

myriad leaves

JUNE 2007



A view of Tokyo from the Metropolitan Government Building in Shijuku

万葉

Myriad Leaves is the English-language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry. 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'.

Local Elections in Japan	2
JLGC News / News	3
Editorial: The Election Campaign Trail in Japan	4

**The Council of Local Authorities
for International Relations**
Founded in 1988, CLAIR is a joint
organisation representing Japan's
47 prefectures, 17 designated cities
and 1,817 municipalities.



This issue is a little different from recent editions: it sees the introduction of an Editorial based on things I have found interesting during my time in Japan. This issue is different too, because I am editing it. A little about myself: I have a background in Japanese language and spent several years in Japan writing and editing publications. Upon my return to the UK, I was fortunate enough to be employed at JLGC where I can combine both my Japanese and editorial experience. I am very excited to be working on this publication, and I hope you will be equally as interested to read it. Comments and suggestions will of course be welcomed at the usual address. Here's wishing you all a successful summer.

Until September,

Claire Harris

Local Elections in Japan By Andrew Stevens, Government Relations Manager, JLGC

Local elections for municipalities and prefectures in Japan have traditionally taken place at various points throughout the year. However, under recent reforms to the local elections law designed to promote higher levels of voter awareness for municipal races, most elections were held during one fortnight in April in order to focus national attention on such races, in the country's first unified local elections. The unified elections

reform is one of several reforms introduced in recent years to energise local polls, such as the new law allowing election manifestos. Local elections in Japan, like many other countries, have taken second place to national polls in the public's attention, not least because of the non-partisan nature of many contests. The elections were widely seen as the first electoral test for the two main parties, the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), in advance of this July's upper house elections for the national Diet (parliament).

The elections were also significant for party rule changes introduced aimed at preventing long-serving governors and mayors seeking re-election and banning pacts between local parties, though many local chapters delayed their



Voting in the local elections

implementation on this occasion, meaning that many contests remained non-partisan and term limits were not imposed. The first set of elections, for governors and mayors of four designated cities, took place on April 8. One particularly significant race was that of Governor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, where independent Shintaro Ishihara won a third term. In the other gubernatorial races where the LDP

and DPJ had faced each other, the LDP took nine and the DPJ two, with no governorships changing hands. Mayoral elections were held in Hamamatsu, Hiroshima, Sapporo and Shizuoka — four of Japan's 17 largest cities which, as designated cities, have similar powers to prefectural governments. In Hiroshima, incumbent Tadatoshi Akiba won a third four-year term.

In the second round of the nationwide local elections on 22 April, 262 mayoral elections and 779 municipal assembly polls were held. Most notable of these was the race in Nagasaki, where incumbent mayor Iccho Ito was murdered while on the campaign trail for his re-election. Tributes for the late mayor flowed in from around the world, including by London Mayor Ken Livingstone, and he was replaced in the subsequent election by one of his former employees, Tomihisa Taue.



JAPAN STUDY TOUR 2007

11-21 November 2007, Tokyo and Shimane

Observe Japanese public management systems in action
Learn about reforms in Japanese central and local government
Experience daily family life with a short home stay



Applications will be open from July for the Japan Local Government Centre's Study Tour to Japan. Held every year in autumn, the study tour aims to foster a deeper understanding of Japan, its culture and its system of local government, and to encourage the exchange of ideas and information. The tour is mainly designed for senior personnel from UK local government and related organisations.

This year's tour will take place from 11-21 November, beginning with a visit to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in Tokyo where participants will learn about central and local government in Japan. Participants will travel to Shimane Prefecture, an area of renowned Japanese beauty and myths in the west of Japan, to learn about Japanese local government and participate in visits and meetings relevant to the theme. Participants will also experience a short home stay with a Japanese family.

Further information, including the application form and a provisional schedule, can be found on our website:

www.jlgc.org.uk. Enquiries: Claire Harris Tel: 0207 839 8500 E-mail: harris@jlgc.org.uk

Deadline for applications: Friday 24th August 2007.

