

We Are *Tomodachi*

Spring / Summer 2018



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited the Higashiosaka Hanazono Rugby Stadium in Osaka Prefecture, one of the venues where Japan will host Rugby World Cup 2019 from September to November 2019.

Feature: G20 Japan 2019

Synchronized Swimming Olympic Medalist Performing with Cirque du Soleil

Sowing Seeds of Peace for Japan and China



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JapanGov, the official portal of the Government of Japan, provides a wealth of information regarding various issues that Japan is tackling, and also directs you to the sites of relevant ministries and agencies.

It introduces topics such as Abenomics, Japan's economic revitalization policy, and the attractive investment environment that Abenomics has created. In addition, it highlights Japan's contributions for international development, including efforts to spread fruit of innovation and quality infrastructure worldwide.

You'll also find the articles of all past issues of "We Are *Tomodachi*" (<https://www.japan.go.jp/tomodachi>).



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"We Are *Tomodachi*" is a magazine published with the aim of further deepening people's understanding of the initiatives of the Government of Japan and the charms of Japan. *Tomodachi* means "friend" in Japanese, and the magazine's title expresses that Japan is a friend of the countries of the world—one that will cooperate and grow together with them.

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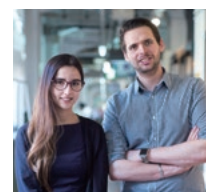
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In April 2018, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited the Higashiosaka Hanazono Rugby Stadium in Osaka Prefecture, one of the venues where Japan will host Rugby World Cup 2019 from September to November 2019, and met with elementary school students from a local rugby school. The G20 Summit Meeting will also be held in Osaka Prefecture in June 2019.

Note: U.S. dollar equivalents for Japanese yen amounts in this issue are calculated at 107 yen to the dollar, roughly the rate at the time of publication.

This
is
Japan

Journey through a Vibrant World of New Green

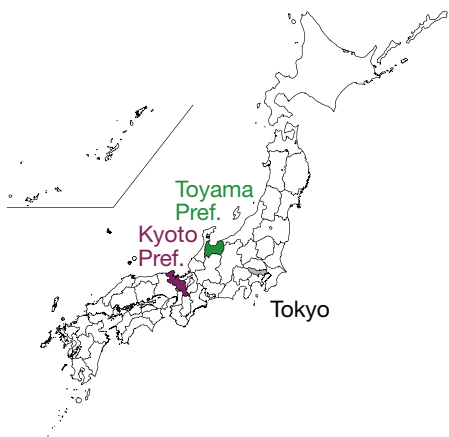
Japan is about 70% forest. From June through early summer is the season of *shinryoku*, or “new green,” when the fresh leaves create a scenic and pleasant atmosphere in bright green hues. Each region features distinct ways to enjoy this invigorating season of life and renewal.



Toyama

Explore deep ravines on the Kurobe Gorge Trolley Train

A one-way trip on this sightseeing train along 20.1 km (12.5 mi.) of canyons takes an hour and 20 minutes. The trolleys weave through steep V-shaped valleys, giving you an intense close-up view of soaring cliffs and surrounding you with panoramic scenes of the forests.



Kurobe Gorge Trolley Train

Operating Schedule: Mid April through Late November

► For more information, please visit: <http://www.kurotetu.co.jp/en/>



Hozu-gawa River Boat Ride

Operating Schedule: All year round

► For more information, please visit: <https://www.hozugawakudari.jp/en>



Feel the refreshing breeze on the Hozu-gawa River Boat Ride

Experienced boatmen deftly steer you downstream on the Hozu-gawa River Boat Ride. On this 16 km (10 mi.), two-hour journey past exciting rapids, deep pools and massive rock formations, you will get your fill of thrills and magnificent nature.



Game App Developer in Her 80s Opens ICT World for Fellow Seniors



At the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC) in June 2017, Wakamiya talked with Apple CEO Tim Cook about the relationship between seniors and ICT.

“Apple CEO Tim Cook gave me a friendly hug, saying, ‘You really inspire me.’ I told him, ‘I want you to make the iPhone more user-friendly for seniors.’ People in Silicon Valley are passionate over gender and ethnic diversity, but have you overlooked the senior women like me?”

Eighty-three-year-old iPhone game app developer Masako Wakamiya exudes cheerfulness. “Curiosity makes me jump quickly to try new things,” she says. “I don’t make walls to shut out unknown worlds.”

Personal computers were becoming popular when Wakamiya retired from a major bank at the age of 60. Sensing computers’ great possibilities, she lost no time in purchasing one for herself. As she started to use her

computer, Wakamiya discovered that she could encounter and interact with a wide variety of people. “At the age of 60 my world expanded—I got wings!” Wanting to share the world of computers with seniors, Wakamiya got involved in activities that included hosting a personal computer class for them.

It always seemed to Wakamiya that few smartphone games were designed with seniors in mind. But she was over 80 when she got the idea of developing iPhone game apps herself. “I wanted to make games that would allow us seniors to defeat even young people on the basis of our knowledge—games that are different from the competitive ones that require quick reflexes. I bought

several specialized books to try programming on my own. At first, I struggled with programming languages for app development and my lack of English. However, when I didn't understand something, I put my social skills to use, asking many people for advice through the Internet. After about five months, I completed "*hinadan*," a game in which players arrange the traditional *hina* (dolls) displayed for the Japanese Doll Festival in their proper order on the stair-like *dan* (display shelves)."

When *hinadan* came out in February 2017, response exceeded anything she had imagined. Articles appeared in one Japanese newspaper after another, and CNN introduced Wakamiya and her game in the United States. She was invited to the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC) in San Jose, California in June 2017 as a special guest and introduced as "the oldest developer." The day before the conference, Wakamiya had the opportunity to talk with Apple CEO Tim Cook. She also gave the keynote speech at the United Nations Headquarters in New York for a February 2018 conference on digital technology and the elderly. "With ICT [Information and Communication Technology] literacy, seniors can create their own space, and by using social networking systems, they can expand interactions with family members, friends and foreigners who live far away. This makes me really happy."

Confronted with an aging society and decrease in the number of people in the labor force, the Japanese government is seeking to implement a "Human Resources Development Revolution." Wakamiya is seen as a role model and has been selected as one of the experts to participate on the "Council for Designing 100-Year Life Society" that is considering practical measures for

transforming, as did Wakamiya, aging into opportunity.

Wakamiya's interest now lies in the evolution of AI. "Some people are afraid of being deprived of work, but we must find new jobs and participate in society in new ways. I am looking forward to what the future society will be like," she states, eyes shining with irrepressible curiosity.



The *hinadan* game app Wakamiya created requires players to use their knowledge of Japan's traditional *Hinamatsuri* (Doll Festival) to arrange dolls each in their correct position on a four-level display stage. "To make it easier for seniors to play, I did not use slides and swipes, but made it possible to move a doll with just a tap," she explained. The number of downloads now exceeds 80,000.



Seniors learn hands-on at Wakamiya's computer class.



Masako Wakamiya

Wakamiya was born in Tokyo in 1935. She is vice chair of the senior generation website "Mellow Club" that she helped create in 1999, director of the NPO Broadband School Association, and active in promoting the usage of digital devices by seniors. As an expert on the Japanese government's "Council for Designing 100-Year Life Society" held from 2017, she is involved in policymaking to support learning after mandatory retirement.



Spendlove practicing for an underwater performance on the theme of *Swan Lake*.

Kanako Kitao Spendlove

Spendlove was born in 1982, in Kyoto Prefecture. She represented Japan in synchronized swimming while a student at Ritsumeikan University. She won silver medals in the team competition at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens and at the FINA World Championships in Montreal in 2005. She has been a member of Cirque du Soleil since 2006.

Series: Japanese Individuals Contributing Worldwide

| Synchronized Swimming Olympic Medalist Performing with Cirque du Soleil

Kanako Kitao Spendlove, selected at the age of 20 for Japan's national team for synchronized swimming (now officially referred to as artistic swimming), overcame harsh practices lasting as long as 10 hours a day to win a silver medal in the team competition at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. Having also earned a silver medal the following year at the FINA World Championships in Montreal, she was expected to capture the gold at the next Olympics, but instead she announced her withdrawal from the sport, after three years on the national team.

"While it's true I had earned a medal, I didn't feel that I had achieved the kind of synchronized swimming I had imagined I would," she recalls.

She wanted to pursue a style all her own. A few weeks after announcing her retirement from competition with that dream in mind, she found out that an audition for a show incorporating synchronized swimming performances would be held in Tokyo. The organizer was Cirque du Soleil, a company with its international headquarters in Montreal that incorporates such diverse elements as street performance and opera into traditional circus shows and performs those shows in countries around the globe.

Highly evaluated at her audition for her expressiveness, physical ability, and, most of all, her confidence in taking on new challenges, Spendlove headed to Canada alone to participate in training that spanned dance, music, and



The Nage (synchronized swimming) team of "O." Spendlove is fourth from the right in the back row.

more.

Cirque du Soleil is known for shows that push performers to the very limits of human physical ability, and its unique production offerings bring together top-notch athletes, street performers, dancers, and staff from around the world.

"While each performer works to enhance his or her own abilities, we also come together as one, respecting each other's skills, to produce an even better show. I was really struck at how wonderfully the group harmonizes, and I became completely absorbed in my training," Spendlove recounts.

