

Approaches to Countries/Regions and Activities by Overseas Offices

The Japan Foundation formulates program policies in consideration of the government's diplomatic activities and changes in international affairs. Twenty-two offices in 21 countries run various programs designed to meet local situations and needs.



An event to introduce "LIGHT UP NIPPON," a project to mourn the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake by simultaneously displaying fireworks at 10 locations in the devastated areas, was held in New Delhi, India on March 11, 2012, and many Indian participants offered their prayers. Photo: aki

Fiscal 2011 Activity Summary by Country/Region

In fiscal 2011, we were involved in a number of special focus activities, including a program for strategic and intensive dissemination of culture in India, the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youth (JENESYS) Programme encouraging cultural exchange in the Asia-Pacific region, and large-scale anniversary commemorative events, such as the "150th Anniversary of Friendship between Japan and Germany" and the "50th Anniversary of Kuwait-Japan Diplomatic Relations."

■ Strategic, Intensive Dissemination of Cultural Information Programs in Major Cities

The objective of this program was to introduce the values and appeal of the Japanese people and modern Japanese society by offering various events in major cities of diplomatic importance in collaboration with local culture and arts organizations, thereby improving and deepening the understanding of Japan. In fiscal 2011, between January and March 2012, we held over 20 India-Japan cultural exchange events titled "India-Japan: Passage to the Next Generation" to commemorate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relation between the two countries. On March 11, 2012, a screening of the film *Light Up Nippon* and a symposium in memory of the victims of the Great

East Japan Earthquake were held in New Delhi, India.

■ Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Programme

This program was launched in 2007 in an attempt to lay a firm foundation for Asian solidarity through large-scale youth exchanges with East Asia Summit countries (Association of Southeast Asian Nations member countries, China, Korea, India, Australia, and New Zealand) and other Asia-Pacific countries over a period of five years. The Japan Foundation is playing a role in this program and in fiscal 2011, the final year of the program, invited Japanese-language teachers and learners, as well as young intellectuals, practitioners, artists, designers and other talents, to Japan with the aim of nurturing the region's future leaders in various fields. (See p.42, p.47.)

■ Cooperation in Large-Scale Anniversary Commemorative Events

In fiscal 2011, numerous cultural exchange events were organized by the private and public sectors to commemorate the "150th Anniversary of Friendship between Japan and Germany" and the "50th Anniversary of Kuwait-Japan Diplomatic Relations." The Japan Foundation was actively involved in these events to promote Japanese culture. (See p.35.)

Various Projects Including Art Exhibitions and Symposiums Commemorate 150 Years of Japanese-German Relations

One hundred fifty years have passed since the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and Prussia was concluded in 1861. To celebrate this long friendship, various commemorative events were held in Japan and Germany in 2011. We also organized many events in cooperation with Embassy and Consulates-Generals of Japan and cultural institutions throughout Germany. Although some were suspended due to the Great East Japan Earthquake, some new projects were developed to support reconstruction efforts. All these events strengthened our mutual ties.

A main event in the field of arts and culture was the "Hokusai Retrospective" at Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. This first large-scale exhibition on Hokusai in Germany attracted considerable attention and received over 90,000 visitors. We also held a screening of director Akira Kurosawa's films at our institute as well as movie theaters in Berlin, Munich, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Nuremberg and Hamburg, with a total of 13,549 people turning up for the film event. We hosted many other events as well, including a Ryukyu dance performance, Karakuri Ningyo (mechanical dolls) demonstrations, a jazz concert, and a book design exhibition.

We offered Japanese-language courses from beginner to advanced level and also organized courses based on certain themes, free-talk meetings to practice Japanese with the volunteers, and hands-



Left: Ryukyu dance performance, Right: Book design exhibition

on workshops that gave participants opportunities to experience Japanese culture. Over a thousand people attended these sessions. We provided three training seminars for Japanese-language teachers and sent instructors to training sessions organized by local teachers' associations.

