

JAPAN



Japan's aid to Iraq

Committed to the postwar reconstruction of Iraq, the Japanese government has contributed both financial and personnel assistance.

To date, Japan has pledged \$5bn in reconstruction aid for Iraq, consisting of \$1.5bn in grant aid and up to \$3.5bn in loan aid. As part of its grant assistance, the government has supported a number of different projects, including the deployment of 620 police patrol vehicles in 27 cities and the provision of ambulances and cars to transport water to the city of Samawa. Medical equipment at the Samawa hospital, built by the Japanese government in the 1980s, will also be replaced.

In addition, the government has decided to contribute \$8.8m to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to help finance the restoration of 271 primary and secondary schools, 3,000 damaged houses and other public facilities – projects which will create much-needed jobs for local people.

In December 2003, the Japanese government approved a basic plan for the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to Iraq, in accordance with the Iraq Reconstruction Assistance Special Measures Law enacted in July.

This paved the way for the dispatch of approximately 1,000 members of the SDF to Iraq. Members of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) will engage in a wide range of humanitarian and reconstruction activities. GSDF doctors will provide medical treatment for the local people and technical support to Iraqi doctors and hospital staff. The GSDF will also use purification equipment to enable clean water from the Euphrates river to be supplied to areas suffering from severe water shortages. In addition, the GSDF unit will repair public facilities such as school buildings, roads and irrigation systems.



GSDF Advance Unit head Col Masahisa Sato meets local community leader

Members of the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) will airlift food, medicine and other supplies between Kuwait and Iraq as part of Japan's assistance, and some 300 members of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) will also be deployed to transport GSDF personnel and equipment to the Persian Gulf.

All SDF operations will be conducted with due consideration and respect for the customs and religious beliefs of the Iraqi people.

Goodwill message from Foreign Office Minister Rammell



PHOTOGRAPH: FCO

I am pleased to have this opportunity to contribute a message to *On Japan*. 2003 was a momentous year in foreign policy terms for both Japan and the UK. The UK-Japan relationship has never been better. This was evident during the Prime Minister's successful visit to Japan in July. During this visit, Prime Minister Tony Blair and Prime Minister Koizumi had detailed discussions on many areas of international concern, and signed bilateral agreements on the Environment, Science and Technology and ICT. Mr Blair

made clear during his visit that Britain sees Japan as an indispensable and valuable partner in achieving international security.

The importance of the political, economic, trade and cultural links between our two nations has been apparent to me throughout my tenure as minister responsible for relations with Japan. Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and the Foreign Secretary speak regularly, discussing the wide variety of areas where our two governments are working together. My own visit to Japan in 2003 gave me the opportunity to learn about the issues and priorities of the Japanese government and people.

It is my belief that, through greater co-operation with friends like Japan, we can make real progress on key global issues such as sustainable development, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. As the second largest aid donor in the world, Japan is committed to international development. We are working on an increasing number of joint development projects with other countries. Another example of this co-operation is Japan's strong political support for the aims of the coalition in Iraq: the generous response made at Madrid to the appeal for reconstruction funds and their position on debt forgiveness for Iraq. Japan's historic >

NEWS IN CONTEXT

Japan's Foreign Policy 2004

The future direction of Japan's foreign policy was outlined in two key speeches made on January 19. Addressing the 159th Session of the Diet, Prime Minister Koizumi stressed that Japan's development and prosperity were intertwined with the peace and stability of the world and pledged that Japan would play an active role in the international community.

The importance of international co-operation was echoed by Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi in her policy speech later that day. Describing the reconstruction of Iraq as an urgent issue facing the world, she reiterated Japan's commitment to providing

humanitarian assistance to Iraq, as well as to strengthening the solidarity of the international community in this context. She also announced that Japan would host a conference aimed at confidence-building between the Israelis and Palestinians in a further effort to promote peace in the Middle East.

Turning to the fight against terrorism, Ms Kawaguchi said it was vital to promote co-operation among various countries in areas such as information exchange, immigration control and anti-terrorist financing. It was also important, she said, to prevent the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction by countries of concern and terrorists, and Japan would therefore endeavour to strengthen international frameworks to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

The Foreign Minister observed that in order for the international community to co-operate in its efforts to tackle important issues, it was necessary for the United Nations to play a greater role, and Japan had therefore proposed a meeting of heads of states and governments in 2005 to discuss UN reform.

