



ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE

ASEAN Promotion Centre on Trade, Investment and Tourism

Building Bridges, Connecting Heart to Heart

FY2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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Building Bridges, Connecting Heart to Heart

FY2023 Annual Report



ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE

ASEAN Promotion Centre on Trade, Investment and Tourism

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OUR VISION

Building Bridges, Connecting Heart to Heart

The ASEAN-Japan Centre is committed to fostering stronger connections among the people of ASEAN and Japan. By becoming a regional champion of change, we strive to create a human-centred, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient society. Our efforts significantly contribute to realising the ASEAN-Japan common agenda outlined in the ASEAN Vision 2025 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We enhance the collaborative spirit and mutual growth between ASEAN and Japan through targeted and strategic mandates in trade, investment, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges.

OUR FOCUS

The AJC is dedicated to achieving impactful outcomes that benefit the people of ASEAN Member States and Japan. We focus on supporting micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), underserved regions, women, and young people. We build on our experience, continually adapting to meet the evolving needs and demands of communities across ASEAN Member States and Japan.

OUR VALUES

We prioritise the best interests of individuals in ASEAN and Japan, fostering a positive, collaborative, and inclusive culture that cultivates equal, sincere, open, and meaningful relationships between the two regions. We strive to embody competence, good judgment, and respectful behaviour in all our endeavours, aiming to be reliable, competent, and respectful individuals. We actively listen, empathize, and appreciate the perspectives and circumstances of others, regardless of agreement. Our actions are guided by compassion and attentiveness to the values and needs of others.

“The year of 2023 has been a time of deep reflection and new discoveries.”

In 2023, the relationship between Japan and ASEAN, its member countries, and its people has continued to hold profound significance for both regions. The year of 2023 has been a time of deep reflection and new discoveries. One of the most remarkable realizations is the history of heartfelt efforts and mutual cooperation that has been built over the past 50 years since 1973. In times of difficulty, the regions have stood ready to support each other. Disagreements have been resolved through dialogue and cooperation, reinforcing our shared vision for a sustainable future. While the names of these contributors may not appear in history books, their legacy lives on in the hearts of the people.

In FY 2023, the ASEAN-Japan Centre implemented both traditional and innovative programmes. These included interactive seminars, high-level forums, capacity-building workshops, and outreach missions. We mobilized young environmental leaders for networking, convened sustainably oriented young designers to showcase their products to the world, partnering an ASEAN-loving

YouTube creator, organizing Model ASEAN Meeting plus Japan with ASEAN and Japan university students at ASEAN Secretariat, and organized hackathons on circular business products and models with young entrepreneurs to connect investors. These initiatives collectively reached approximately 100,000 people in FY 2023. Despite our small organizational size, we are driven by a grand ambition. We recognize the current and future importance of the Japan-ASEAN relationship more keenly than any other organizations. Our commitment to this cause is unwavering, and we strive to lead by example, fostering an environment where both regions can thrive together.

As we move forward, we pledge to continue our efforts to strengthen these ties, guided by our belief in the enduring value of our partnership.

Together, we will build a brighter, more sustainable future for all.



K. Hirabayashi

Dr. Kunihiko Chris Hirabayashi

Secretary General, ASEAN-Japan Centre

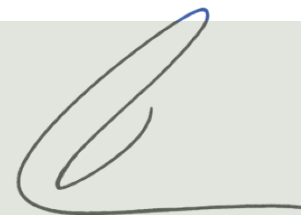
“...the bridges we have built together will connect more hearts and reach deeper into the corners of our nations in more profound and meaningful ways.

It is with great pleasure that I extend my warmest greetings to the ASEAN-Japan Centre and its stakeholders as we reflect on another year of fruitful collaboration and achievements. The year 2023 witnessed a historical milestone in ASEAN-Japan relations with the commemoration of the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, as well as the elevation of our ties as seen in the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which demonstrated our shared commitment towards fostering peace and security, economic prosperity, and sustainable development to secure a better future for our peoples.

The ASEAN-Japan Centre has been instrumental in promoting trade, investment, tourism, and people to people exchanges between ASEAN and Japan, faithfully adhering to its vision, “*Building Bridges, Connecting Heart to Heart.*”

Through innovative initiatives and work programmes, the AJC has significantly bolstered ASEAN-Japan economic ties and enriched our mutual understanding. The friendships and partnerships the AJC has forged over the years extend beyond government relations to encompass our societies, fostering connections among communities, businesses, professionals, and youths. This comprehensive heart-to-heart synergy is extremely crucial as we navigate the complexities and uncertainties of a rapidly changing global landscape.

The establishment of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has injected a new impetus into the work of the ASEAN-Japan Centre to solidify ASEAN and Japan as partners for peace and stability, partners for the co-creation of the economy and society of the future, and especially the heart-to-heart partnership across generations.



Dr. Kao Kim Hourn
Secretary-General, ASEAN



CONT.

Over the past year, the AJC has actively enhanced ASEAN-Japan cooperation in various sectors, including the digital economy, green technologies, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) development, and human resource capacity building.

It is particularly encouraging that the AJC has actively engaged the youth as a catalyst for fostering a forward-looking and dynamic ASEAN-Japan partnership through various initiatives that support ASEAN-Japan startups, youth empowerment, and networking. I am reminded of the Model ASEAN Meeting Plus Japan co-organised by the AJC and the ASEAN Foundation in November 2023, which brought together students from Japan and ASEAN to learn about the critical processes of cooperation between the two regions, thus promoting greater trust, mutual understanding, and collaboration among our young leaders.

As we move forward, we must harness our combined strengths and resources to tackle emerging challenges and capitalise on new opportunities. The ASEAN-Japan Centre's dedication to promoting a human-centred, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient society aligns seamlessly with ASEAN's vision for a resilient, dynamic, and people-centred community.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the leadership and staff of the ASEAN-Japan Centre for their strong commitment and dedicated efforts for the last fiscal year in bringing our peoples closer together and promoting mutually beneficial cooperation. We appreciate the value of the AJC in highlighting the needs and voices of grassroots stakeholders from both ASEAN and Japan, facilitating our co-creation of solutions to the shared challenges of our times.

I look forward to seeing more of the AJC's continued successes and our collaborative efforts to bolster the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. I firmly believe that the bridges we have built together will connect more hearts and reach deeper into the corners of our nations in more profound and meaningful ways.

Dr. Kao Kim Hourn
Secretary-General, ASEAN

“Looking ahead to the future, to another 50 years.”

I am honoured to have the opportunity to work with the ASEAN-Japan Centre. It has been an enjoyable moment working together, and I'm grateful for the AJC's continued support in ASEAN community building, which contributed to strengthening the ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership.

In 1973, soon after the establishment of ASEAN, Japan became the first country worldwide to start a dialogue with ASEAN. Since then, Japan and ASEAN have worked together not only as major trade and investment partners but also as trusted friends. Both regions have learned from each other and have joined hands to overcome differences and challenges and cooperate toward peace and prosperity.

The ASEAN-Japan relationship has advanced significantly over the course of 50 years. The ASEAN-Japan Centre has steadily implemented practical cooperation in various fields and achieved concrete results.

Under the current fluctuating global economic situation, especially post-COVID, the economic upswing has slowed, with the average growth lower than in previous periods. As a result, individual countries must adjust their policies to be up-to-date and practical to cope with challenges and inconstancy. The AJC achieves results for the interests of people in the ASEAN Member States and Japan, promoting mutual trust and understanding among the people and building a foundation for future friendship and cooperation.

On behalf of the ASEAN Member States, as we value our close relationship with Japan, we seek to strengthen the friendship further in every aspect and share a new era of unprecedented growth. Looking ahead, I hope the ASEAN-Japan Centre will continue to promote activities that support the nations' connectivity. It is a good opportunity to take a step further into a new era based on this precious friendship, looking ahead to the future, to another 50 years.

Mr. Phusit Ratanakul Sereroengrit

Chairperson of the Council Director
of the ASEAN-Japan Centre for FY2023
Council Director for Thailand

Director General of the Department
of International Trade Promotion (DITP),
Ministry of Commerce, Thailand

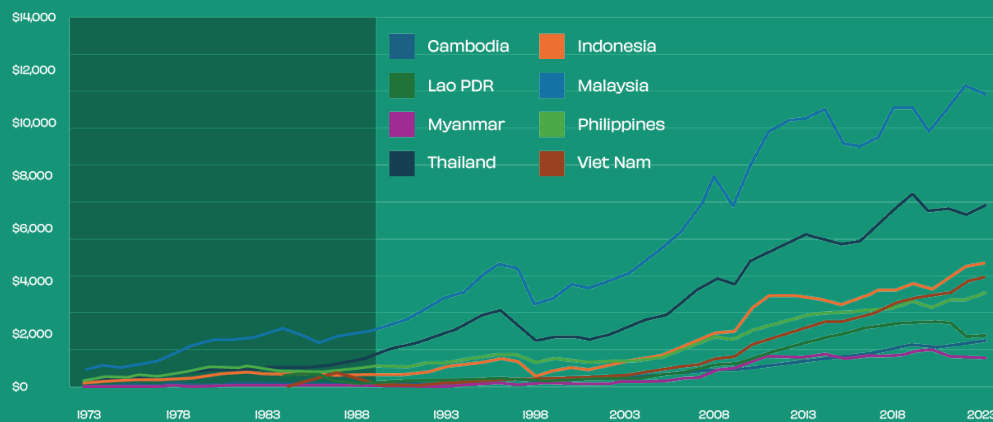
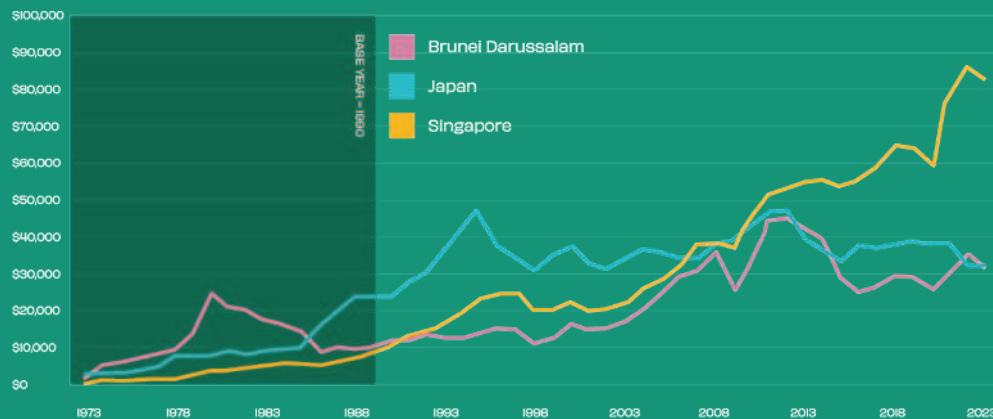


ASEAN and Japan's Economic Growth Through Time

GDP Per Capita

Source: World Bank Indicators, 2024

Over the past five decades, Japan's GDP per capita showed moderate growth, reflecting its stable but mature economy, reaching around \$46,268 in 2023. The ASEAN region, however, experienced significant economic expansion. Singapore emerged as high-income nations, while Malaysia remains on the cusp of high-income status. Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Thailand showed strong growth while Cambodia and Lao PDR also demonstrated steady development. Overall, ASEAN's economic dynamism contrasts with Japan's slower, steady progress, highlighting the region's diverse growth trajectories.



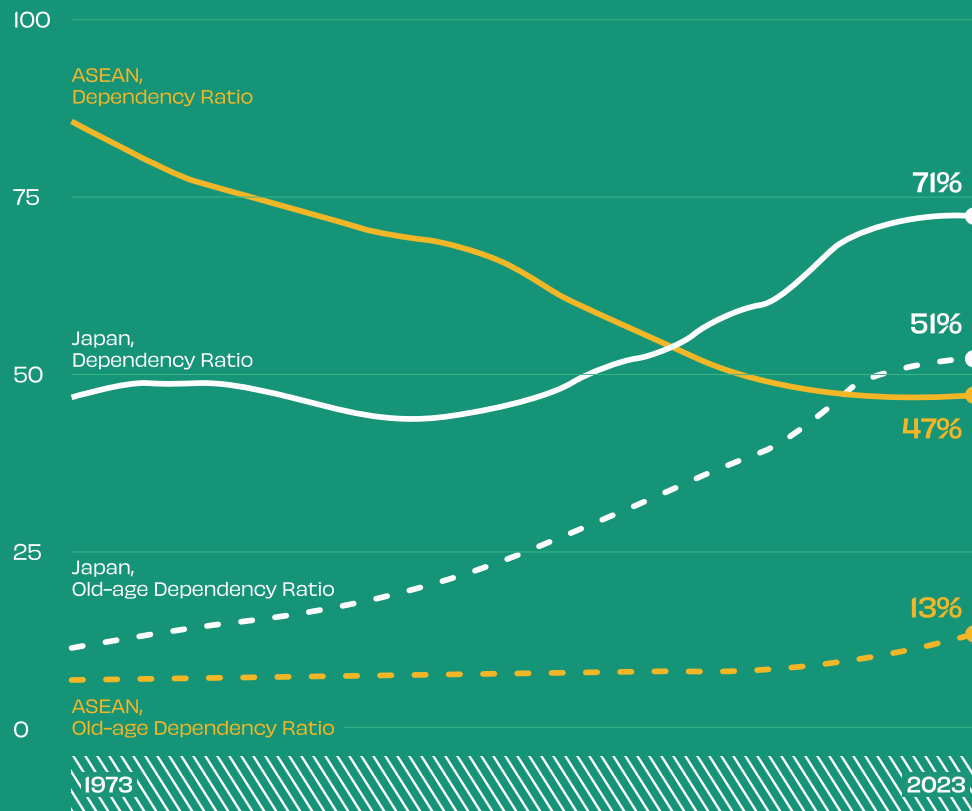
Multiplication Factor of GDP per Capita from 1990 to 2023 (PPP*, Constant 2021 USD\$)



By utilizing GDP per capita in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), a more precise representation of the population's purchasing power across different countries is obtained. PPP adjusts for variations in living costs, allowing for a fairer comparison of economic well-being between nations.

Age Dependency Ratio

Data Source: World Bank, 2024



World Bank Definition:

Dependency ratios capture variations in the proportions of children, elderly people, and working-age people in the population that imply the dependency burden that the working-age population bears in relation to children and the elderly. But dependency ratios show only the age composition of a population, not economic dependency.

Japan's aging population has been a well discussed subject since even before the turn of the century. This concern, paired with a declining birth rate, meant that a smaller number of working adults will have to support a growing number of retiring individuals. This trend can be seen in the Old-Age Dependency Ratio.

In contrast, ASEAN has a relatively low Old-Age Dependency Ratio.

However, while the trend of Japan's Old-Age Dependency Ratio seems to follow that of its Age Dependency Ratio, this is not the case for ASEAN.

As the Age Dependency Ratio also considers those before the age of 15, the reason for ASEAN's high Age Dependency Ratio in the 1970s can be inferred to be due to the high birth rates.

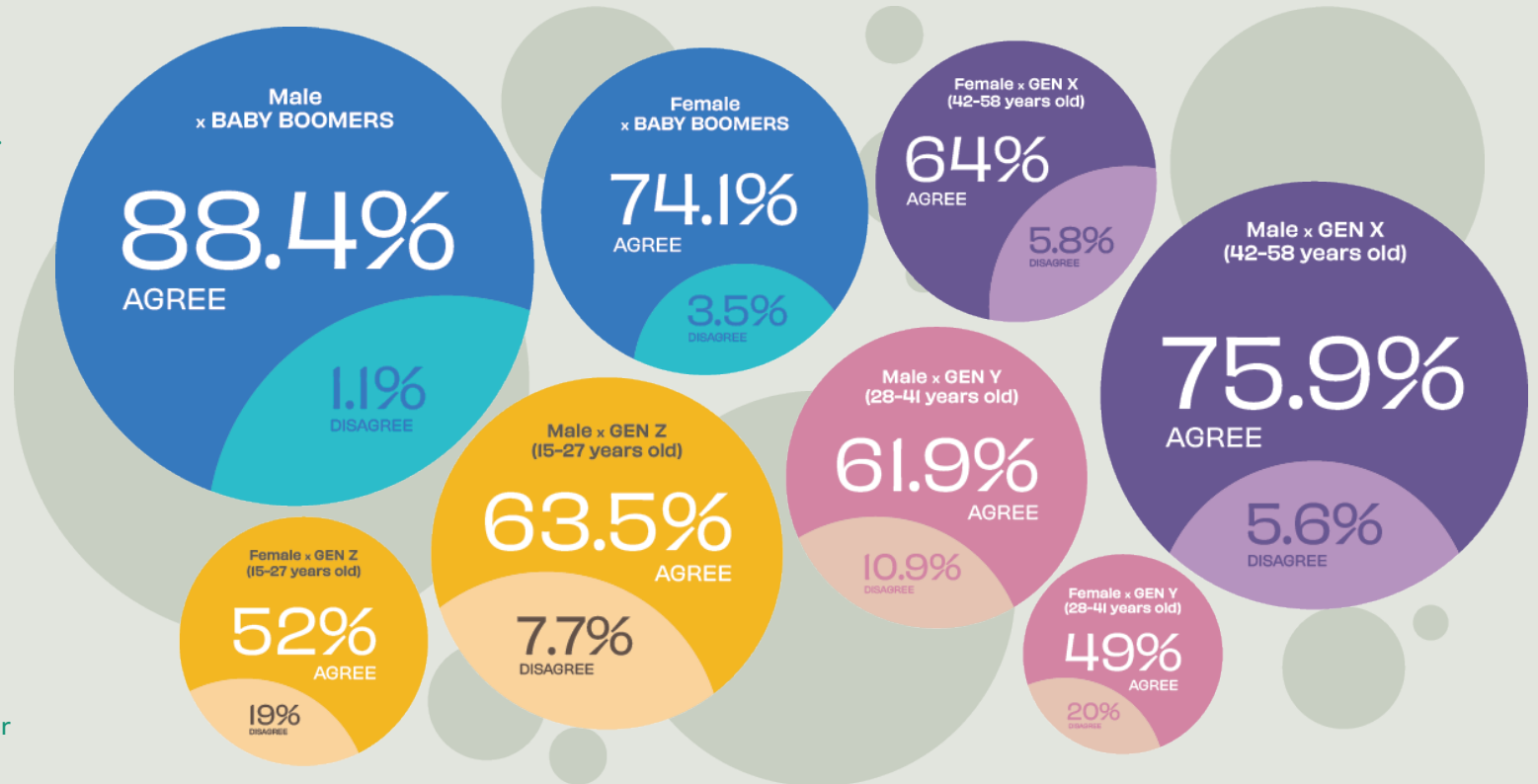
However, since the 1970s, the Age Dependency Ratio of ASEAN has fallen by about 40%, while the Old-Age Dependency ratio rose by only about 5%. This indicates that ASEAN may begin to face the early stages of an aging society in a few decades. In this time, ASEAN should work with Japan to discover ways to prevent the problems that will come with it.

Importance of ASEAN Countries to Japan's Future

Source: AJC Public Online Opinion Survey from Japanese Respondents (n=1,650), March 2024

Our recent public opinion survey underscores a crucial challenge for Japan's future engagement with ASEAN, particularly in resonating with younger generations and women. While a significant percentage of older male respondents (Gen X and Baby Boomers) strongly agree on the importance of ASEAN to Japan's future, younger generations, especially females in Gen Z and Gen Y, exhibit less conviction.

This highlights the need for tailored communication strategies that connect with these demographics. Efforts should focus on creating compelling narratives that emphasize ASEAN's role in Japan's future prosperity, leveraging channels and influencers that resonate with younger audiences and women.



Perceptions of Japan's Relations with Each Country/Region

Source: AJC Public On-line Opinion Survey from Japanese Respondents (n=1,650), March 2024

Our recent public opinion conducted in March 2024, also shows that ASEAN holds a strong third position in perception among countries and regions, indicating high confidence and regard from Japanese respondents.

This favorable view of ASEAN highlights its significant role and potential for strategic enhancement, drawing inspiration from Japan's established partnerships.

Respondents feel that ASEAN Member States have a good relationship with Japan

ASEAN

63%



USA

67%



AUSTRALIA

58%



EUROPE

63%



100,000

100,000

That is the number of businesses, schools, and individuals that we have managed to reach out to directly in FY2023.



