

## Section 2

# Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

## Overview

### (Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals abroad)

In July, the terrorist attack in Dhaka, Bangladesh, occurred, claiming seven Japanese lives and injuring one. The risk of large-scale terrorist attacks is now spreading from the Middle East and Africa to Europe, the U.S. and Asia. Besides these attacks, the risk of ordinary crimes and infectious diseases that are unfamiliar in Japan exists worldwide. Approximately 16 million Japanese nationals travel abroad annually (2016), while approximately 1.32 million Japanese nationals lived overseas as of October 2015. Securing the safety of Japanese nationals overseas and promoting their interests is one of the most important missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

In light of the terrorist attack in Dhaka, MOFA reviewed the recommendations from the “Task Force on Bolstering Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Overseas,” issued in 2015, and published a report in August 2016 indicating measures that should be further strengthened. The report addressed the recognition of concerns over trends where the risk of terrorism

is spreading to Europe, the U.S. and Asia and is geared toward “soft targets” such as stations and shopping malls where large numbers of people congregate. In view of this, MOFA is engaged in efforts to further strengthen safety measures in order to prevent Japanese nationals from being harmed by terrorism based on the recognition that the following perspectives are important: (1) enhancing the awareness of safety measures and response capabilities of each and every person; (2) delivering timely, appropriate and effective information to the people; and (3) establishing a structure to securely implement them. In September 2016, it was decided to strengthen the International Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Collection Unit, which had been newly established in December 2015. The Unit collects information that serves the interests of the Prime Minister’s Office on international terrorism. The collected information is promptly provided to the Prime Minister’s Office and the related ministries and agencies, where it is utilized for assessing situation and making policy decisions, including in the area of consular services for the safety of Japanese nationals overseas.

In addition to terrorism, there are risks

of falling victim to robbery, other crimes and troubles, political disturbance, natural disasters, and infectious diseases such as the Zika virus disease, which has been spreading across Latin America, parts of the U.S. and Southeast Asia. When traveling or staying overseas, it is very important for each and every person to have strong safety awareness, collect information and take the necessary safety measures. MOFA is calling on people to use the MOFA “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”)” and the Overseas Safety Website, through which it issues relevant information.

MOFA also endeavors to protect the safety of Japanese nationals and promote 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 2016 and Countermeasures

In July, a terrorist attack occurred in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where a restaurant was assaulted, with eight Japanese nationals harmed. The threat of terrorism is now spreading from the Middle East and Africa, where Islamic extremist organizations are

based in, to Europe, the U.S. and Asia, where many Japanese nationals travel and/or stay. Moreover, many cases of terrorism are seen where the acts are perpetrated by people who have been indoctrinated by foreign Islamic extremism ideology through the internet, etc. (homegrown type) and/or lone wolves, who have little organizational background and act alone, while there has been a tendency for terrorists to target the general public in everyday locations. This is making it ever more difficult to prevent acts of terrorism from occurring.

Other incidents occurring in 2016 that demonstrated this tendency include the January shooting and bombing in Jakarta (Indonesia), the March airport and subway terrorist attacks in Brussels (Belgium), the June shooting terrorist attack at a night club in Orlando (the U.S.), the June terrorist attack on the international airport in Istanbul (Turkey), the July rampage with a large truck at a fireworks festival in Nice (France), and the December assault with a large truck on a Christmas market in Berlin (Germany). There is concern that terrorist incidents will continue to occur at places where large numbers of the general public congregate.

As other crimes, murder incidents involving Japanese nationals occurred in several countries such as the Philippines, the U.S., Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, and Colombia. The incident involving Japanese students overseas include the murder of a Japanese woman in Canada (September) and the robbery murder of a male student in Colombia (November).

Incidents involving Japanese nationals include a mountain-climbing death on Mt. McKinley in June, the tourist bus rollover accident in Taiwan in September, train

collision in the Hoboken Terminal in New Jersey in the U.S. in September, a falling accident while mountain climbing in the Himalayan Mountains in Nepal in October, the capsizing of a glass-bottom boat at Sulangan Island in Indonesia in November, and the helicopter crash in Hawaii in the U.S. in November.

Cases of Japanese nationals overseas affected by a serious deterioration of security caused by political instability include two cases in July, one in South Sudan where government and opposition forces repeatedly clashed in the city of Juba, leading to evacuation of Japanese nationals out of South Sudan and the other in Turkey where part of the military conducted an uprising and left Japanese travelers temporarily stranded in the airport.

There have been continued reports of deaths and illness of middle-ages and seniors in the high altitude mountains, the sea, and at hotels. In some of such cases, family members of the victims faced difficulties dealing with expensive medical fees or transportation costs compared to those in Japan, or insufficient medical services.

