



26TH INDIA-JAPAN STUDENTS' CONFERENCE

# 26TH INDIA-JAPAN STUDENTS' CONFERENCE REPORT

## FEBRUARY-MARCH 2023





2023

# The 26th India-Japan Students' Conference

K o l k a t a    R e p o r t

**Organized by**  
Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society

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## Message from the Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society

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Kazuko Nigam

My heartfelt congratulations to all participants and members of the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society, who gave their best to make a big success of this 26th India-Japan Students' Conference.

I extend an enormous appreciation for the efforts of the students who did an excellent job with a high sense of responsibility, planning, and dedication. I hope everyone has been able to learn something from this conference and will cherish pleasant memories from their participation. It would also be very nice if the participants join the IJSC Dosokai to promote and guide the future of IJSC. Wishing the very best to all.

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## Message from a Founder Member of the Japan-India Students' Conference

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Hiroko Nagahama

Dear members of Kolkata IJSC,

I am extremely happy that this IJSC could be held physically, after a gap of 4 years, that too in the 70th anniversary year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India.

For two years this program was held online, and before that it was held in Japan. I was glad to meet the students who had visited Japan and express my gratitude to all those who contributed actively in making this IJSC possible.

I am very happy that the OBOG association has started and hope that it continues for many years to come. All of us live on the same planet, and face the same problems, regardless of which country we live in. Our aim should be that all can live happily each day. Everyone should be able to eat and drink safe food and water. We must all endeavor to create an environment where each person can breathe and live safely.

From now on, we should think about these important issues together, exchange opinions about how to bring about the betterment of this world. I hope and expect this dialogue, and the friendship nurtured in Kolkata between the students will continue for many years. I express my gratitude to each and everyone who made this event possible.

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## Message from the Coordinator's Desk

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Partha Sarathi Mitra

Success in any event is possible when a team becomes a family and has sympathy and respect for each other with a fighting and passionate spirit towards achieving a common goal.

Pulling off a conference of such magnitude, working with such an innovative and result oriented student house, made a world of difference in the team's success. We believe that the success of a conference lies in the culmination of sincere team effort.

All your efforts and hard work have paid off with the grand success of this conference. We are really proud and happy to have you all including the 6 Japan side students as family members of the 26th India Japan Student's Conference.

Words will fall short to express my appreciation for the excellent teamwork. I will always recall the beautiful memories of this conference. I take this opportunity to thank all executive members of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society for their active and unconditional support. Thank you.

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## Message from the Student President of Japan

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Dan Nagata

I would like to begin by saying this 26th Japan-India Students' Conference was also my first trip to India. I had read books about India since I was a child and had a particularly strong admiration for India. The activities of the 26th Japan-India Students' Conference began in Kolkata. When I was on the plane to Kolkata, I was thinking to myself–

“I want to be able to interact deeply with Indian students from now on.”

“I want to be able to directly feel the country of India. Not just from the pages of a book, but through palpable smell, touch, and sight.”

And most of all, “I really want to go to India”.

I felt the wind as I left the airport in Kolkata. The wind was heavy, hot, and strong, unlike that in Japan. When I saw the Kolkata members who welcomed me kindly with a smile even though it was late at night, I strongly felt that I was finally able to meet face-to-face, not through a screen. Every day in Kolkata was very long. Breakout sessions, exchange meetings, meals with Kolkata members, visits to various places. We spent a lot of time together, learned together, interacted with each other, and grew together.

The experience of standing in the same line of sight, looking at the agendas, exchanging opinions, and making presentations gave birth to a great learning that can only be gained from face-to-face meetings. Although I felt my own lack of study and lack of ability, I had many dialogues with the support of Kolkata members.

Also, my stay in Kolkata made me feel strongly about the help of others. The experience of suffering from diarrhea for about two days and being unable to do anything by myself was particularly significant. Kolkata members who spoke kind words to me who couldn't do anything and covered for me when I was gone, teachers who responded to unreasonable consultations regardless of time, and who enthusiastically nursed me when I was sick. I can't thank my host family enough for helping me. I learned strongly that one cannot do anything alone, and that is why we must discuss and help each other.

What I gained from my stay in Kolkata is immeasurable. What I gained from the study group, what I got from the interaction, and what I got from the entire stay, etc., are countless. But we have a responsibility to make the most of it. It comes from gratitude to all the people who were involved in this stay and the kindness of their help. Each student must make the most of their experiences and grow as a JISC and IJSC member. That is how we must protect and develop the bonds that we have nurtured this time, future student conferences, and Japan-India relations.

Lastly, I would like to thank Professor Nagahama, one of the founders of this students' conference, who provided essential support for student-centered activities, Professor Kazuko Nigam and other teachers from Kolkata, and others involved in this students' conference. I would like to express my gratitude to all of them.

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## Message from the Student Vice-President of Japan

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Ryuki Kuramitsu

It was my great pleasure to attend this conference in Kolkata. I would also like to thank the IJSC members and Nigam Sensei for their cooperation in holding this conference. Without your cooperation, this conference would not have been possible.

On a personal note, this is not my first visit to Kolkata. This is also my third time participating in this conference. It was just three years ago that I visited Kolkata for the first time. At that time, I was attracted to the people and the city of Kolkata and wanted to visit Kolkata again. However, due to the influence of the coronavirus, I was unable to travel for the next two years. The conferences I participated in twice were also held online.

However, in February 2023, I was finally able to visit Kolkata. I remember being impressed by everything from the smell to the temperature when I first arrived at the airport in Kolkata. I am really glad that I was able to come to Kolkata at the end of my student life. Also, since it was my second time in Kolkata, I was able to enjoy more things than the first time. Especially in terms of personalities, I felt the difference from Japan, and I was fascinated by it. Kolkata students are very cheerful and always sing and dance. It was very hard for me to keep up with their high spirits. I was also touched by the kindness of the people of Kolkata. The members on the Kolkata side were very worried about anything, and I could feel their hospitality. Especially in the homestay, I could feel this kindness and hospitality. They welcomed me wholeheartedly and took care of everything from meals to sightseeing. I had a lot of conversations with them, and they had a lot of interest in me and Japan. It was a short time, but it was a very enjoyable time. I am really glad that I was able to come to Kolkata.

And this time, I attended the conference session as the student Vice-President of the Japan side, but to be honest, I was very anxious and didn't have the confidence to manage it well. However, I am very happy that I managed to finish the conference in one piece. In addition to the conference, other JISC members were also actively involved in cultural exchanges and daily activities. I will be working as a member of society from now on, but I would like other members to make use of what they learned this time not only in their JISC activities but also in their future student life after returning to Japan. And I hope that some of these people will be able to take part in building relationships between India and Japan.

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## Message from the Student President of India

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Tuneer Chakrabarti

After four years of participating in the IJSC; I was overjoyed to finally represent the Indian side as the President. Now, after the wrap; my respect for the management of the previous IJSCs have grown tenfold. This conference has been the labor of love for every member present; even the ones who were unable to participate in the conference; but duly performed to the zenith of their abilities during the planning and preparation stage.

This is my final IJSC, and in many senses this conference has proved to be a landmark turning point in my own life. For the IJSC, it was the first physical conference since 2019. For everyone this conference signaled a return

to normalcy - a win for everyone who fought the pandemic and came out of the experience older and wiser. From the 22nd IJSC to the 26th IJSC, many things have changed. What remains unchanged, is the spirit of the IJSC - something that goes far beyond that of an individual. Something done uniquely for the group, and for this family we have become.

The year 2022 marked the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Diplomatic Relations between Japan and India. It is this auspicious occasion that has signaled our convergence of two allied nations that go beyond ties of history and culture. This IJSC was no different in that sense, as it provided a space for interaction with some of the brightest minds from Japan and India trying to resolve and bolster Sustainable Development Goals and how their ethical and logical dimensions need not be completely separate from the other.

While no effort to ensure perfect comfort for our guests can be flawless; far from that, the Japanese side ensured that we remain utterly blind to any shortcomings that may have been unknowingly caused by us. They were exceptionally understanding even when we were not able to communicate our end of the research at times, and exceptionally compassionate even when they had to use unconventional forms of transport or endure the scorching sun of Kolkata. The Indian members, on the other hand, went above and beyond their duties to make sure that every arrangement was vetted and handled adeptly. Every member of the Indian team whole-heartedly contributed in making this conference a shining example of what the IJSC stands for; as well as serves as a reminder of how great this institution shall become with every iteration pushing boundaries and expectations.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to the NKKS, the DOSOKAI, the IJSC-JISC members, the JU staff, Balaram Mullick & Radharaman Mullick Sweets, the Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata and all who have guided us on our path to success. While unconventional, much like how every conference is unique in its own right; I end with this line from a poem by Kipling Rudyard that has signified the spirit of this conference for me.

*“For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.”.*

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# Message from the Student Vice-Presidents of Academics, Culture, Events, Finance, Press

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## **1) Hiranya Mukherjee, Vice-President of the Academics Team:**

The IJSC is a forum for participation, engagement and cooperation that spans eclectic boundaries. In the duration of just seven days, through multiple activities, we engaged in cultural exchange, building camaraderie, and facilitating a link of understanding between the Indian and the Japanese students. At the core of these activities lay the academic discussions and deliberations regarding the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The topic as decided this time around was "Food", and as such, the SDGs that were considered for discussion were– Goal 1: No Poverty, Goal:2 Zero Hunger, Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being, Goal 4: Quality Education, Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, Goal 14: Life Below Water, Goal 15: Life on Land.

It was planned that the students would be divided into three groups, each concerning a set of three goals and engage in research to locate certain issues prevalent in the real world pertaining to the goals, and work towards certain trajectories of solutions that may be utilised to meet such challenges. The Academic Team decided that the mode of presentation would be each group being allotted 20 minutes to present their findings using slides. It was also deemed to be an apt move for each group to prepare five questions directed towards their own research. These questions were prepared so as to be given to the other two groups to facilitate debates and threads of inquiry between the groups.

The Academics Team this time round for the 26th IJSC, went through some period of instability. Due to adverse reasons, two initial members of the team had to leave the IJSC during different points in the preparation phase. Due to the cooperation of said team members and the efficacious tenacity of the newer members who joined later– Ms.Sunanda Shaw and Ms. Anuska Saha, the team did not face any significant hindrance in the process of its functioning and the execution of its plans.

As the Vice-President of the Academics Team for the 26th IJSC, I had decided to attempt to incorporate certain newer lenses and perspectives in the conducting of research through team effort. To my knowledge, the previous IJSCs veered heavily towards quantitative analysis with some minor additions of qualitative research sprinkled on top. Although such an approach can be very

viable and practical, I thought it also harbours the risk of becoming too teleological and empirically constrained. I had noticed that a significant number of students participating in this IJSC were from a Humanities background. As such, I thought it only fitting that we incorporate their expertise in exploring more holistic and qualitative lenses in research. Thus, for this IJSC, from the very initial phase I had envisaged encouraging the groups to add qualitative tools to their repertoire in forming their presentations. The research guidelines that I had prepared for the same went as follows—

#### Pointers for the Research Approaches:

- 1) Be creative! Say a topic is being covered like “Good Health and Well-being”— it is advisable to not just stick with linear approaches such as focusing just on governmental policies or the consequences of certain methods of approach in society. We should focus on a varied analysis of these topics including disparate lenses such as for example, along with socio-political and legal elements we should look to see the multifaceted ways in which the topic can manifest in reality— how does it feature in agriculture for instance along with the legal, governmental and political aspects? What about industry, trade, packaging? What about local, national or even international case studies that we can use as examples? We can even use Netflix series, films, artworks, songs, and so on to explicate our point in a persuasive and attractive manner. The point is not being rigid, linear and “bookish”.
- 2) The point of these presentations is not to be “prescriptive”. We are not here to necessarily give solutions because practically it may not be possible to “solve” these problems with 15 minute presentations. Our goal is to explore different ways of looking at these issues and come up with possibilities that might entail solutions or might not. What is more important than trying to “solve” these issues is to locate different tools that could be possibly used to dissect them in a better way. Understanding, dissection should come first— solution shall emerge organically.
- 3) Adding to the prior point there should be an emphasis on group collaboration. Say there is a common “general theme” that two groups are dealing with in their presentations. It is not important for these two groups to agree on how to look and deal with them. If both groups provide appropriate evidence and argumentatively present their interpretations then differing views are plausible, heck even encouraged. That being said, a sense of camaraderie should be present amongst the teams in the sense that during the presentations they point out where their own presentations overlap with that of others and how you are “agreeing” or “disagreeing” or “elaborating” on the data or interpretation already put forward by a preceding group about a specific topic.

The three groups need not arrive at the same conclusion. Yet, what the groups should do is make it explicit of the different ways in which they are converging on certain themes, if the situation rises organically.