In conclusion, Foreign Minister Kawaguchi said: "All countries in the international community are co-operating to counter constantly emerging new issues. As one of the major members of this community, Japan needs to participate in these efforts on its own initiative." *For the full text of this speech please visit www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/eng/announce/040120_policy.html.*



PHOTOGRAPH: MOFA, JAPAN

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decision to send troops to Iraq in January 2004 to assist with reconstruction shows the changing role Japan is playing on the global stage.

Alongside terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, one of our greatest challenges in forthcoming years will be the environment. The UK will continue to work closely with Japan on sustainable energy solutions to reduce CO₂ emissions, the principal cause of climate change.

With such a wide range of issues before us it is also important not to lose sight of the importance of grassroots issues. The JET programme gives many young British people the opportunity to experience the real Japan by living and working there. The working holiday visa provides young people with the chance to live and work in Japan for up to a year, on a more flexible basis. It is a reciprocal programme which also allows Japanese young people to live and work in the UK. In May 2003 the Japanese government introduced a new volunteer visa category. This has opened the door for many young people to travel to Japan and work in a voluntary capacity on programmes such as GAP. I am also pleased at the success of Innovation UK, a year-long project run by our Embassy in Japan, aimed at raising the UK's image as a progressive, innovative and dynamic society.

We live in challenging times, but with support from like-minded partners we can look forward with hope to a more just and peaceful world. I look forward to the continuance of the very close friendship between our two countries.

Letter from Japan

A popular winter destination is Sapporo, a city which has been clever at making the most of its harsh winters. Home of the beer of the same name, it is one of the *ramen* capitals of Japan and offers good skiing. It hosts an annual international ski marathon and is famous for its snow festival, which doubles its population during the first week of February as teams from around the world compete to build small-scale replicas of world famous buildings. Last year, 16 overseas teams participated, and although the

city experienced a slight fall in numbers of domestic visitors, those from abroad rose by 33% compared with the previous year. To promote the event further, the City introduced a Virtual Snow Festival four years ago to enable children around the world to design and send in their own virtual ice sculptures.



Sapporo's world famous snow festival

J-trends Biometrics



Since the events of September 11, 2001 the demand for biometric security systems has rocketed, and so has the need for international standards.

Biometrics is the technology used to measure and recognise human features which are unique to a particular individual, such as fingerprints, iris and retina, voice and handwriting. In Japan, products with such friendly names as Touchpass, Puppy Fingerprint, Friendtouch and Irispass will already enable you to unlock your front door at the touch of a button, without having to put your shopping down to hunt for keys.

Research has been given a further boost

by the International Civil Aviation Organisation's recommendation to introduce biometric passports in 2004, currently being considered by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In its bid to make Japan's airports the leading e-airports in the world, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport has been conducting trials at Narita. One thousand frequent flyers were asked to register their face, iris and passport details onto an integrated circuit (IC) chip, which was then embedded in a card or a mobile phone strap. At the check-in desk, the IC chip is read and data and face are matched through a facial recognition system. The IC chip is again tested against the passenger's iris to let them through security and onto the aircraft. The aim is to reduce by half the time taken by check-in and security procedures.

PHOTOGRAPH: NARITA AIRPORT AUTHORITY

interview

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSURE

Dai Fujikura



Born in Osaka in 1977, Dai Fujikura has lived in the UK since the age of 15. He has studied with leading composers Daryl Runswick, Edwin Roxburgh and George Benjamin. His versatile compositions have won him prizes and been performed throughout Europe and more recently in Japan, where he received 2nd prize in the coveted Toru Takemitsu Award in May 2003.

Why did you come to the UK?

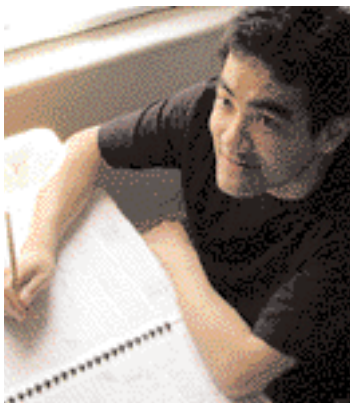
Because of the A' Level system, whereby I could study fewer subjects, but in greater depth. I always wanted to be a composer and staying in Japan meant spending too much time on other subjects, so I went to Dover College as a music scholar.

Why composition?

