


THE YOUTH FRIENDSHIP PROGRAMME

ASIA, PACIFIC AND AFRICA

[Report]

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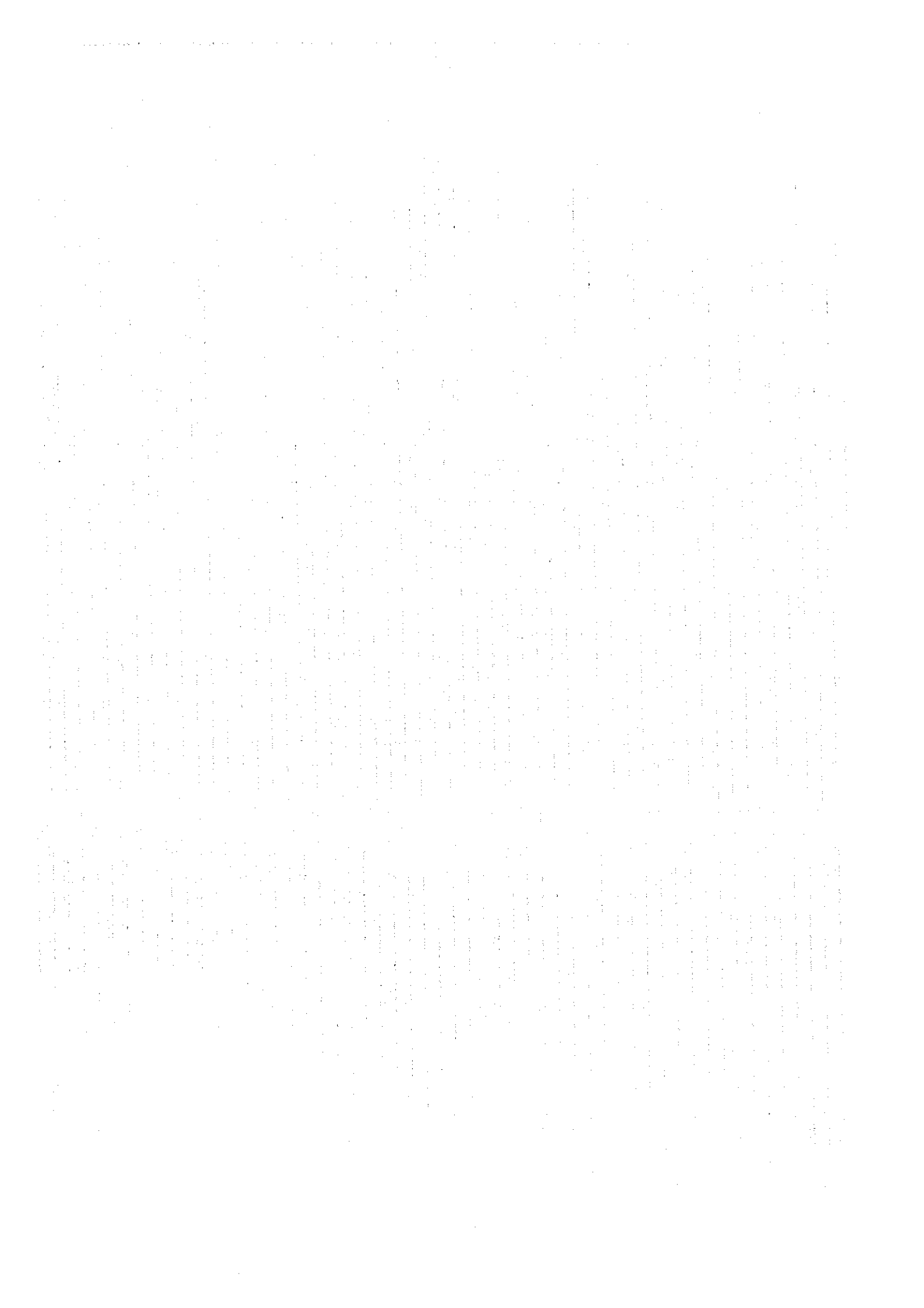
THE YOUTH FRIENDSHIP PROGRAMME
—ASIA, PACIFIC AND AFRICA—[Report] (1996)

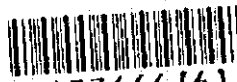
YOUTH INVITATION DIVISION
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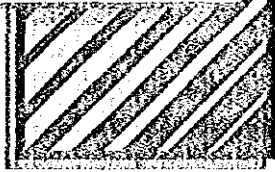


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ONE STEP TOWARD MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND FRIENDSHIP

Memorable scenes of the Youth Friendship Programme, 1996

OPENING CEREMONY



Welcome address from JICA



Participants full of expectation



Giving a big hand to the speaker

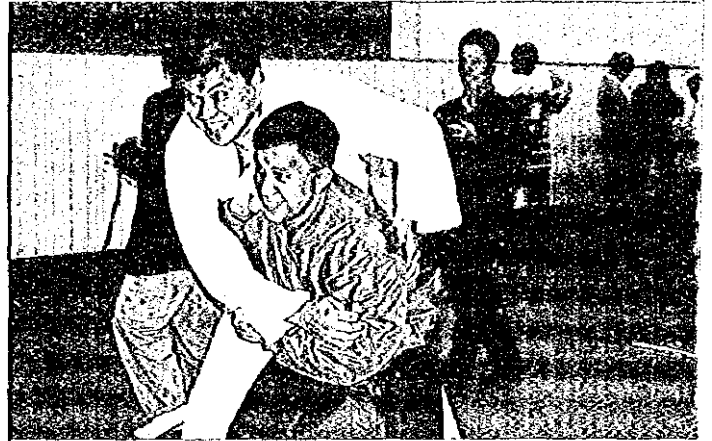


Participants in rapt attention

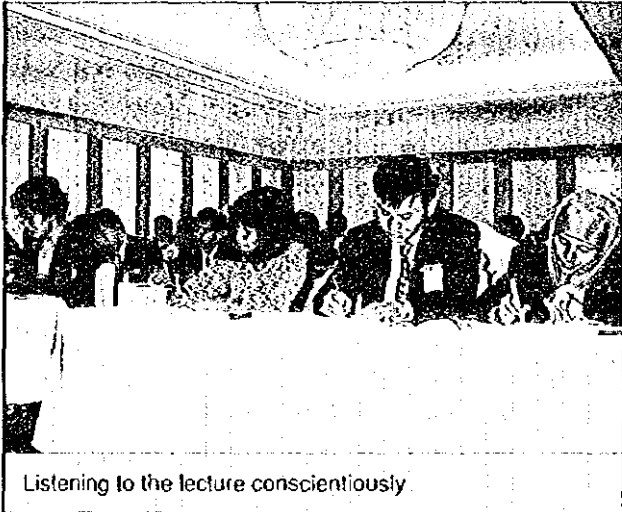


Anticipating the one-month stay ahead

GENERAL ORIENTATION PROGRAMME



Experiencing Japanese martial arts



Listening to the lecture conscientiously



One-day exchange with a Japanese volunteer
(Learn Japanese on the Move)



Learning how to say, "Ojamashimasu," and removing one's shoes upon entering a home (Japanese Lesson)



Any ideas as to where we shall go?(Learn Japanese on the Move)



Questions one after another



Phooo...Phooo...(Practicing artificial respiration)



Observation tour of a market

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMME
IN TOKYO



Experiencing tea ceremony



Trying to extinguish a fire (Fire drill)



Showing how to do the bamboo dance

IN-HOUSE SEMINAR



Receiving warm messages from new friends



I made it!



Enjoying conversation till late at night

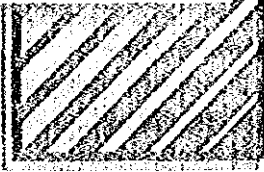


Yumm...Looks delicious!



Showing off our traditional dance

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMME
IN DIFFERENT PREFECTURES



Can't wait to take my first bite.



You're doing just fine.



Wearing kimono with pride



Just browsing through



We are having a great time.

HOMESTAY



Feeling at home with the family over a Japanese home-cooked dinner



A kiss for the flowers



Posing with my host family



Costumed in saris



Hai, Smile...

OBSERVATION TOUR



Golden smiles for the Golden Pavilion



Stepping into the history of Kiyomizu Temple

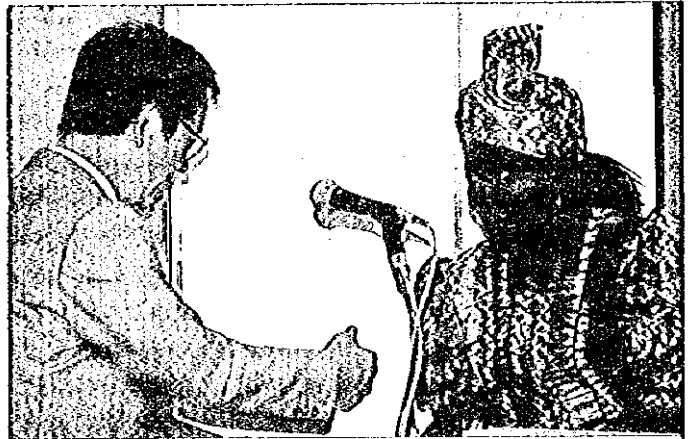


Serene at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park



At Miyajima, one of Japan's three outstanding scenic marvels

FAREWELL PARTY



JICA representative handing out a certificate



Thank you speech by the representative of the participants



Dancing to the rhythm

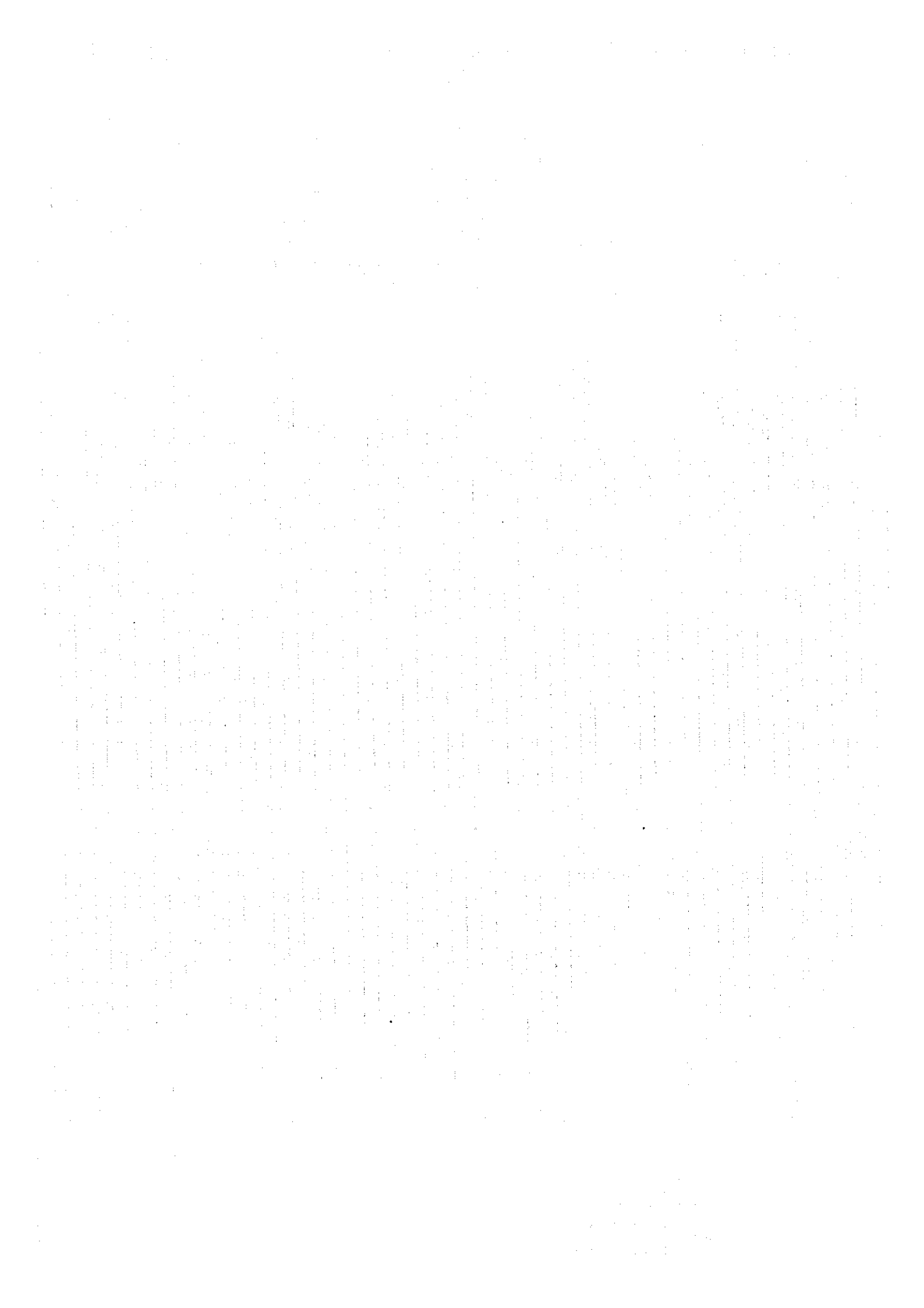


Singing and strumming with glee



The grand finale

THE YOUTH FRIENDSHIP PROGRAMME



FOREWORD

"The Youth Friendship Programme" is implemented by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as part of a technical cooperation scheme for developing countries. Under the programme young people from the ASEAN and other Asian, Pacific and African countries, who will shoulder the task of future nation-building, are invited to Japan for one month in different groups categorized by their specialized fields. The purpose of this programme is to provide the participants with opportunities to study their respective fields, as well as to deepen mutual understanding, thereby establishing trust and friendship between them and the Japanese people through wide-ranging exchanges with their host families and their counterparts.

During the past twelve years from 1984, a total of 13,454 young people from the abovementioned nations have visited Japan. At first only six ASEAN countries participated. Our network of friendship, however, has greatly extended to Pacific countries and territories, Myanmar, China, Korea, South Asian countries, Mongolia, African countries, three Indo-Chinese countries: Cambodia, Laos, and Viet Nam.

In 1996, to mark the thirteenth year of this programme we invited a total of 1,555 youths and fulfilled our role as their host, thanks to the warm support and cooperation of all those concerned. I wish to express to them my deepest appreciation.