While in training, she was selected for the show "O," a resident show at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. First performed in 1998, "O" received glowing praise for its extraordinary creativity and artistry and became an endeavor that brought Cirque du Soleil's reputation to even greater heights.

"The first time I performed and received a standing ovation, I was so deeply moved that I was trembling, feeling the positive feedback to my very core. 'O' is a richly complex work that people in the audience can interpret in various ways. Even now I approach each show with a fresh outlook and a bit of healthy tension. I really enjoy performing it."

Spendlove's abilities are highly evaluated, making her one of the star performers in "O." She centers her life in Las Vegas and weaves practice as a competitive athlete into her performance schedule of two shows daily, five days a week.

She adds with a smile, "I want to understand synchronized swimming even more deeply, because it's my true passion. I hope to keep pushing myself to the best of my ability and continue to move audiences through my performances."



The name "O" comes from the French word for water, "*eau*." The set dramatically converts to an enormous pool before the audience's eyes.



Spendlove continues to practice as a competitive synchronized swimmer. Representing the United States of America at the 17th FINA World Championships in 2017, she partnered with Bill May to win the bronze medal in the mixed duet competition.



Spendlove enjoys a satisfying life in Las Vegas, where she lives with her husband, who works as a rigger at Cirque du Soleil, and their almost-three-year-old son.

G20 Summit & Ministerial Meetings to Be Held for the First Time in Japan

On the 28th and 29th of June 2019, the leaders of the G20 will gather in Osaka as Japan hosts its first ever G20 Summit. Concurrent with the Summit meeting, the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting, the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and other ministerial meetings will also be held at eight different locations throughout Japan.

During its presidency of next year's G20 Summit, the Japanese government is determined to carry out strong leadership in advancing discussions toward resolving the myriad issues now facing the international community.

At the same time, the G20 Summit is a perfect opportunity for people from all over the world to see and experience not only a newly revitalized and transforming Japan—which is thanks to booming corporate profits and a wave of inbound investment as a result of bold regulatory reforms and other stimulus measures—but also the wide-ranging appeal of the various regions that will host these consequential discussions.

What Are the G20 Summit & Ministerial Meetings?

The G20 Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy is held every year to discuss the critical issues affecting the global economy, and it brings together the members of the G7 (France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada and the European Union), as well as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey (listed in alphabetical order).

The participating nations represent 80% of global gross domestic product. Designated as the “premier forum for international economic cooperation” at the Pittsburgh meeting in 2009, in recent years the G20 Summit has dealt with a wide range of issues facing the global community, including development, climate and energy, digital economy, and employment in addition to the world economy.

Ministerial meetings discussing related themes are also held during the host year.



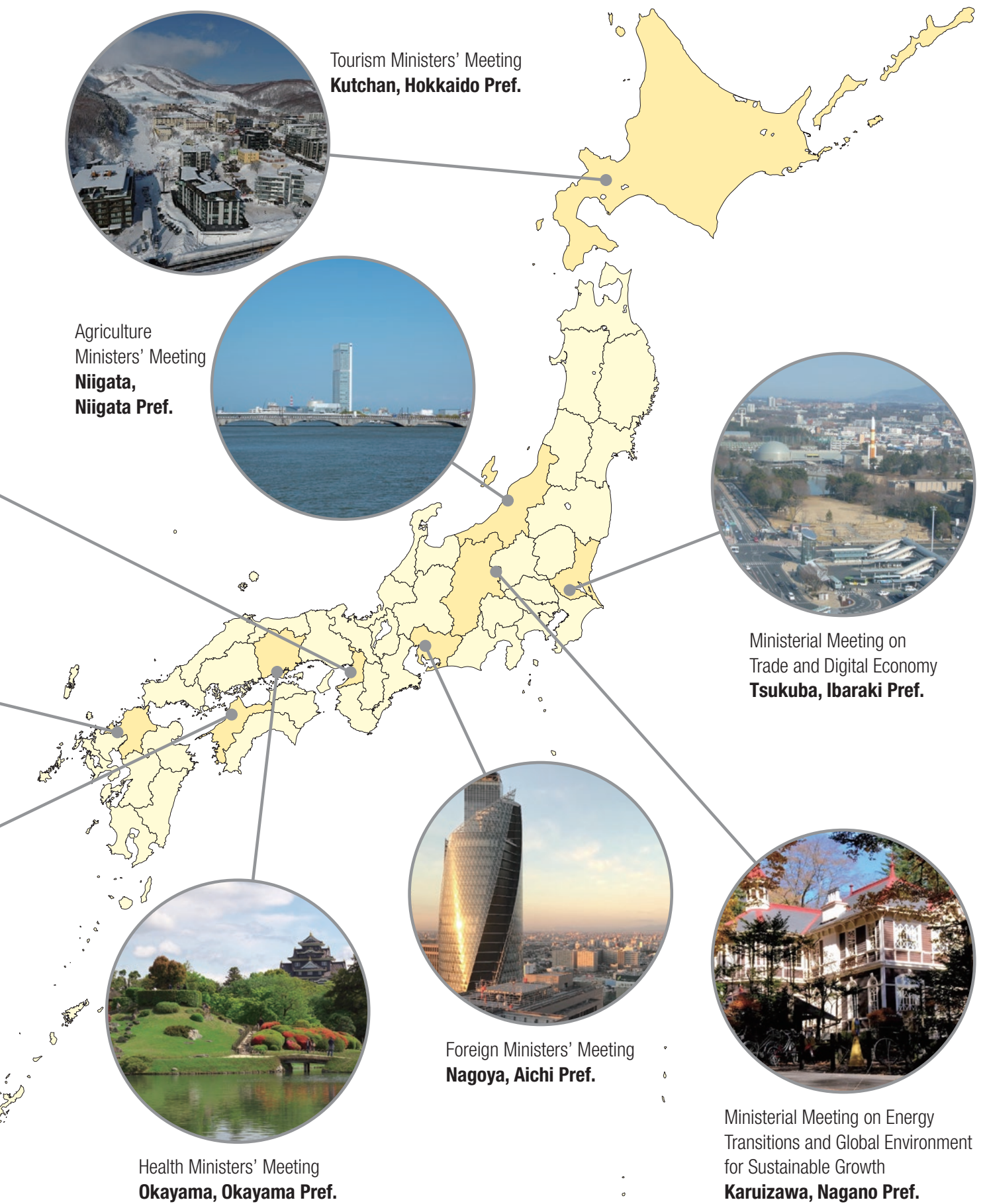
G20 Summit Meeting
Osaka, Osaka Pref.



Finance Ministers
and Central bank
Governors' Meeting
**Fukuoka,
Fukuoka Pref.**



Labour and Employment
Ministers' Meeting
Matsuyama, Ehime Pref.



Tourism Ministers' Meeting
Kutchan, Hokkaido Pref.

Agriculture
Ministers' Meeting
**Niigata,
Niigata Pref.**

Ministerial Meeting on
Trade and Digital Economy
Tsukuba, Ibaraki Pref.

Foreign Ministers' Meeting
Nagoya, Aichi Pref.

Health Ministers' Meeting
Okayama, Okayama Pref.

Ministerial Meeting on Energy
Transitions and Global Environment
for Sustainable Growth
Karuizawa, Nagano Pref.

All Nine Host Cities Represent Unique Aspects of Japan



The G20 Hamburg Summit was held from July 7 to 8, 2017 in Germany. The G20 Buenos Aires Summit will be held from November 30 to December 1, 2018 in Argentina.

The nine cities hosting the G20 Summit and its related ministerial meetings all have their own fascinating cuisine, history, and culture. The city of Osaka, location of the Summit Meeting, is one of Japan's economic powerhouses with a population of 2.72 million (Osaka Prefecture: 8.83 million) and a GDP of JPY 20 trillion (USD 187 billion) (Osaka Prefecture: JPY 39 trillion (USD 364 billion)). Meanwhile, the Tourism Ministers' Meeting will be held in Hokkaido's increasingly popular and scenic international resort town of Kutchan, with a population of 16,000. These incredibly diverse municipalities have already started thoroughly preparing for the gatherings they will host. The following article showcases the appealing qualities of each of the host cities and the expectations of their leaders.

An International City Rivaling Tokyo Summit Meeting (Osaka, Osaka Prefecture)

Osaka is a major city of commerce and has been since olden times. Today it is served by three different airports, including Kansai International Airport with round-the-clock arrivals and departures, and has become an international city bustling with over 10 million foreign visitors per year.

According to Governor of Osaka Prefecture Ichiro Matsui, "The prefecture and city have worked together to enhance Osaka's urban infrastructure, and we're able to provide an ideal environment for welcoming the visiting heads of state. They'll see that Osaka is brimming with manufacturing companies known for their can-do approach that says, 'there's nothing we can't make.'"

Alongside much of the world, Japan now faces the issue of a super-aging society, and Osaka is promoting endeavors that incorporate cutting-edge technologies to develop a society in which all people can live healthy and happy lives. Osaka is also now working to invite the World Expo 2025 to Osaka, under the banner of "Designing Future Society for Our Lives." According to Governor Matsui, "The G20 Summit is also an opportunity to raise Osaka's profile as a

candidate to host the World Expo 2025. Osaka Prefecture is working together with the city of Osaka and the business community to ensure that the G20 Summit is a definitive success."

Osaka City Mayor Hirofumi Yoshimura, too, is looking forward to the summit. "For the safety of this top-level global summit and the 30,000 people it will gather, we are taking every precaution. I want to make the G20 Summit's success an opportunity for Osaka to grow to represent Japan right alongside Tokyo."



