

THE YOUTH INVITATION PROGRAMME

ASIA, PACIFIC, AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA AND MIDDLE EAST

[Report]

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THE YOUTH INVITATION PROGRAMME

—ASIA, PACIFIC, AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA AND MIDDLE EAST [Report](1998)

YOUTH INVITATION DIVISION
TRAINING AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY

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CONTESTING FORWARD THROUGH UNDERSTANDING
AND FRIENDSHIP

Memorable scenes of the Youth Invitation Programme, 1998

OPENING CEREMONY



Welcome address by JICA



Earnestly they listen to the address



Now, your official programme starts



Naginata—their very first experience(Observation tour of Martial art)

GENERAL ORIENTATION PROGRAMME



Nice group photo together (National museum of Ethnology)

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMME IN TOKYO



School visit is useful, indeed



What's Japanese school like ?



Interested in chemistry class



Asakusa, peep at Japanese culture



Thank you for memorable time

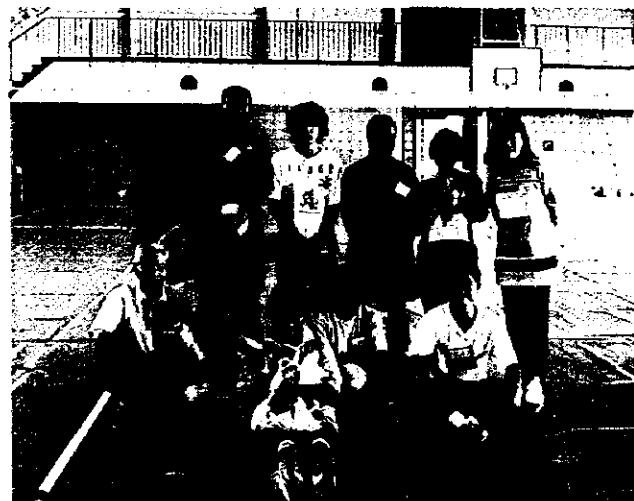
IN-HOUSE SEMINAR



We are in one world



Excited with games



We played in good sweat at gym (Sport exchange)

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMME IN DIFFERENT PREFECTURE



First challenge to calligraphy



Never do we forget this warm exchange



Observation tour is plenty of learning



Japanese tea ceremony is quite satisfactory

HOMESTAY



Sharing really good time for three days



We have a new family

Feel sad when we say good-bye



See you again soon

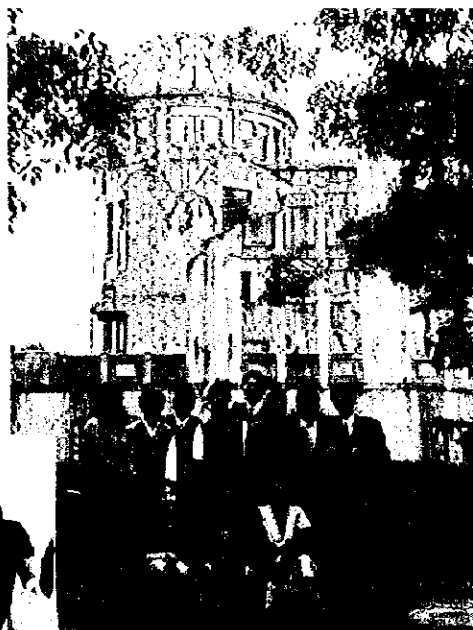
OBSERVATION TOUR



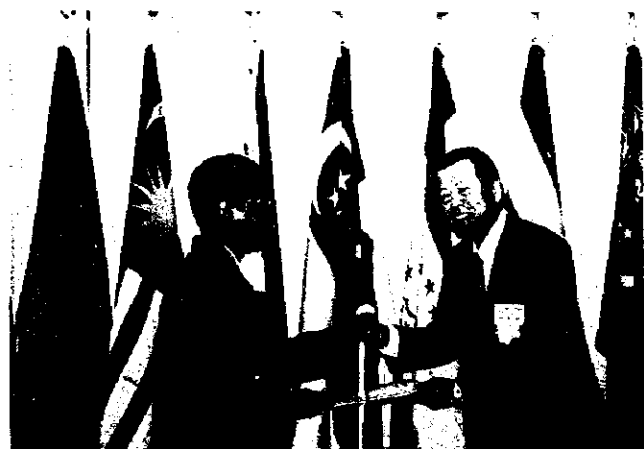
Programme is coming to the end
(At Miyajima island)



Take a memorial photo, shall we ?



Peace ----- Our perpetual wish



Receiving Certificate by JICA

CLOSING CEREMONY/ FAREWELL PARTY



With Japanese friends



Heartful memories to bring home



Brand-new dance "Bon-Odori" together

THE YOUTH INVITATION PROGRAMME



1154064 (8)

FOREWORD

"The Youth Invitation Programme" is implemented by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as a part of technical cooperation scheme for developing countries. Under the programme young people from the ASEAN and other Asian, Pacific, African, Latin American countries and the Middle East, who will shoulder the task of future nation-building, are invited to Japan for four weeks 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 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, Latin American countries, Saudi Arabia and Central Asian countries.

In 1998, we invited a total of 1,592 youths and during the past fifteen years from 1984, a total of 18,194 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 four-week 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 1998. It will also be sent to those who are concerned with the programme in the participating countries and Japan, such as the counterparts for In-house Seminar and the host families.

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

Thank you.

March 1999

Takashi Kaneko
Managing Director, Training Affairs Department
Japan International Cooperation Agency

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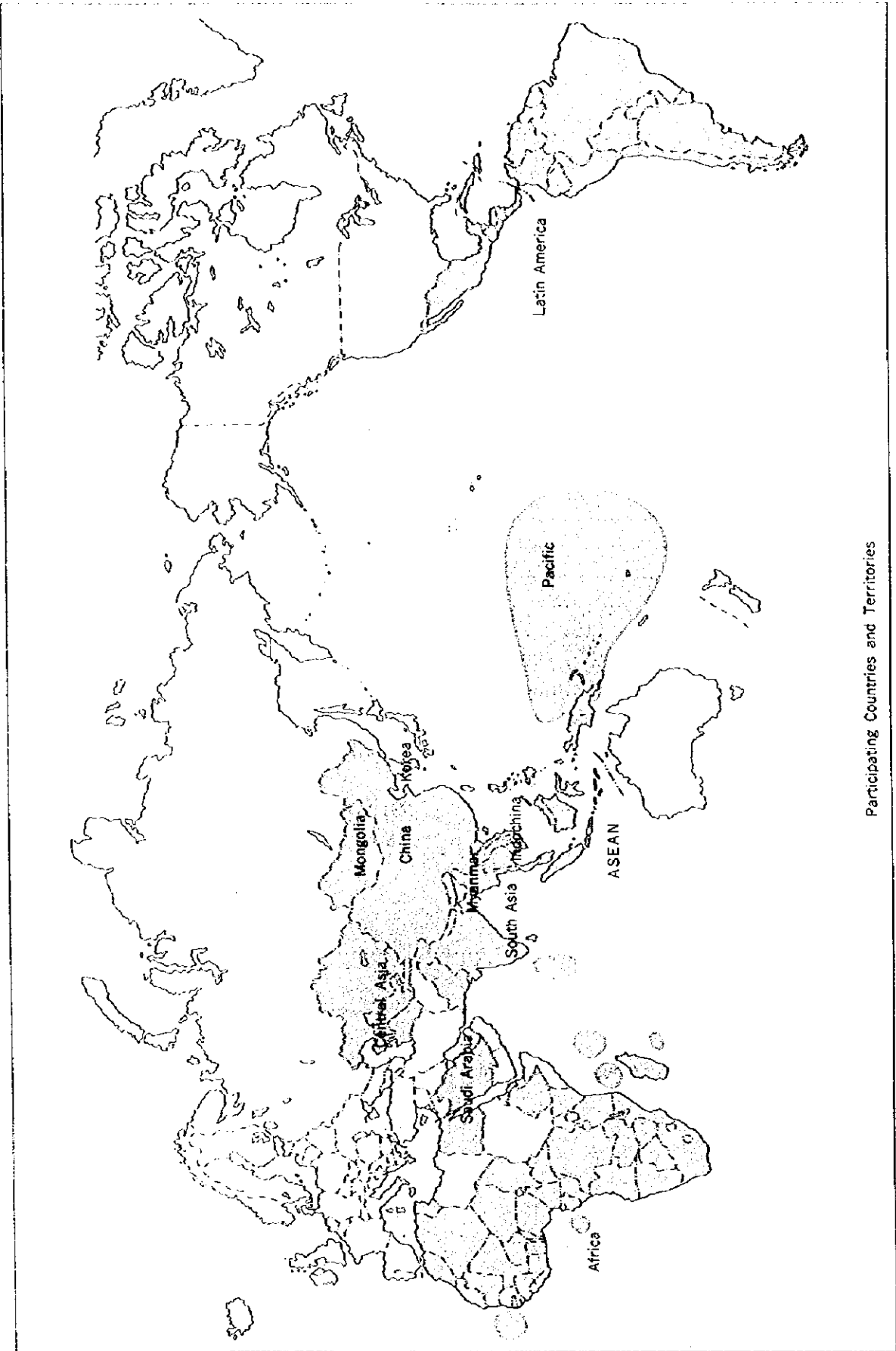
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Participating Countries and Territories

1. The Youth Invitation Programme

Asia, Pacific, Africa, Latin America and Middle East

1. Outline of the Programme

(1) Purpose

"The Youth Invitation 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 four weeks 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 Economy (Economic and Financial Management, Small and Medium Industry and Manufacturing)
[6 ASEAN Countries, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Central Asian Countries]
- ② Education, Teacher
[6 ASEAN Countries, Pacific Countries and Territories, Myanmar, Viet Nam, Latin American Countries, African Countries, Saudi Arabia, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India]
- ③ Social Development
[Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines]
- ④ Agriculture, Agriculture Development, Civil Servant (Agriculture)
[6 ASEAN Countries, Laos, Viet Nam]
- ⑤ Environmental Protection
[6 ASEAN Countries]
- ⑥ Social Welfare
[6 ASEAN Countries, Latin American Countries]
- ⑦ Health and Medical Service
[6 ASEAN Countries]
- ⑧ Public Administration, Civil Servant, Government Official
[6 ASEAN Countries, Pacific Countries and Territories, Viet Nam, Bangladesh]
- ⑨ Working Youth
[Mongolia]
- ⑩ Scientific and Technological Development
[Malaysia]

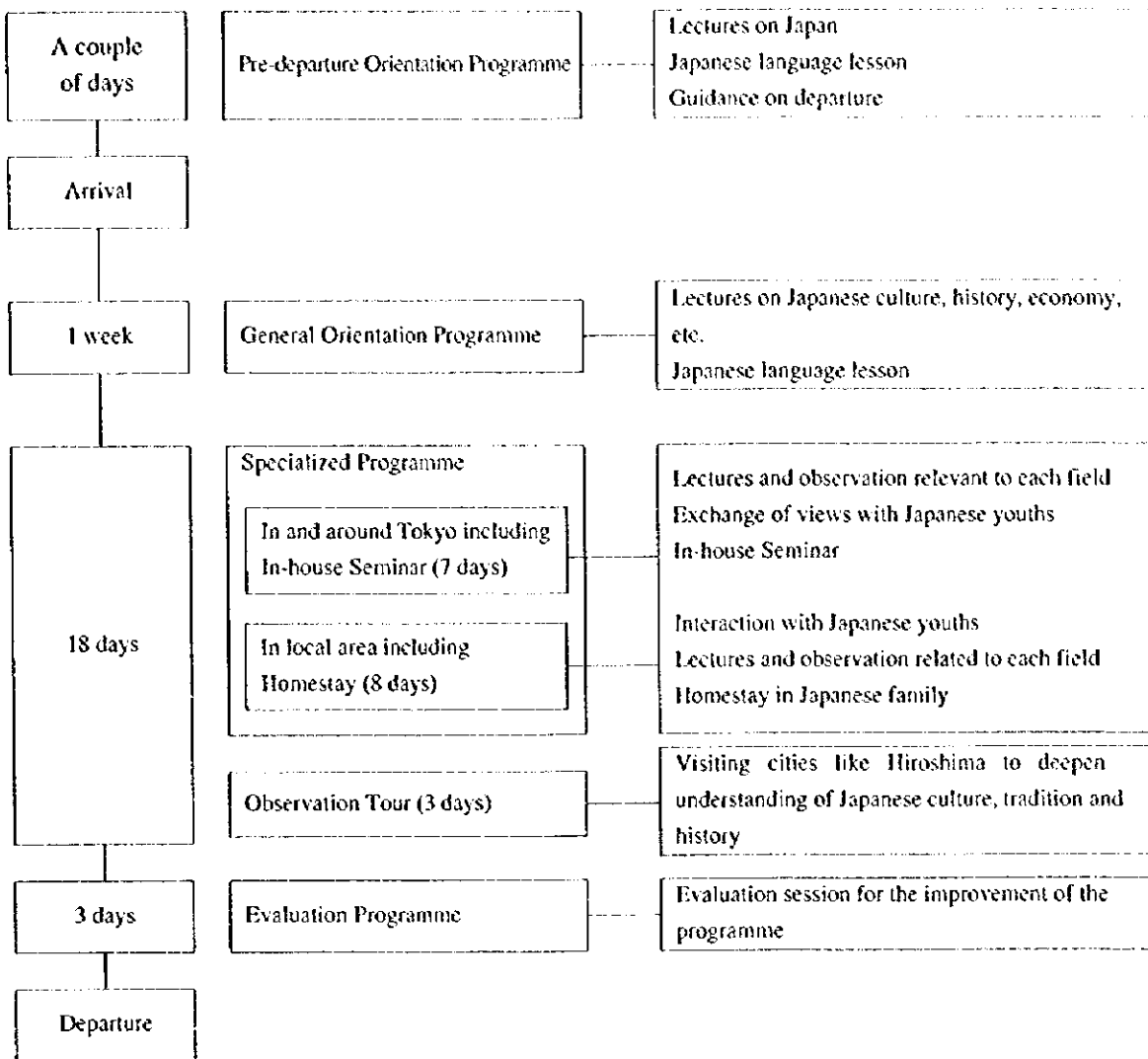
(3) Duration and Number of Participants

755 young people from six ASEAN-member countries (45 from Brunei, 110 from Singapore, 150 from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand), 20 from Myanmar, 90 from 14 Pacific countries and territories, 100 from 7 South Asian countries, 10 from Mongolia, 100 from 48 African countries and 1 UN organization, 100 from Viet Nam, 30 from Cambodia, 20 from Laos, 50 from 21 Latin American countries, 20 from Saudi Arabia and 25 from 5 Central Asian countries were invited to Japan for a period of four weeks between May 1998 and February 1999. 1,320 youths were invited in all.