Saitama Hosts National Flower Festival:



Shibasakura



Higanbana

The Japan Flower Festival: Saitama 2007 Committee

were hard at work for a year making preparations for the event hosted in Saitama Prefecture. The Japan Flower Festival was first held 17 years ago in Osaka as the International Flower and Greenery Exhibition, and although it was intended as a one-off event, its success has meant that it has become an annual fixture.

Saitama Prefecture is Japan's largest distributor of primula and lilies, and second largest of tulips. It is also the country's 7th largest producer of flowers and the 4th largest producer of plants, making it one of Japan's major horticultural centres.

The festival arena covered an area of nearly 15,000m² and there were many displays created with flowers grown locally as well as a flower contest with flowers from all over Japan. There was also a flower auction as well as numerous stalls selling all manner of plants and varieties of flowers.

The main display was the 'Dream Garden' created using locally grown petunias, orchids, and garden trees and traditional gardening techniques. It represented the main theme of the event this year: 'Flower and Greenery Garden City, Saitama'.

The event was supported by all municipalities in the prefecture, each sending some of their region's famous blooms. The Chichibu region of Saitama supplied its famous shibasakura and higanbana flowers, Shobu town its lavender, and Okegawa its safflowers.

Yamanashi Prefecture Starts a Quick Answer System

In Yamanashi, the prefectural office has set up a quick answer hotline system for its residents. It will work on a postal system where comments and questions can be emailed using a link on the home page, faxed or sent to the prefectural office on specially designed forms. Replies will be added to the prefecture's home page within one working week. Yamanashi Prefecture has placed these specially designed forms in its 312 sub-offices. The form will ask for opinions and thoughts on the best ways to deal with situations, and in addition to this, local government officials will use the system to share information. The prefecture hopes to receive constructive opinion and propositions for improvement to the area through this system.

March

Assistant Director, Mr. Eitaro Kawamoto, seconded from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications since February went on a one week visit to North West Leicestershire District Council. His report follows:

From the 12th February to 2nd March I was lucky enough to spend a week at North West Leicestershire District Council. During my stay at North West Leicestershire District Council, I was able to sit in on a council meeting, enjoy discussions with many local executives and visit many facilities run by the District Council. Also I was able to make many friends there.

I found my time in North West Leicestershire to be of much use for it gave me the opportunity to see a local authority in the UK in action with my own eyes. It is my aim now to build on what I learnt in North West Leicestershire and further my knowledge of local government in the UK through my work for both central and local government in Japan.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the staff members of North West Leicestershire District Council, and to the other organisations which I visited during my time in North West Leicestershire.



Mr. Eitaro Kawamoto with the staff of North West Leicestershire District Council

Late March-April:

Sadly, at the end of March JLGc said so long and thank you to five members of staff: Deputy Director Mr. Toyosaburo Koyama, and Assistant Directors Mr. Koichi Iwao, Mr. Kazato Iwasaki, Mr. Shigehiko Nohara, and Ms. Yuko Koike. Their two year tenure had come to an end and they have returned to Japan.

Gladly at the beginning of April, JLGc said hello and welcome to five new members of staff. Deputy Director Mr. Toru Murase from Aichi Prefecture, Deputy Director Mr. Shingo Kazama from Chiba Prefecture, Assistant Directors Ms. Yuka Kuwabara., Mr. Takeya Sato and Mr. Toshihiko Takeda. They have settled into their new working environment well and look forward to making some visits to local authorities.

On April 4th, Mr. Naiki travelled to Sheffield to meet with the Chief Executive of Sheffield City Council, Sir Bob Kerlake. They had a very successful meeting where they discussed cooperation in local government and economic policies. Mr. Naiki was very interested to hear about Sir Bob's vision for Sheffield, and they agreed to further the development and interaction between JLGc and Sheffield City. Sheffield is also twinned with Kawasaki near Tokyo, so this was also discussed.

On April 24th, Mr. Naiki, Director of the Japan Local Government Centre attended the LGA's European and International Branch launch and reception.

Again, at the end of April, JLGc said thank you and good luck to Publications Officer Richard Kelner. He has left us to pursue his career at the University of Aberdeen, so we wish him all the best. His position has been taken over by Ms. Claire Harris.



