

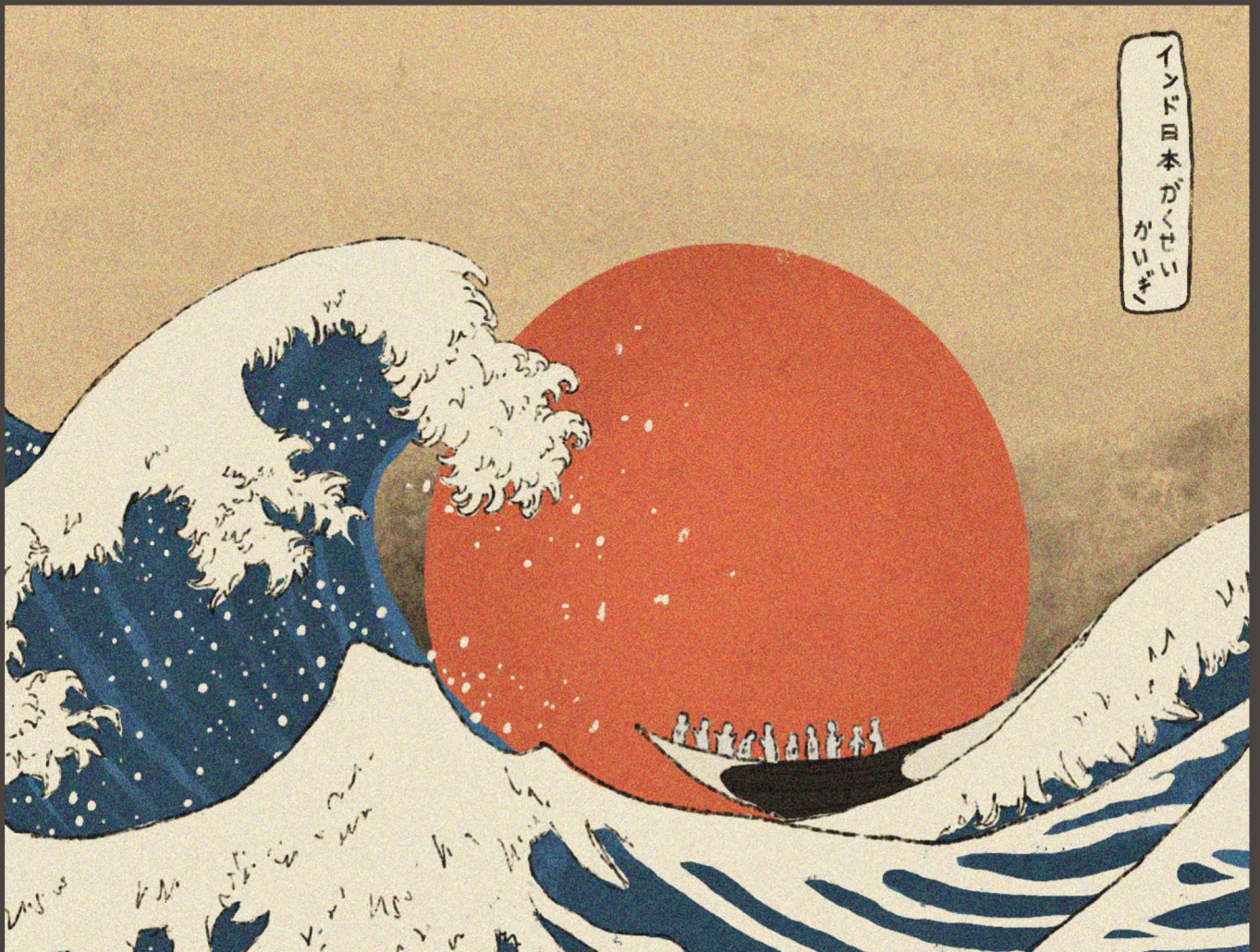


organized by
NIHONGO KAIWA KYOOKAI SOCIETY

日本インド学生会議

28TH INDIA-JAPAN STUDENTS' CONFERENCE REPORT

TOKYO - JAPAN 2024



**28TH INDIA – JAPAN
STUDENTS'
CONFERENCE**

TOKYO, JAPAN

2024

KOLKATA REPORT

Organised by



NIHONGO KAIWA KYOOKAI SOCIETY

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Message from the Ambassador of India to Japan

भारत के राजदूत
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA



भारत का राजदूतावास
Embassy of India
2-2-11 Kudan Minami, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 102 0074



MESSAGE

It is a pleasure to witness the next generation of leaders from Japan and India coming together under the theme of 'Community Development through Japan-India Collaboration' to celebrate the 28th Japan-India Students' Conference. Our two nations share a rich history of cooperation, and your efforts today will help shape the future of this bond. Community development is a cornerstone of progress, and through your collaboration, I am confident we can build stronger, more inclusive societies.

I encourage you all to learn from one another, innovate, and foster relationships that will contribute to the betterment of both our countries.

Best wishes for a successful and inspiring conference.

(Sibi George)

Tokyo
September 14, 2024

Message from the Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society

Kazuko Nigam

I am extremely happy that this conference has ended with great success. Japanese side members, including Nagahama Sensei, took full care of the Indian team.

There is a saying in Japanese that seeing something once with your own eyes is better than hearing about it a hundred times. So, I think the students of Kolkata who had heard a lot about Japan must have felt very satisfied seeing many things with their own eyes. It was also great that most of the participants purchased local SIM cards which enabled them to not only keep in touch with each other but also communicate with their family and organizers in Kolkata. It was a thrilling experience to stay connected and share their enjoyment in Japan through photographs and comments while being in Kolkata.

Apart from guidance from senior NKKS members, the participants also received a huge support from IJSC Dosokai.

Next year, in 2025, we will be holding the 29th IJSC in Kolkata. I hope the ‘*omotenashi*’ (warm and sincere hospitality) that the participants experienced in Japan will be reciprocated by all of you when Japanese students come to Kolkata.

My best wishes and congratulations to all of you.

Message from the Founder Member of the Japan India Students' Conference

Hiroko Nagahama

Welcome to Japan!

Dear participants of the 28th IJSC, how was your experience participating in this conference held in Japan?

In Japan, the month of August is also the season for typhoons. Just before your arrival, there was a forecast of an unprecedented typhoon, so I was actually quite worried every day.

This was the first time in a long while that we hosted the JISC in Japan. Therefore, we made extensive preparations to extend our Japanese '*omotenashi*' to all the participants visiting from India. I hope that you were able to express your thoughts freely on this conference's topic, "Community Development Through Japan-India Collaboration". The activities of JISC are designed so that, in every conference, participants can exchange views on various topics that interest them while also enjoying the lifestyle of either India or Japan. There are often opinions that the conference could be conducted online. However, I think that there is no better form of exchange than meeting face-to-face and spending time eating and living together!

I would like to thank Nigam Sensei and everyone else who supported the participants until their departure from Kolkata to Japan.

I am very glad that we could hold the 28th Conference, and I look forward to the 29th Conference next year, where with fresh members, the world will see Mt. Fuji and the Himalayas shaking hands.

Message from the Coordinator of the India-Japan Students' Conference

Partha Sarathi Mitra

Hello Everybody,

What a memorable performance!!

The whole Indian team have performed exceptionally well. I am writing this to express my sincere appreciation of hard work and dedication, which all of you have shown during the conference.

Your positive attitude and enthusiasm have made a significant impact on the success of this conference.

I strongly believe that experience and knowledge garnered by you all from this conference will make you an outstanding human being in the forthcoming years.

Thank you all!!

Message from the Students' Conference Dōsōkai

Supratik Sil Roy

On behalf of the Core Team, Dosokai

Dear Participants,

We are pleased to know that you had a successful conference in Tokyo during August - September 2024. It must have been a meaningful and life changing experience for you in some ways, and it is hopeful that all of you will continue being good friends from now on. This conference provides a unique platform to experience the hearts and minds of Japanese and Indian people closely, so that you develop a comprehensive, realistic and unbiased understanding of each others' country, and apply it in an optimised manner to fulfill your personal or professional goals. We look forward to seeing you emerge as future leaders in Japan India exchanges of your chosen discipline!

Message from the Student President of Japan

Natsuki Yamaguchi

As we come to the end of the 28th Japan-India Student Conference, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we have shared over the past week. This conference has been a testament to the enduring spirit of collaboration and mutual learning between our two countries.

We began this conference with the theme of “community development,” and I am proud to say that we have not only explored this theme in depth but also embodied it in our interactions. The experiences we shared—whether during company visits, the eye-opening fieldwork in Fukushima, or various discussions and cultural exchanges—have brought us closer together and broadened our perspectives in ways that words alone could never convey.

I am deeply grateful to the 12 Indian students who travelled from Kolkata and Chennai, as well as the 10 Japanese students from across Japan, for their active participation and enthusiasm. Your commitment to learning from each other and from the communities we visited has made this conference a success.

As the president of the executive committee, I have come to realise just how much we can achieve when we work together. The support of the executive committee members, our alumni, and Nagahama-sensei has been invaluable. Without your dedication, this conference would not have been possible, and for that, I am deeply thankful.

Furthermore, the friendships we have formed and the insights we have gained here will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on our lives and on the relationship between Japan and India. I believe that the connections we have made and the ideas we have exchanged will continue to grow, fostering deeper understanding and collaboration between our two nations.

As we part ways, I hope you carry with you the lessons learned and the bonds forged during this conference. Let these experiences guide you in your future endeavours, and may the spirit of Japan-India friendship continue to flourish.

Thank you all for making the 28th Japan-India Student Conference a truly memorable and meaningful event. I wish you all the best in your future journeys.

Message from the Student Vice President of Japan

Shogo Inoue

I am very happy and relieved to report that the 28th Japan India Student Conference in Japan, took place from 21 August to 2 September, was successfully completed by 11 Japanese and 12 Indian members. This 28th JISC was the first time in five years that the conference was held in Japan, so we did not know where to start.

However, I believe I have learned a lot from this experience. In order to consider an activity from scratch, I learned it is so important to cherish the relationships, to work diligently and carefully, and to rely on the people around me. I believe that this was an invaluable experience that I could not have achieved without such an opportunity.

The theme of this year's conference was 'Community Development Through Japan-India Collaboration', and activities were organised in Tokyo and Fukushima so that the participants could deepen their learning with the theme of each subcommittee. The various people I met in each place and the words of each person were really stimulating. Therefore, we gained diverse knowledge on how to realise multicultural communities through fieldwork and lectures in Tokyo and Fukushima.

As vice president of the student conference, I was able to give my all from the first to the end because I have strong memories of last year's 27th JISC. I visited Kolkata last year as a member of the Japanese side. At that time, the Indian side members warmly welcomed me and gave me maximum support in an unfamiliar environment. In addition, I was able to grow a lot through active discussions with them and an understanding of their culture and values. My memories of Kolkata are my treasures. I am grateful for the precious memories and have always wanted them to make wonderful memories in Japan this time. Every member I met at this conference is a great colleague and friend to me. I cherish the relationships I have formed here and hope to meet them again.

I cannot thank all the members who have worked together with me. We have also received tremendous support and cooperation, including support and sponsorship from various quarters, and also the founder, advisor, and Alumni of JISC. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all of you.

Message from the Student Vice President of Japan

Haruki Kodaira

This year's student conference was held in Japan. Ten students from Kolkata and two from Chennai were welcomed by 11 Japanese students from Tokyo and other different cities.

Each member majors in a different field of study, and the discussions from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds showed more than what a student would think possible. The discoveries and knowledge gained through the group discussions surpassed both the quality and quantity of information available on the Internet, which made us aware of the importance of holding face-to-face conferences even in the information society.

However, what made our conference what it was, was the sightseeing days, free times, and a little chatting among members. We were highly active, and despite the fatigue, we went out on the town every day. We drew omikuji at Senso-ji Temple, scoured Akihabara for our favorite manga, and saw a slice of the vast Pacific Ocean in Futaba, Fukushima. The knowledge and data we gained from our discussions will remain as documents, but these events we experienced together will remain as memories in our minds. As a member of the conference, I am incredibly happy to have experienced so many things with the other members and to be able to share these unforgettable memories with them for years to come.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who made a great contribution to the success of this student conference.

India now has the largest population in the world. Japan has a declining population, but still has over one hundred million people. Their societies are dynamic, unpredictable, and enormous. Indeed, we are only twenty-three of those hundreds of millions of people. However, I am proudly sure that, after we start our careers, if we maintain our friendships with those we share the memories of this conference with, become links between those huge societies, and take an active role in the society with the knowledge and the broad perspective we have gained this time, this conference will be far more meaningful.

Message from the Student President of India

Sabarno Sinha

It has been my proud privilege to serve as the President of the India-side for the 28th India-Japan Students' Conference. I was fortunate to have a supportive team that was always willing to cooperate and put in maximum effort, enabling us to overcome any difficulties and enjoy the experience to the fullest. This year, 10 students from Kolkata and 2 students from Chennai travelled to Tokyo, and it was an unforgettable experience, particularly because it was the first time any of us had visited Japan.