(4) Pre-departure Programme and Four-week Programme in Japan

- ①Pre-departure Orientation Programme in the respective countries
- ②General Orientation in Tokyo or Osaka
- ③Specialized Programme (including In-house Seminar and Homestay)
- ④Observation Tour to cities like Hiroshima
- 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 Invitation Programme and also to perpetuate the friendship between them and Japanese youth, JICA has been conducting an aftercare project as follows.

① Supplementary Literature

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

② Alumni 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.

③ Alumni Liaison Conference

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

JICA gives financial support to 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.

④ Follow-up Mission

To the participating countries, JICA sends missions which consist of Japanese youths, host families, staff members of related organizations, who played a major role in receiving participants in Japan, to ensure further understanding of Japan among the ex-participants. At the same time, Japanese delegations deepen their understanding of the actual conditions of those countries, which 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 1998, three teams visited Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines.

2. List of Invited Groups and Implementing Youth Organizations in 1998

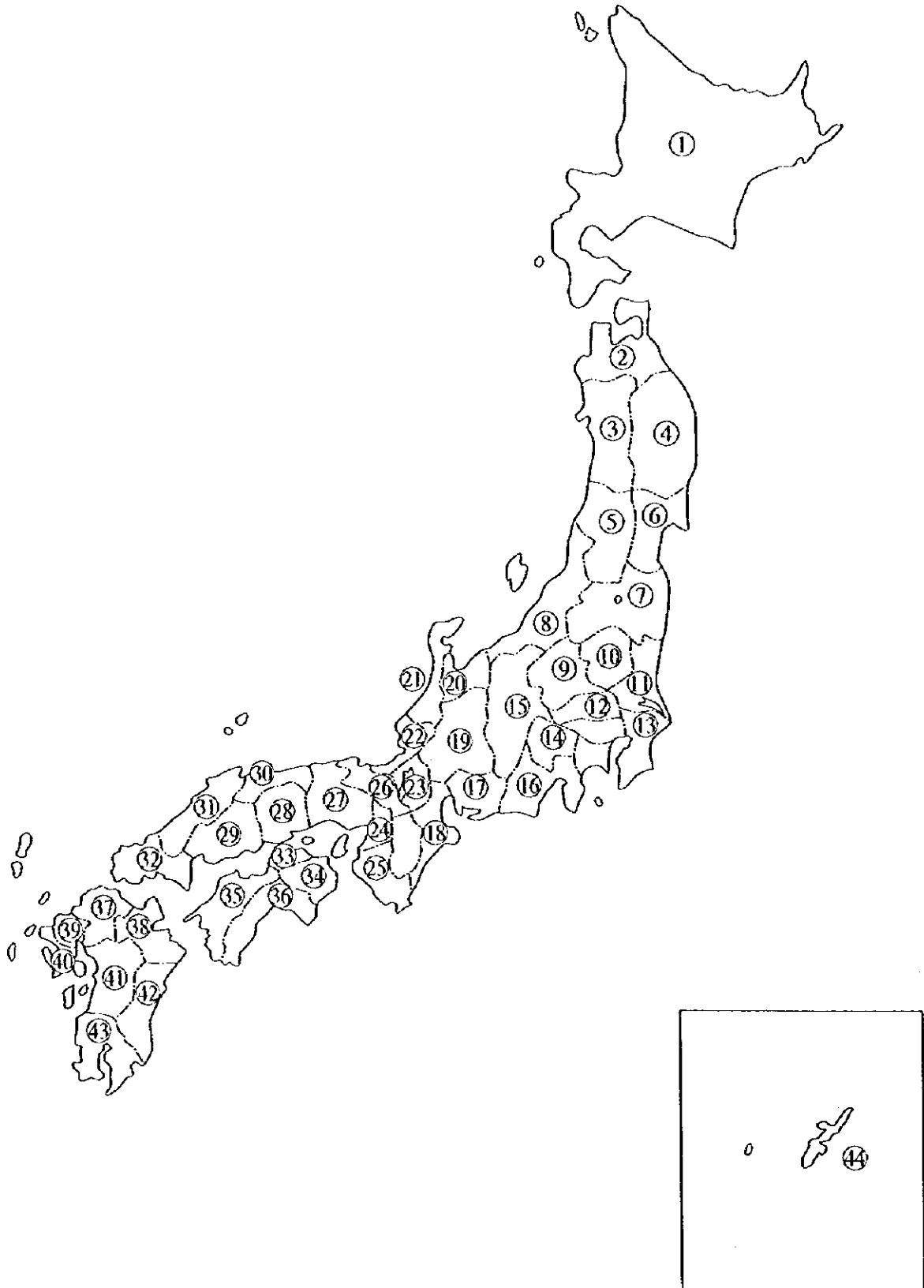
Period	Country	Group	Size (Persons)	Youth Organization
May 6-June 2	Malaysia	Economic and Financial Management	24	National Assembly for Youth Development
		Education	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
May 13-June 9	Indonesia	Economy A	20	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
		Economy B	24	The Working Youth Welfare Association
May 20-June 16	Singapore	Education	22	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		Economy A	17	Junior Executive Council of Japan
May 20-June 16	China	Economy B	17	The Working Youth Welfare Association
		Youth Leader	25	National Assembly for Youth Development
		Economy	25	Development Association for Youth
		Civil Servant	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
May 27-June 23	ASEAN Component	Teacher	25	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
		Environmental Protection	29	Junior Executive Council of Japan
		Social Welfare	28	Sapporo International Communication Plaza Foundation
		Health and Medical Service	30	The International Nursing Foundation of Japan
June 10-July 7	Brunei	Public Administration	24	National Assembly for Youth Development
		Social Development	15	Japanese Association of the Experiment in International Living
June 25-July 22	Singapore	Civil Servant (Agriculture)	20	Kochi International Association
		Education	20	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
July 1-July 28	Korea	Social Development	19	Development Association for Youth
		Youth Leader and Civil Servant	24	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
		Working Youth	25	The Working Youth Welfare Association
		Teacher	25	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
July 8-Aug. 4	Malaysia	Student	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
		Small and Medium Industry and Manufacturing	24	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
		Agriculture Development	15	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		Scientific and Technological Development	24	Toyokawa International Association
July 15-Aug. 11	Viet Nam	Agriculture	25	Iwate International Association
		Infrastructure	25	National Assembly for Youth Development
July 15-Aug. 11	China	Social Development	24	Development Association for Youth
		Economy	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		Local Development	25	Japan International Cooperation Center
		Human Resources Development	25	The Working Youth Welfare Association
Aug. 19-Sept. 15	Thailand	Economic Development	25	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
		Economy A	20	Development Association for Youth
		Economy B	24	The Working Youth Welfare Association
Aug. 19-Sept. 15	Philippines	Agriculture	25	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		Education	25	Japan International Cooperation Center
Aug. 26-Sept. 22	Papua New Guinea	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association	20	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		Civil Servant	10	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
Sept. 23-Oct. 20	Nepal	Teachers	19	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		Bhutan & Maldives	10	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
Oct. 7-Nov. 3	Sri Lanka	Education	10	Japan International Cooperation Center
		Education	10	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
Oct. 14-Nov. 10	African Component	Education	20	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		English-speaking Countries: Female Teacher	21	National Assembly for Youth Development
		French-speaking Countries: Female Teacher	24	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
		English-speaking Countries: Natural Science and Math Teachers	24	Osaka Foundation of International Exchange
Nov. 11-Dec. 8	Pacific Component	French-speaking Countries: Natural Science and Math Teachers	23	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		Civil Servant	24	Junior Executive Council of Japan
Nov. 18-Dec. 15	Bangladesh	Teachers	23	Japanese Association of the Experiment in International Living
		Civil Servant	12	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
Nov. 25-Dec. 22	India	Education	20	Japan International Cooperation Center
		Government Officials (Social Welfare and Women Affairs)	20	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
Nov. 25-Dec. 22	ASEAN Component	Female Teacher (Primary and Middle School)	20	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
		Education	28	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
		Economy	30	National Assembly for Youth Development
		Economy 1	25	Aichi International Association
Jan. 13-Feb. 9	Thailand	Economy 2	29	Junior Executive Council of Japan
		Education	22	The Working Youth Welfare Association
Jan. 13-Feb. 9	Viet Nam	Economy	25	National Assembly for Youth Development
		Social Development	22	Japan International Cooperation Center
Jan. 20-Feb. 16	Latin American Component	Government Official	25	International Hospitality and Conference Service Association
		Education and Related Areas	25	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
Total	71 Groups 1,592 youth	Philippines	22	Development Association for Youth
		Philippines	26	Japanese Association of the Experiment in International Living
		Philippines	22	Japan Youth Hostels, Inc.
		Mongolia	10	National Assembly for Youth Development
		Primary and Middle School Teacher	22	The World Youth Visit Exchange Association
		6 ASEAN Countries (741), Myanmar (20), 14 Pacific Countries and Territories (88), China (200), Korea (99), 7 South Asian Countries (98), Mongolia (10), 49 African Countries (92), Cambodia (30), Laos (20), Viet Nam (100), 21 Latin American Countries (49), Saudi Arabia (20), 5 Central Asian Countries (25)	27	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
		Grand Total: 110 Countries and Territories		

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

3. Participating Countries and Number of Youth (1984-98)

Country	Year																Total
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998		
Indonesia	149	150	150	150	150	149	150	149	147	149	145	150	149	150	148	2,235	
Malaysia	147	148	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	149	150	150	146	2,240	
Philippines	149	150	150	150	150	150	149	147	148	149	150	149	150	148	149	2,238	
Singapore	149	150	150	150	150	150	150	147	149	149	147	146	149	148	106	2,190	
Thailand	149	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	149	147	150	150	150	150	150	2,245	
Brunei	5	30	49	50	50	49	50	43	50	48	49	48	49	48	42	600	
Total(Six ASEAN Countries)	748	778	799	800	800	798	799	786	793	792	791	792	797	794	741	11,803	
China	-	-	-	100	100	50	199	200	199	197	200	197	200	200	200	2,042	
Korea	-	-	-	100	99	99	100	98	99	96	100	98	100	97	99	1,185	
Mongolia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	70	
Myanmar	-	-	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	20	20	20	120	
India	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	29	30	13	23	27	24	28	204	
Bangladesh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	20	20	20	20	20	19	20	159	
Pakistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	160	
Nepal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	9	10	10	10	10	7	10	76	
Bhutan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	40	
Sri Lanka	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	80	
Maldives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	40	
Total(South Asian Countries)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	98	100	83	93	97	90	98	759	
African Countries	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	100	97	95	95	92	529	
Fiji	-	-	10	10	11	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	151	
Papua New Guinea	-	-	10	14	30	34	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	29	29	356	
Other Pacific Countries and Territories	-	-	-	-	45	38	36	32	36	34	38	36	47	47	47	436	
Total(Pacific Countries and Territories)	-	-	20	24	86	84	78	74	78	76	80	78	89	88	88	943	
Viet Nam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	98	99	99	100	396	
Cambodia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	30	30	30	120	
Laos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	18	20	20	78	
Total (Indochina Countries)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	148	147	149	150	594	
Mexico	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	3	14	
Brazil	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	2	17	
Peru	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	4	15	
Chile	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	8	
Other Latin American Countries	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	38	45	
Total(Latin American Countries)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	49	99	
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	20	
Kazakhstan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	
Kyrgyz	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	
Tajikistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	
Turkmenistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	
Uzbekistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	
Total(Central Asian Countries)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	25	
Total	748	778	829	834	886	882	877	960	970	1,028	1,084	1,238	1,255	1,296	1,592	18,194	

