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THE YOUTH FRIENDSHIP PROGRAMME
--ASIA, PACIFIC, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA-- [Report] (1997)

YOUTH INVITATION DIVISION
TRAINING AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY

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ONE STEP TOWARD MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND FRIENDSHIP

Memorable scenes of the Youth Friendship Programme, 1997

OPENING CEREMONY



● Full of expectation



● Welcome address by JICA



● Can you speak Japanese?

GENERAL ORIENTATION PROGRAMME



● Learning Japanese hard



● Trying tough in martial arts



● Listening to the explanation (Lecture)

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMME IN TOKYO



● Much interested in the specific field



● Observation at Rehabilitation Center



● Enjoying life-saving training together



● Oh, hi-tech! (Multi-media experience)



● Say, "Cheese!"



● Discussion outdoors

IN-HOUSE SEMINAR



● No language barriers among us

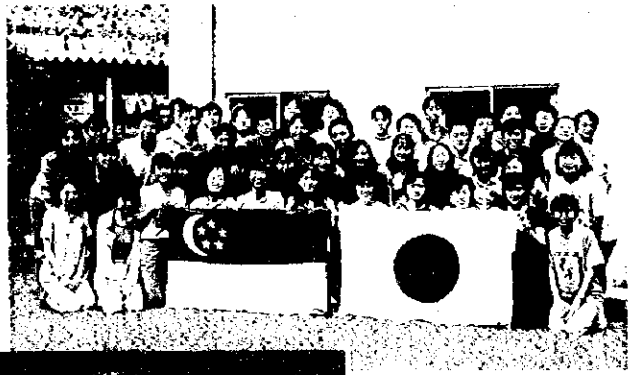


● Memorable chorus in a group

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMME IN DIFFERENT PREFECTURE



● Making friends with primary children



● Ever-lasting friendship



● Do you enjoy playing koto?



● Lovely, huh?



● Rich apple harvest



● Together with family

HOMESTAY



● At the frontdoor of host family's



● We are two in the same family



● Feeling at home

OBSERVATION TOUR



●At Miyajima Island



●Big smiles against Seto-ohashi Bridge



●So moved by thousand paper-cranes



●Golden Pavilion in autumn

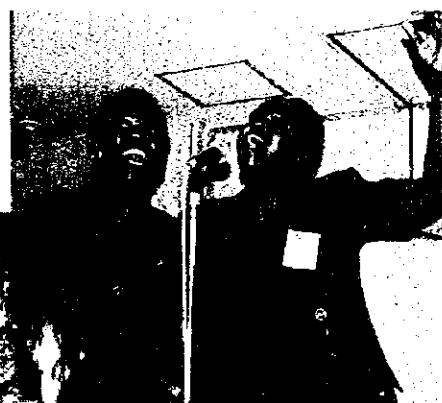
FAREWELL PARTY



●Receiving Certificate by JICA



●With Japanese friends



●Singing performance



●With beautiful memories



●Dainty dance in harmony

THE YOUTH FRIENDSHIP PROGRAMME



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FOREWORD

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

At first only six ASEAN countries participated. Our network of friendship, however, has greatly extended to Pacific countries and territories, Myanmar, China, Korea, South Asian countries, Mongolia, African countries, Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam, and Latin American countries.

In 1997, we invited a total of 1,593 youths and during the past fourteen years from 1984, a total of 16,602 young people have visited Japan. Thanks to the warm support and cooperation of all those concerned, I wish to express to them my deepest appreciation.

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

This report will be sent to all the participants of the year 1997 as well as to those who are concerned with the programme in the participating countries.

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

Thank you.

March 1998

Masaru MORIMOTO

Managing Director, Training Affairs Department
Japan International Cooperation Agency

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1. The Youth Friendship Programme

Asia, Pacific, Africa and Latin America

1. Outline of the Programme

(1) Purpose

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

(2) Group Categories

① Six ASEAN Countries:

a. Single Country Group

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

Education

Social Development (Malaysia—Scientific and Technological Development)

Agriculture (Malaysia—Agriculture Development)

b. Component Group

Environmental Protection

Education

Social Welfare

Health & Medical Service

Public Administration

Economy

② Pacific Countries and Territories, South Asian Countries, Mongolia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam,

Latin American Countries:

Teacher

Education (Viet Nam—Education and Related Areas)

Civil Servant

Government Official

Nurse and Medical Technologist

Economy

Agriculture

Social Welfare

Working Youth

③African Countries

Female Teacher (High School or Junior High School)

Civil Servant (Economic Development)

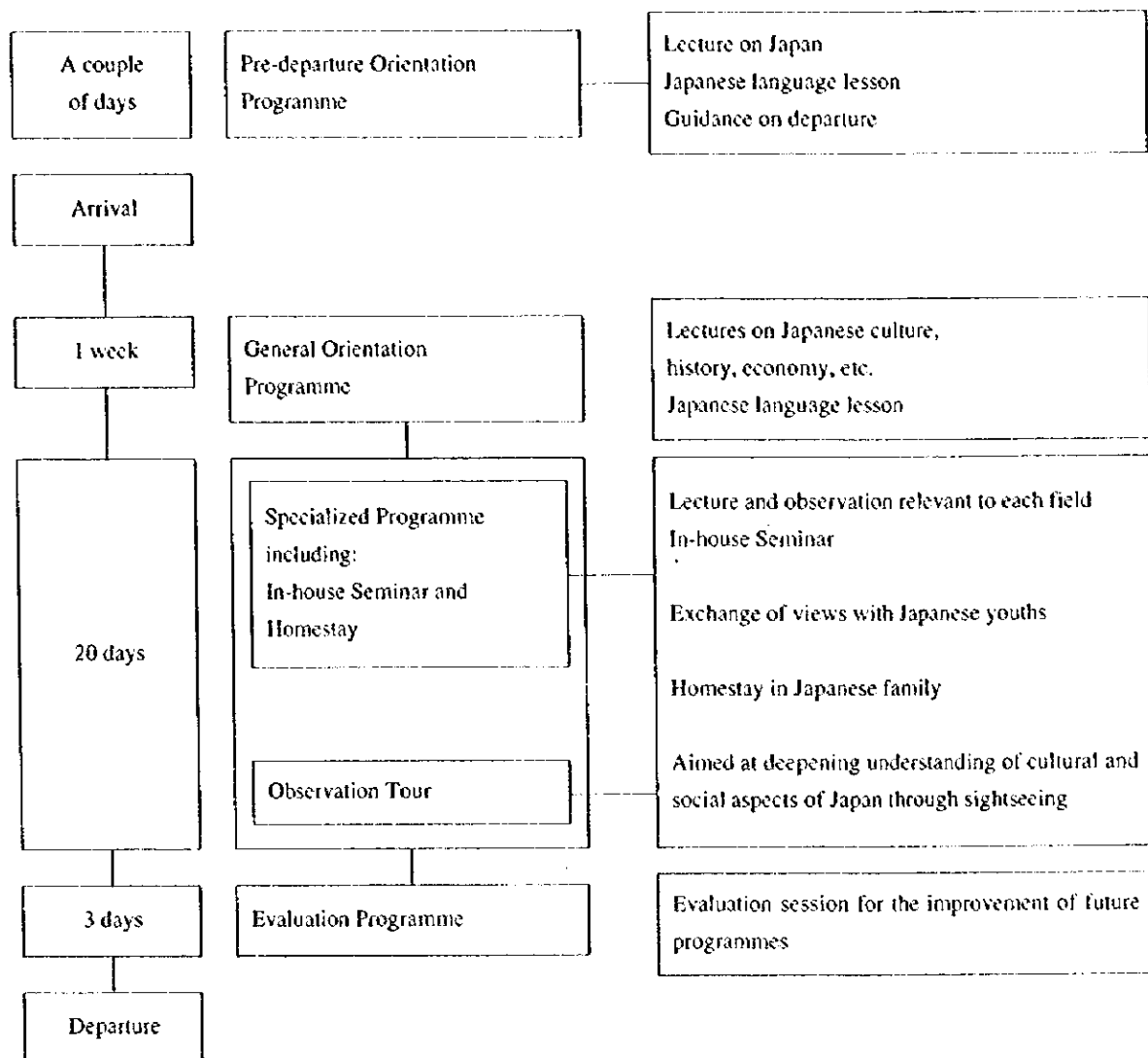
(3) Duration and Number of Participants

150 young people from each of six ASEAN-member countries (50 from Brunei), 20 from Myanmar, 90 from 14 Pacific countries and territories, 100 from 7 South Asian countries, 10 from Mongolia, 100 from 47 African countries and an UN organization, 100 from Viet Nam, 30 from Cambodia, 20 from Laos and 50 from 11 Latin American countries were invited to Japan for a period of one month between May 1997 and February 1998. 1,320 youths were invited in all.

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

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

(5) A Programme Model



(6) Aftercare Project

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

①Supplementary Literature

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

②Alumni Associations

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

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

③Alumni Liaison Conference

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

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

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

④Follow-up Mission

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

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

In 1997, 5 teams visited four ASEAN countries and China.

2. List of Invited Groups and Implementing Youth Organizations in 1997

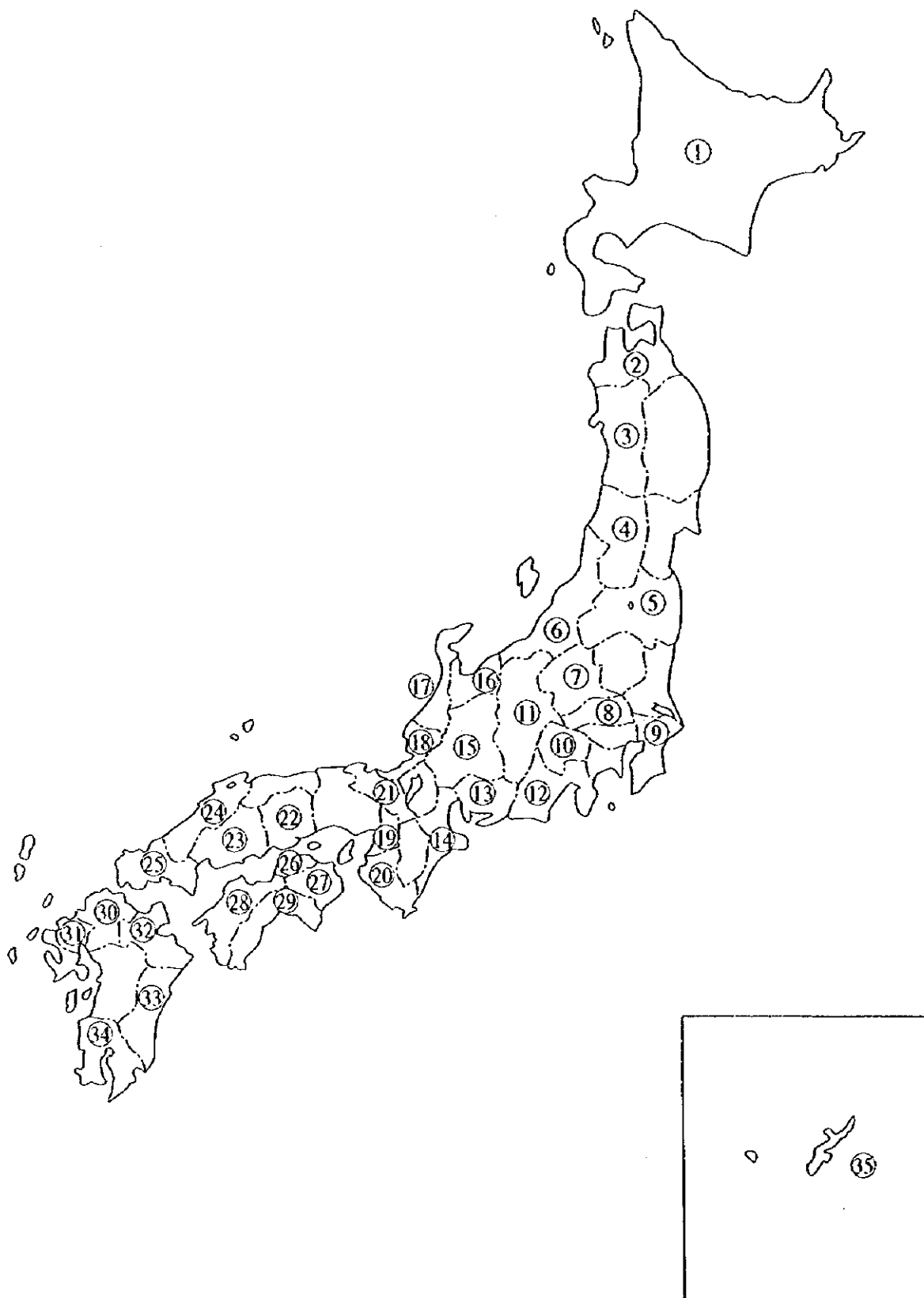
Period	Country	Group	Size (Persons)	Youth Organization
May 15-June 13	Indonesia	Social Development	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	Indonesia	Economy A	20	Junior Executive Council of Japan
	Indonesia	Economy B	24	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	Philippines	Education	22	National Assembly for Youth Development
May 21-June 19	Philippines	Social Development	25	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
	Singapore	Education	21	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Singapore	Social Development	25	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	Singapore	Economy B	24	Japan International Cooperation Center
June 4-July 3	Thailand	Education	22	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Thailand	Social Development	25	Yusai Youth Association
	Viet Nam	Government Official	25	Japan Association for Civil Service Training & Development
	Viet Nam	Economy	25	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
June 19-July 18	Malaysia	Economic and Financial Management	25	National Assembly for Youth Development
	Malaysia	Small & Medium Industry & Manufacturing	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	Singapore	Economy A1	20	Development Association for Youth
	Singapore	Economy A2	24	Junior Executive Council of Japan
June 26-July 25	Cambodia	Education	30	National Assembly for Youth Development
	Laos	Civil Servant (Agriculture)	20	Kochi International Association
	Pacific Component	Civil Servant	23	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
	Pacific Component	Teacher	24	Japanese Association of the Experiment in International Living
July 2-July 31	Papua New Guinea	Civil Servant	10	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Papua New Guinea	Teacher	19	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Fiji	Civil Servant	12	Japan International Cooperation Center
	Korea	Youth Leader and Civil Servant	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
Aug 20-Sept 18	Korea	Working Youth	24	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	Korea	Teacher	23	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Korea	Student	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Viet Nam	Education and Related Areas	25	Development Association for Youth
Aug 28-Sept 26	Viet Nam	Agriculture	24	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Philippines	Economy A	20	Japan International Cooperation Center
	Philippines	Economy B	24	Junior Executive Council of Japan
	Philippines	Agriculture	24	Akita International Association
Sept 10-Oct 9	Bangladesh	Nurse and Medical Technologist	19	The International Nursing Foundation of Japan
	Bhutan & Maldives	Education	10	National Assembly for Youth Development
	India	Education	24	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Nepal	Education	7	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
Sept 18-Oct 17	Sri Lanka	Education	10	National Federation of UNESCO Association in Japan
	Pakistan	Civil Servant(Social Welfare)	20	Japan International Cooperation Center
	Thailand	Agriculture	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	Thailand	Economy A	20	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
Oct 8-Nov 6	Thailand	Economy B	24	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	Brunei	Social Development	15	Japan International Cooperation Center
	Myanmar	Education	20	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	Mongolia	Working Youth	10	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
Oct 16-Nov 14	Malaysia	Agriculture Development	16	Japan Seinenendan Council
	Malaysia	Education	25	Japanese Association of the Experiment in International Living
	Malaysia	Scientific and Technological Development	25	Toyokawa International Association
	Indonesia	Agriculture	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
Oct 22-Nov 20	Indonesia	Education	22	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	China	Youth Leader	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	China	Economy	25	Junior Executive Council of Japan
	China	Civil Servant	25	Development Association for Youth
Nov 5-Dec 4	China	Teacher	25	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
	African Component			
	English-speaking Countries:Female Teacher 1		26	Osaka Foundation of International Exchange
	French-speaking Countries:Female Teacher 2		20	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
Nov 19-Dec 18	English-speaking Countries:Civil Servant 1		23	National Assembly for Youth Development
	French-speaking Countries:Civil Servant 2		26	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
	ASEAN Component	Education 1	18	Aichi International Association
	ASEAN Component	Education 2	18	Japanese Association of the Experiment in International Living
Jan 21-Feb 19	ASEAN Component	Economy 1	18	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
	ASEAN Component	Economy 2	18	National Assembly for Youth Development
	ASEAN Component	Economy 3	17	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	ASEAN Component	Environmental Protection	30	Junior Executive Council of Japan
Nov 5-Dec 4	ASEAN Component	Social Welfare	30	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	ASEAN Component	Health and Medical Service	29	The International Nursing Foundation of Japan
	ASEAN Component	Public Administration A	24	Japan Association for Civil Service Training & Development
	China	Infrastructure	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
Nov 19-Dec 18	China	Economic Development	25	The Working Youth Welfare Association
	China	Local Development	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
	China	Human Resources Development	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
	China	Social Welfare 1	25	National Assembly for Youth Development
Jan 21-Feb 19	Latin American Component	Social Welfare 2	25	Japan International Cooperation Center
	Latin American Component			
	72 groups	6 ASEAN Countries(794), 14 Pacific Countries and Territories(88), Myanmar(20), China(200), Korea(97), 7 South Asian Countries(90), Mongolia(10), 39 African Countries and one International Organization(95), Cambodia(30), Laos(20), Viet Nam(99), 11 Latin American Countries(50)		
	1,593 youth	Grand Total:84 Countries and Territories plus one International Organization		