This is a brief account of the one-month exchange programmes, along with the essays contributed by some of the participants from our guest countries, by the Japanese youths who took part in the In-house Seminars, as well as by the host families in the various parts of Japan who offered to receive the participants in their homes. It is our greatest hope and delight that this account would help to further enhance this programme and help our participants bring back their good memories.

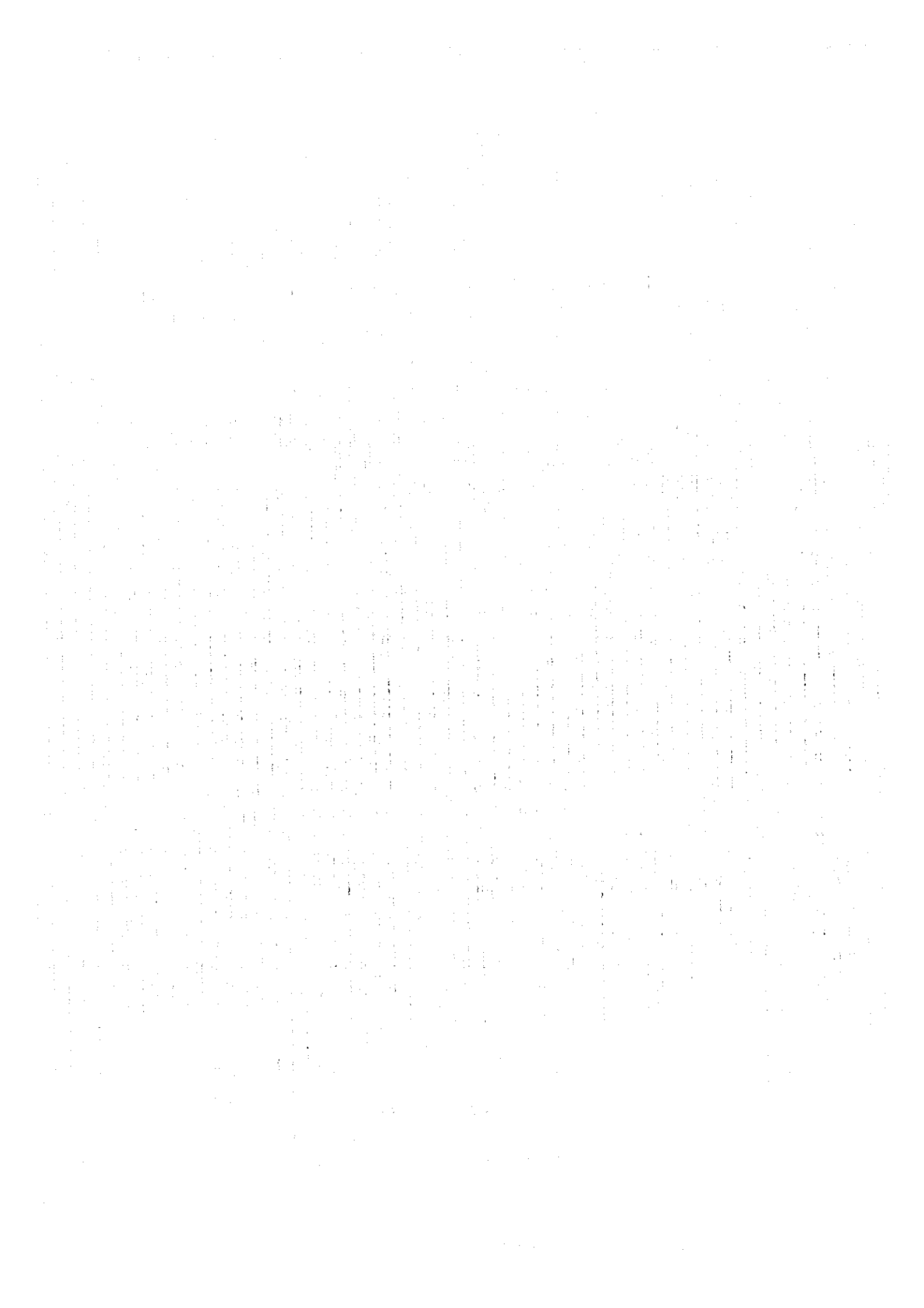
This report will be sent to all the participants of the year 1996 as well as to those who are concerned with the programme in the participating countries.

Lastly, I wish to convey my deep and sincere gratitude to all those who have helped us implement this programme and who have sent us impressive essays and opinions. I hope we can count on your continued support and cooperation towards making the Youth Friendship Programme even more worthwhile in the years to come.

Thank you.

March 1997

Masaru MORIMOTO
Managing Director, Training Affairs Department
Japan International Cooperation Agency



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1. The Youth Friendship Programme

Asia, Pacific and Africa

1. Outline of the Programme

(1) Purpose

"The Youth Friendship Programme" is implemented by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as part of a technical cooperation scheme for developing countries. Under the programme young people from these countries, who will shoulder the task of future nation-building, are invited to Japan for one month in different groups categorized by their specialized fields. The purpose of this programme is to provide the participants with opportunities to study their respective fields, as well as to deepen mutual understanding, thereby establishing trust and friendship through exchanges with the Japanese people of the same generation.

(2) Group Categories

① ASEAN Countries:

a. Single Country Group

Economy (Malaysia—Economic & Financial Management, Small & Medium Industry & Manufacturing)

Education

Social Development

Agriculture (Malaysia—Agriculture Development)

b. Component Group

Environment

Education

Social Welfare

Health & Medical Service

Public Administration

Economy

② Pacific Countries and Territories, South Asian Countries, Mongolia:

Teacher

Education (India—Teacher in the Field of Natural Sciences)

Civil Servant (Government Official)

- Health & Medical Service
- ③ African Countries:
 - Teacher (Female Teacher of High School or Junior High School)
 - Civil Servant (Economic Development)
- ④ Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos:
 - Education
- ⑤ Viet Nam:
 - Government Official
 - Economy
 - Education and Related Areas
 - Agriculture

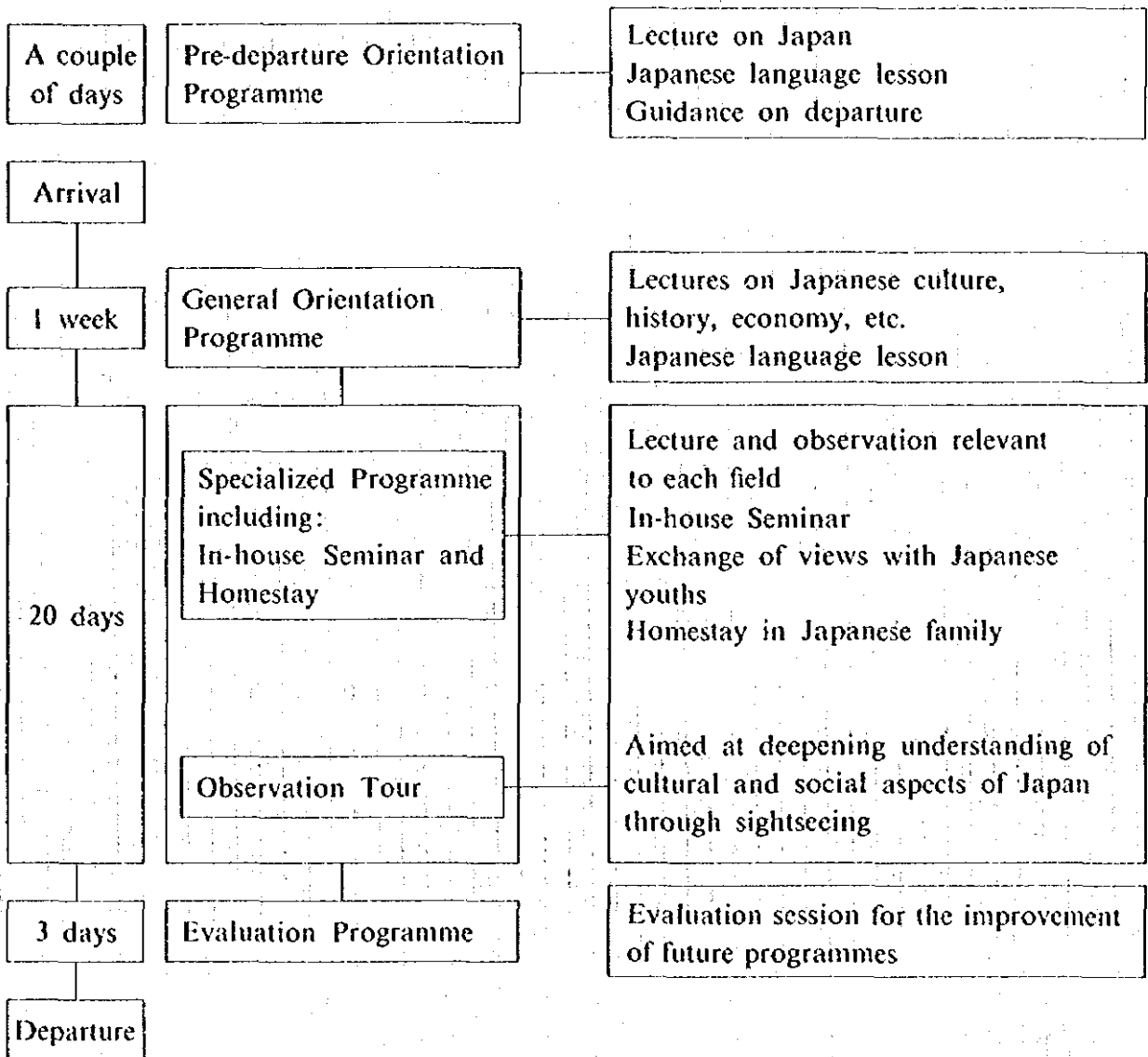
(3) Duration and Number of Participants

150 young people from each ASEAN-member country (50 from Brunei), 20 from Myanmar, 90 from 14 Pacific countries and territories, 100 from 7 South Asian countries, 10 from Mongolia, 100 from 44 African countries and an UN organization, 100 from Viet Nam, 30 from Cambodia and 20 from Laos were invited to Japan for a period of one month between May 1996 and December 1996. 1,270 youths were invited in all.

(4) Pre-departure Programme and One-month Programme in Japan

- ① Pre-departure Orientation Programme in the respective countries
- ② General Orientation in Tokyo
- ③ Specialized Programme (including In-house Seminar and Homestay)
- ④ Observation Tour to Hiroshima & Kyoto, etc.
- ⑤ Evaluation and Preparation for departure

(5) A Programme Model



(6) Aftercare Project

In order to promote the understanding of Japan by the youths who were invited under the Youth Friendship Programme and also to perpetuate the friendship between them and Japanese youth, JICA has been conducting an aftercare project as follows.

① Supplementary Literature

JICA supplies the participating youth, after their return, with the "Exchange Report" which is a digest of the programme of the year and the news letter "Dear Friends", so that they can keep up their understanding of Japan.

② Alumni Associations

JICA promotes the organization of alumni associations which consist of ex-participants of this friendship programme in each of the participating countries respectively. Alumni associations take the initiative in making it's members' list, cooperating in Pre-departure Programmes for new participants, holding meetings and issuing bulletins for their members. JICA offers support to alumni associations by bearing costs of their activities, etc.

Alumni associations have already been organized in all 6 ASEAN countries. Also in the Pacific countries and territories, preparation is being done for organizing an alumni association.

③ Alumni Liaison Conference

Representatives of alumni associations in respective countries meet together to hold an alumni liaison conference for the purpose of promoting activities of each alumni associations and ensuring continuous development of this Youth Friendship Programme.

JICA gives financial support to the alumni liaison conference by bearing various expenses. JICA also sends a Japanese delegation to the alumni liaison conference to have exchange of views.

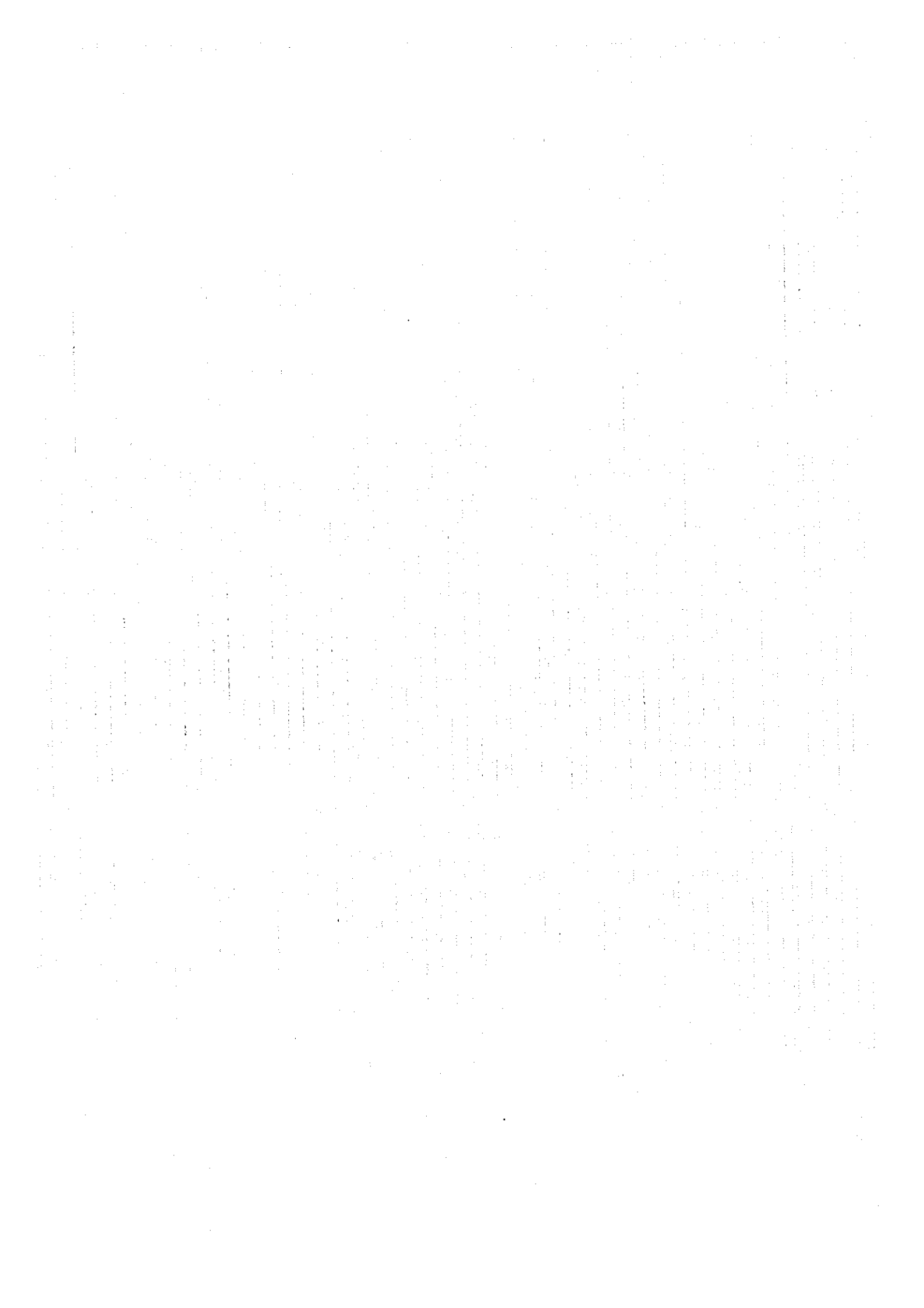
Up to the present, the alumni liaison conference is held in countries of ASEAN in which alumni associations have already been organized.

