

ASEAN, Japan to take partnership to new heights

Written by Administrator

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TOKYO, 27 June 2016 – Senior officials from ASEAN and Japan met in Tokyo on 24 June for the 31st ASEAN-Japan Forum and agreed to take the partnership to new heights by strengthening cooperation in the face of new developments in the region. The forum, co-chaired by Brunei Darussalam and Japan, took stock of the progress in ASEAN-Japan relations particularly after the adoption of the Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation and its implementation plan. These documents were adopted by the Leaders at the ASEAN-Japan Summit to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Dialogue Relations in December 2013.

Much progress has been made under the four pillars of partnership, which are Partners for Peace and Stability, Partners for Prosperity, Partners for Quality of Life and Heart-to-Heart Partners. However, the forum noted the need to update the Implementation Plan to reflect latest developments. The revised plan would take into account the ASEAN Vision 2025, which was adopted at the ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015, and Japan's initiatives to support ASEAN integration.

The senior officials had an exchange of views on regional and international issues of common concerns and agreed to work together to address security challenges and promote peace and stability in the region. In their discussions on the challenges posed by non-traditional security issues such as terrorism and violent extremism, cybercrime, and trafficking in persons, the senior officials shared their common concerns and explored ways to address these threats.

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The forum also highlighted the progress in the economic field despite the current unfavorable global economic situation. Japan remains ASEAN's third largest trading partner and second biggest source of foreign direct investment. ASEAN and Japan are also currently finalising the Investment Chapters of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement that will serve as a tool to deepen economic integration between the two sides.

Both sides recognised the need to establish broad cooperation to enhance quality of life in the areas of disaster management, women's empowerment, climate change, and healthcare. ASEAN and Japan also reiterated the significance of people-to-people contact to grow mutual understanding through various exchanges under the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange Students and Sports for Tomorrow.

The forum took note of the need to reform the 35-year-old ASEAN-Japan Centre, considered as the symbol of the long-standing relationship between ASEAN and Japan, to enhance its effectiveness in promoting the ASEAN-Japan strategic partnership.

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