In the field of Japanese studies and intellectual exchange, we worked together with the University of Cologne and held a symposium entitled "Dynamics of Traditional Research Societies in a Rapidly Changing World" in September. The presidents of 16 Japanese universities were invited to Germany for this event. We lent a hand in organizing other symposiums such as "The Disaster and the Role of Conventional and New Media – A Comparative Look at How Japan and Germany Reported the Earthquake" at the Japanese-German Center Berlin, "Long-term Problems and Short-term Disasters: Politics and Social Policy in Post 3/11 Japan" at the University of Duisburg-Essen, and "The Impact of Catastrophes on Education for the Hearing Impaired" at the University of Munich.

Furthermore, to mark one year since the Great East Japan Earthquake and to express gratitude to Germany for its support for reconstruction efforts, we held a memorial evening at our institute on March 12, 2012, in the presence of the representatives of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and the city of Cologne.

Great Success with Events to Introduce Modern Japanese Culture in Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of Japan-India Diplomatic Relations

Japan and India have a long history of exchange originating from the introduction of Buddhism from India to Japan and have enjoyed cordial relations since 1952 when diplomatic ties were established. From January to March 2012, the year marking the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, we conducted more than 20 cultural exchange events throughout India under the theme of "India-Japan: Passage to the Next Generation." These events included not only the introduction of Japanese traditional culture but also animation workshops, contemporary art exhibitions by young artists, performing arts produced by Japan and India in collaboration, and screenings of Japanese films. These events contributed to the enhancement of Japan-India cultural relations and showed a new side of modern Japanese culture from various perspectives. These opportunities allowed many Indian people to experience numerous aspects of the appeal of Japanese culture.

At the 20th New Delhi World Book Fair held from February 25 to



Manga Café at the New Delhi World Book Fair

March 4, 2012, we set up the Manga Café stall showcasing more than 500 of the latest Japanese manga books translated into English. The number of people coming to India's first large-scale Manga Café grew with each day, reaching around 12,000 during the nine-day fair. Even though Japanese manga and anime are popular in India, the majority of people see them only on the Internet. It is almost impossible for Indians to have access to actual Japanese comic books. Thus, Manga Café presented a precious opportunity for the public to actually see and read easy-to-understand translated versions of Japanese manga. Even though Indian people have less access to modern Japanese culture than their East Asian counterparts on a daily basis, it was recognized that not a few people had a keen interest to the relevant information through this event. To satisfy their interest, we will strive to provide opportunities for them to explore various aspects of Japanese culture.

Music Connects China and Japan Heart-to-Heart



Soulful performance by Kyogo Kawaguchi

In October 2011, we carried out "The Center for Heart-to-Heart Exchanges Concert Tour." Kyogo Kawaguchi, who is well-known for his powerful voice and performance, and the Japan and China-based singer amin held joint concerts in Beijing, Qingdao, Chengdu, and Xining. They sang more than 10 songs for local fans including Japanese-language learners. The audience greatly enjoyed the entertaining concert production that included talks given both in Japanese and Chinese and name-the-song quizzes. The tour drew an audience of 3,450 and forged a heart-to-heart bond between Chinese and Japanese people through popular music. As a vast country with a huge population, China has both metropolitan cities such as Beijing and Shanghai and small cities like Xining where people have limited opportunities to come in contact with foreign cultures. Some people in those areas are also interested in Japan and its language. This music event was highly valued for disseminating Japanese culture to local cities.

The year 2012 marks the 40th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-China diplomatic relations. We will do our utmost to further promote cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Experts Gather to Share Their Views on Post-Disaster Reconstruction



Lively discussion based on actual cases

In February 2012, a Roundtable Discussion on "Post Disaster Community Design and City Planning" was held in Jakarta. We invited Tohoku University professor Yasuaki Onoda, one of the founders of a network of architects called ArchiAid that supports recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake. Professor Onoda and 30 other discussants, including Indonesian government officials with experience in post-disaster reconstruction, researchers, NGO staff members, architects and journalists, actively engaged in the discussion. In terms of post-disaster reconstruction, there are a myriad of differences in the external environment between Japan and Indonesia, such as government authority, governance performance, economic standards, budget size, and the roles and functions of communities. At the same time, the two nations share many commonalities. For both countries it is important that residents, governments, civil engineers, architects, business entities, and investors work hand in hand to integrate and reflect the opinions and interests of various stakeholders in the process of post-disaster city planning and community design. As countries frequently hit by natural disasters, we learned a great deal from each other's experiences.