As a candidate for hosting the World Expo 2025, Osaka continues to transform to become a truly international city.
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY



**Ichiro Matsui (right),
Governor of Osaka Prefecture**

Born in Osaka Prefecture in 1964. Served as a member of the Osaka Prefectural Assembly. Elected as Governor of Osaka Prefecture in 2011.

**Hirofumi Yoshimura (left),
Mayor of Osaka**

Born in Osaka Prefecture in 1975. Became a licensed attorney in 2000. Served as a member of the Osaka City Council and as a member of the House of Representatives. Elected as Mayor of Osaka in 2015.

Evolving into One of Japan's Preeminent International Resorts

Tourism Ministers' Meeting (Kutchan, Hokkaido Prefecture)

The town of Kutchan, located a two-and-a-half hour drive from New Chitose Airport, is one of Japan's top ski resorts. Kutchan has become internationally recognized for its high-quality powder snow and scenic landscapes, and the number of foreign tourists has risen dramatically over the past 20 years. Luxury condominiums are being built in rapid succession thanks to foreign direct investment, transforming the town into an international resort.

Kutchan Mayor Eiji Nishie explains, "In order to prevent disorderly development, we take the landscape into account in our planning, for example by restricting the height of buildings to that of local trees. This has benefitted our town's reputation overseas and attracted more foreign investment."

The town has worked hard to make life easier for non-Japanese visitors, including by providing foreign language services at its general hospital. Since tourism is a highly seasonal industry, Kutchan has also implemented measures to attract conventions during the off-season and become an all-year resort.



Eiji Nishie, Mayor of Kutchan

Born in Hokkaido in 1963. Became mayor in 2015, after serving as Kutchan's Construction Section Manager and in other positions.



Kutchan supports the development of luxury condominiums and hotels, while enforcing strict environmental standards.

"The entire town has made great efforts to become even more hospitable towards our guests, putting up additional guidance signs and enhancing Wi-Fi coverage. We'll be able to treat everyone to a stress-free stay for the upcoming G20 ministerial meeting, and we hope to make the meeting an opportunity for all participants, including ministers, to share examples of their own difficulties and successes in promoting tourism," says Mayor Nishie.

A Science City and Hub of Cutting-Edge Technology

Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Digital Economy (Tsukuba, Ibaraki Prefecture)

Ibaraki Prefecture is located in the vicinity of Tokyo, and the region boasts agriculture and manufacturing that are not only highly developed, but also highly in balance. Furthermore, the ministerial meeting's host city of Tsukuba is known as Japan's leading science city, with scores of cutting-edge technologies. Roughly 8,700 non-Japanese researchers and students representing about 140 countries live in this international city. Tsukuba enjoys easy access from Tokyo, located only about 45 minutes from the city center by train.

Ibaraki Prefecture Governor Kazuhiko Oigawa explains, "We're taking advantage of the favorable conditions in Ibaraki to pursue efforts that are ahead of other prefectures' in order to further boost our industry and cultivate future leaders." Examples of these efforts include Ibaraki's approaches to resolving social issues through the use of innovative digital technologies such as autonomous driving and robotics, and fostering human resources with the help of digital equipment.

"Through the upcoming meeting, I hope to promote



Ibaraki is devoted to the use of robotics and digital technology for educating its next generation of skilled professionals.

Ibaraki Pref.



**Kazuhiko Oigawa,
Governor of Ibaraki Prefecture**

Born in Tsuchiura, Ibaraki Prefecture in 1964. Joined the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (the present Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) in 1988. Left the Ministry in 2003 and served in positions such as Director of DWANGO Co., Ltd., before assuming the office of Governor of Ibaraki Prefecture in September 2017.

Tsukuba to the world as a cutting-edge technological hub while showcasing Ibaraki Prefecture's beautiful nature, and enable this region to show the world the way forward for global economic partnerships and digital technology utilization," says Governor Oigawa.

Pioneering Next-Generation Agriculture and Food Culture

Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (Niigata, Niigata Prefecture)

Niigata Prefecture and its city of Niigata have highly productive agriculture and fishing industries. Niigata produces more rice than any other prefecture and is home to the premium “Koshihikari” brand of rice. Niigata Mayor Akira Shinoda explains, “Even our most fertile farming regions used to be marshes with a lot of flooding, and our ancestors struggled with the water and soil to create our farmlands. In order to hand down these rich production fields to the next generation, we have a long history in Niigata of engaging in environmentally friendly, sustainable agriculture, while also working to increase profitability.”

Niigata also works hard to realize state-of-the-art agriculture with its use of large-scale plant factories and incorporation of information and communication technology. “I want our visitors at the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting to see our forward-looking agriculture, as well as our efforts to create a new food culture, for example through helping launch restaurants operated by farming families. I also hope that they will enjoy our distinctive Japanese cuisine, sake, and geisha culture.”



Niigata implements various progressive measures to boost its agricultural productivity, such as the use of driverless tractors. KUBOTA Corporation



Akira Shinoda, Mayor of Niigata

Born in the city of Niigata in 1948. Worked for a newspaper company. Elected as Mayor of Niigata in 2002.

The city of Niigata is easily accessible from Tokyo in as little as 100 minutes by the Shinkansen bullet train. When Japan ended its isolation from other countries in the Meiji period, Niigata Port was one of the five ports designated to be open to international trade. “Hosting the G20 in 2019 will coincide with the 150th anniversary of opening our port. I would like us to think of this as a ‘second opening of the port’ and use the chance to promote our status as an international hub city.”

A Community in Harmony with Nature, Striving for Energy Self Sufficiency

Ministerial Meeting on Energy Transitions and Global Environment for Sustainable Growth (Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture)

The town of Karuizawa is located on a plateau surrounded by a beautiful natural environment, just over an hour from Tokyo by Shinkansen bullet train. It welcomes some 8.5 million visitors annually as one of Japan's preeminent resort areas. In 1886, Canadian missionary Alexander Croft Shaw praised the town as “a hospital without a roof,” and since then it has developed into a place to find respite from the heat and an international setting for health and recreation. Under the slogan “Karuizawa Smart Community,” there are ongoing efforts to reduce environmental impact by equipping public facilities with renewable energy systems, and providing subsidies for the installation of residential solar power generation systems and the purchase of electric vehicles. Karuizawa Mayor Susumu Fujimaki explains, “Through these measures we hope to promote energy conservation and local production for local consumption in the area of energy. Our goal is a community grounded in coexistence with nature.” The mayor adds, “We're hoping that future generations will be told of this meeting as a big turning point regarding the

world's environmental issues, and we want to create the best possible environment for a productive discussion, while telling our visitors about our town's efforts.”



To preserve its uniquely beautiful nature, Karuizawa adopts policies such as subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles.



Susumu Fujimaki, Mayor of Karuizawa

Born in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture in 1951. Served as a member of Karuizawa's town assembly from 1995 to 2007. Became mayor in February 2011.

“The Heart of Japan—Technology and Tradition”

Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture)

Aichi Prefecture is one of the world’s leading industrial regions, especially for fields like automobiles, being home to Toyota Motor Corporation, as well as aerospace manufacturing and robotics. “We hope that the dignitaries visiting us to attend the meeting will experience our industrial strengths and cutting-edge technological capabilities first-hand,” says Hideaki Ohmura, Governor of Aichi.

Aichi’s slogan is “The Heart of Japan—Technology and Tradition.” “This region produced many of the samurai leaders who laid the foundation of early modern Japan, and it is also an area that contributed greatly to the evolution of tea ceremony culture,” explains Governor Ohmura. “We hope that our visitors will not only see our leading technology, but also develop awareness of our traditional Japanese culture and touch upon the true heart of Japan.”

Aichi Prefecture has successfully hosted various international events and meetings, including the 2005 World Exposition. Governor Ohmura explains his fellow citizens’ hopes for the coming meeting: “Our local

Aichi, home to Toyota Motor Corporation, has become one of Japan’s biggest industrial centers with its cutting-edge technology and a highly-skilled workforce.



**Hideaki Ohmura,
Governor of Aichi Prefecture**

Born in Aichi Prefecture in 1960. First elected as a member of the House of Representatives in 1996. Served as Parliamentary Vice-Minister for the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, and as Parliamentary Vice-Minister for the Cabinet Office. Assumed the office of Governor of Aichi Prefecture in 2011.

communities are going to provide heartfelt *omotenashi* hospitality to all our guests as a concerted regional undertaking. Peace and friendship are essential to global development, and we hope to make this an international gathering that will enable the world’s leading nations to cooperate for the future of humanity.”

Developing as a City Where Everyone Can Live Long and Healthy Lives

Health Ministers’ Meeting (Okayama, Okayama Prefecture)

The city of Okayama, a pleasantly warm region that’s served since long ago as an important hub for domestic transportation, is gaining recognition for its efforts toward sustainable urban development. In 2014 the city hosted the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and has received high praise internationally as a city taking the lead in ESD. Okayama is also known as a city advanced in medical treatment and health due to its plentiful medical resources. It boasts some of the highest rankings in the country for the number of doctors per capita, quality of medical installations, and quality of doctors. Mayor Masao Omori says, “Health is a foundation for building a sustainable city. We are working to create a city environment where it’s easy for everyone to have long and healthy lives and continue living in a place they are accustomed to, even if they need to undergo medical or nursing care.”

