

Minister Fumio Kishida's Interview with Brunei Times and Borneo Bulletin (June 29 2013)

**Japan has been a dialogue partner of ASEAN for a long time. With China's influence looming large in Southeast Asia and the United States' renewed interest in Asia-Pacific, does Japan see greater engagement with ASEAN?**

Japan-ASEAN relations and Japan's bilateral relations with each ASEAN country with which we feel deep friendship occupy a very important position in our diplomacy. The importance of ASEAN has been growing even more as the Asia-Pacific's regional situation has been changing in recent years.

The fact that our government attaches great importance to ASEAN is well reflected in our decision to have chosen ASEAN countries as the first destination for official visits by Prime Minister Abe, Deputy Prime Minister Aso and myself last January. On the basis of the five principles of Japan's ASEAN diplomacy announced by Prime Minister Abe in Indonesia, Japan is resolved to strengthen its relations in all areas, including politics, security, the economy, culture and people-to-people exchange.

We also consider that the United States' policy of giving prominence to the Asia Pacific region is important for regional peace and stability.

This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> year of Japan-ASEAN Friendship and Cooperation. Japan will hold a Japan-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in Tokyo this coming December. At the Summit meeting, we would like to discuss our mid to long term vision for fostering Japan-ASEAN relations, and realise our motto for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary "Thoughts Connected, Future Connected".

**Japan is Brunei's top export destination for oil and gas with exports reaching about \$7 billion in 2012, as well as one of its key investors. With Mitsubishi Corp already having a presence in Brunei, does Japan see other avenues for direct investment in the country?**

In addition to the traditionally good economic relationship, mainly through trade of LNG, trade and investment between Japan and Brunei have been steadily growing under the Economic Partnership Treaty signed in 2008. Brunei's additional LNG supply to Japan after the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011 has helped Japan tremendously. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to Brunei for the

longstanding and stable supply of LNG.

During the meeting with His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade when I visited Brunei last January, I conveyed that Japanese companies are interested in contributing to Brunei's economic diversification and job creation and we agreed to cooperate to establish mutually beneficial economic relations. Furthermore, during the Japan-Brunei bilateral summit in May, Prime Minister Abe and His Majesty Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam confirmed to strengthen cooperation between the two in economic area, mainly in energy sector.

The Government of Japan wishes to actively support investment from Japan to Brunei. In particular, in consultation with Brunei, we would like to consider the possibility of cooperation in Brunei's economic diversification, job creation, renewable energy and energy conservation by utilising Japanese technologies.

**What will be high on the agenda at the upcoming meetings including ARF and EAS meetings which Japan would like to raise?**

ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' meetings are important opportunities for strengthening cooperation between Japan and ASEAN and deepening cooperation among countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan will actively share our thinking on issues of peace and prosperity in this region, and affirm its cooperation with participating member countries.

Every year at the ASEAN Regional Forum(ARF), there are active discussions on regional security situations such as the South China Sea and the North Korea issues. I would also like to have frank discussions on these issues which are particularly important for this region.

With regard to the East Asia Summit (EAS), we would like to see it further developed as a leader-led forum for dialogue on political and security issues. In this coming EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, I would like to have discussions on cooperative projects to which Japan has always given importance such as maritime cooperation, low carbon growth, disaster

management, youth exchange etc. Then, I hope that its outcome could be fed to the discussions at the Summit leader's level later.

I look forward to having frank discussions with His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other Foreign Ministers.

**Do you foresee any big breakthrough in this upcoming regional meeting that will uplift the Brunei chairmanship of ASEAN and its credibility?**

I am impressed by Brunei's excellent leadership as Chair of ASEAN. For instance, Brunei has taken initiatives to identify areas such as food security and maritime resource management as priority, and Japan wishes to cooperate in its realization.

We are confident that Brunei will continue to show strong leadership during this Foreign Ministers' Meetings and the ASEAN related Summit meetings in October.

As mentioned earlier, Japan is planning to host the Japan-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in Tokyo this coming December. We will work with Brunei, as the co-chair, to further strengthen the Japan-ASEAN relationship. Also, we look forward to making this commemorative year of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary a big celebration, together with Brunei.