④ Follow-up Mission

To the participating countries, JICA sends missions which consist of Japanese youths, host families, staff members of related organizations, who played a major role in receiving participants in Japan, to ensure further understanding of Japan among the ex-participants. At the same time, Japanese delegations deepen their understanding of the actual conditions of those countries, which will contribute to the improvement of the programme.

Follow-up missions expand and develop this friendship programme, which used to be rather unilateral, into an "exchange" programme in its true sense which enhances mutual trust and friendship between the youths of Japan and the participating countries.

In 1996, 7 teams with 34 members visited the ASEAN countries and China.

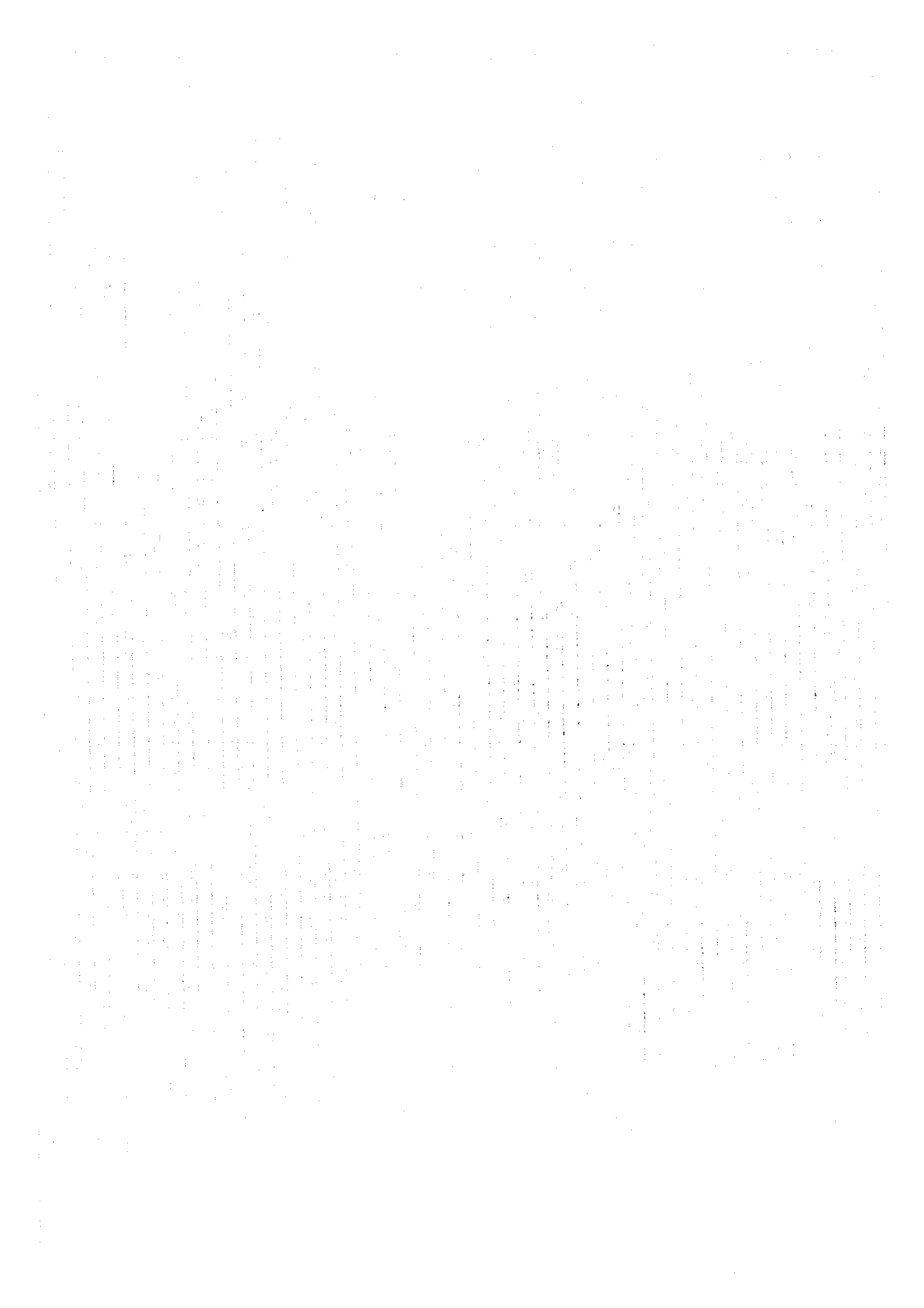


2. List of Invited Groups and Implementing Youth Organizations

Period	Country	Group	Size (Persons)	Youth Organization
May 16-June 14	Indonesia	Social Development	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	Indonesia	Economy A	20	Junior Executive Council of Japan
	Indonesia	Economy B	24	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	Philippines	Education	22	National Assembly for Youth Development
	Philippines	Social Development	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
May 22-June 20	Singapore	Education	22	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Singapore	Social Development	25	Development Association for Youth
	Singapore	Economy B	24	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
	Thailand	Education	22	National Assembly for Youth Development
	Thailand	Social Development	25	Yuai Youth Association
June 5-July 4	Viet Nam	Government Official	25	Japan Association for Civil Service Training and Development
	Viet Nam	Economy	24	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	Malaysia	Economic and Financial Management	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Malaysia	Small & Medium Industry & Manufacturing	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
June 20-July 19	Singapore	Economy A1	20	Development Association for Youth
	Singapore	Economy A2	24	Junior Executive Council of Japan
	Cambodia	Education	30	National Assembly for Youth Development
	Laos	Education	18	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
June 27-July 26	Pacific Component	Civil Servant	24	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Pacific Component	Teacher	23	Japanese Association of the Experiment in International Living
	Papua New Guinea	Civil Servant	10	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Papua New Guinea	Teacher	20	Japan International Cooperation Center
	Fiji	Civil Servant	12	Aichi International Association
July 3-Aug. 1	Korea	Youth Activity Leader and Related Civil Servant	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	Korea	Working Youth (Civil servants in local governments)	25	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	Korea	Teacher (Kindergarten)	25	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
	Korea	Student (Agriculture, forestry & fishery courses)	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
Aug 21-Sept 19	Viet Nam	Education and Related Areas	25	Development Association for Youth
	Viet Nam	Agriculture	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Philippines	Economy A	20	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	Philippines	Economy B	24	Junior Executive Council of Japan
	Philippines	Agriculture	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
Aug 29-Sept 27	Bangladesh	Government Official	20	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Bhutan & Maldives	Education	10	National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan
	India	Education	27	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Nepal	Education	10	Japan International Cooperation Center
	Sri Lanka	Education	10	National Assembly for Youth Development
	Pakistan	Health and Medical Service	20	The International Nursing Foundation of Japan
Sept 11-Oct 10	Thailand	Agriculture	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Thailand	Economy A	20	Japan International Cooperation Center
	Thailand	Economy B	24	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	Brunei	Social Development	16	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	Myanmar	Education	20	National Assembly for Youth Development
	Mongolia	Civil Servant	10	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
Sept 19-Oct 18	Malaysia	Agriculture Development	16	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Malaysia	Education	25	Japanese Association of the Experiment in International Living
	Malaysia	Scientific and Technological Development	25	Toyokawa International Association
	Indonesia	Agriculture	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Indonesia	Education	22	Japan International Cooperation Center
Oct 2-Oct 31	China	Youth Leader	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	China	Junior Executive	25	Junior Executive Council of Japan
	China	Civil Servant	25	Development Association for Youth
	China	Teacher	25	Japan International Cooperation Center
Oct 17-Nov 15	African Component			
	English-speaking Countries: Teacher 1	Teacher 1	28	Osaka Foundation of International Exchange
	French-speaking Countries: Teacher 2	Teacher 2	22	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	English-speaking Countries: Civil Servant 1	Civil Servant 1	23	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
Oct 23-Nov 21	ASEAN Component	Education 1	18	Osaka Foundation of International Exchange
	ASEAN Component	Education 2	17	Japan Association of the Experiment in International Living
	ASEAN Component	Economy 1	18	Japan International Cooperation Center
	ASEAN Component	Economy 2	18	National Assembly for Youth Development
	ASEAN Component	Economy 3	17	The Working Youth Welfare Association
Nov 6-Dec 5	ASEAN Component	Environmental Protection	30	Junior Executive Council of Japan
	ASEAN Component	Social Welfare	30	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	ASEAN Component	Health and Medical Service	30	The International Nursing Foundation of Japan
	ASEAN Component	Public Administration B	24	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
Nov 13-Dec 12	China	Infrastructure	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	China	Economic Development	25	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	China	Local Development	25	Japan International Cooperation Center
	China	Human Resources Development	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
Total	70 groups 1,555 youth	6 ASEAN Countries (797), 14 Pacific Countries and Territories (89), Myanmar (20), China (200), Korea (100), 7 South Asian Countries (97), Mongolia (10), 33 African Countries and one International Organization (95), Cambodia (30), Laos (18), Viet Nam (99) Grand Total: 72 Countries and Territories plus one International Organization		

in 1996

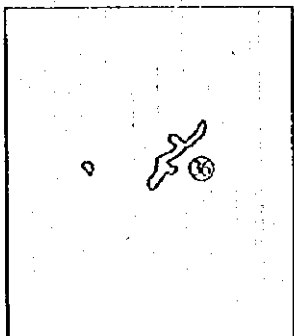
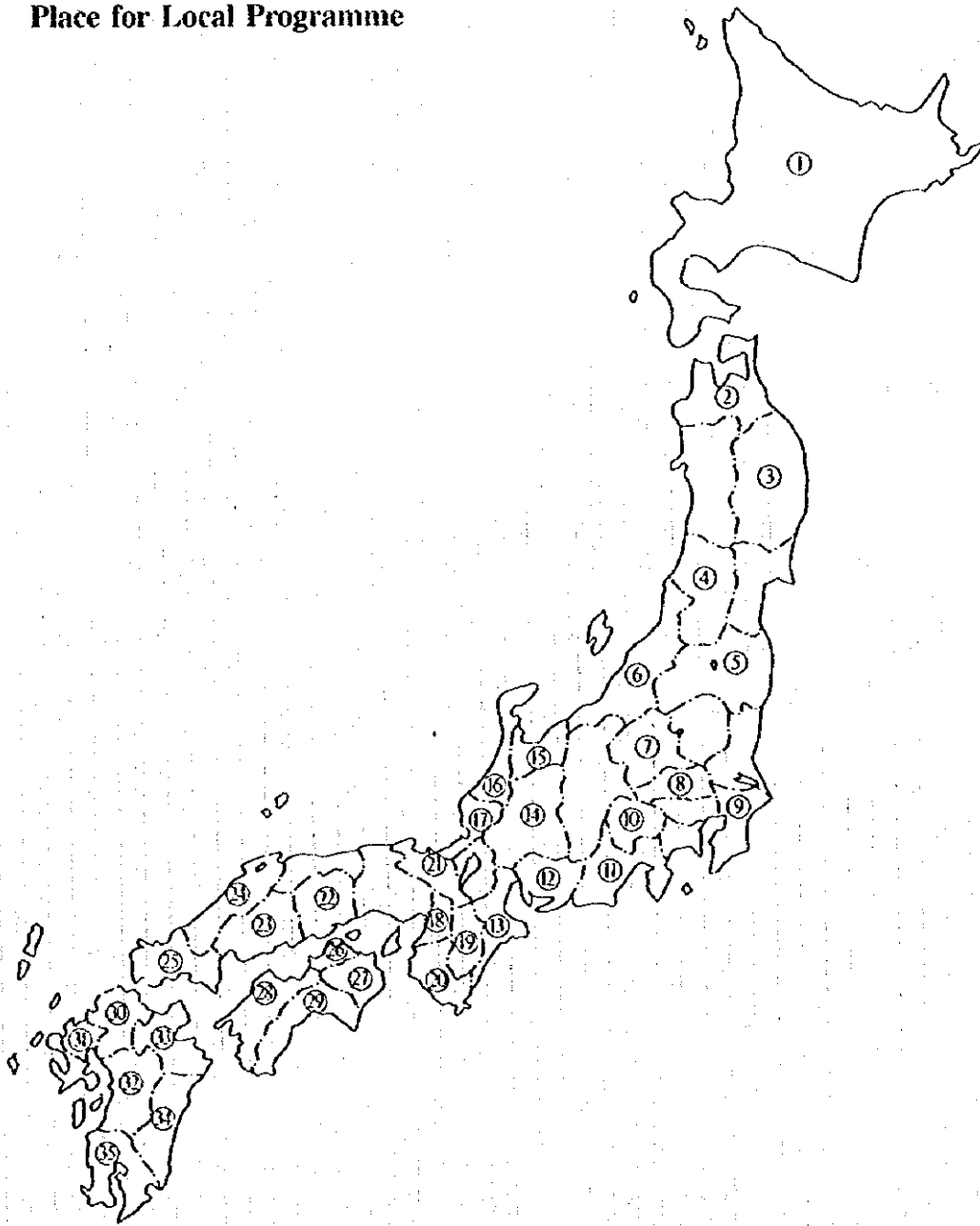
Place for Local Programme	Local Youth Organization
Hokkaido Fukui Shimane Yamanashi Hokkaido	Chitose International Communication Society Fukui International Association The International Youth Exchange Organization of Shimane Prefecture Yamanashi Prefectural Assembly for Youth Development Hokkaido Cooperative Association Doto Branch
Okayama Miyazaki Toyama Hokkaido Okayama	Federation of World Youth Okayama Development Association for Youth Miyazaki Branch The Toyama International Center Foundation Hokkaido YMCA Okayama-ken Seinen-kan
Hokkaido Osaka Fukushima Oita	Tomakomai International Exchange Center Pacific Resource Exchange Center Fukushima Wings of Youth Association Oita Prefecture Overseas Coordination Office
Hiroshima Saitama Yamagata Kochi	Shobara International Exchange Association Ageo Global Association Association for International Relations in Yamagata Kochi International Association
Ehime Mie Hokkaido Yamaguchi Aichi	Ex-JOCV Ehime Mie International Exchange Foundation Hokkaido Federation of Children's Club The Youth Organization Council of Yamaguchi Aichi International Association
Ehime Shiga Ibaraki Akita	Ehime Prefectural International Association Shiga Youth Union of Organization Ibaraki Prefecture Executive Committee Akita International Association
Okinawa Kumamoto Kagoshima Kagawa Aomori	Okinawa International Foundation Japan Overseas Cooperative Association Kumamoto Kagoshima International Association Kagawa Prefecture International Exchange Association Aomori Overseas Cooperative Association
Hokkaido Saga Gifu Niigata Wakayama Fukuoka	Hokkaido Cooperative Association Doto Branch Saga UNESCO Association Gifu World Youth Niigata International Association Wakayama Prefectural Youth Guidance Association The International Nursing Foundation of Japan
Shizuoka Fukuoka Aichi Ishikawa Hokkaido Ishikawa	Numazu Association for International Communication and Exchange Fukuoka Prefectural Foreign Youth Invitation Committee Japan Young Circle Tokai Branch Ishikawa Youth Hostels, Inc. Hokkaido Cooperative Association Kanazawa International Exchange Foundation
Iwate Kyoto Aichi Kagawa Yamagata	Iwate International Association Japan Overseas Cooperative Association Kinki Office Toyokawa International Association Friendship Association for Youth Dispatched Overseas in Kagawa Yamagata Overseas Cooperative Association
Miyagi Nagasaki Fukui Hyogo	Miyagi Youth Hostels, Inc. Federation of World Youth Nagasaki Takefu International Association Hyogo Youth Services Administration
Osaka Okayama Tokushima Niigata	Osaka Foundation of International Exchange Tsuyama Global Friendship Society Tokushima International Youth Exchange Association Federation of World Youth Niigata
Osaka Gunma Chiba Fukuoka Shizuoka	Osaka Foundation of International Exchange Gunma International Association Chiba Prefectural International Association Kyushu-Yamaguchi Economic Federation The Shizuoka Association for International Relations
Hokkaido Ishikawa Nara Osaka	Kushiro City Foreign Youth Invitation Committee Komatsu International Association The International Nursing Foundation of Japan Osaka Association for Youth Development
Yamaguchi Tochigi Tottori Okinawa	World Youth Friendship in Tokuyama The Executive Committee to Invite Foreign Youth of Tochigi Prefecture Tottori Youth Friendship Association Okinawa Prefectural Assembly for Youth Development



