

I return home? I have always thought that one's invitation can identify a potential friend even before any conversation begins. I am glad that this trip has not proven my belief wrong, and I have gained some life-long friends.

A month seems short now that this is the last day of the programme. Yet, when you consider that you spend every waking hour with one particular group, the real time spent together adds up to a lot. My friends and I made use of every available moment—visiting Shinjuku, doing the laundry together, talking and laughing through the night. Perhaps in some little corner of our minds, the clock was always ticking, telling us, "You only have one month."

The Japanese friends met at the In-house Seminar were a great bunch. After only 3 days together, many of us (ASEAN participants) were very sad to part. Imagine how much harder it is to leave the friends we have spent 10 times that amount of time with.

To everyone I have met, especially Economy 3 group members, our coordinators Masako-san, Michiko-san and Koga-san, 'thank you' seems too trivial an expression. And to the Gang, thanks for the memories; I'll never forget you.

■ Asia

■ Thailand

What Impressed Me at Koinonia

Wechakorn Boonmee

Education Group



One early summer morning, I visited Sapporo, the central city of Hokkaido, which I imagined would be one of the most beautiful cities in the country of the rising sun. The limousine bus, with 40 passengers, including myself and six other fellow participants, a coordinator, and an interpreter, Mrs. Pilaipan, had pulled up along a certain roadside. At the coordinator's instruction, we all got off the bus.

Before our eyes appeared a large two-story wooden house with additions here and there. They say this 43-year-old house was left to the school by the former owner. As I had already felt respect for this school through reading reference materials, my heart started beating fast the moment I saw the building, and the welling excitement put me at a loss for words when I stepped into the facilities.

Koinonia was established four years ago, with support from a Christian church in Sapporo. I would say that it would be more appropriate to call it a mental care center for children rather than a school, for every child there suffered mental problems. Bullying in schools has become one of the most serious problems in Japanese education. But there are still others, such as mentally retarded children, and the children who suffer enormous pressure

from their parents' excessive expectations, or who cannot receive sufficient attention from their parents who are too busy with their own business. I keenly felt that the human mind cannot always follow the economic development. Mr. Shiro Bando, the school principal, took us around the school as he explained things to us.

During the visit, a girl, about 13 years old, with dull eyes caught my attention. She looked mentally retarded. She was staring at us, with an interested look. I found out she was one of the ten children studying there. As we moved from one place to another, she followed us around, hiding herself from our sight. At last Mr. Bando told her that we were Thai participants in the Youth Invitation Programme. As soon as he finished telling her, she smiled as if relieved. Her smile filled my heart. It expressed the delight that she was not forgotten from the world and the excitement to have new friends from far away.

Her case is one of Japan's problems, an issue that the country should overcome with concerted efforts. And further, this children's issue is a global one. Koinonia illustrates a case where they encourage the children facing difficulties in society and help them attain their places in it. Assuming that these children are part of the country's future as well, isn't it natural that those who have enough should complement someone else's missing part? I pray for the girl—that one day she will enjoy peaceful days for sure.

The children at Koinonia were given considerable freedom with their own studies. The school is trying to set them free from pressures that they have already suffered so far. Unlike other schools, instead of following a fixed curriculum, the school tries to develop the children's spiritual aspects, through such collaborative activities as music, plant cultiva-

tion, and excursions. I was deeply impressed by what Mr. Bando said before we left the school: the children themselves decide when they will leave here. Up to now, quite a few children have left here and now enjoy their lives in society. This school may not help all the children who visit, but it helps many of them.

I had lunch with five children, and then we did "origami," or paper folding, together. The children always had smiles on their faces. The staff were all volunteers full of great voluntary spirit. I thought that the children's problems would be fewer and fewer if there were many more of such schools.

We left Koinonia later in the afternoon. The teachers, other staff members, and the children all came to see us off at the station. They appeared sad at the parting. Voices saying "sayonara" echoed around. As the train was slowly pulling out, the figures of the waving children got smaller, but those figures are still deeply imprinted in my memory. I will call this place the school that left a great impression in the country of the rising sun, and will never forget it as long as I live.

Unforgettable Thirty Days

Thai Participant Group
Social Development Group

First of all, we from the Thai Social Development Group want to express our deep gratitude to JICA for the great assistance and hospitality offered to us during the Youth Invitation Programme. We were able to learn a lot through this programme. Particularly impressive were the wonderful harmony and efficiency of the Okayama-ken Seinen-kan, of the Asahi Town Youth Association, and of all the other people concerned. Furthermore, the

new friendship and mutual understanding that were established among the participants have turned out to be an asset more precious than anything else to us.

As might have been expected, the homestay, as the highlight of this programme, was most impressive and very fruitful. We were very satisfied with it, as we were able to learn about Japanese culture and customs through living and talking together. We appreciate, from the bottom of our hearts, that our host families treated us like their own children. Also, in the In-house Seminar, through opinion exchanges with the Japanese participants, we were able to learn about young people's values and lifestyle. We would not have been able to understand them unless we had actually joined and experienced this programme, although we already had some knowledge of Japan through watching, hearing, or reading. In this sense, this programme will be helpful in enabling us participants in our own tasks and self-development, and further in the development of Thailand.

As we entered this programme from different workplaces, we made adjustments individually to compose a group and prepared for living together in Japan. We can tell the successful results in the wonderful friendships we cultivated during our stay in Japan.

The touching days we spent with our host families and the Japanese participants, as well as the many experiences we had, will fill our heart with warm feelings and become a new page of our remembrances. Again, we thank all those concerned very much.

One Month Engraved on My Mind

Duangdao Roo-Ngan
Agriculture Group



A five-hour trip by air,
coming far away from friends and family,
away from Thailand, the Golden Axe, which
nurtures all living things, I can tell my arrival
in Tokyo by the smell of its land.

At the Holiday Inn Metropolitan,
tied up in JICA's Programme.

During a one-week seminar and tour,
money is consumed every day.

The short length of school girls' skirts,
and everyday scenes come into sight.

A wonder is the women in this country.
They never fear to take in nicotine and
smoke,
with little pause to take a deep breath.

That oddity confuses me.

About the life of Tokyoites,
it is their nature to walk restlessly, without
taking a glance,
like a robot, like a broken machine, which
never learns how to rest.

Nor does it ever look back.

Punctuality is most important.

The biggest crime is to be late for appointments.

Strange is the food, too. They eat things raw.
How bitter the orange juice tastes here!
Food is overflowing.

At any time and at any place, fridges are
packed with food.

Almost everything goes through a machine

and is packed into a cardboard box. Few things are sold as natural.

I never got used to that, for in Thailand fruits, vegetables, pork, and fish are all in natural form.

Nature is processed and made up here.

It is sold and accepted, without exceptions.

To avoid shortage, they develop technology at will, and whatever millions of yen it cost, they pay for a comfortable living.

Research and development, and the proud Panasonic selling remote-control products.

Just one push of a button changes life drastically.

Like Einstein, nuclear research and development.

From Metropolitan Tokyo to the suburbs, I headed for Hiroshima on the Shinkansen.

Very quick, speeding away,

Great, Really great!

My heart aches over damage by the atomic bomb.

Oh, beloved people, and the human race's heavy karma. Words fail me. Harms and evils of wars, indiscriminate destruction.

We must remember, in whatever time, that wars are never justified.

Coming to ancient Kyoto, where traditional culture remains.

Restored with utmost care for the sake of future generations, it represents old customs, culture, and living.

Even for tourism, it is still a valuable asset and is the object of endless envy.

What an exquisite mixture of old and new.

Civilization appears in the interesting city planning.

The Japanese often say,

"We, representing Japan, ..."

Strongly and deeply, since ancient times,

their spirit has been tied to this land and state.

With pure spirit, they hate evil.

It has been ceaselessly throbbing in their veins.

Regardless of religions: Shinto, Christianity, Buddhism, or whatever, they think much of living as humans.

I sense their hearts, delicate and gentle, in their well-versed manners, and in the traffic on the road.

People coming, cars give way to them gently.

Figures standing in lines in order.

Finding trash on the road, they put it into a prescribed bin.

They never compete nor struggle for fashion.

Cars and clothes, they seldom differ in colors and shapes.

Perhaps that is the reason the people are equal and free from social scales.

Confident and creative, with goals and vision, wide-range and long-term, placed amidst their present living, they advance any time.

The Agricultural Cooperative is a good example, for it keeps in mind the improvement of everyone's living and happiness.

Products are supplied fresh without faltering, with consumers' welfare taken into account.

Such a wonderful service spirit, even foreign visitors can easily tell.

The road signs beautifully equipped, will guide you back if you get lost.

Bangkok is more dangerous than here, where safety is taken for granted.

Numazu and Tokyo are no different, in that we have little fear on every street.

Local people in Japan are warmhearted. Agriculture is the universal basic.

The Japanese are all like Mt. Fuji, in their modesty, generosity, gentleness, and

beauty.

I could see good examples to follow, strong points and weak points.

Now it's time to close this poem.

Thanks to JICA, with sincerity and affection.

I'll try the good things and bad things, which I learned in this country.

Language and Understanding

Suwannee Tungthongchai

Economy A Group



For a long time I had dreamed that someday I would have a chance to visit Japan and gain various experiences in this industrial land of prosperity. And this time, I was given the opportunity by JICA, and I discovered some peculiar behavior among my Thai fellow participants and Japanese friends. It was an experience very interesting to me, but at the same time rather different from what I had expected.

Before visiting Japan, we read about the life of the Japanese and learned that they think much of punctuality. And while in Japan, I witnessed unusual behavior in my fellow members, who were obsessed with the idea of being punctual. For example, one of the fellow members went out shopping after the daily programme, and came home late and overslept the next morning. This person managed to wash her face, but had to give up the morning shower, which she normally made a point to take. Another fellow member fell asleep as soon as he got on the bus, and another ended

up dozing during the lecture. (We listened to the lectures whether we understood their content or not and asked each other about them afterwards.) Needless to say, we tried to be punctual at mealtimes!

As for food, we normally prefer strongly seasoned dishes, but we became used to lightly seasoned food while we were in Japan. However, there was one thing that we were all unwilling to eat. That was "natto" or fermented beans, which have a very strong smell. Once one of my fellow members was tricked into eating it, and at that moment the fellow made horrible faces, which caused all of us to burst into laughter. I also learned that some Japanese people like stronger tastes than we Thai do. Meals seem to be a very important thing in Japan. I thought so from the size of the plates and the amounts of food that were displayed in restaurant windows. In other words, the plates, as well as the amounts of food, are large. Take a bowl of rice, for example, a portion for one person was large enough to feed a few people. I ate out at restaurants several times, yet was never able to finish all the food that was served.

We fellow members were able to communicate with Japanese people unbelievably well, although we cannot speak Japanese. Sometimes we made mistakes, but other times we could speak correctly. We could make ourselves understood to each other in Thai, English, and furthermore with gestures.

Regarding communication, we had one impressive incident. One day, we wanted to mail letters to Thailand, but did not know where the post office was. Then, we decided to ask an old lady. We did our best to explain our situation, and she understood and hurriedly took us to the post office. She seemed to take it as an urgent matter, so she went in a hurry, walking and trotting on the way. We found it

a hustle to keep up with her, yet managed to reach the post office at last. Filled with feelings of thanks, after we finished our business, we bought flowers, went back to her place, and handed them to her. The lady looked a little surprised but thanked each of us in Japanese again and again. At that time, we told her that we were from Thailand. I think she will remember us, and we will never forget her kindness, either.

On this occasion, we learned from various impressive experiences that differences in language and culture are not obstacles to us as people, and that, on the contrary, they will serve as motivation for us to understand each other and share feelings. Although we had some small misunderstandings, we found out, in the end, that the result was a great success.

Participation in the Youth Invitation Programme

Duenphen Chinalai
Economy B Group



From the lectures, we gained academic knowledge. Through the observation tours to the facilities, like plants, we actually saw the advanced technology and excellent operations. And in question-and-answer sessions, we were able to deepen our understanding further. We were impressed to have been received warmly wherever we went, such as on the occasions of the courtesy visits to the Governor of Aichi Prefecture, to the Mayor of Inuyama City, and

to the Chairman of the Inuyama City Council, as well as in the tours to Yazaki Sogyo, the NTT Kasumigaseki Communication Center, the Chubu Electric Hekinan Plant, and the Toyota Motomachi Plant.

At the In-house Seminar, we came to feel certain that we actually made Japanese friends. At the beginning of the Seminar, we were worried about language, but through exchanges and opinion-sharing on culture, customs, and daily life, we came to learn about the similarities and differences between us. Even now that the Seminar is over, we are sure this bond of friendship will never disappear.

The homestay, which lasted for two nights and three days, was one of the most impressive programmes. We were filled with expectations, and at the same time, with concerns. However, all of us were warmly received by our host families, and we could experience the ordinary life of Japanese people and their warm feelings. It was only three days, but the homestay ended in sorrow and tears at parting.

We are very grateful to JICA, the Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, and furthermore, to the Japanese Government and those concerned from the private sector, for allowing us to participate in such a significant programme. We are also grateful to the coordinators for the wonderful experiences.

My Impressions of Japan

Wiroj Onganunkun

ASEAN Comp. Environmental
Protection Group



30 days in the beautiful autumn in Japan deeply impressed me. I had a chance to leave my job, mentally clean from my work, to travel and learn with both ASEAN and Japanese friends. I experienced in Japanese nature, valuable culture and kokoro. I learned how Japan balances economic growth with environmental costs, investments in environmental protection and preservation of nature. But this kind of learning should not be done for the sake of learning only; it should be learned to improve both the economy and environmental protection. I came to know about Japanese sustainable development, which I shall try to adapt to my own country's problem-solving system.

Little by little, as I learned more about Japan, friendships developed among the ASEAN and Japanese participants. Even though we belong to the same ASEAN countries, we are not necessarily the same. We had to learn and adapt to live together for a month, and it was a good time. But by the end of the programme, this relationship may return to being only an acquaintance. We may forget it and may never bring it to mind, or it may be as an old saying, "Absence makes love grow fonder." It depends on us.

My impressions cannot be completed if I do not mention the generosity of the Japanese to give us a chance to live together. And lastly but most importantly our gratitude goes out to

our industrious coordinators, who devoted themselves not only out of their sense of responsibility but also out of their love, which made them work to carry out the heart of this programme.

Finally I would like to ask one question: "Shall we meet again?"

■ Asia

■ Bangladesh

Japan: Development with Harmony and Peace

Ahmad Kaikaus
Civil Servant Group



Japan, one of the most industrialised countries on earth, is certainly an attractive place to visit. Twenty participants, including myself, from Bangladesh got the opportunity to cruise over this wonderful land for one month.

I think we were very fortunate to be able to come to Japan with the "Youth Invitation Programme" under the patronage of JICA. We visited so many places like Tokyo, Yamanashi, Obihiro, Osaka, Kyoto and Hiroshima. This one month trip was a wonderful and unforgettable experience.

I always wanted to visit Japan more than other countries, because I have wondered how a country without many natural resources can develop to maximum limit! My dream finally came to reality when I landed at Narita Airport on 28th August. After the completion of my tour, I had the feeling that this country's destiny lies in nothing but development and prosperity. I have read many books on Japan's development, its process of industrialisation and the nature of its society. But my knowledge from books was something like blind man's elephant watching. When we came to Tokyo and walked around our hotel, we found the communication system of this town is just

like a spider's web. One of our participants asked me, "Do you think this system has been developed by a human?" It is really amazing to observe how Japanese people could utilise the earth above ground and beneath it.

Our one month tour in Japan included lectures, interactions, homestays and observational tours. Each and every moment of all these programmes was exciting. Before coming to Japan, we were given a brief idea about Japanese language. I found this language to be full of politeness. In Japan I could realise why this language is like that. Japanese people are very respectful to others. Their generosity is remarkable. I was curious about whether they are paying extra attention and care to us since we were guests. But afterwards I realised that this is the most common behaviour of all Japanese people.

