

Exchange with Southeast Asian Muslim Youth
Talk to a Muslim (TAMU) 2017
Programme Outline

The Japan Foundation Asia Center

The Japan Foundation Asia Center announces the opening of the application process for the 2017 edition of the Talk to a Muslim series (TAMU). Now in its second year, the annual programme is held with the aim of developing better understanding in Japan of Southeast Asia culture and society, in which moderate Islam is deeply embedded, by engaging the region's Muslims in various activities of exchange with Japanese youth.

- Duration : 5–14 November, 2017 (10 days)
Locations : Tokyo and Oita (tentative)
Participants : Eight young Muslims representing Indonesia (3), Malaysia (2), Philippines (1), Thailand (1), and Singapore (1) who actively engage in social activities and/or services based on Islamic values

Rationale:

Due to the recent increase in the number of travelers from ASEAN countries, more occasions arise for Japanese to come across with Muslims on a daily basis. We now see Muslim travelers enjoying sightseeing and shopping at major tourist sites. This creates an opportunity for both sides to be in direct contact for more face-to-face relations.

On the other hand, many Japanese do not know much about Islam simply because they find little or no connection with the religion due to the fact that Japan has historically had limited contact with the Islamic world. Furthermore, as the Japanese understanding of Islam heavily relies on Western sources, people tend to see and understand Islam through the lens of Western media, which often leads them to believe without much thought that “Islam is violent” or “Islam is the cause of terrorism”.

In reality, a majority of Muslims in the world are in favor of peace and lead ordinary lives like ours. Many Muslims actively engage in humanitarian and social services to the needed because such social engagement is an inherent part of Islamic faith. This aspect of Islam however is not very much recognised and understood by the non-Muslim world including Japan.

The number of Muslims in the world is projected to increase rapidly in the decades ahead and developing basic literacy on Islam and its people is becoming more important. This suggests that the current situation presents a chance for the Japanese public, particularly for the young, to learn about the reality of Islam, especially its diversity. There seems to arise an opportunity for Muslim side too to communicate with an interested Japanese audience in order to counter the misperception of the religion.

With this as a background, the programme will carry out exchange activities with Muslim youth in Southeast Asia, where more than 60% of the world’s Muslims reside. The

programme aims to communicate the moderate nature of Islam and its diversity in Southeast Asia to the Japanese public, particularly targeting the young people.

Young Muslims are expected to exchange with Japanese youth at universities and other public venues in Japan on their life as Muslims and the social activities/services that they engage in. It is hoped that the programme will enable Japanese audiences to develop an interest in the Southeast Asian people, their culture and society, in which moderate Islam is deeply embedded. Conversely, Muslim youth from Southeast Asia are expected to deepen their interest in the Japanese people, culture and society thus hopefully developing lasting relationships with Japan.

Participant Requirements:

- The applicant must be a Muslim national of Malaysia.
- The applicant must be below 40 years of age as of 1 November, 2017.
- The applicant must be actively engaged in social activities and/or services based on Islamic values in such fields as education, welfare, cooperatives, microfinance, environmental conservation, disaster recovery and prevention, human rights and advocacy, conflict resolution, etc.
- The applicant must have a high degree of awareness regarding the various challenges surrounding Islam in the modern world.
- The applicant must possess excellent knowledge of the state of Islam in their own country as well as that of other Southeast Asian countries.
- The applicant must have the ability to comprehensively communicate the peaceful nature of Islam to a Japanese audience, especially youths who may not possess basic knowledge of the religion and its culture.
- The applicant must demonstrate a willingness to sincerely answer questions and converse with the audience.
- The applicant must be capable of substantial discussion in English.
- The applicant must have concrete means of disseminating their experiences in Japan to their respective country and community upon return from the programme.
- The applicant must have an interest in Japanese culture and society.
- The applicant must be able to attend all activities as provided by the organiser.

Application Procedure:

Please submit the following documents to info@jfkf.org.my by **3 July, 2017**:

- Curriculum vitae
- Recommendation form (download at www.jfkf.org.my)
- Essay (download guidelines at www.jfkf.org.my)

Participant Entitlements:

- Round-trip airfare between Tokyo and participant's city of residence
- Accommodation and daily allowance (in cash or in kind)
- Medical insurance

Important Notes:

- Participants are expected to arrive and leave Japan with flights as arranged by the Japan Foundation which will be decided upon the participants' confirmation. Participants are not allowed to extend their stay in Japan even at their own expense.
- Participants are expected to join all group activities as set by the programme.
- Participants may not be accompanied by any other person to Japan.
- Participants will be required to prepare one or more presentations on given topics in order to facilitate conversation with university students and other relevant counterparts in Japan.

Tentative Schedule:

5 November	Arrival in Tokyo Orientation and welcoming dinner
7 November	Introductory lectures
8–12 November	Various activities in Tokyo and Oita prefectures Dialogue with university students and other counterparts Site visits (NPOs/NGOs, cultural institutions, media, etc.)
13 November	Wrap-up session (semi open with invited audience)
13 November	Depart Japan

Organiser & Key Persons:

The Japan Foundation Asia Center is the Organiser of the programme in cooperation with Prof. Emeritus Mitsuo Nakamura of Chiba University as Advisor and Dr. Ken Miichi of Waseda University as Coordinator.

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