3. Participating Countries and Number of Youth (1984-96)

Year Country	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	Total
Indonesia	149	150	150	150	150	149	150	149	147	149	145	150	149	1,937
Malaysia	147	148	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	149	150	1,944
Philippines	149	150	150	150	150	150	149	147	148	149	150	149	150	1,941
Singapore	149	150	150	150	150	150	150	147	149	149	147	146	149	1,936
Thailand	149	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	149	147	150	150	150	1,945
Brunei	5	30	49	50	50	49	50	43	50	48	49	48	49	570
Total (ASEAN Countries)	748	778	799	800	800	798	799	786	793	792	791	792	797	10,273
Mongolia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	10	10	10	50
Myanmar	—	—	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	20	80
India	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30	29	30	13	23	27	152
Bangladesh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	20	20	20	20	20	120
Pakistan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	20	20	20	20	20	120
Nepal	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	9	10	10	10	10	59
Bhutan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5	30
Sri Lanka	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
Maldives	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	5	5	5	30
Total (South Asian Countries)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100	98	100	83	93	97	571
African Countries	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	50	100	97	95	342
Fiji	—	—	10	10	11	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	127
Papua New Guinea	—	—	10	14	30	34	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	298
Other Pacific Countries and Territories	—	—	—	—	45	38	36	32	36	34	38	36	47	342
Total (Pacific Countries and Territories)	—	—	20	24	86	84	78	74	78	76	80	78	89	767
Viet Nam	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	98	99	197
Cambodia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30	30	60
Laos	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	18	38
Total (Indochina Countries)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	148	147	295
Total	748	778	829	834	886	882	877	960	979	1,028	1,084	1,238	1,255	12,378

Place for Local Programme



- ①Hokkaido: Indonesia, Social Development
Philippines, Social Development
Thailand, Education
Viet Nam, Government Official
Papua New Guinea, Civil Servant
Bangladesh, Government Official
Myanmar, Education
ASEAN Component, Environmental Protection
- ②Aomori: Philippines, Agriculture
- ③Iwate: Malaysia, Agriculture Development
- ④Yamagata: Cambodia, Education
Indonesia, Education
- ⑤Fukushima: Malaysia, Economic and Financial Management
- ⑥Niigata: Nepal, Education
African Component (French-speaking Countries), Civil Servant 2
- ⑦Gunma: ASEAN Component, Education 2
- ⑧Saitama: Singapore, Economy A2
- ⑨Chiba: ASEAN Component, Economy 1
- ⑩Yamanashi: Philippines, Education
- ⑪Shizuoka: Thailand, Agriculture
ASEAN Component, Economy 3
- ⑫Aichi: Fiji, Civil Servant
Thailand, Economy B
Malaysia, Scientific and Technological Development
- ⑬Mie: Pacific Component, Teacher
- ⑭Gifu: India, Education
- ⑮Toyama: Singapore, Economy B
- ⑯Ishikawa: Brunei, Social Development
Mongolia, Civil Servant
ASEAN Component, Social Welfare
- ⑰Fukui: Indonesia, Economy A
- ⑱Osaka: Viet Nam, Economy
African Component (English-speaking Countries), Teacher 1
ASEAN Component, Education 1
ASEAN Component, Public Administration B
- ⑲Nara: ASEAN Component, Health and Medical Service
- ⑳Wakayama: Sri Lanka, Education
- ㉑Kyoto: Malaysia, Education
- ㉒Okayama: Shingapore, Education
Thailand, Social Development
African Component (French-speaking Countries), Teacher 2
- ㉓Hiroshima: Shingapore, Economy A1
- ㉔Shimane: Indonesia, Economy B
- ㉕Yamaguchi: Papua New Guinea, Teacher
- ㉖Kagawa: Philippines, Economy B
Indonesia, Agriculture
- ㉗Tokushima: African Component (English-speaking Countries), Civil Servant 1
- ㉘Ehime: Pacific Component, Civil Servant
- ㉙Kochi: Laos, Education
- ㉚Fukuoka: Pakistan, Health and Medical Service
Thailand, Economy A
ASEAN Component, Economy 2
- ㉛Saga: Bhutan & Maldives, Education
- ㉜Kumamoto: Viet Nam, Agriculture
- ㉝Oita: Malaysia, Small and Medium Industry and Manufacturing
- ㉞Miyazaki: Singapore, Social Development
- ㉟Kagoshima: Philippines, Economy A
- ㊱Okinawa: Viet Nam, Education

2. Impressions by the Participants

■ Asia

■ Brunei

My Impressions of Japan

Rostinah Pehin Dato Paduka



Hj Mohd Tahir
Social Development Group

Japan is a very developed country in terms of both its economy and people. Japan is blessed by its advanced and highly industrial capital and is also very rich in original traditions. I was very much impressed that the country has a lot of historical places which dated more than a thousand years.

Japan, too, has been able to maintain its rural way of life. The scenery in the rural areas is absolutely beautiful with rich green pastures and clear rivers. The scenic beauty of its countryside is absolutely different from its major cities. One of the most beautiful natural monuments I personally think is Mt. Fuji. Its beauty really caught my breath.

Apart from that, the Japanese people espe-

cially the rural inhabitants are very warm and friendly. The way of life in the rural areas is slower compared to that in the cities. Residents of Tokyo seem to be in a hurry all the time, especially in the subway. In fact, not only is there a hustle and bustle of cars in Tokyo but also a flow of human traffic. However, I was amazed that the people of Japan, in my opinion, are the most punctual in the world. Not only that, they are also a very hard working people. For the Japanese people work becomes their number one priority.

On the other hand, the other cities like Kanazawa, Kyoto, and Hiroshima are slightly different from Tokyo. The pace of life in these cities is bit slower compared to Tokyo. Well, these cities really remind me of my home town. My stay in Japan for 30 days was filled with exciting and enjoyable experiences. I really had such wonderful time seeing this beautiful country and meeting its people, as well as getting to know its historical and cultural heritage. Hopefully someday I can come back to Japan and meet old friends. My stay in Japan is surely the best I have ever experienced, and its memories will always be in my heart. Till next time... Sayonara...

One Month Stay in Japan

Brunei Group
ASEAN Comp.
Education 1 Group

First of all, we are all very grateful that we were given such opportunities to visit your lovely country. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of Japan for making this trip possible.

Japan is one country that many people have heard much about. Those who have been here would love to come back again in the near future. We all know, through the mass-media, that Japan is famous for its advanced technology and its highly intellectual people.

Before we came to Japan, we were worried that we would have a lot of difficulties living in Japan, especially in terms of food (Muslim food) and communications. Yet, as the days went by, we were able to overcome all these difficulties. Those people who were in charge of this programme really looked after our needs with great care and attention. They really helped us to smoothen all our difficulties. Their kind consideration made us feel that a month stay in Japan was just like a day.

During our one week stay in Tokyo, we learnt that Japanese people are polite, kind, and have strong respect for one another. Although they are striving for development, they are never too busy to take care of the welfare of others. We were really impressed with the people here in that sense.

After one week in Tokyo, our group (Education 1) moved on to Osaka. Initially, we were all very reluctant to leave Tokyo, as we have just got accustomed to the hustle and bustle of the life in the capital. However, after moving to Osaka was the major part of our programme. We travelled there by the bullet train

—which we all have heard a lot about but had never tried. What a thrilling experience!

During our two-week stay in Osaka, we visited many educational institutions ranging from preschool to university, Prefectural Government, Education Centre, and Daihatsu Motor Company. We had the In-house Seminar together with the local teachers—which we found to be very interesting, as we get to exchange views and ideas. Another programme we all enjoyed a lot was the homestay. A lot of us were very apprehensive about the whole idea before the homestay. However, our perspectives were dramatically changed after a weekend with our homestay family. Not only did they let us have a taste of what Japanese lifestyle is like, but also they treated us as if we were one of their family members. All our worries in the beginning were for nothing. In fact, the weekend went by too soon for some of us.

We acquired a lot of valuable experiences in Osaka. We learnt about Osaka's working efficiency, educational system; and most important of all we learnt about its culture. The Osakans all work very hard. They devote their energy to protect and develop their prefecture and their country as a whole. Despite all that, they did not neglect their culture. They really preserve their culture, and this conveys the sense that they love another. All these things made us feel sad to leave Osaka at the end of the two-week programme there.

Our two-day experience in Hiroshima and Kyoto during the observation tour made us realize again that the Japanese are wonderful people.

From our one-month stay in Japan, we feel that inside the heart of every Japanese lies this idea: "Technology is technology, but a human must always be a human." This means that no matter how great their technology is, they do

not neglect to treat all people with love, respect and honesty, without being too proud.

All these experiences that we encountered in our one-month stay in Japan will be kept in our memories forever. No matter how much we may try, we know we will never be able to repay all the kindness that was showed to us in Japan.

My Impressions of JAPAN

Abd Rahman Bin Awg Haji Apong

ASEAN Comp.
Social Welfare Group



This was the first time for me to visit Japan. The first day I stayed in Japan was a new experience. I tried to go out shopping without depending on anyone so that I could get a lot of experience. Practice makes perfect. I learned some background information about Japan when I was in school. But I didn't know about the people, culture and economy either directly or indirectly.

After a week's stay in Japan, I found that the people are polite, well-behaved and help each other if needed. I was surprised that the people of Japan work over seven hours a day. They return home from the office late in the evening. In the early morning, they rush to go to the office. They don't waste time. For them time is precious, and they go to the office punctually. During our visit to some ministries and institutes, they were working efficiently, and were highly motivated, productive and full of prestige.

I found that elderly people work even in the

fields. Even old women did what men had done. For example, they could lift luggage.

The buildings were fully equipped with advanced technology. I understood that those buildings were built with high quality materials, which could protect them from any disaster, such as an earthquake. When I visited the institute called the Center for Oral Health of Persons with Disabilities, I saw the members and staff take care and look after the handicapped people. This center was also fully equipped with advanced technology. That showed me that there is no discrimination between the able-bodied and the disabled persons. The handicapped people in the private sector even had an advantage in job placement. There were a lot of public buses for the handicapped. Sound and path sensors were set up to help the blind cross roads.

■ Asia

■ Indonesia

Charmed by This Country

Rifah Zainani

Social Development Group



I visited Japan through JICA's Youth Invitation Programme, which took place from May 14 to June 14, 1996. During that one month, I learned a number of impressive things, and one of them concerns my image of Japanese people.

Before coming to this country, I thought Japanese people would be haughty and difficult to talk to. The Japanese I had met in Indonesia were mostly taciturn and behaved as if they did not care about others. Such a negative impression, however, gradually changed as I stayed in this country longer. The Japanese I met in Japan were very kind and friendly indeed. Day by day I became close to them, and plunged right into the busy daily life in Tokyo with them; we rode on the crowded train and had lunch together. Without realizing it, I came to feel as if I had become Japanese.

The programme that took place in Chitose, Hokkaido left quite an impression on me as well. There I had the opportunity to meet the young participants from Hokkaido and experienced a homestay for two nights with a Japanese family. The exchange programme with the young participants from Hokkaido was really enjoyable. It proved to be a good opportunity to learn about young Japanese, as

we were able to have open discussions. They were eager to learn about Indonesia and study the language; I was greatly pleased by that. Since we were eager to get to know one another much better, we talked about our experiences, shared information, and exchanged opinions. We also taught each other games, dances, and songs from our homes. We had just met, but felt as if we had known each other and been friends for a long time. I no longer sensed cultural and racial differences; rather we felt like a big family.

