

CLAIR Singapore Newsletter

vol.68 September

JET 30th Anniversary



This year, 2016, marks a milestone in the history of the JET programme: Its 30th anniversary.

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme is administered through the collaboration of Japan's local government authorities, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR).

Aiming primarily to promote grass-roots internationalization at the local level, the JET Programme invites young

college graduates from around the world to participate in international exchange work and be involved in foreign language education at Japan's local government offices, Boards of Education, elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools.

The JET Programme has gained high acclaim both domestically and internationally for being one of the world's largest international exchange programmes. We hope that all people involved in the JET Programme, both the participants and the local people they live and work with, will build an international network and become successful in today's global society.

There are 66 participants from Southeast Asia in 2015 (see graph below). After returning home, many JET alumni continue to contribute towards Japan-related activities through the JET Alumni Association (JETAA) Singapore and India.

This is a message from the representatives of JETAA in Singapore and India:

	ALT	CIR	Total
Singapore	38	9	47
Indonesia	0	2	2
Philippines	10	1	11
Malaysia	0	1	1
Thailand	0	2	2
Vietnam	0	3	3
Total	48	18	66

[JET Participants FY2015]



2016 Singaporean JETs at the orientation ceremony in Tokyo



JETAA Singapore members at the 2016 Summer Festival in Singapore



Nathalie Ng, Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture (2010-2011)

In 2010, I was sent as an ALT from Singapore, to the small town of Sakuma in Hamamatsu in Shizuoka. Coming from Singapore, with a 5.49 million population squeezed into a 719km² land area, the little town of Sakuma was quite a drastic change to my perception.

Sakuma had just 5,394 people, and its land area of 168.53 km².

Needless to say, Sakuma was a big shock to me. The tallest building was the hospital, at 5 stories tall, endless fields and mountains of green in summer, and trains that ran every 2.5 hours in either direction - not something you're likely to experience in any urban development. I struggled to adapt to the heat in the summer in an apartment without air conditioning (not unusual in Japan), and then the bone-chilling cold of winter in Sakuma as the winds tore out of Nagano. Despite all this, my interactions with the sweetest students and teachers in that little school had me captivated. I learned to love the little town of Sakuma.

In March 2011, the Great Tohoku Earthquake happened, and what happened next really made me feel like I was part of Japan. Over the course of the next few weeks, many of the teachers texted me, or knocked on my door to check if I was alright, and if I needed anything - the supermarket in my town was beginning to empty itself of daily necessities as we rerouted things to Tohoku for aid. It was this level of care and concern that they had for me, that made me truly feel like I was a part of this small community in the mountains of Tenryu Ward, in Hamamatsu.

Leaving the programme when I did was heartbreaking for me, and I was desperate to find ways to stay connected to Japan. When I came home, I learnt about the JET Alumni Association in Singapore. I attended their events, and found that it was a very enjoyable way of staying connected to Japan, and also to the programme that changed my life. Since then, I've joined the Executive Board to help further JETAA Singapore.

JETAA Singapore is a young organization, coming to its 7th year, with just 121 members. We have expanded our range of events over the years to include both the JET Alumni in Singapore, as well as the local community of Japanese and Singaporeans at large.

As sempais, JETAA Singapore is helping to mentor the incoming JETs every year, as they depart for the programme that has enriched our lives profoundly. In addition, as a way of contributing to society, we will be holding a beach cleanup event to celebrate 海の日 (Marine day). We have also been partnering with JCC (Japan Creative Centre)

to put together a yukata workshop in August, and this year is no exception. The latest addition to our flagship events is the JET Programme Information Session held every October.



Japanese Class

As this year also marks the 50th Anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Singapore, we are partnering with CLAIR for the SJ50 Matsuri that is being held in Ngee Ann City in late October. JETAA Singapore will be holding a yukata-wearing experience, as well as helping to spread the word about the JET Programme.

Not only that, but JETAA Singapore has also started a new monthly column on the JETAA website titled "JET Alumni of the Month". In this column, we invite JET Alumni members from all walks of life to share with others about what they've been doing since their return from their stint on the programme. We've started with Ms Anna Wong, who has been very active in Taiko during her time in Ishikawa in Japan, and has assisted Kodo in the Super Japan Matsuri in May this year. We will next be featuring Mr Kennard Xu from Kagoshima Prefecture in July.

As we head into the 30th Anniversary of the JET Programme this year, it becomes increasingly important that we recognize the kizuna that we've built during our stay in Japan. We're not simply JETs, we are the bridges that connect Japan to the world.