Place for Local Programme	Local Youth Organization
Oita	The Oita Prefecture Foreign Affairs Association
Fukui	Fukui International Association
Gunma	Tatebayashi Executive Committee for ASEAN Youth Invitation Program
Yamanashi	Yamanashi Prefectural Assembly for Youth Development
Toiyama	The Toyama International Center Foundation
Ishikawa	Kontatsu International Association
Osaka	Osaka Youth International Exchange Federation
Osaka	Japan International Cooperation Center Osaka Office
Kyoto	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association Kinki Branch
Ishikawa	Ishikawa Foundation for International Exchange
Hokkaido	Hokkaido YMCA
Osaka	Pacific Resource Exchange Center
Fukushima	Fukushima Wings of Youth Association
Ishikawa	Ishikawa Youth Hostels, Inc.
Hiroshima	Shobara International Exchange Association
Kyoto	Kyoto Youth Hostels, Inc.
Okinawa	Okinawa International Foundation
Kochi	Kochi International Association
Saitama	The Ageo Global Association
Mie	Mie International Exchange Foundation
Toiyama	Federation of World Youth Toyama
Hokkaido	Obihiro Junior Chamber Inc.
Shizuoka	The Shizuoka Association for International Relations
Nagasaki	Nagasaki Youth Hostel Association
Hokkaido	Takikawa International Exchange Association
Ibaraki	Ibaraki Prefecture Executive Committee
Kumamoto	Kumamoto Overseas Cooperative Association
Miyazaki	Development Association for Youth Miyazaki Branch
Tokushima	Tokushima Overseas Cooperative Association
Kagoshima	Kagoshima International Association
Kagawa	Kagawa Prefecture International Exchange Association
Akita, Aomori	Aomori Overseas Cooperative Association
Yamanashi	The International Nursing Foundation of Japan
Shimane	The International Youth Exchange Organization of Shimane Prefecture
Gifu	Gifu World Youth
Nagano	Komagane Junior Chamber Inc.
Saga	Saga UNESCO Association
Niigata	Niigata International Association
Shizuoka	Numazu Association for International Communications & Exchanges
Ehime	Ehime Prefectural International Association
Aichi	Japan Young Circle Tokai Branch
Hokkaido	Chitose International Communication Society
Gunma	Gunma International Association
Wakayama	Wakayama-ken Seishonen Ikusei Kyokai
Okayama	Okayama-ken Seinenkan
Hokkaido	Tomakomai International Exchange Center
Aichi	Toyokawa International Association
Kagawa	Friendship Association for Youth Dispatched Overseas in Kagawa
Yamagata	Yamagata Overseas Cooperative Association
Miyagi	Miyagi Prefecture Youth Hostel Association
Tokushima	Tokushima Japan China Youth Exchange Association
Iwate	Iwate International Association
Tochigi	Tochigi-ken Seinen Kaikan Foundation
Osaka	Osaka Foundation of International Exchange
Okayama	Tsuyama and World Friendship Association
Ehime	Ehime Overseas Cooperative Association
Yamaguchi	World Youth Friendship in Tokuyama
Aichi	Aichi International Association
Hokkaido	Sapporo International Communication Plaza Foundation
Chiba	Chiba Prefectural International Association
Fukuoka	Kyushu-Yamaguchi Economic Federation
Okayama	International Youth Exchange Association of Okayama
Hokkaido	Kushiro City Foreign Youth Invitations Committee
Hiroshima	Hiroshima Seishonen Bunka Center
Nagano	The International Nursing Foundation of Japan
Fukuoka	Fukuoka International Exchange Foundation
Hyogo	Hyogo Youth Service Administration
Tottori	Tottori Youth Friendship Association
Hokkaido	Tokachi International Association
Okinawa	Okinawa Prefectural Assembly for Youth Development
Okinawa	Okinawa International Foundation
Okinawa	Okinawa International Foundation

3. Participating Countries and Number of Youth (1984-97)

Year Country	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Total
Indonesia	149	150	150	150	150	149	150	149	147	149	145	150	149	150	2,087
Malaysia	147	148	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	149	150	150	2,094
Philippines	149	150	150	150	150	150	149	147	148	149	150	149	150	148	2,089
Singapore	149	150	150	150	150	150	150	147	149	149	147	146	149	148	2,084
Thailand	149	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	149	147	150	150	150	150	2,095
Brunei	5	30	49	50	50	49	50	43	50	48	49	48	49	48	618
Total(Six ASEAN Countries)	748	778	799	800	800	798	799	786	793	792	791	792	797	794	11,067
Mongolia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
Myanmar	--	--	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	20	20	100
India	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	30	29	30	13	23	27	24	176
Bangladesh	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	20	20	20	20	20	20	19	139
Pakistan	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	140
Nepal	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	10	9	10	10	10	10	7	66
Bhutan	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Sri Lanka	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	70
Maldives	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Total(South Asian Countries)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	100	98	100	83	93	97	90	661
African Countries	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	50	100	97	95	95	437
Fiji	--	--	10	10	11	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	139
Papua New Guinea	--	--	10	14	30	34	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	29	327
Other Pacific Countries and Territories	--	--	--	--	45	38	36	32	36	34	38	36	47	47	389
Total(Pacific Countries and Territories)	--	--	20	24	86	84	78	74	78	76	80	78	89	88	855
Viet Nam	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	98	99	99	296
Cambodia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	30	30	30	90
Laos	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	20	18	20	58
Total (Indochina Countries)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	148	147	149	444
Mexico	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	11	11
Brazil	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	15	15
Peru	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	11	11
Chile	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6	6
Other Latin American Countries	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7	7
Total(Latin American Countries)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	50	50
Total	748	778	829	834	886	882	877	960	979	1,028	1,084	1,238	1,255	1,296	13,674

Place for Local Programme



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

2. Impressions by the Participants

■ Asia

■ Brunei

Discovering Japan

Hj Dayang Bin Hj Kasim
Social Development Group

To discover Japan is to get yourself acquainted with its way of life, culture, traditions and the advancement of its technologies. Therefore, the one-month Youth Invitation Programme was the best in helping us discover at least some aspects of Japanese values. This programme has enabled us to meet and see for ourselves the advancement and the way of life of Japan and the Japanese.

Generally, we would like to thank to our coordinators for making everything possible for us to follow. Every programme has been beneficial to us, and everyone of us really enjoyed our stay in Japan.

The most memorable programme for all of us was the homestay programme, where we had a real chance and experience to meet and live with a Japanese family. We also learned how Japanese culture was preserved and passed on to the new generations.

Also beneficial in this programme was the In-house Seminar, where we had chances and opportunities to meet Japanese youth and exchange ideas and experiences with them. During this programme, we discovered differences and similarities in our education systems, social development, and many others.

Pertaining to the lecturers, every lecture was beneficial for us, as we could always make some differentiations and evaluations on whether some of the information would be applicable to use in part in

our country. Through this session, we also got some glimpses of the Japanese governmental structure and economic situation.

In terms of the observation tour, we were really delighted to note the advancement, which was undeniably far beyond of reach. The visit to NTT opened our minds and vision in that we realized we still have a lot to catch up on.

Generally, all programmes, which had been arranged for us, were wonderful and beneficial to us and maybe for the Japanese counterparts, too. Through this programme, we also managed to foster a new bridge of friendship that will last forever.

Massalam.

IROIRO ARIGATO GOZAIMASU.

Made in Japan

Habibah Sion
ASEAN Comp.
Education 1 Group

My Japanese experience can be expressed in several ways unique to my own individual impressions. In general, Japanese education has evolved rapidly from the postwar era to fulfill the nation's needs for an advanced and progressive nation. The current educational structure has strong emphasis on building the young generation with a firm balance between mind and physique. In addition to the above, Japanese citizens still possess their warmth, friendliness, and an honest attitude with an obvious respect for punctuality. Although Japan has been a closed society now with a policy to become very 'international,' the English language still takes a back seat in Japan. Thus, communication in Japan was a real headache.

The colourful wave of flower arrangement called 'Ikebana' and the strict discipline of the tea ceremony reflect the wide range of culture that the

land of the rising sun can offer. From the well-known electric goods to the famous bullet train, Japan has developed the most complicated underground and aboveground transportation in the Asian region. On-the-dot timing, safety and comfort have been the religion for the Japanese transportation system.

'Oishii-desu' is one word rightly deserved by the unique Japanese cuisine, which emphasizes the original taste with minimal additives. Last but not least, the whole Japanese experience can be summarized by saying 'Sugoi (Wonderful).'

My Impressions of Japan

Mazlan Bin Haji Yahya
ASEAN Comp.
Social Welfare Group

I visited Japan through JICA's Youth Invitation Programme, which took place from November 5 to December 4, 1997. During that one month, I learned various impressive things such as about its culture, traditions and sophisticated technology.

What surprised me was the attitude of the reception staff, who were endlessly greeting the visitors with smiles and always say "Irasshaimase." Imagine that those people do this all day long and almost every day. Moreover, other people act in the same way when working at the shopping center and restaurants.

I also realized cleanliness is important to the Japanese people. In addition to their neat and tidy dress, the clean and pretty appearances of the cities caught my attention, the highways, subways, the Shinkansen, Ikebukuro, Hiroshima, Kyoto, Nara and Osaka were all clean without any trash. Through the observation tours to various facilities, I actually saw Japan's advanced technology and excellent operations. I was most impressed while visiting Hiroshima. I was very eager to see the place, and the reason is obvious. I saw a movie, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Atomic Bomb Dome, and Peace Memorial Park there. I could not help letting some teardrops falling down to the ground. I cannot but hope that this incident will teach people a lesson that wars profit nobody.

There is so much to say about this wonderful

experience that I had in Japan over the past 30 days. However, no matter how hard I try to think or write about it, these are the only words that can describe what had actually gone through my heart and my feelings, too.

I hope the programme will continue to help strengthen the ties between our cultures and build a better understanding between our people.

To everyone I have met, especially the Social Welfare members, our coordinators, Haru-san, Miyuki-san, Mommy-san, "thank you so much" seems to be a trivial expression to relate my feeling here. And to the Social Gang, thanks for the memories, I will never forget you. And "shall we meet again?"

■ Asia

■ Indonesia

A Letter to Friends

Nina Fivi Oktavia
Social Development Group

Perhaps you know a saying that goes like this: "If you don't know them well, you can't love them." These words, which we often hear, express one's desire to become friends with the people we have just met. I think these are the most suitable words for us, who, participated in the "Youth Invitation Programme" and had a quick look at the Japanese way of life, through observation tours to different places in the country, exchanges with members of the young generation, and stays with Japanese families in order to know Japan, which is called the "Asian Tiger."

When we first arrived in Japan, as had been expected, we at first felt out of place. We tried hard to adjust ourselves to Japanese society and the customs, which have little in common with Malay culture. So it was natural for us to have many questions, which sprang up from the gap between our preconceived ideas and the reality, and therefore we made many mistakes.

To our pleasure, those efforts were rewarded. With Japanese participants, we exchanged jokes, held discussions, sang and danced together, and even bathed together. We also visited many different places for observation. Every time we encountered something new, our horizons were broadened. Also, while staying in Japanese homes, we introduced our respective cultures to each other, and enjoyed a pleasant chat. We really had an exciting time.

We fully enjoyed ourselves, and none of us could even imagine that the days in Japan would pass so quickly. But the last day came eventually, and our excitement reached a peak at the farewell party. Yet still, we need to think, amidst the limited time left for us and the excitement we presently feel, that this one month has, in reality, not been such a short period. There are many things we gained here in Japan. Our broadened minds, and the new ideas and perspectives obtained, will change our ways of life

from now on. I think what we are taking back home to Indonesia are not only souvenirs, but a sense of responsibility to God and our nation, which has been confirmed by this invaluable opportunity.

But this is, of course, a matter of individual's way of life. How we live depends on the life we decide to live. Let's believe it will be naturally decided by each one of us. I say this because we will sooner or later determine who will live and how they will live.

You know, we can decide the life we want to live. You can go to any place you like. So, let's watch over one another and see how we will live by taking advantage of this experience.

The First Step Forward

Adis Noer Rachmi Prima Dewi
Economy A Group

I must thank God for the luck I had in being able to participate in this "Youth Invitation Programme." For me, this programme means the first step in my life to move forward into the future, and, therefore, I want to utilize this excellent opportunity. I should also note here that this programme will give us the courage and enthusiasm to meet a steady future.

Through participating in the "Youth Invitation Programme," I was able to gain a lot of knowledge and perspectives, as well as being able to improve my personal qualities. I am proud to have been able to see the fairly valuable culture that the people of Japan have nurtured for hundreds of years. I would also like to express my respect for what I have seen.

Again, the homestay was a very interesting experience that enabled us to understand the ordinary life of Japanese people. Another impressive experience was the friendship we developed with the Japanese fellow participants. I hope this friendship will continue forever, and I wish the same about the sincere affection and friendship that I developed personally with my host father, mother, and little brothers and sisters. My host family accepted me like a real family member. Two days were too short and felt like a mere moment to me. I did not want to part from them. That feeling is the most important part of my life now.

Things like this are fairly difficult for me to

forget. I did not want this programme to end soon, but everything having a beginning must come to an end in due course. To my regret, we cannot participate in this programme again. I hope this programme has proved to be significant for all the participants, as well.

Again and finally, it was a great pleasure for me to meet all the people, including the Japanese and Philippine participants, the patient and kind coordinators, the participants from Indonesia, and my host family. I am sure I will remember all of these people forever with warmest feelings.

The Fruit was Sweeter than Anticipated

Poppy Karlina
Economy B Group

I can still remember, vividly, how I felt when my host family came to meet me, and when they brought me back to the hotel after I stayed at their home. Yes, the former was the day when my host family would come to meet me. My fellow members, like myself, were wondering this and that about that day. We all knew our Japanese was insufficient. We also heard that some of the host families had not experienced this programme before and that some could not speak English.

After the meeting with the host family I was stepping into a life with manners and customs totally different from my own. Although my host family looked very kind, I was still a little anxious that no one spoke English, that they did not know a lot about Indonesia, and that it was the first time for them to be a host family. But because of my own personality, I could not keep silent. I tried to speak various things about Indonesia, in spite of my scant knowledge of Japanese.

After the dinner on the first evening, all the members of the family got together for the first time. I talked and showed my host family the photos of my family at home and postcards of scenic beauty in Indonesia. All of them seemed to listen intently to my poor Japanese. What pleased me at that time was that the family members, besides trying to listen well, asked me various questions as they saw the

photos and pictures.

Though being puzzled by their unexpected questions, I earnestly responded to them, thumbing through my magic key, "Nihongo 21." As a result, by actively utilizing this conversation book, our communication went on, though not smoothly, of course.

During my stay at their home, we shopped and saw sights together. On the evening when the relatives joined us and we had dinner together, we had a fireworks party, and we frolicked until midnight.

And the day finally came when we had to say good-bye. When I was brought back to the hotel by the family, I could not hold back my tears, and my heart was filled with a sense of gratitude. My anxieties about staying with a Japanese family, now that it was over, turned out to be nothing to worry about. As an Indonesian saying goes, "What is expected to be sweet is not always sweet, while what is expected to be bitter is not always so." In other words, doing something is far easier than just worrying about it. I think that was exactly the case.

Through the homestay, I realized that a lot of differences in culture, language and religion, will not always be obstacles in our loving, caring, and respecting one another as human beings.

An Unforgettable Homestay

Evy Anggraeni Barlianti
Agriculture Group

The homestay, as one of the programmes, has remained in my mind as an unforgettable memory for me. I was full of anxieties, wondering if I would be able to communicate with my host family and how I could adjust myself to the family environment. Once I actually visited their house, however, I felt such tension gradually dissipating.

First, my eyes were captivated by the sign "Selamat Datang (Welcome)" in the living room. I felt grateful, from the bottom of my heart, for their warm-hearted welcome. They treated me as a member of the family. They were also careful about my food restrictions and to see that the flavoring suited me. Every time I tried something, they asked

me if the food was all right with me.

