

Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar 2019

~ Strengthening relations through 'Kizuna'~

In Japanese Language, the word 'Kizuna' embodies the true spirit of Japanese culture, where the country's social fabric is weaved on the foundation of close and cordial human ties, or 'Kizuna'. The very concept of 'Kizuna' serves as the underlying principle of CLAIR's 'Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar', which is aimed at enhancing the cooperative ties between CLAIR and its counterparts in the ASEAN region, India and Sri Lanka.

Held annually in Japan, this 1 week seminar functions as a platform for senior level government officials from countries covered by J.CLAIR Singapore to gain insights on Japan's local government system, as well as to exchange knowledge and ideas pertaining to the latest developments of local administration in seminar participants' home countries.

The seminar in 2019, which was conducted from 15 ~ 21 December, saw participation from a total of 9 members representing countries including Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Based on 2 major themes, namely 'Tourism Promotion' and 'Multiculturalism', the 1 week seminar was divided into 2 parts, where seminar participants attended the first half of the program in Tokyo and the remaining program in Shimonoseki City, a local government located in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The overall program of the 2019 seminar is illustrated as follows:

Date	Location	Program
15 Dec	Tokyo	Seminar participants arrive in Tokyo
16 Dec	Tokyo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lecture on 'Local Administration in Japan'● Visit to Shinjuku Multicultural Plaza● Visit to Tourist Information Center (TIC)
17 Dec	Tokyo	Visit to Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)
	Shimonoseki	Briefing on Shimonoseki City
18 Dec	Shimonoseki	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Courtesy call on the Mayor of Shimonoseki City● Briefing on Shimonoseki City's disaster prevention policies,● visit to disaster prevention facility● Visit to water treatment plant● Visit to local tourist destinations (Chofu Garden, Mori Museum)
19 Dec	Shimonoseki	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Visit to local tourist destinations (Tsunoshima Bridge, Tsunoshima Lighthouse etc.)● Opinion Exchange Session
20 Dec	Shimonoseki	Visit to local tourist destinations (Karato Market etc.)
	Tokyo	Overnight stay in Tokyo
21 Dec	Tokyo	Seminar participants return to their respective home countries

The program in Tokyo focused on providing a central government perspective to the seminar participants so that they could observe how the central government formulate policies for local administration, tourism development and multiculturalism on a national level. On the other hand, the program in Shimonoseki City enabled seminar participants to gain knowledge regarding the roles and functions of a Japanese local government, especially in the context of regional revitalization. Overall, it could be said that the program provided a balanced view on the mechanisms of central and local government in Japan.

Seminar participants were deeply impressed by the efforts implemented by Shimonoseki City in developing the local economy through tourism promotion as well as integration of multiculturalism. As part of the program, seminar participants were also given the chance to visit the local water treatment plant as well as disaster prevention facility, where they were able to obtain new knowledge concerning the advanced technologies of water treatment and disaster prevention developed in Japan. During the Opinion Exchange Session, seminar participants proactively exchanged their ideas and opinions with Shimonoseki City in a wide range of topics that are of importance to Shimonoseki City. Through the program in Shimonoseki City, seminar participants were able to gain new aspirations as well as inspirations to further catalyze regional revitalization in their home countries.

In conclusion, the Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar functions as a highly effective platform for CLAIR to establish working relations as well as contact networks with its counterparts in the ASEAN region, India and Sri Lanka. Through this extensive network of contacts, CLAIR and its counterparts could mutually tap on each other's resources so as to facilitate the implementation of programs and activities in the various countries. It is hoped that this seminar could continue to bring together CLAIR's counterparts and strengthen our cordial collaborative ties into the future.



A scene from the lecture



Participants' group photo at Chofu Garden