Thinking of the Roles and Functions of Cities amid Globalization



Symposium held in Seoul

In August 2011, we hosted the "International Symposium on Intercultural Cities in Asia and Europe" in Seoul. The concept of "Intercultural City" is already widely adopted in EU countries, which views cultural diversity within a city caused by foreign residents as a source of strengthening and developing the city. At the symposium, researchers, politicians and practitioners from Japan, Korea and EU shared several cases of EU cities and discussed the potential of cultural diversity both in Japan and Korea. The success of the symposium led to the need of holding continuous meetings as "Intercultural Summits." The first Summit took place in Tokyo in January 2012 with the participation of mayors and governors of nine cities from Japan, Korea and EU countries. The second meeting is scheduled to be held in Hamamatsu, Japan in October 2012.

The Japan Foundation devised "The Five-Year Plan for Japan-Korea Cultural Exchange" to strengthen the relations between the two countries from a mid- to long-term perspective. The plan's second phase that began in fiscal 2011 focuses on mutual efforts to overcome common issues. We carried out exchange programs on interculturalism, disaster reconstruction, energy, social enterprises, aging society and youth education, and we are working to find solutions to issues that both countries currently face.

Android-Human Geminoid F Costarring with a Thai Actress



Geminoid (left) co-starring with a Thai actress ©THE NATION

Sayonara, the latest android play co-produced by Oriza Hirata, a renowned playwright and theater director, and Professor Hiroshi Ishiguro, a leading robotics researcher at Osaka University, was staged at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok in March 2012. In this revolutionary play, a humanlike android named Geminoid F shared the stage with human actors. The Thai script was written by a local Japanese-language student and winner of a play translation competition, and a Thai actress appeared on stage with Geminoid F. First presented in Aichi Prefecture in 2010, the play was performed in Europe where it gained celebrity. This was the first staging in Asia outside Japan and the world's premiere collaborative performance pairing an android with a local actress in the local language. All 10 shows were sold out, and audiences of 3,000, including people in the theater business, engineering students and learners of Japanese-language, enjoyed the play. It made the newspaper front page twice and was broadcast on television. We also organized a workshop by Oriza Hirata and a lecture by Professor Ishiguro. This project created a strong bond between Japanese and Thai members.

Hip Hop Artists from Japan, France, and Germany Support Marginalized Youth in the Philippines



Artists from overseas making a song with their Filipino partners

In cooperation with the Goethe-Institut Philippinen and Alliance Française de Manille, the Japan Foundation, Manila held performances and a workshop of hip hop music creation and street dance by artists from Japan, France, Germany and the Philippines for street children and young people living in slum areas. The event was aimed at teaching youth the importance of expressing their hopes and dreams through popular dance and music. The event was not just about Japanese, French and German artists giving technical instructions to the young participants; it also achieved multiple positive consequences, such as establishing networks and enhancing mutual understanding among the participating artists through collaboration, improving the technical skills of local artists, and developing creativity and expressiveness in young Filipinos. The artists and participants remain in touch through social media, and we will continue to support them in deepening their borderless friendship developed during the event.

Japanese and Vietnamese Rock Bands Cheer on Japan's Reconstruction Efforts



Performance by the popular Vietnamese band Ngu Cung
Photo: Aidan Dockey

In an attempt to rebuild images of Japan after the Great East Japan Earthquake with its "youth," "liveliness" and "vigor", we hosted a joint rock concert of Japanese and Vietnamese bands entitled "Go! Go! Japan!" It featured three Japanese rock acts – OKAMOTO'S, a young emerging band whose members are all twenty years old or so; Electric Eel Shock, which has performed at rock festivals throughout the world; and MOLICE, returning to Vietnam for a second time. The two biggest bands in Vietnam, Ngu Cung and Rosewood, also hit the stage. The rock bands gave an energetic five-hour performance. The live concert started with the screening of a digest version of *A Remembrance of Tohoku Earthquake – Our Gratitude for Bonds of Friendship of the World* produced by the Japan Foundation to show the audience how Japan is endeavoring to recover from the disaster. At the end of the event, everybody shouted "Go! Go! Japan!" with the lead singer of OKAMOTO'S. The bands and the audience gave a hearty cheer for Japan in hopes of its early restoration in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami.