One problem I faced during the interaction with Japanese friends was the language barrier. But if communication can be established, they are very cordial and enthusiastic. I found every Japanese is introvert in nature, but if anybody comes forward to talk to them, especially in Japanese way, the people of Japan can turn into best friends. The most significant characteristic I noticed in Japan is the homogeneity in the behaviour of the people. Japan is an isolated island, but it is closely connected with the rest of the world because of its business, industries, etc. The information and communication networks between countries now are very fast and intense. Nevertheless, Japanese people managed to uphold this homogeneity, and I think this serves as a big source of power for Japan as a nation.

My observation about the Japanese society is that this is a safe place. Japanese people could attain kind of peaceful society because of some habitual traits such as trust, respect to others, sincerity and patriotism. I did not find

the law enforcement agencies vigilant here. But still then peace and harmony are present.

Everywhere there is an atmosphere of trust, and everybody is sincere about his/her own work and pays respect to others' activities. In Japan technology has advanced fast, but its tradition has been preserved beside it. Materialistic development in Japan has reached its peak, but materialistic development has not dropped human qualities. The people of Japan are very sensitive and sensible. During my homestay I found my host family to be the best host I have ever come to know.

I had believed that for peace and harmony in a society, the existence of god is very necessary. In Japan I found a different picture. It appeared to me that Japan is a godless society. In fact, most of the people I met are not very aware of religion, and some of them are even confused about this. But their approach toward human relations, society and nation are divine. It is really amazing to observe such a country without the bindings of religious rituals, but working in a disciplined way.

I was most impressed while visiting Hiroshima. All of our participants, including myself, were very eager to see that place, and the reason is obvious. We saw a movie, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Atomic Bomb Dome, and Peace Memorial Park there. I could observe there the devastation caused by the atomic bomb. But the most significant thing I could observe in that city was that every demonstration shown there has an appeal for peace only. Although the atomic bomb cost thousands of lives, in Hiroshima there is nothing to generate hatred for anybody. An appeal for peace is the only message one can get from that place. From the devastation of atomic bomb and war, Japan immediately learned a lesson. Nowadays the behaviour of Japan towards war is a lesson for the

rest of the world, and my impression is that Japan can be treated as a pioneer for global peace.

To summarise my feelings about Japan, I think it is, needless to say, that I was impressed. A one month tour in this country and society is an experience which is not only wonderful but also fruitful. I am taking with me a lot of memorable events, some new ideas and approaches, and leaving behind a lot of friends. In Japan I found a nation charged with spirit and a society with peace and harmony.

■ Asia

■ Bhutan

Experiences in Japan

Bhutanese Participants
Education Group

The trip to Japan was first time for all of us. So we found that the journey flight from Bhutan to Japan was really exciting and enjoyable.

Japan is a country worth visiting in all respects. The people are simple, hard working, co-operative and punctual. So, we feel that such good qualities may have led to the achievement of Japan's present advanced position within a short period of time.

The traditions and culture of the nation are well preserved. There are many historical places well preserved which serve as a source of historical and cultural education to the young learning generations. We appreciate the strong determination in the minds of the Japanese for preserving their national language despite of the pressure of the international language (English).

The advanced transportation and communication system have greatly promoted the time management and work qualities as well. The compulsory education system in Japan is really a good step to uplift the goal of literacy, thereby resulting in the quick development of the nation. The facilities provided in the schools and institutions are very excellent, and suitable for their teaching and learning process.

In conclusion, we learned a lot about Japan during our one-month scheduled stay. We are confident that we can implement some of these things in our country's education system.

■ Asia

■ India

A Dream Come True

Anurita Ghiik
Education Group



Japan, the land of rising sun, was always in my dreams. Then came this call to visit Japan as a member of Indian Education Group, and it was a dream come true. Flying amidst snow white clouds over the vast Pacific and landing at Narita after sunset, the mood had been set—the adventure had begun. The one hour drive to the Hotel Metropolitan through shimmering streets of Tokyo bathed in light was enough to make you fall under an illusion that you are on a trip to a place beyond time and space.

The mornings were as bright as the beautiful silhouette of Atami City against the sunset sky. The sound of the sea as I walked along the quiet beautiful coastal lines of Atami made me feel like music playing till eternity.

Conversing with Japanese counterparts while on the move or during the In-house Seminar was a fulfilling experience. There could have been no better way of experiencing Japan than staying with Japanese families in their homes and being a part of their family. For a moment, it was like meeting my own parents. I had the opportunity of attending a Japanese wedding during my homestay. The long beautiful embroidered gowns of the gorgeous bride brought back vivid visions of fairy tale stories, which my mother used to tell me; and for a moment I became a part of it and

relived my childhood. I am sure each one of us was rejuvenated by the love and affection that was showered by our host families. The experiences were diverse but nevertheless memorable.

Set deep with in the mountains of Gifu Prefecture is the city of Takayama—its temples, shrines, rivers, and nature in its pristine glory. Quietly, dripping of spring water on moss between rocks—my hemisphere is not big enough to hold it all.

The elegant souvenir shops dealing in speciality product of the area, antique shops, and the restaurants—wherever you go—the country with its incomparable atmosphere will soak you up.

This trip to Japan holds so many pleasant memories which I shall cherish all through my life. It was indeed a dream come true.

■ Asia

■ Maldives

An Unforgettable Trip

Maldivian Participants

Education Group

It was a day which brought us life, happiness and excitement. The day when we arrived Japan—the most advanced and developed country in the world, the country of peaceful life.

It's quite obvious that Japan committed itself to the maximum to succeed in life after the Second World War. The short period of time that we spent in Japan led us to experience Japanese life style in every way.

One thing that touched our hearts most was the behaviour of the Japanese people. Their success in life mostly depends on their well disciplined behaviour as well as hard work and punctuality. There are no black sheep at all. Men and women, adults and children lead the same way of life.

We were impressed by the respect the Japanese people have for the others. There is no difference in treatment, whether they are black or white, Asian or European. All are equally respected.

The education system of Japan is well established in our opinion. The students at a very early age are taught about Japanese culture and way of life, which really help them in their adult years. Apart from that, there is equal opportunity for everyone to study.

We have gained invaluable information and experiences, which will definitely be of help in our way of life as well as our careers as teachers.

■ Asia

■ Nepal

Japan in My Memory

Yashodhara Pant

Education Group



Japan, the land of rising sun, where the morning rays of the sun clap on the cheeks of the people with love and blessings to start the day with charm, new ideas, and courage. This is how the day begins. Everybody rushes towards their work delightfully with new hopes and creative ideas. All work is performed sincerely and honestly. It seems that the work is God for the Japanese and it is not just in their duties but more than that towards the organization and the nation. Because of this wonderful feeling today, Japan is in the top position in the world; and being Asian, we are also proud of it.

In Japan normally three types of religions are observed, Buddhism, Shintoism and Christianity. The majority of the people are Buddhist; some are Shintoist which originated in Japan; and a small percentage is Christian. I think there is Christianity maybe because of the impact of American culture. It is observed mostly by the younger generation. After deep evaluation and research, I noticed that Japanese culture has its foundation in the principles of Buddhism that remained from ancient times rich. Separating it from them, it becomes like removing the charm and importance of the cultural festivities.

Linguistically speaking almost the same lan-

guage is spoken all over the country. Unity is found in every respect. Time is very precious; the proper utilization of time can lead any country towards development. And Japan is the best example. It was the proper and maximum utilization of time which lead Japan towards the tremendous development in every field.

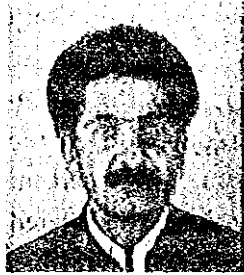
Another good aspect of Japan is the education system. Compulsory education is the main point of attraction with a 100 percent literacy found in the country, as educated citizens are the strong pillar for construction and development. Japan has a strong foundation, which helps a lot in attainment of the goals of the country.

Beauty is scattered all over the country like the fragrance of flowers. Among many lovely places, Kyoto is one of the most beautiful and historical cities where traditional culture is well preserved and protected. It is no exaggeration to call Kyoto as the city of temples and shrines. Another beautiful and peaceful city is Hiroshima, where one can easily experience the value of life and peace. It really touches the hearts of the millions of people who visit Hiroshima. Life is very precious; and to live happily, peace is very important. Being a citizen of Nepal, the sacred land and birth place of Lord Gautama Buddha, the messenger of peace, I wish Japan, which is looking forward to maintaining peace in the world, to attain its objective of peace everywhere. My best wishes are always with Japan and the Japanese.

■ Asia

■ Pakistan

Thank You, Japan



Tariq Hussain Bhatti
Medical and Health Service
Group

During our one-month stay in Japan, we not only learnt a lot but also enjoyed a lot. We found a lot of similarities between Pakistan and Japan, and we also witnessed certain differences. Both countries belong to the EAST. Their people have similar habits as far as hospitality, affection in human relations and family values are concerned. However, the people of Japan are different in certain aspects from the people of Pakistan. The former are more disciplined, more work diligently, are more law abiding, more hard working, and more practical. We, the people of Pakistan have a lot to learn from our Japanese brothers (and sisters as well). The way we have been treated here during our one-month excursion made us feel special, and it also brought us closer to the Japanese. Now our concept of the individual Japanese is different.

We were particularly impressed by the health facilities provided here. However, it is also as much a matter of affordability as it is a matter of priority by the respective governments. We also feel that our Japanese counterparts are better in the execution of their services, as they display more patience on an average in comparison to us usually. However, it perhaps is related to our respective job satisfactions, the status we enjoy in our respec-

tive social ambiance, and also the fringe benefits we receive out of our jobs in our respective countries.

Besides our professional observations, at a personal level we would like to say a word or two. The exposure we have been offered to Japanese life style during our homestay, the interaction with Japanese youths and the guidance as well as perpetual help of our coordinators have also been amazing. Our respective host families made us feel at home and showered so much affection on us in such a short time that was unbelievable. The Japanese youths we encountered were very excited to know about us and very happy to know us. And as for our coordinators and hosts, we think we really cannot appreciate the depth of cooperation they extended, the attention they paid and the magnitude of care they took.

Although we are leaving Japan with much more enlightenment in our perceptions, with much more knowledge in our minds, and much more respect for our hosts in our hearts, however, it will be unfair if we do not admit that we will miss these people with heavy hearts. Thank you, Japan, thank you very much indeed.

■ Asia

■ Sri Lanka

Wakayama—A Place to Remember

P.A.S.P. Jayalath
Education Group



Before I came here, I had heard about Japan as a very beautiful country. When I came here, I could learn that not only the country but the hearts of the Japanese people are beautiful, too. In the very short period I stayed in Japan, I obtained a good understanding about Japan, Japanese people and their life style.

Since the programme was well planned, our group could complete the programme quite successfully. Out of all the interesting and exciting programmes and events, I should especially mention our local programme in Wakayama Prefecture. I still can remember the warm welcome we received at the Wakayama station. Since Wakayama Prefecture is full of natural beauty, I felt as if I were in my own country. I visited the beautiful beaches of Wakayama and had magnificent ocean views from hill tops. Since I stayed with a Japanese family in Wakayama, I had a chance to visit many beautiful places with them. In fact, Wakayama is a place rich in scenic beauty.

We could closely associate with many Japanese friends from Wakayama including my host family. Through them I could feel the hearts of Japanese people in Wakayama. They are very kind and hospitable. All the Sri Lankan participants came back to the hotel feeling they had had a memorable homestay.

Everybody found it hard to say good bye to their host family members. They were so dear and near to them.

Though I found all the activities and events quite interesting, I particularly enjoyed yacht sailing very much. Being a teacher, I must say that visits to two schools were quite important. The teachers and school principals were very friendly and amiable. I think this friendly atmosphere in the school helps very much in the teacher-pupil interactions and teaching-learning process.

The visit to Marina City gave us a lot of pleasure. To conclude this, I must say that we found the stay in Wakayama quite interesting, and none of the Sri Lankan participants will ever forget Wakayama Prefecture or its people. We all will cherish the unforgettable memories of wonderful stay in Wakayama forever and ever.

■ Asia

■ Mongolia

Seeing Is Believing

Batbold

Civil Servant Group



First, I would like to say that I am very pleased and satisfied to have participated in the Youth Invitation Programme.

In Mongolia we have a saying, "Seeing is believing." I would say, reading and hearing about Japan at home and actually visiting and traveling in the country are as different as day and night.

I cannot but feel impressed, as well as sympathetic, with the policy of the Japanese government, with its foresight pointed towards the realization of world peace in the future through building a foundation of friendly relationships and mutual understanding.

Wherever we visited, everyone received us warmly with great hospitality. In this trip, we were able to experience a lot and learned about various things. If I tried to describe all of these things, I would need a great amount of time to finish. I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, the people from the organizations concerned who prepared for this Programme. I am quite happy with the Programme as a whole, and it goes without saying that the Programme leaves nothing to be desired.

The things we saw and the people we became acquainted with in Japan will be engraved on my mind as unforgettable memories.

Above all, I was impressed by the gentleness of my host family and of the Japanese participants who joined the In-house Seminar. Although we sometimes had some difficulty like the language difference, we found it no obstacle in communication. Every time we look back on the Programme, we remember how wonderful it was to eat, talk, play, and sing together. We certainly started to cultivate true friendship.

We were strongly impressed by the scenic beauty of nature in Japan, as well as by the pleasant climate and historic cultural assets. We also marveled at the advanced aspects of the country, and found that Japanese people have a surprisingly industrious and patient national character.

In particular, the many things we saw in Hiroshima caused pain in our hearts, as well as feelings of sympathy and awe toward the Japanese. Moreover, we came to understand the cruelty of wars and the preciousness of peace. As we imagined the efforts that Hiroshima has put forth in the pursuit of peace, we felt so much pain that our smiles disappeared, and in fact we were unable to speak. Such a horrible disaster should never again happen to any people at any time!

After returning to Mongolia, we will always remember what we learned in Japan and our Japanese friends. We hope to stay in touch with the country and the people that we met here forever.

We would like to express our gratitude again to the organizations concerned, including JICA, JICE, IHCSA, and the Kanazawa International Exchange Foundation, and to all the people involved in the execution of this Programme. In particular, we are grateful to the persons in charge from respective organizations, who worked hard and accompanied us during the Programme, and we wish them the

best of luck.

We will never stop hoping that this wonderful friendship, which we established together, will last forever. We thank you all very much, with our best wishes.

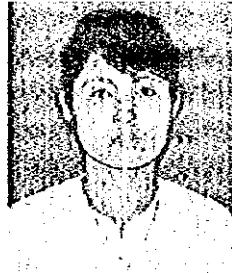
■ Asia

■ Myanmar

A Trip of Everlasting Goodwill

Daw Kyi Kyi Swe

Education Group



On September 11, 1996, through JICA's Youth Invitation Programme, we of the Myanmar Education Group arrived in the capital of Japan, Tokyo, the most prosperous industrial city in the world. After this we visited Sapporo, the main city of Hokkaido, where we were able to further deepen friendship between Japan and Myanmar. We also visited Kyoto, which represents the culture and history of Japan, through the programme of the National Assembly for Youth Development.

Throughout this trip, we were blessed with the opportunity to learn about many things, including education, administration, economy, culture, and historic Buddhist architecture of Japan. In that sense, this trip has brought great gain to us.

Regarding Japanese education, I learned that if parents do not have their children attend primary school and junior high school, they will be punished by law. I think this is wonderful for the children's future. We also marveled and felt respect for the conditions of Japanese education, into which the Ministry of Education has introduced a system of life-long education, which allows citizens of any age to continue to learn.

The In-house Seminar, when we, Myanmar participants, stayed with the Japanese partici-

pants at a Japanese youth hostel, proved to be an excellent opportunity to exchange knowledge and information about each other's culture and education.

What impressed me most about the education programme was the observation trip to a school for handicapped children in Sapporo. When we visited the school, the children greeted us very pleasantly. They had handicaps, but they nevertheless overcame their sufferings and managed to learn, supported by the teachers' good faith, benevolence, and sense of justice. They attended the school happily like ordinary children. We felt respect for the teachers of the school, who were full of love and affection.

Offered the opportunity to experience the homestay, we were able to learn about the life of a Japanese family. We will never forget their warm hospitality and consideration for the rest of our lives.

