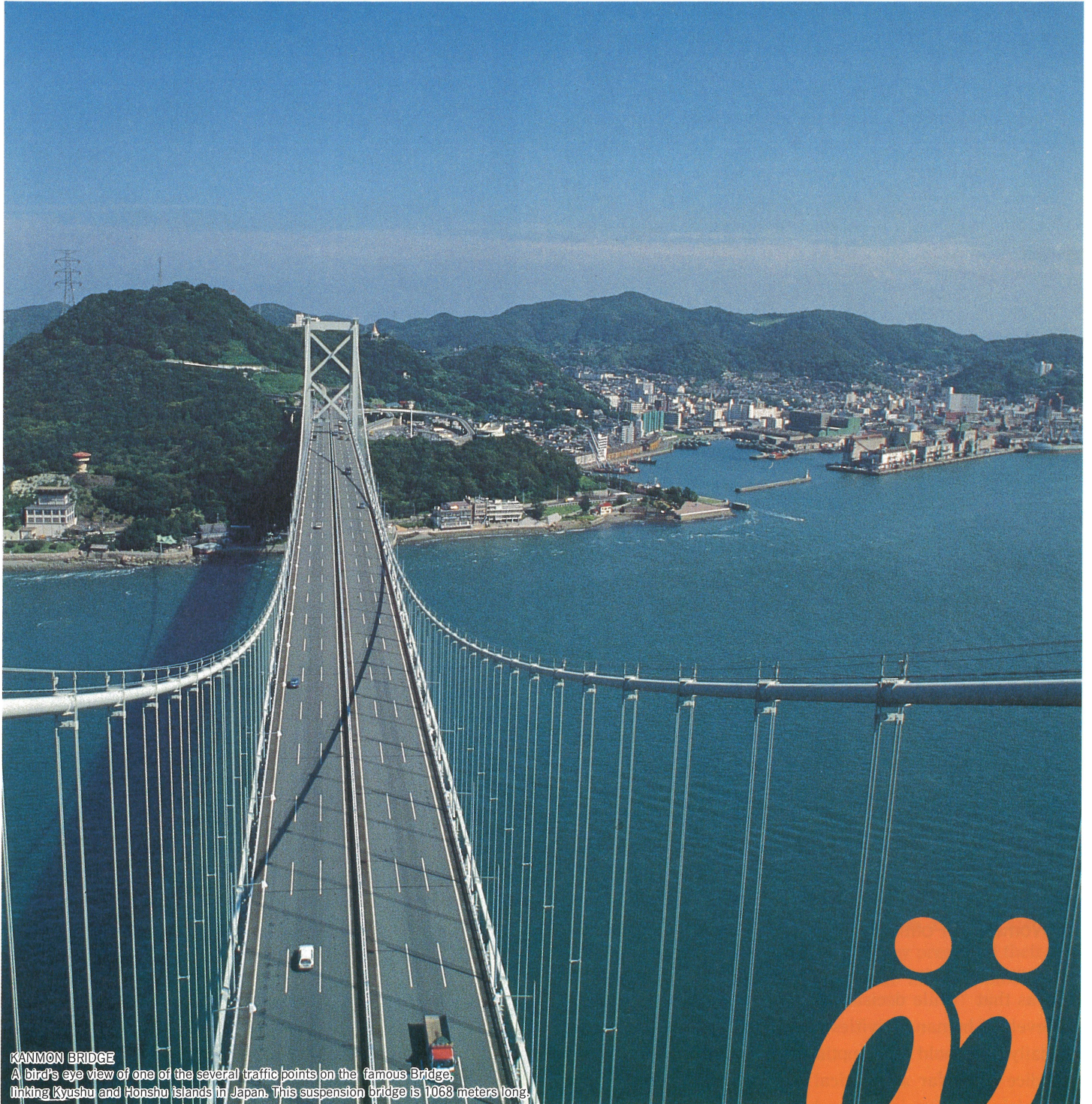


# Asian Breeze



**KANMON BRIDGE**

A bird's eye view of one of the several traffic points on the famous Bridge, linking Kyushu and Honshu islands in Japan. This suspension bridge is 1068 meters long.