When I was young my piano teacher insisted that one should play a piece as the composer intended. Now I think she is right, of course, but at the time I rebelled and thought I would compose my own music so I could play it how I liked. My mother read me stories about German and Austrian composers, which inspired me to go to Germany. I was going to move there after Dover College, but at the time I did not really like the German contemporary music scene, so I stayed on in the UK and studied composition at Trinity College. Ironically many of my projects and commissions are from Germany now.

You received recognition in Japan recently with *Calling Timbuktu*?

Yes, I won 2nd prize in the 2003 Toru Takemitsu Awards. The piece was not written for the award. In fact, it was two years old and now I think I could do so much better. I was lucky – it is every composer's dream to actually have their music performed. Its UK premiere will be on March 12, played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

**Do you think music is perceived differently in Japan and the UK?**

That would be the subject of an entire thesis. Until last year, I had never worked with a Japanese orchestra and was nervous about using polite forms of Japanese. What struck me most was the rehearsal time: in the UK,

musicians have such limited time, dashing from one end of the city to the next. Working with the Tokyo Philharmonic was fascinating because they spent so much time on my piece, and I felt they understood how to play it and were very committed to it.

What about your UK collaborations?

Over the years my music has been performed in places as varied as Huddersfield, Hoxton Hall and the Queen Elizabeth Hall. I have developed a very good relationship with the London Sinfonietta, which has played my music since 2000, and I am currently working with them on their *Blue Touch Paper*.

What is *Blue Touch Paper*?

It is a commission, but unlike other commissions I have a budget which I can use freely and this has enabled me to experiment with instruments. I am developing my 'spatial work' and currently working on staging music. It is something I feel very strongly about because the quality of recordings is so high nowadays, concert goers need to get more than just the performance of a piece. The music is the most important thing of course, but the lighting and staging of the performance could be so much better. My current project involves 10 players, and I place the cello, which has a significant part, at the front of the stage, the trumpet behind it as a shadow, and the other eight players within the audience. The conductor faces the public, which makes them feel more involved in the actual performance, as though they were in a cinema.

Has film had an important influence on your work?

Yes. I wanted to be a film music composer when I was younger, then realised my direction was more towards contemporary music. But I always have a strong visual image when I compose: it's abstract, to do with colours, camera movement, zooms. Last year, I scored the music for a short film called *Salt Scrubbers*, which was part of the London Film Festival. Despite time pressure, it felt very natural. There are constraints of course, but what I love most about composition is the freedom to do what you like at the pace you like. I am also working with a friend and video artist called Tomoya Yamaguchi. He's actually a painter and only bought a video camera to film his children. We have already done two collaborative pieces, *teki*, performed at the Purcell Room, and *moromoro*, performed in Holland by pianist Tomoko Mukaiyama. Video and music share a time element which painting doesn't have. This is one of my new directions. *Future UK performances include March 12, and April 6 and 8. For information and samples of Fujikura's work, visit his website www.daifujikura.com.*

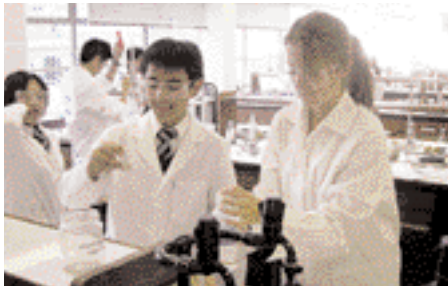
Interview by Elizabeth Aveling

Science, Creativity and the Young Mind

Recently Japanese and British pupils had a unique opportunity to carry out experiments together at top university laboratories as part of a pioneering Japan-UK school-scientist partnership programme.

Jointly co-ordinated by Dr Eric Albone of the Clifton Scientific Trust and Dr Toru Okano, Head of Science at Rikkyo School in Sussex, with funding from the Japanese Embassy, 'Science, Creativity and the Young Mind' is a pilot project designed to explore the potential for partnership between scientists and British and Japanese schools. This enables pupils to see science as a 'real-life challenge' by working with professional scientists.

As students from Drayton Manor High School in Hanwell and The Japanese School in Acton put their heads together to work on an experiment involving plasmid digests at the Genetic Therapies Centre (GTC) at Imperial College, London, 15-year-old Nicky quickly made friends with her partner Tomomi. "We



Students from Rikkyo School and Cranleigh School

would never have the chance to do such detailed experiments at school", she said, "but the best part of today has been working with the pupils from The Japanese school." Fourteen-year-old Kenta from The Japanese School was clearly impressed by the high-tech surroundings: "Being able to use proper equipment in a real laboratory has definitely deepened my interest in science," he commented.