4) There is no limitation as to the content one might include in the presentation. As long as what is being presented logically pertains to the themes agreed upon— one can use fiction, pie-charts, bar graphs, empirical data, news clippings, case studies, artworks, films, series, video games, whatever really to put forward their point in a semi-formal tone. That being said, no matter what sources are used, the argument should be lucid, logical, detailed, and analytical.

At the close of the conference, as I sit now writing this report, I can say with conviction, pride, and gratitude, that all of the groups were able to adhere to this almost ludicrous vision and redirection. It was only possible because of the tireless efforts of the members of the Academic Team— Ms. Tapoja Banerjee, Ms. Anuska Saha and Ms. Sunanda Shaw. The group leaders of the three groups formed— Mr. Tuhin Biswas, Mr. Adesh Kumar Sahoo, and Ms. Namrota Mandal also adroitly managed their teams to coordinate and compile such varied ideas within a sharp time crunch. Lastly, I would like to thank the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society (N.K.K.S.), Dosokai, Mrs. Kazuko Nigam, and Mr. Partha Sarathi Mitra for guiding me and giving me this space for such an enriching academic and cultural experience.

## **2) Ananya Ray, Vice-President of the Cultural Team:**

The 26th India Japan Students' Conference was a forum for transnational engagement, both academic as well as cultural. This year, I had the honour of being the Vice President of the IJSC Cultural Team. My team was composed of three other members, all of whom possessed myriad talents, including dancing, musical and recitation skills. Our responsibility was to organize the Cultural programs for the opening ceremony at Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture on 25th February and the closing ceremony at Onkar Community Hall on 3rd March.

For the opening ceremony which was emceed by me and Sucheta Halder from the cultural team, we decided to present a Shruti natok or an audio skit which Incorporated Bengali lore and fairy tales. A Shrutinatok or a reader's theatre is a public reading or a recitation of a play or skit with interpretive and dramatic use of voice. It does not have sets, lights, special effects or costumes. The actors are usually seated or standing and incorporate minimal stage movements. This IJSC, the Cultural Team's take on the Shruti Natok was a dramatic reading of Rabindranath Tagore's short story "Shuoraanir Saadh" from Lipika which we had adapted into a poetic play with rhyming couplets. The title of the play can be translated as the Yearnings of the Younger Queen. Our

dramatic reading was our take on the story where we were trying to portray the pathos and yearning of Shuoraani, the younger queen.

The audio skit was followed by a folk song medley. Songs have been an integral form of expression. From ancient oral epics to modern rock and roll, singing helped express the innate cultural background as well as the personal feelings of affect, joy and sorrow. Bengali Folk songs are lores of celebration, joy, grief and communion. Our medley was a combination of the popular Bengali Folk songs which reflected all the celebration that we wanted to project in our presentation. The rehearsals for these performances were a jolly affair, with people from other teams participating with great enthusiasm and gusto. The opening ceremony was a huge success and the closing ceremony was just as entertaining if not more.

From the Ikebana presentation to fun games and anonymous notes written by the students for each other, the closing ceremony was a splendid affair. As the Cultural Team VP, I could not be more grateful for my amazing team of talented students. I would like to share a few takeaways from this IJSC-

#### DO NOT BE AFRAID TO BE CREATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL-

This year, the cultural team blended performance styles and media and tried to be experimental in order to create something unique. We turned a short store written in prose into a narrative play with rhyming couplets. We created our own musical medley using different folk songs. This attempt would not have been such a success had we not dared to experiment with form and content by breaking and redefining performative styles. So, it is always great to be extremely creative while showcasing your culture to a diverse audience!

#### EVERY PERSPECTIVE IS IMPORTANT-

I, personally, am not in agreement at all with the idea- "Too many cooks spoil the broth." To me, every voice, viewpoint and idea is crucial to creating a successful project. Had it not been for the diverse creative ideas and suggestions by my team, the presentations by the Cultural Team would never have been such a huge success. So, remember to take everyone's idea into account when you are trying to create something that will be remembered forever with fondness!

#### HAVE FUN-

This one is self-explanatory! Do not go into a project with dread and disinterest. Choose something that interests you and makes you smile. Revel in the experience and have fun with your teammates while creating something unique. That joy is bound to translate into your performance! The Cultural Team, as

well as the other performers had a lot of fun during rehearsals and shared joy and laughter while preparing for the performances. And to me, that is all that matters!

Lastly, as the Cultural Team VP, I am immensely grateful for my teammates and the performers from other teams. I am greatly indebted to the India side President Tuneer Chakraborty for translating the gist of our Shruti Natok into Japanese and Namrota Mandal for reading it out in Japanese for the ease of the Japanese audience members. I owe my heartfelt thanks to the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyokai Society (NKKS), the Dosokai and Mrs. Kazuko Nigam Sensei and Mr. Partha Sarathi Mitra Sir who not only encouraged us during IJSC but also allowed us to perform our Shruti Natok at the 38th In Nichi Bunkasai on 12th March at the Rabindra Okakura Bhavan after the IJSC. Every year, the IJSC is enriched by the exchange of culture between India and Japan. I am elated to have played my part in this fulfilling and invigorating sharing of ideas, thoughts and culture between the nations of India and Japan at the 26th India-Japan Students' Conference.

### **3) Debabrata Dey, Vice-President of the Events Team:**

The 26th IJSC was an opportunity that provided us with a lot of valuable experience and gifted us with an array of memories that we shall cherish forever. From the day of selection to the day of farewell, it has been quite a journey. I am glad that I was able to share this journey with so many wonderful people. During the selection, I would've been nervous if not for my sheer ignorance of what I would be missing. Now that I've been through it, I know I would have missed a lot if I had let go of this opportunity to participate in such a conference.

After the selection, the president, the communicator, the teams and their vice presidents had been decided soon after. I was given the opportunity to be the vice president of the Events team. It goes without saying how honoured I was to be chosen as the representative of such a crucial team. As the name of the team implies, we were given the task of looking after all of the events that would take place during the conference. The cooperation of other teams tremendously lightened our load. No amount of gratitude would be enough for that.

During the early stages, after a tentative schedule was made, my team got into working. We started scouting various locations in Kolkata that would have been suitable for the Japanese students. The scouting was a learning experience as well. I learnt so many new places in Kolkata that I didn't even know the existence of!

Planning the schedule for the sightseeing day was very hectic since the schedule for that day kept changing. We had to improvise a lot. My team members were worried as to what the schedule for the sightseeing day would turn into. Fortunately, the sightseeing day was a success as was evident from the reactions of the people on the day itself. We had to work side by side with the Finance team a lot and seeing how our joint effort for the sightseeing day turned into a success, our entire team felt very proud.

Our biggest challenge was making a schedule keeping the budget in mind. We had so many discussions and so many debates on which places to finalise. Fortunately, we all finally ended up on the same page and planned the schedule which everyone agreed with.

I am really glad and honoured that this year, I had the chance to lead a team of such wonderful people. I am very happy that our efforts were met with the smiles of everyone.

#### **4) Tamalika Nag, Vice-President of the Finance Team:**

In the 26th India Japan Student Conference, there were five teams among which one was the Finance Team. The work of our team was to deal with all the financial necessities before the conference, during the conference and also after the conference. Where majority teams work was complete after the conference got over, our team had to work even after the conference period. Before the conference our main work was to coordinate with other teams, specially the Events Team, as their work was to make the schedule– and based on which, we had to create a budget for the Conference.

Once the Events Team finalised the schedule, the Finance Team came up with a budget. During the conference, the Finance Team's work was to make the payments, note down all the expenses and collect the receipts of the payments made. This was one of the toughest parts for the Finance Team. After the conference we had to make an expense sheet of all the expenses that took place during the conference and compare it with the budget that was created earlier.

Being the Finance VP, I have learned a lot. Before this conference I was lacking the practical knowledge of dealing with finance. This conference guided me to deal with finance in a much more organised manner. I have also acquired knowledge of how to respect each and everyone's decision. There were a few challenges that I had faced during the conference but my team helped me to overcome those challenges smoothly. I am grateful for having Adesh, Namrata and Sabarno as my teammates. The success of any team depends on the team members and the success of this Finance Team was because of the hard work of all the team members.

This conference is a great and educational experience for each and every student. I would suggest the successors to enjoy the conference as much as you can even if you meet challenges, as once the conference gets over the

memorable moments created during the conference will make you forget all those challenges you faced. Also enjoy and be a part of each and every moment as everyone does not get these kinds of opportunities in their life.

## **5) Drishti Shroff, Vice-President of the Press Team:**

The Editorial/ Press Team was created for the first time in 26th IJSC and took charge of writing updates of all discussions until the conference began. The Press team mainly focused on creating an archive that would serve as a layout for the future conferences and provide all necessary information regarding our discussions and implementation procedures in our blog and social media handle. Being a new team, I had to devise a working structure that was lucrative and purposeful to our existence. I was blessed with a really cooperative and supportive team who aligned themselves to the requirements and committed themselves with the tasks provided to them.

Since exerting too much pressure wouldn't be ideal during the conference days, we stuck to updating social media with reels that mainly displays the activities we did during the conference in a short video format. Prior to the conference, we updated the blog and social media to the best of our abilities and shared it for public understanding of our conference. The editorial is an excellent team to be in if one is creative and interested in taking footage, video-editing and content creation. It provides scope for more improvisation based on creativity and knowledge.

My experience of being the Press VP taught me how to improvise things as they follow and gave me interesting insights into team management. The Press Team had no struggles and had an agreeable stance towards their collective goal. We exchanged ideas frequently and it gave scope for more creativity and made tasks easier. Undoubtedly, it was a privilege and an honour to be bestowed with responsibility of such magnitude and I'm grateful to the NKKS for this opportunity. Last but not the least, I'm extremely thankful to all the members of the conference for having fun immeasurably which allowed the Press Team to make exciting videos and click beautiful happy faces for group pictures. At the same time, I am grateful to know that everybody could share their own videos and pictures with us in a collective google drive that would serve as an archive and help us access the precious moments of our conference at any time.

In all senses, I had a very educational and pleasant experience and I would tell my successors to enjoy every moment of their work and convert it into something beautiful to be remembered and appreciated.

*“I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination”. - Jimmy Dean*

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## Schedule

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### 24th February

- Arrival of the Japanese Side

### 25th February

- Opening Ceremony
- Lunch at Koshe Kosha
- Visit to Durga Museum & Rabindra Sarobar
- Visit to Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple

### 26th February

- Visit to the Indian Museum
- Lunch at The Bhoj Company
- Visit to St. Paul's Cathedral
- Cultural Session at Sabarno Sinha's House

### 27th February

- Table Discussion 1 & 2
- Visit to Dakshinapan Market

### 28th February

- Watching a film
- Visit to Consul General's Residence
- Visit to Tram Cafe

### 1st March

- Table Discussion 3 & 4
- Homestay

### 2nd March

- Company Visit
- Homestay

### 3rd March

- Table Discussion 5 (Conclusion Session)
- Closing Ceremony
- Sayonara Party

### 4th March

- Nostalgia Video
- Departure

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## Sustainable Development Goals

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In 2015, the United Nations came forward with 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs to protect the planet, and to ensure that all the world's people can live in dignity and freedom. The year 2030 has been set as the year of achievement of these goals. These goals include the elimination of poverty, hunger, and societal inequalities; it is to be able to provide clean water, proper sanitation, good health and a quality education to everyone; it is to enable a decent economic growth for all

countries; it is to be able to build sustainable and environmentally friendly cities; and it is to be able to provide peace, justice, equal human rights and effective governance to all. The centrepiece of the 26th India-Japan Students' Conference is our discussion on Sustainable Development Goals, what their status in the world is, and how we can achieve them as citizens of the world. We explored these SDGs through intricate research, brainstorming, and discussions, and fieldwork to certain notable establishments around the city to have an idea of their present scenario.