Indirectly, that number could be much greater. But while numbers are important in ways, they can also take away from the individual stories that each number represents.

At the ASEAN-Japan Centre, we are redefining what success means to us. Being able to witness the change in lives at a personal level continues to hold a higher value to us than any number fathomable. That is why this year, we want to put the stories of these individuals front and centre.

Throughout this annual report, we have paired each of our activities with an individual that participated in it, sharing their experiences from a personal point of view. From all walks of life, these individuals represent schools, governments, businesses, and most importantly, themselves.

This is the next step in the ASEAN-Japan Centre's journey as an intergovernmental organization. Since our founding in 1981, the Centre has had to adapt through multiple political, economic, and technological environments. This is just the newest page in that chapter.

In 2022, the ASEAN-Japan Centre introduced the Mid-Term Strategic plan in the hopes of better communicating our ambitions and goals with our partners and stakeholders. It also laid out how the ASEAN-Japan Centre will adapt to become even more relevant in the years ahead amidst these uncertain times.

Last year, we presented the **18 STORIES OF CHANGE**, signifying our determination to make bold moves to remain a pioneering institution in bettering the lives of people across ASEAN and Japan. This year, we are proud to bring to you the ASEAN-Japan Centre's **18 STORIES OF PROGRESS**, the mid-point of our journey towards full realignment.

As we march on into the final phase of this transitory period, we would like to invite you to join us in reflecting on the progress made last year through this report. May we be able to elevate the lives of people of ASEAN and Japan for many more years to come by integrating its people and society through trade, investment, and people to people exchanges.



Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Trade

Building tomorrow's
trade today,
where inclusivity
and sustainability
pave the way.

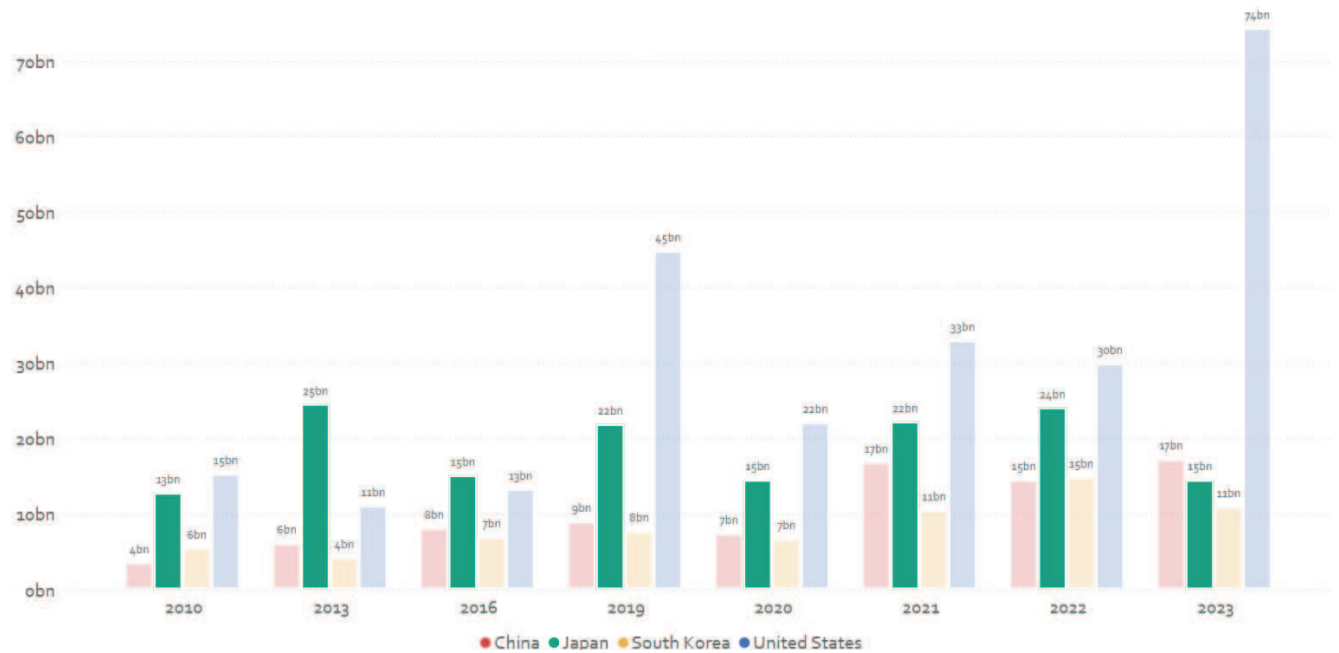
CONTEXT IN DATA

Total Foreign Direct Investments (FDI)

Japan has been a consistent and significant source of foreign direct investments (FDI) to ASEAN countries between 2010 and 2023, totalling more than \$177 trillion. Japanese investments in the region mainly focused on infrastructure, future projects related to technology and climate, and key industries, such as agriculture and manufacturing. Furthermore, ASEAN is rapidly establishing itself as a technology hub, with tech giants such as Microsoft, Google, and Amazon announcing significant investments in the region's technology sector.

Sources:
Fulcrum, 2024
Nikkei, 2024
Microsoft, 2024
The Diplomat, 2024

SOURCE
UN Comtrade (comtradeplus.un.org)

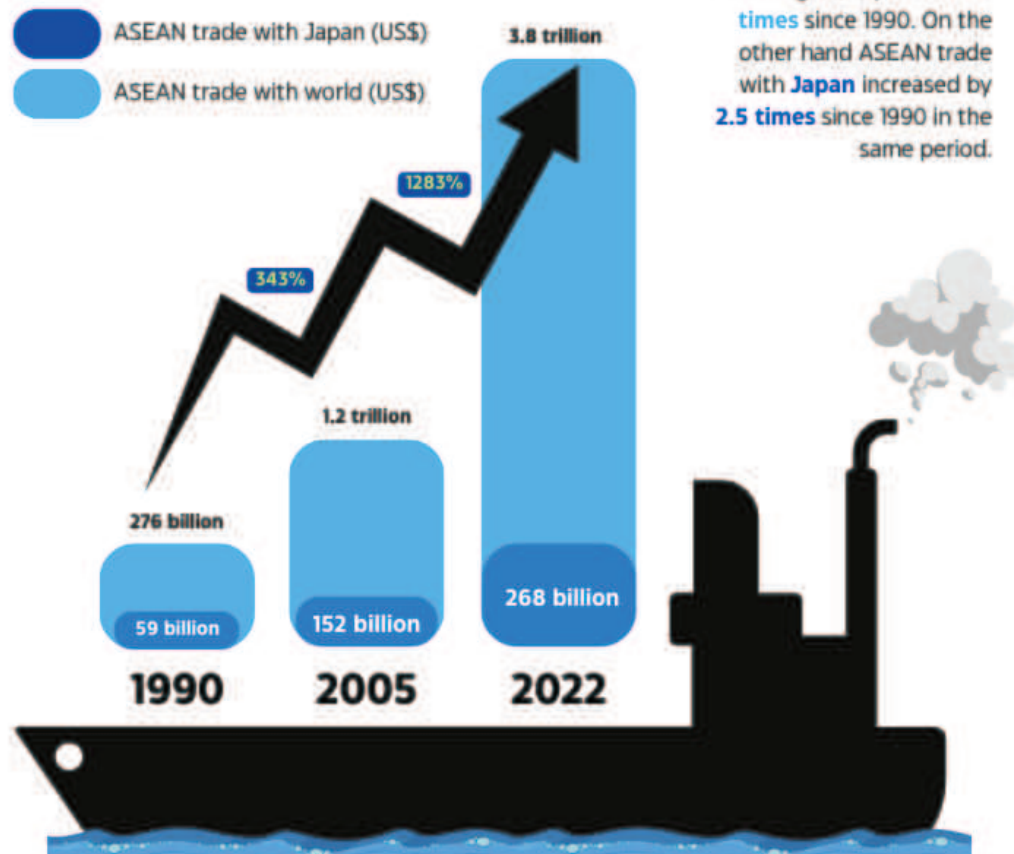


▲ Total Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) into ASEAN by Source (USD)

CONTEXT IN DATA

Rising Trade: ASEAN and Japan's Economic Bond

SOURCE
ASEAN Statistics Division (data.aseanstats.org)



Trade has been a vital part of many ASEAN economies, with individual member states forging numerous trade pacts and agreements with various trade partners over the years. Total value in terms of goods traded showed a clear upward trajectory, starting from under \$100 billion in 1990 and exceeding \$3.82 trillion in 2022, equivalent to more than 1200% increase.

Also, Japan has emerged as one of ASEAN's largest trading partners during the same period, with over \$268 billion in traded goods by 2022.

Moreover, the ratification of recent free trade agreements, e.g., CPTPP and RCEP, is expected to contribute to an even more heightened trade relations in the region. Both Japan and ASEAN are keen to sustain and build upon this positive trend in the future.



STORY OF PROGRESS 1

Transforming Economies with Digital Inclusion: The Journey of Women-led MSMEs in ASEAN



Interview with Young Entrepreneurs Association of Lao PDR

Promoting digital finance usage is an important step in furthering financial inclusion. The AJC is committed to supporting the inclusive digitalisation of ASEAN enterprises, focusing on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly women-led MSMEs (WMSMEs), and helping them address their unique challenges. This initiative seeks to identify bottlenecks, opportunities, and essential skills required for the digital transformation of WMSMEs in the ASEAN region. From October 2023 to June 2024, the AJC conducted a comprehensive survey incorporating both qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires. Respondents included representatives from public institutions, associations, research institutes, non-profits, non-governmental organisations, and WMSMEs. The AJC collected and used a total of 63 interviews and 204 questionnaire responses to analyse trends and provide fundamental information.

Key Insights

Over the past years, the AJC has identified several challenges hindering digital endeavours. These include limited internet access due to infrastructure issues, high costs of digital tools, financial constraints impacting data management, cybersecurity risks exacerbated by low digital literacy, and a lack of networking opportunities. These obstacles underscore the need for strategic interventions to enhance digital capabilities and resilience.

Furthermore, the AJC’s research has provided critical insights into the challenges women face in digitalisation efforts, with 73% of respondents citing constrained flexibility due to household duties, 85% acknowledging the necessity for financial management skills, 84% for the improvement of marketing skills, and 79% for the high cost of digital tools. The research also highlights significant skills—finance, marketing, accounting, and inventory management—crucial for overcoming these obstacles and promoting inclusivity in digital transformation.



Interview with ICT Center, National University of Laos



Digitalisation for women-owned MSMEs requires a multifaceted approach involving multi-stakeholder partnerships. The AJC plans to develop women-friendly programmes while advocating inclusive and resilient digitalisation and establishing networking platforms. Collaborative efforts at regional and national levels of public, private, and non-profit sectors are one way, among others, to achieve these goals.



Progress of Digitalization through Gender-Responsive Policies

INTERVIEW WITH

Ms. Khay Ann C. Magundayao – Borlado, OIC, Executive Director, **Ms. Elizabeth Omas**, Supervising Gender and Development Specialist, and **Ms. Anne Jeaneth Casalme**, Gender and Development Specialist II, Sectoral Coordination Division of the Philippine Commission on Women

In April 2024, the Centre (AJC) conducted an online interview with Atty. Khay Ann C. Magundayao-Borlado, OIC, Executive Director, Ms. Elizabeth Omas-as, Supervising Gender and Development Specialist, and Ms. Anne Jeaneth Casalme, Gender and Development Specialist II, Sectoral Coordination Division of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW).

PCW is a policymaking, advisory, and coordinating body that leads in developing gender-responsive policies, conducting advocacies, providing appropriate and strategic technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluating plans and programmes on gender mainstreaming towards a more gender-responsive bureaucracy and institutions. Through PCW's insights, the AJC was able to shed light on the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation for MSMEs (WMSMEs).

Regarding the overall progress of digitalisation, the PCW showed that it is undistinguished, neither good nor bad. The rationale lies in the fact that urban areas benefit from digitalisation; in contrast, the progress of digitalisation in rural areas is limited and slow. PCW cited the Statista Research Department (2021)



Interview with women-led MSME in Sabah Malaysia

and the Digital 2024 Global Overview Report, as well as the positive trend in the Philippines, where women have higher internet and social media usage rates than men. Despite the uptick in internet usage and connectivity, data and consultation results revealed that women continue to face the following challenges:

- 1 Limited access to affordable digital technology as a tool for digital transformation (marketing and information tools), including access to devices and the internet;
- 2 Financial constraints and cybersecurity concerns;
- 3 Digital skills gap, data management and privacy, and e-commerce adoption; and
- 4 Lack of digital infrastructure, including unstable internet connectivity.

Rural women are particularly vulnerable to these issues; however, women in the metropolitan are equally affected by numbers 1 and 2. This demographic also experiences time constraints due to unpaid household and care chores, resulting in a loss of flexibility in the work area.

CONT.

Furthermore, according to the PCW's observation, women appear intimidated vis-à-vis digital tools and technologies. In digital skill capacity-building training, PCW testified that fewer people and enterprises (men-led and women-led) are willing to support women in digital technologies than men, both financially and time-wise. Financial constraints mean digital technology training in the Philippines is not free. Time constraints mean enterprises cannot afford to allow women staff members to attend these trainings regardless of who leads it.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) of the Philippines has already started integrating “gender-sensitivity” and “gender-conscious” principles into the design of the training, schedule, and demographics of the trainees or participants. DTI also promotes the “formalisation” (registration) of MSMEs from “informal” (not registered) MSMEs whose income exceeds 5,000 pesos. This formalisation will endow

company certificates and open MSMEs' potential to borrow loans from the bank, which enhances financial inclusion.

PCW recommends that most MSMEs (both women-led and non-women-led) need orientation to establish a solid foundation of digitalisation. This orientation includes hands-on guidance by experts or colleagues, mentorship, and benchmarking of the best practices of leading models. Plus, it is necessary to expand financial support or subsidies to capacity-building activities and incentives for MSMEs using digital tools like tax subsidies or tax exemptions.



STORY OF PROGRESS 2

Enhanced ASEAN- Japan Trade Ties for Stronger Engagements and Collaborations

As ASEAN solidifies its position as the world's fifth-largest economic bloc, Japan maintains its role as one of the region's primary trade partners. Mutual trust, complemented by bilateral and regional partnership agreements, notably the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), has made their economic relationship flourish, benefiting both sides. In line with the commitment to achieve inclusive, resilient, and sustainable trade between the ASEAN Member States and Japan, the AJC has carefully designed and implemented events that propel trade relations between the two economic powerhouses.

Highlighting Series of Collaborative Journey

The AJC's ASEAN-Japan Insights series, covering market trends, regulatory frameworks, and sustainable practices, provided forums for policymakers and industry leaders to explore avenues for collaborations. Notably, the recent seminar on the *Future of Cross-Border Digital Payment Systems* in ASEAN and Japan sparked substantial interest from private sectors, expressing their interest in further engagement with Bank Indonesia and the Indonesian Fintech Association, laying the groundwork for future cooperation. The ASEAN Focus+, a regional online publication focusing on ASEAN matters, disseminated the summary of this webinar.

Likewise, workshops and seminars have proven instrumental in building trade capacities for trade practitioners with practical knowledge for navigating complex trade-related issues. One of the AJC's highlighted seminars, *Unlocking Trade Opportunities: Empowering Thai and Japanese MSMEs through the Utilization of FTA*, cohosted by the Department of Trade Negotiations, Ministry of Commerce of Thailand and the Japan External Trade Organization, Bangkok Office also garnered positive feedback, with more than 90% of participants expressing a high level of satisfaction post-surveys.

Furthermore, the recent business matching event, the *Facilitation of Japanese Companies' Participation and Local Counterparts* in March 2024 at Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, has been a resounding success, resulting in over 350 fruitful business meetings on sustainable packaging solutions for the Japanese market. Another significant event, the Healthcare Business Mission by the AJC and the Thailand Board of Investment, Tokyo Office, played an essential role in providing Japanese companies with in-depth insights into the latest business opportunities within Thailand's healthcare industries. During the three-day mission, participating companies showcased their products tailored to meet each facility's needs and technological requirements. As the current landscape of Thailand is shifting towards becoming a super-aged society by 2030, this mission presents a promising opportunity to introduce Japanese products and further collaborate with Thai partners to meet domestic demands.



WAY
FORWARD

The AJC's engagements underscore the commitment to long-term cooperation and shared objectives of ASEAN-Japan trade relations. Leveraging ASEAN's dynamic markets alongside the partnership of Japanese expertise sows the seeds of understanding for mutual growth and prosperity of long-term alliances. As ASEAN and Japan continue their journey of economic integration, the AJC shares that commitment to cooperation promises a prosperous future for all.



Open ASEAN Opportunity: ASEAN - Japan Synergy in Healthcare



INTERVIEW WITH

Dr. Kriskrai Sitthiseripratip, Principal Researcher at National Metal and Materials Technology Center, National Science and Technology Development Agency, Thailand

Dr. Kriskrai Sitthiseripratip, Principal Researcher at the National Metal and Materials Technology Center (MTEC) in Thailand, opens window into the institution’s pivotal role in advancing the nation’s research landscape. As one of Thailand’s National Research Center under the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), MTEC stands as a stalwart in promoting research and innovation related to the materials development and applications, including health and wellness sector. In alignment with Thailand’s national agenda, namely the Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model, MTEC is committed to developing the BCG Medical Devices to push Thailand at the forefront of medical devices and healthcare industry in the ASEAN region.

In the interview, Dr. Sitthiseripratip sheds light on MTEC’s key achievements on pioneering ASEAN - Japan relations in the healthcare industry, and a vision for future collaboration and technological synergy. Among the standout projects, is one supported by Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, focusing on developing new ISO standards for

‘customised implants’, with participation from multiple ASEAN countries and East Asia. MTEC’s collaboration with Japan’s New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization has also yielded remarkable results in the development of a total knee implant developed based on the bone morphology of Thai people, marking a groundbreaking venture in ASEAN-Japan medical device innovation.

Reflecting on the progress of ASEAN-Japan trade relations in the medical device and healthcare industry, Dr. Sitthiseripratip highlighted the demographic parallels between Thailand and Japan. Both nations are now contending with a rapidly expanding elderly population, igniting a common need for demand-driven and innovative healthcare solutions. This demographic similarity has sparked deeper collaboration, with Japan’s expertise directed localising and adapting wellness and healthcare devices for Thailand and other ASEAN countries. Dr. Sitthiseripratip posts that despite of Thailand being in its early stage, this synergistic partnership holds a potential promise for future local commercialisation.



BOI-ASEAN Health Mission to Thailand



Group photo taken at Kluaynamthai 2 hospital, Thailand

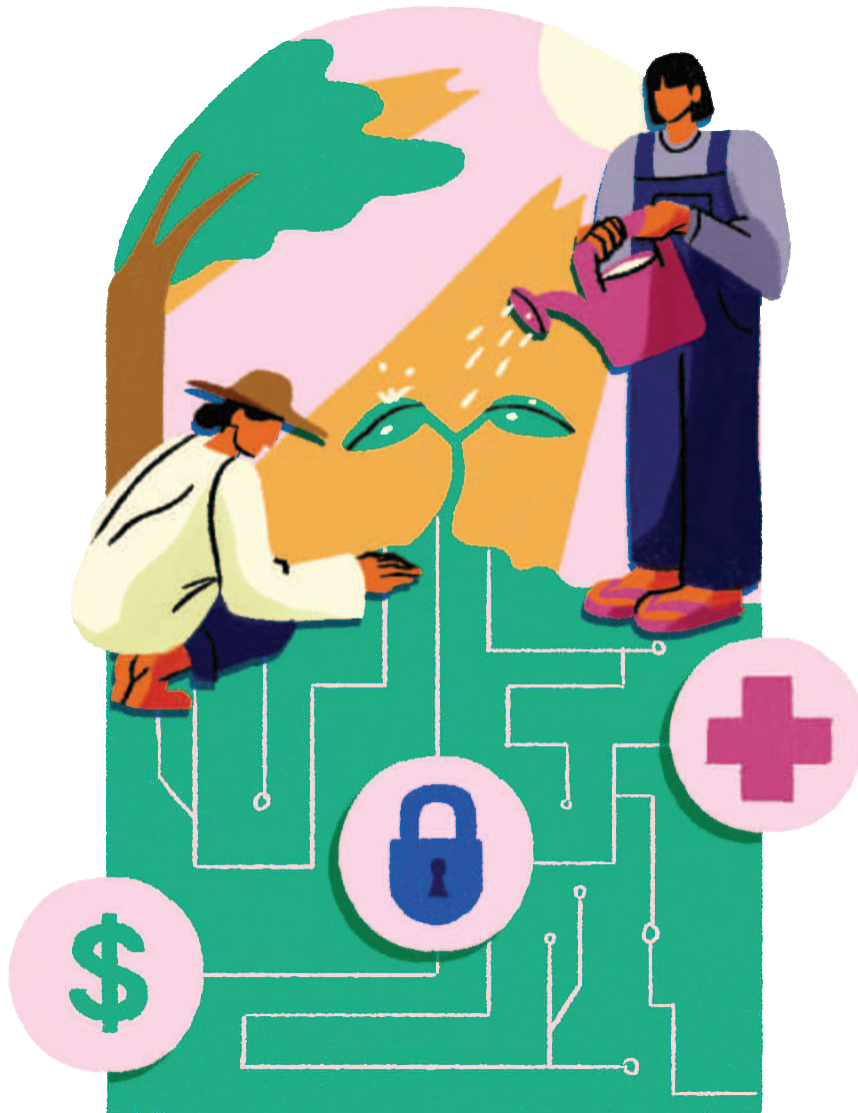
CONT.