Biology teacher Wahida Dandjee, who accompanied the group from Drayton Manor, was thrilled by their response to the project. "It's inspirational for pupils to see science in a real context, and I'm sure it will have an impact on their motivation when they get back to school."

Professor Andrew Miller who heads the GTC was equally struck by the pupils' enthusiasm. "I am very pleased to see a two-way interaction between the schools and my own PhD students. It is essential not only to engage pupils with the social significance of science and its relevance to their own lives, but also for universities to reach out to bridge the gap between science as taught in schools and in the real world."

As part of the same project, Rikkyo School in Sussex was partnered with Cranleigh School in Surrey in September 2003. Pupils from the two schools carried out chemical analyses of water from different



Pupils from Drayton Manor School and The Japanese School in Acton

countries and compared samples of each other's hair under the direction of Dr Neil Ward at the University of Surrey.

Dr Albone is delighted with the success of the programme which, he feels, has demonstrated how working alongside professionals can transform pupils' perceptions of science. "Young people need to see science as something creative and living, and this project has also demonstrated the potential for science to act as a cultural bridge."

Dr Okano agrees: "Japan and the UK face a similar problem in that science is no longer popular among young people, partly as a result of the fact that they only experience it as a school subject. The most valuable aspect of this project is that they are able to discover the role that science plays in the real world through direct contact with working scientists."

To find out more about the Science, Creativity and the Young Mind project, email Dr Eric Albone at eric.albone@clifton-scientific.org.

JICC AT YOUR SERVICE

Support for Japan-related events

As part of its mission to encourage grass-roots exchange, JICC regularly provides support to regional UK-Japan societies, universities and other non-profit groups wishing to



Wax replicas of Japanese culinary favourites available for loan

organise Japan-related cultural events.

JICC can provide advice on the planning and organising of an event, such as a Japan Day or a regional Matsuri. The Centre can also put organisations in touch with Japanese performers and artists based in the UK and can sometimes participate directly by providing Embassy staff to speak about aspects of Japan or Japanese policy, or to take part in cultural workshops. JICC can supply materials including posters, leaflets on Japan and origami paper, and lend items such as calligraphy brushes and colourful happi coats from its collection of Japanese artefacts. Small grants are also available on a



JICC offers support at the Northern Ireland Japan Day last April

case-by-case basis to support events.

For further details about the support available to organisations planning to hold a Japan-related cultural event, please contact JICC on 020 7465 6500.

FOCUS ON The Japan Society

Established in September 1891, The Japan Society has a membership of 250 corporate and 900 individual members. It offers a wide range of activities and caters to all tastes and budgets, from hosting a lunch for the Foreign Secretary to leading annual country walks. It celebrated its centenary during the 1991 Japan Festival.

The Japan Society still plays a central role in many aspects of UK-Japan relations within the UK, at both high and grassroots levels. Its mission is the better mutual understanding of the cultures, societies and businesses of the UK and Japan and its wide membership combines to make a powerful focus on Japan within the UK. Corporate membership benefits all staff and their spouses while individual membership includes wives or husbands, so a great many people are involved.

Recent large-scale events have included The Will Adams Dinner in the Painted Hall at



Francis Roads, Hon Vice-President of the British Go Association, challenges JCG members

Greenwich, the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the signing by Lord Lansdowne of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and a three-month-long exhibition in Edinburgh and London, displaying through books, paintings and decorative art the wonderful and varied plants and gardens which Japan has bequeathed to the West. Also well attended has been the Autumn Pub Supper, during which the Ambassador, or his representative, has led a serious discussion in an informal setting.

The Society is keen to encourage participation from younger members. A strong recent set of initiatives has brought down both the cost of most events and the average age of members, and many young people have derived great enjoyment from them. The Society enjoys a close relationship with the JET Alumni Association. Another medium-term aim is to increase the participation of Japanese members, who currently make up 45% of its membership. The Society is working hard to encourage more families to join the activities in order for them to make new friends and gain even more from their stay in the UK. The Annual Cricket Match and Barbecue is part of The Society's effort in this area and is as popular as ever, attracting people from a wide range of ages and from all walks of life. Families are catered for with special provision for children. Programmes are now produced in Japanese



Garden Party in honour of Prince and Princess Arisugawa, 1905

and the website has a useful up-to-date Japanese section.