In visiting the historic cities of Kyoto and Nara, we were very surprised at the foresight of the Japanese, who have preserved their historic cultural assets for more than a thousand years and handed them down to the following generations.

On August 6, 1945, at 8:15 A.M., the first atomic bomb in the history of mankind was dropped on Hiroshima. In a flash, most of the city was destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of people were killed. When we actually saw the disastrous effects the bomb brought to the citizens of Hiroshima, we Myanmar participants prayed, from the bottom of our hearts, that man should not repeat the tragedy of Hiroshima ever again.

Finally, we extend our sincere gratitude to the Japanese Government, and the staff members from the respective organizations concerned for making great efforts for the sake of our Myanmar Education Group. We are also

keen about receiving the Japanese participants in return, so they will learn about the education, administration, economy, culture, and historic Buddhist architecture of Myanmar.

■ Asia

■ Cambodia

**Our Memories of Japan
and Our Hope for the Future**

Loh Chha Vanna
Education Group



Five decades after World War II, we could see during our stay in Japan how tremendously indeed the Japanese economy has developed. We were impressed and delighted to have had the opportunity to see the patience and the diligence of the Japanese people who worked hard to achieve this high level of development.

While here, we acquired a better understanding of Japanese culture and customs, especially through the deep exchanges we had with Japanese youths. We will never forget the kindness of the Japanese people who welcomed us with warm hearts.

Through the Youth Invitation Programme, we learned about Japan's education system, its economy, industry, and way of life. We have come to know that its government has placed great importance on education, which is essential to the development of a country. With this policy, Japan managed to develop and install all the necessary technology and equipment and, thereby, equip itself with the proper tools and materials necessary for teaching and imparting knowledge and skills through excellent teachers nationwide. As a result, we could see how all people are given the opportunity to receive education and learn vital knowledge

with which to build their nation.

The Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima gave us a close and vivid look at the tragedy which took place here in Japan in 1945. As a lover of peace, I hope that everyone in the world will put an end to war that only reaps destruction.

To establish peace and stability, everyone must cooperate. I think the Youth Invitation Programme fosters not only a deepening of friendship between Japan and Cambodia, but also brings peace and stability among many nations.

As a teacher who shoulders the task of raising and developing human resources, I shall bring my precious experiences of Japan back home and work for the rehabilitation and development of my country that has been devastated by the 20-year-long civil war.

Finally, I would like to express our deep appreciation to the government of Japan and to the JICA-related organizations who work for friendship and cooperation in the world through this programme. It is my hope that the friendly relations between Japan and Cambodia will continue to grow all the more strong in the future.

■ Asia

■ Laos

Our One-month Experience in Japan

Vieng Ngeun Khamvongsa, and the other members
Education Group

During our one-month stay in Japan, our hearts became filled with deep impressions. In not only physical but also mental aspects, from accommodations to food, to various activities, we were pleasantly received and warmly looked after by the persons in charge on the Japanese side. They made plans that suited real situations, so that we could actually learn through different activities and training. Thanks to this one-month programme, I think we were able to learn a lot from our experiences in various fields, including education, culture, economy, and society.

Last year the first group visited Japan, and we, the Laos Education Group, this time were the second ones to make the visit. We all agree that this Youth Invitation Programme will bring people in the world closer, help them understand one another, strengthen ties among nations, and contribute to world peace and development. Especially, we earnestly pray that the bond between Laos and Japan, and above all our ties with Kochi Prefecture will be further strengthened.

Every exchange and opinion-sharing session in the programme were very fruitful: the meeting with the Japanese participants, the opinion exchange with Japanese teachers and students; and the most wonderful occasion was a homestay with a Japanese family. Through the homestay, we were able to learn about both the *ordinary and social life of Japanese people*, and their customs.

What we have gained in this study tour is numerous experiences. We hope to take these

back to Laos and make full use of them, particularly in the fields of education, economy, culture, and society, by accommodating them to suit our country's actual situations.

All of us in the Laos Education Group were able to participate in this programme, through which each member managed to obtain the result that had been expected. We extend our sincere gratitude to JICA and all the other organizations concerned with this programme, and the Japanese Government, for giving us such a wonderful opportunity and for making all of the arrangements to facilitate the programme.

■ Asia

■ Viet Nam

Unforgettable Days

Duong Quoc Hung
Government Official Group



The days I spent on the "Youth Invitation Programme" went by like a flash. It always happens that, at the time of parting, we feel at a loss for words. One month is never a long period in a whole life, but the unforgettable memories of our staying in the country of cherry blossoms will have a special place in the heart of each member of the Government Official Group.

For us, it was an enjoyable period in which we came to know Japan and the Japanese better. And particularly it was a good opportunity to learn that the country has become a world economic power as a result of its enormous efforts, while observing its own national traditions. Through lectures and visits to facilities, I was also able to learn a lot. I hope to make the most of this experience in my own specialty. In particular, I would like to learn how, in Japanese civil service, each official becomes at home in his duty, even though the total number of civil servants is comparatively small.

At this moment, in my mind appear the impressive figures of the Japanese participants and my host family. All of them are now my friends and the people closest to me. I wonder how we managed to become close with each other so quickly, despite the differences in

language and customs. One of my fellow participants said that it might be because they were very hospitable, and because young people tend to have some feelings in common. This may not answer the question sufficiently, but at least it addresses the essence of the question.

In the latter part of the programme, we visited Peace Memorial Park and Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima. Upon seeing the disastrous scenes, many of my fellow members started to cry. We shed tears for the sake of the innocent souls. Only those who have experienced wars truly understand the value of what was lost and how disastrous wars can be. Therefore, a peaceful, happy life, is not only the wish of our two countries, Viet Nam and Japan, but the wish of all mankind.

The success of our programme owes much to the great concerns and support from JICA, JICE, Japan Association for Civil Service Training and Development, and Tomakomai International Exchange Center. Especially, the liveliness, activeness, expressiveness, extensive curiosity, and perfect consideration of the coordinators and the staff members of each organization, should serve as good models for us to follow.

I cannot help feeling reluctant to say farewell to this beautiful country, which has generously extended its hospitality to us visitors, and to every one of the new friends with whom we became close so quickly, but I will say "sayonara" for now. However distant we may be, we will never forget you, believing that we will stay close and good friends. The days I spent in Japan will always stay alive in my mind. Thank you for watching over us all the time. I hope that the friendship between our countries, and the young generations from both, will be further strengthened. Good-bye, and see you again.

Beautiful Impression of Friendship

Tran Minh Man
Economy Group



Twenty-four Vietnamese representatives from economic and social fields visited Japan to join JICA's Youth Invitation Programme, as members of the Viet Nam Economy Group. During the one-month stay (from June 5 to July 4, 1996), we Vietnamese participants, despite a different climate and environment, actively joined the programme designed by JICA, JICE, and other cooperative organizations. The programme offered to our Economy Group was very substantial and exciting. Wherever we went, we were carefully and kindly looked after. The contents of the programme provided each member's specialty with new information and useful experiences.

I think every one of us must have different feelings about Japan, but our shared impression about this country of cherry blossoms is its high-tech industry, the developed and well-organized social infrastructure, the world's top economy, and the scenic beauty of sight-seeing areas. And the people are observant of rules; they hold social relations in high esteem; they are youthful, positive, and sincere; and they receive guests warmly.

While the lectures provided new knowledge about the country's economy, the study visits to companies helped us learn their organization and different production systems. These experiences will be useful in our management control and planning. By seeing the factory

people working hard on assembly lines, which were equipped with modern, advanced machinery, we learned, to some extent, the Japanese way of management operation. I am sure the aforementioned experiences will be helpful in the process of economic development, industrialization, and modernization of Viet Nam.

Looking back on the whole programme, the most impressive experience was the exchange with Japanese participants at Kawaguchiko, as well as the homestay. Although the time for exchange and discussion in the In-house Seminar was limited, we ate and lived together like real brothers and sisters. Through this community life, we managed to exchange information about the cultures and customs of both countries. We spent time learning about different things, such as our romances, hobbies, hopes, and wishes. We finally came to find several common aspects in our way of life. These include, having pride in our own nation, studying hard to contribute to the homeland, and living in harmony with the environment, which is filled with the love of mankind.

As for the homestay, we will never forget that our host families received us with such delight, as if a real family member had come home. Neither will we forget the sad, reluctant expressions in their eyes and gestures when they saw us off. They looked as if their own family members were about to go far away from home.

The faces, eyes, smiles, and gestures of the friends we came to know in Japan are deeply engraved in our memories. This should not be forgotten for the sake of both countries' friendship; indeed it is a memory that should be treasured forever.

Memories from the Country of Cherry Blossoms

Trieu Thi Nai
Education Group



It was a great pleasure to have been able to participate in the Youth Invitation Programme, which took place in Japan from August 21 to September 19. Everything that happened in this one month impressed me favorably. During my stay in Japan, I observed many things of great significance, and learned from them.

From the first day of the visit, I was treated with warm, sincere hospitality. Through the Pre-departure Programme in Viet Nam and the General Orientation Programme in Japan, I was able to learn about the country, its history, and people. In particular, the lectures on the economy, politics, and culture of Japan were very interesting. Also, thanks to the Japanese language lesson, I was able to have meaningful exchanges with Japanese people. The visit to Edo-Tokyo Museum, a martial arts demonstration, tea ceremony, and flower-arranging made me impressed with the greatness of Japanese culture. With the Specialized Programme in Local Area, I could see that Japan has a rich, wonderful traditional culture. Here, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Mr. Horizoe and Ms. Anno from the Development Association for Youth. Thanks to their enthusiasm, we were able to have a wonderful programme. The other members of the group, as

well as myself, were all pleased with the activities, like the visit to the Ministry of Education, the visit to Yoyogi Primary School, and the tea ceremony and flower-arranging experiences. We were very satisfied, in particular, with the In-house Seminar, where we spent three days with the Japanese participants, made friends with them, and deepened the exchanges for the benefit of our countries' future.

The visit to Okinawa, the islands on the blue ocean, was another opportunity to learn about its unique culture, as well as to acquire many unforgettable memories. We were received with great enthusiasm by all those involved, including the people from the Okinawa International Foundation, the staff members who organized the programme, and the people working with each of the facilities we visited. It was like music, which reflected love and respect among people for the 21st century. I could learn the valuable cultural mode and lifestyle of the people of Okinawa.

The visit to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum made a strong impression upon me. I was surprised at the quickness with which the country recovered from the destruction caused by the Second World War. We must try our best, so that the sky may always stay clear, and so that friendship between our countries may last forever.

I was very pleased to be able to visit Kyoto, which has a millennium of history of Japanese culture. I learned that Kyoto represents the Japanese spirit and reflects the essence of the country. The shrines and temples, half hidden among the trees, give peace and comfort to the souls of the people who visit. To me, the impression of Tokyo was magnificent, but that of Kyoto was even more splendid. Again, I was impressed by the third largest city in Japan, Osaka, which is said to be the center of

the culture and economy of the western part of Japan.

The Youth Invitation Programme thus turned out to be a marvelous experience. I appreciate that the governments of both countries arranged such a significant meeting. I will also extend my gratitude to JICA and all the other organizations concerned for treating us with warm hearts.

I will never forget this.

My Impressions of the Tour

Ha Van Nhut
Agriculture Group



It was fortunate for me and for the other Vietnamese participants that we, for the first time, got to visit Japan, called the land of cherry blossoms. Since we were students, we had heard about its beautiful traditional culture, such as "samurai spirit," tea ceremony, and kimono, while we also learned about famous Japanese products with names like Honda, Toyota, Sony, Panasonic, National, and Hitachi. We heard as well that Japan was the world's most developed economy. Through our one-month stay in Japan, we were able to learn whether our earlier perception about the country was correct or not.

I suppose it would be impossible to gain a universally deep understanding of Japan and the Japanese, due to my own limits in understanding and in such a short time. However, I keenly recognized the real situation of the country by coming in touch with that on my

own. This recognition must be different from person to person, but to me it was very impressive and profound. The first thing that impressed me in this country was the well-organized, modern traffic infrastructure. The transportation network is wide and fine, extending not only to the cities, but also to the mountains and to local farm villages. The transportation network, in fact, reaches every single house. What impressed me next was the level of modernization or automation in the service industry. I had neither seen, nor had I even imagined before the ticket machines and automatic controls at underground stations, vending machines for drinks, nor automatic doors in town, nor automation lines in factories. I cannot describe everything from what I felt about the Japanese economy, but one of my opinions is that the young people in Japan should naturally take pride in their country's economy. Another impressive thing was that Japan can solve the food problem without depending on imports, although most of its land is mountains and oceans. Isn't it the policy of modernization, or industrialization, that has contributed to the country's stability? I was impressed with this point.

During our stay in Japan, the most impressive was the feelings of the Japanese participants and the other Japanese who had close contact with us. Wherever we went, they received us cheerfully, kindly, and politely, making us feel relaxed and close to them. Never can I forget the homestay, when I was able to learn about Japanese people and their way of living. In this opportunity, we got over the language barrier by mutual human trust and became closer to each other. The characteristics of Japanese culture are carefully retained in many different places, particularly in historic relics, which will serve as a significant basis for the education of future genera-

tions. What shocked me was Minamata Disease and the aftereffects of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki. After witnessing what was kept in the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum and Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum with my own eyes, I all the more wish for a clean environment and peace, in which people on this earth can live safely. On the other hand, I share the same concern as some Japanese people. The rapid economic growth has been causing losses in the traits of its ethnic culture, changes in the younger generation's morals, and environmental destruction. I cannot fully express what I saw and felt in Japan, but I hope for the development of Viet Nam so that the people's life will be improved. What I have so far mentioned may be insufficient and may not be congruent with other people's opinions, but it is my honest, simple impression that I gained during my short visit to Japan.

I owe all of this to JICA, the cooperative organizations, and related local organizations. Thanks to the good conditions they provided in this closely and rationally organized programme, I have come to gain this view as a Vietnamese participant. All through the activities of the Youth Invitation Programme, from the beginning to the present, the people from this land of cherry blossoms have given me deep impressions as well as beautiful memories. I found this activity very beneficial to us.

Finally, I appreciate everything that took place in Japan, hoping that the friendship between the young people in Japan and Viet Nam will be increasingly developed.

■ Pacific

■ Cook Islands

Highlights

Alexander Tama Henry

Pacific Comp.
Civil Servant Group



On arrival in Japan, it was what I had expected. A lot of traffic, high-rise buildings and extremely modernized and advanced compared to my world. But in total contrast, I did not expect to witness the beautiful smiles and the degree of friendliness evident amongst the humble citizens of Japan.

The excitement began with the In-house Seminar, which struck a lot of chords within the realms of cultural music and beer drinkers. This was a weekend of enjoyment for the civil servant group, and I believe for the Japanese counterparts also. What better scenery than the background of Mt. Fuji to create new friends, a better understanding of each other's culture, and to be merry. It was certainly a task for some to wake up the morning after the Friendship Evening. Departing certainly touched the hearts of many, but it was also the start of another journey of experience through Japan.

The visit to Ehime was the climax of the programme for me. For the ambiance great thanks is extended to the ex-JOCV's. Definitely the homestay was an experience of happiness and sadness. I personally congratulate the person who thought of this. Though there was a language barrier, it did not prevent enjoyment.

I have restricted space to express my experi-

ence, so I will conclude here by saying, I experienced Japanese friendship, their cuisine and several odd encounters. All the best, and keep on this way. Cheers!!

■ Pacific



Japan—A Land of Dreams

Jaihoon Nisha Khan

Civil Servant Group



On 26th June 1996 I arrived in Japan under the Youth Invitation Programme. Now, a month later, I am convinced that Japan is a successful nation because of the value it places on punctuality, tradition, culture, and work.

Coming from a nation where life moves on 'Fiji time,' I was totally impressed with the system adopted in Japan to carry out any task.

During the month, I travelled to various places such as Aichi, Ichinomiya, Kyoto, Nagoya, and Hiroshima. I have learnt that although language is a barrier in effective exchange between Japanese and foreigners, there is no barrier to the hospitality, friendliness and affection of the people.