The collaboration between ASEAN and Japan in the healthcare sector also serves as a linchpin in unlocking the potential of the ‘silver economy’. By synergising their resources and expertise, stakeholders can spearhead the development of innovative R&D solutions finely tuned to cater to the unique requirements of the ageing populace while also lessen localised price burden in both national and regional scales. A noteworthy example is the MOU signed in 2017 between NSTDA, the Fukushima Medical Device Industry Promotion Association, and the Federation of Thai Industries. This MOU taps on the rapid growth of the healthcare industry with the objectives to bolster new capabilities of Thai and Japanese medical device sectors, and the broader ASEAN region.

The recent BOI-AJC Business Mission, held from 17-20 March 2024, stood as another significant milestone. Co-organised by the ASEAN-Japan Centre and Thailand Board of Investment, Tokyo Office, the mission was designed to comprehensively assess the real demands of the healthcare industry in Thailand, spanning from public and private hospitals to nursing care facilities. Dr. Sitthiseripratip lauds the mission as an excellent opportunity to grasp extensive demand-driven opportunities and the importance of localising Japanese technologies for expansion into Thailand and other ASEAN countries.

Looking ahead, Dr. Sitthiseripratip highlights several key areas where ASEAN and Japan can deepen their cooperation. One promising trend is the development of advanced wellness devices in the digital world for the new generation of elderly individuals, alongside with the adaptation of the ‘aging in place’ concept, wherein older adults opt to remain in their homes and communities as they age. Envisioning the future of ASEAN-Japan relations in the healthcare industry over the next decade, Dr. Sitthiseripratip also advocates the Centre as a pivotal bridge to connect ASEAN-Japan medical device and healthcare industries and streamline processes and activities between the two regions. Thus, by leveraging shared advancements in innovation and the quadruple helix of partnership—government, academia, industry and communities—ASEAN and Japan can jointly advance new trends in lifestyle that can enhance the quality of life for elderly populations.

The future collaboration between ASEAN and Japan in the medical devices and healthcare industry indeed holds a significant promise. To catalyse this vision, Dr. Sitthiseripratip exhorts *“Turning burdens into power will drive our aging society towards a brighter, happier future”*. By fostering strong partnerships while sharing common challenges, both can look forward to stronger trade relations and mutual prosperity.



STORY OF PROGRESS 3

Digital Transformation: Unleashing the Potential of Cross- Border Payments and Digital Health in ASEAN and Japan

In September 2023, the ASEAN governments launched the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (ASEAN DEFA) during the 43rd ASEAN Summit. This agreement marked a significant step towards ASEAN’s goal of establishing a regional digital economy by 2025. The AJC has been at the forefront of digitalisation initiatives in the region, underscoring the transformative potential of technology in regional economic integration in ASEAN and Japan.

The AJC’s initiatives, including a webinar on cross-border digital payment systems and research on digital health, highlight the significant strides made in digital transformation. The AJC launched the ASEAN-Japan Insights, which aims to be a relevant and leading information-sharing platform in the region on ASEAN-Japan matters. For its inaugural launch on December 14, 2023, it brought together key figures from the financial, banking, and fintech sectors to discuss

the potential and challenges of establishing cross-border payments in ASEAN and Japan. The discussion revolved around four main points: trust in cross-border digital payments, economic impacts, challenges and opportunities of these systems in ASEAN, and the potential for stronger ASEAN-Japan cooperation.



TAKE A LOOK

Advancing the Digital Health Ecosystem in Southeast Asia

In this article from ASEANFocus, Katrina Navallo and Keith Detros discuss the importance of infrastructure, trust, and innovation in fostering a thriving digital health ecosystem in Southeast Asia.



CONT.

Trust is a crucial factor in the success of digital payment systems. Central banks play a vital role in regulatory oversight and consumer protection. The webinar highlighted the importance of adopting international standards and best practices, promoting digital literacy and public education, and fostering collaboration between various stakeholders to build and sustain trust. In closing, the discussion wrapped up the current developments in digital payment systems between ASEAN countries and Japan. In 2022, Pay Indonesia signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on QR code-based payments (Indonesia QRIS and Japan Unified QR code) with the Japan Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry. In December 2023, Cambodia and Japan entered a Memorandum of Understanding on the cross-border digital payment connection using QR codes.

Riding on the forefront of economic digitalisation in the region, the AJC has also been researching digital health in ASEAN. This research explores the potential of digital technologies in improving healthcare services and outcomes in the ASEAN region and Japan. Initial findings have been presented in the quarterly meetings of the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Services, including members of the Technical Working Group on e-Health Services. At the same time, an article based on the research has been published and widely circulated by leading think tanks in the region, such as the ADB Southeast Asia Development Solutions (ADB SEADS) and the Tech for Good Institute. The research report is expected to be published and launched in an upcoming webinar in July 2024.



WAY FORWARD

The AJC’s digitalisation activities, including the webinar on cross-border digital payment systems and digital health research, underscore the transformative potential of technology in regional economic integration in ASEAN and Japan. These initiatives highlight the significant strides made in this area and the potential for further advancements in the future.

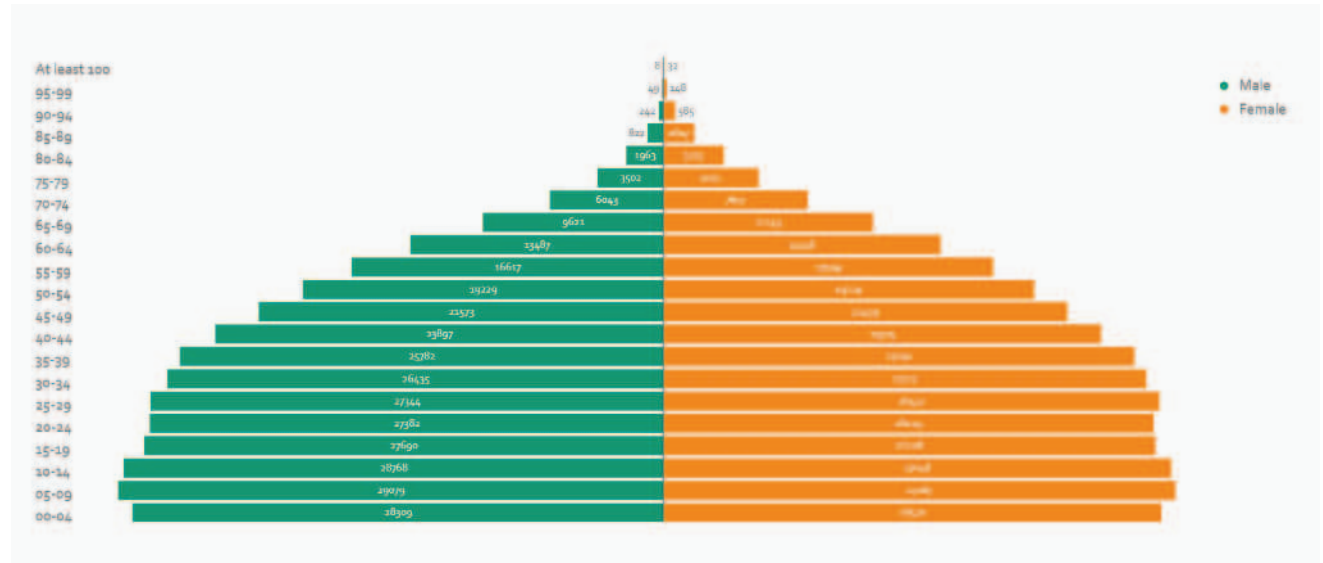
 STORY OF PROGRESS 4

Advancing Evidence-Based Decision Making

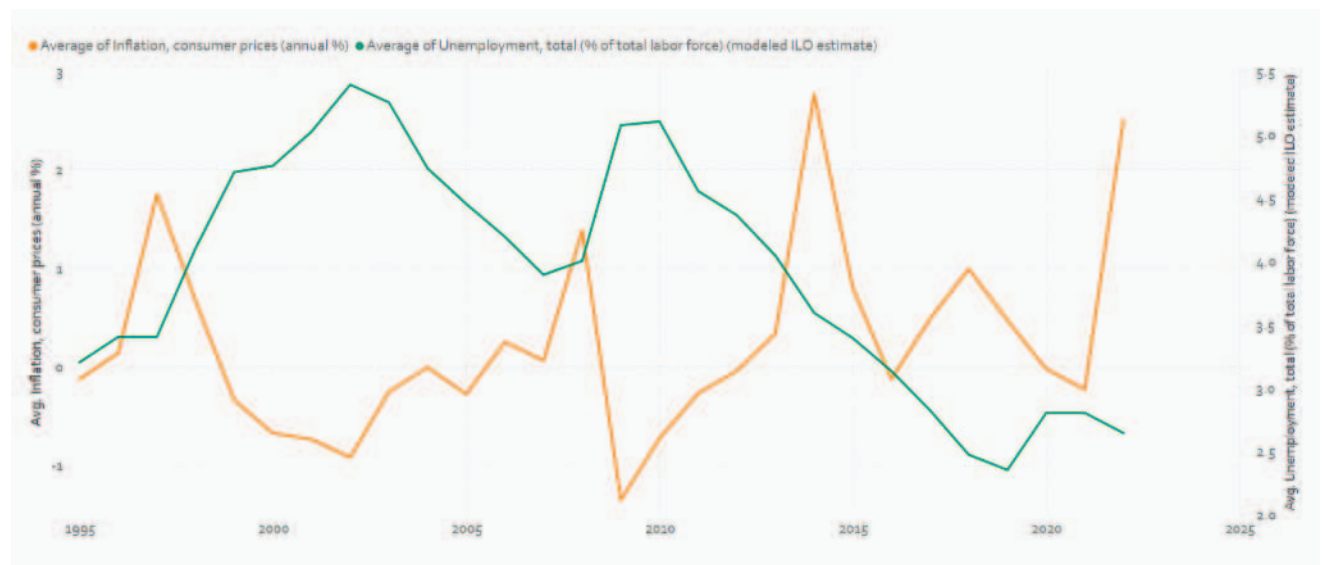


The past decade saw the rise of data as an essential ingredient to sound decision-making. Governments, international organisations, and private companies seek to collect and analyse vast amounts of data to determine their best courses of action. The AJC sees the increasing value of real-world data in supporting governments and businesses in ASEAN and Japan in evidence-based decision-making for policy creation and trade developments. As proof of the AJC’s commitment to becoming a data-driven organisation, in addition to hosting seminars and workshops, it has also published articles and reports throughout the fiscal year that involved the analysis of existing data on the said disciplines.

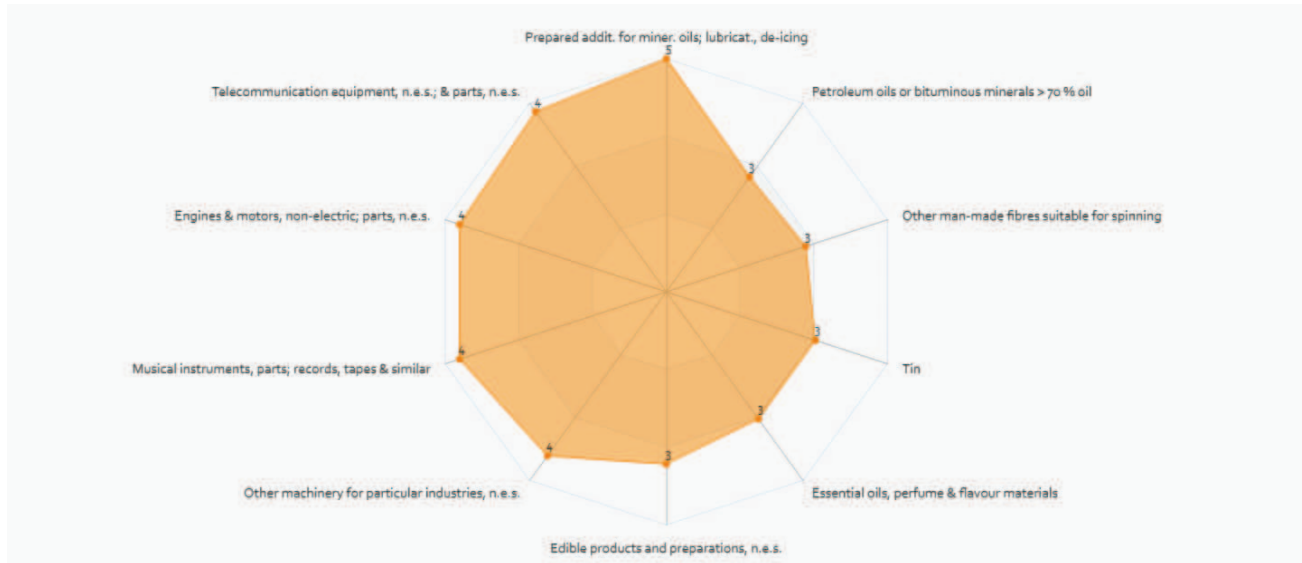
As part of this ongoing initiative, the AJC has utilised existing data on ASEAN and Japan to produce and publish fully functional and interactive dashboards made available on its revamped website last April 2024. The dashboards include key metrics and visualisations about Japan and ASEAN Member States’ basic socioeconomic profile, trade, investment, and tourism. The visualisation tool aims to assist the AJC’s stakeholders—businesses, government agencies, researchers, professors, and students—in understanding real-world data better and possibly contributing to their decision-making.



Population by age group and gender (ASEAN, 2020). Data were obtained from UN World Population Prospects 2024 (population.un.org/wpp/).



Inflation Rate and Unemployment Rate in Japan (1995-2022). Data were obtained from World Development Indicators, 2024 (databank.worldbank.org)



Top 10 Commodities based on Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) Index of Singapore (2022). Data were obtained from UNCTADstat (unctadstat.unctad.org).

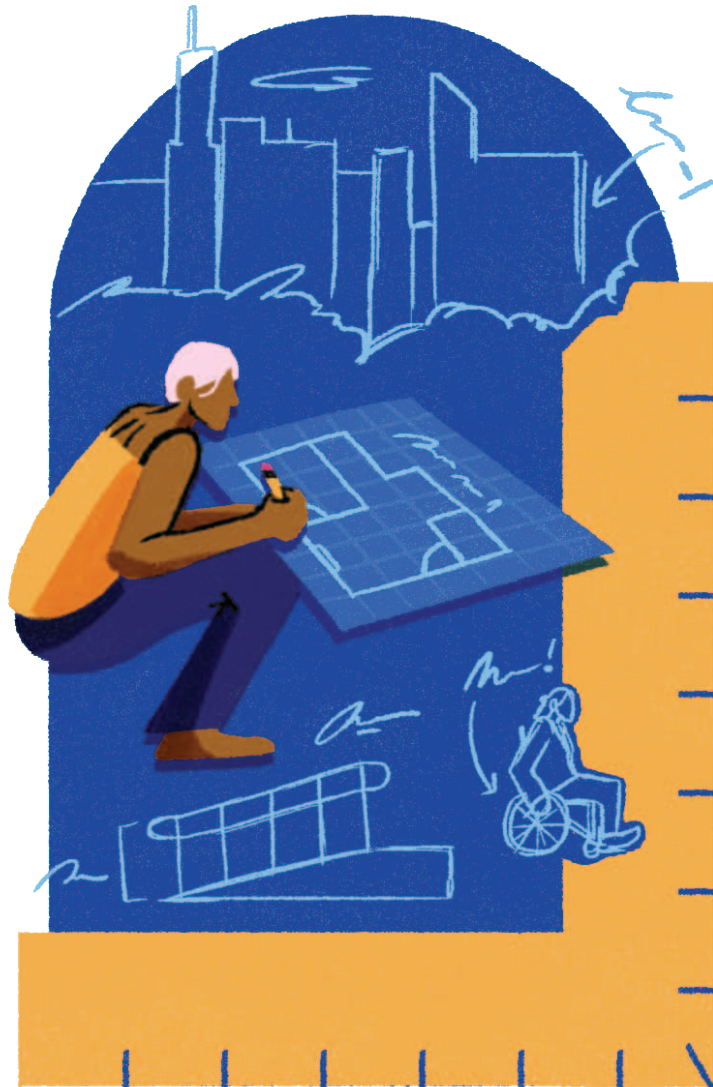
CONT.

With the sheer amount of data publicly available daily, the AJC aims to consistently monitor and update its existing data repositories and reports. In the next fiscal year, the AJC envisions a one-stop database containing key socioeconomic indicators of Japan and the ASEAN Member States. The database shall be updated regularly, depending on data availability. Specifically, the AJC seeks to gather data on the five areas: economy, trade and investment, people and society, technology and environment, and people exchange.

Apart from maintaining and updating the visualisations and data dashboards on the website, the AJC aims to add a function that allows users to customise charts and tables to further reimagine the data according to their specifications. By offering more flexibility, the users can explore the data and discover hidden patterns and insights independently, providing additional knowledge and better utility.

WAY FORWARD

The AJC is currently in the phase of collecting relevant data and developing a more comprehensive database. Once completed, this dataset will be available to the public on the AJC website within the next fiscal year, alongside some preliminary visualisations and an ideal chart-customisation feature. Furthermore, the AJC will welcome feedback and suggestions from users and stakeholders to help improve its services as a reliable source of data for ASEAN-Japan relations. These ongoing plans are part of the AJC’s commitment to data analysis for evidence-based decision-making and as a driving mechanism for developing the ASEAN-Japan region towards a more sustainable future.



STORY OF PROGRESS 5

Supporting ASEAN's Creative Economy

Recognising the pivotal role of the creative economy in ASEAN’s sustainable and inclusive development, the AJC has been actively bolstering and advancing this sector since 2017. Its forward-thinking initiatives, such as partnering with esteemed design institutions in Japan to establish the Good Design Award System in each ASEAN Member State, enhancing the design skills and networks of creative agencies, and conducting various trade promotion activities to boost the recognition and market visibility of ASEAN products, have significantly impacted the creative economy in the region.



Designers and creative policy makers from ASEAN countries and Japan

The AJC seized the opportunity presented by the World Design Assembly 2023 in Tokyo, hosted by the World Design Organization, an event held once every two years. Returning to Japan for the first time in 34 years, the AJC orchestrated a series of impactful activities aimed at empowering ASEAN’s creative economic sectors. The collaborative efforts on the creative economy between ASEAN and Japan have

yielded significant impacts, leading to increased trade and investment opportunities, promotion of design excellence and innovation, and heightened awareness of the design’s role in addressing environmental and societal needs.

SERIES OF IMPACTFUL ACTIVITIES

ASEAN Pavilion

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan relations, the AJC organised the ASEAN Pavilion at the Japan Good Design Award Exhibition. The pavilion showcased 50 innovative products from ASEAN Member States and award-winning products to present the story of the past, present, and future of ASEAN design.