Every JET wants to stay in contact with Japan, even after having left the programme. Through our various activities, we hope to share some of the zeal that we still have for Japan with others, and hope that many more will be able to love the country that has become our second home. With CLAIR's help, we've been able to achieve this, and we look forward to many years of delightful partnership to come.



Yukata Workshop



Divya Jha, Tobata-ku, Kitakyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture (2007-2008)

I was appointed at Hibiki High School in Kitakyushu in Fukuoka. Hibiki High School was a credit-system school (unit that gives weight to the value, level or time requirements of an academic course taken at a school or other educational institution), the environment was more like a college. Classes ran in 3 shifts and students had the advantage of taking classes throughout the day, in any shift as per their convenience and subjects of their choice.

Most of the students were holding part-time jobs. There was no school-uniform (many fashionable students opted for this reason too) and students' age varied from 15 to 75.

Introducing Indian dishes in Japan

I was probably the first Indian in that school and that entire area. People were quite inquisitive about my sari, long hair, yoga and food (they thought it was all about curries). So, my English class-lectures and activities were mostly based on that.

My jitaku (Kannonjimachi) was at a very convenient and lively place. The school, Tobata JR station, bus-stop, Seven-Eleven store, Spina super market, city library were all at a walking distance. I still have vivid memories of Kitakyushu city art museum, Matsumoto-Tei,

Wakato bridge and its fireworks, Tobata-Gion festival etc. Since I came from a noisy, densely populated place, this small and quiet town gave me a heavenly feeling. Very soon I made many friends around the place and felt like I had always belonged there.

I had spent 5 years studying about Japan but JET programme gave me the opportunity to 'see and feel' it. Though I came back within a year because I had left behind my two little daughters, now that I look back, I feel it was not enough. I set up the India chapter of JETAA in 2012 to stay connected with other JETs and thank the JET programme. Unfortunately, there have not been any JETs from India in recent years, but I do hope it is revived soon wherein I can contribute to my maximum capacity.

On its 30th anniversary, I wish that the JET programme will resume taking JETs from India where I want to play an active role in reaching out to maximum people, propagating about Japan. That will be my way of thanking the JET programme.



Cultural cooking class in Japan

The 3rd South Asian Cities Summit

Under the theme of “Smart Cities – Aspirations and Challenges”, the 3rd South Asian Cities Summit was organized and held on 6 to 7 May by the All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG) in Delhi, India. Calling together officials from both central and local governments, as well as interested stakeholders across the varied fields of academic, business and community from the region, CLAIR Singapore is privileged to be invited to speak at the Summit and share more about Japan’s experience in terms of local governance.

Representing CLAIR Singapore was its Executive Director, Mr. Kenjiro Hashimoto, who addressed the role of citizen participation in Japanese local governance at one of the plenary sessions that explored the subject of innovative urban governance and leadership. In his presentation, Mr. Hashimoto related the brief context of how an arising of the volunteer movement during the Kobe Earthquake in 1995 had led to the enactment of Japan’s “Non-Profit Organization Law”, while also providing a personal take on how apart from monetary contributions, one’s offering of labour and services through volunteer work is also a form of “time contribution” that deserves to be highly valued. Using an example of citizen participation in Japan, Mr. Hashimoto highlighted the fact that going forward, regardless of one’s country or region, provision of public services can no longer be the sole responsibility of local governments and that encouraging greater citizen participation through promoting active volunteerism and developing of intermediary organizations will be an important approach that local governments should consider in the management of their cities.

During the question-and-answer, a seminar delegate from Nepal raised a question about any suggestions that could help to better round-up volunteers, to which Mr. Hashimoto responded by stressing the important role played by intermediary organizations such as NPOs in linking local governments and individual volunteer activities. The Nepalese delegate concurred on the importance of volunteers from Nepal’s prior earthquake experience, a thought that was reiterated by the session’s moderator who believed that such high-level volunteerism would bring about a new form of leadership. Mr. Hashimoto was also interviewed by the organizer’s media after the session, as many showed high interest towards the sharing of Japan’s experience.



CLAIR Singapore's Executive Director, Mr. Hashimoto delivering his presentation at the Summit

CLAIR Singapore Showcases Japanese Traditional Crafts

Hailed as the largest exhibition for interior decoration in Singapore, The Décor Show primarily targets buyers such as distributors, retailers, designers, hotels and construction-related companies. On the last day, general consumers were also admitted to the exhibition and were allowed to buy the products on display.

The total number of visitors to the exhibition was 20,343 people from 92 countries and a total number of 423 booths were exhibited.

