

for farming. Farm land prices shot up, and labor became short in supply. Yet, Japan is evaluated highly for taking measures to resolve these problems. Moreover, agriculture is being guided to pay more attention to the impact on the environment. This is emphasized in government subsidy for organic farming and agricultural business system including attention to the welfare of farm workers.

This is part of what I felt during my stay in Japan. In the course of rapid development in various areas, much of the society maintains values such as friendship, closeness, and mutual respect. I believe all such values contribute to friendly relations extending beyond nation, religion, and culture.

Dream Becomes Reality

Suhaimi Bin Ramli
Education Group



Japan is a nation that awed not only Asia but the world with its spectacular growth. That is why a visit to Japan is a dream for everyone who wishes to see its postwar recovery.

Stepping on Japanese soil for the first time, we saw it is a modernized nation and witnessed the speed with which it modernized. The development Japan achieved dimmed our memory of the country's destruction by atomic bombs. Still, it is important for us to feel for ourselves and deepen our understanding by actually visiting the country.

How could Japan accomplish such achievement? The key to success lies in the Japanese

discipline both at work and in their spare time. The Japanese are tireless, hard-working people who do not mind working overtime. To them, productivity of the company is more important. We can learn even from how they keep time. This is true, as demonstrated in the programme itinerary and schedule.

Their attitude toward work and their sense of discipline and responsibility are reflected in how everything proceeds as scheduled. These Japanese values are viewed with awe around the world.

Japan is unique also in the area of culture. Tea ceremony, for example, is conducted in an orderly fashion. Each movement mirrors the attention to cultural finesse. Another factor that must not be forgotten is the way the *kimono* is worn. There was great elegance in the style and details of the *kimono*. Every custom has its own unique meaning.

I must also mention the issue of sanitation, which is regarded with great importance and is applied to everything from global concerns to what we might consider negligible.

Another surprising Japanese characteristic is honesty. I wonder why.

Every forgotten item is delivered without fail. How peaceful the world will be if each person cares to be honest. The key to our happiness is peace. Japan's bitter history teaches us how important harmony among people is. There are countless number of experiences that have been both beautiful and instructive, but it is difficult to put down in writing. What is important here is that change cannot come in a country unless the people themselves take action to change destiny.

Lastly, I would like to express my deep gratitude to JICA and the Public Services Department of Malaysia. I must not forget to acknowledge my indebtedness to PAMAJA (Malaysia-Japan Alumni Association), Devel-

opment Association for Youth-DAY-, the coordinator, the host families of Kitagou, Miyazaki, and young Japanese counterparts who have made the programme a success and made our dreams come true. Without them, I could have done nothing.

In closing, I would like to quote a Malay four-line poem:

Pandang Island is halfway remote;
 Mount Daik splits into three peaks;
 Even when worn flesh returns to soil;
 Good deeds are never forgotten.

Friendship

Mat Azami Bin Yoop Yunus

Scientific and Technological
 Development Group



My knowledge of Japan was that it is the world's most advanced nation. It is developed in every aspect. The Japanese are the only people who are enthusiastic at work, extremely disciplined, honest and trustworthy, rigidly loyal to their culture, traditions, and customs, not distrustful of others, and are open in thinking.

I was extremely happy when the Public Services Department of Malaysia gave me the opportunity to participate in this Youth Invitation Programme. It was perpetual joy. I never thought I would set foot on the Land of the Rising Sun, but it became reality. It is one sweet memory. It is beautiful, unforgettable memory.

Everything started from the effort to build the spirit of solidarity at MARA Institute of

Science and Trolak by the Public Services Department, PAMAJA, and JICA. The pre-departure orientation programme started at Wisma Belia (youth center) in Kuala Lumpur. I met a lot of people there. We got to know each other by building solidarity. In this spirit of solidarity, I was taught the meaning of "friendship". How important is friendship, real friends, and where you meet them. Away from kin and family and in a faraway country, friends are your family. They are everything.

At 6:30 a.m. on September 13 when the busy Japanese were starting a new day, I landed at Narita Airport with the rest of the Youth Invitation Programme participants. We brought from our home country the resolve not to be discouraged by anything. After arriving at Hotel Metropolitan where we resided in Tokyo, I walked with my friends around Ikebukuro.

Our life at the hotel gradually became a daily routine. In seminar after seminar, lecture after lecture, our bond with the Japanese became stronger. It was an exciting experience. "Learn Japanese on the Move" with Japanese volunteers was wonderful and interesting, making language problems only minor. This feeling and experience came back again when we deepened friendship with Japanese participants in the In-house Seminar in another part of Japan. In homestay, sense of closeness with the host family grew to the point that I could feel their heartbeat. It was beautiful and sweet. It is not useless to foster friendship with as many sincere people as possible.

This reminded me of an old Malay "Pantong" (four-line rhyme):

Fresh and ruby-colored mango bud
 Marine Catfish fry in the palm of my hands
 Remains in the heart though out of sight
 Far away for thousands of miles
 It is a poem I dedicate to my host family,

friends, and people I met for the first time.

I chanted my promise with my host family with the Japanese style of making promises called "yubi-kiri genman."

"Promise with fingers. Swallow 1000 needles if you tell a lie!" It was an unforgettable and true promise I made when I was with my host family.

The visit to historic monuments and graves in Hiroshima was also memorable. Despite the lack of time and fatigue, each visit was very meaningful.

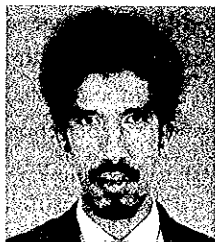
Tokyo, Toyokawa, Kyoto, Osaka, and Hiroshima are certain to become nostalgic memory and one thing that I will never forget.

Japan: As I Experienced

Sahful Bahri Bin Johar

ASEAN Comp.

Education 2 Group



During the Introduction to Organization Concerned, one of the participants mistakenly addressed himself as his country's name which made everybody in the room laugh.

Well, that made a happy start to our programme schedule and showed the effectiveness of Japanese lessons (*nemui desuka?*). It was then our great Miura san from Yuai Association came on the scene, who was always saying 'Be happy', asking us to enjoy the programmes and I for one actually love this programme throughout.

The first lecture was rather dissappointing because of the Japanese-English used by the

lecturer which was not familiar in my daily usage, but then I was able to cope with other lectures later on.

I had a very great time visiting so many historical places and museums which made me realise that Japan has a long interesting history of modernization in administration, economy and culture which astonished me so much.

We were visiting so many schools and were given chances to interact with students in their classes personally, which I found to be very educative. But somehow it seems strange to me, as for the male participants, they found it difficult to learn *Origami* unless being helped by the girl students. I really wonder why? Well, to the students, thank you very much for the lunch which we really enjoyed.

The climax of our trip to Japan was the homestay in Kumamoto. For me, homestay was the best programme which I will always treasure for the rest of my life. My host parents, Mr. Tadanobu and his wife Yasukosan, made my stay with them so lively. They were always treating me as if I was their very own son, in fact I had become their spoilt son and I love it. Thanks, papa and mama. Do make homestay a compulsory because I think it will always bring sweet memories to the participants even though some of them are very scared before meeting host families. During the *kimono* dressing session, I found it difficult to recognize my other Malaysian colleagues. They seem to look more like Japanese than Malaysian. Well done to the kimono instructors for the outstanding job. You are all truly professionals in your fields.

In-house Seminar had made me feel very close to the Japanese counterparts. We went shopping together for spices and had discussions formally and informally. They were helping us cook our own traditional dishes.

And that remind me to say thanks to Mr. Miura for the *Halal* meat. One night, I actually stayed up until four in the morning conversing with the Japanese counterparts. At that time I felt that language is not a barrier for making good friends.

Visiting Minamata and Hiroshima will always be on my mind. The disaster made by humankind for being selfish towards others. Greed in a few people has caused a life-long suffering to many innocent lives. In Hiroshima I realized that no one is to be blamed for the damage done and that peace should always be in every Person's mind. Nuclear weapons should be destroyed thoroughly from this world.

Shinkansen trip is fast. Wow! What an experience! But then we should always be alert since in our group there was a professional photographer who was always waiting to take a snap shot of participants who fell asleep. Well, at last she too became a victim of her own game.

Lucky for my group, we had the two prettiest coordinators accompanying us all the time and they were ever so friendly and helpful towards satisfying our needs. They are also very efficient in giving us the up-to-date information from time to time. Thank you very much Keiko-chan and Sunny-san.

To all the people concerned in this programme, thank you very much from the bottom of my heart, and this is the word which all of us in the group would like to express for the nice time we had in Japan. You have shown us your great hospitality and I think Japan is a country of warm loving people.

*Sayonara.....*from me.

■ Asia

■ Philippines

Yamanashi: A Home away from Home

Jayagan Ma. Pearly Joan
Education Group



In the heart of Japan lies one of the most beautiful and unforgettable places I have ever been to YAMANASHI.

"What is in Yamanashi that makes it a well-loved place by people who have visited it?" This question has been asked time and again by visitors to this "Environmental capital of Japan" including the 22 Philippines Education Group '95 delegates for the Youth Invitation Programme. Various answers had been given, I, myself, had tried answering this question a couple of times and always ended up searching for the right words that would describe my feelings.

I once thought that Yamanashi is all equated with Mt. Fuji, the most photographed volcano in the world, thus I said to a Japanese friend, "Yamanashi is so beautiful, we have come to love it at first sight because of its harmony with nature, and your greatest treasure is Mt. Fuji."

To my amazement, Mt. Fuji is not the all and end all of Yamanashi. It has its other secrets and showcase of national treasures distinctly separate from the glory of Mt. Fuji. Such would be known if one has lived in Yamanashi.

My 10-day stay in Yamanashi was so short time to be able to explore all its scenic spots and historical places. On the other hand, it was long enough for me to get to know the different facets of life in Yamanashi, a microcosm of Japan.

The visits to various schools in Yamanashi did not only reveal more of Japan's educational system but also unveiled the similarities and contrasts of both Japan's and Philippines' system of education. Indeed the feeling of belongingness enveloped us when we made our visit. Students had eagerly responded to us in the same manner that they had responded to their teachers, despite the language barrier. It was as if we were back in our own classrooms in the Philippines. Basically, both countries' teachers teach the same subject matter, the only difference lies in the fact that Japanese students are luckier in terms of availability of equipment and materials needed for a better understanding and application of topics/lessons discussed. The Filipino students, meanwhile, have to make use of their vast imaginative skills and ingenuity to compensate for the lack of these materials. This is one reality which I have to accept and contend with, Philippines being a developing country.

The visits to various museums and temples had been very educational. It made us more aware of Japan's culture and tradition, what fascinated me most though was the Shadow Museum in Shosenkyo, listed in the 1994 Guinness Book of Records as the only Shadow Museum in the world. The feeling is like that of going back in time when nature was in its full glory and splendor and wherein animals, trees, flowers and man are all living in harmony. It was indeed a reflection of the Yamanashi people's love for nature.

I could not stop searching for the answers to my question without thinking of the warm,

kind and loving people of Yamanashi who have gone out of their way to welcome all of us — the officials of the Prefectural Government, our coordinators, Japanese counterparts, students, teachers, YMCA staff, bus drivers and guides, the crew of Royal Garden Hotel, and the foster families — the very people who have made our stay in their prefecture a very memorable one. These people, I believe are the most prized possession of YAMANASHI, the very answer to the question of why I have come to love YAMANASHI very much. And I know deep in this heart of mine Yamanashi will always occupy a special part, especially the very people who have given us a HOME AWAY FROM HOME.

Friendship's Wings

Alvie Nonette G. Capili
Social Development Group



Time is neither stopped nor stretched and covering the distance back to the Philippines shall have been a past occurrence. How ironic it is to leave home for the purpose of coming back. Yet in the shaping and molding by a gratifying, wholesome experience, one may come home in the same wrappings, the same form and yet in a different light and bearing a greater value.

Miyajima Island, the homestays and In-house Seminar, the tea ceremony — all these and more came and sped before our very eyes and caught us with awe and wonder, puzzlement and cheer. There is but a million particu-

lar reasons for the different tones and variations in laughter, plus the bustle of emotions that sometimes get caught up in misty eyes. The explanation, however, is simple. Amidst Japan's busy lanes blossomed a place we all came to love — this place so often called "home".

I guess no scenic spot in Japan can ever radiate with glowing beauty without people around to share them with ... people you walk with, joke with, or simply greet and extend a smile to. There is so much to mention indeed, I'm afraid I must apologize for meanings which mere words may never be sufficient enough to describe.

I am but one among the many who found their homes in Japan in a matter of one month: home with a roommate, a groupmate, a countrymate, a coordinator, an ASEAN-mate, a foster family ... home with people you meet in the wink of an eye, communicate with in the presence or absence of words, get to share a certain bond with beyond each one's limitations and difficulties.

Perhaps the only loophole of the whole scenario is the lack of knowledge about the Philippines by the Japanese students. As a result, interaction has not been carried out to the fullest. This is something that could probably gain consideration in the near future.

On the aftermath, the wellspring of global understanding, I believe, takes its roots in the beauty and magic of one's eagerness to learn about another country, another culture, in the event becoming a part of a broader scope of knowledge. The more programmes are materialized, the closer we can get to attaining such goal.

Thanks to the Youth Invitation Programme, I am more than ever a part of the universal language of friendship and love as well as a living bridge between what is and what can

still be done — for a better tomorrow and a deeper essence of living. I am certain this goes for everyone as well.

Shinkansen

Jose Almodovar Cabrera, III
Economy A Group



From our seats on the *Shinkansen Hikari*, we watch the countryside rush past us. We press our faces against the glass windows but the sound of wind rustling through the trees evade us. So we sit back and watch from our windows the thousands of picture postcards we run across through the countryside. Another *Shinkansen* races past in the opposite direction. *Nozomi*, perhaps. We enter a tunnel and the darkness tries to press us in as we streak on, ever forward, and we think that maybe, for now, the *Shinkansen* is our world.

We remember the lodge in Yamanashi where we first begin to recognize the faces and remember the names of the millions of people who are part of Japan. Two worlds, two different *Shinkansen* running us, maybe, opposite directions. But, we realize, even more in common than we thought possible. And so we rush on forward to our destination through the rain that obscures our vision and we think that, perhaps, it is fine to sit and talk.

Again, another *Shinkansen* streaks past us. *Nozomi*, perhaps. And we remember moving through the night looking for the beautiful, graceful and elusive fireflies in Shobara-shi. So we sit down and talk and we realize, as we

look at the pine and cedar groves of Kawatecho, that though our words often fail to convey our meaning, our hearts can speak for us.

From our seats on the *Hikari*, we remember Azumayama and think of our own haggard and weary faces. We watch as yet another *Shinkansen* flashes by. *Nozomi*, perhaps. We realize, again, that as we count the hours to reach the end of our journey, we often forget to stop and look around us. And talk. Maybe of big things. Maybe of little things. Maybe of our past or our present. Or, even, maybe of how we want our world to be.

And as move on, we remember Japan. We remember how our offer of friendship was received with grace and warmth. And we sit and we talk. In friendship we find that our two different worlds are one and the same. In friendship we find that our hopes for peace is one and the same.

Rediscovering Japan

Racquel Reyes-Aglaua
Economy B Group



The Youth Invitation Programme has been a perfect scheme to develop and strengthen close personal ties between and among the people of Japan and the Philippines. In addition, it was the right opportunity for me to confirm most of my preconceived notions about Japan and to dispel some of my biases against its people.

At the outset, the Programme's objective had seemed to be an easy job. But to achieve this

in Japan made it difficult. There were many things that had happened in the past that could strain the friendly relations between the two states and the fear that the Japanese people would take these on us had been quite disturbing. Whatever have happened during the one-month trip to allay the fears and anxieties felt at the initial stage deserve to be written on record.

A lot of things struck me and what tops these all is Japan's people themselves. Perceived to be stern and serious people at first, the Japanese are a very warm, hospitable, equally feeling and friendly people. As we exchanged views and opinions about matters of common interest, we were at the same time assessing each other's inner selves — the persona, brains and whims, among others. The result was an unspoken bond that may turn into an eternal commitment.

The country also struck me as a tremendously rich country. High-rise buildings, flashy cars and well-dressed people met us every day. Although almost everything is expensive, almost every Japanese is rich and seems to afford the skyrocketing prices of commodities. However, for a foreigner like me, I still found the prices of goods in discount stores expensive, and yet on sale. I understand that some Japanese echo my sentiments.

Aside from financial wealth, Japan also possesses abundance in culture, traditions and exotic sites. As the country grows more into a modern and complex world of autos, electronic products and telecommunication gadgets, it is rather incredible to see her maintain her gardens, mountains and waters without any sign of environmental problem brought by industrial development.

Meanwhile, its custom of removing the shoes upon entering a room or a house which is common all over Japan still surprised me.

Again, at first I found it strange and taxing but I have learned that it is a gesture of politeness — a trait so obvious and striking in their acts and words. I think the custom helps in maintaining the cleanliness of the house. So far, it is the Japanese house that I have seen to be the most tidy, shiny and airy. In here, a homesick foreigner can find solace. Although we Filipinos are known for our hospitality, it is surprising to find this trait among the Japanese. The warmth of the family and the stillness of the house, sometimes disturbed by the wind and the soft rustle of the leaves in the garden, reminded me of my own home. Strangely though, instead of feeling homesick, I felt more at home.

On the other hand, I expected that the West had already spread out its influence among the people. In cosmopolitan areas such as Tokyo, the people have adopted the Western style. Prior to this trip, it had been unthinkable that the Japanese women would wear outlandish outfits, smoke in public and party all night. I had been naive. However, in the prefectures that we visited, the conservatism that the Japanese women had been known for in the past could still be felt among the local women. They are sweet, loving and dedicated to their men and children. It is such a pity that women are given least importance in society. They still remain in the background. Apparently, the men display superiority over women not only in their homes where the major decisions are made by the men, but also in offices where the top positions are male-dominated.

Personally, I believe that Japan still has to undergo a social revolution particularly in putting the leverage for women in the society.

On the other hand, I have great admiration for Japanese men specially for their tremendous contribution in propelling Japan's rapid development. As for all the Japanese people,

their hard work, diligence, discipline and high sense of nationalism are worth emulating. These characteristics inspired me most, and it is this great "love for country" that really contributed much to Japan's success. Having genuine concern for their resources/environment and patronizing their own products are among the things I have observed. These, I believe, are the basic and most important factors for development.

In sum, I can say that my experience in Japan has changed my total outlook of the country and its people. Travelling, indeed, widens one's horizons and deepens his perspective. I'm happy to have had the immense opportunity to experience and rediscover Japan — a beautiful country filled with beautiful people. Of course, unanswered questions remain hanging in my mind such as "Where have all the bad guys gone?" I have not encountered any. If there have been any, it would not have mattered. After all, Japan also belongs to the real world.