The host family that looked after me was running a dairy farm. As I major in stock raising at my university, while having the homestay, I learned a lot of things from the father regarding how to raise cows. I believe this will be helpful in my future study and research. He instructed me on things from the breeding method to milking. Thanks to the advanced automation, none of the work was exhausting there, while in Indonesia we still have to do most of the work by hand. In the morning and evening, I also helped with feeding the cows. I learned about how to handle the milking machine, as well as about the distribution of dairy products, which I am going to utilize as comparative factors.

My host family lived in a mountainous region with a comparatively low temperature. It is also suitable for producing hay as fodder for cows, because the meadows grow well.

I cooked Indonesian food for the family, and I was happy they generally liked it.

Also, they invited me to go out for a walk. I went out with my host family and had a good time. I keenly felt that all human beings wherever they live, are the same.

I gained an unforgettable memory. I will visit Japan again when I have another chance some time.

The Unforgettable Days of the Homestay

Luthfi Fauzi Maskati
Education Group

What most excited me in this programme was the homestay, in which I became a member of a happy family living in Asahi-cho in Yamagata Prefecture.

On the first day, the mother invited me to join a volunteer activity, which I was told is carried out by the people in the local community every Saturday. The mother introduced me to her colleagues.

On the second day, the father and the mother took me out sight-seeing. Since we walked all day long, we felt exhausted when we came home. According to the mother's advice, I decided to go to bed earlier than usual.

The next morning, began the last day of the

homestay. "Ohayogozaimasu, Uzi (Good morning, Uzi)." Mother tried to wake me up, but I could not easily get up. When I became awake, it was already after quarter past seven. Both the father and the mother were waiting for me at the fully prepared table. When I apologized for having overslept, they answered, "Daijobudesu, Uzi (That's all right, Uzi)." These words kept on echoing in my mind.

From Sapporo with Memories

Nasiruddin Munawir
ASEAN Comp.
Education 2 Group

The touching time which I am waiting for by the wind at the window of Lusi Sapporo Hotel there is nothing more to say.

I can only enjoy the beauty of Sapporo waiting for snow falling, but the snow is not coming until the time for leaving.

I am here in a faraway country
a strange country without a sky
only the kimonoed girls hold silk umbrellas
to shade the silence and doubt
of one thousand dreams beyond time

Interesting, amazing, impressing or boring
together in one from night until morning. Even the
snow could't fall to make thousands of guesses in
my inner being.

But I remain here in this faraway country, a
beautiful and lovely country.

To all participants
let's speak heart to heart
to strengthen our friendship and fraternity.
Remember once we were together.
Tomorrow may not come again, but the
memories will remain.
Share together this closeness.
Lean on each other in times of weakness.
Trust each other in times of difficulty.
We'll meet tomorrow wishfully.

How Wonderful Japan is!

Muhammad Iqbal Mochtar
ASEAN Comp.
Health and Medical Services Group

First, thank you for giving me a chance to express my impressions about Japan. Before visiting Japan, I only had a narrow and simple mind regarding Japan. In my opinion, Japan was a small country completed by its people who worked hard every day, were strong in preserving their culture and with no interest in other people.

Actually, Japan is a big country that has succeeded to place itself in the first ranks among all countries in the world. The most important factor is that Japan may reach this success because of the high attitudes of the Japanese people, including their discipline, diligence and pride in themselves etc. I'm frightened to see how hard Japanese people work every day. About 10 hours every day, they work seriously, continuously, without making jokes, getting bored or tired. These things caused them to know their job in detail and be experts in their fields. As for discipline, I saw something to admire when I was at Tokyo Disneyland. When we went to a theatre, we had to stand in a long queue that took 4 hours. The long queue was controlled only by rope, but wonderfully, nobody jumped over it, and everyone still followed the line. With such an attitude, Japan can build various sophisticated facilities, provide professional services and be successful in its development.

But in its cultural aspects, unfortunately, Japan seems to be sinking in a cultural adaptation process that directly makes its original culture appear hazy. There is a tendency for Japanese people to take western culture especially on life styles, hair styles, clothing styles, reading materials, TV programmes, etc. Maybe this is the consequence of being an industrial country.

Once more, Japan really gained a valuable experience from its defeat in World War II with the atomic bombings. They have been feeling the war as only reminder of destruction and destroying. Nowadays, Japan forces its power to create a peaceful and united world through social activities

such as providing funding and sending its experts to other countries, Friendship Programmes, etc. Japanese people always say, "No more Hiroshimas, No more Nagasakis," as their promise to avoid war and destruction in the world.

It is not impossible that the next time Japan will hold the most important role in the world. Why not!?

■ Asia

■ Malaysia

An Impression of the Japanese

Noor Azman Bin Ali

Economic and Financial Management Group

I learned, through this programme, that Japanese people are very polite and kind once they get to know each other. I was deeply impressed by their special manner of treating the participants, and we should learn from such hospitality. Their attitude of respecting and praising others must be one of the factors that led this programme to success. In the question-and-answer session in the interaction programme, the Japanese counterparts did not express what they really felt. Unless the participants have an objective viewpoint in looking at things, it is likely that they will not be able to reach a conclusion properly.

Japanese society underlines the efficient use of time. This is the best way for the Japanese to have learned from their accumulated experiences. We noticed a spirit of punctuality all through the programmes. At times, it happened that language became an obstacle, but I realized that, as long as the operation of the programmes was efficient, and as long as the problems were dealt with properly, the result would not be spoiled.

Looking at the people moving about all day and night, I had a quick glance at what was behind Japan's development. From this lesson, I learned that we should do more to see that the rise of materialism will lead to the improvement of the moral senses and spirit. Also, the principle of environmental conservation, as was seen in the economic development of Fukushima Prefecture, was equally significant in this kind of thing helps overcome the negative effects of development.

Thus, I have come to appreciate the exertions of those who organized this programme so it would meet the expectations of the participants from many different backgrounds.

Homestay

Shanmugam a/l Thiagarajan

Small and Medium Industry and Manufacturing Group

The homestay experience gave me unforgettable memories. My host family was quite wealthy, but their manner of accepting me was something to be respected. My Japanese father, Mr. Susumu Funaki, and his wife were both very active, although they were over sixty.

On the second day of the homestay, I had an opportunity to participate in the "Firefly Fiesta," which was held at a nearby stream. Many local people, including children, came to enjoy this festival. There I chanced to speak with a young Japanese fellow. Because of our language difference, our conversation did not flow smoothly, but language was never an obstacle for exchange. We parted after speaking for twenty minutes.

Two days later, my host family came to see me at the hotel, with a copy of something written in Japanese. And what an excitement! It was an article about that "Firefly Fiesta," with my name printed in it! I was told it was in the newspaper that 90 percent of Kanazawa citizens read. For the first time in my 32 years of life, I was blessed with the luck of having my name printed in a newspaper. And what was more significant for me is that it was in a foreign newspaper. That turned out to be both historic and the sweetest experience in my life. I cannot be too grateful to all the members of my host family and JICA.

A Memory That will not be Forgotten

Kamal Bin Pardi

Agriculture Development Group

On September 18, 1997, it was 4:30 a.m., when each of us, participants was already awake. We felt restless to see "the land of the rising sun," a land none of us had ever stepped into. On the first afternoon, we had a chance to take a walk. We were surprised that not very many people were walking. When we were on the subway, however, we could then tell why.

In the Japanese language lesson, we started with the first episode of what was called a "conversation between a cock and a duck," a confused and incoherent communication. When talking with the Japanese participants who could speak English, we had active conversations. On the other hand, when the group had some participants whose English was not sufficient, some member always volunteered to become the interpreter. We were looking forward to the In-house Seminar with the Japanese participants. Mt. Fuji attracted our interest, but it did not appear. Yet, the next day, the shy Mt. Fuji, as they called it, showed itself, as if it had heard our desperate wish to see it. "Separ takraw" was introduced, and the Japanese participants showed improvement after they played it so hard that they developed bumps on their heads and got sore feet. The dances of "endan and bolia" aroused the people's interest, too.

The word "Tomimura" excited all of us. Each of us started anticipating the appearance of the second episode of the "conversation between a cock and a duck," and it did happen. They asked about the airplane, but our answer was sparrows in the paddy field. The point we would like to underline is that, although we carried around with us dictionaries and a book on the Japanese language, we Malaysians and Japanese—people of two different nationalities—were still able to communicate with each other. I cannot forget how I enjoyed fishing and going to the fields. The time of parting was very sad, and made me shed teardrops. The grape picking and potato digging afterward helped me forget the sad experience for a while, but it will never be forgotten in my memory.

The visits to different historic places never failed to impress us. We shed tears further in Hiroshima, probably because we felt how horrible the atomic bomb must have been when it was dropped during World War II. We also felt respected as Malaysians, by the two Hibakushas (victims of the bombs), whom we met there.

Japan — we wish to come back to this land some day.

The Japanese People — Some Aspects We Came to Know during One Month

Siti Salbiah Bte Hj Raduan
Education Group

We started to wonder about various things when we visited Ueno Park. There were lots of tents under the leafy trees. We thought we came to a camping site, but later we found out that those were the cardboard houses of homeless people. I cannot help expressing my great astonishment that in Japan, a country known for its national wealth, there are so many people without homes to live in, who have decided to live in the park. How would they spend the four seasons?

When I witnessed, in the evening in the park, a young Japanese couple, I nearly fainted. The boy was almost naked, while the girl was taking off her clothes one by one, without showing any sense of shyness. This symbolizes a moral collapse. Have they forgotten that they are proud Asian people? Only they themselves should know the answer.

One month is not enough to learn the mind of a particular nationality. However, we have learned that the Japanese are an "extremely" unique people. Generally, they do too much in everything: discipline, cleanliness, joy and sorrow, fashion, technology and innovation, reading, amusement, diligence, and strictness.

This does not mean that to do it too much is bad, however that they tend to devote themselves too much to everything. We have met more than ten peoples in the world, but this is the first time we met such a delicate and sincere people. Therefore, it is no wonder that they have beaten American and European countries within a few decades after the war.

Japan Looked at from a Global Point of View

Sharom Bin Bakar
Scientific and Technological Development Group

We 25 members of the Scientific and Technological Development Group, headed by the leader, Mr. Iskandarshah, stepped out at Narita

Airport on September 18, together with 41 other participants. All of us participants were impressed at the order and cleanliness of Tokyo.

As far as we know from experiencing its systematic development and effective transportation, we can tell that Japan has achieved rapid development in every field without having caused confusion like that seen in the rest of the world.

The Rainbow City shows the marvels of the most advanced technology of Japan.

Other than that, the tours to the historic spots of unique value let us know that it is necessary to pursue development without disregarding our traditional culture.

The homestay programme and the interactions with our Japanese counterparts turned out to be significant. They sufficiently stimulated the spirit to pursue technological development and to evaluate the happiness of the next generation, as well as helping us consolidate a sense of unity.

Development, like a mountain, can never be reached only with high ideals. It requires both enthusiasm and a spirit to love the country.

Japan proved that itself, and other countries, should set this point for guidance. In every field, Japan is far ahead.

As Malaysians, we believe this visit to Japan will be able to change our points of view and attitudes about creating energy and ideas. — factors required by Malaysia to become a developed nation by the year 2020.

Fusion, technology, learning, and high spirits are the short cuts for success and development.

Impressions of Japan

Mohd Rashid Bin Kanchil
ASEAN Comp.
Economy 1 Group

Prior to my visit to Japan, my impression of the nation was largely acquired through secondary information and my direct contacts with many Japanese people in Malaysia. The country, among other things, has the most hard working people, punctuality in time, high work ethics, and a rich culture and tradition.

The one-month stay in Japan has strengthened some of these impressions that I had. The excellent infrastructure and the close relationship between the government and private sector are also strong elements in Japan that have made it highly successful in the business world. Japan's big population and focused mind have also made it successful in international sports. These strengths, supported by comprehensive planning and availability of various sports facilities, make it easier to search for new talent.

Through observation and discussion with the local people, I realized Japan is now facing various problems. However, it is my belief the root of the problem lies in the fact that Japan is becoming an extremely materialistic country, which is leading to moral decay and instability in the family structure. This is the result of too much freedom with little or no laws to suppress the negative elements.

My Homestay Experience

Mohammad Bin Mentek
Abd Ghani Bin Ghazally
Abdul Rahim Bin Ishak
Asri Bin Ab. Rahman
ASEAN Comp.
Public Administration A Group

Expectations

As Malaysians, we were told before coming to Japan about the old Japanese life style. Our expectations were to have a first-hand experience living with a Japanese host family in a suburban or village area. But it didn't really turn out as we expected, because we all we stayed mostly in situation with modern Japanese family life.

First impression

As most of my host family lives in the city area, we can hardly see them living and practising the old Japanese values. We were wondering whether the Japanese family were beginning to lose their Eastern values and slowly accepting Western values into their life styles, families and society.

Experience

It was a surprise when we were warmly welcomed into the family, and a simple party was organized by a family member. The special dinner for the guests,

including a steamboat, was "Oishii desu ne." The two-day programme was very tight, as we were all taken to a lot of beautiful and historical places by the family. Everything was so interesting and fascinating. At night we had a chance to try us hard in the kitchen to make some famous Malaysian dishes,—and the Japanese liked the taste though they had originally feared that it would be hot and spicy.

Another exciting experience was to have a Japanese bath called 'ofuro' and sleep in a Japanese mattress. We had fun and learned to play a Japanese card game called 'Uno' and shared knowledge about each other's country culture by exchanging views and opinions. The photographic session with the host family left unforgettable memories, and I should not fail to mention exchanging souvenirs as a token of appreciation. The two-day period with the host family was too short. It was a little bit tiring yet full of fun, excitement and sweet memories.

Conclusion

Time goes by fast, and by the time our visit had passed, by there was nothing left but sweet memories of the time we had enjoyed it with the host family. That was not the end but only the beginning of a new relationship between us and the Japanese family. It started a long-lasting experience, which will be brought back home and be shared with our family, friends and colleagues.

■ Asia

■ Philippines

Japan Up-close

Lorenzo D. Paran III
Education Group

Clearly, this study-tour programme has achieved what it set out to do—that is, build ties between the Philippines and Japan by building ties between both peoples. I myself have begun, as I am sure all the other participants have, to look forward to that day when we shall all meet again, whether that next meeting will be in the Philippines or here in Japan. I am hoping that it will be in the Philippines so I can at least try to return the hospitality and kindness that I have been shown these past weeks.

Japan's greatest attraction, I am sorry to say, is not Mt. Fuji, Tokyo Tower, or even the beautiful lakes and mountains in the countryside, but its warm and lovely people. Admittedly, this was aspect of the Japanese character that I did not know much about. The impression I had of the Japanese people before I came here was limited to the stern-faced businessman, the mean-looking sumo-wrestler, and the melancholy woman in a kimono. But now these images have been joined by other images—the smiling Japanese youth, the Japanese woman in a business suit, even the bubbly bus conductor/guide with a hearty laugh—and now I can confidently say that they can be great friends and that I will treasure my friendship with them forever.

Bridging the Gap Through Understanding and Goodwill

Madeleine Sylvia Francisco
Social Development Group

Travelling, they say, is a very good learning experience. It puts you on a front row seat to witness the events happening in a country as they unfold before your very eyes. It also gives you the opportunity to become a participant and be a part of its history. More important, it is the best way of understanding as to how and why a country came to

be. The Youth Invitation Programme gave us that chance and more.

Japan is a country where the old and the new blend harmoniously. A leader in advanced technology, it is indeed a heaven for computer and electronic buffs. A trip to Akihabara and Shinjuku will tell you why. The latest car models and sophisticated equipment can be seen everywhere you go. The efficient transportation system and advanced communication networks have practically bridged the gap between urban and rural living standards.

Amid the abundance of high-tech facilities and modern day amenities, Japan has successfully preserved its rich and unique cultural heritage. Old castles and temples stand proudly among high rise and modern structures. A number of women in kimono can still be seen making their way through the railway stations together with other men and women in business suits and fashionable clothes and interesting, colorful hairdos. The Japanese language is still being used predominantly despite the country's stature in the international arena. The custom of bowing to acknowledge, greet or show respect is still prevalent among both the young and the old. In the countryside, rice fields and mountains are beautiful sights to behold among the pachinko parlors and other commercial establishments. Loyalty to and value on work, as well as the emphasis on the common good-traits that have contributed to Japan's rapid economic growth are still very evident. While trying to preserve its niche as an economic power, Japan strives to protect its environment for sustainable development and does its share in the maintenance of world peace by being a staunch advocate of a nuclear-free world.

Needless to say, the programme has afforded us the chance to enrich ourselves intellectually and allowed us to reflect and take stock of ourselves as a people. Admittedly, we have a lot to learn if we want the Philippines to be as progressive as Japan. The experience and the learnings which we have acquired during one-month-long stay will indeed help us in our effort to become a newly-industrialized country by the turn of the century.

As the programme comes to a close, a feeling of ambivalence prevails within us. While we look forward to reuniting with our own families and old

friends, we will surely miss the things that we have grown accustomed to and come to love like the ryoku-cha, the hashi, the hot bath, the yukata and the common expressions like Sumimasen; Hai dozo; Toire wa doko desu ka. And, of course, the delicious Japanese cuisine.

