

Section 2



Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

Overview

(Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals abroad)

Approximately 16.21 million Japanese nationals traveled abroad in 2015, while approximately 1.29 million Japanese nationals were living overseas as of October 2014. As more Japanese nationals travel and live overseas, the risk of Japanese nationals being involved in incidents or accidents, or facing terrorism, riots, or natural disasters abroad has been increasing. The safety for Japanese nationals overseas is one of the important missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

In 2015, terrorist incidents occurred where Japanese nationals were victims, including the terrorist incident regarding the murder of Japanese in Syria and the terrorist gun attack in Tunisia. Moreover, ISIL listed Japanese people and interests as target of terrorist attack in its bulletin. Furthermore, Islamic extremist groups and individuals motivated by opinions of such groups have committed terrorism not only in the Middle East and North Africa but also in various places all over the world, including a series of terror attacks in Paris. The threat of terrorism against Japan is real.

Under these circumstances, it is a crucial task for the Government of Japan to make every possible effort to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals, companies

and other interests overseas. In May, following the terrorist incident regarding the murder of Japanese in Syria, the “Task Force on Bolstering Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Overseas” published recommendations. The recommendations show the basic recognition that (1) Japanese nationals will not only be involved in terrorist attack but also be a target of such attack, (2) not only Japanese nationals living abroad but also Japanese travelers abroad can encounter terrorist attacks, and (3) terrorism occurs not only in the Middle East and North Africa but also anywhere in the world including developed countries. The Government of Japan works on the enhancement of safety measures focusing on the improvement of consular structure, the safety of the Japanese Schools and gathering and disseminating of information.

As part of such efforts, MOFA launched the MOFA “Overseas Travel Registration” (“Tabi-Regi”) on July 1, 2014 and is calling for registration. The “Overseas Travel Registration” is one of the important measures to assure the safety of Japanese Travelers. This new service aims to provide registered users with the latest travel safety information of their place of stay, and confirm their safety in the event of an emergency. For this purpose, short-stay (less than three months) travelers, who are not required to submit an Overseas Residential Registration, such as tourists and

business travelers, are invited to register their travel itineraries, including their place of stay and contact number through the system.

In 2015, the end of the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in West Africa was declared, but in the Middle East, human infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) continues, and Zika virus is spreading in Latin America and other areas. In addition, large-scale natural disasters such as the major earthquake in Nepal in April 2015 occurred. Furthermore, the security situation outside Japan is not as good as inside Japan. Japanese nationals may be victims of various crimes such as theft and other trouble. Japanese nationals overseas must be careful, collect the safety information and take measures for assuring their safety in advance.

(Smooth Implementation of Consular Service)

Furthermore, MOFA endeavors to protect the safety of Japanese nationals and further their interests. Efforts to this end include issuing passports and various types of certificates, as well as accepting notifications concerning nationality and family registers, and handling overseas voting.

MOFA, as the “Central Authority” for the implementation of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Hague Convention), provides assistance to realize the prompt return of children who have been wrongfully removed across borders, and/or to realize visitation or contact with children across borders.

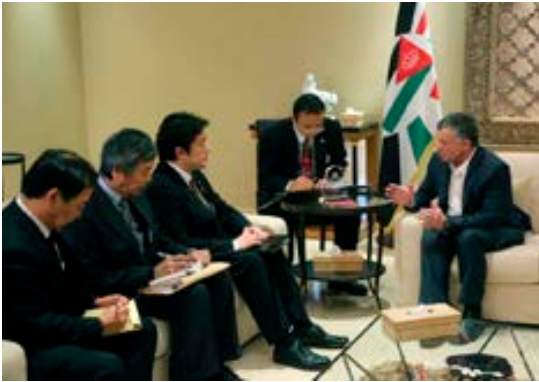
1 Overseas Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals

(1) Incidents and Accidents in 2015 and Countermeasures

As more Japanese nationals have been traveling overseas in recent years, there is a greater risk for them to become involved in atrocious incidents and contingent events (see 3-1-3-(3)). In 2015, Japanese became victims in the terrorist incident regarding the murder of Japanese in Syria at the beginning of the year, the terrorist gun attack in Tunisia in March, the bombing incident in Bangkok in August, and the murder of Japanese in Bangladesh in October.

A series of terrorist attacks and kidnappings occurred mainly in the Middle East and African regions; examples of terrorist attacks include attacks on government facilities, such as security authorities, indiscriminate terrorism targeting citizens in places where many people congregate, such as public transportation facilities, religious facilities and markets, and the capturing/killing of hostages perpetrated by Islamic extremist groups, such as ISIL, al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The lone-wolf type of terrorism committed by individuals who seem to be motivated by Islamic extremism occurred also in the Western countries. For example, the shooting incident in the international high-speed train traveling in France in August, a series of terror attacks in Paris (France) in November, and the shooting incident in California (U.S.) in December, occurred. Individuals motivated by Islamic extremism have been arrested for terrorist plots all over the world. More attention is required in the future. Moreover, kidnappings of foreign nationals occurred around the world.