**KFAW**

2nd KITAKYUSHU CONFERENCE ON ASIAN WOMEN  
WOMEN TODAY  
FOREIGN COLUMNISTS REPORTS  
THE FORUM WINDOW

MARCH 1992 No. **4**

## 2nd KITAKYUSHU CONFERENCE ON ASIAN WOMEN

The 2nd Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women was held by the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women on December 1 - 2, 1991 as one of its major programs aimed at linking its activities of "exchange" and "research."

The Conference included an international symposium entitled "Women in Decision-Making," the presentation of a Japan-Korea joint research project, a workshop, a bazaar and a citizens' exchange meeting all held during the first day and a panel dubbed "Research and Discussion" held on the second day.

### International Symposium

Theme: "Women in Decision-Making"

Panelists:

Ms. Leticia Ramos Shahani:	Senator of the Philippines
Ms. Supatra Masdit:	Former Minister of Thailand
Ms. Mayumi Moriyama:	Diet member, the House of Councilors in Japan
Ms. Manae Kubota:	Diet member, the House of Councilors in Japan
Mr. Koichi Sueyoshi:	Mayor, City of Kitakyushu
Coordinator:	
Ms. Tomoyo Nonaka:	Journalist

Ms. Nonaka, the coordinator, stated in her opening remarks that in order to promote social progress as the 21st century approaches, it is essential for both men and women, as partners, to participate jointly in social activities, and that the women's participation in decision-making in particular is the key to further development.

### Women in Politics

A unanimous concern expressed in the keynote addresses was that "while decision-making is required at various levels of human activities ranging from state policies to daily household consumption, the established social prejudice is, as far as political affairs are concerned, that decision-making is confined to the men's domain."

In order for women to enter politics more easily, Ms. Moriyama, the first speaker, stated that "it is important to reform the structure of politics and elections to lessen the burden on individuals. As for women, they should make a greater effort to strengthen their abilities." Ms. Kubota then proposed the introduction of a quota system in order to allocate a fix number of positions in national



▲International Symposium

assemblies, political parties, government councils, etc. to women; thus, encouraging more women to participate in the political world. Mr. Sueyoshi, the third speaker, pointed out that "the local government faces enormous problems in the daily life of citizens, including environmental issues, child education etc. In this context, the participation of women in decision and policy making is essential and significant." Another speaker, Ms. Masdit, admitted the actual lack of political experience among women, and called for the training of future female politicians. She also spoke about private women's organizations in Thailand that had launched training programs to make women learn about methods of election campaigning. Ms. Shahani then also contended that "in the pyramidal social structure created by men, it is important for women not only to strive for an increase in the number of women active in the political world but also to try through their viewpoints to influence policies made. Women, as mothers of the next generation, should also become actively involved in global peace activities."

### Prospects for the 21st Century

The final consensus affirmed that "the existing hurdle for women's participation in decision-making is probably deeply rooted in their own self-restraint as well as the apparent drawbacks attributed to established social conventions, political or educational systems." It was also agreed that there is a need for solidarity among women on a global basis. Finally there was a call for all women to realize that their daily life is nothing but politics, and to cooperate with one another in navigating this spacecraft "Earth" safely toward the 21st century.



▲Research and Discussion (Discussion with a specific theme)



▲Research and Discussion (Free presentation)



▲Bazaar



▲Citizens' Exchange Meeting

### Research and Discussion

The panel, "Research and Discussion," consisted of two parts: free presentation and a discussion with a specific theme. The free presentation included nine panel participants ranging from housewife to researcher, who presented their reports on general women's problems in Asia. At the discussion, with the specific theme of "Women in Development," experts working in various research fields delivered keynote addresses and discussed problems.

### Japan-Korea Joint Research

While studying the problem of "Women in Development" in Asian countries, the serious impact of economic development upon women and families as the basic unit of social structure has been of vital concern. Conversely, it is also necessary to look at the characteristics of familism in Asian countries and their contribution to economic development.