Roundtable Dialogue

The AJC facilitated a productive roundtable dialogue involving policymakers from various AMS and designers. The dialogue focused on promoting the creative economy, fostering trade of innovative products within ASEAN, and encouraging collaboration in initiating design awards within each AMS. The outcome was a heightened interest among AMS in promoting the region’s creative economy and a shared commitment to collaboration.

Participation in World Design Assembly

As one of the supporters, the AJC secured key stakeholders in design communities from ASEAN to participate in the World Design Assembly. This participation aimed to enhance their creative capabilities by updating them on global

design trends, reviewing the role of design in changing society, and learning from leading designers worldwide.

Inspection Tour

An inspection tour was provided for ASEAN designers and policymakers, offering a unique opportunity to witness the tangible impact of design and creativity on society. Participants unanimously expressed that the tour deepened their understanding of the multifaceted nature of design, its capacity to address societal needs, and its role in fostering meaningful connections among people.



The initiatives undertaken this fiscal year under the ASEAN-Japan collaboration have made substantial headway in enhancing the creative economy in the ASEAN region. The efforts to promote design excellence not only address environmental challenges but also reflect the commitment of both ASEAN and Japan towards sustainable development and mutual prosperity. The AJC will continue to build upon the momentum generated by these activities and deepen collaboration in the creative economy for the benefit of ASEAN Member States and Japan.

Sustainable Impact Investment

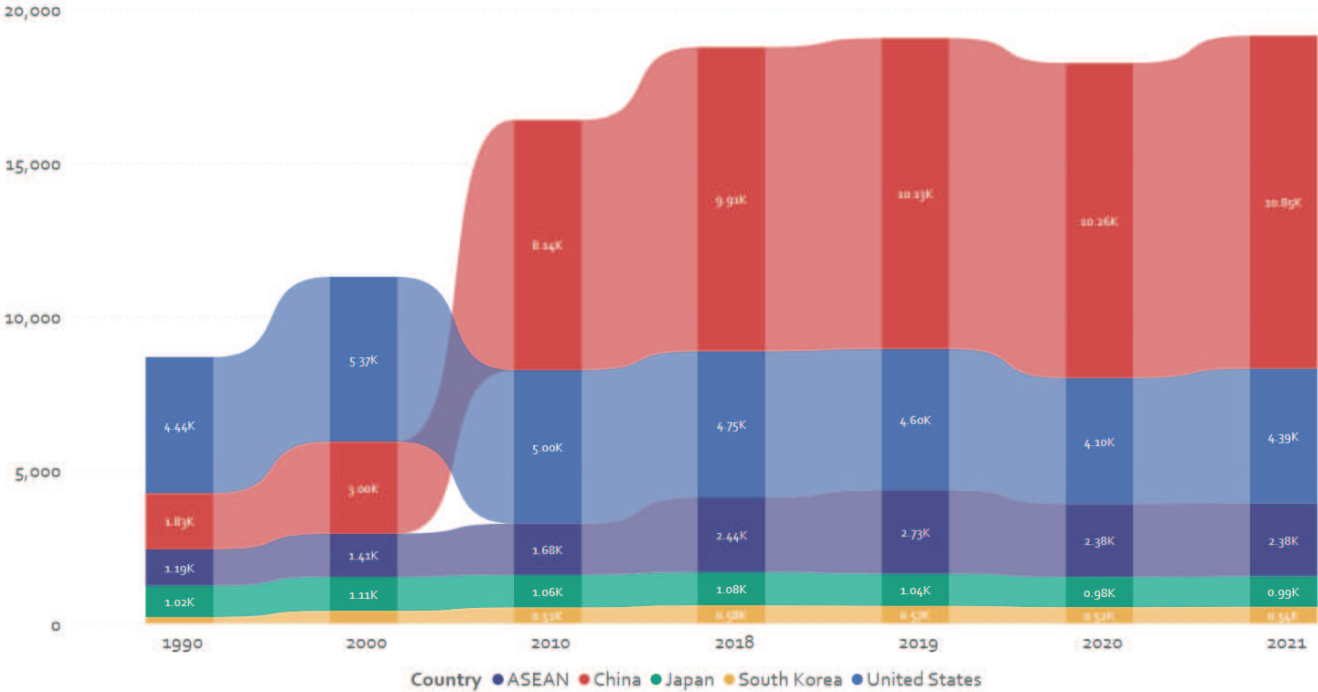
Driving sustainable growth, investing in today's future, where profit meets purpose.



CONTEXT IN DATA

Total CO2 Emissions

SOURCE
ASEAN Statistics Division (data.aseanstats.org)



Following the establishment of climate action as part of the UN Sustainability Development Goals and the 2015 Paris Agreement, the reduction of CO2 emissions has been at the forefront of many environmental policies. ASEAN's emissions have seen a substantial increase from 1,879.36 in 1990 to 3,408.17 in 2021, with a notable peak in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. ASEAN Member States have committed to reducing CO2 emissions as part of their sustainability efforts through policies including carbon pricing and carbon credits. Countries such as Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR, Singapore, and Viet Nam have set respective net zero targets by 2050 while Cambodia, Malaysia, and Thailand aim to achieve carbon neutrality in the same period.

Total CO2 Emissions (million metric tonnes)



STORY OF PROGRESS 6

Advancing Sustainable Impact Investment in ASEAN and Japan

On the frontier of sustainable finance and impact investment, the AJC works as an enabler, collaborating directly with counterparts (investment ministries and agencies in all ASEAN Member States) to promote impact investment through seminars, collaborative workshops, company visits, and research publications. With the recently released ASEAN Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance Version 3 to become a larger priority for ASEAN finance ministries and central banks moving forward, AJC aims to advance this field towards a paradigm shift for a sustainable economic model.

In 2023, the AJC strengthened its regional partnerships and affirmed its resolve to build ecosystems in the impact investment field in ASEAN and Japan. This commitment was evident when, in the same year, the AJC formally joined the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN), Asia’s largest social investment network entity. Additionally, the AJC continued its partnership with the Japanese National Advisory Board of Impact Investment and collaboration with the Global Steering Group (GSG Impact) for research initiatives.

KEY INSIGHTS

AJC as Impact Investment Facilitator

As a facilitator of impact investment, the AJC continues solidifying this role by hosting groundbreaking panel discussions. Notable events included the Ecosystem of ASEAN-Japan Impact Investment at the Nikkei Forum on Frontiers in International Finance: Japan’s Pathway to Prosperity and Harnessing Social Innovation for Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Development



during the ASEAN-Japan Business Week 2023. These panels spotlighted the AJC’s work to a global audience, showcasing the significant growth potential of impact investment in ASEAN.

Propelling Impactful Conversations

The AJC fosters collaboration and dialogue in this dynamic field by catalysing conversations with key stakeholders. In addition to bilateral dialogues to assess the progress and needs of ASEAN impact investment ecosystems, the AJC held a dialogue with ASEAN governments on sustainable and impact investment to explore challenges and opportunities for the field.

Collaborating for Future Impact

The AJC hosted an internal workshop conducted by Dr. Ken Ito of Social Value Japan. The session, which received an 88.2% usefulness rating, emphasised the need for consistent terminology, systemic change through impact investment, and robust impact measurement and management (IMM) standards. As a common understanding of impact investment is still a struggle among ASEAN governments, by fostering a strong understanding within the organisation, the AJC can best support governments and actors in setting up the National Advisory Boards (NABs), which can drive other actors to spur progress.

WAY FORWARD

If impact investing becomes a social norm, the entire industry will move towards sustainability. The AJC strives to continue shaping the field through its research and advocacy efforts. It plans to spotlight potential impact investees in ASEAN that may need more resources or institutional backing to promote themselves to the public, open themselves to foreign investment, and thereby scale. The AJC plans to continue exploring partnerships while spearheading innovative events on impact investment, aiming to initiate connections and utilise its extensive network across ASEAN and Japan.



Economic Pathways through Impact Investing

INTERVIEW WITH

Ms. Fai Wechayachai, Head of Market Development (Asia) of the Global Steering Group of Impact Investment

Fai Wechayachai, Head of Market Development (Asia) of the Global Steering Group of Impact Investment, moderated the AJC-facilitated panel on *The Ecosystem of ASEAN-Japan Impact Investment* at the *Nikkei Forum on the Frontiers in International Finance: Japan's Pathway to Prosperity* on October 24.

The panel highlighted the growing landscape of impact investment in Japan and ASEAN. Panellists discussed the importance of driving more capital towards impact, the movers and shakers in impact investment, current impact initiatives, and ways to support the global movement of impact investing. Ms. Wechayachai led the experts through pathways of collaboration and implementing initiatives to strengthen impact ecosystems in the region.

On making impact investment a norm, Ms. Wechayachai said:

“ **With the current state of the world we're living in, the way to address global challenges we face must be by changing the way we do things. We must have a new sense of urgency and take on an intentional and collective call to action.**

Impact investing can create opportunities for innovation and value creation as ways to unlock new markets by addressing global challenges, such as clean energy, education, or health care.

We must embed the impact element in the core investment strategy, adding impact as the third component to the risk-reward calculus, knowing that, at the end of the day, there will be real lives that will be transformed.

Together, we harness the power of business and finance to create a more inclusive and sustainable form of capitalism.

Ms. Wechayachai asked panellists for their call to action for ASEAN and Japan stakeholders in scaling the development of the impact investment ecosystem.

She concluded the meaningful exchange by saying,

“ **Impact investment is no longer a trend, but a paradigm shift. It needs all of us in this room to transform the capital market into an impact economy.**

 STORY OF PROGRESS 7

Forging Economic Frontiers: Advancing ASEAN- Japan Collaboration through Malaysia and Singapore



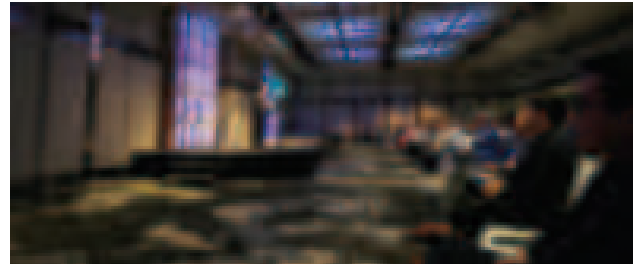
At the heart of the ASEAN-Japan economic cooperation, the central roles of Member States Singapore and Malaysia represent a nexus of transformative partnerships that shape the region's economic landscape. This tripartite relationship, built on a foundation of shared values, economic complementarity, and geopolitical significance, is a cornerstone for regional development and prosperity.

Singapore

Renowned as the gateway to ASEAN, Singapore is leading the regional business, finance, and innovation space. As a dynamic hub for transformative ecosystems, Singapore capitalises on its strategic location to nurture seamless connectivity and drive cross-border trade. The recent EDB Connect 2024 event underscores the potential collaboration between Japan and Singapore. This alliance transcends mere economic growth but marks the dawn of a new era of excellence and prosperity across the ASEAN market, encompassing 670 million individuals. As one of the supporting organisations, the AJC continues to reaffirm its dedication to harnessing Japan's technical expertise and Singapore's strategic vision to set a new global benchmark in economic partnership.



Roundtable Meeting between Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and the Captains of industry in Japan



Secretary-General Hirabayashi delivering the closing remarks at EDB Connect 2024

Malaysia

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia is embarking on a new era of innovation and economic resilience. A recent roundtable discussion in Tokyo highlighted the country's constant commitment to regional integration. The event welcomed esteemed figures, including Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Minister of Investment, Trade, and Industry Tengku Zafrul, and 25 prominent Japanese business leaders. During the event, the Prime Minister outlined Malaysia's National Energy Transition Roadmap and the New Industrial Master Plan 2030, positioning Malaysia as a key player in enhancing regional economic resilience. He shared his vision of ASEAN economic integration as innovative and tech-oriented foreign direct investments, highlighting current and potential collaborations with Japan in various sectors, from decarbonisation to cybersecurity capabilities and 5G mobile communication systems, along with the mutual effort to strengthen ties with the global south.



WAY
FORWARD

As Singapore and Malaysia join hands with Japan, both exemplify the spirit of cooperation and advancement, paving the way for mutual economic growth and opportunities across ASEAN. Together, Singapore and Malaysia set a new benchmark for regional economic collaboration, guiding towards a more interconnected and prosperous future for all.



Forging Economic Frontiers: Advancing ASEAN-Japan Collaboration through Singapore



INTERVIEW WITH

Mr. Fabian Tan, former Regional Director of Northeast Asia and Oceania at Enterprise Singapore

Mr. Fabian Tan, former regional director of Northeast Asia and Oceania at Enterprise Singapore, shared insightful perspectives on the significant progress in the enhancements of the ASEAN-Japan economic collaboration. His experiences underscore Singapore's pivotal role as a gateway to the ASEAN market, highlighting milestones, potential collaborations, and the region's economic integration. Mr. Tan emphasises the importance of establishing robust co-innovation bridges between Singapore, ASEAN, and Japan. These bridges enable Japanese companies to collaborate with ASEAN startups, fostering innovative business models that help them stay competitive against regional giants like China and Korea.

Given Singapore's robust financing ecosystem, diverse talent pool, and advanced digital infrastructure position, the country serves as a critical gateway to the ASEAN market. Mr. Tan stresses the importance of Singapore in connecting Japanese businesses with ASEAN opportunities, giving emphasis to its strategic role in the region. Furthermore, Singapore's global benchmarks in financing, green building, and data centres offer a blueprint for other ASEAN countries.

Discussions on decarbonising data centres and exploring hydrogen-powered alternatives highlight Singapore's leadership in sustainability. These benchmarks serve as models for ASEAN nations striving to enhance their economic frameworks, demonstrating how innovative practices in Singapore can be replicated to foster economic growth and environmental stewardship across the region.

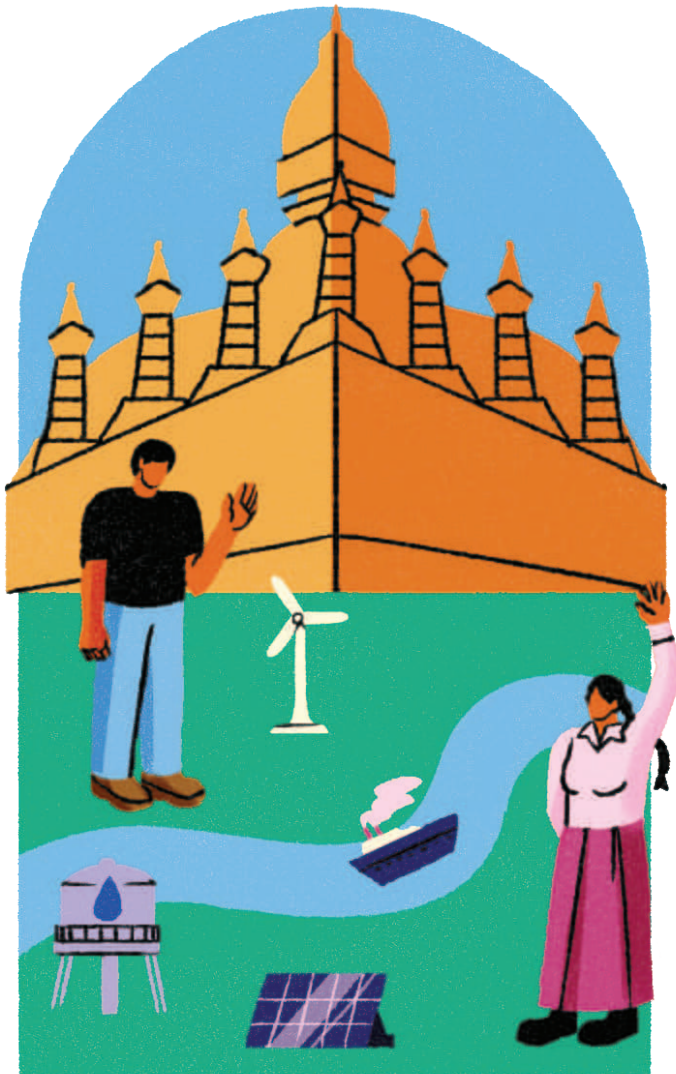


ASEAN Economic Integration

Mr. Tan discussed the future of ASEAN economic integration, envisioning reduced trade barriers and seamless intra-regional travel. Enhanced flight connectivity, especially between secondary cities, and initiatives like the Malaysia-Singapore Special Economic Zone (SEZ) exemplify steps towards deeper integration. Collaborative projects such as R&D in Singapore and manufacturing in Malaysia highlight the practical benefits of regional cooperation.

The 1+1+1=4 Collaboration Model

A key takeaway from Mr. Tan's insights is the '1+1+1=4' collaboration model, which highlights the enhanced value created through joint efforts between Singapore, Japan, and ASEAN. Mr. Tan thanked the ASEAN-Japan Centre for its strong support in working with Singapore to promote deeper collaboration with ASEAN member states and Japan on topics such as co-innovation, green tourism, and rural revitalisation. Mr. Tan encouraged AJC to continue to play a vital role in facilitating this collaboration and contributing to the region's economic discourse.



STORY OF PROGRESS 8

Fostering ASEAN-Japan Dialogue: Championing Lao PDR Chairmanship's Vision for Enhanced Connectivity and Resilience



Meeting with Yokohama Development Authorities, Yokohama Urban Solutions Alliance (YUSA), Fintech



Lao PDR Innovation & Investment Forum, 18 Dec 2024



Distinguished Guests at the Lao PDR Innovation & Investment Forum

To launch the pivotal chairmanship of Lao PDR in 2024, the AJC facilitated the dialogue and cooperation between AMS and Japan under Lao PDR’s chairmanship theme, ASEAN: *Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience*, for regional development and integration. This momentum is further solidified at the Lao PDR Innovation and Investment Forum last December 14 to 19, 2023, co-organised by the AJC, the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) of Lao PDR, and JETRO. The forum also coincided with the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, which celebrated the 50th year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Championed by His Excellency Sonexay Siphandone, the prime minister of Lao PDR, this initiative focuses on sustainable investments in net-zero initiatives and transitions to smart and green energy cities, along with leveraging Japan’s technological leadership and Lao PDR’s strategic geographical advantages and rich natural resources.

Towards Seamless Connectivity and Building Trust to Inspire Growth

Seamless connectivity in Lao PDR takes a leap forward with the development of the ASEAN Plus Supply Chains Link, marking its vision to transform from landlocked to land-linked. Working with Lao PDR ASEAN chairmanship in 2024, the AJC maximises collaborative activities and reception progress.

Discussions with the Japan International Freight Forwarders Association (JIFFA) during the side event of the Lao PDR Innovation and Investment Mission highlighted potential partnerships and explored new strategies in Lao PDR’s logistics systems through digitalisation and standardisation of trade processes. Furthermore, Lao PDR shared valuable insights on its dry port and inland trade facilitation, identifying exciting opportunities for building foundational trust for future growth.

Opportunities in Green Logistics and Supply Chain for Regional Resilience

In the dynamic landscape of ASEAN e-commerce and business, Lao PDR is actively upgrading its connectivity infrastructure. This effort aims to create a faster and more reliable flow of goods and services. During the visit of the smart city development authorities among green development centers in Yokohama, such as the Yokohama Urban Solution Alliance and the Musashino Clean Center, Lao PDR delegates explored investment opportunities from Japan in innovative and green technologies and learned about Yokohama’s Joint Credit Mechanism and potential private partnerships in waste and water treatment and energy-saving. The mission also marks an achievement in greater economic and cultural ties and future collaborations for the upcoming commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lao PDR and Japan in 2025.



Fostering ASEAN-Japan Dialogues



INTERVIEW WITH

Mr. Tee Chee Seng, Executive Director of Savan Pacifica Development Co Ltd, Savannakhet Special Economic Zone in Lao PDR

To understand the transformative impact of ASEAN-Japan Investment Missions on businesses in Lao PDR, the AJC interviewed Mr. Tee Chee Seng, the executive director of Savan Pacifica Development Co. Ltd. and a key figure in the development of the Savannakhet Special Economic Zone. Through this interview, the AJC explored how events organised by the AJC have enabled private companies and government entities to achieve their goals, mainly through investment forums and business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) engagements.