As for infectious diseases, the Zika virus disease broke out in Brazil and elsewhere in Middle and South America and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)”. This drew worldwide attention. WHO announced the end of the PHEIC in November, but the infection has spread to parts of the U.S. as well as to Southeast Asia and Oceania among others. Thus, it is still necessary to be careful when traveling to or staying in the infected areas.

Moreover, cases of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever in Spain were reported,

and there continue to be reports of cases of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in the Middle East and human infection with avian influenza A (H7N9) in China and elsewhere. Dengue fever and malaria also continued to spread throughout the world.

MOFA issues “Overseas Travel Safety Information” on infectious disease and air pollution to provide Japanese nationals staying abroad with information on the current outbreak situation and prevention measures as well as with relevant warnings.

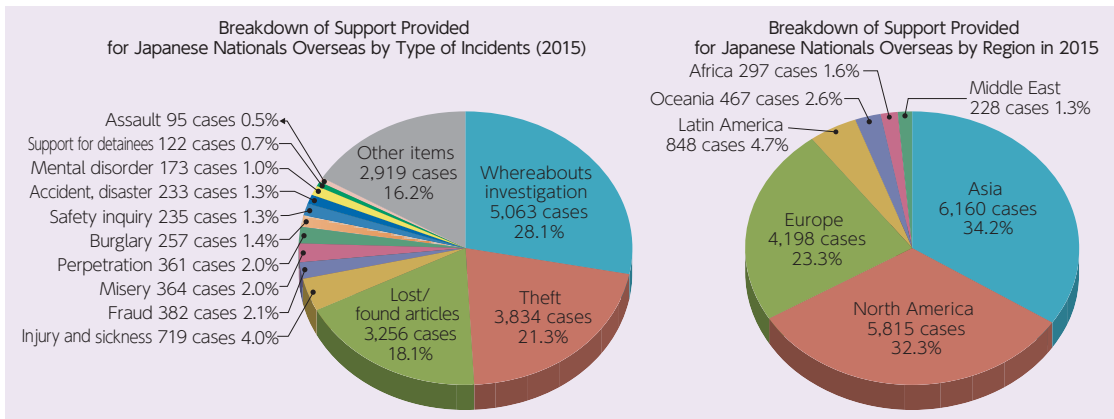
### **(Tips for Traveling and Living Abroad)**

As described above, threats to the safety of Japanese nationals have prevailed 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 beforehand 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. It is very important for each individual traveler to purchase travel insurance with sufficient coverage as, without travel insurance, expensive medical fees incurred abroad may make it difficult to pay the medical cost or to receive proper medical care.

### **(2) Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Abroad**

While Japanese nationals play major roles in the international community, there

## Breakdown of Support Provided for Japanese Nationals Overseas by Type of Incidents and Region (2015)



are many cases where Japanese nationals are harmed overseas. The number of Japanese nationals who received support or protection from the diplomatic missions overseas and the Interchange Association has stayed on a high level. It was 20,387 people with 18,013 cases in 2015<sup>1</sup>.

In order to avoid overseas accidents and troubles, it is important to collect information beforehand. MOFA works to raise the safety awareness of the Japanese public and promote counter-measures by disseminating and sharing information on safety measures.

MOFA issues the latest safety information of each country and area on the Overseas Safety Website. Newly issued information is distributed to Japanese nationals staying overseas who have made Overseas Residential Registrations and short-term travelers who have registered to the “Overseas Travel Registration (‘Tabi-Regi’).” They also receive safety information issued by diplomatic missions overseas. “Tabi-Regi” is also available to those without travel plans, through

simplified registration, and the safety information distributed in this manner is widely utilized by Japanese businesses with overseas operations for their safety measures.

MOFA is also making efforts to enhance the knowledge and capability of the Japanese people concerning safety measures and crisis management through seminars and drills. MOFA hosted domestic safety measures seminars nationwide, and dispatched instructors from the Consular Affairs Bureau to give lectures on safety measures at seminars nationwide conducted by various organizations, associations, etc. MOFA also conducted the “Public-Private Joint Practical Training for Counter-Terrorism and Anti-Kidnapping Measures” with the participation of members of the business community. These efforts not only serve to prevent harm from terrorism, etc., but also contribute to enhance response capabilities in the unfortunate event that someone is caught in an incident.

