

**AHEAD50 (ASEAN Human Educational Development Scholarship Partners)
for CID Officials of the ASEAN Secretariat
(Short-term Invitation Program to Japan-Mission #7) Report**

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

From 26 July to 1 August, four officials from the Culture and Information Division (CID) of the ASEAN Secretariat visited Japan.

The visit was conducted with the aim of strengthening ASEAN's capacity for policy development and program implementation in the fields of culture and the arts.

With a focus on culture and the arts, the program sought to deepen participants' knowledge of cultural and artistic development, the promotion of cultural and creative industries, and the protection, preservation, and utilization of tangible and intangible cultural heritage through exchanges with Japanese policymakers, practitioners, and researchers, as well as visits to specialized institutions engaged in cultural and artistic cooperation.

Participants explored practical approaches and enhanced their understanding of cultural policy development, cultural institution management, the preservation, restoration, and digital archiving of cultural properties, the development of young artists, and the promotion of international cultural exchange. Strategic themes such as the promotion of cultural and creative industries, the revitalization of local traditional arts and culture, community-building through culture, and institutional frameworks for international cooperation, including anti-piracy initiatives, were also discussed.

The knowledge and insights gained through the program, spanning areas from cultural policymaking to artistic and creative practice, are expected to provide valuable perspectives for advancing comprehensive initiatives in the field of culture and the arts across the ASEAN region through the sharing of these experiences and lessons learned.

【Overview of AHEAD50】

AHEAD50 (ASEAN Human Educational Development Scholarship Partners) is an invitation program launched on the occasion of the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in 2023. The purpose of this program is to provide promising staff of the ASEAN Secretariat and other related organizations with an opportunity to learn about Japan's policies, systems, and positions, thereby strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat through human resource development and enhancing smooth cooperation with Japan.

【Participants】 Total: 4 staff members (1 Director-Level Officer, 1 Senior Officer, 2 Officers) from the CID of the ASEAN Secretariat

【Locations】 Tokyo, Ishikawa

【Schedule】

■ Invitation Program:

July 26 (Sun) – August 1 (Sat), 2026 (6 nights, 7 days)

July 26 (Sun) Arrival at Narita International Airport

【Briefing】

July 27 (Mon) 【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Agency for Cultural Affairs

“Japan’s Cultural Policy and Administration: ASEAN Cooperation and Next-Generation Strategies”

Lecturer: Mr. SHIMA Ryuichiro, Director for Cultural Affairs

【Observation, Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Kabuki and Popular Performing Arts Training Division, National Theatre Traditional Performing Arts Training Institute (Japan Arts Council)

“Daikagura Training Program at the National Theatre”

“Traditional Performing Arts Training Program at the National Theatre: Preservation and Human Resource Development”

Lecturer: Mr. SHISHIDO Yoshiharu, Director General

【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Japan Arts Council

“The Japan Arts Council’s Grant System and a Sustainable Cultural Ecosystem”

Lecturer: Mr. MITSUISHI Yasunori, Deputy Director General for Grants

Secretariat / Deputy Director General for Japan Cultural Expo Secretariat

July 28 (Tue)

【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Independent Administrative Institution National Institutes for Cultural Heritage Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (Japan Center for International Cooperation in Conservation and Department of Art Research, Archives and Information Systems)

“Digitalization of Cultural Heritage Protection and Prospects for ASEAN Cooperation”

Lecturers:

Mr. TOMODA Masahiko, Deputy Director General / Director of Japan Center for International Cooperation in Conservation

Ms. ASADA Natsumi, Researcher Architect, Japan Center for International Cooperation in Conservation

“International Cooperation and Ethics of Public Access in Digital Cultural Heritage Archives”

Lecturers:

Mr. OYAMADA Tomohiro, Head of Cultural Properties Information Section

Mr. KIKKAWA Hideki, Head of Archives Section, Department of Art Research, Archives and Information Systems

	【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA) “Japan–ASEAN Cooperation on Anti-Piracy Initiatives and Intellectual Property Protection Strategies” Lecturer: Mr. GOTO Takero, Representative Director Travel from Tokyo to Ishikawa
July 29 (Wed)	【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Kanazawa College of Art “Overview of Kanazawa College of Art (KANABI) and Its New Campus” Lecturer: Dr. INAGAKI Kenji, Professor “Heisei Hyakko Hisho: A Comparative Collection of One Hundred Crafts of the Heisei Era” Lecturer: Mr. YAMAZAKI Tsuyoshi, Professor 【Observation】 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa 【Cultural Experience】 Gold leaf decorating workshop
July 30 (Thu)	【Observation】 Kenrokuen 【Cultural Experience】 Tea Ceremony Experience Travel from Ishikawa to Tokyo 【Observation】 teamLab Borderless: Mori Building Digital Art Museum
July 31 (Fri)	【Workshop】 Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, confirming social media posts, preparation of action plans) 【Reporting Session】 Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans
Aug. 1 (Sat)	Departure from Narita International Airport

