

CLAIR Singapore Newsletter *Volume. 61* *March 2014*

Visit Japan Travel Seminar and Business-Meeting Sessions in Vietnam and Philippines

In order to further boost and support Japan-bound tourism promotion efforts of Japanese local governments and related organizations within the Southeast Asia region, CLAIR Singapore has been holding Japan-travel seminar and business-meeting sessions in one of these countries every year since 2011. Targeted at local travel industry players such as travel agents, airline operators and media agencies etc., these sessions aim to introduce some of the latest attractions and travel destinations in Japan to the local participants, as well as provide an opportunity for travel partners from both Southeast Asia and Japan to interact and network with one another.

For FY2013, the aforementioned 'Visit Japan Travel Seminar and Business-Meeting Session' was held in both Vietnam and Philippines, and details of the events are as follows.

■ Hanoi / Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

Co-organized by the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA), Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) Bangkok Representative Office and CLAIR Singapore, together with support from the Embassy of Japan in Vietnam and Consulate General of Japan in Ho Chi Minh City, the 'Visit Japan Travel Seminar and Business-Meeting Session' was successfully held in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City earlier this year, during mid-January 2014. This was a first time for Japanese public organizations to hold such a Japan-centric travel seminar and business-meeting session in Vietnam, and response from both Japanese and Vietnamese participants were highly positive and encouraging, with many of the Vietnamese participants finding information on the Japanese Visa application and new travel destination areas in Japan extremely useful. At the Hanoi venue, a total of 18 groups from Japan, including 7 Japanese local governments and related organizations,

as well as an estimated 56 participants from various travel agencies, airline operators and media agencies in Vietnam attended the event; while at Ho Chi Minh City, a total of 16 groups from Japan and an estimated 45 participants from Vietnam attended the session.

■ Manila (Philippines)

A 'Visit Japan Travel Seminar and Business-Meeting Session' was similarly held in Manila in December 2013, organized by JTA and JNTO Bangkok Representative Office. CLAIR Singapore was a supporter of the event and had also participated in the business-meeting session by setting up an information desk that provided general travel information on various local regions in Japan. Following last year's inaugural event, this was the second time that such a Japan travel seminar and business-meeting session was being held in Manila, and many of the participants from Philippines indicated that they were happy to see such events being held regularly as it provides them an



Business-meeting session at Philippines



Participants from the travel industry in Hanoi listening to the seminar

opportunity to gather more information about travel in Japan. This year, a total of 14 groups from Japan, including 4 Japanese local governments and related organizations, as well as an estimated 83 participants from the local travel industry in Philippines attended the event.

Following the recent issuance of multiple-entry tourist visas to Vietnamese and Filipino citizens who are visiting Japan, together with an increase in the frequency and flight options from these countries to Japan, the number of Japan-bound tourists from this region has been increasing significantly especially in the past year. As more and more Japanese local governments are seen shifting and enhancing their promotion efforts within Southeast Asia, CLAIR Singapore hopes to continue to collaborate with our various stakeholders in the implementation of such events and contribute in the promotion of Japan-bound tourism in the region.

Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar 2013

Held and hosted annually in Japan by CLAIR, the Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar (hereinafter referred to as 'the Seminar') is a platform that allows executives working in local governments and related organizations from both within and outside of Japan to come together to exchange information and engage in discussions regarding the current situation and issues faced by their respective local areas. The Seminar aims to raise awareness about the state of local governance in both Japan and abroad, and also provides an opportunity for all participating countries and local governments to further establish and develop their networks with one another.

From 6 – 11 October 2013, 11 participants from the ASEAN region and India, namely, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Thailand, Cambodia and India were invited to Japan to take part in this Seminar.

The week-long Seminar consisted of 2 parts: a seminar in Tokyo and an exchange program at a Japanese local government. At the Tokyo seminar, lectures on the Japanese local administration system, an overview of CLAIR's programs and a welcome reception were held.

For the exchange program at a local government, the participants visited Tottori, the prefecture with the smallest population in Japan. In line with this year's program theme of 'Promotion of Economic and Tourism Exchange with Southeast Asia', participants were introduced to the prefecture's various efforts in tourism promotion and regional development. For instance, the prefecture is stepping up on its tourism campaign to promote its 3 main attractions of lush nature, hot springs and famous Japanese manga characters. Recommended sightseeing courses that cover major places of interests in Kyoto, Osaka and Tottori will be introduced to foreign tourists to aid in the planning of their travel itineraries, and a new prefectural office will be opened in Bangkok, Thailand which will oversee the prefecture's regional economic and exchange activities in Southeast Asia.