A New Course and Classroom Expand Opportunities to Learn Japanese



Newly opened classroom for Japanese courses

As part of the expansion of our Japanese-language courses, we started to offer a beginner-level course using a trial version of *Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture*, a coursebook based on the JF Standard, in October 2011. Among the comments received from the students were "as many group activities were held, not only did I have more chance to speak Japanese but I was also very much encouraged by the group members," and "the portfolios that we maintained throughout the course allowed us to keep track of our learning progress and knowledge gained, and made us realize that we had also learned something about the culture too." In March 2012, we rented a nearby facility close to the commercial area to accommodate the expansion of our classes. The small gallery space fronting the premise allows for exhibitions on Japan as well as publicity for our events, thus enabling more Malaysians to learn about Japan, its language and culture.

15th Japanese Film Festival Draws an Audience of 22,000 in Seven Cities



Actor Yutaka Takenouchi
© 2011 Japanese Film Festival in Sydney

Fun, Moving and Relaxing, the Japanese Film Festival marked its 15th anniversary in 2011 in an impressive way. Numerous movies were screened in the major Australian cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Perth, Brisbane, Hobart, and Adelaide, and the festival drew a record audience of 22,000. Indeed, messages of congratulations from prominent figures, including Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Sydney and Melbourne mayors, reflect the wide public attention that it captured in its anniversary year. In Sydney, 30 of the latest hot movies were presented, and in Melbourne, 35 films entertained movie goers. Two disaster-related films—*Yamakohsi: The Recovery of a Tiny Japanese Village*, a documentary film on the 2004 Great Chuetsu Earthquake, and *The Town's Children* capturing people dealing with the aftermath of the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake—were shown. The screening of these two films was followed by panel discussion featuring a selection of filmmakers involved in the projects, such as movie directors, producers and cinematographers, and the associate editor of *The Australian Financial Review* as the moderator. These special screenings generated considerable interest nationwide. At the premiere screening of *Oba, the Last Samurai* in Sydney, director Hideyuki Hirayama and leading actor Yutaka Takenouchi appeared on stage. A packed audience gave them a rousing standing ovation.

A Large-Scale Exhibition on Japan in a Metropolitan Area Attracts 120,000 Visitors



Demonstration of a mechanical doll
Photo: Bits Box Inc.

We held a large-scale special exhibition entitled "JAPAN: Tradition. Innovation" at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa over six months from May 2011. On the theme of Onkochishin (respect the past, create the new), modern design and technology and their historical roots were presented in a variety of ways. Exhibits included Karakuri Ningyo (mechanical doll), the biped walking robot ASIMO, the lineage of industrial design, beautiful Edo period kimono, paintings on folding screens, and a huge wall mural created by pop artists in real-time. Furthermore, we hosted a performance of Japanese music blending classical tradition and contemporary sensibilities and an outdoor nighttime anime screening. A total of 120,000 visitors explored the allure of Japanese culture including its tradition and innovation through this exhibition. It took 10 years to plan and prepare for this multi-component exhibition now widely viewed as the result of cooperation between Japanese cultural institutions and private companies with support from those involved in Japan-Canada exchange. To make more effective use of the resources, some of the exhibits, including the mechanical doll demonstration, anime screening and music performance, went on a tour to Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver.