Other murder incidents involving Japanese



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Nakayama asking His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan for cooperation (January 21, Amman, Jordan; Photo: the Jordan Government)

nationals occurred in several countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Brazil.

Incidents involving Japanese nationals were a traffic accident in Sanliurfa (Turkey) in January, a shark attack on a Japanese surfer at Shelly Beach (Australia) in February, the German-wings crash in the southern France in March, and a bus collision in Seattle, Washington (U.S.), in September.

As for large-scale natural disasters, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake occurred with its epicenter 80 km to the northwest of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal in April. The earthquake and aftershocks killed over 8,000 people and injured more than 20,000. One Japanese national was killed and one injured.

As a case of a serious deterioration of security caused by political instability, in Yemen, armed forces of Saudi Arabia launched a military campaign against Houthi rebels in March and local security situation changed dramatically. While there was no serious damage suffered by Japanese nationals, MOFA confirmed the safety of Japanese nationals staying in Yemen and helped their evacuation.

In Europe, the rapid increase of refugees who came to Europe from instable regions in the Middle East and North Africa by sea and

land caused social unrest such as confusion in transportation systems and clashes among the refugee groups. MOFA provided necessary information to Japanese nationals living there.

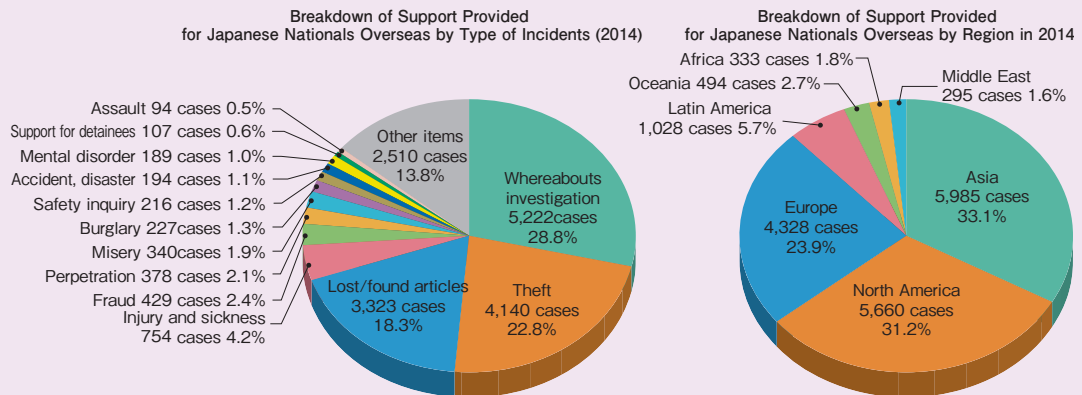
In addition, the tension between Israelis and Palestinians mounted in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the Old City of Jerusalem, since the end of September. Many people including tourists were injured in heated demonstrations and confrontations.

Regarding middle-ages and seniors, there have been reports of incidents in the high altitude mountains and the sea and also of getting illness while traveling; in particular, there were a number of cases of deaths caused by sudden illness when staying at hotels. In dealing with such incidents or illnesses, some family members of the victims faced troubles due to expensive medical fee or transportation costs compared to those in Japan, or insufficient medical services.

As for infectious diseases, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, mainly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, had a global impact since 2014 and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)”. However in 2015, the end of the outbreak in all of these three countries was declared.

Cases of infection with the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) mainly in the Middle East and human infection with avian influenza A (H7N9) in China were reported respectively. In addition to Dengue fever and malaria, other mosquito-borne infectious diseases such as Zika virus also continued to spread throughout the world. Moreover, people’s concern is growing on the influence of air pollution over their health in China, India and Southeast Asia.

Breakdown of Support Provided for Japanese Nationals Overseas by Type of Incidents and Region (2014)



MOFA issues “travel advice and warning,” “spot safety information” or “region-wide safety information” on infectious disease to provide Japanese nationals traveling and living overseas with information on the current outbreak situation and prevention measures as well as with relevant warnings.

(Tips for Traveling and Living Abroad)

As described in the earlier sections, emergency situations posing threats to the safety of Japanese nationals are continuously occurring all around the world. When traveling and living abroad, in addition to “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”)” or submission of Overseas Residential Registration, the following actions are important: (1) to check overseas safety information before their traveling on the Overseas Safety Website or through media reports, etc., (2) to take full safety measures and risk aversion actions to prepare for emergency situations while abroad, and (3) in an emergency, to contact the Japanese diplomatic missions overseas nearby, such as the embassy/consulate-general, and family

members in Japan. Expensive medical fees may be incurred abroad due to diseases and accidents, and it may be difficult to pay the medical cost or to receive proper medical care without travel insurance. It is extremely important for each individual traveler to purchase travel insurance with sufficient coverage.

(2) Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Abroad

As Japanese nationals expand their roles in the international community, the number of Japanese nationals supported or protected by the diplomatic missions overseas and the Interchange Association were continually kept at a high level. It increased in 2014 to 20,724 and the number of cases to 18,123¹.