These concerns resulted in the first major research project of the Forum since its foundation: a joint comparative study on contemporary family consciousness in Japan and Korea — two economically successful countries in Asia with cultural roots in Confucianism. This study was conducted with the cooperation of the Korean Women's Development Institute.

Both Dr. Wha Soon Byun, chief researcher of KWDI, and Ms. Masami Shinozaki, chief researcher of KFAW, reported the results of their respective research work.

### Workshop

The five citizens' groups participated in and operated voluntary study workshops in which they presented their opinions and exchanged information about women's problems in Asia.

### Bazaar

A bazaar was held with the cooperation of OASC (Our Asian Seminar Circle), Shapla Neer and UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) as an experiment aimed at raising funds to promote the self-sustenance of Asian women. At the bazaar, handicrafts made by women in farming areas of Thailand, Bangladesh and India were put on sale.

## WOMEN TODAY

### Strengthening UNIFEM and NGO Activities



**Ms. Mitsuko Yamaguchi**

Secretary-General,  
The Fusae Ichikawa  
Memorial Association

As we enter the 17th year after the International Women's Year whose three objectives were "Equality, Development and Peace," I would like to emphasize that the "International Women's Year" is still a basis for solidarity among women. First, due to the influence of the U.N. International Women's Year on NGOs as well as on the central and local governments, the National Plan of Action, which aimed at the equality between men and women, was established. The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law came to represent the framework for equality. Although the basis for equality was established legally, there still remain many problems in reforming the social structure in which prejudice against women and the sex role division in society is deeply rooted. We must realize that we have reached a point where we must work more bravely and effectively in reforming this social structure.

Although the United Nations is promoting a three-phase program—"Equality, Development and Peace," Japan has mainly focused on the issue of equality. Only recently, the issue of women in development has come to the forefront in Japan, showing that we are also behind in complying with this issue. Although the National Plan of Action for central and local governments itemize such categories as "International Cooperation" or "International Exchange," there is no specific category for "Support for Women in Development." The enactment of the International Women's Year was closely related to the North-South problem. Economic independence is essential for developing countries in order to release women from poverty. Women in developing countries, who form a half of those nations' populations, must engage in hard labor in order to obtain food, drinking water, and other necessities for their families. As this sort of contribution by women has not been properly evaluated by their society, there are few opportunities for women to

obtain the skills, training and loans to improve their status. UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), founded for helping poor women in developing countries, is maintained by subsidies from U.N. member governments and donations from NGO and individuals. To support women at the grass-roots level, UNIFEM directly provides financial aid for them, although it is small in amount. The subsidies from 103 U.N. member governments amounted to 44 million US\$, and contributions from NGO and individuals amounted to 1.8 million US\$ by 1990. The Japanese government subsidized 610,000US\$ and 680,000US\$ respectively in 1990 and 1991. This figure, however, does not reflect Japan's status as a big economic power, considering the subsidies of 1 million US\$ from other developed countries such as Norway, Finland, Canada, the United States and Holland.

The Liaison Group for the Implementation of Resolution from the International Women's Year Conference of Japan was composed of 50 nationwide non-governmental women's organizations. This Group held the Women's Conference for Equality, Development and Peace in November 1990. The Conference adopted a special resolution to support UNIFEM's efforts to improve living conditions of women and to promote welfare of women in developing countries. The Group also raised contributions and donated it to UNIFEM. With this resolution, the Group inaugurated the UNIFEM committee, and then promoted the UNIFEM campaign as well as continuous fund-raising activities. The Group also requested the government to increase the Japanese subsidy to UNIFEM.