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## List of Members

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**Group 1: Zero Hunger** (SDG1: No Poverty, SDG2: Zero Hunger, SDG3: Good Health and Well-Being)

Name	Position	University/ Major
Tuhin Biswas (Group Leader)	Press Team	Sister Nivedita University/ Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science Engineering (AI&ML)
Poulomi Saha	Cultural Team	Lady Brabourne College, Calcutta University/ Department of Philosophy
Anuska Ray	Events Team	International Institute of Language and Culture/ Certificate in Japanese Language
Sunanda Shaw	Academics Team	Bhairab Ganguly College/ Master's in English
Sabarno Sinha	Finance Team	Jadavpur University/ Department of English
Debadrata Dey	Vice President - Events Team	Rabindra Bharati University/ Department of English
Tamalika Nag	Vice President - Finance Team	Indian Institute of Company Secretaries of India/

		Company Secretaryship
Rin Tanaka	International Liaison	Tokyo University of Foreign Studies/ School of International and Area Studies
Emina Ozuka	Academic Planning	Dokkyo University/ Faculty of Economics



**Group 2: Good Health and Well Being** (SDG3: Good Health and Well Being, SDG4: Quality Education, SDG6: Clean Water and Sanitation)

Name	Position	University/ Major
Namrota Mandal (Group Leader)	Finance Team	Shri Shikshayatan College, Calcutta University / Department of English
Hiranya Mukherjee	Vice President - Academics Team	Presidency University/ Department of English
Sucheta Halder	Cultural Team	Lady Brabourne College, Calcutta University
Tapoja Banerjee	Academics Team	Sister Nivedita University/ Department of Biotechnology
Anuska Saha	Academics Team	Calcutta University/ Department of English
Riddhika Chatterjee	Cultural Team	Jogamaya Devi College/ Department of Psychology
Ananya Ray	Vice President - Cultural Team	Jadavpur University/ Department of English
Naoyuki Ichihara	Financial Management	Momoyama Gakuin University/ Faculty of

		Economics
Natsuki Yamaguchi	Domestic Liaison	Tokai University/ School of Physical Education



**Group 3: Responsible Consumption** (SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production, SDG14: Life Below Water, SDG15: Life on Land)

Name	Position	University/ Major
Adesh Kumar Sahoo (Group Leader)	Finance Team	Meghnad Saha Institute of Technology/ Bachelors of Technology in Information Technology
Gargi Dey	Press Team	Indira Gandhi National Open University/ Bachelor of Arts (English)
Deepalika Deb	Events Team	St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata/ Department of Political Science
Tuneer Chakrabarti	President	Presidency University/ Department of Sociology
Drishti Shroff	Vice President - Press Team	Calcutta University/ Department of English
Ritika Banerjee	Events Team	Jadavpur University/ Department of English
Ryuki Kuramitsu	Vice President	Momoyama Gakuin University/ Faculty of International Studies and Liberal Arts
Dan Nagata	President	National Institute of Technology, Toyota College/ Electrical and Electronic Engineering

# I

## ARRIVAL FROM AIRPORT

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24th of February, 2023

*BY TUNEER CHAKRABARTI*

Our tale begins on a slightly colder February night, the 24th of February to be exact. Having summoned a jet black SUV, and three other personal cars; we had started off at 7:30pm for the airport; almost unprecedented in time for a flight that was to arrive at 11:05pm. The excitement was exhilarating as few team members had been electronically tracking the flights the entire afternoon.

Being an exceptionally helpful team member, Adesh-san had volunteered to accompany me to help the four members board the Japanese delegation and bring them to their accommodations. He would then inaugurate the auspicious journey of the IJSC by promptly detaching his seat headrest and somehow putting it back into place before the driver noticed. We were later informed by the Academic Head, Hiranya-san that it was traditional in some European histories to break and repair a small part of a vehicle on its maiden journey to signify good luck and durability.

The roads were relatively clear and we had reached the airport by 9pm, by the time the Japanese delegation was boarding their flight from Delhi. By some stroke of luck, Sabarno-san had also booked the same flight while returning from Delhi on that very date. In some sense, the 26th IJSC had begun much before the Japanese Delegation had ever set foot on Kolkata. Sabarno-san must be commended on deftly being able to handle first-aid for Nagahama- sensei in Delhi, who had been grazed slightly in the course of her travels. He would also direct the Japanese delegation properly through the Delhi Airport and give us an exceptionally accurate reading on when and how our reception should prepare ourselves on their arrival.

On reaching the airport, we generally hung around in the International Gates of the arrival floors due to the Domestic gates initially being very busy; whereupon I was introduced to the old terminal of our Kolkata airport by Adesh-san. The stretch of road was hauntingly beautiful in the afterglow of the night, and an incredible spot to take a walk on. Hiranya-san and Drishti-san joined us very soon and all of us waited near the airport discussing the packed IJSC schedule that was awaiting us from the next day.

The flight had been delayed by an hour, which was promptly conveyed to us by Sabarno-san and Adesh-san who were tracking the flights physically by being in the flight and on their phone respectively. Even Hajime-san reached out to us by means of message to inform us of this delay. We spent the time having a very aggressively good mughlai food at the airport that exceeded my expectations even for the slightly bloated price. The rest of the time was either spent in preparing for what was to come in the conference and staring at the new terminal from its elevated gardens.

As the night darkened, we were informed by Sabarno-san that he and the Japanese delegation were collecting their bags; whereupon we waited at the gates with bated breath and signs that Adesh-san had printed. The Japanese side would arrive tired but equally elated to meet us where we received them and quickly boarded the cars with their luggage at 12:37am.

The Japanese side would enter their lodgings at Ramakrishna Mission at 1:46am, after a thorough check-in procedure; after which the contingent of the Indian delegation would inform them that they too had reached their home at 2:18am.

We were raring to go for the opening ceremony and the marvelous conference that was awaiting us. The Indian contingent would be later heard admitting that the amount of sleep lost was well worth its weight in gold for the privilege and experience of being able to perform our duty to such a high degree.

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## II OPENING CEREMONY

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25th of February, 2023

*BY SUCHETA HALDER*

The inaugural ceremony of the 26th India-Japan Students' Conference commenced with the inaugural speech from the coordinator of the Conference, Mr Partha Sarathi Mitra. Consequently, we were inspired by the kind words from Mrs Sabujkoli Sen, Principal, School of Languages, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture. She motivated us to continue on the educational journey, focusing on the strong support of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.

We were then graced by the inspiring speech of Mr Yamasaki Matsutaro, Deputy Consul General, Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata. He motivated everyone to participate in the workshop to get benefited actively. In his address, he briefed us about the importance of the exchange of culture and education which was to guide us through our journey. He wished for the conference's success and inspired the participants for an academically and culturally rewarding time. The presidents of both the Indian and the Japanese sides came up next. They thanked all the guests and participants for gracing the occasion with their solemn presence and providing all kinds of facilities to conduct such a conference. With personal and courageous messages from the presidents, we moved into individual letters from the members of the 26th India-Japan Student Conference.

The section for cultural exchange began with the Cultural Team of the Indian side introducing the concept of "Shruti natak" which they had adapted to produce a dramatic reading of Rabindranath Tagore's "Shuoranir Sadh". Suitably English and Japanese

translations were provided for a better understanding of the context of the play. After reading the play the Indian side members gathered from the group song. The group song was produced as a medley of popular Bengali Folk songs to give the audience a taste of authentic Indian Folk culture. The Japanese side members presented us with a lively show of a game of Kendama and demonstrated interactive challenges.

Towards the end of the ceremony, the members of the Students' Dosokai were invited for their speech. With Dosokai's support, we moved into the final speech of the ceremony by Ms Anjana Bandopadhyay, Vice President, NKKS who reminded us of the great support we had and the encouraging team with which we embarked on the journey. The opening ceremony became the lively beginning of the 26th India-Japan Student conference. With gratitude and joy in our hearts, we then gathered for a group photograph which was to finalise the commemoration of the ceremony.

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### III

## LUNCH AT “KOSHE KOSHA”

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25th of February, 2023

*BY TUHIN BISWAS*

After the Opening Ceremony, the lunch was scheduled at “Koshe Kosha”, Garia outlet. As everyone was craving for food, all the members of the India and Japan side gathered at the Gariahat Auto stand immediately after the opening ceremony. Each auto took four passengers. Three Indian and one Japanese passenger. Japanese members were full of excitement as this was going to be their first Auto ride. One auto followed by another, seven autos were heading towards Garia. It was almost a fifteen minute ride.

Meanwhile, one auto, with passengers Mr. Adesh Kumar Sahoo, Ms. Sunanda Shaw, Mr. Naoyuki Ichihara, and Ms. Anuska Ray, stopped midway due to some malfunction. So they had to take another auto from there. Other than that, the auto ride went well. The Japanese members were very excited and thrilled. Ms. Emina Ozuka said, *"It felt like a rollercoaster"*.

When we reached the restaurant, the employees got busy rearranging the tables. All scattered tables were assembled together so that most of us could share one big table. But not everyone could fit in there, so some of us took another round table. The initial plan was that all Indian members would share the large assembled table and the Japanese members would share the round table as it would help the restaurant staff to serve food. Because for Japanese members, less spicy dishes were ordered and for Indian side regular spicy dishes. But Japanese members insisted on sitting all together with Indian members, so anyone sat wherever they deemed fit.

The restaurant had an ambience of authentic, Bengali household, decorated with traditional Bengali kitchen tools. The sunlight coming through the glass painted window gave an aura of old “Zamindar Bari”. Japanese members were curious about the decorated

kitchen tools, so Indian members explained to them the usage of the tools on display. The food was served one by one. First 'Bhaat' or Rice, Sona Moong Dal, and Shukto. Indian members described the dishes, ingredients, and making processes to the Japanese members. Japanese members wanted to try eating food with their hands, not using a spoon or fork, like Indians do. After a few trials they did eat all the food with their hands, and not using anything else.

Next dishes came after that. For Indian members it was Chicken Kosha, which was quite spicy, and for Japanese members, Gondhoraj Chicken, which was less to not spicy. Few Japanese members tried the spicy Chicken Kosha out of curiosity. For some of them it was not any problem. But for others it was not a good experience, to say the least. For Japanese members Luchi was also served. In the end, Rosogolla was served to sweeten our mouths. Everyone enjoyed each of the dishes. Everyone seemed satisfied with the lunch.

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## IV

# VISIT TO DURGA MUSEUM AND RABINDRA SAROBAR

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25th of February, 2023

*BY DRISHTI SHROFF*

On 25th February, the members of the 26th IJSC took a trip to the Durga Museum located in the heart of the Lake area, Rabindra Sarobar. The day started with the opening ceremony which moved on to lunch at Koshe Kosha and gradually opened possibilities for a visit to Durgabari Museum when we took a stroll near the lake. The members had some fun suspending themselves from the hanging roots of the banyan tree we spotted.

As we moved to the Durgabari Museum, an oriental air of mysticism invaded our minds and we got momentarily lost in the craftsmanship of the idols and the surrounding space. Durgabari Museum is an extremely significant symbol of our heritage and culture as it reflects the traditions of West Bengal. It provides a historical background to the Indian mythical contexts and briefly connotes through its visual display of idols the existence "Maa Phire Elo" in Durga Museum. It is symbolic of our festival "Durga Puja" and essentially carries with it a sense of eternal joy and hope even after the festivities end.

It was an exhilarating experience to witness the Durga Museum in all its grandeur on the very first day of the conference. The open gallery aesthetic of the museum with the idol situated at a short distance to each other was breathtaking. The wooden walls and cave-like appearance from outside was extraordinary and the atmosphere was very serene from within. The members marveled at the structure in front of their eyes and took several pictures.

Eventually, we came together to take a group picture that would serve as a reminder to us concerning our invaluable and previous moments spent at such an interesting heritage site which in very subtle ways gives us an opportunity to live the atmospheric ambience of Durga Puja, even if it's for a short duration and in a very different way.

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## V

# VISIT TO NIPPONZAN MYOHOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE, DHAKURIA

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25th of February, 2023

*BY RIDDHIKA CHATTERJEE*

Japanese culture is quite harmonious, respectful, and hardworking. Their culture is made up of being respectful of others, family, and nature. They value their history, tradition, religion, family, education, and work. Japanese and Indian culture share a lot in common. The India Japan Students' Conference has been providing a unique platform for cultural exchanges and friendship, in order to promote better understanding between the young citizens of both India and Japan since the past 25 years. Students from Japan as well as India gain insights about the cultures and share their thoughts and opinions on them. The IJSC-JISC mainly focuses on the importance and the differences and similarities that Indian and Japanese cultures share. We present performances which reflect the Indian and Japanese culture such as ways of lifestyle, attire and foods through songs, dramas and other similar acts. Places of historical importance are also visited to enlighten us about certain important factors which are of greater importance. 26th IJSC being the first offline IJSC after the pandemic marked a greater beginning towards a fulfilling goal.

After having lunch at Koshe Kosha, we decided to take a small detour before arriving at the Nipponzan Myohoji. We took a walk around the Rabindra Sarobar Lake and spent some quality time there chatting, having fun. On a calm afternoon like that, taking a walk around the lake was a soothing experience which made us refreshed and energized for the monastery visit.

In the evening of 25th February, at about 5pm the IJSC-JISC members facilitated a visit to the Nipponzan Myohoji. On reaching we were greeted very warmly and accompanied by the priest and the members of the monastery. Nipponzan Myohoji also known as the "Japanese Buddhist temple", located on the Lake Road, now known as Kabi Bharati Sarani, in Dhakuria area of South Kolkata, is one of the most elegant and well-maintained Buddhist Monasteries. The temple was founded by Nichidatsu Fujii, who was a disciple of the great Japanese Buddhist monk Nichiren, who held the opinion of Lotus Sutra.

