

Japan sends election observation team to Bhutan



The Government to Japan decided to dispatch an election observation mission from March 21 to 26 to support the fair implementation of the National Assembly election held in Bhutan on March 24 for the transition to parliamentary democracy. The Mission comprised of three members and was headed by Mr. Takio Yamada, Political Minister of the Japanese Embassy in India. The mission visited polling stations, held talks with the Chief Election Commissioner of Bhutan, high ranking

officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and exchanged views and information with other election observation missions.

The mission also visited the project sites of “Emergency Grant Aid for General Elections in Bhutan,” multi-bi cooperation through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the general elections. They saw that equipments for the Election Commission of Bhutan as well as TV receiving sets are well utilized for the general election.



The election observation mission reported that votings were conducted in an orderly manner, polling stations were equipped with necessary personnel and election materials, no significant misconducts observed, and that the election was conducted successfully. Japan intends to continue to assist Bhutan’s efforts toward its transition to parliamentary democracy.



Come and Join Japan Fest in Tashiyangtse!

Having organized in Thimphu, Chukkha and Tashigang previously, JICA volunteers are bringing Japan Fest to Tashiyantse this year for the first time. The festival, planned from **22nd to 23rd of April**, provides a great opportunity for Tashiyantse people to experience Japanese culture, such as Origami (paper crafts) and tea ceremony (13:00-16:00 on 22nd at Trashiyangtse LSS). There are stage performances on the evening of 22nd at Baylling HSS, as well as sports event like soccer match in the morning of 23rd at Trashiyangtse LSS.

The Japan Fest aims at exchanging Bhutanese and Japanese culture so that we know more about each other and further strengthen our friendship especially with Tashiyangtse people. The festival is open to public and all are welcome to join. Come with friends and family to have fun with JICA volunteers!

JICA schemes

- ◆ Technical Cooperation Projects
- ◆ Grant Aid
- ◆ Training Programmes
- ◆ Development Studies
- ◆ Emergency Disaster Relief
- ◆ Citizen Participation
- ◆ Follow-up Cooperation

JICA target areas in Bhutan

- ◆ Agriculture and rural development
- ◆ Infrastructure development
- ◆ Local governance
- ◆ Social services development (health, education and IT)

JICA members in Bhutan as of April

- ◆ JICA office staff: 15 (7 internationals; 8 nationals)
- ◆ Experts: 6
- ◆ Senior Volunteers: 20
- ◆ JOCVs: 28



JOCV supports preservation of traditional architecture



Bhutan is a small country in land area as well as in population. It has a unique culture that remains intact and is something to be proud of. The Division for conservation of architectural heritage, Department of culture, MoHCA works on conservation works that focus on historical and cultural architecture such as Dzongs, Monasteries and old houses. Two JOCV architects, Mr. Masakazu TAKAGI and Ms. Kasumi ISHIDA, are currently working under the Division and are involved in various projects such as the Pangrizampa Astrology School, the New Chhukha Dzong construction, the Dechenph Lhakhang, the Memorial Chorten and the renovation of Gasa Dzong, which recently suffered a fire disaster.

“At the beginning, I had basic knowledge of general architecture and skills for designing, but nothing for Bhutanese architecture,” said Mr. TAKAGI who has worked for two years with the Division. “I had to learn not only about Bhutanese architecture but also about the culture and history from the beginning, but soon I became able to enjoy my work with much interest. The more I learned about it, the more Bhutanese architecture became interesting to me. I think it is good that my colleagues and I can cover each

other with our individual different expertise in the way of mutual understanding and cooperative activities.”

He thinks that one obvious problem in the Division is the lack of human resources to handle the huge number of the buildings of historically and culturally significant architecture in Bhutan. Ideally, more academic research should be undertaken to preserve this heritage in Bhutan as it moves ahead with modernization. Such research might reveal the historical meaning of individual architectural styles and make a systematic description and establish the theory for the structural analysis of traditional construction methods.

There are a lot to contribute from Japan, which has past records about the preservation of old wooden structures, because Bhutanese traditional architecture has used a mixed structure of stone masonry/rammed mud and wood, and has some similarity to Japanese architecture. JOCVs continue to support in this field.



News in Brief

- ◆ Ms. Karma Yuden, Program Officer for Volunteer Program left JICA office on 31 March after a brief stint. Ms. Karma expressed her desire to pursue a Master degree program and prepare for it.
- ◆ Dasho Penden Wangchuk the Secretary of Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs met Mr. Seiji Kaiho, Director of Regional Department II of JICA at JICA Headquarters, Tokyo on 4 April 2008. Dasho Penden Wangchuk expressed gratitude towards JICA's cooperation in Bhutan and shared the progress of the political transition taking place in the country.
- ◆ Mr. Tetsuo Yabe attends the annual Resident Representatives' meeting at Tokyo from 17 to 23 April at JICA Headquarters, Tokyo.

For more information

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