The above mentioned Liaison Group asked the Yokohama Women's Forum, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, and other women's groups to hold the first informal meeting concerning the formation of a UNIFEM National Committee Japan (tentative name). They decided this Committee should be authorized to conclude an approved agreement with the United Nations. UNIFEM's concrete and practical activities try to improve living conditions and to promote the welfare of women in developing countries with a small sum of money. In conclusion, we should never retreat from our responsibilities toward UNIFEM, always strongly supporting its activities. If you consider that only with the amount of a cup of coffee, you can share the Burden imposed by poverty in developing countries. You would also realize that this is a contribution anyone can make. To promote such an attitude is also an objective of UNIFEM. I sincerely hope to expand such warm support nationwide by encouraging the voluntary participation of various non-governmental women's groups.

## 1991-1992 FOREIGN COLUMNIS' REPORTS

### Rural Life in Thailand

By Ms. Mariko Kato <Thailand>

In November the rainy season is over and winter starts in Thailand. This time of the year, when the paddy fields are already harvested, and the new rice planting is in the offing, is the popular wedding season for young couples. It is also a time in which farmers who have left their village homes return from their jobs in cities like Bangkok and come home to their families to enjoy a few days together after a long separation. When the holidays are over, most of the young people again vacate their villages in northeast Thailand and return to the cities to work. It is said that there are no jobs in the countryside and that farming alone is not enough to sustain their families. In impoverished rural areas, most boys and girls after finishing their 6-year compulsory education are expected to help their parents in farming or go to the city for work. Consequently, only a few boys and girls normally are lucky to proceed to middle school. Due to their poor educational background, they can find only low-paid jobs in towns, usually as day-labor, live-in washerwomen or housemaids or petty hands at a small factory. Young men and women are nevertheless willing to go to towns for work. In agricultural communities, the labor is demarcated between men and women. Women are limited to household tasks and men to manual labor outside. However, even without proper education or skills, women can earn money more easily than men can in the cities where there is a large demand for women in the service industry. Thus women become the major breadwinners for their families.

The above phenomenon is one of the many hardships of rural life in Thailand.

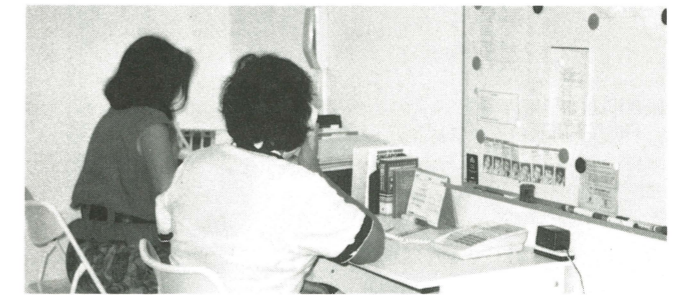


▲Women in Agricultural Communities (Thailand)

### Singapore's Hotline

By Ms. Noriko Yamaguchi <Singapore>

It was in October 1990 that the AWARE, the only feminist group in Singapore, inaugurated its hot-line consultation service for women. Two telephones are in operation from 16:00 to 22:00 every day except Saturday and Sunday. Around 50 volunteers, who were trained for 50 hours in four months, receive calls by rotation.



