

Singapore National Day

Another 50 years of excellent ties

LUI TUCK YEOW
AMBASSADOR OF SINGAPORE



Aug. 9 marks the 52nd Anniversary of Singapore's Independence.

Japan is one of Singapore's most important partners, as Japan was one of the first countries

to recognize Singapore's independence and establish diplomatic relations with Singapore.

Last year, Singapore and Japan celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, or SJ50. This milestone was commemorated with a series of celebratory events. President Tony Tan was invited on a state visit to Japan from Nov. 28 to Dec. 6, where he was welcomed at a state banquet by Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and met with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. He also visited Shichigahama Toyama Nursery School, one of four reconstruction projects undertaken by Singapore after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made an official visit to Japan from Sept. 26

to 29, when he held a summit meeting with the Japanese prime minister, and received the posthumous award of the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Paulownia Flowers on behalf of Singapore's founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

Our economic ties are robust and dynamic, with total bilateral trade between our countries reaching 49.5 billion Singapore dollars in 2016. There are more than 4,800 Japanese companies registered in Singapore, and Singaporean companies such as The Ascott Limited, Bee Cheng Hiang and Honestbee are also investing in Japan. Our economic ties have been supported by the Japan-Singapore Economic Partnership Agreement (JSEPA). Signed in 2002, JSEPA was Japan's first-ever free trade agreement and Singapore's first with a major trading partner. We look forward to the conclusion of the third JSEPA review. Singapore and Japan are also working closely on the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

People-to-people ties have blossomed, with more than 360,000 Singaporeans visiting Japan in 2016. In other words, more than one in 10 Singaporeans visited Japan last year alone. Likewise, 784,000 Japanese visited Singapore, making Japan our sixth-largest source



Singapore's President Tony Tan shakes hands with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Singapore-Japan summit during his state visit to Japan in December. MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION, SINGAPORE

market in terms of visitor arrivals. Japanese food enjoys widespread popularity in Singapore. Likewise, restaurants selling Singapore delicacies such as chicken rice and bak kut teh are sprouting around Tokyo, attracting their own following in Japan.

Our ties will be given another boost when Changi Airport opens its fourth terminal later this year. Built by Japan's Takenaka Corp., the new terminal will bolster Singapore's standing as a vibrant global air hub. The number of flights between our countries is also growing. Nevertheless, there remains much potential for Singapore and Japan to deepen our transport cooperation.

Our cooperation also extends to regional issues. Japan is one of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) most



Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong receives the posthumous award of the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Paulownia Flowers from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on behalf of Singapore's founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

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active and important dialogue partners. In 2018, Singapore will assume the ASEAN chairmanship. We look forward to working closely with Japan to strengthen ASEAN's centrality and unity, and to ensure that ASEAN remains resilient, relevant and innovative in the face of emerging opportunities and challenges.

The excellent state of bilateral relations over the last half a century must not be taken for granted. As we embark on the next 50 years, I am confident that we will work together to strengthen our bilateral relationship based on mutual respect and trust, toward the pursuit of peace, stability and prosperity for our countries and our region.

**Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Singapore
on the 52nd Anniversary
of Their Independence**

 **Mitsubishi Corporation**