Ministerial Visit:

The end of April also saw a visit from Minister Yoshihide Suga from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. He met with representatives from the JETAA at Grosvenor House Hotel on the 29th and held a formal lunch meeting where the future of the JET Programme and other impressions were discussed. This occasion was hosted by CLAIR with representatives from the Embassy and JLGc.

The event was a great success with the seven JETAA representatives sharing some highlights from their time in Japan on the JET Programme and talking about how participation had benefited them personally as well as professionally.

Minister Suga was not in the country very long, and we are grateful to him for making time in his busy schedule to attend this meeting.

May

Director Naiki has spent a busy month visiting Mr. Richard Kemp at Liverpool City Council, Mr. Nick Rowe at Kent County Council and Mr. Phil Halsall again at Liverpool City Council. He and other JLGc representatives also went to meet Mr. Chris Watson and Mr. Mike Smith at the University of Birmingham on Friday May 4th. His visits were very profitable and interesting, and he wishes to thank all those involved for their time and hospitality.

JLGc's new members of staff have been fortunate enough to spend time at Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council and we shall have their reports in the September issue.

On May 27th, Mr Naiki attended a formal reception at the Embassy of Japan in London where he was privileged to have met with and spoken to the Emperor Akihito about the development of internationalisation and exchange between the UK and Japan including the JET Programme.



Top from left to right: Director Naiki, Mr. Luke Barclay, Mr. Tadashi Tokisawa, Mr. David Giddings, Mr. Shinya Inaoka, Mr. Jeff Glekin;

seated from left to right: Ms. Catherine Dawson, Ms. Mami Mizutori, Ms. Joan Dixon, Minister Suga, Ms. Elizabeth Aveling, Mr. Nobuyasu Kubo, Ms. Caroline Lewis

Editorial The Election Campaign Trail Japan:

The visitor to Japan during the time of the local election campaigns may only be slightly perplexed to encounter suited men (and more recently women) wearing white gloves clutching a bunch of microphones (or in more provincial areas) a loudspeaker and shouting outside random railway stations. Of course, for the more leisurely visitor, this wonderful sight may be missed as it invariably takes place at the peak rush hour, between 6.30 and 8 in the morning. If the visitor is especially fortunate, they may have a small packet of tissues pressed into their hands as they walk past.

The visitor to the country might also wonder what is going on if they happen to see a van packed with pretty girls also wearing white gloves waving out of the window. The more observant may notice a picture of a person on the sides, but only the truly deaf can fail to hear the loudspeaker message.

If the visitor can read Japanese or understand a little of the language, these seemingly random events begin to take on a sharper focus. The people standing outside train stations are candidates: they are making their pitch to claim a seat in the local elections. National elections also take this format, but media attention around them tends to generate more interest.

Traditionally, the election campaign has focussed on getting the candidate's name heard and remembered which can usually be taken to mean saturation of the market. Campaign posters are designed with a large head-shot of the candidate and their name written in bright colours. All the posters are then posted on a board and placed by road-sides, parks, train stations and outside private houses. In this environment where all the posters take on a grim year-book feel the person with the most open features and the brightest lettering is the one who will be noticed.

Although the person standing outside the station speaking appears to be vehemently putting forth his manifesto to the electorate, in actual fact what he tends to be doing is greeting people with a cheery 'Good morning, have a nice day at work,' and shouting his name, so that everyone on the approach to the station has the opportunity to hear it several times before even thinking about fishing their tickets out of their pockets and boarding a train.

The vans filled with lovely ladies waving at passers by are also an opportunity for the candidate to get his name heard in the community. More often than not, the candidates themselves are not in the car, but a recorded message plays informing the locals of the date of the local election, their name and thanking them in advance for their vote. In recent years it has become more popular for the candidate to mention something of a brief manifesto or more likely a slogan, but this whole loop will probably last no longer than thirty seconds before it starts again, and the speed at which the vans drive around the residential areas ensure that even the most inaccessible houses will have no difficulty caching the main points.