Dancin' with the Land of the Rising Sun

Dennis Zerna Andres
Agriculture Group



Welcome to Japan! Thus, a gentle voice echoed as JAL flight 742 from Manila gently touched the ground of Narita Airport. On board are twenty five young Filipino participants comprising the agriculture group of the 7th batch of the Youth Invitation Programme.

As we walked along the aisle heading towards the arrival area, we can't help but admire the beauty of the surroundings. For everybody, being in Japan is really a dream come true.

In a short period of time, we were exposed to Japanese language and lifestyle. Learning *Nihongo* needs enough effort though, but we find it interesting and enjoyable. On the other hand, knowing Japanese culture, its people, industry and economy is also an experience in itself.

Such orientation has somehow lead us a better understanding and appreciation of the real purpose of the programme.

In Tokyo, the places we have visited and the days spent with our Japanese counterparts further strengthened our appreciation of Japan's agro-industrial and tourism development strategies. The latter in particular, has developed in ourselves a sense of belongingness despite the communication barrier.

The Oita experience particularly the lessons learned in the prefectural government's effort of promoting regional revitalization and the homestay programme gave us an opportunity to understand agrarian living. It lead us to closely interact with the Japanese farmers. In the process, we were able to capture how they really valued themselves as a farmer and their role in addressing such issues as increased food production and successor problems.

A visit to Hiroshima gave us a feeling of grief and opened our eyes to the harsh reality of war. In here we realized the essence of a true world peace with the coexistence and prosperity of all humankind.

Indeed, the programme has not only provided us the necessary information about Japan in general, but somehow enabled us to further strengthen our role towards improving agrarian living and in fostering world peace and international cooperation.

To this we thank the government of Japan, JICA and JICE for such great opportunity. We pledge to uphold the friendship and cooperation we have all started.

Understanding Japan

Atilano John Yamane

ASEAN Comp.
Environmental
Protection Group



It took me sometime before I could really put down in writing my personal reflection about our experience. There are lots of things to focus on.

Firstly, the automation and robotic society of Japan, where the essence of time is fast and instant. I really am impressed with the preciseness of subway and bullet train. The queue of waiting time for Disneyland ride, yes indeed, time here is precious, time is gold. May I say Japanese value of discipline elaborates all this. Seeing two worlds of Japan, the Tokyo perspective and Hokkaido, Kushiro perspective has helped us understand the social dynamics of a world dominated by western influence, which was manifested by the sense of value among the youth. This phenomenon is a reality not only in Japan, but in other countries as well. It was just perfect for the city of Kushiro to symbolized crane. I personally believed and has experienced the bond and warm love and care among our host families.

Likewise, the call for environmental protection and conservation has a tremendous force among the life style of the Japanese.

Needless to say, there is no need for all the

lecture about environment, you could observe it around Japan.

The collective emphasis of maintaining its rich natural resources to include its historical heritage.

From the traditional paper art, *ikebana* to martial art, archery and tea ceremony.

From the concept of preserving the virgin forest, the marshland to the endangered *marimo*. All these things has transformed our concept or out look towards protecting our environment. From our visit to Kyoto and Hiroshima which gave us a global view point of uniting our effort for lasting peace and brotherhood.

Finally, may I say, Environmental Component Group will always draw strength and inspiration on our experience in Japan.

Domo Arigato Gozaimashita.

My Perception of Japanese Way of Getting Things Done

Baja, Emmanuel Saporna
ASEAN Comp.
Economy 1 Group



Our brief visit to your wonderful country has now come to a close. The beautiful images of Japan moving deep into winter will always remain in my heart. Even the 20th century cityscapes look like delicate Hiroshige canvases.

It is my pleasure to present to you, my personal views and perceptions. It feels great to be able to express my own views and for a change not speak for the group. Having the

pleasure of wandering around the city on my own, I was impressed by the velvet seats of the subway cars. It underlined to me the elegance and cleanliness of Japan. But apart from stunning images, Japan is also full of ceremony. The department store receptionists, bowing politely, the "*itadaki masu*" expression before meal time, is my constant reminder that Japanese businessmen also operate on ceremony.

Sometimes I can imagine this to be frustrating to western-style businessmen. Nobody talks direct. There is a network of conferences and layers of approval before something is decided on. In my country, some business is conducted in the western manner. But sometimes, the oriental ways prevail. It is good for me to be reminded that I am also an oriental business professional. To behave this way, is not to be third world, for our Japanese neighbors of the first world continue to operate in the oriental fashion.

If there is something for me to criticize, it is the fact that the Japanese way is very rigid and structured. There seems to be very little room for individual growth and expression. In fact, young professionals are bound to follow the old and tested way. And only after acquiring enough experience, they can give their personal views. It would be very difficult for me to operate in this manner.

But in seeing this, I also see the remarkable traits of the Japanese professional, which I would like to adopt in my own way. The quality of perseverance and endurance. You work quietly and patiently. You work long hours and even on Saturdays. There is "wordless efficiency". Not so much said, but a lot done. We also work hard, but we also play hard. I would like to encourage you to see this point, as I find a few of my Japanese counterparts, the same as my age as "too serious". There

is wisdom with the elders. There is also energy and new ideas with the young.

I look forward to the chance of extending the warm welcome, given to me during my stay. I hope that some of you who have been with me come and visit someday. But I will always, have a special place in my heart for the Japanese, as I have come to know you in a very special way. This programme has promoted a bond for me and your countrymen.

Sa muling pagkikita!
Mabuhay!
At maraming salamat po!
Till we meet again!
Long life to all of you!
and thank you very much!

■ Asia

■ Singapore

A Token of Thanks

Sim Ngah Imm
Education Group



I've always been curious about Japan and her people. In Singapore, I've actively sought out Japanese food, Japanese Literature, and the Arts. But it wasn't until I came to Japan that I could truly appreciate what had, till now, been only a vicarious experience. In my stint here, I came to understand anew the word "warmth." I met Japanese friends so gracious that the language difference was no hindrance. The many times in which my host family used their Japanese-English dictionary so that I could enjoy an evening's television programme with them; how no topic was ever given up for lost just because of my halting Japanese; and how several Japanese school children clapped so spontaneously when their numerous attempts to teach me a game finally succeeded, have touched me in a way that takes more than eloquence to describe.

And no less is the warmth demonstrated to us during our stay in Ibaraki. Our stay there was so well-planned, it was evident that no time and effort was spared in seeing to our comfort, safety and enjoyment - no two meals was the same; no school made us feel we were intruding, and every night, volunteers would be waiting in the hotel lobby, so no one faced the problem of being all dressed up and having nowhere to go.

I now realise that a fast-paced lifestyle need not result in hurried courtesies. Nor is hospitality merely opening one's front door or smiling broadly. Hospitality is an attitude of the heart. It is easy to see why no more than one occasion some of us on the programme have experienced a desire to stay in Japan. In leaving, I know that my curiosity has been satisfied, and that a part of my heart will be left behind.

Lasting Impressions of the Land of the Rising Sun

Kang Ling Ying Florence

Social Development Group



Our one-month stay in Japan was a time of discovery which left lasting memories in our minds and hearts. I have always heard above the excellent service and friendliness of the Japanese, and this was indeed what I experienced. At the hotels we stayed in and the shops where we bought *omiyage*, the service staff were very polite, endlessly repeating "*domo arigato gozaimasu.*" with a bow. Even if you did not purchase anything from a shop, the Japanese always serve with a smile.

The warm hospitality I received during the homestay in Osaka was another strong impression. My host, Masako Fujiwara and her family treated me as a family member. Despite the language barrier, we managed to exchange information on each other's culture and food. I was also impressed by the "high-tech" toilet at their house. There was a panel of buttons

with different functions which I had problems adjusting to. But it was an interesting experience! The homestay programme was an eye-opener experience which made me aware of the lifestyle of a Japanese family.

The local programme jointly organized by JICA and the Yuai Youth Association was also an enriching experience. The In-house Seminar held in Kanagawa gave us the opportunity to interact with Japanese youths. Discussions focused on superstitions in Japanese society, food and volunteer organizations. We had a wonderful time at the Yomiuri Amusement Park where I took my first ride on the White Canyon-roller coaster. It was very scary yet thrilling! Overall, we had an unforgettable time with the Japanese youths in the In-house Seminar.

Our visits to the political institutions such as the National Diet, Osaka Prefectural Government and City Hall contributed to our knowledge of the political system in Japan.

The last part of the programme was sight-seeing in Nara and Kyoto. We visited temples, shrines and parks. This reflected the traditional side of Japan in contrast to the cosmopolitan and "high-tech" nature of Tokyo. There were many scenic views for photo enthusiasts to capture and of course, the traditional goods to buy. It was simply breath-taking to see the mountains, colourful wild flowers and rice fields. One can imagine what a vision it would be in autumn!

The programme has made me fall in love with a country which is home to very warm and sincere people and encompasses both the modern and traditional. I have gained a better understanding of Japanese culture, tradition and new friends. Though I may not have an opportunity to visit Japan again, the memories I have now has left a lasting imprint on my life.

20 Witnesses from Singapore

Joint Work of the Group

Economy A1 Group

* The subway trains which schedules are accurate to the minute, the adorable *Kokeshi* dolls, the immaculate and delicious *Obento* box on the *Shinkansen*, the sincerity, trust and concern of the host families and kind folks of Naruko, all these and many other fond memories I will cherish with the 18 rolls of Fuji films that I took. On behalf of our group, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all people who worked for the programme.

(Heng: Group Leader)

* Japan — A country so advanced and so rich in culture and tradition.

* Japan — A country that fascinates me, always.

(Swone)

* The month long stay in Japan has been very enriching and fruitful. Not only did I learn about Japanese culture and its language, I have also gained an insight into the ways of life in Japan.

(Yin)

* I was sort of overwhelmed by the attention showered on us by many of the various organizations involved. The generosity and warmth shown by my host family really moved me. I hope the foundation laid through this friendship programme would flourish and thrive beyond our generation.

(Yoke Yue)

* Through the interactions with Japanese counterparts and host family, I have a better understanding of Japanese culture and lifestyle. I would love to visit Japan again during a different season so that I would have a chance to see other aspects of Japan.

(Mei Ling)

* I enjoyed myself very much, mixing with both Japanese counterparts and Singaporeans, and enjoying the beautiful scenic spots.

Homestay programme has been most interesting and memorable. This trip also provided me with an insight on the many organizational activities in various parts of Japan.

(Wee Ming)

* The most memorable moment was the homestay, I was touched by the warmth of the host family. In Tokyo, I was impressed by the fashion and pop culture in Shibuya, traditional culture exists side by side with sophisticated technology.

(David)

* This programme was a good learning experience and had enabled us to gain a better understanding of the Japanese lifestyle. Special thanks to our friends in Naruko for their warm hospitality. We had a wonderful time. Hope we meet again.

(Siew Bin)

* Deeply appreciate the close bonds and care displayed by the amiable folks of Naruko Town. Sincerely wish that such valuable qualities, which enhance the attractiveness of the town, would remain within the hearts of its people.

(Beng Kim)

* The homestay was enjoyable even though we had to communicate with an electronic dictionary. I will cherish the time spent in Onikobe and sipping coffee, brewed with water from the nearby stream in the mountain.

(Kian Giap)

* A Giant Harajuku TV Screen, Subway-JR Maze at Ikebukuro Station, *Sashimi* overload in Naruko, boiling in Hiroshima furore weather, overcrowded temples in Kyoto, sitting on baggage towards the end, ... How I survived the JICA trip.

(Angela)

* If you think taking a bath without pain, then try Japanese way. Its temperature is more than warm and you stop getting into it after cleaning your body. Do not put off, try it and note the difference yourself.

(Eng Choon)

* In Tokyo, I witnessed the bustle of city life while walking along the streets and in the

subway. Miyagi, we were warmly welcomed by the locals, the climax of the visit must surely be the homestay in Naruko town, ... learnt about Japanese customs and traditions from a typical Japanese household.

(Sor Tjing)

*The big earthquake, gas attacks, rising yen,... why do I still want to go to Japan? After being here for a month, there is no better time to come. Japan is not just the busy Tokyo, beautiful *Kimono* and yummy *sushi*. I have learnt more about the Japanese way of life. Thanks to my host family for the wonderful stay and I hope they come to Singapore so that I can return their kindness. (Lai Yee)

*I am most impressed with how Japanese make courtesy their way of life, this make my interaction with Japanese counterparts most memorable and fruitful (especially the homestay.) (Kok Choun)

*I was very much touched by the warmth and hospitality of the Japanese counterpart during the homestay programme. Though communications was minimal, the extend of care and concern showered on me was overwhelming. Finally the trip to Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum has been very educational. Once again it reminded me of the horrors of war and our need to strive towards peace and harmony throughout the world. (Poh Keong)

*"Home is where the heart is," so the saying goes. In last 30 days, I have made Japan my home. I will cherish the good memories and moments that I will bring with me back to Singapore. (June)

*The interaction with Japanese during this one-month stay has been tedious but most fulfilling and enriching. Language barrier did not dampen our zeal and enthusiam to learn about the Japanese way of life. We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to everyone we have met, in particular to the folks in

Naruko Town. Thank you for the first class hospitality extended to us.

Kanpai to the organizers and all participants of this programme.

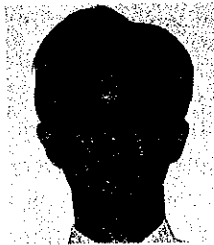
YUM ... SENG!!!!

(Soh Hoon, Tenny, and Sock Hwa)

Japan: The Land & its People

Kelvin Loh Chi-Keon

Economy A2 Group



During our one month stay in Japan, we saw and experienced many things about the country first hand. A complete exposition of everything we have seen and felt is not possible but hopefully the following will give a brief account of our very personal insights to the land and people of Japan.

Japan's countryside is beautiful. Driving along trunk roads between cities, one can see green plantations or forests on both sides flanked by mountains at the horizon. Crystal clear water is the norm for the many streams that cascade down the mountain sides. We were very fortunate to have had the chance to witness all these during our In-house Seminar in Muika-machi. It takes little imagination to realise that Japan's countryside would be ever more beautiful in spring or autumn.

We found one urban area in Japan beautiful — Momochi city in Fukuoka Prefecture. It is an exceedingly well laid out waterfront project, complete with sanctuaries for nature and underground electrical cables. The same cannot really be said of many other cities we

visited. Tokyo is perhaps the best counter - example : overgrown concrete jungle in which the occasional photosynthetic life forms seem to struggle for survival.

Of the Japanese society, we found 3 features most striking. The first is diligence. There is no question that the Japanese are very hard workers and are prepared to give their best in every assignment they undertake. It seems to us that this is the fundamental reason for the quality as well as quantity of Japanese products and hence the industrial might of Japan.

The second is the very interesting coexistence of many traditional Japanese customs with equally many "modernized" or "westernized" habits. For example, while every Japanese eats primarily with chopsticks, wearing a suit to work is the norm. *Sumo* wrestling is probably as popular as today as it was long ago. Yet these same *Sumo* fans are often the most ardent fans of baseball. In spite of having adopted so many "western" habits in the work place since opening its doors in 1868, Japan's unique system of life employment is still very prevalent. Having said that however, it also seems to us that many of these traditional practices, together with traditional Japanese arts and crafts are slowly being lost in the younger generations.

Lastly one cannot fail to notice how courteous the Japanese generally are. As a newspaper said, "Japan is a nation of apologizers." On the streets and shopping malls the 3 most frequently used words are perhaps "sorry, thank you, and welcome."

We have really learnt so much about Japan and had such a wonderful time during our stay here. Thank you, JICA for the Japan experience. Thank you, once again for everything.

Japan: The Sun Continues to Rise

Loh Tuck Wai
Economy B Group



We arrived in Japan at a time when the country was still reeling from the shock of the Kobe earthquake in January and the sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway. The economic outlook of the country also appeared bleak with the bursting of the "bubble economy," record low growth rates, the high yen and the raging trade dispute with the US. People were commenting that the "Land of the Rising Sun" was becoming the "Land of the Setting Sun." We therefore expected to see a nation demoralized and pessimistic about its future. This was not to be.

Whether it was formal contacts with Japanese bureaucrats, businessmen and municipal officials, or informal conversations and discussions with the average Japanese, we met people who seemed determined to resolve the nation's present troubles. In Toyohashi city, we were impressed by the clear vision shared by both the city leaders and locals as to where the city should head towards in the 21st century and how Toyohashi could fit into the overall development of Japan. In our discussions with young Japanese adults, we could sense their eagerness to chart out their future. What struck us most was the realism of these young adults, the future leaders of Japan. While accepting Japan's current problems, they also showed a willingness and flexibility to make adjustments and accept the need for

change. More importantly, they were receptive to foreign concepts and suggestions. Throughout our stay in Japan, we saw little evidence of a society that was inward-looking and closed to the outside world. Instead we met a people that showed such warmth, hospitality and friendship that would be difficult to be watched elsewhere.

Japan has always responded well during critical moments in its history. In the late 19th century, it decisively chose modernization instead of continued isolation. After the devastation of the Second World War, it made a dramatic recovery to become one of the leading economies of the world. Today Japan faces another critical moment in its history as it searches a new role for itself in a new world order. Given the energy, fortitude and the resilience of its people, the world expects Japan to rise to the occasion yet again and lift itself out of its present troubles.

Ten Minute Lakeside Solitude

Lim Ming Foong Monica
ASEAN Comp.
Social Welfare Group



Pine trees all in a row;
Pointing to the sky —
Like sentinels

In a faraway Land
Magic Happens —
As the change of seasons
Result in a change of colour;

The silence of nature
The music of nature
Come together in perfect harmony.

A drop or a bubble by a fish,
Sends out ripples towards the shore

A lone fisherman
Casts out his line —
And his bob sends out ripples
Just like nature would

The serenity of beauty;
The quacking of ducks —
A pair of fowl lovers,
Now silent,
Sail quietly through the
Length of the lake,

The sun peeks through the clouds,
And light up the colours of the 'YAMA'
Reflecting its image on the still waters;
Time to go to reflect on this ...

The Land of the Rising Sun

Ng Pick Yong
ASEAN Comp.
Economy 2 Group



Dozing off in the comfortable *Hikari 232* leaving for Tokyo from Shin-Osaka, vivid memories of my stay in Japan flashed across my mind like the speed of this train. Constantly struggling with mixed emotions, I was hoping that I could travel back in time and live through those memorable days again.

Life in Tokyo was never a moment of dullness. The city was always bustling with activities; from the colourful night of Roppongi, to the Kabuki-cho Shinjuku, to the chic and posh shopping strips of Ginza. Meandering through the spider-webbed subway and struggling with my few words of *Nihongo*, I was a "Lost and Found" child. Unlike the Japanese, this lost child was constantly walking aimlessly on the streets. Despite that, it was fun searching for the 100-yen shop, not to mention being treated to a parade of girls in mini-skirts and high boots, and guys in coat and tie walking briskly in front of me.