During my homestay I witnessed the love and friendship of my host family. One of my experiences in Japan was when I cooked an Indian meal for my host family, I was very impressed when the whole family sat down to eat with their fingers in the Fijian way.

One of the highlights of my trip, or perhaps of my life was my visit to Hiroshima. The remains of the war which devastated the country indicates that despite such great pain and devastation, the country recovered greatly to reap the benefits it enjoys today.

Fruitful exchanges between the young people of Japan and my country have raised many

issues and taught me new things to practice in my home, Fiji.

Japan is not only a land of the latest technology but also a warm and friendly country which takes its prosperity, tradition and culture seriously to move towards the 21st century.

During the one-month stay I experienced the hospitality of this country. However, one night while walking along the streets of Tokyo, I noticed several people sleeping on makeshift beds on the streets. I would like to suggest there is a serious need for the government to look at the plight of these people as this can cast a negative picture on such a beautiful nation as Japan where dreams are made and the world looks up to for its latest technology.

■ Pacific

■ Papua New Guinea

What I Have Discovered in Japan

Beverly Sangamat

Civil Servant Group



Coming to Japan on this Youth Invitation Programme for a tour of four weeks has given me a completely different picture of what I have always believed about Japan and her people. I had also from childhood wondered about the great success of Japan and its very sophisticated technology developed in this country. I had always wondered what the secret was.

But during the four weeks of extensively touring of the country from Hokkaido in the north right through to Hiroshima in the south, I have seen and observed for myself. Because Japan speaks and writes in her own language, when I first arrived four weeks ago, it was as if I were deaf and dumb. The language barrier unexpectedly gave me that special motivation to go out on my way and explore, finding answers to my own questions. Through this, I found out for myself the answer to the question that I had always asked as a school girl. What is it about these people (Japanese) that they managed the big leap and success after losing face some 50 years ago in the destruction of the war.

Commitment and determination to learn and implement using your own local experiences to support and meet your need, and appreciate and look after your inventions with

pride and royalty, in harmony with nature, upholding the traditions, wealth, and values are what I discovered and learnt from Japan in this tour.

Thank you, JICA and all those agencies, and individuals involved in the tour for providing us, the youth of the Pacific, and opening the doors to the many prestigious areas and venues for us to learn and discover for ourselves the heart of your beautiful country and loving people. I have really enjoyed my stay here and met some lifelong friends as well. Until then, I wish for the peace I found in your hearts here and the peace you will find in mine when we next see each other again.

Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!

Life in Japan



Joseph Eka
Teacher Group

I have the great pleasure as a foreigner to give an account of my experience I had through short lectures, talks, and visits during the one month of my stay in Japan.

It was about 45 minutes before actual landing. When I overheard, "Look to your left and you will see Mt. Fuji, the highest in Japan," from the voice of the flight captain. Upon hearing the announcement, I quickly switched my direction of my view looking in a desperate more to catch sight of it. Oh! What great excitement it was, because I knew we were close to our destination. As our aircraft, QUANTAS 747, approached Narita Interna-

tional Airport at a descent to make its landing, I could see beneath us the beautiful green scenery and landscape. At last, I felt relieved after being suspended in the air for seven hours.

During my stay in Japan, I perceived that Japan, as any other country, has its own cultures; and its national character is largely molded by its geography, inhabitants, and climate. Japan has a great history in how it has developed from agricultural oriented system to the current industrialization and political scene. The government and its people are pleading strongly to all nations for global peace after World War II. Japan does not want to repeat its evil mistake.

I learnt that the people of Japan are time conscious and hard working in their daily routines. It is surprising that though the land mass area of Japan is smaller than Papua New Guinea, it has a gross population of 130 million people. Tokyo alone has 10 million people dwelling there, which is two times bigger than the total population of Papua New Guinea. Tokyo has so many skyscrapers that hold facilities such as restaurants, shops, government office complexes, and accommodations for people. The streets of Tokyo are always flooded with people walking at a racing pace trying to catch up with time. Traffic is always heavy and usually frequent traffic congestion is obvious.

Rice is the main food with variety of vegetables. Japanese are very fond of seafood; therefore, much of their diet contains seafoods. This includes the eating of raw fish. I found it extremely difficult to use chopsticks to eat with; however, fear of hunger encouraged me to acquire the skills so I was able to use them eventually.

Geel! What a great experience. The majority of the people do not speak English. Therefore,

our contact with them was usually done through the interpretation of those who were able to speak it. The Japanese begin to study English in junior high school. All learning, instruction and expression are done in the Japanese language.

Finally, I gratefully thank the government of Japan for its commitment and true love in spending millions and millions of money (Yen) to promote mutual relationships with Papua New Guinea and other third world countries in the Pacific region and Asia. My special endless thanks to the programme coordinator, Mr. Kenta-san, and two coordinators, Ms. Yukari and Ms. Chie, for their tireless guidance and patience. Without their assistance and expertise, our stay in Japan would not have been as enjoyable and beneficial.

DOMO ARIGATO GOZAIMASU
SAYONARA

■ Pacific

■ Solomon Islands

Japan from the Inside

Aseri Yalangono

Pacific Comp.
Teacher Group



I must admit that I seemed to know a fair bit of Japan before participating in this programme, i.e. Japanese history notably World War II, its economic recovery to its present day, and the political and economic status in the world today.

Having been educated in a western-styled education system, I did have my fears and reservations (as other participants did) whether I could cope with the month long programme. However, my fear/knowledge of Japan proved to be wrong and maybe naive. The programme did prove to prepare me for the stay in Japan. The orientation and the In-house Seminar were extremely helpful.

As my stay in Japan progressed, I realised that there is so much that the outside world does not know about Japanese history, culture, traditions, and people. The In-house Seminar, homestay, and observation programme have very much shed light on what I do not know about Japan: the food (sashimi and other raw dishes), the cleanliness of the town and cities, and respect for one another. Hearing the "Sumimasen," "Arigato Gozaimasu" and the bows which are the central part of the everyday life, made a great impression on me.

My homestay was the highlight of the programme. It was like an adventure into the

unknown. However, it was a practical test of the Japanese language lessons, the In-house Seminar, and other programmes. Despite the language barrier, there is always a high degree of satisfaction. Whenever words cannot explain, the use of body expressions were used, and reference to the Nihongo book clarified the situation. Laughter usually summed up all such situations. The real friendship in this short time did prove to me that the Japanese are reserved only because of the language/communication barrier. I have made new friends in my short stay in Japan.

Among the many other things I have experienced in Japan, time is one. As the saying goes "all things must come to an end" (even the good ones). So it goes for my stay in Japan and my article. The wonderful experience all the participants have can only be closed with "Arigato Gozaimashita."

■ Africa

■ Algeria

A Short Meeting with Japan

Mimouni Ouahiba

Civil Servant 2 Group



I participated in the Youth Invitation Programme between Japan and African countries—an opportunity which I found a fruitful experience both in terms of human exchanges and in gaining knowledge and information about the Japanese economy.

Through the tours to various companies and administrative organizations, I gained an extensive understanding of how these organizations are managed and operated. On the other hand, the exchanges with Japanese people, especially the homestay, had special characteristics. With the In-house Seminar, although the time was limited, I was surprised to learn that we could achieve substantial results through discussion. What impressed me was that my host family received me warmly and ardently, and that we became friends immediately. Through such exchanges, I could find something noble about the Japanese people—a quality which I suppose has supported harmony within Japanese society.

After my arrival in Japan, I noticed three values of the Japanese: humanism, hospitality, and generosity. I think these values are essential for a society, in order to meet the expectations of the citizens full of upward mobility.

I also think that Japan has become an economic power today due to its unfathomable

abundance, symbolized by its centuries of history and the culture to serve as a model. Staying in Japan allowed me to understand the country from a comprehensive point of view, including its cultural aspects. The Japanese show strong attachment to their culture—a tendency which I believe is a reflection of their will to try to maintain their uniqueness.

In Japanese culture, principles, such as politeness, hospitality, and enthusiasm for work, are taught. These ethics are also prescribed in our religion, Islam.

I hope to understand Japan better; and if possible, I would like to participate in other programs and technical training that will contribute to the development of Algeria.

I believe the efforts, generosity, and humanity of Japanese people are praiseworthy.

■ Africa

■ Benin

Japan Breathing

Pchabi-Talata Mariam

Teacher 2 Group



The country of the rising sun.

I had heard people praise it.

I will confess that I had long doubted it. How could this country, without natural resources and with its earth always trembling with quakes, climb the ladder of success?

An unforeseen opportunity, filled with friendship and goodwill, brought me knowledge of the country. Oh, God! This country is alive. I can even hear it breathing.

From Tokyo, to Okayama, to Hiroshima, to Osaka, everywhere is full of upward vigor. In factories, in seaports and airports, in schools, and in each workplace, I felt this land moving and breathing, together with the prompt and conscientious people living there, the lovable, sincere, and proud citizens.

In every aspect, I saw all of this. This feeling shook and paralyzed me, over and over again.

What a feeling! Filled with wonders and doubts, and marvels, and a sense of shame, I reflect upon the conditions of my country. We are equally endowed with reason, though. What's more, they say the first human being was born in Africa!

While I am thinking like this, Japan continues drawing a clear picture for its future, as it creates a balance, harmony, and vigor. This country's success is a masterpiece done by the

elderly, and the young appear rash and frivolous. Can they commit themselves to the creation of this art? Can they draw out virtue and knowledge from what they have inherited without any special effort? No problem! They will, for sure, weave the cloth finely. And they must keep on finding the way to overcome difficulties. While skillfully avoiding the issues in religion, language, and color, the nation will keep on going its own marvelous way.

Yes, once the sun comes out, drowsiness, and indulgence, and even vice will disappear. This is the truth about the rising sun. This country, which has surprised the world over and over again, will stay a marvel to all of us forever.

SAYONARA to such a wonderful country!

■ Africa

■ Egypt

Exploring Japan

Wafaa El-Sayed Soliman

Teacher 1 Group



I remember when I was a teenager, I had a dream. I have always wanted to visit three countries: USA, Russia, and Japan. USA and Russia were the greatest powers at that time, so no wonder I was anxious to see them. But as for Japan, I had a very special reason. I wanted to see that great giant who got out of his magic lamp after long suffering with wars that consumed all its national income. For me it looked like a miracle. I wanted to meet those people who worked the miracle and put Japan on an equal footing with the greatest powers of the world.

I have always paid those people great respect and admiration, and I came to respect and admire them more when I met them. I found that in spite of the great technological progress they achieved, they didn't lose the moral and spiritual aspects of their life—something that many other countries failed to maintain. They still care for the old, the poor, and those who need their love. This was very apparent in the photos I saw in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum, the photos that showed how the people who survived took good care of those who needed their help, and how they show these photos to the new generation to follow the same example.

I wanted to see what kind of people the

Japanese are. "They must have something different," I said to myself. And when I came to know them, I realized what this thing was. It was their fighting spirit. It's the same fighting spirit that enables the teenage students to stand a long exhausting school day.

Also, I remember that the idea of homestay was like a nightmare for me. How am I going to communicate with people who don't speak any of the languages I know? And what kind of a conversation can go on between us? But surprisingly, I came to love my homestay. I was even more surprised when I saw that all the other participants who came back from their homestays were not less happy than I was. The people were very hospitable and warm. We felt at home and all our fears went away. I enjoyed my homestay very much, and I was very happy because I will go back home with new friends who may have a different culture and traditions, but they have the same human feelings that eventually put all the different countries into one world. I can't forget the very sweet high school students, waving good-bye to us as we were leaving their school, their eyes full of love, and the message on their lips, "We'll miss you."

I don't know how to thank those people, both in Egypt and Japan, who facilitated my coming here to enjoy this wonderful experience. And finally, I have something to say to the Japanese people: you should be proud of your country, and you should be proud of yourselves because you are the ones who made this country a nice place to live in.

■ Africa

■ Swaziland

Nippon—The Place Where the Sun Rises

Madonsela Lindiwe
Civil Servant 1 Group



Sounds of "Ah-h!" "Huh!" were the most audible as we sank one by one into the seats of the bus taking us from Tokyo Haneda International airport to the hotel. The sighing signified the aftereffects of thirty days swallowed up by excitement and adventure. It also marked the end of our visit to Japan under the "Youth Invitation Programme."

"Ogenki desuka?" was the sound of Yoshida-san's voice, one of our co-ordinators under the programme. Immediately a chorus of "Hai! Genki desu!" rang from behind her. In truth, not all of us were very 'genki' at that moment, for the flight into Tokyo had been slightly turbulent in the last few minutes because of the weather. But yes, overall we were all 'genki-dusu' and had had an absolutely marvellous time!

But where had the month disappeared to? Before we left London, the Japanese Chargé d'Affaires in his farewell speech said, 'I envy you for going to Japan. Now it is autumn in Japan, so you shall experience the most beautiful colours as leaves shed their summer green.' This heightened my interest; but I was still a little apprehensive, as I had yet to meet a different people and experience a different

culture.

After travelling through Saiko (Lake Sai), Tokushima, Kyoto, and Hiroshima, I understood why the people call their country Nippon. In Japan one discovers a way of life where technology, man, and nature interact so beautifully to enhance the richness of the earth.

As we drove towards Kuwarubi-Saiko, we 'drank in' the beautiful landscape—volcanic mountains lying above huge lakes and the beautiful autumn leaves—brown, yellow, orange, rust, red, and the palest shades of green. My immediate reaction was: 'This is magnificent!' I soon discovered in Tokushima—the land of rivers, mountains and waterfalls—beauty beyond imagination.

Hiroshima—one can only say 'a city born out of the ashes with its astounding beauty.' Yes, Japan is Nippon!

The Memorial Cenotaph, the Children's Peace Monument and the A-bomb Dome in Hiroshima complete the picture of the heart of the Japanese people, which had been slowly developing in my mind since the visit to Edo-Tokyo Museum. By now I fully realized, in fact a view shared by the other participants—that the Japanese are a people committed to peace, sincere in all their efforts to see this endeavour come to be in the whole world. Yes, they have learned from the harsh lessons of war the value of positive interaction and living in harmony with the rest of the world.

The time spent with our co-ordinators, counterparts and host families revealed the hidden side of the Japanese people. We experienced a relaxed atmosphere filled with humour. To us, the Japanese are no longer serious people in suits who work endless hours and think about work all the time. We have discovered a diligence blended with humour.

When people meet people with understand-

ing and respect, life will be so nurtured. Yes, there is a gap between Japan and the African countries. The Youth Invitation Programme has established links stronger and more resilient than those of the Kazura Vine Bridge. My only hope is that these will give as clear and as beautiful a view over the distance of time as that which can be seen over the Kazura Bridge.

TANOSHI KATTA DESU!!

3. Impressions by Japanese Counterparts

The Melody in My Mind

Tatehito Kamei
Company Employee

"Tanah airku INDONESIA . . . Negri elok amat kucinta"—the melody still echoes in my mind pleasantly, even now that the In-house Seminar is over. Yes, it is the national anthem of Indonesia, which we Japanese participants practiced together to welcome the young Indonesians.

As I start singing this song, I vividly recall, together with happy memories, the face and voice of each participant from overseas. I cannot forget this song, because I feel all my remembrances, wonders and surprises are packed in it.

Before I participated in the seminar, honestly speaking, I was very worried. I was filled with all the following concerns: if I would be able to communicate with the guest participants with my inadequate ability to speak English; if I could treat them nicely enough to please them; or if I might commit a religious taboo (like using the left hand). However, all these anxieties completely disappeared as I actually met and talked with them about many different things. Simple English and gestures

were sufficient for communication. Besides, what pleased us more than anything else was that they expressed their happy feelings in smiles and laughter, as did we Japanese participants. In due course, we were able to enjoy lively conversation. I thought at first that this In-house Seminar might be a bit too long, but it actually passed by like a flash.

At present, I am proud that I was able to share such a fantastic moment with those young fellows, who are living beyond the oceans.

The Moment of Happiness

Yuka Akai
Company Employee

I was a little nervous when I first joined the In-house Seminar, but it turned out to be most exciting and a good opportunity for me to start thinking about many different things.

