



Myriad Leaves

JLGC Newsletter

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Autumnal foliage in Gakuenji Temple, Shimane Prefecture ©JNTO

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Myriad Leaves is the English language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry, *Manyōshū*. It contains 4,516 *waka* poems, the last of which is dated AD759. There is uncertainty over the intention of the title: it could mean either 'Collection of ten thousand leaves' or 'Collection for ten thousand generations'.

Japan's Change of Government
The effects of the birth of a DPJ Government

Japan's party of government has changed from the LDP to the DPJ **writes JLGC Director Noboru Fujishima.**

Japan's party of government has changed from the Liberal Democratic Party to the Democratic Party of Japan. This, if perhaps gradually, from here on will have a great effect on Japanese society. At the convening of the 172nd session of the National Diet on the 16th of September, Democratic Party of Japan leader Yukio Hatoyama was appointed Prime Minister and established a cabinet based on the DPJ.

Throughout my career, the LDP was always the main party of the lower house, having a near guaranteed majority without needing coalition partners in both chambers of the Japanese parliament, and it is not an exaggeration to say that the titles of *president of the LDP* and the *prime minister* were synonymous.

When I became a public servant, Japanese government, and the system of public finance, was structured as the basis for keeping the LDP as the political party of power. I think it was the normal state of affairs that the operation of public facilities, the distribution of public subsidies, the favourable conditions of the tax system, the enforcement and mitigation of regulations and so on were all implemented after various business and pro-business organisations were able to effectively lobby the government through negotiation with powerful LDP politicians. Further, it also became customary practice for government bureaucracy to implement its own draft policies as policy, having them acknowledged as advantageous to the LDP at the related party section meetings before presenting legislative bills and draft budgets to parliament.

The feeling was that elections could be carried out based on this overwhelming strength, an unshakable foundation upon which the LDP administration stood.

However, after the Bubble burst in 1990 and with the continuation of the long term slump, the citizens of Japan had gradually rising grave anxieties about the future of society and expected radical reform from their government. Despite this, the long term administration of the LDP continued to focus on sustaining the complicated system concerned with economic equality, and in stressing the importance of stability in society the government was not seen as able to realise fundamental reform or the vision needed to accommodate a great transformation even despite the administrative reform carried out through strong leadership by Prime Minister Koizumi from 2001 to 2006.

The results of this election are based in the Japanese reflecting on their feelings of frustration. The expectations of a revolution are I think also wrapped up in this result which expresses these frustrations. However, the DPJ which will form the next administration has up until now not provided sufficient policy information and there are fewer DPJ members with experience of government.

In order to meet manifesto pledges, public finances will go into deficit to a much greater extent than before, and with one stream of public opinion extremely against this, there is no doubt that there will be significant risks.

However, voters have chosen this government on the basis of considering such issues. Voters are expecting a massive change to society through this new proactive DPJ administration, a change which hitherto has not been realised.

Although the direction of international issues is not clear from the DPJ manifesto, this change for me it is going to mean a society more open to other countries and non-Japanese, a society wishing to be a multi-cultural and more active in international cooperation than previously, and that is what I would like to contribute to through our work here at JLGC.

JLGC Activities
SCI Annual Conference, Belfast

JLGC participated in the 'Sister Cities International' (the American Twinning Association) annual conference in Belfast, held at the end of July/beginning of August 2009. This was the first time that their annual conference was held outside of the United States. Together with the New York Office, JLGC London presented in a well-attended workshop focusing on town twinning involving Europe and other regions. It was chaired by Susan Handley from the LGA European and International Team, who managed to pull many disparate strands together and lead a successful discussion.

During the conference, it emerged that the recently concluded mergers of local authorities in Japan have an impact on sister cities in the US and Canada: if constituent cities each have their own link, there is an issue about maintaining all these links or possibly discontinuing some of these, and some North American cities have found communications more difficult than before.

JLGC Activities
Birmingham University Visit

JLGC Staff were able to take advantage of a visit to Birmingham University, by combining it with a walking tour of the city's redevelopment of the Bullring and other city centre areas.

