

Message from the President

Fiscal 2014 was a year of new challenges for the Japan Foundation.

In April 2014, the Asia Center was established in line with the new Asian cultural exchange policy, *WA Project: Toward Interactive Asia through Fusion and Harmony*, announced at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting in Tokyo in December 2013. The Asia Center conducts two-way cultural exchanges between Japan and Asia. It supports activities to give rise to new values, sends Japanese-language education assistants, and conducts other new ways of cultural exchanges. One such program is NIHONGO Partners which recruits Japanese people interested in Japanese-language education or cultural exchange and sends them to junior and senior high schools in Southeast Asian countries. They assist local Japanese-language teachers and explain about Japanese culture. In September 2014, the program's first group of 100 "Partners" were assigned to five Southeast Asian countries including Thailand and Indonesia where they interacted with 38,000 students. The Asia Center plans to send more than 3,000 Japanese "Partners" over a seven-year period until 2020. Since the Japan Foundation has conventionally sent Japanese-language education specialists overseas, sending non-specialists is a new challenge for us. We have received comments from the Partners about how wonderful their

experiences were: "I was very touched by the kindness of the Southeast Asian people" and "I found a new goal in my life."

Also, since the project for providing broadcast programs overseas has been approved in the fiscal 2014 budget, the Japan Foundation will start providing quality Japanese programs to broadcast stations around the world.

Despite the Japanese government's tight fiscal condition, the Japan Foundation is being entrusted with more tasks to bring urgent and important government policies to fruition. They include strengthening exchanges with Asia and providing Japanese broadcast programs overseas. We take this as evidence of people's high expectations for the Japan Foundation. As the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics approach, all of us at the Japan Foundation have reaffirmed our commitment and determination to fulfill our mission to disseminate Japanese culture to the world and promote mutual understanding.

Mutual exchanges with other countries cannot be achieved without the understanding of all the parties involved. It is becoming more essential to have people in Japan gain understanding and offer their cooperation, in order to implement "NIHONGO Partners" and other important programs to strengthen exchanges with Asia. Unfortunately, young Japanese, the generation leading the future,

do not seem to have a high level of interest in international cultural exchanges.

International cultural exchanges enable people to see, understand, and like different cultures through person-to-person interaction. This enriches people's lives and helps them build a cornerstone for peace and prosperity in the world together. The Japan Foundation shall keep working to narrow the distance between the Japanese people and people around the world; to foster empathy, trust, and goodwill; and to have more people understand how meaningful international cultural exchanges are.

We would appreciate your continued support and cooperation.

Hiroyasu Ando
President
The Japan Foundation
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