Therefore MOFA is enhancing and improving the contents of the Overseas Safety Website for the provision of safety information and as well as revising the functions and design of the website to enhance its usability.

The Consular Service Center of MOFA

¹ The Statistics on Assistance for Japanese Involved in Accidents and Other Incidents is an annual report on the number of Japanese nationals involved in any kind of troubles overseas, such as incidents/accidents, acts of committing crimes, and falling victim to crime or disaster, and have received assistance provided by the diplomatic missions overseas and/or the Japan Foundation and was published in 1986 for the first time.

Top 20 Diplomatic Missions Overseas in Terms of the Number of Cases of Assistance Provided (2014)

Ranking	Diplomatic missions overseas	Cases	Ranking	Diplomatic missions overseas	Cases
1	Embassy of Japan in Thailand	1,157	11	Embassy of Japan in Italy	317
2	Consulate-General of Japan in Shanghai (China)	963	12	Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong (China)	272
3	Embassy of Japan in the Philippines	720	13	Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle (U.S.)	271
4	Embassy of Japan in France	710	14	Interchange Association (Japan), (Taipei Office)	264
5	Consulate-General of Japan in Los Angeles (U.S.)	643	15	Consulate-General of Japan in Vancouver (Canada)	261
6	Consulate-General of Japan in New York (U.S.)	639	16	Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco (U.S.)	258
7	Embassy of Japan in the United Kingdom	634	17	Consulate-General of Japan in Hagatna (U.S.)	254
8	Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu (U.S.)	466	17	Consulate-General of Japan in Houston (U.S.)	254
9	Consulate-General of Japan in Barcelona (Spain)	407	19	Consulate-General of Japan in Boston (U.S.)	247
10	Embassy of Japan in Republic of Korea	390	20	Consulate-General of Japan in Chiang Mai (Thailand)	235



Overseas safety website (<http://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/>)



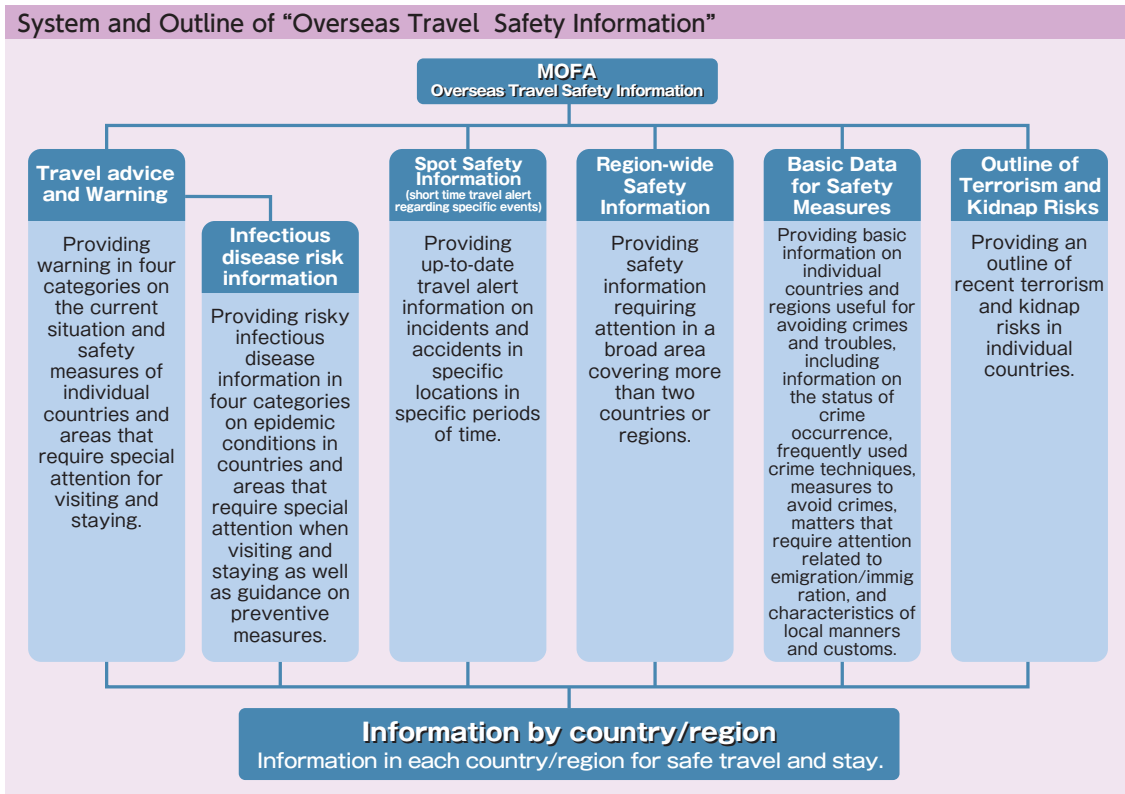
provides advice on safety issues abroad. In order to provide detailed response to the activities of Japanese nationals abroad, the center distributes a booklet titled “Kaigai Anzen Toranomaki” (“Essential Safety Tips for Overseas Travel”) which contains comprehensive safety measures, as well as pamphlets describing measures to be taken in each possible case, such as terrorism, kidnapping and intimidation. These pamphlets can also be downloaded from the Overseas Safety Website.