I am deeply grateful to Kazuko Nigam sensei, Partha sensei, and Nagahama sensei for conceiving this wonderful cultural and academic exchange programme, which not only enriches our academic study but also provides a compact, two-week introduction to Japan. Of course, two weeks cannot suffice to fully experience any country, but within these fourteen days, we gathered a variety of experiences that will be etched in our memories forever.

I must thank the President of the Japan-side, Natsuki Yamaguchi-san, and her excellent team of 10 for crafting a schedule that balanced cultural activities, academic sessions, and sightseeing. I do not think a single Indian member could complain about having missed out on any experiences. The schedule was so tightly packed with activities that I would advise the next IJSC team to consider a greater variety of activities that can be conducted both within and outside Kolkata with the Japanese members.

Not only did we travel to a different prefecture (Futaba Town, Fukushima) and stay there overnight, but we also experienced home visits in various parts of Tokyo and its outskirts, as well as local sightseeing – including Asakusa, Akihabara, Tokyo Ueno Museum, and Yasukuni Shrine, to name a few. As is often the case, there were certain challenges when two different cultures meet, but overcoming these minor issues taught us greater lessons, which I think is the most rewarding aspect of the IJSC: the opportunity to reflect on our own thought patterns and to imbibe the best qualities of Japanese culture. I believe that the 28th IJSC provided all ten of us with such moments, and I am sure we have perhaps changed, even if just slightly, from how we were on the 20th of August when we left for Japan.

Message from the Student Communicator of India

Adesh Kumar Sahoo

It was my great pleasure to have served, once again, as the Communicator for this edition of the India-Japan Students' Conference. In the previous edition, this role presented its own challenges, testing my abilities alongside my team. This time, however, it felt like a true test of how much I had grown from that initial experience. Throughout the journey, I was able to reflect on the lessons learned, the progress made, and how far I had come. As I now sit to write this message and look back on the 12 days that passed all too quickly, it feels surreal to acknowledge that the conference is over.

The opportunity to travel to Japan and work in a different environment was a dream come true. Not only at a personal level but also as a team, navigating cultural differences, coordinating together, and managing unforeseen challenges helped us all grow—not just as individuals but as a united Indian team. We learned to communicate better, adapt to new situations, and empathise with one another, making sure that every member felt supported. Our soft skills—teamwork, resilience, and collaboration—were tested and strengthened throughout the conference, allowing us to achieve our goals and emerge as a stronger, more united team.

I wouldn't even be writing this message today if it weren't for the immense trust and belief that Nigam Sensei, Partha Sensei, the NKKS, and the *Dōsōkai* placed in me by entrusting me with the duties of the Communicator. I am deeply grateful for the confidence and faith they had in me, allowing me the opportunity to lead and learn throughout this incredible experience. Without their guidance and encouragement, I wouldn't have had the chance to challenge myself in this way.

I must also express my sincere thanks to the Japanese Student President, Natsuki-san, and the entire Japanese team. Organising the conference in Japan, despite the team members living far apart and various logistical hurdles was indeed challenging. Yet, the Japanese team's dedication and meticulous planning ensured that we, as Indian participants, had an unforgettable experience. The '*omotenashi*' they showed us was nothing short of remarkable, and for that, I am truly thankful.

I would also like to thank Sabarno-san, the Student President of the Indian side, whose leadership has been instrumental in navigating this year's conference. Working alongside him, as well as the other team leads, has been a privilege. Finally, to all my fellow team members—thank you for your dedication, your energy, and for always supporting one another. Together, we made this conference a success, and I am proud of what we've achieved.

To the future Communicator, I encourage you to embrace the role fully. It may be challenging, but it will be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Trust in yourself, support your team, and cherish every moment. You will grow in ways you never imagined.

Here's to new beginnings and meaningful connections!

Message from Academics Team Lead

Deepalika Deb

The 28th India-Japan Students' Conference has been nothing short of a learning experience for me. Apart from enabling me to tick off my bucket lists, it facilitated growth, maturity and cultural appreciation in me. With this marking as my third time participating in the IJSC, I was bestowed with the responsibility of the academic part of the conference – that underlines the crucial motto of IJSC/JISC every year. I humbly thank the members of NKKS, the Dosokai, my teachers, seniors, colleagues, and friends, who trusted me with this responsibility, that empowered me to drive my management and academic skills in this venture.

The Academics Team of the 28th IJSC included the capable membership of Yash and Jayee, along with the guided presence of the President and Communicator of 28th IJSC, Sabarno and Adesh, respectively. The Academics Team facilitated the Group Discussions along with the Academics coordinators of the Japan side members, promoting a holistic study of the theme of the conference, which was “Community Development Through Japan-India Collaboration”. The Academics Team’s main task was to prepare and compose the IJSC reports every year. With the assistance of the members, and the guidance from the stakeholders, the report was prepared with meticulous details and planning – which you may be reading now!

The Academics Team stuck to three principles while working:

1. Have no bar on creativity – What’s originality, if there is no spice of creativity? The Team came up with a box full of ideas while discussing the structure and pattern of the report. This report has passed through the creative nerve of the IJSC members, and has been arranged in a blend of fun and efficiency.
2. Proper Documentation – The Team maintained a detailed note of meeting briefs and academic worklogs, recording important details, decisions, and suggestions, ensuring transparency and accuracy. This ensured effective management of all the academic activities and report compilation of the IJSC.
3. Consistency is the Key – Steadiness, patience and discipline are the values that kept us going. From being able to manage time by prioritising tasks, making deadlines, equal distribution of work, and ensuring smooth coordination during the report preparation, we were able to build momentum in our tasks assigned due to the consistent efforts made by the members.

Having said that, the team really enjoyed the whole operation of report preparation and assisting the members during the Group Discussions. The whole Conference presented us with a universe full of knowledge – from the Group Discussions held in Tokyo, to the fieldwork and lectures in Fukushima – the configuration of academics with passion learning and amusement-driven trip to Japan made our whole experience extremely fulfilling.

Message from Cultural Team Lead

Riddhika Chatterjee

The Indo-Japan Students' Conference is a platform that promotes cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Indian and Japanese students. This conference has grown to become a significant bridge for fostering cross-cultural relationships, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration between the two countries.

During the 28th Indo-Japan Students Conference, I had the distinct honour of leading the Cultural Team, with the membership of Ms. Sunanda Shaw and me. On August 22, 2024, we hosted the Opening Ceremony at the Center Building of the National Olympic Youth Center in Tokyo. As part of this event, we sought to highlight the richness of Indian culture by showcasing traditional festivals such as Dussehra, while offering an in-depth presentation on the significance of Bengali Durga Puja, a celebration deeply rooted in our heritage. We prepared a script and small performances in between such as the Opening Chant by Adesh Kumar Sahoo, narration of Mahalaya by Deepalika Deb, and ending the presentation with a short poem on Durga Puja by Jayee Dutta. The Press team assisted us in creating and handling the presentation. It was a truly wonderful and enriching experience to share our culture and heritage with the Japanese members and notice how both of our nations, despite being geographically distant, hold deep respect for tradition and spirituality.

From the presentation in the opening ceremony to anonymous notes of encouragement, and the heartfelt group songs that filled the room with unity and warmth, the enthusiasm and collective effort of everyone involved was truly inspiring. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to NKKS, the Dōsōkai, Nigam Sensei, and Partha Sensei who not only encouraged us so much during IJSC but also guided us unconditionally. I thank Adesh Kumar Sahoo and Jayee Dutta for translating our script into Japanese and also everyone who supported the Cultural Team throughout this journey. From logistical assistance to creative input, every contribution played a vital role in bringing our vision to life. I am deeply thankful for the encouragement and help from our President Sabarno Sinha and Communicator Adesh Kumar Sahoo for guiding us and correcting us which in turn led us to success. It was a profound honour to be entrusted with the responsibility of leading the Cultural team at the India-Japan Students Conference in Tokyo. This opportunity not only allowed us to share a cherished tradition but also strengthened the cultural bond between India and Japan. I remain truly humbled by the experience and the invaluable support that made it all possible.

Message from Press Team Lead

Namrota Mandal

In this 28th edition, I had the opportunity to participate as the leader of the press team, which was a very different experience from my previous ones. This responsibility came to me in varied forms. As a film school student, it was a passionate endeavour; as a member, an honour, and as a leader, duties that I had to undertake. I am extremely thankful that I can say this in a shameful doggedness that I was blessed with outstandingly talented team members like Kanak and Ritika, who were not only a constant emotional support but also steadfast creators.

The press team commenced its responsibilities earlier than most other teams. Our mandate encompassed content creation, editing, vlogging, and information processing for social media platforms. The team's inaugural meeting on July 12th was pivotal in laying the groundwork to make this conference a successful campaign, covering topics such as logo redesign, questionnaire development, Instagram aesthetics, archival methods, and post-trip content planning.

As members of the Press team, we were tasked with capturing every significant moment of the conference. We aimed to create a lasting record, not only of the day-to-day events but also of moments that could be used to maintain a consistent online presence and attract a wider audience. As the official chroniclers of the event, we had to be meticulous about documenting future content opportunities as well to keep the page engaging. The three members of the team would devote their post-sightseeing gatherings to dedicated brainstorming, editing, and selecting suitable audio to complement our visual content.

Post-trip, the focus shifts towards compiling comprehensive reports as an official archival medium, which entails redesigning certificates, the cover for reports, and their layout. The editorial team's objective was to document the conference proceedings for future reference through a well-structured layout. The Press Team offers an excellent opportunity for those who possess creative potential and a passion for writing. The team's independent nature and flexibility provide ample room for innovation and experimentation.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the NKKS, Nigam Sensei, Partha Sensei, and the Dōsōkai for providing me with this invaluable opportunity. Capturing these unforgettable moments over two weeks was a truly rewarding experience. From the joyous expressions and hearty laughter to the contemplative looks during shopping decisions, every moment was a treasure. Given the chance, I would gladly relive this experience again and again.

The Schedule of 28th India-Japan Students' Conference

DATE	FIRST HALF OF THE DAY	SECOND HALF OF THE DAY
20 August, 2024		Departure from Kolkata
21 August, 2024	Transfer at Singapore	Arrival in Haneda
22 August, 2024	Opening Ceremony	Sightseeing at Shibuya
23 August, 2024	Group Discussion Session 1	Sightseeing at Asakusa
24 August, 2024	Onwards to Futaba Town for Groups 1 and 3	Fieldwork: Visit to <i>Denshokan</i>
	Onwards to Minamisoma City for Group 2	Fieldwork: Visit to <i>Yorimichi</i>
25 August, 2024	Lecture session at <i>Denshokan</i>	Lecture session at Multicultural Center Sakura, Minamisoma City
		Return to Tokyo
26 August, 2024	Yukata Experience	Meeting with Mr. Yogendra Puranik
27 August, 2024	Group Discussion Session 2	Visit to the Embassy of India
		Visit to Yasukuni Jinja
		Sightseeing at Shinjuku and Harajuku
28 August, 2024	Group Discussion Session 3	Sightseeing at Ueno and Akihabara
29 August, 2024	Company visit by GEOTRA	Free Time
	Group Discussion Session 4	
30 August, 2024	Group Discussion Session 5	Final Presentation
		Closing Ceremony
31 August, 2024	Home Visit	
1 September, 2024	Shopping and Free Time	Sayonara Party
2 September, 2024	Departure from Narita	

The Theme of the Conference

Every year, IJSC focuses on themes revolving around sustainable development goals or global community development, emphasising youth participation. This year, the theme was "Community Development Through Japan-India Collaboration," addressing key issues faced by both Japanese and Indian residents.

The theme was chosen for three main reasons:

First, growing cultural barriers, such as religious restrictions and language differences, affect daily life. Indian residents in Japan, for example, face challenges with food options and administrative processes. Likewise, Japanese residents in India may struggle with adapting to local customs, and dietary preferences, and navigating a complex bureaucratic system. These cultural and linguistic differences can create feelings of isolation, making integration into the local community more difficult for both groups and addressing issues as these would play a pivotal role in community development.

Second, the population outflow from rural areas to urban centres in both countries is driven by disparities in education and healthcare access. In rural regions, limited opportunities for higher education and specialised medical care often push residents to migrate in search of better prospects. This migration creates an imbalance, leaving rural areas with ageing populations and underdeveloped infrastructure, while urban centres struggle with overcrowding, strained resources, and growing socio-economic divides. Addressing these disparities is key to achieving balanced regional development in both Japan and India.

Lastly, disaster prevention is a critical area where Japan and India can collaborate by sharing experiences to build resilient communities. By combining Japan's advanced disaster preparedness strategies with India's growing infrastructure development efforts, both countries can enhance their ability to mitigate and respond to natural calamities effectively.

This year, the conference was held in Tokyo, and participants visited Minamisoma and Futaba for fieldwork. During the fieldwork, participants discussed various topics, including improving public services for foreign residents through accessible healthcare and multilingual support. They also explored strategies for revitalising rural economies, focusing on sustainable industries to reduce urban migration. Additionally, discussions centred on utilising digital technology to bridge the education and healthcare gaps between rural and urban areas. In the area of disaster prevention, the group examined community-based response systems and the integration of Japan's disaster management expertise to strengthen resilience in rural India.

