

Japanese Foreign Minister here for first bilateral visit to strengthen ties further



KAMIKAWA Yoko
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greetings to friends in Brunei Darussalam. I am very honoured to have visited Brunei on October 8 and 9 as the very first destination for my first bilateral visit as Foreign Minister. I am extremely grateful to His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, as well as to Minister of Foreign Affairs II Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Erywan bin Pehin Datu Pekerma Jaya Haji Mohd Yusof, for the gracious hospitality extended to me during my stay in Brunei.

Japan and Brunei have enjoyed an excellent relationship for many years.

The Imperial Family of Japan and the Royal Family of Brunei share a long history of active exchanges, which has played a pivotal role in the friendship and goodwill between our two countries, beginning with His Majesty's state visit to Japan in 1984, and more recently, His Majesty's visit to Japan in 2019 to attend the Ceremony of the Enthronement of His Majesty the Emperor.

Our bilateral relations are supported by a wide range of people-to-people exchanges. Coincidentally, Minister of Foreign Affairs II Dato Erywan has a homestay experience in my home prefecture Shizuoka. Furthermore, the local government of Shizuoka Prefecture served as the host town for the Bruneian delegation for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Turning to our economic relations, we have steadily deepened our ties including through the stable supply of LNG from Brunei to Japan. Amid Russia's aggression against Ukraine and soaring global energy prices, Brunei's role is becoming increasingly important for Japan to have stable access to energy resources.

Our bilateral economic relations go beyond the energy sector. Through the activities of Japanese companies in Brunei, Japan strives to support Brunei's efforts to diversify its economy and industry.

As a flag bearer of free trade, Japan intends to actively promote economic ties with Brunei, with a view to promoting trade and investment and to

maintaining and strengthening a free and fair economic order. In light of this, we welcome Brunei's entry into force of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in July.

Brunei, which is located in a geopolitical strategic point facing the South China Sea, and Japan, which is an island country in East Asia, are both heavily dependent on maritime transport. I think Brunei and Japan both share the recognition that the rule of law is of vital importance. From this standpoint, we have been promoting cooperation between Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

Based on this close relationship, we would like to revitalise people-to-people exchange between our two countries, which has been disrupted by COVID-19. Brunei is blessed with rich culture and nature, including tropical rainforests and beautiful seas, filled with charms of attracting many Japanese tourists. On the other hand, I hear that there are many fans of Japanese manga, anime, and food in Brunei. Youth exchange, student exchange, and sports exchange are also active between our two countries.

Royal Brunei Airlines has recently resumed direct flights between Japan and Brunei after a suspension period due to COVID-19. I sincerely hope that people-to-people exchange, including business and tourism, between the two countries will exceed the pre-pandemic level.

Next year marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Brunei. I hope that my visit will lead to further strengthening our bilateral ties.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Japan and ASEAN have been working closely together for peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region under the strong partnership known as "heart to heart" relations. At the Japan-ASEAN Commemorative Summit to be held in Tokyo in December, Japan intends to launch a new vision for the relationship. On this historic occasion, Japan will work even more closely with Brunei.