The threat of terrorism has increased all over the world, including sightseeing spots which were thought to be relatively safe,

such as Paris where a series of terror attacks occurred in November 2015. The risk of short-stay travelers becoming involved in emergency situations increased remarkably.

Under these circumstances, to improve the level of recognition of the MOFA “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”),” which was launched on July 1, 2014, MOFA works on advertisement through various media and promotes registration through collaborations with travel agency. In the event of an emergency, “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”)” enables the diplomatic missions overseas to provide registered individuals with safety information in Japanese, and also

2 Service sending a short text message between mobile phone or PHS users.



MOFA “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”)” (<https://www.ezairyu.mofa.go.jp/tabiregi/>)



Download is available from MOFA Safety Application in Overseas Safety website “Kaigai Anzen Apuri no Haishin ni Tsuite (Overseas Safety Application Distribution)” (http://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/c_info/oshirase_kaian_app.html)

to confirm their safety at critical moments. In

March, emergency simultaneous notification to Japanese nationals abroad via short message services (SMS) on mobile phones² started in ten countries and one region where many Japanese nationals live (ROK, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, China including Hong Kong, Taiwan, and U.S.).

Moreover, MOFA promotes the strengthening of public-private partnerships to enhance the overseas safety of Japanese nationals. In Japan, MOFA held a “Seminar on Safety in Japan” in Tokyo (July), Nagoya (August), and Osaka (September) for companies operating overseas to improve their safety measures and risk management. Hands-on training for responding to terrorism and kidnapping in October and November was participated in by both public and private sectors in order to further effectuate the

private-public collaboration in responding to emergency situations. Moreover, the meetings of the “Liaison Committee of Government and non-Government for Overseas Security” were held periodically to exchange information and views and to consult and discuss the common issues between Japanese private companies/organizations engaged in overseas activities and MOFA.

The diplomatic missions overseas have regular meetings of “Security Consultation and Liaison Committee” with local Japanese organizations and private representatives to enhance opinion exchange and information sharing regarding safety measures. MOFA is engaged in efforts to strengthen the safety measures for Japanese nationals abroad. For example, “Seminars on Overseas Safety Measures” were held to enhance knowledge and ability concerning safety measures and risk management for Japanese nationals abroad at 27 places in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

2 Consular Service and Assistance for Living Overseas

(1) Improving Consular Service

Aiming at providing good consular services to Japanese nationals overseas, MOFA conducts a questionnaire survey every year on consular services such as employees’ attitudes in over-the-counter services and telephone responses, information provision, and Visiting Consular Service (of which survey is only conducted by the missions offering it.) to reflect the voices of Japanese nationals overseas in order to improve consular services

by the diplomatic missions overseas. In 2015, the surveys were conducted by 149 diplomatic missions overseas and received about 15,000 responses. The results showed generally high grade of satisfaction with regard to the consular services provided by the diplomatic missions overseas in general as well as over-the-counter services and phone responses. At the same time, there were negative answers, although few in number. MOFA intends to continue its efforts for improvements listening to the voices of the users so as to provide consular services at the diplomatic missions overseas in line with user needs.

(2) Issuance of Passports and Prevention of Illicit Acquisition of Passports

Approximately 3.25 million passports were issued in Japan in 2015. As of the end of December 2015, approximately 30.58 million passports are valid, and the number of ePassports³ accounts for about 99% of all the valid Japanese passports.

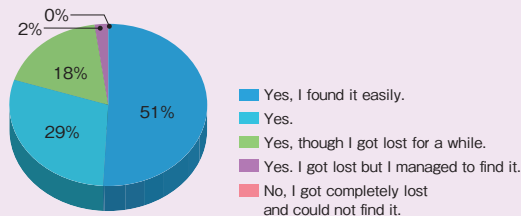
The issuance of ePassports is effective for deterring illicit use of passports such as forged or altered passports. However, there continue to be cases of illicit acquisition of passports by means of impersonation⁴. There were cases where Japanese nationals or illegal foreign residents left and entered Japan using passports bearing the name of another person which had been acquired illegally. Also, passports with false identities were used for borrowing money from financial institutions, opening bank accounts for the purpose of selling them to those who plot to commit other crimes, and subscribing to mobile

³ An Electronic Passport or ePassport is a passport embedded with an integrated circuit (IC) chip which contains a digitized facial image (biometric information) and other information of the passport holder to prevent passport forgery and illicit use of passports by a third party. It was first issued in 2006.

