

Newsletter from the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN
No. 27: Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations

28 February 2025



Exchange of views with Asian Young Scholars Forum

(7 February 2025, at the Residence of the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN)

Hope this newsletter finds you well. As we approach the month of Ramadan in March, February has been a particularly busy month for our mission, with numerous ASEAN-related meetings and events taking place.

In the first half of February, the Japan-ASEAN Defense Vice-Ministerial Forum was held in Fukuoka. Meanwhile, in Jakarta, I had an exchange of views with participants of the Asian Young Scholars Forum and held final meetings for our participation in the ASEAN Pavilion at the Expo 2025 in Osaka, Kansai, Japan. We also held the ASEAN-Japan Food Event at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat. In the second half of February, we held the ASEAN-Japan-UNDP Blue Economy EXPO & Business Matching Event and the Japan-ASEAN Youth Summit in Jakarta, and at the end of the month, I went on a business trip to Hanoi to participate in the ASEAN Future Forum.

This month, I feel that the exchange programs related to “Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations” have made significant progress. In this edition of the newsletter, I would like to reflect on the series of meetings and events that took place this month, and together, consider the importance of people-to-people exchanges between Japan and ASEAN.



Japan-ASEAN Defense Vice-Ministerial Forum

(11 February 2025, in Fukuoka, credit: Japan's Ministry of Defense)

● ASEAN-Japan Young Scholars Exchange and Defense Exchange

On February 7th, participants of the "Asian Youth Scholars Forum" were invited to the Residence of the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN for [an exchange of views](#). The "[Asian Youth Scholars Forum](#)" is a forum jointly organised by the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) and the Indonesian think tank FPCI, where the 1st - 3rd batches of young fellows, who participated in the short-term special overseas invitation program of the JIIA and furthered their studies in Japan, meet to give presentations on their experiences and research in Japan.

I gave a [presentation](#) on the current state and outlook for ASEAN-Japan relations after we marked the 50th year of friendship and cooperation in 2023, and on strengthening the trust between ASEAN countries and Japan. We took the discussion through a question-and-answer session.

The following week, on 11 February, the annual [Japan-ASEAN High Level Defense Working-Level Meeting](#) was held in Fukuoka. This was the 14th meeting. It was chaired by Japanese Deputy Defense Minister KANO Koji, and in addition to the ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretariat (Deputy Secretary-General Dato' Astanah), Timor-Leste also participated as an observer.

At this meeting, the two sides confirmed the [specific achievements of defence cooperation](#) under the "[Japan-ASEAN Ministerial Initiative for Enhanced Defense Cooperation \(JASMINE\)](#)" that Japan presented at the Japan-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting 2023 and held discussions and bilateral meetings toward the implementation of new initiatives.



Working Lunch with ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General Nararya and his team for Expo 2025

(11 February 2025, at the Residence of the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN)

● Towards the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan

Preparations are progressing well for Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, scheduled to be held from 13 April to 13 October. Prior to the arrival of ASEAN Secretariat officials in Osaka to set up the ASEAN Pavilion, I invited Deputy Secretary-General Nararya and all the relevant staffs of the ASEAN Secretariat to my residence on 11 February for [a final meeting](#) over lunch.

The theme of the ASEAN Pavilion is "Building Bridges," and [a logo](#) expressing various concepts was recently announced. In addition, [a page introducing the ASEAN Pavilion](#) has already been launched on the ASEAN Secretariat website. Fun events are planned, including the "ASEAN Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Passport," which allows visitors to visit the pavilions of each ASEAN country and collect stamps.

At the Japanese Food Event held at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat this month and at the Emperor's Birthday Reception on 20 February, we set up a booth to promote the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. New events are currently being planned in Osaka ahead of the opening ceremony in April.

The Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan is also positioned as one of the "Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations" items in [the implementation plan of the ASEAN-Japan Joint Vision Statement](#). From now on, we will actively be promoting the expo.



Japanese Food Event
(14February 2025, at the ASEAN Headquarter/Seretariat)

● Japanese Food Event held at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat

On 14 February, the 6th [Japanese Food Event](#) was held at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat. This time, the theme was “*Osechi Ryori*”, and Japanese food culture was introduced to Ambassadors from the Permanent Missions to ASEAN and dialogue partners, as well as staffs from the ASEAN Secretariat.