Looking out of the window in the far distance, I see patches of red and yellow leaves, which reminded me of Gunma, a place of tranquility where I had my In-house Seminar. It was a fruitful discussion with the Japanese youth. I will always cherish the close friendship that had flourished amongst us in such a short time together. I had a fun time trying out the Japanese hot-spa *onsen*, the *karaoke*, and the Japanese traditional dance.

Just before parting with the Japanese youth, we had a chance to go up to Mt. Shirane and experience the extreme coldness of the weather there, and view the breath-taking scenery of Gunma. It was indeed an enjoyable stay there.

The climax of the programme began at Shizuoka, a prefecture situated on the south-western part of Tokyo. The first impression I had was that the prefecture was vastly different from Tokyo. There was an atmosphere of serenity the moment I stepped into Shizuoka. The streets were neither crowded nor smoky, and the people moved around in a more relaxed pace.

We were given an overview of the beautiful prefecture by the Shizuoka Prefectural officers, accompanied by various informative visits to institutions like Yamaha Moter, Hamamatsu

Industrial Research Institute and Fuji Trout Cultivation Centre.

Following the visits came the day which I had been waiting for. It was a feeling of anxiety and excitement when I met my host family for homestay. I was treated with warmth and hospitality that casted on me fond memories I will never forget.

Nearing the end of my stay at Shizuoka, we had a tour around Mt. Fuji up to the fifth level as we were all eager to see this magnificent and famous landmark of both Shizuoka and Japan. In addition, I had a chance to put on a *kimono* and experience the Japanese traditional tea ceremony and *koto* playing. The performance was an eyeopener for me.

Autumn in Japan displayed a spectacular view, particularly at the Miyajima Island and Kyoto. I was glad to be able to witness this beautiful season.

"... we had arrived at the Tokyo Terminal ..."A crystal clear voice suddenly rang in my ear, bringing me back to reality. I have almost reached the end of my trip, but I'm sure it would not be the end of my friendship with the Japanese, my affection for the land of the rising sun ...

■ Asia

■ Thailand

**Thirty Days of
Friendship in Japan**

Sonthaya Saneam
Education Group



I learned of JICA and its Youth Invitation Programme from a notice of the National Youth Bureau, Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand.

All Thai youths have very strong interest in participating in the programme, and I was no exception. Thanks to the good will of the National Youth Bureau and JICA, my dream and hope of participating in the programme came true. We were excited by the prospect of being able to see Japan for the first time. Forty-seven of us were separated into two groups, the Education Group consisting of 22 people and the Social Development Group of 25. We prepared for programme participation ourselves but received various favors from the coordinator before leaving Thailand. We left Thailand on Japan Air Lines Flight 718 on May 23 and arrived at Narita Airport at 6:30 a. m. on the following day. I was excited by many things in Japan that I saw for the first time. Also, I was able to participate in many very interesting programmes through the kind hospitality of the Japanese programme officials. I enjoyed the Japanese language lesson and was able to learn of Japanese life-style, way of thinking, and present conditions

while practicing basic conversation. I think I was able to understand why Japan had been able to achieve what it has achieved today through the many programmes. The programme opening ceremony at Hotel Metropolitan was held in a very friendly atmosphere, and I was extremely impressed touring the important institutions in Tokyo, including martial arts appreciation at Budokan and visit to the Edo Tokyo Museum.

We left Tokyo for Gifu on bullet train. I was thrilled to be able to ride the world's fastest train for the first time. In Gifu, we received very warm welcome from the citizens at the welcome party and orientation. The hot bath at Gero was interesting, but the most memorable was the In-house Seminar organized by the World Youth Visit Exchange Association. For three days, we were able to exchange views and experiences with Japanese people and make new friends with which we were able to share friendship. We were able to feel strong bond and friendship particularly at the last farewell party. After leaving Gifu, we went to Osaka. JICA's Osaka International Center where we stayed was comfortable and satisfying for all of us. We were able to enjoy various sports. We were able to contact Japan's beautiful traditional culture in Kyoto and observe the prosperous commercial city of Osaka. After leaving Osaka, we headed for Numazu, where an important programme was waiting.

Immediately when we arrived, we were welcomed warmly as special guests by the people of the Numazu Association for International Communications and Exchanges. Here we were able to see in person Japan's excellent educational system from primary to university levels.

At last, it was time for the homestay programme that we had been waiting for. The

host families received us very warmly as if we were part of their own families. We developed a very deep bond and did not feel any problem or barrier in language or culture. We all felt happy to have families close to our hearts in Numazu and could not stop our tears when we had to say good-bye to them.

When we returned to Tokyo, an evaluation meeting and farewell party were held. We will never forget this wonderful experience. Today, we feel a deep friendship and affinity to the Japanese. We were able to develop this permanent friendship because of JICA. We hope to return this favor some day.

The Japanese are Truly Wonderful

Ananya Jaimsripong
Social Development Group



Japan was a dream country to us. That is why participation in the 1995 Youth Invitation Programme had made members of our Social Development Group (of 10 men and 15 women) tremendously happy.

For people who had not visited Japan or even haven't met Japanese, they may believe Japanese are self-centered, thinking only of themselves and of their own country. But coming to Japan and associating closely with them, I found that they share much in common with Thais and are kind, considerate, and shy. All the Japanese we met, the staff who was with us during the whole one-month stay, Shuzenji Youth Hostel parents, and the host families of Miyama-cho, were all charming.

They could be internally different in some respects, but they were kind and nice people without exception. There was not a single person we did not love.

The Youth Invitation Programme may be regarded as a reward to people who have been doing good. Everything during the stay — from accommodations and food to the welcome and tours — had been delightful for us. During the first week in Tokyo, for example, we stayed at Hotel Metropolitan, which was conveniently located in the city center and provided good food. It was also located near a park. The male members of our group was very pleased staying there. We were also very moved by the kindness of the hostel parents at Shuzenji Youth Hostel. I can never forget that they prepared us dishes to suit our tastes by studying Thai food recipes. In Kyoto, Mr. Ito of Kyoto Youth Hostel Association looked after us late into the night every day and acted like a real father to us.

Regarding food, most were Japanese dishes. Although there were people who could not take much Japanese food or lost 2 or 3 kilos of weight, there was no serious problem. We were served good food at every restaurant, which probably was very expensive. We understood how high food is in Japan on occasions when we ordered food ourselves with the living expense money we received. We were surprised and felt burdened at first by the price of ¥110 of a canned juice but gradually got used to it. We began to feel that price of less than ¥1,000 was not expensive. In addition to Japanese dishes, there were Chinese and Western dishes. We were particularly pleased by Thai dishes.

As leader of the group, I would also like to thank the 24 participants in the group, particularly for being punctual. If they were told to gather at 8:30, for example, they showed up on

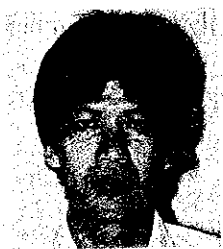
time. This was strange, particularly because they were late almost every time when we were in Thailand. Although it may be in part because the coordinators always stressed meeting time, the group members paid attention to time because the Japanese are always punctual. The group was very good in other respects as well. They listened to the coordinator's instructions and were cooperative and virtually irreproachable in conduct. In the area of health, however, I must apologize that many in the group got sick and thank the staff for the care we received.

The places we visited were all very beautiful. There were trees everywhere. Although we were told not all of them are natural forests, we thought the country is rich with nature. We were happy not only about visiting beautiful places but also for the opportunity of spending time with Japanese families. No words can express the gratitude we felt. We will never be able to forget the people and places we visited in Japan.

After Completing the Programme

Panit Yodpunya

Agriculture Group



The people in charge of the Youth Invitation Programme gave 25 of us from Thailand time to prepare and to get to know matters necessary for our month-long stay in Japan. The day of excitement and joy finally arrived. It was the day we left Thailand. For some, it was their first-ever experience.

Since arriving at Narita Airport, most of us could not control the excitement of seeing firsthand the prosperity of the Land of the Rising Sun. In the trip from the airport to the hotel, everything appeared fresh and new to us.

Before the actual encounter with Japanese society, an impeccable orientation programme has been provided to study the economy, society, arts, and culture of Japan. The volunteers who guided us through Tokyo for hands-on Japanese language learning experience seemed tireless and helped us deepen our knowledge of the Japanese language. Our hosts took us to see museums and watch martial arts.

We were surprised by the organization strength of the Japan Seinendan Council. In any country in the world today, it is difficult to control any organized group.

Our group's first encounter with Japanese agriculture is exchange with agricultural cooperatives. The cooperatives support the lives of Japanese farming households and instilled pride among people who are engaged in farming. Isehara Agricultural Cooperative that we visited was a cooperative with longstanding history. The Thai participants were able to communicate with people cultivating vegetables, fruits and flowers. We were very happy and satisfied by the sincere and earnest attitude of the people who tried very hard to answer our questions.

We had the opportunity to have an exchange with Japanese youths before leaving for the countryside. The exchange was held at the Fuji Youth Center nearby a beautiful lake called Yamanaka-ko and not so distant from Mt. Fuji which we have longed to see. The environment was beautiful, and the programme was truly meaningful for us and something we truly enjoyed.

The day for us to go to Tohoku region "Aomori" to spend the next ten days arrived. I

am sure that our hosts had spent considerable time and worked hard for organizing this programme. Everything was enjoyable for us, and everything we saw was new to us. During the short homestay in Aomori, we were separated from each other. We were anxious of having to stay at homes where we neither shared the language nor nationality. As it turned out, we are all humans, and the two-night-stay turned out to be brief.

On our departure from Aomori, a very heartwarming farewell party was organized for us and our host families. It was our last exchange with our Japanese families. We spent the evening in a very relaxed mood, with performances to show each other. Through the various programmes in Aomori, we felt that we were able to gain experience and knowledge that are extremely meaningful.

We said good-bye to Aomori the following morning and headed for Osaka. Some families even came to Aomori Airport to see us off and stayed until our airplane disappeared into the sky. The aquarium at Osaka was very impressive. All living creatures at the aquarium drew our attention, particularly the great white shark.

From Osaka, we entered the beautiful city of Kyoto. I have also heard the story of the U.S. not bombing the city during World War II because of its cultural value. If the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb in the city, people around the world would not have forgiven the U.S. That is how valuable the beauty of the city is.

In the morning of the second day in Kyoto, we went to see a show of beautiful women's kimono. It is the center of traditional arts. Because of the beauty of the traditional crafts there, we became absorbed in shopping without hesitation. Later, we visited three temples, where we felt a sense of peace. Temples in

Kyoto have historical value and receive endless streams of visitors. We told each other, "Those who did not visit Kyoto should not say they have ever visited Japan."

After leaving Kyoto, we took the *Shinkansen* train to go to Hiroshima. None of us had ever been in the train. Although the trip lasted only two hours, we were all very excited and happy.

Hiroshima is a place that we had wanted to come. Our interest was undeniably heightened by the disaster unprecedented in human history, in which 200,000 lives were lost at once.

The next morning, we visited the Peace Memorial Museum and Peace Memorial Park located at the epicenter. Although it was 50 years ago, we were wrapped in deep sadness. We have been told that 42 million have visited the park to keep the memory from fading. I believe that it shows how strongly we wish for peace than war and death. Later, we returned to Tokyo, and the day of return approached. All of us yearned to see our children and loved ones again.

Although the group of Thai participants that visited Japan is small, the bond of peace, freedom, and friendship that had been built through the programme will never diminish. This is certainly true not only for us Thais but for other foreign participants as well.

We are sure that the memory in our hearts will never fade.

Friendship between Japan and Thailand

Piyachat Plodprong
Economy A Group



In participating in the Youth Invitation Programme and visiting Japan, 20 participants of our group were very excited and pleased in the exchange with Japanese. At that point, however, we had no clear image of the Japanese. During our stay in Japan, we appreciated the kind hospitality and attention paid by our three coordinators and by the warm welcome and friendship we built with our host families who accepted us for homestay. I believe that the programme is not only a success but carries importance for both Japan and Thailand in the future.

During the one-month stay in Japan, the three coordinators took care of us in every way. Not only was there any trouble in accommodations, travel, meals, visits and tours, they removed the language barrier by interpreting and explaining things for us. Although a number of the participants took ill, they became well soon, thanks to the help of our coordinators. With the support, I feel we were able to go through the programme smoothly both mentally and physically and have a very pleasant and meaningful experience.

The same was true for homestay. Although the time we had was short, friendship between Japan and Thailand was imprinted deeply in all our hearts and we said good-bye to our host families with reluctance.

Although we are sad to leave Japan on September 21, we hope to preserve forever the bond between Japanese and Thai participants, the feelings of excitement and appreciation, and the friendship cultivated in the programme.

Deep Impressions of Japan

Jesada Bhansaisri
Economy B Group



Participation in the Youth Invitation Programme hold greater meaning than any travel for any purpose. It was probably one of the greatest experiences in my life.

Japan had the image of a very advanced nation both economically and technologically. Coming to Japan, the nation was developed as I imagined it would be and, in my eyes, was developed beyond our expectations.

In lecture following our arrival in Japan, we were able to deepen our understanding toward the Japanese, its economy, society, and culture. I was also able to understand why the nation had developed so rapidly from the values Japanese uphold and their orderliness in every way.

In the tour of Edo Tokyo Museum and of Budo-kan (martial arts), I was able to gain firsthand understanding of Japan's history, culture, and arts. In visits to temples in our sightseeing tour, I was able to see the Japanese government's earnest efforts to promote the programme and help foreigners understand Japanese arts and cultures. The good point of

the Japanese is their effort to preserve their own culture. One example is the *kimono*, which is spectacularly beautiful worthy of appreciation to the onlooker.

In the tour of Japanese companies and plants, we learned that Japanese companies have comprehensive policies ranging from development of their employees' potential, technology, and to quality control. Seeing the Japanese mobilize their abilities in full in work and every employee being given the opportunity to give their own personal opinion at work, I was able to reaffirm the reason for Japan's development.

The most unforgettable part of the programme that I will remember all my life was Homestay. I was impressed by the welcome of my host family (particularly, the son who is like my brother to me). During my stay, I could feel that I was being treated with the greatest care by the family from the moment I woke up until late at night. The association with this family did not end after the homestay is over, and other participants appear to have had contact with their respective host families. I myself received calls from the son every evening. I plan to continue the ties with the family after I return to Thailand and hope to receive my Japanese family in Thailand some day. How happy I would be when the day comes.

Lastly, I must not forget the kind attention we received during our programme by our three coordinators, as well as pertinent officials of Aichi Prefecture and representatives of government organizations, private companies, and organizations who have received us. Although the Youth Invitation Programme will soon be over, the memorable moments in Japan are sure to remain forever.

The Feelings

May Chavanakunakorn

ASEAN Comp.
Health and Medical
Service Group



Fortune pulls us together towards unity in diversity. Each country has her own specialities, customs and ways of thinking. I had a wonderful time at this gathering. We learnt a lot how to pick up good visions and look at our defects from each other's perspective. This brings us towards the unity of "Brotherhood."

Comparing humanity the world over, each leaf represents each soul, each branch represents the difference among nations, religions and so on. It seems like we are learning how to create a blossom tree of peace and prosperity.

We have learnt how to ...

Plant the seed of unity based on truth.

Shower the water of love and joy.

Put the fertilizer of care and support.

Plough the soil with patience and forgiveness.

Cut off the leaves of those defects and weaknesses.

Then, just watch ..., you will see this unique tree growing more beautifully in freedom, peace and happiness.

Thank you very much for all of you; JICA, International Nursing Foundation of Japan, JICE, other agencies and host families. You all are the sun who shine tirelessly in learning benefits to all. So much effort and resource you gave. This is nothing we can return to you except spreading all good things we have

gained from the Youth Invitation Programme to others, like you.

Arigato gozaimashita.

Peace through Friendship

Thai-participant group

ASEAN Comp.
Economy 3 Group

“AN EYE FOR AN EYE MAKES MAN BLIND.”

The Atomic Bomb Dome, the Flame of Peace, the Children's Peace Monument, the Atomic Bomb Memorial Cenotaph, and the Peace Memorial Museum are some of the historical landmarks in Hiroshima. It was 16 November, 1995, when we with other ASEAN participants of the Youth Invitation Programme, sponsored by the Government of Japan through JICA, visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum as part of our observation tour. Pity is our initial reaction when we have seen the torn clothes, the ashed bodies, the unborn children ..., yes, it is war made by leaders, by strong nations, not by women, not by the young, and not by the aged. However, they have been fallen victims. It was argued in some texts that Japan deserved the Hiroshima bombing because of its participation and incrimination in war crimes with other nations. “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” as the old texts stated. But it only widens the differences and conflicts among people, families and nations. This saying blinded most men. The historical landmarks, instituted by Japan in Hiroshima, aims to send the message across. This message is “Peace”. Peace, after fifty years of non-occurrence of war, is shared by all people of the world. Japan, on her part continues her efforts to reach out to the world. Peace through friend-

ship is one of the themes that we have learned. We have learned that peace should be guarded. As the JICA Youth Invitation Programme participants from Thailand, we were taught to understand the culture of not only Japan, but also the other ASEAN members. The efforts toward peace through friendship may be simple. Each of us may be speaking different language or eating different kinds of foods. At least, all of us have similar purpose which is to bridge the gap of cultural differences and values. Friendship may be a simple step toward peace but each small step from Japan, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand may subsequently lead to the path of peace, peace through friendship.

Please appeal to the world for abolition of nuclear weapons and eternal peace of the world.

■ Asia

■ Bangladesh

Life in Japan

Collaboration of all members
Civil Servant Group

"The Youth Invitation Programme" conducted by the Japanese government and JICA is a memorable event in our life. As a part of this programme, we the 20 civil servants from Bangladesh along with other Asian countries got the opportunity to visit various parts of Japan starting from 28th June to 27th July, 1995.

Our hearts have been delighted to see the eye-catching skyscrapers, crisscross communication network, panoramic natural beauties in the areas of mountains and hills, a newly built floating airport in the Pacific Ocean, adjoining bridge, flyovers and subways.

The progress attained in various fields within a narrow span and time is a miracle in the history of mankind. Japan has not only achieved economic progress but also introduced punctuality, sincerity, discipline in their life style.

The other name of Japan is a country of green forest, clean roads, and connecting bridges, no variation between urban and rural life.

We enjoyed much in participating world famous martial art, bowling games and cultural activities.

The hospitality we have been accorded during our stay in Japan has reminded us that we are at home.

We are going back home with sweet memories. The sweet memories shall remain ever fresh in our mind.

We would like to extend our gratefulness to all concerned relating to this programme.

■ Asia

■ Bhutan

I Love You, Japan!