Group Discussion Overview of Groups 1, 2 and 3

Group 1

Members:

Name	Position	Institution / Major
Sabarno Sinha	President - India Side	Jadavpur University / M.A. in English
Adesh Kumar Sahoo	Communicator - India Side	Meghnad Saha Institute of Technology / B. Tech. in Information Technology
Sivalingam Thirumurugan	Member	B E Jaya Engineering College / Computer Science and Engineering
Prashant Donda	Member	B E Jaya Engineering College / Computer Science and Engineering
Shogo Inoue	Vice President - Japan side	Kyoto University / Faculty of Integrated Human Studies
Taisei Miki	Public Relation/ Domestic Liaison	Kindai University / International Studies
Suzuno Mekarū	International Liaison	Asia University / Faculty of International Relations
Kotaro Ono	Finance Bureau	Tokyo University of Foreign Studies / Department of Language and Culture Studies, Major language is Hindi

Topic: "A Livable City for Foreign People"

The concept of a "Livable City for Foreign Nationals" is crucial in today's globalized world, especially for immigrants in India and Japan. The goal was to address challenges faced by foreign nationals in urban settings, including cultural differences, language barriers, and infrastructure issues. To efficiently tackle this vast topic, we have adopted a five-segment approach.

PRE-CONFERENCE STAGE

The pre-conference stages involved identifying key challenges such as food and hygiene, language barriers, cultural differences, work culture, infrastructure, cost of living, discrimination, and safety. The planned to conduct surveys and research to gather public opinions and refine the understanding. To make a strong anchor point and keep an inclusive outlook, the group proposed a "Five Segment Approach". It included:

1. Culture and Work Culture: Understanding local social norms and workplace expectations to improve integration.
2. Language, Food, and Hygiene: Ensuring language proficiency, access to familiar food, and understanding hygiene standards.
3. Infrastructure: Addressing reliable transportation, affordable housing, and accessible healthcare.
4. Cost of Living and Services: Ensuring financial stability and access to banking and essential services.
5. Safety and Discrimination: Creating inclusive communities by addressing safety and discrimination.

Before the actual conference stage, a survey form was shared publicly to capture idea and trend from the general consensus on the above mentioned challenges.

CONFERENCE STAGE

During the conference, the group focused on analyzing the survey data to develop actionable solutions for improving city livability for foreign nationals. Key activities included:

1. Survey Analysis: The group reviewed survey data, identified key challenges, and brainstormed practical solutions based on both data and personal experiences.
2. Five-Segment Discussion: In-depth discussions were held to understand the root causes of issues within the five segments, facilitating targeted solution development.
3. Fieldwork: A visit to Multicultural Center Sakura in Minamisoma provided insights into how such organizations support foreign nationals in Japan.
4. Collaboration: The group exchanged findings with other two groups, refining their proposals through feedback and discussion.

FINAL OUTCOMES

In the conference's conclusion, the group presented their findings segment-wise, summarizing survey data and outlining key issues for each segment. They proposed tailored solutions to address these challenges, structured around their five-segment approach. Additionally, the group integrated the concepts of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* ("The world is one family") and *Isshi Doujin* ("one heart, one mind"). These philosophies underscored the importance of global unity and collaboration, highlighting the need for inclusive environments where local governments, residents, and immigrants work together to create supportive, harmonious communities. These principles guided the group's commitment to fostering livable cities for diverse populations.

Group 2

Members:

Name	Position	Institution / Major
Ritika Mukherjee	Press Team Member	Jogamaya Devi College, Calcutta / B.A. in English
Kanak Verma	Press Team Member	St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata /

		M. Sc. in Multimedia
Yash Das	Academics Team Member	Vivekananda College / B. Sc. in Computer Science
Sunanda Shaw	Cultural Team Member	JIS University / Bachelor of Education
Haruki Kodaira	Vice President - Japan Side	Keio University / Faculty of Law
Yoko Morita	Academic Planning	Akita International University / Faculty of International Liberal Arts
Shinji Kawai	Public Relation/ Domestic Liaison	Keio University / Department of Humanities and Social Science, Sociology Major
Nanami Okazaki	Public Relation	Soka University / Faculty of Economics

Topic: “The Issue of Population Outflow to Urban Areas”

Under the main theme of the conference, Community Development through India-Japan Collaboration, Group 2 focused on The Issue of Population Outflow to Urban Areas. The main goal of their research was to analyze this migration trend, its causes, and potential solutions. The group divided the issue into three key categories: education and employment, transportation, and housing shortages in both India and Japan.

PRE-CONFERENCE STAGE

In the pre-conference stages, Group 2 focused on understanding the factors driving the population outflow from rural to urban areas. They identified and researched key challenges within three main categories: education and employment, transportation, and housing shortages.

The group examined disparities in education and job opportunities between rural and urban regions in both India and Japan. They found that limited access to quality education and insufficient employment opportunities in rural areas were significant factors pushing individuals to migrate to cities in search of better prospects.

Transportation inefficiencies were another critical focus. The group investigated how inadequate and unreliable transportation options in rural areas hinder access to essential services and urban centers, exacerbating the migration trend.

Housing shortages also played a crucial role. The lack of adequate and affordable housing in rural areas in India was found to drive people toward urban centers. In Japan, the issue was compounded by overpopulation in urban areas, which strained housing markets, while rural areas struggled with abandoned properties.

CONFERENCE STAGE

During the conference stages, Group 2 focused on analysing and discussing the collected data to address the issue of population outflow to urban areas. They gathered valuable insights from lectures attended in Minamisoma and Futaba, which provided real-world examples and practical knowledge on managing rural-urban migration.

The group segmented their topics among members to facilitate in-depth discussions and detailed analysis. This approach allowed them to thoroughly explore each aspect of the issue, including education, employment, transportation, and housing. They then prepared comprehensive slides to present their findings and solutions effectively. Final Conclusion: In conclusion, Group 2 presented their findings and proposed solutions for addressing the issue of population outflow to urban areas. Their recommendations focused on improving rural living conditions to mitigate the migration trend.

FINAL OUTCOMES

One key solution was addressing housing problems by focusing on abandoned properties, or 'akiya', in Japan. The group suggested that purchasing and repairing these properties could revitalize rural areas and provide affordable housing options. This approach not only addresses the housing shortage but also rejuvenates underutilized areas. To improve transportation, the group recommended enhancing infrastructure to ensure reliable and efficient connections between rural and urban areas. This includes investing in better transportation networks and exploring innovative solutions like carpooling and IT-based transit management.

Addressing employment and education gaps was another crucial aspect of their proposal. The group emphasized the need to create job opportunities and improve educational facilities in rural areas. By enhancing access to quality education and local job prospects, rural areas can become more attractive places to live and work.

Group 3

Members:

Name	Position	Institution / Major
Deepalika Deb	Academics Team Lead	Indira Gandhi National Open University / M.A. in Development Studies
Namrota Mandal	Press Team Lead	Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute / Animation Cinema
Riddhika Chatterjee	Cultural Team Lead	Indira Gandhi National Open University / M.A. in English
Jayee Dutta	Academics Team Member	Indira Gandhi National Open University / M.A. in English
Natsuki Yamaguchi	President - Japan Side	Tokai University / Department of Physical

		Education
Fukuyoka Matsui	International Liaison	Tokyo University of Foreign Studies / Department of International and Area Studies, Major language is Hindi
Miyu Sazuka	Academic Planning	Okayama University / Faculty of Engineering

Topic: “Disaster-resilient Community Building”

GD group 3 was entrusted with a critical topic under the main theme of “community development” which is “Disaster-resilient community building”. Considering Japan’s current measures and challenges during disasters such as, physical disaster prevention, people-based disaster prevention, deterioration of public safety during disasters. The group was supposed to examine despite frequent natural disasters in India how challenges remain in implementing effective measures and discuss what is necessary for preventions.

PRE-CONFERENCE STAGE

During discussions it was decided to find the fundamentals in creating a disaster resilient community, what are the disasters that affect both India and Japan most and research on existing case studies. Additionally, in the pre-conference stage, the group’s research focused on Japan’s advanced disaster prevention measures, such as physical structures (seawalls, embankments) and people-focused initiatives (evacuation drills, hazard maps). The group also discussed about the socio-economic or political barriers that India and Japan had faced in any previous disaster mis-management.

CONFERENCE STAGE

During this stage, Group 3 figured out that Japan and India have both experienced severe natural and man-made disasters, each impacting their infrastructure and communities in profound ways. To streamline the research process, the members divided themselves into sub-groups focusing on each theme. The three subgroups primarily conducted their research on the following questions:

- i.** What is a disaster resilient community, and why is it important for India and Japan to have a disaster resilient community? – This questioned explored the nature of the community, the practice with which the community can be sustained, and the role of such community. In this regard, the members highlighted four points – Education, Networking, Governance, Infrastructure.
- ii.** How should India and Japan tackle the problems arising out of disaster mis-management? – Here, the group research on the already existing laws and the ministries/bodies that tackle and make policies on disaster prevention in the two countries. Additionally, the members highlighted the importance of good governance and rights-based approach in this regard.
- iii.** How can the disaster resilient community tackle physical disasters, and how can the aspect of public safety be maintained? – In this question, the group explored some case studies pertaining to India and Japan. With the fieldwork done in Futaba town, Fukushima, the group highlighted the three-dimensions of post-disaster public safety, which are, Healthcare, Cultural preservation, and Restructuring.

The Group also examined the frequent natural disasters and significant industrial incidents in both countries, highlighting their causes and proposing effective countermeasures and policy solutions to address these challenges. The group reviewed case studies, including the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Chennai Tsunami, the Fukushima Daiichi Disaster, and the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, to draw practical insights for disaster prevention. The fieldwork done in Futaba Town, Fukushima, provided firsthand experience of how disaster resilience can be integrated into community development.

FINAL OUTCOMES

The group defined a disaster-resilient community by its ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. Essential components include risk assessment and planning, robust infrastructure development, community engagement and education, early warning systems, and effective emergency response and recovery strategies. For communities to become truly resilient, it is crucial to integrate these elements comprehensively.

A four-pillar approach was proposed by the group that could guide the development of disaster-resilient communities: Education, Networking, Governance, Infrastructure. By focusing on these pillars, communities can build a strong foundation for disaster resilience. The integration of Gandhian principles with modern disaster management frameworks, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, offers a holistic approach to enhancing resilience. Additionally, the group proposed enhancing legal frameworks in India to prioritize disaster resilience, with the NDMA playing a more active role.

Regarding Public Safety, while both India and Japan prioritize public safety in disaster management, their approaches reflect differing levels of development and cultural practices. India focuses on strengthening emergency healthcare, leveraging traditional knowledge, and improving urban planning, with gradual integration of mental health support. The fieldwork in Futaba town, Fukushima, provided practical insights into these measures, highlighting the need for community engagement, ethical leadership, and stronger disaster management frameworks in India. Japan, benefiting from advanced technology and higher economic capacity, employs highly sophisticated disaster preparedness systems, including resilient infrastructure and comprehensive public education. Japan's robust, well-coordinated response mechanisms and cultural emphasis on disaster readiness provide a model of efficiency and resilience.

In conclusion, the research highlighted that creating disaster-resilient communities require a sustained commitment to the principles and practices of law, socio-economic development, and the adequate management. Both India and Japan can benefit from applying these strategies to build resilience, reduce vulnerabilities, and ensure that their communities are better prepared for future challenges.

EVENT REPORTS

Arrival in Tokyo

21st August, 2024

Adesh Kumar Sahoo

On the 20th of August, a delegation of ten Indian students embarked on a journey to Japan for the 28th India-Japan Students' Conference. The team was filled with excitement and anticipation as they boarded a Singapore Airlines flight from Kolkata, with a scheduled layover in Singapore before reaching Tokyo. However, an hour-long delay in the first leg of the flight caused a chain reaction of further delays. This resulted in the team missing their originally booked connecting flight, thus extending the layover in Singapore to about five and a half hours, from the initial one and a half hours, making the already long journey more exhausting. Nonetheless, the delay was both a bane and a boon. Despite the setback, the extra time provided an opportunity for the members to rest and explore various attractions within Changi Airport, such as the Butterfly Garden and the Sunflower Garden.

After multiple delays and turbulent weather, the team finally arrived at Haneda Airport safely at midnight on the 21st, completing a gruelling 24-hour journey. Upon landing, the team faced a lengthy immigration queue, but the process was handled swiftly and smoothly, thanks to the efficient Japanese system. After clearing immigration and exiting the arrival area, the team was warmly welcomed by Natsuki Yamaguchi-san and her team, who had been patiently waiting since the afternoon. After some chatting and taking archival photographs, the Indian side was split into smaller groups, each accompanied by a Japanese team member, and headed to their accommodation at the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center via taxi. Despite the fatigue from the extended travels, the sight of Japan brought a surge of energy to the team, fuelled by the excitement of exploring a country they had always dreamt of visiting.

Although it was well past midnight when the team reached the Olympic Center, the hospitality of the Japanese side members was unwavering. At around half past two in the morning, all Indian team members finally checked into their respective rooms. To the pleasant surprise of the Indian team, the Japanese side had thoughtfully arranged snacks and drinks for them, considering the fact that the Indian team had missed dinner due to the travel delays. Despite the long and tiresome journey, the team's excitement for the upcoming twelve days of the conference and cultural exchange lifted everyone's spirits. After a brief discussion of the following day's schedule, everyone retired to bed, eager for the experiences and connections that lay ahead.