During their stay in Tottori, the Seminar participants visited the Tottori Sand Dunes, the Sand Museum, a sake brewery and the Tottori Institute of Industrial Technology. They were also given the opportunity to stay overnight at a traditional Japanese inn called Misasa Onsen to experience Japanese culture at its best.

At the end of the Seminar, an opinion exchange session was held in which the participants actively contributed ideas and views based on their experience in Japan. Some participants suggested that Tottori focus its marketing efforts on its famous manga characters and unique marine products to distinguish itself from other prefectures. Others commented that Tottori's policy of getting residents, enterprises and government together to work towards regional economic development had been of great reference to them when facing similar challenges in their countries.

To the participants, the Seminar had not only been a trip to learn about the latest policies of Japan, but also a valuable occasion to get acquainted with counterparts from different countries and deepen the cultural understanding among them.



A visit to a precision instruments manufacturer in Tottori



Visit to Asakusa area in Tokyo

Seminar Itinerary

Date	Itinerary	City
6 Oct Sunday	Arrival in Japan	Tokyo
7 Oct Monday	Tokyo Seminar (presentation on the activities of CLAIR, introduction to local government system and local economic development in Japan, welcome reception)	Tokyo
8 Oct Tuesday	Travel to Tottori Prefecture Exchange programs in Tottori (tour of local tourist attractions, courtesy visit to the Governor, presentation on Tottori Prefecture, welcome reception hosted by Tottori Prefecture)	Tottori
9 Oct Wednesday	Exchange programs in Tottori (tour of local tourist attractions and businesses, opinion exchange, reception hosted by CLAIR, overnight stay in traditional Japanese inn)	Tottori
10 Oct Thursday	Exchange programs in Tottori (tour of local tourist attractions) Return to Tokyo, tour of tourist attractions in Tokyo, free time	Tokyo
11 Oct Friday	Depart from Japan	

Regional Exchange Promotion Program 2013 in Thailand

The sustenance of a dynamic and advantageous network of cooperation with local governments in the ASEAN region as well as India has been a preponderant element propelling the internationalization efforts of Japanese local governments in recent years. Though the success of such endeavors depend on a myriad of factors, creation of an effective catalyst for communication between the local governments is thought to be utmost vital. In view of the necessity to open doors for communication between local governments in Japan and the ASEAN region as well as India, CLAIR Singapore has implemented the Regional Exchange Promotion Program since 2007.

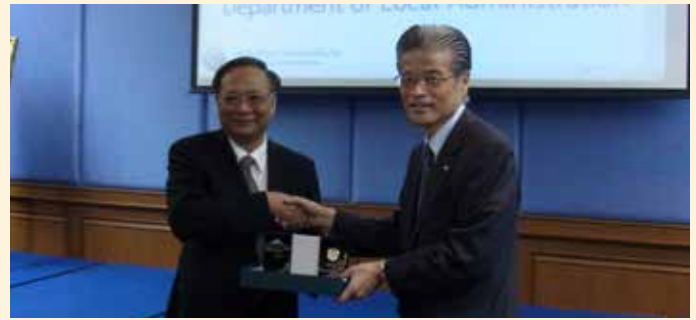
The Regional Exchange Promotion Program is a study mission aimed at providing a constructive platform for Japanese local government officials to interact with governmental organizations, enterprises as well as civilians in other ASEAN countries and India. Through the program, Japanese local government officials will not only be able to gain first-hand knowledge pertaining to the many facets of administrative as well as economic reforms in the local context, but they will also be given an opportunity to establish important contacts with local counterparts which may lead to future cooperation.

For FY 2013, CLAIR Singapore implemented the Regional Exchange Promotion Program in Thailand from 6 to 16 November 2013, whereby 11 local government officials from various regions in Japan participated in the program. Being one of the most popular investment destinations for Japanese companies in the ASEAN region, Thailand indeed has a wealth of potential for future developments. In FY 2011, Thailand recorded a per capita GDP of USD \$5,395 which enabled the country to be ranked fourth in the ASEAN region, and this is testament to its economic capability. According to data released by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in Bangkok, as of August 2013 a total of 7,730 Japanese companies are operating in Thailand, making Japan one of the biggest investors in Thailand. In view of the increasing interests from Japanese local governments towards Thailand, CLAIR Singapore held meetings with governmental as well as trade organizations, Japanese enterprises, industrial park and educational institution during the course of the Regional Exchange Promotion Program in Thailand.