After arrival at Birmingham New Street Station Mr Noboru Fujishima (Director), Ms Yoko Miyamoto (Assistant Director) and Mr Keith Kelly (Research and Publications) were met by Mr Simon Baddeley (Course Convenor), accompanied by Dr Jon Bloomfield, Head of European Policy at Advantage West Midlands and for 10 years Head of Regional, European and International Division at Birmingham City Council. The tour included a walk around New Street Station arcade and shopping mall.

JLGC Activities
Local Government Association Conference, Harrogate

At our stall for the 2009 LGA Conference in Harrogate from 30th June to 2nd July, JLGC presented case studies of Japanese local government best practice in the areas of environment, technology in care for the aged, and industry and employment. A summary of two of the case studies of service provision covered at the LGA Conference, as well as a new topic can be read on pages 4 and 5 of this issue of Myriad Leaves, as part of a series on the issues faced by Japan's shrinking population and ageing society.

JLGC Activities
JET Programme Pre Departure Orientation

122 Assistant Language Teachers, and 6 Coordinators for International Relations gathered at Queen Mary, University of London in July for a pre-departure orientation for this UK intake of graduates participating in the JET Programme. After opening words from minister Okaniwa of Embassy of Japan, JLGC director Noboru Fujishima and Assistant Director Yasuhiro Ogawa explained the role of CLAIR in managing the JET programme at the two day orientation organised by the embassy and EJEF. Advice was given in a presentation by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and explanations were also given on travel arrangements, and a variety of training sessions and workshops were held on Japanese language for introductions, business customs, working in a Japanese environment and conversations skills at a variety of levels. Participants travelled out to Japan at the end of July and beginning of August for the main Tokyo orientation and to begin their placements with local authorities' boards of education.

Guest Article Hospitality Badge Project

Kyoko Akaike, Illustrator,
Shizuoka Prefecture



Japan is very much a visual society with mascots and characters regularly used in branding a whole range of services, more so than in the UK, including in local government. As the baby boomer generation grew up immersed in manga and anime from the 1950s, this helps explain

why this visual culture is so pervasive with prefectural governments widely using character "mascots", as well as some local governments at town and village level. It can also be said that customer service in Japan is more of an art form, and visitors for the UK are especially taken with the huge effort made by shop and customer service staff to be polite, positive and cheerful.

After staff training with privately contracted companies in some prefectures in Japan, a discussion on the idea of "manner badges", to improve the customer service skills of local authority staff started to appear on intranet bulletin boards.



To begin with there were some negative comments and opposing opinions, but steadily there was a gathering momentum of voices asking if it should be tried out as it was something easy to put in place. Adding to this, on the back of the research findings looking at service user satisfaction, the opinion of some mayors was that "there are too many staff who do not respond positively to the needs of service users" strengthening the need for something to be done to raise communication standards. Badges were thought to be a good way of encouraging staff.



For Shizuoka prefecture's "Omotenashi (hospitality) Badge" campaign, illustrations were offered for free. The character, in the design of a rabbit, has various attributes representing qualities required for good customer service - eyes that can see well (a sense of foresight), big ears (listening to the voice of citizens), nimble (smart and quick response to requests), jumps (able to make a leap in logic, making great strides). At the beginning of the design process the name was decided



through a public appeal. As a result of this "Cha-Ranger" (Japanese pun on tea and challenger) was the name given to the character, connecting it with the produce for which Shizuoka prefecture is so famous. Manufacturing the badge was carried out by people with disabilities at a sheltered work programs centre called "Kasuga (Spring Day) Work". When the production began, local authority staff went to see how progress was going and already found people making the badges wearing them. People with vision problems, and those unable to use both hands freely for machine operation had skilfully made the badges. The finished product when checked had been beautifully realised.



As the badges were being handmade, this increased the unit cost of the large quantity needed. However, after covering the costs of the materials the profits were going towards salaries at the sheltered work centre, so through campaigning we were able to raise the number of buyers. Although there were concerns about using the prefectural office for selling the badges, it was authorised by the office of human resources for long enough to receive wide spread public attention. However the reaction snowballed, and sales took off due to being on local television; as well as the being able to transfer the selling to "Kasuga Work", raising the profile of the centre and enabling them to get more orders from the prefecture.