Sonam Zangmo
Teacher Group



When we landed at the Narita International Airport, we were filled with mixed feelings of excitement, happiness, and also fear. We wondered how we would be received. But the cloud of fear dispelled when we arrived at Hotel Metropolitan and met our coordinators, Mariko-san and Rutsuko-san. The following two weeks were filled with orientation programmes, i.e. learning the Japanese language, meeting the concerned personnels for the programme, etc. An interesting programme that followed was at the foot of Mt. Fuji. We called it the "In-house Seminar." We came across 10 Japanese youth volunteers who shared with us not only the rooms but also their tradition, customs and cultural views. The two nights that we spent here were simply G-R-E-A-T! though a frenzy of activities throughout, with games, songs, discussions and partying away throughout the night. The Maldivians (We were grouped together) and we presented our own traditional songs and dances, which was enjoyed by all. Here we had some very interesting people like Mr. Yokozawa, and Mr. Horizoe. I must mention that Mr. Horizoe is one of the most interesting and charming personalities that I have come across in my thirty years of life! We celebrated his birthday in Kyoto. He said it was his 20th birthday

(though his second son is 23 years old !?). He taught us some of the local dances and a special number which he calls 'The Hori-cha-cha.' We also enjoyed 'the bath' (Japanese style!). The next visit was to Okinawa. The homestay was the most interesting programme here. Some of us landed with families who could not speak English at all. So the "NIHONGO 21" (provided by JICA) was very useful. The Okinawa lifestyle is quite different from Mainland. We were introduced to some of the traditional songs and dances of this prefecture. We also met the vice governor and the superintendent of Education Div. of Okinawa. Our visits to the school, esp. the blind school was very interesting. Before concluding, I would like to mention that this programme turned out to be very useful and educative to us. We're filled with gratitude to the concerned organization (JICA) for this wonderful opportunity. We returned to Tokyo after a brief visit to Kyoto and Osaka. The trip to Japan is like a beautiful dream — short and sweet!

■ Asia

■ India

Japan : A Dream Comes True

Nishant Jain
Youth Leader Group



Every person has his own dreams, but one of my wildest dreams came true when I landed at Narita Airport. I saw a whole new world in front of me.

The one-week General Orientation Programme in Tokyo was very useful and enjoyable, too. We came to know about various aspects of the Japanese society, like Japanese economy, culture, life, etc. Another most important thing which we learned was the knowledge of Japanese language and it was taught in such a good manner that all of us had no problem in learning, and that a little knowledge of Japanese language gave me a very big help during my whole trip, whenever I spoke something in Japanese I was appreciated so much that I never lost a chance to speak in Japanese.

The most unforgettable and enjoyable part of the whole trip was in Okazaki, a very small town in comparison with Tokyo. The natural and traditional beauty of Japan about which I had only heard was in front of me, but the most loving and admiring were the people of Okazaki. During our 2-day homestay and 2-day In-house Seminar, I can never forget the love and care I had got from the people. In only two days I and my host family were so deeply attached that we were crying at the time

of parting.

I along with my group members also visited the giant companies of Sony and Nippon Denso. We were amazed to see the high-technology of these companies. We also learned the four traditional arts of Japan which were *ikebana*, *kimono* wearing, calligraphy and tea ceremony. One place in Japan where I must say that the whole world should come and see at least once is the A-bomb Museum of Hiroshima. After seeing that place one shall start thinking whether this is progress.

In conclusion, I must say that I have learned a lot from the Japanese. Their punctuality, discipline and politeness are really admirable. Before coming to Japan, I thought about it as only an industrialized country, but after seeing the rich culture and hospitality, I came to know that I was wrong. I can never forget this whole trip and after learning so much from this country I think I will be a different person now.

■ Asia

■ Maldives

Hope Towards a Peaceful Century

Ahmed Shahid Aboobakuru

Teacher Group



We, the human beings are the masters of the world, hence responsible for the protection and development of it.

Throughout the history of mankind, we have seen innumerable developments or civilizations. These civilizations have contributed towards the development of world in various ways.

However many of our achievements, are backed by the fact that we have had many fierce wars and battles against each other. Two of those most fierce wars, World War I and II, were fought in this 20th century we are in now. Those two wars not only costed the lives of millions and millions of people, but also nearly all our valuable cultural heritage.

Now, we are preparing ourselves towards a new millennium, the 21st century.

Since we are all determined to make it a peaceful one, we'll have to make sure that we are not going to repeat the mistakes of the past, through misunderstandings and lack of friendship and respect to each other.

"The Youth Invitation Programme" provides the opportunity to develop mutual understanding and friendship among the youths of today who will be the leaders of the 21st Century.

As a participant of this programme, I believe

that the actual benefit we gained from this programme is worth everything. Our visit to Japan has given us the true sense of friendship and co-operation, not only with the Japanese youths but youths throughout the world.

The programme further exposed ourselves to the culture, way of life and sense of values of Japanese people as a whole which resembles the great efforts they lay on the development of their country in a peaceful and retainable manner.

Furthermore, this friendship programme has enlightened our hearts and souls with the essence of true friendship and love of peace and harmony.

The friendly environment we experienced here in Japan is the ideal environment where our young generation should be brought up for a peaceful future.

Before conclusion on behalf of Maldivian participants, I would like to convey our thanks and gratefulness to JICA for granting us this opportunity to participate in this programme. At the same moment, I would like to thank all the other organizations who are involved in this programme, particularly JICE, Development Association for Youth and Okinawa International Foundation.

We hope towards a peaceful century.

Thank you.

■ Asia

■ Nepal

Japan in My Memory

Bhoj Bahadur Shah

Teacher Group



Japan from the inside and outside is very different. We can study another nation objectively from the outside, but we can also experience another culture from the inside, entering into its thoughts and feelings as much as possible.

Everywhere in Tokyo, Tokushima, Hiroshima and Osaka, Kyoto, from the very beginning up to the end of our programme, I felt Japanese people are so well behaved, cheerful and hospitable, though I am from Nepal, peace loving country and birth place of Buddha.

I am very much impressed by the education system of Japan. Being a Teacher Group participant I was very interested and curious to know something about education system of Japan. In fact we are behind, because of lack of proper education system, according to the need of society and nation.

Everywhere, to our relevant visit to our field, we put many questions without hesitation. I am very much grateful to the persons who had keenly listened to our questions and answered very beautifully. I liked very much the teaching skill, methodology, dedication, punctuality, and discipline.

Ministry of Education, school authorities and parents are very careful and sensitive to identify problems, issues and for solution also.

Just for an example, even in our country also, education is free up to secondary level (class 10), but not compulsory. From the government and local levels also nobody cares whether the guardians are sending their kids to the school or not. Usually the parents they want to be free from all the burden after admitting their kids in the school. They think it's teacher's duty. Even the educated parents also, they used to do like that. It has been already a part of bad habit in comparison of Japan.

The sense of self realization of moral values in Japan are very high. They use to think what they can do for the nation, for the organization, etc. That's why they are easily accepting the high tax burden. Because of this also Japan could do tremendous improvement in every field. Social justice and peace, security have been set up. The deers of Miyajima Island are the example enough to show sense of peace, hospitality and social security.

Another part of memory for always was the visit to Hiroshima. I have already mentioned above that not only the people of Hiroshima they love peace even the deers of Miyajima Island also. My heart beating stopped for a while observing the Peace Memorial Museum. I remembered the day of 6th August, 1945. How cruel that moment was? All the displayed over there were conveying the message of sadness and anger of victims. The following verse of Tamiki Hara came into my mind.

This is a human body. Look how the A-bomb changed it.

Flesh swells fearfully. All men and women take one shape.

The voice that trickles from swollen lips.

Whispers the thin words, please! help me.

This is a human being, this is the face of human being.

There are many things to write, but I am quite unable to bind/confined them in 2 pages. The miracle of Japanese economic prosperity, history, culture and education what I experienced in my one month programme. At the last, I am saying very happily that the programme was quite interesting and memorable and academic. Our mission to foster (to promote) the friendship through mutual understanding, peace and prosperity have been succeeded. Specially, we had interchanged our culture, history and education in the In-house Seminar and more in Tokushima City. At last, I am very grateful to the government of Japan, JICA officials and Nepal Gov., Ministry of Education giving me this opportunity. Hoping to share the ideas and experiences in future also. Thanks.

■ Asia

■ Pakistan

Japan: The Deep Inside

Arshed Hossain Bhatti

Civil Servant Group



When I came to Japan, the impression I had in mind was: A lot of material development guarded by a highly developed and smooth systematic fence; however, the people are prisoners of clock and inhabitants of routine. That is, routine has become a ritual for them and defiance to their systematic values must be an alien phenomenon.

And, now, after about one month's cruise through the land, the people, the culture & the traditions of Japan, my perception, my opinion and my impressions about it are not only highly developed but also very deep. And this depth of understanding is a sequel to my personal interaction as well as personal observations which I gathered during this cruise.

Today, towards the end of my visit to Japan, I feel myself very close to my Japanese contemporaries and counterparts. Now I no more surmise that Japanese are not part of this world. They are very much like other people in their behavior and social approach. However, what makes them take the lead in today's world are certain habitual traits, such as hard work, humility and hospitality. Due to these individual traits, the culture of Japan does not have many spiritual and psychological contradictions. Here tradition, technology, and techniques go side by side and the societal fabric

has balanced patterns of development, values and cohesion.

I have also found Japanese people to be very sensitive, sensible and sweet. Their social interaction starts from the assumption that people countering them are good-natured.

Another observation gathered from many a youth is that now the young generations is in search of Cultural diversity: This fascination has perhaps emerged from the cultural onslaught of ENGLISH, led by the USA. But this I do not feel can be or will be a threat. It instead may be just a natural input needed for further cultural evolution through dialectic synthesis.

I am particularly impressed by the 'general atmosphere of trust' around in Japan. Everyone seems to trust everyone and people check themselves at their own. And, as a pleasant surprise, no one cheats either, neither to the system nor to other fellows on the street.

It may be a Godless society, but it has a divine approach in human relations. This I have felt deeply. And obviously, there are certain observations and experiences which one gathers sub-consciously and subliminally, and which are very difficult to translate right now. To sum up: It was an intense cultural exposure for me, and it will live long in my memory.

■ Asia

■ Sri Lanka

One Month in Japan

Nahuran Abdul Rahuman

Teacher Group



During my stay for one month in Japan, I perceived many impressions and got several experiences, too. The impression I perceived first was on the movement of the people of Japan with others. It made not only me but all the groups from many parts of the world get surprised. While their behavior makes others happy, it sometimes makes them feel sorry. One can see in hotels, shops, schools and offices the people who work in these institutions saying the same greeting several times to the same person bowing, uninterruptedly at the reception and everywhere. Sometimes people get confused as to how to thank them. This kind of activity should be praised by each and everyone. It shows the good quality of human beings. I wonder why these innocent and kind hearted people became victims of the atomic bomb in the Second World War. One can not deny that the real human beings are in Japan.

Though they have received the western culture, they have not forgotten their old traditional way in eating, clothing and housing in every house. But one short coming found among them are the poor knowledge of English though they are westernized. It is not only my opinion but also common opinion that if they can converse in English, their interaction

with the foreigners will be better than that of present.

People of Japan enjoy all the facilities which are available in the world. One of the reasons, I guess for their present enjoyable life, is the World War II. After the war only, I understood, they have developed their country. If the world war had not occurred, it is impossible I suppose, that the people of Japan can enjoy these facilities. There should be an inducement for an improvement in one's life. As such, one can say war is one of the reasons for the development of Japan.

The historical, tragical and unforgettable experience that I had during the stay in Japan was the excursion to Hiroshima which was completely destroyed during the Second World War and the first place which was subjected to atomic bomb in the world. When one visits the museum and looks around it, he or she can not return without feeling sorry for the victims who lost their lives during the war. I was greatly impressed and felt sorry when I saw the pictures, photos and statues which portray the effects of the war and sufferings the people underwent. The verses on the walls make everyone pray to God for peace. At that moment I did not fail to pray to God to protect the people of the world from such a war in future, and not to show a war like this even in dream for the human beings. I am sure that if everyone in the world visits the museum and sees the effects of the war, he or she will never fail to pray for peace in every part of the world. I remember a verse that I read on the wall of the museum "War is created by man." This verse is enough for an understanding man to sacrifice for peace. One can not object that the medicine for peace is in Hiroshima or in Nagasaki. On my point of view, the Youth Invitation Programme was more useful for us and we learnt a lot. Any how what we expect-

ed has been achieved and what the government of Japan expected is in our hands. We will definitely utilize it in our country in future.

I can not forget to mention about the "Homestay" as it was the main means to understand the people of Japan. Every participant from the South Asian countries, I am sure, may have felt as being at their own home for two nights and three days during their stay with the Japanese families. Briefly speaking, the programme was very useful for all to learn about the history, culture, education of Japan and to foster friendship between Japan and Sri Lanka.

■ Asia

■ Mongolia

Impressions of Japan

Samdan Banzragch
Civil Servant Group



I would like to express my deep gratitude for allowing ten civil servants in Mongolia to participate in JICA's Youth Invitation Programme in Japan, including In-house Seminar and visits to local government offices.

During our stay in Japan, we attended lectures on the Japan's socioeconomic development, finance and banking systems, projects by national and local governments, and support to small and medium-sized businesses and were able to come in contact with the lifestyles and customs of the Japanese people. We were also able to visit cultural and historical sites in Kyoto, Hiroshima, and other cities, as well as see traditional arts and sports center.

In the In-house Seminar, we were able to exchange opinions with young Japanese of our generation regarding our two countries, social conditions, and other issues of mutual interest.

Our visit to Obihiro, Hokkaido, which resembles our own country in terms of climate and topographical features, was most impressive. Particularly unforgettable was our two-day homestay, in which we were able to make friends with ordinary people in their homes.

In Hiroshima, we were moved visiting the Peace Memorial Park and Museum near the A-bomb site and watching documentary films there. We prayed that such a tragedy never

happens in the history of mankind.

The Japanese spirit of diligent work, solidarity, and self-sacrificing effort for the country and society is cultivated from childhood. We were impressed by the Japanese character to make efforts to complete work as planned, keep accurate time, and work to achieve goals in order to fulfill their respective responsibilities.

Japan was able to achieve such development because of the importance the country placed on education. With recent economic slowdown, however, various social problems have surfaced, and many young people appear to have doubts regarding the future.

Invitation of young people from developing countries to Japan and other industrialized nations is vital in not only benefiting the countries whose young people have been invited but also for development in the 21st century.

We believe we must build closer friendship and exchange information with Japanese people we have met through the Programme. After our return, we must not only spread the information on Japan we know but promote greater bilateral friendship.

We were made acutely aware how true it is that "seeing is believing".

I would like to thank deeply as a Mongolian participant in the Programme for the extensive support rendered to Mongolia in its drive to build a free market economy.

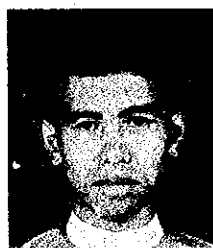
Lastly, I must note that we are deeply indebted to JICA, JICE, Japan Overseas Cooperative Association, and Hokkaido Cooperative Association Doto Branch.

■ Asia

■ Myanmar

Training Tour That Was Like a Work of Art

U Thet Oo
Education Group



Hello.

I would like to write an essay on our training trip to express our appreciation to all Japanese and persons at JICA.

Our education group from Myanmar was given the opportunity to come to Japan on invitation from JICA. We were deeply impressed and grateful for the sincerity and careful consideration expressed by our Japanese friends to run the programme smoothly for us to prevent problems.

The programme in Japan was like a stroll through an orchard lush with trees and fruit. I cannot express in full how much we have appreciated the warm welcome received and admire the Japanese for building such a wonderful orchard.

Because we were able to see the beautiful city of Tokyo at the beginning and end portions of the programme, we felt like we saw a fine work of art set in a beautiful frame. The group discussion held at the In-house Seminar in Atami will certainly become one of the most memorable events in my life. We were able to have meaningful and fruitful discussion thanks to the interpreter who was very fluent in both Japanese and Burmese.

In tour of Kobe, we saw on hand the abilities of the Japanese to fight head on against natural disaster. The Homestay programme at Asakomachi was unforgettable for us all. In Hiroshima, we understood the tragedies of war and were overcome by a strong feeling to join hands for world peace.

In the subsequent tour of Kyoto and its traditional cultural heritage and Osaka, the commercial center, we were able to gain much knowledge.

The visits of Japanese primary and junior high schools to watch students being taught and dialogues we have with our counterparts in Japan, as well as the students, were invaluable experiences that money cannot buy.

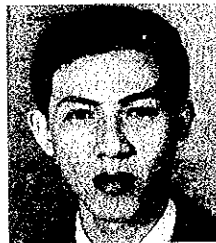
From the beginning to the end, the programme resembled a beautiful story. Inclosing, I pray that JICA's wonderful Youth Invitation Programme which had made our trip possible will continue on into the future.

■ Asia

■ Cambodia

Osaka is a Red Rose

Nguon Chan Bun Thet
Education Group



This is my first thirty days visit to Japan. When I got off the plane at Narita Airport, I took a bus to Tokyo in which I stayed about two weeks, then I went to Osaka City by the Shinkansen (that is the fastest train in Japan). I spent about a week in Osaka City. I heard people say that Osaka is the second largest city in Japan after Tokyo. After that I continued my trip to Kyoto and Hiroshima. Hiroshima is a historical place in Japan. All places which I have seen, were interesting and fascinating. I like all those places.

What kind of place is Osaka City? Osaka City is really the second city, but it is a beautiful rose, I think.

You know, when I set my foot on Osaka City's soil the first day, my feeling seemed unusual and it seemed there was something strange in my mind. I felt very very excited and then both of my eyes were looking straight on the chain of mountains. I started realizing that, oh! things that took my eyes, were the mountains' view. The landscapes of mountains nearly took my breath away. Those mountains are covered with trees, birds, street, roads. Lights are winding around and shining everywhere, and above, all the railway lines go through mountains. That's great. One night, when I got out of my room (while I stayed with my host

family), stood outside and looked around myself, it seemed as if I stood in the air and I felt free like a bird that had just got out of a cage. I thought myself, mountains used to be covered with trees, animals, birds and dark with no light. Now they became towns full of people, electrical light everywhere and there are too many cars, buses, trains travelling up and down, days and nights. I really love not only Osaka's mountains' view but also other places like, the sea port, Museum of National History, Sports Center for the Disable, schools and Cosmo Tower and so on.

So I think, in my mind, Osaka City is really a thornless rose for Japan and I really love this city a lot because it makes me feel warmer and warmer in my heart. Specially, the mountains' view stands deeply in my heart. In my life, I will never forget this. Now I will drop my pen here. Once again, I wish you and Japanese good luck. May God help you all.

■ Asia

■ Laos

Participating in the Youth Invitation Programme

Bounseng Khammounty
Education Group



First, I would like to speak in behalf of the Education Group and express our deep gratitude for this opportunity to undergo training in Japan. In the monthlong activities, we were able to gain broad and deep knowledge and experience. We were able to learn its arts, culture, and advanced economic development.

