

Participants in the "Seminar for Promotion of Gender Equality" make a courtesy call on a Minister

"Unlike other aid agencies, JICA hasn't given us even a pen, a notebook or a bottle of mineral water". These were the words expressed by a JICA participant on the occasion of a courtesy call to the Minister of State for Special Missions (Consumer Affairs and Food Safety, Social Affairs and Gender Equality) Mizuho Fukushima on December 2. Did she make a direct plea to the Minister because she thought that the allowances provided by JICA were very insufficient?



Participants shake hands with Minister Fukushima and receive her business card.

It seemed that those who accompanied the participants, including Director General of JICA Tokyo Kusano, went pale for a moment at her comment. But not to worry. The following moving words were added. "Instead, they gave us useful knowledge and courage so our leadership capability has improved. Thank you for letting us learn so much from Japan. We believe that the Japanese government will continue to do its best to set an example for the world."

The Seminar for Promotion of Gender Equality has been conducted since 1977 with the object of contributing to the improvement of the status and ability of women and also gender (social and cultural gender gap) equality. It has been improved year by year and this fiscal year is the final year for the course. And as a last commemorating event of the course, a visit to the Minister in charge was realized. After Minister Fukushima shook hands with each participant and said her words of welcome, she referred to the fact that in terms of gender equality there are areas where Japan still lags behind. And she gave an encouraging message to the participants, "I hope the training will be fruitful".

In response to these remarks of the Minister, Ms. Radhia on behalf of the participants made a thank-you speech which was introduced at the beginning of this article. At this, the Minister seemed to be moved and again shook hands with her and said without the assistance of an interpreter, "Thank you, thank you. I'm so glad to hear that the training in Japan is so meaningful." And after this, she had a very friendly conversation with the participants. One of the participants said, "I expected that the Minister would be an elderly person but I'm surprised to find you are young and yet the Minister." To this, Minister Fukushima responded cheerfully, "You must be kidding!" And we took a commemorative photo surrounding the Minister.

After the interview, the participants showed their joy by making a series of comments such as, "It was really good to know about the Japanese government's efforts. And it is wonderful that a woman has become a Minister and promotes gender equality herself." Ms. Radhia said, "As the Minister mentioned, Japan is not necessarily advanced in terms of gender equality. But that very fact becomes a good reference for us. Everyone concerned that we have met in Japan is not satisfied with the current situation and is continuing to make serious efforts for improvement. That attitude is what we should learn." She took very seriously the significance of the training in Japan. And she also added, "For Japan too, there should be something to learn from participants from countries with a big male-female divide."



A commemorative photo surrounding the Minister. Ms. Radhia, second from left.

Let's ask the Director General about the funny things in Japan



Have you ever felt funny or wondered about the oddities of Japan while you are staying here? On a day in February, the round-table discussion was held by the Director General of JICA Tokyo to answer the questions you might have. Four curious, cooperative participants joined this discussion. What is their impression of Japan? Here is a report.

At 18:30, Mr. Edwin from Tanzania, Mr. Vipin from India, Ms. Sajeda from Jordan, and Ms. Lupe from Samoa came into the room of the Director General. Everybody had a strained look. The Director General, Mr. Kusano welcomed them warmly as friends. To break the ice, they went in front of the world map and started to check the location where they were from. Mr. Kusano told them his travel experience relating to their countries and that relieved their tension. Soon they showed smiles on their faces, and the discussion session was begun.

Mr. Kusano: What's the number one topic you would like to talk about?



Mr. Edwin (Tanzania)

Mr. Edwin: My most interesting topic is that the Japanese work for long hours. Is this the sign of hardworking or inefficiency? What's your interpretation?

Mr. Vipin: Yeah, I also have an impression that the Japanese are workaholic. I don't mean it's because of inefficiency. They just

keep being busy all the time but they are ok with it.

Ms. Sajeda: I am wondering if the Japanese get bored with their routine because it seems there is no room for anything spontaneous.

Ms. Lupe: They have so much work all the time and I don't see any social life in their routine.

Mr. Vipin: According to my experience of Home Stay, I feel they enjoy working more than spending time with their family.

Ms. Lupe: I don't think they are enjoying it but even when they come home, they do their homework or prepare for lunch or something and they are still working in the house.