Mayor Omori continues, “Through the Health Ministers’ Meeting, we hope to convey Okayama’s

Okayama leverages its abundant medical resources for community development that enables everyone to live long and healthy lives.



Masao Omori, Mayor of Okayama

Born in Okayama, Okayama Prefecture in 1954. Served as Director General for Disaster Management of the Cabinet Office and as Director-General of the National Spatial Planning and Regional Policy Bureau of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. Became Mayor of Okayama in October 2013.

approach to health and medical care as an issue of critical importance, while also sending the message that medical care should be provided under the philosophy of universal health coverage, meaning that everyone should have access to affordable health care services in times of need.”

Making Life and Work Easier

Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting (Matsuyama, Ehime Prefecture)

The city of Matsuyama, the capital of Ehime Prefecture and the largest city on the island of Shikoku, boasts a great variety of attractions. Among them are Dogo Onsen, which is said to be the oldest hot spring in Japan and whose main building is designated as one of the nation's important cultural assets, and the 400-year-old Matsuyama Castle in the city's center, which is one of the only 12 remaining original castles in Japan. The neighboring Setouchi Shimanami Kaido Expressway also provides a world renowned cycling course. This warm-temperature city facing the Seto Inland Sea is making full-scale efforts to create an environment that is not only pleasant to live in, but also to work in.

Matsuyama is providing training and job-seeking support to women raising small children, single parents, and others, as well as creating opportunities for these workers to work from home. This is helping the development of diverse human resources, which contributes to resolving labor shortages among small and medium enterprises.

Matsuyama Mayor Katsuhito Noshi explains, "From

Matsuyama strives to create a society that provides supportive work environments for everyone.



Katsuhito Noshi, Mayor of Matsuyama

Born in Matsuyama, Ehime Prefecture in 1967. Led a popular local informational program as a television anchor. Assumed the office of Mayor of Matsuyama in 2010.

fiscal 2018, Matsuyama has been making full-scale efforts to be a leading city in realizing work style reform. It is pressing forward with raising work efficiency through the introduction of IT equipment, while promoting the creation of a wide range of work styles and schedules tailored to each citizen's particular lifestyle. This makes a work environment in which it is easy to continue working long-term." Mayor Noshi describes the city's aspirations by saying, "Through this ministerial meeting, Matsuyama looks forward to starting a new page toward resolving labor and employment issues around the world."

A Leading Japanese City for Startups

Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting (Fukuoka, Fukuoka Prefecture)

The city of Fukuoka, with a population of 1.57 million, is the municipality with the largest economy in the Kyushu region. In addition to enjoying an economic boom, the city has also been designated a National Strategic Special Zone for Global Startups and Job Creation by the national government.

"In the special zone, the government provides corporate tax cuts and relaxed visa requirements for startup entrepreneurs," explains Fukuoka Mayor Soichiro Takashima. "Together with support from Fukuoka's startup accelerator Fukuoka Growth Next, the largest accelerator in Japan, the city has attracted outstanding human resources from both around Japan and overseas, and is the origin of many unique enterprises. You could say that Fukuoka is Japan's most startup-friendly city." Experiments for use of drones and hydrogen energy are conducted within the city, and implementations of technologies like artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things are also making headway.

Fukuoka's airport, harbor, and main station are concentrated in a 2.5 km (1.6 mi.) radius, creating a



Fukuoka boasts one of Japan's largest startup accelerators, Fukuoka Growth Next.



Soichiro Takashima, Mayor of Fukuoka

Born in Oita Prefecture in 1974. Worked as a television anchor. Elected Mayor of Fukuoka in 2010 at the age of 36.

compact urban structure. The city is also surrounded by a rich natural environment of ocean and mountains, and its urban vitality exists in harmony with this environment.

"In the financial sector as well, the waves of innovation are surging and the world is keeping a close watch on future developments, lending great significance to Fukuoka's hosting of the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting. My fellow citizens and I are determined to make this meeting a success," says Mayor Takashima.

TICAD7 to Be Held in 2019 in Yokohama, Japan's "Closest City to Africa"



Elementary school students in Yokohama City learn about Malawian food as part of the "One School, One Country" project.

Yokohama has been selected as the host city for the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development ("TICAD7"), to be held in Japan in 2019. TICAD is an international conference on the topic of Africa's development, led by the government of Japan, in cooperation with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the African Union Commission. Participants include leaders from African nations and representatives of international organizations.

It will be the third time for Yokohama to host TICAD. The city has used previous opportunities to host the conference in 2008 and 2013 to build stronger relationships of cooperation and exchange with African countries. Yokohama has been working with African countries to find solutions to problems, particularly those related to water supply, harbor logistics, and waste management, by sharing the experience and expertise it has gained in the process of overcoming its own urbanization problems such as insufficient infrastructure and environmental damage resulting from rapid population growth.

With regards to promoting the empowerment of women, Yokohama Mayor Fumiko Hayashi explains, "I proposed at TICAD V in 2013 to work on supporting career advancement for women and establishing business networks in cooperation with the Japan

International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Since then, an exchange program for African and Yokohama businesswomen has taken root, with African businesswomen visiting the city each year to interact with female entrepreneurs."

To promote international understanding, officials from African embassies are invited to elementary and middle schools in the city as part of the "One School, One Country" project with Africa, where they provide deeper understanding of Africa through introducing their countries and interacting with students. The city has also been supporting expansion of local companies into African markets by offering them business seminars and helping them accept African youth as interns through programs like the African Business Education Initiative for Youth (ABE Initiative).

Mayor Hayashi is eager for Yokohama to contribute to the TICAD, saying, "As Japan's 'Closest City to Africa,' I sincerely hope that we will be able to further strengthen our bonds with African nations through exchanges and projects. We will put our full effort into supporting the hosting of TICAD7 to help ensure that it is a success."



Fumiko Hayashi,
Mayor of Yokohama

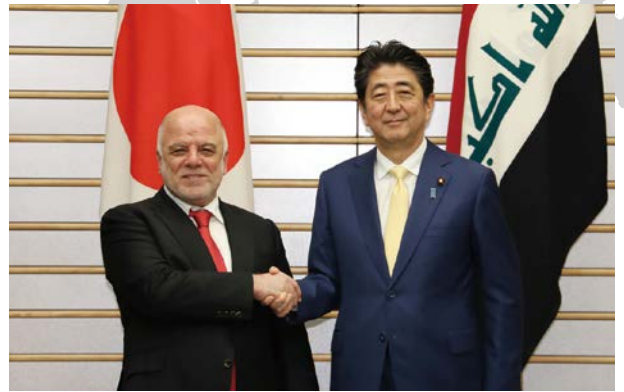
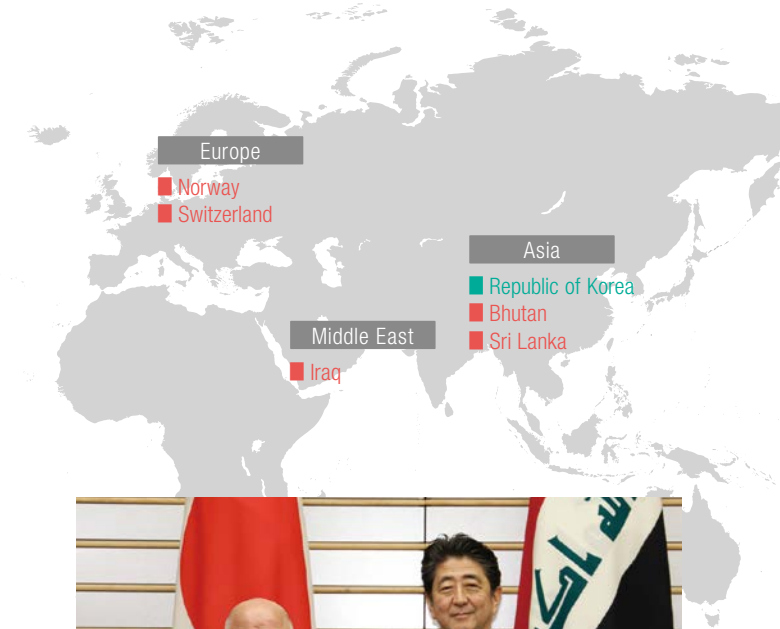
Born in Tokyo in 1946. Served as President of BMW Tokyo Corp. and Chairperson of The Dai-ichi, Inc. Became Mayor of Yokohama City in 2009.

Prime Minister in Action

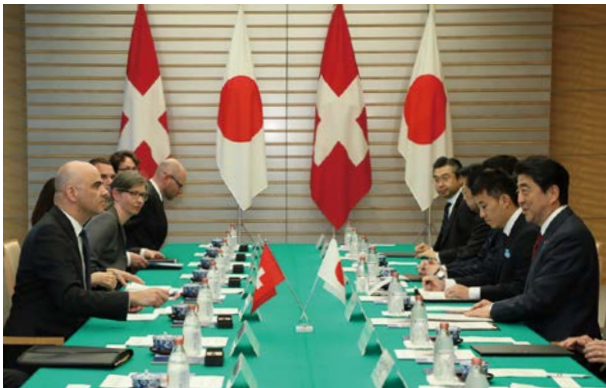
Prime Minister Shinzo Abe continues to advance his “Diplomacy That Takes a Panoramic Perspective of the World Map.” In addition to visiting the Republic of Korea for the Olympic Winter Games in February 2018 and the United States of America in April 2018, he met with many heads of state visiting Japan.



