



MINATO

みなとユネスコ 会報

Bulletin

MINATO UNESCO ASSOCIATION NEWS & CALENDAR

ISSUED BY/MINATO UNESCO ASSN. 16-3,SHIMBASHI 3-CHOME MINATO-KU TOKYO 105-0004/HIROSHI NAGANO PRES.
発行所/ 港ユネスコ協会 〒105-0004 東京都港区新橋3-16-3 Tel : 03-3434-2300 Fax : 03-3434-2233 発行人/ 田部換一部
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No. 167: June 1, 2022

A thought on the aircraft noise along the new Haneda Airport-bound landing route -Is it an issue which the citizens have to endure? -

NAGANO Hiroshi, President of the Minato UNESCO Association



There is an issue shared by the citizens of not only Minato City, where MUA is located, but also its neighbor cities – Meguro and Shinagawa. It concerns the aircraft landing route which started to be used in 2020 by Haneda Airport-bound flights, preparing for the growth in the number of inbound tourists. This route can be used on the days when the wind blows southward, for about three hours during the 3pm to 7pm time zone. The altitude of aircrafts is regulated to be about 450m to 700m, which means a fairly low flight. During the government explanation held prior to the start of use of this route, the noise was estimated to be almost comparable to that of cars running along streets. However, we must be aware that while the noise caused by cars travels linear, the noise caused by aircrafts propagates over a vast area. Therefore, the two cases are quite different in terms of the affected areas.

I wonder if there is any similar case overseas where aircrafts fly at a low altitude in the sky directly over the central part of a nation's capital. In my own experience, I have seen the Thames in London from a fairly high altitude as well as the Eiffel Tower in Paris from afar. In Washington, D. C. or Berlin, airports are located not far from the city center. Still, I have never seen aircrafts flying so low directly over the town areas. Neither have I noticed the presence of aircraft noise.

I'm aware of the opposition movements by the affected people in the region. The most common fear, shared by related citizens, would be a possibility of objects dropping from aircrafts. However, even before arguing about such a danger, we should be aware that the basic role of the government is to realize a better living environment for citizens. From this viewpoint, it is outrageous the way the government adopts so easily a new policy which extensively damages the living environment of citizens.

The progress in science & technology is meaningful only when the fruitful results benefit citizens. That's why we allocate budgets for research & development programs. Aircrafts are a typical example of successful technological progress. However, if aircrafts irritate the sentiment of many citizens daily by their flight, the citizens would lose their sympathy for science and technology.

What is the root cause of this problem? I personally feel that one cause derives from the process of policy decision making. It would be difficult to introduce a direct democracy system as instituted in Switzerland. On the other hand, we see a noticeable trend, once into the current century, toward a process where the government and citizens jointly propose and create ideas in the decision of a legal system. A typical example is the government & citizens joint conference in France, regarding the climate change.

(To be continued on P.3)

The Minato UNESCO Association 40th Anniversary Commemorative Event in 2021

The 5th Japanese-Language Speech Contest

Date: Sunday, December 12, 2021

Venue: Minato City Gender-free Center “Libra”

We at MUA were delighted to register 12 applicants this year for the flagship event. In retrospect, our first contest back in 2017 started with seven applicants. My predecessors have taken the trouble of visiting many Japanese-language schools, located in Minato City, to recruit applicants. Without any double, it must have been an enormous challenge. Thanks to their accumulated efforts over the years, we could recruit 12 applicants this time, an increase of two over the initially planned number. It certainly suited the special occasion of MUA's 40th anniversary.

In an effort to advertise for applicants, we mailed out publicity leaflets to public facilities, foreign embassies, international schools, and Japanese-language schools located in Minato City. We also spread the information by SNS and word of mouth. In addition, we made it a rule to advertise this event to the attendees who participated in a variety of MUA programs, including Japanese calligraphy, Bonsai and Bonseki.

As the MC of this event, I started with an interesting ice breaker, asking the speakers and the audience the following questions which are all related to the number “40” in one way or another:

Question 1: What would you choose as major world news that took place 40 years ago?

(Ans: Wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, The Pope's first visit to Japan, etc.)

Question 2: Can you name the 40th Emperor in Japan? (Ans.: Emperor Tenmu)

Question 3: Who is the 40th President in USA? (Ans.: Ronald Reagan)

Question 4: What is the 40th chemical element? (Ans.: Zirconium)

Question 5 was addressed to a few young speakers who participated in this event.

What would happen if you eat 40 cups of ice cream at once? (Ans.: Loose stomach)

This concluded my ice breaker and the speech competition started.

Let me summarize the winners. Pariyar Nabin from Nepal won the grand prix (right photo). Once when he was delivering newspapers, he was greeted by an elderly lady saying, “Sumimasen.” He wondered why she said so and came to a conclusion that she just wanted to express her appreciation for his paper delivery service early in the morning darkness. It's important in learning Japanese to catch the implied intention behind the expressed words. From Nabin-san's speech, we could understand the process how he thought deeply about the said question and arrived at his understanding of the Japanese mentality which we natives sometimes overlook. I trust the judges highly evaluated his sensitivity.



In the last contest, we added a new “Audience Popularity Award.” This provided an opportunity for the audience to vote for their best choice speakers after they had listened carefully to each and every speech. The following list shows the winners (name, home country, speech subject) of different awards:

Grand prix award: Pariyar Nabin (Nepal) on “Sumimasen to ¥200”

MUA president award: Chen Huang (China) on “Kansha no kokoro”

Minato City mayor award: Sarah Emily Harrison (UK) on “Hontouni hitsuyou desuka?”