Place for Local Programme



- ①Hokkaido; Malaysia, Education
Singapore, Economy B
ASEAN Comp., Environmental Protection
ASEAN Comp., Social Welfare
Korea, Working Youth
Korea, Student
China, Human Resources Development
Central Asian Comp., Economy
- ②Aomori; African Comp. (French-speaking Countries), Natural
Science and Math Teachers
- ③Akita; Myanmar, Education
- ④Iwate; Indonesia, Agriculture
- ⑤Yamagata; Indonesia, Education
- ⑥Miyagi; Pakistan, Teacher (Primary and Middle School)
- ⑦Fukushima; Viet Nam, Civil Servant
Saudi Arabia, Education
- ⑧Niigata; Papua New Guinea, Civil Servant
- ⑨Gunma; Indonesia, Economy B
ASEAN Comp., Health and Medical Service
Korea, Youth Leader and Civil Servant
- ⑩Tochigi; Indonesia, Economy A
- ⑪Ibaraki; Korea, Teacher
- ⑫Saitama; Malaysia, Small and Medium Industry and
Manufacturing
- ⑬Chiba; Philippines, Economy B
- ⑭Yamanashi; Thailand, Education
- ⑮Nagano; Nepal, Education (Natural Science Teachers)
- ⑯Shizuoka; Papua New Guinea, Teachers
African Comp. (French-speaking Countries), Female
Teacher
- ⑰Aichi; Malaysia, Scientific and Technological Development
Thailand, Economy B
ASEAN Comp., Education
- ⑱Mie; China, Economic Development
- ⑲Gifu; India, Education
- ⑳Toyama; China, Teacher
- ㉑Ishikawa; China, Economy
Philippines, Agriculture
Philippines, Social Development
- ㉒Fukui; African Comp. (English-speaking Countries),
Female Teacher
- ㉓Shiga; Malaysia, Economic and Financial Management
- ㉔Osaka; Singapore, Economy A
African Comp. (English-speaking Countries),
Natural Science and Math Teachers
Thailand, Social Development
- ㉕Wakayama; Viet Nam, Agriculture
- ㉖Kyoto; Bangladesh, Government Official (Social Welfare
and Women Affairs)
- ㉗Hyogo; Viet Nam, Economy
Cambodia, Economy
- ㉘Okayama; China, Infrastructure
Thailand, Agriculture
Latin American Comp., Social Welfare
- ㉙Hiroshima; Brunei, Social Development
- ㉚Tottori; ASEAN Comp., Economy 1
- ㉛Shimane; Sri Lanka, Education
- ㉜Yamaguchi; ASEAN Comp., Economy 2
Mongolia, Working Youth
- ㉝Kagawa; Singapore, Education
Philippines, Economy A
- ㉞Tokushima; China, Civil Servant
Pacific Comp., Civil Servant
- ㉟Ehime; Pacific Comp., Teachers
Philippines, Education
- ㊱Kochi; Laos, Civil Servant (Agriculture)
- ㊲Fukuoka; ASEAN Comp., Public Administration
Fiji, Civil Servant
- ㊳Oita; Malaysia, Agriculture Development
- ㊴Saga; Bhutan/Maldives, Education
- ㊵Nagasaki; China, Local Development
- ㊶Kumamoto; Indonesia, Social Development
- ㊷Miyazaki; Viet Nam, Education and Related Areas
- ㊸Kagoshima; Thailand, Economy A
- ㊹Okinawa; China, Youth Leader
Singapore, Social Development
Latin American Comp., Primary and Middle
School Teacher

2. Impressions by the Participants

■ Asia

■ Brunei

Japan from the Blind Eyes of a Brunei Youth

Abdul Rahim B. Hj. Sulaiman
Social Development Group

Japan to the rest of the world is the country of the rising sun. By the middle of the 18th century, it started to develop so rapidly both in population and economy. Now it's known as the world most advanced technology-producing country.

To us Brunei Youth, Japan seems like the most peaceful, green, polite and loyal environment and community in the world. Especially after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bomb attacks on, we had to see it with our own eyes to believe it. Japan can be proud of its advanced economy and technology in both the urban and the rural areas, where the green environment is maintained culturally. However, though Japan is rich in culture, it is poor in maintaining family unity (Family Integrity) and human interest, especially in urban areas. After a month it felt as if it was only yesterday that we came here, yet we've learnt a lot about the Japanese way of life culturally and economically. Lastly, thank you for this opportunity for me to comment on my great hopes that we can do this together for the sake of many young generations to come, so that family integrity won't be lost forever.

My Life Experience in Japan

Sia Ai Chin
ASEAN Comp.
Education Group

There is not enough space for me to describe the life experience in Japan in just one page of writing. However, I will share my experience as much as possible. Throughout my one month's stay, I had a lot of wonderful, meaningful and memorable moments.

The highlight is the homestay programme. Through this programme, I was able to experience the ordinary life of Japanese people. I can never forget the hospitality of my foster family in making me feel at home. And I enjoyed cooking, eating and exchanging ideas with them. I also admired their close community link despite their hectic daily life. This can be seen through their regular get-together on Sundays to collect recyclable items.

Through the visit to various educational institutions and discussion with teachers, I discovered some similarities and differences in our education systems but I realized that we educators are facing the same challenges in educating our future generation.

From the In-house Seminars, I valued the ideas that we have exchanged with our Japanese counterparts. Even though the seminar emphasized exchanging ideas on education, I gained more than that --- knowledge and friendship, which I hope will continue even after the programme.

From the visit to the manufacturing industry, I came to know that human aspect is still given top priority although advanced technology is being employed. The company provides favorable working condition and attractive benefits for its employees.

Another thing which impressed me is the facilities provided for the less fortunate people. Although they are physically handicapped, they are trained to be

independent and, hence, lead a fruitful life.

Some of them are even employed in light industries.

What I bring back to Brunei will only be not name cards and "Omiyage" but also valuable experiences and a broadened mind, which is to be shared with my colleagues and students. In return, I hope that my Japanese counterparts will also benefit from our interaction and thus serve the purpose of this friendship programme in bridging understanding among the participating countries and the host country.

To conclude, I would like to say 'Totemo tanoshikatta desu.' And I hope that someday we will meet again.

"ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA"

■ Asia

■ Indonesia

Going to Japan, the Country of the Rising Sun and of My Dreams

Heribertus Pranoto
Economy A Group

Previously, going to Japan was just a dream to me. But the dream has come true. I visited beautiful and historical places and made friends with Japanese people. I felt really happy when all these things, which had existed only in my dreams, appeared to me as a reality.

During the nearly one month, sometimes I wondered whether it was real or a dream. If it was a dream, I thought I would write about it before I wake up.

I heard that Japan was country of efficiency and punctuality before I came. But what I saw in Japan was not only that. To me, the Japanese people seemed to be very polite and quiet-mannered and seldom make merry. However they never seemed to feel uncomfortable about that. Maybe it is because they have a drinking habit. I think when they drink, they are getting very open and frank. So they can understand each other. These things I learnt during my two-day homestay. Until then I had never drunk beer, whisky, Japanese SAKE or wine. But when my host brother offered me SAKE, I felt honored and friendly. For the Japanese, SAKE is not only for getting drunk, but also a lubricant for understanding each other. Though this made me feel strange, it must be a good way for the Japanese.

The friendship with Japanese people touched my heartstrings. The friendship will last forever, even when we are far apart.

Joining the Youth Invitation Programme

Yusuf
Economy B Group

The Youth Invitation Programme we participated in this time was conducted very smoothly. Now we finished the programme and are going back to our country, but I will never forget this enjoyable and

unique experience. I, an Indonesian, had a very new experience I had never expected during my stay in Japan, away from my familiar Indonesian culture and customs. It was an experience of Japanese life style through experiencing the Japanese food and a homestay.

Before that, I thought that in Japan all seafood was served uncooked. But actually almost all fish was cooked. However, unfortunately, as I was used to Indonesian cuisine, I couldn't appreciate Japanese food. During our stay in Japan, we seldom had a Japanese-style breakfast but often had chances to enjoy Japanese-style lunches and dinners. One day we went to Japanese restaurant for lunch. I had no difficulty in using a chopsticks because I had already gotten accustomed to them in Indonesia. However, I didn't know how to eat it on which dish we should start with.

Just like Japanese food, the homestay gave me a strong impression. I was so excited that my heart might have beaten faster when I met my host family at the welcome reception in Tatebayashi City. The day after the ceremony I went to host-family's home. I knew neither about Japanese life style nor what would happen next. The uneasy feeling I had at that time was beyond my expression.

However, the uneasiness was driven away immediately after the homestay started. I could understand my host family, and I felt as easy as if I had been with my own family. My host mother was a housewife but busy, so her son, Yasuhiro, and her daughter, Mikiko, showed me around the city. Through this opportunity I learned a lot about Japanese culture. I never forget my host family's kindness and wonderful hospitality. I wish I could visit Japan again and meet my host family once more someday.

I hope my joining this programme will become an important experience with sweet memories all my life, and I also wish for long lasting friendship between Japan and Indonesia.

Education, Friendship and Peace

Anna Fauzlah
Education Group

Dear Diary, when I first landed in the country of "Doraemon," I had mixed feelings of wonder and anxiety. Furthermore, outside of the airport was still cold, and that made my heart and body feel more strained. However, after being welcomed by a kind smiling stewardess, my prejudice was soon dispelled. And thanks to such kindness, my distrust disappeared gradually.

Dear Diary, the "Cherry Blossom Country" Japan is an advanced country both in economics and industry. I am sure it's because they have put emphasis on education. During the lectures during the orientation programme, the lecturers said, "the Japanese government regarded education as a very important matter in the early stage of development. The government subsidized the educational field a lot. That has made schools install complete facilities; teachers are well paid, and parents work very hard for their children's education."

Dear Diary, I realized that was true when I visited Yamagata Pref. which is famous for its education-oriented policy. I heard that the education-oriented climate of Japan had originated here in Yamagata. It is proved by the museum here introducing the history and the ideas of Japanese education. I was impressed more during our ten-day stay in Yamagata, observing the museum, visiting educational institutions and having a three-day homestay in addition. I felt the warm atmosphere in the family. And it was built with the creativity of educators, good discipline at school, harmony between married couples or within a family, the habit of having meals with one's own family, and being sure to exchange greetings even at home. Moreover, children are reared to be independent already while they are still young.

Dear Diary, though we talked with Japanese youths and carried out cultural exchanges, unfortunately, we had no opportunity to visit any "organization that train successors to Japanese traditional cultures." I don't know if it was just because Japan doesn't have such organizations or simply because we had no chance to visit such institutions during the programme. Japanese

youths said that almost all of them were not interested in traditional culture or art. Going to a disco is more fun to them. So they were very surprised to see us performing Indonesian traditional dances.

Dear Diary, time flies. This one month has passed so fast for me. But I have obtained a lot of things from this programme. In Hiroshima, I could feel the scent of the peace that filled up the whole city, when I visited there at the end of the programme. All the people there exchanged greetings with smiles. I am sure that the "Prayer of Mothers" will be attained. It is the first step towards peace and friendship, which the mothers of the earth are longing for.

Japanese Agriculture Through a Quick Observation

Zainal Arifin
Agriculture Group

The Youth Invitation Programme was a good programme. I could understand and appreciate Japanese culture.

The thing which impressed me most was agriculture. I have heard that in Japan just a single crop of rice is enough for domestic consumption. Moreover, they still have some surplus rice remaining.

That must be a matter of course. Much advanced technology has been introduced. Paddy fields are kept neatly in the same size and shape, as if somebody had ruled lines on the fields. Machines come and go in the paddy fields without concerns about mud. In addition, they move like a human beings. But then why must Japan import rice? People in Iwate said that they had a limitation on their rice production. I can't understand that.

We exchanged views with Japanese youths during the In-house Seminar in Sawachi Village. All our Japanese counterparts were very nice, and they welcomed us sincerely. Through the discussion with them, we learned that Japanese youths were reluctant to become engaged in agriculture, because the work is very hard and makes them dirty. In addition, it is difficult for farming people to get married. I thought it is strange, but I heard it is true. Most of the farming people in Japan are old. When they can't work anymore, who will do the job? The Japanese like Japonica-rice. How will they get the rice without

producing it in Japan?

According to the Iwate Agricultural Research Center, Japan is focusing on organic farming. I think it's a good idea as it meets the demands of consumers who don't want to eat foods contaminated with agricultural chemicals, and chemical-free vegetable are delicious and safe. However, so far organic farming has just been a slogan and has a long way to go.

Actually in many places, they still use weed killers and chemical fertilizers. They actually did that even at the agricultural university we visited. But I believe the Japanese can invent an efficient machine to replace weed killers. That will be much better to the environment.

A Wonderful Gift from Japan

Rizka Oktora Ibrahim
Social Development Group

It is quite difficult for me to pick the most impressive minute during my stay in Japan. Every minute was very special. All the things are memories I can't express in words, and I can't even forget them. If I were a video camera, I could have recorded each and every passing day in detail. The days were so wonderful that sometimes I had to say to myself "this is not a dream."

Hiroshima was the last place we visited before going back to the Osaka International Centre. We reached a conclusion on various issues such as friendship, global peace and international relationships here. Hiroshima became modern city after its complete destruction 50 years ago. This restoration made us realize we can revive from any difficulties.

All the experiences were meaningful: exchange with Japanese youths, wearing Japanese KIMONO, observation of the coastal subcenter, shopping in Tokyo where prices are the highest in the world, experiencing the Japanese life style during our homestay. Everything was not a dream. All are leading to the future.

Hiroshima was not the terminal of my trip but the most important starting point. My experience here has turned out to be a wonderful gift to my mother country.

The Japanese People

Ahmad Zaky
ASEAN Corp.
Economy 1 Group

The high economic growth of Japan, of course, has been influenced by many factors. But I believe that human resources (people) have been the greatest factor.

We know that Japanese companies are supported by high technology, and they also have their own core competence and harmony between men and machines. Beside that, the government policy — that gives opportunities to all companies to become independent without ignoring education, research and development — has to be mentioned. But, once again, I believe that without the great mentality of the Japanese people, all of these things would be nothing.

The Japanese people, as I saw while in Japan, are skillful human resources. They are also very diligent. Furthermore, they are always self-motivated. Each worker knows his own responsibility and is very conscious of his role in the group.

Beside that, Japanese are very kind, honest, warm, and hospitable. I have felt it since I first came here. Not only in the sport exchange and In-house Seminar Programme in Kanagawa, but also during the Homestay Programme in Tottori. I just spent my time meeting some nice people everyday.

