

Reaffirming Japan's Full Support for Thailand to join the CPTPP

On 18 July 2018, Japan and Thailand held a high-level economic meeting in Tokyo to discuss how to promote multilateral free trade and strength cooperation in infrastructure development. Both nations agreed to work together towards the Southeast Asian countries' entry into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), as they boost economic cooperation aimed at promoting free trade. Moreover, the two nations also reviewed their bilateral economic agenda and agreed to advance railway development projects in Thailand.

Following the abrupt withdrawal of the United States from the former Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement in January 2017, Japan has led the negotiations to form a new trade deal involving Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. On 8 March 2018, eleven Pacific Rim countries signed the CPTPP in Chile. Since then, Japan and the other CPTPP members have been hoping to increase the number of members, while encouraging the United States to return to the trade pact. With this final point in mind, Yoshihide Suga, Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan, addressed the importance of the construction of a new international economic order during the meeting between Japan and Thailand.

With Thailand having expressed its readiness to join the CPTPP, the Japanese representative reaffirmed that Japan is willing to support the accession of Thailand to the CPTPP and both sides will accelerate working-level consultations to that end. This helps forge closer ties between the two countries and creates more opportunity for Thailand to join the trade pact due to Japan's leading role in negotiating and signing the CPTPP. In addition, both nations expressed determination

to continue advancing railway development projects in Thailand. Citing an agreement on Japan's support to build a high-speed railway system connecting Bangkok and Chiang Mai, reached in the previous meeting last year, H.E. Dr. Somkid Jatusripitak, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, said the project helped bring Japan and Thailand closer.

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