Above all these, we will miss Japan, which has become a second home to us, and our new-found friends — the programme organizers and coordinators, our host families, our counterparts and even each other (Filipino co-participants).

As we say "Sayonara, Japan," we bring with us all the fond memories as well as the hope that you have learned from us as much as we have learned from you and look forward to more fruitful undertakings in the future.

Japan — A Unique Blend of Culture and Economic Gains

Jose V. Camacho Jr.
Economy A Group

Friendship, to be true and long-lasting, must be deeply-rooted. It must be based on mutual trust and solidarity in spite of glaring diversities and differences in attitude, socio-economic status, culture, beliefs, values, traditions and political ideologies. But to engrave friendship fully in one's heart and mind, a full grasp on how people interact and socialize must be experienced; their voices of struggle and victories be heard, and their beliefs and lifestyle be understood. Indeed, mutual trust and understanding have been the essence of the Youth Invitation Programme of Japan.

Rich and unique culture...

bustling and busy metropolises...

humble yet fascinating Japanese people...

From a dramatic and dark past painted in its history, Japan has remarkably risen up as one of the world's leading nations and economic giants undoubtedly symbolizing hope and fresh vigor in attaining economic prosperity. The horror of war and conflict did not hamper the Japanese from rebuilding and reconstructing their nation.

Indeed, their process of modernization has been unique. It emphasizes pragmatism, homogeneity and

hard work. It entails discipline, sacrifice and belief on the part of the Japanese people; their spirit of collective will and oneness have also been needed to attain progress and industrialization. In spite of its limited natural resources, Japan was able to have its people—its precious human resource—to work hard for development. This development, indeed, has benefitted every single Japanese so they could obtain a high quality of the life and standard of living; and Japan even extended these fruits of development beyond its boundaries with the end view of international peace and for the sake of prosperity for humanity.

However, caution must be exercised for development, and social transformation has its cost. Some precious values and rich cultural traditions can become eroded. Passiveness and the loss of identity start to creep in. Close family ties and value for human life must not be sacrificed in exchange for material gains and temporary benefits.

So indeed, the Japanese people exert an effort to balance economic gains with preservation of their treasured values and culture. The question is how to sustain such balance. And if indeed a trade-off is inevitable, the question is which must be accorded priority and up to what extent will it affect the Japanese national life and future as we enter the next millennium.

Smelting

Arlene Malto Lorejo
Economy B Group

smelting
a mushroom cloud
a purple haze, then flesh melted
structures crumbled; eyesockets hollowed
a dead testimony in history
suddenly
Hiroshima stands
words burst
from pages
rivers choke
streets crawl
decapitated
yet, such darkness
gave birth to light, hideousness
beauty; violence-peace.
A lei of cranes I lay.

Hiroshima shook me.

The video was shown and years of dead history melted away. The sight of the innocent children, who if not dead, were maimed, had my throat aching. The thought of them wandering, confused and lost, tormented me. The chaos and destruction of lives and property were a horror.

And I began to reflect on the presence of nuclear bombs to which I was previously indifferent. There is only one conclusion. There has to be peace. This is a promise.

Japan: A Sight to Marvel at...And More

Gemma C. Falgui
Agriculture Group

Awe-struck. This is how I felt the first time I stepped on Japanese soil. During this brief 28-day stay, I learned, imbibed and savored Japan in its entirety—an experience to surely last a lifetime and maybe, even in the afterlife.

The awe started at Narita Airport, where we breezed through without a hitch, and it lasted up to

the very end. Our itinerary ("hectic" is an understatement in describing it) took us to an array of interesting places from far north to down south; All continually amazed me with the contrasts each one offers from the other: from the fast-paced city life in Tokyo to the serene and uncomplicated life in rural Ogata-mura (in Akita) and Takko town (in Aomori) ; from the dynamic and flourishing industrialized centers to the calm and slowly decreasing agricultural areas in the north; and from the innovations of modern life in Tokyo to Japan's majestic past in Kyoto and the sad past and lessons learned from Hiroshima, among others, all impressive and rich sources of learning.

The programme also made it possible for us to meet and make friends with a lot of Japanese people: from the curious seatmate on the JR Line in Tokyo, to the insightful farmers of Akita, to the more than hospitable host family in Aomori, to the friendly guides and drivers of chartered buses, to the gracious officials of associations who hosted us, to the very approachable coordinators, to the patient English translators, just to name a few of the more than a hundred others, all of whom have shown genuine kindness and warmth.

Of course, not all has gone smoothly during our brief stay. Homesickness crept in after the first week and became our worst enemy. The language barrier was something we have to contend with at times. Due to constant practice, we learned the art of hopping from one activity to another on time, where a minute or two counts. After savoring Japanese cuisine for so long, we began to crave our Filipino food of back home. The emotion-filled goodbyes, with the concomitant tears and embraces, to new-found friends were scenes we hated most. Other than these, though, everything went on well.

Looking back to the past 27 days and 19 hours (as I hand in this piece) into our 28-day-stay in Japan, I must say that the experience changed me greatly, not only in terms of the added weight I gained from eating delectable Japanese cuisine, nor the learning imbibed and the friendships bonded, but in ways I never expected. This brief visit will forever be impinged in my memory (and captured in the 10 rolls of films I used for every photo opportunity I unhesitatingly took). Simply put, Japan is epitome of

many things a developing country, such as the Philippines, should aspire to become someday.

Sayonara and domo arigato gozainashita for the memories, Japan, truly a sight to marvel at...and more.

Friendship and Unity among ASEAN Countries

Maria Josephine E. Duque
ASEAN Comp.
Economy 2 Group

I believe that like my fellow participants in the Youth Invitation Programme, our experience in Japan is one which we will cherish for the rest of our lives. If there is one goal of the programme that has met with a great degree of success, I believe it is the goal of promoting unity through mutual trust and friendship. The bonds of friendship we have built are simply irreplaceable.

The group discussions and social contacts with Japanese counterparts, the homestay programme and the month-long travel around Japan with other ASEAN nationals have given me rich insights to my neighboring countries' cultures and, to some degree, the workings of their economies. I believe that these first-hand interactions have given me and other participants a deeper understanding of each other to the extent of maybe erasing our preconceived prejudices formed from our exposure to the mass media as well as previous brief and limited contact with nationals from our respective countries. Most important, I believe that the programme gave me a lasting impression of how despite our diverse cultural backgrounds (i.e. differences in religion, race and languages), we remain united in our desire for peace and prosperity for all the people in the world. This is our common dream. May we all continue to strive towards this dream in order to turn it into a reality.

■ Asia

■ Singapore

Seeing Japan the Way It is

Pang Khee Meng Alvin
Education Group

Right from the beginning since our arrival in Tokyo, we were well taken care of by our two coordinators, Hasegawa-san and Takano-san. Their friendliness warmed our hearts. Their care somewhat eased our bouts of homesickness, especially on days when the chilly air in Tokyo made us wish for the tropical sun we are used to having in Singapore. The petite, well-mannered Murakumo-san from WYVEA joined us in the second week. I began to observe how the coordinators work closely together to make us feel at home and enjoy to the utmost our stay in Japan.

The first highlight of our programme was a 3-day In-house Seminar held in Gero where we had fruitful discussions with our Japanese counterparts on the education systems in Japan and Singapore. The breathtaking scenery with rolling hills, green pastures and hot springs in Gero completed an idyllic picture within a rustic setting, which we could never have a chance in Singapore to become acquainted with. It was also in Gero where many of us had our first experience taking a Japanese-style bath in the hot spring.

In Ishikawa Prefecture, we visited several schools and paid a courtesy call on the mayor of Kaga City. We also had an opportunity to experience some aspects of Japanese culture, such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement and Japanese archery. Undeniably, the best way to see and learn about the Japanese way of life is to immerse ourselves with a Japanese family. The homestay programme was the most memorable part of our sojourn in Japan. The warm hospitality, generosity and friendliness of our host families touched us. Though language may have failed us, we were still able to communicate with our host families through other means. In fact, their genuine care and concern transcended the language barrier: and we did not need to rely on words to realize the emotional bonds we had already

established with our host families. I could sense the heavy atmosphere when bidding farewell to our host families at the railway station.

Hiroshima was where the observation tour began. It is a historic city with a tragic past to tell: the horrors of the world's first atomic bombing. We visited the Peace Memorial Park, which has become the symbol of Hiroshima as an eternal peace commemorating city that has risen like a phoenix from its ashes. We watched a touching documentary entitled "A Mother's Prayers" which moved some of us to tears. The tour ended with a day visit to Kyoto, the old cultural capital of Japan.

Reflections

Low Cheh Chuan
Social Development Group

My hands shot up instantaneously when the group coordinator asked for a volunteer to write an essay about this trip. A friend of mine, Harris, looked at me and said jokingly, "Gomasuri?" That hardly seems to be a plausible reason to volunteer myself. Well, I have given a lot of thought during the course of this programme and I sincerely wish to express my heartfelt thoughts for all to know.

Inevitably, there are differences. Differences in language, physical outlook, customs, culture, values and others, which all add up to what seemed like an insurmountable barrier. Nationalism accentuates that further: the convenient label that separates you, a Japanese, from me, a Singaporean. The questions remain: "Are we really that different?" and "Does it really matter if we are different?"

The first important lesson I learnt was the debunking of this myth. Perhaps more important was how easily the barrier could be overcome. All it takes is an open-mind and an open-heart to unleash the power of friendship. That is what happened. We learnt about Japanese culture and lifestyle, and came to appreciate their differences. Furthermore, through interactions and discussions with Japanese youths, we found that beyond that facade, we have more points in common than we thought, such as our capacity to be kind, compassionate, tolerant; our worries and problems: our thoughts and fears.

Friendship is the bridge that will allow us to come together to share our problems and help each other along the way.

Such friendship did not come naturally, and it took a while before we could adapt to a changed environment, and finally see beyond our differences. Singaporeans are generally more frank or blunt at times and, in my personal opinion, tend to complain a lot. However, it is not out of malice but what we are accustomed to. Even though we may complain at times, I am very certain that we are all full of gratitude and really appreciate all that was done for us. Our lovely coordinators: Eiko, Miyuki, Minato – how they looked into our every single need and displayed show of kindness and understanding. JICA, for their most generous spending and elaborate planning that made this trip possible. I also cannot forget the staff and volunteers of the Osaka Youth International Exchange Federation for being such hospitable hosts and coming up with such an interesting programme. I shouldn't forget the Working Youth Welfare Association, either.

Beyond showing our gratitude, I hope we do not bring back only beautiful memories but more importantly that we have sowed the seeds of friendship. And may they blossom for a long time to come. To all the wonderful Japanese friends and people I have met here, "Sayonara," I really hope to visit all of you again, and please do come to Singapore.

Reflections on Our Days and Nights in Japan

Peeris, Adrian Reginald
Economy B Group

We left Singapore full of anticipation and anxiety. Our brief orientation seemed to provide us only with basic "survival skills." Yet nothing prepared us for our first contact with the Japanese. A friendly smile and a warm "Ohayo gozaimasu" from our coordinators helped ease our tensions and set a happy tone for the rest of our stay in Japan. We soon began a one-week general orientation which gave us a sound grounding in Japanese society, economy and history. The highlight of this orientation was

informal contact we had with Japanese volunteers for "Learn Japanese on the Move" and a specially organized In-house Seminar in Yamanashi. These programmes gave us the chance to dialogue with the Japanese and to learn about their way of life.

When we remember the Kansai region, we think of JICA's Osaka International Centre and Chugoku International Centre in Hiroshima. These truly were homes-away-from-home. We will also remember the many efficient and interesting factories and local governments we visited. We will also remember the warmth and hospitality of 24 Japanese families who shared their hearts and homes with us. And so, as we leave Japan, we take with us a shared experience of long sake-toasts, chit-chat sessions and the warm Japanese people.

The last few lines of Robert Frost's poem "The Star" are especially poignant and best reflect our feelings as we leave this land of the rising sun.

"... and when at times the mob is swayed
To carry praise or blame too far...
We may choose something like a star
To stay our minds on and be staid..."

Our "star" will be the memories of our days and nights in Japan and the lasting friendships we have made here.

Discovering Japan

Nazerene D/O Ibrahim
Economy A1 Group

One month ago, JICA's "Youth Invitation Programme" brought together 20 Singaporeans who were strangers to one another. One month later, we have become good friends who together explored the exciting sights and sounds of Japan. What struck me most is the way Japan has created an impressive balance between modernity and traditions. Not only did I experience the fast-paced, mechanical life of urban Japan, but I also discovered the warmth of its people and their hospitable nature. The highlight of my visit was the weekend homestay with a Japanese family. It gave me intimate insights into the typical Japanese way of life. It taught me that the Japanese are not very different from me, that they, too, value family life and customs. As I leave Japan with

wonderful memories and plenty of o-miyage, I shall always remember it as a truly dynamic nation that succeeded through the trials and errors of history. The images of Mt.Fuji, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, peaceful Shobara City and the beautiful castles and temples of Kyoto are forever imprinted in my mind. I shall never forget this rare opportunity that helped to deepen my understanding of Japan. At last, for me the mysteries of Japan have been pried open in a most pleasant and memorable way.

One Month in Japan

Quek Soon Buay, Dorothy
Economy A2 Group

For one month between 19 June and 18 July 1997, we were given the golden opportunity to experience life in Japan. In this one month, we encountered many experiences which enabled us truly to appreciate Japan's culture, traditions, and customs. The systematic and well-structured programmes allowed us to have a deeper insight into the Japanese way of life.

The informative lectures about Japan greatly enhanced our knowledge of Japanese history and economy. The Japanese language classes were very enjoyable and facilitated our interactions and exchanges with our Japanese friends. The visits to various institutions such as the Edo-Tokyo Museum and Budokan were very educational and interesting. We were greatly impressed by the commitment and efficiency of the staff from different organizations.

Our stay in Kyoto was a refreshing change from the busy pace of life in Tokyo. We were able to immerse ourselves in Kyoto's rich historical and cultural heritage. Our homestay programme was truly a memorable encounter. We were given the unique opportunity to experience first-hand life in a Japanese family. Words can hardly describe the special relationship that we have formed with our host families.

The visit to Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and Museum was a touching experience, while our stay in scenic Kurashiki was relaxing.

We will bring back with us many indelible

memories about the different faces of Japan. We have made many friends and a new family in Japan. We are deeply indebted to JICA, JICE, JEC, the Kyoto Youth Hostel Association and the coordinators for making our stay in Japan so memorable and fruitful.

Impressions of Japan

Foo Say Jiam
Luke Chen
Kalaivani Ramu
ASEAN Comp.
Economy 3 Group

Each one of us had come with differing perceptions and expectations of Japan formed through our own unique experiences prior to arriving here. However, after spending a month together--attending lectures, meeting and exchanging views with Japanese people, visiting companies and enjoying beautiful sights—we have come to agree on some aspects of the distinguishing features of Japan that have made an impression on us. They are as follows:

Diligent and Disciplined People:

The Japanese have a lot to be admired. From a young age, the tradition of being hardworking and disciplined has indeed made them a distinct group. Their commitment and dedication are seen both in school and at work. Their accommodating nature and hospitality have impressed us deeply. Their education system has produced a disciplined and loyal workforce driving the rapid growth of her economy in the post-war period. With the advent of the 21st century, Japan has shown that she is adjusting her education system to foster individual creativity and expression. This will elevate Japan to an even higher level of performance and competitiveness through a balanced mix of creative "gun-slingers" and dedicated supporting workers.

Cultural Heritage

Though the waves of modernization and internalization due to the post-war high economic growth have somewhat affected Japan's traditional culture, the Japanese have managed to preserve their rich cultural heritage. They have seen that it is well preserved and passed on to the younger generation.

In our month's stay in Japan, we visited and saw many old relics of Japan. From temples and bridges to traditional weaving houses and tea-houses, Japan has mastered the ability to juggle the "old" and the "new" with remarkable precision. The importance placed on such preservation is something all countries can learn from. Such rich culture helps to balance a nation that is developed and has adopted modern ways.

Technological Advancement

With modern methods come new technologies and new ways of thinking. The Japanese have shown an amazing talent in learning, adopting, adapting and innovating. Their ability to learn quickly and customizing to local needs have worked well. Moreover, their competence in the deployment of computers in innovative areas has enabled them to be extremely efficient. We have seen computers capable of sketching personal portraits with an incredible resemblance. We have seen computers and robots used to automate many stages of an automobile assembly plant. This ability to innovate and design new applications out of existing or new technology is something we wish our own countries could emulate.

Japan is gradually but surely recovering from her bubble economy crisis. Although domestic growth rates are still low compared to the double-digit rates in the 60's, Japanese multi-national companies (MNCs) have managed to adapt to unfavorable exchange rates and high domestic labour costs by investing more and shifting their production facilities to developing countries. With the forthcoming economic, educational and political reforms, we are certain that the enterprising Japanese will be able to innovate new solutions and catapult their nation to a new level and role on the global stage in the 21st century.