Opening Ceremony

22nd August, 2024

Ritika Mukherjee

With a little bit of sleep and hearts full of excitement, all the members headed to room 103 of the central building to commence the 28th India Japan Students' Conference with the Opening Ceremony hosted by Morita-san and Sazuka-san from the Japan side. Vice-president Inoue-san addressed the crowd with his opening remarks and set the stage for introductions from the Presidents: Yamaguchi-san and Sabarno-san. Their heartfelt speeches expressed their gratitude and hope for the success of this year's Conference.

Following that, there was a motivating address by Mr. Masayuki Taga, the Former Consul General of Japan in Kolkata and Chennai. Ms. Kanika Aggarwal, Director of Vivekananda Cultural Centre, followed next with a reminder of the role of youth in building bridges between the two nations. Ms. Hiroko Nagahama, founder of the Japan India Students' Conference, warmly welcomed all the members and Mr. Yusuke Suzuki, a JISC alumni association representative, shared highlights of his experience with the conference. Core members of the students' conference alumni, Mr. Deepro Banerjee and Ms. Reina Ishida delivered a presentation on their role in this conference, assuring everyone of their active support throughout. Matsui-san then debriefed the schedule for the entire conference.

The cultural segment brought vibrancy to the proceedings, with the India side cultural team presenting on Durga Puja, a grand festival deeply ingrained in India's cultural heritage. Anchored by team lead Riddhika-san and Sunanda-san, the presentation delved into the significance of this festival, its rituals, artistic expressions and celebrations. The fluidity of Jayee-san's recitation, Deepalika-san's eloquent explanation of the Mahalaya and its beautiful recitation by our communicator Adesh-san created a moment of true cultural exchange.

The opening ceremony concluded with a palpable sense of excitement as all the members, determined to make this experience memorable, gathered for a commemorative group photograph.

Sightseeing – Shibuya

22nd August, 2024

Deepalika Deb

On the first day in Japan, which marked the commencement of the 28th Indo-Japan Students' Conference in Tokyo, the Indian members were warmly received by the Japanese delegates and congratulated by stakeholders and guests. Following the Opening Ceremony, the evening was reserved for sightseeing and dinner in Shibuya.

The Indian and Japanese members were divided into groups for sightseeing. Each group consisted of three Indian members and two to three Japanese members. After receiving our Welcome Suica cards, which the Indian members were excited about, we headed to the nearest bus station and boarded transport towards Shibuya.

In the heart of Tokyo, Shibuya is home to shopping malls, marketplaces, bustling Japanese-style restaurants, and alluring theme stores. The area danced with the symphony of lights and the movement of modern cars. With pop culture reigning supreme—trendy boutiques, fashion, arcades, and eclectic cafes—Shibuya is a place woven with the threads of fashion, technology, and culture.

Our group, consisting of Yamaguchi-san, Kawai-san, Riddhika-san, and Yash-san, went to Parco for dinner. Parco is a massive ten-floor store housing high fashion, exhibitions, and culinary offerings. We dined at a Vegan Izakaya where we enjoyed ‘gyoza’, ‘kara-age’, tofu, seasonal vegetables, ‘tempura’, and more. We were joined by another IJSC group consisting of Inoue-san, Ono-san, Okazaki-san, Sabarno-san, Sunanda-san, and Kanak-san. Another group savoured authentic Japanese ramen during their visit. All members had the opportunity to visit the Shibuya Scramble Crossing. Nestled between skyscrapers, billboards, and neon lights, the intersection was a living mosaic of amused tourists and contented locals. This iconic crossing captures the essence of Shibuya’s unrelenting energy, urban life, and modern culture.

Some Indian members visited the Hachiko statue, one of Shibuya’s most beloved landmarks, symbolising love, dedication, and loyalty. Later, there were short visits to Shibuya Sakura Stage and Shibuya Scramble Square, which provided picture-perfect views of the ephemeral city and allowed everyone to capture images from above of the choreographed life below at the crossing.

Some members also took time to shop in Animate and Shibuya Hikarie. In Animate, members passionate about anime culture found treasures in anime goods, merchandise, and manga books, connecting with popular franchises. The observation deck in Shibuya Hikarie offered breathtaking views of the sparkling, busy city of Shibuya from the top floor.

On our return from Shibuya, walking among the lanes surrounded by Mega Don Quijote, IKEA, Starbucks, SEIBU, Tsutaya, Mitsukoshi, Disney Store, Shibuya Loft, and other monumental shopping architectural marvels, we were enveloped by the very soul of Tokyo’s rapid and ever-evolving lifestyle. After a marvellous day of sightseeing, the weariness from the previous day’s flight journey was forgotten. The day thus marked new discoveries in Tokyo’s dynamic city life and fostered budding friendships through cultural exchanges and hearty conversations among the Indian and Japanese members of the Conference.

Group Discussion Session 1

23rd August, 2024

Sabarno Sinha

The first Group Discussion session of the 28th India-Japan Students' Conference was held in the Central Building of the National Olympics Memorial Youth Centre in Tokyo. Students had already been divided into three groups based on the sub-theme they wanted to work on. Ten students from Kolkata, along with two from Chennai, were split into three groups, each consisting of three to four Japanese students.

The first group discussion began at 09:00 A.M. JST and lasted for about three hours. During the session, the students discussed the data they had collected so far, the surveys conducted, and the key questions and issues that needed to be addressed in the subsequent group discussions. Since it was already scheduled to leave for Fukushima the following day, a significant amount of time was spent framing questions and points to investigate during the field visit to Futaba Town and Minamisoma City, two areas that were completely devastated by the Great Tohoku Earthquake and the subsequent tsunami. The students also discussed a draft outline for the final presentations they would need to show at the end of the conference and began dividing the tasks between the Japanese and Indian members.

Alongside these academic activities, as is customary, students exchanged a variety of snacks and small gifts from their respective countries. The India-side brought different types of biscuits, cookies, and chips, while the Japan-side offered gummies, rice crackers, and other delicious snacks, making the whole session an enjoyable experience. Time flew by during the discussion as the students prepared for the sightseeing planned for later in the day.

Sightseeing-Asakusa

23rd August, 2024

Deepalika Deb

An enchanting district of time-travel, where the train takes you back to the vibe of old Tokyo – Asakusa is the place where the fabric of traditional Japan gets beaded in the souls of the visitors. After a fruitful discussion in the first Group Discussion session, and a nutritious lunch in the Tokyo National Youth Centre's canteen, we got ready for the day's sightseeing trip. What awaited us was a deeper exploration of traditional Japanese culture, divine connection, and an enchanting cityscape where there was a marriage between tradition and modernity.

The members took the train to Asakusa in the afternoon. As we emerged from the subway to the streets, we were welcomed with the aroma of traditional sweets and snacks. As we walked through the old lanes and to the main roads, in front of our eyes was a vivid portrayal of the perpetually developing Tokyo, a coexistence of modern architecture and time-torn wooden establishments. Our destination for the day was the most famous and revered locations of Tokyo, the Senso-ji Temple. The Senso-ji Temple is the oldest Buddhist temple in Tokyo, founded in 628 CE. Its establishment echoes an interesting legend, which says that the temple was built in the gratitude of the statue of Kannon discovered by two fishermen from the Sumida River, that flows through the centre of the city.

Enroute to Senso-ji temple, we encountered the striking and majestic Tokyo Skytree, with its breathtaking height, reaching the clouds of heavens overlooking the city. Creating a beautiful silhouette against the Tokyo skyline, the Skytree is known to be the tallest tower in Japan. Having a 360-degree observation desk, the Skytree is a testament of architectural ingenuity. While we were taking pictures of the Tokyo Skytree, surrounding the landscape we were entertained by the story of The Asahi Flame, commonly referred to as the ‘Golden Turd’ or ‘Poo Building’, that invited loud laughter from all of us!

The Indian members were amused by the ‘jinrikisha’ or hand-driven carriage, lined around the main street, giving an authentic glimpse of Tokyo’s old mode of transportation. While the ‘rickshaw’ in India is a regular mode of transportation, the ‘jinrikisha’ in Japan marks a heritage of nostalgia, and a personal sightseeing experience.

As we reached the pedestals of the Kaminarimon Gate, with the giant red lantern and guardian statues, we were enthralled with the performance of the flourishing traditions of Japan. The streets surrounding the Senso-ji houses the Nakamise-dori, a shopping street lined with traditional souvenirs, bakeries and snacks. After reaching the Senso-ji, the members tried おみくじ (*Omikuji*) or fortunes that was a delightful way of connecting with traditional culture. After offering prayers in the temple, and enjoying the captivating view of the place, some members went for a feast in Sushiro, while others went for a Monjayaki dinner. Our group, including Mekar-san, Kanak-san, Yash-san, and myself were warmly invited to Kawai-san’s home where we had the wonderful opportunity to engage with the Japanese lifestyle in an intimate setting. In the midst of home cooked meals and conversations about Japanese and Indian lifestyles, the Kawai family offered us a serene atmosphere enriching us about Japanese school life, education, and work-life. In passing, we had jovial sessions of yoga, games, and childhood stories. The Kawai family was very kind and hospitable, and their generosity to accommodate Indian culture as well as their eagerness to share Japanese culture with us left a lasting impression. We were awestruck by the view of the Sumida River from the Kawai family residence and learnt a lot of stories about the festivals that happen there every year. While we had the opportunity to enjoy the brightly lit view of the Tokyo Skytree while returning to our accommodation, other groups experienced the breathtaking evening-view of the Senso-ji temple. Some members paused for a short trip to Asakusa Don Quijote after feasting traditional meals in different restaurants.

In conclusion, our sightseeing in Asakusa was a serene escape to old Tokyo, with a pulse of life bustling in the not-so-old lanes! The view of the Sumida River, the captivating Skytree, and the iconic Senso-ji lives as a picturesque memory – an enchanting journey through time.

Visit to Futaba and Denshokan by Groups 1 and 3

24th August, 2024

Adesh Kumar Sahoo

After settling down in Tokyo and spending two days attending group discussion sessions and some sightseeing, the day for the fieldwork finally arrived. The day began early for the Indian team members, who checked out of their accommodation at dawn and made their way to Tokyo Station to board the Hitachi Limited Express. Arriving well before departure time, the team took the opportunity to explore Tokyo Station, appreciating its architectural beauty and historic significance. After some sightseeing around Tokyo Station, they waited at the station before finally boarding the train for their destination, Futaba Town in Fukushima Prefecture.

The train journey to Futaba took approximately three and a half hours. During the ride, the group enjoyed 駅弁 (*ekiben* or bento lunch) while reflecting on the transition from the bustling metropolis of Tokyo to the quiet, rural landscapes of Japan's countryside. Two groups deboarded at Futaba, while another group continued on to Namie Town for their fieldwork. The shift from the fast-paced, urban life of Tokyo to the serene and sparsely populated areas of Fukushima was striking, highlighting the stark contrast between Japan's cities and its rural regions.

After arriving in Futaba, the group checked in at their accommodation. Close to the Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, Futaba Town had been a nuclear exclusion zone following the Great East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent nuclear disaster of 2011, only reopening for resettlement in 2020. Following check-in, the group proceeded to 伝承館 (*Denshokan*), officially known as The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum. This museum holds heavy significance as it documents the events surrounding the 2011 disaster and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, educating visitors on the impact it had on the region. The visit began with a short documentary detailing the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011. This was followed by a tour of the diorama and museum exhibits, where Hiramoto-san, the guide, meticulously explained the sequence of events that unfolded during the disaster.

One of the most moving parts of the visit was the storytelling session led by Hidezo-san, a survivor of the disaster, who vividly recounted the harrowing events of that day. The group was deeply moved by his firsthand account, which brought the reality of the tragedy into sharper focus.

While the visit to Denshokan left the group saddened by the immense loss and suffering caused by the disaster, they also left feeling hopeful. Seeing Futaba Town—once a desolate exclusion zone—show signs of life and recovery after years of abandonment served as a powerful reminder of human resilience and the capacity for rebirth in the face of adversity.

After the visit, the group returned to the hotel and spent the rest of the day enjoying the Pacific coastline and taking in the serene atmosphere of rural Japan before retiring for the night, reflecting on the emotional and educational experiences of the day.

Visit to Minamisoma by Group 2

24th August, 2024

Kanak Verma

After arriving in Futaba, Group 2 continued on to Namie Station, where we had a wait of over an hour for our train to Minamisoma. During this time, we visited a restaurant named Jyubako Café. The café, set up in four different vehicles with a wooden interior, was very quiet and comfortable. We enjoyed bonding with each other, talking, drawing, and playing Shiratori, a traditional Japanese game where each player says a word that starts with the last syllable or letter of the previous word.

After spending some time at the café, we boarded our train to Minamisoma City. The Indian side members received their first 駅の判子 (*'eki no hanko'* or station stamp). Minamisoma was extremely clean, quiet, and beautifully constructed. We walked a few minutes to よりみち (*'Yorimichi'*), where we attended a presentation and seminar related to our topic. The seminar was insightful, providing us with valuable information to incorporate into our case studies and solutions to various problems.