Ms. Lupe (Samoa)

Mr. Kusano: The Japanese economy in the 70s had started becoming really good. As much as we worked, we earned the money. We stayed in that prosperity too long and took it for granted. But then, the economy drove off a cliff! So back to your question, those who seem workaholic or stay in the office for

long hours don't think they have issues. Each of us just has too much work.

Do you know the proverb "the nail that sticks out gets banged down"? That nail represents the person who says something and is troubled in an organization. We have such a culture so we feel comfortable being conformed to others. This is another reason that the Japanese do not go home early and still working long hours.





Ms. Sajeda: Well, I also wonder about the language problem in Japan. I was surprised the people from a developed country like Japan can't speak English even though they have English classes at school with native-speaker teachers.

Ms. Lupe: Yes, it is very difficult to find someone who can understand me on the street or in the store. They usually run away when I talk to them.

Mr. Edwin: I have mixed observations about it. I think the Japanese are shy. My Japanese friend told me that she is afraid of mistakes. In Tanzania, we have so many local languages but we have encouraged speaking English. I think Japanese needs more exercise to speak.

Ms. Sajeda: Yes. In Jordan also, we are forced to learn and speak English. That's why we can speak.

Mr. Kusano: To be afraid of mistakes or be shy, that's because we are from a monoculture.



Ms. Sajeda (Jordan)

Another reason is the education system. Although we have English classes at school, it's class-room style. It should be changed to a participatory style.

Mr. Vipin: I was also surprised by the translation business in Japan. In India, when we read a computer book, we have only books written in English. But here, I found a computer book written in Japanese.

Mr. Kusano: That is true. We have a big translation and interpretation business here in Japan and they spoil the customers' effort of learning English. We don't need to learn the other languages because someone translates for others. This might be another reason for the language problem in Japan.



Mr. Vipin (India)



The Director General of JICA Tokyo, Mr. Kusano



The discussion went on and on and on. Besides these topics, they commented "The public places in Japan are so clean even though there aren't many rubbish bins. It's amazing!" or "It's quite impressive to see many people move the same way in the same place at the same time during the rush hour in the train station! It's not easy to do!" and so on. It seems they observe good things about Japan as well.

This session was continued until 21:30. At the end, Mr. Edwin said, "I've been here for 2 years now but this is my first time to talk with the Director General about Japan. To have such an opportunity is already a very fruitful experience." The rest of the participants nodded with satisfaction. Then, the Mr. Kusano said, "Well, if we have a chance, let's continue where we left off in the second session!" With his words, this session was over and the participants went back to their rooms with a pleased look.



Great City and Great People! Let's visit Kamakura!

Every month, JICA Tokyo organizes a Kamakura Tour. What's unique about this tour is no coordinator will attend. But don't worry! The greatest volunteer guides are waiting for you in Kamakura! Let's check out what it's like.

Departure



1) The very end of Platform 1 at Yoyogi-Uehara Station on a weekend morning is a bit different. The participants who are going to Kamakura are gathering and waiting for an express train bound for Fujisawa.



2) The participants are requested to get on the last car. Once you take the train, it's about a one-hour trip to Fujisawa Station.



3) At Fujisawa Station, some of the volunteer guides from KSGG (Kanagawa Systematized Goodwill Guide) are waiting for you and leading you to the Enoden Line (Enoshima Electric Railway).



4) From Fujisawa to Kamakura, it's about a half-an-hour trip. On the way to go to Kamakura, the train runs alongside the coast.



5) At the square of Kamakura station, you meet rest of the members of KSGG and are divided into small groups. (The guides are wearing a green cap.) When you find your group guide, then the tour is started.



12) After visiting Hachiman-gu Shrine, it's lunch time! The guides will take you to a delicious restaurant close by.

Lunchtime



13) After the lunch, you have some time to stroll through Komachi-dori. You can find many souvenir shops there.



14) Now we are at Hase-dera Temple. The first thing that appears in front of you is a beautiful Japanese garden!

Mr. Ehara (a member of KSGG)

JICA participants are from various cultural, religious, and dietary backgrounds and a standardized guide won't fit. So I always try my best to meet their requests. I often take the participants to the morning market to show them the real life of Kamakura citizens. Everybody is pleased to visit there and it's also enjoyable to eat the fresh veggies and fruits from the market around the pond in Hachiman-gu Shrine and talk about their unknown countries.



18) The last place we visit on this tour is the Great Buddha in Kotoku-in Temple. In front of the Great Buddha, we take group photos as usual.



