

**SPEECH BY NUSS PRESIDENT MR DAVID HO
AT MEET-THE-AMBASSADOR SERIES WITH
JAPANESE AMBASSADOR TO SINGAPORE
13 MARCH 2013, WEDNESDAY
7PM AT KENT RIDGE GUILD HOUSE**

Your Excellency Yoichi Suzuki, Japanese Ambassador to Singapore
Fellow NUSS members and friends

The Meet-the-Ambassador Series is one of our highlight talk events to bring ambassadors to NUSS to share with us various insights at the closed door sessions. I had lunch with the Japanese Ambassador earlier to let him know that we ask very pertinent questions at the talk albeit in a polite manner.

As you know, Japan has been in the news recently and we are delighted that the ambassador is taking time to share with us the new relationship which Japan intends to build with ASEAN. ASEAN, as a gathering of countries, is a very strategic gathering in Asia. With the spotlight over Japan's relationship with North Korea and China, we have to look at how we could balance and defuse potential conflicts in the region. I think the ambassador will also share with us some insights on the relationship between ASEAN and Japan.

At the same time, to bring things a little closer to home, Japan and Singapore have been very close partners all these years. Japan's foreign minister visited us in January 2013 and the country's leaders always spend time with our leaders to deepen the relationship and discuss the role that Singapore could play with Japan and ASEAN.

It is also interesting to see that Japan, after all these years, is still progressing very well. This morning I read about 'Abenomics', which involves big spending and hyper-easy monetary policy. I really do not know if that will help ASEAN but I was also very happy to read that Japan is very supportive of ASEAN countries, for example, Japan provided loans to Myanmar. So this is something which maybe the ambassador would share with us on how we are moving forward.

Every day I am hearing news and this is the first time I am hearing about the seven years of US occupancy in Japan. As a young man, I am very young and I am reading this for the first time, so pardon my ignorance, but maybe Your Excellency would share with us what this is all about.

Ambassador Suzuki is a Friend of NUSS. Before I let Bernard introduce His Excellency's distinguished career in foreign service, I was trying to search for things I have in common with Ambassador Suzuki and I realised something interesting. Ambassador Suzuki plays very good golf and I seldom play golf, so we do not have that in common. The ambassador is a very distinguished scholar. I just found out that he is a law graduate of a very distinguished Japanese university and he did his Masters in public policy in France. He is also an expert in WTO negotiations. And for that, again, we have nothing in common – I am far from that. So I was trying to look at what I have in common with him, and I finally found one – he has three sons and I have three sons – and that is the only common thing.

Enjoy the evening, thank you very much.