In the programme, we understood that, in education from primary to university level (both in learning and teaching), it is important that all persons should have the opportunity to receive education and that the opportunity should not be deprived by screening or ability (academic performance). Education does not merely mean offering academic knowledge to students but cultivating sense of cooperation and friendship with others, custom of reading books, knowledge regarding cleaning and sanitation, love for sports and arts, and high regard for culture.

We have also learned and understood Japanese lifestyles and customs. The Japanese are generous and very polite to others. They are sincere in thinking and work hard according to plans.

We would like to acquire the strengths we saw in Japanese systems and workstyles and try

to bring them home and apply to the current conditions in our country.

Thank you very much.

■ Asia

■ Viet Nam

Unforgettable Memory

Bui Van Hai

Government Official Group



After reading books, I understood Japan to be an infertile land with a large population and very few resources and that after the Second World War, the Japanese people built the country to what it is today through huge efforts.

Because it was my first visit in Japan, everything was new to me. From the cities to farming villages, in factories and farms, in business offices and homes, everyone worked hard. I wondered how the Japanese could build such a wonderful country. Everything was clean and neat - the high-rise buildings, transportation network, factories, and parks. People built machines, and these machines have released people from strenuous labor. The purpose of my visit was not only to remember everything in Japan but to learn how the Japanese live and work for development of their own country.

Through my stay in Japan, my understanding changed in this way. The Japanese are very diligent at work, have great respect for order and discipline, and have a strong sense of responsibility. This is probably because they believe that personal gain leads to social gain. The young people in Japan have good financial standing but still study hard and are eager to learn to pursue their respective specialized

pursuits. Despite the affluent lifestyle, the Japanese are not very extravagant, are thrifty with food, and do not waste resources.

I have met a wide variety of people in Japan and found all of them — from ordinary folk to high-ranking officials and from children to senior citizens — very kind. They are not very explicit with emotions but lead sincere lives and are respectful of each other. Although I am a foreigner, I did not feel any different from others and in fact had many opportunities in which I was able to share thoughts and feelings. I felt that Japanese culture is mirrored on the mind-set and personality of the Japanese. The free economy has not destroyed Japanese culture but has preserved it.

I think Japanese values on lifestyle formed by solidifying order in the nation and preserving traditional culture. During my stay, I discovered one thing — that people who defend their culture and who have a sense of solidarity will surely be able to make the country grow.

The 30 days certainly passed swiftly. I made many new friends. I was able to be a good friend with them and make wonderful memory. For me, the programme was not only wonderful memory but a fruitful lesson.

Sayonara, Japan.

Deepened Mutual Understanding

Pham Cong Luan
Economy Group



I saw English words "Learn from great

earthquake" in front of a post office near Hotel Metropolitan. I started to think that why Japanese people have been so successful in developing economy, science, technology and so forth on a disaster stricken place. Mountains and narrow terraces caught my eyes during my trip. Cracked wall in a company in Osaka reminds us of Great Hanshin Earthquake.

It seems that the severer the natural condition is, the more strongly Japanese people develop their country. Kansai Airport and Seto Grand Bridge which is No.1 in the world show that Japanese has courage to create, courage to carry out and courage to achieve. Where did they get the motivation from ?

Wherever we went which is related to culture, history and religion, we saw students in school uniforms touring around orderly. Even though their attitude is different from that of adults, they were seriously taking notes observing places by themselves. We can say that Japan is the country which can afford to plan such tours for students. We can also admit that school excursion is apparently good education method for future generations. Old tradition and culture are protected and old castles in Nara and Kyoto are well preserved. School excursions are organized and students are meticulously guided and well taken care of.

The character of Japanese people which I imagined before is different from what I found here. Japanese people has an atmosphere of Western people. At the same time Japanese has humbleness and calmness which is feature of Asian people. I found such features in people whom I met in this programme and host families and even in the people whom I just happened to meet on streets. I still remember the person who kindly and carefully showed me the way to Disneyland. Especially Japanese youths we met are honest and modest. Some youths are very shy.

When we think about our future, youths, regardless of which country they belong to, are sharing the desire to build the world which is full of happiness and peace. By meeting with Japanese youth in this programme, we have deepened mutual understanding.

Success is led by decision which is one of the traits of human being. Mr. Konosuke Matsushita, who is the founder of Matsushita Industry, is a good example.

It's very difficult to express my feeling in 1 or 2 papers. Especially on behalf of more than 20 people. This is only a part of my feeling which I got in this one-month-long stay in Japan.

After all, 1995 Autumn is commemorative season for us. And this beautiful autumn will remain in our lives.

development. The current economic success is the result of the Japanese working very diligently. The prudent and patient people overcame the sufferings and losses from war, realized "spectacular growth of the Japanese economy," and helped bring the nation among the ranks of world powers.

When I went to a museum in Tokushima, a senior citizen from a farming household showed me sandals made of straw. When I heard that he wore such sandals when he was small, I was deeply impressed. In the last half-century, the Japanese went from straw sandals to building world-famous cars such as Nissan and Toyota. Japan departed from poverty and became No. 1 in various economic areas. Aspects of successful economic growth could be seen everywhere I went. However, I feel Japan's greatest economic success is not in the tall buildings and modern industrial unions but in the living conditions of the people in which there is little income gap. The fact that 89% of the people regard themselves middle class is astounding. In addition, there is little difference in quality of life between people in the city and those in the countryside. If I were to live in Japan, I would choose to live in the country, because there is an ample supply of things necessary for living and the surroundings are richer in nature. In addition, everyone is sincere and warm at heart. I think the values of traditional culture will be preserved actively in the farming areas. The *Awa Dance* in Tokushima was wonderful and charming — with dancers shaking their hands vigorously to energetic music and encouraging spectators to join them. I could tell that the Japanese had been working hard to preserve their ethnic color through their cultural and historic achievements. However, some of my Japanese friends expressed humility and said they had not been so successful in that respect.

Pondering on Board the Shinkansen Train

Hoang Tuan Phong
Agriculture Group



I am being transported to Tokyo on a *Shinkansen* train, and the pleasant trip will soon be over. Like the speed of the bullet train, the one-month stay in Japan passed quickly. The Vietnamese describe such a trip as "watching the flowers while riding a horse." Still, I will never forget the wonderful memory and impressions of the nation shining with cherry blossoms.

When the war was over in 1945, the Japanese restored national strength with steadfast determination and energy and brought

The greatest challenge for Asian nations in the 21st century is to defend and preserve ethnic and cultural color, particularly for nations with historic culture and traditions like Japan and Viet Nam.

Being Oriental in origin and black-haired, having the custom of using chopsticks, and affected by Buddhism and Confucianism for thousands of years, it should be easy for Japanese and Vietnamese to understand each other and share feelings and thoughts.

The young people hold the initiative in the 21st century. Exchange beneficial to mutual understanding holds many times the value than indirect information. If young people of various countries understand and share feelings with each other, I believe that world peace and the future of mankind will be brighter and sound. The objectives of JICA's world exchange activity under its Youth Invitation Programme is lofty in ideal and realistic at the same time. This trip had been successful in line with the objective.

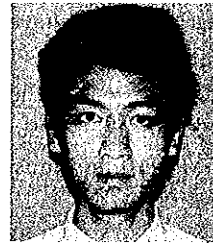
In the dance for peace and close friendship which are the aspirations of mankind, Japanese and Vietnamese youths were able to join hands and create a large circle of camaraderie. I thank all the people at JICA.

Iroiro Arigato Gozaimashita. SAYONARA.
(Thank you for everything. Goodbye.)

The Memorable One-month Period

Tran Le Tra

Education and
Related Areas Group



Japan is a country I dreamed of seeing since I was very young. It is the Nation of the Rising Sun, beautiful cherry blossoms, and strong *samurais*. In the one-month stay in Japan, I discovered many new things in Japan. I tried hard to compare what I knew about Japan through books and what I saw with my own eyes. Although it is very difficult to express all what I felt in this short essay, I would like to describe in brief that Japan, though not a perfect nation, is undoubtedly a country which many people dream of going. Despite the many things that I heard about Japan before arriving in Japan, I was surprised that the nation's capital Tokyo which I saw for myself is overwhelmingly modern, overwhelmingly beautiful, and overwhelmingly wonderful.

The high-rise buildings and the expressways everywhere glittered with neon lights at night. However, as we became accustomed to it, we started to feel a sense of pressure in city life in Tokyo. It probably came from the fact that Tokyo had very little greenery compared to Viet Nam.

I felt differently when I was in Ishikawa Prefecture. The beautiful red leaves and the soft sunlight of autumn created genuine harmony. It was certainly like the picture of autumn tints by Levis Tan.

There is a Vietnamese saying that goes like this: "Many things can be learned when you

leave home." In this programme, I found two things that must be learned from Japan. One was that, at work and when associating with people, the Japanese place importance in cultural traditions.

As a member of the Education Group, I was able to visit elementary, junior high, and high schools in Tokyo and Ishikawa Prefecture. I noticed that traditional education is regarded most important in every school. Although I know that preserving cultural color is very difficult for developed nations, I felt that Japan has succeeded in this respect compared to other countries. I felt that even the smaller students understood and loved traditional arts. We could have had more exchange, for which the programme was designed, if there had been more time to talk with teachers and students.

The other thing is that I did not expect to meet people who felt like family in Japan, when I am far away from my own family, friends, and country. The host family and friends made me feel that way and gave me unforgettable memories.

I thank all who had helped me participate in this meaningful programme.

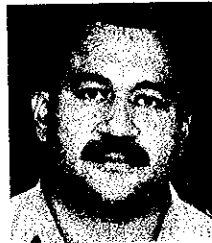
Although I must return to Viet Nam tomorrow, deep in my heart I do not want to say good-bye. That is because I love all the people I met here and think they like me as well. I must say "SAYONARA" for the time being to Japan and the Japanese who I love, believing that people who love each other can meet again. I say thank you to all of my Japanese friends who gave me wonderful memories in Japan.

■ Pacific

■ Fiji

A Blessed Evening in Japan

Lorima Lasarusa Vosa
Civil Servant Group



I heard the door open and all I could understand from what I was overhearing was the familiar Japanese greeting and most welcoming invitation accorded to the visitor by Mrs. Kishikawa. In a few seconds a middle-aged Japanese lady was presented before me by Mrs. Kishikawa.

"Lorima-san, this is Mrs. Tagawa, my neighbor friend. She says that her two sons want to meet with you."

"Konnichiwa, watashi wa Lorima desu. Dozo yoroshiku."

I represented to the lady, who was just bowing shyly in response to my greetings.

"I sure would love to do that." I added.

The time was 8:30 p.m. and I was just relaxing myself away, after a delicious dinner with my host family. The place was Iwade, Nagagun, a small town in Wakayama prefecture.

As we moved out of the house, I noticed two young Japanese boys sitting on a door step opposite to the Kishikawa family's home.

Immediately, my heart moved, I felt so special and at the sametime so honored to meet this two young boys, who may have been away past their bedtime just to meet with me. What a blessing this was for me. The picture of my own three children began to cross my mind as I smiled to the two boys.

I introduced myself and asked their names. There was a short giggle amongst them as they shyly said their names.

"My name is Takahiro and I am 8 years old."

"My name is Masahiro and I am 7 years old." was the interpretation from Mrs. Kishikawa.

During the course of this introduction I noticed that I was being examined from top to bottom by very sharp and inquisitive young eyes.

After a few whispering in Japanese, Mrs. Kishikawa turned to me saying,

"They ask if they could touch your skin and hair."

"Certainly." I replied as I knelt down towards them.

There was an immediate comment from Masahiro and they all laughed.

"He says, that your hair is like sponge."

We all laughed together again.

Question after question came as we sat and enjoyed ourselves. After a short silence, Mrs. Kishikawa began another interpretation.

"Masahiro is asking if you have dogs in Fiji."

"Yes, we have puppies and dogs." I replied.

Another interpretation came.

"Takahiro is asking, how do they bark."

We all laughed before I answered.

"Bow, wow."

"What about in Japan?" I asked.

"Wan, wan." replied Takahiro.

"I think your dogs speaks in Japanese and our dogs speak in English."

I remarked. We all exploded laughing after Mrs. Kishikawa interpreted the remark.

That night as I lay on my bed, I began to dwell on my perception about the people of Japan.

I had witnessed the busy city life in Tokyo

with its hustle and bussle with the same friendly, warm hearted, wonderful good intended Japanese people. However could not see much manifestation of such characteristics.

Here I was on the other side of Japan, where the pace of life is country style. There is time for everyone and time for everything. In here you can come to see the wonderful, friendly, warm hearted and loving Japanese, manifest. A beautiful country with beautiful people.

As a Christian, I sure do, from my God and Christ bless this country and its people. God willing, I sure would love to return someday to bring the good news of the gospel to the country which has touched my life different ways.

■ Pacific

■ Papua New Guinea

Bond of Two Cultures

Kavana Mahumu
Civil Servant Group



My arrival with 29 other Papua New Guineans (comprising; 10 civil servants, 19 high school teachers and I journalist with post courier [PNG]) at Japan's International Airport, called NARITA International Airport, herald the beginning of what I was to learn later, probably the highlight of any of the overseas trips. I have ever undertaken as a civil servant in Papua New Guinea with 15 years of work experience and an extensive international travel experience to boast of. I was not prepared for what was to unfold in the days to come, of the true and real Japanese hospitality.

In Papua New Guinea, we view Japan and its people as been aggressive and ignorant towards other people or race. The next 30 days was to change my total impression and perspective of Japan and her people.

The efficiency and the manner in which the South Pacific Component of the Programme, particularly for the Papua New Guinea Civil Servants Group was organized was totally outstanding. We enjoyed all aspects of our programme. I was more grateful particularly on the specialized programme in local areas. In our case, Toyama Prefecture was our local area. You only had to be there to experience what we had experienced. My preferred aspect

of the programme being the local homestay in Toyama. My homestay family, the Sawadas, lived about more than an hour's drive from Toyama City. As Yasunori, an office worker in Toyama, drove me around his town the next day, I wondered at the beauty of the surrounding typical Japanese countryside, and I was touched by the beauty of her landscape.

The next evening, there was a very big festival in Johana Town (my homestay town) which we attended. The evening was marked with performances after performances by different Japanese cultural groups displaying the splendor and beauty of Japanese cultures. I even took part in one of the street dances, and my camera is a testimony to my participation. I loved every moment of it. It was just fascinating.

Coming away from the 3-4 days of my homestay left me touched with nothing but total admiration for nation of people blessed with a majestic history, a hard working, humble and respectful population surrounded by a very blessed and divine environment.

I was honoured to do my specialized local programme in Toyama, viewed to be one of the best prefectures in Japan. The experiences in Toyama only confirmed and strengthened the growing bondage of two totally different race and cultures. As we cried and waved goodbye to our new found Japanese families, brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers and guardians, I said to myself, "Yes!" truly a cultural bonding has been cultivated this very moment. Thank God. God bless Papua New Guinea and Japan.

The Real Japan and Homestay

Wendy M. Urambo

Rene Lasin

Teacher Group

1) The Real Japan

Japan is one country spoken off for many years by the elderly of P.N.G. It is mainly the harsh attitude of the Japanese soldiers that made fear grip the hearts of the two generations before me. Believing that our people supported the U.S. Army, they many times punished our people severely for the slightest mistakes (by making them work hard) or sometimes for nothing. So, we grew up believing that the Japanese were bad and very cruel.

But my short stay here in Japan has taught me a few truths about Japan and the "Japanese people." Despite the fact that it is one of the most developed countries, it has the grace to be so humble and helpful. Behind the scene of neon lights, crowded streets, tall buildings, concrete bridges and waterways, the nature available blends and compliments the concrete setting. The remains of the numerous historic sights are carefully retained with utmost respect among the young and old. The humbleness amongst these kind people deny their intelligence and their complex way of living. And the younger generation are always invited to observe/study both the old customs and the latest inventions so as to keep everyone in touch with everything. Furthermore, it tries its best to assume forthcoming problems and find suitable solutions to it.

Although Japan is an independent and self-reliant nation, it has the generosity to extend a helping hand to the most needy countries. And, I am delighted to say that it even had the grace to "apologize," though not many words were used. I believe that action speaks louder

than words, i.e., the 'helping hand' has tried to make up for its mistakes in the past. Please can we all learn to "accept" and 'forgive' each other. Let's make this a better place to live in.

2) Homestay

Whatever the word meant or implied, one can only guess what went on in the minds of the 16 high school teachers, 2 senior high school teachers, one public servant and a newspaper reporter. One safe guess would be that there was fear, anxiety, uncertainty and fear experienced by each member prior to the arrival and departure with the hosts to their various homes.

The families who volunteered to be homestay hosts should be commended for all that they did for us. Many, if not all, gave up their time and privacy to accept us into their homes. The care, hospitality and kindness bestowed upon us as aliens from a different country with more than 850 languages and customs were immeasurable and very touching.

Imagine the anxiety they would have had about how to reside with a "son" or "daughter" or "brother" or "sister" who was different in skin colour and, worst of all, was not able to communicate with them in Japanese as he/she knew "*sukoshi*".

The departure from the homestay homes would have been very sad, moving as was very evident from the many red and watery eyes espied at the Hotel Biwako lobby on the Sunday 17th September, 1995.

Words alone cannot express the gratitude and contentment derived from the sacrifices made by our hosts.

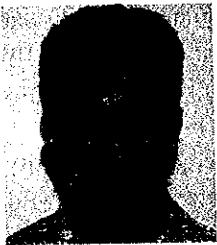
Thank you to JICA and the Homestay Hosts.

IROIRO ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA!!!

■ Pacific

■ Solomon Islands

The People I Didn't Know



Ali Tuhonuku
Pacific Comp.
Civil Servant Group

Prior to my coming to Japan under the Youth Invitation Programme, I learnt a fair bit about the political and economic history of the Japanese society. Unfortunately I knew very little about the society's most important element — its people. In fact, the image I had of the Japanese people was rather negative. I used to think of the Japanese people as disrespectful and inhumane in a lot of ways. My studying of World War II and limited contact with Japanese fishermen and loggers in my country were largely responsible for creating the negative image I had of the Japanese people.

However, my staying in Japan for a month has totally changed my view of the Japanese people once and for all! I have been greatly impressed by the deep respect Japanese people have for one another as well as foreigners. The hospitality accorded to us everywhere we went had been such an extent that I never expected.

Apart from the people I have also been greatly impressed by cleanliness of the cities and the beauty of Japan. I have no doubt that Japan is one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

In closing, I can only say that my trip to Japan has made me realised that Japanese people are the most respectful and kind heart-

ed people in the developed world I have ever seen. And this will be the bottom line of the stories I will relate my family and friends when I return home.

■ Pacific

■ Western Samoa

Our Last Moment



Moeimanono Fouvaa

Pacific Comp.
Teacher Group

We experienced a lot when we started our Friendship Programme from the end of August until the end of September. We confronted and discussed a lot of wide issues about education from various Pacific Island countries and we were all impressed according to the various systems that each country runs her educational systems.

We compared and contrasted our opinions with our Japanese counterparts and we came out with a lot of useful and significant ideas in order to help out running our special gifted-talents from GOD.

