

Voice of the Participants

Hydrographic Survey for 2001--JAPAN



Mr. Maheswarnath Ramjug (MAURITIUS)

Indeed it is a great honour for me to follow the Group Training Course in Hydrographic Survey for the year 2001 in Japan. Though it is a new field for me, I took it as a challenge to make a breakthrough. The Government of Mauritius is in the process of setting up a new Hydrographic Unit. Dr Tadahiko Katsura and Mr. Toshio Nagai from the Japan Hydrographic Department (JHD) in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are working very hard to realize the unit.

While leaving my country the only thing I was thinking of was about the alien and foreign country I was going to live for the next seven months. Japan is not unknown in the world. The enormous economic power, high tech. society, new inventions, courageous people and the wide-ranging high quality products have long been identity of Japan. However with all my acquaintance with Japan I was feeling odd at Narita airport with lots of fears crumbling into my mind. The sight of JICA

booth at airport provided me with some comfort. Our coordinator received us warmly at the airport. And soon we were traveling to TIC. After arrival in TIC and general orientation I gave away with my fears and started feeling home. New places and new faces seldom offer so much support as TIC and JICA staff has offered.



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After the general orientation period, the Group Training Course started on the 11th April at the Hydrographic Office in Tokyo. Though the training schedule looked very long and bulky, I was able to cope with it very rapidly. No wonder, the participants from this Group Training Course were the most busiest persons during their stay in Japan due to the high load of knowledge delivered everyday from 9.45am to 5pm with continuous systematic assessment. I take this opportunity to thank all the lecturers who were involved in this training course for their good delivery of information and new ideas on the various techniques applied in the hydrographic field. I would also like to thank the personnel attached in the office for their kind collaboration and friendly attitude which always made us feel at home. In general, our course was very well organized with several study visits and observation tours in between which apart from the study also gave a better insight of Japan. Kyoto, Kobe, Hiroshima, Nagoya, Shimizu, Yokohama, Tateyama, Sendai and Niigata are among the places we visited. However, the sights of Kyoto will be a source of enlightenment for me for a long time. Kyoto very deservedly is called the cultural capital of Japan. Ancient shrines, handicraft industries, warm hearted people make Kyoto worth visiting place.

I was much more confident about myself after the one month field training programme in Takamatsu Ko Port. I must confess that all the knowledge attained during the course have been implemented for the good execution of the survey work. It was very interesting to go through both the conventional and modern method during the field practice and data processing which gave us a better understanding of the various applications.

The only problem I faced during my stay in Japan is the language barrier. And as I learned to use common phrases and greeting words, I came to realize the wonders these small words or phrases can do. The Japanese people represent an ancient civilization. I found the people generous, good-humoured and highly dedicated. Yet as most of the Japanese are not conversant with English, many of us are left blank faced in the streets

without working knowledge of common Japanese phrases and greetings.

Few months is very less time to understand a society. I cannot say that I now know the whole of Japanese culture. But I am confident to say that my course here has given me a chance to identify the very virtues which has made Japan as we see it today. Moreover it has given me a chance to physically work upon the most modern survey equipments and ships which will go a long way in coming years. I return to my country with a lot of sweet memories and find myself equipped with knowledge and skills which would definitely help me in serving my country better. Thank you Japan.



Mr. Prosper Ernest ULOTU (TANZANIA)

Before coming to Japan, I thought I had a fairly reasonable knowledge about Japan. I knew Japan as the second largest economy in the World, a country of cars and origin of electronics. These are very true, but not all. In the past six months, I never witnessed any crime, not even people quarrelling or fighting! Look at the infrastructure, roads, railway network, harbours, airports etc. they seem hypothetical, but they are real! Talking of cleanliness, impressive and complex architectural designs and high technology, the list is endless; bravo Japan.

My gratitude to our coordinator Mr Sadahiro Abe, who took us to many exciting historical & cultural sites around Japan eg Shrines and Temples, which are always well kept, and surrounded by beautiful gardens; they *EAHC Newsletter No.37 – December 2001* are a big tourist attraction. Environmental protection, recreation and maintenance are accorded high priority here.

Japanese are very humble and ready to offer assistance when the need arises although English is sometimes a barrier. This society shows high respect to the elderly people. People are always prompt, and very frustrated when one fails to observe time. If classes of people exist, they are not readily evident to an outsider. Generally they display a lot of wisdom. Despite these very personal observations, I must admit that I am ignorant of the real life of Japanese. This course almost does not offer an opportunity to mix freely with the people in their real life. A few stayed for one night in a selected Japanese family, this is fictitious exposure. In trains they are reading or pretend to be asleep, do you know the reason? Grown up people maintain a strict tradition and culture, I do not observe the same from the younger generation.

The course started by reviewing the basic subjects, gradually bringing us to the tune of understanding the subject matter. Then it concentrated on the subjects relevant to the profession. We have had extensive exposure to the conventional methods of preparing nautical charts as well as to the very modern instrumentation and methodology. To this achievements, my sincere appreciations to the coordinator Mr. Abe, the course leader Mr. Sachio Ozawa and the staff members of the Japan Hydrographic Department JHD.



I came here with limited knowledge of hydrography, but now I have sound knowledge in hydrography, especially after undergoing a month of intensive fieldwork in harbour and port hydrographic surveying followed by data processing and presentation. The vague questions I had are now clear. I am very grateful to Mr. Ozawa, for his tireless efforts, assistance and encouragement throughout the term of course. We had lectures and seminars from distinguished learned as well as practising professionals from around Japan, though to a few, English and communication skills posed a bit of problem. Also we visited a number of government and private offices,

where a lot of modern hydrographic instruments were demonstrated. On several occasions, we had hydrographic surveying practicals aboard some of the very up to date surveying ships of the Japan Coast Guard (JCG), e.g. Tenyo and Shoyo.

Before I conclude this message, I must point out two very important things I learnt here:

In the absence of enough land and minerals, Japan invested intelligently and heavily into people who were abundant, and hence its current state.

For the knowledge received abroad to advance a country, it must closely be scrutinised, filtered and if need be modified.

A Question: Birth rate and culture cohesiveness are getting low, how bright is the future?

I have seen, learnt, and appreciated a lot while here. Also I have met and made a lot of friends and contacts, for this I am very grateful the government of Japan through JICA.

Request: Let worshipping be a right, set Sundays free from any work, accord participants more free times and interaction with Japanese for mutual benefit and cultural enhancement.