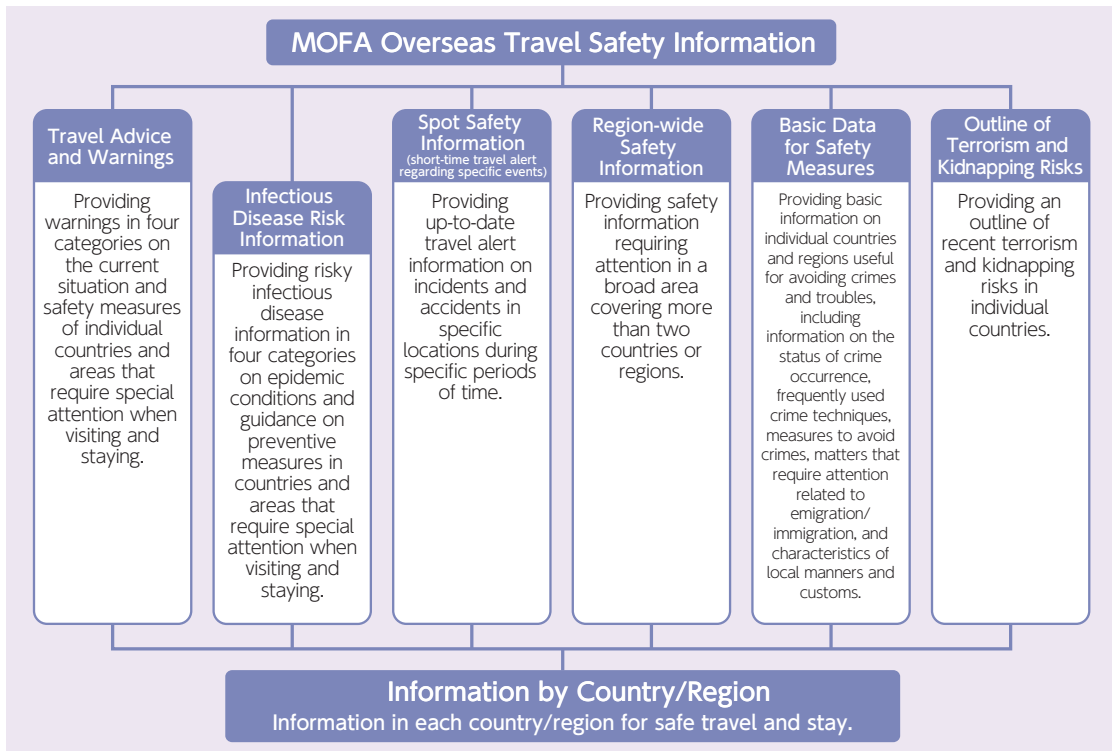
The public and private sectors are also cooperating overseas to take safety

<sup>1</sup> The Statistics on Assistance for Japanese Involved in Accidents and Other Incidents, first published in 1986, is an annual report on the number of cases/people where the diplomatic missions overseas and the Interchange Association provided assistance to Japanese nationals involved in any kind of troubles overseas, such as incidents/accidents, acts of committing crimes and falling victim to crime or disaster.

### Top 20 Diplomatic Missions Overseas in Terms of the Number of Cases of Assistance Provided for Japanese Nationals Overseas (2015)

Ranking	Diplomatic missions overseas	Cases	Ranking	Diplomatic missions overseas	Cases
1	Embassy of Japan in Thailand	1,028	11	Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Korea	326
2	Embassy of Japan in the Philippines	974	12	Embassy of Japan in the People's Republic of China	324
3	Consulate-General of Japan in Shanghai, China	927	13	Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong, China	311
4	Consulate-General of Japan in Los Angeles, U.S.	752	14	Consulate-General of Japan in Vancouver, Canada	292
5	Consulate-General of Japan in New York, U.S.	669	15	Embassy of Japan in Italy	291
6	Embassy of Japan in the United Kingdom	591	16	Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco, U.S.	273
7	Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu, U.S.	525	17	Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle, U.S.	268
8	Embassy of Japan in France	502	18	Consulate-General of Japan in Hagatna, U.S.	241
9	Consulate-General of Japan in Barcelona, Spain	416	19	Consulate-General of Japan in Boston, U.S.	233
10	Consulate-General of Japan in Düsseldorf, Germany	371	20	Consulate-General of Japan in Houston, U.S.	232

### System and Outline of “Overseas Travel Safety Information”



measures. The diplomatic missions overseas host regular meetings of “Security Consultation and Liaison Committees” with Japanese nationals residing abroad to share information, exchange views and bolster collaboration in preparation for emergencies.

After the July terrorist attack in Dhaka,

MOFA has placed particular focus on international cooperation personnel, small and medium enterprises, students studying abroad, short-term travelers and others who have limited access to information on safety. MOFA has worked to enhance their awareness of safety measures and their response capabilities.

## Column Calling on Golgo 13 ~Overseas Safety Measures for Japanese Businesses~

[quote from *gekiga* graphic novel]

"Mr. Togo, could you give us your help..."