Thanks to the homestay programme that allowed me an experience with a Japanese family, my understanding of the Japanese way of life has become deeper. My host family welcomed me pleasantly and was attentive to details, like food I would be able to eat. They never failed to let me know my schedules, including bedtime and bath time. I felt looked after sincerely. They were like my real family and eased my homesickness for my own family in Indonesia.

The time to go back to Indonesia eventually came, just when I became used to the life here, and totally charmed by this country. These remembrances will remain in my mind after I return to Indonesia.

Finding Out about Japan

Rr Alliatun Sarasati

Economy A Group



I was impressed that the Japanese have a different identity from that of us Indonesians,

and that they have a unique way of thinking. In particular, Tokyo, as a megalopolis, the differences are clearly demarcated; everything I saw there was perfect and automated, equipped with a range of high technologies.

I knew Japan was famous for its sophisticated technology, while its high prices are also well known. Everything is expensive in Japan because the high market demand keeps prices high. Japanese products are overwhelming not only in domestic but also international markets. What market strategy has made this possible? This question had been a big issue to me. Thanks to heaven and good luck, I was given the opportunity to participate in this programme.

As I stayed in Japan longer, the aforementioned question was gradually becoming solved, because I could actually study and analyze the business activities and social life of Japanese people. In my mind, however, there remain various questions that I can neither answer nor explain. These questions are related to the Japanese spirit, which is rather like a sense of pride or a passion. I was not able to appreciate it when I studied, observed, and analyzed Japan. Yes, I have realized that, as well as being educated to keep order, Japanese people are equipped with strong motives to produce something with creativity—the passion that urges them to create domestic and overseas markets.

On one occasion, we Indonesian participants and the participants from Japan enjoyed an exchange programme, joking with each other. Through sharing experiences, we were trying to find something significant for both countries and peoples. On no other occasion had I ever been so impressed by what the word "friendship" means. I found out it was indeed the true sense of our participating in this programme.

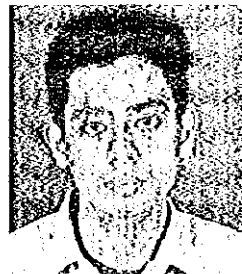
Various experiences and touching contacts with people are my greatest remembrances from this country—the country that has achieved a great deal for its own progress and is now trying to share its experience with developing countries, particularly Indonesia.

In addition, another fact that impressed me was that in Japan trash is properly collected by type, and every town is kept clean. This system is conducted in order by rules and regulations.

Finally, brothers and sisters in Indonesia and Japan, let's establish a better life and share it with each other, so we can feel that peaceful living, welfare, and equal prosperity have been achieved in every town. I especially wish this for my homeland, Indonesia.

A Homestay Never to Be Forgotten

Bachtiar Aras
Economy B Group



Time flies like a flash, and so many memories are engraved deep in my mind. Memories, when will you fly back to me? Sweet memories—how lovely you sound. No world can exist without memories, and a person with a sound spirit will encounter his own memories that he will never forget for the rest of his life.

Thanks to the Youth Invitation Programme, I visited Japan and obtained innumerable exciting memories. This programme opened my eyes to the true sense of friendship: yes, friendship that goes beyond the language and cultural barriers without regard to differences in race and color. The most impressive pro-

gramme was the homestay, the days I stayed with a Japanese family and felt myself part of them. Although it was only three or four days, I think I was able to quickly learn about the life of a family in a rural Japanese community.

As you can probably guess, before I met my host family, I was filled with fear and anxiety. I think my fellow participants felt the same way, too. I wondered if I would be polite enough to the family, or if it would be difficult to communicate with them because of the language barrier. My mind worried about this and that, but all these anxieties disappeared the moment I arrived at the house. At the first sight of their faces, I realized that the family was eagerly awaiting my arrival.

I also found that language was not such a major problem in communicating with the family members. All possible measures, even gestures, were employed. I spoke almost no Japanese; but I was able to make myself understood with English, a little Japanese, and gestures.

To tell the truth, at first I was so nervous that I was at a loss for words. But the next day both they and I felt quite relaxed about one another. Everything was new, and the days I spent with the Japanese family went by pleasantly. For the first time in my life, I could actually experience the real daily activities of Japanese people.

Workaholic—this was my previous image of the Japanese, and what I actually saw here did not greatly change this view. Imagine: the father leaves for the office at eight in the morning and comes home at five in the evening. After coming home, surprisingly, he further works in the field for some hours at night. I could not just watch him working alone, and found myself helping him before I realized it. Mother also cooked Japanese dishes in earnest. Grandmother, in her seventies, is hardworking

as well. I felt myself even embarrassed to see such an old lady setting out for work with a strong will.

Between busy daily activities, they kindly took me to see the wonderful sights of the town of Iwami. They also took me to a manufacturing factory of automobile parts. I even had a very useful experience related to my specialty, business.

The homestay lasted only three nights and four days, but I fully enjoyed myself. On the last day, both my host family and I shed tears at our parting. They asked me when we could meet next and talk about our countries and cultures together. I could not hide my feelings at that moment of farewell. It is hard to find the right words—all I can do is express my sincere gratitude to the people, who heartily accepted me for several days: Good-bye, my host family. Good-bye, Iwami.

My New Family in Kagawa

Rizki Yanuwar
Agriculture Group



My participation in this programme turned out to be a good opportunity to deepen my understanding of Japanese society, as well as to have experiences with it. Of all the programmes, the most pleasant was the homestay, in which I was able to experience the ordinary life and customs of the Japanese people.

Before the homestay actually started, my heart was beating fast with anxieties. I did not speak the language at all, nor did I know much

about Japanese customs, yet I would have to live in the house of someone I did not know for as long as three days. In my mind filled with worries and anxieties, many wonders and questions whirled round and round: Will they accept me? With what attitude will they treat me? In what way can I communicate with them?

Actually, to each of these questions that surged like high seas at first, I was able to find an answer, slowly and one by one. I think I was lucky compared with some of my fellow members, because my host family accepted me like a real family member. When I went into the living room and said, "Hello," the mother, father, grandfather, and grandmother appeared one after another and hugged and greeted me in warm, heartfelt Japanese. I was not able to understand what they said, but I could feel that they heartily accepted me. From then on, we had pleasant conversation in Japanese, Indonesian, and English, and we even used gestures, dictionaries, maps, and paper and ballpoint pens. Furthermore, when the 86-year-old hale and hearty grandfather talked about his experiences abroad in his youth, with a funny but vigorous manner of speech (in Japanese), all of us exploded with laughter. Mitsuko, the eldest daughter, interpreted his talk for me.

The next morning, Mitsuko told me that her friends would come to cook Indonesian dishes together with me. She said they had found recipes at a bookstore. At twelve o'clock sharp, her friends came, and we had lunch together after driving around the town and shopping in the supermarket. At four o'clock at the grandfather's rustic house, we started cooking. Mitsuko and her friends were all getting along very well and joked with each other often. We cooked together until dinnertime. That night dinner was enjoyed in a friendly and pleasant

atmosphere, with the family and Mitsuko's friends at the same table. We joked and exchanged presents with each other.

On Sunday, the father and mother took me to Yashima. We visited Yashima Temple on the summit of a mountain 293 meters high. We then visited an aquarium and an art gallery and had "udon," thick white noodles, at the foot of Mt. Yashima. At home, the grandfather waited for me to come back, and took me to the crop fields and many other places in the neighborhood by motorbike. We had dinner after coming home.

The mother and Mitsuko were present at the farewell party. I felt sad that I had to part from them after we had become so close to each other. Particularly, the grandfather was really a good person. When I gave him an Indonesian textile as a souvenir, he tearfully promised to use it every day until he dies. I felt all the sadder when I remembered that.

On the day we left Kagawa Station, the mother and Mitsuko came to see me off, unexpectedly, in kimono. I was very happy to see them, but at the same time I felt sad that we had to part. Mitsuko, the father, the mother, the grandfather, and the grandmother, I will never forget you for the rest of my life.

Memorandum on My Visit to Japanese Schools

Agus Tri Gemahwan
Education Group



This turned out to be a very valuable experience in that I was able to gain firsthand information through discussions with those involved in Japanese education and to observe educational institutions at all levels, from primary school, to junior and senior high schools, and to university. In this report, I would like to give my impression about the education from primary to high school levels, as well as my personal comments on Japanese education in general.

Up to today, Japanese education has succeeded in elevating the living standard of the population, through pursuing and developing advanced technology, while it maintained the characteristics of the people and the traditional culture of Japan. However, putting too much emphasis on keeping up with the rapidly developing science technology has caused Japanese education to be saturated. Also the tendency to trivialize the cultural aspects may cause a problem in the future for Japanese education. I believe these issues will serve as important themes in considering the guidelines for those involved in education.

When I undertook observation of schools, the students were particularly impressive, in that they behaved politely to their teachers and seniors with a sense of respect, and in their

volunteer attitude in trying to keep their school and things around them clean and in order. The facilities used for lessons and club activities are sufficiently equipped for improving the students' study skills and creativity. The school life of the students is busy, which has both positive and, for sure, negative points. In the negative aspects, they tend to lack sociability within their families and groups, while their behavior is likely to be rough because of the tight school schedules.

Additionally, very interesting to me was the annual educational goal, which is identified as the school guideline. The goal has a direct impact upon each school's management and the students' behavior. For example, in the case of Yamagata Dai-yon Junior High School, which I visited, 1996's educational goal is to "take steps regarding students who refuse to attend school." According to the school, the refusal is psychologically rooted, and it is often caused by their parents having expectations that are greater than the student's actual ability, or by bullying from other students. The very first step taken by the school was to give such students counseling and psychological support. As a result, the school saw a decline in the number of students who stopped coming to school, and it proved to be a great success. In Indonesia, educational goals are usually restricted to general ideas, which are repeated every year. They seldom refer to pragmatic guidelines, as they do in Japan. And when they have a student who stops coming to school or a student whose behavior is regarded as problematic, the school has a right to expel the student and send him or her back to his or her parents.

The aforementioned is what impressed me in this Programme. And I hope many things I learned here will contribute to the development of education in Indonesia.

Impact of Education System on Japanese Society

Abdusy Syakur Amin

ASEAN Comp.
Education 2 Group



Undoubtedly, Japan still sits in the most coveted position in global economics. And to say that its system of education greatly pushed it to its present status is only to make reaffirmation of the very obvious. What then, in our perspective, are the strengths of the Japanese educational system?

First and foremost is the order which is brought about by punctuality. Whether in the schools, offices or on subways, punctuality in the strictest sense of word is followed. Thus, the students' daily pie is divided into several activities (as prescribed in the curriculum) and is followed strictly.

The availability of school facilities cannot be overlooked also, with a huge part of the financial coffers of Japan going to education. The school are equipped with modern facilities from machines to high technology software. This enables students to acquire from classroom lectures and discussions.

Likewise, the tendencies of the students and teachers to follow strictly the school's (or Monbusho's) rules and regulation add up to Japanese success. Students follow rules from their uniforms to haircuts to the kinds of socks they can wear. This may cause some students to be unable to make decision for themselves.

The latter position may prove to be an

advantage. But since societal climate changes, sometimes enough room must be given for individuals to decide on their own. Individually, they should to some extent be given opportunities for creativity.

Likewise, it can be noted that corporate management style is being employed in schools. Of course, managing car companies and schools are two extremely different things. Thus, a school-based management style may prove to be better.

One point of concern is the examination orientation of the system. This gives too much stress and pressure on students, teachers...and parents, too.

The success of Japan as an economic super power originates in the success of its educational system. The system must also be stirred up; modifications are imperative.

Of course, aiming for the best way is an idealistic impossibility...but there is always a better way.

Worlds Apart, but One Heart

Holy Ametali

ASEAN Comp. Health &
Medical Service Group



In Indonesia, Japan is famous as—among other things—as the country of the rising sun. I was very excited when I was informed that for one month, I would be one of the first people in the world to see the sun rising each new day.

My expectation turned out to be quite low. What I got from my one month in Japan is so

much more than merely that. I have found friendships, new experiences and the precious chance to widen my horizon.

I still remember vividly my first day in Tokyo when I had butterflies in my stomach from my anxiousness. One month had seemed like a long time to me. How was I going to build friendships with so many characters—so many individuals, who came from backgrounds and had ways of thinking which differ from that of my own? Why in the world did I leave my warm nest in Indonesia, which is surrounded by familiar faces, sights, sounds? Why did I come to this cold, far-away place that probably wouldn't be kind to me?

Days went by, I found that my fear has proven to be unreasonable. Japan turned out to be a friendly country and the politeness of its people never failed to amaze me. In the meantime, my friendships with my ASEAN counterparts blossomed into a tight bond. Together we were taken by the beauty of the various temples and shrines we visited. And we all were awed by the high technology that Japan has.

The unique character of each individual was also beginning to surface. For instance, Pak Rahim from Brunei is a CNN reporter; Ade from Indonesia is the original "abunai," Anabelle from the Philippines is a singer, Atikah from Singapore is the energetic one.

We grew close enough to laugh together, sharing jokes, making fun of one another. We laughed at how some of us were obsessed by the so-called "pay-TV." We laughed at Takeda-san's "collapsed English." We laughed everytime someone mentioned "three hundred yen." (Sorry folks, that's a private joke.)

We became quite dependent on our Japanese coordinators, too. It would be hard to imagine this programme without Takeda-san's mischievous grin (and his accident-prone

manner), Aoki-san's fatherly gestures, nor Mari-san's sweet smile. It was they who had made our stay in Japan the most enjoyable. It must be very difficult to take care of 29 adults, each with his/her own demands... But our Japanese friends had been able to grin and bear it.

Programme by programme ended, introducing us to Japanese medical system. Visiting Osaka General Hospital was, I reckon, one of the highlights of our study tours. We compared it with the ones we have back home, and we all had to admit that Japan is more advanced. We learnt, observed and absorbed every detail.

Some mishaps did happen during the programme (like the time Firdaus from Indonesia sprained his ankle, or Aoki-san's leg injury), yet on the whole one can say that everything ran wonderfully smooth.

But the most memorable experience for most of us is what happened on our last night in Kyoto, December 1, 1996, starting from a shrill scream. Fire? NO! Earthquake? Wrong again. It was the snowfall that had caused the scream (which was a joyful one). Since ASEAN countries are all tropical climates, most of us had never seen snow before. And even here in Japan, we had almost given up hopes.