As a matter of tradition local parties tend to field candidates from the same family, so it is not uncommon for a municipality to have been dominated by one family for a number of generations, and this even extends to the general elections where

famously ex-Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka, daughter of former 1970's Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka was elected primarily because of family connections in the LDP and more secondarily because of her non-conformist approach to politics, which eventually lead to her downfall in the Koizumi Government.

Voting trends in Japan seem even to support reformed criminals. Take the example of Muneo Suzuki: in 1983 he was elected to represent a Hokkaido municipality, but was forced to leave in 2002 after persuading the Foreign Ministry to fund the Japan-Russia Friendship House and was arrested shortly after on suspicion of accepting bribes. After serving his 2 year sentence, he formed his own party and successfully ran for and won the same seat in the September 2005 elections. These two examples point to voters in Japan following a person rather than a policy or political ideology. In point of fact, the word and term manifesto was only introduced in 2005 when Koizumi made the decision to dissolve the Lower House in order to push through his postal reforms.

How then do election campaigns in Japan compare with those in the UK? The use of the internet has until recently been strictly forbidden in campaigns because it is believed this could prejudice the campaign. Web pages and blogs are frozen until the campaign is over, the thinking being it might encourage younger people to take an interest in politics at the expense of the older generation. Takafumi Horie, disgraced ex-chairman of the Livedoor Group had 50,000 hits on his blog each day, but was forced to suspend it after announcing his intention to run in the 2005 general election.

It may be possible to consider the endless shouting at train stations and broadcasts from mysterious white vans as verging on noise pollution, but in a country as busy as Japan, these methods have been very successful ways of attracting voter attention. In fact, during the recent local elections candidates drew strength on the green platform by pledging they would not ride around in cars (thus reducing exhaust emissions) or have their names blared by loudspeaker (and therefore reducing the amount of noise pollution). One candidate even did his canvassing by bicycle. He claimed people felt more confident in approaching him and the campaign was more successful because of it.

While local elections in Japan focus around getting the name and face of the candidate recognised and remembered so the voter can recall it when they have to write it on their ballot paper (as opposed to the UK where the voter has to make a choice and mark the correct box), local elections in the UK focus on party issues. Door-to-door leaflet campaigns and street surgeries have been the mainstay of campaigning in the UK and with more double income families, reaching members of the public at their homes during the day has proved to be a problem. Candidates are free however to use the internet in their campaign and it is this new media and new approach to campaigning which will arguably see the revitalisation of interest in local agendas and politics as a whole. Personality is less important in the UK, but we are not immune to celebrity particularly in high profile positions such as the Mayor of London. In Japan, having a fan-base already almost guarantees the candidate a seat, although in point of fact when Takafumi Horie

stood in the 2005 general election, he did not win despite being a recognised personality throughout the country.

Voter turnout has been a problem in local elections both in Japan and the UK, and whereas the turnout for Japan is a little less than 60%, in the UK the figure is more likely to be around 35%. Various new strategies have been employed to quash this downward trend and the new postal voting regulations and extended polling hours have certainly seen some improvements.

Japan is synonymous with technical achievements and effective business practices throughout the world, but in the case of electioneering, the government could take a lesson from the private sector to modernise the campaign trails. Whatever the casual visitor may think of the annual racket, it certainly can't be denied that the Japanese brand of electioneering is very successful.



Posters advertising the candidates in a local election

The Japan Local Government Centre is the UK office of CLAIR – the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations. Founded in 1988 with the support of Japan's Ministry of Home Affairs, now the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, CLAIR is a joint organisation of local authorities, working to promote and provide support for local internationalisation.

With its head office in Tokyo, CLAIR has branch offices in each of Japan's 47 prefectures and 17 designated cities, and also has 7 overseas offices – in Beijing, New York, Paris, Singapore, Seoul, Sydney and London. Each overseas office is responsible for a specific area; the London office covers the United Kingdom, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

The main functions of the JLGC in 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.



JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTRE • LONDON

15 Whitehall, London SW1A 2DD
United Kingdom

Tel: 020 7839 8500 Fax: 020 7839 8191

e-mail: mailbox@jlgc.org.uk

www.jlgc.org.uk

Editor: Claire Harris

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An election van making its way to disturb quiet residential areas