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# “Aikawa kokusai kouryuu club” (Aikawa international exchange club) Aiming to build a town where people can live happily in a multicultural environment

**1. The establishment of Aikawa kokusai kouryuu club (Aikawa international exchange club)**  
In Aikawa-machi, where the ratio of foreign residents to the total population is high compared to most of other regions in Japan, we established this club to help the lives of the foreign people with different customs and cultures who cannot understand the Japanese language. We have been carrying out activities such as Japanese language classes for nineteen years to promote a multicultural society.

Aikawa-machi is located in the north-west part of Kanagawa prefecture, adjacent to Atsugi city, Sagami city, and Kiyokawa village. Its population is 41,178 and the number of foreign residents are 2,118 (as of Oct.1, 2015), which is 5.14 % of the whole population. The foreign residents are from 38 different countries. Roughly half of them are from Central and South America, such as Peru and Brazil. In recent years, people from Southeast Asia like the Philippines and Thailand are increasing, and also, there are people from China and Taiwan.

## **2. Foreign people came to Japan after the establishment of the industrial park.**

One of the reasons for this high ratio of foreign residents is the industrial park. In 1966, the industrial park was built at the site of Sagami army airport of the old Japanese army. In the period of high economic growth, the pollution in the coastal areas became a big problem, and more and more people were trying to build industrial zones in inland areas. The site of the former airport was favorable because of its large and flat land. The industrial park was built as a result of the efforts by then Kanagawa governor and town's bid committee of the industrial park. At that time, the population of the town grew because the workers of the companies moved in. After that, during the bubble economy period, South American people of Japanese descent had come to Japan to make up for labor shortage, and started living in the town. In 1987, the number of registered foreign nationals was 120, but in 1991 it had grown to 971.

## **3. From learning Japanese to becoming members of the community.**

At first, activity of Aikawa international exchange club was mainly Japanese language classes for foreign residents. Many people came to Japan without learning the Japanese language, so the Japanese classes were appreciated by not only foreign residents but also companies that were accepting them. Because of the difference in lifestyle, problems related to the rules of daily lives, such as garbage disposal, became quite evident. To solve these problems, communication with the foreign residents was crucial. We have been considering Japanese lessons for the foreign residents as a very important agenda. Soon, the situation of the foreign residents not joining the neighborhood resident's association became a problem. In order to become a part of the community as citizens, the foreign people needed to start by joining the neighborhood resident's association, receiving town

paper, and getting local information. To solve the problem, we worked with the local government to translate the town paper. Now, there are various issues such as disaster prevention, crime prevention, “My Number” individual number system, and announcement of the national census. I think it is important for the club to be flexible to cope with the changes in the society.

## **4. Organizing events to understand each other.**

Many foreign residents from different countries are participating in our weekly Japanese classes. This is the result of the active PR we did through community events such as summer festivals. We started publicizing because the Japanese class was not recognized even by the local government and residents. We tried to figure out how we could make the Japanese class known to the foreign residents. To publicize the class, we organized events that drew attention. We invited a military band from the U.S. Army Camp Zama to the Aikawa-machi Bunka Kaikan and also performers of folk dance from different countries. The show was successful and the hall of 500 seating capacity was full. In the annual “Aikawa-machi outdoor workers' festival,” we set up an international “food stall village” and served each country's food to promote our club and also to deepen our friendship with foreign residents from various countries. At first, we organized the “food stall village” as a single fiscal year program of the chamber of commerce and industry to support regional revitalization. However, we decided to continue the event after that, at the request of the town mayor. Some members opposed to participate in this type of event, saying it was different from their original activity: teaching the Japanese language. Eventually we managed to continue the event by reconciling opposing views.

## **5. Future issues.**

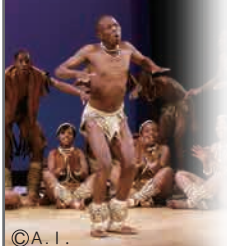
We are thinking about changing the teaching materials in class so that we can deal with the recent increase in Asian residents. As an organization which values multicultural environment, we wish to prepare for other languages. We would like to accelerate the interaction of people from different nationalities. Also, we have to think about how we can find volunteers for our activities.

Through our activities, I feel that the world is connected in many ways. This field of international exchange still requires efforts of many people. We would like to help build a town where people can live happily and joyfully, regardless of their nationality.

Aikawa kokusai kouryuu club (Aikawa international exchange club)  
President, Shigeru Sato

(translated by Keiko Hori, IAC)

Dancers from Botswana



## Join the IAC!

International Artists Center (IAC) is a non-profit organization. It was established in 1960 and has been doing its activities in the aim to contribute to the international understanding and the world peace through cultural exchanges programs.