At the entrance of the temple is a small signage, which reads "Na – Mu – Myo – Ho – Ren – Ge – Kyo". Translated it means "I take refuge in the wonderful law of the Lotus Flower Sutra". The interior of the monastery is pleasantly decorated with beautiful wall hangings and colorful lamp shades along with Japanese calligraphy of Buddha's preaching. Also, on the walls hang a photograph of Nichidatsu Fujii, the founder of the temple. There are a total 108 Buddha statues with a marble Buddha sitting in the altar. The monks' quarters are located at the back of the temple and the front part consists of a beautiful well-maintained garden containing a pillar with golden Japanese inscriptions which carries a message of peace. The pillar is guarded by a pair of golden lion statues.

The members sat inside the monastery as the monk was doing certain rituals like chanting the mantra written at the entrance while playing a drum, which made the whole atmosphere very tranquil. We spent some quality time observing and experiencing the process of worship. He then later gave us insights about the lotus sutra which is a collection of teachings of Siddharta Gautama near the end of his life and the importance of chanting and how it can help us gain wisdom and inner peace if we devote ourselves to it.

We stayed there for about thirty minutes and from one of the members of the monastery we also got to know that the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple is mainly run by monks from the North – East India and regular services are held in the morning from 5:30 am to 6:30 am and in the evening from 5:30pm to 6:30pm, and after each prayer they read the sutras. People of all faiths are free to attend the service and are welcomed in the temple.

Even though it was a short visit, the memorable experience that we gathered from there is highly motivational and encouraging. With that on a very positive note, around 5:35pm the IJSC-JISC members left for Ramakrishna Mission guest house to drop the Japanese members and we concluded our very first day.

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## VI

# INDIAN MUSEUM TOUR

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26th of February, 2023

*BY RITIKA BANERJEE*

The morning of the 26th had been allotted for a visit to the Indian museum in Central Kolkata, the oldest and the largest museum in Asia. The morning of the 26th was tinged in the golden hues of an early summer and the city seemed indulgent with a lazy Sunday morning flavor. The Indian and Japanese sides met at the RMIC guest house and assembled at the Golpark Bus Stop. Some Indian members had chosen to greet the party directly at the museum. The morning was bright and dazzling and the Japanese side was tired yet curious about this journey that they were about to undertake.

We all hailed a minibus to Dharmatala and had an enjoyable ride to our destination. The Japanese side's first bus ride in Kolkata was thrilling and they were reminded of a roller coaster-ride in an amusement park. They took in the essence of the various sights, sounds, and experiences of Kolkata through the open bus windows and waited with great patience to reach the destination.

We reached our destination at around 10:30 AM and started walking towards the main gate of the museum, accompanying the Japanese members. The historic red building glowing in the sun notified us about our proximity to the main gate. The sun was heading to the centre of the sky, and its intensity grew steadily which led us to our next destination, getting sunglasses. We gathered at a stall to get shades for Natsuki Yamaguchi-san and had some miscellaneous adventures while heading to the museum. Emina Ozuka-san was enthusiastic about the beautiful traditional kurtas displayed on the streets while the rest of the members tried to read Urdu from the back of a poster plastered on an Auto that blasted

prayers through its speakers. The Japanese side witnessed the local Central Kolkata markets, vans, fruit sellers, and sights common to the Indian side but new to them. We ultimately reached the main gate to join the Indian members who were waiting at the museum already.

Our tickets were booked, nineteen for the Indian side and six for the Japan side and after a quick security surveillance, we gathered near the benches, at the heart of the Indian Museum. Surprisingly, more than the grandeur of the museum, Rin Tanaka-san and Naoyuki Ichihara-san were found admiring a cat, sunning itself on a short chair under the warmth of the sun. The Indian side also joined them in this endeavour and played with the cats till we realised that we had to move on since we were running out of time.

Our first stop was the room of statue excavations from Bihar, consisting of early 11th-century fragments of gods and goddesses. The intricacy of the designs greatly interested the Japanese side and they kept enquiring about the nature of the statues. Next, we moved to the Bharhut Gallery on the opposite side and learnt about the architectural remains including the giant gateways with the Pali script on them, also known as Torana, carved out of red sandstone. The large frames reminded one of a portal to another dimension and both the Indian and Japanese sides took turns crossing through the gate to admire the artwork and create a make-believe portal. We headed up the stairs to get a look at the other artefacts and split into different groups to meet again at around 12.15 in front of the Queen Victoria statue after our tour was over.

My group and I accompanied Dan Nagata-san to the Painting Hall– hosting art from Bengal, Rajasthan, Deccan and more and we explained the differences in styles of Mughal, Persian, and Bengal forms of painting. Dan Nagata-san sketched details from a Jamini Roy portrait and some poses in his notebook after which we moved to the Bird Gallery. The Japanese side viewed the giant exoskeletons of birds and fossilised specimens of aquatic animals in the Bird and Marine galleries to shift to the Decorative Art Gallery next. We passed through the Textile Gallery on our way which displayed authentic and traditionally woven clothing from different states consisting of those worn by Mughal and Hyderabad rulers. The fine, oakwood craftsmanship of the figurines and stretch of veranda made from Burmese wood in the Decorative Art Hall greatly intrigued the Japanese side and they were awed at the finery of the dark, polished wood imported from Burma or modern-day Myanmar. The Japanese side spent a little more time browsing through the Gallery, looking at the Bronze potteries, ancient Dice Boards, delicate Porcelain tea sets, weapons, Nataraj sculptures, and more. Our last stop before leaving was the workshop in the museum organised to promote the rearing of coral to protect their natural habitat. It was a thought-provoking presentation about ecological danger zones, the preservation of natural ecosystems and maintaining a sustainable relationship with our natural resources. We collaborated to solve some puzzles given through the presentations, had a VR and audio session, listened to various demonstrations and signed all our names on paper, leaving heartfelt messages on it so it could be read by other people when put around a growing tree. By 12:30 PM we had assembled near the courtyard of the museum at the bottom of the stairs and had a last headcount before leaving for our next destination, “The Bhoj Company”. Overall, the experience at the museum was pleasant and the Japanese side left with a small insight into the vast history of India.

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## VII

# LUNCH AT “THE BHOJ COMPANY”

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26th of February, 2023

*BY POULOMI SAHA*

On the 26th of February after our visit to the Indian Museum, the twenty five of us strolled our way to “The Bhoj Company” for lunch. The Bhoj Company is a restaurant, located in Sudder Street, that specialises in Bengali cuisine. Our aim was to choose an eatery that was neither too far from the museum nor too expensive by the set standard of the given budget. Approximately, it took us about ten minutes to reach the restaurant from the Indian Museum by foot.

On our way, we bypassed numerous stalls along the esplanade footpath that sold goods ranging from Japanese anime t-shirts to local Indian snacks. The Japanese side members showed their keen fascination with the noon time hubbub that distinctly characterises the Kolkata streets.

It was around 1:15 PM when we reached the restaurant and were served shortly after everyone settled in. Upon our arrival, the tables which originally accommodated four in each, were conjoined to capacitate all twenty five of us. Unsurprisingly the Japanese side members were the first to extend their helping hands to the restaurant staff who were rearranging chairs. The Indian members followed suit.

Despite it being the month of February, it was a hot day with the temperature soaring to thirty-three degrees. The constant walking around in the heat since morning seemed to have taken a toll on the Japanese members as some of them developed rashes on their shoulders and hands. Due care and medical attention were provided in a jiffy, which helped them relieve their skin inflammations. It is worth mentioning that not all twenty six members could be present at the lunch as one of us, Namrata san, was absent due to an injury.

The lunch order for rice, dal, a light cauliflower vegetable curry and aloo bhaja (potato fries) were placed prior to our arrival. This lunch introduced a more homely and comfortable meal for everyone as compared to the meal we had on 25th of February at Koshe Kosha. The Koshe Kosha meal was hefty owing to the unique combination of spices and flavours. Alternatively this meal lacked similar piquancy. Nevertheless the friendly behaviour of the staff compensated for the lack thereof. As time marched on we disintegrated into groups of four to five; everyone engaged in conversations spanning from historical facts to their favourite anime as the staff played ambient music in the background.

The snug ambience escalated to a fun one as one of the staff switched to an old bollywood score. What began as an energy-driven sing along, ended up as a mini dance party much to everybody’s amusement. To recall an especially endearing moment was when a stranger approached one of the Japanese members, initiating a conversation in fluent Japanese. Naoyuki san, the aforementioned Japanese member, was elated at the exchange as was the Bangladeshi tourist who left with a genial smile. Mentioning the team that had to

gear up at any given instant was the finance committee, who expertly handled the monetary transactions.

Finally, with our stomachs and hearts full, at around 3 PM we gradually took leave for our next destination.

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## VIII

# VISIT TO THE ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

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26th of February, 2023

*BY ANUSKA SAHA*

On the 26th of February, after a filling lunch at The Bhoj Company, our team of twenty-five, headed out on the second part of the day's excursions. A slight amendment had to be made to the original plan of visiting the Victoria Memorial owing to the unanticipated long queue at the ticket counter that would doubtless have hindered our adherence to the schedule. Pausing very briefly, so that the Japanese members could view, and take photographs of the monument from outside the premises, we started moving towards St. Paul's Cathedral, located about a kilometer away.

A fifteen-minute walk brought us to our destination at around 3:30 PM. The Cathedral, established in 1847, is one of the most important architectural landmarks of the city. Built in the Gothic style, after England's Norwich Cathedral – the main tower being modeled on the "Bell Harry" tower of Canterbury Cathedral – the monument stands tall at 247 feet, and is surrounded by massive lawns and pathways on all sides. It is adorned by three stained glass windows, designed by Pre-Raphaelite master, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, and two grand frescoes in the Florentine Renaissance style. The interior of the Cathedral was of such serene beauty and demanded silent admiration. Photography being prohibited, the members took extra time to bask in the grandiose architecture, admire its structural intricacies, and experience its calm stillness to the fullest. One of the Japanese members, Dan Nagata, was even seen sketching scenes in his notepad.

Having spent about fifteen minutes inside, the members moved outside to rest on a staircase. It was here that an Indian member, Namrata Mondal, who was hitherto absent from the day's activities owing to a leg injury, joined us. While some of the members bought little articles from a souvenir stall, others moved into the large ground at the rear of the church to relax and indulge in light-hearted games. After a series of spontaneous, fun races, the whole group gathered in a circle and broke into a bi-lingual (Japanese and English) rendition of the song– "If you're happy and you know it".

The visit ended in great cheer and delight. As we were ahead of schedule and had some time to spare before we set out for the "phuchka party" at one of the members, Sabarno's house, at around five, we walked over to the Maidan ground to unwind, for a while, from the long day's exertion. While we watched the sunset, some members set off in

strains of nostalgic Bengali melodies as others savoured the refreshing taste of ice cream or masala tea.

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## IX

# CULTURAL INTERACTION SESSION AT SABARNO SAN'S PLACE

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26th of February, 2023

*BY ANANYA RAY*

No experience is as fulfilling as an evening spent at a friend's house. At the end of the second day of the 26th India Japan Students' Conference, the India and Japanese side gathered at our communicator Sabarno Sinha's house for an informal adda session over homemade "phuchkas".

The culture of talking with friends on myriad topics ranging from mundane gossip to current affairs, is known as "adda" in Bengali parlance. An adda is an informal discussion with friends over tea and snacks. It is deeply embedded in the Bengali cultural tradition. In order to give our Japanese friends a taste of the quintessential Bengali adda, we met at Sabarno san's house.

The adda session started off with an informal introduction from students of both sides. We talked about our likes, dislikes and interests while telling everyone a bit about ourselves. We were taken by pleasant surprise when Rin Tanaka san introduced himself in Bengali. Following his introduction, he sang the famous song "Give me some sunshine" from the film Three Idiots after which the Japan side President Dan Nagata san sang a Japanese song.

We revelled amidst musical performances by the students till time came for our mini-phuchka party. The ubiquitous phuchka, golgappa or pani puri is a famous Indian street food consisting of a shell of wheat flour with a filling of spicy potato and tamarind water if served in a savory way, or yogurt and sweet sauce if prepared as a sweet dish. The Japanese students were absolutely delighted with the textures and flavors of the dish. All the students had several servings of the snack and when it was time to bid adieu, we all went home satisfied and glad.

Finally it was time to go home. After an eventful evening full of fun, food and laughter, we left for home, with full stomachs and full hearts.

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## X

## TABLE DISCUSSION SESSIONS 1 &amp; 2

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27th of February, 2023

*BY SUNANDA SHAW*

The first two Table Discussion sessions of IJSC were scheduled to be held on 27th February 2023. Both the Indian as well as Japanese side students met at Jadavpur University. Aurobindo Bhavan, Committee Room 1 was allotted for the sessions. The enormous size of the room mesmerised the students with its beauty. Most of the students had gathered there by 10:30 AM and took their seats in accordance with the SDG groups assigned to them. The Table Discussion officially began at 11:00 AM.