■ Asia

■ Thailand

Memories from Japan

Pronchan Thaprunpung
Education Group

Japan is a country with a rich civilization that has lasted over two thousand years. We can say that the beautiful and graceful culture, which history has long nurtured is the pride of the nation. At the same time, the country has beautiful nature. We can give examples endlessly; but to name some, they include shrines and temples, and traditional arts, represented by "Kabuki" and "Noh." It seems that these represent the characteristics and spirits of the Japanese, which still throb ceaselessly in the veins of modern Japanese people. Japanese people seem to have various faces. While their technology is of a standard that leads the world, the country areas represent a quiet and tranquil atmosphere. On the other hand, the dynamic metropolitan areas show a well-balanced national power. One greeting that impressed me was "irasshaimase." This word, which expresses "welcome" from the country of the rising sun, namely Japan, made us feel that we had a glance at the nation's wealth and the profundity of its tradition.

Experiences like these make us feel excited. We are happy to have had an opportunity to visit this country. The worries and anxieties, which were deep in our minds from the time of our arrival at Narita Airport, turned into joy and pleasure. Hearing this greeting with smiles, all our anxieties and fatigue disappeared like magic.

In the In-house Seminar, through the community life with the Japanese participants, we were able to learn about the culture and customs of the land of the rising sun. From another point of view, new friendships were built up between the Japanese participants and us Thai participants. Beyond the language barrier, we discussed many different things. We recognized the differences in our values and national characters, and established friendly relations. We found all of the Japanese participants promising and wonderful people, and they tried hard

to speak English for us. As for using English, we had similar experiences in the towns we visited later. We were impressed by many Japanese who tried to communicate with us.

Other than that, what was impressive was the appearance of towns with efficiently conserved nature, clean and tidy roads, tunnels bored through without destroying forests, harmoniously arranged rows of houses that were made of wood and paper. I hear many young people are constantly making efforts to maintain these beautiful assets of the country. Thus, I was sure the country had a bright future.

Regarding the homestay, every one of us was nervous at first. But the moment we visited Fukuchiyama, a local city blessed with beautiful nature, our anxieties vanished. The ancient city of Fukuchiyama showed an exquisite blend of the new and the old. Received by gentle and thoughtful host family members, we were given an excellent welcome. We smacked our lips over delicious cooking, and talked together, cutting down on time to sleep. We had such an exciting time that two nights and three days were too short. We were all deeply impressed to be able to have new families. At the farewell party, we shed tears all the time, as we didn't want to part with them. Wishing to see them again some day, we went back to the hotel with painful reluctance.

The Japanese are a well-disciplined and punctual people. They also seem to give a hand to those in trouble and to wish for the happiness of others. To those who were involved in the programme, we express our deep gratitude for their best and utmost efforts. In the future, we would like to make the most of the knowledge and experiences that were gained in Japan.

I wish good luck to this beautiful land of cherry blossoms, a country blessed with a graceful history. We are proud to have visited this land and will treasure this experience for the rest of our lives.

The Flying Cranes of Friendship

Dararat Weerapong
Social Development Group

This "Youth Invitation Programme" was established, from the ideals of ASEAN leaders, and above all those of the Japanese leaders, to build peace and friendship within the region. We 25 members of the Thai Social Development Group were given the opportunity to participate in the programme, and we actually could learn from each other through exchanges with Japanese people.

In fact, the act of learning does not choose places. We can learn about Japan even in Thailand. Yet still, through coming from our homeland to a place of our neighboring friends, Japan, by actually seeing what the country is like and how it changes, we feel that new views and perceptions have started to grow within ourselves.

As we participated in various programmes in Japan, starting with the Pre-departure Orientation Programme in Thailand, I could see both positive and negative aspects that are clearly manifested in Japanese society. This country has such a mixture of excellent Western modern technology and the Oriental culture, rich in profound spirituality supported by its long history.

What we realized little by little, as we learned about various things, was that we should not think within a single nation's framework, but of problems that involves the whole human race, beyond national borders—because we are all living together on this one blue earth.

In Hiroshima, we keenly felt the importance of peace and friendship, which can never be created by a mere chance or by weapons, but will solely derive from the beautiful minds and hearts of the people.

And today, in addition to the one thousand paper cranes that a little Hiroshima girl named Sadako folded, tens of thousands of cranes are being folded. They represent the strong desire of these people, who want the crane of ever-lasting peace and friendship to keep flying in the air, covering entire blue sky.

Homestay

Kanokkan Weeragul
Agriculture Group

Friendship—this is what each of us seeks, what everyone is trying to obtain. That was also the case with us of the Thai Agriculture Group. Friendship was the biggest purpose to this Youth Invitation Programme, and we were able to gain much friendship. When we stepped out of the airplane at Narita Airport, we were greeted with the cheerful smiles of our coordinator. And all through the In-house Seminar, through the three days at Evergreen Fuji, we never stopped laughing. Every day we were happy and very friendly to each other. Most impressive of all was the homestay. It was the most precious source from which our friendship sprang.

Our host families and us were different, not only in language but in nationality, religion, culture, and customs. However, once we lived together, we felt very comfortable with each other. Before the homestay actually started, we all worried about many things, like whether each of us could get along well, whether there would be any problems. On the day our host families come to meet us, we all talked about what the homestay would be like, and whether it would turn out to be as we imagined. Finally, the day started when we lived together with Japanese people. At first, we were timidly speaking with our host families, with fears that we might make some mistakes. We, therefore, did not communicate well with them and were under pressure. But as we spoke Japanese as much as we could, mixing it with English and body language, which was the simplest language and one we did not have to pick up, we came to understand each other much better. From then on, we were able to see many different things in the Japanese way of life. For example, I learned that the mother did most of the housework, that the guest will be the first to take a bath, and that the family members use chopsticks and have miso soup at every meal. These things appeared in novels, and they were new experiences to us. Also, our host families took us to places that helped us understand Japanese culture, like a calligraphy class and Japanese dances

we had never had a chance to appreciate before. They also took us out to enjoy places like Mt. Fuji, seashores, and an aquarium. All of these things were amusing and exciting, and we were able to get used to the Japanese family happily. All the family members were always friendly to us. The anxiety that we had about them at first gradually turned into a sense of solidarity. They were also thoughtful about what we ate, and cooked Thai instant ramen (Chinese noodles) into Japanese yakisoba (fried noodles) and flavoring Japanese soup into a Thai style. I think what contributed most to gradual strengthening our solidarity were the efforts, between both the Japanese and Thai parties, to adjust ourselves to each other to become good friends. In the end, we did not want to go back to the hotel. We even felt like staying with them another week. When the time of parting finally came, feeling strong attachment to one another, we were able to say goodbye, firmly convinced that there would be another opportunity to meet again.

During the three nights and four days of the homestay, nice feelings like affection and a sense of solidarity were generated before we realized it. They came out of the full efforts of both the host families and ourselves. As a result, we gained more than we had first expected. We all would like to treasure how we are feeling now as long as we live.

Kanoko

(My host family spelled my name like this, after the Kano River in Numazu.)

What We Have Seen and Felt

Nurak Jewsew
Economy A Group

First of all, we are all very grateful that we were given the opportunity to visit Japan from September 10-October 9, 1997. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of Japan for making this programme possible. We also would like to thank all the staff concerned who really looked after us with great care and attention. They really helped us to smoothen all our difficulties. Their kind consideration made us feel at ease during our one-month stay in Japan.

The following are the impressions that pressed our hearts during the 30 days.

1. The way of life of Japan

We got many experiences and learnt the way of life of the Japanese in various cities from a crowded city like Tokyo to smaller-sized city like Matsuyama, where we learned directly from our host family. We also visited other cities like Hiroshima and Kyoto during our Observation Tour.

2. The state-of-the-art technology orientation

Japanese companies constantly introduce new technology to the world. We visited many companies and organizations, which were prompted to introduce new technology for better life. During the 30 days we were detected by the infra-red sensors of the hotel doors, which opened for us, and at the counters at the doors of public buses when we stepped on.

3. Infrastructure development

From central Tokyo to the rural area of the country we were not given different facilities. The same level of transportation system, telecommunication system, computer-controlled vending machines, and so on were provided everywhere.

4. Environmental protection

The scenery in the rural area on our travel from Hiroshima to Kyoto and from Kyoto to Tokyo was absolutely beautiful, with abundant greenery and clear rivers. We wondered how the Japanese balance their economic growth with environmental protection and the presentation of nature at the same time.

5. Systematic administration

Our group was administered by many organizations from JICA, JICE, JYH and EPIC, which all were very expert in their work. We were particularly impressed with the matching of programmes and documents. Everything came on time and was completely planned in advance.

We will remember that we were treated as honorable guests and were accorded sincerity and friendship from all participants. We learnt to exchange *niyage* with each other. We learnt to say, "Itadakimasu" before our meals. Thanks to the government of Japan and all staff in charge who tried their best to help us through the 30 days of the programme. You will be with us forever.

What Impressed Us in Japan

Charuwan Supantanel
Economy B Group

The morning of the first day, when our group arrived at Narita Airport in Japan, the sun was about to show itself from the horizon, like a light to tell the beginning of our new days. The morning sunshine looked as if it symbolized what we were going to gain: new knowledge, ideas, awareness, and people's warmth.

Everyone of us was proud that we were given the opportunity to participate in this Programme. Each individual was able to obtain new knowledge and experience that we would be able to utilize for our own lives, as well as the development of our society and country.

The friendship that we obtained while staying in Japan will serve as a bridge of beautiful relations between Thailand and Japan. It will further consolidate the ties among the Thai members, and will also unite us with the participants from other countries.

We are grateful to all those involved, who exerted themselves in the enforcement of this Youth Invitation Programme in order to make the world better place to live in.

We extend our gratitude, from the bottom of our hearts, to all those involved in this Youth Invitation Programme, the personnel from the Thai and Japanese governments, JICA and JICE, and all the other people who gave us wonderful memories and friendship.

"Minasan no kotowa wasuremasen" (I will not forget you all.)

Essay

Wattana Thongchaiya
ASEAN Comp.
Environmental Protection Group

The coldness at the winter season in Japan, especially in Kushiro, was matched only by the warmth and hospitality of the Japanese people, and the endearing friendships developed among the

participants of the ASEAN Component Environmental Protection Group.

Every participant felt this warmth and kindness, especially when it was manifested during the In-house Seminar and our respective homestays with our host families.

We all enhanced our friendship during this programme. So now we can take that and additional knowledge acquired from the lectures and tours to the different ecological centers and facilities here in Japan back home with us.

As we go back to our respective countries after this programme, we all look forward to further cooperation among Japan and the ASEAN countries, especially in the field of Environmental Protection.

On behalf of all participants of ASEAN Environmental Protection Group, the Thai Environmental Protection Group would like to thank JICA and the Japanese people for the 30 days that will remain in our hearts for the rest of our lives.

Kopkun Mak.

Domo Arigatogazaimashita.

■ Asia

■ Bangladesh

Japan is the Best

MD Tajul Islam

Nurse and Medical Technologist Group

In the world Japan is the best.
The people of Japan continue flying in the sky.
Like the pigeons with their works.
Polite, good behavior is their ornament.

When we take delicious foods
Seems it I am living in Japan

In the world, all know Japan is the best.

They create a bright culture
Just like the lovely moon.
When we feel about punctuality
It likes a current as Japanese

Hiroshima, the name A-bomb exploded.
Yet, this is our voice and prayer
For ensuring peace in the whole world.
Let all the souls here rest in peace
For we shall not repeat the evil.

Japan is the best
We know it's best.
The world knows it's best.

■ Asia

■ Bhutan

An Experience of a Lifetime

Bhutanese participants
Education Group

It was not for nuts that Japan was called "The Land of the Rising Sun." We all had our own expectations and aspirations about Japan; but when we actually did land in Japan, we were left flabbergasted.

Japan, though one of the world's most advanced countries, still has the beautiful things of nature. Looking at the metropolitan cities, alongside the lush green forests and the deep blue sea, make us wonder how it has managed to have its cake and eat it, too. For us the sun never did seem to set. Each new day dawned on us like a fresh new light, and we had to pinch ourselves several times to tell that we were not dreaming.

Our one-month stay in Japan was wonderful, and we will cherish it like a sweet, sweet dream.

■ Asia

■ India

Impressions of the Indian Delegation to Japan

Seelamanthula Sreenivasa Raja
Education Group

Our visit to the Edo Tokyo Museum and Budokan Stadium in Tokyo were a good introduction of the Japanese history and culture. The Atami In-house Seminar was like 'Sangha' with a good exchange of ideas in various fields. It started with hesitation, but very soon we all began to enjoy, and now we will cherish the memory of the hot spring experience.

The homestay programme provided a practical experience of oneness in human feelings and a microscopic view of Japanese culture. Our visits to the various science centres deepened our knowledge. The school visits were enriching our professionalism, and the discussions were extremely useful for the future education system. The tour to Takayama city was a pleasant experience giving a panoramic view of the landscapes, hills and the greenery of Japan.

The observation of the A-bomb Peace Memorial Museum at Hiroshima gave us a chilling experience, and everyone in their hearts prayed for global peace. It was a marvelous experience to observe sea life at the Osaka Aquarium. The sightseeing in the ancient capital Kyoto gave us glance into the history and traditions of Japan.

The one month friendship programme was superbly planned and well executed. It gave us a blend of thrilling experiences, full of excitement each day. The programme was educational and excellent in all respects. We sincerely thank all the officials concerned in making this programme a grand success. We shall cherish these sweet memories and carry the golden message of friendship to our mother land, 'BHARAT.' May we all live as friends forever in this beautiful loving world.

JAI HIND.

■ Asia

■ Maldives

A Memorable Trip

Adam Shareef
Education Group

It was a trip which brought us life, happiness and excitement. It reached the most advanced technologies in the world. It showed a peaceful life and one of the most developed countries on earth.

Japan is a unique example for the developing countries. Its success in life mostly depends on its people's well disciplined behaviour and education system as well as hard work and punctuality.

Educated citizens are the strong pillar of construction and developments. Compulsory education is the main point of attraction, with a 100 percent level found in Japan. And preservation of Japanese cultural properties and natural beauties for the next generation are also good examples for both the developed and the developing countries.

Japan possesses a rich cultural heritage including a wealth of art objects, historic sites and monuments resulting from its long history. Cities such as Kyoto, Shimane, Osaka, Hiroshima, Tokyo and their surrounding areas as well as the Miyajima Island and Mt. Fuji are places, where traditional culture, the temples, shrines, most beautiful valleys, lakes, mountains wonderful scenic sites are well preserved and protected.

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

■ Nepal

A New Horizon

Rajendra Kumar Gurung
Education Group

For me Japan was the country of the Rising Sun, the country of Sumo wrestling, the country of frequent earthquakes, the country where the first Atomic Bomb had been dropped and the country whose development was like a fairy-tale for the rest of the world.

I always had a fear inside me regarding Japan before my visit here, but I found the people over here very disciplined, very punctual, very loving and caring. Wherever we went for our specialized programme namely Atami and Komagane, we received a red carpet welcome, and the people were very warm and loving.

I could not resist myself narrating an incident during our stay in Komagane. One day I was doing some shopping, the shopkeeper asked me where I was from. When I told him that I was from Nepal, he was very happy, and many questions he volleyed towards me, I did not mind answering him. Later he presented me a beautiful hanky as o-miyage (a gift). I was certainly touched by his gesture. There were many more such incidents, but I cannot relate them due all to the lack of space for writing.

For me now Japan is a country of love, a country of peace and prosperity, a country of beautiful people and, of course, a country of friendship. I am leaving this country with a heavy heart, but I am carrying with me tonnes of love. Thanks God, I don't have to pay the airlines for the heavy luggage (the love).

■ Asia

■ Pakistan

A Dreamland: Japan

Irfan Ahmed

Civil Servant (Social Welfare) Group

Japan, the land of rising sun, had always been a dreamland for me. Colourful kimonos, wooden slippers, printed paper fans, tatami houses, ikebana, martial arts, and tea ceremonies were some of the aspects of Japan that had often fascinated me even before coming over here. When I got the opportunity to visit Japan under the JICA sponsored Youth Invitation Programme, it was like a dream coming true.

Along with nineteen other members of the Pakistan delegation, I visited Sajima, Niigata, Kyoto, Hiroshima. In Niigata, we had the unique opportunity of staying with Japanese families during the homestay programme, and to observe the typical Japanese lifestyle. One cannot overlook the presence of two distinct cultures in Japan: the traditional one and the modern one. However, the family system appears to be intact, at least partially, and seems to have endured through the era of industrialization and high living standards. This is very encouraging for a developing country like Pakistan, as we often see Japan as a role model.