2. Program Photos

Invitation Program

	
July 27 【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Agency for Cultural Affairs	July 27 【Observation, Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Kabuki and Popular Performing Arts Training Division, National Theatre Traditional Performing Arts Training Institute



July 27 【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】
Japan Arts Council



July 28 【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Tokyo
National Research Institute for Cultural Properties



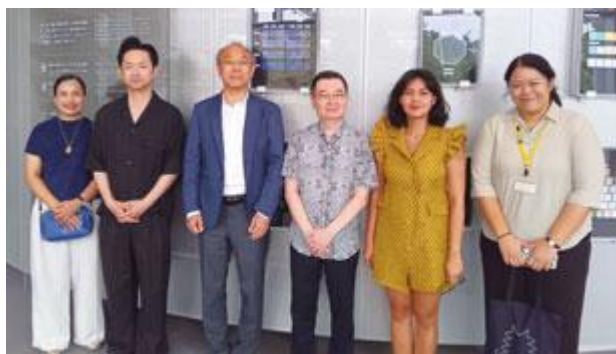
July 28 【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Tokyo
National Research Institute for Cultural Properties



July 28 【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】 Content
Overseas Distribution Association (CODA)



July 29 【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】
Kanazawa College of Art



July 29 【Lecture, Opinion Exchange】
Kanazawa College of Art



July 29 【Observation】 21st Century Museum of
Contemporary Art, Kanazawa



July 29 【Cultural Experience】
Gold leaf decorating workshop

	
July 30 【Observation】 Kenrokuen	July 30 【Cultural Experience】 Tea Ceremony Experience
	
July 30 【Observation】 teamLab Borderless: Mori Building Digital Art Museum	July 31 【Reporting Session】 Commemorative photo

3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

● Agency for Cultural Affairs

The concept of creating a “virtuous cycle between culture and the economy” was particularly insightful. We learned how Japan seeks to balance the protection and utilization of cultural heritage despite limited financial resources by using cultural assets to promote tourism and international engagement, while reinvesting the benefits into heritage preservation and human resource development. This approach provided valuable insights into how cultural policies can be implemented in a sustainable manner.

We also gained a deeper understanding of Japan’s growth strategies for the content industry, the application of digital technologies and AI to cultural heritage preservation, and cultural cooperation with ASEAN. It was particularly impressive to see how Japan’s cultural administration not only protects cultural assets, but also works to pass them on to future generations while contributing to social and economic development.

● National Theatre Traditional Performing Arts Training Institute

The detailed explanation of the training program, curriculum, support systems, and career pathways provided valuable insights into Japan’s efforts to preserve and pass on traditional performing arts.

We were particularly impressed by the dedication of the Daikagura trainees, who devote themselves to daily practice in pursuit of professional careers. Observing their commitment deepened our respect for the mission of the training institute, which plays a vital role in the promotion and preservation of traditional intangible cultural heritage.

- **Japan Arts Council**

The session provided valuable insights into the Japan Arts Council's grant programs, including an introduction of Arts Council functions, the structure of the grant system, and initiatives to support arts and culture and foster next generation. We were particularly interested in the professional support framework provided by Program Directors (PDs) and Program Officers (POs), as well as the emphasis placed on fairness and transparency throughout the review and evaluation process.

We were also impressed by the broad range of support provided both within Japan and internationally, as well as by the efforts to promote the self-reliance of cultural organizations and foster a sustainable cultural ecosystem. The information shared during the visit was comprehensive and highly informative. It was particularly valuable to gain a holistic understanding of Japan's cultural and arts policies from the perspectives of both the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and public support programs for arts and culture.

- **Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties**

- **“Digitalization of Cultural Heritage Protection and Prospects for ASEAN Cooperation”**

We found the initiatives on the digitalization and archiving of cultural heritage particularly relevant to the ASEAN Secretariat's efforts to support the development of regional archives across the 11 ASEAN Member States. Through the lecture and exchange of views, we gained a deeper understanding of how digital technologies and archival practices can be applied to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage. We also enhanced our understanding of the importance of ensuring the long-term sustainability and consistency of archival systems and information management.

- **“International Cooperation and Ethics of Public Access in Digital Cultural Heritage Archives”**

The session offered valuable insights into research, conservation, documentation, and capacity-building practices for the preservation of cultural heritage across diverse regions and countries.

The Institute's scientific and interdisciplinary approach was particularly impressive and greatly appreciated. The session underscored the importance of generating and accumulating scientific evidence, as well as the application of emerging technologies, including 3D technologies, to cultural heritage conservation. It also highlighted the vital role of international cooperation in these efforts. These insights provided valuable perspectives for the future work of the Culture and Information Division of the ASEAN Secretariat.