It was a miracle, kind of like God's gift to us. We went out to the hotel's parking lot, oblivious to the chilly weather, jumping up and down, screaming, shrieking, we looked like a bunch of five-year-olds. Nobody who saw us would believe that in our daily lives we are responsible for the life or death of so many people. Had our patients seen us that night, never again would they trust us with their lives! But that fateful night we all merged into one; the walls between us fell down.

In the end, there were no Koni from the Philippines, Donya from Thailand, nor Akiko from Japan. There were only Koni, Donya and

Akiko—my friends. Our countries' borders are not boundaries anymore, as we weave the threads of friendship together.

We are living up to the purpose of this friendship program. After all, skin colours, languages, and races are not important. What really counts is the warmth in our hearts.

■ Asia

■ Malaysia

Experiences in Japan

Muhammad Fahimi Bin Abu Bakar

Economic and Financial
Management Group



As a participant in the Youth Invitation Programme in 1996, I visited Japan and had several interesting experiences. I hope to take these precious experiences back home and to utilize them as good models to follow.

The most unforgettable experience was that I was able to learn about the work culture of the Japanese, who have diligence and a positive attitude toward their jobs. In the opinion exchange session in Atami, with other participants from the Mitsubishi Group, I realized that the Japanese in general are very hard-working. Most of the participants admitted that they usually work until after eight o'clock at night. What's more, they said they once in a while come home after midnight.

Another impressive occasion was a visit to Disneyland. What surprised me was the attitude of the reception staff, who were endlessly greeting the visitors with smiles. Imagine that those people do this all day long, and almost every day, and other people, in the same way, work at the shopping center and restaurants.

I also realized that cleanliness is important for Japanese people. In addition to their neat and tidy dress, the clean and pretty appearances of cities caught my attention; the highways in Ikebukuro, Hiroshima, Kyoto, and Osaka were all clean, without any trash.

Instead, the roadsides were planted with trees in different sizes, cleanly trimmed, making those towns appear as if they were built in green parks. The Japanese also have respect for others. They apologize for every single matter whenever they think it has caused any trouble to others. Particularly impressive was the manner of greeting visitors with bows. It gives them a sense of honor, as well as making them feel respected. I think this directly contributes to making a humane and friendly society. How wonderful it would be if such an attitude were adopted by Malaysian society.

Punctuality is another important factor for the Japanese. In this country, every minute and second counts in any activity. For example, trains come and go on schedule; the same with this programme I have joined. Each programme was conducted according to a fixed timetable without delay. It seems as if the whole of Japanese society is expected to observe punctuality as well as accuracy.

I also realized that Japanese family members have strong ties with one another. This point became even clearer when I experienced a homestay in Iwaki City. The family bond is very strong, indeed. The younger generations respect the elderly. My host himself was always very respectful of the aged and to his other family members. Though the country itself is developed, the ties within the Japanese family are still close, a point different from other Western nations where family collapse is being seen in actuality. The affection and hospitality that the family showed me eased somewhat my homesickness for my own family in Malaysia.

Finally, I expect programmes like this to be continued further, and believe all the goals of the Look East Policies that Malaysia has enforced will be achieved in the future.

Happy Experiences in Japan

Shaik Roslinah Bux
Small and Medium Industry
and Manufacturing Group



The Youth Invitation Programme I participated in recently proved to be a golden opportunity for me to gain a deeper understanding of the language, culture, and way of life in Japan.

One of my most unforgettable experiences, among all the various activities, was having my birthday in Japan. That morning I was in a bright and fresh mood, as usual, but I did not tell anyone that it was a special day, because I like to spend my birthday quietly.

That day, I visited the Oita Prefectural Office in the morning, and Japan Sun Industries and the Bamboo Museum in the afternoon.

One of my fellow participants, who is a personal friend of mine as well, remembered my birthday but did not have a chance to tell the coordinators. Then, all of a sudden, the twenty-five fellow participants, two coordinators from JICA, two officials in charge from Oita Prefecture, and the programme coordinator from the Japan Youth Hostels, Inc. started singing a birthday song for me. In return, I had to improvise a speech, which I had never done before! I was very moved by what they did for me.

Again, at dinnertime, something happened to touch my heart. The officials in charge from Oita Prefecture presented me with a strawberry birthday cake. On the table was a dish prepar-

ed to resemble the yellowish rice served on special occasions in Malaysia (like Japanese steamed rice with red beans), and a "karaoke" set, which is one of my hobbies. We sang and enjoyed ourselves to our hearts' content. The meal that night was really tasty and appetizing.

I cannot express all the feelings I had at that time. That day became a special one to me, because I celebrated my birthday in a country other than Malaysia. Having such a wonderful birthday in 1996, together with a lot of new but close friends, has brought me everlasting pleasure. This pleasure shall continue to live in my memory forever.

Japan—Between Its Development and the Past

Satari Bin Markom
Agriculture Development
Group



Japan is a member of G7 nations. As its economic stability cannot be denied, there is no doubt that it is a world leader for its latest, diversified technology. Throughout its history, while catching up with advanced countries, the country has never forgotten to have a view toward the next generation. The Edo period and the legacy of the Shoguns are an invaluable asset.

My yearning to visit this land of the rising sun was achieved, when, on September 19, 1996, I arrived at Narita Airport and started a trip to find a valuable experience within a limited time.

Tokyo, where 11.78 million lonely-looking people live busy lives, gulps down millions of them, into the belly of its underground subway network. I think the agility and punctuality of the people have actually determined this country's development.

Iwate, with its enchanting beauty and refreshing climate, will naturally keep on attracting visitors. The friendliness and hospitality of the people in Iwate, especially those of my host family, became deeply engraved in my mind.

Hiroshima! When I actually witnessed the scenes of destruction by the atomic bomb that was dropped on August 6, 1945, I could not keep teardrops from falling to the ground. I cannot but hope that this incident will give people a lesson that wars will profit nobody, and I pray that nuclear weapons will disappear from this world.

Seto Ohashi Bridge, a combination of highway and railroad, which connects Honshu, the main island, with Shikoku, another main island, creates a wonderful view. This uniqueness attracts tourists.

I will also keep in mind the hospitality of the sales staff, who never stopped smiling at their customers, together with the phrase, "Irasshai-mase," or "Welcome."

Homestay—a Wonderful Experience Engraved in My Memory

Shahabuddin Bin Hashim
Education Group



It was the homestay that highlighted the Specialized Programme in a local area which took place under the supervision of JICA. Some of us participants already had friends whom they might call their host families in Malaysia, but the homestay this time was completely different. Japan and Malaysia are 5,396 kilometers distant, separating us in terms of language, culture, and various other aspects. This experience as an "outsider" can be placed as the climax of the Youth Invitation Programme.

After visiting Senkyo Primary School on October 4, 1996, we reached "Fureai Noen," or literally "Friendship Farm," at four o'clock sharp. In addition to dishes fixed by Japanese volunteers, like "yakisoba," we prepared chicken curry together. At the same time, Mr. Katsuki introduced us to our respective host families. The Murayama family was my host family. By the time we finished general self-introductions, we came to know some background information about our host families. At 7:30 in the evening, we set out for our respective houses, exchanging greetings with one another, like "all the best!" or "stay in touch."

The Murayama family from Fukuchiyama received me warmly. While being welcomed

with very delicious Japanese fruits, I spoke with them about myself and my family. We enjoyed a video about Malaysia together before we went to bed. I did not forget either, to give them a souvenir from my home, saying, "This is from my heart." The next morning, after breakfast, they took me around the neighborhood and to a school nearby. In the afternoon, a beautiful town, Maizuru, welcomed us as a whole family. The mother looked tired, as she had cooked special dishes for me the night before. Relatives of the Murayamas visited us as well, and we had an enjoyable time together. I also became very close to the Fushimis, the relatives, and we visited the famous Fukuchiyama Castle together. The two families, which usually live far away from each other, enjoyed the wonderful view from the hill all together for some two hours.

However unhappy we felt about the time passing by, we had to say good-bye with feelings of sadness. Our parting at Ayabe International Exchange Plaza was very sad.

"See you again." I hope the Murayamas will be sure to visit Malaysia next summer.

In any case, generally speaking, although we have a communication problem with our host families, I do not think it is impossible to express ourselves in another way. I also believe that, although we are from different cultures, we can still confirm our friendship by maintaining respect toward each other from the bottom of our hearts. I would say this is the most important for us Asians as a family.

Experiences in Japan

Ab Rahman Bin Anas
Scientific and Technological
Development Group



As we had already known, Japan proved to be a country with special standards of living and culture. One of its most distinctive features is Japanese people's attitude to respect each other, and their consideration in giving top priority to those who need assistance. Other than that, traditional Japanese culture has not only been perpetuated but is also being formed by younger generations, as we see in the traditional arts like tea ceremony, martial arts, and kabuki.

The responsible attitude of workers toward their employers is reflected in their truly respectful manner regarding their tasks. This characteristic is implanted in them early in life. When visiting a school, we saw the students diligently cleaning around the schoolhouse, without depending on the school caretakers for assistance. Like this, we learned that Japanese workers regard their employers as their own families, and that their loyalty will last until retirement.

During the one month in Japan, we actually watched people keeping up their efforts until various sorts of the latest technology and the original ideas of the workers take form and become perfected. We also saw an actual scene of economic development going together with social development in the form of apartment houses built in a rice-farming area.

In the observation tour, we were able to visit

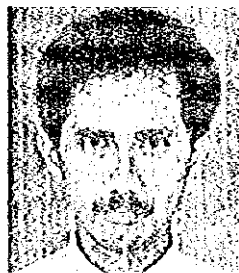
several important places, including the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. The park symbolizes Hiroshima's desire for peace, on its way to reconstruction from the destruction by the atomic bomb. In the park are the Peace Memorial Museum and several monuments, established with prayers for everlasting world peace. At the museum, we had an opportunity to learn about the suffering of the Hiroshima citizens at the time of the A-bomb attack. Before we started a tour around the museum, we saw a film entitled "A Mother's Prayer," which was related to the atomic bombing. Watching the film, nearly all of the members of our group shed tears of sympathy, from the bottom of our hearts, for the tragedy inflicted upon the people of Japan. I also learned how necessary it is to eradicate nuclear arms from this world.

Through this Youth Invitation Programme, I believe that Asia, as an entity of peace and prosperity, was successfully represented.

A Decision-making Process— The Friendship Programme Way

Tun Ahmad Faisal Tun Abdul Razak

ASEAN Comp.
Economy 1 Group



It is time to pack my things and get ready for the voyage home. I expected this problem beforehand, but I guess I never really figured out how to overcome it.

The problem: I was never good at packing my things.

To make matter worse, there is a 40kg ceiling on the weight of my baggage.

Now, at 4 o'clock in the morning, I am figuring out what items to leave behind, so that I will not exceed the set limit. That would seem to be the easiest thing to do then.

Perhaps I should just leave behind that black 'orangutan' T-shirt of mine. It is old, anyway. But, wait, Reichelle from the Philippines always called me 'orangutan' for all the nuisance I caused her. She will always remember me by that T-shirt. And our friends of the In-house Seminar at Sajima Marina laughed the night I wore that T-shirt. I just loved it when Taro-san, Ari-san, Kei-san, Yoshie-san, Touchy-san and the others laughed. You could really see the human side of Japan then.

Or perhaps I should just throw the table clock into the trash bin. It is cheap, but it sure consumes space. Wait a minute, the clock was set ten minutes faster. I remember doing so because everything (practically everything!) in Japan is so well-planned and adhered to. Punctuality has always been my weak point; and by setting the clock ten minutes faster, our wonderful and ever efficient coordinators, Kono-san and Aiko-san, would have one less problem to worry about. The clock truly reminds me of how much effort was put up by JICE, the prefecture of Chiba, and many other organizations and individuals in planning and laying out the specialized programme for *Economy Group 1*. The clock, to me, symbolizes perfection through concentrated effort.

Oh, well, I will just throw away the big and bulky map book. Almost immediately, the name of Itsukaichi came to mind. A small city where, with the help of this map book, I managed to find the grave of a Malaysian who died during the A-bomb blast in Hiroshima.

It was a very sorrowful and mournful

moment the day I saw the grave. Two Malaysian lives were lost, and the pain I felt was beyond words. I dare not venture to think what was the feeling of losing 190,000 lives in Hiroshima then.

Oh, God, I cannot leave anything behind, since each one of them has its own memory. The clothes, the programme sling-bag, even the tooth-brush, have their own stories.

It is 5 o'clock, and I have made a decision. All this stuff is too valuable and nostalgic to be thrown away. So, what if it exceeds the weight limit? The friendship which we have fostered among the ASEAN participants and Japanese people, and having friends like Zakarya, Frederick, Golf, Jacqueline, Tino, Christina and many others, could never be measured by money. And these things bring the memories of this friendship.

The decision stays. I will just pack all the memories and go.

Experiencing the Japanese Way of Life

Shahriman Bin. Muhyiddin

ASEAN Comp. Public
Administration B Group



November 5, 1996, I arrived in Japan through Narita Airport. That was my first entry to Japan. After checking in at the Hotel Metropolitan, I was so anxious to get around by Chikatetsu (subway). Prior to that, I had learned the Japanese language in our country. So I started asking some Japanese people how

to buy a Chikatetsu ticket in "Nihongo (Japanese language)." But unluckily, I couldn't understand even a bit what they said. Furthermore, they couldn't understand English. Anyway, my friends and I managed ourselves how to get into a Chikatetsu. I got off at the wrong station a few times. At the stations, Japanese people walked so fast I wondered what they were chasing after. I have never seen anywhere in the world people walking at this speed. After all, the laps time between trains was only 3 to 4 minutes. Anyway, what I wondered about most was how some Japanese even slept in the train and managed to wake up just before it arrived at the station where they wanted to be.

A few days later, we learned "Japanese on the move." I was guided by quite an old Japanese man to move around, and a friend from Brunei followed him. In the afternoon, we had a Japanese lunch—the first time I had Sushi for a meal. I saw my friend put "raw fish" in his mouth and try to swallow. He closed his eyes and forced himself to swallow. Then my turn came, I closed my eyes and forced myself to swallow. Ohh, ohh! What a taste! I couldn't take it anymore after that until now.

During our stay in Saitama Prefecture, I experienced how to socialize with Japanese counterparts. Then I learned that, deep in their hearts, Japanese people are very nice, friendly, warm-hearted, kind, helpful and more and more. Then I went to a hot spring nearby the hotel. Everybody was naked... The scene looked so awkward that I left the place without taking a bath at all. I went to my room for a shower in a little "ofuro"(bathtub).

