnership Agreement, which concluded in 2002 and was the first EPA for Japan. Cultural and people-to-people exchange is also an area of cooperation that has been augmented, and in particular the Japan Creative Center (JCC) established in 2009 plays a crucial role.

Cooperation has gone far beyond that of a bilateral relationship and has been the driving force in tackling regional and international challenges together. These achievements were made through Japan and Singapore's shared fundamental value of peace and prosperity.

Our cooperation under the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, so called ReCAAP, is one of the good examples.

As maritime nations attaching a high value on the rule of law at sea, Japan and Singapore have been leading countries of ReCAAP.

Japan has been sending the Executive Directors. In this month, Mr. Masafumi Kuroki has just assumed his duty as the 3rd Executive Director. Singapore has been contributing to promoting information sharing regarding counter-piracy in Asia as the host country of the secretariat of ReCAAP ISC. ISC itself has made a significant contribution to the regional efforts in countering piracy and armed robbery against ships, including publishing a guidance in cooperation with the shipping industry, maritime law-enforcement agency, and research institutes.

Japan and Singapore also hold the Maritime Security Dialogue where both countries discuss counter piracy measures as well as the safety of navigation in vital shipping lanes including the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

Through bilateral and multilateral cooperation in maritime security, we have contributed to the rule of law at sea, and I would like to reiterate that it is our common mission and interest to maintain the seas as "global commons" governed by the rule of law for the world and humankind.

Next, let me talk about the current situation of Japan-Singapore relationship.

Today we can truly commend the strong relationship cemented by ties we have forged in various fields through cooperation for half a century.

First, over the last ten years, I am proud that every year prime minister- or foreign minister- level exchange is held between Japan and Singapore, including the state visit to Singapore by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan in 2006 and the state visit to Japan by H. E. S R Nathan in 2009.

Regarding exchange of people, tourism has increased by 50% over the past ten years. I believe the foundation of the exchange of people between two countries is the youth exchange. More than 3000 visits, including the youth, have been made so far between Japan and Singapore through the JENESYS program, and I would like to promote this program.

Looking at our economic relations, trade between both countries has grown by 25% over the last ten years. On a flow base, investment has also dramatically increased. Investment on a stock base has also increased by ten times from Singapore to Japan, and by four times from Japan to Singapore.

When it comes to culture, we see many more cultural exchange events taking place in both countries, such as the Japan movie festival and Singapore international art festival. The number of events and visitors at JCC has doubled since 2013.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Taking advantage of this great opportunity, let me introduce a large event to be held on October 29th and 30th this year in Singapore, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Japan-Singapore diplomatic relationship. It will be held on Ngee Ann City Civic Plaza near Orchard

Street, the central street in Singapore, and will offer best Japanese and Singapore foods and cultural events. I kindly invite you to attend so please mark the event in your calendar.

Last, let me touch upon future prospects of Japan-Singapore relationship. In the course that Singapore has achieved the economic growth in Asia, some people say that 5Cs have been adored among young Singaporeans, that is, credit card, club membership, condominium, car, and cash. I would suggest that the following 4 Cs be adored in the context of the Japan-Singapore relationship.

First, communication.

Communication is necessary for people to understand each other.

We would like to continue promoting high-level exchange between Japan and Singapore, as well as people-to-people exchange.

In this context, at the beginning of this year, the Japan National Tourism Organization and Singapore Tourism Board signed the Memorandum of Cooperation. I look forward to seeing more active tourist movement between Japan and Singapore with this memorandum.

Second, cooperation.

While various cooperation between Japan and Singapore already exists, we still hold the promise of exploring new cooperation. TPP is one of these examples. As members of TPP, Japan and Singapore can be centerpieces and expand its merits within the region and all over the world.

Cooperation in infrastructure is another example. Last year, the Government of Japan announced “Partnership for Quality Infrastructure” to further expand our cooperation in the field of infrastructure development in Asia. Infrastructure is a foundation for national development and is even

more important because integration and connectivity within Asia is being strongly called for.

It is also worth mentioning JSPP 21, the framework of tripartite cooperation, as an area of cooperation to be deepened.

Third, consolidation.

As I mentioned before, free, open, and stable seas are essential for the region's prosperity and the rule of law at sea must be realized for the prosperity, but it is regrettable that they are compromised given the current situation in the South China Sea.

Terrorist attacks have been frequently made, including the bombing in Jakarta.

As Japan and Singapore are Asia dominant economies and share the fundamental values, we should address these regional issues more actively and contribute to the peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

It is our responsibility to strengthen our partnership in the framework of ASEAN, including East Asia Summit (EAS), as well as to consolidate our relationship.

Fourth, creativity.

"He who moves not forward, goes backward," said Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a famous German poet.

We cannot be satisfied with the relationship between Japan and Singapore that now we enjoy, and we must cope with and lead the world that is changing. Thus, we need to be more creative.

Japan and Singapore are tackling issues ahead of times such as eco-friendly urban development, ageing society and low birth rates and gaining experiences. This Symposium is a place where we can share those experiences and knowledge and it is expected to provide new ideas on the issues that we, as human beings, are facing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Japan-Singapore Symposium has been held every other year since its foundation, but I believe we need to hold the Symposium every year.

Today, we take a step in the next half century of the Japan- Singapore relationship. All of us present here are leading figures of making a new era of our relationship.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to wish you all a fruitful discussion throughout the symposium, and I also expect that the Japan-Singapore relationship will be even further strengthened through our efforts today.

Thank you so much for your attention.