

HIGHLIGHTING
Japan

VOL.
186
NOVEMBER
2023



26TH ASEAN – JAPAN SUMMIT

JAPAN'S INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
FOR ASEAN: PAST AND FUTURE

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Japan's International Cooperation for ASEAN: Past and Future

This year, 2023, marks the 50th anniversary of Japan-ASEAN Friendship and Cooperation. The 50th anniversary catchphrase is "Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities." In this month's issue of *Highlighting Japan*, we feature the 50-year history and introduce some leading examples of the many international cooperation projects that have been or are being implemented by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and have built the foundation for today's friendly Japan-ASEAN relationship, along with a look at prospects for the future.



Photo: ASEAN Official

ON THE COVER: The 26th ASEAN-Japan Summit was held in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia (September 6, 2023)

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Official logo for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

The year 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation. In celebration of this milestone year, the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit will be held in Tokyo from December 16 to 18. Back in 1973, Japan became the first country in the world to establish dialogue relations with ASEAN. Ever since, Japan has continued to build and strengthen its friendship and cooperation with ASEAN in a wide range of areas. Here, we will review the history of ASEAN-Japan friendly relations and cooperation as well as the various exchanges that have occurred over the past half century. We will also highlight the initiatives undertaken in the milestone year of 2023.

Outline of ASEAN

ASEAN is an abbreviation for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It was established in August 1967 for the purpose of promoting peace and economic growth in the region. Amid the changes in the political and economic structure of Asia that arose in the 1990s, ASEAN served to strengthen intra-regional economic cooperation, including the signing of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) in 1992. In 2007, “The ASEAN Charter” (effective December 2008) was passed, reaffirming ASEAN principles such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, peaceful

resolution of disputes, and non-interference in internal affairs, and looking toward the establishment of an ASEAN Community. Subsequently, at the 2015 Summit, ASEAN adopted the “ASEAN Community Vision 2025 (2025 Vision)” to further deepen ASEAN’s integration by declaring the establishment of the ASEAN Community consisting of a Political-Security Community, an Economic Community, and a Socio-Cultural Community. Consultations are currently under way within ASEAN on the formulation of a Post-2025 Vision.



The 26th ASEAN-Japan Summit was held in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia (September 6, 2023)

Photo: ASEAN Official

History of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation

The relationship between Japan and ASEAN as a whole goes back to 1973 when Japan and ASEAN agreed to establish a forum to discuss Japan's export of synthetic rubber. ASEAN countries, many of which were natural rubber exporters at the time, were concerned about losing their market to Japanese synthetic rubber. Japan sincerely listened to the voices of ASEAN countries and agreed to provide technical cooperation to ASEAN countries. The result of trade negotiations between ASEAN and Japan was also a success story for ASEAN in its early years.

Since then, over the past 50 years, Japan and ASEAN have worked closely together not only on economic issues, but more broadly, as well, for the sake of peace, stability, development, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. In 1977, the first ASEAN-Japan Summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with Prime Minister of Japan Fukuda Takeo in attendance. Immediately after the Summit, Prime Minister Fukuda visited the Philippines and announced the principles of Japan's ASEAN diplomacy, which later would become known as the "the Fukuda Doctrine."¹ These principles have become the foundation of ASEAN-Japan friendship, and Japan has solidified its position as one of ASEAN's most important dialogue partners.

In 2013, which marked the 40th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation, Prime Minister of Japan Abe Shinzo announced the Five Principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy (see attached material). At the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit held in Tokyo in December of the same year, the leaders of ASEAN and Japan adopted the "Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation" and the related Implementation Plan. They declared that Japan and ASEAN Member States would

promote cooperation based on four pillars: Partners for Peace and Stability, Partners for Prosperity, Partners for Quality of Life, and Heart-to-Heart Partners.

Official Logo and Catchphrase for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

The design of the logo created for the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation in 2023 features a bundle of ten rice stalks representing the ASEAN member countries, wrapped like a Mobius ribbon around the rising sun as a symbol of the commitment to ensure that the friendship built by Japan and ASEAN will continue for many years to come. The blue waves at the bottom of the design represent the ocean that connects Japan and the countries of Southeast Asia, expressing the hope that all countries will enjoy the benefits of the bountiful ocean together and thus forge relations of friendship.

The 50th anniversary catchphrase, "Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities," expresses the hope that Japan and ASEAN, which have nurtured their friendship and forged strong ties through productive and cooperative relations over the past 50 years, will have opportunities to shine again in the next 50 years as their economies recover from the pandemic and move forward.

Initiatives in 2023

In 2023, Commemorative Symposiums for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation were held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in February, and in Tokyo in March. In addition, private-sector organizations and government agencies conducted numerous events and projects to commemorate the 50th anniversary, including the ASEAN-Japan Business Week in June, the ASEAN-Japan Special Meeting of Justice Ministers in July, and the ASEAN-Japan

Tourism Ministers' Special Dialogue in October.

To conclude the 50th anniversary year, Tokyo will host the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation from December 16 to 18, 2023.

Earlier, in March, Prime Minister of Japan Kishida Fumio announced a New Plan for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)”, clearly positioning Southeast Asia as an important region. He also declared that Japan will make a new contribution of 100 million US dollars to the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). In addition, at the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF), a side event of the ASEAN-Japan Summit held in Jakarta in September, Prime Minister Kishida announced the “Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative”. Under this initiative, Japan has indicated its intention to cooperate to

strengthen connectivity in a wide range of areas, including transportation infrastructure, digital connectivity, maritime cooperation, supply chains, electricity connectivity, and human and knowledge connectivity. At the Commemorative Summit to be held in December, Japan and ASEAN will jointly set out a vision for the broad direction of future ASEAN-Japan relations and cooperation.

Note: This article was created using publicly available materials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and with MOFA's consent.

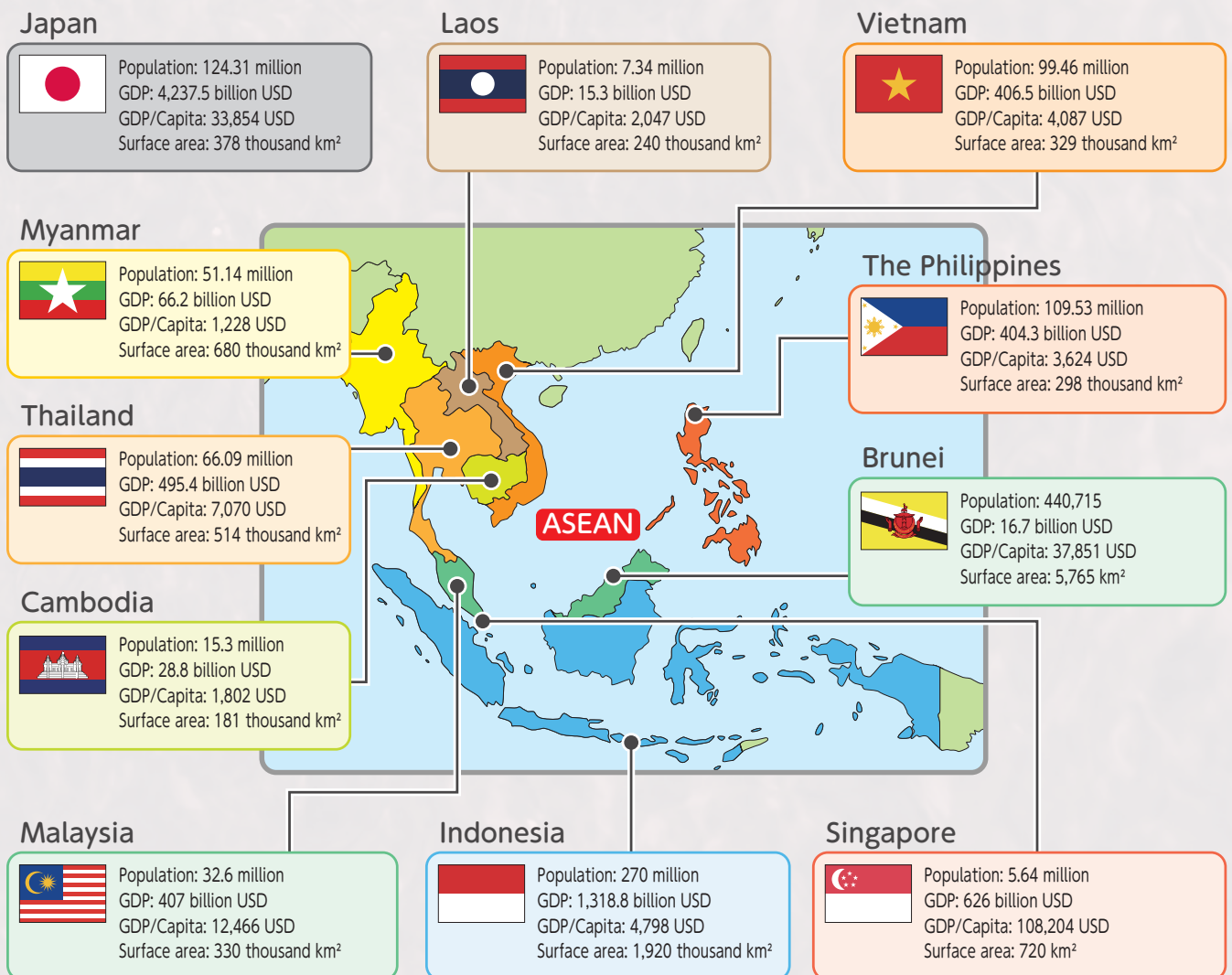
1. The Fukuda Doctrine consists of the following three principles that define

Japan's ASEAN diplomacy:

- (1) Japan will never be a military power
- (2) Establish a “Heart-to-Heart” relationship with ASEAN
- (3) Japan and ASEAN are equal partners

Brief history of the Japan-ASEAN relationship

1967	ASEAN established (Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia)
1973	Japan-ASEAN Synthetic Rubber Forum launched. First cooperative relationship.
1977	Then-Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo announces the Fukuda Doctrine (see note 1.) in Manila. First ASEAN-Japan Summit Meeting held.
1978	First ASEAN-Japan Foreign Ministers Meeting held
1981	ASEAN-Japan Center opened in Tokyo
1997	Asian Economic Crisis. Japan announces its intention to provide 80 billion US dollars in support. Third ASEAN-Japan Summit Meeting held (annually thereafter).
2003	ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit held. ASEAN-Japan Tokyo Declaration.
2005	Joint Statement of the ASEAN-Japan Summit on Deepening and Broadening of ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership adopted
2008	ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement goes into effect.
2013	Five Principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy (see attached material) announced
2017	50th anniversary of ASEAN
2023	50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation



Japan and ASEAN Basic Data (figures based on 2022)

Source: IMF WEO(2023), Countries & Regions(MOFA)

Five Principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy

In January 2013, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo announced the Five Principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy, with a view to Japan moving forward with ASEAN as an equal partner. The principles are as follows.