This time I was given an opportunity to work for the "Exchange Party," and I was able to enjoy many different scenes. The topics we discussed most were about the types and contents of games. Probably because we spent a lot of time in discussion, Mr. Takayama, the master of ceremonies, later said to us, laughing, "They told me that the Japanese are strict." I was amused at such differences in language, culture, and individual perception.

What impressed me most was the song of the Philippine participants—the atmosphere in

which we all listened to the song, and the feeling as if time had stopped. I suppose quite a few people were moved by them. It came home to me that we could communicate, even though we are from different places and cannot understand each other's language perfectly.

After the programme was over, I went back to my room past eleven, while all of the participants stayed awake and told me that they would like to wear "yukata," a Japanese summer kimono. Clad in yukata, they took their pictures of each other. They all looked pleased, and I was very happy as well to see them like that. During the exchange programme, they did not mention that they wanted to try anything like that on, so I thought the idea did not interest them very much. But I realized they simply did not mention it, and felt that they were all reserved.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the participants with whom I shared such precious time, and to those who worked in earnest behind the scenes. Thank you very much for all of this. I am very happy now.

Friendship Cemented by Talking, Singing, and Dancing Together

Yukinori Kachi
Teacher

I participated in this In-house Seminar for the first time, and I appreciate that its content was very solid and substantial. To start with, the objectives of this Youth Invitation Programme should be reviewed: from ASEAN and other Asian, Pacific, and African countries and territories, we invite to our country youth from different fields who will become future leaders in building their respective

nations. During the one-month term, they are encouraged to study their specialties and to deepen mutual trust and friendship through extensive exchanges, including homestay experience. I think this In-house Seminar is an ideal programme for pursuing the aforementioned goals. Besides, I think the basis for nation-building is education. With this understanding, I think the In-house Seminar for teachers this time played a very important role.

In the discussion that took place for two days, we talked about educational and social issues of both countries. I realized that, although we have different systems and practices, we fundamentally have similar concerns and problems. We were all eager to learn from each other, therefore we had very lively discussions. In the course of discussion, I came to recognize the following points:

- (1) We Japanese still have many virtues, but we are gradually losing them.
- (2) Adults are responsible for handing down such virtues to children through schools, families, and communities.
- (3) This will eventually result in the continuation of the culture.

As above, I was able to understand culture in a more familiar and realistic way.

On the last evening of the seminar, after the open symposium, we all became relaxed. We sang and danced shoulder to shoulder, like old friends. The next morning, they kept waving from inside the bus, expressing their sorrow at our parting. I cannot forget that scene. I hope friendship like this will spread more extensively.

Experiences in In-house Seminar with the Vietnamese Civil Servants

Katsuyoshi Terada
Civil Servant

Viet Nam used to be a country far away from my mind, as all that I knew about it were the Viet Nam War, the South-North unification, and Doi-moi (meaning "renovation"). I was a little nervous, too, because of my lack of knowledge about the Vietnamese language and way of life.

However, as those worries were disappearing through the three-day In-house Seminar, I found out various things and learned a lot. First of all, I found the Vietnamese to be gentle and cheerful. We first met in the bus on the way to the seminar venue. They sang songs and talked about their country. I was in particular overwhelmed by Mr. Nguyen Thanh Hung, the sub-leader. I just kept listening, very impressed, to the Vietnamese folk songs and many other different songs flowing out of his mouth in succession.

Second, I learned that they had the sort of vitality to try to absorb everything. I was impressed by their positive attitude in trying to utilize what they have learned for their future work and life, by assimilating everything absorbed about Japan. As most of the participants were from the government, I felt that their sense of loyalty to the country was particularly strong.

Third, I felt, in the group discussions, that they are more strictly observant of social practices than the Japanese. Through the discussions regarding the themes provided, I managed to learn about the work environment in Viet Nam, which was a significant opportu-

nity for me.

Finally, thanks to this Seminar, I was able to come to know many Vietnamese. I have become determined to extend this circle of friendship as a fellow member of Asia.

In addition, Nagasaki Prefecture, taking advantage of its geographical conditions as the westernmost region of Japan, actively promotes international exchange with other Asian countries. I hope to contribute to the promotion of further exchanges with Viet Nam, as well as with other countries in Southeast Asia.

"If Happy, Let's Express It"

Shimako Goto
Company Employee

We Japanese are poor at expressing ourselves. I would say this is a definite feature of our people. From a global point of view, however, I cannot help feeling that our skills and levels of "communicating something" are not yet sufficiently developed.

In the exchange programme with Malaysian participants this time, the Malaysians smiled and spoke to me in Japanese: "Konnichiwa. Watashi no namaewa—desu. Yoroshiku onegai shimasu." (Hello. My name is—. Nice to meet you.) I wanted to express my hearty welcome and excitement to meet them in return, but all I could do was say the simple English phrase, "Hello. Nice to meet you." My feelings should have been as strong as those of Malaysian participants. I felt very sorry about that.

That moment I realized: if we want to express goodwill to them, if we want to become close to them, then, why don't we reach out to them? Just standing with smiles won't tell them anything. Why don't we start approaching them, instead of just waiting?

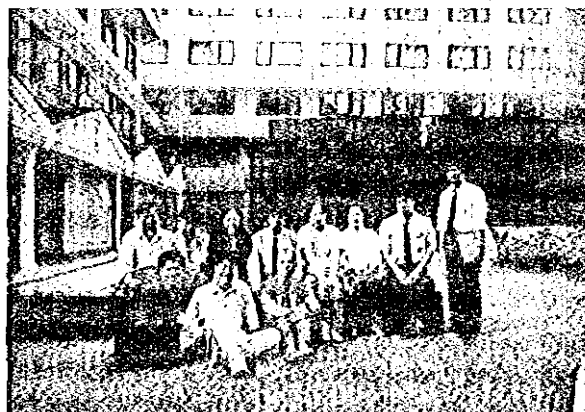
I don't think I was the only one who thought like this. The Japanese participants were overwhelmed by the Malaysian party at the time of self-introduction, but we gradually picked up Malay and stepped forward. As a result, we became friends quickly without realizing it. We were able to develop a sense of solidarity as fellow youths, fellow humans, despite the fact that our countries and languages are different. Before I joined the programme, I never expected to come to feel so close to them in only three days.

We together enjoyed playing "separ takraw" and dodge ball, singing songs, and dancing. Among a number of such happy memories, a particularly noteworthy occasion was when, while we were watching fireworks, out of nowhere, somebody started singing a song that went like, "If happy, let's clap our hands" (Shiawasenara te-o tatakou). That night we sang the song in Japanese, English, Malay, and with gestures, deeply thinking about the meaning of the song ... Terima kasih!

Cambodia's Education and Future

Naoko Ide
Student

Speaking of Cambodia, the country has the ruins of Angkor Wat, which is designated as a world cultural asset, while its reconstruction has been pursued since the general election that took place under the supervision of the United Nations. Needed most by the country at present is, for sure, education. The In-house Seminar turned out to be a very good opportunity, in which I could exchange opinions and deepen friendship with Cambodian teachers, who will support the country from the foundation of education and give the nation future



directions.

The present conditions of education in Cambodia are as follows: schools have not been sufficiently provided, and not many people want to be teachers due to their unrewarding treatment. It is desirable that the government of Cambodia modify its stance on education. However, the Cambodian teachers were always bright and cheerful; and when we had discussions, they asked questions with serious looks in their eyes. In their attitude of trying to absorb everything in order to be able to teach their students about Japan and in such enthusiasm about education, I felt I could see a bright future for Cambodia.

I hope to take advantage of my recent opportunity of having met those teachers to carry out mutual cooperation in the future with the people of Cambodia, which will join ASEAN next year and which will continue to develop in the years to come.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to the staff members from the National Assembly for Youth Development and all those concerned for giving me this wonderful opportunity.

Japan-Laos Friendship

Aoi Mishina
Student

The three days of the In-house Seminar with the Laos Education Group turned out to be really significant. At first, I was concerned about my scant knowledge about Laos, and I felt all the more nervous and anxious to hear that we would have a discussion. But all those feelings were blown away when we enjoyed bowling together at the outset. In the exchange party that night, we Japanese participants introduced ourselves in Laotian, while the Laotians did the same in Japanese. At that time, I realized that the desire to communicate with each other is more important than anything else.

All through the next day, we discussed the educational situations in Laos and Japan, and we became actively involved in a question-and-answer session and opinion exchange regarding that issue. We compared the situation in Laos with that in Japan, from the problems of facilities, schooling, and curriculum, to the general social background of both countries.

In the aforementioned discussion, what I learned about college students in Laos was particularly interesting to me. The number of students who proceed to university is far smaller than the percentages of elementary, junior high, and high school attendance. And although those college students have been fortunate enough to gain entrance to higher education, which will give them a better future, they nonetheless must bear considerable pressure from the people around them. They cannot afford to have part-time jobs, which made me keenly aware of the great freedom allowed to Japanese college students.



Following the exchange of opinions in the discussion, we had a very enjoyable party that night. The Laotians appeared in their ethnic clothes, while some of the Japanese female participants were clad in "yukata," or Japanese summer kimono. The Laotian dances and songs, which I saw for the first time, were so open and cheerful that they made all of us feel like dancing.

On the last day, we had a volleyball tournament, with each team composed of both Laotian and Japanese members. In the adjoining court, we freely enjoyed basketball and badminton as well. The Laotians came to share the same space and time as ours beyond their country's border.

I believe those three days have certainly strengthened the bond of Japan-Laos friendship. And I have decided to go to Laos and actually see the various situations that I heard about from the people, whose cheerful, warm-hearted national character accepted me.

After Participating in the Pacific Comp. (Teacher) In-house Seminar

Fumiko Okudaira
English Teacher

Whenever I spread out a world map, now I feel each individual country in the Pacific, which I used to look at vaguely, clearly set itself apart with its own significance. Due to my interest in the education systems of countries around the world, I found this In-house Seminar very significant. In the Seminar, we enjoyed discussions, sports, and an exchange party, where we danced, chatted, and played games together. In spite of its brevity (two nights and three days), the content of the Seminar was solid and rich enough to bring me closer to the Pacific countries. One participant from the Cook Islands, said that what had surprised her first in visiting a Japanese school was a school playground. In her Island, I hear, outside the schoolhouse stretch palm trees and the ocean. They also have time for a nap, because of the daytime heat. Another participant was from Niue, which has a population of only about 2700 and no public transportation system. He asked, in round-eyed wonder, why the Japanese make themselves so busy that they pass by one another with no greetings exchanged. Another participant from the Solomon Islands said that in his country they do not teach the local dialects in school. Because each local dialect is an expression of life, which differs from region to region, and because the number of the local dialects amounts to 87, the students are supposed to study in English. While they have some similarity as Pacific islands, each country and island has its own unique culture.

Furthermore, even within the same country, customs differ according to the island. The more we discussed things, the more profound the conversation became; and our discussion went on to further involve men-and-women issues, marriage and death, and our ordinary way of life. I keenly felt once again that I should become able to explain about my own country properly, while learning about their culture. When I take into my hand the seashell accessories and straw loincloth that they gave me, I felt I could hear their merry songs and laughter accompanied by a breeze from the southern islands. My hope these days is to visit their countries sometime.

Looking Back on the In-house Seminar

Yoshihito Abe

Primary School Teacher

"Wow! How wonderful we humans are! How fantastic friends are! My friends from Papua New Guinea, you are super!" These were my feelings from the In-house Seminar.

Well, what we had at the In-house Seminar, on the first day, was a recreation festival. Divided into four mixed teams of Papua New Guinea and Japanese members, we enjoyed beach volleyball. We broke down the language barrier and plunged into having a good time. Honestly, I hadn't felt excitement like that for some time. After dinner, we enjoyed fireworks to which we gave thunderous applause. And then we deepened our friendship by teaching each other many games, like "o-nawatobi," or a long-rope skipping, from Japan, and "Bari, Mana, Pototo" from Papua New Guinea. The night fell, and we said, "Good night." But we still felt young! Could that be? So until three o'clock in the morning, we talked about our



families, culture, and other things.

I forgot to tell you, but we did have serious discussions (throughout the second day). It turned out to be a very good experience to exchange ideas regarding our respective educational situations, views of education, pupils, etc. Let's not forget, as people are engaged in education, "to believe in the possibilities of children, and to believe that dreams will surely come true." Let's keep these two things in mind, however different our situations may be.

It was just the second night since our initial meeting, when we had a farewell party. We Japanese participants gave a performance about "tanabata," the star festival, while the participants from Papua New Guinea introduced their ethnic dances and songs. We enjoyed ourselves, but with sorrow of parting in our hearts. Now I remember that among everyone dancing in ethnic costumes and "yukata" (summer kimono) was a strange guy in a judo costume, who was dancing with slippers in his hand. (Oops, that was I!)

All in all, it was an enjoyable and worthwhile three days, during which we managed to discuss education seriously. Everyone from Papua New Guinea, we will visit your country in return. I hope you can take care of us then. Thank you very much!

Experiencing a Different Culture

Masatsugu Ishizaka

Teacher

The In-house Seminar, with the teacher participants from Maldives and Bhutan, took place for two nights and three days. For me, who had never shared living with Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists until then, it was a fascinating plan allowing us to talk together face to face.

After the welcome party, it was around seven in the evening when we arrived at Wood Village in Kushigatayama. After the orientation and room allocations, we finally separated to enter each building. We found ourselves six people: four Japanese, Abbas from Maldives, and Jambay from Bhutan. Soon an awkward conversation began. As I was not good at English conversation, and as they spoke English with accents, I found it all the more difficult to communicate with them.

Then I took some Japanese toys out of my bag, which I had prepared in advance to keep the conversation going. I demonstrated a "pasokon," or a personal computer game; "kendama," or a cup and ball; "origami," or folding paper; "hanafuda," or Japanese cards; "taketombo," or a flying bamboo toy, and "shabondama," or making soap bubbles. What interested them most was, unexpectedly, "kendama." They tried it out persistently and quickly mastered it. Once we became able to exchange smiles, we started a small party with home-style food, like Japanese snacks and canned food from Maldives. As I had expected, the Muslim participant did not drink liquor. He also asked about every single snack item and the cup noodles, whether they contained pork fat. I was able to see for the first time how

certain aspects of life are restricted by religion. Jambay from Bhutan was wearing a portrait of the Dalai Lama XIV around his neck. He also wore a ring with a blue stone, which he said was further proof of being a Lamaist.

As we discussed the respective educational situations of our countries, I often heard the phrase, "for the sake of our homeland." I found it was an excellent opportunity for me to think about religious attitudes and patriotism, which many Japanese have forgotten today.

In-house Seminar with Indian Science Teachers

Takako Terada
Company Employee

"Isn't it unclean for all of us to use the same water, Takako?" The Indian group asked me a little anxiously, when I recommended trying the hot spring. What flashed into my mind was the scene of the Ganges, where Indians do their washing, relieve themselves, and wash away cremated ashes, and yet also they rinse their mouths and purify their bodies with the same water... I could not help imagining such a scene at the Ganges.

I have often been asked by people from developing countries the reasons for the surprising postwar reconstruction of Japan. To be sure, it would appear like a miracle to their eyes. This question arose in our discussion, too. As I listened to someone mentioning "the diligence of the Japanese," a typical answer to this question, I suddenly remembered the question of the night before of whether the hot spring was clean or not.

For us Japanese, cleanliness and diligence might be different from what the Indians perceive. They may possibly think, "Why, we are

also diligent." I am afraid we will not be able to give a proper answer unless we explain specifically, like in what way we claim to be diligent. When I said, "For example, once a deadline is fixed, the Japanese will complete the task by then, no matter what." To hear this, their uncertain faces suddenly lit up, and they nodded again and again, saying, "Oh, I see. That's true. Yes, you are diligent."

I keenly felt that it is more essential to know about the actual conditions of Japan and have the ability to communicate that knowledge than to be familiar just with the word "diligence." Language is not perfect, it can be a dangerous tool. I realized the pitfall in international exchanges and mutual understanding: our tendency to depend too much on vocabulary. I felt as if the scales had fallen from my eyes, which were overly accustomed to plowing over 'Derutan' (a popular collection of vocabulary for college entrance exams), and then they had flown away onto the Ganges.