CLAIR Singapore unveiled 10 carefully-selected traditional crafts at the exhibition: beech wood lamps from Aomori, bottle-gourd (kampyo) speakers, yuki-tsumugi material which is made of silk floss and braided accessories from Tochigi, cast iron tea kettle and tea utensils from Toyama, hand-dyed wall art from Kyoto, Japanese candles from Hyogo, suge sedge crafts from Osaka, automata from Yamaguchi which are made by incorporating traditional Japanese wooden crafts methods, and indigo fabrics from Fukuoka.

Visitors were especially interested in uncommon crafts and distinctive designs. For example, each of the bottle-gourd speakers is made of the actual vegetable and is thus unique in the world; the wooden automata have unique movements that captivate the

visitors; and the beech wood lamps are made of thin ribbon-like wooden strips and come in various rare shapes and designs.

CLAIR Singapore will set up a booth to showcase Japanese traditional crafts again at the Decor show (renamed Nook Asia) to be held in March 2017.



JAPAN Traditional Crafts ~TAKUMI~ booth

Specialist Dispatch Project in Surabaya, Indonesia

Indonesia, the largest economy in Southeast Asia, has been experiencing high economic growth since 2010 which brought an abundance of opportunities for regional developments in the country. However, as regional cities advance and evolve over time, issues such as environmental pollution will arise as a consequence of economic development. Surabaya, the second largest Indonesian city in terms of economic development as well as population, is currently facing various environmental issues, in particular pollution of local rivers. Realizing the importance of conserving the water quality of local rivers to ensure clean drinking water for the local population, Surabaya City Government participated in CLAIR's 'Specialist Dispatch Project' for fiscal year 2015.

Mr. Kohei Yamaguchi, an expert in the field of river conservation from the Landscape and Environment Department of Nara Prefectural Government in Japan was dispatched to Surabaya from 14 to 17 December 2015 to conduct the relevant trainings in ensuring the water quality of local rivers. Around 15 officials selected from various departments in Surabaya City Government who are in charge of maintaining water quality, for example the Environment Department, Development Planning Board as well as Cleaning and Parks Department actively participated in the training programs.

During the training program, the expert conducted 4 highly specialized lectures, namely 'Water Quality Standards in Japan', 'Regulations on Effluent Emission and Calculation of Pollutant Load Capacity', 'Overview of Soil Contamination Countermeasures Act', as well as 'Prevalence of Sewage System and Promoting the use of Sewage System'. The local participants were particularly interested in discussions pertaining to the regulatory and administrative frameworks of maintaining water quality in rivers, especially topics relating to the installation, maintenance, distribution of expenses as well as regulatory infringement of septic tanks.

The training program reaped enormous beneficial results to Surabaya City Government, as the expert was able to work closely with Surabaya City Government to accurately identify the issues plaguing water quality in local rivers and propose effective measures to counteract the problems. Through the Specialist Dispatch Project, CLAIR aspires to promote a higher level of knowledge transfer between local governments in Japan and the ASEAN region as well as India.



The expert advising local counterpart on river maintenance

Specialist Dispatch Project in Brunei Darussalam

Realizing the significance of incorporating a sound regulatory framework as well as best practices in the field of fire prevention, the Fire and Rescue Department of Brunei Darussalam participated in CLAIR's 'Specialist Dispatch Project' for fiscal year 2015. Mr. Toshihiko Yabe, a specialist from the Tokyo Fire Department was dispatched to Brunei from 16 to 18 February 2016 so as to conduct relevant trainings in fire prevention as well as rescue operations to the local participants from various government agencies in Brunei.

Currently, a comprehensive regulatory framework that stipulates fire prevention and management of high-rise buildings is non-existent in Brunei. As such, the Fire and Rescue Department could only conduct fire prevention trainings to the local public through guidelines that were drafted based on regulations from other countries. Realizing the need to change the current status quo to benefit the local population, the Fire and Rescue Department is proactively promoting the incorporation of a comprehensive regulatory framework of fire prevention in Brunei, in which the Department has tabled a bill entitled 'Fire Safety Order' to the parliament that is currently being deliberated.

During the training period, the specialist from Japan conducted lectures that introduced the laws and regulations on fire prevention in Japan that served as timely references to the Fire and Rescue Department in Brunei. In addition, the specialist also provided advice and guidance on fire prevention management in local high-rise buildings, as well as tips concerning site inspections.

Fire safety in designated areas was also focused during the training program. Brunei is famous for its Kampong Ayer, or Water Village in Bandar Seri Begawan. As of now, there are approximately 2,400 families living in Kampong Ayer. However, due to the fact that the village is built on water and is exposed to strong winds, it is difficult to implement relieve efforts in the event that a fire occurs. In fact, 15 cases of fire occurred in Kampong Ayer in 2015, and in early 2016 alone there were about 6 cases of fire in the locality. To overcome these issues, the specialist from Tokyo provided advice as well as case studies from Japan, including the case study of Sumida River in Tokyo which is similar in context to Kampong Ayer.