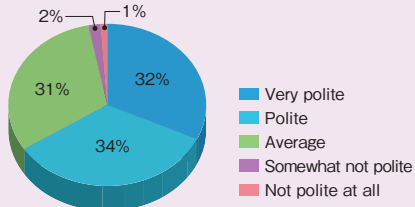
⁴ The number of illegal acquisitions of passports through identity theft discovered: 43 in 2011, 26 in 2012, 13 in 2013, 12 in 2014, and 10 in 2015.

Results of Survey on the Consular Service (2015)

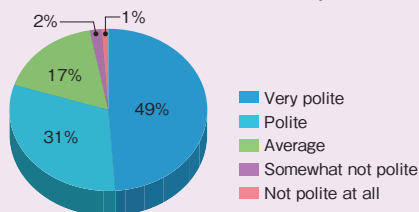
Did you find the diplomatic mission overseas easily?



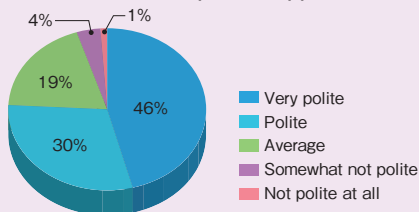
Reception at the time of visit



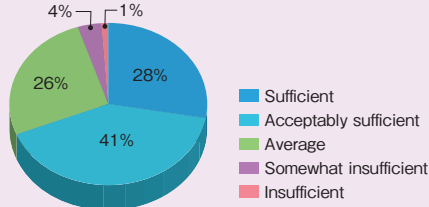
Consular counter response



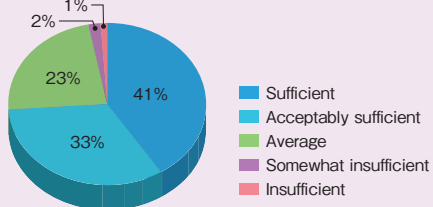
Telephone support



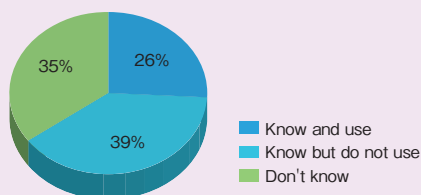
Contents of the website



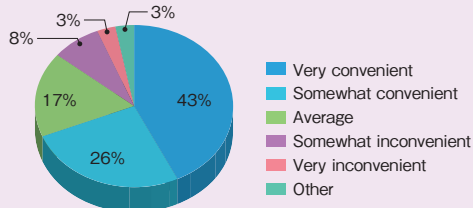
Contents of announcements and information provided



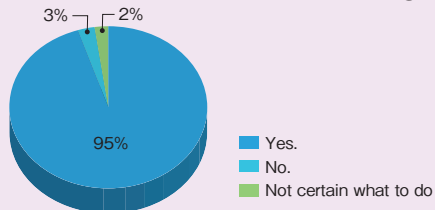
Do you know and use the visiting consular services? (*)



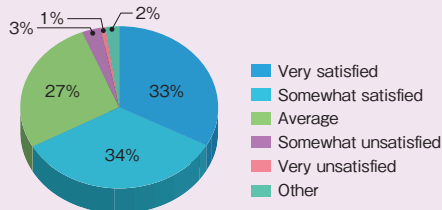
How convenient is the visiting consular services? (*)



Submission of overseas residential registration



Satisfaction with administrative service

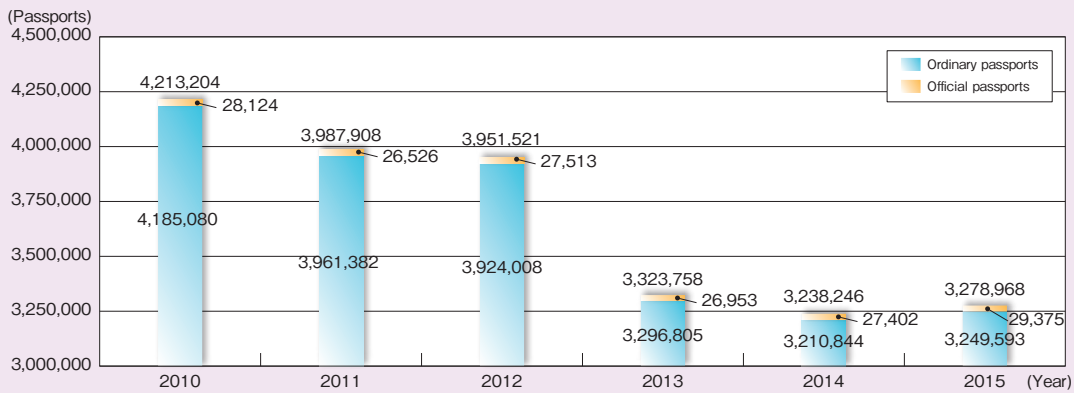


*The results above are based on research conducted only by diplomatic missions overseas offering visiting services

phone services without the real passport holders knowing it. In order to prevent illicit acquisition of passports that may nurture these secondary or tertiary crimes, MOFA has been making further effort to enhance strict

identity examination in issuing a passport, for example, by such means as designating a stringent examination period against illicit acquisition of passports through identity theft at passport offices located in each prefecture.