Another custom, and a unique one, is their gift-giving ritual (omiyage) to start a good relationship and trust. In Japan, I have received a lot of omiyage everyday. It seems like everyday is a special day in Japan. In Indonesia, it is only on some special occasions that a person receives presents from his family or close friends. It will be a wedding, a birthday, Hari Raya (a special day for Moslems after fasting for a month), or on a very special day. But in Japan people treat each other with gifts all year-round. Some people gave me gifts without saying or writing any message on them at all. Probably, because "business and working relationships in Japan depend far more on trust than on written contracts."

If you want your work in Japan done smoothly, you will have to show people that you are reliable, honest, and trustworthy.

Asia

Malaysia

Two Countries, One Heart

Khairul Ariffin
Economic and Financial Management Group

I was fortunate enough to be a participant in the Youth Invitation Programme. The experience here in Japan, the country of Rising Sun, from May 6 through June 2 became unforgettable to each and every one of us participants. We had many precious experiences through the well-organized programme such as orientation, Japanese language lessons and homestay and all this had various influences on a part of everyone's mind.

The aim of the Programme is to foster lasting friendship between the youths of Japan and those of Malaysia through exchanging ideas, and learning about the cultures and customs of each other's. I think that the Programme achieved its aim successfully.

It seems to me that the most successful part of the programme was the homestay. That doesn't mean that the other parts of the programmes did not go well, but that homestay programme allowed each of us to have new family in Japan.

I have one suggestion for this Programme in the future.

I felt the Orientation Programme which lasted a week was too long. Before we came to Japan, we already had a five-day Orientation Programme in Malaysia. So how about making this programme shorter to two or three days and having time for sports and recreation activities, for instance?

I hope this Programme continues for the sake of the relationship between our countries, and also that lasts forever.

Valuable Experiences

Halimah Bt. Ismail
Education Group

The Youth Invitation Programme gave us meaningful, unique and enjoyable experiences. That's because we could understand Japanese culture, lifestyle and customs, and also we could see Japan, the

programme was successful in many fields, as it is. All these things motivated us to join in the exchange of ideas and the other exchange activities.

We visited schools from the kindergarten to university level in Japan. We learnt effective teaching methods and management, and also got some useful information on the school facilities for instance. These programmes were quite meaningful to us.

The visit to Hiroshima reminded us of a sad history and the significance of humanity and peace. I will also never forget my visits to other beautiful and unique cities.

The homestay was a particularly memorable experience and the highlight of whole the programme. Though it lasted only for three days, I could feel the Japanese spirit and got very close with the Japanese family. I will never forget this experience all through my life. The differences in religion, language, culture and customs can no longer be a barrier between us and the Japanese youths. All the experiences we obtained through this Youth Invitation Programme have become an enormous OMIYAGE (souvenir) of immeasurable value to us.

Our Experiences in Japan

Ikmal Hishan Bin Mohd Tajuddin
ASEAN Comp.
Public Administration Group

During our stay in Japan, many things were done and seen. We in particular had the advantage of learning the framework of the central and local government. We believe that we learned a lot of things learned that we can take back home for the benefit of our agencies and our own peers in the administrative field. Besides that, we benefited from teamwork. No avenues were spared. We made full use of the seminars and workshops.

We enjoyed exchanging ideas with the Japanese youths staying together for a number of days and from them we collected precious ideas and views. We think it a lot easier to communicate and exchange in a relaxed and happy environment. And, of course, the most challenging task of all of them was to learn to speak the Japanese language. Perhaps when we go back to our country, we can boast a word or two of the language and try eager to impress our own folks with them.

And the next thing, worthy to mention, was the priceless "Homestay." Leaving us in the homes of host families is a highly regarded and welcomed agenda. We must say it was a short stint, but it gave us the feel of being Japanese. The Japanese hospitality had made all this an enjoyable experience and difficult to part with.

Last but not least, we all also enjoyed going to Hiroshima and other places, formally and informally. In all the sightseeing, we witnessed not only admirable and scenic views but also the history of this "Land of the Rising Sun." We wish to say thanks to the organizers for the wonderful excursion. Perhaps, if you come to our countries, we pray that we will be able to return the favour and do the same for you.

Thank you.

Domo arigato gozaimashita.

Homestay

Mastor Masri
Small and Medium Industry and Manufacturing Group

The clock hands told me it was three o'clock in the morning. Even though I was tired after a 3-day homestay, I couldn't sleep because I was recalling my days with my host family.

I will never in my life forget the homestay. Staying with Japanese family is quite different from what I had imagined before actually experiencing it. Images had always floated to my mind of the FURO, or Japanese style bath, which I experienced during my homestay. Because I had never experienced FURO, considerable uneasiness filled my mind.

On the first day, my host mother held a welcome party for me with friends of the family. The next day she took me bowling and shopping. When we decided to have lunch at a restaurant, a funny thing happened as I spoke Japanese to impress my host mother. I ordered a lunch in Japanese as follows: "Jusu (juice), gohan (rice), sarada (salad)" when the waitress asked me something, so I nodded to mean I understood her. However, what I was served were ice coffee and tempura. Then I knew for the first time that the waitress couldn't understand my Japanese. To tell the truth, I memorized the phrase just before I had come for the homestay.

The Meaning of Destruction and Peace

Hj. Mohd Lokman Bin Hj. Othman
Agriculture Development Group

My wish was realized. Once, the country of Rising Sun was completely destroyed by the atomic bomb in an instant. Many things came to end in death. Whenever I hear or see such stories, I can't help shedding tears of grief. Japan is the country which many people visit now.

What I had conjectured about the situation in Japan was that it is highly developed in a certain part but that the other parts are far from development in the future. However, I found Japan is definitely a country which is now developing to conserve nature in the future. It focuses its efforts on the development of computer technology, agriculture, industry and many other fields of academic research.

From the global perspective, Japan has many important elements in its historical background for its growth as a nation and a society. I learnt and experienced a lot through visits and training during my one-month stay.

When I stayed with my host family in Oita, we managed to share the same thoughts and feelings even though the colors of our skin were different. I will never forget this as a most meaningful part of life.

My Experience

Syed Abdul Malik Syed Mohamad
Science and Technological Development Group

Kansai, the name given to the new airport which was built on a man-made island, clearly showed me the greatness of Japanese technology and economy. The long journey from KLIA had not made me tired. I had dreamed for a long time of coming to Japan, and at 7:26 AM, when the JAL 722 flight landed, it marked the beginning of a new chapter in my life.

Even the hot weather failed to stop my dream of getting to know more about the Japanese people and Japan itself. "Hajimemashite," the first word I learned sounded beautiful, but I found difficult to learn. Food, as I thought earlier, was in fact my biggest problem although Halal food was served. I lost 2 Kilos! The

transportation system is great, especially the trains. Riding on the Shinkansen gave me some happy memories. I said to myself, "What a great life I would have if the Shinkansen were there in my country."

The homestay experience has given me the chance to know more about the Japanese family, their culture, food, and typical everyday life.

Hiroshima, the city which was destroyed by the atomic bomb, managed to win my heart with its beautiful rivers and landscapes. I fell in love at the first sight!

As a final thought, I wish to say that this Youth Invitation Programme was well planned by both JICA and Toyokawa International Association. By making the visit to Hiroshima just after the Homestay Programme, I got a clearer picture of what the main objective of the programme is, and I believe it was successfully translated to us.

■ Asia

■ Philippines

A Month in Japan

Emma Ruth B. Cuevas

ASEAN Comp.
Health and Medical Service Group

With mixed feelings of excitement, apprehension, uncertainty and hope, we embarked on a month-long journey of friendship and understanding in the land of the rising sun. Thirty young eager men and women representing the six ASEAN countries: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, we were anxious to experience first hand, and get an eye opening glimpse of Japanese culture and the health care delivery system. Neither the pouring rain nor the cold weather could dampen our enthusiasm as we were whisked from one prefecture to the next, continuously struggling to communicate with our Japanese friends who were quite understanding of our shortcomings and appreciative of our efforts to relay our thoughts in Nihongo.

This experience will undoubtedly leave a lasting mark in all of our hearts and minds. Who could forget the Karaoke sessions, the endless pictorial sessions, the shopping sprees, the sightseeing tours in Tokyo, Osaka, Maebashi, Hiroshima and Miyajima, the heart-to-heart talks even in the wee hours of the morning, the hearty meals, the honor of meeting with the Mayor of Maebashi and the Governor of Gunma, the homestay with Japanese families and the friendship that developed between the bubbly Bruneians, the inquisitive Indonesians, the friendly Malaysians, the surprisingly (?) punctual and ever reliable Filipinos, the shopping-crazy Singaporeans, and the Meow girls and guys of Thailand? All of these would not be as enjoyable if not for the help of our coordinators, who in one month's time, became our guardians, sisters and brother and friends.

As the programme ends, nobody wants to let go of the good things in Japan. It has achieved its objective, as we have greatly increased our understanding of the people of Japan and of the other countries in South East Asia. We can only hope that what we have learned here will be used to improve our health care system and the friendships formed will not end with

the closing of the programme. As a last note:

Sayonara Tomodachi, Mata Aimasho, Daijobu
Korede Owarijanai

Hanarete Itemo Watashino Kokorowa Anatato Issho

With you, my friend, with you.

Thoughts and Impressions of Japan

Jonas Tribiana Morco

Economy A Group

When one lives outside Japan, one's idea of the country is marked by stereotypes: Japan is a highly developed country; its technology is highly advanced; and its people are hardworking, extremely polite and have a high sense of social shame (for example, when a public official fails in his responsibility to his constituents, he will take his own life). This is the conventional idea of Japan and its people held by the average foreigner. It was basically my own conception of Japan. When I came to Japan, I discovered that these notions are essentially true.

Nevertheless, I have not ceased to be amazed. Going around in the city or taking a walk in the countryside, my friends and I would constantly come upon some clever invention or innovation designed to make simple activities easier and safer. We have marveled at the way the Japanese think of everything, even simple things which are often taken for granted back home in our own country. We are convinced that this attitude of innovation, together with the Japanese practice of doing things with clockwork precision, is at the heart of Japan's rapid and high level of progress.

Japanese courtesy is one of the things that fascinate me greatly. My mind is filled with images of the deep 45-degree bow. I shall never forget the scene during the first night of my homestay when my foster parents and their daughter knocked on the sliding door of my tatami room to say "Good night." They said, "Oyasuminasai" and bowed together. The gesture implied not familiarity, but distance and respect. This touched me deeply.

These traits are what make the Japanese distinct as a people. But my one-month stay has allowed me to get to know some Japanese on a more personal level, and I am happy about my discoveries from that. The Japanese individuals I've met were warm and friendly

and had a good sense of humor. They were quite easy to get along with. My host family in particular were very hospitable. Interacting with Japanese individuals has allowed me to get a glimpse into their thoughts and concerns. I am gratified that Japanese youths have a modern outlook and are concerned not just with trivial pursuits but also about important issues like the environment, or the role of their country in world affairs. These are issues which require cooperation and understanding around the world, and it is fortunate that the Japanese government and its people have a keen appreciation for international exchange.

I think, in the end, what should be emphasized are not our differences but our common aspirations.

An Imperial Surprise

Herminia R. Caringal
Romulo D. Conde
Jonathan L. Galindez
Agriculture Group

As a participant in the 1998 the Youth Invitation Programme there is a lot of wonderful memories that I will cherish and never forget for the rest of my life.

For instance, the Homestay Programme made me closer to the Japanese people. In a short period of time, my foster family showed their kindness and generosity without any reservations. The gesture somehow filled the emptiness I felt while being away from my loved ones.

As the programme was coming to an end, I gained a lot of Japanese friends. There were a lot of fun-filling events where we exchanged views, jokes and "love lives." We managed to create a bridge of friendship that is definitely meant to endure the test of time.

Every single day of my stay in Japan was special. But there was one thrilling moment I never imagined would ever happen to me. During one of the parties hosted by the organizing committee of the 1998 Ishikawa Agriculture Convention, their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Japan, graced the occasion. When it was time for them to leave, the Royal Couple passed beside me on their way to the door. I never expected it, but the Prince together with the Princess turned in front of me and asked, "Are you a Filipino?" At that instance, I nearly fell on the floor out of nervousness. Luckily, I was able to regain my

composure, stood straight up and proudly replied, "Yes Sir, I am a Filipino!" From that moment on, a short conversation ensued.

Rubbing elbows with the Imperial Family of Japan had not crossed my mind. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would meet a royal couple. Not only did the Youth Invitation Programme give me the surprise of seeing them in person, but I actually talked to them in person, too!

As I go back to the Philippines, I will have many interesting stories to tell. With all the excitement, I am eager to share the special moment I had with the Royal Couple with my friends, relatives, especially with my wife and my daughter.

I hope my daughter, when she reaches the right age, will also have the chance to visit Japan and experience more than what I have gained. How about dining with the Imperial Family at the Imperial Palace? That is wishful thinking, you may say. But then I say, we will never know!

Building Bridges

Maria Abigail O. Carpio
ASEAN Comp.
Economy 2 Group

The journey my friends and I have undertaken in Japan was one towards understanding our differences and more importantly, the things that bring us together.

In our travel, we have crossed many bridges to reach various destinations and learn more about the ways of the Japanese -- ways we truly admire for they result in a high degree of efficiency and productivity. Our exposure to the Japanese way of life has been all the more enriched by our experiences with our host-families and counterparts who have touched our lives with their openness, their genuine warmth and their laughter.

The places we visited revealed, among other things, the value of culture appreciation and the necessity of understanding the lessons of history. Significantly, Japan has accelerated into the future while keeping these values at heart.

This journey has given all of us the chance to build bridges ourselves, transcend the barriers of language and culture, and discover that indeed, we are united in

our aspirations for a good life -- for ourselves, our families, our nations and the world.