The project is thought be a success in various ways such as encouraging staff to be more positive, helping the users of the Kasuga Work centre; the project received coverage nationally and support from various groups.



Top to bottom, left to right: Welcome; Shizuoka at your service; Once in a lifetime; Cha-Ranger; Full of laughter; Smiling; Trying hard; I want to be helpful!



Japan Day Seminar 20th Anniversary 2009 Local Government House, London, Wednesday 23rd November



The Japan Day Seminar is an annual event hosted by the Japan Local Government Centre to raise awareness of Japan and Japanese local government and provide a real-time opportunity to exchange information and ideas on local government policy and best practice concerning both the UK and Japan. Marking the 20th anniversary of the Japan Local Government Centre in London, 2009's Japan Day Seminar will be held in partnership with the Local Government Association at Local Government House, Westminster, London, on the 23rd of November and will examine the different strategies that local authorities in Japan and the UK have adopted to deal with issues brought on by the recession.

The seminar will begin with three keynote speeches from experts on local government in Japan and the UK and will be followed by a panel discussion.

The seminar will run from 1:30pm to 5:00pm on the 23rd of November, 2009, at Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ, and will be followed by a reception. It will be free to attend but registration is necessary. To register email mailbox@jlgc.org.uk indicating your name, address, organisation, affiliation, and whether you will attend the seminar, reception, or both events.

Japan's Aging Society New methods in care for the aged in Japan

Continuing from last issue's theme on Japan's aging society—this issue, specific examples of tackling the issues around depopulated areas and care for the elderly



Okuizumo town's video phone and call centre system

Japan is one of many developed countries that is facing serious problems due to an ageing and shrinking population. The problem is magnified in remote towns

and communities where a severe lack of people of working age, combined with an ever growing number of elderly people requiring specialised care causes major strains on social welfare systems. Okuizumo town in Shimane prefecture is one such town attempting to come to grips with the demographic change. The town's population of 15,000 has shrunk by 20 percent since 1980, a trend that is predicted to only continue. 35 percent of people are 65 years old or over, 21 percent are 75 or over, more than 15 percent require care, and one in four households is a single occupant aged 65 or over. To add to the problem, many people live far from the closest neighbour or shop, and there is a shortage of social care workers.

Video phone and call centre

Since 2008 Okuizumo town has embarked on a 93 million yen (£580,000) programme to set up video phones in 70% of all households of people aged 65 and over by March 2010. 600 video phones have been set up so far with another 300 installations planned for the remainder of 2009. The multi-function video phones connect to a small call centre located in the Health and Welfare Division of the Okuizumo town hall where personnel can give support to the users of the service in their everyday life. It also enables home nursing and home health care support, allows users to live more independently, and lowers the number of people who move into care homes.



In Japan, as in many countries, many older people tend to shy away from confusing and intimidating new technologies. However the multi-function video phones have been designed specifically for an older user group and can be operated with ease via a touch panel display. As well as being installed in homes, they are also being set up in various social care facilities around the town.



The call centre is connected to an optic fibre network and enables Health and Welfare Division personnel to keep a watch over the health and well-being of the users, allowing them to lead a normal life. It also frees up the resources of

and reduces the burden on nursing and medical care centres as they do have to handle every call directly. In fact, many calls are from lonely people simply wanting to have a chat.

As video phones allow for visual, not just audio, interaction, it gives a more detailed picture of the person's condition. The

call centre personnel regularly call the users of the service, which not only confirms their well-being, but also helps to build a relationship of mutual trust. This also ensures that the person will not hesitate in contacting the call centre when a real problem does arise.

Providing a service with video phones

Users can bring up a phone directory on the screen of the video phone, and can choose who they call by making a selection on the touch panel. They can then contact either the call centre or other people who have volunteered to take calls, and can talk about everyday life. Also on the video phone is a "well-being confirmation" function to let the call centre know that things are fine, and an "emergency call" function for when an emergency situation arises.