The Society's offices at Buckingham Gate are now very happily co-located with its library. Particularly strong in the history of Anglo-Japanese Relations, the library has some wonderful photographs and a collection of some 6,000 very fine volumes, which have been donated over the years, mainly by past members. After much devoted labour, the library is now open for the loan of books and for study. The Society also publishes one or two books a year, produces a regular *Newsletter* and its annual *'Proceedings'* which carry the edited scripts of some of the 25 or so key lectures organised each year.

Every year The Japan Society organises a forum for all UK-based Japan societies. The next one, in February, will host some 50 delegates discussing activities and administrative initiatives of mutual interest. Currently jointly chaired by The Viscount Trenchard and Sir John Whitehead, the Council oversees committees dedicated to specific interest groups (see boxes below):

Special Interest Groups

Younger Members

The group has a very active programme, ranging from outings to plays and night clubs, to skating and tennis tournaments, and quizzes and demonstrations. There are events every month, some joint with JET AA. Particularly popular is the annual Treasure Hunt, which involves racing round Inner London finding the answers to Japan-related questions.

Japanese Conversation

About 60 or so members meet monthly in a private room in a pub in London's West End to speak Japanese. This is aimed at those wanting to improve language skills, and seasonal activities and games are organised to encourage interaction for those who wish to participate.

Business

This group is probably the most active in the Society and its role is of central importance. As well as the four lunch parties per year which it arranges with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce (recent guests of honour have included the Chairman of Mitsubishi, the Head of the Bank of International Settlement and the Permanent Secretary in the Lord Chancellor's Office), the group organises lunchtime lectures (this year, the Head of the *Financial Times* Bureau in Tokyo and the Editor of *The Economist*) and four dinners a year, with guests of honour such as the Executive Director of The Bank of Japan and the Chief Executive of British Trade International. At all these events, an informal and interactive atmosphere is encouraged.

Culture

The Japan Society culture programme covers 25 lectures per year, gallery visits, tours of houses and attendance at plays, concerts and other performances thanks to close relations with a number of galleries and museums. A recent visit to Gallerie Besson, for example, followed a tour of a Zen temple in a suburban villa. In 2003, the Society organised visits to Ireland, to Down House and to two particularly fine English Gardens as well as special gallery tours at the British and Victoria & Albert Museums in London.

For further information on The Japan Society and its programmes, please call 020 7828 6330 or visit the website: www.japansociety.org.uk.

UK-Japan 21st Century Group

Tadashi Yamamoto, President, Japan Centre for International Exchange



PHOTOGRAPH: JCI

Established in 1985 as the UK-Japan 2000 Group, the UK-Japan 21st Century Group was set up to study UK-Japan co-operation, based on an agreement between the Prime Ministers of the day, Yasuhiro Nakasone and Margaret Thatcher. The group meets once a year and its recommendations are submitted to the Prime Ministers of both countries.

It is not an easy task to review in a brief essay the genesis, evolution and accomplishments of the UK-Japan 21st Century Group. The challenge is particularly acute for me, given that I have been fortunate enough to be involved in this Group from its inception in February 1985. There are many rich and colourful tales to be told about this exceptional experiment. The Group represents a living tradition of trying to sustain and improve the relationship between the two nations, and indeed it can be regarded as a witness to the evolution of the UK-Japan relationship over the critical period of the past two decades.

The fact that the UK-Japan 20th Century Group was created in 1985 is, in itself, a reflection of the changing nature of the relationship. Japan was by then regarded as one of the leading industrial democracies, increasingly viewed as part of the West. Many large enterprises like Toyota and Sony had started making substantial investments in the UK. There was a growing amount of policy co-ordination and co-operation at the governmental level. Yet, it was keenly felt by some that such commercial and governmental relations were not matched by the depth of personal contact and mutual understanding enjoyed by Britain in its relations with other major partners.

Around this time, Richard Needham, a Member of Parliament, and Yukio Satoh, Political Counsellor at the Japanese Embassy in London, began exploring ways to remedy the situation. They saw relations between Japan and the UK at all levels as being 'cordial but not close'. As he started his tour of duty in the UK, Satoh was deeply impressed by the role played by the



PHOTOGRAPH: JCI

Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Masashi Nishihara, Lord Howell and Peter Mandelson in discussion on the new security challenges in East Asia

Koenigswinter Conference series between the UK and Germany in rebuilding their relationship in the postwar era.