1. Work with ASEAN countries to consolidate and expand universal values such as freedom, democracy, and fundamental human rights.
2. Ensure, in cooperation with ASEAN countries, that the free and open seas, which are the "most vital common asset," are governed by "laws and rules" and not by "force," and welcome the United States' rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region.
3. Further promote trade and investment, including flows of goods, money, people, and services, leveraging various economic partnership networks to promote Japan's economic revitalization and the prosperity of both Japan and ASEAN Member States.
4. Protect and nurture Asia's diverse cultural heritages and traditions.
5. Promote exchanges among the younger generations to further foster mutual understanding.

Japan's International Cooperation for ASEAN: Past and Future

This year, 2023, marks the 50th anniversary of Japan-ASEAN Friendship and Cooperation. The 50th anniversary catchphrase is “Golden Friendship, Golden Opportunities.” In this month’s issue of *Highlighting Japan*, we feature the 50-year history and introduce some leading examples of the many international cooperation projects that have been or are being implemented by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and have built the foundation for today’s friendly Japan-ASEAN relationship, along with a look at prospects for the future.



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- Project on Long-term Care Service Development for the Frail Elderly and Other Vulnerable People
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Japan's International Cooperation for ASEAN: Past and Future

Tanaka Akihiko, President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), shares his insight on Japan's history of international cooperation for members of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Could you share your perspective on Japan's history of international cooperation with ASEAN members and the role JICA has played in that?

Characterized by historical, religious, and ethnic diversity, Southeast Asia has close political, economic, and historical ties with Japan, as well as geographical proximity. With a population of around 680 million people,¹ the region is home to a large consumer market and labor force.

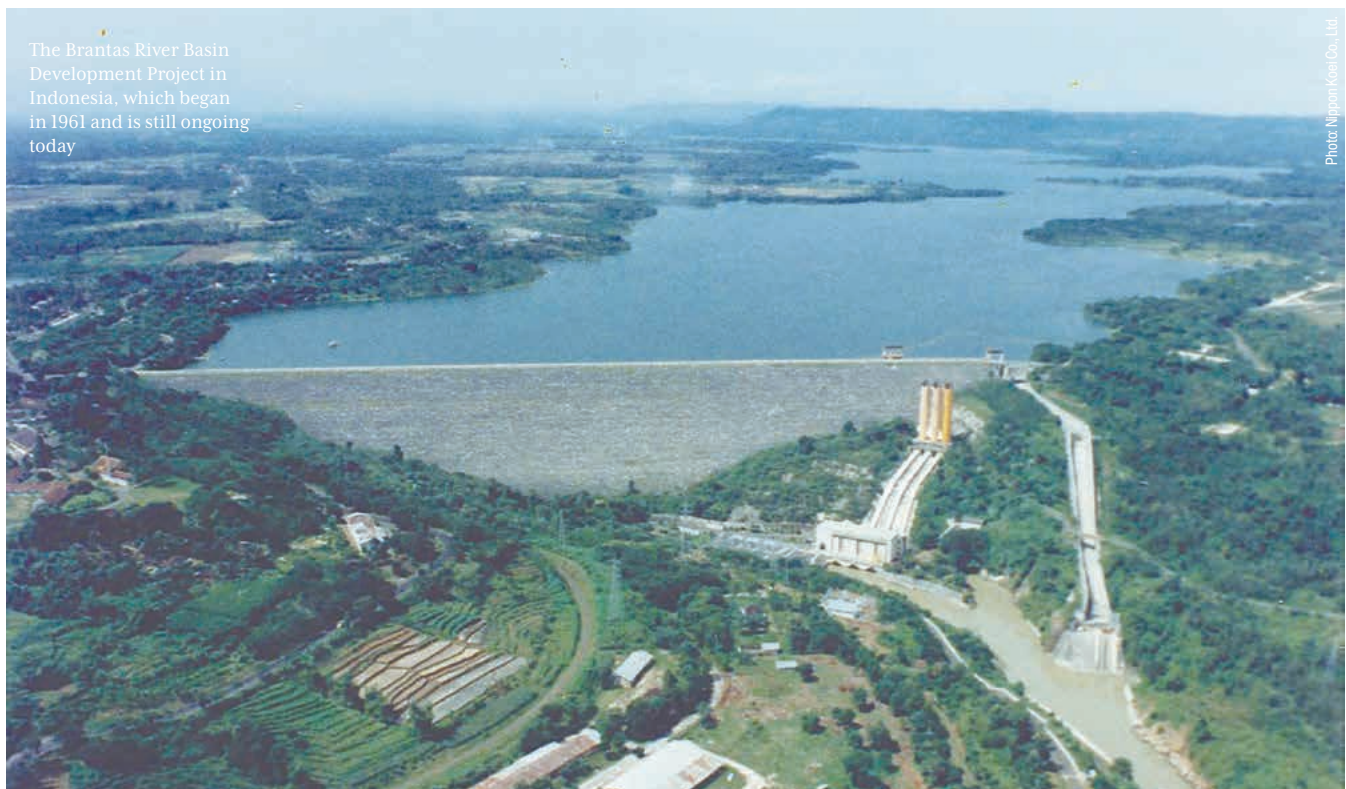
I think Japan has now earned the trust of the mem-

bers of ASEAN. Historically, however, these relationships were not always as friendly. International trade imbalance brought about by aggressive exports of Japanese products in the early 1970s triggered a boycott of Japanese products in Thailand,² and anti-Japanese riots took place during the visit of then-Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei to Southeast Asia in 1974. Events like these greatly impacted the Japanese government officials of the time. It was amid such circumstances that Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo announced the "Fukuda doctrine" during a visit to the Philippines in 1977. The doctrine outlined three principles of ASEAN diplomacy: that Japan would

rejects the role of military power, that Japan would strengthen "heart-to-heart" relationship, and that Japan and the ASEAN members would be equal part-



Tanaka Akihiko
President, Japan International
Cooperation Agency (JICA)



The Brantas River Basin Development Project in Indonesia, which began in 1961 and is still ongoing today

Photo: Nippon Koei Co., Ltd.

ners. This clarified Japan's commitment to engaging in mutual exchanges with the ASEAN members. Beyond this, when Prime Minister Suzuki Zenko made a tour of the ASEAN member countries in 1981, he urged cooperation to develop ASEAN human resources, by Japan. This led to active "people-to-people" exchanges supported by ODA.³ These approaches formed the basis of the friendly relationships Japan enjoys with ASEAN members today.

The 1990s brought a major turning point in modern history with the collapse of the world order based on the Cold War. When four countries in the Mekong region – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam – became members, ASEAN developed into a regional coalition covering the entire Southeast Asian region. With the achievement of the Comprehensive Cambodian Peace Agreements, JICA resolved to promote full-scale cooperation with Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, providing support for various forms of infrastructure as well as intellectual cooperation. This included joint research to support the transition from a socialist planned economy to a market-oriented economy. It also included legal and judicial development cooperation, such as help in drafting civil codes and support in training legal professionals.

Then, in 1997, the Asian Financial Crisis struck the ASEAN region. JICA provided funding to the member countries to provide necessary emergency support. Also, in Indonesia, JICA sent experts to provide support for economic measures intended to overcome the currency crisis.

More recently, JICA has provided a total of ¥285

billion (JPY) in emergency loans to help counter the spread of COVID-19 since 2020 to five ASEAN member countries at preferential interest rates. Through such forms of cooperation, Japan has provided support to ASEAN members in developing infrastructure, human resources, and resilient societies.

President Tanaka, you have again taken the role of JICA president as of April 2022, after previously serving as president from 2012 to 2015. Do any particularly memorable international cooperation projects stand out for you?

One that was particularly memorable to me was cooperation in the Philippines' Mindanao region (see pages 18–19). Here, nearly 50 years of conflict between armed forces demanding autonomous rule for the "Bangsamoro," meaning Muslim people, and the Philippines government had negatively affected the lives of the local townspeople. Following a cease-fire agreement in 2003, JICA began providing support for the peace process. In 2008, even as the conflict worsened and other countries withdrew from the region, JICA remained, continuing to provide peaceful assistance to both sides, under the strong determination of then-President of JICA Ogata Sadako. In 2011, with Japan acting as a mediator, Philippines President Benigno S. Aquino III and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Chairman Murad Ebrahim held a summit meeting in Narita, Japan. This led to the signing of a historic comprehensive peace agreement in 2014. As JICA president at the time, I was present at the signing of the peace agreement, and since then, we have offered



Over 26,000 Malaysian trainees have taken part in the Look East Policy project⁴ to date.



The signing of a comprehensive peace agreement in the Philippines' Mindanao region

our cooperation in a variety of ways to promote peace in the region. Also, when I visited Mindanao in January this year (2023), I could see that developments in the situation were underway in the area, and the Bangsamoro Transition Authority Parliament adopted a resolution of appreciation for JICA's long-standing cooperation. I accepted this as a great honor.