One main focus of the program is to enable participants from Japan to obtain insights on the latest reforms and



Group photo of the participants during the Cultural Exchange Program



Meeting at the Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior

developments of local administration in Thailand. In line with this objective, participants of the program were given the opportunity to visit the Ministry of Interior's Department of Local Administration, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and Phitsanulok Municipality. The Department of Local Administration provided in-depth explanations on the structure of local administration in Thailand, and at the same time enlightened program participants on the current situation as well as future direction of Thailand's local autonomy. The meeting at Bangkok Metropolitan Administration saw program participants engaging in meaningful discussions with representatives from the administration on topics relating to its urban planning policies, in particular measures undertaken by the administration in tackling urban issues such as floods. Program participants also visited Phitsanulok Municipality situated in the northern area of Thailand, where they were warmly welcomed by the local people. Program participants were able to learn about the various administrative reforms implemented by Phitsanulok Municipality to improve public service delivery.

For the program participants to grasp a deeper understanding on the factors contributing to Thailand's economic advancement, visits to local Japanese companies and industrial park with high concentration of Japanese companies were also conducted, whereby participants were enlightened on the current situation and issues of doing business in Thailand.

To promote friendly exchange between Japan and Thailand, a Cultural Exchange Program was also implemented in conjunction with the main program in Thailand. Students from Naresuan University in Phitsanulok Municipality who are learning the Japanese Language were given an opportunity to exchange views with participants from Japan on an array of topics relating to the culture and lifestyle of both countries. This program provided an invaluable platform for the participants from Japan to interact with young aspiring Thais who will be the key persons to bridge the cordial relations between Japan and Thailand in the future.

CLAIR Singapore will continue to implement the Regional Exchange Promotion Program, and we aspire to strengthen the cooperative ties and widen the contact networks between local governments in Japan and ASEAN countries as well as India through this program.

Specialist Dispatch Project in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia has been a crucial growth engine driving the nation's economic as well as social developments, strengthening Malaysia's overall competitive advantage in the ASEAN region. A highly urbanized metropolitan city with an area of 243km² and a population of 1.7 million people, Kuala Lumpur sees a high density of local residents with diversifying needs in terms of public services. Mandated with the administration and management of the city, Kuala Lumpur City Hall has continuously strived to leverage the quality of public services it provides, so as to better address the actual needs of local residents. As a result of this tireless effort, Kuala Lumpur City Hall has been able to implement a wide range of successful best practices in the fields of urban design, economic planning, transport management, environmental conservation and also public health management.

Public health and sanitation has always been a key focus area for Kuala Lumpur City Hall in delivering its daily administrations, as this aspect concerns the wellbeing of local residents living in the city. With the aim to further improve the level of public health and sanitation in the city, in addition to leverage the food sampling techniques used by its Food Laboratory, the Health and Environment Department of Kuala Lumpur City Hall made a request to CLAIR Singapore for a Japanese specialist to be dispatched to Kuala Lumpur. As a result, Mr. Mitsuru Higashiseto, a Health Officer from the Aira Public Health Center in Kagoshima Prefecture was dispatched as a specialist to Kuala Lumpur from 3 to 13 December 2013 so as to provide the necessary trainings.



A scene at the food laboratory

During the first half of the project, the specialist and officials from Kuala Lumpur City Hall conducted on-site inspection on restaurants that were randomly selected, whereby the specialist conducted activities such as checking the current local conditions of sanitation management, gathering test samples for the quantitative analysis of coliform bacterium and interviewing local restaurant owners. In addition, the specialist also inspected the sanitation conditions in local restaurants and provided

the relevant advice to restaurant owners on sanitation management. The specialist also conducted relevant trainings on different food sampling techniques to the staff of Kuala Lumpur City Hall's Food Laboratory.