New Japanese-Language Courses in an Area Flourishing with Japanese-American Community



Japanese learners having fun in class

In January 2012, we began offering new JF Nihongo Courses to meet the needs of learners. Based on the "JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education," the courses include "Mastering Kana," an introductory course on Katakana and Hiragana, a conversation course titled "Everyday Japanese" to enable learners to communicate in Japanese in a variety of daily situations, and "Business Japanese" through which learners will be able to carry on conversations in Japanese in business settings. Our classes are held in Little Tokyo, a historic area developed by the Japanese-American community. Reflecting the characteristics of Los Angeles, people from diverse backgrounds come to our lessons, and despite differences in ethnicity, age, occupation and reasons for learning Japanese, they share a passion for mastering the language. All are enthusiastic learners and seem to enjoy coming to class every week. Though limited to one small classroom, the learners enrolled in the 2012 winter term expressed their eagerness to come back for more during spring. To meet their demands, teachers have been busy preparing for new courses.

Looking Back on the Past to Strengthen Japan-U.S. Relations



Hoichi the Earless by the dance group Dairakudakan Photo: GION

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the original 1912 gift of cherry trees from Japan to the United States that today line the Potomac River in Washington D.C., we organized numerous cultural events. These events ranged from a Butoh dance performance of *Hoichi the Earless* accompanied by traditional Japanese and Turkish lutes, to a demonstration of Japanese confections. To further support Japan's disaster reconstruction efforts, special performances of Japanese drums and Kagura, a Shinto theatrical dance, were organized. In addition, we sent four groups of U.S.-based Japanese artists to Central and South America. Turning to intellectual exchange, we supported various Japan-U.S. collaborative research and exchange efforts to address global challenges such as the financial crisis, climate change, disaster prevention and post-disaster reconstruction. In an effort to further develop human resources within the realm of Japan-U.S. relations, we invited to Japan a variety of graduate and undergraduate university students groups, young Japan experts, and Asian experts influential in shaping public opinion. And to enhance mutual understanding at the grassroots level, we supported initiatives such as one to strengthen the foundation of Japan America Societies. We look forward to another 100 years of constructive relations between the two countries.

Talking about Disasters as a Common Experience under Requiem Fireworks



Requiem fireworks set off at the end of the event

On March 10, 2012, a year after the Great East Japan Earthquake, we held a memorial event consisting of a documentary film screening, a lecture by architects, and a requiem fireworks display. After the screening of *A Remembrance of Tohoku Earthquake – Our Gratitude for Bonds of Friendship of the World*, capturing interactions between local people and foreign volunteers in disaster areas, architect Hidekazu Wakabayashi, a victim of the disaster himself, and López Óscar, who travelled to the disaster areas to conduct research, gave a lecture on natural disasters and architecture. Mexico was devastated by a massive earthquake in 1985 and hit by frequent earthquakes in 2011, and the local participants were keen to ask questions because of their common experience. The lecture was followed by another screening of a documentary on the "LIGHT UP NIPPON" project in which fireworks were simultaneously set off in 10 locations in Tohoku in prayer for the disaster victims and the region's early recovery. The event ended with a display of traditional Mexican fireworks. Every participant offered a prayer for the disaster victims. Some people unable to get into the film screening waited until the fireworks lit the sky and prayed for the reconstruction of disaster areas in Tohoku.

Disaster-Related Events Promote Solidarity between Japan and Brazil



Lecture by graffiti artist Titi Freak

In March 2012, one year after the Great East Japan Earthquake, we organized various events to promote solidarity between Japan and Brazil and to wish for the reconstruction of the disaster areas in collaboration with the Consulate General of Japan in Sao Paulo. We also worked with the State Government of Sao Paulo in holding a photo exhibition capturing recovery efforts in communities affected. Other events we hosted included a lecture and demonstration on Tohoku cuisine by Koichi Mori, a Soba chef in Sendai, a performance and workshop of Japanese drums and Brazilian percussions, a screening of *Light Up Nippon*, a documentary film on a fireworks performance to commemorate the earthquake victims and pray for reconstruction, and screenings of images of the earthquake and recovery at the Brazilian Society of Japanese Culture and Social Assistance. Furthermore, we organized lectures by Brazilian artist Titi Freak, who took part in a project to create wall murals on temporary housing in Ishinomaki City as well as another screening of disaster-related images. We hope these events served as an opportunity to express our gratitude for Brazil's warm support, deepen ties between the two nations, and provide encouragement to the disaster victims.