The ASEAN member countries seem to be developing an increased presence in the international community, politically and economically. What is your view on the current status and future of ASEAN members in these areas?

The ASEAN member countries have achieved remarkable economic development in the 21st century.

The total gross domestic product (GDP) of the ASEAN region as a whole grew from \$660.7 billion (USD) in 2002 to \$3.6232 trillion in 2022, multiplying by five and a half times in those 20 years to develop into a major economic area. Also, in the field of politics, ASEAN agreed in principle to admit East Timor as a member at the 2022 ASEAN Summit. If East Timor is officially admitted, this would mean that all the coun-

A subway project making use of Japanese knowledge about and experience with railway development and operation



tries in Southeast Asia are members of ASEAN. With ASEAN's economic development, the establishment of the ASEAN Community and its deepening integration, and ASEAN's rise in the international community, relationships between Japan and the ASEAN members are changing significantly. The ASEAN member countries are becoming increasingly important to Japan as well, day by day. I think it should be safe to say that peace and prosperity in the ASEAN region is directly linked to peace and prosperity in the entire East Asian region, including Japan.

The Phum Prek Water Treatment Plant in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which was rehabilitated in a water supply system development project conducted in cooperation with Kitakyushu City, Japan





A JICA-supported training program for participants from Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia being conducted at SIRIM Berhad, in Malaysia


Please share your thoughts on future prospects for international cooperation with ASEAN members, taking into account political and economic relationships between Japan and ASEAN.

Both Japan and the ASEAN member countries must respond to the increasingly sophisticated and complex challenges and opportunities that are currently arising. These include climate change, the rapid progress of digital transformation, rapid urbanization, infectious diseases, and changes in population structures. Looking forward, I think it will be important for both Japan and the ASEAN member countries to take the approach of working together even more closely to identify ways to address these shared challenges. As one example, measures we put in place in Southeast Asia in response to natural disasters have the potential to be of use to us back at home in Japan as well. Also, consider a project JICA is supporting to build a subway system called Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) in Jakarta, Indonesia. This project makes use of experience and technology used in public transportation development in Japan. I feel that it also has extremely strong potential to solve challenges in major urban areas in Japan with the knowledge and experience acquired through the project on the Japanese side.

JICA also supports cooperation between local governments in Japan and in ASEAN member countries. I feel that such projects have great potential for Japan as well with the ways they provide opportunities for Japanese local governments to engage in international interaction and may also help stimulate their economies.

JICA is also now starting to collaborate with the

ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN member countries to resolve issues in Southeast Asia and other regions. We can expect these efforts to keep expanding in the years ahead. Also, up until now, Japan has traditionally approached problem-solving in Southeast Asian countries by having Japanese specialists and engineers consider the issues together with local people in ways meant to match the situation in the area. I think in the future, we will see an even stronger shift toward interactive activities like this, with both sides learning from each other's strong points.

Looking back over these past 50 years and considering JICA's aims and accomplishments, I feel it was contributing to each country's development, and at the same time, building "people-to-people", "heart-to-heart" relationships and the trust that comes from them — fulfilling the goals of the Fukuda doctrine. For Japan to continue being a reliable and important partner to ASEAN, I imagine we will need to be eager to learn from the ASEAN member nations as they develop further, engage in deep dialogue with them, and aspire to move forward together. 

1. Source: "World Bank Open Data (2022)"
2. Abbreviated country names are used.
3. Abbreviation of "Official Development Assistance." Public funds for international cooperation activities provided by governments and government-related organizations for the primary purpose of supporting development in developing regions.
4. In 1981, the "Look East Policy" was initiated with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's urging to provide opportunities to study the knowledge and technologies, as well as the work ethic and will to work, that have been driving forces in Japan's development. The following year, in 1982, a program of the same name was initiated as a collaborative project providing opportunities to study topics including Japanese culture and technology. Over 26,000 Malaysian trainees have taken part in the program to date, receiving training to assist them in becoming exchange students or career professionals in Japan. Along with contributing to economic and social development in Malaysia and helping establish economic infrastructure in the country, it has provided opportunities for both Japan and Malaysia to deepen their mutual understanding.

International Cooperation in Response to the Aging Population in the Kingdom of Thailand

We asked Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Senior Advisor Nakamura Shintaro about the Project on Seamless Health and Social Services Provision for Elderly Persons, an international cooperation project in response to the aging population in Thailand, and other efforts. (Text: Morohashi Kumiko)

In recent years, Thailand has become an aging society¹ with more than 10% of its total population aged 65 or over. In 2007, JICA formulated the Community Based Integrated Health Care and Social Welfare Services Model for Older Persons based on an analysis of the conditions of Thailand's healthcare and social welfare services for older adults, and began providing support for its utilization and popularization. Since 2013, JICA has cooperated toward the introduction of more institutionalized public services.

JICA dispatched care managers and other experts, trained volunteer personnel called “caregivers” and management personnel locally, and assisted in the preparation of policy recommendations to the Thai government on care for older adults.

In 2016, in parallel with JICA's initiatives, the Thai government started an initiative to provide long-term care and nursing-care services to persons requiring care. The care managers who were trained under this project played a major role. In addition, since 2018,



An expert conducts an interview for the purpose of preparing a care plan for an older person.



A Japanese expert assesses conditions of a care-dependent older person in community.



Cooperation is also provided for the development of rehabilitation services at hospitals.



A local health volunteer visits an older person in need of care.



A workshop to share each pilot site's activities

toward the realization of more comprehensive services for older people, it has continued to provide support for the strengthening of rehabilitation programs and other intermediate care for in-patients as well as follow-up services in the community to prevent care-dependency after discharge from hospitals.

While the central government is the institution that implements this kind of project while receiving JICA support, the people at the actual site where care is provided are local members of the community. Nakamura says that among the actual initiatives, there were many episodes that left a strong impression on him.

“When we had an expert from Japan come to visit the home of an older person in need of care, we encountered a situation where a family caregiver shed tears sharing the painful reality of the situation. This made me feel in my bones how vital these care services are, not only for the older adults in need of care but their family caregivers as well. Also, in 2017, when a trained local caregiver was presenting his experiences at an international conference, the sight of this person passionately describing how this project made them feel needed by those requiring care, giving them a sense of purpose. I felt that this project had become one that could resolve issues not only for the ones being cared for, but also for those who provide the care.”

Thailand has also made progress in its long-term care policy, its research into challenges to older adults by academic institution is advancing, and the country's care businesses for older persons are starting up. Nakamura adds that future support from Japan may also shift to a more multilayered structure of cooperative resources from industry, government, civil society, and academia.

“Japan is a ‘front runner in aging’ that experienced challenges of rapid aging earlier than other countries in Asia. It is also ahead in terms of its future direction

for the decentralization of health and welfare for the aged. Aging-related cooperation is also an opportunity for both sides to learn from one another, rather than one-way technical cooperation. We'd like to probe the potential for partnering on initiatives to work on the problems and share knowledge with other ASEAN nations.” **J**

1. Currently, the over-65 population is often referred to as the “older people,” while their proportion of the total population is called the “aging rate” (older population ratio). In addition, in United Nations reports, societies with aging rates over 7% have been referred to as “aging societies.”

Reference

Examples of JICA's International Cooperation Projects Concerning Response to Population Aging in Thailand

■ The Project on the Development of a Community Based Integrated Health Care and Social Welfare Services Model for Thai Older Persons

Term of cooperation: Nov. 2007 - Nov. 2011

Outline: According to population statistics, in Thailand the growth rate of older adults had surpassed that of the overall population. Under this cooperation, through the analysis of challenges facing older adults and the state of health care and social welfare services for them in four project sites, as well as through initiatives to respond to the challenges, support was provided toward the formulation of a “Community Based Integrated Health Care and Social Welfare Services Model for Older Persons,” and for its dissemination with the aim of utilization. This contributed to the nationwide use of the model.

■ Project on Long-term Care Service Development for the Frail Elderly and Other Vulnerable People

Term of cooperation: Jan. 2013 - Aug. 2017

Outline: Thailand was undergoing the most advanced aging among developing countries in the Southeast Asia region. There were concerns that care fatigue among family members would become a societal problem, and there was a need to introduce care services in the form of institutionalized public services. Under this cooperation, support was provided for the preparation of policy recommendations on care for older adults through the implementation of model care services, while utilizing community-based integrated services.

■ Project on Seamless Health and Social Services Provision for Elderly Persons

Term of cooperation: Nov. 2017 - Oct. 2022

Outline: In 2016, Thailand became an aging society with its population aged 65 or over accounting for about 10% of its total population. At the same time, patients hospitalized for stroke, etc., often become bedridden due to the lack of proper in-patient rehabilitation and follow-up after discharge. Therefore, it was necessary to strengthen rehabilitation services and provide seamless care. Under this cooperation, support was provided for strengthening rehabilitation and coordinating care to prevent older persons from slipping into care-dependency after discharge from hospitals.