Meeting with Wonderful People

Hiroshi Watanabe
Teacher

Every time I am about to join some event, my heart is filled with expectations. This time, however, before I attended the In-house Seminar, I felt rather nervous because of the language difference and my absence from the guidance session for the seminar.

However, when I met the Nepalese teachers at Sajima Marina, I felt as if I had known them for a long time, and the Japanese teachers seemed like old friends I was meeting for the first time in a long while. It was a strange feeling.

I wondered what that feeling was. But I

gradually forgot about it as our exchange progressed. Instead, I came to learn about the refreshing attitude of the Nepalese teachers and differences in manners and customs, and we exchanged opinions with each other. These experiences were totally satisfying and valuable to me.

I remember a woman swinging around a bundle of lighted fireworks. While I felt it was too bold, I was also enchanted by the splendor.

And another woman danced to the song that is sung when pasturing yaks in high mountains. Wondering where that energy came from, we all could not resist dancing together, enticed by her cheerfulness.

Furthermore, I remember a woman who said, "We are proud of our culture, tradition, and religion, and always keep our hearts full of hope, dreams, and enthusiasm." On hearing that, I was deeply moved and could not help looking back on my own way of life. And all of those incidents seemed very refreshing to me.

So busy with daily activities, I felt the In-house Seminar was long. However, as the seminar was closing, I also felt reluctant to part with those energetic women and the Japanese teachers, the staff members from JICA and JICE, who treated us perfectly, and our reliable interpreters. It was only two days and three nights, but what wonderful people I was able to meet! This is what I honestly feel now.

Beyond Different Living Customs

Hiroshi Terasaka

Civil Servant

I had never participated in the Youth Invitation Programme before, nor had I ever had any contact with people from abroad, except when I traveled overseas once. Therefore, until the programme actually started, I was worried about whether I would be able to communicate well. But once I managed to start communication with my poor English and gestures, I could make myself understood better than I had expected, and I felt more relaxed. After that I became able to speak more positively and came to enjoy fully the In-house Seminar: from the discussion session, to the exchange party, and the sports activity.

In the discussion session, we talked about the various social practices and welfare system of Brunei, which are based on Muslim precepts. Although I had some knowledge of the country from books and other media, through direct discussion, I was able to learn about the real Brunei. Such information would have been impossible to obtain through books. As a result, I came to feel very familiar with the country.

At the exchange party, we had a very exciting time. The participants from both countries danced a Japanese Bon festival dance (the one called "tankobushi"), and sang songs together in Malay. Particularly, with "tankobushi," thanks to the English explanation given to each gesture, the Brunei participants were able to dance with us, and we had a very good time. The most enjoyable event was the sports exchange on the final day. We were taught how to play "separ takraw" (a sport like foot-volleyball), which is very popular in Southeast

Asia. When we all played it together, we were so absorbed in the game that we lost track of the time.

As described previously, I was able to have wonderful experiences and obtain many memories as well. I will not merely let this friendship be just a memory, but intend to cherish it for the rest of my life. Through this In-house Seminar, I learned that it is not difficult for people to understand each other even though their cultures and living customs are different. This realization will be a great asset for me in the future.

Feeling a Breeze from Myanmar

Yutaka Noguchi

Self-employed

First, I extend my deep gratitude for being allowed to participate in this wonderful In-house Seminar. I am sure that this In-house Seminar will have a great influence (of course, a positive one) on my way of life in the future.

Now, I am going to write about two things that particularly impressed me among all the experiences I had on this occasion.

First, upon receiving the participants from Myanmar, I was hoping to give some performance relevant to the country. When a helpful friend of mine let me know that he had a tape in which Myanmar music was recorded, I hit upon the idea of playing the music using an accordion. Then, after some overnight practice, as I played it at an exchange party, all the Myanmar participants suddenly stood at attention and started singing. Later I learned that the title of the song was "Koba Ma Kyay," and to my surprise, it turned out to be the national anthem of Myanmar! I felt embarrassed that I played it badly without knowing it

was their national anthem. However, the Myanmar participants pepped me up with their surprise, excitement, and questions such as saying, "There's no need to feel embarrassed! Why did you learn the national anthem of Myanmar? How did you learn about it?" I keenly felt that even though we cannot fully make ourselves understood through language, music joins people from heart to heart.

The other impressive thing was the attitude of the participants from Myanmar, their eagerness to learn Japanese, and their friendly, bright, and cheerful personalities. I could see in such positive attitudes their efforts to deepen their understanding of Japan and to nurture friendship by opening their minds and hearts as widely as possible.

They were indeed very sociable, cheerful, patriotic, and simple people full of heart. Asia is becoming a more closely knit part of this world.

The Mongolians Interesting Way of Life

Kazumitsu Takahashi

Civil Servant

From September 20 to 22, I joined the In-house Seminar with the Mongolian participants at "Sajima Marina" in Yokosuka. As for myself, this was my third time to participate in the Seminar, but I was able to realize all over again that different countries in the world have different ways of life.

First of all, I will explain the Mongolian way of drinking sake: First, put your ring finger into the sake filled in the cup, make a circle with the finger and the thumb, and flick the liquor three times. I was told this means that the first flip is dedicated to heaven, the second to the earth, and the third to the home-

land. For them, sake is the best drink of all, and they offer it only to those whom they trust. I felt privileged—very honored—when they offered it to me; but, to tell you the truth, I am a teetotaler, who gets sick with just a glass of beer! I felt very sorry, but I had to decline the offer politely.

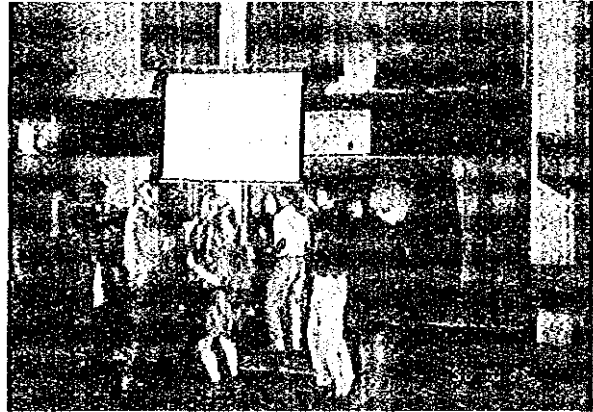
Speaking of Mongolia, I am naturally reminded of nomads. Even in Mongolia today, nomadic people account for 40 percent of the whole population, and they live in a traditional style in tents called “Ger.” Their life is completely self-sufficient, making their things on their own, from food and the houses they live in naturally to clothes, and even to cooking tools. In passing, I might mention that one of the participants with whom I spoke turned out to have been born to a nomad family and used to live as such.

For me, who is fully accustomed to the Japanese way of life, it was very interesting to listen to them. The word “international exchanges” sounds like something difficult, but I think it is important to be interested in a foreign way of life, first, and then to try to learn about it. I would like to learn more about Mongolia, and I would also like to communicate with the people more smoothly. I will close this report, praying that some day I will be able to see them again.

Discovering Africa

Takako Ida
Civil Servant

I participated in the In-house Seminar for the first time. It proved to be more stimulating than I had expected, for I had been too ignorant of Africa until then. The experience finally made me realize that the continent is divided into many countries and that many



different people are leading many different ways of life there.

It is wonderful that although fundamental elements to make a human being, such as language, culture, and religion, are different, we still can become friends as the same human beings. I myself understand very little French, nor was my English sufficient. Therefore, I felt somewhat hesitant to speak. But some Japanese participants did not care about such things and tried to express their goodwill as best as they could. Such a positive attitude was encouraging to me.

I can never forget how excited we were at the exchange party on the second day. The room was filled with excitement, and I found myself unbelievably excited as well. Through music and dances, I vibrantly felt the energy of Africa. It was a real Africa, quite different from the processed information on TV or in newspapers.

In this world, we can meet only a small number of people while we are alive. There are *geographic limitations* as well. So if we do not meet at all, we do not even imagine each other's existence, nor do we regret that we did not meet. The fact that “unknown countries” have become “countries where my friends live” has certainly broadened the world map in my mind. One cannot know about everything in

the world, but I want to open my mind and heart to the people and the cultures that I came to meet by good fortune.

I thank everyone who supported this Seminar, which brought me many discoveries and remembrances.

Gratitude, Emotional Stirrings and Discoveries

Kazumi Nakanishi
Organization Employee

One autumn day, with colorful leaves in red, yellow, and fluorescent orange—a feature of the picturesque Japanese landscape—and surrounded by the lake shining brightly in the sunshine, we started the In-house Seminar with the African participants.

For some reason or other, I felt powerful vibrations from Africa and joined the programme in search of “something” latent within myself. After meeting my roommates, we went on with the exchange session, opinion sharing, an exchange party, and sports exchange. In each of the aforementioned events I had an exciting time.

The opinion exchange, in particular, made me feel closer to Africa, which used to be distant and wild in my imagination. The real Africa was different from the one invented based on my stereotyped images. I no longer felt much difference between their cultures and customs and ours, either.

On the other hand, I discovered one point in which they were different from us Japanese. It was their “open-mindedness.” In everything, I sensed their openness and frankness, which I found fascinating. Was it culture shock that I felt then? It made me start thinking to myself: “What am I like as a Japanese? Am I open-minded, too?”

In the Exchange Party, I could also see them enjoy singing and dancing with every part of their bodies. They showed great curiosity about the fancy clothing that Japanese participants were clad in, and also revealed keen interest in traditional things, like calligraphy. I saw the eyes of many participants shining with enthusiasm for everything.

In this small island, Japan, which is blessed with material abundance and a rich natural environment, we lead a comfortable life every day. Yet I wonder if we have the sensitivity to allow us to enjoy ourselves with our whole being, to feel touched, and to create something original.

All through the Seminar, such ideas and reflections came to me one after another. In spite of my poor English ability, I think I was able to absorb the issues that, as a human being, I should live with for the rest of my life. I also regained the enthusiasm that I had nearly forgotten.

It was a “once-in-a-lifetime chance meeting.” If you treasure what you feel at the very moment, then you will reach the state of mind of trying to discover something new. I thank both the African and the Japanese participants!

The Pure Hearts from Asia

Taro Mikuriya
Company Employee

“Hello, I’m—.”

In somewhat broken Japanese one member of the group introduced himself, but surprisingly he had a Japanese name. Another person whom I thought looked Japanese had a foreign name. By now I found I couldn’t tell who was an ASEAN visitor and who was not. Excitement had already filled the bus that was taking



us to the three-day In-house Seminar in Sajima. Unlike in past seminars, this time we all had black hair, so in a sense it was hard to tell who was from where. In fact, up to the second day one young Japanese lady participant had thought I was Malaysian.

Eighteen young people from ASEAN countries and an equal number from Japan taking part in the Youth Invitation Programme were heading to the beautiful Sajima Marina in a bus.

In the week they had already just spent in Japan, the ASEAN participants had studied Japanese history, economy, and culture. So the next three days would be an ideal opportunity for them to learn from first-hand experiences and living materials. It was clear they were beginning to open up and were quite excited about meeting and mixing with Japanese people of their own age. We on the Japanese side, too, were looking forward very much to the next three days.

On the first day we played volleyball. It's amazing how naturally people can make themselves understood when they are chasing after a ball. Such is the beginning of true understanding. After dinner, the national borders that separated us completely torn down through recreation and a range of games from our respective countries until late in the night.

On the second day, the ASEAN participants told us things about their own countries, ranging from economics through to a tourist spots. In the afternoon we broke into small groups and talked about things that were of interest to us. The group I was in discussed at length socializing between young men and women. The end result of our discussions was that despite the differences in our religions, cultures and so on, we found that our ideas were fairly similar, which was all very interesting. I wondered if this was because we are all from the Asian region.

That night, we had a party where we all sang and danced typical songs and dances from each of our countries. We on the Japanese side performed the Awa Odori. I don't think I've ever danced as much as I did then. After the dancing and singing, we again took up to the different games we learned the previous night and continued playing until the small hours of the morning. It really was an unforgettable time.

The three days flew by quickly. But I believe we all gained much from each other. I truly hope that in the time our ASEAN visitors were here they came to feel a little closer to Japan, and that they take back to their countries fond memories of the many new friends made during their stay.

International Exchange and Multimedia

Akio Fukui

Company Employee

Regardless of what we look like on the outside, inside we are all the same.

This was my first impression when I talked with other young people from the ASEAN countries. I took part in this programme with

the encouragement of my company. Before leaving for the seminar, I gave some serious thought about exactly what international exchanges mean, and what form economic and technological exchanges with Asia should take. I also read as many books on this as I could in the time I had available. Looking back, I remember feeling quite tense before I left to meet and talk with young people from different countries and cultures. But once I got to where the In-house Seminar was to be held and started meeting the visitors, I realized that if anything, language was perhaps the only difference between us. Getting together informally before the start was important, and I think it certainly set the programme off on the right foot.

The group was together for three days and two nights at the seminar, and we spent every spare minute of that short period talking, laughing, and getting to know each other. Among the broad range of subjects we discussed were the various economic situations and marriage customs in our respective countries.

We all agreed that a tremendous opportunity was wasted if we didn't keep in touch with

each other after the seminar. This is indeed the essence of international exchange—everyone wanting to and making the effort to continue ties even after the formal programmes have come to an end. Fortunately, multimedia has been able to help us achieve this, and it's important for everyone to know that multimedia channels are well within most people's grasp, young people in the ASEAN countries included. By multimedia, I don't mean the high tech TV phones, but rather, the internet and e-mail are the perfect ways to keep in touch. It's faster than normal mail and quite a deal cheaper than international phone calls. I've already started sending e-mail to some friends from the ASEAN countries I made during the seminar.

I must express my sincere thanks to JICA and the Working Youth Welfare Association for giving me the opportunity to be a part of the programme, I'd like to help in any way I can to make all future exchanges as enjoyable and as fruitful as the one in which I participated. Thank you for giving me the chance to make some truly wonderful friends, both from overseas and in Japan as well.

4. Impressions by Host Families

Our First Host Family Experience

Tadayoshi Yasuda
Hokkaido Pref.

We experienced a homestay for the first time. Before this, on the occasion of the Great Hanshin Earthquake last year, I went to Kobe to help the local people for about a week. I wondered whether I would be able to do something for them, discussed it with my family, and then decided to take in children who had gone through the quake, although Hokkaido is quite distant from Kobe. We reached the City Office of Kobe and told them our intention, but we received no request, probably because our place was very far. Then, this spring, we learned about this international exchange programme and decided to accept a homestay.

As the day of the guest's arrival was approaching, we were filled with mixed feelings, expectations and anxieties, wondering what the person would be like or whether we would be able to communicate with him.

On the arrival day, we at last met a 23-year-old Indonesian man, named "Ahsantany." Both my wife and I felt nervous, while our

eight-year-old daughter and five-year-old son, far from being nervous, approached him and took his hand, speaking to him in Japanese, saying such as, "Hello, my name is..." Watching them behave like that, we grownups felt ashamed of having worried so much about this or that, like language, customs, and food.

We felt like we were taught by the children that it is most important to receive the person with an open heart.

At home, we had enjoyable three days, during which time we learned about his country and family. Meanwhile, he played cards and games with the children, met the "Samurai Ninja," or the "Mutant Turtles," and videotaped the sports festival of the primary school that our children presently attend. While he was in Chitose, we had a spell of chilly days. I suppose that is why the Japanese expression he became used to was "Totemo samui" (very cold).

At the farewell party, both he and I could



not stop crying. If we have more chances in the future, we hope to continue accepting guests as a host family.

We Want to See Matet Again, Okay?"

Eiko Ueyama
Hokkaido Pref.

In late May, a 23-year-old woman, Matet, visited our family. Hoping that she would learn what a Japanese family was like, I saw to it that she would experience our ordinary lifestyle.