Japan: the Philippines Education Group's Home

Emmanuel James "Manny" P. Pattaguan
Education Group

Flowing from our hearts are a few impressions we would like to share to the Japanese people.

Foremost, we would like to acknowledge the organizers' 'efforts' in making the Youth Invitation Programme possible. JICA, for w/c we are greatly indebted, paved the way for us to experience this rare opportunity of gaining insights, values, skills and knowledge about Japanese culture. This I believe shall promote the better and friendly relations between the Philippines and the host country.

Furthermore, the other members of our group have these to say, the programme is : excellent, soul searching, worth remembering, spectacular, beneficial, dynamic, succinct, very interesting, memorable, well coordinated, worth sharing, worth appreciating, informative, life-giving, fruitful, wonderful, impressive and SUGOI.

All these and more were made possible because of the love, the friendship and the generosity of the Japanese people.

In behalf of the group, may I assure everyone that as soon as we go back home, we will be proud to say once in our lives we stepped in one place we called, heaven, paradise, leading Asian Country, the Land of the Rising Sun: Japan that was and will always be-- OUR HOME.

For all the beautiful memories, *domo arigato gozaimashita*.

Serendipity

Angelica Paroni Balino
Rachelle Marie Ortega Gepiga
Ma. Teresa Apostol Maguigad
Social Development Group

Like most of our travels, coming to Japan meant having preconceived notions and set expectations of what awaits us: In our minds, Japan is merely the seat of cutting edge technology endlessly bustling with commercial and industrial, activities that earned for it the reputation as a global economic force to reckon with. Driven by an intense economic impulse, we thought that her long-cherished customs, traditions and values had given way to modernization. We presumed that the socio-cultural aspects of Japanese life have been unduly compromised.

But seeing Japan for ourselves proved otherwise. We were awed by her unique heritage and natural beauty preserved over time. The family, social structures, mentality and world view of the Japanese manifest a strong adherence to the time-honored principles that breathed life to the Japan of old. Drawing inspiration from her past, coupled with the remarkable ability to harmonize the old with the new, Japan has successfully overcome the challenges of the present and has revolutionized herself to achieve and enjoy a period of renaissance unrivalled in this day and age.

But what we shall always remember are the people that made our study tour even more enjoyable. The warmth, kindness, generosity and love that we have experienced here in Japan will leave an indelible imprint in our hearts. Indeed, our visit to Japan has more than just promoted mutual understanding and fostered friendships. It has created a strong bond that will always make us yearn to come back to this place we now call "home."

Experiences in Japan

Lawrence Nelson Guevara
Economy B Group

Four weeks in Japan. For our group, it is a journey against cold weather, smooth traffic, raw food and never-ending search for “good-byes” in remote discount stores and hard-to-find hundred-yen shops. Though time was short, the programme was all in all pleasant, memorable and successful.

To start off, we learned that in Japan, one must be able to blend with the Japanese by speaking its language and knowing its culture. So the first few days of intensive Japanese language lessons was worth it. Aside from the usual greetings --- “ohayo gozaimasu,” “konnichiwa” and “konbanwa,” we also learned to say “arigato gozaimasu” and “sumimasen” in our daily activities in and around Japan. If everything else fails, there’s always “Nihongo wakarimasen, do you know English?”

From Osaka we move to Tokyo, the famous business capital of Japan. Not only did we have the chance to see some of the famous tourist attractions in Tokyo, but we also had a glimpse of the everyday Japanese business life in action. There was also enough time to shop for reasonably priced electronic gadgets (like in Akihabara) and other intrinsically Japanese omiyages for friends, officemates, and family members back in the Philippines.

Our bonding with the Japanese youth flourished in Fuji Youth Center. I guess sharing would be the best word to describe our three-day In-house Seminar with the Japanese youth volunteer group. While they learned that Filipinos are very romantic and fond of singing and dancing, we learned how to use the FURO without being too conscious about other people inside the public bath. Snow fall was also a welcome sight for all of us and despite the cold weather, snowball fights and hundred camera clicks followed thereafter.

Perhaps the best place we visited was in Chiba, not only because of Tokyo Disneyland, but also because of the very warm reception rendered to us by the Chiba prefectural government. The three-day Homestay Programme was perceived to be nerve-wracking at first, since it would be the first time we will be

separated from the group, but turned out to be very heart-warming and very “at home.” Kind of reminded us of our own families back home. But before making the last stop back home, Hiroshima provided us with a part of Japan’s history, an insight of the area’s miraculous “rise from the ashes” and its on-going battle cry against nuclear weapons.

Now, although the programme is ending, we believe that the friendship between Filipinos and Japanese is only beginning. As we return to our country, our homes, our work and our friends, we shall always remember Japan, the places we visited and the friends we’ve made. We hope this won’t be the last time and we thank the Japanese Government together with our patient coordinators who put up with our undying passion for shashin. Once more we say domo arigato gozaimasu and sayonara (for now)!

■ Asia

■ Singapore

Exploring Japan

Winston Kan
Economy A Group

On 20 May 1998, we, a group of Singaporean youths, arrived at Narita Airport to begin a one-month exploration tour of Japan under JICA's Youth Invitation Programme. Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun, has long been perceived as a homogeneous and closed society whose people speak only the Japanese language. As such, we were not sure whether the 'crash' course we had in basic Japanese language would enable us to survive in this foreign land. We were anxious, naturally. However, our anxiety was quickly dispelled when we were greeted warmly by the coordinators at Tokyo International Centre (TIC), who spoke reasonably good English.

The 'Learn Japanese on the Move' and the In-house Seminar at Kanagawa provided plenty of opportunities for the vast exchange of ideas between the Japanese and Singaporean youths. At the end of these sessions, we were enriched with a better understanding of each other's language, traditions and culture. It is surprising to note that many of our Japanese counterparts were able to converse in Simple English. Numerous friendships were fostered in the process, which we promised to bring back to Singapore.

Through the various lectures, we were able to understand the socio-economic system of Japan better. We found that there are similarities between Japan and Singapore. Firstly, both countries will be plagued by the aging population syndrome in the next century. Policy makers of both countries would have to tackle this problem carefully as it has economic and social implications. Secondly, Japan, as well as Singapore must invent their own technology through Research and Development activities. Imported technology, which had enabled growth for the two countries in the past, is no longer sufficient to meet the challenges of the next century.

The part of the programme that made us most nervous was the homestay with Japanese host families. To most of us staying with a stranger family, whom we met barely a week ago, was a fresh experience. In

order to enhance our survival, some of us were busy polishing our Japanese language skills. Luckily, some members of the host families could speak some English. At the end of the two days, most of us formed a strong bond with our host family.

The various corporate visits were definitely an eye opener. We had the privilege of viewing sophisticated equipment, some of which had not been released in the market yet. One interesting thing to note is that although Japan is a technology giant in Asia, she is able to preserve her traditions well. One example is the tea ceremony, which is still treated with great respect and dignity.

Hiroshima is a city scarred with a dramatic past. At the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum, we witnessed the damaging effects of the Atomic bomb. The building of the park signifies the Hiroshima people's wish to maintain peace. The park will serve as a constant reminder to the world not to repeat the history of Hiroshima.

We would like to thank JICA for sponsoring the programme and the agencies that were involved in its organisation. Last but not least, we would like to express our gratitude to our two lovely coordinators. They had 'baby-sat' us throughout our entire stay in Japan. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, thus making saying good-bye difficult. We really hope to visit Japan and see our Japanese friends again.

The Land of Rising Sun

Economy B Group Participants
Economy B Group

On arriving at Chitose airport, we were overwhelmed by the warm hospitality exhibited by our Japanese counterparts from Chitose. The welcoming party at the airport really touched us, and this showed that it is not true that Japanese are shy and reserved people.

During our stay in Chitose, briefings conducted by various officials from Chitose City deepened our understanding of the recent development in that city. We were greatly impressed by Chitose City officials' bold initiatives of investing highly in their higher education system and the city infrastructures. The high emphasis given to the environment in the development

planning of Chitose City has left us with a striking high impression of Japan. We also noted that the people of Chitose enjoyed a high quality standard of living as a result of the great attention given to the surroundings.

Although there was a language barrier between our Japanese counterparts and ourselves, we found that the direct interaction in the In-house Seminar and the Homestay Programme in particular provided an excellent opportunity for us to understand the culture and the way of thinking of the Japanese.

The Japanese people's warmth and kindness have gone a long way in making our stay in Japan a pleasant and memorable one. Japan's technological advances (in particular, the visit to NTT and Sony Multi-Media World) have also impressed us greatly. We hope that there will be opportunities for our countries to work together in this area.

Impressions of Japan

Goh Oon Chiew Gabriel Gerard
 ASEAN Comp.
 Social Welfare Group

I had read in a tourist guide book that if one visits Japan for a day, one would want to write a whole book about Japan. Spend a week in Japan, and one would reduce the writing to a short thesis or essay. Spend a month in Japan, and one would not know what to write.

I find myself in that position after almost a month here. The reason for this is the conflicts and contradictions within the unique society.

This is a society that laments its unimaginative school system and the lack of creative thought but at the same time has given us Ultraman, Godzilla Nintendo, Tamagotch, and Sony Walkman.

This is a society that has vending machines at every corner selling cigarettes, chewing gum, hot meals, cold drinks, batteries, cameras, and even adult magazines, indicating a high level of automation. Yet one sees staff at train and subway stations collecting tickets.

I went to a Catholic church on Sunday and saw a young woman with multi-coloured hair wearing a very traditional veil. Perhaps this sums up my impression

of Japan. Despite modern ideas and fashion, old ways are not forgotten. While Japan moves forward, it does not forget its past; it does not abandon its traditions, where possible Japanese society integrates the new with the old, like the young woman with the dyed hair and the veil.

A Heartwarming Learning Journey

Chan Yew Wool
 Education Group

Few visitors will have no preconceived ideas about Japan and her people. For me, Japan was quite simply just an economic juggernaut. My four-week stay certainly offered me plenty of evidence of Japan's efficiency which underpinned her economic success, from the speed of the Shinkansen to the almost religious obsession with punctuality. However, I quickly discovered that the Japanese are not characterless workaholics. I was most impressed by the effortless courtesy of the front-line service personnel, and the pride and joy everyone took in their work, no matter how "lowly" their jobs may be. As a customer, I have never felt more kingly, and quite so ready to engage in conspicuous consumption!

The cleanliness of Japan also struck me. Social discipline must be a major factor. Perhaps significantly, a pupil asked during our visit to a school whether it was true that in Singapore litterbugs are fined. Consideration is also extended to the handicapped everywhere, from the pavements to the railway stations. The Japanese are also clearly a closely knit people. And the ties that bind are forged in the schools where the pupils' cultural identity is reinforced and where group activities are emphasized.

The Homestay Programme helped me to know the Japanese as individuals and allowed me to savour their generosity and kindness. However, it also opened my eyes to the anguish of those who felt that their punishing workload has affected family life. Since my host family's proficiency in English allowed me to communicate effectively with them, I hope that museums and other public places in Japan could similarly make greater use of English, so that foreigners like me could understand Japan more easily.

Certainly, my group has benefited in varied ways from the Exchange Programme. We left Japan with very fond and lasting memories, and all of us have made new friends.

Remembering Japan, its People and Culture

Chin Yin Ling
Social Development Group

Before coming to Japan, the deepest impression I had of this country was its cherry blossoms and Tokyo Disneyland. Now, I return home with a better understanding of Japan's history and culture (from the lectures that were given and also from mixing with the local people) and also bring back numerous unforgettable experiences.

There was the In-house Seminar held in Yamanashi, where we met Japanese youths to discuss current issues. This discussion enabled us to know and understand more about today's youths, their interests, concerns etc. Ideas on activities organized for Japanese youths were also exchanged. We also made a lot of new friends and hope to maintain this long distance friendship in the years to come.

The homestay was an another highlight which all of us looked forward to. It turned out to be a good and enriching experience. We got to feel what it was like living in a Japanese home for a weekend. The host families were hospitable people, making our homestay most comfortable and enjoyable. Our stay in Okinawa was made more memorable when some of our host families got together and put on performances for all of us. We were touched by their sincerity and appreciated the hard work they put in to make all that possible.

The tea ceremony and Ikebana class were indeed eye openers. Not only was the origination of Ikebana explained to us, but we were also given an opportunity to 'practice what we learnt.' We were also shown the traditional tea ceremony. Some of us were dressed in Yukata especially for the occasion. This experience will be remembered for a very, very long time.

Many of us did not understand the impact of World War II on Japan until we toured the Memorial Park in Okinawa and the Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki.

All of us came back realizing the importance for peace and harmony to be maintained throughout the world, for such tragedies and their aftermath should never occur again to anyone or any country.

In conclusion, this Youth Invitation Programme has turned out to be fruitful and enriching. We not only bring back with us many 'omiyage' but also beautiful memories of Japan and its people. May the friendship we fostered over the 28 days blossom and bear fruits in the future, too.

Asia

Thailand

My Great Experience

Chaaim Pachanee
ASEAN Comp.
Environmental Protection Group

The programme was a great experience. I made a lot of good friends and learned about Japan, its people and its environmental programmes.

The color that greeted me when I arrived in Japan was green. On the way to Osaka International Centre, I saw many trees. I could see that Japanese were successful in protecting their environment. When I visited the landfill site in Tokyo Bay, I saw how effective the waste management they implemented is. The lectures and activities also deepened my knowledge about environmental protection.

The Japanese people were very friendly and hospitable. During the Homestay Programme, my host family took me to the Lake Mashu. I was told that Lake Mashu was always foggy; but when I went there, I was very lucky. The sky was clear and very blue. I took many pictures. In the same area of the national park was the Iou Mountain. From a distance, the mountain looked as if it were covered with snow. However, when I went closer, I discovered that it was actually sulfur gas coming from underground and it was very smelly.