Japan as the Guest of Honor at Salon du Livre, the Largest Book Fair in France



Japanese novelists at "Changes in Japanese Literature after 3.11"

We participated in Salon du Livre, an international book fair in Paris, where Japan came under the spotlight as the 2012 guest of honor. With the support of the Japan Book Publishers Association and the French National Book Center, we invited 20 authors from Japan and staged numerous events. This series of events started with a press conference in January, followed by a roundtable discussion entitled "Changes in Japanese Literature after 3.11" on March 17. Four of the invited authors participated in a thought-provoking discussion on the meaning of writing novels in the aftermath of the earthquake, influence of the disaster on Japanese literature, and issues relating to literature and the Japanese language. On March 22, we co-hosted a lecture by one of the authors, Mitsuyo Kakuta, with Mediatheque in Aix-en-Provence. Audience interested in modern Japanese novels were intrigued by her lecture. The book fair enjoyed remarkable success drawing 190,000 visitors over the four-day period, a five percent increase from the previous year. Through this event we shared our views on the nature of modern novels with the French people. We will continue to promote exchanges between Japan and France through literature.

Hosting a Variety of Programs from Different Perspectives for People of All Ages



An event to introduce the Japanese tea ceremony
Photo: Mario Boccia

We presented various perspectives of Japanese culture for people of all age groups. While the display of artworks belonging to our institute and a photo exhibition of Japanese gardens showed Japan's traditional beauty, the photo exhibition titled "The Metamorphosis of Japan after the War" and the "Japanese Kites and Tops" exhibition introduced Japanese lifestyles. In March 2012, one year after the Great East Japan Earthquake, we held the photo exhibition "TOHOKU – Through the Eyes of Japanese Photographers" to showcase a true picture of the Tohoku region. We screened various quality Japanese movies ranging from new films to highly artistic works by the Art Theater Guild of Japan. In the field of performing arts, the performance of traditional Ryukyu music and dance was particularly well-received among a variety of projects we hosted, including classical music and a combined performance of film and music. We also presented lectures by former Japan Foundation fellows from Italy on topics such as literature, architecture and Noh. As for Japanese-language courses, classes of all levels were offered also at night, on Saturdays, and during the summer, in which 600 learners enrolled. We also provided support for two Northern Italian high schools to purchase Japanese textbooks.

Raising Issues in Modern Society through Art Programs



Director Masayuki Suo at the talk after his film screening

In the UK there are a lot of artistic works which deal with political and social issues. Reflecting on this, this year we placed our focus mainly on artists and creations which approached the problems of modern Japanese society. We screened *I just Didn't Do It* through which director Masayuki Suo posed questions about the Japanese legal system, as well as *Sleep*, a story by Katsumi Sakaguchi about a victim of sexual transgression. These screening sessions were followed by talks with the directors. The question and answer sessions, with director Suo fielding, were not only about films - in one case a highly technical question was posed by a British attorney. Furthermore, we staged an English reading of a Japanese play by playwright Shiro Maeda entitled *Getting Lost* with a British director and actors. The play elicited much sympathy from the British audience who understood the struggles of young people living in Tokyo. We also helped stage an exhibition in which art is seen from the perspective of social change and hosted a lecture by Professor Hiroshi Minamishima from Joshibi University of Art and Design on artistic activities after the Great East Japan Earthquake. Our activities fostered great opportunities to exchange opinions with UK citizens.