On the first day, all of our four family members (including our four-year-old son and two-year-old daughter) went to pick her up, and on the way home, we bought three days' worth of food at the supermarket. When I said to her, "Please put your favorite ones in the basket," she put some grapefruit in it. Although I had worried about what she would eat, she turned out to enjoy Japanese food. Especially it seemed that she liked Japanese sweets filled with green bean jam. My husband's English and mine, as well, were far from understandable, but after dinner we got involved in talking about our countries until late at night.

On the second day, as one of our acquaintances does natural herb dyeing with dandelions, we visited her place together to observe the process. Afterwards, since it does not snow at all in the Philippines, we decided to go to see some snow and drove into the Hidaka Mountains from its base. Some two weeks earlier, there had been an out-of-season snowfall, but it was somewhat difficult to find any of it remaining. However, as we drove further on, there was a little snow left in the shade. Matet was very pleased and took many pic-

tures of it. There, we picnicked for a while, with biscuits and coffee.

On the third day, we went to the junior high school where I work to join its sports festival. We had prepared box lunches from 6:30 in the morning, and she made rice balls very well. In the sports festival, she took part in some games as a guest player, and we participated together in a three-legged race. That day Lourdes, Matet's fellow participant, was also there with her host family, and we had a lively day. Our time together was brief, but my children became close to Matet. They often say, "We want to see Matet again, okay?"

Miscellaneous Impressions about the Homestay

Keiko Takeno
Toyama Pref.

Since it was my first experience to serve as a host family, I was filled with concerns. I had not studied English for more than ten years, nor was I confident in my cooking skills. In conversation with the guest, I fully used my rusty brain, while leafing through a dictionary. When I was not able to communicate properly, I often felt irritated. But I started to enjoy riffling through the dictionary together with the guest. We burst into laughter when we found any mispronunciation or misunderstanding. When I could communicate with her all right, I was very pleased.

We asked her to use a spare room upstairs, the one that is supposed to serve as a children's room in the future. My six-year-old daughter and four-year-old son, upon getting out of bed, went upstairs directly, to be with Karen. The children could not speak English, but they enjoyed chatting about "Sailor Moon" and "Ultraman," popular TV animation characters



for children, and playing badminton with her. The children enjoyed themselves in such a relaxed way and became close to Karen.

Also, as we had "yakimiku" and "somen," or barbecued beef and thin wheat noodles, together with my neighbor friends, we enjoyed talking about various things, like the differences between the national characters of Singapore and Japan, schooling, cars, and Japanese "hina" dolls. I think we all had a very good time.

The happy time passed by in an instant. On the final evening, after I took Karen to the hotel and came home, my children discontentedly asked, "Why isn't she here tonight?" The next morning they went upstairs as usual and found she was not there. "She isn't there!" They were half crying, and I did not know how to explain the situation to them. I feel the house is missing something. It looks somewhat lonely now. When I went to the station to see her off, I could not speak much because I thought I would not be able to hold my tears if I spoke to her. I was surprised at my having such feelings, since she was with us just for two

nights and three days.

At times the children ask me, "What is Karen doing? Won't she come again?" Then I reply, "We want to see her again, don't we? Let's visit Singapore someday."

Many pictures and memories are left with us.

Our First Experience as a Host Family

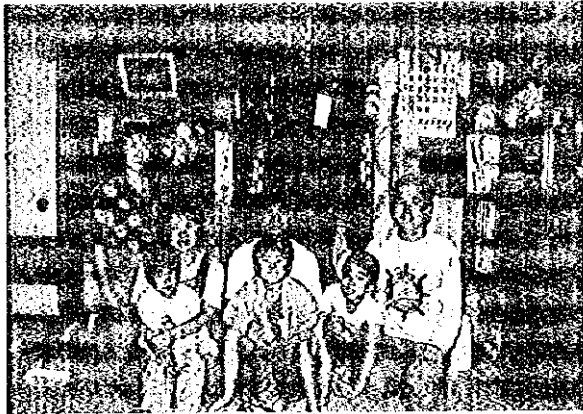
Yoko Kikuchi
Yamagata Pref.

This year my husband joined the International Exchange Association of our town, and shortly after that we were requested to accept a homestay.

From a group of school teachers, who are expected to lead the reconstruction of their nation, Ean, a 26-year-old high school English teacher, visited our home.

As neither my husband nor I was able to speak English fluently, we tried to communicate with him somehow, by watching his expressions, and with a dictionary in one hand. Ean was a very polite and intelligent person. He was also warm toward us, and even our shy daughter took to him very well and was always at his heels.

Unfortunately, our second son had a high fever then, and I was not able to do much for him. Instead, my very accommodating husband took Ean to different places, according to his requests. They went to a house that was used for shooting a TV drama, as the birthplace of the heroine "Oshin." (I hear the drama is very popular in Cambodia.) They also went to a swimming pool, which he said was his first experience. Then, we visited the cherry orchards of my husband's parents, where, looking at the paddy fields that stretched over the foot of the mountain, Ean said sadly, "In our



country, we still plow using a bull and plant by hand.” We did our best to communicate the following words in broken English: “Things were like that when we were little children. Everything in Japan was like that, too. Things in your country will turn out all right, as well, we’re sure. Please build a good country with your youthful strength.”

That day fell on the evening of “tanabata,” or the star festival. All of us wrote our wishes on strips of paper and put them on a bamboo stalk. As Ean wrote his wish in Cambodian, none of us could tell what he wrote, but we still keep it as a memento.

Before going home, he called us from Tokyo twice. For both Ean and our family, the homestay has established an unforgettable bond.

Pup Kan Mai (See You Again)

Naoko Kubo
Kochi Pref.

The guest who came to stay with us was Boonpheng from Laos. We learned that he was a high school English teacher.

He stayed with us for three days, from July 5 to 7. The period fell on “tanabata,” or the star festival. We suddenly felt like missionaries

of Japanese culture and made “tanabata” ornaments with Boonpheng. I am not sure whether his enthusiasm in making ornaments made us work seriously, or whether our enthusiastic attitude to try to communicate with him through gestures made him work seriously, but what we obtained in the end was a beautifully decorated bamboo stalk that rewarded our efforts. In due course, we then wrote down many wishes on paper strips. He in Laotian, and we in Japanese both wished for our friendship to last for many years to come. When we had our photos taken for commemoration in front of the decorated bamboo stalk, all of us seemed fully satisfied.

Actually, we prepared dinner together as well. While saying, “I don’t cook very often at home,” Boonpheng helped me with the meal and handled a knife rather skillfully.

In this way, the two nights and three days passed in a flash.

During those three days, Boonpheng picked up a considerable amount of Japanese, while I was also able to learn a little Laotian. Moreover, he taught me some Laotian songs. Today we live in the so-called information society, where we have good access to various information. However, the songs and words I learned from him, I suppose, have another, different value. If you wonder what it is, I hope you will definitely experience a homestay as a host family.

Copchai (Thank you).

Thanks for the Fragrance from a Southern Land

Miyoko Iizuka
Aichi Pref.

Asenaca, from Fiji, visited our family. Upon hearing she was from the South Pacific, I

recalled the film "South Pacific" and Heyerdahl's "KON-TIKI." Those dream-like and romantic thoughts became reality. This opportunity also stimulated our family to talk about substantial things, like that the countries in the Pacific are largely divided into three parts: Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia, and that Fiji belongs to Melanesia.

Contrary to the image we had of an administrator working in the Office of the Prime Minister, Asenaca, or Naca for short, was a cheerful, stylish, and intelligent young lady. She stayed with us for two nights and three days, to experience Japanese life and culture. We had her view our lifestyle as it was, in living and food, like our rooms and bathroom. At the same time, thinking that she might not like having only Japanese food, we asked her what she wanted to eat. She said she would like to go to McDonald's if there was one nearby, because the first chain had just opened in Fiji this year and she liked it. After hearing her say that, we immediately went to McDonald's. The young lady enjoyed a cheeseburger and a double burger.

On the weekend, we went to Meiji Village with Brown, the sub-leader of her group. The historical village collects and restores buildings from the Meiji Era as cultural assets. We rode on a 120-year-old steam engine and walked around in the village on a fine, refreshing day, which was a lull in the rainy season.

After that, she visited a neighboring city and joined the In-house Seminar, where she carried out exchanges with young people. She was also excited by her first "sento," or public bath, experience. She told me that her stay in Aichi turned out to be most significant because of those experiences in a foreign culture.

I was very pleased that Naca, who treasures Fiji's social traditions and her own family, also accepted the Japanese way of life.



A Polite Young Fellow

Sadatoshi Oshiro
Okinawa Pref.

It was September 6, when we received a Vietnamese, Mr. Ta Xuan Thanh, at our home. We spent time only two nights and three days together, however it was long enough to make me feel reluctant at our parting.

Thanh did not speak Japanese, but my two daughters, both primary school pupils, easily became close to him. They taught him Japanese with gestures and laughed out loudly together with him. He helped me when I was watering a small vegetable plot and flower pots in the garden. He said that in Viet Nam they also have plants like "goya," or a balsam pear and green peppers, while saying the names of the flowers and showing me which plants are edible by actually putting them into his mouth.

We went to the Marine Expo Park in the town of Motobu in the northern part of the main Okinawan Island. We rode on a jet coaster and visited the aquarium, which surprised him as it was the biggest he had ever seen. To the performance of dolphins, entitled "Oki-chan Show," he clapped his hands, with an innocent little boy look. At Chatan Beach

at sunset we played on the shore, looking at the sun setting on the horizon. He tried to catch a crab for our daughters and had his finger pinched by a large crab. We all laughed and praised his efforts.

He was a very courteous young fellow. After each meal, he carried the empty dishes to the kitchen sink. When we got into the car, he opened the door for us, and got in after all of us. His reserved manner, however, did not show a bit of self-effacement. It seemed that he was proud of his country's history and had confidence in its future.

He also taught us some Vietnamese words, like "HUU NGHİ" (friendship) and "HOA BINH" (peace). While looking at the photos of his family, my daughters said that they wanted to visit Viet Nam when they grow up. When I shook hands with him to say good-by, I could not help hoping that peace based on strong friendship will prevail among all countries of the world.

A Neighbor Coming from the Land of Curry

Shuichi Ando
Hokkaido Pref.

From September 14 to 16, for two nights and three days, Mofizul from the Bangladesh Civil Servant Group came to stay with us.

When he arrived at our place, a small but strange thing happened. Our cat abruptly jumped at him the moment it saw him. Such a thing had never happened before, so we had to isolate the cat in the children's room for the next three days. One day, I heard him calling me, "ANDO-SAN, ANDO-SAN," and went to find that the cat was staring at him. At that moment, he was stiff and still, and I could not help bursting into laughter in spite of myself.

Sorry, Mofizul.

What particularly left an impression on me was that Ferdous, another participant staying with a friend of mine, invited us to enjoy his homemade curry. It turned out to be a very good experience for me to taste the food as it was really prepared in its original country.

I was impressed by many things during the three days I spent with Mofizul. I was very surprised at his attitude of trying to learn something from Japan, and at his knowledge about Japan, which was greater than ours. When we talked about the observation tour to Hiroshima in the Programme, he said that the children in his country know about the tragedy of the atomic bomb. This made me wonder deeply to what extent we, in return, know about Bangladesh, a fellow Asian country.

I must admit that, at first, before the home-stay actually started, I felt it might be complicated to receive people from Moslem countries due to their many religious restrictions. But for me and my family, it turned out to be a wonderful experience, which will not be forgotten for the rest of our lives. Mofizul, thank you for the pleasant memories.

All the staff members from JICA, thank you very much for giving us such a great opportunity.

Having Ameenza with Us

Masahiro Nishiyama
Saga Pref.

From a country made up of a number of islands like stars spreading over the Indian Ocean, we received a guest to stay with us for two nights. The small lady, constantly smiling, was a teacher who worked for a primary school in the country's southernmost island. As a mother of two sons, a three-year-old and

a one-year-old, she was both gentle and strict, while, as a wife, she was always concerned about her husband who works in Male Island, the capital, which is far from where she lives.

Fortunately, my wife and I live by ourselves, as our children are now on their own; so we spent time leisurely in talking with Ameerza and going out to see sights together. What left the strongest impression on me in our conversations with her was that in Maldives the divorce rate is fairly high. Once the husband says, "I'll divorce you because I don't like you anymore," the wife cannot do anything but go along with it. Furthermore, many cases end up without any alimony paid. While she is from a Muslim society, which is different from ours, I could not help feeling sorry that women's rights are neglected like this.

She stayed for only two nights. However, on the second day we went shopping at the supermarket in town, and the next morning Ameerza made a Maldivian breakfast for us. It looked like a pancake, like thinly baked Indian "nan" or Sri Lankan "appa," and tasted very good. We wrapped curry and pickles with it and enjoyed eating it with our fingers. We learned that the dish is called "losi."

After that, when we served grapes for dessert, she said she had never seen them before. When I explained that they grow on a vine, she said she would very much like to see that. Then, I immediately contacted one of my acquaintances, who had an orchard, so that I was able to meet her request. It was such a short exchange time, but we were pleased to have such pleasant and satisfying company. Next, I hope to visit Maldives someday.

Memories of Ajay

Yasuyo Inoue

Gifu Pref.

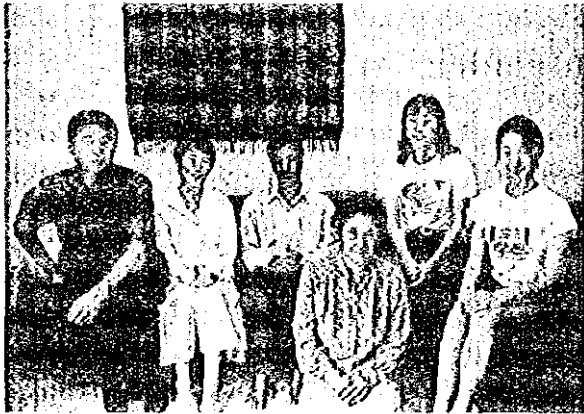
Ajay, who visited and stayed with us, was a high school physics teacher from India. He spoke cheerfully in a good, resonant voice.

After having our first dinner, he made Indian tea for us, saying, "My wife always cooks, but once in a while I make milk tea." When we were talking over the sweet tea together, he said, smiling, "I'm feeling like part of your family." To hear that, I felt at home as well.

My daughter, who is a third-year high school student and is keen on physics, was looking forward to Ajay's arrival. But she was in a hospital after an appendicitis operation. We went to the hospital together, first of all, according to Ajay's wishes. As she was able to talk with him a lot, such as about theorems and formulae in her collection book of problems, my daughter was fully satisfied. Ajay was considerate enough to say to her, "I'll definitely come back tomorrow," so that she would not feel lonely.

On the second night, when we went to see the night view of Gifu City, he said that in India he always goes out for a walk with his family after dinner. Hearing this, we went to Nagara Park nearby and had a relaxing time. I keenly felt how much he cared about his family and was also impressed by his spiritual richness in thinking much about sharing time with them.

On the third day, on our way home from Gifu Castle, he said to us, "Before the homestay, I was worried, but after living together with you, I realize that we are just the same. Thank you." That moment, I was thinking the same thing. I felt pleased that we hit it off instantly.



At the farewell party held by the Prefecture, Ajay performed an Indian song solo. I am thankful to him and the people who organized this programme for giving us pleasant memories.

My First Host Family Experience

Jun Kishi
Niigata Pref.

The other day, we had a beautiful guest from Nepal, Biva. As it was our first host family experience, we were a little nervous, but thanks to the frankness of Biva, we were able to have three very pleasant days.

What was pleasant to me was that we chatted about this and that, while working together in the kitchen. As women, we talked about fashions, cooking, our husbands and children, etc. We talked on and on, and I felt we were just the same, although we are from different countries. Another interesting experience was when we four members of the family tried her homemade Nepalese curry with our fingers. (The taste was very mysterious, and it made my husband and me feel that the world is still vast and has much to explore.)

Our two daughters seemed to enjoy playing

games with her. They taught her "shinkei suijaku," a card game called "nervous breakdown," while she taught them in return Nepalese-style fortunetelling with cards, and a game that was like marbles. They did not understand her language but could communicate their feelings very well. They were laughing very pleasantly. For my daughters, it was also an exciting experience to get dressed in saris. The younger one attended at the farewell party dressed in sari. She was all smiles.