Hiroshima left a deep impression on me. The horrors of Hiroshima are not over yet. The physical and emotional traumas have been inherited by the new generation, and the tragedy continues. The world cannot afford another nuclear catastrophe. Even the thought of the big blast, the electromagnetic impulse wave and the nuclear waves can send a tickling sensation down one's spine. I left Hiroshima with a heavy heart. It's high time for the world to decide to rearrange its priorities concerning peace and harmony over the globe.

■ Asia

■ Sri Lanka

Green Memories of Japan

Abdul Caffoor Zarook

Education Group

I am very happy and satisfied about having had a wonderful and enjoyable trip in Japan. During my stay for a month in Japan, I could participate in many programmes that were well arranged by JICA. Almost all of the programmes were well arranged and effective.

I found as a teacher, that the In-house Seminar and exchange of ideas with the teachers of Tateyama gave me the chance to know about the education and school system in Japan. School visits in Tateyama gave me practical knowledge about the school system of Japan.

Moreover in Tokyo, too, I had a nice time with my friends and the visits to the Diet Building, and the University of the Air. In Kyoto, cultural and historical places were both informative and enjoyable. The visit to the Peace Museum in Hiroshima and meeting with Mr. Akihiro Takahashi, a survivor of Atomic Bombing in 1945, were, I feel, very rare opportunities in my life. These visits once again reminded my friends and myself how much of a curse war is to humanity and nature.

My final destination was a visit to Saga, which is a prefecture full of natural beauties and kind-hearted people. I together with my friends visited many schools and the Prefecture Office in Saga and had first-hand experience with Saga's educational achievements and development. The warm welcome with the Sri Lankan National Anthem given by the pupils of Saga Commercial High School impressed all of us deeply. The two-day homestay in Saga is another event that I highly appreciate. The warm welcome given to us and the way the host parents treated all of us will be a matter of "GREEN MEMORY" in our minds forever. Finally, it was indeed very sad to say "SAYONARA" to our host-parents.

In conclusion, once again I would like to mention that this was a successful trip for all Sri Lankan of

Education Group. On behalf of Sri Lankan participants, I sincerely thank the officers of JICA, UNESCO Associations, and the Government of Sri Lanka for giving us this chance. "Domo Arigato Gozaimasu."

■ Asia

■ Mongolia

I Shall Return

Battai Chuluunhuu
Working Youth Group

Yes, I shall return to Japan some day.

I will never forget the 30 days that have passed so significantly. The days were so full of impressive stories that, if all were written down, they would make a volume. What captivated my eyes, when I first arrived in Japan, were the highly developed infrastructure and the people's diligence. I also realized, for the first time in my life, that land is so valuable and precious here. Again, having interactions with the people in different places we visited was such a wonderful experience. I cannot forget, even for a moment, my experiences in having discussed together with Japanese participants, and when we joked with each other at times. I was able to make friends with many people. I will certainly miss the places of such scenic beauty as Wakayama, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Osaka. Never will I forget, for the rest of my life, the homestay and the rice heaping that I experienced at my host family's for the first time in my life. As I look back, I feel like crying, even now. I thank all of you people in Japan for giving me such an opportunity to see, hear and understand your country. I believe that, if human beings treat one another with love, there will no need in this world to resort to war or violence. I would like to devote the rest of my life to international friendship, especially to a comprehensive partnership between Japan and Mongolia.

■ Asia

■ Myanmar

Japan Through My Eyes

U Soe Ko Ko
Education Group

We arrived in Tokyo on 10 September, 1997. We were greeted with a warm welcome and considerable hospitality. I found Japanese people very helpful, and they regarded us as their own brothers and sisters.

The one-month stay in Japan gave us the chance to observe and discuss the Japanese education system and make study-visits to the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, and schools. In my eyes, the students appear well disciplined. The relationship between teachers and pupils is based on frankness and sincerity. It is unique. Through the In-house Seminar and other discussions, we made friends with many young Japanese people, and we could exchange our views. All the discussions were useful and applicable for the participants. By exchanging information, we have come to understand the systems and activities undertaken in our two countries.

In my opinion, "The Youth Invitation Programme" is a unique one. By participating in the programme, we could experience and observe the true face of Japan, and through exchanges, deepen our understanding of the Japanese people. It will also make the existing relations between Japan and Myanmar further strengthened and consolidated.

In brief, as a Myanmar participant in "Youth Invitation Programme," I would like to express my gratitude to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the World Youth Visit Exchange Association (WYVEA) and other related organizations that gave me the opportunity to come to Japan to exchange friendship with young Japanese people. I also thank my coordinators from JICA and WYVEA, who rendered all necessary assistance to us during the whole trip. Besides, the experiences I gained and the knowledge I acquired will stay in my memory, and they will be shared with my colleagues in Myanmar.

I am proud of having been a participant of this programme.

■ Asia

■ Cambodia

New Ideas About a Heavenly Island

Tan Saroeun
Education Group

We learned about Japan while we were studying at junior high school. Then we only knew this country on the map and the reputation of the emperor in the Second World War. This made us feel frustrated and eager to see this country.

One Cambodian saying goes "Hearing one hundred times is not like seeing for once with one's own eyes." When we first arrived here, we were very surprised because everything is under orderly computer and electronic system—especially the areas of culture, education, science and so on.

The situations that impressed us are the following: The Japanese are people who fulfill trials in both work and creation even though all infrastructure in this country, especially in historical center, was destroyed by war. The government tried to collect just the bare; trace that remained from the war to create video tapes, paintings and so on to maintain cultural treasures. But even though the government made efforts to restore and look after such culture, the youth also like copying Western styles. As for the education field, we also were interested in it because it has laboratories from the kindergarten to the university level allowing students to practice with their own eyes. Moreover, the teachers go to conduct research at the government offices and private companies, about what they need, for training the students in the right direction. Although the education field is eager about development, we noticed that ordinary Japanese people and students can't speak English well. This is one reality about the powerful economic country: people there think that even if they cannot speak one word of English, they still get a job with a good salary. On the other hand the foreigners have some difficulty with the language and informations, because English is seldom used on the notices in the streets or roads or on advertising boards. We think Japanese government wants to spread its native language widely, especially around the world.

Finally, we would like to thank the Japanese governments, JICA, NAYD and the Japanese people for the Grant Aid' and for sponsoring the Cambodian Education delegation for the one-month study tour of Japan.

Thank you.

■ Asia

■ Laos

One Earth, One Heart in Japan

Bounphakanh Sisanonh
Civil Servant (Agriculture) Group

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

One thing that touched our hearts most was the behavior of Japanese people: the Japanese acted the same towards us Laotians. Japanese people's success in life mostly depends on their well-disciplined behavior as well as hard work and punctuality.

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

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.

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

Thank you!

■ Asia

■ Viet Nam

The Country of Blue

Dinh Chung Phung

Civil Servant Group

In early summer, I visited Japan for the first time.
In the sunlight shining like a gold,
I arrived in the land of the sun.
A shining island, shining like a jade,
floating on the vast ocean.
I travelled from south to north.
Wherever I went, blue jumped into my sight.
Tokyo — high buildings made me feel dizzy.
Densely lined with cars, the roads reflect the shades
of blue trees on the street.
Hokkaido, the northern island — where snow
festivals have taken place many times.
The carpet of blue spreads far beyond reaching into
the sea.
Mt. Fuji, with its top covered with snow for millions
of years, has a jacket, refreshingly blue, on its
shoulders.
Seto Ohashi Bridge — with its epoch-making length,
unites blue islands floating out of the sea.
Kyoto — the land of a millenary history.
Kinkakuji Temple stands aloof in green woods.
Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, pressed hard by
its harsh experience.
The large beautiful houses raised high nearby, with
gardens of blue-green trees accepting various
thoughts of profundity.
Amid the blue, I brood over friendship
between the heart of the Japanese people and mine.

Japan within Myself

Ngo Thi Kim Ngoc

Economy Group

When I found out I was going to participate in the "Youth Invitation Programme" in Japan, my heart was filled with excitement and joy. The programme prepared for our Economy Group has proved to be a carefully-organized, perfect, and impressive one.

Although it lasted only 30 days, while staying in Japan on this programme, we could actually see and listen to the voices from prosperous towns like Tokyo and Osaka. Business corporations with sharp-minded workers, industrialization, modernization, supermarkets, and to the people walking briskly in town — all of these made impressions on my memory.

I felt the energy of the people living here welling up from roads, underground arcades, and bridges over rivers and in town. The life of the people seemed to be always expanding and developing. I also think that the reviving force that made Hiroshima what it is today is the source of Japan's great vitality, while in the human mind, the flame of desire for peace burns ceaselessly.

Stepping into the well-organized towns, my heart beat faster, when the sounds of automatic machines from factories, auctioneers' voices from the Tokyo Central Market in Tsukiji, and the alert cues and signs at the Tokyo Stock Exchange Market started echoing in my head.

What was most impressive within this programme was the homestay—the days I spent with a Japanese family. I earnestly prepared for the homestay by studying Japanese with fellow members of my group, as well as by learning about Japanese customs and ways of thinking. But all the worries and anxieties gradually disappeared, as my host family and I step by step established a close friendship based on enthusiasm and sincerity. As best I can tell, besides being intelligent, Japanese people are always conscious of conserving their traditional culture. The Japanese are devoted to the firms they work for, and they have a strong sense of community. They are also sincere, open, and have profound feelings. Aren't these characteristics shared by both of us, to serve as a prerequisite maintaining and developing friendship between the young people in both Japan and Viet Nam? These characteristics will also make a bridge that will, day by day, strengthen the friendly relations between Japan and Viet Nam. Those happy days went by. At the same time, the fruitful days of this programme are coming closer to an end. I must bid farewell to the coordinators, who guided us all through this programme, and the other members of the group.

My luggage, which is going back home with me, was packed with a lot of memories collected in Japan.

"I stood here when I arrived.

When I leave, memories will remain"

A Note on My Memories of Japan

Pham Quang Tuyen
Education and Related Areas Group

I visited the country known for cherry blossoms, Japan, and there I saw sights of Tokyo, Miyazaki, Hiroshima, Osaka, and Kyoto. It was the first experience to me. Although it was a short period, many things are deeply implanted in my mind, and my attachment to Japan is now beyond description. This has become one of the special spiritual scenes in my life.

I had imagined that people living in one of the most developed countries, like Japan, would tend to have an individualistic and highly businesslike character, and lack in a sense of collaboration as a group. However, the people I met through this programme, irrespective of age and sex, and regardless of their professions — civil servants, self-employed, housewives, and others — were all considerate of others' feelings, polite, gentle, and loved their guests from the bottom of their hearts. Probably Japanese people have been able to enrich themselves because they always assume the humble attitude of trying to learn from others. In discussion they open themselves and respect others. Japanese people have such an Asian quality of collaboration and cooperative spirit. I felt this particularly strongly while visiting the suburbs of Tokyo.

I think Japanese people's diligent nature, brightness, and efforts to improve themselves on their own have naturally led them to conserve their traditions and cultural assets, as well as boosting them up to the level of a developed nation that is respected by other countries.

Modern towns, busy supermarkets; areas only for skyscrapers; parks with many green trees; meandering blue rivers with numerous bridges, small and large, on them; temples amid trees that are hundreds and thousands of years old; woods

spreading around houses and along the streets; the martial arts; traditional arts; the tea ceremony; and flower arrangement — all are manifestations of the original Japanese tradition. I think it is a Japanese quality to treasure the past and to love nature. This quality, introduced into scientific technology, may have resulted in advancement. The collaboration with achievement in the most advanced scientific technology that man has ever had has made Japan what it is—an attractive and respectable country from which we must learn.

It is pity that I cannot express, within this one page, all of what I have felt about the nature, the country.

But there is one thing I must emphasize. Between Viet Nam and Japan, we created friendship and wonderful cooperation, which have started to develop. I am sure they will grow better and become wonderful. Youth comprises the future. The relationship of our countries will depend on the young people in both countries. The "Youth Invitation Programme" will guide us to a recognition of goodwill, to harmony, to unity, to collaboration, and to relations that will benefit all of us.

A 30-day Stay in the Land of Cherry Blossoms

Ly Nguyen, Binh
Agriculture Group

I arrived in Japan in August, in mid-summer. Though I was not able to see blooming cherry blossoms, I visited the Imperial Palace and the Edo-Tokyo Museum, appreciated Japanese martial arts, and tried "sashimi"—fresh slices of raw fish. I also tasted Japanese rice wine ("sake"), and learned how to dance the "awa odori"—a traditional dance from Tokushima Prefecture—and had other various experiences.

Also, I sometimes chanced to see elderly ladies clad in "kimono" and "zori"(or Japanese sandals) at stations. It made me keenly feel that the Japanese people are always trying to treasure their own traditional culture. Again, I could experience everything, from city life to rural life. Yet, seen as a whole, there is no big difference between the city

and the country, in terms of the ways of living and the status of infrastructure development. Anyway, my impression on Japan is that everything is highly studied and organized for the benefit of the people.

On the other hand, it seems to be trendy for young people to dye their hair and dress themselves in Western styles. Also, women often behave just like Western people, by doing things such as smoking cigarettes. Some Japanese fellows I made friends with said that, in spite of their high salary, they cannot be fully content with their life because Japan has the highest prices in the world. I guess this is another problem of the modern Japanese people.

I am leaving Japan soon, and I came to feel again that Japan is a member of Asia. I believe I will continue learning a lot from this country later on in the future.

Pacific

Fiji

Fiji's Perspective

Andie Maria Agnes Driu
Civil Servant Group

"Will we actually be able to say that Fijians came, stayed and endured during their 30-day stay?" we keep wondering to ourselves.

Before departing from home, we were told that Japan is a country that has to be seen to be believed. Upon arriving in the "land of the rising sun," our impressions can only be summarised to "Wow! What is that?" and so on. This kept us imagining what it would be like for the rest of the thirty days to come. However, having arrived at the Hotel Metropolitan Tokyo, and been greeted with the many smiles, bows and "konnichiwa" being echoed from the hotel lobby, we were assured of having an enjoyable stay in Japan — not to mention being treated very much like royalty.

The orientation programme gave us an in-depth knowledge of the official system, culture, history and politics of Japan and her people. Those brilliant professors from Japan's most prestigious universities, such as Waseda and Yachiyo International University, imparted knowledge and information that were to be imprinted in our minds and that should assist and guide us in our decision-making as civil servants back home.

In preparation for the rest of our stay in Japan, we visited shrines and ate various Japanese food such as tempura, sashimi, sushi and not to mention Japanese pizza. We also saw places in Tokyo while at the same time experienced the Japanese way with our Pacific counterparts and tour guides. "Domo Arigato" to our tutors without whom we wouldn't have been able to get our message across and overcome the language barrier, which was evidently present everywhere we went. From a country that moves in a "relaxed" sort of fashion, "Learn Japanese on the Move" also prepared us in getting used to moving around the country in coach and train rides as well as boat cruises.

The In-house Seminar held at Fuji Hakone land

enabled us to exchange views with Japan's leaders of tomorrow by comparing our two countries' official systems, culture, and lifestyle. The quiet, still and misty surroundings were only to be erupted with laughter from playing volleyball and soccer, fireworks, "yagona" and beer drinking, "meke" and the rice dance over the weekend. Though the stay in Hakone area was short, we achieved our objectives of establishing and fostering mutual trust, understanding and long-lasting friendship.

Since we were always "on the move," our boat cruise around the Yokohama Harbour and the fast Shinkansen ride to Shizuoka were experiences never to be forgotten. Upon arriving in Shizuoka, we were welcomed by the rain that lasted for about 5 days, but that did not dampen our spirits. Our courtesy call on the Vice-Governor, our introduction to Japanese culture where our Fijian women delighted themselves by wearing the 'kimono' and the men the 'yukata' learning origami and the patience of the art, Japanese cooking, and paying the various visits arranged according to our respective occupational backgrounds were all but informative and enjoyable. Then came the homestay which can only be described as simply excellent. I believe what each individual participant experienced with his or her host family is beyond expressing. Finally at Shizuoka, the exchange of views with government officials enabled us to gain insight into the official system on a prefectural level.

The rest of the programme consisted of sightseeing and visits to world-proclaimed cultural heritage sites such as the Golden Pavillion, shrines and temples, the enchanting tour around the "Kaiyukan Aquarium" and the touching experience at the historical sites of Hiroshima.

The Youth Invitation Programme has given all of us the opportunity to gain firsthand experience with the people of Japan and their way of life. We have had the opportunity to socialize with them, actually participate in the tea ceremony with the "Kurinomi" kindergarten children, drink green tea, beer and sake with the many friends we made along the way and say "Kanpai." Moreover, most of us developed new talents, which we somehow never knew we had, and this was evident during the playing and singing of Karaoke.

All in all, while the schedule was hectic with long hours of travelling, the programme has been one that is educational, beneficial, worthwhile and helped us develop a sense of appreciation of another's lifestyle. If the programme was somewhat full of surprises, we can say that we came with open minds, eager to make an impact upon our return home.