15) Once in a while, the flea markets are held in front of the main temple.



16) Of course, the participants are absorbed in weighing up the stuff.

Mr. Umeshita (Leader, Guide Guide Support Group of KSGG)

Since Its establishment in 1989, we, the KSGG Club, have been guiding JICA participants to Kamakura. We are proud of having guided about 400 participants from about 100 different countries in 2009.

We appreciate all you participants who spent your valuable time with us in Kamakura. We have only a limited time but we try to help you understand the Japanese culture as much as we can. I hope one day in the near future, you spread this friendship and make the world joyful and peaceful as a big friend of Japan.



Start



11) Meanwhile, a participant tries his luck to draw an omikuji, the sacred lots. How's his luck???

Mr. Magno (Philippines)

During the tour, outside the Hachiman-gu Shrine, I noticed a bunch of identical white papers were tied in hanging ropes. Then I found out they were omikuji and decided to try my luck. I shook the container for a while and picked the popped out bamboo stick with a number 18. Then I received a pink piece of paper. WOW, what I got is a "Dai-kichi"! I never realized I got the BEST!! I'll never forget that fateful day.



10) Hanging next to the main shrine, there are many ema, votive tablets. Nowadays you can see many ema written in foreign languages. Did you find any ema written in your language?



19) At the end of the tour, a small gift is distributed by KSGG. But this is not for everyone. You have to win janken, rock-scissors-paper, to get it.



20) A great time always flies away very quickly. By the time to go back home, everybody has become like a family.



9) Now go up the stairs to the main shrine.



8) Luckily, that day was the day of "Shichi-Go-San". The participants were excited to take photos of the children in Kimono who came for the prayers for their future health and well-being.



7) When you arrive at the Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gu Shrine, you wash your hands to purify yourself. Don't worry! Your guide shows you how to do it.



Mr. Farhan (Malaysia)

This is the first time in my life seeing such a scenic and iconic sight as the Great Buddha. KSGG provided us with very useful information about the history of all the places and they are very friendly and helpful too. I recommend all of you to join this tour.



temple.



Don't forget to enjoy the view from the observatory! You can look across the sweep of Kamakura and also the ocean.



6) First of all, you reach to Wakamiya-Oji street and walk along towards Dankazura path.

Ms. Kassiyet (Kazakhstan)

This is my second visit to Kamakura. I learned the history and the region in Japan on the first trip. The second time, my friends from Kazakhstan asked me to go with them to interpret so I accepted because I enjoyed the trip so much last time. I am very surprised that many of the volunteer guides are in their 70s! Through this tour I felt the soul of the Japanese people which is very kind and friendly.

Thank to the members of KSGG, we always have a great time in Kamakura. If you haven't joined this tour yet, you'd better join in! Those who already joined this tour once, you will still be welcomed for a second, or even a third time! I am sure that you will have new discoveries on each trip.





The children are waiting for you! Interaction with Japanese children!

The School Visit to Nishihara Elementary School

Do you like children? Are you interested in cultural exchange with Japanese students? If your answer to one of these questions is "YES!" this is good news for



you. Every June, we have the exchange program with the students of Nishihara Elementary School. Each grade prepares their own programs to welcome you to the school.

Ms. Tamar (Jamaica)

The Nishihara school visit was indeed one of the most memorable events of my trip to Japan. I was taught the traditional Japanese game, Kendama, by the most patient and skilled 'little teachers'. After an hour practice, I finally got the ball into the middle cup! Then, I had to grave my skills in front of the entire class and the observing parents. Fortunately I succeeded! I was pleased with my accomplishments and just couldn't stop smiling. It was amazing to see that when it comes to playing and having fun, there is no language or cultural barrier!!



Ms. Jira (Thailand)

The reason I joined this program was I wanted to know the difference between the kids in Japan and in my country. I was very impressed how the young kids taught me to play their games. I couldn't speak much Japanese and they could barely speak English either. However, the language barrier was not a problem for us. I believe it is human nature that we can always find a way to communicate with each other. I recommend all the participants to join this program to feel one of the roots of Japanese culture.



Mr. Kinlay (Bhutan)



The school visit at Nishihara gave me an opportunity to interact with Japanese children and to know how they behave and think. I believe all of us who visited the school enjoyed every moment and did not even know how time passed by.