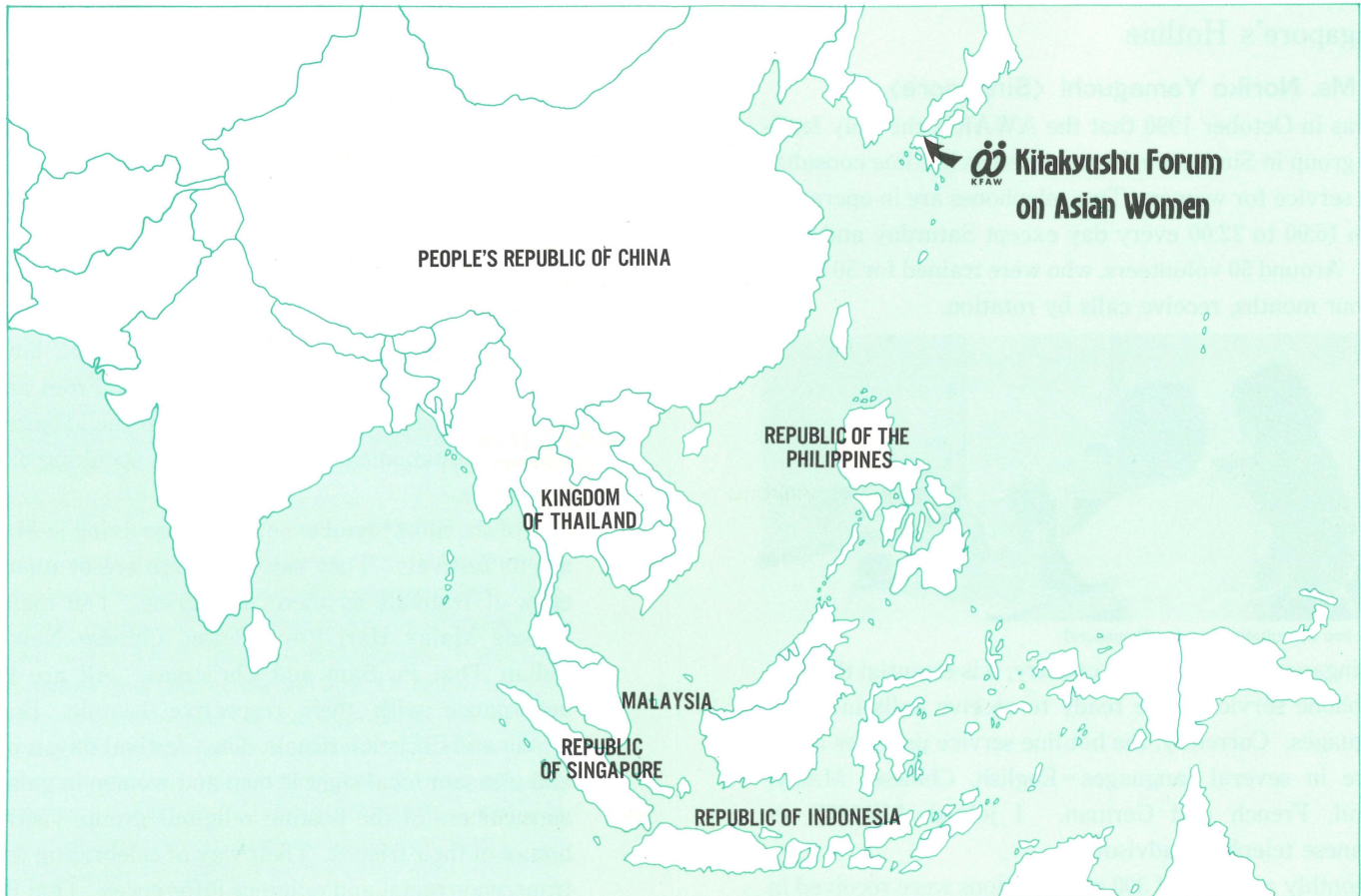
▲Hot-line Consultation Service (Singapore)

In Singapore, a multiracial country, it is essential that the telephone service to be ready to receive calls in many languages. Currently, the hot-line service provides assistance in several languages—English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil, French and German. I joined AWARE as Japanese telephone advisor.

A monthly average of 300 consultations were received in recent months, pertaining to children's care and education, husbands' violent acts, sexual harassment at the workplace, sexual matters, boyfriends, etc. There are also problems with traditional cultures and practices among different races.

The most popular consultations are related to divorce. In Singapore just as in Japan, the age of marriage has been getting higher and the divorce rate is increasing. As the lifestyle of women varies, what wives seek in marriage naturally also changes. On the other hand, there are husbands who are adamant about not changing their established views on women. During these consultations, I strongly feel the growing gap between men and women and the isolation of women. I think the same situation also exists in Japan.

We, telephone advisers, provide inquiring women with appropriate information including recommendations on legal offices, shelters or counseling agencies. But most important to us is "listening" to what they say, i.e. not to force on them our viewpoints or sense of values but to support them so they will be able to find the best answer by themselves. I feel happy when I hear an apparent change in the caller's tone from sadness to cheerful relief as she finds her next step. "Listening is caring." Now, I have come to know that listening is accepting and loving others.