With H.E. Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, at the Japanese Prime Minister's Office. (February 2018)



With H.E. Dr. Haider Al-Abadi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, at the Japanese Prime Minister's Office. Earlier, both leaders attended the Senior Officials Meeting on Supporting Job Creation and Vocational Training to Facilitate Weapons Reduction for Iraqi Society. (April 2018)



With H.E. Mr. Alain Berset, President and Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs of the Swiss Confederation, at the Japanese Prime Minister's Office. (April 2018)



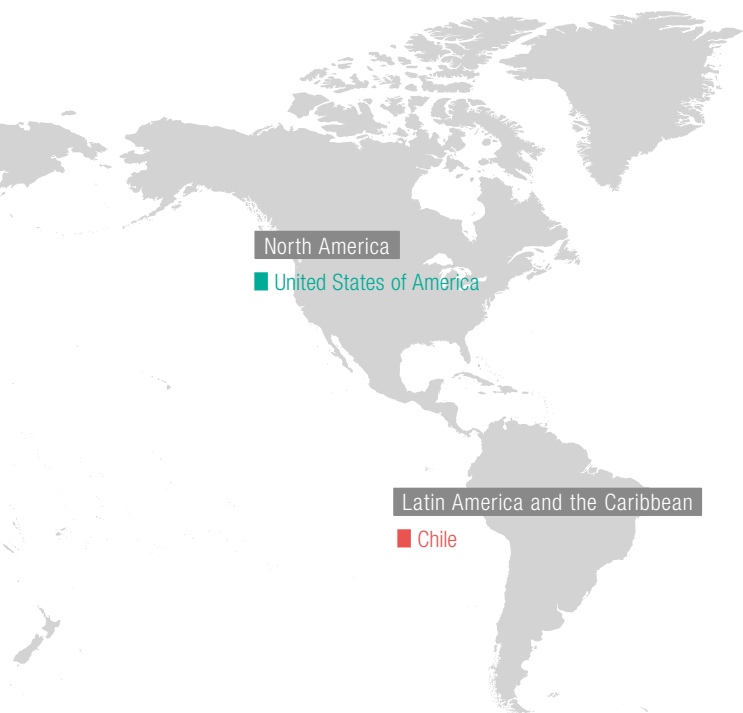
With H.E. Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, at the Japanese Prime Minister's Office. (March 2018)

Countries and Regions

■ Visited by the Prime Minister

■ Whose leader met the Prime Minister in Japan

(Only represents activities featured in the photos of this article)



With the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President of the United States of America, in Palm Beach, Florida. Prime Minister Abe held three summit meetings with President Trump, where the two leaders discussed topics such as the actions to be taken on the issue of North Korea, realizing economic development in the Indo-Pacific region, and further promoting Japan-U.S. security cooperation. (April 2018)



With H.E. DASHO Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, at the Japanese Prime Minister's Office. (April 2018)



Visited Yongpyong and PyeongChang in the Republic of Korea to attend the Opening Ceremony for the 23rd Olympic Winter Games, and met with H.E. Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea. (February 2018)



With H.E. Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, former President of the Republic of Chile, at the Japanese Prime Minister's Office. (March 2018)

Global Economic Uncertainty and Japan's Leadership in the Asia Pacific

Japan has found itself assuming new and unusual leadership responsibilities in the Asia Pacific as it deals with the rise of protectionism in the United States and parts of Europe. Japan has led the way in holding the line on the global economic rules-based order, through pressing conclusion of the Asia Pacific's first mega-regional trade agreement in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and initiating the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement.

The leadership vacuum in the global economic system

The current U.S. administration's America First agenda is a dramatic departure from the U.S. leadership of a multilateral order that has been the norm for over 70 years. That order defines the rules of trade and economic exchange between countries that have signed on to it through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international institutions and underpinned the growth in Asian economic relations and prosperity.

Economic relations between Japan and China have prospered hugely despite the ups and downs of their political relations because of both countries' adherence to the rules of the WTO. Economic relations would unravel all over Asia if confidence in the WTO-led, rules-based order was undermined. Trade disputes, like that between Japan and China over rare earth metals in 2012, are settled peacefully in the WTO without resort to retaliation, escalation or force.

Protectionist measures may not have large, immediate economic effects but they pose a bigger and long-term threat to the entire global rules based system. Managed trade that includes measures such as voluntary export restraints will have negative effects on other countries, putting pressure on other markets to close up or 'protect' themselves. Asia cannot afford to see beggar-thy-neighbor policies and contagious protectionism. That is one challenge the free trade system faces. Another that is equally important is to expand the coverage of the agreed upon rules of economic exchange that are more relevant to business in the 21st century and to strengthen cooperation at the multilateral level.



Dr. Shiro Armstrong

Armstrong is a Director of the Australia-Japan Research Centre and the Asian Bureau of Economic Research at the Crawford School of Public Policy at The Australian National University, and an Editor of the *East Asia Forum*. He is also a Research Associate at the Center on Japanese Economy and Business at Columbia University.

The Asian region and the global economy have relied on American leadership but now it is necessary for Asia to step up and assume a larger leadership role on the global stage, commensurate with its economic weight and interests. Japan has positioned to take a more active leadership role but no one country in Asia can do this alone. Collective leadership will be required from those that have a large stake in the global trade regime. Asian leadership will require coordination and strategic action that doubles down on the rules-based global system. Japan is key, and other open economies such as Australia and Canada will be important. China, though it may seem unlikely, will be a critical partner.

Japanese leadership in a time of uncertainty

Prime Minister Abe effectively built a productive

relationship with the current U.S. administration while holding the line on core national and global economic interests. His strategy has included laying the groundwork for improved relations with China.

Japan is leading the defence of the rules-based order and has so far managed the threat better than any other country. Japan has developed a strategic, pragmatic and principled approach to the problems that it and the world both now confront.

Japanese economic diplomacy has been re-imagined from one that largely sought expansion of markets and investment in Southeast Asia to a more strategic approach that aligns more closely with domestic reform and international priorities. The Japan-Australia Economic Partnership agreement and the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement are important agreements that help reform the Japanese economy and achieve diplomatic goals as well.

The TPP was seen as an agreement that would use U.S. leverage to open up protected sectors in Japan consistent with domestic reform priorities. U.S. withdrawal from the TPP was a shock, but then Japan—now the Partnership's largest economy—led the conclusion of the TPP-11 or rebranded Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Australia was important, but conclusion of the TPP-11 would not have happened without Japan's leadership.

TPP-11 does not deliver the big strategic goal of keeping the United States entrenched in Asia or providing a weighty defence of the global trading system. But TPP-11 does send the world a message on the region's commitment to rules-based openness. That could add momentum for broader liberalisation in Asia by facilitating expansion of membership and by lifting the ambition in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), an agreement being negotiated by the 10 ASEAN members as well as Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.

Australia and Japan are leading the way in opening markets, expanding rules and strengthening regional economic architecture. TPP-11 and RCEP are only two of the vehicles for lifting living standards for their members.

Japan is now stepping up to leadership in RCEP by hosting the first ministerial meeting outside of ASEAN in mid-2018. The grouping has real strategic significance given that it includes the large emerging market economies. Forging a core agreement in 2018 that locks in credible reforms in China, Indonesia, and India, and that helps Japan's domestic reform agenda, will provide a major boost to the global economy. That will require strong leadership and political will.

Japan's biggest play is still to come. Prime Minister Abe's pragmatism saw him break the ice in relations with China in 2006 and he has laid the groundwork for once again improving relations with Japan's most important economic partner. Mr. Abe has suggested that there could be room for cooperation on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and China's Belt and Road Initiative for Japan so long as the right conditions are met. The China-Japan-Korea trilateral has continued its work, despite the difficult relations in Northeast Asia, and was the arena for Premier Li Keqiang visiting Tokyo. Bilateral state visits look set to follow.

A breakthrough in the Japan-China relationship is overdue. It will boost Asian cooperation at a time when Asia must assume an important leadership role in global affairs.



Revolutionizing Single-Item Manufacturing



Processing machines with HILLTOP's trademark pink color scheme are arranged in neat lines inside a factory. Most operations are automated and require little human intervention.

Typically, when we think of automated machine tools, we imagine the mass production of identical products, but HILLTOP Corporation, a metalworking company in Kyoto, runs a profitable, groundbreaking system to fulfill precision machining orders for small and single-item lots, such as aluminum prototypes and one-time production items. Their work is precise and relatively low-cost, yet HILLTOP can deliver products in as little as five days after a new order comes in.

What makes this possible is the HILLTOP System, the company's proprietary production control system. The system digitalizes tasks workers had traditionally performed manually. A programmer enters commands and the system automatically implements them with the machinery. HILLTOP Executive Vice President Shosaku Yamamoto, who has been ahead of the times in his pursuit of completely mechanized manufacturing processes, created this masterpiece.

"My dad ran a small steel workshop machining auto parts," says Yamamoto, reflecting on his past. "Workers were stuck in front of machines like in the Charlie Chaplin movie *Modern Times*. The workshop made a lot of parts. Every day, the same items were made in the same way." Yamamoto inherited the factory from his father, but he believed that "human beings should use their brains to their full potential and engage in creative work." That idea was the starting point for the HILLTOP System for manufacturing a wide variety of products in small quantities or as single units. "Employee motivation is more important than the outward appearance of efficiency. Even if we streamline with mass production and hold down costs, in the end, it won't inspire the workers. We're better off computerizing simple tasks and leaving them to machines." Yamamoto, who 35 years ago reached conclusions that would find expression in today's AI, IoT and 3-D printers, set to work on digitalizing his workers' skills and knowledge. Although



Among the engineers working in the equipment development division's lab are French graduates of prestigious *grandes écoles*.

there were major setbacks along the way, Yamamoto eventually made changes to put the business on track for better efficiency. Digitalization and automation turned most of the employees into programmers. Now, it takes only a few operators to run the machines.