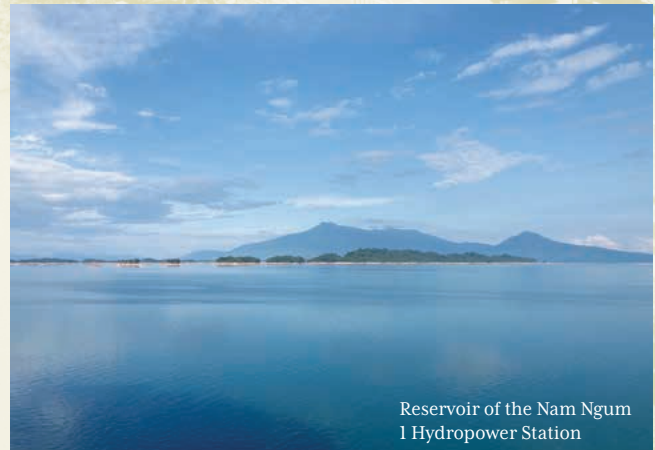
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- <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/0613081/index.html>
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- <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1700422/index.html>

International Cooperation for Climate Change Action (Energy and Disaster Prevention) in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Republic of the Philippines

International cooperation in climate change action is crucial. Here, we introduce a cooperation in clean energy power trade in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (hereinafter, "Laos"), and the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project, a flood control project in the Republic of the Philippines (hereinafter, "the Philippines"), which are ongoing initiatives by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

(Text: Morohashi Kumiko)



Reservoir of the Nam Ngum 1 Hydropower Station

The issue of climate change is an urgent global challenge that should be addressed beyond borders, and JICA is also strengthening its support to various countries in response to this problem. One such initiative is a clean energy power trade in Laos, aiming to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Laos is abundant in hydroelectric resources, with hydropower accounting for approximately 80% of the total installed

capacity of power generation facilities. JICA aims to develop the necessary policy frameworks and organizational capabilities to sustainably facilitate power trade to neighboring countries while ensuring a stable domestic power supply. These initiatives encompass a comprehensive approach, including the dispatch of power policy advisors, improvements in power quality, enhancements to power utility management, and the development of an integrated energy master plan geared towards achieving a carbon-neutral society. We spoke with JICA expert Shibata Kuri about past activities and future hopes.

“Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been consistently providing clean energy development cooperation to Laos since the 1960s, yielding results in various forms, including the construction of hydropower plants, the introduction of the first grid-connected solar power generation and the formulation of power system master plan,” explains Shibata. “In the future, it will be significant to continue our efforts

capacity of power generation facilities. JICA aims to develop the necessary policy frameworks and organizational capabilities to sustainably facilitate power trade to neighboring countries while ensuring a stable domestic power supply. These initiatives encompass a comprehensive approach, including the dispatch of power policy advisors, improvements in power quality, enhancements to power utility management, and the development of an integrated energy master plan geared towards achieving a carbon-neutral society. We spoke with JICA expert Shibata Kuri about past activities and future hopes.



Above: Development Partners Coordination Meeting sponsored by Electricite Du Laos



Below: Officials headed by Minister from the Ministry of Energy and Mine in Laos visit a pumped storage hydropower plant by JICA's Invitation Program to Japan



Left: The Pasig-Marikina River embankment, which was completed through a river channel improvement project supported by Japan

Right above: Example of technology transfer in construction quality control of concrete structures through collaboration between Japanese and Filipino engineers

Right below: Project manager from DPWH in the Philippines (right) with Yamaguchi (left)


towards expanding sustainable power trade to neighboring countries, alongside ensuring a stable domestic power supply. We hope to continue utilizing Laos' ideal advantages and potential with abundant water sources and renewable energy. This includes activities that contribute to the supply of Laos' clean energy to neighboring countries."

In the Philippines, JICA has been supporting flood control measures in the Manila metropolitan area since the 1970s. This includes providing assistance for projects such as the construction of the Manggahan Floodway, the development of a flood control master plan, and the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project. These initiatives help mitigate the impacts of climate change. JICA expert Yamaguchi Masahiro, who is stationed at the Philippines Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to carry out projects on-site, shared insights with us.

"The Pasig-Marikina River is one of the most important rivers in the Philippines, and its coastal areas downstream serve as the political and economic hub. However, due to its geographical characteristics, the region has frequently experienced flooding," comments Yamaguchi. "The construction of the Manggahan Floodway, redirecting upstream floods to Laguna Lake, has significantly reduced the flooding impact on the downstream Manila city area. Currently, as part of further flood control initiatives, there are plans to continue the improvement of the middle reaches of the river and construct flood diversion facilities directing excess water to Laguna Lake."

The simulation of flood damage caused by Typhoon Ulysses in the Manila metropolitan area in 2020 estimated that the effects of previous projects contributed to reducing damage by approximately 85%.

"The significant contribution of long-term proactive

investment in flood control, resulting in substantial damage reduction, is a source of pride," says Yamaguchi. "Japan's advanced technological expertise and high-quality construction have been validated through river channel improvement projects, fostering a high level of trust. We hope to continue contributing to the international community in the field of disaster prevention through Japan's technology in the years to come." 

Reference: 1

Examples of JICA's International Cooperation Projects for Electricity in Laos

- **Project on Power System Master Plan**
Term of cooperation: June 2017 to March 2019
Outline: Laos relies significantly on electricity exports harnessing its abundant hydropower resources, serving as a major pillar for its industry. However, due to a nearly fourfold increase in domestic electricity sales over the past decade, there is an urgent need for further power development in the country. In this cooperation project, a master plan was formulated, considering the electricity demand within the country and neighboring nations. This plan contributed to ensuring stable domestic electricity supply and facilitating electricity transactions with neighboring countries.
- **Nam Ngum 1 Hydropower Station Expansion Project**
Term of cooperation: Since June 2013 (signing of loan agreement)
Outline: In Laos, there has been a rapid increase in electricity demand in the central region, including the capital area, posing a challenge for domestic power development to meet the growing needs. In this cooperation project, support was provided for the expansion of one generating unit at the Nam Ngum 1 Hydropower Station near the capital. This contributed to the expansion of the country's stable electricity supply.

Reference: 2

Example of JICA's International Cooperation Project for Flood Control in the Philippines

- **Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project (Phase 4)**
Term of cooperation: Since January 2019 (signing of loan agreement)
Outline: In the Philippines, the Manila metropolitan area, being a coastal lowland, is susceptible to the impact of typhoons, causing significant damage to the economy and social activities due to frequent flooding. In Phase 4 of this cooperation project, efforts are being made to mitigate the flood damage in the central part of the Manila metropolitan area by implementing improvements for the Pasig-Marikina River, constructing a movable weir (Marikina Weir), and implementing non-structural measures against flooding. This is in response to the significant human and economic damage caused by the tropical storm Ondoy in 2009.

Reference websites

- <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1600282/index.html>
- <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/LS-P7/index.html>
- <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/PH-P271/index.html>

International Cooperation for Peacebuilding in the Kingdom of Cambodia and Republic of the Philippines

Japan has cooperated with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for half a century for the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region. Meanwhile, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has bolstered activities aimed at peacebuilding since the 1990s. JICA has focused on activities aimed at creating resilient nations and societies that can prevent and avoid the re-emergence of violent conflicts, with the goal of fostering a peaceful and inclusive society. Here, we introduce the initiatives on landmine removal in the Kingdom of Cambodia (hereafter, “Cambodia”) and the peace efforts in Mindanao, Republic of the Philippines (hereafter, “the Philippines”).

(Text: Morohashi Kumiko)

In Cambodia, even over 30 years after the end of the civil war, landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) remain, concentrated in rural areas where 80% of the population lives. This situation not only poses a threat to the people but also hinders agricultural land development.

The clearance of landmines and UXO is primarily conducted by the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (commonly known as CMAC), a government agency. In addition to providing equipment for landmine and UXO clearance activity, JICA has been implementing technical cooperation projects for many years that support the introduction of equipment management systems and information management systems for clearance activity, and the enhancement of CMAC’s training capabilities and organizational functions. Hayashi Akihito, an expert assigned to CMAC, had the following to say.

“As a signatory of the Ottawa Treaty (the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention), Cambodia is obligated to complete the clearance of all anti-personnel mines



Supporting the independence of individuals handicapped by landmines

within the country by 2025, and it is expected to fulfill this obligation. I believe there is no other country that has been able to resolve the issue of landmines as smoothly, and the fact that Japan has been supporting this effort is of great significance internationally,” he explains.

In addition, CMAC, utilizing the knowledge it has



Left: An expert provides instruction on the maintenance of heavy machinery used in landmine clearance activities

Center: Ukrainian government personnel involved in mine action receive training at CMAC

Right: JICA staff member Ochiai Naoyuki is working to bridge the gap between soldiers of the national army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front



Rice harvested through agricultural support in Mindanao, the Philippines

gained so far, is conducting training for countries such as Laos, Colombia, and Ukraine which are also affected by landmines and UXOs, under the cooperation of JICA. Hayashi believes it is a rare international success story where peacebuilding activities have spread through an aid recipient country.

“Currently, we are working on a project where we have asked curators from museums, including the Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum to help create exhibits at the Peace Museum of CMAC planned for construction in Siem Reap, a city in the northwest of Cambodia,” says Hayashi. “I believe this can become an example of cooperation between countries that share the same pain of having their homelands turn into battlefields.”

Among JICA's peacekeeping activities, the international cooperation contributing to the peace process in Mindanao, the Philippines, is particularly noteworthy. Mindanao Island is located at the southern end of the Philippine archipelago and is the second-largest island in the Philippines, with an area of about 94,600 square kilometers, following Luzon Island. In response to the ceasefire agreement reached in 2003 between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, an armed group seeking a high degree of autonomy from the Philippines, and the Philippine government, JICA began full-scale peace support efforts. Ochiai Naoyuki, a JICA staff member who has been involved in support for a long time, reflects on that time.

“We maintained a strictly neutral position, providing peace mediation to the government side as well as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and development support for conflict affected area in Mindanao. In Mindanao, deep-rooted poverty issues resulting from years of

conflict were addressed through agricultural support, medical and welfare assistance, and infrastructure development, all aimed at underpinning the peace negotiations with ongoing development efforts,” he explains. “In 2008, amidst deteriorating security conditions and the withdrawal of other countries from International Monitoring Team as peacekeeping forces, the continued presence of JICA strengthened trust in



Experts provide agricultural guidance to decommissioned soldiers of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front as part of the Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro

Japan. As a result, in 2011, the first top-level meeting was realized between Philippine President Aquino and Chairman Murad of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.”

Afterward, a comprehensive peace agreement was signed, and the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority was established. Local efforts continue to focus on capacity-building initiatives and legal system support to promote the autonomy and operation of the autonomous government.

“The local community says that Japan is providing support that aligns with their perspectives,” says Ochiai. “I feel that the success of democratic conflict resolution is due to JICA's collaborative approach of working from the same viewpoint, identifying problems, and finding solutions, which has become the foundation of our relationship of trust.”