- **Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA)**

The session with the Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA) was highly valuable in the context of future discussions between the ASEAN Secretariat and the Government of Japan (Mission of Japan to ASEAN) on intellectual property protection. Japan has long shown a keen interest in advancing regional cooperation on copyright and intellectual property protection with ASEAN. The opportunity to engage directly with CODA enhanced our understanding of the issues involved and provided useful insights that may contribute to the formulation of future regional initiatives in this area.

- **Kanazawa College of Art**

- **“Overview of Kanazawa College of Art (KANABI) and Its New Campus”**

The session provided a valuable opportunity to establish contacts that may be shared with ASEAN Member States interested in exploring future collaboration with KANABI.

The session at Kanazawa College of Art was engaging and highly informative. The institutional model presented by the university offered a compelling example of how cultural heritage preservation can be effectively integrated with contemporary international practices. The comprehensive tour of the facilities, including studios, library spaces, and gallery facilities, provided practical insights into the institutional infrastructure that supports the development of artists, designers, researchers, and educators who are well equipped to excel on the global stage.

- **“Heisei Hyakko Hisho: A Comparative Collection of One Hundred Crafts of the Heisei Era”**

Situated within Kanazawa’s distinctive cultural ecosystem, where historical heritage and contemporary innovation coexist, the university demonstrated how cultural institutions can play a leading role in both preserving tradition and promoting contemporary creative excellence. This was a particularly inspiring example and may serve as a useful model for the development of educational and cultural initiatives across ASEAN Member States.

4. Articles, etc.

	July 30, 2026 (Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA)’s website) “ASEAN Secretariat Officials Visit CODA” Lecture and Exchange of Views on Anti-Piracy Measures
---	---

5. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session (excerpt)



【Results of the Program】

◆ Key Highlights and Major Takeaways

- The Agency for Cultural Affairs' model for developing international cultural exchange professionals is applicable to the ASEAN context. We hope to have better interactions in the future.
- At the Japan Arts Council, while interacting with a Daikagura trainee, he mentioned that social media was his first contact with this performing art. There are issues surrounding social media, but we see that it is an important component in the dissemination of art. We also learned the details and results of the comprehensive grant-programs.
- At the Japan Center for International Cooperation in Conservation, we learned about the possibility of technical transfer, local partnerships, and bilateral capacity-building. We also deepened our knowledge on digital archives and integrated image databases with bibliographic and research information.
- CODA coordinates anti-piracy initiatives. The Japanese content industry is very popular and learning about their IP protection initiatives was particularly valuable. We hope that this exchange will lead to further interaction with CODA in the future.
- Kanazawa College of Art is a potential partner for our future projects, particularly with the ongoing project with Cambodia to which we are proposing collaboration with Japan.
- The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa gave us an idea of another form of expressing art.
- Digital Art Museum teamLab Borderless provided us with an immersive experience of digital technology applications in arts.
- As for cultural experience, we joined a gold leaf decorating workshop and experienced a traditional tea ceremony.

【Action Plan】

We will generate an information paper on enhancing ASEAN-Japan cooperation in culture. The Agency for Cultural Affairs is our direct counterpart, but it was our first time having direct contact with the other organizations we visited.

Japan is an aging society with a declining birthrate, and the Agency formulates policies with these issues in mind. To be specific, how to use culture to promote welfare of the elderly, as well as how to educate younger generations so that they will be inheritors of culture. We can get ideas from their approach and adapt them to our policies.

Culture and arts are often given relatively low priority. We intend to share the insights gained through this session with relevant divisions across the ASEAN Secretariat and promote a better understanding of the importance of the cultural and creative sectors.

TOBUNKEN's knowledge would be beneficial to the relevant divisions that were unable to participate in this mission. Particularly in the age of AI, archiving is becoming increasingly important, and there is a growing need to assign persistent URLs to reference data.

We have maintained close dialogue with the Mission of Japan to ASEAN, and discussions have been held regarding a possible initiative on copyright and IP protection. However, the initiative has not been advanced as anticipated. Through the meeting with CODA, we have gained a clearer understanding of the background and current context of this area and would like to propose renewed follow-up on this initiative. As CODA is also engaged in the content industry sector, we see potential opportunities for collaboration in advancing the creative economy.

In Lao PDR, there is a "Recycle Arts Project" funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). We see Kanazawa College of Art as the potential counterpart for their project.

【Feedback on the program】

The program was well curated and thoughtfully tailored to the requests of ASEC, and overall arrangements were excellent. The knowledge and experiences shared by the Japanese counterparts were highly insightful and informative. It was particularly inspiring to observe how traditional heritage preservation has been effectively integrated with digital innovation.

The exchanges with the organizations visited offered practical lessons for regional policy and program development, and we see significant potential for future collaboration with them.

Implementing Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)