I also took Biva to the parents-children circle, which was made up of regional people. We taught each other traditional gesture games and songs from our respective countries. She also enjoyed operating a robot control at the natural science museum and seeing the planetarium (She is a science teacher). We went out together, but I think it was most important that she could see how an ordinary Japanese family lives.

Nothing pleased us more than her consideration in saying repeatedly, "I'm really happy to meet you." All of us wish her the best of luck.

The Outcome Was Easier Than What I had Feared

Toshiko Endo
Yamanashi Pref.

About two month ago, I was requested, through the Yamanashi Prefectural Nursing Association, to be a host for a homestay programme for a member of the Pakistan Health and Medical Service Group. At that time, I thought I would clean up my house, learn to cook her favorites, and pick up some Urdu for greetings. But when I realized it was the day before the guest would come. I began to rush. Yet in the end everything remained as usual. Our family has two cats, and both of them had

kittens in succession in August. Unable to find new homes for them, our house had turned into a cat-house with seven cats and kittens. Under such circumstances, I just prayed to heaven that we would have a cat-lover guest.

However, after I met the guest, I found out overnight that such worries were needless. As we are both engaged in nursing, the major topic in our conversations was nursing. Our talks further extended into families and cultures. I realized that having some topics in common was important, and I was able to see the reason why the Nursing Association had accepted the homestay. My husband and child had pleasant exchanges with the guest as well. The long and the short of it was that I came to feel keenly that a "desire to know the person" will overcome national borders and cultural differences, and bring people together as good company.

On the second day of the homestay, at the "Kage-e" Art Gallery in Kofu, five host families and their guests met by chance. I do not know how to describe the expressions of relief on each guest participant's face then, while each of us host families exchanged reports and asked, "How's it going?" In the end, we agreed to go to another place all together, and then we had a strangely pleasant time somehow or other.

My impression after the two nights and three days is: the outcome was easier than what I had feared. In our everyday life, we tend to view human relations as being more difficult than they have to be. However, I was made to realize, for the first time in ages, that what is important is the desire to know another person from the bottom of our hearts. Not only in Pakistan but in Japan as well, men do not help with housework. Yet at this occasion, my husband transformed himself into an active homemaker, while our child felt eager to study

English more. We acquired a variety of positive outcomes. Thank you. "Dubara malau Guey!!" (See you again.)

Being a Host Family for the First Time

Mihoko Iwata

Ishikawa Pref.

One of our acquaintances invited us to be a host family for a homestay programme for two nights and three days. That is how we became a host family for the first time.

As our English is not excellent, language was the greatest concern. We had been abroad on trips several times before and had managed somehow then. However, that was, after all, at tourist places, so we were worried if we would be able to communicate well.

We managed to share daily life with our guest; but as we had expected, it turned out to be difficult to learn about his country and ideas. In the end, we decided to ask a friend of ours, who could speak English, to help us. Thanks to the friend's help, we were able to have some communication.

What worried me next was meals. As I heard the guest was a Muslim, with many religious restrictions, my concern was whether I would be able to prepare food that would suit his palate. Finding that he did not touch many of the dishes on the table, I felt disappointed.

For the first evening meal, I prepared fried noodles with seafood, tofu, and miso soup with rape leaves, short-neck clams steamed in sake, and boiled rice with chestnuts. He ate the fried noodles and the clams. With the latter, I found out later that I should not have cooked them with alcohol, yet he liked that dish best of all. He did not like chestnut rice and miso soup at all. He gave his portions to my chil-

dren. For the next morning's breakfast, he ate instant curry noodles that he had brought from home, without touching the prepared Japanese meal.

That afternoon, we went to an Indian restaurant, which he seemed to like.

For dinner, he cooked some food dish for us, using ingredients he had brought from Brunei with him, vegetables he bought at Omicho Market, and things from our refrigerator. He enjoyed what he cooked, with great enthusiasm. I was a little disappointed, saying to myself, "It seems he only wants to eat what he likes." I also found out he liked meat when I saw him cooking with beef jerky and canned goods of halal meat. Then I thought that because it is difficult to get that special kind of food in Japan, he had to bring some with him to cook on his own if he wished to eat meat. Outside of Japan, we ourselves might also find it hard to eat something unfamiliar.

In this way, I started to understand his tastes by the third day.

In bathing, he seemed to make a habit of taking a shower in the morning. On both days, he took morning showers. We naturally had a hot bath prepared in the evening, but he did not use it.

I sometimes felt puzzled by this or that. However, thinking that customs differ from country to country, and from person to person, I realized we should not be bothered by that too much.

He seemed to enjoy the final event, the bowling games, most of all. He looked most lively with his friends. I suppose it was because he could feel most relaxed when speaking Malay, his own language.

The homestay entailed only two nights and three days, but still it made me feel a little tired. If I have another opportunity, however, I would like to accept a homestay again.

Meeting with Mr. U Saw Chit Tun

Kuniko Tamura

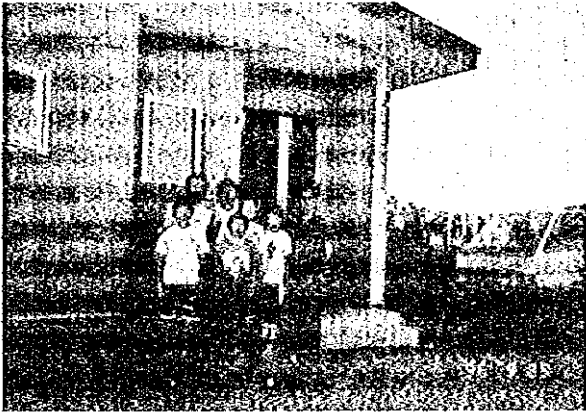
Hokkaido Pref.

At the very beginning of the New Year, our family received a request for a homestay. Without any information in advance, we accepted Mr. U Saw Chit Tun from Myanmar. We decided not to do anything special and just live as we usually do, but in fact we felt somewhat awkward. We also had to stick to a guidebook and a dictionary, because we were not good at English conversation.

Saw Chit Tun (as we called him) must also have felt nervous often. Perhaps we gave him the most tiring three days of his stay in Japan.

On the evening of September 27, under the fair autumn sky, I went to meet him in high spirits, for it was both my birthday and his! I usually spend my birthday without doing anything special. However this year was a special one. We had a small and humble party, but he, as a token of gratitude, presented us with a precious folk costume of the Karens. It was a very beautiful costume, and we placed it in the living room. We were impressed by his attitude in trying to learn and see various things. He seemed to be interested in dairy farming as well and intently watched the milking process in the morning and evening, and the harvesting during the daytime. Seeing our children play with battery-driven toys and solar panels, he said, "This is a very good system, but children in Myanmar may never be able to enjoy (afford) it." I cannot forget his words.

I wonder how he will talk about Japan to his students once he goes back to Myanmar. I hope at least one of his students will want to come to Japan in the future. At the farewell



party, while leaving an encouraging message, "Study hard," to our children, he expressed his gratitude and wish to have us visit Myanmar. The country, once far away in our minds, has become a close one that we want to visit. From him, we received his warmth of heart, which is even kinder than his words.

Thank you, Mr. U Saw Chit Tun.

Like the Wind That Blows Across the Field

Setsuko Tanaka
Ishikawa Pref.

The day had finally come, when ten civil servants from Mongolia were to experience homestays in Kanazawa.

In the meeting session, I was rather worried about language. At the same time, I had an optimistic view of "whatever happens, happens," due to my seven years of experience as a host family that had accepted 24 people from nine different countries so far. Even if I understood English only a little, I had actually studied it in school. Also, with some of the previous guests from Asia, we had been able to understand each other through "kanji," or Chinese characters. However, this homestay, honestly speaking, made me feel at a loss. Both

the guest and I tried to have a conversation, with the help of Mongolian and Japanese texts, but such one-way communication shortly broke off. When I failed in making myself understood by gestures, I managed to communicate by leading him by the hand, although I thought it might be rude of me.

He stayed with us for two nights and three days. On the second day, we walked around the city and went out to the "Kanazawa Historic Spot Concert." A number of citizens joined this concert as volunteer staff, as did I. As I had already made sure through our interpreter that Tsogoo, our guest, would join the concert as well, he ended up working as a volunteer, too. He, as a receptionist, folded programs and pamphlets, and helped us efficiently, in carrying tables, etc. I think it was a good opportunity for him, as he was able to carry out exchanges with the people he worked with. After this host family experience, I have become keenly aware that language is still important. However, I want to always remember to be "human" before that. After Tsogoo left our home like the wind blowing across the Mongolian field, what did he feel, I wonder, about our casual life? Thus ended the three days, and I appreciate that I had a chance to meet him out of the 5.8 billion people living in this world. I will cherish the encounter as a lifelong friendship.

What I Learned from My African Visitor

Miho Tanaka
Tokushima Pref.

My family hosted an Ethiopian economist. At first I thought he would be one of his country's elite and fairly fixed in his views, however whatever preconceptions I may have had vanished as soon as I met him. He was a very easy-going young man with a marvelous sense of humor and a friendly smile. I learned much from him.

One thing I learned was to look always on the positive side. I mentioned that he must be tired from his hard schedule in Japan, but he responded with a laugh, "I'm enjoying it so much that I don't have time to be tired."

After I told him that I'm always saying, "I'm exhausted," when things get a little tough, he smiled and suggested, "Why don't you try saying 'I'm not exhausted, instead?' I'm doing this now."

The second was "failure is the basis of success." I apologized to him about my poor English, but he praised it (African people are very good at compliments), and said "It's more important to have the courage to keep trying for success even after failure than to aim at perfection without any mistakes the first time."

The third was the significance of learning to speak English. I think many students forget that the real aim of learning English should be to communicate, and not simply to pass a school entrance exam. I raised this point with him. "English is important for communication as is a good knowledge of social issues, culture, science, music, and a whole range of other subjects," was his reply.

Probably what I learned the most about was his personality and the individuality of

African people. He, too, seemed to have had certain preconceptions about Japanese egoism before coming to Japan that were changed by his stay.

I came to realize that common traits shared by the African and Japanese people are an open mind, a cheerful and kind nature, and diligence.

We learned as much as we could about each other's language (he Japanese, and I Amharic), and taught each other about our own cultures. So I am convinced that personal contact through exchanges such as this are the best way to find out about what people of different cultures are really like.

In closing, I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to the staff for giving me the opportunity to make a new friend and have many wonderful memories. Thank you very much.

About the Homestay

Eishi Kobayashi
Niigata Pref.

Guinea-Bissau? I did not know where it was located in Africa, nor had I even heard the name. I accepted a homestay, but had never even heard of the name of the guest's country. We wanted him to experience ordinary Japanese living. Also, because the schedule of the homestay fell on Culture Day, a national holiday, and on Sunday in succession, our family was busy with our children's affairs, such as the kindergarten's culture festival and the elder children's club activities. As a result, we did not make any special plans.

Our greatest concern was whether he would be able to communicate with our children. To the contrary, we found Mr. Ture, our guest, was very fond of children. There was no prob-

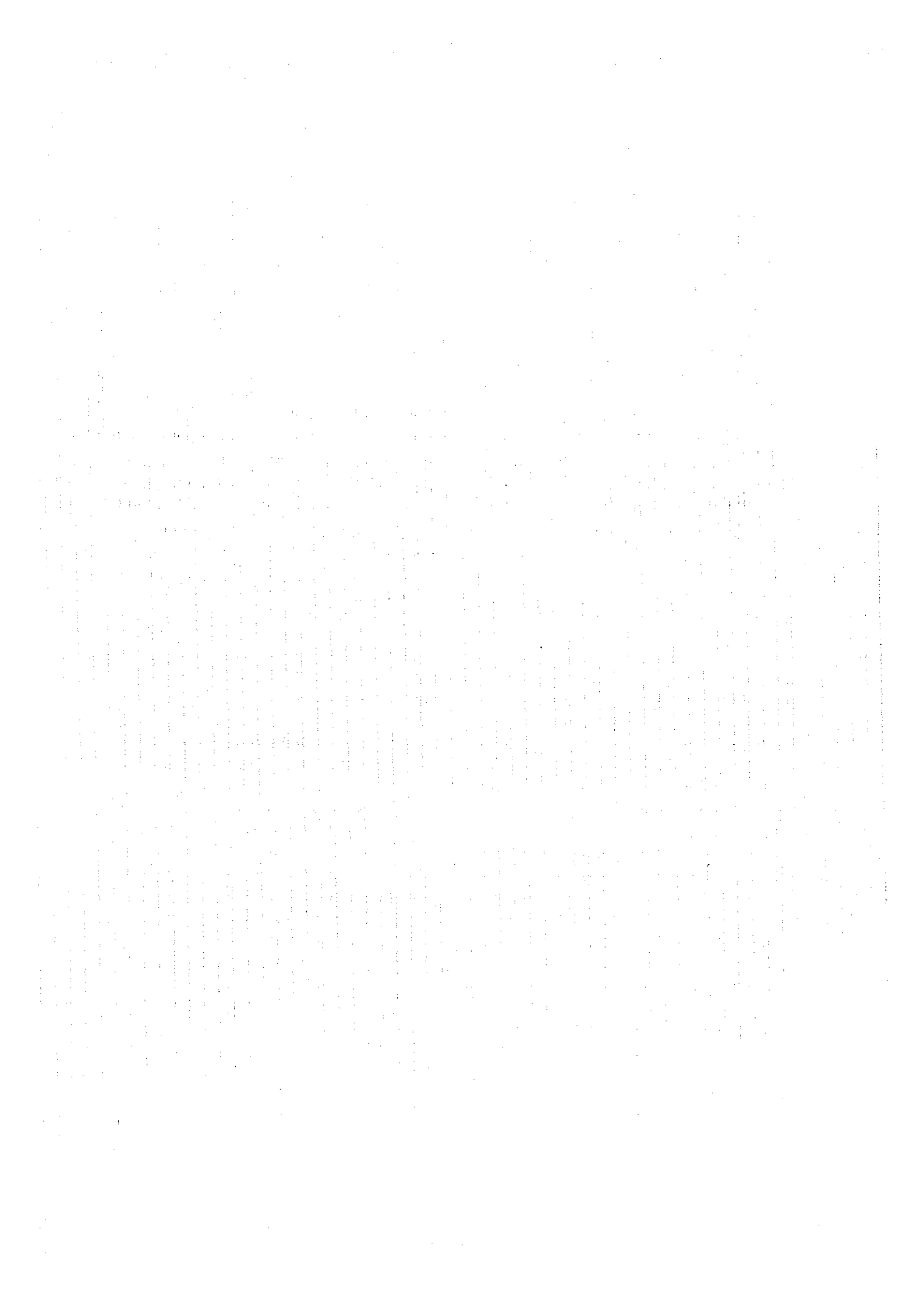
lem. He even became closest to the children. I remember his saying one of our children's name, "Nozomi, Nozomi," often.

We visited the Cultural Festival of the kindergarten, enjoyed a panoramic view of Niigata city from the Japan Sea Tower, strolled around the NEXT and the library, and went to the Natural Science Museum. I hope he will have good memories from those experiences. At home, we enjoyed folding paper together—an experience which he said he found helpful for the cultural study later in the schedule.

We took him to a sushi bar, where sushi was served on conveyor. There he tried "wasabi," or Japanese horseradish, for the first time. When we paid the bill, he seemed to wonder how they determined the charge so quickly.

On Sunday evening, we watched "Torasan," a popular Japanese movie series together. Surprisingly, by only watching the expressions of the cast, he laughed at exactly the same times we did, though he did not understand Japanese. I wondered if he could, in fact, understand Japanese.

It was a short stay, but all of us in the family came to like Mr. Ture. The experience of accepting such a wonderful messenger from an unknown country in Africa brought us wonderful memories. Other than that, we listened, with great interest, about the problems that African nations currently suffer, particularly the ones concerning children. We would like to take this opportunity to learn more about Africa. We also hope to deepen our friendship with Mr. Ture further.



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