

“How can we help you?”

Foreign Residents Information Desk

Hello, I'm Wu from China. I studied Japanese there to learn more about Japan, the country of beautiful cherry blossoms. I married a Japanese man and came to Meguro four years ago. Besides raising my one-year-old child, I also work as an advisor at the Foreign Residents Information Desk in Meguro City Office. Let me tell you a little more about my workplace and my job.

Some advice is based on information I gathered on my own. For instance, I have introduced MIFA's Japanese Conversation Salon to those who were worried about speaking Japanese. I learned about it through my interaction with MIFA.



I need to improve my skills and knowledge to offer the best advice for each case. So I read the MEGURO Living Guide repeatedly to deepen my understanding of how the City Office works. Also, I exchange information and share experiences with other advisors to become familiar with various cases.

This is a fulfilling job because I feel that I can be of help. I'm really happy to hear at the end “thank you very much” from people with a smile who had problems when they first visited. That brings me a sense of achievement. When I first came to Japan, I myself felt uneasy because I couldn't converse well in Japanese or get necessary information. So I can relate and would like to support people in solving their problems.

The Foreign Residents Information Desk provides information on Meguro City's administrative services, such as tax, pension, insurance, medical care and child rearing support services, and offers advice for dealing with inconveniences and problems you have while living in Meguro. This service, available in four languages – English, Chinese, Korean and Tagalog – is now provided by twelve advisors working in turn. Check when service in your language is available.

If you visit the counter, the advisor will, for example:

-Take you to the proper department in the City Office and interpret the staff's explanation on how to solve your problem; or

-Refer you to an external organization, such as the Immigration Bureau, or a website, such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Medical Institution Information Service “HIMAWARI”, if the City Office cannot handle your problem.

You can also call the counter to ask for advice if your problem can likely be solved over the phone. However, in the case of a certificate issuance or when your signature is required, you will need to visit in person.



Do not hesitate to visit the Foreign Residents Information Desk.

Wu-san and her teammates are ready to help.

Information Desk Office Hours & Days (except for national holidays and year-end / New Year holidays)

English 9:00 – 12:00 / 13:00 – 17:00
Monday to Friday
Tel : 03-5722-9187

Other languages 10:00 – 12:00 / 13:00 – 17:00
•Chinese : Monday to Wednesday & Friday
•Korean : 1st & 3rd Thursday •Tagalog : 2nd & 4th Thursday
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JAPANESE ENGLISH

Foreign Residents Information Desk

03-5722-9187
English

www.city.meguro.tokyo.jp/multi/index.html

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MIFA
Meguro International Friendship Association

http://mifa.jp/en/

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Kaleidoscope MEGURO aims to embrace diversity and promote intercultural harmony.

Kaleidoscope MEGURO No.12 May 5th, 2019

Published by Culture & Exchange Promotion Section, Meguro City Office

Written and edited by Meguro International Friendship Association Volunteers (MIFA)

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Kaleidoscope MEGURO

Vol. 12

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Interview with our International Resident The Ambassador of Egypt to Japan

Kaleidoscope Meguro had the honour of being invited to the Egyptian Embassy for an interaction with His Excellency Mr. Ayman Aly Kamel, the Ambassador of Egypt to Japan.



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1 What are the main aspects of cooperation between Egypt and Japan?

Japan and Egypt engaged in people to people relations since 1864 during Meiji era, when a Samurai delegation visited Cairo and posed for a photo in front of the Sphinx. Egypt at that time was quite a developed country and Cairo had its own railway system, even before Japan. Since then the relationship has evolved between the two countries. This mutual admiration has continued throughout recent times as Egyptian people hold the Japanese culture and civilization in high regards. Japan's ability to rebuild and recover after the world war, to become one of the world's leading economies after being exposed to this much devastation is astonishing.

Japan and Egypt have always coordinated on multinational fronts such as the UN, we share a mutual interest in maintaining peace & stability. These facts constitute the basic

pillars in the relationship between Japan and Egypt.

Japan has invested a lot in the development projects in Egypt in the 70s and 80s through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), such as the Egyptian Opera House built in the 1980s with the cooperation of the Japanese Government and was inaugurated with a performance by a Japanese Kabuki troop. In recent times, the Grand Egyptian Museum is also being established with the help of JICA, while Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE) is looking after the restoration of ancient Egyptian artifacts. Once completed the Grand Egyptian Museum will be the biggest museum in the world showcasing a single civilization, as it will exhibit more than one hundred thousand artifacts from ancient Egypt. Therefore, as long as the human race lives, the coming generations will be able to appreciate the treasures of the Pharaohs, due to this successful cooperation model between the two countries.

2 Can you shed some light on Egypt's efforts to further strengthen its role in Africa, and how do you assess the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process, taking into consideration the Egyptian chairing of African Union?