After the seminar, we returned to Futaba. Since we couldn't find any available transport to our hotel, three of our group members (Nanami-san, Sunanda-san, and Ritika-san) rented bicycles to reach the hotel, while the rest of us walked. Although we were initially very tired, the walk became quite relaxing as we took in the scenery. The contrast between urban and rural Japan was striking. As crowded and rushed the urban areas are, the rural areas were very less populated, with a very slow life. It also felt very quiet and relaxing after the rushed city life in Tokyo. For some of us, we had the chance to ride a bicycle after years, which felt very liberating. The roads were empty, and the landscape was lush and green.

Overall, the experience became a cherished memory for all of us, something we will remember for a long time.

Lecture with Mr. Hiramoto

25th August, 2024

Jayee Dutta

After checking out from the hotel, everyone left for the memorial museum once again. The Japanese side members had arranged a projector for the presentation. Hiramoto-san soon joined and began his lecture. The presentation started with devastating footage of a tsunami hitting Onagawa Town in Miyagi Prefecture.

Following the disaster in the Tohoku region, the Indian Embassy requested assistance from the Indian National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). From March 28th to April 10th, 2011, they engaged in disaster relief and search operations for missing persons in Onagawa. Hiramoto-san, who worked as a translator with the team, described witnessing only the traces of the tsunami that had swallowed the town in one breath, leaving behind mountains of debris and exposing the foundations of houses. NDRF personnel used only their bare hands, without equipment or machinery, to remove the debris to avoid harming any potential survivors, a method that was highly praised by the local people. He also spoke about an elderly woman who assisted in locating many missing people. As a local resident, she was familiar with the community and the whereabouts of its residents. One of the footage depicted the devastation caused by the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant explosion, and the subsequent suffering due to continuous evacuations, false news, and mental distress.

The Japanese government, with the aid of various countries, has worked tirelessly to overcome the disaster. This experience serves as a reminder of the ancient Indian philosophy, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "The world is one family," highlighting the importance of supporting one another despite the vast differences.

Lecture at SAKURA in Minamisoma

25th August, 2024

Sabarno Sinha

After Hiramoto-san's lecture, we travelled from the green expanses of Futaba Town for an hour by train and reached Minamisoma City in Fukushima Prefecture on a rainy afternoon. A short walk from the station brought us to SAKURA: Minamisoma City Multicultural Centre. We entered a spacious classroom adorned with Japanese language materials, flags of different countries, posters of Minamisoma City's famous historical events, and maps and materials related to the American town of Pendleton, Oregon.

Mr. Masanori Watanabe, the Director, welcomed us to the Centre and delivered a compelling presentation on Minamisoma City and the work of Sakura over the next hour and a half. From the moment we arrived, we were struck by how the city looked completely new, equipped with the same kind of technology found in any other Japanese town. Hiramoto-san showed us pictures of Minamisoma City from thirteen years ago, when the tsunami wreaked havoc and destroyed everything. Yet, it had bounced back and was now ready for tourists, workers, and new residents to revitalise its streets and lanes.

Sakura plays a vital role in this recovery by helping foreign workers acclimate to Japanese society through various activities, including organising get-togethers with locals, celebrating foreign festivals, conducting Japanese language classes, and providing legal and administrative support. This helps foreigners feel at home in Minamisoma City. At the same time, Sakura also forges connections with foreign institutions and domestic corporations to encourage investment in Minamisoma City and aid in its economic regeneration. To this end,

Sakura has been instrumental in establishing a partnership with the town of Pendleton in the US, facilitating regular exchange programmes and visits between the two places.

At the end of the lecture, Watanabe - san informed us about various opportunities in the city for both STEM graduates and those in the Humanities, and he encouraged the Indian students to consider working in Fukushima Prefecture. I was genuinely inspired by his spirit and the energy of the people of Fukushima as they work tirelessly to revive the region. The session left us reflecting on the remarkable achievements that human determination can accomplish, even in the face of natural disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis.

Yukata Trials

26th August, 2024

Adesh Kumar Sahoo

Cultural exchange is one of the best ways to truly understand and appreciate a country's traditions, and similarly, one of the most enriching experiences for the Indian members was the chance to try on a yukata, giving everyone a firsthand glimpse into Japan's cultural heritage. The yukata is a casual, lightweight summer kimono typically made of cotton or synthetic fabric and is often worn during festivals or fireworks displays. Unlike the formal kimono, the yukata is simpler and easier to wear, making it more suitable for the warmer months in Japan. The trial presented a unique opportunity to connect with Japan on a deeper level, going beyond observation to experiencing tradition through attire.

On the 26th of August, at half past eleven, Natsuki-san and Inoue-san accompanied the Indian members to Kitazume-san's residence in Nakai, where the session was organised. The session was also joined by Nagahama-sensei and Nishiwaki Suemi-sensei, a renowned kimono expert and hairdresser. Kitazume-san's hospitality was exemplary. While preparing for the session, she treated the members to delicious 'kakigori' (shaved ice) and a variety of Japanese snacks, making everyone feel truly at home.

After some introductions and formalities, Nishiwaki-sensei began the process by styling the hair of the female members in traditional Japanese fashion, adorning their hair with delicate ornaments. Following this, both Kitazume-san and Nishiwaki-sensei worked together to help all the members, both male and female, dress in yukata. A variety of yukata in different colours and patterns were arranged for the session. In addition, various accessories such as 'sensu' (Japanese hand fans) and plastic 'katana' (Japanese swords) were handed out to better match the aesthetics of the yukata. After everyone was dressed in yukata, some members enthusiastically posed with the plastic katana, mimicking samurai stances in a fun, playful atmosphere. The group then enjoyed a traditional hand game, *Konpira Fune Fune*, where two players rhythmically tapped an object in sync with a folk song, trying to outsmart each other by placing or withdrawing their hand at the right moment. It added a lively and competitive touch to the session, enriching the cultural exchange experience.

Following those activities, a photo session began which captured the joy and novelty of the moment. After the photo session, Kitazume-san taught the female members some traditional Japanese fan poses, known as *sensu-mai*, further enhancing the cultural depth of the session. She also gave all the members a brief introduction to the Japanese tea ceremony, explaining how a tea master carefully handles the utensils and allowing everyone to experience a mock session of matcha-making using those utensils.

After a few more group photographs, it was time to change back into regular clothes and conclude the event.

The yukata trial was a highly anticipated event for the Indian members. Wearing a yukata for the first time was a memorable and exciting experience that gave everyone a deeper appreciation of Japan's cultural elegance. Opportunities like this are truly hard to come by, and the members made the most of it.

Lecture with Mr. Yogendra Puranik

26th August, 2024

Sabarno Sinha

On August 26th, there was great excitement among both the Indian and Japanese groups, even after the yukata trials, as we were about to meet Mr. Yogendra Puranik, fondly known as Yogi-san, a Japanese politician of Indian origin who is also a school principal. As we travelled to Nishikasai in Edogawa ward, we were filled with anticipation. Upon entering Yogi-san's home, which has an Indian restaurant run by his mother at the front, the familiar scent of garam masala greeted us, evoking a sense of home.

Yogi-san delivered his lecture on the first floor of his house, surrounded by Indian clothes, a small temple to Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesh, and posters and blackboards for Hindi classes. He spoke in both English and Japanese to ensure everyone could understand. Yogi-san shared valuable lessons to help us better understand both Japan and India, emphasising the importance of learning the local language and adapting to customs. He illustrated how small cultural differences, such as the flooring materials in homes, can lead to misunderstandings, like noise complaints.

He further elaborated on the different thought and behavioural patterns between Japanese and Indian people, highlighting the importance of learning from each other. Yogi-san stressed the value of community development, noting that while many Indians in Japan believe they can sustain themselves independently, this mindset often fails during crises.

The day ended with a meal of Indian thali, prepared by Yogi-san's welcoming parents. The roti, rice, dal, papad, and chicken curry were comforting and familiar, and the Japanese students were thrilled to try Maharashtrian cuisine for the first time. As we returned to our accommodation, we felt enriched and inspired by Yogi-san's insights. His words gave us new perspectives on fostering better understanding and coexistence between our cultures.

This session motivated us to give our best for the rest of the conference and beyond, aiming to build a more beautiful world together with our Japanese friends.

Group Discussion Session 2

27th August, 2024

Sunanda Shaw

On 27th August 2024, we had our second Group Discussion Session. It was conducted in the Centre building of the National Olympic Memorial Youth Center, Tokyo. The Group Discussion began at 09:00 A.M. and ended at noon. Initially, all three groups sat with their respective members and delved into deeper discussions. But later the session took interesting turns. Then, it was not only focused on serious discussions but there were also fun chit-chats, snack sharing, souvenir exchange, drawing animated characters such as Doraemon on the whiteboard, and so on. Your sentence is clear but could benefit from some restructuring for better flow and clarity. This group discussion was informative, as all three groups had participated in fieldwork in Fukushima Prefecture on August 24th. In this session, each group focused on incorporating the practical knowledge they gained into their presentations.

Towards the end of the second Group Discussion Session, each group was asked to summarise their research or discussions. Accordingly, in the last 20 minutes, all three groups summarised their work, beginning with Group 1 and followed up by Group 2 and Group 3. There were also Question and Answer sessions, where other groups could raise questions to another group based on the summarization that they had given; and could pass suggestions that could be incorporated into the Presentation. The second Group Discussion was summed up at 12:00 P.M., after which the members dispersed from the room and moved towards the lunch area.

Although the Japanese and Indian members were segregated into three groups, the teamwork as a whole was seen in these sessions of the Conference. Members were not only helping their group but were also supporting other groups if needed. From sharing personal opinions to demonstrating professionalism, it was a fruitful session.

Indian Embassy Visit and Sightseeing at Yasukuni Jinja Shrine

27th August, 2024

Yash Das

On August 27, 2024, our group embarked on a remarkable visit to the Indian Embassy in Tokyo. Comprising both Indian and Japanese members, our group exuded a sense of elegance, as we were dressed in both suits and Indian formals, which added a sense of occasion to the day. The journey began at Yoyogi Station, where we boarded the train, made a smooth line change at Omotesando Station, and eventually arrived at Kudanshita Station. From there, we walked towards Chiyoda City, where the Indian Embassy is located. As we approached the embassy, the sight of the Indian tricolour fluttering in front of the building instilled a deep sense of pride within me.

Our group was accompanied by Nagahama sensei and two members from the Dosokai, Dee-pro-san and Ishida-san. Entering the embassy felt surprisingly homelike, as the entrance welcomed us with a large statue of Lord Ganesha, setting a serene and cultural tone for the visit. We ascended the stairs to the main office, where photographs of India's Prime Minister and President adorned the walls, reaffirming the connection to our homeland.

At 03:00 P.M., the honourable Indian Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Sibi George, commenced the meeting. He began by introducing himself and sharing insights about his extensive career, including the countries he had served and his experiences in Tokyo as the ambassador. The atmosphere was professional, yet warm, as we were treated to delicious samosas and tea, a taste of India amidst a foreign land.

The Ambassador's presentation covered current international relations and crucial geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region, such as "FOIP" (Free and Open Indo-Pacific), "QUAD" (Quadrilateral Alliance), "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region), "FIPIC" (Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation) and so on. His explanations were thought-provoking, sparking conversations on global affairs, and Japan's and India's crucial collaboration in these matters. The session, although brief, was enriching and gave us a deeper understanding of India's diplomatic initiatives.

After the meeting, we posed for a group photo with the Ambassador, capturing a moment of shared cultural pride. We then descended to the lobby for another group photo, this time in front of the Ganesha statue.

The day continued with a visit to the Yasukuni-Jinja shrine, located in Kudanshita, a short walk from the Embassy. This shrine, dedicated to honouring Japan's war dead, exuded an aura of peace and reverence. Some of the members purchased stamps and fortune tokens. The atmosphere inside the shrine was calm, reflective and offered a glimpse into Japan's rich cultural heritage. Overall, the visit was both informative and inspiring, blending diplomacy, culture, and reflection in one memorable day.

Sightseeing - Shinjuku and Harajuku

27th August, 2024

Namrota Mandal

After a very informative and insightful visit to the Embassy and a stroll through the serene Yasukuni Jinja, the members were divided into smaller groups to visit different places of their choice. Most groups headed to Shinjuku.

Shinjuku, one of Tokyo's most dynamic districts, is renowned for its bustling energy, diverse attractions, and iconic landmarks. From high-end department stores to the bustling electronics district of Akihabara, Shinjuku is a hub for entertainment, with numerous theatres, cinemas, and live music venues.

One group gave in to the temptations of the Don Quijote store located right alongside Uniqlo, while another group scoured the streets of Shinjuku. The giant *Gojira* Statue, standing proudly in the middle of those busy lanes, became a newly discovered treasure for members who were fans of the iconic monster. After lengthy shopping sprees, hunting for restaurants with vegan options, emptying pockets at claw machines, and posing at '*Purikura*' booths, the members had a blast exploring the vibrant atmosphere, diverse attractions, and iconic landmarks of Shinjuku.