Strengthening Cooperation with Casa Asia



Live performance by Pe'z on La Rambla, Barcelona

Celebrating our second anniversary, we have practically doubled the number of activities such as exhibitions, concerts and dance performances. A wide range of our cultural events turned out to be a total success, gaining twice as many participants as the previous year. Casa Asia, an institution which contributes to strengthen relations between Spain and the Asia-Pacific region, has played a key role in our accomplishment. Ever since we were at the preparation stage to establish our office in Madrid, Casa Asia has been supporting us, and cooperating with a number of activities including language courses. Moreover, as this reliable partner has its headquarters in Barcelona, it offers us an invaluable assistance whenever we organize activities in their home city. During the fiscal 2011, we co-organized numerous activities such as the concert of Japanese band Pe'z; the exhibition "Japan: Kingdom of Characters"; an Asian Digital Content Festival entitled "Asia Geek"; and screenings of documentary films on the Great East Japan Earthquake. We also cooperated with each other in the area of public relations and activities organized by each institution. Furthermore, the new Japanese language courses based on "JF Standard" were launched simultaneously in both centers in October 2011, and the number of courses and participants increased steadily. We will strive to further develop cultural exchange programs in Spain through continuous collaboration with Casa Asia.

Kuromori Kagura Contributes to Stronger Ties between Russia and Disaster-Stricken Areas



Russian media covering the performances

We organized performances of Kuromori Kagura, a traditional Japanese performing art passed down in disaster-stricken Miyako City in Iwate Prefecture, in Moscow and Zelenograd in October 2011. Responding to the Great East Japan Earthquake, Russia provided support in various ways, with the dispatch of a rescue team three days after the earthquake just one example. To express our gratitude for this assistance and to show our efforts for recovery and reconstruction, we invited Russian government officials and people involved in local charity programs to support disaster victims to the performances. The audience was captivated by the performance that expressed the rich history and tradition, lightness and power of folk performing art. The performers responded to the crowd's prolonged applause with an encore performance. This event was a great success in strengthening ties between the two countries. At the reception, a member of a Russian emergency rescue team mentioned that he was touched by the courage of the Japanese people who confronted the disaster. The performance won eighth place at the Russian Silver Archer Awards. We will be more than happy if the success of the event and the enthusiastic response of the Russian audience have an empowering effect on the disaster victims.

Dekiru 1, the First Comprehensive Japanese Textbook in Hungary



Dekiru 1 and certificate of the Most Beautiful Hungarian Book Award

The first volume of a Japanese-language textbook for Hungarians entitled, *Dekiru 1* was published in August 2011. The textbook project was financed with the support of the Japan-Hungary Cooperation Forum, a platform of 12 Japanese private companies and whose aim was to enhance the teaching of Japanese-language education in Hungary. Work on the textbook started in 2007 with the cooperation of Association of Japanese Language Teachers in Hungary (MJOT), and under the guidance of Japanese-language education experts, the textbook was developed in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). CEFR outlines objective criteria in order to assess language proficiency levels of learners in secondary school education or higher. *Dekiru 1* has caught the attention of Japanese-language educators and its community, not only because it is the first CEFR-based textbook published in Europe, in addition to numerous illustrations and photographs that assist in providing knowledge of Japanese society and culture, it emphasizes the promotion of cross-cultural understanding. In June 2012, *Dekiru 1* was awarded the top prize in the textbook category of the *Most Beautiful Hungarian Book Contest* due to its excellent design and comprehensive content. The next phase and challenge for us is to expand our outreach efforts using *Dekiru 1* to teach Japanese language in classrooms across Hungary.

Raising Interest in Japanese Culture through Pop Culture



Participants at Hosogaya's lecture with their original manga drawings in hand

With the outbreak of revolution in January 2011, Egypt faced a tumultuous year. Under this tense situation, we continued to host programs to introduce Japanese pop culture to local youth who are the future of the country. In October we refurbished our library and provided visitors with opportunities to experience Japanese culture. The library features more than 1,000 comic books as well as CDs, anime DVDs and games, equips J-POP video corners, and hosts lectures, workshops and film screenings, under different themes every month to acquaint local people with modern Japanese culture. In March 2012, we held a lecture and workshop on Japanese manga by manga researcher and associate professor at Tokyo Polytechnic University, Atsushi Hosogaya. The venue was packed with young manga fans who brought their original works, asking for his advice. The event triggered spontaneous engagement in cultural activities, for example, forming manga drawing groups to enter international manga award competitions and issuing manga magazines. We will further work to promote cultural exchange with Egypt, a country currently in the process of democratization, in hopes to contribute to the future.