

Singapore National Day Special

Ties with Japan continue to blossom

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AMBASSADOR OF SINGAPORE



Aug. 9 marks the 53rd Anniversary of Singapore's Independence. On this occasion, I am pleased to convey warm greetings from Singapore for the good health and prosperity of Their Majesties Emperor

Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Japanese government and the people of Japan.

Japan was one of the first countries to recognize Singapore's independence and establish diplomatic relations with Singapore. Japan played an important role in helping lay the foundation of Singapore's economy. Many Japanese companies invested in Singapore in our founding years, bringing with them much-needed employment opportunities and high standards of excellence.

Since then, Singapore and Japan have enjoyed decades of excellent relations. Our



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Group of 20 Hamburg summit in July 2017. OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN AND HIS CABINET

bilateral relationship has been underpinned by frequent high-level exchanges, strong economic links and close people-to-people ties. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe meet regularly during their mutual visits and on the sidelines of multilateral meetings, most recently at the Group of 20 Hamburg summit in 2017.

Our economic ties are robust. Japan is our eighth-largest trading partner with bilateral trade of \$38 billion last year. It is also our third-largest foreign investor, with investments in

Singapore amounting to \$9.7 billion in 2017. There are currently about 5,000 Japanese businesses registered in Singapore. Japan is an attractive investment destination and Singapore is Japan's fifth-largest and top Asian investor. The value of Singapore's investments in Japan, which totaled \$3.45 billion in 2017, has seen a surge of 82 percent and 10 percent from 2015 and 2016 respectively. Singapore and Japan have also worked closely to conclude the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership that will further boost our economic ties.

People-to-people ties between our countries continue to blossom. More than 400,000 Singaporeans visited Japan last year, an increase of 11.7 percent from 2016. In other words, more than one in 10 Singaporeans visited Japan in 2017. Likewise, close to 800,000 Japanese visited Singapore, making Japan our sixth-largest source of visitor arrivals. This brings two-way travel between our countries to more than 1 million annually. Singaporeans have also paid close attention to the recent torrential rain disaster in western Japan with great concern and sympathy.

Singapore made a contribution of \$100,000 to our Japanese friends.

Japan is an important partner to Singapore on the regional front. This year, Singapore is chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). We are also celebrating the 45th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan relations. We appreciate Japan's long-standing support for ASEAN's development as one of our most established and active dialogue partners. Today, ASEAN-Japan relations are deep and multifaceted, encompassing not only trade, investment and official development assistance, but also new areas of cooperation such as cybersecurity, smart cities and air connectivity.

Singapore will do its best to take the group forward and further ASEAN's centrality and unity through our chairmanship theme, "Resilient and Innovative." We aim to strengthen ASEAN's resilience against threats such as terrorism, cybercrime and climate change. We are also striving toward a more innovative and connected ASEAN, for which we have launched the ASEAN Smart Cities Network as a key deliverable. Singapore also hopes to conclude the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership this year, in partnership with Japan and 14 other countries.

Japan has done well domestically under its stable and capable leadership and has consistently contributed to the peace, stabil-



The Fifth Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Intersessional Ministerial Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and six other countries in Japan on July 1. ASEAN SECRETARIAT

ity and prosperity of the region. As a country that shares a common strategic outlook with Japan, Singapore welcomes Japan's leadership and proactive role in the region, including its engagement of Southeast Asia. We have also supported Japan in playing a more active role in the international arena.

Singapore looks forward to working closely with Japan in many areas, such as enhancing connectivity and promoting economic partnerships in the region. There remains significant potential for Singapore and ASEAN to further enhance our transport cooperation and air connectivity with Japan. We also see synergies between Singapore's Smart Nation initiative, the ASEAN Smart Cities Network, and Japan's Society 5.0 initia-

ive. There is also potential for collaboration between Singapore's new Infrastructure Asia initiative and Japan's Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, which can bring concrete benefits to both each other and the region.

Given the common challenges and priorities that our two countries share, there are abundant possibilities for even deeper Singapore-Japan cooperation going forward. I am confident that we can usher in an era of enhanced cooperation and closer friendship toward the next milestone of our relations and beyond.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.