### Mother-in-Law

By Ms. Wang Jing <China>

From the concept of large families, a doctrine which has been carried on in China for thousands of years, many people often tend to associate the word “mother-in-law” with “strict or powerful.”

My mother-in-law, 52 years old, retired two years ago and lives in Shanghai with my father-in-law. She married 30 years ago, and became the mother of a son and a daughter four years later. For a few years around the time of her marriage, China was facing economic difficulties. Since the country tried to cutdown on the number of its employees in order to lighten its economic burden, she voluntarily quit her position at a government-operated company. Although she became a housewife for a while, she found work at a town factory to supplement the household finances. Her children then graduated from university, got married, and raised families of their own.

It is quite reasonable for parents to wish to live with their children when they get older. However, China has been adopting a policy of internationalization for the past ten years, causing an increase in the number of young people going overseas for education and the like. This factor is influencing almost every family in the country. I can

imagine the loneliness and anxiety of the mothers. My mother-in-law once told me the following story.

“In the time of my parents, children taking care of their parents was still a well-kept custom, just like it had always been. However, the times have changed, so I must change, too. My children try hard to make their dreams come true for their future in a foreign country, so I shouldn’t regret this even if that causes some difficulty for me.” My mother-in-law let her two children reside temporarily overseas and one of them, my husband, is now in Japan.

The relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law has always been a difficult problem to handle. “A daughter-in-law was considered to be an outsider’s daughter in the old times, and that was why mother-in-laws were hard on their daughter-in-laws. In more free-thinking times like today, the positions that daughter-in-laws occupy as well as their relationships with their mother-in-laws have changed. I think if a mother-in-law treats a daughter-in-law like a real family member, the daughter-in-law will also think of her as a real mother.” My mother-in-law treats me like a mother treats her own daughter. My mother-in-law is like any other woman who wants to do anything for their children, and I hope to be such a mother someday.

## Malaysia's Melting Pot

By Ms. Machiko Nakama <Malaysia>

After a 6-hour flight from Fukuoka International Airport, I found myself drenched with sweat in Malaysia's everlasting summer. Looking at the multi-ethnic group people in the airport, I felt that I was out of Japan and in Malaysia.

Malaysia is a multi-racial country whose inhabitants are mainly of Malay, Chinese and Indian origins. Varied as they are in their racial origins, all are Malaysians. You may hear a person speak to another in his ancestor's tongue as well as in the official Malaysian language. They also use English with foreigners. From an early age, Malaysians are exposed to a multi-racial culture and learn to communicate with neighbors speaking different languages.

One of the most joyful events for those living in Malaysia are its festivals. They say that there are as many varieties of festivals as there are races. The main ones include Malay Hari Raya Puasa, Chinese New Year, Indian Thai Pu Sam and Christmas. All are held in accordance with their respective Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian rituals. On a festival day, a popular and pleasant local sight is men and women in gala dress, as members of the hosting religious group, visiting the homes of their friends. Their way of celebrating festivals transcends racial and religious differences. Thai Pu Sam features Hindu worshipers who trek for kilometers from one Hindu temple to another, carrying on his shoulders a seemingly heavy ritual arch, with his back, chest and nose pierced with big needles. Although these worshipers appear to be in trance, I cannot help feeling surprised when there is no bleeding after the trekkers' needles are pulled out. I should say that one of the attractions that Malaysia exerts on people from abroad is the Malay way of life. Or in other words, the way people from different racial backgrounds accept and respect each others' cultures and traditions. It is this acceptance of different ethnic groups which must play a key role in Japan's search for internationalization.



▲ Thai Pu Sam (Malaysia)

## Rural Women in the Midst of Change

By Ms. Luwarsih Pringgoadisurjo <Indonesia>

Developing countries are making attempts to improve women's conditions, their status in society and enhance their role in national development. In order to reach that goal, it has been recognized that education is regarded as an important aspect of development. However, daily practice has shown that most women in developing countries are not yet able to take full advantage of available education and training programs. Barriers could be religious, cultural or economic. Often the barriers come from the women themselves, mainly because of their ignorance of their rights as citizens.