LAO PDR delegates visit Musashino Clean Center



LAO PDR delegates visit Musashino Clean Center

Mr. Tee has attended AJC-organised investment forums for nearly five years. His extensive experience provides valuable insights into these forums' tangible benefits, particularly in fostering impactful engagements that drive business growth. Mr. Tee elaborated on numerous incentives and benefits for Japanese companies relocating their production lines to Lao PDR. He highlighted that Lao PDR benefits from preferential tariffs under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme, significantly lowering investor production costs. These schemes create opportunities to expand exports to key international markets such as the EU and the US. Additionally, Lao PDR's strategic location within ASEAN provides significant logistical advantages, making it an attractive destination for Japanese investors.

CONT.

Quality and Sustainability of Japanese Investment

According to Mr. Tee, Lao PDR prefers Japanese investment due to its high quality and sustainability. He states that with Japan, the member states are ensured of a long-term commitment and a strong focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR). Japanese companies are known for their high standards and sustainable business practices, which align well with Lao PDR's development goals.

The Role of Dialogue in Promoting Business and Investment

According to Mr. Tee, AJC Investment Forums are competent and trusted platforms for creating crucial partnerships between Japanese and Lao PDR businesses. Mr. Tee emphasised that AJC provides a structured environment for dialogue, building the confidence of Japanese companies to invest in Lao PDR. This is achieved by helping Japanese companies understand the investment landscape in Lao PDR and offering insights into local regulations and market conditions. This mutual engagement benefits both Japanese businesses and ASEAN countries, fostering more robust trade and investment relations.

Mr. Tee highlighted the pivotal role of these forums in developing Savan Park. By facilitating B2B and B2G connections, the forums have enabled direct

engagement with Japanese investors and government officials, which helped secure investments, adopt advanced technologies, and improve regulatory practices. Consequently, this alignment with global standards has enhanced operational efficiency, compliance, and the overall business environment in Lao PDR. Dialogue between policymakers and business leaders is crucial for enhancing business, trade, and investment between Japan and Lao PDR. These engagements allow for immediate responses from top leaders, aligning investments with government policies and facilitating faster decision-making processes.

Opportunities in Logistics and Connectivity for Regional Integration

Looking ahead, Mr. Tee suggested that future forums focus on connectivity and logistics companies to better align with government policies and target goals. Enhancing connectivity within ASEAN, such as developing a railway linking Lao PDR with Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam, could further boost regional integration and economic growth.



WAY
FORWARD

The Lao PDR Investment Mission exemplifies the power of dialogue in enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation among ASEAN nations and Japan. By championing themes such as seamless connectivity and resilience, the initiatives foster growth and contribute to a vision of a prosperous and integrated ASEAN community. AJC's pivotal role in these dialogues highlights its enduring commitment to regional development and the cultivation of meaningful partnerships that benefit all stakeholders.



 STORY OF PROGRESS 9

Creative and Sustainable Economy Through Innovation

As part of the commemorative events marking the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, the AJC co-organised the *Creative and Sustainable Economy Through Innovation* with the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Philippine Trade and Investment Center (PTIC) on December 17, 2023.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. and First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos graced the event with their presence, with more than 200 participants in attendance. In his keynote speech, President Marcos highlighted the critical role of the Philippines' creative economy in driving sustainable economic growth. He also extended his gratitude to the AJC for supporting the Philippines. The event showcased the Philippines-Japan collaborative projects, featuring circular economy, textile development, fashion, design services, animation, and game development. The platform also explored indigenous materials and design combined with SDGs-oriented and innovation-based platforms while seeking prospective collaborations with Japan to explore and enhance the commercial potential of the Philippines' products and services in the Japanese market.

Reaffirmation of the Philippines' strategic policy contributions to SDGs

The event reaffirmed the Philippines' strategic policy to contribute to the SDGs through product exhibitions, fashion shows, and speeches by key speakers, all of which attracted widespread media attention. The unique collaborations between Philippine and Japanese food, textile, game development, and animation

highlighted the potential for fostering a creative and sustainable economy aligned with the SDGs. For instance, the fashion show featured contemporary and traditional attires made from indigenous fibres blended with traceable Japanese textiles, including a modern kimono entirely fabricated from banana fibres sourced from the Philippines.

The fusion of Japanese teas, such as matcha and hojicha, with Philippine cacao exemplified the collaborative spirit between the two nations. These examples underscore the innovative and sustainable partnerships forged between the Philippines and Japan.



Behind the scenes

The event's success was significantly bolstered by the tremendous support of First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos. The First Lady actively participated in numerous fashion shows and cultural exhibitions, including the Manila FAME 2023, which showcased design-driven products from the Philippines' home décor and lifestyle sectors. Her dedicated involvement in these events highlighted her commitment to promoting the Philippines' creative economy and played a crucial role in the event's success.



WAY
FORWARD

In 2024, the ASEAN-Japan Centre commits to enhancing and creating more business linkages between the two countries in terms of circular economy and creative economy through more collaborative activities with the Philippine government.



Appreciation Message

FROM

STR Dita Angara-Mathay, Commercial Counselor, Philippine Trade and Investment Center-Tokyo



Contemporary fashion by indigenous material from the Philippines

STR Dita Angara-Mathay, Commercial Counselor at the Philippine Trade and Investment Center in Tokyo, extended her sincerest appreciation to the ASEAN-Japan Centre for supporting the pioneering project, Creative and Sustainable Economy Through Innovation. Held on the fringes of the ASEAN-Japan 50th Year Commemorative Friendship and Cooperation Summit on Sunday, 17th of December, 2023, the event served as a veritable testimony to the Philippines-Japan cooperation in promoting creative industries on a global platform.

By showcasing the unique and successful collaborative works of Philippine and Japanese partners in food, lifestyle, retail, textiles, and game development, the event brought to life ASEAN and Japan's collective vision towards innovation through co-creation. In his speech at the ceremony, President Ferdinand R. Marcos paid tribute to the Philippines and Japan's commitment towards a sustainable, creative, and innovation-driven global economy.

With the continued support and patronage of the ASEAN-Japan Centre, the Philippine Trade and Investment Center-Tokyo will continue to advance its agenda of promoting the creative industry through the strength and talent of its people, ensuring better opportunities and prosperity for both nations.

 STORY OF PROGRESS 10

Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges





Innovative Young Startup Hackathon Winner at Startup Connect as sidelines event of ASEAN Summit

The AJC demonstrates its commitment to enhancing the partnership between ASEAN and Japan by encouraging shared visions and priorities and promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. It endeavours to address common challenges and seize opportunities for mutual growth. In line with this commitment, digitalisation has emerged as the top priority, focusing on inclusive digitalisation to ensure that the benefits of technological advancement are accessible to all segments of society.

In this fiscal year, AJC initiated its first hackathon, the Indo-Pacific Hackathon, nurturing entrepreneurship among the youth in ASEAN and Japan. It provided them a platform to craft, enhance, and spotlight groundbreaking solutions tailored to tackle waste and resource management challenges within their home countries. Beyond the experience, these young innovators were lauded with awards and presented with invaluable opportunities to escalate their business endeavours.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

Hackathon for Environmental Solutions

The programme commenced with a hackathon aimed at harnessing the power of technology and innovation to tackle environmental challenges. Participants from ASEAN Member States and Japan collaborated to develop creative solutions addressing food loss, plastic waste, and resource management.

Startup Connect Event

The four best teams had the opportunity to materialise their ideas at Startup Connect, which was held in Jakarta. The event provided a platform for startups to showcase their innovative solutions and connect with investors and industry stakeholders. It facilitated knowledge exchange and networking opportunities, which are significant to an entrepreneur's growth.



OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The Indo-Pacific Hackathon generated significant outcomes and impact, including empowering the youth and entrepreneurs to leverage technology for environmental sustainability. It promoted cross-border collaboration and knowledge sharing between ASEAN and Japan, creating investment opportunities for startups focused on environmental solutions. Additionally, it strengthened partnerships between the public and private sectors, driving inclusive digitalisation initiatives.



WAY
FORWARD

A little effort towards saving the environment is better than no effort. The Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges programme exemplifies the AJC's commitment to fostering collaboration and innovation for mutual benefit. By harnessing the power of technology and entrepreneurship, the region can address common challenges and create a more sustainable future for ASEAN and Japan. Moving forward, the AJC remains dedicated to advancing inclusive digitalisation initiatives that empower all stakeholders and contribute to the region's prosperity.



Fostering an Environment for Champions of Change to Thrive In

INTERVIEW WITH

Ms. Izza Arnaez, Head of Partnerships of PAMMÉ

PAMMÉ is a brand established under the Indo-Pacific Hackathon: Youth Strives for Circulation hosted by the ASEAN-Japan Centre (AJC). The brand promotes the circular economy model by transforming hard-to-recycle plastic waste into sustainable fashion items, including bags and accessories. This business model earned it the Most Impactful Hack Award because it addresses environmental concerns and impacts the community positively by providing stable income to waste collectors and employing women deprived of liberty.

pammé

In support of its endeavours, PAMMÉ was invited and sponsored to participate in StartUp Connect, an event organised by the AJC in collaboration with Google and various Indonesian partners during the ASEAN Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia. The event presented PAMMÉ with the opportunity to expand its network with fellow MSMEs and industry leaders and leverage the platform to raise brand awareness.

In an interview with Izza Arnaez, Head of Partnerships of PAMMÉ, she recalled her discussions and exchanges with several other individuals and proponents of sustainability as the brand representative to the event from 5th to 6th of September, 2023. She remembered engaging in discussions with BNF Industries Pte. Ltd., a waste recycling company in Singapore and sharing enriching conversations with Tita Ardiati of Mindtera and Arfan Arlanda from Jejakin. Reflecting on the event, Ms. Arnaez felt it provided a rare opportunity for MSMEs to discuss challenges and connect with potential collaborators.

Apart from the insightful discussions, Ms. Arnaez found the session where ASEAN leaders, world figures, and industry experts shared their visions and insights about the future direction of ASEAN to be particularly enjoyable. It was a moment of immense significance as it encouraged her to make her position as a fashion social entrepreneur a more prominent role in society and to continue making a positive impact in the world. From the 7th to the 8th of September 2023, Ms Arnaez had the privilege of engaging with sustainable brands such as SOVLO, Ramahija, and Du Anyam. This experience proved invaluable to her and bolstered her business endeavours.

Ms. Arnaez collaborated closely with the AJC, including Secretary-General Hirabayashi, for which she remains grateful. Their support created an opportunity for her to advance her vision and mission. She particularly appreciated the chance to highlight her work to companies in Jakarta, aligning objectives to foster mutual growth.

Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

Cultivating heart-to-heart connections, celebrating diverse cultures, and embracing responsibility together.



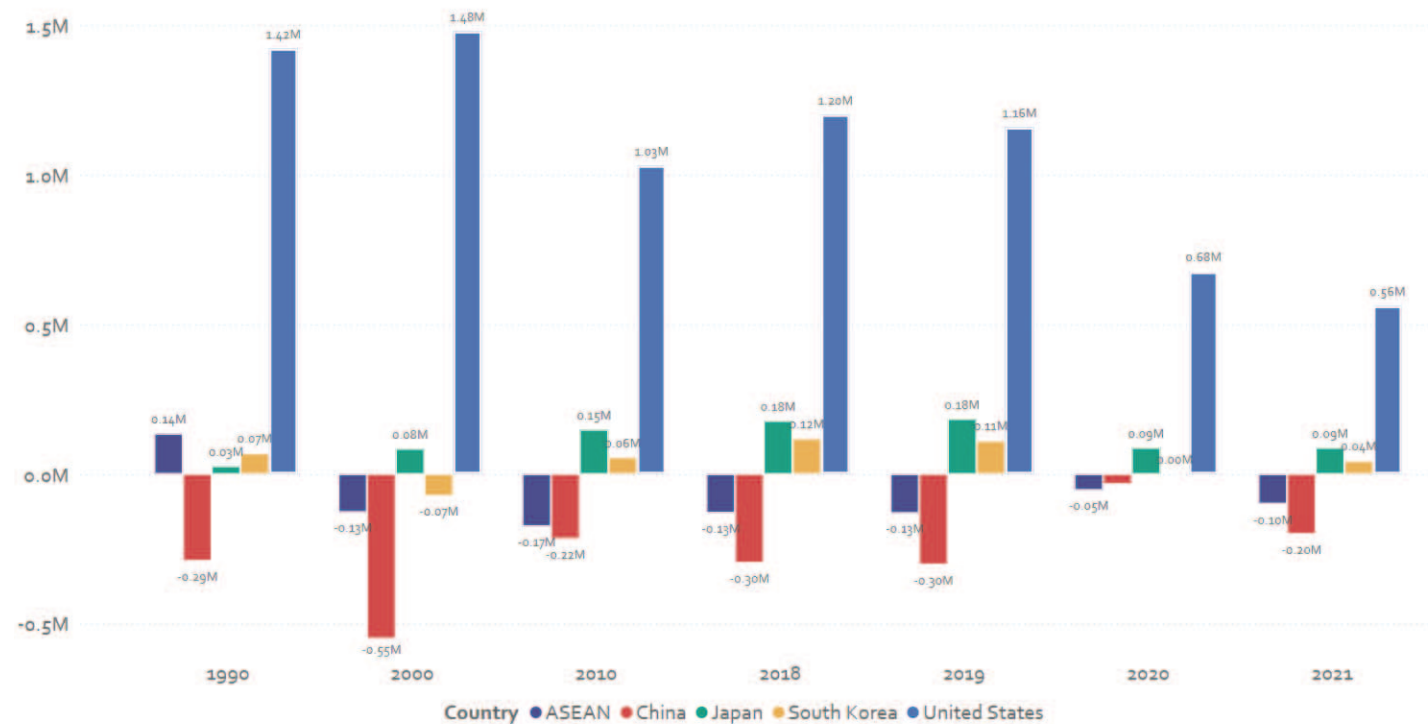
CONTEXT IN DATA

A Glimpse into Net Migration

SOURCE

World Development Indicators, 2024 (databank.worldbank.org)

▲ Net Migration = Number of Immigrants - Number of Emigrants



As the ASEAN region stabilized and experienced economic growth, skilled individuals, partly motivated by increased educational opportunities and economic disparities, began seeking opportunities beyond their home countries. Recognizing this trend, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint, since its adoption in 2015, has prioritized attracting and retaining talent as a key strategy for regional integration. Currently, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand report net migration gains; however, other ASEAN countries face different migration challenges, reflecting the diverse economic and social dynamics within the region.

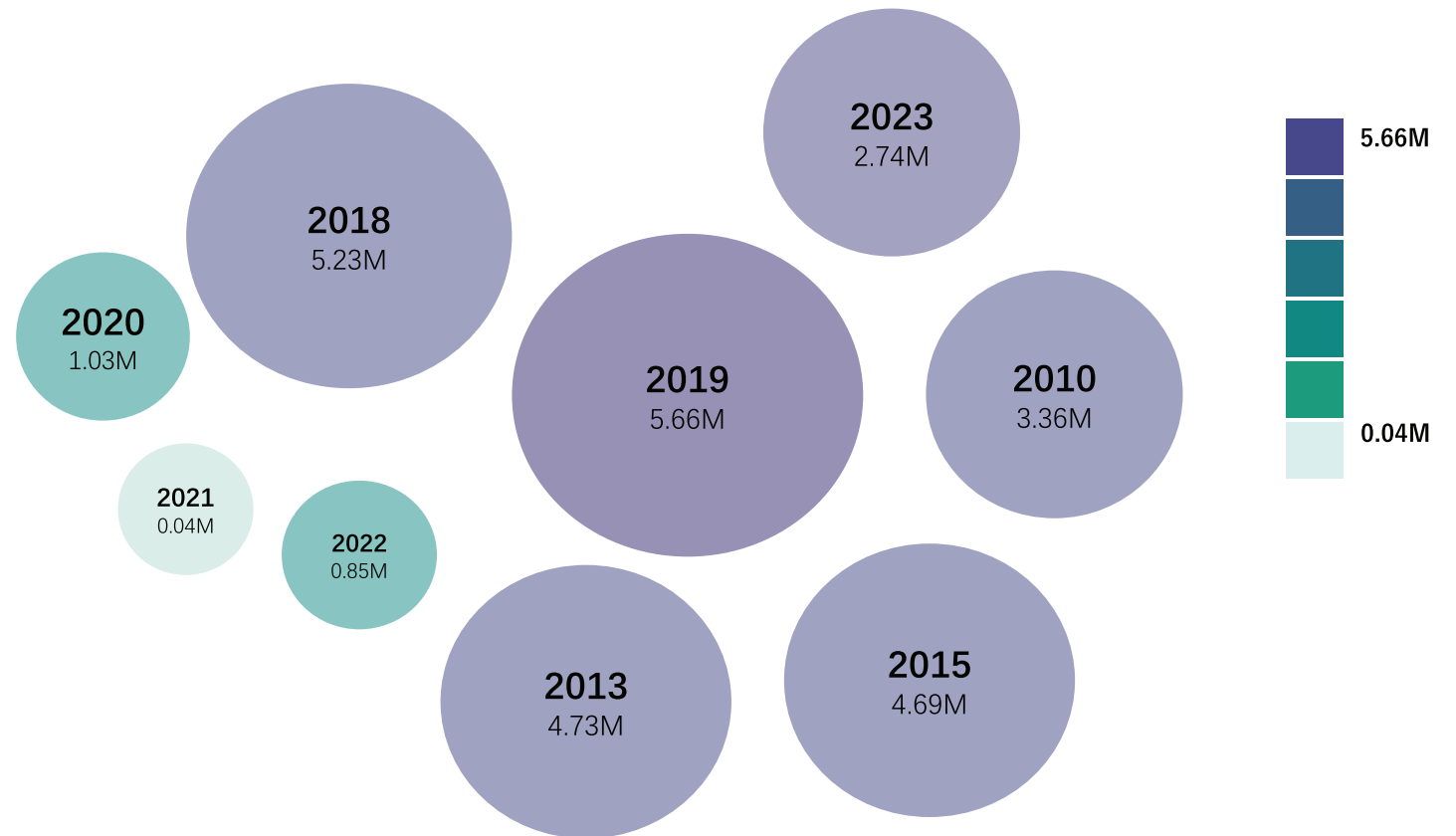
CONTEXT IN DATA

Travelers from Japan to ASEAN countries

SOURCE
data.aseanstats.org

The data shows the number of outbound tourists from Japan to ASEAN countries over the years. Between 2010 and 2022, the number of outbound tourists from Japan to ASEAN countries displayed notable fluctuations.

The pandemic had a substantial impact, with a significant drop to **1,030,408 tourists in 2020** and a nadir of **42,732 in 2021**. In 2022, the number of tourists recovered, reaching **851,345 individuals**.



 STORY OF PROGRESS II

Reflecting on the ASEAN-Japan Tourism Ministers' Special Dialogue





Bilateral meeting between Lao PDR and AJC

On October 28, 2023, ASEAN and Japan's Tourism Ministers, alongside the Secretary General of ASEAN, engaged in the ASEAN-Japan Tourism Ministers' Special Dialogue in Tokyo to chart the path towards sustainable tourism for the next 50 years, commemorating a golden jubilee milestone.

“Sustainable tourism” has become a prevalent term in recent years. UN Tourism defines sustainable tourism as one “that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.” ASEAN identifies five pillars for its sustainable tourism development:

- 1 Sustainable economic growth
- 2 Social inclusiveness employment and poverty reduction
- 3 Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change
- 4 Cultural diversity and heritage
- 5 Mutual understanding and peace



AJC's intervention at the Special Dialogue

The special dialogue recognises the significant potential of tourism and its role in the thriving economy in the region, along with ASEAN-Japan reaffirmation of their commitments to strengthen tourism cooperation. A noteworthy suggestion pushes various sectors and industries to be involved in promoting sustainable tourism. Governments, private operators, and residents at the national and community levels have roles to play and need to understand and cooperate with each other. Furthermore, creating a system that presses travellers to respect the environment, culture, and customs of the place they are visiting is another way to advocate sustainable tourism.

During the discussion, leaders stressed the importance of crafting tourism offerings that conserve natural and cultural resources that benefit local communities and tourists. It emphasised the right direction of developing products enabling travellers to immerse themselves in the authentic experiences of ASEAN and Japan's diverse charm while encouraging visits to lesser-known destinations through innovative marketing initiatives emerged as one of the key strategies. To facilitate these agendas, ministers urged the expansion of mutual tourism exchanges across various sectors and stakeholders. At its intervention, AJC emphasised the importance of promoting exchanges with the younger generation.