The Japanese and UK governments eventually joined the effort to create a similar forum, but what stands out throughout the history of the UK-Japan 20th (and now 21st) Century Group was that it was individuals who initiated the process and who have kept this new tradition between the two countries alive. Individuals such as Peter Parker, Tadao Kato and Akio Morita have passed from the scene, but their legacy is felt in the Group's continued efforts.

Another important feature of the Group that has enabled it to play a useful role is that its activities have been independent from both governments despite a close relationship with them that includes financial support. The role played by the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) has to be emphasised in this connection. The intellectual integrity and substance of its leaders and staff provided a strong and essential underpinning for the Group's activities in the initial period and even enabled its Japanese counterpart, the Japan Centre for International Exchange, to play its role independent of the Japanese government.

One other distinctive feature of the Group has been its catalytic role in encouraging and supporting diverse groups in the UK and Japan to co-operate. Such efforts are consistent with its mission to bring people in the two countries closer together. Many individuals associated with the Group played a key role in the UK90 festival in Japan and during the Japan Festival in 1991-92. More recently, the Group has been encouraging closer co-operation between NGOs in such fields as the environment and development assistance. Its members also have played a catalytic role in enhancing co-operation among philanthropic and community-based organisations.

These developments clearly underscore the fact that the increasingly complex relationship between our countries can only be sustained through the involvement of a large number of individuals in diverse sectors.

The UK-Japan 21st Century Group has, in many instances, led the way in responding to the new challenges facing the international community. It has also become clear that such collaboration on the global agenda has, in turn, strengthened the bilateral relationship. Nevertheless, the task of keeping the UK-Japan relationship strong and viable in the current world environment has clearly become more challenging than before. I believe we can make a modest claim that the strong network of like-minded individuals that has developed through the work of the Group over the past two decades has better prepared our two countries to meet such challenges effectively.

what is Mame maki?

February 3 is *Setsubun*, literally 'seasonal division', and has come to mean the eve of Spring.

To mark the change, families still observe the custom of *mame maki*, bean throwing. The custom began as a new year ritual designed to drive away evil spirits and welcome prosperity, and is still popular with children today. On the evening of *Setsubun*, people throw roasted soy beans around the house and out of the windows, shouting "*oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi*" (devils out, good luck in).

Sometimes, someone plays the part of the *oni* and is chased around the room. When all

the beans are thrown, it is customary to eat the same number of beans as one's age in the hope of warding off illness.

The ritual of *mame maki* is said to originate from a Kyogen story (Noh comedy) still performed at Mibu Temple in Kyoto, in which an old lady, frightened by an ogre as she tries to steal his belongings, chases him out of her house with a handful of beans.

Nowadays, *mame maki* beans are sold in packets as *fuku mame* (lucky beans).



Lucky charms: Devil's mask and *mame maki* beans herald the arrival of spring

PHOTOGRAPH: THE JAPAN FORUM

kanji of the month



[mame]

February's kanji is *mame*, bean. It is a seven-stroke radical with *on* readings *tō* and *zu*. The basic ingredient in the healthy eater's favourite, *tōfu* (bean curd), *mame* are also found in the more controversial dish of *nattō* (fermented soy beans). *Mame* also

means miniature or pocket-sized as in *mamegaki* (small persimmon) or pea-shaped as in *mameshibori* (polka dot pattern).



On Line

This month we would like to introduce a fascinating and informative website:

www.jnto.go.jp/eng/illustrated/index.html

Hosted by the Japan National Tourist Organisation, the site provides lists of Japanese customs, traditions and arts, with helpful step-by-step instructions and fun illustrations all presented in a unique and easy-to-understand style.



gallery



PHOTOGRAPH: IRENE KATCHOURIN

This photograph was taken by Irene Katchourin during a visit to Beppu on the island of Kyushu last September. A fellow of the Geological Society, Ms Katchourin was taken to Beppu while visiting friend and fellow geologist Professor H Okada, Chair of Geology at the University of Fukuoka. Beppu is famous for its hot springs and boasts 104 public spas, all with varying degrees of heat and mineral concentration. Some of the deposits have formed spectacular *jigoku* ponds (hells), so-called because they are thought to go deep to the centre of the earth and are too hot and dangerous for bathing. The pond pictured here is *Chi no Ike* (Blood Pond Hell), whose high concentration of iron has turned the water red. *If you have a striking image of Japan that you would like to see appear in the Gallery, send it to us at the address on page 8 with a short caption.*