Participants from Brunei's Fire and Rescue Department showed great interest and were highly motivated to learn from Japan's expertise and experience pertaining to fire prevention. The training program resulted in a meaningful exchange of knowledge and ideas between the participants and the specialist.



The expert from Tokyo Fire Department conducting a lecture to the local participants

Japan Local Administration Seminar 2016

Japan Local Administration Seminar is a program whereby Japanese staff seconded to CLAIR Singapore will be given an opportunity to visit local universities or local governments and deliver presentations in English on a wide range of topics, for example the unique Japanese culture, local administration system in Japan, as well as attractive Japanese travel destinations. The seminar is conducted solely in English, and the Japanese staff from CLAIR Singapore prepare the presentation materials as well as the Q & A session in English.

In collaboration with Kuala Lumpur Training Centre (KLRTC), which is the official training institute of Kuala Lumpur City Hall, CLAIR Singapore implemented the “Japan Local Administration Seminar 2016” on 19 January 2016. During the seminar, 5 presentations were delivered by staff from CLAIR Singapore, namely, (1) Public welfare assistance scheme by local governments in Japan, (2) Public engagement for environment conservation ~ Local residents’ role in preserving the environment, (3) Decision making through public engagement ~ A case study of Sapporo City, Japan, (4) Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in public facilities management ~ Case study on library management in Japan, and (5) Sports development by local governments in Japan: A case study of Nagasaki Prefectural Government.

In addition to the presentations, group discussions were also held between staff from CLAIR Singapore as well as Kuala Lumpur City Hall. Participants from both organizations had a lively exchange of ideas and experiences pertaining to the differences in administrative affairs between Japan and Malaysia. CLAIR Singapore looks forward to continuously working with its counterparts in the ASEAN region to bring more such seminars to fruition.



A group photo of participants of the seminar

Introduction of New Staff

Kenji Nii

Hello! I'm Kenji Nii and dispatched from Koto City, one of the 23 special wards that make up the Tokyo metropolitan area. My hometown, Koto City is a heart-warming city that retains histories and cultures from Edo period and feelings of hospitality in the downtown areas, while at the same time promotes urban development in the coastal area of Tokyo bay. A full-sized model of Gundam in the Tokyo bay area has already attracted many foreign tourists and the Tsukiji fish market will also be moved to this area this Autumn. In addition, Koto City has the greatest number of stadiums in Japan, and with the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games that will be held in Tokyo, more people all over the world will pay attention to Koto City.

I hope to share with people living in ASEAN and India about the many appealing charms of Koto City.

It is an honor and pleasure for me to work here in Singapore, and I look forward to meeting with many people!



Shoko Yumisashi

I'm from Kagoshima Prefecture, which is located in the southernmost island of the four main islands of Japan.

Kagoshima's agricultural output is the fourth-highest in Japan, so the prefecture has a lot of fresh and delicious foods. Kagoshima is also abundant in nature and boasts the only natural hot sand bath in Japan, where you can enjoy the natural hot spa while listening to the sound of the waves.

Singapore and Kagoshima has been conducting exchanges in various fields such as tourism, youth and culture for more than 30 years. It's my pleasure to be able to work in Singapore as a CLAIR staff.

Through such a valuable opportunity, I hope to be able to meet with a variety of people and gain a lot of experience in my two years in Singapore, and I would like to support in developing a good relationship between Japanese local governments and countries in ASEAN region as well as India.



Sengan-en in early spring
(Source: CK. P.V.B)



Introduction of New Staff

Katsuya Tobioka

Hello, I am Katsuya Tobioka and I am dispatched from Miyazaki City, which is located in the south of Kyushu.

Miyazaki is famous for its delicious food, such as mangos, Miyazaki Beef, Miyazaki chicken and so on. Once you try them, you will be a big fan of Miyazaki.

Also, Miyazaki has many places to visit, like Aoshima, where you can see the beautiful sea and sunset. I think Miyazaki people are one of the happiest who can enjoy their life because of the harmony with nature and daily life.

During my stay in Singapore, I would like to meet many people to learn about different cultures and the different way of thinking.

Finally, I look forward to working with you in the future. Please feel free to contact me if you'd like. Thank you!