Japan was the first Asian country and the first developed country that created a forum to cooperate with Africa. This program started in 1993 when TICAD was established. Egypt is the current chair of the African Union and will focus on strengthening the coordination between the African brothers and Japan. TICAD has been successful in achieving fruitful cooperation in sectors of healthcare, education, relocation of refugees and caring for returnees. We are now in the process of

collaborating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to set the agenda for the next TICAD summit, which will be held in Yokohama in August 2019.

3 What is the vision of the embassy for the next couple of years?

Since I arrived in Japan, I have noticed that there are misconceptions and a lot of inaccurate news about the Middle East circulating in the Japanese media. We wish to project the fair and unbiased image of our region, and we are hopeful to change this incorrect perception.

4 What message would you like to convey to the residents of Meguro City?

We are happy to live in Meguro. The embassy has been here for about 40 years. It has become a landmark in the neighbourhood with its architectural showcase of several symbols from our ancient Egyptian civilization. We would like to express our gratitude to the residents of Meguro city who always make us feel at home, and we would like to tell them that the embassy welcomes their visits and our doors will be always open for them. We often engage in cultural activities with Japanese students, such as Lectures about ancient Egyptian civilization and Arabic language classes, and this is one of the ways we give back to Meguro and to the Japanese society, as we wish to be an open museum bringing them closer to our part of the world.

Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Japan

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Interview with Meguro UNESCO Association

1 The origin and goal of the Japanese class from Meguro UNESCO Association

Have you ever heard of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)? Meguro UNESCO Association offers Japanese language classes to people aged 16 and above, from complete beginner to intermediate levels. This is an interview about the foundation of Meguro UNESCO Association and a summary of the kind of Japanese lessons they offer. If by any chance you are looking for a school to learn or improve your Japanese, read on!

Meguro UNESCO Association was founded in 1954. Their main goal is to realize UNESCO's spirit of peace in the local community through a variety of volunteer activities, and to enrich international relation and cultural exchange with support from the Meguro City Board of Education, compliant with Japanese law concerning UNESCO activities. The Japanese language class is part of these activities to achieve this goal.

We asked Ms. Katou Reiko, the Honorary chief director of Meguro UNESCO association about the history and how the Japanese language class started in the first place. Originally it was a request from the Meguro City Board of Education. Due to the lack of resources, they asked Meguro UNESCO Association for support in teaching Japanese to 15 elementary school students that came from China. Additionally, a Vietnamese refugee called and asked them to teach Japanese to his wife.

In order to run a class, you will need teachers. However, back in the 1980s, it was hard to secure Japanese teachers with the necessary knowledge and qualification in the first place, also there weren't any official Japanese textbooks or classrooms available. Ms. Katou kindly offered her own house as a place to conduct lectures/meetings for Japanese educators, and the nearby Yokohama Bank located at Yutenji also offered their meeting room for this purpose. And thus, the Japanese language class of Meguro UNESCO Association started in 1987.

Students who like to study Japanese at Meguro UNESCO Association are registered under a "Friendship membership". There is no distinction between teachers and students, hence those with a "Friendship membership" are exempted from the yearly membership fee which is required to become a regular UNESCO member.



2 The Japanese language classes available at present.

Meguro UNESCO Association offers Japanese classes ranging from complete beginner to intermediate courses and they are separated into 3 terms, Spring, Autumn, and Winter. The classes are held on Tuesday and Thursday morning, Tuesday night and Saturday morning (Kanji class). Most of the classes are conducted at the Meguro school support center and the night classes are conducted at Gohongi elementary school.

The motto of the Japanese class is to teach learners the Japanese used in everyday life in an enjoyable way. Especially for absolute beginners, instead of using a completely language immersive method, they use English when necessary, as well as a wide variety of visual aids such as gestures and flashcards, and sometimes a physical tour to learn new vocabulary and phrases used in everyday life.

3 Activities beyond Japanese language classes.

According to Mr. Tamesue Shigeru the director of Meguro UNESCO Association, there are many more meaningful activities to promote international relations and help Japanese language learners to deepen their understanding of Japanese culture simultaneously. One of such activities is called "International Exchange Forum", where Japanese learners are introduced to traditional Japanese cultures such as Sumo, Kabuki, and Noh, and they can also enjoy exchanging conversation with Japanese people participating in the program.

Another extremely interesting event that is provided to learners is visiting local elementary schools. Learners can immerse themselves in a Japanese school environment, have school lunch and clean up

the classroom with the students. This is once in a lifetime experiences which cannot be found elsewhere!