It was clear that both the feelings of nervousness as well as excitement had preoccupied the minds of the students. In the first half of the Table Discussion session, all the groups with their respective members were engrossed with researching and managing their sources. During the initial hours, the groups seemed to undergo some confusion while managing various aspects of the presentation but through their enthusiasm and excellent team work they overcame the situation. All the groups strictly focussed on researching about their respective SDGs; additionally they took help of the information collected by the team members prior to the group session.

Both the Indian side as well as the Japanese side students gave their full coordination by exchanging views and opinions on the issues with each other. Towards the end of the Group Session1, our Academic Team Vice-President, Mr. Hiranaya Mukherjee, asked every group to summarize their research. Accordingly, all the groups summarized their work which had been done in the first session. Everyone in the room got the brief ideas on which the groups will be working on. This is how the first Table Discussion session summed up at 1:00 PM.

Before the beginning of the second Table Discussion session, an interval of one and a half hours took place, from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. All the students received their lunch boxes. The quest for information among the students was evident from the fact that the students kept researching on their respective topics even during the lunch time. After having lunch, students used their spare time for walking around the campus and working on their presentations.

After the interval, Group Session 2 resumed at 2:30 PM. Students seemed more confident than they were in the first session. In the previous session the students were a bit confused and tangled up with their research, whereas in Session 2, the students became more optimistic and self-assured regarding their presentation. They sorted most of the problems which they had faced during the first session. After summing up their respective research, students started to work on the slides of their upcoming presentations. The estimated time on which the Group Session 2 would end was 4:30 PM. An extra thirty minutes were given to the students for winding up the remaining work. During these thirty

minutes, refreshments such as tea and coffee were served as per the preferences of the students.

By 5pm all the team members summed up their work and got ready to depart. Before leaving the Jadavpur University Campus, both the Indian and Japanese side students stood together in front of the Aurobindo Hall and clicked a group picture. Both the Group Sessions taught a lot of things to all the students whether it was resolving problems together or helping each other out during times of difficulty and maintaining uniformity and discipline in the group; the team members did it all. It acted as the platform where not only the students but the perspective of two different nations came together and worked to make the whole conference successful. Though the journey was not as smooth as expected, the lessons and the outcomes were really fruitful for each and every member in this 26th India-Japan Students' Conference.

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## XI

### VISIT TO DAKSHINAPAN

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27th of February, 2023

*BY DEEPALIKA DEB*

The City of Joy's traditional urban culture is highly manifested at the shopping centers clustered around South Kolkata streets in the form of flea markets and open-air complexes. Such markets are reflective of the socio-cultural taste of the region and the demography. For the people, these markets are the converging point of trending fashion and tradition. In Kolkata, India, such places are the centers of socialization - of primary learning, by experiencing the *modus operandi* of the 'bazaar' functioning, or of secondary collections, through studying and communications. Engaging in such activities is a lifestyle— native to the public. Not only do people get to engage in the blissful purchasing of their voguish needs, but they also experience a taste of the public culture dominating the city.

The third day of the India-Japan Students' Conference was filled with a plethora of activities. While the students spent the first half of the day engaging in intense research and discussion, the latter half was spent exchanging in-depth knowledge about the conduct and way of life of the Indian and the Japanese youth. To elucidate the lifestyle more in tangible experiences, the students planned a visit to Dakshinapan located in the southern part of Kolkata. Dakshinapan is an attraction center for people who love to engulf themselves into shopping and buying handloom and handicrafts products. It is the hub for traders where different state emporiums and trading centers from across the country are situated, and showcase products specific to the region's culture and tradition.

The students, in awe of the diversity and amalgamation of various arts, spent plenty of time walking around the shopping complex as the breeze from the spring evening gently comforted their skin. With friendships growing and cultural exchanges, the Indian students helped the Japanese students to understand the nuances of Indian textile industry, fabrics,

prints. Most of the evening was spent going around shops and exploring the art, textiles, and pottery of the Indian subcontinent.

Most of the students occupied themselves in buying gifts and souvenirs for each other. An essence of a place is best preserved with its heritage and culture, which can be carried through a range of things - from photographs, remembrance, friendships, and to more tangible objects like souvenirs, keepsakes, and gifts. Through the passage of time, these are conserved and loved, often landing up in showcases, travel boxes or inside stationery, as good luck charms. It is similar to the joy one receives while picking shells from the beach, while plucking flowers from plants, while handpicking gift cards for one's friends. Such keepsakes serve as the conveyer of memories, and keeping this philosophy at the center, the students presented each other with meaningful gifts which are traditionally considered auspicious and useful.

Some even helped each other to buy and fashion themselves in trendy traditional clothes. Most of the students were interested in unique art and jewelries which were on display throughout the shopping arena. With "Food" as the theme of the conference, many students visited shops selling packaged snacks, where they learnt and analyzed the processes, contents, and ingredients of the meals. Mostly, they were interested in chocolates and healthy snacks.

The students also played and imitated various games in the open arena. With laughter, joy and smiles shining across everyone's faces, the stopover at Dakshinapan refined communications among the participants of the conference. A fraction of the students, pronouncing their physical tiredness, chose to sit at the stairs of Dakshinapan and watch the sunset while jamming to songs. This invited trust and cultural exchanges among the students while they stretched their conversations ranging from music, art, theatre, food, lifestyle to Japanese and Indian philosophy, market operations, traditional customs, etc.

The visit to Dakshinapan uplifted the mood of the students both morally and animatedly. At the end, everyone gathered and discussed the unique aspects they found in the shopping arena. The students also had a talk over the nitty gritty of Indian culture and the similarities it poses with Japanese culture. The day ended by exploring each member's interest and expectations from the conference. The students chose to take a walk back from Dakshinapan to Ramakrishna Mission, Golpark, where the Japanese students were residing for the week. Many expressed their interest to come back to Dakshinapan again for shopping and socializing. It was an engaging and memorable evening whereby the students could familiarize themselves with the market and could have an opportunity to purchase their needs and desires. The essence of shopping and traditional culture was effectively and politely captured through the visit.

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## XII

# WATCHING A MOVIE

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28th of February, 2023

*BY TAPOJA BANERJEE*

The Japan side members had been previously acquainted with a few Indian movies and had personally made a request to have a movie watching experience in India. They were very fond of the action sequences and the catchy songs of the Bollywood movies. The Indian members were equally delighted to share our movie viewing experience with them. The movie we decided on was “Pathaan”; as it was the highest grossing film at the time. At 10:30 in the morning, the India side members arrived at Lake Mall, the Cinepolis theatre. The Japan side members were escorted to the theatre from Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture (RMIC) by some Indian members. Few of the India side members were decked in Indian formals; i.e.; Saris, Kurtas, etc. However, even to our surprise some Japan side members chose to wear Indian formals. It was quite a sight.

The Japan side members took pictures with the movie posters outside the cinema hall. The Japan side and the India side members entered the movie theatre after getting some refreshments. It was the first time for the Japan side members to see people stand for the national anthem before the movie. They were very touched by this gesture. We settled down for the movie viewing experience. However, it was not going to be smooth sailing. The movie was aired in Hindi but it did not have English subtitles. The Indian members resorted to translating the movie to our Nihon friends. Certain bits, lost in translation, produced much laughter indeed.

Like whenever we read a manga; despite being part of vastly different languages we can understand the story, the Japan side members were also able to understand the movie without us explaining it to them. This was the first time they had the experience of watching a more than two-hour film. Yet they watched the entire movie with rapt attention. Some of the Japan side members were grooving when the songs came in. As “Pathaan” was an action film, they enjoyed the fighting sequences and the CGI. As many Indians are huge fans of Shah Rukh Khan, the Japan side members after seeing the film also joined the team. As the movie ended, we took a few pictures in front of the big screen.

This movie was a long-awaited movie of Shah Rukh Khan, all the Indian side members were very excited to watch this movie. We, the Indian side members, were very thankful to the Japan Side members for showing eagerness towards Indian films and sharing this movie experience with us.

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# XIII

## INVITATION TO THE CONSUL GENERAL'S RESIDENCE

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28th of February, 2023

*BY ADESH KUMAR SAHOO*

As the conference continued with full zeal and enthusiasm, with the various Group Discussion sessions going on, the event of visiting the residence of the Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata came as a breather to the members of the conference. The visit not only served as a pompous event of its kind but also was an educative and engaging event in its own right. The visit added that unique experience to the ever-packed palate of experiences for the members from the Japan Side and the Indian Side as well.

It was the 28th of February, when the visit to the Residence of the Consulate General of Japan in Kolkata, Mr. Koichi Nakagawa, happened. The scheduled time of visit was three o' clock in the afternoon. Few members from the Indian Side arrived by themselves, whereas a few others assisted and accompanied the Japan side members, like usual, to reach the location. Following the stipulated time of visit, all the members, to their best of punctuality, rendezvoused at the unanimously agreed location near Birla Mandir. After a brief wait of about ten minutes, at around quarter to three, all the members, accompanied by Nigam sensei, Nagahama sensei and Partha sensei, moved towards the Consul General's residence. Upon reaching the avenue of the residence, all the details of the members were tallied along with a collection of individual signatures for office purposes; after which they were all marshaled in front of the entrance door for a brief checking. One by one, as the members were done checking, they entered the residence lobby and made their way into the drawing room and found themselves comfortably settled in the chairs, specially arranged for the occasion and calmly waited for his Excellency, Mr. Koichi Nakagawa to address the members.

With a mere wait of a couple of minutes, Mr. Nakagawa and his wife came into the drawing room, brightening the atmosphere and inspiring the members, who were intently and eagerly awaiting his advent. A term of customary bowing followed his entry. The formal session then commenced, with Mr. Nakagawa delivering an astounding welcome speech on India-Japan relations and how cultural and academic exchanges, like the India Japan Students' Conference, play a significant role in bonding the budding generations from both the countries. At the end of his speech, he wished great success to the conference and acknowledged how profusely he was elated that such exchanges were being undertaken. Following the speech, a concise presentation on the various objectives, obligations and services provided by the Consulate were presented beautifully by Mr. Supratik Sil Roy, which in turn helped the members better understand the functioning of the Consulate. Various equipment were also demonstrated, used by the Consulate in the plight of emergencies. A small question & answer session trailed the presentation, finally giving way to a marvelous afternoon tea and refreshment service.

As the members applauded after the brilliant presentation session and moved on to enjoy the refreshments, they were greeted by an alluring assortment of sumptuously made snacks, ranging from sandwiches, samosas, cookies and afternoon cakes; along with a freshly brewed cup of Matcha or Japanese green tea. Though with an initial restraint for snacking, slowly the members freed up and helped themselves with the sundry of snacks and enjoying them to its brink. As the dining area filled with the mild aromas of the bakeries and snacks, the members gradually started vocalizing with Mr. Nakagawa and his wife, speaking about the various experiences from the conference thus far. Not only limiting the discussion to that, but also on a variety of topics relating to Japan and its culture and listening to the experiences and ideas of Mr. Nakagawa himself as well. All the members, be it individually or in small groups, interacted with the Consul General. The voices progressively got louder and the atmosphere of the room became warmer, thus ultimating the High Tea session into its grandeur and eloquence. As time elapsed, the event of High Tea drew to a close, and several group photos of the members with Consul General were taken for the Consulate and Conference archives.

At the close of the event, before all the members departed from the residence, the Japan side members collectively with the Indian side members, for one last time expressed their gratitude and how much they were honoured to be invited to the residence of the Consul General of Japan in Kolkata, and finalized with a bow of extreme gratitude, the Saikeirei. Once done, all the members then ambled to the gate and exited the residence compound. With that, the event High Tea came to an end.

An event, this rare and of this prominence, should definitely be remembered by all the members in the times to come. The event filled the members' hearts with enthusiasm and endorsed a sense of completeness to the conference.

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## XIV

### VISIT TO THE “TRAM CAFE”

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28th of February, 2023

*BY DRISHTI SHROFF*

During the conference, the members were tied up in academic space, sightseeing and cultural activities. However, the “Tram Cafe” offered tranquility in the form of an open space where members could dance, play games, and indulge in Karaoke. Tram Cafe came to existence a few months earlier and has been attracting attention of people all across the city. Due to my personal affiliation and connection with the owner, we were given several benefits for which I’m extremely grateful to their staff and faculty who supported our cause. We availed a large space with chairs and tables.