Then we moved to Osaka City by Shinkansen, once the fastest train in the world. I learned that when the Japanese invent anything, it has to be the best in the world. No

wonder they are the fastest walker in the world. By the way, my friends and I had "shashin" photographs taken in front of the "Hikari" before it took off for Osaka. In Osaka, I experienced the "Homestay Programme." I was so nervous but so excited. My Otosan and Okasan were in their mid-thirties. They had two sons. I'd never been to any Japanese style bathroom. So during my stay at their home, I only ate a little in order to prevent myself from "entering" the toilet. Anyway, they were very wonderful and very nice to me. I think all Japanese are like them.

Hiroshima, the city, looked so peaceful. We went to the Peace Memorial Museum. The pain and agony of A-bomb effects during World War II could still be seen deep in their eyes and felt deep in their heart. We prayed for peace forever. The A-bomb explosion may have been a blessing in disguise.

To sum everything up, I learned that the Japanese are very polite; words like Sumimasen, Onegaishimasu, Kudasai, Irashaimase and so on are always heard. Hopefully, the youngsters of today will be brought up with such good values inculcated into them so that they maintain a good way of life in order to build a better tomorrow.

■ Asia

■ Philippines

Full Circle

Natasha Bautista Vizcarra

Education Group



I. My mother's tale about a soldier

Rosa Henson, a comfort woman.

Stone-faced Japanese soldiers during World War II.

The atom bomb and Hiroshima.

I carried around these impressions of Japan since childhood. These were stories my parents and grandparents used to tell me, and what I read from books and newspapers later on as an adult. I know they are not very pleasant. Nothing about war, death and pillage can ever come close to being pleasant. And I have chosen to share my elders' anger, if only vicariously, because I wanted to understand what their generation went through.

This was why I had second thoughts in applying for the Youth Invitation Programme. And I know I am not alone. I know of another participant whose grandfather is also still very angry at Japan. I think he has all the right reasons to feel that way. But one memory, shared to me by my mother, made me go. During the war, she said, one Japanese soldier had been very kind to her and seemed to regret being there with the other soldiers who took so much pleasure in torturing Filipinos.

"I had wandered one day from my mother, your 'Lola,'" she told me. "And this Japanese soldier approached me and made funny faces

to make me smile. Then he gave me some fruits and then went on his way."

"When your 'Lola' and your 'Lolo' ('Lolo' means grandfather in Tagalog and 'Lola' means grandmother.) found me again, they scolded me for straying, and when I told them about the Japanese soldier they became angrier," my mother said. "They said I should never ever go near a Japanese because they would kill me."

II. A professor

I set aside all these when I went to Japan. It was, after all, a friendship programme, and I did not want to be a rude guest. I guess my being a journalist made it easier for me to shift my brain into the "objective and unbiased mode."

I and the other Filipino participants went through a flutter of lectures, observation trips and exchanges with Japanese youth which I all enjoyed. But sometimes, I found myself conversing with a new-found Japanese friend and thinking "How could it have happened? Where are the monsters my grandparents told me about? I could not see them in your eyes."

Often, our Japanese counterparts were not even aware of what happened between Japan and the Philippines during World War II. I don't know if I felt relieved because we did not have to talk about such a sensitive topic or if I was hurt that they did not know.

Then, finally, a Japanese university professor dared to talk about it during an orientation in Yamanashi Prefecture. I remember him saying that it was very unfortunate that the Philippines and Japan had such a dark history. He said these were the mistakes of their parents and grandparents and perhaps the present generation can start anew.

For the very first time during my stay in Japan, and I think that was the second week

already, I felt we were truly there. That someone knew we were there. I appreciated this gesture very much, and I admired the professor for daring to mention it.

III. One child

I will have many memories of Japan, and all of them are pleasant. I have made new friends, learned a new language and have seen a beautiful country. But of all these, one child stands out as one Japanese who really, truly touched me.

Yuko is an eight-year-old autistic child, and I met him one sunny day at the Pony School in Katsushika. What I knew of autism is limited only to books I have read. An autistic child is self-absorbed and can only think of tasks at hand, not complicated processes. But Mr. Ohno, the director of the Pony School, told me Yuko was improving—that since he started learning how to ride the pony, he was more lively and even knew all the steps involved in preparing a pony for riding.

I joined Yuko and his mother for his warm-up exercises, always standing behind them because I just wanted to observe. But when we went jogging Yuko held my hand and ran with me. I thought “maybe he thinks I am his mother,” so after a while I tried to lead him to his mother. But he would not let go. He held my hand tightly, and I do not know why but I felt teary-eyed. I held these tears back because who ever heard of somebody crying while jogging.

At one point, we egged Yuko to go faster so he let go of my hand and sped off for a few seconds. But then he came back to me and held my hand again.

To this day I still have to figure out why I felt so touched holding that young boy's hand in mine. We never really spoke, and we were not really properly introduced.

And I wonder what that Japanese soldier was thinking when he chose to be kind to my mother who was still very young during the war. Was he feeling sad? Did he feel regret? Or was he heartened when my mother did not run away, just as I was touched when Yuko trusted me so entirely and held my hand tight?

I never thought I would feel closest to my mother from so far away. We have come full circle.

Cameras, Cherry Blossoms, and More

Alexander Antonio V. Abelar
Social Development Group



It was like using up a roll of film and pointing the camera to almost every scene. Yes, thirty days were not enough for me and the twenty-four other participants of the 1996 Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Youth Invitation Programme, Philippines Social Development Group, to get a whole picture of Japan. However, those thirty days were more than enough for us to gain diverse experiences, knowledge, and new friends. I hope that this short essay would then give you some ideas on what are my and my group's impressions about Japan. Let's start with the three T's . . .

Toilets. This word will surely occupy a special place in our hearts. Why? In our busy schedule of lectures, observation tours, and discussions, and in the airports, restaurants, parks, and even roadsides, we are always sure that whenever there is a “call of nature,” we

need not worry since clean and well-supplied toilets are nearby. If only other countries (including ours, of course!) could also do the same...

Trains. I was impressed by Japan's web of modern railways and trains, but I was even more impressed with how they'd work: on time, punctual, just like the Japanese people. Funny it may seem, yet these trains will always remind me to realize the value of time: that you could do more things when you're punctual and that troubles may arise when you're late. (I was once "crushed" by a train door in my first week of stay here, by the way...)

Tokyo. Japan is considered to be a country with one of the highest standards of living. Still, it is not problem-free, and I think, Tokyo is the place where you can find most of them. Behind those magnificent buildings, I have seen homeless people, always with garbage, and juvenile delinquents. Also, people here always rush, and it seems that they live to work, not work to live. Enjoying life is hard when the situation is like that.

Let me finish the essay with this. Our midnight talks in the hotel rooms with our co-delegates and our Japanese counterparts, our short but happy stays with our foster families, and our bouts with fatigue (really?), lack of sleep, and over-fed days have made our stay in Japan more colourful, and more memorable.

My final words: we have seen few cherry blossoms in our one-month stay here, but the memories and the friends we've made will always blossom in our hearts.

IROIRO ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA.

Transcendental Learning

Balgos, Teresita Silma
Economy A Group



Travel opportunities may come only to the selected few, while learning opportunities are always open to anybody. But learning through travel is a different kind of opportunity which may make a great change in a person's total personality, widening not only his perspectives on life within a community of diverse people but also his acceptance of such diversity. One transcends local barriers and steps into a different world, which could bring out a different person.

The one-month study tour programme is one novel experience that gave a deeper insight on how a highly-developed nation such as Japan copes up with the rapidly-changing global environment. Because of its history and natural environment, the country has imbibed a habit of selfless diligence as manifested by the Japanese's commitment to work and their objectivity in pursuing their goals through speedy, punctual and efficient delivery of service. In public places, even with the long queues, order is still maintained, as if discipline is an inherent trait which was etched in each and every soul of the Japanese people even before conception.

Japan's volition towards improvement is quite overwhelming—especially for third-world countries. Its ingenious precision and strict quality control has won for itself great acclaim and recognition for its technically

advanced electronic products. The respect accorded to Japanese brand names may also be the reason why Japan has a competitive edge in the global market, thereby making it an economic power.

On the lighter side, the Japanese people's love for natural beauty and their awareness of environmental preservation are quite visible especially in the countrysides. This love can also be seen in the many arts they practice and specialize in such as in bonsai plants and ikebana. In Japan's ancient structures, for example, the temples, shrines and Japanese-style hotels, the course of nature is neither hindered nor tampered with. Rather, Japan and its people have used ways to keep their natural treasures perennially alive and more splendid. Although they have used their technical know-how in the construction of a lot of infrastructure even on their mountains, it has been done with consideration for nature.

Through the years, Japan has experienced a great deal of turmoil not only socially but also economy-wise. From these experiences, the Japanese have learned to improvise and have successfully risen to become a great economic power. They admit to have committed some mistakes, but they took it as another chance to improve themselves and their nation. Now, having been considered a great player in the economic and social stabilization especially in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan is opening its doors to greater interaction with its neighbors as exemplified by the Youth Invitation Programme. Isn't it time for the neighbors to learn from the Japanese experiences and act on them as well?

Japan, Its People and Me

Buagas, Segfredo
Economy B Group



I had not heard so much about Japan, except for the havoc it brought when it wanted to control the world, the stigma of which continuously haunts our parents and grandparents who are our living witnesses of the horrible past—the past that left indelible marks in their hearts and minds.

Today I am awed by Japan, which has miraculously risen from the ravages of war and successfully reconstructed itself into an economic power house. This resulted in the government's ability to provide a truly humane society, free from worries such as environmental destruction, food supply and safety among others. It raised the standard of living of its people and pursued economic development in harmony with nature—a thrust most developing countries contemplate but still fail to achieve.

In my quest to uncover the secret, I scanned through the pages of history to visit its past and find the links to the present. But from a very vantage point at train stations, subways, arcades, pavements and homes, I was struck by the truth. It is Japanese people who hold the key to the gateway of progress and development—a people who can diligently love their work. They are people with the discipline and initiative to queue on stairways and separate wastes for proper disposal as well as to run or ride on bicycles even in most glamorous out-

fits, just to avoid being late on appointments. Their good sense of values and attitudes, warmth, friendliness, cleanliness, hospitality and practicality are some of the good virtues worth emulating. They are able to preserve their historical facts and sites for us to appreciate, and they understand the need for a better perspective of our future.

I am very grateful to the Japanese government through JICA for a very noble initiative to build an international arena of friendship and understanding. I believe this is a vital fabric in the foundation serving as the platform that will catapult us into the realization of our vision for a genuine world peace, for without it, economic development and prosperity to establish a truly humane society would forever remain an illusive dream.

Special recognition is due to our coordinators who have had tremendous patience in bearing with our failures. To our Japanese counterparts and volunteers, too, who took time to make our stay worth while and openly discuss with us issues affecting Japan. To Mr. Takeshi Toshiro's family, who unselfishly shared their time, money and effort to take care of me and for sharing their home, warmth and love. I may have been alone but was never lonely.

And these precious moments here in Japan will always remain in my heart and will never be relegated to the limbo of oblivion. For these are memories that I will truly cherish and treasure forever.

"Maraming Salamat po."

A Scoop of Japan

Barimbao, Anna Delza Suizo

Agriculture Group



Known as the land of the morning sun, Japan has captured my admiration when I was a participant in the Youth Invitation Programme.

Surrounded by scenic spots, I stand in awe of her beauty.

The green thick forests, the fresh smell of grasses and flowers of different hues combined with nature's serenity made me commune with the Maker.

The other side of Japan is the fast-paced modern life, which taught me the value of discipline and diligence.

The use of high technology even in the so-called rural areas surprised me.

One of the distinct characteristics of the Japanese is cleanliness. It is taboo to throw garbage just anywhere.

Their sense of aesthetics is so strong that even simple things can become very attractive.

Gardens carefully landscaped backdropped by majestic temples reflect their eclectic character, which contributes to their natural beauty.

But it is the people that make Japan what it is today. They are a people who are no different from Filipinos in terms of family closeness and who share the warmth of love and care.

A people who shine not just in Asia but in the whole world.

This simple poem contains all my thoughts about Japan.

Oh, land of the morning sun,
 Sweet memories filled with fun
 Full of people with polite gestures
 allures me with their miniatures.
 A fast-growing economy
 Known for its origami
 Tiger in Asia, situated east of China,
 It's a dream come true
 through friendship with you.

My Fond Memories of Japan

Richard Villarin Cagara

ASEAN Comp.
 Economy 2 Group



Participating in the JICA-sponsored Youth Invitation Programme was a very rare opportunity. I am one of those lucky souls selected from more than 2,000 applicants in the Philippines to join the Programme.

It was my dream, since school days, to be able to visit Japan, to know more about its people, culture, lifestyles, and their aspirations, and to visit its many interesting places. Its amazing dragon economy and over-speedy breakthroughs in technology fascinate me tremendously. This programme was the realization of that dream.

Tokyo, I found out, is more than what I initially had in mind. It is a mega-city in the truest meaning of the word. Roaming around its vastness and finding your way through its maze of subways are like wandering aimlessly in a concrete jungle. Japan's many interesting places, like Lake Yamanaka reflecting the majestic Mt. Fuji, Ueno Zoo with its lovable

inhabitants, the breathtaking view of Tokyo Bay, just to mention a few, never failed to fascinate me. And if you're an electronics buff, man, this is your Mecca. But most admirable are its people. Their warmth, friendliness and brand of hospitality were surprisingly unexpected in a highly urbanized and modern society.

As we flew to Fukuoka, the air assumed a more serious tone. We were treated to a dose of what it takes to be an economic giant. The Kyushu Energy Science Center gave a clear view of the backbone that supports Japan's industries: energy, its generation from various sources including nuclear, and utilization. And, if one whole Mark II car in 45 minutes will not impress you, I wonder what would. There and then, you'll realize the profound meaning of the following terms we have come to know: automation/robotics/assembly line/advanced technology/R&D/JIT/business conglomeration, productivity, efficiency, etc.

Once we moved to Kagoshima, the homestay programme touched everyone's heart. It allowed us to have a first-hand experience of the everyday life of a Japanese family. The homestay is the closest way of feeling the warmth, friendliness and hospitality of the Japanese. The emotionally-charged Farewell Party attests to the excitement of the homestay.