Looking at the man straight in his eyes, the Foreign Minister began to speak as if he'd made up his mind and invited him to sit down with a gesture. The man that he had called Togo remained standing and wordlessly stared back at the Minister.

"...tell me why you need my help."

Tension filled the Minister's room. Otherwise known as Golgo 13, Duke Togo's date of birth, age, and nationality are all unknown. All that is known is that he is a professional who never fails to complete the most difficult missions.

The Minister said with a measure of conviction.

"Mr. Togo, if I had to say, it could be because you are timid. That is the kind of person that we need for this job..."

Duke Togo continued to fix his gaze on the Minister as he resumed his silence. Was he trying to intimidate him, or was this his way of showing gratitude for the "compliment" that had been sent his way? Nobody knew. Then Togo murmured.

"Alright, I'll do it."

Terrorism is no longer limited to the Middle East and Africa as it spreads to Europe and the United States, as well as Asia, where many Japanese are staying. Japanese are now not only being drawn into terrorist attacks but are actually being targeted.

In order to support Japanese businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises that comprise their bulk, on safety measures, the MOFA posts "Golgo13's Security guidelines for Japanese SMEs Abroad" on its website, in which Duke Togo, the main character in the *gekiga* graphic novel series "Golgo 13", describes safety measures. Duke Togo, who has survived for half a century on the frontlines of a turbulent world, is also aware that he is as timid as a rabbit. The safety measures related by such a man is expected to be received by people involved in Japanese businesses with overwhelming impact and credibility.





MOFA hopes that Golgo 13's Guidelines will be useful in enhancing the awareness and capability for "being responsible for your own safety" so that Japanese will not be harmed by any acts of terror. MOFA will continue to contribute to bolstering the safety measures of Japanese businesses people overseas through the effective distribution of information.  
(note: Duke Togo is a fictional character in the *gekiga* graphic novel series "Golgo 13").



Overseas Safety Website (<http://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/>) (in Japanese)



MOFA "Overseas Travel Registration ("Tabi-Regi")" (<https://www.ezairyu.mofa.go.jp/tabireg/>) (in Japanese)

In order to support Japanese businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises that comprise their bulk, on safety measures, MOFA launched the Overseas Safety Taskforce together with the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) in August and the Small and Medium Enterprise Overseas Safety Measures Network, in which organizations related to the overseas activities of Japanese businesses participate, in September. The aim is to share knowhow and information on safety measures with a wide range of people in the business community and to swiftly grasp and resolve concerns and