Changes in the Number of Issued Passports in Japan



Note 1: Official passports include diplomatic passports.

Source: The graph was created based on the Passport Statistics February 2016 Edition (Passport Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

In the meantime, Machine Readable Passports (MRP) are issued in most countries of the world, in accordance with the recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The ICAO determined the deadline for the termination of non-MRP circulation is November 24, 2015. Moreover, as ePassports improved with security, using biometric information such as fingerprints in addition to digitized facial images contained in its integrated circuit (IC) chip, have become widespread, possibilities for more effective use of IC chip are under consideration at the ICAO and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Consignment of passport-related work from the prefectural governments to city/town offices has been possible since 2006, such as application and delivery, and 798 cities/towns had started passport service by the end of 2015. They make up about 40% of all the cities/towns in Japan.

(3) Overseas Voting

The overseas voting system allows Japanese voters living overseas to vote in national elections. In the elections after June 2007, it

was made possible to vote overseas for the small electoral district election of the House of Representatives and the electoral district election of the House of Councillors (including by-election and recall election), in addition to voting for the proportional representation segment of elections of the both House. In December 2014, the 47th election for the House of Representatives was conducted. In summer of 2016, the 24th regular election for the House of Councillors will be conducted. A referendum concerning the constitutional amendment can also be voted in the same manner.

In order to vote overseas, it is necessary to be registered in advance in the overseas voter directory managed by the election board of the city/town government and to obtain overseas voter identification. Voters with valid overseas voter identification can vote by choosing one of the three methods of voting, diplomatic mission overseas voting, postal voting, or voting in Japan. The diplomatic missions overseas have been making efforts to disseminate the system and to increase the number of registered voters by publicizing this system and carrying out a visiting service for the registration of Japanese nationals

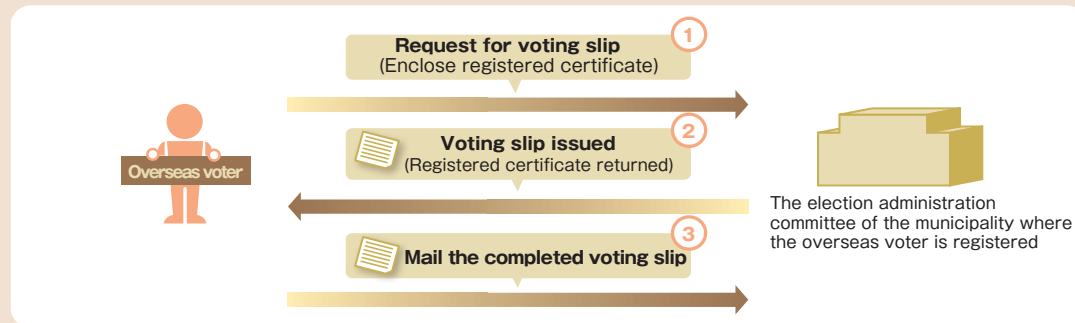
a Voting at diplomatic missions overseas

Voters registered on an overseas voting list can vote by presenting their registered certificate and ID such as passport at a diplomatic mission (period and time for voting vary depending on the mission)



b Voting by mail

A voting slip can be requested by sending voter's registered certificate and written request for a voting slip to the chair of the election administration committee of the domestic municipality where the voter is registered. Completed voting slip needs to arrive at the voting venue before the end of voting time (20:00 Japan time) of the domestic voting day in Japan.



c Voting in Japan

If overseas voters are temporarily staying in Japan during the election time, or in case voters are not yet registered on a domestic voter's list often their permanent return in Japan, the voter may vote in the same way as other domestic voters with their registered certificate for overseas voting. (early voting, absentee voting and voting on the election day).

living in remote areas.

(4) Assistance for Japanese Nationals Living and Engaging in Activities Overseas

A Japanese Schools and Supplementary Education Schools

Education for children is one of the major concerns for Japanese nationals living abroad. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education,

Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, MOFA carries out assistance for the Japanese Schools (partial subsidy for school building rental fees, rewards for locally hired teachers and safety measures expenses) so that the overseas school children at the age of domestic compulsory education can receive education equivalent to that of in Japan. MOFA also provides assistance (partial subsidy for school building rental fees and rewards for

locally hired teachers) for the Supplementary Education Schools (educational institutions established to maintain children's ability, such as Japanese language ability) mainly in areas where the Japanese Schools are not located. The number of Japanese children living abroad has been on an increasing trend in recent years, and MOFA and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology intend to continue/enhance its assistance.

B Medical/Health Measures

In order to provide health advices through consultations to Japanese nationals residing in countries where the medical situation is poor, MOFA dispatches medical teams with the support of domestic medical institutions (one country, seven cities in FY2015). MOFA also dispatches medical specialists to regions, where infectious diseases or air pollution become serious, and organizes health and safety lectures (11 countries, 18 cities in FY2015).

In addition, MOFA collects information on infectious diseases outbreak overseas and provides them publicly through the Overseas Safety Website and the websites of diplomatic missions overseas.