This was one of the most crucial moments of our discussion, because each participant looked forward to contribute and share out to other colleagues what his/her feeling about a central idea of our discussion was all about.

We managed to look at the common grievances amongst schools in Pacific Islands compared with those that are found in Japan. Not only that, but we also contributed a lot to the consequences of various major dilemmas. We also looked at the strategic ways of classroom teaching and we emphasized some of the useful methods in order to increase and reinforce the process of learning.

Furthermore, we visited to other prefectures for educational likewise, and we discovered

those prefectures artistically and creatively. We also visited to various schools and observed the facilities and resources that used for their programmes.

While in Kanazawa and Kyoto, we visited so many artistic places and we drew more attention to what those monuments established from and initiated by. We pictorially examined and observed the views of various exhibitions.

To Hiroshima, we discovered the originality of PEACE in Japan and there was a sorrowful scenario and touchy feelings that were inside us, when watching the movie and explored the phenomenon, as well as putting our shoes into Japanese shoes at that time. On the other hand, there was no winner or loser, except our GOD and our LIVING LORD. So, to increase living in PEACE around the world, let us stand together and show out how we CARE and LOVE each other.

Overall, we were so excited and grateful because we came from various Pacific Island countries and we explored so many useful things in Japan which we thought that they helped out piling and collecting in order to fill up our empty baskets for our assigned jobs, especially our In-house Seminars as well as group discussions. This was great throughout the programme. Well done, everybody.

To conclude, we thanked to our coordinator, Keiko Takano-San and our Programme coordinator, Yoko Yagi-San, for guiding our programme throughout as well as our translators and interpreters for the great work done. This also went out to JYH Inc. and Ishikawa YH Inc. from the bottom of our hearts. We would never forget you.

Last but not the least, we thanked to the JICA which is a big umbrella of this programme for funding and sponsoring us in terms accomodations, touring and moneywise

and others. We thanked you for everything.

Special dedication for the Youth Invitation Programme 1995:

SONG: We are brothers and sisters we all one
Does not matter what country we are from
We will always be one in the spirit
We are brothers and sisters we are one

Chorus : Does not matter what island we come from
Nor to what group of people we belong
We will always be brothers and sisters
We are brothers and sisters we are one

We would like to say Bye-bye
Sayonara
We shall never forget you in our hearts
We will always be brothers and sisters
We are brothers and sisters we are one.

■ Africa

■ Morocco

From Dream to Reality

Imani Nawal
Teacher 2 Group



For all young people in Africa, it is a dream to travel to Japan. Certainly, Japan is distant, expensive, and overly populated. However, it holds a prominent trump card and is able to offer us the most attractive adventure that an industrialized nation can offer.

The stretch between Narita and Tokyo that we saw provided a wonderful guide in understanding Japan's development. Farmhouses that stood alone, surrounded by fields and trees gradually changed into urban homes, which then became more crowded until they were swallowed into the vast ocean of high-rise buildings of Tokyo. It was certainly the economic capital.

The stay in Osaka, Kyoto, and Hiroshima was very interesting and fruitful. We were enchanted by the wondrous view and awed by huge structures such as temples, castles, and shrines. We also had the opportunity of speaking to volunteers and teachers. They explained about Japanese customs such as of tea ceremony and flower arrangement.

Lastly, the most memorable was our homestay experience. The wonderful experience will remain in our memory all our lives. We were deeply moved by their cordial welcome and hospitality and their desire to learn about Moroccan customs and manners. In my view,

Japan's strength lies both in Western civilization and Japanese tradition and the unique blend of the two in its distinctive cultural environment.

I would like to dedicate a small poem to the people of Japan:

Enthusiasm and strength, solidarity and discipline

The Japanese made their great dream come true

Though Japan's wonderful living standards are the envy of everyone today,

The endless sufferings it went through to become a power should not be forgotten.

I pray for you happiness and aspiration.

Working together in Peace and Prosperity toward the 21st Century

Elamrani Abdelkrim
Civil Servant 2 Group



Before visiting Japan to participate in JICA's Youth Invitation Programme for African participants, we had a number of questions about Japan, which is a great mystery for us.

Since meeting the Japanese for the first time at the preliminary orientation in Paris, the mystery began to unravel considerably, along with rudimentary study of the Japanese language. Our wish to go to Japan and discover a new world grew stronger as our days in Paris passed.

The days in Japan, which lasted roughly a month, turned out to be something we will not forget for our entire lives and will certainly

affect how we will perceive the world from now on. I believe it is extremely difficult to describe our stay in Japan in a sentence, since the impact on us both in terms of culture and human exchange had been tremendous. I will not list up everything but will restrict myself to our impressions of our stay in Japan.

First of all, I must express our gratitude to all persons who exerted efforts for the programme's success and were involved in planning and preparation of the programme. From this, I was able to feel the precision and efficiency of the Japanese, a distinctive character of the people toward work.

Because of the rich and diverse plans included in the programme, we were able to know Japan and its people very well. The diversity comes from the opportunities the programme provided us to see in person the numerous aspects of socioeconomic life in Japan and to evaluate it accurately. The richness comes from the frank and friendly meetings with youths, businessmen, and corporate executives, at which we were able to have meaningful discussions, and the comfortable homestay with our host families. No doubt, this will be imprinted as the most unforgettable events in our travel in the Land of the Rising Sun.

We were able to see and feel the great respect rendered to us, as well as respect for others, generosity, tolerance, tenacity toward work, determination to establish world peace. Through combination of these value with its creative spirit, Japan was able to achieve socioeconomic success and set an example which can be regarded as a universal model. We were able to discern the substance of the development, having been amazed by the view of the Seto Bridge, the road network, and numerous tunnels.

Beyond such impressions in general, we were particularly impressed by Japan's affluence

founded on human resources, cultivated through school education, vocational training, and highly effective manpower allocation system.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone responsible for planning and preparation and for the special attention we received during our stay in this great nation. We earnestly wish that the friendship we formed will continue and that our common goals be achieved through the following:

Creation of a club of young people from Africa and Japan

Planning of an invitation programme to organize visits by Japanese youths to Africa

Lastly, let me call for the following:

“Let us join hands for world peace and mutual prosperity.”

■ Africa

■ Swaziland

Outside Imagination

Makosha Nomsa Manthata

Teacher 1 Group



I am leaving for Japan, thanks to Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), but I will be able to spend a whole month in one of the most densely populated countries in the world? I can see myself walking down a dingy street full of street kids, beggars, unemployed people, pickpockets and hawkers. At the end of the street there is a path leading to a shanty town with a household of ten members living in a small room struggling to meet their basic needs. Children are carrying pails of water on their way home from school. There is poor sanitation. I hope I am not going to stay here. Across the street there's a road leading to an isolated residential area with double storey buildings, maisonnettes, bungalows, expensive cars, satellite dishes and not a soul in sight. Least to say the socio-infrastructure is perfect. This is the place where the majority would like to stay. Life in the rural area is not better than the shanty towns.

After checking into Hotel Metropolitan in Tokyo, I decide to take a walk. It's a cool evening, and the place is alive with thousands of people both young and old. Neon lights flash all over the place. Shops and restaurants are filled with well dressed people. Students are in smart uniforms on their way home from

school. You can tell this is their way of life. No beggars, no street kids. Oh, it's a far cry from what I thought !

The Japanese actually lead simple lives and place importance on their culture and traditions. The average family consists of three to four members. It is their culture to take off shoes when walking into a house. Bowing is a sign of respect. Temples, shrines, museums, castles and traditional gardens have been preserved to give a clear picture of their history which they treasure. A modern house will have a *tatami*, a Japanese bathtub and possibly a portable shrine.

Education is also important. This is evident in the number of kindergartens, elementary, junior and senior high schools and universities found in Japan. These schools are well staffed and contain modern equipment. The school curriculum is geared towards the production of responsible citizens who can automatically fit into the labour market. Students spend more time at school than at home, making the teachers work something like 24 hours a day.

Technology is advanced. This is noticeable in most homes. TVs, videos, radios, pianos, washing machines, telephones and cars, just to mention a few, are common features.

My picture of Japan is now totally different. The people are courteous, respectful and peaceful. I also came to realise that time is well managed, and that culture is well preserved. Technology is super. Thus making Japan a wonderful place to live in.

■ Africa

■ Togo

Impressions of the Programme

Kokou Agbessi Zomblewou

Civil Servant 3 Group



During our stay in Japan, we made numerous discoveries in the areas of economy, society, and culture. Planning and preparations were perfect, and the programme was executed nearly completely. We were able to deepen goodwill and friendship with Japanese people of all generations.

Japanese living standards are extremely high, and prices were high for participants from Africa.

We were also tremendously surprised by economic, industrial, and technological development and at the same time the successful blend of modern civilization and traditions. Although the programme was very productive and meaningful, there had been some inadequacies in interpreting. There was little time allocated for questions and answers, which is a point of improvement in the future. The reason is because we need to ask many questions for better understanding and can gain knowledge through such interaction.

In accommodations and other services, everything was planned to be comfortable for us.

Although there were no problems in meals, there were problems in terms of religion and health for some of the participants due to well-meaning considerations provided by the

people in Okayama and limitations in menu and time. Generally speaking, our stay in Japan went smoothly. In the programme, we were able to learn much from the Japanese character and from the outstanding caliber of its economy, industry, and culture.

■ Africa

■ Uganda

Nagato City—My New Home

Sarah Mayanja

Civil Servant 1 Group



When I first heard of the homestay programme, I dreaded it and silently prayed that it could be cancelled. However, that was not to be and Friday, 27th October, all participants left for their homestay.

Unlike my colleagues, I had not met my host family before. Hence I was trembling like a leaf in the autumn breeze! However, to my relief, Mr. and Mrs. Imai turned out to be a wonderful and warm couple such that by the time we left for Nagato City, we were at ease with each other. At the home of the Imai I had the opportunity to use the Japanese bath. Although in the beginning, I was rather reluctant, the bath turned out to be a relaxing and soothing experience.

In Nagato City, I discovered I was the first black person in the area. So people looked at me curiously and some even came up to talk to me while others asked my hosts who I was. To my amusement, one lady in her 70's referred to me as a "Big Doll with Huge Eyes".

During my stay with my hosts, I prepared a dish of chapati and chicken stew which my hosts enjoyed very much to the extent that one child Takeshi said he was willing to come to Africa, if that was the food he would eat, however he feared the wild animals! It was during my stay there that I realized that despite

my inability to eat seafood enjoyed by most Japanese, I loved the shrimp dishes prepared by my host mother!

With the Imai family, I had my first try at the bowling game which was very exciting and my hosts were surprised to find that I played rather well for a beginner.

The weekend turned out to be a very good experience for me however, as the saying goes, "All good things come to an end." So we parted almost in tears with several promises of keeping in touch.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the homestay experience was the best and most memorable part of the whole programme. Because through it, I have gotten a new home in Nagato City.

To Mr. and Mrs. Imai and family,
"Iroiro Arigato Gozaimashita" and GOD
BLESS YOU!!



3. Impressions by Japanese Counterparts

Vessel Name "ASIA"

Miwako Yamamoto
Company Employee

There are many countries in Asia which are geographically near but little known to the Japanese. In this In-house Seminar, I encountered many discoveries and heartwarming experiences and was able to re-examine my identity as Japanese.

Malaysia is a multiethnic nation. Malay and Chinese groups, which are the largest majority groups in the country, account for 90% of the entire population. The rest includes people of Indian and indigenous descent. It is evident that there are numerous latent problems stemming from this ethnic makeup. It can be said that the government's "Bumiputra" policy giving priority treatment to Malays is proof of the problem's existence. Still, I felt the country is far more aggressive and constructive than Japan in building peaceful co-existence among ethnic groups. Japan cannot be regarded a monoethnic nation. There are Ainus and people of Korean descent. In addition to the presence of an overseas Chinese population who have lived in Japan for generations, the number of for-

eigners coming to Japan to study and work have increased, causing growth in the number of international marriages and expanding the range of ethnic diversity in the country.

The number of foreigners living in Japan is growing in this way. In particular, Asians have become a significant part of Japanese society. However, how many Japanese are able to communicate with them on a personal and humane level by overcoming language and cultural barriers? The Japanese should realize that they are just one of the Asian ethnic groups and should cooperate with other groups.

I was made acutely aware during the In-house Seminar that Asia itself is a multiethnic state. We are "Asian races" in the same vessel named "Asia". The captain, the crew, and passengers are all Asians. We are in charge of steering our own course. Everything in navigation is in our hands.

An Exciting Encounter

Koichi Tanaka
Company Employee

The three-day In-house Seminar held at Sajima Marina was an extremely meaningful experience. Unaccustomed to being with foreigners, the exchange with young Filipino people brought novel and stimulating experiences that are not possible in everyday living. Through contact with the Filipino ethnic char-



acteristics, way of thinking and sense of value, I was able to discover and feel the growth of new "awareness" toward various issues and things.

At the recreational and exchange programme on the first day, I found the Filipino people unpretentious and expressive of their emotions. We were surprised by their charming personalities and found ourselves drawn and mingling with them naturally.

The most surprising and moving experience during the seminar came during the discussion session. In the course of serious discussion covering a wide range of topics, we felt their passionate love for their country. The Philippines today is far from being economically affluent. In fact, the economy is still far behind in development, and the country has numerous problems that cannot be resolved easily. Nevertheless, they are serious about their love for their country and are determined to lead their country toward the better. Their attitude toward the future is constructive.

How about Japan today? It is economically wealthy and filled with goods. However, young people have little interest in its economy and its politics. There are too many youths who lack clear vision or dream of building a better country and who lead lives purposelessly.

The human being is an animal that can change itself when there is an ideal it wants badly to achieve. That is what I felt in them. The three days there shed light to such thoughts in me.

Participating in My First In-house Seminar

Noriko Shigehisa
Civil Servant

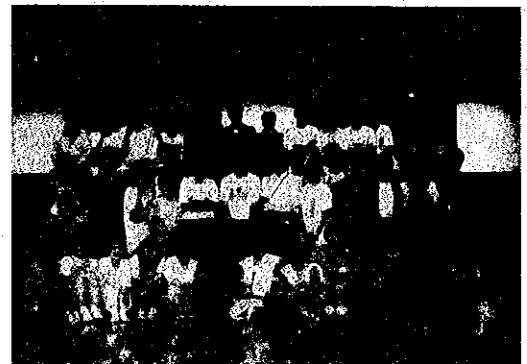
Starting on July 7, I participated in the three-day In-house Seminar with Bangladeshi participants at Sajima Marina in Kanagawa Prefecture. I was slightly nervous at the start because it was my first experience.

The three-day seminar passed quickly with a huge amount of interesting events planned—group discussion, recreation, and exchange meetings.

Group discussions were spent most on explaining conditions in each other's country. I wished we had more time listening to a lot more things.

My attention had been directed only to the U.S., Europe, and other foreign countries famed for sightseeing. It was this seminar that aroused my interest in Asia as well.

We felt deeply grateful for the support of the



staff. Particularly because I lacked proficiency in language, I am grateful for the interpreters in helping me enjoy group discussion.

Though I may not have another chance to join such a seminar, I was happy to experience something exciting and not possible in everyday life.

Because of the lack of time and of language proficiency, I was not able to learn enough. Still, the experience helped me become more familiar with Bangladesh and want to know about many more countries.

From Nepalese Schoolteachers

Yoshio Handa
Civil Servant

"Why not give the students more freedom?" Those were the words of a Nepalese participant at the end of the discussion over the state of education in Nepal and Japan. They apparently participated in the In-house Seminar in the earnest desire to learn from Japan's miraculous growth for the good of education in their country. Although the comment was considerably restrained because they felt they were not in the position to preach but to learn, we were wholeheartedly in agreement with the statement that slipped quite casually.

Discussion that focused on education as the theme started out falteringly because neither side knew much about the conditions on the other side. The Nepalese participants were surprised by the high level of education in Japan and asked why this has become possible. They seemed to wish to look for a clue to raising the low schooling rate in their country. We wanted to help them but were not able to give what they wanted because we had little knowledge of conditions in Nepal.

The talks went into the problems in

Japanese education—school environment that has little room for freedom for the sake of advancement into institutions of higher education; learning for the sake of entrance examinations that has made adults look for new goals in life after school. From the Nepalese perspective, an environment that allows students to concentrate on their studies is ideal. The problems in Japanese education are something beyond their scope of understanding, belonging to what they have yet to achieve. They were most of all greatly interested in Japan's educational system and the level of attainment. All the more because of this, the comment mentioned earlier had great impact. The Nepalese participants, who grew up in a different cultural environment and who had been in Japan only briefly, were astute in their observation of the problem many Japanese had known all the time.

In the same way they had learned from their stay in Japan, we had much to learn. I felt that the In-house Seminar holds meaning only when the comment is made useful later.

Lastly, I would like to thank deeply all who had made this In-house Seminar possible. *Dhanyabad* (Thank you).

Key to Social Development in the 21st Century is Social Participation of Women

Shuichi Yajima
Organization Employee

Under the Youth Invitation Programme of JICA, a group of ten schoolteachers from Nepal came to Japan and participated in the In-house Seminar hosted by the Japan Seinen-dan Council with a group of 10 Japanese youths. On the first day while riding the bus,

people who sat beside each other exchanged introductions and kindled friendship. After arriving at the seminar house and undergoing orientation, the participants engaged in a goodwill sports event at a nearby grass field they borrowed and had a very good time together. Particularly pleasant and congenial was Nepalese "kabaddi", a sport with very simple rules. For the Nepalese participants, the seminar came after nine days of goodwill programmes and peak of their fatigue since their arrival in Japan, and sports helped create a relaxed atmosphere during the seminar and foster friendship. The event served as an effective lubricant in making the seminar very meaningful.

On the second day, the participants were divided into two groups for discussion on separate themes. In my group, there was a report on the current state of women's education in Nepal. We found that in Nepal the number of girls going to school is absolutely smaller than the number of boys. It was also reported that parents have a strong belief that children are important as household labor in their homes. In Nepal, there is virtually no organization (business) serving as receptacle to persons who completed their education (equivalent to high school education in Japan). Because of the social reality that virtually all seek livelihood in farming, the importance of education and schooling naturally diminishes. Therefore, people believe that children, particularly girls, should be helping with household chores than going to school to become vital labor to help the family earn a living. In view of such family (parent) awareness and economic conditions, the issue of women's education cannot be studied in terms of education alone but with due regard to the entire Nepalese society, including the nation's economic conditions, living conditions, and general con-

sciousness of the people.