In Kushiro, I learned to enjoy eating raw fish and to eat Sukiyaki with a raw egg. I also experienced an "earthquake" for the first time at the Disaster Center of Kushiro by using the simulator. Furthermore, I had Ikebana and tea ceremony classes. So I realized that Japanese people still preserve their traditional culture from generation to generation.

In conclusion, what I have gained from this programme is not only friendship and deeper knowledge about environmental protection but also a better understanding of other cultures and lifestyles.

An Experience Which Taught Me Both Good and Bad Points

Amphai Boonyasitpichai
Economy A Group

First, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to JICA, staff of the organization concerned and coordinators.

We got a precious opportunity to visit Japan under the Youth Invitation Programme. Coming in touch with various life styles and senses of values, we could broaden our horizons.

While Japan has high-technology and expanded her economy, she has been enjoying a splendid harmony with good, old traditions and sufficient greenery. On the other hand, we have also learned the gap between modernization and existing cultures or traditions has caused various problems, such as stress under the work-oriented life, where people are pressed for time. Even though our stay in Japan was short, I made every effort to absorb information about the nation as much as possible.

The thing which impressed me most was the Japanese people's hospitality, their cordial welcome, and thoughtfulness. I think that the faithful and great efforts of the Japanese people to understand Thai culture and the Thais will become a foundation to build a friendship-bridge between our two countries in various fields.

An Ear of Rice and Blessed Rain

Erawan Tubblee
Economy B Group

"Friendship" is the basic principle of the Youth Invitation Programme, which makes the globe look small.

To participate in this programme we spend months practicing cultural performances, as well as preparing souvenirs and personal things. Finally our Economy B Group's new life in Japan began. Away from our home, Thailand, we found new things such as meeting with new friends, exchanging views and ideas with them, etc. waiting for us. When we arrived at Narita Airport, new questions rose to my mind, what Japan

has and what kind of people live here. Maybe other members of the group shared the same feeling with me.

When we were living, communicating, exchanging views, watching and listening various things with the Japanese people, they always treated us Thais full of heart.

As I had the precious experience of homestay, I could exchange views and ideas with Japanese youths and many other people. Everybody was very kind to us. Although time was limited, we were able to get unforgettable and precious memories. Now all of us have new fathers, mothers and friends here in Japan. We are proud that Japanese people got to know about us and tied strong bonds of friendship with Thailand and Thai people. Some people said that they wanted to travel to Thailand, visit Thailand on a honeymoon, and vice versa. If we have a chance, we do want to come back to Japan. Japan is a country of affection and beautiful friendship. There are meetings, there are partings. Even if we live far away each other, if there are thoughtful ties, the distance between us means nothing. If we have sympathetic spirits, our friendship will last for a long, long time.

Lasting friendship between Japan and Thailand
Having been handed down to many descendants
Cherry blooms blossom in heart

Japan and Thailand have preserved their own
culture

Thailand is the ear of rice with fruit
Japan is blessed rain

People are in trouble when there are no rice and rain
Both of them bring happiness to people

Friendship and Memories

Phunsup Seubma
Agriculture Group

Crossing over the sea and flying over the ocean, we came to Japan full of excitement and anxiety from a faraway country. Our hopes for having Japanese friends expanded. We worried whether we could be accepted or not.

However, the tie of friendship went across Tokyo and spread over to a small town in Okayama

Prefecture called Ochiai Town more quickly than I imagined.

As I was eager to talk with Japanese people, I tried to communicate with them in Japanese which might be strange.

During the long awaited homestay, my Japanese father, mother and all other members of the family looked after me with tender loving care. I greatly appreciate their kindness.

As time flows like water, so does our enjoyable time shared with Japanese people also flow like water? No! This pleasant time has fostered a strong friendship between Japan and Thailand which can't be swept away. At the same time we were given knowledge and wisdom, which will surely serve as a guidepost when we bear our countries on our shoulders in the future.

My gratitude and deep emotions to all the people whom I have met in Japan will remain forever.

Thai with All of the Heart

Lawan Inthararak
Education Group

Prior to participating in the Youth Invitation Programme, my perception of Japan was based on knowledge and image of technological advancement, orderliness among the people, and strength in building organization.

When that is all you hear, you are led to believe that the Japanese are materialistic. However, that perception and feelings changed during the Programme. I learned that Japan is using its advanced technologies not only for society, education, industry, and improvement of everyday living but also for preservation of nature and greenery.

Amid the intensely competitive and hectic living, the Japanese have their pride and sense of responsibility as citizens, keeping social order and maintaining cleanliness of cities. Japanese women dressed gracefully in kimonos are wielding strength at par with men in organizations.

Even when the economy is not necessarily vibrant, the Japanese welcomed us with smile, warmth, and sincerity. It may be realized that the Japanese have capability to blend modern technology with traditional

consciousness.

I also laud the courage demonstrated in giving us the opportunity to see everyday Japanese living, since it is truly the first step in true friendship and true mutual understanding.

Thai Friendship

Sompot Kwangkaew
Social Development Group

I am very grateful for having this opportunity to visit Japan under the Youth Invitation Programme. Most of the members of our Social Development Group had visited Japan for the first time. The trip between Narita Airport and the Tokyo International Center where we were to stay was a series of surprises in everything we saw and heard.

Tokyo International Centre (TIC) had very modern, convenient facilities. There, we studied Japanese and had the opportunity to learn about Japanese economy, social development, and culture and cultural consciousness. At the same time, we were excited to see the metropolis of Tokyo.

We also visited regional cities in Saitama, Osaka, and Hiroshima, I was truly grateful for the warm welcome given by the Japanese volunteers and host families. I believe that we could all understand about Japanese way of thinking through such exchange. It was a wonderful experience. I hope to bring this sense of thanks home and spread it around from the grassroots level.

I would like to thank all of you for this.

Asia

Bangladesh

The Japanese People: Angels or Robots?!

Riva Shahriar
Government Official Group

We came to Japan on the Nov. 18, 1998. One of our coordinators came to Dhaka to pick us up there. From that day on, we have experienced the organizing capacity, punctuality, dutifulness, and friendly behaviour of the Japanese people.

At the beginning, it was very difficult for us to catch up with their schedule. But since they created a good environment, we managed to cooperate with them. Their schedule was excellent. They started teaching us the language; and they invited many renowned professionals to give us, without boring, an overview of Japanese lifestyle, administration and the civil servant system, social welfare, politics and so on. On the whole, they managed to create a clear picture of Japan to us. With them, we visited many institutions and gathered knowledge about those institutions. I think that it will help us in making our decisions in our own fields.

With this, we have also visited the Museum of Ethnology where we learned about the evolution of different races. Not only that, but by visiting the Peace Park and Museum in Hiroshima, we have come to know about the devastating effect of the nuclear bomb.

They also made an effort to introduce us to different kinds of foods. We enjoyed the dishes very much. I may not get this chance again.

In the In-house Seminar, we exchanged our views with our Japanese counterparts, which also helped us to build up our opinions about Japan.

The Homestay Programme is also an innovative idea for introducing us to the lifestyle of Japan.

However, sometimes, I wondered whether the Japanese are men or machines, because it is more or less impossible for a human being to be so hard-working, punctual and dutiful. So sometimes, I think that the Japanese are robots, but not men.

■ Asia

■ Bhutan

A Visit to the Land of Rising Sun

Nima Tshering
Education Group

It was a great joy for the 5-member group from Bhutan to be selected by JICA to attend the Youth Invitation Programme.

During the 27 days of visiting places and meeting people, we have learnt a lot about Japan. The Japanese compulsory education system seems to show how the people care about youths and want to bring them up as the future leaders of this country. We found Japanese society sociable, patient, and punctual; and it is ruled by a code of moral ethics and self-discipline.

In spite of being one of the most developed countries in the world, Japan has managed to keep its cultural heritage alive. Two national museums, the "Edo-Tokyo Museum" and "Peace Memorial Museum," are worth visiting. There, one can see, as a reality, the experience the united Japanese went through to reach this stage after World War II.

May Japan prosper further, too.

■ Asia

■ India

An Unknown Indian in Well-known Japan

Sabitabrata Mandal
Education Group

You may not know me,
I am an unknown Indian.
But you are known to me
from time unknown.
When civilization's barbarism,
flashed on your land,
We shared your feelings
in unknown villages of India.
Again when you bloomed,
from the ashes of destruction,
We shed tears of happiness.
My visit made me know more
in thousand forms in thousand places,
and every encounter made me yours.
Buildings we have heard of,
Cars we have seen,
In electronics you are the best,
But what I got is great
and I can not forget
and I must pass on to others.
The trapped people of concrete,
catch every second of time.
They have talked with us a little bit
but they have listened to everything of mine.
The JICA's bell has rung,
So we have to go back.
But before I leave you all
I call you, O! civilization
please do not find the differences,
but let us know the similarity
that of the humanity
to make a great, green, beautiful world.

■ Asia

■ Maldives

My Impressions of Japan

Nazima Shameem
Education Group

Japan is one of the world-leading countries. Though I came here for a short visit, I would say my impression of Japan was excellent and fantastic. I never forget the hospitality given by the people here. The Japanese people are so nice and kind. They respect each other very well. Their life style is very different from others. The Japanese are very well organised and systematic.

I never ever forget the different occasions we met together. Their warm welcome was highly appreciated. The management of the education system was well organised. We have gained much knowledge through the education system, and I will share the experiences I had in Japan with my colleagues in Maldives.

Thank you very much for giving me such an opportunity. I would like to visit Japan once again.

■ Asia

■ Nepal

Friendship

Jay Prakash Shah
Science and Math Teachers Group

I know its name "The Country of Rising Sun," which means Japan is an attractive and beautiful country. Here I was able to have many experiences. Before coming to Japan I had heard many things about it, but after arriving in Japan I was able to see and experience more various things than I had expected.

Here I had a chance to get information on economic and educational situation about Japan. It means that I could observe many schools and factories. Moreover through two days homestay in Komagane City I was able to experience Japanese family life. During our stay in Japan, Japanese friends showed me thoughtfulness and afforded cooperation. I believe that these are characters of Japanese people.

I expect that the experience which I gained under this Youth Invitation Programme will be a great help at my work place. I also hope that the exchange through this programme promotes further friendship between Japan and Nepal.

■ Asia

■ Pakistan

Dream Destination

Zaibi Bukhari

Female Teacher (Primary and Middle School) Group

Japan is the land of rising sun, the factory of economic convinced many people that its remarkable economic success has come only at the expense of its education. It is very important to realize the role of education which seems as the foundation of social system. Japan is one of the best country in the world with an excellent education system, which not only educates a person but also make him a good human being. No doubt the secret of success of Japanese people is because of their cent percent literacy rate. Here in Japan all children between the age of 6 to 15 are required by law to attend the school, education is compulsory and free, and the student have got all the facilities at their school e.g. computer, language, singing etc., and all other sports facilities are available for them. Teachers are kind enough to instruct them in a friendly way. In this way the successful result of a school directly depend on the struggle and qualification of a teacher. In order to become a teacher there are different certificate courses. Nowadays Japan is facing the shadow of education such as violence, bullying and no attendance in the school.

Japan has a number of fascinating places such as in the Miyagi Prefecture, Matsushima which is full of beautiful Island. It is a famous saying that "beauty lies in the eyes of beholder," but for Matsushima beauty lies in every eyes. The colourful and fascinating mountains of Innoshima Island with a number of orange trees looks like paradise on earth. If all these things are dream of anyone, then they should have visited Japan.

■ Asia

■ Sri Lanka

Mutual Bonds

M. D. P. Shanthi

Education Group

Faces new, Places unknown, Scenes strange, Roads busy,

Scenes strange, Roads busy

My first steps in a foreign land

Many miles away from my homeland.

Cheerful faces, kind voices

-- All polite and dignified.

OSIC -- the first home -- What relief it was.....

"Nihongo" lessons and repetitions

-- reminded us of our childhood.

Opening ceremony with our neighbours.

Useful talks -- All on Japan

Opened the doors to broaden our knowledge

Country Reports, rare opportunities.....

To share our thoughts.

Hikari trains, memorable tours, buildings, museums

Took us back to the time of our forefathers

Friendly counterparts, deep relationships

Songs, dances, exchanging views.....

Wonderful and tightened the friendships

To keep forever and ever.

Tokyo : "The pride of Japan"

-- Symbol of modern life

People everywhere like "a swarms of bees,"

Shimane and sweet memories.....

Traditions, customs, beliefs and schools

Special and joyous at times

"Sayonara," dear land of flowers

We'll meet again and again.

■ Asia

■ Mongolia

Approaching the 21st Century

Tumentsogt Tsevegmid
Working Youth Group

With the 21st century approaching, I was very honored to be invited to participate in JICA's Youth Invitation Programme.

Especially with the need to cooperate, learn from each other, and work together in all areas regardless of region, nation, or language, the programme has great significance.

Through the programme, I was able to learn Japanese culture, customs, and lifestyle. Exchange with Japanese youths on various issues will certainly contribute to friendly relations, mutual understanding, and future cooperation between Japan and Mongolia.

Although the stay in Japan was short, I was blessed with the opportunity to visit many cities, met people in the same field of work, and visited relevant sites and facilities.

The most memorable was the homestay. I was able to make many friends in Japan and look forward to growth of cooperative relations in the future.

I pray for the good health and fortune of the hardworking Japanese people and for future success of the various organizations that have cooperated in organizing this programme.

The remaining problem is how we can learn from the Japanese experience of building their country and cooperating with each other.

■ Asia

■ Myanmar

Unforgettable Memories

Aung Naing Win
Education Group

Being one of the Myanmar participants in the Youth Invitation Programme, I arrived Osaka on the morning of November 18, 1998. Since that time on, I encountered so many new experiences, new faces, new names, new places: everything new and new.