Girls in rural areas, often do not finish primary schools. Because of economic reasons, priority is instead given to boys. Women in agriculture have traditionally made a vital contribution to agricultural production and also to family earnings. However, because of new technologies penetrating this sector, women are often pushed aside from these new agricultural activities while the chances for them to earn a living have become increasingly limited. As the education of the majority of the rural women is very low, or nothing at all, they can only find low paying jobs in other sectors. These constraints affect their economic life, health conditions and many other areas.

More and more non-formal training programs are being launched to improve the conditions of the rural adult population. These programs cover agriculture, home industries, health and nutrition, family planning etc. We know by now what is important is not just a matter of earning a living or improving skills, but also motivating women to change and creating equal opportunities for their advancement. Programs should be created to give women a chance to experience the benefits as well as the cost of not joining training programs. And more important, these programs should make women more aware of their potentials to participate in these development programs.

Another issue coming to the surface is the question of whether there should be separate training programs for women and for men in the community. Should such programs not be integrated to speed up men and women's mutual understanding of their obligations toward family and community welfare? For instance, why should men only attend courses for the application of agriculture technologies? And why are family planning programs in most cases only attended by women? The field of adult learning for the rural women needs to be continually assessed in order to improve their abilities and economic life.

## Women and the Mt. Pinatubo Disaster

By Ms. Elena L. Samonte <Philippines>



▲ A Tent City in Barangay Anonas (Philippines)

It has been a long season for disasters in the Philippines. The most serious and long-term disaster was caused by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. Our team had to make a psycho-social assessment of the Mt. Pinatubo disaster so we set out to visit the various affected areas.

The first barangay or village was Barangay Anonas in Pampanga. Many of the 272 families whose houses were washed out or partially damaged had lived in Anonas for more than 20 years. One such woman, Aling Gloria, 74 years old, as well as many others, found it difficult to evacuate to the "tent city." She said, "It was stressful to have to leave one's home of many years."

The adverse conditions under which these families now live are also a source of stress. There is no running water available. They have to depend on kind neighbors to give them water for drinking and washing clothes. They cook their meals inside hot tents. The heat inside the tents can be quite unbearable during the day.

In Sapang Bato, Aling Presy, a widow, tends to her store. She has four children and six grandchildren who depend on her from time to time. She makes even less profit now because it has become more expensive to transport goods to her store as those she hires to carry the goods have to go through the lava-filled areas. Aling Presy finds it hard to sleep at night as she always has to be on the alert for lava signals. On the average, she sleeps 3 hours every night.

Another barangay we visited was Potrero. Lita, 18 years old, was a sophomore studying to be a teacher. However, she had to stop schooling when Mt. Pinatubo erupted. Her family could not afford to send her to school anymore. Her father, a farmer, could not work on the rice paddies anymore because this was covered by lava. Her mother, who sells cucumber and cabbage in San Fernando, earns barely enough for the family to live on.

These women, however, are not about to give up. Despite the hard living conditions under which they live and suffer, they continue with their daily chores, made even harder by the disaster.

## THE FORUM WINDOW

### EPISODES IN JOINT RESEARCH

For the first five years, the main theme of the research section is "Women in Development." Above all, we are focusing on the changes in the family and women's lives through rapid industrialization in several Asian countries. As a first step, we started a comparative study on Korea and Japan. These two nations are tied historically, geographically and culturally. It was our great pleasure that Korean Women's Development Institute agreed to participate in this kind of regional project in Asia. Dr. Wha-Soon Byun, a brilliant Korean researcher whose doctoral thesis is a comparative study on divorce in Korea and France, and I worked together on the above study.