AJC is committed to operationalising sustainable tourism, particularly in developing regions in ASEAN, which can create decent jobs and maintain sustainability. The AJC executes this by understanding sustainable tourism from a holistic point of view. Reflecting on the last discussion of tourism leaders, the AJC has started analysing and recording the best practices of ASEAN and Japan's sustainable tourism, which can highlight the best possible way to maintain the long-term viability of sustainable tourism.

 STORY OF PROGRESS 12

AJC Reaffirms Commitment to Sustainable Tourism



The AJC, as a catalyst for ASEAN-Japan partnership and cooperation, has consistently promoted sustainable tourism in ASEAN and Japan. In light of the outcomes of the ASEAN-Japan *Tourism Ministers' Special Dialogue* held in December 2023 in Tokyo, the AJC reaffirms its commitment to sustainable development, focusing on mitigating environmental impacts and enhancing economic and socio-cultural well-being within local communities. These efforts include environmental management, community engagement, women empowerment, building capacity, inclusivity, resilience, and the exchange of best practices for responsible tourism.

Capacity-Building Boosts Sustainable Tourism

Out of its dedication to sustainable tourism, the AJC conducted the comprehensive Digital Skills for Green Tourism Enterprises – Training of Trainers workshop in December 2023 in Hue, Viet Nam. This initiative provided digital skills to trainers supporting green tourism enterprises, driving them towards sustainable practices. Participants included government officials and private sector representatives from ASEAN Member States (AMS) in the tourism industry.



Training Highlights

The training enhanced collaborative efforts with the Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The five-day interactive program combined instructor-led and participant-led sessions alongside case studies, problem-solving exercises, role-play simulations, and group presentations. The immediate feedback indicated that participants felt confident applying the knowledge gained and using digital technology in tourism or mentoring tourism MSMEs in their respective countries.



Engagement of ACC, AJC and AKC during ATF 2024



Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement

The AJC has consistently organised and participated in high-level events focused on strengthening and expanding partnerships with ASEAN tourism ministries and its dialogue partners. These events include ministerial meetings, national tourism organisations meetings, bilateral engagements, conferences, and forums, not only within the ASEAN tourism framework but also in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam) tourism regions.

CONT.



Occasion of ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024

Through this platform, AJC showcased its initiatives in fostering sustainable and responsible tourism, holding bilateral discussions with industry leaders and experts, and exchanging ideas on sustainable tourism development.

By engaging stakeholders at high-level events and increasing regional awareness, the AJC has made substantial progress towards fostering sustainable and inclusive tourism development in ASEAN and Japan.



Reducing Disparities Through Women Empowerment

UNWTO highlights that women constitute 54% of the tourism workforce, yet they often occupy lower-skilled, lower-paid, and frequently informal roles, with fewer opportunities for career development and greater obstacles to entrepreneurship (UN Tourism [UNWTO], n.d.). The AJC acknowledges these issues and plans to launch a project in the upcoming year that enhances digital skills for community women in ASEAN tourism.

Leveraging Industry 4.0 for Sustainable Development

Amidst the rapid rise of the digital transformation era, the AJC acknowledges the potential of digital innovation to elevate travellers' experiences and promote convenience. Furthermore, digital solutions can encourage the exploration of lesser-known tourism destinations and amplify their attractiveness, ultimately stimulating the growth of tourism-related MSMEs and start-ups.

Reference entry:

UN Tourism. (n.d.). Women's empowerment and tourism

<https://www.unwto.org/gender-and-tourism>



STORY OF PROGRESS 13

Promoting Responsible Tourism

Following the lengthy hiatus caused by the pandemic, the travel industry is currently grappling with the challenge of balancing economic recovery with the pursuit of sustainable tourism. The ASEAN region holds a vibrant blend of nature, culture, and history, making it an appealing destination for tourists worldwide who have resumed travelling. Unfortunately, some undesirable aspects of past tourism practices have reemerged as the region opened up to travellers. With the world recognising the importance of preserving our planet, sustainable tourism is becoming a priority, playing a key role in revitalising tourism while protecting the inherent values of these lands.

The ASEAN Member States, abundant in nature and history and frequented by global travellers, are actively adopting eco-friendly initiatives and continuously evolving their distinctive ways. By shifting perspectives and showing empathy towards diverse natural environments, animals, and cultures inherited from the locals who cherish their lands, it's possible to create a positive ripple effect that benefits both travellers and locals.

The AJC takes the lead in exercising this sustainable tourism mindset by inviting Japanese travellers to embark on a journey that mindfully encapsulates the warmth and kindness of ASEAN. One initiative was to launch a special web content, 50 Mindful Travel in ASEAN, commemorating the 50th year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.

This website introduces 50 mindful travel ideas in five categories - learn, play, stay, eat, and buy - promoting care for the environment, history, and culture. These travel ideas also aim to benefit the selected communities with the cooperation of the ten national tourism offices of ASEAN Member States. The list includes traditional dishes enjoyed in a farm-

to-table style, participation in orangutan conservation activities, eco-resorts that utilise solar power and wastewater recycling, and businesses that create local employment. Each is paired with mindful points to explain the concise reasons for selection, making it informative content that aids in understanding the key aspects of sustainable tourism.



TAKE A LOOK

50 Mindful Travel in ASEAN in “Travel in Life” website

The ASEAN-Japan Centre launched a special content “50 Mindful Travel in ASEAN” in a travel website “Travel in Life” to commemorate the 50th years of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.



CONT.

To raise awareness about responsible tourism practices in ASEAN for Japanese consumers, the AJC strengthened the promulgation of this web content by collaborating with a prominent newspaper in Japan and an online travel agent based in ASEAN. The advertorial in the Biz Sta Tokyo supplement newspaper, with 120,000 in circulation, successfully elevated awareness about sustainable tourism and ASEAN tourist destinations. Surveys revealed that 70 out of 100 respondents were interested in sustainable tourism after reading the Mindful Travel in ASEAN article. Another significant act was the advertising campaign on the Agoda website, launched on August 8, 2023, to celebrate the anniversary of ASEAN's establishment. This three-month campaign achieved a total of 2,173,988 impressions and garnered 2,366 clicks. Notably, the campaign influenced 428 hotel bookings in the ASEAN region.



Mindful Travel Ideas by Country and Theme



Occasion of ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024



Utilizing social media for tourism promotion



WAY FORWARD

Responsible tourism is indeed the future of travel. The AJC initiatives have effectively raised Japanese public awareness about responsible tourism practices in ASEAN. These initiatives should continue to reach out to Japanese travellers to foster a mutually respectful relationship between tourists and the tourism industry in ASEAN. This deliberate approach is vital to achieving sustainable tourism.



Fostering Leadership Exchanges and Empowering Young People and Women

By investing in women and the younger generation, we unleash the full potential of more than half the world's population.



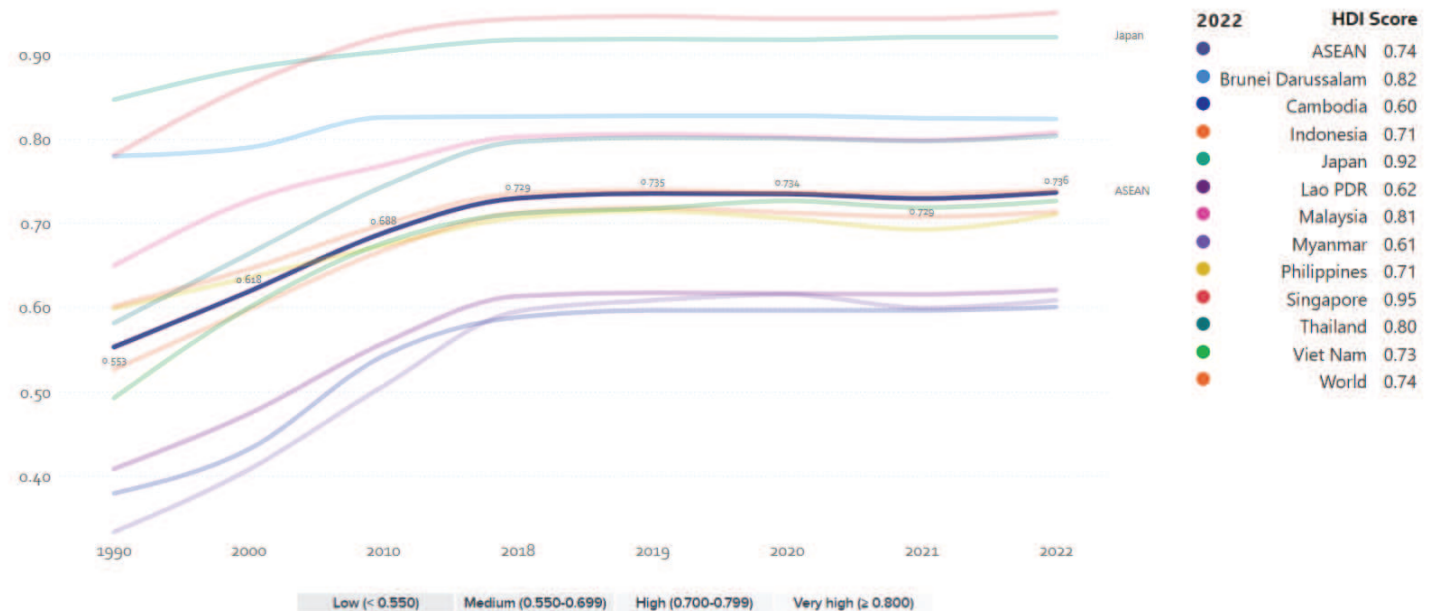
CONTEXT IN DATA

Human Development Index

The Human Development Index (HDI) provides a composite measure of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators. From 1990 to 2022, HDI values for ASEAN countries and selected Asian nations show a general trend of steady improvement.

ASEAN's HDI rose from 0.5525 in 1990 to 0.7359 in 2022, reflecting significant strides in human development. This upward trend highlights the region's commitment to enhancing the quality of life for its people, bridging past challenges, and building a brighter future for the generations to come.

SOURCE
United Nations, 2024 (hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI)



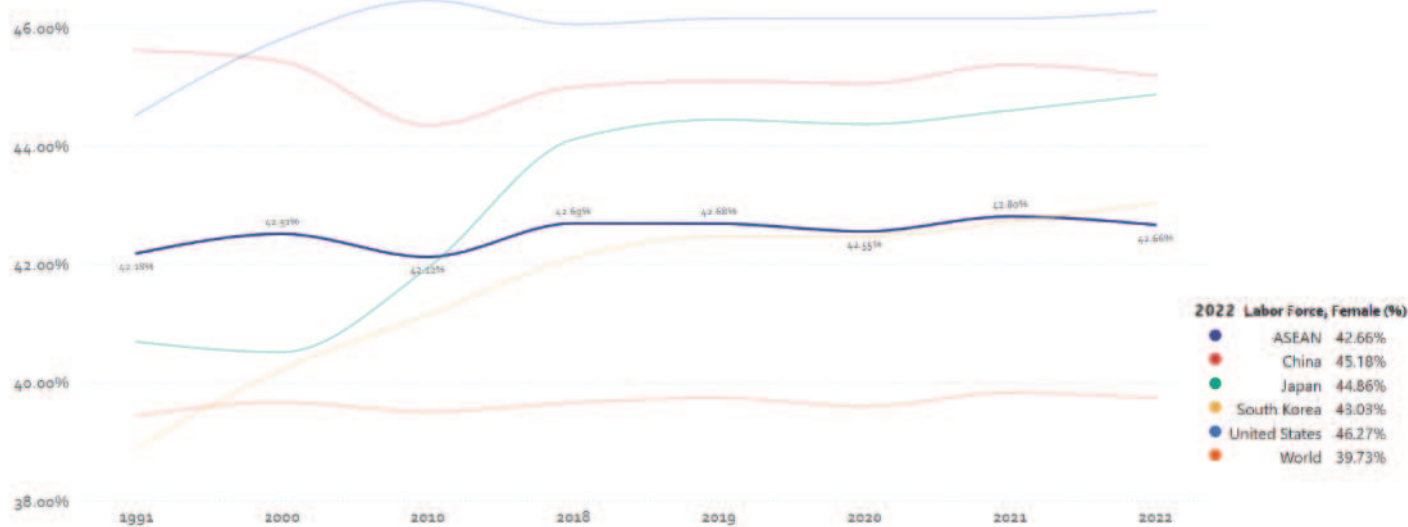
CONTEXT IN DATA

Women in the Labour Force in ASEAN, Japan and the World

SOURCE

World Development Indicators, 2024 (databank.worldbank.org)

▲ Labor Force, Female (% of Total Labor Force) by Country/Region



Women’s economic opportunities are often limited by factors such as unequal access to education, discrimination, and cultural norms. This results in lower labour force participation rates for women than men, restricting their economic independence and societal contributions. Between 1991 and 2022, the women’s share of the total labour force averaged around 42% among ASEAN Member States. While this number is higher than the world average, it is comparatively lower than in countries like the United States, China, and Japan. Enhancing access to education, skills training, and formative projects and initiatives can significantly expand economic possibilities and encourage greater empowerment for women, especially in rural areas.



 STORY OF PROGRESS 14

Youth Engagement and Leadership:
Collaboration with ASEAN Foundation for its Model ASEAN programme (AFAMAM plus Japan 2023)

In November 2023, the ASEAN-Japan Centre hosted the ASEAN Foundation Model ASEAN Meeting Plus Japan (AFMAM plus Japan 2023) at the ASEAN Secretariat headquarters, commemorating the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Aligned with the principles of the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific, the discussions focused on advancing cooperation between ASEAN and Japan.

Model ASEAN plus Japan 2023

Model ASEAN, also known as the ASEAN Foundation Model ASEAN Meeting (AFMAM), is a unique programme designed for ASEAN university students. It offers a hands-on learning experience in ASEAN diplomatic decision-making processes. Through simulations of key ASEAN meetings such as the ASEAN Summit and Minister's Meeting—students take roles as heads of state and high-ranking officials, representing countries other than their own. This practising model allows them to reconsider issues from different perspectives and gain insights into regional cooperation and diplomacy.

In light of the Golden Jubilee of the ASEAN-Japan Partnership, the AJC hosted a special version of AFMAM with ASEAN's dialogue partner, Japan. The selection process concluded with 72 students aged 18 to 25, chosen from over 1,000 applicants from ASEAN countries and Japan. Through 2-day diplomatic role-playing using an actual conference hall where heads of state held their summit meetings, young delegates tackled regional issues such as cybercrime, post-COVID recovery, and youth empowerment in education.

In addition, the programme provided a unique opportunity for delegates to gain insights into how the ASEAN inter-governmental system operates while developing their skills in decision-making, public speaking, communication, team building, and leadership. The delegates drafted the Chairman's statement as the outcome document, emphasising the importance of ASEAN-Japan relations, which they submitted to the ASEAN Secretariat and the Mission of Japan to ASEAN.

H.E. KIYA Masahiko, Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN, expressed his hope that delegates would go on to represent their countries or play significant roles across various sectors in the future. The programme may inspire young participants like Cyril Karl Carandan of the Philippines, who said, *"The programme gave a clearer reason to pursue public service."*

The student delegates from eleven countries are the promising leaders of the next fifty years. They envision the future ASEAN-Japan relationship as one *"marked by deeper heart-to-heart relationships, navigating through challenges, and seizing the opportunities in an ever-changing world,"* with the youth as the main driving force. Their work and dedication give hope to many for a brighter future in ASEAN-Japan relations.



WAY
FORWARD

The AJC continues to recognise the voice of youth and pledges its unwavering commitment to serving the people of ASEAN and Japan. The robust connections and extraordinary experiences of future leaders forged through this programme are bound to make a significant impact, bolstering new bonds between Japan and ASEAN. This commitment ensures a promising future for ASEAN-Japan relations.



Students photos taken during the AFMAM plus Japan 2023





Student Voice on ASEAN Foundation Model ASEAN Meeting

INTERVIEW WITH

Ms. Sakura Haraguchi (Waseda University), a delegate from Japan

It was an incredibly immersive experience to gather with delegates from all ASEAN Member States and Japan at The ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. We spent two intense days in the decision-making process, constructing a statement paper in the Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The council was more than just a debate; it was a process of co-creation, the ASEAN way.

Before joining the program, I expected to gain practical knowledge about ASEAN-Japan relations. Instead, the actual experience focused more on building cross-national networks and enhancing leadership skills, which I gained beyond my expectations. The programme was a vivid representation of ASEAN's mission to achieve greater prosperity for each member state by fostering unity while respecting their unique characteristics. This experience strengthened my personal mission to help unlock ASEAN's potential by raising awareness about the organisation to a broader audience. If ASEAN successfully navigates the challenges as a regional organisation, it can achieve significant goals and further prosperity.

Participating in the AFMAM significantly contributed to developing the skills required for international discussion. Initially, my interest in Southeast Asia felt more like a hobby. Since my teenage years, I have been fascinated by ASEAN, drawn to each member state's unique strengths and charms—qualities that are often underrated or overlooked. However, the AFMAM experience transformed this interest into a deeper appreciation and practical soft skills. The role-play discussions required each delegate to put themselves in the situations of other nations, allowing us to view issues from various angles and develop compassion for others. This experience made me realise that I had been cultivating cross-cultural empathy all along and that I need to continue nurturing this skill throughout my international career.

The aspect of the programme that left the most significant impression on me was co-creating the statement paper with delegates from diverse backgrounds. This process allowed us to view the topic from various perspectives, greatly enriching the discussion. Sharing one table with delegates from each ASEAN member state made me feel that it differed

from a dialogue between ASEAN and Japan. Instead, it felt like Japan was an integral part of the community, which was a new and enlightening experience for me. A particularly memorable moment was when we shared the view that ASEAN is no longer merely a recipient of aid. Instead, ASEAN is a dynamic and rapidly evolving region that offers many benefits and opportunities to Japan. This inclusive approach highlighted the mutual respect and shared goals between ASEAN and Japan, reinforcing the idea of collaboration and unity.

Inspired by the aspirations of youths from across ASEAN, I was genuinely motivated to seek ways to promote ASEAN's potential in Japan. I want to continue promoting the idea that ASEAN is a region where initiatives can take root and unite diverse people. Saying farewell to my fellow delegates on the last day was emotional; however, I am confident our paths will cross again, as the AFMAM delegates all share the same goal despite our different professions. I will encourage young professionals, including myself, to look beyond their national borders and see how their skills can contribute to the broader world.



STORY OF PROGRESS 15

Empowering the Next Generation of Young Environmental Leaders

The ASEAN-Japan Young Environmental Leaders Network (AJYELN) is a transformative initiative of the AJC that is shaping the future of environmental sustainability in the ASEAN region and Japan. This network comprises young regional champions aged 15 to 18, selected from the 10 ASEAN Member States and Japan, committed to combating the plastic pollution crisis.

The AJYELN programme provides these young leaders with hands-on leadership and project management training and opportunities to network with regional peers and institutions. Each team receives seed funding of up to 100,000 JPY to implement its projects, aiming to reduce marine pollution and environmental challenges in their communities.

The programme has already seen remarkable outcomes. For instance, the AJYELN fellows in Cambodia and Indonesia have organised waste-collecting activities, eco-art, and mini-craft events. Participants in Thailand held a vertical garden competition, while Brunei Darussalam saw a beach cleaning campaign. These activities not only addressed environmental issues but also fostered community engagement and awareness.

In Myanmar, the *Say No to Plastic Competition* campaign was organised, while Malaysia launched an awareness campaign for marine pollution. These initiatives highlighted the programme's focus on promoting sustainable practices and raising awareness about environmental issues.



1st AJYELN Symposium Tokyo

The AJYELN programme also emphasises the importance of collaboration and partnership. The ASEAN-Japan Centre acts as a facilitator and enabler, connecting youths with opportunities for growth, learning, and connection. This approach fosters a supportive and collaborative learning environment, empowering the youth to become agents of change.

The programme is not just about addressing current environmental challenges; it's about nurturing a generation of changemakers who can positively impact their community and create a sustainable world. On March 15, the AJC featured the effects of their projects in the first AJYELN Symposium held in Tokyo and online, gathering viewers from various countries in Asia and other regions.



