

The Special Programs for Japan-Middle East Exchange

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, recognition of the international significance of the various problems in the Middle East has heightened throughout the world. Under these circumstances, the Japan Foundation implemented the Special Programs for Japan-Middle East Exchange in FY2003, positioning intellectual dialogs, cultural cooperation and promotion of understanding of the Middle East in Japan as the core in addition to the existing projects centered around promotion of Japanese-Language and Japanese studies and introduction of Japanese culture, with recognition of the importance of promoting a high level of mutual understanding between Japan and the Middle Eastern countries and structuring and maintaining stable relations between Japan and the Middle Eastern countries. The Japan Foundation established the Office for Middle East programs to execute those new projects in January 2003.

1. Intellectual Exchange Seminars and Conferences (Middle East)

<Examples of FY2003>

- **Mission for cultural exchange and dialog with the Middle East**

The Japan Foundation organized a mission consisting of learned persons in Japan to strengthen and develop cultural exchange between Japan and the Middle East, and the mission visited Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and Egypt during the period from September 19 to October 1, 2003. They conducted a symposium with the theme "Tradition and modernization", and exchanged opinions with learned persons, men of culture, religious leaders, etc. in a broad range of fields at the destinations.

- **Symposium "Japan and the Middle East: An Era of Co-existence"**

The Japan Foundation hosted a two-day symposium (February 16-17, 2004) in Tokyo by learned persons from Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Thailand to discuss the ideal exchange style between Japan and the Middle Eastern Islam world. The themes for the first day were "What the role of the media is: toward mutual understanding between Japan and the Middle East" and "The ideal exchange style between Japan and the Middle East", and the themes for the second day were "Culture and society: sharing and difference", "Toward mutual understanding: from the

viewpoint of the media", "Expanding role of females" and "Proposals by learned persons and specialists: ideal exchange style between Japan and the Middle East", and the participants conducted active discussions on those themes.

- **Invitation to a female group from the Middle East**

The Japan Foundation invited eight female editors and reporters from women's magazines in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, United Arab Emirates and Oman for opinion exchange with specialists and two panel discussions in Osaka and Tokyo.

2. Fellowship Program for Leaders of the Next Generation (Middle East)

<Examples of FY2003>

The Japan Foundation invited Ibrahim Ozturk (Assistant Professor at Marmara University, Turkey), Allah Essam Erushazuri (Faculty of Politics and Economy, University of Cairo, Egypt) and Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni (Associate Professor of Social Anthropology at Tel Aviv University, Israel) for three months, who contributed to promotion of intellectual exchange and dialogs between Japan and the Middle Eastern countries in their specialized fields.

3. Promotion of Japanese Islamic Studies Abroad

The Japan Foundation dispatches Japanese scholars of Islam and provides opportunities to present the results of the studies to reinforce the transmission of Islam theology studies in Japan and contribute to understanding of Islam throughout the world.

<Examples of FY2003>

- **"Middle Eastern studies in Japan in the 21st century world"**

The Japan Foundation had a grant to dispatch six researchers from the Japan Middle Eastern Studies Association to give presentations on the current conditions of Middle Eastern studies in Japan at three panels at the North American Congress of Middle Eastern Studies 2003 (November 6 to 9 at Anchorage, USA). They participated in the planning activities, conducted reports and discussions, and prepared and distributed the investigation results and achievements to demonstrate the presence and high level of Middle Eastern studies in Japan.

4. Supporting the Preservation of Cultural Properties (Middle East)

<Example of FY2003>

- “Afghanistan, artists toward the future: Paintings, craft-work and photo reports” (November 20 to December 3, 2003 at the Japan Foundation Forum in Tokyo)

The Japan Foundation hosted an exhibition of paintings and craftwork created by the working street children in Kabul. The Foundation also exhibited photographs of towns, agricultural villages, schools, etc. in Afghanistan by photographer Takeshi Uchibori and hosted a photo discussion with him.

5. Introduction of Middle Eastern Arts and Culture to Japan

<Examples of FY2003>

- Courses on understanding the Middle East, by the Japan Foundation

The Japan Foundation conducted two open, continuous courses entitled “Let’s learn about Iraq” and “Is Islam the problem? Let’s consider the relationship with modernization” at the Japan Foundation Conference Hall from January to March 2004.

- Iranian Culture Week

The Japan Foundation cooperated in conducting Iranian Culture Week (hosted by the Japan-Iran Association and the Iranian Embassy in Japan) held at the Japan Foundation Forum in Tokyo in May 2003. The event contained a variety of programs, such as performances of traditional music, film screenings, lectures (Iranian studies, Iranian miniature paintings, Iranian archeology, Persian language and calligraphy), exhibitions of artwork, etc.

- Dispatch of observers’ team for performing arts in Israel

The Japan Foundation dispatched eight Japanese performing arts related persons (leader: Taeko Nagai, Director of Setagaya Public Theater) to the contemporary performing arts introduction festival “Curtains Up” in Israel with the objective of promoting introduction of Israeli performing arts to Japan, and provided opportunities for observation of performing arts and opinion exchange with the directors and other related persons in Israel in December 2003.

- Tokyo International Arts Festival: Invitation performance by three Middle Eastern companies

The Japan Foundation invited three contemporary performing arts companies from Kuwait, Lebanon and Palestine to perform in the

Tokyo International Arts Festival program held from February 12 to March 28, 2004.

	Performances	Theater Company
Kuwait	<i>Al Hamlet Summit</i>	Sulayman Al-Bassam Theater Company
Lebanon	<i>FaceA/FaceB Biokhraphia</i>	Rabih Mroue and Lina Saneh
Palestine	<i>Alive From Palestine : Stories Under Occupation</i>	Al-Kasaba Theatre