

Aging in East Asia & Southeast Asia – Opportunities & Challenges

By Naoyuki Haraoka

Asia is often characterized as a region of diversity. Aging is no exception. In Asia, there are some countries suffering from greying populations but others are enjoying the energetic growth of younger populations.

Area wise, East Asia and Southeast Asia are in the first category. This issue focuses on these parts of Asia and showcases the merits and the demerits of aging and how to take full advantage of a maturing population for prosperity and well-being. However, other parts of Asia will face the same issue of aging as time passes, since this is the destiny of human civilizations overall. The nations with younger populations should learn about the lessons of aging societies in East Asia and Southeast Asia. In particular, large nations with bigger populations can draw valuable lessons from those currently facing this challenge.

JEF collaborated with ERIA, a Jakarta-based international organization on economic policy, in 2024 in conducting research on aging in Thailand and Singapore, and this May/June 2025 issue of *Japan SPOTLIGHT* highlights this theme in its cover story.

As usual, we start with a Roundtable discussion on the issue, this time with international experts from Thailand, Singapore and the United States. The issue of aging covers a variety of aspects, such as economic, social and political, as well as national security. Our experts' short policy-oriented essays follow. Dr. Poowin Buyavejchewin and co-authors talk about the possibilities and

potential for the residential care industry in Thailand, as a runoff benefit of an aging society. Dr. Rahimah Ibrahim, a leading gerontology expert in Malaysia, discusses how to enhance the well-being of elderly people by social welfare programs, labor market policies, and thoughtful use of healthcare-related technologies to achieve an inclusive longevity dividend. Dr. Insil Yi, president of the Korean Peninsula Population Institute for the Future, talks about South Korea's future policy to improve productivity through elderly-friendly innovation and to pursue a new growth strategy suitable for a super-aged society faced with a seriously shrinking population.

Finally, Dr. Tomohiko Moriyama, a young Japanese expert on aging societies from the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, talks about a very interesting aspect of a super-aged society – the need for people around 60 in Japan to work in nursing care for their parents. Would this affect their employment patterns or occupational status? This is a serious question for our super-aged society in Japan.

An aging society creates a number of serious challenges and difficulties, and we will need to do our best to turn them into chances. We will need not only government policies but also great efforts from communities and individuals as well.

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