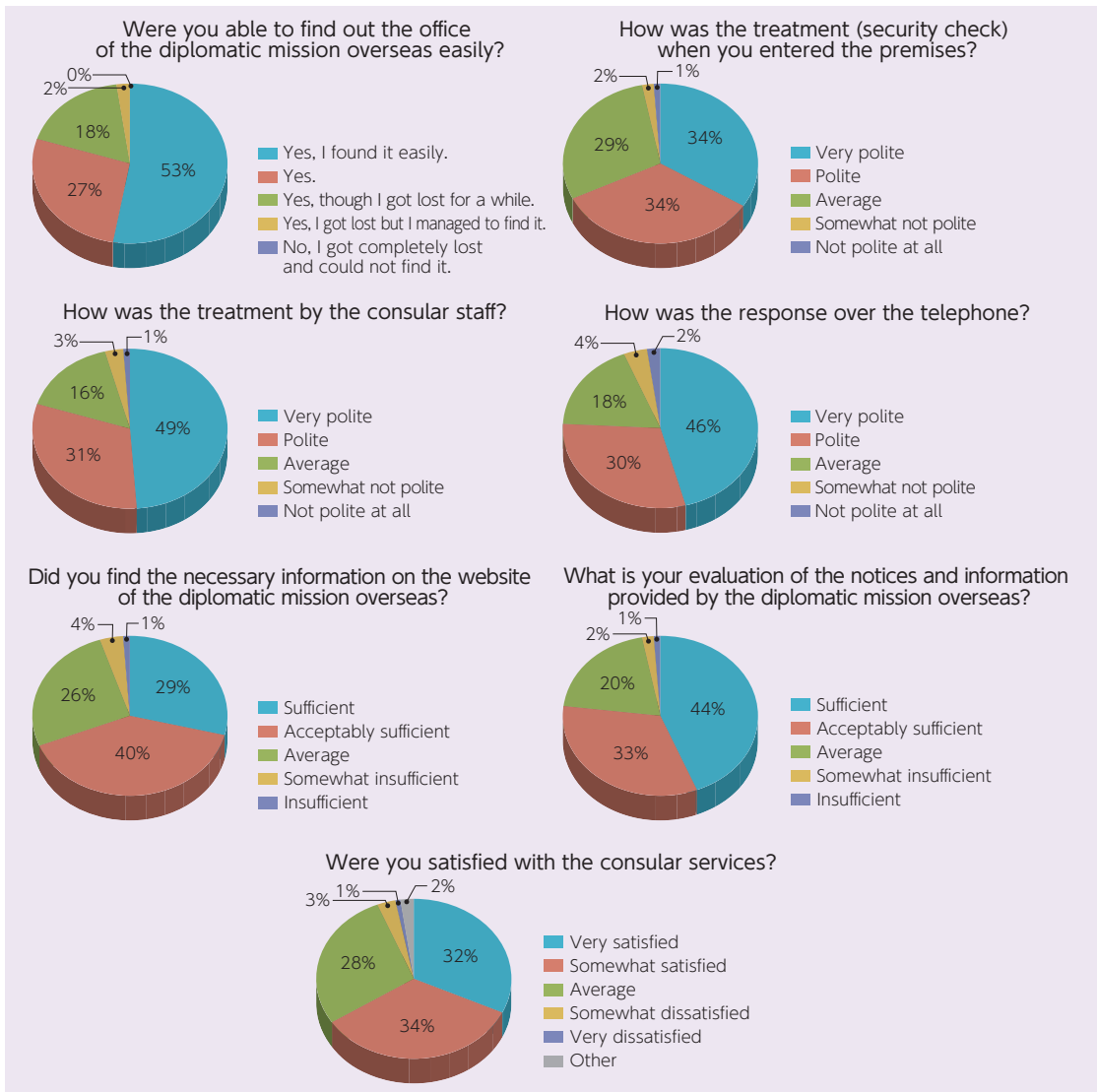


Download is available from MOFA Safety Application in Overseas Safety website "Kaigai Anzen Apuri no Haishin ni Tsuite (Overseas Safety Application Distribution)" ([http://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/c\\_info/oshirase\\_kaian\\_app.html](http://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/c_info/oshirase_kaian_app.html)) (in Japanese)

problems they have on security issues. In addition, MOFA has produced "Golgo 13's Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs abroad", and published them as they are completed (See column "Calling on Golgo 13 -Overseas Safety Measures for Small, Medium and Mid-Sized Enterprises-").

MOFA is working to enhance the awareness of safety measures for Japanese students studying overseas. MOFA sends lecturers to universities and other educational institutions, many of which have insufficient knowhow on safety measures and emergency responses, upon their requests. MOFA is going forward with

## Results of Survey on the Consular Service (2016)



efforts to connect government agencies with educational institutions, overseas study agencies and students by such means as beginning automatic registration to “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”)” with some overseas study institutions.

As for safety measures for short-term travelers, MOFA is engaged in PR activities to encourage registration under “Overseas Travel Registration (“Tabi-Regi”).” MOFA is aiming at increasing the number of

cumulative registrants to 2.4 million by the summer of 2018. The number of registrants increased from about 61,000 in January 2016 to about 1.49 million by December of the same year.

## 2 Consular Service and Assistance for Japanese 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 2016, the surveys were conducted by 148 diplomatic missions overseas and received about 19,000 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, though 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 3.74 million passports were issued in Japan in 2016. As of the end of December 2016, approximately 30.1 million passports are valid, and all of them are ePassports<sup>2</sup>.

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 impersonation<sup>3</sup>. 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 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.

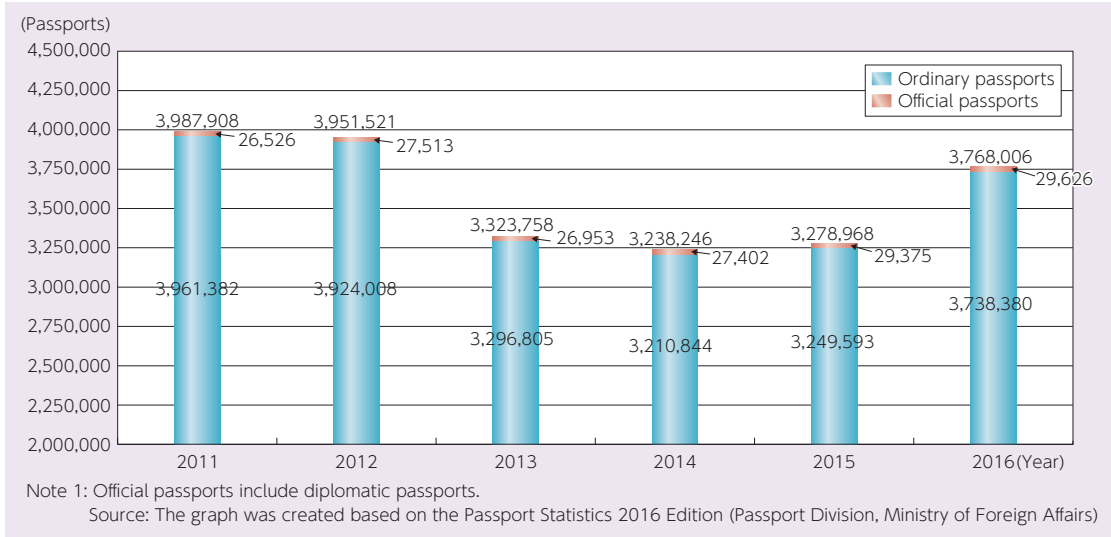
Moreover, while the integrated circuit (IC) chips in Japanese passports contain facial images and other information identifying the passport holders, ePassports with improved security against counterfeiting using biometric information such as fingerprints have become widespread in other countries, and possibilities for more effective use of IC chips are under consideration at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Consignment of passport-related work from the prefectural governments to city/town offices has been permitted since 2006, such as application and delivery. 818