The area was well-lit and the ambience was very dreamy with rustic 19th century architecture with the trams in the background and bamboo used for setting up stalls and chairs. The music system and microphone was provided to us and could be connected with

a bluetooth for playing any song of our liking. As members started pouring in, board games were played by all initially. This included UNO, Chess, Jenga and a few others. The members got entranced in the labyrinth of this little space which provided a relaxing ambience for people to indulge in anything they pleased. It created an opportunity for members to loosen themselves and throw away all their inhibitions to the rhythm of the music being played. The delicious snacks provided were added advantages to the set atmosphere which was dictated by dancing, playing and breathing in the soulful air of camaraderie.

An episodic moment, we couldn't contain our joy and excitement watching Dan-San groove to the beats of a Hindi song which enraptured him till the very end. In a similar vein, his skilful take on Jenga with the pieces meticulously crafted in a vertical fashion was something we were delighted to see. The multiple servings of ice-cream taken by everyone seemed to be quite something in a weather that gradually veered towards heat and humidity.

Rejoicing and celebrating our moment of togetherness in a beautiful space with so many factors giving us a memorable experience, I believe we truly echoed the spirit of cultural exchange and sentiments of camaraderie. It was a night that most people couldn't forget and remains one of the most cherished highlights of our conference. I believe we had an engaging conversation and moment to ourselves that fueled us for the coming days.

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# 26TH INDIA-JAPAN STUDENTS' CONFERENCE GALLERY



**AIRPORT PICKUP ON 24TH MARCH**



**GROUP PICTURE ON OPENING CEREMONY DAY**



**KENDAMA DISPLAY BY JAPANESE SIDE**



**NKKS GROUP PICTURE**



**VISIT TO DURGABARI MUSEUM**



**JAPANESE SIDE WITH NKSS**



**WALK AT LAKE**



**LUNCH AT KOSHE KOSHA**



**BEGINING THE DAY WITH BUS RIDE**



**GROUP PICTURE INSIDE MUSEUM**



**WALK TO MUSEUM**



**VISIT TO ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL**



**PUCHKA PARTY AT SABARNO'S PLACE**



**FUN MOMENTS**



**CLOSING CEREMONY**



**IKEBANA SHOW**



**GAMES AT SAYONARA PARTY**



**DINNER TIME**



**GROUP PICTURE OF SAYONARA PARTY**



**SEE OFF AT THE AIRPORT**



**GROUP DISCUSSION SESSION**



**CONSUL GENERAL'S RESIDENCE**



**MOVIE: PATHAAN**



**VISIT TO TRAM CAFE**



**COMPANY VISIT TO BALARAM AND RADHARAM MULLICK**

## XV

# TABLE DISCUSSION SESSIONS 3 & 4

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1st of March, 2023

*BY DEBABRATA DEY*

It is with great pleasure that I present to you this report, documenting my experience of the 26th IJSC that took place from 24th February to 4th March. The event was organized by the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society (N.K.K.S.) with the aim of bringing two countries together and exchanging ideas between the students of both countries, and I am thrilled to share the successes, challenges, and key takeaways from this event.

Throughout the conference, 26 participants, including students from both India and Japan, came together to engage in meaningful discussions, exchange ideas, and network with one another. This conference featured various activities that were carefully curated to provide valuable insights into the cultural aspects of both countries.

The Group Sessions 3 & 4 which took place on 1st March, were one of the most integral parts of the whole conference as all of us finalised and readied everything that was to be presented at the final session. My group was Group 1 and we were tasked with SDG Goals 1, 2, and 3. In my group, I was tasked with the research on SDG Goal 2 along with a few others. During Group sessions 1 & 2, much of our time was spent on visualising the whole presentation and not many actions were taken. During Group sessions 3 & 4 however, we started and ended our draft of the presentation that we were assigned.

Group session 3 started sharp at 11 A.M. As I reached the auditorium where we were doing our sessions, I could tell that each and every student was more focused than they had ever been on this whole conference. Seeing them spurred me to give my best as well. From a more personal standpoint, this session felt much more intense than it felt in the previous sessions. By the time the 3rd session ended, we were almost done with our draft. Everyone seemed very relieved that we were finally on the right track. By the time of recess, everyone seemed to be very exhausted yet very eager to finish their drafts for the presentation.

As the 4th session started at around 2:30 P.M, everyone's mood changed from being casual to being professional in an instant. This instantaneous change in mood felt apt considering we had only this single session left before the final session. Fortunately, my group was able to finish the draft by the end of the 4th session and we felt very proud of the work that we all finished together.

As the day ended, we all walked out of the auditorium with a much deeper understanding of each other.

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## XVI

# HOMESTAY EXPERIENCES

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1st and 2nd of March, 2023

*BY ANANYA RAY, DRISHTI  
SHROFF, GARGI DEY, NAMROTA MANDAL, AND SABARNO SINHA*

### 1) Ananya Ray:

Perhaps the perfect location to have an authentic cultural interaction is the space of the home. At our homes, not only are we most comfortable and at ease, but our home also forms an integral part of our cultural identity. Right from the architecture and decor of a house to the food consumed by the inhabitants of the house on a daily basis, a home speaks a lot about the cultural identity and personality of its residents. Therefore, when approached with the opportunity to host a Japanese student in my house, I gladly took it. I wanted to showcase the cultural traditions and elements in my house to my guest and engage in discourse around Japanese and Indian culture with them.

My house guest for the 26th India-Japan Students' Conference was Natsuki Yamaguchi who originally hailed from Kanagawa in the Shibuya Prefecture in Japan. A few days before IJSC began, we started interacting over WhatsApp chats where she very kindly offered to bring snacks and gifts for me and my family all the way from Japan.

On the first day of homestay, which was March 1, Natsuki and I spent a fun-filled evening with other IJSC members. After a hearty dinner of delectable Japanese fare like sushi and yakitori and some homemade veg sandwiches, Natsuki san and I booked an Uber ride to my home in the heart of South Kolkata. I live in an apartment complex on Charu Chandra Avenue near Rabindra Sarovar Metro station.

My parents were immensely excited to host her and greeted us when we reached home. After freshening up, Natsuki san, me and my parents bonded over cups of Dahi or curd which my guest found to be incredibly delicious, especially after our scrumptious Japanese dinner. This was followed by an exchange of gifts from both sides. Natsuki san gifted me a box of dainty cookies and delicious Castilla cake. I had bought gifts for her from some independent businesses which had put up stalls in my college campus during a fest. I gifted her an oversized cotton button up shirt with Bengali motifs like the feet of the Goddess Lakshmi, fish etc printed on it. I explained the significance of each symbol to my eager guest. I also gave her a necklace, an evil eye bracelet, a notebook with a sketch of a North Kolkata street on the cover, tea candles and her favorite- a pink floral hair scrunchie which to my absolute delight, she put on immediately!

After a good night's sleep in my room, we woke up rejuvenated and feasted on a breakfast of Luchi, light potato curry and halva. Natsuki san absolutely loved the food and wanted to convey her appreciation to my parents in Bengali. My father taught her the Bengali words "Khub bhalo" which roughly translates to "very tasty" or "sugoi oishi" in this context.

After breakfast, we left for our Company Visit by the metro, the station of which was very close to my house. After an eventful day, we returned to my house and rested.

Next morning, my mother served Natsuki san a South Indian breakfast consisting of Idli, Vada, Sambar and Chutney with some kebab and a butterscotch pastry. At the table, after tasting the food, Natsuki san quipped, "Ashadharon" which roughly translates to "excellent" to the surprise and delight of my parents. Turned out, a friend from IJSC had taught her the word!

Finally, it was time to bid adieu. We clicked a lot of photographs with each other and the whole family. Then the time came to load Natsuki san's luggage onto the car and head to RMIC for the final academic group session. My parents said their goodbyes fondly, reminding her to visit again, soon.

It was truly an honor to be a part of the homestay experience. There was significant cultural exchange among the Indian and Japanese side. But the most important thing to me, were the memories we made along the way!

## **2) Drishti Shroff:**

The homestay experience was undoubtedly a treasured part of the conference and it was my privilege to host two Japanese members- Emina Ozuka and Naoyuki Ichihara. Goes without saying, the homestay involves a more personal touch as you correspond with the members from the minute you wake up and have an in-house Indian dining experience which serves as one of the most exciting aspects of homestay. The homestay commenced from 5 PM IST on 1st March. I took the members to my apartment where they were given an opportunity to recuperate and replenish themselves with food and other refreshments. Since Ichihara-San felt unwell initially, staying home was given more priority than going outside and so we engaged in banter and little games within a closed space. It's an ideal relaxing environment with music being played and the air carrying a comforting sense of peace that pronounces home. As we stayed home, I called a few friends over to engage in conversation and enliven the atmosphere. We gradually ordered sushi and other Japanese dishes since the Japanese members were missing their own usual day-to-day meals and it was an opportunity for us to also assess their reaction to our country's Japanese cooking. They devoured it within a short span and dinner seemed to be a success. We cooked them open pizza with feta cheese topping as additional elements to our dinner. It was equally appreciated.

On 2nd March, we initiated our journey for a company visit to Balaram and Radharam Mullick. The members were thrilled to receive delectable varieties of sweets and savouries. The Japanese members were in awe of the exotic flavours of Nolen Gur and other traditional Indian sweets. After the company visit, the homestay commenced once again and since we had several spare hours, I took the Japanese members back home to rejuvenate. I was accompanied by a few friends who coincidentally were also hosting. Since my home is situated closer to their respective homes, we mutually agreed to rejuvenate and take an afternoon nap. A short visit to a nearby cafe was accompanied with a boat ride later on. The day passed slowly and the vehement need to stay home was felt strongly by the Japanese members so we ushered home for dinner. An assortment of flavourful Indian dishes were served with papad, a crunchy condiment. Naoyuki-san mentioned how Dal is

different in every place we have eaten so far and that observation was itself remarkably accurate. It is the basic difference in preparation of every Indian recipe that is the highlight when you visit any place. I was quite impressed to hear that, to say the least and they loved more servings of dal. Later, we played a small board game mastermind which immediately appealed to Nao-san and Emina-san.

The intriguing gesture of exchanging presents and gifts with each other, observing little facts about our culture and traditions apart from closely interacting and sharing living space under one roof was definitely one of the most memorable aspects of homestay. I also introduced the members to little quarters of my home, the temple area and my study. Emina-san gave me a beautiful traditional Japanese fan and a maneki neko. Naoyuki-san gave me an assortment of Japanese sweets and Tokyo Banana. I devoured all of the Tokyo Banana in less than ten days of receiving it and my faith in Japanese snacks have grown tenfold. Emina-san was bustling with energy when I presented her with a traditional Indian Salwar-Kameez with purse and earrings. Naoyuki-san gave an ecstatic smile as he received a Kurta set with a travelling bag. On another note, the camaraderie between my mother and Emina-san was noteworthy as they seem to have bonded heavily on food channels on television. They shared a considerable amount of time together, enjoying visual mediums of entertainment and clearly, this experience of me and my family spells out how language can never be a boundary between two people.

Having breakfast together was especially an interesting experience as they seemed to take great liking to my mother's 'Frittata' pancake served with ketchup and tea. They found it strangely equivalent to their own recipes and banana was one of their favourite fruits to bite on. The next day we had beans on toast for breakfast with caesar salad. While they were not as enthralled by salad, beans on toast was a hit and they filled themselves up well. We discussed several matters during breakfast, light topics and touched on worldly observations. I wish I had more time to spend with them as no amount of time felt enough and too many discussions awaited us that could not find an opportunity in this hustle. I believe it was truly an honour to have this opportunity with me and I express my gratitude for the same.

### **3) Gargi Dey:**

On the morning of 1st March, we had Table Discussion Sessions 3 & 4 at Aurobindo Bhavan (CR 1), in Jadavpur University. Since morning we were vigorously brainstorming on our given SDG points. The 4th session finally got over at 4:30 PM and we assembled outside the CR room, excited to move on to the next schedule, that is, the homestay. With the consent of my family, I volunteered to host a member of JISC. Our guest was Dan san, the President of the present JISC. My friends, Poulomi and Tamalika accompanied us as well.

I booked a cab to Ichapur (my hometown) which is about 35 Kms away from Golpark. We departed from Golpark at 5:00 PM and arrived at my place at 7:00 PM. Throughout the journey, we played music including ghazals and J-pop. The invisible barriers that we had at the beginning of the JISC, everything seemed to fade out gradually and we ended up talking on a plethora of topics en route. Fond memories of our childhood, school life, future plans and more. We made plans for the upcoming days as well. We planned to visit the Ganga ghat and Barrackpore Cantonment the next day.