Upon enplaning to Hiroshima, we were allowed more time for sight-seeing/sight visits. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park & Museum enshrine a stark reminder for the whole world never to repeat the horrendous mistake of the past of using the atomic power to destroy rather than to build. To cap this much-needed reflection & contemplation, we were led to a visit to the sacred island of Miyajima. And, just when our heads are tired of minding the present and thinking about the future, our sponsors were kind enough to

allow us to indulge in something more spiritual, conservative and traditional. The Kyoto visit, with its centuries-old shrines, was such a perfect place for that purpose. The serenity of the shrines, which gives a glimpse of the glorious past, soothes the mind.

Indeed, the foregoing are worth remembering. It is an experience that cannot be quantified in terms of yen, pesos, dollars, rupiahs, bahts, or ringgits. And I'll take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to our sponsors (JICA, NAYD, JICE & Kyu-Kei-Ren), to our Japanese counterparts (the youth and professionals), and to the officials of government and private institutions we visited. And special thanks goes to our coordinators (Ms. Miyuki Aoki, Ms. Chiaki Hasegawa, Ms. Noriko Kobayashi) who did extraordinary things for us.

All of the above contributed to the attainment of the goals as envisioned by the Programme, which are mutual understanding and establishment of a lasting friendship. Many ideas were shared and exchanged. Many things were learned, which led to a better understanding of one another and that of every country. We differ a lot in practices, beliefs and aspirations. But once we take time to discuss, share and exchange things and ideas, we soon discover each other and find that we have a lot of things in common. This promotion of 'unity in diversity,' I believe, is the bedrock of a true friendship—a kind of friendship that can break even the language barrier—a friendship that must be nurtured and carried through to the 21st century and beyond.

To Japan and the ASEAN, I say, MABUHAY!!!

■ Asia

■ Singapore

A Thing of Beauty Is a Joy Forever

Hamimah Binte Abu

Education Group



Keats wrote:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will
keep

A bower quiet for us; and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, health and
quiet breathing.

And that's how I'd describe this trip to Japan—a thing of beauty that will remain a joy forever. Whatever initial apprehensions, doubts and misgiving I had about this trip—a trip to a land where everything from the language, customs, culture and food seemed so foreign. However, since my arrival, these were gradually replaced by invaluable knowledge, merry moments, unique bonding and most of all, a quiet but firm understanding of the country and her people.

Indeed, I found beauty in Japan—beauty in a system that's fast, efficient (as exemplified by the Shinkansen), progressive and pro-active, but always with the good of the community in mind. This can be seen from the excellent infrastructure and the impressive education system. Before I came to Japan, the jukus or cram schools and the suicide rate of students were well-known to me. After the discussions and sharing sessions during the In-house Semi-

nar in Gifu and actual visits to the schools in Okayama, it was wonderful for me to note the balance in the system. Although the academic aspect was emphasized, the overall development of each student was never neglected. The conscious effort in encouraging creativity and independence in thinking and learning is an aspect to be emulated.

I discovered beauty, too, in the architecture—the Seto Ohashi Bridge, the shrines and old houses—ornate and so full of history, standing strong and proud. For most of us, Kurashiki City especially held a special place in our hearts, with quaint streets and houses and to my delight, the Ohara Museum with Monet's "Waterlilies" and Picasso's "Bird Cage" to capture the mind.

But I think beauty in the people of Japan was most striking. Everyone whom we'd met had been hospitable, understanding and most generous, particularly the organisers, our coordinators and our counterparts, especially our homestay families. We were so welcomed as members of the household that most of us became quite homesick after our home-stay ended and we realized yet again that communication of the heart needed no specific language. A genuine desire to know each other transcends language barriers.

I also truly appreciated the frank and honest exchanges of ideas, information and opinions with our friends in Japan, as experienced in all Question & Answer sessions and particularly during the seminar and Open Symposium in Gifu. But, most of all, we were moved by the cute and earnest faces of the students in Okayama, as they warmly welcomed us with their songs & dance. So I wished there was more time to interact with each other. We found beauty, too, in the sobering resilience and dignity of the people of Hiroshima.

And, of course, there was profound serenity

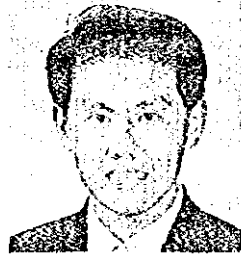
in the beauty of Japan's natural landscape—of beautiful mountains and fresh paddy fields side by side with modern skyscrapers. I will always remember the involuntary gasp we gave when we first caught sight of the majestic and awesome peak of Mt. Fuji.

But I personally fell in love with the meandering rivers in Gero. How wonderful it was to wake up each morning to the sound of gurgling waters, chirping birds, and the sweet voice of a friend singing, a few balconies away, inspired by the beauty of nature.

Indeed, if beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, then this beholder was enchanted and at times, most overwhelmed.

Feelings

Lee Wai Chung Brennan
Social Development Group



There's so much to say about this wonderful experience that I had in Japan over the past 30 days. However, no matter how hard I tried to think or write about it, only one word can describe what I had actually gone through—feelings.

I found that there were so much feelings exuberated throughout my exchange with my new-found Japanese friends. Whether it was about culture, the economy or just plain simple conversation, the warmth and sincerity that were felt made the experiences all the more meaningful and enjoyable. During these moments, getting to know my new friends suddenly made me realise that the friendships

that I have made would actually last for a very, very long time. It's a feeling that somehow leaves me with a tingling sensation everytime I think of my friends.

I guess my fellow colleagues feel the same way. What we had really gained from this experience in Japan was not just friendships, but also precious feelings and sweet memories which we will take back to Singapore.

So, to all our friends in Japan, the Singapore Social Development Group of the Youth Invitation Programme would like to dedicate this to you. It's called 'My Friend, My Love.'

The day we arrived, the day we met
With such a feeling that I'll never forget
Your smile is so pretty, and your voice is so sweet
That you had me dreaming away...

The time we spent, the time we're together
With such a memory that we will remember
You are so gentle, and you are so nice
That you cause me thinking away...

Sayonara, my friend, my love
We had a great time, but it's time to part
Though we're together only for a while
Our feelings will be forever

The minute we touched, the moment we met
With such a sensation that we will cherish
The seconds came by, the feeling's so real
That you help me feeling away...

It's time to part, it's time to cherish
With all the sweet memories that we will carry
We will miss you, we'll always love you
And we'll always be thinking of you...

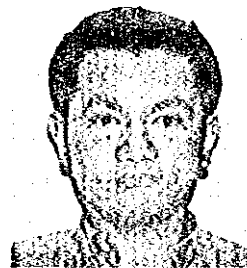
Thank you, my friends for your warm hand-

shakes and genuine love. Till we meet again,
Ai shite imasu!

Memories of Japan

Wun Ryal

Economy B Group



When the group landed at Narita Airport, we were already excited as we had been psyched up for the month-long programme. The two short week-ends of orientation in Singapore only served as a prelude for what was to come.

The image of the efficient, polite and serious Japanese citizen was one that many shared. What is not known usually about the Japanese people is their warmth and kindness, and the changing aspirations of their younger generation.

The chance to meet up with young Japanese was eagerly anticipated, which made the In-house Seminar a unique and memorable experience. The opportunity to exchange views with Japanese people of our age was both enjoyable and eye-opening.

Of course, the Specialized Programme in Toyama will always have a special place in our hearts. There was a wealth of knowledge gained about the economy of Toyama through site visits; there was the richness of the local culture, above all, there was the kindness of the local people that touched us deeply. The observation tour ended too quickly for many of us. All too soon, we had to leave such beautiful places like Kyoto, Hiroshima and

Miyajima.

The month-long programme gave us an insight into Japanese culture in a way that no commercial tour could. It gave us a unique opportunity to learn about the real Japan.

The Japanese people have such a rich history, tradition, and culture spanning more than two thousand years. It would have been interesting to have had an opportunity to mix with more younger Japanese, especially at a period where traditional values may be undergoing fundamental change.

The programme could not have been better organized, due largely to the dedicated, efficient and accommodating staff of JICA, to whom we will always be grateful.

We hope the programme will continue in Singapore to help strengthen the ties between our cultures and build a better understanding between our peoples.

The Japan Experience

Ang Chin Chye Wilson
Ho Chai Teck
Economy A1 Group

The Tokyo Express

On 20th June 1996, 20 young Singaporeans arrived at Narita Airport, not knowing what to expect from this month-long stay. Armed with enthusiasm, we took part actively in what was to be a truly memorable experience.

Nihongo-on-the-Go & Back to School Again

"Learn Japanese on the Move" was a truly effective way to let us practice the language. The volunteers were also untiring in their efforts at teaching us and bringing us around. The lectures that followed also proved to be interesting and informative. The Singaporeans

were particularly intrigued by the lecture delivered by Prof. Yasushi Kikuchi on Japanese Culture and Sense of Values.

Official Visits

We visited the following places over the next few days: the Edo-Tokyo Museum, Nippon Budokan, JETRO, National Personnel Authority (NPA), and Ohi Thermal Power Station. We were extremely impressed by the hospitality of the Budokan staff and the pains taken by the hosts at Ohi Power Station to make us feel comfortable and welcome. We also gained a lot from the candid talk delivered at NPA.

In-house Seminar at KDD Training Center, Saitama

This seminar was one of the most eagerly anticipated. The discussions, games and informal interaction we had resulted in the start of many long-lasting friendships. The only regret was that time was too short to get to know everybody. The epitome of friendship was aptly reflected in the form of a song, composed in a collaborative effort by a Japanese-Singaporean duo. *Ocean of Dreams* captured and traced our anticipation, relief, bonds and hopes, throughout the seminar.

The Hiroshima Days

To many of us, Hiroshima is a city once devastated beyond recognition. Our apprehension mounted into anxiety as we neared the city by Shinkansen. However, the warm welcome we received at the station dispelled all fears. Preparations were made to ensure that our stay was comfortable and enjoyable.

Shobara City

The city came across as a land of vast mountains and rich greenery. The warmth of

the city mayor and officials marked the start of an enjoyable stay. The people showed extensive generosity and hospitality, leaving us deeply impressed and grateful.

Official Visits

Of the numerous visits organized, the ones that left a lasting impression were those to Nagasue Elementary School and Mazda Proving Ground. The young innocent faces of the young students reminded us of our own childhood days. Indeed, we revived such memories as we sang, danced and played games together. At Mazda, some of us had the opportunity to go on high-speed rides. We were also impressed by the comprehensive test circuits constructed to ensure consumer safety.

Homestay—A Home Away from Home

This was the highlight of our Shobara stay. Our apprehension reached a height at a tense initial meeting, but soon all ice was broken down. Despite the language barrier, we communicated with sign language, dictionaries, interpreters and our own limited Japanese. All of us returned from homestay satisfied and enriched, for it paved the way for long-lasting friendships.

Peace Memorial Park and A-bomb Museum

We were profoundly shocked by the casualties inflicted by the A-bomb. The suffering and torment that the Hiroshima people went through were beyond description. But what struck us most was the determination they displayed in fighting for peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons. We are positive that the people here are all for world peace and international friendship.

Conclusion

This month-long stay had given us wonderful memories and precious friendship—gifts that money cannot buy. We treasure these deeply and are indeed grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this programme.

Faces of Japan

Economy A2 Group

Economy A2 Group

Introduction

To many of us, the mention of Japan has always conjured up a variety of exciting and complex images. Japan is home to traditional art forms, from martial arts like karate to delicate cultural activities like ikebana and the tea ceremony. On the other hand, we also know Japan as a global economic leader. Through the Youth Invitation Programme organized by JICA, we were given the chance to experience Japan firsthand.

Economy

We had the privilege to receive lectures from prominent academics, government officials and economists on the prospects for the Japanese economy. These lectures gave us an overview of the history and future of Japan's economy. From the lectures on Japan's 'bubble economy' and its future direction, we gathered many valuable ideas. As Singapore progresses towards industrialized nation status, it would be vital to learn from Japan's experience.

Observation tours to Nissan Diesel Company, Sony Media World and Taisho Pharmaceutical Company, amongst others, were conducted. As the idiom goes, seeing is believing. We were impressed by the innovative technology, welfare-oriented management and enthu-

siastic pride of the workforce. Indeed, we began to understand that the success of Japan's economy did not come about incidentally. Strong determination and the spirit of continual innovation were the key proponents of Japan's economic miracle.

Culture

Our understanding of Japanese culture was enhanced by lectures on Japan's history, cultural practices and social structure. Visits to the Nippon Budokan, the Edo-Tokyo Museum and other historic sites further spurred our interest in these areas. Hands-on experiences of making our own washi paper, yuzen dyed handkerchiefs, calligraphic works, and ikebana arrangements served to make the learning process all the more enjoyable.

Despite Japan's rapid modernization, she has succeeded in preserving her traditions in these fields. Coming from a country with a short history, we were impressed by the union of modernity and history in today's Japan.

Friendship

The seminar at Lake Sagami was one of the highlights of our month-long programme. We were initially apprehensive about our ability to discuss current issues with our Japanese counterparts because of the language barrier. Fortunately, our anxieties faded away and effective communication took place as both sides earnestly wanted to exchange views. A new awareness emerged as open and honest discussions were held on a wide spectrum of issues.

For two days, we had numerous programmes which fostered interaction between the Singaporean and Japanese participants. From volleyball matches to meals, taking ofuro to sleeping on futon, everyone had his or her unique experience of the friendship that

was nurtured. We were especially touched by the warmth of our new Japanese friends so evident in the effort they took to prepare for our stay in Sagami.

Another high point was our homestay programme in Saitama Prefecture. We had a special opportunity to live with Japanese families and experience their way of life. Our host families graciously opened their hearts and homes to us. We will bring our fond memories of the homestay back to Singapore.

Conclusion

Having spent thirty days in Japan and having learnt about Japanese culture and economic developments, we will return to Singapore with a fresh perspective on this exciting country. We thank the Japanese government for giving us the opportunity to learn about the different facets of this fascinating country. Through this programme, we were able to see beyond the 'tourist's' viewpoint and gain an understanding of the everyday lives of the Japanese people.

774 Hours in Japan

Michelle Anne Goh Ai-Lyn

ASEAN Comp.
Economy 3 Group



As I look back on the last 31 days of my stay in Japan, my most treasured memories are of the friends I have made. How could I have imagined one month ago that I would become such firm friends with some other participants, or that I would be so sad to leave them when