Miyazaki city's mascot, "Missi-chan"



Yuri Kutami

Hello, everyone. I am Yuri Kutami and I am dispatched from Saitama Prefecture that is located just above Tokyo. I was born and raised in Saitama, and have been living there for a long time until I moved to Singapore recently.

My hometown is often regarded as the epitome of Japan because it has both the countryside and urban area. Therefore, visitors can enjoy both beautiful natures and local cuisine, as well as shopping and entertainment activities in Saitama. Furthermore, these days, Saitama is famous as the location setting for several animations like "We still have not known what is the flower's name we saw that day", "Lucky Star", and so on. If you like these animations, please come to Saitama to go around the locations and feel as if you were one of the characters.

Singapore is a multicultural country, so I am looking forward to meeting new people and cultures. I will try my best to further enhance the relationships between local governments in Japan and those in ASEAN as well as India. Thank you!



Moss pink in Hitsujiyama Park in Chichibu



Yosuke Yasuda

I am very pleased and excited to have the opportunity to work in Singapore. I am Yosuke Yasuda, seconded from Shimane Prefectural Government.

Shimane is located in the west of Japan, and is surrounded by the Japan sea and the Chugoku mountains. Shimane's history is so vast and deep that the earliest time it first appeared was in the time of the Japanese mythology. There are various legends and folklores found everywhere in Shimane, and the culture and traditions related to those legends are still alive in people's daily life. I really would like you to visit Shimane as you can experience the traditional faces of Japan here.

Since this is my first time to Singapore, I have been very much amazed by the country's advancement and the diversity of its people and culture. During my stay in Singapore, I aspire to deepen my understandings of the economic trends and culture in ASEAN as well as India.



Shimane Prefecture's mascot, "Shimanekko"



Maki Nakazawa

Hello! I am Maki Nakazawa. I'm dispatched from Gunma Prefectural Government. This is my first time to work abroad, so I'm very excited. I'd like to learn a lot of things while I stay here.

My hometown, Gunma, is a very beautiful Japanese countryside and visitors can travel there in just one hour from Tokyo by the bullet train (Shinkansen).

There is a lot of nature and hot springs in Gunma Prefecture. In winter, you can enjoy skiing, and in summer you can enjoy hiking in the cool area. I hope many people will come and enjoy Gunma Prefecture.

Gunma also has a very cute mascot named "Gunma-chan", which is in the motif of a pony. I would like more people to know about Gunma-chan during my dispatch in CLAIR Singapore!



Gunma Prefecture's mascot, "Gunma-chan"



Introduction of New Staff

Shunsuke Shinkai

Hello, everyone! I'm Shunsuke Shinkai. Great to meet you!
I'm from Tokai city in Aichi Prefecture.

Tokai city is located in the middle of Japan, and so it is very accessible to all areas in Japan. Tokai city is also known as "The City of Iron and Orchid" due to the many steel companies and orchid farms that are situated in the city.

Just like Singapore, it is a city that balances the harmony between its industry and nature, and thus, I would like to learn more about the urban policies of Singapore during my two-year tenure here.

Anyway, I'm excited to meet and work with people of various countries and I hope that in these two years, I will be able to grow as a person both professionally and personally.



Dendrobium "Charmy Ray"
(Tokai City original breed)



Takeshi Nagai

I am really glad to have the opportunity to work here in Singapore. I am from Yamagata Prefecture, which is located in the northern part of Honshu.

On the map of Japan, you can find a prefecture resembling the side view of a smiling face. That is the prefecture where I am from. It is popular for fresh and delicious agricultural products such as cherries, pears, melons, peaches and apples etc.

In winter, you can enjoy winter sports and the beautiful snow scene. One of the most attractive scenery in winter is the frost covered trees on Mt. Zao, called ice-monster ("Juhyo" in Japanese). This is a must-visit.

I hope that many people in Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries would get to know more about Yamagata Prefecture and that our mutual exchange will be enhanced. Please feel free to contact me at yamagata@clair.org.sg for more information about Yamagata.



Yamagata Tourism mascot,
"Kitekero-kun"



Snow Monsters
of Mt. Zao

About CLAIR

CLAIR is a joint organization founded in 1988 by 47 prefectures and 20 major cities in Japan in order to assist Japanese local authorities with the implementation of their international exchange policies. With its headquarters in Tokyo, CLAIR has seven overseas offices in New York, London, Paris, Singapore, Seoul, Sydney, and Beijing.

CLAIR SINGAPORE office was set up in October 1990. It supports and promotes international activities and friendly relations between local authorities in Japan and their counterparts in Singapore and the ASEAN countries as well as India. For further information on our activities of Japanese Local Authorities, please contact CLAIR Singapore office.



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