<sup>2</sup> An electronically enabled machine readable Passport (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 its illicit use by a third party. It was first issued in 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The number of illegal acquisitions of passports through identity theft discovered: 54 in 2012, 52 in 2013, 41 in 2014, 31 in 2015, and 22 in 2016.

## Changes in the Number of Issued Passports in Japan



cities/towns had started passport service by the end of 2016, which make up almost 50% 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 from 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 order to vote from overseas, it is necessary to be registered in advance on the overseas voter directory managed by the election board of the city/town government and to obtain overseas voter identification<sup>4</sup>. Voters with valid overseas voter identification can vote by choosing one of the three methods of

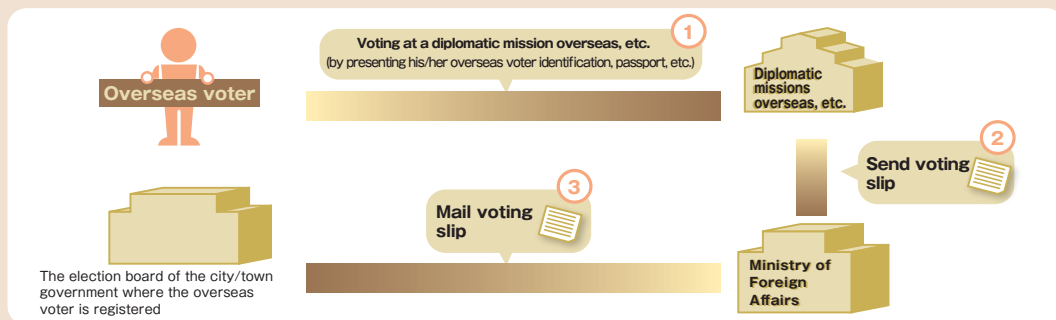
voting, a) Voting at diplomatic missions overseas, b) Voting by mail, or c) voting in Japan.

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 living in remote areas. At the 24th regular election of members of the House of Councillors held in July 2016, the first election after the voting age was lowered to 18, personnel from diplomatic missions overseas visited overseas educational institutions that had high school departments to encourage the newly eligibles to register on overseas voter directory and vote.

<sup>4</sup> In December 2016, the Public Offices Election Act was revised to simplify registration application procedures for the overseas voter directory. When the revision comes into effect, it will be possible to apply at the municipal office when transferring overseas in addition to the existing method of applying through a diplomatic mission overseas after transferring overseas.

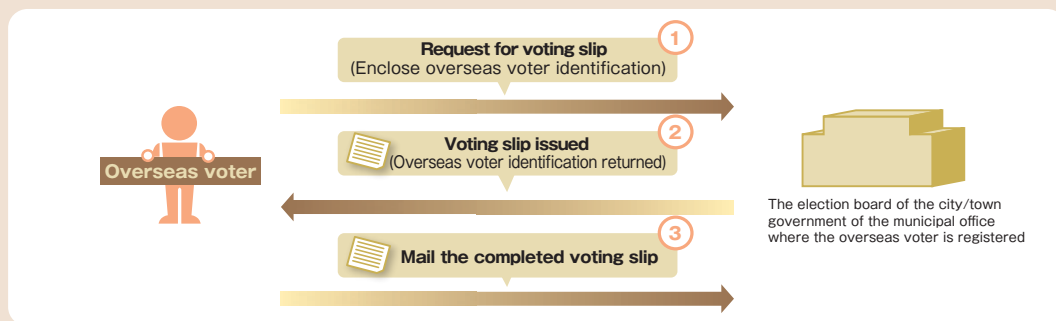
### a Voting at diplomatic missions overseas

Voters registered on an overseas voter directory can vote by presenting their overseas voter identification and ID such as a 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 his/her overseas voter identification and written request for a voting slip to the chair of the election board of the city/town government 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 directory after their permanent return in Japan, the voter may vote in the same way as other domestic voters with their overseas voter identification for overseas voting (early voting, absentee voting, and voting on the election day).