There is also a device attached to the video phone which can measure the person's vital health statistics. The device takes a reading of the blood pressure and heart rate and sends it to a data centre. A graph is also automatically generated from the data and displayed on the screen, making it easy for people to monitor their own health. If they notice something out of the ordinary they can contact the call centre right then and there via the video phone and discuss with the consultant whether they should go and see a doctor.

Users of the service can have groceries and other daily necessities delivered to their home from participating shops via the video phone touch panel. Order details are sent to the shops via video phone or email.

Okuizumo town is one of many examples of a local authority utilising technology to deal with the effects of demographic change in Japan. The video phone and call centre service helps to relieve strain on social welfare services by reducing the need for older people to physically see a nursing or medical care professional. It also provides an outlet for people who might otherwise lead lonely lives, and allows them to live life more independently than they would being confined to a care home.

Paro - the therapeutic robot harp seal



The falling birthrate and ageing population in Japan means that there is an ever growing increase in the number of people that require nursing care, and a continual decrease in number of people in younger generations to provide such care. One of the big issues to come out of this is how to support the independence of elderly people to reduce the social costs of old age care and how to reduce the overall degree of care required for an elderly person. Caring for elderly people with cognitive disorders such as dementia costs local authorities in Japan 4 million yen (£25,000) per patient per year. Also, giving direct hands-on care to these patients increases facilities maintenance and labour costs which is further magnified by the labour shortage. To help ease this strain on resources, a number of care robots are in development. One robot, which has already been put to practical use is Paro, a therapeutic robot baby harp seal.

World's "most therapeutic robot"

Humans have been keeping animals as pets for companionship for thousands of years, but only in recent years have animals been used as a specific form of therapy to help improve the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive functioning of people. Of course, with real animals comes problems such as allergies, infections, bites and scratches, so keeping an animal in places like social care facilities and hospitals can prove difficult. Paro is a "mental commitment" robot baby harp seal for therapeutic use, developed to interact with people and increase their emotional attachment. Paro acts

as a companion for those who cannot take care of real animals and those who live in places where pets are forbidden. He costs 350,000 yen for the basic model, or 420,000 yen for the robot plus a three year support service (costs in Europe start at €4500, or £3800). The main aim of Paro is to reduce the degree of care required for elderly people - to decrease the overall social costs of care.

Paro is said to have a therapeutic effect on patients with cognitive disorders, and according to the Guinness Book of Records he is the world's "most therapeutic robot". Development on Paro began in 1993 and sales began in March 2005. To date more than a thousand models have been sold. Paro can learn to behave in a way that the user prefers, and to respond to a new name. When Paro is stroked, he will remember the action he performed that resulted in him being stroked. If Paro is hit, he will remember his previous action and will try not to do that action again.



A real baby harp seal spends most of the day sleeping, but Paro has a diurnal rhythm of morning, daytime, and night, so he is active during the daytime, but gets sleepy at night. He can express feelings such as happiness and surprise, and reacts to human voices by crying out. When he is stroked he moves from left to right. Paro's artificial fur has an antibacterial, soil-resistant finish, and he is fitted with electromagnetic shield so he can be used by people with pacemakers. He is 57cm long and weighs 2.7kgs and is equipped with touch sensors, whisker sensors, light sensors, a microphone, temperature sensors, and head sensors. He is fitted with movement actuators in his eyes, neck, front legs, and fin, and runs on a nickel hydrogen rechargeable battery which is charged through a dummy in his mouth. He can operate for up to an hour and a half on one charge. Also, each model is hand made so the face of every Paro is different.

Local authority initiatives

Nanto city, Toyama prefecture, the home of the company that manufactures and sells Paro, introduced him to eight nursing homes in May 2005 with the aim of preventing dementia and other cognitive disorders in the elderly residents. The Toyama prefectural government officially endorses Paro by permitting the use of the official 'Toyama Products' label.