While most groups were on various quests in Shinjuku, our group was having a blast in Harajuku, the fashion mecca and cultural hub of Tokyo. From kawaii to gothic Lolita, Harajuku is known for its unique fashion, quirky shops, and youthful energy. It's a paradise for fashion enthusiasts, with a wide range of styles on display. We passed the famous Takeshita Street, known for its trendy boutiques, street food stalls, and vibrant atmosphere. Completely absorbed by street fashion and its varieties, we admired the people maintaining the same fashion streaks. We visited different souvenir shops, enjoyed crepes and candies, and decided we deserved a grand treat after such a long day. Natsuki-san, Suzuno-san, Thirusan, and I were trying to decide our dinner plans when we stumbled across a ramen shop. A sudden waft of noodly aroma led us inside, and we could no longer resist the urge. We entered and wasted no time ordering. The food arrived quickly, and we dove into it while chatting away.

After filling our stomachs to the brim, we moved to the entrance of Takeshita Street, a famous photo spot in Harajuku. The LED screen at the Takeshita gate sometimes shows videos of people entering the street. We took a picture of ourselves on that LED screen to commemorate the well-spent day. We retraced our steps back and, as it was already late evening, decided to head back to the Olympic Centre, exhausted but exhilarated from our adventures in Shinjuku and Harajuku.

Group Discussion Session 3

28th August, 2024

Deepalika Deb

The Group Discussions in the IJSC/JISC always feature a unique academic enlightenment and teamwork. In the first two Group Discussions, the groups prepared their foundational research and also did cross-group communication regarding the topics. The third Group Discussion, scheduled on the 28th August, at 09:00 A.M., in the Center Building, welcomed deeply focused participants who were enriched by already held lectures and the Embassy visit.

Compiling all the knowledge gathered during the lectures, and assembling the additional research done with regard to the discussions, each group sat down to prepare their presentations. The research not only focused on cross-cultural dialogues about the theme, that is, “Community Development Through Japan - India Collaboration”, but also highlighted the enhanced understanding of socio-cultural and behavioural impediments in different contexts and milieu.

During conversations, each group member also discussed their proposed initiatives and research. All the three groups during this Group Discussion session primarily focused on finalising the presentation, conducting in-depth research, and integrated the knowledge gained from the previous lectures.

Amidst the productive research, there were light-hearted sessions of a brief hushed-karaoke among the members of Group 1 and Group 3, filling the atmosphere with little music and amusement. Group 2 members generated their artistic nerves and presented caricatures of the members on the whiteboard. Midway through the discussion, the members also exchanged Indian and Japanese snacks with each other - thus, exchanging a delightful taste of culture ! These informal exchanges in the middle of serious academic research fostered amusement and created a warm environment enriching the spirit of the Conference.

Thus, the third Group Discussion was a productive and enriching session that enabled the members to effectively prepare the presentation, and also fostered teamspirit and intellectual growth.

Sightseeing - Ueno

28th August, 2024

Yash Das

On 28th August 2024, our group—comprising Inoue-san, Kanak-san, and Deepalika-san—set off from our dormitory in the afternoon for a visit to the Tokyo National Museum and the

National Museum of Western Arts in Ueno. We took a train from Sangubashi to Ueno, a vibrant district known for its expansive Ueno Park, which is home to museums, cultural landmarks, and even a zoo.

Our first stop was the National Museum of Western Arts, where we immersed ourselves in masterful works by renowned painters like Veronese, Rubens, Brueghel, and Fragonard. Many of the paintings carried religious imagery, with Christian motifs dominating the gallery. Eagerly, we sought out pieces by Monet, hoping to glimpse his iconic brushstrokes. The museum's serene atmosphere, coupled with its beautifully curated exhibits, made it a truly enriching experience for us all.

From there, we moved to the Tokyo National Museum, Japan's oldest and largest. There, we encountered an extensive collection of Japanese art and historical artefacts, ranging from ancient pottery and samurai armour to exquisite *'katana'* or Japanese sword and Edo-period paintings. Each exhibit seemed to cultivate a deeper understanding of Japan's rich artistic and cultural heritage. If one walks through the vast halls, an undeniable connection to Japan's past could be felt. The experience was nothing short of awe-inspiring, offering a vivid glimpse into centuries of history.

As the day drew to a close, we left the museum around 05:30 P.M., and went to the energetic streets of Akihabara, where we had the wonderful experience of visiting a ramen shop for dinner. The day's visit was thus, a serene blend of artistic captures, history, and learnings.

Sightseeing – Akihabara

28th August, 2024

Jayee Dutta

One of the groups formed for the day included Yamaguchi-san, Mekarusan, Sunanda-san, Riddhika-san and myself. It was decided to finally give Akihabara a visit, also known as Akiba, which is famous for its many electronics shops and has also gained recognition as the centre of Japan's anime culture. Many shops and establishments devoted to anime and manga are dispersed among the electronic stores in the district.

After getting off at Akihabara Station, the very first store we encountered was "Mujirushi Ryōhin". This retail company offers a wide variety of household items, furniture, clothing, and food products. Mujirushi is well-known for its philosophy of functional, high-quality design with a Japanese minimalistic aesthetic. The group spent some quality time shopping for snacks and sweets to take back as souvenirs, which were offered at reasonable prices.

The next store was "BOOK OFF", a well-known second-hand store spread over six floors, specialising in books, music, movies, video games, and manga. The Akihabara branch boasts a large selection of games and manga, offering some of the cheapest options for modern and

retro games, with manga priced as low as 100 yen. The Indian members took some time to buy a few novels and manga.

To experience a typical anime merchandise store, the group visited "ASTOP". This store offers a service for private individuals to sell sought-after collectibles. They display the merchandise in showcases and sell the items on behalf of the owners. The store was filled with a wide range of anime goods, including figures, stuffed animals, plastic models, idol goods, photos, retro games, trading cards, and more. Seeing so many familiar anime figurines as soon as entering the store was a joyous feeling.

After walking for a while, everyone needed to restore the energy exhausted after long walks and shopping, hence after some wavering and discussions it was decided to get dinner at an Izakaya. After enjoying some delicious dishes in a lively Izakaya, it was time to head back to the Olympic Center.

Lecture by GEOTRA and Group Discussion Session 4

29th August, 2024

Ritika Mukherjee

The day started with a visit from the company GEOTRA, a joint venture between Mitsui&Co. and KDDI. Held in room 109 in the central building from 09:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., the company personnel presented an in-depth overview of their data-driven solutions, aimed at improving urban infrastructure and transportation. The representative elaborated on how GEOTRA utilises people's travel patterns, simulating data to devise strategies for reducing traffic congestion, creating eco-friendly cities, and enhancing transportation systems. He further explained the process of gathering activity data, which tracks the movement of each consumer. That brought into question the privacy of these consumers and how well protected it is, GEOTRA addresses this issue by using synthetic data generation technology effectively. The GEOTRA model has applications in various sectors such as urban planning, tourism, construction, disaster prevention, decarbonization, and location-based marketing. A short feedback and Q&A session took place right after, where the members asked insightful questions relating to their respective topics of discussion and gained a better understanding of the GEOTRA model and its ventures.

After lunch, the team reconnected for the fourth group discussion session, which took place from 01:30 P.M. to 05:00 P.M.. Each group reviewed their research and thought about how the earlier lecture from GEOTRA could be incorporated into their study solutions. Later in the session, all three groups came together for a debrief and feedback session to share their progress. The discussion was centred around clarifying ideas and incorporating feedback to solidify each group's final output. The groups finalised their slides, jotting down ideas on notepads and whiteboards as they fine-tuned their content. To lift the tension in the room, both Indian and Japanese side members had arranged and exchanged snacks authentic to their countries, motivating everyone to work harder for their presentations.

Sightseeing - Evening in Shibuya

29th August, 2024

Namrota Mandal

After a long, draining company lecture, there's nothing quite like the energy of Shibuya to wash away the fatigue. Shibuya is a bustling district in Tokyo known for its youthful energy, vibrant culture, and iconic landmarks. Home to one of the world's busiest pedestrian crossings, the Shibuya Crossing has become the pulsating heartbeat of Tokyo. Immersing oneself in a swirling kaleidoscope of neons and pastels dotted with advertisements and people flooding into the area, the "Scramble Crossing" is a chaotic yet mesmerising symphony of urban life.

On August 29th, after the informative Geotra lecture, Natsuki-san, Suzuno-san, and I decided to visit Shibuya. As we were about to leave, a drizzling rain arrived as a refreshing relief from the hot summer week. We took a bus to the Shibuya stop and dove headfirst into the bustling Mega Don Quijote, a nine-story haven for shopaholics. This sprawling department store was a treasure trove of goods, from electronics and cosmetics to groceries and souvenirs. It was a microcosm of Japan, packed with everything from iconic Godzilla memorabilia to adorable Maneki Neko and Shiba Inus. The sheer variety of products was overwhelming, making it easy to get lost in the aisles and discover unexpected gems. Unable to resist the temptation of the endless options, we spent a blissful two hours exploring the store.

After the shopping frenzy at Donki, our stomachs began to grumble in protest. We decided to indulge in a well-deserved feast at a nearby izakaya, conveniently located directly across from the store. The izakaya's warm, inviting atmosphere immediately put us at ease as we settled into our seats. Our empty tables were soon adorned with a delightful assortment of savoury appetisers. That night, we opted for 'gyōzas', and as the plates arrived, the izakaya was filled with a mouthwatering aroma. The sizzling sound of the pan and the fragrant steam that wafted through the air tantalise the taste buds. To quench our parched throats, we ordered some drinks to complement our meal. The izakaya's lively ambiance, filled with the chatter of other patrons and the clinking of glasses, added to the overall enjoyment of our experience. As we leisurely savoured our food and engaged in lively conversation, we lost track of time. By that point, the rain outside had intensified, though we barely noticed. After spending over an hour and a half at the izakaya, we decided to make our way back to the Olympic Center, our stomachs full and our spirits lifted. While walking towards *Shibu-chika* (Shibuya Station), we passed a long queue of people in front of the famous Hachiko statue, a poignant reminder of the deep bond between humans and animals. Overall, my visit to Shibuya was undoubtedly one of my best memories in Tokyo.

Sightseeing - Evening in Shibuya

29th August, 2024

Kanak Verma

After finishing our lectures, we went to Shibuya in different groups once again. We had our dinner and left as soon as possible. Deepalika-san and I needed to do some shopping, and Miyu-san and Yoko-san were kind enough to take us out and show us around. They first took us to Muji, where we split up for easier shopping. It was an amazing experience at Muji and I was so overwhelmed by the collection! It was huge and it had a lot of varieties, from kitchen utilities to an amazing stationery collection. Miyu-san stayed with me the entire time as I was running from one place to another, and then we went to Uniqlo, while Deepalika and Yoko-san went to the vegan izakaya.

We did some more shopping at UNIQLO, where the collection was different from what we find in India. I finally bought a long denim skirt too! Though we wanted to stay longer, we were almost at our curfew time, so we had to head back. It started raining, and Miyu-san and I ran to the bus station. I personally don't like rain, but I loved the rain in Japan. We luckily got the bus within 2 mins and we reached the Orisen in 20 minutes. In our experience of Japan, most of the members really enjoyed the bus in Japan, they were very convenient and you just had to press a button and the bus would stop for you on the next stop, something which I really miss after returning to Kolkata. It was a really fun day, and I was excited throughout since I was able to explore Muji and Uniqlo. Additionally, I felt close with Miyu-san; it was like a personal time, and I got to know her better too.

Group Discussion Session 5

30th August, 2024

Riddhika Chatterjee

Group Discussion 5 took place on August 30, 2024, at room number 109 of the Center Building of the National Olympic Youth Center in Tokyo, from 09:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. Members assembled in front of the meeting room at 08:45 A.M., and the session commenced promptly at 09:00 A.M. Following an intensive period of preparation, the final presentation was delivered shortly after 02:00 P.M. The atmosphere was charged with anticipation as participants consolidated the extensive research and insights accumulated over the preceding months and previous group discussions.

The group sessions included – Livable City for Foreign People for Group 1; Issue of Population Outflow to Urban Areas for Group 2; and Disaster-resilient Community Building for Group 3. During Group Session 5, the final preparatory session before the main presentation, we engaged in an intensive review and refinement of our project. This crucial session, spanning three hours, involved compiling and synthesising the insights we had gathered over the previous months. We focused on drafting and finalising our scripts, as well as meticulously adding the last touches to our PowerPoint presentation to ensure its clarity and impact. Each group presented a concise summary of their contributions and progress to the other groups, providing an overview of their findings and the integration of their research into the overall project. This exchange was instrumental in aligning our collective efforts and addressing any gaps or overlaps in the content.

After completing our research consolidation and the end of the session, we took a break to enjoy a well-deserved lunch at the convenience store. This brief respite allowed us to recharge and reflect on the work accomplished, setting the stage for the final presentation later in the day.

Final Presentation and Closing Ceremony

30th August, 2024

Sunanda Shaw

30th August 2024, was the day to reap what all had harvested for the four Group Discussion Sessions and in the Fieldwork. The members of both the Japanese side and the Indian side were excited as well as nervous at the same time, aiming to conclude the Conference on a good note. The Final Presentation was scheduled from 02:00 P.M. to 04:30 P.M. It was conducted in the Center building of the National Olympic Memorial Youth Center, Tokyo. Nagahama Sensei and Watanabe-san of Mitsubishi UFJ International Foundation were invited as our Chief Guests.