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## Join us for tea at the Embassy



### Tea Party at Embassy of Botswana 24 October 2015

Botswana Embassy would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to IAC members for their participation in our recent Tea Party at the Embassy. Ambassador Nkate sends his sincere appreciation for your efforts in supporting the Embassy.

Embassy of Botswana staff appreciated the time that IAC members were able to spend with us. We hope they have learned a lot about not only Botswana tea, but also tourism, culture etc.

Through this collaboration, IAC members learnt of the different tea that Botswana has namely:

1. Mosukujane (*Lippia Javanica*): this is a herbal tea which treats coughs, colds, asthma and headache.

2. Lengana (*Artemisia Afra*): the tea treats bronchitis, coughs, colds, chills, indigestion, stomach ache, gastric derangements, colic and gout.

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3. Sengaparile (*Devils Claw*): it heals rheumatism, arthritis, hypertension, kidney, gall and liver dysfunction, stomach and intestinal disorders and skin problems.

4. Mosukudu (*Lippia Scaberrima*): the tea is used to treat coughs, colds, bronchial troubles, fevers, influenza, measles, lung inflammations, asthma, migraine headaches and stress.

IAC and Embassy staff also enjoyed snack from Botswana, i.e. magwinya (fat cakes), diphaphatha (baked muffins), morula fruits, morula jam, and morula nuts.

We hope IAC members enjoyed Botswana tea since is similar to Japanese green tea and we look forward to continue working with IAC in the promotion of people-to-people interaction.

Thank you so much for your enthusiastic participation in this event. We have no doubt that it would not have been the success that it was without your presence.

(Embassy of Botswana)

## Hello, dear embassy vol.21 Uzbekistan



### In October 2015, Prime Minister Abe officially visited Uzbekistan and held a meeting with President Islam Karimov He visited Navoi Theater, which was constructed by the Japanese people Agreed to expand and strengthen the economic cooperation Expanding cultural exchange Buddhism came to Japan by way of Uzbekistan Uzbekistan is the leading power in Central Asia

The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is located in a quiet residential area of Takanawa, Minato-ku, Tokyo, across the street from the house of Takamatsunomiya. The person who greeted us was the second secretary, Mr. Hasanov Askarali. He is a handsome man in his thirties who has been living in Japan for more than two years.

Q: At the end of October, Prime Minister Abe visited your country at the invitation of President Karimov. It has been reported that there were favorable outcomes such as the agreement on economic cooperation. It was the second time the Japanese Prime Minister visited Uzbekistan. In 2006, Prime Minister Koizumi paid the first visit to Uzbekistan as a Japanese Prime Minister.

What do you think the Uzbek people think about this visit?

Mr.Hasanov: "Our people think of Japan as a country with abilities in many fields; politics, economy, technology, and intellectual assets. Japan and Uzbekistan have had a trusting relationship for a long time, and it was strengthened by the Prime Minister's visit.

Q. Prime Minister Abe visited the Navoi Theater in Tashkent. Navoi Theater was constructed in part by the Japanese prisoners of war who were transferred to Uzbekistan by the Soviet Union following World War II. I heard that the theater survived the great earthquake and is cherished to this day as a building that shows reliable work of the Japanese people.

Mr.Hasanov: "Major renovation of Navoi Theater had just been finished and Prime Minister Abe attended the opening ceremony. The theater plays an important role in the bilateral

relation between Uzbekistan and Japan. In the past, the plate of the theater indicated that it was, "built by Japanese prisoners" but now, it says "built by the Japanese who stayed here by destiny". The two nations didn't fight each other."

Q. It appears that the economic cooperation between the two countries is deepening.

Mr.Hasanov: "Japan is one of the largest investors in Uzbekistan. Japan is investing in many areas such as railway construction and renovation, upgrading of power plants, airport construction, and construction of oil refinery plants. In addition, Japanese companies are engaged in the actual construction work." "It's not only the economy. In the field of culture, we are organizing many Uzbek dance and music performances. I would like the Japanese people to experience Uzbek culture." "Historically, Buddhism was introduced from India to China by way of Uzbekistan, and then to Japan. We understand that Uzbekistan is the crossroads of eastern and western civilization."

Q. Uzbekistan is a leading power in the Central Asia.

Mr.Hasanov: "Timur, who was originally from Uzbekistan, built a huge empire in the area that spreads from Central Asia and India. Now, the population of Uzbekistan is 31 million and that represents sixty percent of the whole Central Asia. We are rich in natural resources such as oil, natural gas, and minerals. With a little help of Japanese funding and technology, Uzbekistan is expected to grow further.

(Yasunori Yamashita, IAC)  
(translated by Keiko Hori, IAC)