C Other Needs

In order to eliminate the complexity of various procedures for Japanese nationals living overseas (including converting Japanese driving licenses to one of the country of residence and obtaining residence/work permits) and to make living abroad more comfortable, MOFA continues talks with foreign governments.

When converting driving licenses issued in foreign countries to Japanese driving licenses in Japan, all persons with driving licenses

issued in a foreign country can obtain Japanese driving licenses without taking certain examinations (written examination and skill examination) if it is checked and recognized that they should have no problem operating vehicles.

On the other hand, it is mandatory to take driving tests when converting Japanese licenses to local licenses in some North and South American countries and states, for example. In such case, MOFA is calling for those countries to streamline the procedures for license conversion as in Japan.

MOFA also supports victims of atomic bomb attacks living overseas in applying for the authorization of Atomic Bomb Diseases and for the issuance of Health Check Certificates, via diplomatic missions overseas.

3 Cooperation with Emigrants and Japanese Descendants, Nikkei

The migration of Japanese nationals overseas has a history of 147 years as of 2015. There are estimated 3.60 million overseas Japanese, Nikkei, with especially large numbers residing in the North, Central and South America. They make positive and great contributions to the development of the countries in various fields, including politics, economy, academics and culture, and at the same time, they act as a bridge between Japan and these countries in developing close relations.

Together with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), MOFA provides cooperation in Central and South America where estimated 2.13 million Japanese descendants live. Various forms of assistance are offered, including welfare support for aging emigrants, training in Japan for Japanese descendants, and dispatch of volunteers to

the local Nikkei communities.

Various invitation programs for Nikkei leaders in various fields have been carried out in North, Central and South America. Efforts are underway to strengthen relations with Japanese descendants in these regions. Such efforts include holding conferences between Nikkei leaders and the heads of diplomatic missions overseas to discuss how to enhance bilateral relations and active provision of opportunities for Japanese high-level officials on visits to meet Japanese descendants.

The 56th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad was successfully held by the

Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad in Tokyo in October, participated in by about 180 emigrants and their descendants from 17 countries/regions. The welcome party was attended by Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado, and as for MOFA, Foreign Minister Kishida held a welcome reception to deepen exchange with emigrants and their descendants.

Japan intends to provide support for Japanese emigrants and their descendants, promote cooperation with the young generation and strengthen the bond between these people and Japan.

Column

Welcoming the 80th anniversary of Japanese Immigration to Paraguay, "Another Japan on the other side of the earth"

~ a story about Japanese culture covered in the special issue of local newspapers ~

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Paraguay ● Yoshihisa Ueda

The Republic of Paraguay located in South America is a landlocked country, not blessed with major natural resources, tourism resources or a consumer market. The country is not well known to the Japanese people because it takes more than 30 hours to fly there from Japan, but the country consists of vast plains and hills blessed with rich rivers and greens where an open and peaceful atmosphere drifts brightly. What visitors to this country feel is that, in spite of the country being located the farthest from Japan on the other side of the earth, the presence of Japan is larger than imagined. This is because Japanese immigrants have greatly contributed to the country's economic development in agriculture and other various fields. Besides, a variety of tangible and intangible assets of official assistance by Japan have accumulated everywhere in Paraguay. Japanese emigration to Paraguay that began in 1936 marks its 80th anniversary in 2016.

Japanese immigrants developed a settler-oriented land from nothing, which previously had been covered with forest. They cultivated soybeans, vegetables and fruits, and have ultimately developed agriculture to a main industry in this country, where no industry other than animal husbandry existed previously. The efforts must have been extraordinary. The Japanese immigrants who transformed the unpopulated forest into nice farms and towns in this short period have earned the trust and respect of the local society for their sincerity, diligence and perseverance. Now Japanese immigrants and descendants living in urban areas play an active role in various fields as important members of Paraguay society, while they maintain their community, language and culture as Japanese without any contradiction. The trust and respect for the Japanese in local communities as well as the bicultural nature as mentioned above creates a unique presence of a Japanese society.



Photo 1: UH paper May issue "Gift from the Empire"



Photo 1: ABC paper July issue "Japanese cuisine"



Photo 2: UH paper July issue "Diplomacy of taste"



Photo 3: UH paper August issue "The Oriental force"

In 2015, two major newspapers of this country issued a supplement one after another, in which there were carried special features describing remarkable activities of Japanese descendants. The special features consisted of articles of several pages long each, with focus on the following subjects: People "History of immigrants' 80-year development" (Photo 1), Culture "The tea room and Japanese food at Japanese Ambassador's official residence" (Photo 2: Cover photograph shows the Japanese Ambassador and his wife in the Japanese garden and tea house within the compound of the official residence), "The charm of *kaiseki* cuisine" (Photo 3), and Sports "South America Sumo Championships commemorating the 55th anniversary of Japanese Immigration to Pirapo, Paraguay" (Photo 4). The articles recognized again the locus of Japanese immigrants, and the values and culture they had brought to this country.