## (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 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

## Column 150th Anniversary of the Passport ~Passports Past, Present and Future~

150 years ago, on April 7, 1866, the Edo Shogunate lifted the ban on overseas travel by Japanese citizens, issuing an order permitting overseas travel for the purpose of studying and trading regardless of social class. This was 13 years after the Black Ships\* had arrived.

\*The Black Ships, the fleet of the United States Navy Ships, led by Matthew PERRY, that arrived at Japan in 1853 and they demanded the opening of Japan to commerce.

However, issuing passports was an unprecedented task for the Shogunate, which had kept the nation closed for such a long time. The first passport was created with advice from the European and U.S. diplomatic missions that were stationed in Japan at the time, and was issued on October 17 of the same year to Sumidagawa Namigoro, who would lead the "Imperial Japanese Troupe" to perform at the International Exposition in Paris.

The first passports were made of thick A4-sized Japanese paper. They carried descriptions of the passport holder such as height "on the tall side" and nose "on the small side" since photos were not in common use at the time. Namigoro and his troupe folded them in four, tucked them into their bosoms, and set forth for Europe with a Japonism boom.

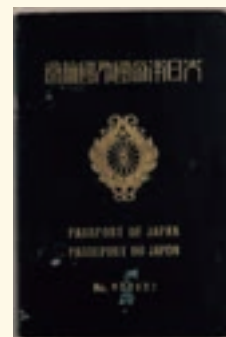
At the time, the "passport" was called in several terms such as "*gomen no insho*," etc. The term "*ryoken*," or the contemporary word for "passport," was officially used for the first time after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued Administrative Order No.1 "Overseas Passport Rules" in 1878.

A resolution was adopted in 1920 at an international conference in Paris to unify the information to be written, photo, effect, size and other items in passports. In 1926, Japan changed the passport from a paper form to a booklet, featuring the emblem of a chrysanthemum, and it became the prototype of the modern passport.

However, overseas travel was not yet common at the time. It was in 1964, in the year of the Tokyo Olympic Games, when restrictions on overseas tourism were lifted, that overseas travel gradually became a familiar part of social life. More than 100,000 passports were issued that year. Currently over 3.7 million passports are issued annually. With the number of effective passports reaching 30



Oldest existing Japanese "passport", issued by the Edo Shogunate in 1866 (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)



The first booklet type Japanese passport in 1926



Basic design of the upcoming Japanese passports (*South Wind, Clear Sky from Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*)

million, one in four Japanese holds a passports.

The passport is an international identification certificate, and its history is a history of fighting counterfeits. The passport has evolved over the years as various anti-forgery and anti-counterfeit measures were introduced, including machine-readable passports in 1992 and electronically enabled machine readable passports (ePassports) in 2006.

The current Japanese passport incorporates approximately 20 high-tech features including black and white watermarks and holograms, making the chances of it being forged or counterfeited extremely small. However, most countries renew their passports every few years incorporating new technologies in light of the evolutionary arms race with forgery and counterfeiting technology.

In 2016, it was decided to adopt *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* by Katsushika Hokusai as the design for the visa pages in the upcoming Japanese passport, which is scheduled to be introduced in FY2019. *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, which features Mt Fuji, the World Heritage site, is a representative example of the *ukiyo-e* woodblock print. The new passport will have the same cover as the current one, but each spread will have a different picture. Having a different design for each page will make the passport that much more difficult to counterfeit.

After 150 years from the birth, the Japanese passports are about to take a new step forward in its history.

not located. In addition, MOFA is further strengthening and expanding assistance related to safety measures in light of the recent changes in the international terrorism situation.

### **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 FY2016). MOFA also dispatches medical specialists to regions where infectious diseases or air pollution become serious, and organizes health and safety lectures (8 countries, 11 cities in FY2016).

In addition, MOFA collects information on infectious diseases outbreak overseas and provides them publicly through the

Overseas Safety Website and the websites and emails of diplomatic missions overseas.

### **C** Other Needs

In order to eliminate the complexity of various procedures for Japanese nationals living overseas (such as converting Japanese driving licenses to country of residence, 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 countries and states, such as North and South America. MOFA is calling for those countries to simplify 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.