The pros of learning Japanese at Meguro UNESCO Association is that they teach using a proper textbook called "Minna no Nihongo", which is also used by education institutions in other countries. You will learn not just the Japanese required for everyday conversation, but also the Japanese grammar required to construct a proper and grammatical Japanese sentence on your own. Another point worth mentioning is that all the teachers are volunteers who have undergone Japanese educator training or have passed the Japanese educator exam. Therefore, you can be certain that all the volunteers are professional teachers who have fulfilled the teaching standard set by UNESCO. For more details about the Japanese language class, please refer to the following URL: www.unesco.or.jp/meguro/

4 A final message from the Meguro UNESCO Association's director to all Japanese language learners

Here is what Mr. Tamesue wanted to pass on to all Japanese language learners, Japanese people are very shy in general and have little opportunities to communicate with people from another country. But what do they need is a simple trigger. It can be a simple greeting in Japanese such as "Konichiwa!", Japanese people will surely greet you back with a smile. Once you exchanged greetings, the conversation will go on. Just keep in mind there could be cultural differences and always respect each other's beliefs, that way you can not only practice but also enjoy a Japanese conversation with even a stranger!

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The New GENGO



On April 30th of this year, Heisei 31, Emperor Heisei abdicated. A new Gengo (era name) was announced earlier on April 1st, which is to be "Reiwa" meaning Beautiful Harmony. The era of Heisei ended and many people are anticipating a hopeful new period.

Gengo is the unique way of naming the year in Japan, which is used together with the

The meaning of recent Gengos are as follows

Meiji [明治 1868 - 1912] People's hearts are renewed.

Taisho [大正 1912 - 1926] People's wishes are granted: the country is well governed.

Showa [昭和 1926 - 1989] Peace and prosperity are achieved.

Heisei [平成 1989 - 2019] Peace on earth and harmony with nature are achieved.

Reiwa [令和 2019 -] Beautiful harmony.

References: Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia published by Kodansha, Encyclopedia Britannica, 年号の歴史(History of Gengo), published by Yuzankaku Books, 1996



More than ten volunteers from various age groups and nationalities work together to issue the English newsletter Kaleidoscope MEGURO bimonthly in cooperation with MIFA staff. This is a picture during the editorial meeting. It is held about once a month at MIFA and volunteers exchange ideas and opinions actively. We mainly discuss ideas for future issues and edit draft articles.



Which country are volunteers from? At present, there are volunteers from India, Hong Kong, Australia, Switzerland and Japan. How do volunteers write the articles? We prepare a draft in Japanese or English. The draft itself can be an interview with international residents living in Meguro, or a translation of useful living information issued by the city office. Some articles are related with Japanese traditional or seasonal events

Western calendar. It started in ancient China, spread across Asia, and came to be used in Japan in the 7th century. Today, Japan is said to be the only country that still uses Gengo.

For the first time the new Gengo is based on a Japanese classic literature "Manyoshu" (literally Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), which is the earliest extant collection of Japanese poetry compiled as early as the 7th century. It is a monument to the first flourishing period of Japanese literature. In the past, Gengo was chosen from among auspicious words in Chinese classic writings to convey what the country desires to be the ideal of the new period at the time of the Emperor's enthronement, which is the first year under the new Gengo name.

While the Western calendar is also used in Japan, we use Gengo, for example, in filing official documents. Concerning the use of two parallel ways of counting the year, some think we should use only the Western

calendar, while others still need Gengo to think of the year.

Since the Meiji era, Japan has adopted a "one-emperor, one-era" system, which means that a new Gengo is inaugurated only on the occasion of the enthronement of a new emperor. In this way, Japan has had three Gengos since Meiji, Taisho, Showa, and Heisei. Before the Meiji period, things were not the same: Gengo changed not only upon the coming of a new emperor, but also because of disasters, misfortunes, wars, celebrations, and other extraordinary events. In other words, Gengo could change in response to events and mood of the time. Therefore, during the two and a half centuries of the Edo period(1603-1868), a new Gengo was introduced 35 times; which sometimes lasted for only one year.

One can say that Gengo represents the shared hope of the people as they look forward to the new period.

How is a new Gengo named? At present, Gengo is determined by an expert advisory committee. They decide the new Gengo by following these rules: It should consist of two Chinese characters, be easy to read, and write, have never been used and have initials in alphabet different from past Gengos.

Volunteers of Kaleidoscope MEGURO



like Star Festival, Full Moon Night (Jugoya) and Tori-no-ichi Fair, and mainly Japanese volunteers contribute in writing these articles. The next step for our volunteers would be proofreading the draft articles. Kaleidoscope MEGURO targets English speakers in general, and everyone writes with that fact in mind. To provide readers-friendly English information, the volunteers' knowledge about English from various countries is essential because they

have been living in an English speaking country since childhood.

Volunteers of Kaleidoscope MEGURO aim to provide international residents living in Meguro with useful information to live a safe and enjoyable life in Meguro. At the same time, our ultimate goal is to contribute in making a society where residents from multiple nations can coexist.