On the other hand, 99% of children who complete compulsory education in Japan enroll in high school, and roughly 30% of them advance to study in universities and junior colleges and proceed on to work with business companies. As for women, in view of the fact that an overwhelmingly large number of women vis-a-vis men quit jobs for marriage and child care, it is doubtful as to what percentage of these women had been able to make full use of the education they received. Also, assuming that women graduate from four-year universities at age 22 and marry and leave their jobs at age 27 (average age of marriage), women are able to contribute to society other than through the home for roughly five years. Provided there are differences by individual, most women are able to make direct contributions to society only until marriage. In spite of the fact that enormous time and money are spent on school education and other pursuits for development of full-fledged citizens of society, it appears that women have very little opportunity to wield their real capabilities in ways other than in looking after the home and children.

Naturally, this is believed to be founded on an underlying traditional concept, prejudice, or discrimination in Japan that the women's place is in the home rather than work, resembling with the social structure and awareness in Nepal. It is generally believed that the level of democratization in society can be measured by the degree of women's participation in society. In this respect, Japan offers smaller ground for women to be active in society compared to other industrialized nations of the West. I believe it is reasonable to think that women has lower status in this country.

In the exchange of ideas with Nepalese participants, we were able to realize that many

countries including Japan still have discriminatory mechanisms in society against women. This is a major issue not only for Japan and Nepal but for the entire world. I felt that development of society that is democratic and free of discrimination and that respects the human rights of all is the key to social growth in the 21st century. Although social conditions are vastly different in the two countries, both confirmed that we must become involved in society as leaders of youths and work hard to move forward, even if it should be a small step, to create such a society.

Goodwill Exchange with Cheerful Pakistanis

Toyoko Miyata
Company Employee

I had no clear image of Pakistan. I perceived it as a country neighboring India and associated it more as part of the Middle East than Asia. I think I was able to understand the country a little better with this opportunity to meet the people of Pakistan.

I was impressed first by the fact that women had higher social status than I expected. The leader of the Pakistani side in our group was a woman named Aisha. After the discussion, she told me that the Japanese group did not have any female leader. I was not able to respond convincingly to her question why there weren't any. My response that leaders are often selected on seniority basis seemed to fail to persuade her.

I was also surprised that the Pakistanis were very cheerful. Of course, there were some who were shy and retiring, they did not hesitate to sing and dance, without the help of alcohol. This happened when we were working on party decorations the day before the real party.

I genuinely felt that they love to sing and dance.

Such impressions made me realize the gap between image we had and the real Islamic country. The image of a country we do not know is formed by its religion, social system, ethnic makeup, etc. I discovered, however, that such images are superficial and felt glad to have the opportunity to talk to people of such a country.

The Man is the Elephant's Right Legs: the Woman is the Left

Yumi Shiraishi
Company Employee

"The man is the right legs of the elephant; and the woman is the left legs"—those were the words that impressed me most in the three-day discussion on social and working conditions with members of Economy B Group from Thailand.

The 1995 employment situation in Japan for women fresh out of school has been described as "the Super-Ice Age." Women who have received the same level of education as their male counterparts face apparent discrimination in the job market. Even if they should be able to find jobs, they must next deal with



social pressures that impede them for pursuing work careers. Many eventually leave their jobs.

When we told this to our Thai participants, they said sympathetically, "That was also true in Thailand in the past. It is no longer so today. My superior officer is a woman, and there is no gender discrimination at work. An old Thai saying goes like this: 'The man is the fore legs of the elephant; and the woman is the rear legs.' However, it has changed like this: 'The man is the right legs of the elephant; and the woman is the left legs.' "

Frankly, we were very surprised. It may be because we misunderstood that Thailand lags behind Japan. It is true that its infrastructure needs considerable improvement, and there had been problems in traveling through the country. However, in terms of gender, Thailand is evidently more advanced than Japan.

We were able to understand from the change in awareness toward sexuality of Thai's broad range of tolerance and versatility to accept new ideas. I felt that, if we are able to do the same, we will be able to find solution not only to the problem of sexual discrimination but to various problems in Japan. I was very grateful to all the Thai participants for providing us new perceptives and food for thought.

Through Exchange with Youths from the Pacific

Yuri Senba
Student

I participated in this event for the first time. I had the invaluable opportunity to speak to people from Pacific nations for the first time and to listen to Japanese people working as civil servants. I would like to speak of a

number of things as I can recall them.

The participants were very friendly as I expected and always spoke to us with a smile. They were eager to outdo each other in describing how beautiful their islands are. I believe all of what they said is true.

The local songs and dances were performed in the exchange party. They were naturally expert in performing their native dances. Because Japanese lifestyle is not closely attached to traditional dancing such as the "bon" dance, it was unfortunate that our "bon" dance turned out to be an amateurish, makeshift thing.

Most of the participants were bilingual and were able to speak English and their respective native languages. Because of their fluency in English, they wondered why the Japanese are not good at speaking English. However, it is only natural for us to be unable to speak English in a certain respect because we are able to live in this country speaking Japanese alone—compared to their countries where English is used openly in TV broadcasting and in school education. Although I have studied English since junior high school, I regret that I rarely had the opportunity to speak English and have not been able to brush up my English-speaking ability.

Also, we were not able to explain many of the questions they had regarding the Japanese and felt very keenly the difficulty in cross-cultural communication. It was difficult to answer questions concerning Japanese social values—for example, why bullying exists and why people live at a hurried pace of life, harassed by the need to be on time. We were unable to explain why because we have accepted our culture and our values as the natural state of being. I was able to discover my own awareness and values through the exchange and hope to make use of this new

realization in future exchanges with people.

Being Taught the Enthusiasm I Had Almost Forgotten

Shigeru Tanaka
Teacher

Before the In-house Seminar, I was very anxious how the seminar would turn out. But from the moment I met the participants from Papua New Guinea, I was overwhelmed by the cheerfulness of each person and was strongly impressed by their enthusiasm to know Japan and build friendship with the Japanese.

The participants who shared room with me were all very courteous and kind. They spoke to me in English right after entering the room. I tried boldly to answer in English.

After asking how they felt about Japan, they talked about Papua New Guinea, explaining in detail with a photographic magazine. I learned from them that they have commodities they ship to Japan (coffee and sea cucumbers). As the conversation warmed up, we decided we should have beer together. In our first encounter, we became fast friends, as if we have known each other for a long time. In the sports event, we enjoyed playing soft volleyball. At dinner, I asked the participants



whether they had any problems with food in Japan. They said they liked all Japanese foods and ate everything.

On the second day, we had discussions on education, society, and customs in Japan and Papua New Guinea. Although I felt three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon are too long, I found that we did not have enough time for the energetic debate. A welcome party was held at night, at which we had a recreational event. It was followed by exchange of dance, with the Papua New Guineans performing their native dances and we performing the "bon" dance as long as time allowed. While dancing, I prayed earnestly that their stay in Japan be enjoyable, safe, and meaningful.

A Hilarious Blooper— Is Japanese Difficult ?

Tomoko Matsui
Civil Servant

I assumed that most of the invited participants studied Japanese for the first time during this stay. I found them wonderful for their effort to learn despite the mistakes they make. I would like to describe two episodes they explained to us with rich and expressive gestures at the In-house Seminar. It was one of the most hilarious happenings in the seminar.

Episode 1: The "Wakarimasen" Incident

When Mr. J was dining at a restaurant, he wanted another glass of water and tried to call the waiter. The waiter didn't notice him for a long time. So he raised his empty glass very high and called in a loud voice, "Wakarimasen (I don't understand)!"

The quick-witted waiter understood at once and brought a glass of water. What on earth didn't Mr. J understand?

Episode 2: The "Aketekudasai" Incident

My roommate N engaged in role-playing with Mr. H in a Japanese language class. When N wanted Mr. H to sit on a chair, she said, "Aketekudasai (Please open it)!" Mr. H, who seemed to have been waiting for this opportunity, grinned slyly and tried to unbutton N's jacket. Naturally, N was shocked and panicked. When we heard the story later, Mr. H stirred roars of laughter with his wry smile and wily hand movement as he recounted the incident.

I thank the participants for the wonderfully hilarious memory and time devoted to straightforward and sincere discussion. Although the problems we face are different, I would be very happy to come together and help each other as comrades who share the same planet. I look forward to the next time we meet again.

Thank You for the Wonderful Time

Kaori Sunaga
Civil Servant

The In-house Seminar started with my hope that I make friends with participants from ASEAN nations and enjoy the opportunity.

At the hotel lobby where we gathered for the first time and in the bus, we felt each other's apprehensions, and tension was in the air. We were finally relaxed when we engaged in our first programme, playing "indiacca" as a sports event. There were people in the game, people cheering the players, people practicing for the game, and people playing "trim volley" and "sepak takraw." We could feel the small groups of people form a large circle of friends. Probably because of the pervasive feeling of friendship, the discussion on the second day expanded from environmental issues into mat-

ters concerning love.

The most memorable during the three days was the exchange party. We had been planning for our ASEAN participants to have a good time and found ourselves being entertained with their native costumes, songs, and dances and all the more interested in the ASEAN nations. In the In-house Seminar, we recalled the importance of sharing time with friends and wish to treasure the friendship we cultivated in the wonderful seminar.

We will live in the memory of the participants from ASEAN nations and hence say "see you again" instead of "good-bye." We would be very happy if the seminar has become a memorable experience for you. Although the time we had was short, we thank you for the delightful time together.

Participating in the In-house Seminar with ASEAN Com- ponent Group

Mayumi Ikegami
Civil Servant

"Internationalization" has long become a familiar word but was something quite remote from everyday living except when coming into contact with foreign cultures while traveling overseas. To admit the truth, I didn't have the courage to take action in this respect despite my interest in it and viewed with awe and respect people who are actually involved in international activities. Participation in the seminar with the ASEAN Component Social Welfare Group, however, turned out to be a pleasant and invaluable experience for me to raise awareness of "internationalization on my own personal level" and to contemplate on the issue.

Although we know of "Americanizing," there is no comparable term associated with Asia. It is totally unheard of. In imagining "things unJapanese," I may have unconsciously eliminated Asia from my mind. I believe that many around me share the same perception. Aside from famous tourist spots, I must admit that I know very little about ASEAN countries. It seems that my perception of those countries has been formed by the words "underdeveloped countries" and "developing countries" that I have heard when I was small carried no real meaning for me.

In the exchange, I felt right away the embarrassment of having very little awareness in this respect when associating with people who underwent rigid screening for this occasion. Although I have been informed in advance that it is a "casual gathering," I questioned myself repeatedly whether or not I am qualified to share invaluable time with them. Still, we were welcomed warmly by the people from ASEAN nations, and I personally found the In-house Seminar was very enjoyable and fruitful.

I have gained many benefits.

1. I realized that there are many that cannot be noticed or understood without real experience. I learned that I had been living a life rooted to some extent in preconceived ideas. Prejudice certainly is an obstacle.
2. Language is not a barrier when there is willingness to understand. Still, I keenly felt it would have been better if I could at least speak English.
3. In international exchange, it is necessary most of all to know your own country. In the discussion, I realized that I knew only vaguely even about familiar matters.
4. There is a need to have a clear personal opinion and the ability to explain it clearly with one's own personal style of presentation.

Tacit understanding does not work in internationalization.

Through exchange, I was able to feel greater affinity to the countries from which the participants came and change inside me that I cannot explain in words. It was stimulating in the constructive sense, and I wish to keep having the awareness I gained in the encounter.

Discussing Environmental Issues with ASEAN Participants

Takuma Hori

Civil Servant

The discussion theme of our group was the environment. In the discussion, we realized that the ASEAN and Japan are witnessing numerous environmental problems while achieving rapid growth that can be called a miracle. There were many problems and possible solutions presented by the members. One said that to resolve environmental problems in the long term, education is the most effective solution. Another said there is a need to make compulsory reforestation after logging. Regarding the garbage problem that becomes chronic with economic growth, there was a person who suggested that it is important to promote development of a garbage sorting system (such as sorting into burnable garbage, unburnable garbage, cans, bottles, PET bottles, and paper for recycling) and of recycling technologies. The discussion covered various examples such as logging, dynamite fishing, etc. In all the issues we covered, we saw the need to pay attention to being "sustainable" in the long run instead of in the short term.

Through this programme, we found that listening to each other's personal opinion to be most beneficial. Reflecting on the information that we gathered, we realized that a large part

of such information comes from the mass media and other third parties. In the current flow of information reaching beyond boundaries, we must make consistent effort in obtaining information to judge whether the information is accurate or whether the information has been tampered by others. In this respect, discussion on the personal level and seeing each other in person have been very meaningful. In the debate, we found that we share many problems in common. We hope in the future to share information on such problems, examine together, learn from each other, and correct what is wrong.

In addition to the fruitful discussion I explained, I felt the greater importance of gaining invaluable friends. There were sports exchange, exchange party, and *karaoke* party proposed by our ASEAN friends after the In-house Seminar. We hated to say goodbye at the farewell party and saw them off the next day. I plan to visit ASEAN nations at yearend. It feels like visiting very old friends back from elementary school days.

People with Enthusiasm and Pride

Yo Tachikawa
Student

I believe the true value of the In-house Seminar was not in the group discussions or parties but in the time we were able to share to show each other our world views and dreams. With the determination to understand non-Japanese speakers not through interpreters and not resigning oneself to inexact communication, the feelings can be conveyed in images even without linguistic competence. The In-house Seminar made me realize its importance in communication.



In speaking with African participants, I found that there are, quite naturally, many people with diverse backgrounds. One was determined to work hard by starting his own company. Another expressed dissatisfaction with his own work, which was chosen from his country's needs but was different from what he studied in university. Another was pouring all of his energies into nationbuilding as vice chairman of a government organization in his young country. However, they all shared the enthusiasm of leading their countries in the constructive path and discontent with the ego-driven behavior of Japan and other industrialized nations. Since one even had the experiences of being injured in war and seeing a friend who shared the same dream of nationbuilding die right in front of him, the feeling comes quite naturally. Because of the great importance of their deeds both in value and meaning to Africa's growth which had only started, the enthusiasm and discontent are easily justifiable. For Japanese who have questioned their existence—at least myself—their drive and energy are awesome and helps

us remind of what life truly is all about.

Although I was embarrassed by my ineptitude, I felt that I learned more—the importance of enthusiasm and pride—from them than they from us and hope that I would be of help to them in some small expression of humility way sometime in the future. Cheers for my African friends and their belief in the future.

Meeting People from Africa

Akihiro Higaki
Civil Servant

I think the exchange with participants from Africa may have been brief but very important. African ways of thinking naturally differ with that of Japanese, as well as among themselves due to difference in country. Though living on the same planet, it is natural that different environment and different ways of living lead us to have different ways of thinking. I renewed my realization how wonderful it is to have the “diversity.”

I was impressed that Africans in general are intelligent and warm. Particularly in the group discussion, they presented a rational assessment of conditions and problems in their countries. At times, I was embarrassed because I knew very little about it.

In the volleyball game, I was amazed by their drive and determination as they vied with each other for the ball. When we took a bath together in the large bathroom at the hotel, it was charming to see them acting shy and bewildered. The only thing that was a bit unfortunate was that we would have been able to understand a bit more if we had better competence in French.

Because the In-house Seminar was brief, I wanted to speak more with them. But I wish

that we all can meet and discuss once again somewhere in Africa five years from now possibly in French. The seminar was simply a prologue to getting to understand Africa better. To prepare for our second meeting, I want to study more about the world and about Africa. In-house Seminar was very meaningful solely considering that I was able to realize that.

Lastly, I would like to thank the staff for making arrangements for the seminar.

Participating in the In-house Seminar

Megumi Ogawa
Civil Servant

An overnight stay for exchange is exciting even for an adult. I felt that the idea of Japanese and Vietnamese sharing the same room is an effective way to getting used to each other. However, there are restrictions to it. Difficulty in communication tend to make us give up communication. Even in the plan to experience “communication of thoughts and feelings even without language,” active effort of the part of the participants to communicate is vital to make effective use of the opportunity.



Although I have worked hard as intermediary with my Vietnamese language ability that I have gained through study, I felt that the Japanese should have a clearer awareness. Because the seminar accounts for only two nights and three days out of their extended itinerary in a foreign country, they are very tired. Still, it is a rare opportunity for us Japanese. We should pour our energies generously into it.

In the group discussion, it was very interesting to see ideas shared in common, points of difference, personal opinions, etc., on social conditions in the two countries. However, the

discussion would have been much better if we had greater focus in theme. As mentioned earlier, vitality on the Japanese side should have guided the discussion.

The exchange party was a very enjoyable experience of introducing each other's cultures. If possible, a joint programme could have enhanced the sense of familiarity among the two groups.

The benefit we gained from the seminar was that we were able to make good friends in Viet Nam. I look forward to meeting them again when visiting Viet Nam in the near future.

4. Impressions by Host Families

My First Experience as Host Family

Ikuko Hino
Yamagata Pref.

"Is it all right to bring home a person for homestay this Saturday?" was the question my husband abruptly asked me in a phone call from office. It was already the middle of the week. He explained that the host family scheduled for the person suddenly couldn't take her for a serious reason and our family was chosen as replacement. Although I understood the situation, I panicked. A person from Indonesia! A Muslim! What about language? What about food?



In spite of the confusion and lack of preparation, it was with our smiles and spunk that we welcomed Nini. We were told she studies English at university and found her very intelligent and well-bred. To our relief, she was earnest and sincere in responding to our awkward English. We were surprised that our five-year-old son quickly became friends with her. Kindness reaches people even when language cannot.

Of course, there were slight misunderstandings and bunglings. We took lots of photographs on the first day—or so we thought. But when we tried to take film out of the camera for development, we found it empty. We all laughed very hard and said in chorus, "Oh, my God!" Needless to say, we took photos all over again the next day.

Although it was only a two-day stay, Nini helped us feel more familiar with her country Indonesia. Right now, my husband and I are studying English conversation because we hope to visit Nini in the near future. To me, Indonesia was in the past a country of tropical rain forests and wild animals. Today, it has become a country where I have a friend named Nini.



Big Sister in Malaysia

Aya Nishimoto

Ehime Pref.

We received an unusual guest on June 23. Our guest was Suzana from Malaysia, a country which was unknown to our family until then. She was a vivacious person and a good singer, and entertained us all the time. She also told us many interesting stories about Malaysia. I was happy because she became a trustworthy sister to me. Although my final examinations were approaching, I tried to spend as much time as possible with her.

She showed me a photo of her office which is located in a 40-story building in Kuala Lumpur. The office was spacious and lined with computers. If Suzana hadn't been wearing the *Tudung* (head covering for Islamic women), it would be mistaken for an office of a high-tech company in Tokyo. I can imagine how rapidly Malaysia's economy is growing. I was told that, like in Japan, agricultural laborers are falling in number with industrial progress and fewer young people carry on family occupations.

While listening to music and talking with her, I found that the latest movies and music popular in Japan are popular in Malaysia as

well. I learned that there are Japanese, Chinese, and Italian restaurants, as well as McDonald's, line the streets, and people enjoy dishes from various countries. I realized that the world is overcoming geographical barriers and growing into one culture.

Through the exchange with Suzana, I was able to find countries are able to become closer by sharing the same culture and ideas while retaining their respective individualities in traditional culture.