The ASEAN-Japan Centre's AJYELN programme significantly influences environmental sustainability in the ASEAN region and Japan. It underscores the transformative potential of youth-led initiatives and the power of collaboration in addressing environmental challenges. As the programme evolves, it promises to inspire more young leaders to act and make a difference in their communities.



Voices from AJYELN fellows: Future young environmental leaders

The path of a youth environmental leader is not easy. We asked how their experience as an AJYELN fellow has shaped their understanding of what it means to lead others towards an environmental cause and how this can influence their future environmental advocacies and journeys.

CHALLENGES FACED IN MANAGING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Cambodia

During the implementation of our activities, we encountered several challenges. Firstly, the initial date we set for implementation coincided with our national exam, so we had to change the date to ensure we could prioritise our studies. Additionally, we faced rejection from two schools where we initially planned to conduct our activities. However, we overcame this obstacle by choosing another school where one of our team members studied, making the process easier.

Through this experience, we learned valuable lessons about managing and implementing environmental projects. We realised the importance of being flexible and adaptable, as things rarely go according to plan. It is crucial to develop a detailed plan that includes a timeline, budget, resources, and tasks to ensure a smooth implementation.

Malaysia

One of the challenges we encountered was trying to host an educational campaign for our school. We were struggling to find ways to engage our target audience.

Other than that, we also had a little trouble finding the right people to help us implement our project, BeachUp, a machine that filters sand from trash.

We learned that it takes meticulous planning and continuous action to implement and ensure the success of our environmental project. These things, alongside cooperation and respect for time, were very much needed during our project. We learned that teamwork makes the dream work, and without having relatable and committed members, nothing would have been accomplished. AJYELN has truly changed our thinking about these problems by broadening our previously narrow perspectives and encouraging us to research deeper on the root causes.

Viet Nam

Previously, I believed that if everyone had personal awareness of environmental protection, it would lead to a better environment. However, the reality is that many individuals are indifferent to their living environment. Through my participation as a member of AJYELN, I now understand that educational influence on consciousness, particularly starting from a young age, requires creating movements to encourage involvement. Gradually, people will develop consistent awareness.

LESSONS GAINED FROM BEING
A YOUNG ENVIRONMENTAL LEADER
AS AN AJYELN FELLOW

Japan

Our participation as AJYELN fellows has transformed our perspective on youth leadership and environmental issues. We now recognise that everyone, regardless of age, can contribute to solving environmental problems. We also understand the value of collective action and cooperation in creating impactful projects.

Myanmar

AJYELN has provided a new perspective and reflection for Burmese local youth, fueling our passion and fostering maturity. It has enabled us to adapt to a better lifestyle and become conductors for environmental preservation in our school community.

Thailand

Participating as an AJYELN fellow has significantly reshaped my views on youth leadership and environmental issues. In terms of leadership, I have undergone a mindset shift on teamwork and time management. I used to be quite confident working solo, but through AJYELN, I have learned the importance of teamwork and the benefits of having supportive colleagues. It has exposed me to the aspirations of fellow youth from diverse backgrounds. It made me realise that concerted efforts can lead to a more sustainable future for all.



Students participate in a waste recycling workshop in Cambodia



From top to bottom – Left: (1) Students attend a lecture on marine plastic waste in Brunei Darussalam; (2) AJYELN Philippines organize beach cleanup in Davao; (3) AJYELN Indonesia conduct a cleanup drive; (4) Malaysian students participate in a workshop on plastic pollution; (5) AJYELN Japan organizes city cleanup in Hiroshima; (6) students join a plastic recycling activity in Hanoi, Viet Nam.



Advocacy, Communication, Social Mobilization, and Partnership for Change

Empowering all the voices to champion lasting change and progress.

CONTEXT IN DATA

Number of Students from ASEAN in Japan Between 2022 and 2023

Between 2022 and 2023, Japan saw a notable increase in international students from the Southeast Asia region. The number of students from ASEAN countries rose from 69,246 in 2022 to 74,283 in 2023. This modest recovery, despite the pandemic's impact, indicates a strong rebound, with student numbers reaching pre-COVID levels. These numbers are more than mere figures; they represent the weaving together of diverse histories and the laying of foundations for a shared future. Each student's journey is a thread in the larger tapestry of global education, bridging past traditions with future aspirations. As we reflect on this year's progress, we are reminded of the enduring power of education to connect different cultures and build a brighter, more interconnected ASEAN.



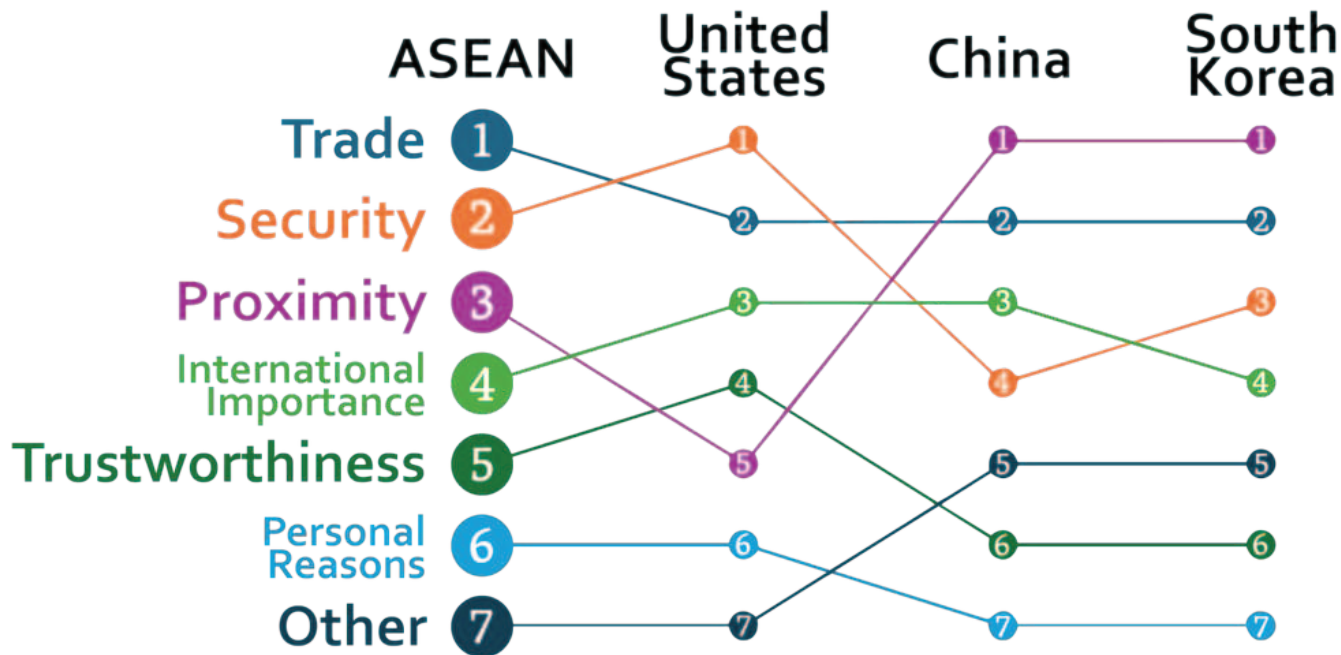
SOURCE
Japan's Ministry of Justice, 2024

CONTEXT IN DATA

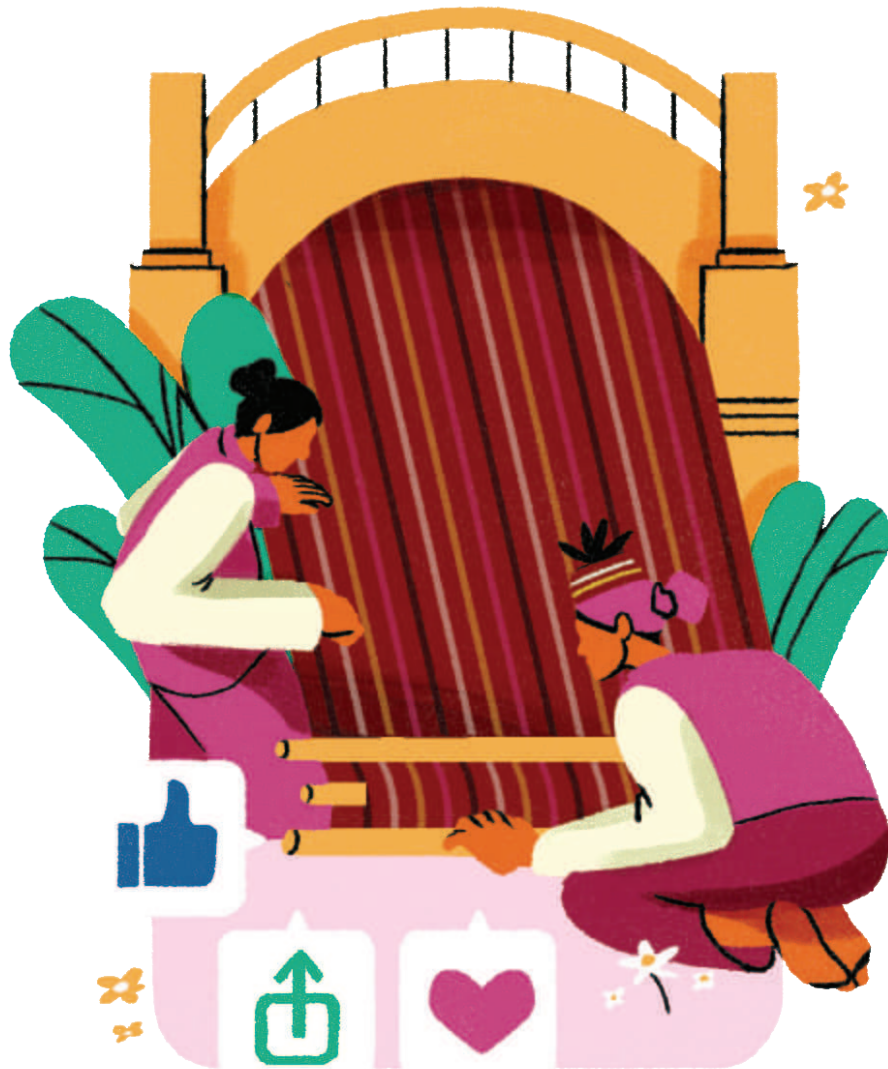
JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION: Reasons for Deepening Ties with Each Country

SOURCE
ASEAN-Japan Centre Public Opinion Survey, March 2024

Why do you think it is better
to deepen ties with each country/region?



ASEAN is viewed by the Japanese public as critically crucial for trade and economic relations, attaining the most votes among all regions. Furthermore, it is considered pivotal in Japan's security, ranking second to the United States. The role of ASEAN in Japan's security was not as high over a decade ago. This graph is a snapshot of history, representing the Japanese population's sentiment about each country's contribution to the global political climate, in which ASEAN holds a significant position.



STORY OF PROGRESS 16

Golden Bridge Short Video Campaign

The AJC celebrated the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation and subsequently released the commemorative video, *Open the Golden Future*, in October 2023. The video was the culmination of the Golden Bridge Short Video Campaign, which ran on the social media platform Instagram from March to June 2023. The campaign invited short videos from the ASEAN Member States and Japan, aiming to foster understanding and friendship through 15-30-second videos while raising awareness of the milestone year. It paved the way for people in the ASEAN-Japan region to redefine, reaffirm, and develop the meaning of the heart-to-heart connection introduced in the Fukuda Doctrine for the next 50 years of ASEAN-Japan relations.

To promote the campaign, ASEAN nationals and Japanese living in Japan were recruited as campaign ambassadors to help spread the information in their local languages through social media. In addition, Japan’s embassies and related government agencies in the ASEAN region and the ASEAN Secretariat

provided much support in promoting the campaign on their social media. In the end, the campaign received about 300 submissions from ASEAN Member States and Japan.

Of all the submitted videos, 29 were selected as winners and featured in the commemorative video, showing the strong bonds and shared values between ASEAN and Japan. Each video told a unique story, expressed differently, but together, they created a harmony full of hope, reminding everyone of the great potential for the people of the region to work together to create a new, bright future (Golden Future) while respecting diversity.

The commemorative video was played at the welcome reception of the ASEAN-Japan Tourism Ministers’ Special Dialogue and the lounge of the venue of the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, both held in Tokyo in 2023. The video, including the summary version, has been viewed more than 100,000 times on social media.

The participants’ voices highlighted the campaign’s impact in broadening perspectives and fostering community engagement. We received statements such as:

“ It made me feel happy that I could create my video to present my country to all people in ASEAN to know and see more of the beautiful things in my country through social media.

“ I also realized that there is a wider community beyond ASEAN which is ASEAN-Japan and as a member of the community this is a great opportunity to be involved in its relationship, build more connections and engage with fellow members.

Members of the panel of judges, H.E. Masahiko Kiya, Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN, and H.E. Haji Shahbudin Haji Musa, Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam to Japan (Chairperson of the ASEAN Tokyo Committee, January-June 2023) lauded the campaign. H.E. Kiya celebrated the successful completion of the campaign, saying it was “a collaborative exchange among ASEAN countries and Japan”, and H.E. Haji Shahbudin congratulated the winners stating:

“ When we look back 20 years down the road, I think you all can be proud that you were part of the celebrations this year.



Golden Bridge Short Video Campaign Online award ceremony



Online award ceremony at the ASEAN-Japan Centre



Winner of the Golden Bridge Short Video Campaign

INTERVIEW WITH

Ms. Mayumi Francine Besorio, Winner of the Golden Bridge Short Video Campaign



The all-expense-paid trip to Japan or any ASEAN country as the main prize is my primary motivation for joining this competition. Second, I knew I had a unique story to tell, so I gave it a shot. Fortunately, joining this short video campaign went smoothly for me.

The story behind my video is inspired by Sadako's tale during our visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. I read her story up close and was intrigued by the Senbazuru. This traditional Japanese belief states that if you finish making 1000 origami or folded paper cranes, whatever you wish will be granted. I have been very fond of Japan since I was a child. It has been my solace and my source of happiness when I was a youth, especially Anime and food.

If only I had known, I would have started creating paper cranes in 2016, which was the time when my hometown, Marawi, experienced a devastating war. I wish for peace and my people and family to be safe. Unknowingly, Japan, my favourite country, would be the answer to that Senbazuru. For all the financial aid they have provided for the rehabilitation and rebuilding of Marawi. Japan, arigatou gozaimasu, thank you so much for all the help through the years. Indeed, wishes and dreams do come true.

It is just heartwarming to think that people who are strangers to you, people who speak very differently to you, people who are foreign to you, are the very people who are very willing to extend a helping heart and hand in crucial times of need.

“As a civil engineering student, I haven't enrolled in any media art communication course, so I have no background. Photography, film, storytelling, and creative writing are my burning passions, so I think that skill came naturally. Of course, with the help of technology and online tutorials, I learned the skill of video editing. The very story I want to tell the world

because that tale is very personal - my experience in my hometown, my takeaway from the siege, my first time in Japan, and my enormous love for the Philippine and Japanese cultures.

My daily experience during my 10-day trip to Japan is memorable and truly one for the books. This is my first solo trip to the country, making it more memorable and remarkable. The end of March is cherry blossom season. However, most of the flowers were still budding when I was there, so looking for the perfect Sakura spot during my travel was the most exciting part of my trip. Seeing that sea of pink Sakura blossoms right before my eyes in Kyoto felt like a dream. It's like time has stopped, making me realise that dreams do come true and that life is beautiful and precious.

More than the Sakura hunting, I also enjoyed my side trip to Mt. Fuji because it showed itself completely. My heart was really ecstatic even though the weather was freezing.

CONT.



Ms. Mayumi Francine Besorio

My hope for future ASEAN-Japan relations is that they continue to deepen and expand across multiple dimensions, fostering mutual benefits and contributing to regional stability and prosperity.

These include strengthening trade and investment ties, enhancing collaboration in the digital economy, innovation, and advanced technologies, and expanding people-to-people connections through educational programs, cultural exchanges, and tourism. Additionally, cooperation on regional security issues, including maritime security, counterterrorism, disaster response, and working together on environmental conservation and sustainable development goals, could strengthen the ASEAN-Japan relationship.

By focusing on these areas, ASEAN and Japan can build a dynamic and forward-looking partnership that benefits their own populations and contributes to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the broader Asia-Pacific region.



STORY OF PROGRESS 17

Enhanced ASEAN Promotion: Raising Awareness through Outreach and Engagement

The AJC has been instrumental in promoting ASEAN and ASEAN-Japan relations through various outreach initiatives that enhance global citizenship and foster mutual understanding. Here are some of the notable achievements from FY 2023:



ASEANPEDIA Exhibition

From April to July, the AJC co-organised the ASEANPEDIA Exhibition at Earthplaza in Kanagawa Prefecture. This exhibition aimed to increase international awareness and promote global citizenship by showcasing the ASEAN region’s rich cultural heritage and contemporary developments. The event drew approximately 6,000 visitors, showing significant public interest and engagement.

Children’s Tour Day at MOFA

On the 2nd and 3rd of August 2023, the AJC participated in the Children’s Tour Day at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), followed by the ASEANPEDIA Exhibition: Welcome to Southeast Asia at the ASEAN-Japan Hall on August 5th and 6th. These events focused on young audiences, engaging around 650 children and adults. These exhibitions helped foster a deeper understanding of ASEAN among younger generations through the interactive displays and educational activities.



World Friends Festa at Sunshine City

The series of ASEANPEDIA events culminated in a three-day exhibition at the World Friends Festa by Sunshine City from November 3 to 5. The event welcomed 600 visitors, further extending the reach and impact of the AJC’s promotional activities. The ASEANPEDIA Panel Exhibition was organised for the first time in the Kansai region in collaboration with Sakai City, Osaka, at their City Hall from January 18 to 31, 2024.

Educational Engagements

The AJC has been proactively engaging with students from Japan and young individuals from ASEAN to underscore the significance of ASEAN-Japan relations for a sustainable future. By the end of FY2023, the AJC welcomed 1,523 participants, nearly double the previous year’s number. The AJC has facilitated interactive sessions highlighting the evolving history of ASEAN-Japan ties, tailoring content and methods to the unique context of each group. Feedback from post-activity surveys revealed that 99% of participants rated the programme as very satisfied or satisfied.

A key observation is that Japanese students have limited knowledge about ASEAN and its member states. In sociology classes in Japanese middle schools where the term ASEAN is introduced, many students mistakenly include countries like China, India, and Japan as member states. Consequently, the educational programmes begin by explaining the purpose of the AJC and the development of ASEAN-Japan relations, referencing the Fukuda Doctrine and Japan’s strategic role in international relations.





CONT.

Performance Metrics and the Way Forward

The effectiveness of these initiatives is evident in the notable participation numbers and positive feedback. The high visitor turnout at exhibitions and the strong engagement in interactive activities highlight the success of the AJC’s outreach efforts.



The feedback from the educational programmes has been overwhelmingly positive. Students have learned the importance of ASEAN-Japan relations, discovered the fascinating aspects of ASEAN, and expressed a desire to visit ASEAN countries in the future. These programmes also encourage students to think for themselves and understand the significance of ASEAN in their lives.

The AJC’s continued efforts in promoting ASEAN and ASEAN-Japan relations through diverse and engaging initiatives highlight its role as a catalyst for cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Moving forward, the AJC aims to build on these successes, expanding its reach and impact to strengthen the bonds between ASEAN and Japan.

 **STORY OF PROGRESS 18**

United for a Brighter Future: Celebrating 50 Years of ASEAN-Japan Collaboration



Over the past 50 years, Japan and ASEAN have built a collaborative relationship and achieved many joint achievements. This long-term cooperation has dramatically deepened the trust and understanding between the two sides. At the ASEAN-Japan Special Commemorative Summit held on December 17, 2023, the AJC had the honour of addressing esteemed leaders of ASEAN and Japan as a guest of Prime Minister Kishida. The AJC delivered a resounding message,

“Alone, we can achieve little; together, we can accomplish so much.”

This sentiment encapsulates the essence of the collaborative journey and the spirit of co-creation that drives shared goals.

The AJC has spent over four decades fostering solid bonds between ASEAN Member States and Japan, engaging in initiatives that span trade, investment, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges. Its efforts align closely with the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific, focusing on critical issues such as marine sustainability, inclusive growth, and transformative digital and green economies.