JICA President Tanaka visiting a local elementary school (the man in the center wearing a hat, slightly above the middle row)

Reference: 1

Examples of JICA's International Cooperation Projects Concerning Landmine Removal in Cambodia

- **The Project for Improvement of Equipment for Demining Activities (Phase 4)**
Term of cooperation: Since August 2004
Outline: Assisting in the enhancement of mine detectors and mine removal equipment has played a crucial role in safeguarding the lives of the local residents.
- **The Project for the Construction of Training Complex and Outreach Facility of Cambodian Mine Action Centre**
Term of cooperation: Since November 2022 (signing of grant agreement)
Outline: JICA supported the establishment of both an outreach facility and a research center focused on mine action technology, which is also responsible for providing training at the Cambodian Mine Action Centre. This support has led to the improvement of the educational training environment for mine action personnel and the promotion of awareness regarding landmine issues.

Reference websites

<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/0409300/index.html>
<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/2260460/>

Reference: 2

Examples of JICA's International Cooperation Project Concerning Mindanao Peace and Development Assistance in the Philippines

- **Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro**
Term of cooperation: July 2013 to July 2019
Outline: In Mindanao, Philippines, the framework agreement between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front was signed in 2012 and then the comprehensive peace agreement was also signed in 2014. The Bangsamoro Organic Law was passed in 2018. Bangsamoro Transition Authority was created based on those agreements and law. This cooperation project involves providing support for the training of personnel engaged in administering services for the new autonomous government, encompassing areas such as water supply, roads, and local industry promotion. Assistance also extended to the development of organizational structures and systems, along with the formulation of regional development plans. These efforts aimed to establish a solid foundation, enabling the new autonomous government to function effectively as an administrative entity.

Reference websites

<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1203122/index.html>

International Cooperation on Legal Development in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

The Project for Enhancing the Quality and Efficiency of Developing and Implementing Laws in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (hereinafter referred to as “Vietnam”), being implemented for the period from January 2021 to December 2025, is a part of legal development assistance program that has been ongoing since 1996. Kono Ryuzo, chief advisor for this technical cooperation project, gave us an overview of the project.

(Text: Morohashi Kumiko)



The Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC), which brings together all cooperating institutions involved in the project, including the Ministry of Justice of Vietnam

JICA's legal development assistance activities in Vietnam have been constant since the first project was launched in 1996. At that time, the Ministry of Justice of Vietnam was the only official cooperating institution, but later the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuracy and other legal institutions joined the project. In 2021, when the current project was launched, the Central Committee for Internal Affairs of the Communist Party, joined the project for the first time as a cooperating institution. Kono says, “It is very meaningful to be able to engage with the structures of the Communist Party, and thus have direct interaction regarding the Party's policies

on legal and judicial reform.”

“Vietnam and Japan have different political systems and governance structures. Vietnam is ruled by a single political party, the Communist Party of Vietnam, while Japan has a multi-party system. Japan has a separation of the three branches of government, while in Vietnam the National Assembly is the highest organ of state power. The Vietnamese government is based on the concept that the power of the National Assembly is distributed to the various state organs. Therefore, the legal system of Japan, which has a different political system, cannot be applied without modification. We provide assistance by comparing



A social survey on local legal development conducted with local attorneys



A seminar for local Vietnamese mediators



Some project deliverables, such as manuals, handbooks and research reports on case law systems, etc.

the political and legal systems of Japan and Vietnam to determine what they have in common and how the principles of the Japanese legal system can be applied.”

The objective of the current project is to improve the quality of Vietnam’s legal normative documents and the effectiveness of their implementation in the light of international standards, in order to contribute to the advancement of legal and judicial reforms and the strengthening of the country’s international competitiveness. Experts dispatched from Japan, including prosecutors, administrative officials from the Ministry of Justice, and attorneys, provide advice and hold seminars on a wide range of issues, including the formulation and revision of basic laws and regulations, the preparation of administrative reference materials, and various types of research.

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of consultations with the project team on drafting new laws, accompanying the continuing economic development of Vietnam in a period of rapid economic growth.

“When JICA first started providing assistance, development agencies from Europe and the United States were also involved, but Japan is the only country that has continued to implement assistance projects on the same scale and in the same seamless manner over all these years. Over the past 25 years, our Vietnamese counterparts have consulted us when revising important laws, and I would say that we have established a relationship of trust with them in supporting legal development.”

As Japan and Vietnam celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties, relations between the two countries are said to be extremely

good. Kono believes that the process leading up to this point was based on a long-standing relationship of trust regarding legal development assistance.

“Legal development assistance provided in collaboration with the Japanese Ministry of Justice is currently being implemented in ten countries, and Vietnam is in the top group in terms of economic development. I believe that in the future, as our relationship continues to shift from assistance to partnership, the two nations will eventually reach a turning point where they will be able to contribute to one another’s development.”

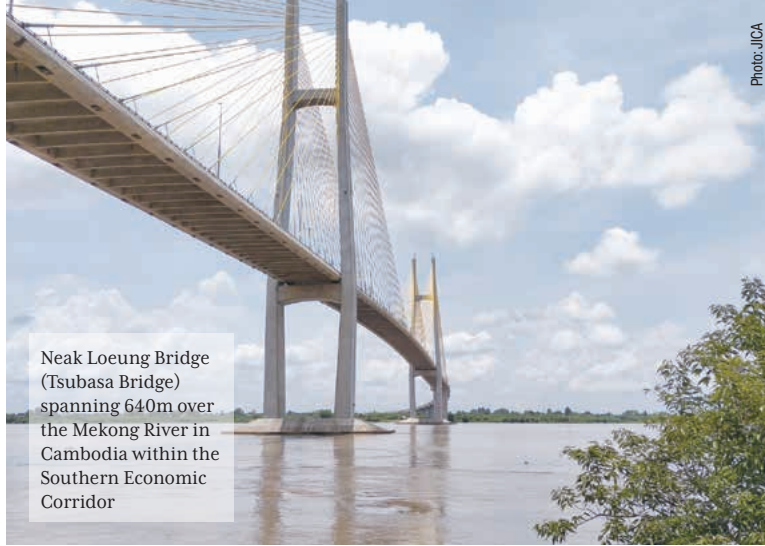
Reference

Examples of JICA's International Cooperation Projects Concerning legal development and judicial reform assistance in Vietnam

After Vietnam adopted the Doi-Moi (“Renovation”) Policy in 1986, there was an urgent need to establish a new legal system to support the country’s transition to a market economy. Consequently, the Ministry of Justice of Vietnam, in collaboration with the governments of other countries and international organizations, launched efforts to develop laws and regulations. In 1996, Japan initiated a legal development assistance project and in the years since has provided technical cooperation and other forms of support based on three pillars: (1) advice on the drafting of various laws and regulations; (2) advice on the development of the legal system; and (3) human resource development.

- **Cooperation in the Legal and Judicial Field (Phase 3)**
Term of cooperation: July 2003 – March 2007
Outline: The project provided assistance in human resource development, as well as in the drafting of various laws and regulations based on the two pillars of legislative support in the civil and commercial fields and strengthening the legal profession, with a focus on the Civil Code. This has contributed to the strengthening of Vietnam’s legal system.
- **The Project for Harmonized, Practical Legislation and Uniform Application of Law Targeting Year 2020**
Term of cooperation: April 2015 – December 2020
Outline: The project provided assistance in the drafting of civil and commercial legislation, human resource development for legal professionals, and the joint preparation of practice manuals for legal practitioners. Through these activities, the project contributed to the establishment of a foundation for the proper and efficient operation and application of legal normative documents in accordance with the 2013 Constitution and the legal and judicial reforms implemented with 2020 as the target year.

Reference websites
<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/0601721/index.html>
<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1400640/index.html>



Neak Loeung Bridge (Tsubasa Bridge) spanning 640m over the Mekong River in Cambodia within the Southern Economic Corridor



JICA and Connectivity in the Mekong Region

The Kingdom of Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (abbreviated names used hereinafter), through which the Mekong River¹ flows, are collectively referred to as the Mekong region countries. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is actively supporting for the development and enhancement of the economic corridors² that connect the Mekong region. In October 2023, JICA staff and related experts conducted an on-site survey along the Southern Economic Corridor, exploring the current state of connectivity and the challenges that must be addressed to strengthen it. This article introduces the background and overview about it. (Text: Kurosawa Akane)

In the Mekong region, there are three major economic corridors: the East-West Economic Corridor (spanning across the Indochina Peninsula from east to west), the North-South Economic Corridor (running vertically through the Indochina Peninsula from north to south), and the Southern Economic Corridor (connecting Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam). The Mekong region faced an urgent need for the restoration of road infrastructure, which had been disrupted by conflicts that persisted until the early 1990s. Here, the development of these economic corridors has been pursued as part of an economic development program, with the vision that cooperation between countries across borders would contribute to regional stability. This initiative has progressed under the framework of international cooperation.

JICA has offered substantial assistance in infrastructure development and development studies, covering both tangible and intangible aspects. For instance, a noteworthy project within the East-West Economic Corridor is the construction of the Second Mekong International Bridge, connecting Thailand and Laos across the Mekong River. This 1,600-meter

bridge’s completion has established uninterrupted connectivity along the East-West Economic Corridor, spanning from Viet Nam through Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. Additionally, in the Southern Economic Corridor, JICA has supported projects such as the construction of Neak Loeung Bridge (Tsubasa Bridge) in Cambodia, and the maintenance and enhancement of Cambodia’s National Road No.1 and No.5.

Moving forward, the importance of enhancing connectivity from both tangible and intangible perspectives will continue to grow as part of development cooperation within the Mekong region.

Under the industrial agglomeration and the division of labor across nations in the region, JICA is aware of the issues facing the ASEAN region as a whole. So, in October 2023 a on-site survey team was formed to travel the Southern Economic Corridor—approximately 900 kilometers from Ho Chi Minh City in Viet Nam to Bangkok in Thailand—to gather insights.