Judges award: Jomok Sahra Sicilia (Philippines) on “Jinsei wa maemukini susunde ikou”



Nabin & Judge Tsuboya

Merit award: Nguyen Thi Mai (Vietnam) on “Nihonjin wa tsumetai”
 Merit award: Yan Jinye (China) on “Watashiga mita nihon”
 Merit award: Lkhagvasuren Javzmaa (Mongolia) on “Corona to watashi”
 Merit award: Tran Thi Bien (Vietnam) on “Akiramenai”
 Merit award: Luke Chon (South Korea) on “Luke no dilemma”

Merit award: Maya Olivia Wheeler (USA) on “Corona”
 Merit award: Janine Chon (South Korea) on “Doushite corona ga sukijanaika”
 Merit award: Aibike Daiirbekova (Kirghizia) on “What is Japan like to me?”
 Audience popularity award: Sarah Emily Harrison (mentioned above)

MUA’s 40-year-long history must have countless episodes to be shared. We’d like to keep up this annual contest as a platform where Japanese-language learners can demonstrate what they have acquired. We hope this flagship program will help in promoting cross-cultural understanding.



Jomok, Chen, Harrison and Nabin



Audience Popularity Award winner Harrison



Speakers and audience enjoy conversation



(Written by TAGAWA J., Standing Director, and translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

(Continued from P.1) A thought on aircraft noise along the new Haneda Airport-bound route

Even before we discuss the pros & cons of representative democracy, we should work out a system where the government and citizens participate with equal capacity in discussing policies which would affect citizens’ life. In retrospect, during the period of high economic growth in post-war Japan, people shared the objective of “catch up and overtake.” Back then, a reckless growth-oriented decision process might have been accepted even if it caused certain negative influences. However, Japan today is a reasonably grown-up economy and is expected to discuss the sustainable development growth (SDGs) proposed by the United Nations. This means we must introduce innovative changes into the decision-making process of policies which would affect the life of citizens.

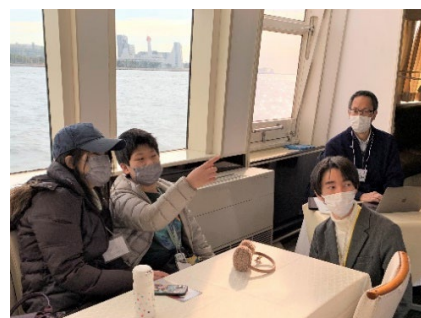
(Translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

Let's Find Out More About Forests, Rivers and Sea of Tokyo -Exploration of Tokyo by Cruise Boat and Bus-

Date: January 30, 2022

Time: 9:30 am – 4:00 pm

We carried out the field study tour titled “Find Out More About Forests, Rivers and Sea of Tokyo” with the co-sponsorship with Minato City Board of Education and Aquatic and Marine Environmental Education Research Laboratory of The Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology (TUMSAT) supported by General Incorporated Association Takeshiba Area Management and General Incorporated Association Takeshiba Town Design. 31 people ranged from elementary school students to adults in addition to 40 TUMSAT students participated in this tour. We visited canals as well as Sumida River by cruise boat in the morning, and Furukawa River and Kanda River by bus in the afternoon during which we all thought over forests, rivers and sea of Tokyo as well as the interrelationship among them.



We started from Hinode Sanbashi, the meeting place for the tour, by the cruise boat at 9:35 am and visited Ooi Wharf, Daiba, Shinonome Canal, Toyosu Canal, Sumida River, Tukiji and Hamarikyu Gardens. After getting on board, participants were divided into 9 groups. TUMSAT students joined each of the groups as moderators. All those groups enjoyed the lectures given by Professor Sasaki and group discussions alternately. Very active discussions and exchange of views were made among participants on the sea and relations between people and sea based on such questions posed as “why the Rainbow Bridge is so tall”, “why Daiba was built”, “why Toyosu was selected as the site for the relocation of Tsukiji Wholesale Market”, “why so many cultural figures gathered in Fukagawa District during Edo Era”, “why so many schools were built in Akashi-cho of Tukiji”, and so on, all of which are closely related with very familiar places and their histories.

In the afternoon, we visited riversides of Furukawa River, Shibuya River, Kanda River, Sumida River by bus via Shiba Area, Tokyo Tower, Azabu Juban, Arisugawa Memorial Park, Shibuya, Yoyogi Park, Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden, Hanazono Shrine, Edogawa Park, etc. Professor Sasaki and students of TUMSAT gave short lectures on forests, rivers and sea of Tokyo as well as the history of water and peoples' lives. Above all, Professor Sasaki gave a very comprehensive lecture on the history of peoples' lives making use of the terrain and indigenous knowledge, and what can be done to minimize the burden imposed on the sea whereas peoples' lives largely affect the sea.

We at MUA are very proud that we could provide the participants with an opportunity to feel close to the sea and observe the City of Tokyo from a new perspective. At last, but not the least, we would like to express our sincerest appreciation for the great cooperation and assistance extended by Professor Sasaki and students of TUMSAT.

(Written by YOKOI A., the International Science and Culture Committee, and translated by SUDA Y., the PR and Internet Committee Associate)

Minato UNESCO Association is a citizens' voluntary membership organization that promotes Japanese traditional culture, holds cross-cultural workshops and presents multicultural events and international symposia for world peace. For any questions or comments about our articles, please contact our secretariat office at:

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