The Final Presentation began as per its allotted time, 02:00 P.M. Deepalika San and Kodaira San commenced the session with a few introductory lines and asked Group 1 to begin with their presentation. Group 1 presented their topic “A livable city for foreign people”, in a unique manner. They ran an online survey in both India and Japan and based on their survey they presented their topic successfully. Next, Group 2 was asked to deliver their presentation. The topic allotted for group 2 was - “The issue of population outflow to urban areas”. They highlighted Japan and India’s issues of population with special context to Minamisoma which they have visited in their fieldwork. Next, the final group, Group 3 delivered their presentation. This group dealt with - the “Disaster-resilient community building” topic, with a special reference to Gandhian Philosophy and community development. There was also a Question-and-Answer session of 10 minutes after each Group presentation, where other groups could pose their questions based on the presentations.

The Presentation ended with good remarks from Watanabe San and Nagahama Sensei. The end of the Presentation marked the end of the academic discussion of the Conference.

After the Final Presentation, the Closing Ceremony which was scheduled at 06:00 P.M. Nagahama Sensei honoured everyone with certificates, beginning with the Indian side and followed up by the Japanese side. As the Closing Ceremony ended, everyone chose to explore more of Tokyo and enjoy dinner outdoors. After taking many pictures, the group happily split into smaller teams to visit their preferred destinations.

Sightseeing - Tokyo Tower

1st September, 2024

Kanak Verma

On the last day, the members were divided into different groups according to the choice of sightseeing. Yash-san, Nanami-san, and myself, went to Tokyo Tower. We changed three train lines and reached Higashiazabu, from where Tokyo Tower was about 500-700 metres away. On the way, we passed by Shiba Park, where we saw a really pretty waterfall and a small shrine.

After that, we arrived at the Tokyo Tower building and had crepes, which were delicious—Yash-san had it for the first time ever, I had it for the second time in my life and Nanami-san loves crepe, so we collectively decided that it was the best crepe we had in our life(which Nanami-san agreed to, to make us happy). We also fed the pigeons, and crows came to fight over the food, which was fun. Next, we went up Tokyo Tower, and despite the fog and rain making the buildings unclear, the view was still somewhat visible and looked surreal. We had a lot of fun and felt very peaceful there, just sitting and watching the scenery.

After an hour or so, we had burgers and loved the innovative sauce packaging. After exploring and collecting stamps, in the mall we headed to Harajuku to visit DAISO, also known as the 100-yen shop. We also found the famous chocochips shown in shinchan and some really cool Shinchan, Doraemon, Hello Kitty (and many more) merch! The items were really cheap and the collection was amazing too, especially the stationery items! We also checked out the famous Takeshita Street, where the stores had an amazing collection of clothes. We checked out the shops together and it was really fun, checking out accessories. Yash-san tried out hats and I looked around jewelleries, whereas Nanami San patiently waited for us everywhere. With some time to spare, we went to a nearby café called Docomo Space, which had a very minimalistic design with neutral colours. We enjoyed drinks there before heading to the Sayounara (*‘Goodbye’*) party.

Sightseeing – MIRAIKAN

1st September, 2024

Riddhika Chatterjee

Miraikan, the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo, stands as a beacon of futuristic exploration and technological advancement. Located in the Odaiba district, Miraikan showcases Japan's commitment to scientific innovation and its impact on society. The museum features a range of interactive exhibits and cutting-edge displays, including robotics, space exploration, and environmental science. Miraikan's architecture itself is a marvel, combining sleek, modern design with functional spaces that facilitate dynamic learning. The museum's goal is to inspire curiosity and a deeper understanding of science and technology through engaging and educational experiences.

On 1st September, the IJSC and JISC members divided them among groups to visit certain places, our group, consisting of 8 members - Namrata-san, Deepalika-san, Sunanda-san, Jayee-san and myself from the Indian side and Morita-san, Ono-san, Shogo-san, Miki-san and Kodaira-san from the Japan side, visited Miraikan.

Our journey began at approximately 09:30 A.M., departing from the Olympic Center just as the rain started to fall, adding a serene ambiance to the morning. Undeterred, we made our way to Odaiba, boarding the train at Yoyogi Station. By 10:30 A.M., we arrived at Miraikan, eager to explore.

Upon arrival, we were immediately captivated by the museum's iconic exhibit, Geo-Cosmos, a stunning spherical display that vividly portrays Earth as seen from space, rendered with an impressive pixel resolution exceeding 10 million. The intricate detail and lifelike imagery of our planet left a lasting impression, setting the tone for the rest of our visit.

As we explored the museum, we encountered fascinating exhibits featuring advanced androids and robots, witnessing firsthand the remarkable progress of artificial intelligence and robotics. We delved into the cellular world, gaining insights into the fundamental building blocks of life and how they operate. The space shuttle room transported us into the realm of space exploration, highlighting humanity's quest to understand the cosmos. Throughout our visit, we absorbed a wealth of knowledge, deepening our appreciation for the vital role science plays in shaping the future and enhancing our understanding of the world around us.

After thoroughly enjoying our time at Miraikan and expanding our knowledge, we proceeded to "DiverCity Tokyo Plaza", a shopping mall, for lunch at its bustling food court. There, we indulged in a variety of delicious meals and spent quality time together, sharing conversations and reflecting on the day's discoveries. The lively atmosphere, combined with good food and great company, made for a memorable and enjoyable break in our day.

Sayonara Party

1st September, 2024

Deepalika Deb

The India-Japan Students' Conference is a rollercoaster ride, with each wave of wind bringing wisdom, learning, friendships, and emotions. Every year, once the formal lectures and group discussions conclude, the hosts organise an informal evening bathed in the warm glow of fun-filled conversations, group photos, games, songs, and merriment.

The Sayonara Party was hosted in a traditional Izakaya, a type of tavern central to community life and cultural exchanges. After gathering in Shinjuku, where skyscrapers shimmered in the neon lights of the small shops below and digital advertisements, we headed to an Izakaya called '*Miraizaka*'. This establishment, a captivating blend of modernity and tradition, was alive with the onomatopoeia of life and the bustling playfulness and vibrancy of families, colleagues, and friends. We were impressed by the hospitality, sizzling delicacies, the clink of glasses and cups, and the conversations echoing through the wooden interiors—making us experience a rich part of the Japanese social life!

Everyone was seated in a traditional Japanese style table or '*horigotatsu*'. Soon, the table was filled with authentic Japanese cuisine, including dumplings, skewers, salads, and '*yakisoba*'. The party began with cheerful speeches by the Presidents of JISC and IJSC, followed by congratulatory notes from the Vice Presidents of JISC and the Communicator of IJSC. After the speeches, everyone entered feast mode, with conversations flowing throughout the room. Alumni of the JISC, who had previously visited India during the 26th and 27th Indo-Japan Students' Conferences, also attended to congratulate the members and share their experiences. During moments of storytelling, there were exchanges of souvenirs, which included cultural gifts such as charms, art, and chocolates.

As the evening progressed, amidst the glowing faces of the members, one could not help but think of the quote from Charles Dickens' '*Nicholas Nickleby*', "*The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again.*"

All the members knew that in a few fleeting hours, their flight back to India awaited at the Narita Airport. Yet everyone's hearts hesitated, yearning for more time in the beautiful country. The Sayonara Party ended with hopes of meeting again—some even saying that it is never a "*Sayonara*" or a 'goodbye', but "*Mata Aimashou*," with the intention of meeting again. Thus, the evening marked a formal conclusion to the 28th chapter of the India-Japan Students' Conference in Tokyo, Japan.

Departure from Tokyo

2nd August, 2024

Riddhika Chatterjee

Leaving Tokyo was a bittersweet experience, one filled with mixed emotions and a deep sense of nostalgia. After spending so much time in this vibrant, ever-changing city, the reality of departure weighed heavily on me. From the neon-lit streets of Shibuya and the dazzling lights of Shinjuku to the electronic wonderland of Akihabara and the serene charm of Asakusa, Tokyo offered a unique blend of modernity and tradition that left a lasting impression on our hearts.

In the days leading up to the departure the memories created in Tokyo and Futaba were revisited, soaking in the city's energy one last time. The efficient trains, the orderly crowds, the courteous smiles, and soothing onsens—it all felt familiar yet fleeting. Each moment carried the weight of finality, whether enjoying a quiet moment with a cup of tea or watching the hustle and bustle of the people in the streets.

After a fun-filled Sayonara Party, on the 2nd of September, we were scheduled to board the flight at Narita airport at 11:30 A.M., so we started our journey by waking up at 04:00 AM and getting ready, and leaving the Olympic Center at five along with some Japanese members who graciously helped to pack our luggage and made sure all of the members are set to leave. Before leaving, they bid their farewells and exchanged gifts, cherishing the final moments as tokens of appreciation and the bonds we had formed.

They walked to the Sangubashi Station and boarded the train for the last time to reach the Shinjuku bus terminal. After waiting for some time, we all boarded the bus and left for Narita Airport, Terminal 3. Though it was almost an hour and a half ride, we enjoyed the final views through the window for the last time. After arriving at the airport, we reflected on the cherished memories and enjoyable moments we shared with the Japanese members in Tokyo and took the time to capture these experiences through pictures, and the JISC members bid us farewell with warmth and grace as we prepared to leave.

Throughout the conference days, we did not only gain material things, but also personal growth, new friendships, and a deeper understanding of Japanese culture. As we boarded the plane, a mix of sadness and excitement washed over us. We left Narita Airport for Singapore, where we had a three-hour layover, following which at 06:30 P.M. of Singapore time in the evening, we departed Singapore for Kolkata. As we sat on the plane for the last time, a wave of bittersweet nostalgia enveloped us, knowing that this extraordinary journey had ended but the indelible memories and experiences would forever shape our lives.

HOME VISIT REPORTS

31st August, 2024

HARUNOSUKE FAMILY WITH SUZUNO MEKARU - YASH DAS

On 31st August 2024, Prashant-san and I, had the pleasure of accompanying Mekaru-san and her friend, Harunosuke-san, on a home visit. Our day began at 09:00 A.M., when Mekaru-san, Prashant-san, and I left the dormitory for Shibuya station, where Haru-san greeted us with a warm smile. It was delightful to meet someone as excited as Haru-san; and for an anime enthusiast like myself, we instantly clicked.

The plan for the day was decided the previous night, which included exploration of Odaiba City, a popular waterfront area in Tokyo renowned for its futuristic architecture and entertainment options. Upon arrival, we were awestruck by the sight of the giant Gundam statue. Our first stop was DiverCity Tokyo Plaza, a grand shopping mall, where we indulged in various activities at Spo-cha. The day was filled with exhilarating moments as we played baseball, basketball, soccer, arcade games, bowling, trampolines, and even attempted skating. Despite multiple falls and the ensuing aches, it was an amusing and unforgettable experience. Mekaru-san's continuous support as we struggled to skate was very helpful, though we eventually concluded that skating was not our forte.

After our energetic exploits, hunger took over, and we headed to an Italian restaurant in the mall. The pizza and spaghetti were incredibly satisfying, especially after such a tiring session. Post-lunch, we spent some time shopping at Uniqlo before venturing outside. The call of the nearby Bay area proved irresistible. We stumbled upon a quiet spot away from a bustling beach party. Haru-san, brimming with enthusiasm, dived into the water. We splashed, played, and captured the joyous moments on camera while Mekaru-san and Prashant-san documented our fun with photos. Following a quick shower, we walked towards Odaiba's mini Statue of Liberty and the famous Rainbow Bridge, reminiscent of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Our next destination was Haru-san's home in Sangenjaya, located a short ten-minute walk from the station. Haru-san's grandparents welcomed us warmly at the entrance, and we proceeded to his room, where we spent the evening cooking a delicious meal together. The chicken barbecue, '*okonomiyaki*', and pork dishes we prepared were delightful, enhanced by the lively atmosphere created by Haru-san's dance to Indian music.

As the night drew closer, Haru-san walked us back to the station. His cheerful and warm nature left a lasting impression, making us grateful for his friendship. We bid farewell to Haru-san with promises to meet again, and returned to the Olympic Center by 09:30 P.M. The day, filled with laughter, friendship, and new experiences, remains one of the most memorable of our Japan trip.

MORITA FAMILY - SUNANDA SHAW

The Home visit experience was definitely one of the best moments in the conference. Yoko Morita-san hosted Deepalika-san and me at her place. On 31st August 2024, we set sail for Saitama Prefecture near Tokyo. We had to change multiple trains, and hence we left the National Olympic Memorial Youth Center early in the morning around 07:00 A.M., and went to Sangubashi Station.

Riding on an express train, we got off at Sakado station, and from there Yoko-san's father gave us a ride to their home. We were amazed to see a traditional Japanese home for the first time, with features like wooden floors, a unique bathroom layout, a sitting area, and much more. When we arrived at Yoko-san's house, her family welcomed us warmly. They made us feel extremely comfortable by generating lively conversations about Indian lifestyles, our families, our aspirations and the conference in Japan, our future plans, among other things; while they shared with us about their solemn Japanese lifestyle. Mrs. Morita also got us to play card games about Japanese Kanji which we enjoyed a lot! We were even surprised with our Kanji knowledge, and we had a great laugh about it. We had a pleasant conversation and exchanged gifts, including snacks and souvenirs we had brought from India. They were really excited about the Indian artwork and the snacks we presented them, and shared stories about their trip to India which they found very amusing.