Site inspection at a local restaurant

In the second half of the program, a series of health and sanitation seminars targeted at staff from Kuala Lumpur City Hall, restaurant owners and food handlers were conducted. During a seminar attended by staff from the Health and Environment Department, the specialist conducted a briefing on several case studies of food poisoning incidents in Japan that have brought about positive changes in the local authority's delivery of sanitation management. During this seminar, the specialist also showcased the ATP bioluminescence method, which is a rapid and reliable test method used to monitor surface contamination in food processing, as well as to detect contaminants in food products. The introduction of ATP bioluminescence method was well-received by staff from the Health and Environment Department as it is relatively new in the local context and has the potential to revolutionize the current swab method adopted locally.

In another seminar targeted at restaurant owners and food handlers, participants were briefed on the necessary steps that should be taken to improve the sanitation management of restaurants and eateries. Participants were also given an opportunity to practice the hygienic methods of hand washing using the "Hand Wash Checker", whereby participants learnt the proper way of cleaning their hands to prevent food contamination during the course of food preparation.

Through the Specialist Dispatch Project, CLAIR aspires to promote a higher level of knowledge transfer between local governments in Japan and the ASEAN region as well as India. Kindly contact CLAIR Singapore for further information on the project.

The Best Produce and Delicacies from Across Japan – Japan Local Specialty Fair Held in Bangkok for the First Time!

In an effort to support Japanese local governments that are eager to look for opportunities to market their local food products overseas, CLAIR has been organizing a food fair entitled “Japan Local Specialty Fair” which features famous local food products sourced through local governments from across Japan. The fair was held in Shanghai in FY 2010 and in Hong Kong in FY 2011 and 2012, all of which were extremely well-received by the consumers, hosting department stores and the participating food companies. In FY 2013, CLAIR held the Japan Local Specialty Fair for the first time in Siam Paragon department store in Bangkok, Thailand, which is emerging to be an important market in Southeast Asia for Japanese food products.



Promoting Japanese apples to Thai consumers

Thailand is one of the major export markets for agricultural and marine products as well as food products made in Japan. Japanese food is so widely accepted in the urban Thai society that it is said that there are already more than 1,200 Japanese restaurants in the capital city of Bangkok. Since the tourist visa exemption for Thai nationals

came into effect in July 2013, Japan’s popularity has risen further among the Thai people with more Japan-bound tours and greater variety of Japanese food fueling a ‘Japan boom’ in the country. For the Japan Local Specialty Fair in Bangkok, there were 18 participating food companies from 13 prefectures recruited through the local governments, and together they presented an abundant collection of famous local food products and fresh produce from across Japan.

■ What are the popular Japanese foods and tastes in Thailand?

Fruits and snacks were the bestselling items in the fair, especially the Japanese persimmons which were so popular that more than 1,000 of them were sold on the first day alone. Reflecting the buying trends of a health-conscious public, fresh fruits as well as snacks made of real fruits enjoyed great popularity among the consumers. In terms of seasoning, sweet and sour foods were undoubtedly the preferred tastes. Noodles such as udon and ramen also sold very well as many consumers bought them for their texture and ease of preparation. Indeed, the noodles were all sold out before the last day of the fair!



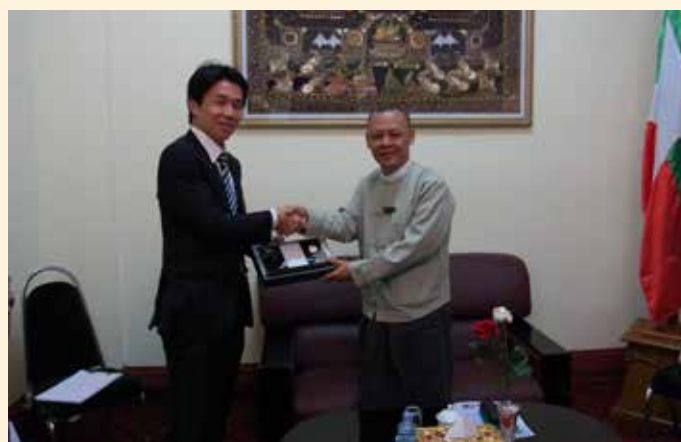
Visits to Myanmar’s General Administration Department and Bago Region

Delegates from CLAIR Singapore visited the General Administration Department (GAD) under the Ministry of Home Affairs in Myanmar on 19 December 2013, with the aim to further enhance the cooperative ties between both organizations. GAD is CLAIR’s official counterpart for its programs and activities in Myanmar, and the two organizations have enjoyed many years of constructive relations.