The students were interested and very curious about my country and the life of people living there, the food habits, the religion and so

on. They were also interested in my national dress, Ghosho for men. They said that it looked somewhat like a Kimono. If I had a chance I'd love to see them again.

Mr. Binh (Vietnam)

The visit to Nishihara elementary school has given me a deep impression and unforgettable time. The most amazing moment when we went into the school under the thunder of applause from all the children from grade one to grade six. I was surprised at the way the children welcomed us, introduced themselves and guided us to play their game. The children are true Japanese ambassadors of culture. In Vietnam, there is a proverb that "children are the future of the country." I believe it is right in every single part of the world.

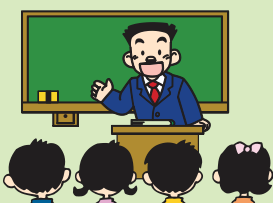


Mr. Takayoshi Kaseda (a teacher of Nishihara Elementary School)

I think it built a sense of achievement for the students to make a presentation to tell the JICA participants directly about what they had discovered. Through this experience, I am sure that they feel closer to communication with foreigners.

Ms. Sakura Cho (a teacher of Nishihara Elementary School)

The annual exchange program with JICA participants is one of the most thrilling and exciting events for the students, especially for them in Grade 6. There is always something we can't learn from a textbook, it's a great smile that came out from the personal contacts. We appreciate this precious opportunity very much!





Do you feel stressed ?

~ How to relax and ease the tension ~



Insomnia, muscle pain or anxiety.... Do you suffer from such stress-related problems? To help its participants control or avoid such problems, JICA Tokyo offers relaxation programs and workshops by a professional psychologist. Let's see how these things are done and get some tips for stress management from Ms. Watanabe, a clinical psychologist at JICA Tokyo.

Ms. Watanabe, please tell me!

Q1 What is an easy way to relax in your room at a hotel or TIC?

As scents work quickly on the brain, you are recommended to carry aromatic oils of your preference. (Lavender is good before you go to bed or when you want to relax. Peppermint and Rosemary are suitable for refreshing. Orange and Lemon are good to lift your mood.)

Place a drop of essential oil on a tissue and take a deep breath. Inhale the aroma to fill your lungs and hold your breath for 3 seconds. Then exhale slowly, imagine that tension and fatigue are relieved from all your body. Stretching while enjoying the aroma is also recommended. When you don't have an essential oil, it's OK just to imagine your favorite fragrance.



Q2 What is recommended music for relaxation?

I recommend the music of a singing bowl player Nagaya Kazuya. There is a website in English on his music and CDs are sold there. Its Japanese taste may make it a suitable souvenir from Japan.

<http://www.ame-ambient.com/index.html>

Also, the world famous Japanese artist Kitaro can't be left out. (Website in English is available)

<http://www.myspace.com/kitaronetwork>



Ms. Mariko Watanabe
Clinical Psychologist
at JICA Tokyo

Q3 What services do the relaxation programs provide?

It provides you various services such as giving private lessons in stress management, consultation for solutions of personal problems and professional psychological counseling to meet diverse needs.

Happiness for your heart and soul!

Wednesdays
15:30 - 19:30

Relaxation Workshop

I feel calm, refreshed,
and relaxed!



1) The workshop starts with a brief lecture on stress and stress management.



2) Next, participants learn breathing techniques to ease the tension.

I have less pain and less
tension in my body!



3) Then they learn stretching to release the stress from their body. Crystal bowls are played during the whole session. Their dreamy sound makes the participants more relaxed.



4) At the end, everyone lies down on the floor totally unwound. Some of them even start snoring!



I've been having trouble
sleeping, but now I'm
ready to go to bed!

The benefit of a relaxation workshop is that while feeling nice and relieving your daily fatigue you can master self-relaxation techniques. Please carry back as a souvenir the useful ways of self maintenance that will be helpful for your entire lifetime. We are happy if you disseminate it in your country.