Yes, we surely came, stayed and endured the 30-day stay of the Youth Invitation Programme on the land of rising sun... our land of the rising moments!!

■ Pacific

■ Niue

The Pasifik Sensei's

Sione Vatorata Richmond-Rex

Pacific Comp.
Teacher Group

Dear Nihon,

- ① A child like me with no hope
Is standing here all alone
Just praying for that special day
When someone leads the way

Chorus Pacific Teachers, we are the future
Let us learn to become better
Let us share our thoughts together
The future of our land is in our hands

- ② Together we will stand
Holding up high the guiding light
To brighten up our future
To give that child a smile

- ③ To Japanese people and your government
We thank you for this chance
You planted the seed of knowledge
Inside our minds and hearts

(Malo Tuiasosopo)

As the above lyrics suggest, we teachers came with a mission in mind--to better ourselves, our students (and thus eventually) our small nations through this programme. This was to be done through a cross-cultural exchange between our myriad of Pacific cultures and Japan and her people (and vice-versa).

We all arrived like bright rays of sunshine, with quivering senses and inquisitive minds. After the initial shock of the frantic pace and power of Tokyo (a far cry from "Pacific-Time"), we began to get a glimpse of modern Japan through lectures, seminars and the like. As a nation, Japan continues to astound the world with its technological and economic prowess, whilst still maintaining its proud culture and extremely rich and intricate heritage. Thus, it has achieved what few "cultural" nations have. As for

the people themselves, we all found Nihon-jin to be extremely polite, efficient, faultlessly punctual and friendly!!

Amongst numerous places on our tour, Hiroshima struck a chord. Having viewed archival footage of the human pain and suffering caused by the destructive power of the A-bomb, we found it hard to keep our eyes dry and emotions placid. In the Pacific islands, after the havoc of terrible hurricanes and tropical cyclones, the hardy coconut tree will recover, even after losing all of its foliage. One could apply this simile to the brave people of Hiroshima! For the survival of humanity and the world, let us hope that all nuclear weapons are eventually abolished!!!

The school visits proved to be outstanding! We will never forget the infectious enthusiasm (and extreme cuteness!) of the Futaba Elementary School (Tokyo) children and their musical prowess! Nor will we forget our savage haka performance at Subaru Gakuen High School (Mie Prefecture) and the hilarity it caused when prompting shy Japanese boys to perform it. As for sport activity, lucky for them, we didn't play rugby!! We all envy Japanese schools and their access to great resources, facilities and revenue, which most Pacific Islands school systems sadly lack.

There were many highlights, however everyone unanimously agreed that one of the most outstanding events was the homestay. Whilst a few participants had slight language problems, these were quickly overcome, and everyone then proceeded to enrich their minds about Japanese home and family life. The homestay was enriching not only to us but also to our host families, as they gained personal knowledge about our respective islands and cultures.

To everyone in Nihon, we feel greatly honoured and privileged! Domo arigato gozaimashita.

Warmest Aloha!!!

The Pacifican Sensei's.

■ Pacific

■ Papua New Guinea

An Educational Adventure in Japan

Willie Eliuda Edo
Civil Servant Group

It is now 4:30 p.m., and a boarding call has come on for passengers to board the airplane bound for Narita International Airport via Cairns. My body begins to stroll toward the international departure lounge, whilst my ears could still hear the fading sound of friends and relatives saying 'good bye.' I could feel a lump inside my throat, and the palm of my hands were cold with sweat. I could not understand the reactions in my body, but what I know is, I am in for a month-long educational adventure in a land where I only wish we and its people could communicate freely with each other.

The itinerary of the tour was very intense. We were programmed to visit government institutions, including very important officials of various government institutions, to attend lectures and seminars; and we amused ourselves with the sights and sounds of Japanese culture and traditions. We visited places which we had only learned about in our classrooms.

Japanese development is very impressive, and I only wish I could have stayed longer to learn more about many Japanese systems that have proven successful over the years in binding the sovereign nation of Japan.

The manner in which our tour was coordinated was exemplary and of the efficient culture that Japanese people have been known for many years. The people are very friendly and understanding. I have come to make friends with some people in my short stay in Japan. On the other hand, it is never going to be easy to say goodbye again to them. Tears will be shed, but as the programme is now coming to a close, only fond memories of my adventure will remain forever.

SAYONARA

Two Worlds—One People

Collin Kingston Taimbari
Teacher Group

To one growing up in Papua New Guinea, Japan was just that big giant in a very faraway land, where the sun is red in color. It was first in everything from manufacturing toys to massive ships, so we were told or read ourselves in books and magazines.

All these impressions about Japan have changed so much, though, thanks to the Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) Youth Invitation Programme.

The culture and the Japanese people's attitudes and lifestyle in general have impressed me a lot. Although Japan is so advanced, what captivates one most about the people is their simplicity, care and respect for others.

One universal language and traditions have to be the single most, if not the major attribute, to Japan's growth and technological advancement, in contrast to my Papua New Guinea, which has 850 different languages and cultures.

Flying into Obihiro Airport on that crisp July summer afternoon, my eyes were to the limits by the neatly laid crop fields going beyond the majestic Tokachi Plains. They were a welcome sight after the hustle and bustle of Tokyo.

Apart from the straight roads and fresh air of the "Bread Basket of Japan," the three things that stood out most here were the host families that took us in with open arms and loved us like their very own children.

Then there were also the beautiful children from the kindergarten and elementary schools who were so exciting and fun to be with but who just as easily, readily wept it was time to say goodbye.

And, of course, there were the members of the Obihiro Junior Chamber. They were very senior businessmen and familymen in their own right, who made us stare in awe realizing how much time and effort they had put into the programme, spending time away from their businesses and homes just to make it successful for the little people that we really were. They deserve our unreserved thanks.

Hiroshima was another world and experience of

its own. Walking the length of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum is to relive the horror and nightmare of nuclear warfare. Whatever happened at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, in Hiroshima must never be repeated.

Also the Edo Tokyo Museum and Obihiro Centennial Museum are historical treasure troves, that tell tales of thousands of years of Japanese advancement in an hour's visit.

And apart from the high heels, tight pants, colorful hair, bicycles, trains, super structured highways, fancy cars, punctuality and, of course, chopsticks, one month in Japan has not only been a total eye opener but one that has completely changed our perspective from that of a relaxed lifestyle in the serenity and peace of the calm blue seas and rugged mountains of Papua New Guinea to one of accepting the man-made forests (skyscrapers) of Japan whose inhabitants are simple and loving.

But then again—its a small world, after all.

■ Pacific

■ Tonga

Around Japan in 30 Days

Apisake Makasini

Pacific Comp.
Civil Servant Group

Touring around Japan in 30 days was a unique, yet an educational experience of a lifetime that will linger eternally in my memory. Each day unfolded a fascinating aspect of this country. Symbolically, the Japanese political, economic and social systems advocate order and uniformity. As I journeyed from Tokyo through to Hiroshima, I saw that the standard of living was equally maintained, and, amazingly, the extreme poverty I have seen in Western countries was absent in Japan.

Appreciating Japan's cultural heritage by strolling through the ancient Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines and taking numerous photographs of castles 200-300 years old in Osaka, Kyoto and Miyajima were intense spiritual experiences, despite the stress from the hectic tour schedule. Exploring the shopping malls and looking for the 100 yen shops were fun, but challenging, especially when my Japanese language was very limited, which somewhat narrowed the area for my adventure, as well as the chances to speak with ordinary Japanese citizens—not to mention struggling to make sense of my surroundings.

However, the highlight of the tour was my realization that despite our differences in culture, we share the same dreams, as well as joy and pain. The homestay at Ageo City, the In-house Seminar, and the visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum accentuated my prayers for peace and dreams of friendship.

Indeed, it was a privilege, being a participant in the Youth Invitation Programme, to share my experiences with the people of Japan. It was an honour to represent my island country—Tonga.

I wish JICA to acknowledge its foresight in building a better future for us all through the programme, and providing me with this once in a lifetime opportunity to see Japan.

Personally, I have fulfilled my objectives within

the parameters of this programme, and the reward has been worth its weight in gold!

■ Africa

■ Côte d'Ivoire

The Memory of My Japanese Family

Seri Louma N'da Genevieve

Female Teacher 2(High School or Junior High School)Group

On October 16, 1997, when I arrived at Narita Airport, I was thinking about this and that about the one month I was going to spend in Japan. I was filled with curiosity, but at the same time I was concerned about the three-day homestay in the programme. I wondered if I would get along with the Japanese family whom I knew nothing about, without understanding the Japanese language. I also learned, in the Japanese language lesson that I would have to take my shoes off in the house, and I wondered if I would successfully get used to such a ceremonious custom. As a result, my anxiety grew further.

On October 30, when I met my host family first at the welcome party in Tsuyama, I found them pleasant people and came to like them at first sight. I felt relieved, thinking that the homestay would not be so difficult with a family possessing so much love and understanding.

The reality was, however, even more than what I had felt then. They were generous and shared everything with me. They made me wonder how they could stay so gentle and frank. They were interested in me and my country, and asked many different questions. We became so close that I could no longer believe we had just met. Later in the programme, we were already like old friends. When I said good-bye, I started crying like a child that was about to part from its parents for good.

That happened although we lived together only for two nights and three days.

The moment, when I parted with my Japanese family, I will never forget.

■ Africa

■ Egypt

Japan in Our Mind

Noha Ahmed Khedr

Civil Servant 1 (Economic Development) Group

Development, High-tech, Good economy, a lot of people and a nice people, Culture, Contradictions, Hiroshima, Kimono. These were our images about Japan before coming here now!

For all of us, it was our first experience in Japan and may be the first one in the far east as well. We came from very far, not only geographically, but especially culturally. We had to face the challenge and it is a double one of knowing and accommodating the Japanese people and also our African colleagues.

I think that we had all quite an experience. Maybe it is not the same for all of us, but it is always something new. We have seen many things; we have met a lot of people; we have tried new things; and most important, we have learned.

Yes, we have learned that we can't judge people without knowing them, that we have to accept the differences even if we don't agree and that there is no end to knowledge.

The most important thing is that we've been in contact with the Japanese people. We met students, civil servants and families. We went to their houses, and we shared a lot of good moments and ideas. And just as they were helpful to us, we've been also the same to them, because knowing others is a two-way street.

It is impossible to describe our experiences on only 1 sheet of paper, but I have to say that this tour was an enjoyable lesson and again we have learned a lot about you, ourselves or even about our brothers and sisters from the other African countries.

Thank you.

■ Africa

■ Guinea

Untitled

Diallo Oumou

Civil Servant 2 (Economic Development) Group

Under the Youth Invitation Programme, we visited Japan as the Economic Development Civil Servant Group from French-speaking Africa. We were impressed by the variety and substantial contents of the Programme, which has taken place during this one month (from October 16 to November 14).

Through the General Orientation Programme, we learned about and grasped the culture, history, and economy of Japan. Lectures and observation tours were relevant to our work fields, and staying in Atami and Tokuyama was very interesting and impressive. The courtesy call on the mayor of Tokuyama City, and visits to the post office, Horikoshi Pottery, Nissin Steel, Yanai Power Station, Saikyo Bank, and Otsushima Primary School, and the homestay as well were all unforgettable. (What we found different from our countries was the way the Japanese handle work: for instance, the information system. On the other hand, we have some points in common, that we think much of the family and that our staple food is rice.) Hiroshima, the symbol of pacifism and the city fighting for the prevention of nuclear proliferation, as well as historic cities like Osaka and Kyoto also deeply impressed us.

We hope this Programme will be continue for a long time and develop so that Japanese young people will deepen their understanding of Africa.

On behalf of the French-speaking Africa Economic Development Civil Servant Group, we extend our gratitude to JICA, the World Youth Friendship in Tokuyama and the coordinators who made every effort to make our stay in Japan comfortable.

■ Africa

■ Mauritius

Japan — Mixed Feelings

Vishwanee Luckheenarain

Female Teacher 1 (High School or Junior High School) Group

Truthfully, after this long stay, now I badly want to go back to my very missed, loved ones and the places I haven't seen in a month.

Japan, once so far and strange, is now so close and familiar. The Japanese are efficient, hardworking, time conscious as well as polite, helpful and so humble. During my entire stay here, I have had a continuous collection of new enriching experiences, which will bear a lifetime mark on me. Though the language barrier was quite frustrating at times, we managed to share views on our respective educational systems from the school visits.

Wearing kimono, cooking tempura and conversing in Japanese language are memories I'll cherish forever. My heart was taken by the land of peace. The heart-wrenching reality of Hiroshima's precipitated death and time-taking rebirth was simply too hard to digest.

It is with an achingly sad feeling that I will leave my newly found friends, especially my wonderful homestay family and my coordinators with whom I developed a special friendship.

Therefore, equally as true, after my short stay in Japan, it's not easy to leave behind those beloved people and places I'll probably never ever get to see again in a lifetime.

■ Latin America

■ Brazil

Is It Really Over?

Marcus Vinicius Romano Lemos

Latin American Comp.

Social Welfare 1 Group

About a month ago we had the chance to meet. We talked to each other in some languages and we shared our laughter. Sometimes we felt that we were complete strangers, but other times we could feel that we were best friends. And we saw many things together, tasted some food and listened to different sounds together. We really enjoyed being together. Do you remember?

Please, accept your role as a world citizen. Having a nationality is really important sometimes (especially during the Soccer World Cup), but try to think of yourself as a representative of the human race, someone who is really special in your own ways. You know, working with human rights I have tried to share this feeling with many people. I have also tried hard to improve living conditions for those who live in a part of the world called Brazil. And I know that you are all trying to do the same in your countries. Social welfare is a strong bond that unites all of us in some way.

Regarding Japan and the Japanese... well, my impressions couldn't have been better. So much life and energy in so little space! High quality of life and high rates of life expectancy! But also the aging society and the problems regarding social welfare. I would like to say this to Social Welfare 2 Group : Please, let us sleep! One last question now when this whole thing is over: Is it really over?

■ Latin America

■ Chile

Friendship We Shared and Unforgettable Memories

Carmen Grolia Carreño Arellano

Latin American Comp.

Social Welfare 2 Group

It is my great honor to have this opportunity to write about the impressions and experiences during my one-month stay in Japan. This task is difficult, but at the same time, it is just like a reward to me. Because by doing this I can not only evaluate a life in a group but also express my personal view.

Now I will describe my stay in Japan in aspect that the life is made up from both small trials and some great learnings from experiences.

It should be self-evident that staying in Japan for one month is the only opportunity to learn about Japan. But I did not know that until I arrived in Japan. And now I know what I have learnt, at last.

What have we learnt in Japan? Japanese culture has been fostered for about one thousand years, by foreign societies of completely different social structure, experiences and people. Without these people, this culture should not have existed. We could know a little about that. I think if Japanese people also learn our ways of life, our Latin view will contribute to mutual understanding.

Being different is important, but being the same is also important. Sharing is beneficial to each other. Though the way of expression may be different, Latin and Japanese people have the same wish for peace. We all are willing to share joy and happiness of life, and also knowledge and technology for our prosperity.

There are various differences between Latin and Japanese people. But the words by a professor in Okinawa was impressive to me. "There are no goods or bads in cultures. There are only differences."

3. Impressions by Japanese Counterparts

To My Dear Friends— A Letter of Thanks

Kyoko Yanaru
Office employee

It seems like a long time since we were together, though in reality it has not been so long since we parted, saying "See you!" to each other. Was I dreaming? Now I'm looking at the photos taken at that time. Everyone looks terrific. Within such a short time, two nights and three days, we talked about many different things in order to understand each other, didn't we? There is one thing I learned from the experience. It was that when one wants to communicate something, words are only means. The words will be given life, only when one has something to convey, a partner and a good heart to speak with. I realized the reason why many Japanese people, including myself, have taken exchange with a different culture too seriously. It was because we simply did not know how to shorten the distance between others and ourselves. I will send this letter, with feelings of thanks, to my dear friends, who helped me realize this. Thank you very much!

The Day I Made Up My Mind

Yumiko Kikuchi
Teacher at a school for the Handicapped

Oh, dear!! That was my first impression when I entered the party room.

"Don't worry about your English. They have interpreters."

While these words of the person who introduced me were repeating in my mind, I wondered what kind of scene was just spreading before my eyes. It was like being in another country. "I may be in the wrong place," I thought, but it was too late. So I made up my mind to plunge into it, saying to myself, "Whatever happens will happen."

Amid the storm of English, English, English everywhere, I could not express my ideas at all because I had not studied the language hard enough. I am afraid I may have been troublesome for my roommates. During the two days, I firmly decided that I would come back again, next time with my improved English.

Thank you very much.

To Friends Who Spent Time Together at the In-house Seminar

Akiko Ishida
Office employee

How have you been? Looking back on the In-house Seminar, we discussed a lot of things during the three days, didn't we? Not only at discussions, but even during the free time, we, in some groups, talked about as many topics as we could think of from our everyday lives: for example, work, economy, impression on each other, country, home, culture, and life.