In Tsukuba city, Ibaraki prefecture, home to the research institute that designed the robotics, Paro is being used in robot therapy to help its residents with depression and motivation, increase conversation and interaction, lower anxiety, and also reduce the stress of the centre's care workers. In 2007, the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, also located in Tsukuba city, provided a 50% rebate for elderly care centres that wished to purchase Paro. The local authority itself also bought a Paro and uses it to promote Tsukuba's achievements in robotics research at industry fairs.

In November 2008, the Japanese ambassador to Denmark announced a plan to introduce Paro into 1000 elderly care homes in Denmark by 2011. The Netherlands and Germany have also both introduced Paro into elderly care homes, and as at April 2009 there are over 1200 Paros in 20 countries being used around the world.

Effects of Paro on patients with cognitive disorders

The National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, and Brain Functions Laboratory conducted joint research involving Paro to discover the effects of the robot on improving the brain function of patients with cognitive disorders such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The brain waves of elderly patients with cognitive disorders who were asked to

interact with Paro were measured before and after the interaction for analysis. Out of the 14 people who participated in the study, 7 (50%) experienced an improvement in brain function. There have also been a number of cases worldwide that have shown that robot therapy involving Paro in centres for elderly care produces expressions and behavior in the patients that is similar to those of healthy people. Interaction with Paro improves brain function in elderly patients with cognitive disorders and helps prevent the development of such disorders in healthy people. Furthermore, subjects who expressed a positive attitude towards Paro were found to show a greater response to the therapy.

Aichi Prefecture—Takahama City's "Iki-iki" Centre

Takahama is a city located in Aichi prefecture roughly 25km south-east of the prefecture capital Nagoya. With a population of 44,600, many of whom are retirees or approaching retirement age, the city has embarked on a welfare related initiative unique in Japan.



The new initiative, jointly-administered by Takahama city and Nihon Fukushi University, involves providing the health, welfare and lifelong learning services of a number of public and private organisations in one central location - the Takahama Iki-iki (meaning *vivacity*) Centre - to help improve residents' quality of life and revitalise the community. The various departments and sections within the centre that serve the community include the General Consultation Department, Resident Services Department (Welfare Section, Longevity Section, Residents Section, Social Welfare Committee), the Iki-iki Centre Administrative Office, and the Nursing and Welfare Apparatus Showroom (which includes machine and aerobics studios).

The General Consultation Department is a comprehensive and specialist consultation facility that integrates the Welfare Administration Department, the General Community Support Centre (including counselling service for disabled persons), the Home Nursing Support Office, and the Nursing and Welfare Apparatus Showroom into one area, providing the necessary support for the various needs of the elderly and disabled.

The Resident Services Department comprises of the Takahama city administered Community Welfare Group, Nursing Care Insurance Group, Health and Welfare Group, as well as the Social Welfare Committee, to provide streamlined application processing, promote welfare policy and enhance welfare services.

The Nursing and Welfare Apparatus Showroom displays and sells the latest welfare equipment. Other functions performed here include the sale of nursing insurance and consultation for other benefit and assistance schemes.

The Lifelong Learning facility holds a wide range of courses on child raising, health care and welfare for different age groups. As well as this, the centre also holds a number of health and fitness programmes for such things as obesity and osteoporosis prevention. There are also training sessions for elderly people to help increase their physical strength and minimise care requirements. The General Consultation Department was set up in 1999 to quickly, precisely and comprehensively deal with the welfare needs of the diverse community and act as a "one-stop shop" general welfare consultation. The General Community Support Centre was established in 2006 after a revision of the Long-Term Care Insurance Act, which allowed the city to provide more specialist consultation.

Japan-UK Relations

Sir Stephen

Gommersall KCMG

**Ambassador to Japan 1999-2004,
now Chief Executive, Hitachi
Global (Europe)**



Diplomacy and business are very different, but equally fascinating. In government, whether you are trying to prevent a war or operate a local unemployment office you are motivated by an idea of the public good. In Anglo-Japanese diplomacy, since our countries are extremely close politically and economically, our focus was on such issues as the response to terrorism, international peacekeeping in Afghanistan, privatisation, international development, NGO activities, the environment and of course the promotion of bilateral trade and investment. We achieved a lot together in international security, and created much new bilateral business and investment. And of course the constant contact with politicians, famous businessmen, scientists, academics and even fashion models gave the job a privileged and exciting dimension.