Our common language is English. Although Dr. Byun and I began to study each other's language, we both can not communicate fluently in the partner's language. Consequently, the readers can easily imagine how we struggled to understand each other through a third language. It was like a three-legged race across the sea. Of course we enjoyed this game by planning our research, as well as discussing the structure of the questionnaires, statistics, data analysis and then their interpretation. Now we are working on our final goal. During this process, I was embarrassed by my own weakness in operating computers. This was further complicated by the subtle differences between computers in Japan and Korea. For example, I sent three types of floppies to Dr. Byun which unfortunately did not work in her machine. My computer illiteracy has now improved, but we must still work around our machines' incompatibilities.

As for the results of our comparative study, a report will later be published in English. (Interested parties can request copies either in Japanese, Korean or English.) However, I will point out only one of the results here.

The economic development of Japan and Korea has been prominent in east Asia. Due to this, the families of the two nations are experiencing almost similar changes to those already experienced by the advanced western industrialized societies, i.e. increases in smaller sized families, nuclear families, working class families and employed mothers. Among these changes, the decrease in the family size has been very rapid. The sudden decrease in the birth rate to 1.53 shocked Japan. It will accelerate the aging trend and the shortage of labor in the future. In Korea, the ratio of aged people over 65 years old to the total population is still around 5%, whereas in Japan it is already over 12%, and expected to grow up to 23~25% in 2020. In Korea, however, the low birth rate trend has resulted in an unbalanced sex ratio for newly born children because of their patriarchal ideology and its so called "boys preference."

Masami Shinozaki

Chief Researcher, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

# INFORMATION

## FORUM 1992-1993 FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS WANTED!

Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women is pleased to announce its 1992-1993 recruitment of foreign correspondents. By including foreign correspondents' reports in the "Asian Breeze," we are promoting an information network to cover all Asian countries.

For our 1992-1993 program, the theme of correspondents' reports is "Home Education," a key element in human as well as social development.

We look forward to receiving many applications.

Number of recruits: fifteen

Duration: May, 1992 - March, 1993

Qualifications:

- ① Residence in an Asian country other than Japan.  
(However, there is no limitation as to one's nationality or sex)
- ② Participation for one year including three reports written either in Japanese or English due July 20, October 20 and December 20, 1992 respectively.

Application:

Applicants must prepare the following items and submit them to the Forum.

- ① Report - 1,000 Japanese letters or 600 English words  
Theme: "Women in Home Education"
- ② Curriculum Vitae
- ③ Photographs: Personal photo and one photo related to the report with an explanation.

Deadline date: April 8, 1992 (Wed.)

For more information, please contact:

Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

Kitakyushu International Conference Center 8F

3-9-30 Asano, Kokura-Kita, Kitakyushu, 802 JAPAN

Tel: (093) 551-1220 Fax: (093) 551-7535

## Asian Women's Conference in Kitakyushu

An Asian Women's Conference in Kitakyushu will be held on Saturday, April 11, 1992, at the Kitakyushu International Conference Center. The theme will be "Talk & Unite, Asian Women."

The purpose of this Conference is to contribute to increasing the social status, equality, development and peace of women in Asia. This event will be a local version of the "Asian Women's Conference" to be held in Japan this year after being previously held in the Philippines in 1985. The Kitakyushu Conference is inviting panelists from various authorities of women's studies, who will visit Japan for the national conference. We believe that this Conference will be of significant value for both panelists and participants.

In addition to lectures and documentary slide shows, there will be an in-depth discussion with four guest authorities from overseas on development, media, environment and labor.

We look forward to your inquiries and enrollment.

Enrollment Fee: ¥1,000 (additional ¥2,000 for the Tea Party)

For enrollment or inquiries, call Asian Women's Conference in Kitakyushu committee at (093) 551-1220

## EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

It has been one year since the inauguration of the "Asian Breeze." During this first year creating each issue has been like a new mother's excitement over her child's teething, crawling and growing up. As we cross over into our second year, we like mothers everywhere are thinking about our child's future. As editors we holding a firm and clear vision for the "Asian Breeze," say Happy Birthday to our newsletter. We also say congratulations to all those who have made its birth possible.



## Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

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