At first I was too concerned about my stance as a Japanese and a member of my company. As we had meals together and shared some time in the same place, however, I came to feel deep affection toward you as if I had been reunited with old friends. I wanted to know much more about you as a person, beyond any borders among us. It was a precious opportunity I could have never had in my ordinary daily life — a time when we could understand one another heart to heart. So I want to treasure that joy,

and would like to stay friends with you forever. Let's strengthen the network among us 40 participants. Let's extend it further and further.

Finally, everyone, take good care. I am looking forward to seeing you again.

Best wishes.

It's Fun Because We Are "Different"

Jinko Kurematsu
Teacher

During the three days from September 6 to 8, I participated with Indian teachers, in the In-house Seminar, which was held by The World Youth Visit Exchange Association. A few years ago, under the Overseas Dispatch Program of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, I visited schools in Korea, the United States, and Australia, and also experienced a short period of study abroad in the United Kingdom and the United States. This time I finally got an opportunity to have an exchange with people from India. On the morning of the 7, we happened to hear about the death of Mother Teresa. As we prayed silently for her for two minutes before the discussion started, I felt all the more grateful for being given such an opportunity, because I felt the programme was the beginning of my involvement with India.

Well, each person has different perception. As for the Japanese, perception varies according to social status, such as private company workers, students, school supervisors, primary school teachers, and high school teachers. And the differences are also concerned to school subjects, interests, specialty, experience, and the way of international interaction. The Indian participants were all science teachers from various parts of the country. Considering that India is nine times larger than Japan, and that there are many differences in terms of the natural environment, race, religion, language, and customs, it is difficult to reach to a consensus, even when we try to focus only on one topic. Though here comes an idea in our minds that "numbers" should be a useful tool for standardization ; still precise definitions must be made. We had an English interpreter. But the difference of language structure

between English and Japanese tended to make unexpected responses (All Indian participants could discuss in English). Whenever I found their response was different from that of Japanese people in general, I enjoyed thinking "What is the reason why?" It was a precious experience to have discussions premise that: "It is natural that we should have differences." I think this can be a way to help solve the problem of "bullying" in Japan. What is really important is to respect "differences." I am thinking of going to India, to see a lot more, and to ascertain things with my own eyes.

India has a large vegetarian population, and the Japanese generally think that this is for religious reasons. However, the fact seems more practical; I heard the Indians have their own diet according to the region and its surroundings they live in. I laughed a lot with my new Indian friends on mutual consent; "What the Japanese know about India is what it used to be more than ten years ago. India has been developing rapidly."

The Southern Wind that Blew Passionately in Tateyama

Masahiro Sanpei
Teacher

It was on September 5, that ardent teachers from Sri Lanka came to Tateyama. I was one of the Japanese participants. As we discussed the school systems of Sri Lanka and Japan and the actual situation of Japanese children, there was one thing that impressed me. A member of my group, Ms. Luwaida, a pious Muslim, brought up a question, namely, "When I was taking a stroll in Ikebukuro in the evening, I saw a girl in a school uniform walking into a *love hotel*, arm in arm with a man. I want to know how you feel about that." I was at a loss what to say, scratching my head, while our interpreter looked up to the sky. Thanks to the cooperation of the interpreter, I finally managed to explain my feelings to her. When she understood, saying, "I see," I felt relieved. During the cultural exchange, doing "karaoke," Ms. Luwaida, again, dashed away from the place the moment she saw a naked figure on the screen. I recognized again that she was a

pious Muslim. That was another memorable incident. Those three days passed like a dream, while we exchanged and shared passion and enthusiasm. I was grateful for this opportunity.

Seeing is Believing, and Meeting is More than Seeing...?

Yumiko Ishikawa
Company Employee

The participants from the six ASEAN countries taught me important things which I could not learn through books, newspapers, or TV. Language, food, religion, and culture all vary from country to country. But what is important is not to look for the differences, but to know that we are all similar. Our theme this time, "Environmental problems," is an issue shared globally. I realized that the situation and problems vary from country to country. However, I'm sure all of us finished the Seminar having the same decision in mind; "In respective countries and situations, we will do whatever we can do to save the earth. As we are all living together on this planet." After the Seminar, I felt closer to the ASEAN countries, and the TV news and newspaper articles are no longer somebody else's business to me. WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU! From an island far away, I wish your success in the future.

A Little Step for International Understanding

Haruo Kaneko
Civil Servant

After the sweating but refreshing sports exchange (volleyball), my fellow Japanese participants and I decided to ask our roommate, Mr. Song, to try the "grand bath" of the hotel with us.

"Let's go to the big bath." We use hand and body gestures, but it did not work out. Mr. Song stood blankly. At last, he was nearly forced to carry a towel on his shoulder and was taken to the "big bath," guarded by several robust Japanese counterparts.

Next morning, I was awakened by a cheerful hum.

Unexpectedly, it was Mr. Song, who pointed to the door with a quick grin, with towel on his shoulder, as if to say "Let's go." Although he had been forcibly taken to the bath the night before, he seemed to have liked the "big bath."

Through this Japanese style "naked communication," it seems that Mr. Song certainly became a great fan of Japan and the Japanese bath, as he invited me to the "big bath" again that night and hummed for me that cheerful Vietnamese song, while soaking himself deep in the Japanese atmosphere.

Receiving Indian Teachers of Science and Mathematics

Masumi Miyamoto
Teacher

"Would you like to try Japanese calligraphy?"

In the classroom of fourth graders, the teachers from India held brushes in their hands and started writing, together with the pupils. I was afraid that they might be awkward in using the brushes, but they made marvelous works. The children were overjoyed, too. I could witness a wonderful scene, where the teachers from India had learnt a value of Japanese calligraphy by themselves through experience, without any prior explanations about traditional Japanese penmanship. The Indian teachers also introduced some puzzles using numbers to the class, and every child tried with interest. Just like the teachers of science and math that they are, they taught the children the joy of consideration.

At the exchange party, we together enjoyed dances of both countries. As they danced the "Harukoma" many times, they completely learned how to do it, and expressed themselves well with their bodies. On the last day, at the farewell party, I was impressed when we danced "Harukoma" all together with the Indian science and math teachers who visited Gifu and Ogaki.

It is natural that our food cultures should be different, but I needed a first-hand experience to recognize it. Many of us have an image that people in India like hot and spicy food, however I learned for the first time that they put a generous amount of

sugar in their tea, and that they love rich butter cookies. They preferred water to Chinese Oolong tea, and they liked eating pizza and nans. I also learned how to treat the guests from other countries.

In the Seminar, we discussed the education in both countries and a heated discussion was held under the slogan, "For the sake of children."

The world is one.

I hope to overcome differences in language and culture, hand in hand with many people, and to tackle education positively for international understanding.

The 21st century is near at hand. Keeping my heart warm and full of ambition, I would like to help children be the ones to play an active role in the world with courage and confidence.

4. Impressions by Host Families

My New Family Member, Hisham

Motoko Abe
Fukushima Prefecture

The time I spent with him was very short and went by so quickly. Before receiving him, I was worried about such things as food, religion, and language. But the moment I met him, all the anxieties disappeared. He tried hard to understand our broken English. Every evening, we had a long and relaxed dinner, talking about various things. We had such a pleasant time. A friend of mine, who practices "kendo," brought a kendo costume set and equipment, and dressed them on Hisham. I was surprised that it suited him perfectly well, and realized that he was also from the same Asian region that we live in. The morning he was leaving for the hotel, he thanked us in Japanese. I wish our family had been able to speak English better, because then we could have understood each other better. I cannot forget how sad we felt after the farewell party. For my daughter, who kept on crying even after coming home from the party, we would, some day, like to see our new family member who lives so far away.

The Unforgettable Taste of Curry

Tamami Chong
Shizuoka Prefecture

I had been nervous until I met Prakash, as I didn't know about Fiji at all. When I met him at the welcome party, I felt relieved that he looked gentle. All through the three days, it was raining, so we could not really go out. Instead, he kindly played cards with my children. He also enjoyed what I

cooked, saying "oishii(delicious)," as he used chopsticks. He was of Indian origin, and brought ingredients from home to cook delicious curry for us. The curry, which he tried hard to cook sometimes wiping sweat on his forehead, tasted wonderful. At night, we talked a lot about Fiji and Japan. When I said I would like to go to Fiji, he said, "you must." It pleased me as well, when he said, "when you come to Fiji, you should stay at my place."

My Family Got Another Member

Toshitada Irimiya
Kagawa Prefecture

We are accepting a lady named Cheche from the Philippines, as our first experience of a host family. Both my wife and I wanted to have a global perspective through international information. For further information we go to International Speech Contest in Japanese every year. As the day of our first homestay was approaching, our worries began growing day by day. Wondering about everything from what to talk about, to food, to bathing, to what to do after meals to where to take her, we became fairly nervous.

However, on the first day from the moment we met her, we felt her cheerful personality had blown away all our anxieties. We had studied English conversation with tapes and NHK TV programme, but we had forgotten everything. Then, hoping to have her understand something about Japanese feelings, we responded to her English, using pen and paper, English-Japanese and Japanese-English dictionaries, a book of English daily conversation, and also used all sorts of gestures and random English vocabulary. Now we feel that "Cheche," who has returned to the Philippines is like a real daughter to us.

An Indian Participant Came to Ours for Homestay

Wataru Kawai
Gifu Prefecture

The Local Programme of the Youth Invitation Programme was held in Gifu Prefecture. The programme is supported by the Gifu World Youth. Gujohachiman International Friendship Association asked us to be a host family for an Indian participant. As we wanted to cooperate, we accepted the role. In fact, this was our third time to be a host family.

The first time, town of Shiratori-cho conducted a homestay programme.

At that time, our daughter was studying in Australia. We hoped to do something to return the kindness the host family was offering to our daughter. And we became a host family for a gentleman from the U.S., and the second time, a lady also from the country.

This time we were supposed to accept an Indian guest, and everything was new to us in terms of both nationality and religion. When we had the American guests, they stayed for a long time. What was more, they had studied Japanese in college and spoke it fairly well. So we had no difficulty in sharing time and living with them.

But this time, the purpose of the Indian woman's visit was observation and study in the field of education. She was not as fluent in English as the Americans who had stayed with us, but since we are the same human beings, we managed to communicate with each other by using hands and bodies.

What we were most careful about, as expected, was food. India is a country with a long history, and religious customs have strong influence over people's lives. In particular, since the cow has long been worshipped as a holy beast, even killing them is forbidden there. As a matter of fact, they don't eat beef or pork, while Japanese people generally like meat and fish very much. It seems difficult for me to have food restriction even for religious reasons.

The Indian participant we accepted this time was a teacher of science and mathematics. She was a noble and very charming woman. She looked very nice in

her sari, the traditional costume. The other guest who stayed in the same town was a nice fellow, who was very cheerful and liked children a lot. Both of us host families and the guests went to the "Traditional Village" in Yamato-cho the Gujohachiman Castle, and Otaki Limestone Cave. We show Japanese history and culture a little to our guests. And we were very glad to see them so pleased.

Actually we could share only one and a half days during the two-night and three-day homestay programme. Short though it was, the last day made me sad as always as we had experienced twice before. Because we could communicate heart to heart beyond national borders and language barriers.

I hope those participants will keep just this experience in their minds and memories, after they return home. Lastly, I will close this report by expressing my gratitude to those who are involved with the Gujohachiman International Friendship Association, who gave us such a valuable opportunity. I pray for the further development of the Association, the Gifu World Youth, and JICA.

A Muslim Man

Kenji Inamura
Niigata Prefecture

Pakistan in my mind ; The men all have beards, the religion was the center of their lives, they pray at designated times.

Masood, who spoke English with an accent, and my family, who could not speak English. It was so difficult for us to convey our feelings and intentions each other. For example, there was the difference in our food. While we wanted him to try Japanese food, he firmly refused to eat it, saying "No" to this and that. I keenly felt the power of his religion.

At the time of our parting, my eldest son, a nine-year-old boy, started crying. That surprised me, because he had never played together with Masood but had just hidden behind. The homestay this time gave me an opportunity to think of encounter, exchange, and relationship between people beyond time and language differences.

Another Daughter for My Family

Hitomi Nishiwaki
Aichi Prefecture

Ms. Noree from Thailand came to stay with my family for two nights and three days. My seven-year-old daughter loved her very much and was always with her, as if she had an elder sister. We had a pleasant three days, having her cook Thai food and teach us songs from her country.

Before the homestay, my family discussed how we would have her spend the three days at our place. We later learned that Ms. Noree herself had her own worries, wondering what her host family would be like and how she would cope with the language problem. So she had talked with her friends until very late at night the day before the homestay was to start. Now these worries turned out to be laughed at.

Meeting her was an experience that my family will never forget in our lives. We were able to accept her in a very natural manner. All the time from shopping to meal, we felt as if our family had another new daughter. Looking back upon the worries I had before the homestay, I feel it is true that "Fear overruns the danger." I want to know much more about Thailand and hope to visit the country some day. I am thankful to her for giving me such hopes and dreams. Through this homestay, my family could make another step for future, which will be different from our life in the past.

I hope that many other people will experience such joy.

"Jalan-jalan"

Teruko Takada
Hokkaido Prefecture

Suddenly we heard words we had never heard before, and all of us stood speechless with astonishment!! That was on the 27th, when we visited Yoichi City after going to the Otaru Aquarium. Our family had planned Ms. Fung Lai Mboi from Brunei to see and experience various things she had never known.

We wanted her to pick Japanese fruit, like apples,

pears, grapes, and peaches from the trees and to taste them. We visited our uncle's house in Yoichi City thinking; "How will she feel? It will surely impress her enough to a long lasting memory." When we were taking a break, we heard the words "Jalan-jalan, ...," coming out of Uncle's mouth. They meant, we learned, "go about the orchards and help yourself to the fruit before it starts raining." Then, we also learned that 55 years ago he had worked in Malaysia for two and half years. Little by little, our 72-year-old uncle regained some of his memories which had long slept for more than half a century. He started speaking in Malay as if a tangled string had become untied. Fung looked very happy to talk with him.

To Know the African Positive Way of Life

Kiyomi Tada
Osaka Prefecture

This time I experienced being a host family for the first time. I started with learning the geography of Botswana in the African Continent: one third of the land is desert, and village people go to the nearby river and carry back water on their heads. The city life sounded almost the same as ours, but also I learned about a peculiar custom; at the time of betrothal, the bridegroom presents an even number (about two or four) of cows to the family of the bride. And above all I was impressed that the lady from Botswana was positive and was proud of her home country and African Continent. I was also very fascinated to know that, although she was extremely busy playing the roles as wife, mother, and teacher, she had even started studying something new. She was full of spirit and never confined herself to her own gender and profession. Moreover, I was deeply impressed that her family understood and supported her working hard, and that she worked in a good environment. I wanted keenly to love my country, Japan much more.

We Will Never Forget Your Smile

Bunji Tottori
Okayama Prefecture

It was the first time for us to be a host family. Though my family members worried about the differences in living customs and about the language barrier, I made up my mind to manage with my courage. Yet, I found myself nervous, too, when I seriously asked my wife how her English ability was.

Then, on the day we were to receive our guest, we were filled with excitement and worries about what the three-day homestay would be like. More than our own worries, I could imagine how anxious our guest must have been, as she had to communicate with a family, who did not understand French at all and spoke only a little English. Yet, we could manage somehow to communicate our feelings each other only by using simple words we knew with smiles. Her intelligence and sincerity gradually enchanted our family as the time passed.

She had a deep interest in Japanese culture. We enjoyed ourselves guiding her around many places, such as a fair at our local community center, a garage sale, and the Joto Mukashi Festival (Joto Traditional Festival). Also, we introduced our guest from Africa to people in our neighborhood and in our community at every chance. This helped her to expand friendship.

We could learn first-hand about the Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire), which we previously had known nothing about. This experience moved us, and at the same time, made us think what the Japanese, including my family, must do for the future. Promising to meet again in Abidjan, she showed a friendly smile for us when she left for home. We handed her some sunflower seeds, wishing large flowers would bloom in Africa.

Dreams on Memories

Fumiyo Iwadachi
Aichi Prefecture

On the second day of the homestay, Mr. Ressang cooked us three dishes including "Fried Tofu and Chinese Cabbage with Oyster Sauce." We knew for the first time that the Malaysian also eat fried tofu, and the taste was very similar to ours. And after dinner our house turned to be Malaysia for a while, as we were absorbed in dancing and singing together.

For three days, we talked a lot on many topics, such as impact by the forest fire in Indonesia, education systems in Malaysia and Japan, matters concerning to U.S. Force Base, and his beloved wife in honeymoon... Time flew when we talked into midnight.

Mr. Ressang made Malaysia a very familiar country to our family. Our dream would expand to that this encounter may grow deeper and stronger to be a tie between two countries. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity.

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