

## **\*SPECIAL ISSUE ON COVID 19 AND JAPAN\***

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COVID-19 has changed the world dramatically to a new normal. The entire world is affected including Malaysia and Japan. We wear masks ubiquitously as well as consistently. We practice social distancing, limit our movements and sterilize our hands to prevent infections. More significantly, COVID-19 has led to thousands losing their livelihood, poverty has become habitual together with uneasiness, chaos and riots taking place far and wide. How has Japan adapted to the pandemic?

Hence, to cognise the “new normal”, we have come up with a special theme-based issue to debate and deliberate the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts as well as lessons learned from the crisis. With a special reference to Japan, the special issue discusses politics, social and economic aspects. There are three politically infused articles such as *Tokyo Gubernatorial Election During Pandemic, Democracy vs “Demo” Crazy; Leadership in Time of Crisis: The COVID-19 Pandemic in Japan and Reflections for Malaysia*; and *COVID-19 Strengthens the Solidarity and Association of Southeast Asian Nations–Japan Cooperation*. Meanwhile, three other articles debate pertinent social aspects which are *The Disruption of the 1940 and 2020 Tokyo Olympics: Sports Diplomacy During War and Pandemic*; *COVID-19 Pandemic Management: Best Practices and Lessons from China, Japan and South Korea*; and *Challenges and Opportunities in the Inbound Tourism of Japan after Disaster and Pandemic*. Last but not least, economics related articles include *Global Pandemic, Technology Boom and New Business Trends: A Case of Japan*; *Coronavirus Impact on Online Purchases Behaviour in Japan*; and *COVID-19: Implications on SME’s Businesses in Japan*.

The majority of the contributors are experts on East Asia, particularly on Japan, China and Korea. The array of articles with their diversity showcase multifaced subjects related to the pandemic. For example, Asmadi Hassan who is an expert on Japanese politics explores the Tokyo gubernatorial election during the pandemic in Tokyo. Even during the peak of COVID-19 cases, democratic principles demanded the election to proceed as usual. Therefore, Asmadi highlights the nature of democratic ideals against "demo" crazy to show the conflict of norms between the demands of democracy and the imprudence of holding elections even when the situation is inappropriate.

Rohayati Paidi, who is an expert on Japanese society and culture discusses the effect on inbound tourism following the pandemic. While the pandemic resulted in negative impacts to Japan, it also provides opportunities. It is well-established that the COVID-19 pandemic had an arguably great impact on tourism activities. Yet there is an opportunity for tourism stakeholders in Japan to use the sentiment of ‘longing’ to capture prospective tourists, especially those who have previously visited Japan. Taking into account nostalgia and sentiment of ‘longing’, travel agencies can now package travel deals on “previously visited locations” as an attractive offer to foreign tourists.

Alias Abdullah who is an expert on Japan’s economy explores the COVID-19 impact on online purchase behaviour in Japan. Research findings perceptibly indicate that during the pandemic, people's consumption habits changed significantly due to fear of coronavirus infections. Although there has been a sharp decline in demand for services involving face-to-face interactions, such as dining out and entertainment outside of one’s home, the online consumption of products and services or e-commerce increased exponentially, and this trend is expected to continue even when the pandemic subsides. The above explanation has

deliberated on some of the topics underlined in the special issue. We hope readers will be intrigued enough to continue perusing the rest of the articles. More significantly, we hope our special issue has highlighted Japan, its people and the country's perseverance in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic head-on, despite some disruptions along the way.

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Dr. Asmadi Hassan

Dr. Geetha Govindasamy