In Spite of Worries over Conversation

Tomiko Nishida

Ishikawa Pref.

On Friday morning, I elatedly went to meet her. Because my husband and daughters were away for the day, I had to face her alone with my poor language skill.

Although we have received homestay guests several times before, it was always on weekends when the entire family could be together or during summer vacation, and I depended on my daughters for conversation with the guest. This time, however, my greatest problem was how to spend the time alone with the guest throughout the first day.

I prepared for the day by going through the possible conversation in advance and memorizing and struggling with the dictionary. Surprisingly, she appeared to have seen through me and greeted me heartily in faltering Japanese. Suddenly, the conversation plan fell apart, and conversation started with words and gestures. I was embarrassed by my own excessive apprehensions and found that language skill is only secondary in communication with people.

In the morning, I wanted to get to know

each other's families and showed her our family photos. We talked—but, of course, with the help of my English-Japanese/Japanese-English dictionary.

In the afternoon, we went to the nearby Kibagata Park. I found that she likes to ride bicycles and decided to have a bike tour through the park. Along the way, there are several varieties of hydrangeas blooming on both sides of a river bank. Every year, I look forward with great anticipation the blooming of the beautiful blossoms. With a foreign guest by my side this year, I felt something strangely gratifying.

The day finally passed in spite of my worries over conversation. The joy of having spent the day with her without the help of my daughters made me forget any feeling of fatigue. I wonder how she felt about it.



Because our family runs a kimono shop, we spent the last day wearing "*furisode*" and "*uchikake*" kimonos—which may have been too hot for that time of the year—and holding tea ceremony and playing the Japanese "*koto*" harp. I was particularly happy because she liked wearing the "*furisode*."

My mother was most worried about food. Fortunately, Kathleen loved Japanese food and ate everything we served on the table.

From the host standpoint, I found it most pleasing when the invited guest enjoyed the stay and went home happy. I am most grateful for having Kathleen, who was broad-minded and enjoyed every experience with us.

Being a Host Family

Chikako Matsushita
Aichi Pref.

We had Miss Kathleen Mitchell of Singapore as guest at our home from July 7 to 9. We were a bit nervous because it was our first experience to have a foreign guest for homestay in our house. However, we were able to enjoy the experience without any problems.

I myself have had homestay experience with families in the U.K. and Australia. The experience of seeing lifestyles and customs I had no knowledge of was truly invaluable. However, living with a family you don't know in a foreign country is not easy for both host and guest.

When I heard that young people from Singapore will be coming, I wanted very much to be on the receiving end this time. That is why we had decided to have Kathleen stay with us.

Smiles Cross National Boundaries

Atsumu Iwaki
Iwate Pref.

Thirty years after my homestay experience, which had been a tremendous shock both culturally and economically as well as great excitement, I felt no anxiety to the call from the Iwate Prefecture International Exchange Association. In fact, I even found a sense of anticipation and pleasure.

When I met the participants in their native



dress at the welcome party, I felt I was in illusion of being on an overseas trip. I saw youth and dynamism universal around the world in the sparkling eyes and sociable conversation and conduct.

"Konbanwa" was the first word she said in greeting, pronouncing it more beautifully than the Japanese. After introducing my family and my home, we started to talk about Bangladesh and our families and realized it was already well past midnight when it was over. After being asked to sleep together, my wife appeared to have had memorable time sleeping alongside her for two nights.

I have guided her to a kindergarten, a dam, hot springs, and a large farm. She seemed to be particularly interested in the kindergarten. The neighbors were also hospitable, and I believe the entire community had been able to foster international goodwill.

In the morning of the third day, she cooked for us curry. She had brought ingredients all the way for us, making us feel so happy and grateful for her consideration.

In her argument that a young nation like hers still requires both material and non-material assistance from Japan, she gave the impression of being a representative of her people rather than an individual citizen. We could feel her aspirations as a person bearing

the heavy responsibility of becoming a leader of a nation striving to achieve unity. At the same time, I must admit to the fact that my interest in Japan's overseas assistance has been expanded greatly.

What impression did she have of Japan and our town? I remember the happy time we had looking at the sari she gave us as a gift, the photos, and other mementos. I am cheering for Yasmin, who loves her country more than herself.

I earnestly hope I will be able to see her again some day.

***"Ichari ba Cho De"*—Meeting Makes Us Sisters**

Sachiko Nakachi
Okinawa Pref.

Our family hosted Fathimath Shaziyya from the Republic of the Maldives. I live with my mother and was very grateful to have the opportunity to host a foreign guest. Because I love to travel and have visited many countries, I myself have been received with hospitality and had decided to join this volunteer programme in hope of returning the favors I received.

In the spirit of the Okinawa expression "*ichari ba cho de*," we promised each other that we will become sisters. Since neither of us had brothers or sisters, we were very happy to become sisters. I recorded everything that happened during the three days with us on video and gave her the videotape as a memento of her stay.

For three days, we went to the Memorial National Government Park and stayed at Moon Beach. I was told it resembles the Maldives. She is a kindergarten teacher and a working woman who skillfully juggles both

her job and the home. There was much to learn from her. She brought a lot of spices from her country and taught me her native cooking. I am interested in sewing and was impressed by the hand-sewn native dress.

When she made an overseas call from our home to her home, she spoke to her daughter with tears in her eyes. She must have been worried about her daughter. And I had the chance to talk to her husband. Since both she and her husband spoke English very well, I realized I have to study the language more. During the three days, I realized that we share the same thoughts, regardless of differences in religion, language, and skin color. Although our time together was brief, I was able to become sisters with a very charming Muslim lady and hope to build our friendship in the future.



—which they found very hot—that she prepared for them. We also took pictures wearing *bindi* (forehead-dress for women). The three days passed quickly with so much pleasure.

Maybe it is our turn to go to India.

After Homestay of an Indian Youth

Junko Oishi
Aichi Pref.

Our family hosted a young lady from Karnataka province in southern India named Geetha Gowda. Her name Geetha means “song”, and most aptly she was a good singer and a very talkative, friendly person.

I am the only person who can speak English in the family. The only English words my husband and children know are “hello” and “thank you”. This made them very nervous at the start. However, the children made friends quickly with cheerful Geetha, who tickled and poked them jokingly. They played happily together, as if they were enjoying the seemingly incommunicable conversation of English and Japanese.

The children in the neighborhood to whom I teach English came and ate the Indian food

Why is Ocean Water Salty?

Yukiko Hayashi
Tokushima Pref.

Asked “why is ocean water salty,” I responded with a stupid answer that it contains salt. He still nodded with satisfaction. Is this the difference between mountainous Nepal and Japan, a country surrounded by the sea? The three days and two nights that we spent with DK became unforgettable memory.

Our family had traveled to Nepal ten years ago. Because the overwhelming Himalayan Mountains and the innocent eyes of children we saw in the villages sprayed among the mountains were imprinted strongly in our minds, we decided to accept a homestay guest from the country. Sure enough, DK turned out to be the same Nepalese type of person we expected him to be.

He played with our one-and-a-half year old child, was genuinely astounded by the Naruto Whirlpool, and looked very happy running in



the sandy beach and jumping into the ocean. We were the ones surprised to see him swim so well. He told us he swam in the small streams of Nepal when he was small. He said it is easier to swim in the ocean than in the river. It probably became imprinted in him as an unforgettable moment in Japan. There were times when he would watch Japanese young people and immerse himself in thought. We wonder how he saw the young people in Japan.

When we talked with him late into the night, the topic we found most interesting was the caste system. To our question on what he teaches children as a schoolteacher, he said he teaches the reality of the caste system, and at the same time not to discriminate against others, and to respect each other. Being only 24 years old, he sometimes appeared to perceive religious rules as mere protocol. Seeing DK say smilingly that young people need freedom, his spirit and fortitude impressed us. We could see that national borders are diminishing for young people and happily look forward to receiving mail from Nepal.

Bond of Love

Hiroko Ogi
Yamaguchi Pref.

Because I am not good at English, I was not able to speak to Aslam at the welcome party. Because my husband said he could not speak much English either, he must have felt very uneasy. Although I felt we could manage to communicate once we went home, I could tell his anxiety from his face and sympathized with him. When he came, the dinner which was supposed to go as usual turned to be pathetic, with the stewed vegetables tasting wrong and the grilled fish unpalatable. I felt very sorry for Aslam, who still ate and claimed they were delicious.

On the second day, we were able to have an enjoyable dinner with a lot of people at the home of Inamul's host family. On the last night, we invited Inamul and his host family to our home to Aslam's own cooking. Although we could not prepare all the necessary ingredients, the curry he prepared was very delicious. Everyone there praised his cooking again and again, and the pot was emptied quickly. I felt I was able to learn firsthand the differences in food culture and to deepen understanding.

We guided him through the beautiful Seto Inland Sea, a scene quite different from Islamabad where he lives and is remote from the ocean. We walked through the sandy beach that stretched along the blue sea and went to higher locations to view the scenery. Hearing that he likes driving, we brought him to Kintaikyo Bridge. He showed interest in everything and asked questions. He also talked a lot by himself. Although I felt more frustration than I expected over not being able to convey my thoughts in words, I am convinced that we were able to communicate in our



hearts.

During his stay, he treated me like a real mother. Being childless, I never thought I would be able to meet such a wonderful son who is intelligent, sincere, and thoughtful of others.

I look forward to the day when I am able to see my son who lives in Pakistan.

It's a Miracle

Kazuhiro Tabata
Hokkaido Pref.

Ten young schoolteachers came from a tropical island slightly smaller than Hokkaido and located in the Indian Ocean. During their stay in our city, they were on homestay only for two nights. However, the brief stay had become a memorable experience. We had at our home a vivacious and friendly girl named Anoma, who was the leader of the group. She showed us photos of her family back home and talked with us about many things.

Although the stay was basically to have relaxing time at a Japanese home, we took her to the Snow Museum, which should be interesting for people from tropical countries, the Yukara-Ori Folk Craft Museum to show traditional arts and crafts in Hokkaido, and other

places. We were able to identify differences in climate and culture and discussed things in common, such as textiles. At night, we went to a "karaoke" shop, Japan's contribution to international culture, and sang in turns. She told us that *karaoke* is popular in her country as well and that there are contests. We played with Japanese fireworks and found children in her country love them as well.

As for food, she told us she likes *tempura* and other Japanese foods, except for *sashimi*. However, she ate very little at meals. But when we served her pizza for lunch, she finished the whole plate. In spite of her claims, she must have had hard time with typical Japanese dishes. That is why we served very hot curry for dinner on the last day and saw her eat with relish.

During the homestay, we took her to a school festival that was going on at a nearby high school. The theme of the festival was "72-Hour Miracle." I felt the three days we shared with Anoma, a girl from a distant tropical island, was a miracle. At the farewell party, she said that, despite differences in nationality and upbringing, she felt like she knew us for a long time, as if we know each other in our previous lives. Because she was an expectant mother, we engaged at times in lively discussion about pregnancy and motherhood. We think of her and Sri Lanka each time we drink the Ceylon tea she brought as a gift. We are grateful to JICA and Takikawa City for making this miracle come true and feel a solid bond of friendship developing.

Welcoming Chris to Our Home

Kayoko Ueda
Ishikawa Pref.

Until Chris came to our home, we did not know that there is a nation called the Federated States of Micronesia. He was pleased at the start to see that I went to the library to check and borrow a book on the nation. The map showed his island Moen in Chuuk, the island where his parents live, and the island where his wife came from. The person holding the native lovestick (a souvenir he brought us) and appearing in a photo in the book turned out to be his acquaintance. Pleasantly surprised, he repeatedly said, "Oh, no!"

We learned that there is electricity only on his island Moen and that items such as "*tawashi* (scrubbing bristles)" and "*haizara* (ash-tray)" that the Japanese brought in while they occupied the area had assimilated into the Chuukese language. The old literature described taro yam as the staple food. However, we learned that the people there have California rice, *Nissin instant noodles*, *Kikkoman* soy sauce, and yellow *takuan* pickles and enjoy a rich diet with imports from Japan and the United States.

When we were watching a TV programme honoring Respect-for-the-Aged Day, our discussion turned to the problem of the elderly caused by breakup of the extended family in Japan. I felt that Japan is poorer than his country in the emotional aspect despite its material affluence. I was told that the average life span in his country is roughly 59 for men and 62 for women and that infant mortality is high. The reason is inadequacy in medical facilities and shortage of medical doctors (the only doctor in the island is a Filipino). I felt that, if Japan could provide aid to Micronesia,



the focus should be improvement of medical facilities and training of doctors and nurses.

When I asked him what he would like to do on the second day, he said he will entrust me with what to do because he doesn't know Kanazawa. I wished it would have been easier on the host family if he had studied even one hour about the place he will go in his programme in local area while training in Tokyo.

The only wish he had was to have his eyes inspected because he had trouble seeing at times. If possible, he wished to buy an appropriate pair of glasses. After eye examination, it was found that Chris had too good eyesight for a 35-year-old and was feeling the onset of hyperopia, an eyesight problem closely associated with old age. Because eyeglasses for the problem were on sale on the Respect-for-the-Aged Day week, we decided to buy one for him as a gift, which made him very happy. He will be reminded of us every time he wears it at home.

His song and dance at the farewell party were wonderful. We got to know a little about Micronesia but wished that other host families explained a little about Western Samoa, Vanuatu, Tonga, and Marshall Islands, from where their homestay guests came.

First Experience as Host Family

Kumiko Okamoto

Okayama Pref.

This was our first experience as host family. The first motive was hearsay that being a host family is "very enjoyable." In reality, however, the joy gradually faded as the time approached, and anxiety spread instead. What kind of person is coming? Would the stay in our home be pleasant and without any discomfort? How would my parents, who have almost never associated with foreigners, react to the person? My parents appears partly excited and partly apprehensive. I planned the homestay, trying to convince myself that everything will be all right because I speak a little English. At any rate, I decided while preparing various options, to honor the guest's wishes and act accordingly after the homestay period starts. In fact, most of my anxieties disappeared once I met Nor at the meeting ceremony.

The homestay lasted two nights and three days. First was the meeting with my parents. My mother was all excited because she felt Nor resembled my cousins and my aunt. This eliminated my worry with my parents. I guided her through the house and explained how to use the bath, shower and toilet. She appeared a bit tired because her training schedule was probably hectic. After dinner, we joined a party at our friend's home. I intended to go home early but ended up returning around midnight because it was very enjoyable.

On the second day, it unfortunately rained very hard. Because she said she did not want to travel very far, we visited a traditional maritime merchant shop nearby which is open to visitors. In the conversation, I found that she is interested in things Japanese and decided to ask my grandmother living nearby to

come to our home for a try wearing kimono. She was tremendously happy. In turn, I wore native Brunei dress. The rain eventually let up, and we went out. Although we were worried that she might become tired from wearing something unfamiliar, she stayed in the kimono for five hours. The day turned out to be very fruitful, thanks to the rain.

The last day was spent talking at home and going shopping. Although the stay was short, we felt sad saying good-bye and see her go home.

I was most impressed by the Brunei people's characteristic of caring for the family, being loyal to their religion, and for open-minded tolerance. When leaving the house or preparing meals, for example, she showed great concern for my parents—something I never did. There had been some aspects that I could not understand over religious matters, but I believe it is important to make an effort to understand each other.

Experience as host family is a good opportunity not for knowing something about the guest but also for reflecting on ourselves and on the Japanese people. Unlike overseas travel when we enjoy foreign customs, we are able to think rationally about our own country by inviting foreign guests.

I am deeply grateful to all who have granted me this opportunity and earnestly wish that more people share the same experience.

Thank You for the Happy Memory

Kimiko Fukasawa
Yamanashi Pref.

We are very grateful that we have been able to learn a lot from our first experience of having a foreign guest for homestay.

The homestay programme was organized under the initiative of Chairman Mochizuki, mobilizing chiefly the members of the Nursing Foundation. It was our first experience at any rate, and we did our best to provide the warmest hospitality possible. Our homestay guest was Jera from the Philippines. Because she is cheerful and sincere, we became friends quickly. The three days with her was very pleasant and warm, as if I had another daughter. I was not able to make sufficient preparations because of my tight work schedule. Because we heard that she is a dentist, we tried to schedule a visit to a dentistry-related institution through our family doctor, but we only managed to add it as a supplement to showing how we live every day.

Specifically, we took her to my monthly Japanese traditional dance practice and to the annual "Kofu *Daisuki* (We love Kofu-city) festival" to wear *yukata* and to dance, as well as to a Sunday mass. Looking back, I regret that the schedule was probably too tight.

Still, she looked very charming in Japanese *yukata*, and she learned two dances after intensive training for an hour. She blended so well with the 1500 dancers. The only funny thing was that we managed to find 25.5 cm-size "*tabi*" socks but could not find suitable sandals of the same size. We reluctantly had her wear sneakers, which in fact became pleasant memory.

Looking back to the three days with her, I found that we are the same human beings

living on the same planet, despite differences in nation, and felt something very warm in our hearts. Memory of living together as one family rather than as friends will never disappear. I will remember the time with her as a member of our family. Thank you for the happy moments.

Meeting Haoua

Chizue Fukushima
Okayama Pref.

Haoua who came to our home is a guest from faraway Niger. Because she was roughly my age, we were able to talk a lot about our children, education, and lifestyles.

I taught Haoua a choosing game using hands named "*janken*." When she mastered the game very well, she told me that she will use it when, as chief in her workplace, she cannot decide what to do. When I told her that I think "*janken*" should not be used to make important decisions at work, she burst out laughing very cheerfully.

Haoua has 10 brothers and sisters. Her father works hard on his farm. Because 70% of the country is desert, growing crops is an arduous task. When she checked the azuki beans my mother dried in the sun in the garden, she touched them and repeatedly said they were beautiful. She carefully packed the beans we gave her as a souvenir for her father and told us how wonderful it would be if the beans grew next year and the years after that. Hearing these words, we felt somehow humbled and embarrassed living in Japan, where food and clothing are profusely available.

With Haoua as our house guest, we were not only able to relax and enjoy her three-day stay but to recall something important that we almost forgot. She invited us to visit Niger. I

wish her good health until we meet again.

Lan Came to My Home from Viet Nam

Manabu Hirata
Hokkaido Pref.

The Vietnamese person who came to my home is named Lan. She came on November 3. She stayed in my room for resting. That is why I wiped the window and the mirror and made my room shiny and clean before she came.

Then, finally it was time to meet her and took her to our home.

While I was in the car, I checked a book to

see how to say "hello" in Vietnamese. I found that you say "chào chi" to women and "chào anh" to men. I couldn't believe why you say differently for men and women.

When the person in charge called "Lan," she came.

Then I said, "Chào chi." She understood me somehow. Next, I checked the book to see how you say "my name is." I found it was "tôi tên là." Then I said, "Tôi tên là Manabu Hirata." We then went home by my father's car.

Because Vietnamese is so difficult, we spoke in English.

Lan was very beautiful.

Lan was very kind.