In business there is also an important social and international dimension, but the objective after all is to make money. You have to sell products, or grow a business, to justify your existence. It is much less glamorous, and rather than leading policy, you are a supplicant to your customers. Why do I enjoy it? Firstly, because just as I felt comfortable as a salesman for my country's national interests, I respect and admire the values of the company for which I am working. That must be essential for anyone looking at a private sector career. Secondly, because there is still a need for strategy and foreign expertise to help a domestic Japanese company become more international. And third, because when you can help your company to achieve an important deal, there is something concrete and exciting to cheer about.

Britain has sold a lot of technology – in jet engines, computer games and education services – to Japan. British experience with public/private funding of infrastructure, British practice in corporate governance, and the encouragement of the role of NGOs in helping to deal with social issues has also attracted a lot of positive attention.

As far as investment in Britain is concerned, the language, the liberal economic environment, and positive attitude towards Japanese management practices makes the UK attractive to Japanese companies. Strangely I think that British people like to learn from Japanese companies' ways of organising efficient production: but that Japanese businesses in Europe often function most efficiently when led by Europeans.

Japanese manufacturing technology is still the best in the world. After working for five years in a Japanese company, I also appreciate the commitment to the long term as well as to employees as stakeholders. Big companies have to balance the long term view and the short-medium term profits.

Transport in Japan is a massive success story as far as rail transport is concerned. It is just so easy, relatively cheap and quick to get around the country on the bullet trains, suburban and subway systems. Also the quality of the stations and infrastructure, the cleanliness and frequency of the services, is the best in the world.

The strength of Japan's rail industry is very strong customer focus. And willingness to invest in infrastructure – eg new rail layouts, interchanges, smart card payment systems, to make journeys easier and the experience of being in cities more enjoyable. Secondly, when the Shinkansen (bullet train) system was built, its route deliberately avoided city centres in order to avoid unnecessary cost and congestion. Now new economic hubs have grown up around the new network. So the public investment in building the first services has been repaid many times by economic regeneration.

Hitachi won its preferred bidder status for the UK's Intercity Express Programme on the basis of a fair competition between only two competitors. The reason for the criticism was simply that Britain has at the moment only one domestic rail vehicle manufacturer (Bombardier – a Canadian company) and therefore the company and its unions saw the decision as taking work away from the UK to Japan. At the time of the announcement however, Hitachi announced that if we won the full order we would create a factory in the UK to manufacture most of the IEP and future train orders, creating or guaranteeing a substantial number of jobs in the UK industry. The bottom line therefore is that the UK will have two rather than one centres of rail manufacturing, new technology transferred from Japan, and an additional base for export of rail vehicles to the Continent of Europe. When people understand this, their attitude naturally becomes much more positive. It is my mission to make this a reality.

Hitachi certainly plans to enter the continental rail market for vehicles, electrical equipment and signalling systems. But this will take time, as it did in the UK. We came first to the UK because the UK was welcoming to outside competition.

The JET programme is a very productive bridge between Japan and the UK. It benefits both our countries and the individuals who participate. My first awareness of the important role of CLAIR was when for the first time I met the British JET students who arrived in Japan in 1999. The Japan-British relationship is deep, historical, and many-coloured. One of its peaks was during the late 19th Century, when Japan, importing technology from all over the world, developed from an agricultural nation to an industrial superpower in just fifty years. Many of the young British engineers who helped build the ports and railways for the Meiji Government were not much older than the JETs who arrive in Japan today. Our world is now more global, and as countries and individuals we have to build our own futures in a more multipolar and egalitarian world. For me it was therefore very exciting to see 600 top graduates from Britain looking to Japan to provide an experience and education which will deeply influence their lives as international citizens.