What can be read from these articles is the respect for Japanese immigrants in Paraguay society, and a great deal of interest in Japanese culture from traditional aspects, such as tea ceremony to youth culture including *manga* (comics) and animation. I feel this country is "another Japan on the other side of the earth" embracing a unique sense of intimacy, which you cannot express just as a pro-Japan country.

Detailed information about the articles is available in the Japanese Embassy in Paraguay's HP "Paraguay news (only in Japanese)." You will see how a total of less than 10,000 Japanese immigrants and their descendants are recognized and how they demonstrate their presence in this country, despite their small population in both absolute and relative terms.

4

The Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Hague Convention) and its Implementation

The Hague Convention is designed to ensure immediate return of children who have been wrongfully removed from one contracting state to another. It is based on the idea that the custody (parental authority) of a child, whose parents' marriage has failed, should be decided in the state in which the child habitually resides. Also, in order to ensure the opportunity for trans-boundary parent-child access, the Hague Convention prescribes

that Contracting States should cooperate for realization of parent-child access.

This convention came into force in Japan on April 1, 2014. On the same date, the Act for Implementation of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction was enforced. As of now, 93 countries including Japan are party to the convention.

A governmental agency designated as the Central Authority provides assistance to fulfill the obligations under this Convention. In Japan, MOFA assumes the role of the Central Authority by assembling experts in

various fields, communicating/cooperating with foreign Central Authorities to implement the Convention, and providing assistance to the parties such as locating whereabouts of the child and arranging mediation services towards amicable resolutions. In the 21 months from the entry into force of the Convention to end-December 2015, MOFA received a total number of 168 applications: 76 applications for assistance in return of the child and 92 applications for assistance in access to the child.

During the same period, seven children returned from another country to Japan and 13 from Japan to another country. These numbers include three returns of children to their country of habitual residence where assistance in access to the child by the Central Authority eventually led to the agreement between the parties to return the child.

Furthermore, MOFA has been taking steps to promote amicable settlements and smooth realization of visitation or contacts such as the

introduction of “Online *Mimamori* Contact System” which provides parents and children living apart online meeting sessions with assistance from an expert from the Visitation or Contact Supporting Institution, the Japan-Australia joint training for mediators from alternative dispute resolution (ADR) institutions, and so on. In addition, MOFA made efforts to enhance the support that can be provided to Japanese nationals living abroad at diplomatic missions overseas, such as collecting and organizing information in order to introduce organizations supporting domestic violence (DV) victims, lawyers, interpreters/translators, mediation institutes, and visitation or contact supporting institutions.

In addition, MOFA puts effort into public informative activities because it is expected that promoting public awareness of the Convention will lead to the prevention of unlawful transnational abduction of children.

Reference: Number of Applications for Assistance Received by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Based on the Implementation Act of the Hague Convention (as of end-December 2015)

	Application for assistance in child's return	Application for assistance in visitation or contact with child
Application concerning a child (children) in Japan	40	69
Application concerning a child (children) outside Japan	36	23

Column

Participating in the “Australia-Japan joint mediation training for Hague Convention cases”

Lawyer ● Tomoko Takase

I had an opportunity to participate in the “Australia-Japan joint mediation training for Hague Convention cases” held in Yokohama for a five-day period of September 7-11, 2015, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

Mediation means an attempt to find a resolution by promoting dialogue between the concerned parties. In cases related to the Hague Convention, parents of different nationalities often become the involved parties. In order to promote dialogue between such parties for a resolution, it is important for a mediator who actually advances dialogue between the concerned parties to understand the culture, law, and society of each party’s country. This is why the training was organized. This training was attended by a total of ten lawyers and family court conciliators from Japan and a total of 14 lawyers, judges and family court staff from Australia. Aiming at understanding each other’s laws as well as culture and customs through direct contact, we spent five days working hard together from morning to, in some cases, as late as 9 o’clock in the evening.

In this training, a unique approach was employed: two German mediators well-experienced in mediation related to the Hague Convention served as trainers, and tried to make both Japanese and Australian participants better understand each other. Instead of either Japanese or Australian participants teaching the other, a third party took the initiative to lead the training, which I think created a feeling of solidarity among the entire participants.

The content of the training ranged from an introduction of each party’s family values and the social environment surrounding divorced families to practical matters such as methods for realizing an agreement or its content used at mediation, as well as language problems. All elements needed to resolve the cases spanning between the two countries were touched on. Furthermore, a role play was conducted on efforts to resolve a model case, with joint mediators comprising one Japanese participant and one Australian participant. Given that it is only a few years since Japan concluded the Hague Convention, I think the training, packed with necessary know-how for Japan, turned out to be very significant.

I hope that if a dispute involving the Hague Convention between a Japanese and Australian couple actually occurs, mediators if possible from each of the two countries discuss the case on the basis of this training to accumulate the experiences and, in the long future, more Japanese mediators will be able to resolve such cases jointly with mediators from other countries. I would be happy if I could help in this regard.