On our arrival, my family welcomed Dan san in the traditional Bengali gesture, that is, with a plate full of sugar-free sweets. Bhulu (pet dog) was excited to see guests at our house. She greeted them by conducting the sniff test and accepted them as her allies. Dan san made friends with Bhutto (pet cat) and was sitting like Lord Buddha with Bhutto resting on his lap. We had dinner at 8:30 PM followed by an Origami session where Dan san taught us to make a “dancing Tsuru” (dancing crane). I showed him a few rare mythological books that I own and he was keen to learn more about Indian mythology. I showed him my sea-shell collection and I was amazed to know that he shares the same interest as well! While we were inspecting the sea shells one by one, Poulomi suggested that we all should draw. Dan san drew himself, Poulomi drew Dan san and I drew both of them. As we were tired, we decided to sleep at 11:30 PM.

We woke up at 7:30 AM and after having breakfast we headed out for the company visit. We returned home at 4:00 PM and we slept for a while. The scorching heat and the intense IJSC schedule made us feel lethargic, hence we canceled the upcoming plans for the day. Dan san had a fever at night but soon, he got well. The next morning we had to leave for Ramkrishna Mission Institute of culture at 9:00 AM and we reached there by 11:00 PM.

#### **4) Namrota Mondal:**

The homestay experience, undoubtedly was one of the best moments to look forward to by the hosts and their families. I was given the opportunity to host Kuramitsu Ryuki San. Personally, my preparation for homestay started a week before the conference when I found myself staring at the heap of clothes on my chair in my changing room, or when I would squint my eyes to spot that one notepad where I was running my numbers, on a table that looked like it belonged to one of those abandoned research labs we often see in movies. Thus began my quest for making my house look more hospitable, running around in a frenzy, finishing years' worth of work in two days; and just like that, it was 1st March, the day of the commencement of homestay.

The homestay officially started after the tireless efforts of the members in the academic session at Jadavpur university. After the group sessions, I moved to Drishti Shroff's residence along with Kuramitsu San to allow ourselves some rest before starting our long journey back home. We were also joined by Ananya Ray and her hostess, Natsuki Yamaguchi San. Huddled up in Drishti San's room, we played games and eventually we decided on getting dinner together. We ordered some mouth-watering sushi, which the Japanese members praised for its distinct 'Indianness'. Ryuki San and I had to leave immediately after dinner because we had a long journey to cover. As we reached home, my family welcomed him and he surprised us all with the souvenirs he brought for us.

Next morning, we woke up early for the company visit at Balaram Mallik and Radharam Mallik. I took him around the house as he greeted my other family members. We left after breakfast. After the company visit, we stopped at an elegant café called Milee Droog, this time with more people joining us. After a satisfying lunch, Ryuki San and I parted ways with the rest of the group and started for our journey back home. Enroute, I took him to the famous Chandannagar Strand on the banks of the river Ganges where he seemed bewitched by the place's historical prowess. We were allowed special entry to the Church in the after-hours, thanks to the kindness of the person-in-charge. Reaching home, we treated

ourselves to some refreshing tea and snacks. We sat together to chat for a while as we started engaging in our respective reports and presentations, consulting each other on them. Dinner was served hot with chicken stew and roti. Kuramitsu San seemed to like it too much and the more he praised the food, the more my mother poured for him until I had to stop him before he overate.

The schedule for the next day was the conclusion session at Ramakrishna Nanda Hall, marking the end of homestay. While travelling, Ryuki San he felt unwell and his digestion was hampered. We bought him ORS and put him to rest at the RKM lodgings. My family and I were worried sick the whole time but he rapidly recovered and later joined us for the Sayonara Party.

The homestay experience for me was one of the, if not the most, engaging and exciting part of the conference. Having the chance to include my family in this enriching experience, sharing the nitty-gritty of the different cultures, to be able to share our everyday lifestyle under a shared roof with one of the members has been my utmost pleasure. Given the opportunity, I would love to be a part of such an experience again.

### **5) Sabarno Sinha:**

I had the great pleasure of hosting the International Liaison of the Japan-side, Rin Tanaka, at my house for two nights. Quite fortunately for me, Rin was someone who was used to India and its very different ways from Japan, be it the bucket bath or eating by hand, which was a relief even though it was my intention to make his stay as comfortable as possible. Thus, when he told me that he was ready to forego both the shower and the toilet paper, I was as surprised as one could be but still insisted that he use both while he stays at my house. We arrived at my house in the late evening after having had a bite to eat at Chili's in South City with some other IJSC members and the moment Rin entered my house, I gave him the standard guest package: towel, slippers and toiletries in addition to a tour of my house. Even though I told Rin that he could sleep in my air-conditioned room, he insisted on having the non-AC room which just had a fan. I couldn't object and so began the two-night stay at my house.

For the next few hours after we had both showered and changed into our home clothes, we just lay on his bed and chatted on various things: about his experience as a Japanese language teacher in Chennai, his stay in Kolkata as an IJSC member, the differences between the two cities from his perspective, work culture in Japan and India and of course, family. I am sure that we had spoken about other subjects but none that I can recall. When the call for dinner came, we both went down and continued our conversation over roti and chicken curry. With the first bite, Rin told me that it was a little "karai" (spicy) but "oishii" (tasty). I was glad. I didn't worry much because I knew that he was used to spicier food in Chennai. The customary sandesh (Bengali sweetmeat) at the end brought him the same pleasure that it does in a Bengali household! Remembering his love for syrupy sweets, I gave him the last pantua that had been left for me and the way he relished it was something that I will not forget. I believe that if he returns to Kolkata at any point in his life, he will not forget our sandesh, rosogolla and pantua.

We woke up early the next day as I wanted to take him on a walk to the Rabindra Sarovar Lake. While walking in the Lake, Rin told me that there are no such places in Tokyo where

there's a walking area circumscribing a huge Lake. The weather was pleasant when we had left but as the sunlight got stronger, so did our sweating. I had decided to take him to the Lion's Safari Park where we could both swing for a while and so we did. While swinging, Rin fondly remembered his days as a shougakusei (primary school student) when he would go to the park and swing almost every day with his friends. I could relate with him as I myself did the same and we both became very nostalgic amidst the prickly heat and the grunts of the people nearby who were lifting weights and doing more intensive exercise.

Rin wanted to buy a couple of panjabis. So, a few of us had decided to take him to New Market after our Company Visit, and so we went there. Coincidentally, one of my most favourite Chinese restaurants was located in New Market. It was very old and run by a Chinese-immigrant family and the interior decoration would make it seem like it was from Shanghai in the 1920s. We all had a hearty meal after which we went inside the Hogg Market and I wanted Rin to taste some of the food at Nahoum's. He loved both of my favourites: the Rum Ball and the Lemon Tart. Even though he had been complaining of having a packed stomach, I believe there is always space for desserts, and I was proved right.

There were many shopkeepers who were calling out to us and one of them took us to his shop. The panjabis he showed were of good quality but the price was quite high. We drove a hard bargain and got it slightly reduced. However, the real surprise came when we were leaving because that's when the shopkeeper realised that Rin is Japanese! Thanks to Rin's Chennai haircut and Indian gestures, everyone would mistake him for a fellow countryman and so had the shopkeeper. He was visibly regretting not having quoted even higher prices and we all left the store knowing that we had got a price that would perhaps have not been possible elsewhere. Thereafter, I had to leave Rin as I had some urgent work but he went with the other IJSC members to one of their houses to work on the final presentation which we had the following day. I am told that he had a great time chatting and knowing about Indian youth and their lifestyle.

I wish I got some more time with Rin. His life seemed so interesting to me and he himself was a very intriguing person. He has a great sense of humour and at the same time, one can also have very serious conversations with him. I would love to host him again in my house and perhaps, for a longer duration. Rin truly is great company!

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## XVII COMPANY VISIT

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2nd of March, 2023

*BY ANUSKA RAY*

On the 2nd march, at 10:30 AM, we reached Netaji Bhavan, Jodhu Babur Bazaar. This was the day for the Company Visit. The scorching March sun was intense but we were excited for the exploration. All the members assembled at the designated time and left by 10:45 AM, for the place.

This year it was decided that the Table Discussions (an integral part of the conference) should revolve around the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. It was using the goals as a basis and a foundation, that the IJSC members had been allocated to 3 groups based on different SDG goals. The main SDG topic was "Food".

In this perspective, the company we had chosen to visit was "Balaram Mullick and Radharaman Mullick" sweets. This company is dedicated to a passionate and innovative sweet making philosophy that breathed a fresh flavour upon the existing Bengali tradition of sweet making in the 21st century. This is noted for Bengal's classic and great tradition of sweets that finds a pride of place in our curated selection of classic desserts. We reckoned that it would be a favourable place to visit for our designated topic.

We walked from the Netaji Bhavan Metro Station to Jodhu Babu Bazaar. From there a man led us to the company. The site of the company was a block of flat or apartment building. Over its floors were spread various sweet processing departments. In the lower floor, colourful sweets are showcased for the customers to buy, which gives an essence of the rich culture and history of Bengal. The history of Bengali sweets is ingrained in its ancient name "Gaud Banga", derived from Gur (jaggery), a common element for making ancient Bengali sweets. The rich saga of early Bengali confectionery comprises jaggery, milk, rice, mishri, and coconut based sweets such as the still-popular "Payesh". We met Sudip Mullick, the manager of the company, also a descendant of Balaram. Sudip Mullick modernized Balaram's by introducing mechanisation and quality control in almost all aspects of sweet making, turning the process 100% pure and hygienic.

Then we were served sweets with snacks. The Japanese side experienced the Bengal sweets touched with rich tradition and legacy. We all loved the perfect blend of sweetness in baked rash malai and sandesh that gave a unique taste. After that we began our interaction session with the various food processing departments. The members were reshuffled into two groups guided by Mr Abhijit Gayen. The manner of the processing was very much commendable. He guided us to the processing departments where we got an insight about how the sweets are made. We realized that it requires tons of hard work to produce just one piece of sweet. After we experienced every department, we had a brief discussion.

The visit must have been eye opening for all students, in how the enormous effects have been put for preserving this rich tradition and cultural heritage. It was also heartening to see the sincerity of efforts to preserve these cultures, thereby preserving entire communities while also alleviating poverty.

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## XVIII

### TABLE DISCUSSION SESSION 5

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3rd of March, 2023

*BY HIRANYA MUKHERJEE*

As the four Table Discussion sessions successfully culminated in the compilation of the presentations of the three groups, there was an air of anticipation regarding the “final academic event”. The students of the India side reached the venue, the Ram Krishna Nanda Hall at the Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture at around 10:30 AM. The Japanese students arrived at around 11:00 AM. Mr. Dan Nagata unfortunately could not be present as he had to take rest for a sudden bout of dehydration. Fortunately he recovered and was his usual contemplative and active self after two days. Nagahama Sensei and Nigam Sensei were present in the hall as well as they intently awaited the first presentation to break the ice for the day.

As the tables and chairs were being arranged, and the groups were huddling up for a final equipment check, a certain issue had presented itself. The session had been planned, and the three presentations had been calibrated with the notion in mind that there would be a projector available in the hall for all the teams to showcase their slides and potential multimedia content. Unfortunately, the projector in the room wasn't available for use on that day. Yet, that did not stop the session from proceeding near to how it had been planned before. With the cerebral aid of the President, Mr. Tuneer Chakrabarti, the Academics Team formulated an alternative plan of action. A Google Meet was set up using the portable hotspot from my phone, with a main hosting laptop. The link of the virtual session was made available to all the participants in the room. Each group used their own laptops to connect to the meet and present their slides while the participants viewed them on their phones. Quite an ingenious solution, one might say!

At around 11:30 AM, the first group commenced its presentation. The group was led by Mr. Tuhin Biswas. The members consisted of Ms. Poulomi Saha, Ms. Anuska Ray, Ms. Sunanda Shaw, Mr. Saborno Sinha, Mr. Debabrata Dey, Ms. Tamalika Nag, Mr. Rin Tanaka and, Ms. Emina Ozuka. The structure of presentation of this group was to tackle the incidence of certain challenges pertaining to the three Sustainable Development Goals in India (Goal 1: Zero Hunger, Goal 2: No Poverty, Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being), and by analyzing certain case studies in Japan, locate ways in curbing said challenges in India. The presentation analyzed the incidence of poverty in India and the ways in which such a demography of peoples were affected by the natural disaster of Amphan in 2020, especially in the Sundarban region. Group 1 then proposed that the Japanese approach to community development and capacity building using social capital post the Great-East Japan

Earthquake, in the Tohoku region in 2011 could be used as a blueprint for such post-disaster action plans in India to help the mentioned especially prone communities. The presentation consequently engaged in such comparative analyses of food distribution and nutrition in India and Japan by focusing on governmental initiatives, empirical statistics, and case studies. The group concluded with words of hope and a call to action: “The 5 pillars, also known as 5 Ps of sustainable development, encompass 5 overarching areas that each of the SDG’s address. These are of critical importance to act towards over the next decade. They are: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships, sustainability sitting at the core of each. These pillars are there to inform decision making around interventions installed by the government that work towards the SDG’s. We can all help contribute to the success of the SDGs and sustainable development by both educating ourselves more, speaking out and making practical and positive adjustments to our daily lives. Together, we can make a difference”.