Visit the head office and you'll find rows of state-of-the-art processing machinery in the first-floor factory. However, employees are hardly anywhere to be seen. But go up to the second floor and the scene changes dramatically. Casually dressed workers sit at their computers in a spacious office decorated primarily in pink hues. The office feels like an IT venture firm, rather than a metalworking factory.

"Nothing makes me happier than the fact that we have created an environment where people are more motivated and can learn new things," Yamamoto continues. "Freed from simple routine tasks, workers can creatively seek out optimal processing sequences and consider ways of applying technology."

HILLTOP has become a magnet for talented engineers from Japan and abroad. The company has formed a new Research and Development Division and is devoting energy to growing a business that provides support to manufacturing firms. HILLTOP set up shop in California when it opened a factory there in 2014. The response has been tremendous, and now the company has over 600 corporate clients, among them The Walt Disney Company. Yamamoto says with enthusiasm, "I want to handle even more of the high-mix, low-volume production that's in demand now, help develop manufacturing around the world and contribute to innovation."



Prototypes cut from aluminum. Digitalizing fabrication processes allows HILLTOP to quickly adjust to customer requests and remake items.



President and CEO Masanori Yamamoto (center) and his two younger brothers—Executive Vice President Shosaku Yamamoto (left), who participated in the interview, and Senior Managing Director Shoji Yamamoto (right)—worked together to create the HILLTOP System.

**This
is
Japan**

Discover Fukushima's Hamadori

Experience Japanese Charm in the Tohoku Region

Japan's Tohoku region is known for its scenic beauty. Although the region suffered an enormous amount of damage from the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, it is now vigorously carrying out reconstruction. The coastal area in the east of Fukushima Prefecture in Tohoku is called "Hamadori," which means "the road along the coast." A highway has run along this coast since olden times from which people can enjoy the beautiful shoreline stretching 160 km (100 mi.). In this area, which has a rich history, a large number of traditions and cultural practices have been handed down, enabling visitors to connect with the Japan of ancient times.

Events

The Soma Nomaai festival, which takes place July 23 through 25, has its origins in the tenth century, when samurai Taira no Masakado caught wild horses and made offerings of them to the gods. With a history stretching over a thousand years, the festival has been designated a national important intangible folk culture asset. Scenes reminiscent of warring states unfold one after another, beginning with a ceremony held at the ruins of Soma Nakamura Castle before the supreme commander heads off to battle, followed by some 500 armor-clad samurai horsemen participating in cavalcades on horseback, horse racing with armored horsemen, and battles in which horsemen scramble to capture flags.

Resorts

Spa Resort Hawaiians, which hosted the 8th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM8) in May 2018, is a large theme park complex made up of five theme parks as well as hotels and golf courses. Amid a tropical mood evoking Hawaii, visitors can enjoy a water park featuring pools and water slides that use hot spring water, the world's largest outdoor bath, with a bathing area of 1,000 m² (10,750 sq. ft.), and various amusements such as Polynesian shows.

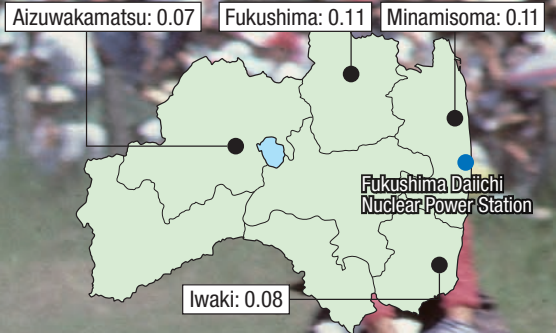
Aquarium

In the sea off the coast of Hamadori is a junction line between two ocean currents: a cold current flowing from the northern part of the Pacific Ocean and a warm current flowing up from the south. Aquamarine Fukushima (the Fukushima Marine Science Museum) is an aquarium taking as its theme the junction line between two currents. Its large water tank, called the "sea where two currents meet," allows visitors to observe schools of fish from up close through a tunnel, creating a powerful impression as the workings of the sea unfold before their eyes. In addition, this is an experience-oriented aquarium, offering behind-the-scenes tours, fishing, and other events daily.



Radiation doses (as of January 2018)

City	Dose rate ($\mu\text{Sv/h}$)
Fukushima	see the map below
Tokyo	0.037
New York	0.046
London	0.108
Berlin	0.073
Hong Kong	0.080-0.150
Seoul	0.117



Thanks to the tireless efforts to recover from the accident at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake, radiation doses in Fukushima Prefecture are now at roughly the same level as major cities such as Tokyo, New York, and London.

Source: Japan National Tourism Organization

Fruits

Fukushima Prefecture is blessed with a good climate and rich soil, enabling mouth-watering fruit to be produced in each of the four seasons. For that reason, Fukushima is known as the "kingdom of fruit." While the Hamadori area also grows figs, kiwis, and other fruit, it is best known for its Japanese pears. From late August into late September, visitors can enjoy a wide variety of Japanese pears virtually bursting with their natural juices. Visitors can pick their own Japanese pears at some orchards, enabling them to enjoy the tastes of the Hamadori region to the full as they pick pears with their own hands.



Hundreds of Host Towns Ready for Big Sports Events

Rugby World Cup in 2019 and Olympic/Paralympic Games in 2020



Scott Fardy talked to 60 sixth-grade students about the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake at an elementary school in Kamaishi City and enjoyed playing tag rugby (a version of rugby for beginners) with them.

The Host Town Initiative is a project which the Government of Japan has been promoting to local governments across the country in preparation for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is a unique project, aimed at creating opportunities for sports-based exchanges between local residents and people from around the world, by taking advantage of the Games not only in Tokyo, but also across Japan.

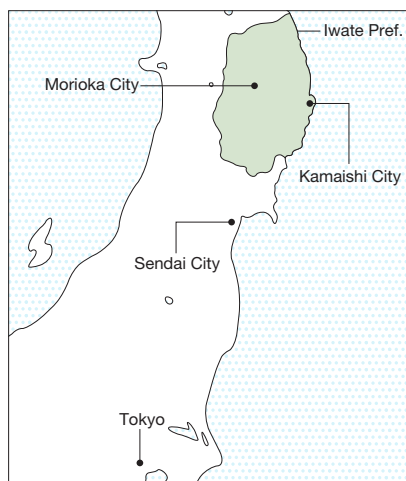
As of April 2018, a total of 298 local governments in all prefectures of Japan, from Hokkaido to Okinawa, have been registered as host towns, while the number of partner countries and regions has reached 95. These host towns have been implementing their own exchange programs; for example, getting local universities to host training camps

for sports teams from overseas, and providing Japanese cultural experiences to promote exchanges between Japanese students and participants from other countries.

Additionally, 15 local governments in the three prefectures most severely affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake (Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima) have been specially registered as “Arigato” (“Thank You”) Host Towns for Supporting Reconstruction, which are promoting exchanges with residents while showing how they have recovered to countries that have supported them. Kamaishi City, situated in coastal Iwate, is one such town, with Australia as its partner country. Having been selected as a host of Rugby World Cup 2019, the city has been promoting international exchanges through rugby in the



Mayor Takenori Noda of Kamaishi City says, "Kamaishi, which was devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake, has received a great deal of support from abroad. We wish to show how we have recovered, and express our gratitude, to many people from around the world through the 'Arigato' Host Town activities."



initiative. Since Kamaishi City is the long-standing home of the rugby team Kamaishi Seawaves RFC, the city has rugby in its genes.

Scott Fardy, a former member of Australia's national rugby team, was in Kamaishi City when the Great East Japan Earthquake struck on March 11, 2011. The city was hit by a tsunami on that day, and Fardy, who played for the rugby team in the city at that time, suffered from the disaster. Although Australian Embassy officials advised that he return home, he declined and helped in the aftermath for six months as a volunteer worker. Fardy says, "I decided to stay because I had Japanese teammates and friends and wanted to help the city that had supported me." Thanks to Fardy and many other people who have offered support, including those from outside Japan, Kamaishi City is now well on its way to recovery.

In March 2018, Kamaishi City invited Fardy to the city as part of its "Arigato" Host Town activities and implemented exchange programs, such as a friendship tag rugby event with local elementary students and a welcome reception by Kamaishi citizens. He enjoyed exchanging with local residents of different generations, from elementary school

children to adults, and said, "I hope rugby will continue helping maintain exchanges between Australia and Kamaishi."

Mayor Takenori Noda of Kamaishi City, who invited Fardy this time, says, "The Host Town Initiative inspires children to have dreams for their future through exchanges with people from other countries. At the same time, sports-based international exchanges can also revitalize regional communities, including disaster-stricken areas. We are hoping that we can continue to exchange with people worldwide after the Olympic and Paralympic Games."

Now that Japan has been selected to host the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, it is feeling a nationwide enthusiasm for sports, while networks of international exchanges are expanding across Japan. The initiative is certain to help bridge between people all over Japan and the world toward and beyond 2020.