The survey team was made up by not only members of the relevant country teams but also the staff in charge of infrastructure development and trade facilitation in JICA Headquarters, as well as experts and local office

Above: The Second Mekong International Bridge constructed along the East-West Economic Corridor, linking Thailand and Laos.
 Below: National Road No.5, which connects Phnom Penh to the Thai border. Before (left) and after (right) development.



Photo: JICA




Photo © Kingdom of Cambodia Ministry of Public Works and Transport

staff within JICA. Through the mission, they witnessed the remarkable growth of the three countries and were able to identify regional challenges that cut across borders from a multifaceted perspective.

For instance, national highways such as the one connecting Ho Chi Minh City and Phnom Penh, developed and rehabilitated with JICA's supports, have shown significant improvements, including reduced travel time. However, the Southern Economic Corridor, uniting the three countries, is not functioning adequately. It became clear that challenges persist in terms of connectivity from a systems perspective, including complex customs clearance procedures at borders, and deficiencies in the implementation structure and legal framework for border management.

JICA staff who participated in this survey express their interests for JICA's future efforts in coordination, mediation, and collaboration spanning multiple countries and sectors, aiming to create additional value. For example, JICA will support to establish an institutional framework related to trade facilitation, including customs, across multiple countries, and provide broad technical cooperation for capacity building. Additionally, they stated their desire to bring a win-win situation for the governments and businesses of the Mekong countries through assistance for the development of human resources needed by industries, addressing the challenges faced by companies within Special Economic Zones (SEZs) along the economic corridor.

The survey on the Southern Economic Corridor, conducted on the occasion of the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, will serve as a crucial foundation for future partnerships between the Mekong region, the entire ASEAN region, and Japan. JICA's established asset of trust with Mekong region countries is bound to extend further into coordination, mediation, and collaboration across multiple nations and sectors, weaving additional value in the process. 

1. The Mekong River is an international river that originates from the Tibetan Plateau, flows through China's Yunnan Province, forms borders between Myanmar and Laos, Thailand and Laos, and travels through Cambodia and Viet Nam before reaching the South China Sea. It is approximately 4,800 kilometers in length.
 2. These corridors are designed to enhance logistics across borders by developing infrastructure and cross-border systems in specific regions. This strategy aims to generate a synergetic economic impact through the reduction of transportation costs, the expedited transit of goods, and the augmentation of transport volume, connecting production and industrial hubs and demand centers. The scope of this development extends beyond road network enhancements, encompassing the establishment of communication networks, the streamlining of customs procedures, and other related initiatives.

Reference

Examples of JICA's International Cooperation Projects Concerning Transportation in the Mekong Region

- **SECOND MEKONG INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT**
Term of cooperation: Commenced with financial assistance (loan agreement signed) in December 2001
Outline: Within the context of Mekong River Basin development, a high priority was given to the development of the East-West Economic Corridor, which connects northeastern Thailand to central Viet Nam through Laos. This cooperation project supported the construction of an international bridge spanning the Mekong River, connecting Thailand and Laos. As a result, it facilitated the connectivity of the East-West Economic Corridor from Viet Nam to Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar, facilitating logistics and the economic development of the regions along the corridor.
- **The Project for Construction of Neak Loeung Bridge**
Term of cooperation: Commenced with grant assistance (grant agreement signed) in June 2010
Outline: Cambodia's National Road No.1 is part of the Southern Economic Corridor connecting Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Thailand. However, this road was divided by the Mekong River, necessitating the use of ferries to cross the river, resulting in waiting times of approximately seven hours at peak times. In this cooperation project, support was provided for the construction of a bridge to Neak Loeung, a critical dividing point. This development significantly facilitated logistics, transportation, and exchanges, making a valuable contribution not only to Cambodia but also to the overall economic development of the Mekong region.
- **National Road No.5 Improvement Project (Thlea Ma'am - Battambang and Sri Sophon - Poipet Sections) (2)**
Term of cooperation: From May 2013
Outline: In Cambodia, with support from Japan, ADB, and other partners since the end of the civil war, significant progress has been made in the restoration of roads, a crucial component of logistics infrastructure. Nonetheless, some areas have deteriorating emergency repair sites and inadequate width, posing a critical challenge for improving existing roads to meet the growing logistics demand driven by future economic development. Notably, National Road No.5 is anticipated to function as a vital industrial artery in the Mekong region. Therefore, in this cooperation project, activities such as road improvement, widening, and bypass construction are underway. This will enhance transport capacity, facilitate logistics with Thailand, and promote economic development.

Reference links

- On-site survey along the Southern Economic Corridor (Mekong region)
<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/LS-4/index.html>
<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1060240/index.html>
<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/CP-P25/index.html>
https://www.jica.go.jp/information/blog/1525786_21942.html
- On-site survey along the growing ASEAN and the significance of Japan's international cooperation Vol. 1 (newspicks.com)
<https://newspicks.com/topics/jica/posts/19>
- On-site survey along the Southern Economic Corridor (Mekong region)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dhathwzguk>
- Infrastructure for people ~ Asia highway (Full ver.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ly03jU0w>

International Cooperation for Water Utility Regeneration in the Kingdom of Cambodia

In this section, we hear from Yamamoto Keiko, a former Senior Advisor of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and Yayama Masashi, a former JICA expert, about their experiences with the international cooperation projects aimed at revitalizing Cambodia's water utility system. This initiative was prompted by the severe deterioration caused by the civil war.

(Text: Morohashi Kumiko)

Right: An example of a successfully rehabilitated water treatment facility in Phnom Penh completed through a Japanese international cooperation project



The prolonged civil war in Cambodia, which lasted until the early 1990s, left the water supply facilities destroyed and neglected, which led to severe deterioration. As a result, the water supply struggled to keep pace with the population growth, leading to an increase in the number of those without access to clean water. Furthermore, the aging water infrastructure had worsened to the extent that water quality no longer met the guideline values set by the World Health Organization (WHO). JICA provided support in creating a master plan for the development of the water supply infrastructure in the capital city, Phnom Penh, starting in 1993. Building upon this plan, from 1994 to 2003, JICA engaged in international cooperation aimed at facility development and human resource development in support of the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority, responsible for the water supply services in Phnom Penh. Yamamoto, who was involved as a facility development and human resource development, reflects on that time.

“Safe water, produced at the renovated Phum Prek Water Treatment Plant as part of facility improvement

efforts, was given priority for distribution to impoverished areas within Phnom Penh. This initiative significantly improved water supply conditions for the underprivileged population. The rapid and remarkable enhancement of Phnom Penh's water supply services over a brief span of 10 years can be attributed, in part, to the great capabilities of the Cambodian workforce. It was indeed fortunate that individuals with a strong will to develop Phnom Penh, even in the post-civil war era, united in the water supply project, which was led by His Excellency Ek Sonn Chan who was the leader of PPWSA.”

Development of the water supply project, later hailed as the “Miracle of Phnom Penh,” expanded to cover the entire Cambodia and continues to receive ongoing support. It is noteworthy that Japan, along with JICA, has maintained a deep and ongoing involve-



Photo from around 1993 of the neglected filtration pond at water treatment plant.



Untreated water (left) and purified water (right). Phnom Penh now enjoys 24-hour access to safe water.



His Excellency Ek Sonn Chan (center), Secretary of State, Ministry of Industry and Handicraft at the time, with members of the Project for Strengthening Administrative Capacity of Urban Water Supply in Cambodia (Yayama is third from left)



The monitoring room at the Phum Prek Water Treatment Plant in Phnom Penh, where the system is monitored around the clock.




The future challenge is that there are still many areas in which water management is not yet well established.

ment, with Kitakyushu City also playing a significant role. Yayama, a former JICA expert who worked at the Kitakyushu City Water and Sewage Bureau at the time, spoke about their ongoing efforts in Cambodia.

“Kitakyushu City began dispatching personnel to Cambodia’s water supply project in 1999, emphasizing the importance of leak prevention technology and preventing water leakage. The non-revenue water rate, primarily indicating the percentage of uncollected fees due to water leakage, was as high as 72% at the outset of the support. However, by 2010, it had decreased significantly to just 6%,” explains Yayama. “Subsequently, JICA and Kitakyushu City, through long-term technical cooperation, have built a strong relationship of trust with Cambodia and continue to be involved in many support projects from Japan. Efforts have now been expanded from urban areas to provincial cities. We implemented the Project for Strengthening Administrative Capacity of Urban Water Supply in Cambodia until March 2023, aiming to establish a framework where the central government can oversee and manage water utilities nationwide from the perspective of water supply administration.”

Unlike Japan, where water supplies are administratively managed nationwide, Cambodia’s provincial cities are characterized by a prevalence of privately-owned water supply operators. Under the above-referenced project, we are progressing towards the broad and stable supply of safe water by expanding the network of water supply. This is achieved through the establishment of a framework where the supervising agency oversees individual privately-owned water supply operators.

“The revitalization of Cambodia’s water utility system is also featured as a success story for the United Nations’ official website under the SDGs¹. The significance of Japan’s international contribution to solving global challenges is immensely important. We hope

that the continued development of Japan’s international cooperation in the Cambodian water supply project can greatly contribute to the deepening of friendship between the two countries,” comments Yayama. 