The AJC emphasises the importance of collective effort. Today’s work benefits not just the current generation but also the ones to come. ASEAN and Japan are building a legacy of harmony and prosperity, ensuring that future generations inherit a world of collaboration and mutual respect.



WAY FORWARD

Moving forward, the AJC is committed to several strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing its collaboration:

Expanding Youth Engagement Programs

Building on the success of marine sustainability initiatives, the AJC plans to expand youth engagement programs to include digital literacy and climate action, empowering the next generation to drive positive change.

Strengthening Sustainable Impact Investments

The AJC will continue to promote sustainable impact investments, focusing on projects that deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits. This includes launching new investment forums and partnerships aimed at fostering social entrepreneurship in the region.

Advancing Digital and Green Economies

The Centre will intensify efforts to support the digital and green economies by providing training, resources, and platforms for innovation. This includes developing digital health and fintech solutions to address regional challenges and enhance economic resilience.

Promoting Inclusive Growth

The Centre will work closely with the Member States to ensure that growth is inclusive and benefits all segments of society. This involves targeted initiatives to bridge the gender digital divide and support women-led MSMEs through research, capacity building, and stakeholder collaboration.

The journey forward is one of unwavering co-creation, transformative innovation, and shared growth. By embracing the spirit of unity, the AJC aims to work with ASEAN and Japan towards a brighter, more inclusive future. Our collective efforts set a precedent for what can be achieved through partnership and mutual respect.

TAKE A LOOK

Read the delivered speech by scanning the QR code.



Timeline for Comparative Advantage (RCA) data from 2012 to 2022

Analysing trade in goods between ASEAN and Japan through Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) data from 2012 to 2022

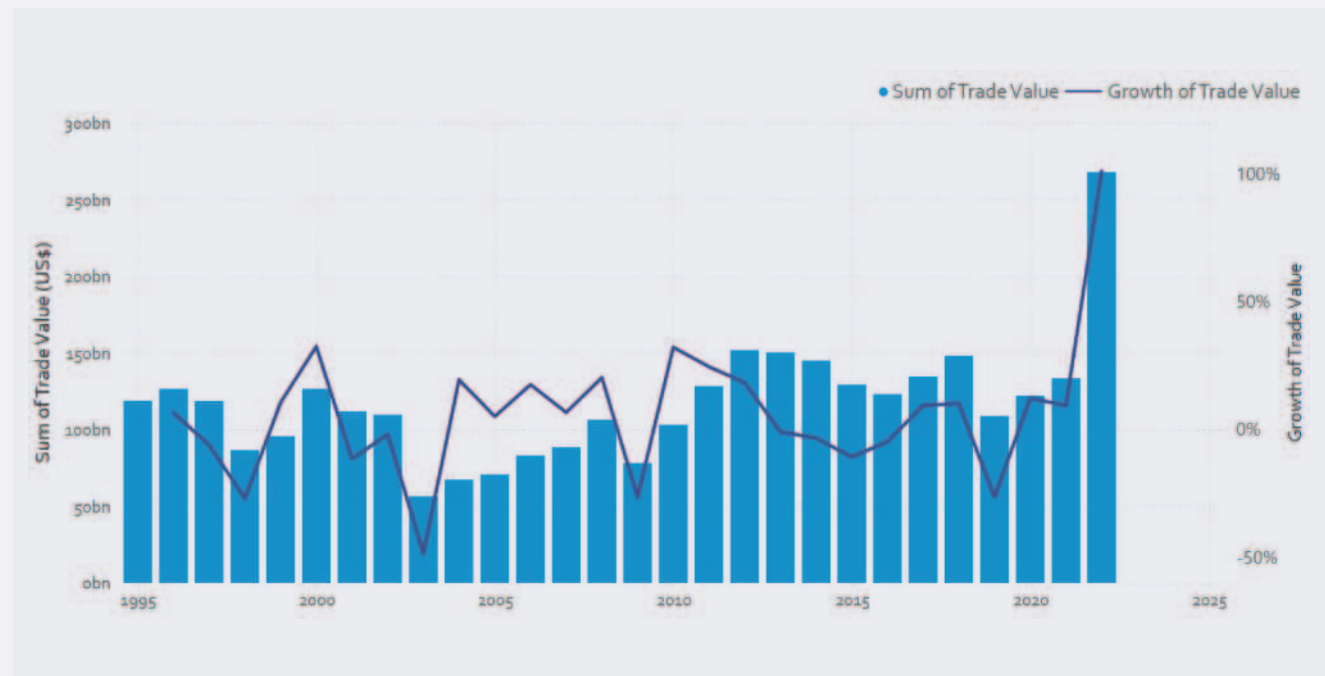
Throughout the years, Japan and ASEAN member states (AMS) have entered into various free trade agreements (FTAs) to increase bilateral and multilateral trade within the region, recently culminating with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2022. The dynamism of the trade relations in the area has been evident in the data on total trade value (exports and imports) and the growth in trade volume (see Figure 1), showing decline and growth trends in trade over the last decade.

Apart from looking into trade volume and growth trends, it is also vital to understand which goods, products, or industries are most widely traded between ASEAN member states and Japan. Countries produce various goods that often compete with other countries in the same or similar set of products. Thus, countries must differentiate their products and strengthen their specialisation capabilities to remain competitive.

Specialisation refers to the concentration of economic resources, such as raw materials, labour, and physical capital, on a narrow range of goods or services. By concentrating their time and resources on a limited set of commodities, countries can increase their

productivity and achieve a comparative advantage in those industries, enabling them to gain a foothold in international trade. In addition, identifying a country’s industry focus characterised by high production efficiency can help attract and divert foreign investments towards these trades, resulting in even higher production, additional job creation, and better trade outcomes.

The Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) index by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is a useful tool that measures a country’s specialisation based on differences in productivity across industries. A high RCA index for a given commodity indicates a high productivity and competitive edge for the member state to produce and export the commodity.



Total Value and Growth in Annual Trade in Goods between ASEAN and Japan, 1995-2022. Data were obtained from UN Comtrade (comtradeplus.un.org).

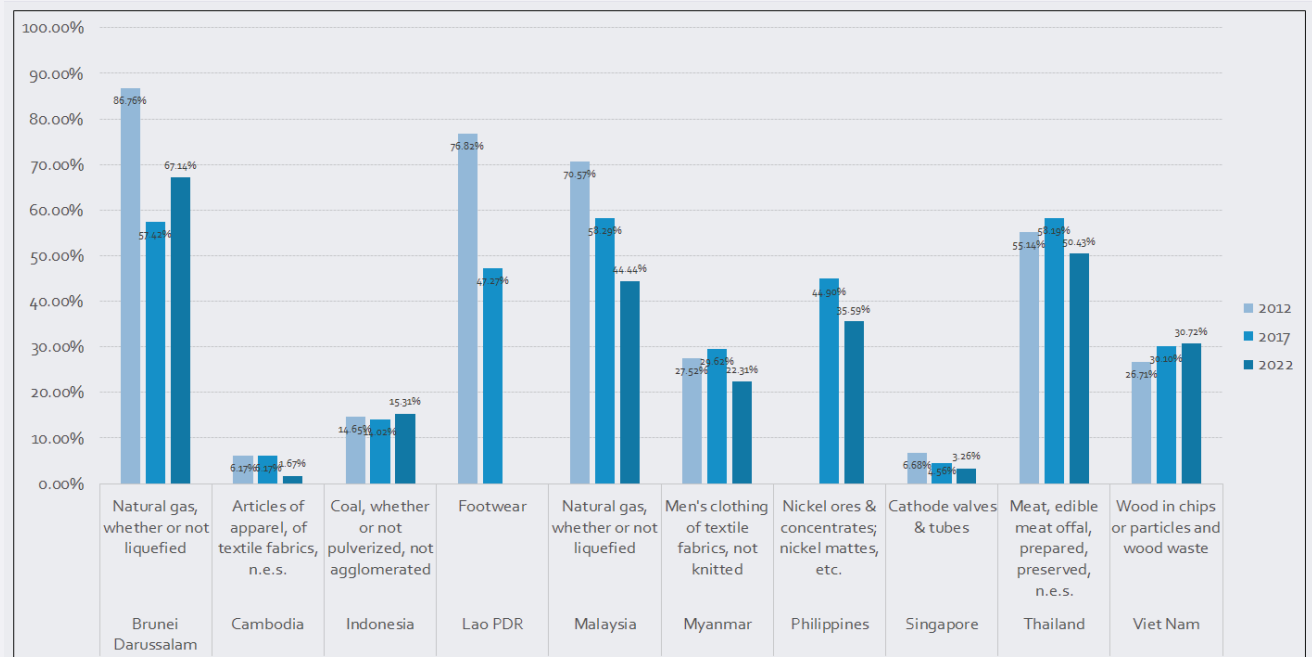
CONT.

Since the index essentially gauges an economy’s capacity to produce a specific good (or industry) relative to all other goods (or industries), it serves as a helpful measure for comparing export possibilities of goods (and industries) produced within the country. However, to give a more accurate picture of the total trade, we compare the RCA index of a product with its actual trade volume between countries.

The chart on the right reveals the commodities that achieved both a high RCA score and total export values of goods to Japan for each AMS for 2012, 2017, and 2022. The columns depict the ratio of the total export value to Japan compared to the total export value to the world.

Based on the chart, Japan was a major trading partner for most ASEAN member states, especially for their most productive and exportable commodities between 2012 and 2022. Japan was the biggest export market for natural gas for both Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, averaging 71.33% and 57.54% from 2012 to 2022, respectively, in terms of the ratio of total export values to Japan and the rest of the world. Meanwhile, Thailand exported more than 50%, in terms of total value, of its meat products to Japan within the same period. Similarly, Japan was a leading destination for footwear, nickel and ore concentrates, and wood-related goods from Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Viet Nam, respectively.

Top Commodities (in terms of RCA Index and Total Export Values to Japan) and the Ratio of Total Export Value to Japan compared to the rest of the world by ASEAN member state, 2012-2022.



Data were obtained from UN Comtrade (comtradeplus.un.org) and UNCTADstat (unctadstat.unctad.org). Data were unavailable for Lao PDR (2022) and the Philippines (2012).

Data were obtained from UN Comtrade (comtradeplus.un.org) and UNCTADstat (unctadstat.unctad.org).

AMS State	Commodity	RCA Index (2000)	Ratio of Exports to Japan to Exports to the World (2000)	RCA Index (2022)	Ratio of Exports to Japan to Exports to the World (2022)
Indonesia*	Coal, whether or not pulverised, not agglomerated	10.80	23.76%	15.90	15.31%
Malaysia	Natural gas, whether or not liquefied	2.90	70.13%	3.90	44.44%
Philippines	Nickel ores & concentrates; nickel mattes, etc.	2.60	83.19%	41.70	35.59%
Thailand	Meat, edible meat offal, prepared, preserved, n.e.s.	5.90	47.73%	13.00	50.43%
Viet Nam	Wood in chips or particles and wood waste	2.50	58.92%	13.40	30.72%

CONT.

With a rapidly changing economic landscape and expeditiously advancing technology, countries must adapt to shifting paradigms to remain globally competitive. This change is concretised through continuous upgrading and upskilling of their respective industries, facilitated by strategic and sustainable investments in physical infrastructure and human capital. Hence, specialisation in other industries is highly possible, introducing exciting effects on trade between Japan and ASEAN in the next couple of years. Nonetheless, if the previous data on ASEAN-Japan trade relations are any indication, Japan will remain a stalwart trade partner and a stark supporter of industrial innovation in the ASEAN region.

Staff Profiles

At ASEAN-Japan Centre, we believe in the power of collaboration and teamwork. Every member of our team plays a vital role in our success, and we operate as a united group rather than a traditional hierarchical structure. In this spirit, we proudly present our team in alphabetical order, reflecting our commitment to equality and mutual respect. Together, we are stronger.



Aya Ono, Ph.D.

Programme Manager,
Research and Policy Advocacy Team

At AJC, we turn our passions into professions. As a team in the Research and Policy Advocacy, 2023 indeed marked us to strengthen our research and advocacy for impact investment between ASEAN and Japan. We continue to drive our message to impact ASEAN and Japan through impact investment.



Aurora Maria Tinio*

Programme Associate,
Research and Policy Advocacy Team*

We believe in the symbiotic relationship of research and advocacy in designing evidence-based programs. From sustainable trade promotions to human resource capacity building, we put the people of ASEAN at the core of what we do.



Bryan Tan Jia Yang

Programme Associate,
Office of the Secretary-General

The opportunity to contribute to the deepening of ASEAN-Japan relations is an incredible privilege. During my time at the ASEAN-Japan Centre, I hope to be able to play my part in elevating this relationship to new heights for the benefit of everyone in the region.

* THE INDIVIDUAL HAS LEFT AND IS NO LONGER AFFILIATED WITH THE ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE



Chairat Liengkajornkiet

Director of Programme Operations in charge of Trade, Investment, Research and Policy Advocacy

ASEAN-Japan relations go beyond economic benefits but are based on mutual trust with “heart-to-heart” connections. While facing complex challenges in society, such as climate change, digitalisation, AI, and so on, we at the AJC have unwaveringly committed to fulfilling our mandates of promoting trade, investment, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges between ASEAN and Japan.



Deborah Danker

Assistant Director of Strategic Country Support Team

In commemoration of this golden anniversary, may we grow stronger and close together albeit difficulties and challenges that come our way. ASEAN and Japan creating a better future together!



Ei Ei Khin

Director of Programme Operations in charge of Tourism, People to People Exchanges and Strategic Country Support

I’m inspired by our unwavering commitment over the past year to celebrating ASEAN-Japan’s 50th anniversary. We remain dedicated to promoting new initiatives and are excited to advance “Sustainable Tourism Best Practices” in the coming year.



Julius Tan Gonzales

Programme Associate,
Office of the Secretary-General

The 21st century hails data as the new currency, which is not only true for big corporations and tech companies. Governments, SMEs, and the public can leverage data to make well-informed decisions. Hence, it is our duty to collect, analyse, and interpret this resource for the future of ASEAN-Japan relations.



Junko Nukiyama

Head of General Affairs and Secretary to
Secretary-General, Office of General Affairs

I am responsible for overseeing general affairs, including human resources. In FY2023, the AJC launched an HR initiative “Recruitment of Program Associate,” designed to attract young talents eager to advance their academic and professional careers in the international arena. We look forward to working with these promising individuals.



Katrina S. Navallo, Ph.D

Programme Manager,
Research and Policy Advocacy Team

Through the Centre’s active engagement in the region, the year 2023 brought us impactful stories of youth environmental activism, and knowledge building innovative and sustainable economies in ASEAN and Japan. We are excited to create more meaningful outcomes from the year ahead.

* THE INDIVIDUAL HAS LEFT AND IS NO LONGER AFFILIATED WITH THE ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE



Kazuhiko Amagai*

Programme Specialist,
Research and Policy Advocacy Team*

I hope the AJC will function as a hub connecting ASEAN and Japan and that this circle will continue to expand.



Kenta Yoshioka

Administrative Assistant,
Office of General Affairs

May the world be full of smiles!



Kunihiko Hirabayashi

Secretary General

The year 2023 was not just a milestone but a cornerstone built by the passion, hope, and dedication of many. In the next 50 years, we must strengthen and expand this foundation. This annual report is a small yet vital step towards that goal.



Mitsuo Watanabe

**Programme Coordinator,
Tourism and Exchange Team**

The ASEAN-Japan relationship is of fundamental importance to all. I believe in the possibility of mutual understanding and dedicate myself to contributing to its development—building a better tomorrow together for all!



Naoko Fujikawa

**Senior Programme Manager and Officer-in-Charge
of the Head of Tourism and Exchange Team**

Beyond the ASEAN-Japan’s 50th anniversary, I hope our relationship in the next 50 years will be a stronger one, based on trust.



Navalta Razel Andrea Dizon

**Programme Associate,
Strategic Country Support Team**

Our mission is to uplift every community in our region. By channelling sustainable investments into the most underserved areas, we ensure equitable progress and dignified development for every individual. As a platform for dialogue, we strive to amplify unheard voices in creating a resilient, hopeful future where no one is left behind.



Olaphai Boutthavong

Part-time Student and Receptionist

We are unity!



Matsumi Oyama

Accounting Officer, National Activity Coordinator,
Office of General Affairs

Let's join hands for a prosperous future for ASEAN!



Phutsakhon Sengmaniphon

Assistant Director,
Bilateral Programme Team

Strengthening mutual trust and understanding of each other's business communities between ASEAN and Japan creates a long-term business partnership and contributes to the relationship between the two regions in the trade and investment areas.



Preechaya Kittipaisalsilpa, Ph.D.

Programme Associate, Office of the Secretary-General and Bilateral Programme Team

The ASEAN Community is akin to a circle of ten friends, diverse yet united. With Japan as a trusted partner and heart-to-heart connection, we embrace shared histories, strengthen present bonds, and envision a brighter future together. In this journey, I place great hope in nurturing the hearts of our peoples as a key step toward fostering a long-lasting relationship between ASEAN and Japan.



Reiko Nagaoka

Programme Specialist, Tourism and Exchange Team

ASEAN offers a variety of authentic travel destinations, catering to all travellers, no matter their agenda or objectives.



Yoshimi Sakai

Lead Accounting and Finance Officer, Office of General Affairs

Although what I do is not directly related to promotion, I hope my work could contribute to building the bridge between the ASEAN Member States and Japan.

* THE INDIVIDUAL HAS LEFT AND IS NO LONGER AFFILIATED WITH THE ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE



Sakura Haraguchi*

Intern,
Tourism and Exchange Team

Let's continue to discover and appreciate the unique charms of the diverse culture of the ASEAN Member States and Japan, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration for a brighter future together!



Seng Vouchleang

Part-time Student and Receptionist

As the receptionist, I am honoured to support our organisation's mission. Welcoming visitors and assisting them in our library has been a rewarding experience. I look forward to continuing to provide excellent service and contribute to AJC's growth and success in the coming year.



Takeko Ito

Programme Specialist,
Bilateral Programme Team

Let's keep an eye on the significant progress of ASEAN's creative industries.



Tomoko Miyauchi

Lead Public Communication Officer,
Office of the Secretary-General

The Golden Bridge Short Video campaign for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation was the most challenging, yet most fun and rewarding campaign I have ever worked on!



Tomoko Onuki

Programme Manager,
Bilateral Programme Team

Looking forward to a bright and joyful future for ASEAN and Japan.



Tomomi Morisaku*

Assistant to Tourism and Exchange Team

I believe the propagation of food, traditions, and culture, which are the foundation of people’s health, through tourism is very important for an inclusive society. The experience of contributing to the tourism industry to raise awareness of ASEAN as a partner of Japan was a great learning opportunity.

* THE INDIVIDUAL HAS LEFT AND IS NO LONGER AFFILIATED WITH THE ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE



Tuan Anh Nguyen, Ph.D.

Programme Coordinator,
Strategic Country Support Team

Together, we bridged gaps and strengthened relationships, using creativity and digitalisation opportunities for a brighter, sustainable, and inclusive future. Looking forward to continuing this journey with you all!



Yaly Sou

Part-time Student and Receptionist

Together, we pave the path toward mutual prosperity and understanding across borders. Let our shared efforts at the ASEAN-Japan Center inspire and illuminate our journey ahead.



Yasushi Ishida

Assistant Director,
Research and Policy Advocacy Team

ASEAN's inclusive trade and investment framework fosters economic growth and regional cooperation. The region offers a welcoming environment for businesses and ensures diverse market access and robust economic opportunities, making ASEAN a prime destination for global investors. We will do our best for the people of ASEAN and Japan.



Yuka Kubota, Ph.D
Senior Executive Officer,
Office of the Secretary-General

As we commemorated the ASEAN-Japan 2023 milestone, we celebrated our enduring partnership and shared progress. Together, we have advanced regional cooperation, economic growth, and cultural exchange. Let us continue fostering strong bonds and mutual prosperity for a brighter future. Thank you for your unwavering support and collaboration.



Yukashi Oki
Information Systems Officer and Assistant to
General Affairs, Office of General Affairs

Let us work towards closer cooperation between ASEAN and Japan

**FY2023
FINAL PROGRESS REPORT**



**FY2023
NATIONAL ACTIVITIES**



**FY2023
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**







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