Fardy described his impression of the city, saying, "Kamaishi City has delicious food and many other good things. This is a really beautiful, quiet place. People living here are very strong and kind, just as they were when they were hit by the earthquake."



Kamaishi City has received a wide range of overseas support for rapid reconstruction since the earthquake in 2011. Among such partnership projects was the visit to the city by a group of renowned New York chefs led by Daniel Boulud ("NY Cooks for Tohoku"), who went to Kamaishi in July 2011 to serve a meal to evacuees, as well as to demonstrate the safety of Japan and Japanese food to the world.

Peace of Mind for Muslims Dining in Japan



Rexy Diane Rizkililah (right) and Nadya Oktairiani Fabanyo (left) enjoy their lunch at “Shokujin” Cafeteria in Kanda University of International Studies.



At SAKURA, a Japanese restaurant in Hilton Tokyo Odaiba, halal meals certified by Nippon Asia Halal Association have been served since 2015.

Increasing numbers of Muslims are visiting Japan, partly in response to Japanese government policies for inbound travelers such as visa exemptions from 2013 for ASEAN countries. One of the top concerns for Muslims traveling to non-Muslim countries is food. The rules of Islam require that Muslims consume permissible “halal” food and drinks. Consumption of pork, alcoholic beverages, and living things containing toxins is forbidden. Also, animals consumed as meat must be slaughtered and processed in accordance with Islamic law.

NPO Nippon Asia Halal Association (NAHA) is one of the halal certification organizations in Japan. When a company or restaurant applies for certification, NAHA auditors visit their kitchen to ensure that the ingredients and equipment used meet halal standards. Muslim



Three Muslim employees work at CoCo Ichibanya Halal Akihabara, where more than 80% of the customers are foreigners.



Halal Certification Mark issued by Nippon Asia Halal Association

travelers can then dine at the certified restaurants or buy the halal-approved foodstuffs with peace of mind. Although in 2013, only four Japanese companies received halal certification, this number has grown rapidly to 180 companies including high-end restaurants serving authentic Japanese cuisine. NAHA chair Dr. Saeed Akhtar, overseeing the certification process, commends Japanese as “sincere and thorough in complying with halal rules.”

Akhtar notes, “Media in Islamic countries often spotlight Japan’s efforts to promote halal. Japan, already a destination of choice for many Muslims, will continue to grow in popularity as its number of halal-friendly restaurants increases.”

In September 2017, Curry House CoCo Ichibanya opened Halal Akihabara, the first NAHA-certified curry restaurant in the popular chain. Many travelers from overseas are now finding their way to Halal Akihabara for a variety of food items that include the popular chicken cutlet curry. Ichibanya’s public relations department explained that “as people of different religions and cultures visit Japan, we wanted to develop a restaurant where Muslims could enjoy meals free from concerns about the food. Although we had some difficulty procuring the chicken and toppings, we believe our experience with this shop will help us expand our business globally in the future.”

Educational organizations that accept international students are also taking steps to meet the culinary needs of Muslims. Kanda University of International Studies opened its NAHA-certified “Shokujin” Cafeteria in 2014 to give students the opportunity to better understand



On-site inspection for Halal certification.

Asian languages and cultures through food. In applying for certification, the university impressed on the entire kitchen staff the necessity and value of strictly following Islamic halal laws. The cafeteria has proven a success and gained the trust of the Muslim community. When it served the *iftar* evening meal during the month of Ramadan, nearly 100 people including Muslims living in the neighborhood came to eat and celebrate. Remy, an international student from Indonesia, remarked with a thankful smile that she finds it “very helpful to be able to have halal meals at the university. I can spend more time studying instead of having to spend that time cooking for myself. I appreciate their consideration for Muslims and the careful efforts they make to serve us.”

Japan’s steadily growing consciousness of halal makes it easier for Muslims to fully enjoy the delicious foods Japan has to offer.



Dr. Saeed Akhtar

Akhtar is Chair of NPO Nippon Asia Halal Association, which he established in 2011. He graduated from the University of Agriculture, Rawalpindi (BA) in 1991 and the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (MSc). He received his PhD in 1999 from the Graduate School of Agricultural and Life Sciences, The University of Tokyo.



Yasmine Djoudi and Thomas Pouplin

After graduating from Kedge Business School in Bordeaux, France, Djoudi and Pouplin co-founded ikkai in Fukuoka. They like traveling, going to the movies, and discovering restaurants.

Yasmine Djoudi (left) and Thomas Pouplin (right) at a startup hub located in a former public school.

Series: Friends of Japan

Fukuoka City Fostering Innovation with the Startup Visa Program

How did two French business graduates end up bringing much-needed disruption to Japan's graduate recruitment sector? What lured them from New York to a coastal town in the west of Japan? At a startup hub located in a former public school, Thomas Pouplin and Yasmine Djoudi sit poised to explain it all: how Fukuoka City is helping them to help brighten the career prospects of Japan's graduates, how they are capturing the imagination of blue-chip companies and how they think Fukuoka beats Tokyo hands-down for fledgling startups and livability.

"It all started when we were MBA students at Kedge Business School in Bordeaux," says Pouplin. "As part of one of our exchange programs, we came to study at Fukuoka's Seinan Gakuin University. We didn't know anything about Fukuoka. To be honest, we really wanted to study in

Tokyo," says Pouplin. But the pair soon warmed to the city. "Tokyo is a great place to visit, but Fukuoka is the best place to live. People are very warm and friendly. We take a run through the park and finish on the beach. You can't really do that in Tokyo," he says. "There's excellent *tonkotsu* ramen for just 280 yen (USD 2.62), and naturally the seafood is amazing too!" adds Djoudi.

To help fund their studies, the two looked for part time work in the city. "Finding a job was a pain. We had to post want ads on a noticeboard, and then wait," says Pouplin. This inconvenience was part of their inspiration for "ikkai," a website to provide Japan's students with a hassle-free way to connect with those who need help with tasks ranging from graphic design and translation to dog-walking and handing out flyers.



The ikkai co-founders being interviewed. The pair have gained media attention both domestically and internationally.



Pouplin making a presentation at an event called "Sharing City Fukuoka 2016," where he talked about the rewards of finding growth through sharing.

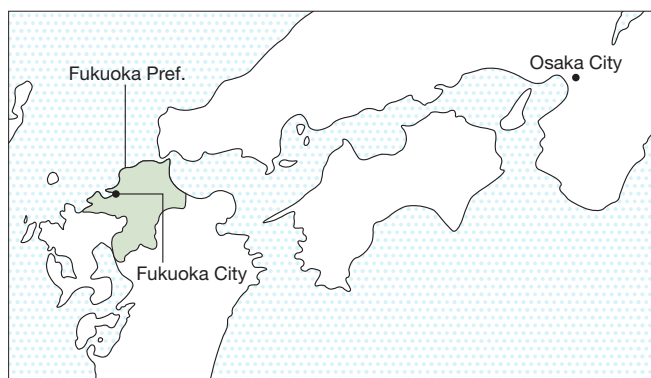


The team at work in ikkai's office. Fukuoka's affordable rent helped them to find a central location and the subsidy program helped to further lower their costs.

"We started working on this project in New York, while preparing to return to Japan. We chose Japan because at that time the startup scene was relatively underdeveloped, and we had Fukuoka in mind because we enjoyed our student days there so much," says Pouplin. Also, there are a large number of universities in or near Fukuoka City, so this warm coastal city was perfect for them.

Their relocation was further hastened by being the first ever recipients of the new startup visa, which at the time was only offered in Fukuoka. "A mentor of ours in Tokyo had a contact who worked for Fukuoka City Council," explains Djoudi. "She arranged for us to pitch to her colleagues. Their response was, 'We have a new startup visa program. It would be perfect for your business plan. Would you like to be the first recipients?' So of course, we said yes!" Fukuoka City's startup visas include generous rent subsidies and free legal advice in English, which helped a lot during ikkai's early stages. "The know-how and kindness of the staff really helped us accelerate our growth and jump through the right hoops," says Pouplin.

Ikkai now has over 5,000 students and more than 200 client accounts. When Pouplin and Djoudi approached university staff in order to connect with students, ikkai was mainly a platform for recruiting people to complete one-off tasks, so they found it hard to convince university staff of the site's value proposition. But after adding internship programs and vacancies suitable for graduates to the services offered by their platform, they soon won over university faculties, thus further accelerating their expansion.



Ikkai's next mission was staff retention, specifically the retention of graduates hired straight from university by large companies. Around 30% of these graduates leave their first job within three years, which is very costly to both employers and employees alike. Djoudi and Pouplin decided this was a challenge they'd like to take on. To help fix this high rate of staff turnover, ikkai aims to help graduates find jobs that better match their characters by leveraging the data accumulated while matching students with one-off tasks, part-time jobs and internships.

With ikkai now progressing smoothly, Djoudi and Pouplin have branched out by co-founding another company, Spear Consulting. "The startup visa is fantastic. Over 30 people have received one in Fukuoka City in the last two years. We want to help more foreign startups to settle more smoothly and enjoy living in this amazing city as much as we do," explains Pouplin.

About Japan's Startup Visa Program

As one of the National Strategic Special Zone Initiatives, the program permits foreign entrepreneurs to receive a six-month "Business Manager" visa without fulfilling the usual prerequisites. Fukuoka City became the first area to start accepting startup visa applications in December 2015. In order to make Japan a more accommodating environment for startups, a new nationwide one-year startup visa program is expected to be rolled out in FY2018.