1. One of the 17 goals established by the United Nations as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is “Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all,” and the project is introduced as a successful example of this. <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships>

Reference

Examples of JICA’s International Cooperation Projects Concerning Safe Water in Cambodia

- **The Project for Expansion of Phum Prek Water Treatment Plant**
Term of cooperation: May 2001 (signing of exchange of notes) to October 2003
Outline: Support was provided to rehabilitate and expand the capacity of the severely deteriorated Phum Prek Water Treatment Plant, aiming to improve the degraded water supply conditions caused by the civil war. This assistance encompassed securing an adequate water supply to meet population growth demands and enhancing water quality to meet the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline values. As a result of this support, safe water is prioritized for distribution to impoverished areas, leading to an improvement in water supply conditions for disadvantaged populations.
- **The Project on Capacity Building for Water Supply System in Cambodia (Phase 1)**
Term of cooperation: October 2003 to October 2006
Outline: With support primarily focused on the construction of facilities, provided by Japan and others, Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority (PPWSA) has successfully expanded its water supply capacity. However, given the urgent need for developing PPWSA personnel to ensure the effective management of the new facilities, technical knowledge transfer was carried out to enhance operational and maintenance capacity of water supply facilities. This contributed to the expansion of access to safe water in urban areas. Following that, Phase 2 (2007-2012) aimed to extend the outcomes of the project nationwide, and Phase 3 (2012-2018) was implemented with the purpose of enhancing the management of the national public water supply utilities.
- **The Project for Strengthening Administrative Capacity of Urban Water Supply in Cambodia**
Term of cooperation: July 2018 to March 2023
Outline: While conditions for water supply in urban areas had improved, the water supply infrastructure in provincial cities struggled to keep up with rapid urbanization. This cooperation project extended support to the General Department of Potable Water Service, the Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology, and Innovation, overseeing the water supply sector. The focus was on strengthening the organizational structure to handle a wide range of tasks and enhancing the capacity for regulating and supervising private water service providers. These efforts aimed to improve the capabilities required to expand the provision of safe water nationwide.

Reference websites

- <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/0100500/index.html>
- <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/0601334/index.html>
- <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1700174/index.html>

International Cooperation for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Using the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in the Republic of Indonesia

For over 70 years, Japan has employed the Maternal and Child Health Handbook to track the health of mothers and their children throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and early childhood, as well as to guide mothers and families to monitor the child's health at home. Japan now has one of the lowest maternal and child mortality rates in the world. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has supported the introduction of the handbook in the Republic of Indonesia (hereinafter, "Indonesia"), and has provided technical cooperation on the development, pilot, and promotion of a handbook that is suitable for the country for many years. In this section, Osaki Keiko, a health senior advisor, gives an outline of the initiative. (Text: Morohashi Kumiko)



Photo: JICA Osaki Keiko

Indonesia once faced high rates of infant and maternal mortality. The Maternal and Child Health Handbook is a tool long employed in Japan. The introduction of the handbook in Indonesia can be traced back to a request from an Indonesian doctor who visited Japan as part of a JICA training course. JICA's support started with Maternal and Child Health Improvement Projects in the 1990s. After planning, development, and training phases, the handbook began to be distributed and were gradually expanded throughout Indonesia. Osaki recalls the situation at the time as follows.

"At that time, in Indonesia, it was still common for midwives to assist with childbirth at home, and when medical care was necessary, families needed to bring women, mothers and children to the hospital on their own. Also, despite there were community-based child health checkups under the *Posyandu* system, once the mandatory vaccinations were completed, mothers tended to stop attending, resulting in limited opportunities to monitor the growth of infants and young child thereafter," she explains. "The introduction of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook has played a significant role in ensuring records of pregnancy progress, childbirth, and childcare, providing a means to communicate within families and between families and



Above: A healthcare professional, with the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in hand, inquiries about the health status of the child at home

Below: Motherhood education program utilizing the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in the matchilhandbooks



A mother looks at her child's Maternal and Child Health Handbook, featuring illustrations tailored to the circumstances in Indonesia



Both Photos: JICA Osaki Keiko



Above: Maternal and child health handbooks in Indonesia have been adapted to each province by featuring a photo of a local mother and child on the cover, making them more relatable.

Left: Sharing insights gained in Indonesia through international training in Bali

healthcare professionals, then regularly monitor the health of both mother and child.”

The introduction of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Indonesia involved tailoring it to the country's unique context rather than simply translating the Japanese model. This adaptation included incorporating text as well as numerous illustrations to provide health and childcare information for pregnant women, mothers and their families, ensuring the provision of valuable health-related insights. In regions where the handbook was actively utilized, there have been observed improvements in the environment surrounding mothers and children, with continuous care provided throughout the pregnancy, childbirth, and period after childbirth. There has also been an increase in support from husbands for childbirth and home-based care. The handbook's design, featuring a photo of a local mother holding her infant on the cover, further enhances its appeal to Indonesian mothers.

“Differing from Japan's Maternal and Child Health Handbooks, the use of photos of mothers and children on the cover sparked considerable enthusiasm in the newly introduced regions. There was a strong desire to feature local parent-child photos on the cover, emphasizing the importance of increasing their sense of ownership,” explains Osaki. “While the standard version of the handbook now features a single cover, there was a time when we incorporated different parent-child photos for each of the 33 provinces in Indonesia.”

Now, with the introduction of the National Health Insurance system in 2014, the system is being put in place that anyone can receive the medical care they need. The circumstances surrounding childbirth has improved considerably. In addition, international training has begun in order to share the insights gained from the Indonesian projects with countries in Asia and Africa that are considering adopting Maternal and

Child Health Handbooks like Indonesia. JICA is also continuing to cooperate.

“Continued cooperation in various forms since the project began in the 1990s has provided Japan with a valuable learning experience in the field of international cooperation and development,” observes Osaki. “In fact, when the Maternal and Child Health Handbook was introduced, the Indonesian Ministry of Health had a strong desire to reduce infant mortality and was taking proactive steps to achieve this goal. While exploring approaches, the universal value of Japan's Maternal and Child Health Handbook, applicable globally, was recognized. I suppose that it was an opportunity for Japan to discover valuable tool that can contribute to the world.”

Reference

Key JICA international cooperation projects utilizing the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Indonesia

- **Project on Ensuring Maternal and Child Health Service with MCH Handbook Phase 2**
Term of cooperation: October 2006 to September 2009
Outline: In Indonesia, where both infant mortality and maternal mortality rates were in need of improvement, Japan provided technical assistance through development, promotion, and other forms of cooperation following the pilot implementation of the Indonesian version of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Central Java province in 1994. In this cooperation project, efforts were made nationwide to establish a system that would ensure the continued functionality of Maternal and Child Health Handbooks as a means of integrating maternal and child health services. Support included creating models for effective utilization of the handbook including motherhood education programs, enhancing training and monitoring of implementation, and conducting evaluation activities.
- **Project for Enhancing the Quality of Maternal and Child Health Program and the Implementation of Maternal and Child Health Handbook in the Era of Decentralization**
Term of cooperation: October 2018 to October 2024
Outline: To promote the continuum of care for maternal and child health in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the cooperation project focuses on pilot models of regular health check-ups using the Maternal and Child Health Handbook, the development of a booklet for preterm and low birth weight infants used alongside the handbook and exploring the utilization of digital technologies. These efforts are aimed at further enhancing maternal and child health services, particularly in key provinces. Additionally, the cooperation supports the sharing of insights with countries in Asia and Africa through the implementation of international training programs.

Reference websites:

<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/0600435/index.html>
<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1600614/index.html>

Drawn to the Art of Dance in Japan, a Thai Woman Becomes a Master of Classical Japanese Dance



The exterior of the National Theatre of Japan (Chiyoda City, Tokyo)

Photo: barman / PIXTA

Born in the Kingdom of Thailand, Okada Yuphin came to Japan in 1993 after her marriage. She began practicing classical Japanese dance in earnest in 2009, and after ten years of training, she became a *natori* — a master of classical Japanese dance — in 2019. She continues to practice under the name Hanayagi Itotomuyuu.

Koike Ginga

Before coming to Japan, Okada Yuphin worked as a hospital clerk. After marrying a Japanese man she met in Thailand, she came to Japan in 1993 at the age of 25 and began living in Tokyo.

“When I first arrived in Japan, I could barely understand Japanese, and I struggled a lot. But it is normal not to understand at first. I learned little by little, at work and in my daily life.”

In such a situation, Yuphin encountered the Bon Odori dance¹ held every summer in her neighborhood. She was fascinated by the joy of dancing with the local people, who gathered together and learned the *furitsuke*² on the spot.

“I really enjoyed participating in Bon Odori with the work colleagues

and friends I made in Japan. Even though I did not know the *furitsuke*, I imitated the way others danced and before I knew it, I had learned the steps and movements.”

After discovering the joy of dance in Japan, Yuphin began learning *Shin Buyo* (lit. “new style of dancing”)³ and made rapid progress. She was able to memorize the steps and movements quickly. Her teacher at the time recognized her dancing talent and artistic sense and recommended that she study classical Japanese dance in a more serious and structured manner. In 2009, she was introduced to Hanayagi Tamaito, a master of the Hanayagi School,⁴ and she continues to study with her master today.

“I felt really uneasy when I was introduced to the Hanayagi School, which is a traditional school of clas-

sical Japanese dance,” Yuphin says. “I still didn’t understand Japanese well, and I was worried about whether someone like me would be able to perform classical Japanese dance. But when I started attending the new class, I found the *sensei* (“master”) and more experienced students to be



Photo taken at the performance of *Uchiwa Uri* (“Fan Seller”) staged in March 2023 at the National Theatre of Japan

Photo: Hanayagi Tamaito



Hanayagi Itotomuyuu Okada Yuphin Photo: Hanayagi Tamaito



Okada Yuphin Photo: Okada Yuphin

warm-hearted and nice. This made me feel at ease, and I was able to continue studying.”

The most difficult part was the exam to be qualified as a *natori*,⁵ a challenge she took on in 2019. Until then, her *sensei*, Hanayagi Tamaito, had suggested several times that Yuphin should take the exam, but she lacked confidence and kept declining. However, a senior student who was a good friend of hers urged her to take on the challenge, and Yuphin decided to give it a try. Once decided, she began a rigorous training program.

“I was working, and in addition

to my regular training, I had to practice for the *natori* exam. Even though I was praised for my dancing skills, perhaps surprisingly good for a non-Japanese, I knew that once I became a *natori*, I would be expected to dance well as a matter of course. The audience looks at you more strictly, and most importantly, your own attitude changes a lot.”

Yuphin says she was so nervous on the day of the exam that she lost her footing. Still, she managed to pass with flying colors on the first try and was given the name Hanayagi Itotomuyuu.