For me, among the many new things, the homestay gave me unforgettable memories. The homestay programme for our group was arranged in Akita. And my homestay family has four members. Among them, Kikue-san, mother of Kazuo-san, is eighty years old and still very healthy. They maintain very good family values, and they take care of each other very well.

Kazuo-san, a company executive, and Emiko-san, an office worker, welcomed me very warmly. After a few chats, we became very close friends. During our limited stay, we talked about our families, cooked Japanese and Myanmar cuisines, exchanged views, went out fishing, shopping and sightseeing.

In the evenings, Noriko-san, sister of Emiko-san and a small restaurant owner, and her husband Yutaka-san, joined us, and we had dinner with the cuisines we had prepared, sang Japanese and Myanmar songs, danced and talked.... Oh I will never forget all of them. Thinking about these fills my heart with pleasure and happiness. And that is the nature of friendship. At the same time, I understand that I have gotten a new family in Japan.

I do want to thank JICA and my host family for these sweetest memories in my life.

They will be with me forever.

■ Asia

■ Cambodia

Experience in Japan

Kuy Savuth
Economy Group

I would like to express my gratitude to government of Japan, JICA, and all the people concerned this program for inviting 30 of us, paying attention for our health, making the doctor stand by and took care of us anytime.

We owe all things such as visiting Ministry of Trade and Industry, observing various factories and study tour in Tokyo to all of you.

Through In-house Seminar and homestay I had new experiences, became acquainted with Japanese youth and family and got new friends and family.

Cultural exchange between Japan and Cambodia will promote friendship between both countries.

Going back to our country, we want to tell what we experienced and saw in Japan to our family, friends and Cambodian.

I think that this Youth Invitation Programme is wonderful. This experience will be useful for Cambodia reconstruction.

■ Asia

■ Laos

My 28 days in Japan

Bounmy Silavong
Civil Servant (Agriculture) Group

I realized that this Youth Invitation Programme was very meaningful through my 28-day stay in Japan. I was strongly impressed upon learning that Japan, which was previously an agricultural country like Laos, has developed dramatically and became an advanced power in the field of technology in the world after World War II.

In Kochi Prefecture we got to observe advanced technologies, which we want to introduce into the agriculture in Laos in the future. We also had fruitful exchanges with Japanese people concerning agriculture and Japanese youths in general. We deepened our understanding of Japanese culture, customs and sense of values.

The experiences we obtained this time will contribute to strengthen friendship and cooperation between Laos and Japan for further continuous development. I sincerely hope that this Programme will continue for a long time.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to JICA, JICE and all the people who made efforts to make this programme meaningful.

We hope to foster this friendship and cooperation forever.

■ Asia

■ Viet Nam

Japan in My Heart

Phan Thi Hanh
Economy Group

I was very lucky to come to Japan, the country of people who welcome their guests very warmly.

Clean, green and the beautiful hearts of her people were my first impressions of Japan. Through observation of various institutions, companies, factories, beautiful scenery and cultural assets, we ascertained that the powers and magnificent abilities of the Japanese with our own eyes, and we admired the Japanese for the fruits of their labor.

I learnt a lot and acquired precious memories. Now the Japanese economy is suffering, but I'm sure that Japan will be able to get out this difficult situation before long, because it is one of the countries which successfully achieved economic development at a top-level high speed.

I think that we were able to find a common language, culture, hearts and purposes in living through our stay in Japan. The stay in Japan gave me the feeling as if I had been in my own hometown. From the very beginning of this programme, a pre-departure orientation in Viet Nam when we, for the first time, learnt the Japanese language and about the culture to prepare us for our stay in Japan, a country of cherry-blossoms, where we enjoyed various programmes such as the In-house Seminar at Fuji 21, and a homestay, where we were deeply moved by the Japanese people who exerted themselves to the utmost to foster friendship and show their hospitality. All these things will remain in my heart as beautiful memories.

Even if time passes, our friendship will last forever.
Thank you for everybody. See you again.

True Joy

Phan Thong
Agriculture Group

For the participants of the Agriculture Group of the Youth Invitation Programme the late summer days in Japan in 1998 will remain in our hearts as a

memorable time.

City names such as Tokyo, Wakayama and Hiroshima, etc., the science and technology in Japanese agriculture, the applied experiment laboratory and famous sports in Japan, a country of cherry blossoms—all these things remain as beautiful memories in the hearts of all of us.

Exchanging with Japanese youths and host families was interesting, and we continuously came across happenings which we never expected. Before we met our Japanese counterparts, we had uneasy feelings about the first meeting and the language barrier between us. However, such feelings faded away through our exchanges with them, and friendly feelings developed. As I spent time with a host family, I felt as if all the persons whom I met were my own relatives and the people in the house where I was staying were my relatives.

One month passed in a twinkling, and beautiful memories which will surely deepen the significance to live will remain in our hearts. Through the Youth Invitation Programme, the distance between Japanese and the Vietnamese was narrowed as time went by. As the world is getting smaller, the bonds of friendship among youths of not only our two countries but also of the world will be strengthened, and everybody's ideas and resources will lead the world to prosperity.

Every one of us faces a bright future. The 21st century is waiting for us. It will not be until our dreams come true that the genuine wish will be granted. This is the common desire of the participants from Japan and Viet Nam in this programme.

On the Day of Return

Nguyen Van Thang
Government Official Group

I will cross the horizon tomorrow
Thinking millions of words that cannot be said
Is it fantasy or reality—dazed and bewildered
Like the thought of separation from loved ones

Time spent in learning together is gone
Japanese and Vietnamese words ring in the passion
in my heart

The youthful and the gray-headed teachers
Remind me of my days of innocence

The time of goodwill is quickly past
Meeting, the bonds are stronger and deeper
I return with the memory of you and the fondness
for you
And the scrap of paper of your domicile

Fukushima glittered with the brilliant snow
Burning warm and bright, a glow is lit in the hearts
of mother and father
Realizing that this is home
My lips tremble and issue only faint sounds

Wherever I tread
There was beauty of nature and loving smiles
A tragic past and the coming future
What am I to tell, the nation fragrant with cherry
blossoms?

Still, we will continue to live for each other
The tender memory will become a perennial song
The blue ripples of the Pacific lap on the shores of
Japan and Viet Nam
As the bridge to each other's heart

My Impressions of My Stay in Japan

Tran Thi Kim Loan
Education Group

My trip to Japan was finalized—*anxiety* grew over the separation from my family and friends. I arrived in Japan—its modernity and noise made me dizzy. The winter cold was harsh, but the warmth of the people made me comfortable and happy. The most memorable experience in the programme was the homestay at a Japanese home.

The first morning of the homestay, I heard in my bed the voice, "Loan, get up!"

The voice was just like my mother's when I was sleeping late. The heartwarming sensation made me shiver slightly with a sense of comfort and relief. I felt the warmth of a loving family.

My Japanese mother who found that I not accustomed to Japanese food searched for a Vietnamese cookbook

and served me Vietnamese food that she cooked based on the recipes.

Living with a Japanese family, I learned Japanese family life, how people associate, and Japanese customs and practices. The Japanese mother also taught me Japanese tea ceremony and how to dress in a Japanese kimono. Notwithstanding the science and technology and economic development the Japanese live with, I found that they have not forgotten courtesy, hospitality, and concern for others.

The two-day homestay ended very quickly. The children grabbed at my wrists carrying my baggage to leave the house and cried. I wanted to cry but smiled instead, as if the tears had gone the other way. The moment the car started, I cried out very loud. The small hands of the children waving goodbye grew smaller and smaller until they became small, moving objects.

Returning to Viet Nam, I certainly will tell my friends and acquaintances about so many things. I will never forget the beautiful and modern country and its people filled with kindness.

■ Asia

■ Tajikistan

War and Peace

Nekruz Bokiev
Central Asian Comp.
Economy Group

I came to Japan, one of the most peace loving country in the world, from the country where real war has just finished. In my country still there is gunfire, many families mourn over the death of their relatives and parents start worrying about their children if their coming home are late even for a few minutes. In Japan children don't play soldiers and adult never take up arms except when they play shooting game at a game center.

In Tajikistan I knew what war brought to people. These are physical pain, mental anguish, poverty and huge accumulation of negative feelings on whole society and each individual.

In Japan I understood what peace brought to people. These are calm expression, fulfilled life, faithful tomorrow and people without hating each other.

While my stay in Japan I want to know the secret of Japan completely destroyed by the war and experienced chaos and poverty after the war her people reconstructed new houses with their effort from destruction, without pursuing the responsibility and inspiring anger toward the whole world. We watched the houses. And the houses attracted us.

Religion, nationality, racially homogeneous nation, island country might be the secret. We don't know. However we can understand how important peace is. We heard that the U.S. attacked Iraq when we arrived at the hotel after visiting the Atomic Bomb Museum in Hiroshima. Again people are dying somewhere. I was really shocked because it was right after I looked at various things.

We heard and also talked much about peace. But it was just abstract words. We know that to understand the word of peace we must come to Japan.

I am going back to my country with the memory of good people who live in peace and who showed every miracle can be realized if hatred and enmity are put aside.

■ Pacific

■ Fiji

The Way the World Should Be

Peceli Baleikorocau
Civil Servant Group

By experiencing life in Japan first hand, I learned how the people of this world have to live to realize lasting family relations and friendship. I got to see photo portraits, hear stories told, and learn about the history of the Japanese people. Seeing and experiencing the Japanese way of life is a totally different reality.

I had heard about the faithfulness of Japanese people, which is part of their living discipline. I had noticed this when walking in some of their big cities, where motorbikes and bicycles are placed here and there, but their owners are not worried about their belongings getting stolen.

This was an experience we have to review in order to build our beloved country up with trust and friendship.

Traditional culture is something that I noticed that Japanese people value very much as a foundation that symbolizes hope for the future generations, and I respect the Japanese people for this. Another point is the way Japanese people look at and respect their homes; shoes are not worn inside the house. I have learned that everything starts from one's home; if you respect your home, you can become a good leader in the future.

In this one page, I want to salute the Japanese way of positive thinking and am convinced that this is the way the world should be. We will treasure this all our lives.

■ Pacific

■ Pacific

Friendship for All

Pacific Comp. Teacher Group Participants
Pacific Comp.
Teacher Group

Once in a Life Time

Children of the sun journey from the southern seas
Cross the equator to experience Japan
The seed of friendship grows within
Nurturers of younger trees
The seed of friendship blossoms and blooms
Conquering barriers of cultures, language
And beliefs

People of the sun sail from pacific seas
Away from home to search the mysteries of the
Japanese

Nurturers of miscellaneous fields for future trees
Miscellaneous fields in education, culture, and
language
Colour of skin and beliefs
Bound as one, become a family
The seed of friendship blossom, islanders become
Japanese

An Opportunity of a Lifetime

A one time never to-come-again chance and
opportunity

A net of memories to linger until death engulfs life
Sunny eyes discover fascination
History, themes of beliefs, and modern technology
Japan moves with the feet of time and wind

The lord of opportunity knocks once into our lives
To brighten and strengthen sunny hearts and lives,
A chance to witness modern technology in the
original light.

Steeped in history, beliefs last for life.
Osaka, Ehime, phenomenal Hiroshima
Ambassadors of peace and harmony
Japan rides on fleeting wind

Homestay

Mutual love, care, and kindness

hovered upon the sun's son's eyes.
Cushioned in the blossom of Japanese lives
Time and feelings are sacrificed
Mother chicken gathers young ones under her
wings
Mutual love, care, and kindness

Acknowledgment

The beating of the drums spreads the message of the
sun

Calling for her children to return.
"Come home, come home to my arms"
Quenched thirst, burst hearts
Journey ends, as new beginning comes
Knowledge made halves entwined into one drum
beat
Soul companions, lovers for life; woes and enemies
defeated
Domo arigato, JICA

A bridge upon the nomadic waves of the southern
and northwestern sea
Sayonara; we shall meet again
Children of the sun
Nurturers of younger trees

■ Pacific

■ Papua New Guinea

Respect and Humility in a Homogeneous Society

Neville Jon Choi
Civil Servant Group

Before we arrived in Japan, we were told by an ex-participant to experience as much as we could about the Japanese people and culture as we were 'privileged' to be able to go on this trip. I can still remember what he told us. A widely traveled man, he said "I have traveled to many places around the world, but I can say that anyone who has traveled the world and not visited Japan has not seen the world."

Well, my first week in Osaka introduced me to what the Japanese people are like. It was on a rainy night when a couple of friends and I had decided to visit nearby shops and got stranded outside of a shop building with no umbrellas. While we were waiting for the rain to stop, a pump attendant from the gas station across the street ran up to us with four umbrellas. Not waiting for us to enquire if we were to pay for them, he left screaming, "Present, present," with a big smile on his face and bowing fervently while crossing the street to the point that we were afraid he was going to get hit by a passing vehicle.

From that moment, until we ended our stay, our images of the people of Japan and their culture were heightened by what we later experienced ourselves. The courtesy given to us by everyone we met in shops and hotels and generally everywhere we went showed us the deep respect Japanese people have for others.

Our exchanges with our Japanese counterparts greatly increased our knowledge about each other's country. Our visits to many traditional Japanese shrines and monuments showed us the importance the Japanese place in holding on to some of their 'old ways.' Other visits to many of the modern organizations that have been the trademark of the efficient Japanese lifestyle showed us how far Japan has come and also gave us insight into its potential to grow more. The homestay with host Japanese families was the highlight to many of us; we all experienced genuine respect and humility given to us by our host families.