For the participating countries, the JET programme is a fantastic resource, creating a pool of talent which will develop business and governmental links in future generations. There are many already in British Government and business. CLAIR plays an immensely supportive role for them.

The shape of things to come on the UK rail network? The Hitachi design for the new UK Intercity Express trains





Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme UK



JET Programme Orientation, Tokyo, 2009 Louise Rolland, ALT from 2009, Ouchi Town, Saga Prefecture



They call it Orientation... My first two days in Japan flew by; now that I am settled in Saga-ken I can reflect on how they prepared me for my job as an ALT and life in the small town of Ouchi. There was a lot of information to take in, from the moment we were greeted by a fleet of assistants in purple T-shirts to the moment we left for our respective prefectures, three days later. Here are a few things that stood out for me from the various speeches and workshops.

It was good to meet some of the new JETs going to the same prefecture: we had an opportunity to start getting to know each other and ask questions of our friendly District Representative, Jesse. Finally we were getting some information about where we were going to live for the next year!

My first cultural shock was when I noticed that one of the hotel employees was kneeling behind the speakers on the stage, in order to move their chairs backwards when they stood up to introduce themselves and move them back again as they sat down. It was a useful reminder of how different things will be.



I was inspired by the first two talks from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) officials. Hearing about the government's aspiration for Japanese youth to grow up with the ability to communicate and cooperate with people from other countries reinforced

my sense of responsibility as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). The role I will play in Ouchi is a small part of a national campaign for change in foreign language education.

I also found the practical sessions on teaching extremely useful. We saw Team-Teaching between the ALT and Japanese Teacher of English (JTE) in action and had fun putting ourselves in the students' shoes. Through singing songs and playing games, we got a feel for the level of English taught at Elementary and Junior High Schools. The Japanese card game karuta was among these tips and has since come up in the notes my predecessor Jade left me about her lessons. We also had the opportunity to buy Association of JET (AJET) publications such as teaching materials, cookery books and kanji lists. I picked up a couple of textbooks and am looking



forward to teaching phonics! Several talks dealt with managing our expectations and behaviour or attitude towards our colleagues and students. The weight placed on cultural differences and first impressions was a little too much for me; by the time I was due to meet the mayor

of Karatsu, I was terrified I would accidentally do something offensive that would ruin my relationships in the workplace and local community for ever! For me, communication is a lot easier when you are relaxed and able to enjoy yourself... That said, there were many positive messages and the ones I have found the most useful so far are: "ask a lot of questions" and "be humble". We have probably all been showered with welcome gifts in the office and complimented on our hesitant Japanese, but ultimately we have to deserve our colleagues' and students' respect.

Arigatou gozaimashita to everyone who helped make Orientation such a useful event!

Now in its 22nd year the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme has placed over 44,000 participants from over 44 countries into positions in Japan. The JET Programme, the official government scheme, sends graduates to promote international understanding at a grass-roots level and to improve foreign language teaching in schools.

JETAA Midlands

Chapter waves "Goodbye" to new JETs



On Sunday 12 July, the Midlands Chapter of the JETAA met at the Dragon BBQ restaurant in Birmingham, writes **Melanie Brookes JETAA UK Communications Officer**, to provide some last minute advice and information to new JETs about to embark

on teaching posts throughout Japan.

Over plates (and plates!) of yaki-niku, members of the Midlands Chapter discussed their experiences of Japan with the "newbies". Six new JETs attended in total. They were in good company - six former JETs were on hand to answer questions and Saori Otsuka, a student at the Brasshouse Language School in Birmingham from Chiba-ken was also on hand to answer questions about the culture and the weather (!) in different parts of Japan. As we helped ourselves to more (and more) food from the buffet, we swapped tales of Japan and our experiences.

When we could no longer manage any more BBQ, we managed (somehow!) to make it to the bowling alley. I hope the whole event introduced the new JETs to the wonders of JETAA and the JET alumni community - from practical advice and tips which should help new JETs in their first few days in Japan to good food and the knowledge that there's always someone who can answer any questions that they might have.