Mr. Tun Hla Aung, Director-General of GAD, met with the delegates from CLAIR Singapore and expressed hopes of continuing to learn about advanced technology and acquire the necessary know-how from Japan.

On 20 December, CLAIR also visited the GAD office of Bago Region where the delegates were warmly received by Secretary Maung Maung Than. The Secretary commented that he looked forward to more interaction between Myanmar and Japan to increase mutual understanding, and consequently spur further cooperative opportunities.

It is hoped that cooperative relations at the local level between the two countries could be leveraged to greater heights in future through CLAIR’s programs such as the



(from left) Mr. Adachi Masahide, Director of CLAIR Singapore and Mr. Tun Hla Aung, Director General of GAD

Specialist Dispatch Project, Local Government Officials Training Program (LGOTP), and Local Government Exchange & Cooperation Seminar.

CLAIR visits Vietnam's Ministry of Home Affairs & Hanoi People's Committee

On 14 January 2014, delegates from CLAIR Singapore, led by Director, Mr. Adachi Masahide, paid courtesy visits to both Vietnam's Ministry of Home Affairs and Hanoi People's Committee respectively, with the objective of strengthening the collaboration and ties between CLAIR Singapore and the two organizations.

Related officials and personnel from various departments under Vietnam's Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) attended the meeting at the Ministry, including Mr. Nguyen Huu Duc, Director-General of the Department of Local Administration, Mr. Luong Quang Luyen, Deputy Director-General of the Department of International Cooperation, as well as officials from the Department of State Employees and Servants and Institute of Science for State Organization. With the recent revision of the constitution in Vietnam, discussions on further reviews of Vietnam's local governance law and administrative structure has also been ongoing, and some officials from MOHA indicated their interest to wish to learn more about Japan's local government administrative system to aid them as a form of reference when they look into amending the nation's local governance system in the future. Calls for



*Left: Mr. Adachi Masahide, Director of CLAIR Singapore
Right: Mr. Ha Van Que, Director-General of Hanoi Foreign Affairs Department*

greater forms of exchanges in terms of human resources and know-how between Vietnam and Japan were also mentioned during the meeting.

The delegation from CLAIR Singapore was similarly warmly received at Hanoi People's Committee, where the group had the pleasure to meet with officials from the Hanoi Foreign Affairs Department, led by Director-General Mr. Ha Van Que. Apart from establishing friendship ties with Fukuoka Prefecture since 2008, Hanoi City has also been actively collaborating with several Japanese local governments on various projects over the recent years, including cooperating with the Embassy of Japan in Vietnam in organizing events to commemorate the 40th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Japan and Vietnam last year. Both Hanoi People's Committee and CLAIR Singapore hope to have greater forms of cooperation between Japanese local governments and the capital city and look forward to further enhancing the relations between both organizations.

CLAIR Singapore hopes to continue to further enhance the collaborations and exchanges between Japan and Vietnam through our various programs, and looks forward to maintaining close and cooperative relations with our counterparts in Vietnam.



Meeting between delegates from CLAIR Singapore and MOHA, Vietnam

About CLAIR

CLAIR is a joint organization founded in 1988 by 47 prefectures and 20 major cities in Japan in order to assist Japanese local authorities with the implementation of their international exchange policies. With its headquarters in Tokyo, CLAIR has seven overseas offices in New York, London, Paris, Singapore, Seoul, Sydney, and Beijing.

CLAIR Singapore office was set up in October 1990. It supports and promotes international activities and friendly relations between local authorities in Japan and their counterparts in Singapore and the ASEAN countries as well as India.

For further information on our activities, please contact CLAIR Singapore.

CLAIR TOKYO HEADQUARTERS

The Council of Local Authorities for International Relations
Sogo Hanzomon building (1st, 6th, 7th floors)
1-7 Kojimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 102-0083, Japan
General Affairs Department
Tel: 81-3-5213-1730
Fax: 81-3-5213-1741
<http://www.clair.or.jp/e/index.html>

CLAIR SINGAPORE OFFICE

The Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, Singapore
6 Battery Road #26-01/02 Singapore 049909
Tel: 65-6224-7927 Fax: 65-6224-8376
E-mail: info@clair.org.sg
<http://www.clair.org.sg>