The second group led by Ms. Namrata Mandal, consisted of members: Ms. Anuska Saha, Ms. Riddhika Chatterjee, Ms. Sucheta Halder, Ms. Tapoja Banerjee, Ms. Ananya Ray, Ms. Natsuki Yamaguchi, Mr. Naoyuki Ichihara, and myself. The presentation was divided into three sections– going over the alarming trends of rising rates of obesity and lifestyle diseases like diabetes in school and university students; the concept of food wastage and “choice architecture” to tackle the issues of mentioned wastage and hazardous diet; and lastly, the issues of water availability in India. We ended our presentation by mentioning an ancient folktale of the Quechua people in Peru– that of a hummingbird doing all it can in its own diminutive way to put out a huge forest fire using drops of water as the other animals laughed at its seeming redundancy. The hummingbird would reply, “I’m doing what I can”. This story, used by the UN for a call to action for its UN 2023 Water Conference was pointed out to be a symbol representing everyone in the room on that day, of each and every person in the room possessing a capability to add such “drops of water” to the vast “sea change” that is possible through solidarity, empathy, tenacity, and camaraderie.

The third group lead by Mr. Adesh Kumar Sahoo consisted of group members: Ms. Gargi Dey, Ms. Drishti Schroff, Mr. Tuneer Chakrabarti, Ms. Deepalika Deb, Ms. Ritika Banerjee, Mr. Ryuki Kuramitsu, and Mr. Dan Nagata. The presentation entailed a detailed analysis of the negative effects on ecology and natural biological cycles through anthropogenic interventions. The analysis dissected notions such as the “Gaia Hypothesis”, “Blue Economy”, the use of plastic in India and Japan and “edible cutlery”, “Green Revolution”, and “Overfishing”. The group poignantly put forward the negative effects on ecology that are becoming more and more apparent in the current age through the vehicle of a poem by the 8th century Chinese poet, Li Po: “The birds have vanished into the sky,/ and now the last cloud drains away./ We sit together, The mountain and/ me, until only the mountain remains”.

The presentations ended at around 1:30 PM. Each presentation was followed by one or two questions from the audience, that were all answered adroitly by the groups while also paving the way for further discussions and deliberations that followed the post session as we exited the room to prepare for the closing ceremony.

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## XIX CLOSING CEREMONY

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3rd of March, 2023

*BY TAMALIKA NAG*

On 3rd March 2023, at around 3:00 PM, all the India side members and the Japan side members gathered at The Onkar Towers Community Hall for the Closing Ceremony. The ceremony began by thanking the Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society; Kazuko Nigam Sensei and Hiroko Nagahama Sensei; The Founder of Japan India Student Conference— for paving the way for future generations to exchange their cultural insights of two countries, expanding our views.

We also thanked the Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society and Dosokai for giving us this responsibility for organizing an entire conference by ourselves and helping us by giving suggestions whenever we needed them. As India side President Mr. Tuneer Chakrabarti said in the opening ceremony of the India Japan Student Conference that we have a canvas to paint, a canvas most unique to the 26th India Japan Student Conference and surely we have successfully painted the masterpiece.

The Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society Kazuko Nigam Sensei congratulated the members for successfully conducting the 26th India Japan Student Conference. Then our very own India Japan Student Conference Coordinator Mr. Partha Sarathi Mitra addressed that the success of the 26th India Japan Student Conference was attainable only because the students came together to overcome the hiccups on the way making this into a memorable success story. He also mentioned that this was a learning experience for all the members making each and every member grow as an individual.

Mr. Rin Tanaka on behalf of the Japan Side President Mr. Dan Nagata, spoke about how they enjoyed the whole conference and got to make a memorable experience. The India side President Mr. Tuneer Chakraborti thanked each and every member for their hard-work, sincerity and eagerness to make this a successful conference. The India Side Communicator Mr. Sabarno Sinha shared his experience of the whole conference. The Vice Presidents Of Academic, Culture, Events, Finance and Press also shared their experience and thanked each and every member.

The Memorandum Of Understanding for the 26th India Japan Student Conference was signed by The President of Japan Side Mr. Dan Nagata, The President of the India Side Mr. Tuneer Chakraborti, The Vice President of the Japan Side Mr. Ryuki Kuramitsu, The Communicator of India Side Mr. Sabarno Sinha, The Chief Patron of Nihongo Kaiwa Kyookai Society Mrs. Kazuko Nigam, The Founder of the Japan India Student Conference Ms. Hiroko Nagahama and The Coordinator of the India Japan Student Conference Mr. Partha Sarathi Mitra.

Certificates were distributed to each and every member of the 26th India Japan Student Conference by Kazuko Nigam Sensei and Mr. Partha Sarathi Mitra. The Closing

Ceremony was coming to a conclusion but to toast newer beginnings our dearest Japan Side member Ms. Emina Ozuka presented us with an Ikebana demonstration. Ikebana is the art of making flowers come alive. Ms. Emina Ozuka showed us two styles of Ikebana. This was a great cultural experience for all the members. After this amazing presentation of Ikebana, the members came forward and played a game of “Musical Chairs”. Each and every member enjoyed this game and it also helped the members to end the conference on a merry note.

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## XX

# SAYONARA PARTY

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3rd of March, 2023

*BY HIRANYA MUKHERJEE*

We had from the very beginning planned to set up a “Sayonara Party” that would do justice to the spirit of the 26th IJSC. It was to be an occasion of reminiscing, of closure, of winding down, of celebration. It was to our pleasant fortune that with the planning of certain members— especially that of Drishti san, we were able to acquire the terrace of her apartment complex— “Onkar Towers”, as the venue. We were also able to avail catering services at nominal rates due to Tuneer san’s efforts in convincing “Mayer Hesel” to serve for the occasion. The ever-anticipated Sayonara Party was finally here, and the air was buzzing with excitement with a tinge of a bittersweet farewell.

The closing ceremony ended with each of the members of both the India and the Japan side, writing secret anonymous messages in paper chits. These chits were to be read upstairs, on the terrace, as we all made our way with gurgling stomachs and a certain tingling warmth inside us. Adesh san, Tuneer san, and I got on the elevator each carrying boxes with twelve bottles of chilled beer— hurrying to deposit them inside the refrigerator. As everyone settled in to the open breezy atmosphere of the terrace, the night sky welcomed us with a few twinkling stars, reflecting the excitement in everyone’s eyes— looking to wind down and reminisce about the days of the IJSC behind us, filled with intensity, growth, and camaraderie. Everyone breathed in the grand view of all of Kolkata almost from the terrace, as the city lay spread out before us— perhaps hinting at how we had finally reached the zenith of the 26th IJSC, having conquered what we had set out before us.

The waiters went around serving piping hot pakoras, tea, coffee, kebabs, as the students decided to play a game of “Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light”. Sabarno san revealed himself to be quite a showman as he relentlessly made many of the participants lose their composure, as the demon. After two rounds of the game, the beer was served and the anonymous chits were read out.

The tone and the content of the messages clearly expressed the closeness that had set in between all the members, including the India and the Japan side— as the messages were filled with playful pokes, enamored confessions, punny jokes, and mirthful utterances.

The dinner was finally served and it was a grand assortment– of fried rice, naan, chicken, vegetables, dal, ice cream, and so on. Everyone was stuffed close to bursting! After dinner, all of us gathered together for one of the final group pictures as the realization started to set in slowly– that the 26th IJSC was finally getting over.

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## XXI

# NOSTALGIA VIDEO

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4th of March, 2023

*BY NAMROTA MANDAL*

Nostalgia- a word that the dictionary defines as “a feeling of pleasure and sometimes slight sadness at the same time as one thinks about things that happened in the past”. Nostalgia - a word that immediately engulfs a reminiscing self in a string of happiness tied with the knots of memories. It is a word that can make you feel a myriad of emotions piled up one after the other.

It was 4th March and both the Japanese and the Indian side members were supposed to meet at Sarat Samity at 11:00 AM to shoot the Nostalgia video. Although the conference was officially over, each and every one of us carried over their enthusiasm from the previous night in the Sayonara party with the same vigour that day. Everyone sat around in circles and discussed the previous night's eventful happenings. Each of the members, by now had warmed up to each other and did not hold back in participating in the discussions. People who had previously missed the chance, were now clicking pictures with the Japanese members and others, trying to establish other modes of communication for after the conference, like connecting through “Line” or exchanging social media handles. Outside the room, the video was being taken as the members were going one by one to finish their part and to share their personal experiences of their best moments and what values they had inculcated from the conference. The Japanese members were surprised with a signed photo frame as a souvenir from the Indian side. As the last-minute gifts and well wishes were being exchanged, some of the members were busy getting minimalistic mehndi designs on their hands. One can feel the palpable air of eking out the most with the Japanese students as the time of departure grew closer and closer. I thought to myself how the clock on the dashboard seemed like an enemy to me, whose hands were moving relentlessly. The Japanese members were given personal gifts like a bag full of Indian snacks to munch on during the rest of their journey and letters with doodles to hold on to by some Kolkata members. With a heavy heart, a sting in the eye that was fighting to hold off the tear and with innumerable memories to unpack and unfold, we left Sarat Samity. Due to acute shortage of time, the members soon hurried over to the Ramakrishna Mission lodgings to pick up the luggage and move to the airport. The students met with Nagahama Sensei and Nigam Sensei at Ramakrishna Mission for their final goodbyes. Informal pictures were taken and the Japanese members bid farewell to the Indian side members who were unable to accompany them to the airport. All the luggage were packed in and eleven members joined the six Japanese members and Nagahama Sensei on their last journey in Kolkata for the 26th IJSC before they departed for Chennai.

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## XXII

## DROP-OFF TO THE AIRPORT

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4th of March, 2023

*BY SABARNO SINHA*

While waiting for the Japan-side members to arrive at RKM one last time for this IJSC, amidst the sweltering heat and the sweating, I couldn't help but remember the past few days which had whizzed past us at a speed even greater than light, I thought. We had all been preparing for the IJSC for so long and it was over in what seemed like a couple of days. The Japan-side duly arrived from Sarat Samity, which was the last scheduled activity in the IJSC calendar and went inside to fetch their luggage that had already been checked out and kept in the lobby. We had brought three cars and two more were booked by some IJSC members who wanted to bid the students adieu at the airport.

The 6 Japanese students and Nagahama sensei were divided into the three personal cars and once the Japan-side was seated and their luggage stored inside the cars, we all left Ramakrishna Mission. It was sad, knowing that we would not have to come to the RKM Guest House and travel all across Kolkata with Japanese students any longer until the next IJSC. Rin and Emina-san were travelling in my car and I listened to them chat excitedly about the things to look forward to in Chennai. Rin, having stayed there for the last 10 months, was giving friendly advice to Emina regarding the climate and the food. But the conversation soon strayed to Japan and the things they missed about it. Rin was of course away from Japan for a very long time as he had not visited home even once since he arrived in India last year. I tried to give them my advice as well and various ways to take precautions when walking on the road.

Very soon, we arrived at the airport and the luggage was taken out. There was a little bit of repacking that had to be done as there were some food items that had to be put inside the suitcases so we immediately set to doing that. Everyone was amazed at the long queues outside the airport gates but I was secretly happy knowing that we would get some more time with our friends. Of all the people, Nao-san from the Japan-side seemed to be the most emotional about leaving our City of Joy. It almost seemed that he would burst into tears any moment. But each and every Indian member's heart was filled while interacting with Japan for those last few moments before they were to depart. I was myself quite moved by this sudden and very intense surge of emotion in the air, and I felt it myself as well for other than our President, nobody had ever experienced an offline IJSC and knew this feeling. This was truly something new for all of us. After a few days, they would be back in a distant land, so far away from all of us and none of us can ever be sure of when we see them again in our lives. That is perhaps what made that moment so emotional. We all ate together, walked together, talked together, rode buses, shopped, and made so many beautiful memories that it would be impossible not to be sad in that moment. That is why, we all stayed while they were waiting in the queue to enter the premises and even when they went inside and were walking towards the check-in counter to drop their baggage, we walked parallel to them outside the premises and kept waving our hands. None of us wanted to say goodbye so soon, and when we realised that it was time to go, we saw Nagahama

sensei come out of one of the lifts. She had been to the Post Office to send some items before she left Kolkata.

We waited for her and waved our goodbyes until she went inside the airport. That's when we realised that IJSC was truly over. All of them were inside, ready to start another chapter in their India Tour. I believe all of us were glad that we had helped them have a great time in the first leg of their journey, here in Kolkata and through this process, we left the airport knowing that whatever happened and wherever we went, these six Japanese students would never leave our hearts. And, a day would definitely come when we would all meet somewhere, sometime, again. Maybe in India or in Japan, but we surely would.

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