Editorial

“Setting the Stage for Heroes”

**Nobuharu Hikiba, JLGC
Senior Advisor, from Tokyo
Metropolitan Government
Translated by Jason Buckley**



Artist's impression of the main Tokyo Olympic Stadium for 2016

environment and accommodation facilities. Tokyo also gave a good presentation that included cutting-edge technology to show the appeal of the Tokyo 2016 concept and plan.

Tokyo also undertook a number of campaign activities at the General Assembly of the Olympic Council of Asia in Singapore on the 3rd of July, and General Assembly of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa in Abuja on the 6th and 7th of July.

Tokyo has also held hundreds of promotional events within Japan in order to win the bid and at the same time spread the Olympic spirit (sport, culture and environment) and pass it on to future generations. Throughout July and August, just before the election of the 2016 Games host city, a full-size model of the robot Gundam, a famous anime character from 30 years ago, was showcased at a park in Odaiba, Tokyo - the proposed site of Olympic Stadium. Gundam is a symbol of global protection and represents the concept of environmental awareness heavily featured in Tokyo's bid. This giant Gundam has so far attracted over four million people and is enlivening the city's bid hopes.



Tokyo is currently in the running to host the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games which, if successful, will steer the city towards further growth, transform it into a more safe, comfortable and beautiful place, and accomplish a model city for the 21st century. With only one month until the election of the 2016 Games host city the bidding cities of Tokyo, Chicago, Madrid and Rio de Janeiro are approaching the final stage of an intense competition.

A look at Tokyo's bidding campaign this year

The International Olympic Committee's Evaluation Commission carried out on site inspections of the four candidate cities from April to May, with Tokyo taking its turn to host from April 14th to 20th.

At an official press conference at the conclusion of the visit to Tokyo, Nawal El Moutawakel, head of the Evaluation Commission, praised the city by saying, 'We were very affected by the vision [of Tokyo 2016] and were also excited by the high quality of the presentations.' She added, 'We were impressed by the community that we have met at every site during our site visits. I felt that many people young and old would like to see the Games come to Tokyo in 2016.' Meanwhile, Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara said in closing, 'It was a wonderful five days for Tokyo and Japan, and the Evaluation Commission now fully understands the incredible vision and concept of Tokyo 2016.' The Evaluation Commission will submit a report on the four bidding cities to the IOC on the 2nd of September 2009 which will later be released to the public.

At the 2016 Candidate Cities Briefing for IOC Members in Lausanne, Switzerland on the 17th and 18th of June, Tokyo emphasised the merits of the city hosting the 2016 Olympics. When asked why they wanted to bid for the event, Tokyo highlighted its venues, transport, finance, safety,

Main strengths and features of Tokyo's 2016 Olympic plan

- 23 of the 34 venues already exist so there is only need for 11 new venues. This not only reduces building costs but also passes the legacy of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics onto the next generation.
- The highly compact plan places 97% of venues within 8km of the Olympic Stadium.
- 45,000 rooms at 280 hotels with no minimum stay required is already guaranteed.
- 34 million local residents passionate about sport live in close proximity to the venues and there is also the potential for 3 billion primetime TV viewers throughout a growing Asia.
- £2.7 billion (£1=150 yen) in venue and infrastructure funding has already been set aside.
- It will be the most environmentally friendly Games in history, and through carbon reduction will be the first ever carbon negative Games.

- It has a 100% government financial guarantee.

By making the most of the above Tokyo aims to provide the finest stage for the world's athletes to break records.

The election of the 2016 Games host city will be made at the 121st IOC Session in Copenhagen, Denmark, on October 2, 2009.



Illuminations promoting Tokyo 2016 at Odaiba, one of the potential sites for the games (Picture © Kaori Majima, above)

The Japan Local Government Centre is the UK office of CLAIR. CLAIR is a joint organisation of local authorities, working to promote and provide support for local internationalisation.

The main functions of JLGC, London are to conduct research on local government in the UK and northern Europe, and to promote exchanges between individuals, including government officers and local government representatives in the UK and Japan. We are also involved in implementing the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, which employs UK graduates in the fields of international exchange and English language education in Japan.

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