

Junichiro Koizumi

JAPAN AND ASEAN IN EAST ASIA
A Sincere and Open Partnership



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JUNICHIRO KOIZUMI

Junichiro Koizumi is Prime Minister of Japan and President of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the largest party in the National Diet.

Born on 8 January 1942 in Yokosuka city, Kanagawa Prefecture, Mr Koizumi graduated from the Faculty of Economics, Keio University, in 1967.

He began his political career in 1970 when he became Secretary to Mr Takeo Fukuda, then a Member of the House of Representatives. In 1972, Mr Koizumi himself was elected to the House of Representatives, in which he remained a member through ten consecutive elections.

In 1980, he became Chairman of the Finance Committee of the LDP, and in 1986 he was Chairman of the Committee on Finance in the House of Representatives. Then in 1987, he was appointed Chief Deputy Chairman of the Diet Affairs Committee, of the LDP.

In 1988, he assumed the post of Minister for Health and Welfare in the reshuffled Takeshita Cabinet and the following Uno Cabinet. The next year, he became Chairman of the National Organization Committee of the LDP as well as Chairman of the party's Research Commission on Fundamental Policies for Medical Care. Two years later, he was assigned to the LDP as Chief Deputy Secretary-General.

He was appointed Minister for Posts and Telecommunications in 1992 when Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa reshuffled his Cabinet. Then in 1996, he resumed the Health and Welfare portfolio in the second Hashimoto Cabinet, and continued to serve in this Ministry when the Cabinet was reshuffled the following year.

In April 2001 he won the party presidential elections and became Prime Minister.

Mr Koizumi has two sons.

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Opening Address

Tony Tan Keng Yam

Your Excellency Mr Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Koizumi and all of you to the 20th Singapore Lecture. The Singapore Lecture was inaugurated in 1980, and since then, many prominent world leaders have addressed the forum.

This morning, we are honoured to have with us His Excellency Mr Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan.

We are delighted that Prime Minister Koizumi has chosen Singapore as the venue to convey his vision for Japan-ASEAN partnership in the 21st century. This demonstrates the importance Japan places on its relations with Singapore and ASEAN.

Japan has played a major role in the economic development of Southeast Asia, especially after the Plaza Accord in 1985. The extensive Japanese contributions to this region can be felt through the omnipresence of its investments, technology and products.

Japan's engagement with Southeast Asia is not limited to commerce and economics. Since the Fukuda Doctrine was enunciated in 1977 by the then Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda for "heart-to-heart exchanges" between Japan and ASEAN, Japan's role in the region has expanded beyond economics into the areas of political co-operation and cultural exchanges. After 25 years, it is time to evaluate the Fukuda Doctrine and examine ways to move forward. Prime Minister Koizumi's speech today will provide his vision of Japan-ASEAN relations, taking it to a higher level.

Prime Minister Koizumi enjoys extraordinarily high popularity in Japan. It is said that his parliamentary performances have become prime time viewing. As a result there has been a surge in cable TV subscriptions in order to follow the live telecast of his debates in the Diet.

What is even more remarkable is that the Prime Minister is popular without being populist. He did not become Prime Minister by making rosy promises. He was chosen Liberal Democratic Party President in April 2001 in spite of his blunt message that the Japanese people must endure pain in order to revitalize Japan. It takes immense political courage to tell the truth. And it requires unusual political skills to carry the truth into acceptance.

Prime Minister Koizumi has an impressive political career. He entered politics at the young age of 30 and is now serving his tenth term in the House of Representatives.

Prior to becoming Prime Minister, he had also been appointed to several Cabinet portfolios, including the Minister for Health and Welfare, and the Minister for Posts and Telecommunications.

Many analysts in Japan have argued that if anyone can do it, it will be the highly popular and unconventional Prime Minister Koizumi who will lead Japan through its painful domestic reforms and revitalize its economy.

When I called on Prime Minister Koizumi last September, he told me that he last visited Singapore some 20 years ago. He also informed me that he was looking forward to visiting Singapore and making a speech on Japan's foreign policy. Today, I am happy to invite Prime Minister Koizumi to expound his vision of Japan-ASEAN partnership in the 21st century. Prime Minister Koizumi's choice of topic reflects the great importance Japan attaches to its relations with ASEAN, while his choice of venue to deliver the speech underscores how Japan and Singapore can work together for the interest of the region.

It now leaves me to invite His Excellency Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to deliver the 20th Singapore Lecture entitled "Japan and ASEAN in East Asia: A Sincere and Open Partnership".