“A person who has always supported me came up with the name ‘Itotomuyuu.’ It is a combination of the character ‘*ito*,’ which is one of the characters in my master’s name, the phrase ‘*tomu*’ (meaning ‘giving many dreams’), which expresses my desire to inspire many dreams, and the character ‘*yuu*’ (lit. ‘graceful, gentle’), which represents the first sound of my given name, Yuphin.”

This year marks Yuphin’s 15th year of practicing classical Japanese dance. “I would like to teach Japanese dance to children in Thailand one day,” she says of her future goals.

1. In Japan, there is a summer custom, called Bon, of visiting the graves of one’s ancestors and making offerings, usually in mid-August. The term “Bon Odori” refers to the dance performed during the Bon period as a ritual to honor the ancestors or as a community event.
2. Choreography, the movements performed to music or song in a dance.
3. A general term for Japanese dance styles that differ from traditional classical Japanese dance forms and aim to create new forms with Western influences.
4. A school of classical Japanese dance founded in the mid-19th century by Hanayagi Jusuke.
5. A type of qualification in which a person is recognized by a school as having a certain level of skill after an examination. A *natori* is entitled to use his or her official stage name. (In the case of the Hanayagi school, the person’s name is added after “Hanayagi”).



Tomoe, a *noh* play scheduled to be included in the January 19, 2024 Showcase

The play focuses on Lady Tomoe, a female warrior who fought under Kiso Yoshinaka around the time of the Genpei War. Although fighting bravely, she meets with defeat. Lady Tomoe's great sorrow, in not being allowed to die together with her master Yoshinaka, is profoundly moving. The performer in the photo has a *Fushiki-zo* mask with the face of a young woman and wears a *Karaori* robe (a weave robe with a raised pattern), the most gorgeous type of *shozoku* costume as a top layer. The photo shows the performer holding a weapon called a *naginata*.⁴

Photo: National Noh Theatre

An Introduction to Nohgaku Appreciation: From the National Noh Theatre to the World

The Japan Cultural Expo 2.0 aims to build momentum for the upcoming Expo 2025 (World Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai), to support renewed interest in inbound travel to Japan, and to encourage further demand for domestic tourism. It also features a focus on “The Beauty and The Spirit of Japan,” promoting Japanese cultural arts and spreading awareness of their diverse and universal charms within Japan and around the world. This is a large-scale project with Japanese cultural facilities, arts organizations, and many others hosting and participating in a diverse range of projects and events. In this article, from among these participants, we will highlight the National Noh Theatre's involvement in the Japan Cultural Expo 2.0, offering an introduction to *nohgaku* appreciation.

Moribe Shinji

Nohgaku is the most traditional of Japan's performing arts, with a more than 600-year history of performance. The term embraces two contrasting forms of expression: *noh* with its stylized refinement, and *kyogen* with its cheerful humor. In 2001, UNESCO recognized *nohgaku* as an Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Special masks worn by leading actors, who are known as *shite*,¹ are a major feature of *noh*. *Noh* masks may represent figures including women, samurai warriors, and elderly characters, as well as otherworldly forms such as *kami* deities, spirits, and ogres. By subtly raising or lowering their faces

to emphasize the effects of light and shadows on the masks, *shite* are able to express a wide range of emotions. The showy *shozoku* costumes worn by performers to match their roles are another highlight of *noh*. These feature some of the most gorgeous and finely detailed weaving techniques of any kimono. *Noh* also features musical accompaniment by *hayashi* ensembles playing *fue* bamboo flutes, *kotsuzumi* small hand drums, *otsuzumi* hip drums, and *taiko* stick drums, as well as *jiutai* choruses that sing and chant out the storyline, setting, and so on. These form a complete whole, bringing the audience into the world of *yugen*,² or subtle and profound beauty.

Meanwhile, *kyogen* plays feature comedic dialogue with familiar events from everyday life as the subject matter. The plays highlight human foolishness and weakness in ways that modern audiences can relate to and laugh about.

These unique features of *nohgaku* have attracted attention outside Japan as well, leading to an increasing number of performances overseas. However, many *nohgaku* pieces are concerned with the world of medieval Japan. This can make it difficult for audiences to appreciate the plays if they are not familiar with the historical background, characters, culture of the era, and so on.



National Noh Theatre stage

Originally, *noh* stages were built outdoors. It has only been in modern times (from around the mid to late 19th century) that they have taken the form of the *nohgaku* theater, with the stage and audience seating brought together inside a large building. The central backdrop to the *noh* stage features a painting of evergreen pine trees.

Photo: National Noh Theatre



Karaori, Flower and raft design on red and white checkered ground

Mid-Edo period, 18th century

Shozoku costumes featuring red were said to indicate young women.

Photo: National Noh Theatre



Noh masks

Left: *Hakushiki-jo* (“white-colored old man”), a form of *okina-men* (old-man mask)

Center: *Ko-omote* (“young woman”), an *onna-men* (female mask)

Right: *Hannya* (horned demoness), an *onryo-men* (vengeful spirit mask)

Photo: National Noh Theatre

In response, the National Noh Theatre, has taken a number of approaches to accommodate audiences. Located in Tokyo’s Sendagaya area, the theatre regularly presents *nohgaku* performances. Its recent audience outreach efforts include preparing a guidebook written in English, installing screens to display subtitles on all seats, and providing explanations in English concerning the dialogue, the content of the *jiutai* chorus’s singing, chanting, and established routines, and so on—all in real time. In addition, the theater also regularly presents Showcases³ offering casual enjoyment of *nohgaku*. The National Noh Theatre posts information about regular performances and Showcases on its website. Also, beyond this, the Cultural Heritage Online portal website also displays *noh* masks, *shozoku* costumes, and other items in the National Noh Theatre’s collection (see below) to help audiences deepen their understanding of *nohgaku*.

As part of the Japan Cultural Expo 2.0, the National Noh Theatre website

began streaming a PR video on the Showcases (see below) featuring shots from a wide range of angles, numerous closeups, and more to convey the charms of *nohgaku* in a way easy for viewers to understand. In addition, the National Noh Theatre holds *nohgaku* appreciation classes and workshops for visitors from outside Japan. It also offered experiences including backstage tours led by *nohgaku* performers proficient in languages other

than Japanese. The Keio Plaza Hotel in Shinjuku, Tokyo, where visitors from overseas often stay, also hosted an exhibition as an introduction to *nohgaku*, with demonstrations by *nohgaku* performers and more.

On January 19, 2024, another Showcase will be held at the National Noh Theatre. If you have the chance, please take this opportunity to experience the charms of Japan’s proud *nohgaku* tradition.

Reference websites

■ Japan Cultural Expo 2.0-related information

Agency for Cultural Affairs website
<https://japanculturalexpo.bunka.go.jp/en/>

The Japan Cultural Expo 2.0 aims to build enthusiasm for the upcoming World Expo 2025, support renewed interest in inbound travel to Japan, and encourage further demand for domestic tourism. It focuses on “The Beauty and The Spirit of Japan,” promoting Japanese cultural arts and spreading awareness of the diverse and universal charms they have.

■ National Noh Theatre-related information

National Noh Theatre
<https://www.ntj.jac.go.jp/en/theatre/noh/>

National Noh Theatre Showcase (January 19, 2024)
<https://www.ntj.jac.go.jp/schedule/nou/2023/11020.html?lan=e>

■ Cultural Heritage Online

<https://bunka.nii.ac.jp/>
 Search results for “*noh* masks”
<https://bunka.nii.ac.jp/heritages/search?page=1&title=%E8%83%BD%E9%9D%A2>

1. In *noh*, the main actor, or protagonist, is known as the *shite*, and the performer who serves to highlight features of the *shite*’s acting is known as the *waki*. There are five schools of *shite-kata*, or the groups centered on *shite-kata*, but also including other several positions. Kanze, Komparu, Hosho, Kongo, and Kita. In *kyogen* as well, the main protagonist is known as the *shite*. There are two schools of *kyogen* performers: Okura and Izumi.
2. The state of a deep and subtle lingering beauty that cannot be expressed in words. The term was first used in relation to appreciation of *waka* poetry. It has represented one of the fundamental aesthetic principles in the arts and entertainments of Japan, such as literature, painting, *nohgaku*, the tea ceremony, and architecture, since medieval times.
3. Compact *nohgaku* performances that can be enjoyed at low cost. Opening talks by *nohgaku* performers are also provided. These have made the events popular as introductions to appreciating *nohgaku*.
4. A weapon with a curved blade attached to the end of a long, wooden staff.

Oshidori Mandarin Duck



Photo: PIXTA

A male and female mandarin duck float together on the water

National Important Cultural Property, *Kosode* (Garment with small wrist openings), Design of Mandarin Ducks and Waves on Black Figured Satin (closeup of mandarin duck pair portion)

Edo Period, 17th Century (Collection of Tokyo National Museum)

See *HIGHLIGHTING Japan*, October 2023 Issue: “The Beauty of Kimono”

The *Oshidori* (mandarin duck), a member of the *Anatidae* family of waterbirds, lives in Far East Asia. It is a migrating bird that lives in north-central Honshu (the main island of Japan) in summer and heads south in winter. It eats acorns, fish, and aquatic insects. Males are about 45 to 50 cm long, and females are a little over 40 cm long. The male's feathers, like the female's, is usually grayish brown, making it inconspicuous, but during breeding season from fall to spring, the male's feathers transform into a beautiful orange color scheme. Mandarin ducks are monogamous (getting married to one at a particular time) and can sometimes be seen pairing up. In Japan, affectionate human couples are familiarly called *Oshidori fufu* (“mandarin duck couples”), and this is why mandarin duck pair motifs have been used since ancient times in works of art and kimono patterns as symbols of harmonious marital relations (See photo: Important Cultural Property, Short-Sleeved Kimono Design: Mandarin Ducks and Waves on Black Figured Satin).



Photo: ColBase

(<https://colbase.nich.go.jp/>)

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