### 3 Cooperation with Emigrants and Japanese Descendants, Nikkei

The migration of Japanese nationals overseas has a history of 148 years as of 2016. There are estimated 3.6 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.

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 57th Convention of the Nikkei and Japanese Abroad was successfully held by the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad in Tokyo in October, in which around 210 emigrants and their descendants from 20 countries participated. 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.

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

The Hague Convention is designed to ensure prompt 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, in circumstances such as where the parents' international marriage has failed, should be decided in the state in which the child habitually resided. Furthermore, in order to ensure the opportunity for trans-boundary parent-child access, the Hague Convention stipulates that Contracting States should cooperate for realization of parent-child access.

This convention came into force in Japan



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 2016)

	Application for assistance in child's return	Application for assistance in visitation or contact with child
Application concerning a child (children) in Japan	67	86
Application concerning a child (children) outside Japan	51	25

on April 1, 2014. On the same date, the Act for Implementation of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction was enacted. As of December 2016, 95 countries including Japan are party to the convention.

The Hague Convention is implemented through mutual cooperation among the governmental agencies designated as the Central Authority in Contracting States to the Convention. In Japan, MOFA assumes the role of the Central Authority. As the Japanese Central Authority, MOFA avails itself of the expertise of experts in various fields to implement the Convention appropriately, and communicates/cooperates with foreign Central Authorities, and provides assistance to the parties such as locating whereabouts of the child and arranging mediation services aimed at amicable resolutions.

In the two years and nine months between the entry into force of the Convention and the end-December 2016, MOFA received a total number of 229 applications: 118 applications seeking the return of the child and 111 applications seeking access to the child. Of these, 14 children returned from another country to Japan. Another 19 returned from Japan to another country. Also, there were many cases where access was secured. Japan is steadily implementing the Convention.

In February 2016, MOFA invited a former German judge, who had worked

to improve the implementation of the Hague Convention in Germany, to Japan to share his expertise with the people who are involved in the Hague cases in Japan. In June, MOFA co-hosted the Asia Pacific Symposium on the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention with the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) and Waseda University to provide an opportunity to deepen the expertise of the people involved in the implementation of the Hague Convention and bolster the implementation structure. In the Symposium, 64 people from 21 countries and areas, mainly from the Asia-Pacific region, participated in lively discussions (See column "Taking part in the Asia Pacific Symposium on the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention").

MOFA is also putting effort into public communication activities such as conducting seminars at diplomatic missions overseas or at domestic local governments, related organizations, etc. and distributing leaflets in multiple languages.

**Column Participating in the Asia Pacific Symposium on the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention****Fumiaki Isogae, Attorney-at-law**

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On June 29 and 30, 2016, MOFA, Waseda University, and the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) co-hosted the two-day Asia Pacific Symposium on the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention. I co-chaired a closed session to which representatives from Asian countries were invited to discuss various issues concerning the Hague Convention.

In the closed session, the participants were divided into four groups, and each group discussed four subjects, (1) State of habitual residence and rights of custody, (2) "Grave Risk" set forth in the Article 13(l)(b), (3) the Enforcement of Return Order, and (4) Time Frame, in 90 minutes for each subject. Each group remained in their respective rooms, while the moderators responsible for the respective subjects circulated between the groups. I moderated subject (1) with Justice Victoria Bennett of the Family Court of Australia.

I was a "co-moderator", but Justice Bennett actually ran the sessions, giving easy-to-understand explanations based on her long experience, while I learned a lot next to her. Although the session used hypothetical cases prepared by the organizer, it was highly appropriate and ignited an active exchange of views in each group. Many of the representatives from non-Contracting States were not very familiar with the Convention, but I felt that they obtained a good grasp of the main issues under the Convention in an efficient manner through the sessions.

The session continued into the morning of the second day. The afternoon was devoted to a mock Hague mediation by Japanese lawyers and mediators. When I asked later, they told me that they had used a script created painstakingly by themselves from their experiences. After the mediation drew to a close, the "actors" took questions from the audience. Some overseas participants expressed a little surprise at the fact that judges engage directly in the in-court mediation in Japan. Pros and cons aside, I believe that we were able to show the world the distinctive features of Japanese in-court mediation.

Japan has been accumulating practical experience bit by bit since the entry into force of the Convention in April 2014. It certainly cannot be said that everything is going smoothly, and I sometimes become aware of challenges as I work on actual cases. Still, I feel that it is very important to present and share this experience worldwide, particularly in Asia, where many countries are still not parties to the Convention, in order to increase the number of Contracting States.

I hope that the representatives who participated in the symposium will return home and become the cornerstones for increasing the membership of the Convention.