We learnt about and felt the distress and destruction

caused by the devastating atomic bomb when we visited the Peace Memorial Park and Museum in Hiroshima. It showed us the Japanese people's ability to 'rise from ashes' to what it is today.

Ever since arriving, we have learned both sides of Japan and its people: both the Japan that is a fast growing technological leader in the world, and the Japan that is a simple yet complex traditional society. Domo Arigato Gozaimashita.

Time

John Kawage
Teacher Group

Japan's fundamental tool for achieving prosperity in life and industrialization was very simple. Many people may have thought it something complex, but I considered time the most valuable factor. Though this may sound simple, I was really moved and touched by the way time was utilized. The government, private sector and the public planned their daily usage of time. They believe in punctuality and efficiency. Therefore, they see themselves progressing in life.

The public transportation system functioned satisfactorily. Buses and trains stop and go within 1-2 minutes. Missing a train or a bus meant that you are late. Observing people walking was interesting. Every man is for himself. I hardly saw anyone wasting time. I also wonder why they run or walk so fast. Obviously, it is because of time.

The Japanese hate being late. Interesting occasions such as parties and celebrations often continue overtime, but that wasn't the case for the Japanese people. Everything had to be done within the given time.

No wonder, Japan developed rapidly in its industrialization; it's because they made good use of time. They both fear time and value it as something precious. When you are time conscious, you achieve your goal or aim. So, that was exactly what was happening in Japan.

Although I've seen and observed countless things, my most impressive experience was connected with time. I even had to run with my suitcase to a train, otherwise, I would have been late. So, to live in Japan, you've got to be time conscious.

■ Pacific

■ Samoa

Of All the Blessings that Heaven Sends, Surely the Greatest is Loyal Friends

Faiga Malaefono Maulaiti
Pacific Comp.
Civil Servant Group

To foster a long-lasting relationship of peace and prosperity based upon mutual understanding and true friendship, is the main purpose of this Programme. It is said to be for the youths from Pacific countries who will become the leaders in 21st century with their nation building; at the same time it is meant to give ample opportunity to experience the way of life and culture.

Everyone was fresh from the farm on the first day of arrival, neither knowing each other nor talking to one another. Amazing Grace!!! It didn't take that long for us to get acquainted.

Before coming to Japan, we were only Pacific Civil Servants. We did not know you Japanese people, and we did not feel that we would be treated the way we thought we should be. But now that we have spent 28 days together in Japan, I must say you made us feel as if we were living in our own homeland. You treated us like your own children, and we felt like brothers and sisters born from the same mother and father. You always advised us about our health, with words like "Take care of your yourselves, and don't catch cold." Your concern for us all ensured that everything went smoothly; it was so great that we felt as if we are on a different planet. We call that love, and it was the most important thing experienced in this Programme.

The Japanese people spoiled us with their warm love, which made every one of us happy. Without love, there would be no peace around the world, and peace cannot be achieved unless we are loved. Everything in our Programme went out very well and peacefully. Japan is a country with a population of many millions. From those millions, we have learned that Japanese are very friendly, honest and kind. But most of all, they are such loving people.

There is so much we want to say but words alone can never express what is in our hearts. Before I go on

any further, I must say that there are many individuals-people that we would like to acknowledge for their support, their love and assistance throughout our stay in Japan and likewise during our programme. It would be unfair to single out single person or group. Iroiro Arigato Gozaimashita.

We love you all.

Africa

Cote d'Ivoire

Impressions of Japan

Yao Ayeki Catherine

French-speaking Countries : Female Teacher Group

I think that a country's sustainable development is based on economic growth, rational utilization of natural resources, and the education of people who themselves are concerned with the development as well as enjoy it.

To deepen our understanding of the Japanese experience, youths from eighteen countries including Cote d'Ivoire were invited to Japan by JICA. I am happy to have participated in this programme.

There were many wonderful programmes, above all In-house Seminar in which we could discuss the problems of the education systems in various countries. The many observations that made us understand the remarkable development of Japan even though historically she had some difficult times. The cultural exchanges and the homestay, which enhanced our knowledge in both the fields of culture and profession. All these were the most magnificent programmes.

The stay in Japan leaves impressions in my mind. First, the Japanese people are very polite and generous. Secondly, Japanese culture and education are in harmony with each other in various fields. Thirdly, the Japanese cultural base is harmonized with a Western sense of values. Fourth was the technical progress in this beautiful country. Last were the research and advanced technology for environmental protection.

I sincerely hope that JICA promotes further this kind of programme. Then African youths will be able to broaden their cultural and professional insights and deepen their understanding of Japan as a model of economic and technological development.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the people who worked hard to make this programme a success, especially the coordinators who were away from their homes to guide us for one month.

I hope international cooperation between Japan and Africa will continue to be promoted and wish at the same time prosperity for JICA.

Africa

Gabon

My Discovery of Japan

Jean Roger Olivier MOUNGUENGUL

French-speaking Countries :
Natural Science and Math Teachers Group

When I received the invitation card for the Youth Invitation Programme, I was stung with the desire to learn about that country whose technological development is well known while her people and culture are unknown.

Immediately after my arrival in Japan, I noticed that these Japanese are moderate, hardworking and deliberate. This first impression turned to be a conviction during my stay in Japan. The good points of Japanese which gave me a strong impression are perfect management, punctuality and consideration toward other people.

Japan is technologically advanced. Japanese people love to work and suffer from the stress. Because of these things, people were apt to be thought not to have interest in others especially Africans. Our prejudice was completely disproved. Wherever we went, we were able to meet people with honest, sincere and open hearts. As we touched this tender side of the Japanese people, our stay in Japan became unforgettable. We felt as comfortable as if we had been in our own homes.

Many things impressed me during my stay. Above all, the following programmes were the most impressive: namely, the In-house Seminar in Yokosuka with Japanese youth; the science experiment at Higashi Ochiai Junior High School; the Homestay and other programmes in Aomori; and days in Hiroshima, the City of Peace.

Meanwhile, I also noticed that prices are high in Japan, Japanese people are hardworking and don't hesitate to overwork. Particularly in big cities children often go to a game center, and families seldom have meals together. This, consequently, tends to lead to a lack of mutual understanding.

Lastly, I would like to finish this writing to express my gratitude to JICA for giving us the opportunity to visit Japan and to all the people who willingly worked to make our stay fruitful.

■ Africa

■ Namibia

Reflection on a One Month Programme in Japan

Edda Wibke Born

English-speaking Countries : Female Teacher Group

From Africa we came, 21 young female teachers, representing all together 15 different countries and many more cultures from a faraway from Japan. With excitement and a little uncertainty, we left home to learn about Japan, its people and their culture.

Lectures displayed the education system and the lifestyle founded through many generations, social values and standards. We observed and shared in the unique traditions and discovered the admirable way the Japanese have preserved these and adjusted them to the technologically developed surroundings. We saw a faultless organization merge between the two: cultural heritage and the modernised "New Age."

All of us envy Japanese youngsters who have a wide range of specialised opportunities to pave their future, by acquiring the necessary education. The education body seems to provide everything --- even that which would be given in Africa by the extended family: a well balanced warm lunch, which we enjoyed amongst the friendly, cheerful elementary school children in Takefu. At both junior as well as senior high school the welcome ceremonies left us speechless, and time seemed to be just too short when we started to communicate personally. To the youngsters, their thirst for information about the big continent we come from could not be quenched in just 30 to 45 minutes. There were too many more things that we wanted to share with them and also wanted to learn from them. Besides the privilege to have visited Mount Fuji, another highlight was the "real-life" experience of trying the papermaking skill which the Japanese have developed. Each one of us will treasure our own hand-made sheet of paper. Then came a weekend homestay with a Japanese family. Equipped with our handbook of Nihongo, we went along enjoying more sightseeing, like the Japan Seashore, cultural events and many more things. In these days, weeks, and month, memories of another kind found

their way into our minds and hearts. Many of us left with feelings of loss, as we parted in the cold wind at Takefu Station, to travel to Hiroshima.

Having read the pamphlet given to us during orientation, we knew what monuments awaited us there. The film "A Mother's Prayer" could give us only a glimpse of the pain innocent people had to suffer. Moved to tears, silently we made our prayers in our own way for a peaceful future.

May this trip and the cultural exchange be for all of us a foundation for the global village we share, in which we have treasured friends in different corners of the world and house blocks. Japanese or African, we are the same human beings living on one planet hoping for one future in peace.

Africa

Zambia

Our Trip to Japan

Stella Mwale Zimba
 English-Speaking Countries :
 Natural Science and Math Teachers Group

It was on October 14, 1998, that we arrived at Narita Airport. Happy was everybody's face to realize that the long flights were over. In an Airport Limousine, we were comfortably driven to Hotel Metropolitan. Oh! How elegant the hotel appeared to us!

Japanese language lessons then followed for the next week... Hajimemashite, Ohayo gozaimasu, Arigato gozaimasu, and many more words were acquired into our vocabulary.

Then came our trip to Osaka City. What a good programme of work we enjoyed there! Nice memories of Soka Elementary School, Tennoji and Semboku High School will live on with us.

Highly beneficial was the sharing we did during the In-house Seminar, thanks to the teachers and interpreters who sacrificed their time during that weekend.

Richer our scientific knowledge became when we went to the Osaka Prefectural Education Training Center. Our experiences were marvelous, and oh, how we wished we could be invited to the Centre for further training!

A homestay then followed. Gee! It was wonderful to experience the Japanese lifestyle in a very hospitable home.

A tour of the Science Museum then followed. We saw and appreciated high technology there! Then came a visit to the Liberty Osaka Museum... Ah! How rich the place is in the labour history of Japan!

Hiroshima was the last place we visited. We saw shrines and places of the A-bomb attack there. What an emotional morning we had at the Hiroshima Memorial Museum!

JICA, JICE, OFIX, and the Japanese people in general, we thank you for your good will. We thank you for your cooperation and friendship.

DOMO ARIGATO GOZAIMASU.

Latin America

Ecuador

Our Experiences in Japan

Leonardo Nunez
 Latin American Comp.
 Social Welfare Group

We are getting closer to the 21st century and there are many transformations and changes, the cooperation in the technology, living in harmony with one another, but most of all the wonderful friendship among all the people in the world. With this concept through the Youth Invitation Programme between Japan and Latin America, promoted by JICA. The fifteen countries from the area of social services in Latin America had the opportunity to interchange ideas, opinions among professionals, Japanese institutions, parents, young, professors, and children, in which all of us together have enriched friendship and mutual trust.

Based in our experience in visiting different institutions, we can say that in Japan one of the main priorities is the well-being of the children, elderly, the disabled, schools, universities and corporations, with the proper infrastructure equipment, economical resources and capable personnel.

It has been a great opportunity to talk with the Japanese youth and seen them in their working environment in their particular homes, had allows us to know their roots, culture, religion, history among other positive aspects. We could relate to our own culture with similarities and differences in the way we think and act.

Homestay allowed us to know much closer the daily living of a Japanese family.

Visiting the different culture, religions and tourist centers lead us to say that Japan is not only an industrialized country but also rich in resources and culture.

In the name of all the participants of the Latin American countries, we want to thank each one of the institutions, that made this programme possible.

We thank you very much for this great opportunity to visit this wonderful country Japan.

■ Latin America

■ Honduras

Icharibachode (We are All Brothers after the First Meeting)

Yessenia Suyapa Luque Padilla
Latin American Comp.
Primary and Middle School Teacher Group

The group of Latin American teachers, participants of the Youth Invitation Programme arrived at the International Airport of Narita, Tokyo on January 20th, of this present year. Since then, we, the teachers have gained an immense satisfaction through the administrative and organizer staff of JICA.

The Youth Invitation Programme, enrolled with professional educator, has been successful in which recreational and social activities have been fulfilled with great satisfaction. Such activities have left unforgettable experience within all of us, being this the first time that educators have participated in this programme.

Each one within himself/herself is taking experience that will mark his/her professional and personal life forever. We have had the opportunity to visit various cities of Japan and have been able to enjoy the friendship and kindness of Japanese people. We shared with them their country, culture, tradition and unforgettable moments.

We have learnt that the distance and borders are not obstacle to unite cultures and we overcome to fight together for peace and brotherhood.

We have recognized the hard work of the Japanese teacher, and we wish, them, the best success in their enterprise. Being that we share an objective in common, like to improve the Educational System on which, the main goal is to prepare the future of our children, our nations, for the best relationship between Japan and Latin American countries.

We express our gratitude to the organizations that made possible this programme; JICA, JICE, JOCA and the Okinawa International Foundation. Thank you for making our stay and programme pleasant and satisfactory. We obtained positive knowledge that we will apply in our countries, to let people know the beauty of this country, Japan, where the sun rises every morning to shine the future of everybody.

Japan we are obliged to leave you tomorrow but you will always be in our hearts. Thank you very much.

■ Middle East

■ Saudi Arabia

Nations of Peace Meet

Abdulrahman Hamad Al-Tammami
Education Group

The twenty Saudi delegates were impressed by the different aspects of modernization in Japan like the sophisticated electronics, modern transportation and communication nets, and both the ancient and the new styles of architecture. Japan has many contrasting scenes like peaceful, green landscapes in the countryside and crowded busy streets in the cities. Also, you can find both beautiful ancient-style Japanese architecture and skyscrapers. It is worth mentioning that we as Saudis have similar aspects of modernization to the extent that we were not completely shocked by what we have seen in Japan.

In addition, we had heard so much about Japan, but now we got to see it up close. Moreover, what attracted us most was the dedication of the Japanese nation to peace. We found the Japanese very friendly and peace-loving. As Muslims, we appreciated that very much because our religion promotes peace and calls all humanity to lead a peaceful life in accordance with of Islam.

Finally, we do sympathise and support Japan in its message for eliminating weapons of mass destruction and for the proliferation of peace.