At noon, Yoko-san took us to her grandmother's house for lunch. Her home was in the same locality. We greeted her grandmother and also met with her two cats. We also paid homage to Morita-san's late grandfather in the traditional Japanese way. Then, the whole family sat and had lunch together. Her grandmother arranged a lot of food items like potato wedges, soba, fried chicken, miso soup, and many more. We had lively conversations about Indian and Japanese food culture; and then had moments of exchanging childhood and family pictures. After that, Yoko-san's grandmother gave us a small tour of her garden which she had incredibly maintained. Following that, we went to a nearby shrine, which was a minute's walk from her Grandma's house. The Shrine is visited by the locals for prayers, and it is said that during the festivals, this shrine is all lit up. The Shrine instilled in us a sense of peace - it was as if we were traversing through the quaint Japanese life as portrayed in the cinema of Hirokazu Koreeda-san or Hayao Miyazaki-san.

After experiencing life in a traditional Japanese household, Yoko-san asked if we would like to visit a mall named "Wakaba Walk" for some shopping. Before heading to the mall, we made a stop at Starbucks, where Yoko-san's sister works, where she treated us to a delicious cold coffee brew before resuming our journey.

Once we arrived at the mall, our first stop was DAISO where we seized the chance to get souvenirs and snacks to bring back to India; after which, we took a short pause at Pres-ami for stationary shopping. On our way back to her house, Yoko-san took us to a chain of traditional-style onsen called "*Kura no Yu*". The onsen was vast and divided into different sections: hot water onsen of various temperatures, a Jacuzzi onsen, a sauna, and even open-air and sparkling onsen. We indulged in each type, and within minutes, all our exhaustion had melted away. It was incredibly relaxing.

A sumptuous dinner was arranged by the Morita family at their residence. Yoko-san had previously asked us about the kind of Japanese food that we wanted to have, and the one thing that Deepalika-san and I had mentioned was Mochi! It was extremely generous of Yoko-san's family to treat us to different kinds of Mochi - including '*Isobe mochi*', '*Karami*

mochi, ‘*Ankoro Mochi*’, along with other traditional foods like ‘*Konyaku*’, salads, potato wedges, and ended with delicious plums and ‘*Yukimi daifuku Mochi*’ which is a Mochi ice-cream. Yoko-san named the whole affair as “Mochi Festival”! After having such delicious food, it was time to say Goodbye. With hearts filled with yearning to spend more time, and also grateful for giving us a comfortable and lovely home visit experience, it was time for us to catch the express train. Our gratitude to the Morita family is heartfelt and sincere - it was one of the best experiences we had in Japan that filled us with warmth, love, and comfort.

SAZUKA FAMILY - RITIKA MUKHERJEE

Visiting a Japanese household is an incredibly special and rare opportunity, especially for foreign guests. It offers a glimpse into the intimate and beautiful aspects of Japanese family life, culture, and traditions. For us, it was a chance not only to strengthen bonds with our hosts but also to experience the firsthand warmth and hospitality that is often spoken about in Japanese culture. The anticipation of this visit was palpable, and it felt like a significant moment in our journey in Japan.

The Sazuka family hosted my friend and teammate, Adesh Kumar Sahoo and me, on the 31st of August. Miyu Sazuka-san, an active member of this conference, had asked us to meet her at 09:30 P.M., from where we would make our way to her parent’s place in Sumida, Tokyo. The three of us had been planning this day even before our arrival in Japan, and we were filled with enthusiasm as we made our way to Sangubashi Station.

Mr. and Mrs. Sazuka were waiting for us at Ryogoku Station’s gate and welcomed us warmly. After exchanging greetings, we followed them to our first stop, the Sumida Hokusai Art Museum. The spectacular display of the artist’s woodblock ‘*ukiyo-e*’ (浮世絵) paintings and manga illustrations left us all in awe. We were familiarised with Hokusai’s life in Sumida during the Edo period and his artworks through the different phases of his life. Adesh and I also bought postcards from the museum shop as souvenirs.

During our discussion with Miyu-san about what we wanted to do that day, Adesh-san and I expressed our desire to shop at the supermarket and help prepare lunch for everyone. Mr. and Mrs. Sazuka generously agreed, and we made a quick stop at Summit Supermarket on our way to the Sazuka residence. Upon arrival at their minimalist and neat apartment, we began preparations for lunch. Mr. Sazuka methodically taught us how to make *Onigiri* (お握り) or rice balls and we eagerly made our imperfect versions. Along with this, we had ‘*Karaage*’ (唐揚げ) or Fried chicken, fruits like grapes and peach, caramel pudding, and ice cream bites. We were extremely thankful for the hearty meal and presented gifts to the family which included some Indian snacks, a packet of salt which was a special request from Mr. Sazuka, Indian candies, and Darjeeling Tea. We also gave Miyu-san a Kurti set, which she wore for the rest of the day and it suited her perfectly.

After lunch, Miyu-san, Adesh-san, and I parted ways with Mr. and Mrs. Sazuka planning to meet up with them later for dinner. Our next exciting activity awaited us at the *Korin-in* Temple in Hiroo. It was ‘*Ikebana*’ (生け花), the Japanese art of flower arrangement. During

the workshop, the Sensei introduced us to the history and the various meanings of Ikebana in great detail. After an enlightening theory session, we were also given the chance of hands-on experience, where we created two arrangements each, one ‘*Shoka*’ (生花) or classical arrangement and the other a ‘*Jiyuuka*’ (自由花) or free arrangement.

After that insightful and enjoyable session, we met up with Miyu-san’s parents and went to see the Tokyo Skytree. A trip to the Gacha shop, the Loft store and a quick stop for some crepes rounded out the evening. Mr. and Mrs. Sazuka thoughtfully presented gifts to both Adesh-san and me as we enjoyed dinner at Din Tai Fung Soramachi before bidding our farewells. With both our stomachs and hearts full, the three of us made our way back to Olympic Center for a good night’s rest.

Although it was a busy day, we enjoyed every second of it. We hope to keep in touch with the Sazuka Family and will always remember their kindness on that day. When they visit India, we look forward to welcoming them with the same warmth and hospitality they showed us. It would be our joy to make their stay just as memorable.

YAMAGUCHI FAMILY - NAMROTA MANDAL

As we were slowly approaching the end of the conference with a heavy heart, one thing that we all were dearly looking forward to was the home visits. Being able to not only visit your dream country but also have the opportunity to have an in-depth cultural and social intermingling with your friend’s family is an experience to be forever cherished. These home visits provide priceless experiences in the personal quarters of Japanese homes, giving a sneak peek into their daily lives.

Our planning on home visit started even before we reached Japan. Natsuki-san, our gracious host had previously created a group on WhatsApp adding the members, Riddhika-san, Kanak-san, and me, who would join her, and organised a group chat to plan our visits and even took note of our preferences. After considering our suggestions, she generously offered to take us to TeamLab Borderless. We were overjoyed. All three of us knew from then on that this was the day we would be waiting for the most.

On August 31st, we left the Olympic Center early to make the most of our time at TeamLab. We took the train and reached TeamLab around 11:00 A.M.. The queues were slowly starting to form but luckily we didn’t have to wait at all. Team Lab Borderless was nothing short of a digital wonderland. The ever-changing installations created a space of sensory overload, where art and technology seamlessly blend to create a truly immersive experience. Entering the Borderless world meant we had entered a place of infinite space and possibilities. Mesmerised, we explored every room and every corner and spent three wholesome hours.

After the visit to TeamLab, Natsuki-san treated us to some delicious crepes for lunch; post which, she took us to Loft, one of the biggest stationery stores in Tokyo, allowing us to freely explore the stationeries unique to Japan. We spent two hours filling our bags with cute stamps, smooth flowy pens, and tempting souvenirs. Following the shopping session at Loft,

it was finally time for us to visit her place in Yokohama. We took a train to Yokohama where her mother, Yamaguchi-san, kindly picked us up.

We were greeted warmly in her house, the most by her adorable pet dog, Jong, who we lovingly called Jong-dono. As Yamaguchi-san started preparing our dinner after a round of tea, we seized the opportunity to give them the souvenirs that we had carried from India. We were also presented with extremely adorable Shiba Inu stationery and beautifully packed sweets. But the main highlight of the day soon shifted to the lofty and sumptuous dinner that was prepared for us. We were overwhelmed by the sheer number of dishes that were produced in front of us, all of them astoundingly delicious, cooked by Natsuki-san's mother. As we chatted away about our experiences thus far on the trip, we also talked about various topics that made us more aware of Japanese cuisine. After dinner, as we engaged in fun games with Jong-dono, who had slowly warmed up to us, Natsuki-san's brother gave us a brave demonstration of *Kendō*, clad in his *kendōgu*.

Sadly, the day was coming to an end and we knew it was time to return to the Olympic Centre. It is always difficult to say our goodbyes when you have had the best kind of experience throughout the day. So, we left bidding farewell to *otouto-san* and Jong while Natsuki-san's mother dropped us back at the station. We showed her our gratitude, making promises of meeting again. This was truly an unforgettable day for each one of us and will remain unscathed and protected in the safe of our memories.

YAMAMOTO SHAREHOUSE - JAYEE DUTTA

At around 11:00 A.M., Miki san took three Indian members, including Sabarno-san, Thirumurugan-san, and myself, from Sangubashi station to Shinjuku station where Yamamoto Hajime-san was waiting. Being familiar with Yamamoto-san from the 27th IJSC, it was elating to reunite with an old friend. From Shinjuku, everyone took a train on the Chiba line. After around 40 minutes of journey, Shin-Koiwa station arrived, which is in Edogawa ward. Getting out from the station's south exit, a shopping street called Lumiere appeared just within a minute of walking. About 140 establishments lined the streets which included restaurants, cafes, bars, drug stores, and more in the shopping district. At the very first, instinctively a sweet shop was explored. The shop was brimming with various kinds of Japanese sweets along with the well-known Dorayaki from Doraemon anime. Strolling around, heavy discounts on clothes and figurines were discovered. Sabarno-san, interested, bought an Anya figure which is a character from a very popular anime Spy X Family. He also took advantage of buying quite a few clothes for his friends at a thrift store with heavy discounts, with the cheapest being 50 yen per piece. Next, entering a bookstore called "*Furuhon Ichiba*" which sells mostly old or second-hand items like novels, manga, games, and consoles like the Nintendo Switch, surprised everyone as the prices were cheap and the quality was still good despite having already been used. After purchasing some novels and magazines, everyone left to move to the next destination.

Yamamoto-san suggested that there is a beautiful 古民家 (*kominka*) or traditional old Japanese house to visit. The Indian members agreed as this was the chance to see the traditional side of Japan even more closely. A taxi was booked to reach the designated house, which is called "*Ichinoe Nanushi Yashiki*". The very first visit to a proper traditional Japanese house was deeply moving. Under the rain, the place seemed more solemn as if cleansing anyone's soul. There was a real sense of the countryside with that property. Surrounded by lush vegetation the place was an absolute delight. The 囲炉裏 (*irori*) or indoor sunken hearth adds to the home-like feeling that only a live flame can provide. There were traditional gardens with ponds and stone lanterns. The house had all of the features one would expect from a traditional home. Although it did not exude ostentatious wealth, the rather wealthy-looking house presented all with a sense that it had been earned through solid hard work. The city Mayor funds and the locals take responsibility for preserving the property with utmost care. Everyone had engaging conversations with the townspeople present there, and they explained how various parts of the house were used. After immersing in the place to the heart's content, it was time to leave the enchanting place.

From there, a short journey by bus began and took all to Chiba prefecture. After getting off, the group walked to a supermarket and bought some snacks, then continued onwards till we reached the Kizunaya sharehouse - "Global Hub", where Yamamoto-san currently resides. Inside the house, the Indian members were delightedly welcomed by a Spanish lady, Diana, and Yamamoto-san's roommate, Kuro-san. Everyone chatted heartily for a while before moving to the living room, where the Indian side handed over some gifts to Yamamoto-san. He showed around the shared house and his room explaining details like the convenience of living there. It was learnt that living in a shared house is to experience a life and daily communication with people from all over the world. Soon, it was evening already, and time for dinner approached. After returning to Shibuya, a well-known Yakiniku restaurant called "*Gyuu-Kaku*" was decided as the spot for dining. After a heartfelt dinner of deliciously grilled meat, everyone headed back to the Olympic Center accompanied by Yamamoto-san, where the group bade goodnight to each other.



22.08. Opening Ceremony



23.08. GD Session



24.08. Yorimichi, Minamisoma



25.08. Sakura Multicultural Centre



26.08. Lecture with Mr. Yogi



25.08. Memorial Museum in Futaba



26.08. Yukata try-on session



27.08. Embassy of India in Japan



29.08. GEOTRA Session



30.08. Final Presentation



30.08. Closing Ceremony



02.09. Departure from Tokyo



Glimpses of Tokyo



Yoko Morita's visit



Hajime Yamamoto's visit



Natsuki Yamaguchi's visit



Suzuno Mekaru's visit



Miyu Sazuka's visit



organized by
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