Japanese films at JICC

The Sky Can't Be This Blue
(Sora ga konnani aoi wake ga nai)
 16 March 2004

Akira Emoto / 1993 / 94 mins

Kentaro Kobayashi seems like an ordinary businessman, living in an old house with his wife, mother and son, and commuting to work everyday. But as the film unfolds, his life takes on aspects of the surreal as his wife is obsessed with cleaning the garden shed, his son develops a habit of walking on roofs and walls, and his mother slowly sinks into senility. Kobayashi takes refuge in an affair with a colleague and becomes a

stranger in his own home.

The screening will be held at the Embassy of Japan in London and starts at 7pm, with no admittance after 7.10pm. Guests need a valid booking number and must be willing to leave their bags in the cloakroom. Book by sending an email to films@embjapan.org.uk or call the JICC film booking line on 020 7465 6592. Leave a message stating your full name and the names of any guests and a daytime contact number. Please book early to avoid disappointment.



Glasgow Matsuri



On February 29, the Glasgow Botanic Gardens will echo with the sound of taiko

drumming as the city holds its third **Hina Matsuri**. Organised by Japanese Matsuri for Glasgow (JMG) with support from the Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow City Council, the event will give visitors the chance to dress up in kimono, practise calligraphy and taste Japanese sweets. Children can try their hand at origami or play traditional games. Taiko performances will be given by Mugenkyo and bands from Cleveden Secondary School. Admission is free. For details, contact JMG on 0141 330 3701 or at matsuriglasgow@hotmail.com.

Meet ASIMO at the Science Museum

The world's most advanced humanoid robot will make its first UK appearance at the Science Museum in London from February



PHOTOGRAPH: THE SCIENCE MUSEUM

16 to 22.

ASIMO (which stands for **A**dvanced **S**tep in **I**nnovative **M**obility) stands at 1.2m tall and was created by Honda using advanced motion tech-

nology which allows him to replicate the walking movement of humans and even to negotiate stairs and corners smoothly. The robot can also recognise voices and postures, which means that it can interact with humans by, for example, responding to an offered handshake and following simple instructions. ASIMO has already worked as an interpreter at a Tokyo museum, accompanied Prime Minister Koizumi on overseas trips and has even starred in a television commercial.

ASIMO will give four performances a day in the Lecture Theatre at the Science Museum. Admission is free, but places should be reserved in advance. To book tickets call the Museum on 0870 870 4868.

Daiwa Seminars

The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation's ongoing programme of seminars brings together experts from Japan and the UK to debate topical issues. The annual joint series organised with The Japan Society takes as its theme for 2004 **UK-Japan Cities of the Future: Regeneration and Urban Life**. Issues to be explored include the environment, sustainability, the home, transport, tourism and leisure. Further details: www.dajf.org.uk/events, events@dajf.org.uk, or 020 7486 4348.

Japan Foundation Film Season

The Japan Foundation presents a season of recent Japanese films in March, including *All Under the Moon* by Yoichi Sai and Takashi Miike's *Shangri La*.

Screenings will take place at the Watershed in Bristol from March 6 to 14 and at the Showroom in Sheffield from March 14 to 20. Contact Junko Takekawa on 020 7436 6695.



Counter-Photography UK Tour

Counter-Photography: Japan's Artists Today is a touring exhibition featuring 60 photographic works by 11 established and emerging Japanese artists.

Presented by the Japan Foundation, the exhibition includes photographs by Hiroshi Sugimoto and Eiko Hosoe. The common theme to the works is the photographers' desire to capture a world invisible to the human eye – the world of the 'spirit'. The exhibition is divided into two sections: 'To Distill: Another Appearance' reflects the artists' attempts to convey other dimensions,

and 'To Reverse: Another Relationship' contains photographs which explore and reconstruct the relationship between people and society.

Counter-Photography can be seen at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery in Preston until March 7. For further information, call 01772 258248 or email harris.museum@preston.gov.uk. The exhibition will continue to tour the UK until June 2005. For details of future venues and dates, call the Japan Foundation on 020 7436 6695.