CRYSTAL (SINGING) BOWL

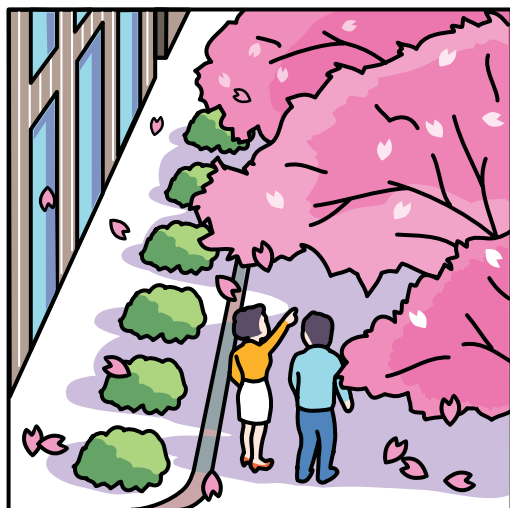


is a musical instrument made of quartz crystal (99.992% pure!), played by moving a mallet around its rim. Its pure and delicate tones make the listeners clear-minded and relaxed.



Shin
Crystal Bowl Player

Do you know the Japanese custom, "Ohanami"?



Speaking of the spring in Japan, the first thing that comes to a Japanese mind is "Sakura", cherry blossoms. It is one of the representative flowers of Japan and Japanese people love it very much.

When the cherry blossoms bloom, people start going on "Ohanami," cherry-blossom viewing. The custom of *Ohanami* started in the 8th century in Japan. It is to enjoy and appreciate the beauty of cherry blossoms at the beginning but nowadays when we say *Ohanami*, generally it means a party held under the cherry blossoms. In this season, we can see many groups of people gathering under the cherry-blossom trees in the park where they enjoy eating and drinking.

Although you cannot have a party under the tree, JICA Tokyo is a secret spot of *Ohanami*. Around the center, there are many cherry-blossom trees. Please take advantage of this lucky environment and feel and enjoy the spring in Japan.

MUSEUM

European Masterpieces from the Museum of Fine Arts Boston

ボストン美術館展

The collection of paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston is the world's best in terms of both quality and quantity. Especially the collections of the Barbizon, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism schools stand out.

Currently the museum is reconstructing a part of their exhibition hall so the masterpieces which are barely brought out from the museum will be shown in this exhibition. 80 masterpieces by 47 maestros of European Arts from the 16th to the 20th centuries are exhibited. El Greco, Corot, Millet, Monet, Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, this exhibition itself is like a textbook of Art History. It is impossible to do such a large-scale exhibition again in Japan in the future so don't miss this great opportunity!

Jean-François Millet
1861

Potato Planters

Photograph ©2010 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Place : Mori Art Center Gallery (Roppongi Hills Mori Tower 52nd floors)
(森アートセンターギャラリー : 六本木ヒルズ 森タワー52階)

(4 min. walk from Roppongi Station Exit 3 on Oedo Subway line;
5min. walk from Azabu Juban Station Exit 7 on Oedo Subway
line; 8 min. walk from Nogizaka Station Exit 5 on Chiyoda
Subway Line)

Date : April 17 (Sat) - June 20 (Sun)

Open everyday during the exhibition

Time : 10:00 - 20:00

⌚ Last entry 30min before the closing time

Admission : ¥1,500

Free tickets are available at the JICA Tokyo information desk on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Lineage of Culture

- The Hosokawa Family Eisei Bunko Collection -

細川家の至宝 一珠玉の永青文庫コレクション

The Hosokawa family is a feudal lord family dating back to the 12th century. To leave the cultural assets which come down to the Hosokawa family from posterity, Eisei Bunko was founded in 1950.

In this exhibition, swords, armor, tea utensils, and other cultural art objects from the Eisei Bunko collection will be displayed and introduce the history of the Hosokawa family and Japanese traditional culture to the public. It is one of the most famous cultural assets collections in Japan and this is a great chance to see a bit of Japanese history.

The Lineage of Culture - The Hosokawa Family

Eisei Bunko Collection

((Black Cat))

By Hishida Shunso, 1910 (Meiji 43) (Important Cultural Property)

Eisei-Bunko Museum

On exhibit from April 20 to May 16, 2010

Place: Tokyo National Museum Heiseikan (Ueno Park)

(東京国立博物館平成館)

(10 min. walk from Ueno or Uguisudani Station on JR Yamanote Line; 15 min. walk from Ueno Station on Ginza and Hibiya Subway Line and Keisei Ueno Station)

Date: April 20 (Tue) - June 6 (Sun)

Closed on Mondays (however, open on May 3)

Time: 9:30 - 17:00

(Open until 20:00 on Fridays and 18:00 on weekends and holidays)

Last entry 30min before the closing time.

Admission: ¥1,500

Free tickets are available at the JICA Tokyo information desk on a first-come, first-served basis.