Wenning Duan

Duan was born in Tianjin City in China. Moving to Tokyo in 2009, she graduated from Waseda University with a master's degree in journalism in 2014. She gained popularity during her six years on NHK's Chinese language program, as well as through her writings and media appearances. She has more than 22,000 Twitter followers.

Series: Friends of Japan

Sowing Seeds of Peace for Japan and China

Wenning Duan first entered the public eye as a “super-cute Chinese teacher” on Japanese TV. Graciously accepting this attention, Duan also shares the struggles that lie behind this image, and her sense of mission to become a bridge between the two countries she loves.

Growing up in Tianjin, China, Duan first learned of Japan from her father, who had traveled throughout Japan, camera in hand, when he worked there in the late 1990s. “My father shared pictures with me and told me how fascinating Japan was, so I always had a positive image of Japan. I loved to eat Tianjin’s fresh seafood, so when he told me of Japan’s sashimi and sushi, I thought, ‘What does it taste like? I want to try it!’”

Duan describes herself as “naturally very shy.” “As a student, when people watched me, I tended to think they were laughing at me. I had no confidence in myself or my appearance and compared myself with other girls in class thinking ‘I am too short’ or ‘I can’t do what this girl can.’ What I feared most was speaking in front of people,” she

recalls. To overcome her shyness, Duan chose to study announcing in university and then got a job at the Tianjin Television Station. She longed to see the world beyond her home city, and next set her sights on the land of her childhood dreams. “I chose my birthday as the date to arrive in Japan and become the ‘new me,’” she smiles.

Duan arrived in Tokyo in May 2009 and enrolled in Japanese language school. She studied hard, forced herself to make friends, and absorbed Japanese culture through part-time jobs as well. She entered Waseda University in 2011, passing at the same time an audition to become a presenter on public broadcaster NHK’s Chinese language program. Duan always gave her best, inspired by her favorite Japanese idiom, *ichigo-ichie*, which comes from the world of the tea ceremony and means that encounters are once-in-a-lifetime and therefore to be treasured. “China and Japan share many idioms, but *ichigo-ichie*, unique to Japan, represents for me something truly good and valuable in Japanese culture.”



Duan played a leading role in *Sannenmae no Kimi e*, a drama staged both in Yokohama and Shanghai as one of the Japan-China friendship projects in 2017.



Duan talks about her experience in Japan on a China Radio International program in Beijing.

During this time, increasing numbers of Chinese came to Japan. Duan soon realized that failure for Japanese people to understand Chinese people, and vice versa, was creating cultural misunderstandings that marred what could have been positive Japanese-Chinese encounters. Resolving to do her part, however small, to ease these needless tensions, Duan published the books *I love Japan!* in 2012 and *Understanding Chinese People the Way They Are—Through Manga* in 2014. As Duan honestly shares her own struggles, challenges, joys, and dreams, she can encounter audiences in China or Japan at the level of our common humanity.

In 2017, Duan played a leading role in a stage drama, *Sannenmae no Kimi e*, meaning “To the person you were three years ago.” The drama was performed both in Japan and China with success. Some of Duan’s Japanese fans visited Shanghai just to see her perform there. “Some had never been to China and had negative images of the country. But they fell in love with China on their first visit, a reversal that touches my heart.”

Duan’s way of life also appeals to young Chinese people. A girl contacted Duan on China’s popular Weibo social media site saying that she wanted to study in Japan and become like Duan. Realizing how coming to Japan has opened so many doors for her, Duan hopes that young Chinese people can believe in their potential too.

Despite the bitter history of World War II, Duan believes that China and Japan can shrink the distance between them by learning each other’s customs and way of thinking; by working to understand differences. Rooted now in both cultures, she models the bridge that must be constructed from each side to link Japan and China. As Duan explains, “My mission is to tell Japanese people about China and Chinese people about Japan, in order to foster mutual understanding and positive relationships beyond nationality. Politics are always complex, but holding hands together, people can construct significant bridges. Making peace in a small way will eventually lead to a greater peace. It’s like sowing seeds of peace that will one day bloom gloriously.”



Duan has published five books that introduce to Japanese people the language and the rapidly changing culture of modern China and tell how she has come to love Japan.



Duan enjoys wearing a kimono: “I think kimono, with their beautiful color and design, represent the Japanese cultural concept of harmony. A kimono may feel a little tight, but the tightness makes your personality straight as well.”

From Nostalgia to Diplomacy: The JET Programme as an Engine of Soft Power



At the Houses of Parliament, March 16, 2017, celebrating the 30th anniversary of the JET Programme. From left to right: Roger Godsiff, chair of the British-Japanese Parliamentary Group; Sarah Parsons, chair of the JET Programme Alumni Association UK; Baroness Frances D'Souza; and Koji Tsuruoka, the Japanese ambassador to the UK.
©Lee Bolton Photography

Any long-term government initiative is bound to face criticism, and the JET Programme is no exception. Having recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, the youth exchange program has received its fair share of complaints, from politicians, third-party observers, and JET participants both past and present. But a former JET-turned-academic is receiving international attention for research that shows how the JET Programme boosts Japan's soft power immeasurably.

Sharleen Estampador-Hughson worked as a JET ALT in Ishikawa Prefecture, an area on the Sea of Japan coast, for three years, finishing in 2009. "I thoroughly enjoyed my time as an ALT, which is not to say that there weren't tough times. I wanted to understand why I felt such a strong attachment to Japan, in spite of those challenges," she says. It was this experience that inspired her to undertake a PhD in Japanese Studies at the University of Sheffield.

"I knew of people who initially had more nuanced feelings about their time as JETs, but nevertheless went on to gain something useful from their experiences. I wanted to find out if this was the case for others. I saw

that the program was having a positive effect, but I wanted to examine the exact mechanisms behind JET's effectiveness," she adds.

"I interviewed a variety of JET alumni, from recent participants to those who took part during the 1980s. My study shows how the transformative qualities of nostalgia produce widespread and lasting soft power for Japan, which boosts Japan's reputation and appeal to the rest of the world," says Estampador-Hughson.

"Soft power can't be measured, but it is very powerful. The impact of the JET Programme's soft power stems from its long-term diffusion of Japan through the cultural appeal of ideas, stories and consumer goods. This results in deeper cross-cultural communication, closer business ties and more diplomatic cooperation. In short, soft power brings the money back."

That soft power is fueled by the participants' strong sense of nostalgia, a result of most JET participants being in their early to mid-twenties. "During this time, we are impressionable as we are continuing to form our

characters. So the connection we feel to Japan is felt especially strongly,” she explains.

This sense of connection means that the majority of JETs become mini ambassadors when they return to their home countries. “American scholars such as David McConnell and Emily T. Metzgar have previously studied the program. They have found that JET alumni are interpreters of Japanese culture and society to those unfamiliar with the country. My research echoes those findings.”

Sarah Parsons, chairperson of the JET Alumni Association UK (JETAA UK), shares this enthusiasm for the JET Programme. Parsons worked as a JET for three years in Gunma Prefecture, finishing in 1998. “It was a fantastic experience, but the culture shock can be difficult. For me and many others, it’s the challenge of overcoming those cultural differences that becomes the best part of the experience, with nostalgia playing a huge part in keeping us connected to Japan after we leave,” she says.

“With over 10,000 JET alumni in the UK alone, it is no surprise to find JET alumni working in important positions. They have lasting influence on how Japan is seen by the rest of the world,” Parsons adds. As enthusiastic as she is about JET, she believes even more could be done to enhance JET’s creation of soft power. “Much of my work at JETAA involves facilitating yet more cross-cultural exchange between former JETs and the rest of the world, which Sharleen’s findings have highlighted the importance of. You can’t manage what people think about an entire country, but each former JET is a potential salesperson for Japan. I think a little more strategy on how to harness this goodwill would go a long way!”

“But it’s clear from both my experience and Sharleen’s study how successful the program has been in its present form. The JET Programme does a fantastic job of generating positivity and goodwill towards Japan,” she adds. Estampador-Hughson feels the same way: “JET provides fantastic opportunities for participants, while Japan reaps rewards through harnessing the connective power of nostalgia. I hope this continues long into the future.”



Estampador-Hughson spending time with her students during her days working as an assistant language teacher under the JET Programme.



Sharleen Estampador-Hughson

Estampador-Hughson was born in Canada to parents from the Philippines, but spent most of her childhood in the U.S. She is now based in Edinburgh, Scotland. She worked as a JET ALT in Ishikawa Prefecture, and later earned a PhD in Japanese Studies at Sheffield University, England. She is currently working on a book project based on her research. Her research paper can be found at: <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/18810/>



Sarah Parsons

Parsons was born in England. She graduated from the University of Warwick. She is founder and managing director of Japan in Perspective, a business consultancy, as well as chair of JET Alumni Association UK, a trustee on the board of the Japan Society, and a lecturer on various Japan-related topics at University of Sheffield and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

About the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme began in 1987 with the goal of promoting grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations, and is now one of the world’s largest international exchange programs. JET participants are placed in every region of Japan and work in one of three positions: assistant language teachers (ALTs), coordinators for international relations (CIRs), or sports exchange advisors (SEAs). In 2017, the JET Programme welcomed 5,163 participants, and currently there are approximately 66,000 alumni from 67 countries living in all parts of the world.



The JET Programme official website
<http://jetprogramme.org/en/>

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