Chef SHIMADA Naoyuki of a Japanese restaurant in Jakarta, Okuzono Japanese Dining, introduced the meaning behind each of *Osechi Ryori*'s ingredients, and [Ms. Melody](#), Japan-ASEAN Goodwill Ambassador on Food and Agriculture, also shared her own thoughts on *Osechi Ryori*.

Furthermore, the Permanent Missions of Lao, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Timor-Leste also provided festive dishes, allowing us to deepen exchanges between ASEAN countries and Japan through food. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to each country for their cooperation.

This Japanese Food Event was introduced in [a video](#) by our mission and was also featured in [the news in Japan](#). Prior to this, the [pre-event](#) was held in January at "Okuzono Japanese Dining" and when Indonesian media was invited, it was widely reported on [TV](#) and in newspapers. The pre-event was also introduced on [Ms. Melody's Instagram](#).



Blue Innovation EXPO & Business Matching
(19 February 2025, in Jakarta)

● Blue Innovation EXPO & Business Matching

On 19 February, the ["ASEAN Blue Innovation EXPO & Business Matching"](#) was held at an office building in Jakarta. This event marks the culmination of the [ASEAN Blue Economy Innovation Project](#), a joint initiative between Japan, UNDP, and the ASEAN Secretariat.

60 innovators, including startups from the 10 ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste, presented their innovative technologies and business models aimed at solving challenges such as sustainable fisheries, marine plastic pollution issues, climate change, and promoting sustainable tourism. The event provided a meaningful opportunity for them to interact directly with corporates and impact investors from Japan and other countries.

On the previous day, the 18th, I invited representatives of [Japanese companies and organisations](#), who were visiting Jakarta to participate in the event, to the residence of the Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN and exchanged views on strengthening ASEAN-Japan cooperation in this field. The attendees were all highly interested in the blue economy and innovation, so we created a LINE group on the spot to maintain communication moving forward.

I believe this project is truly a typical example of ASEAN-Japan co-creation to address economic and social challenges. I would like to continue following up on it.



Opening Ceremony of Japan-ASEAN Youth Summit
(20 February 2025, at the Mission of Japan to ASEAN office)

● Japan-ASEAN Youth Summit

The first Japan-ASEAN Youth Summit was held in Jakarta on 20-21 February. This event was jointly planned by [MIS \(Multilateral Interaction with Students\)](#), a student NPO that mainly consists of students from the University of Tokyo and runs projects to solve social issues in Southeast Asia and Japan, and [AYO \(ASEAN Youth Organization\)](#), a youth organization on the ASEAN side that also won the ASEAN Award last year, and invited around 50 high school and university students from Japan, ASEAN, and Timor-Leste.

On the first day, the 20th, the opening ceremony, plenary sessions, and breakout sessions were held in the auditorium of the Mission of Japan to ASEAN. At the opening ceremony, [ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn](#) attended and delivered [a keynote speech](#). Despite his extremely busy schedule, the Secretary-General's attendance and speech at this event strongly demonstrated the ASEAN leaders' passion for nurturing the next generation.

Afterwards, I held a lecture session with the high school and university students to discuss "the future of ASEAN-Japan" and "the participants' own future careers." The participants enthusiastically asked questions until the end, and I could feel the energy of young people.

On the following day, the 21st, they visited the project site and held a workshop and final presentation at the ASEAN Headquarters/Secretariat and at the hotel where they were staying. We look forward to supporting the next event.



Foreign Minister IWAYA Takeshi's Video Message at the ASEAN Future Forum
(26 February 2025, in Hanoi)

● Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations

In the final week of February, I travelled to Hanoi on a business trip and participated in the [ASEAN Future Forum](#) on the 25th and the 26th. The ASEAN Future Forum, initiated by the Vietnamese government, was first held in Hanoi last year to bring together governments and experts from both ASEAN countries and external partners to discuss the future of ASEAN. This year, in addition to Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh of Vietnam, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia (the ASEAN Chair), President José Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste, and Prime Minister Christopher Luxon of New Zealand were in attendance.

During the plenary session on geopolitical conflicts and the role of ASEAN, [Foreign Minister IWAYA Takeshi delivered a video message](#). He emphasized that in this time of significant global upheaval, it is essential to defend freedom and the rule of law while respecting diversity, inclusivity, and openness. He expressed his intention to continue working with ASEAN to promote the mainstreaming of the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" (AOIP).

I truly believe that exchanges and mutual understanding across generations are the foundation for everything from regional and global peace and stability to solving economic and social issues. I would like to continue promoting people-to-people exchanges with the aim of deepening ["Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations"](#).

Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN
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