

INTERVIEW SERIES WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF JAPAN-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS (No. 4)

SHAUN CHIAM KHAI SEONG

Japan Graduates Association of Malaysia (JAGAM), Northern Branch

Self-introduction

My name is Shaun Chiam Khai Seong. I'm the Chairman of JAGAM Northern Branch. The word "Shaun" in my name actually came from my last name, "Seong". In Japan, my Japanese friends feel that my name is too long thus, I just use "Seong" and the pronunciation is similar to "Shaun". Then, it became my Christian name, Shaun Chiam Khai Seong.

The membership of JAGAM includes Japan graduated students from Tandai (2 years of university or college diploma courses) and 4 years course graduates from university (bachelor degree). Until today, we have expanded our branches to Japan so, officially we have 4 branches. Our members are now over 2000 with 427 in the northern region, center region, 982, southern region, 350, and Japan branches, 340.



Mr. Shaun Chiam (second from the right)



JAGAM Japan Education Fair

Introduction of your organization

JAGAM (Japan Graduates Association of Malaysia) was established in 1972 and officially registered on 9 January 1973 with 3 branches namely the Northern, Central and Southern. Before that, JAGAM consisted small clubs known as PAJA (Penang Association of Japan Alumni).

The main objective of JAGAM is to promote cultural activities. The second objective is to support and guide those who wish to go to Japan and members who come back to Malaysia will be assisted to start their careers. The third objective is to encourage students and post-graduate students to further their

studies in Japan. The fourth objective is to promote goodwill and better understanding between Malaysia and Japan.

What is your relationship with Japan?

As far as I remember, it was in 1997 when I went for a family trip to New Zealand, it was the first time I met with the Japanese. I was asked politely by the Japanese to take their picture in Japanese. I was really impressed with their politeness and their pride in speaking Japanese even in overseas. I felt that the culture is very interesting and there are many things to learn from. That was the beginning of my curiosity to learn about Japan. Luckily, my father started teaching me numbers in Japanese since he is in the tourism industry and had to bring Malaysians to Japan. So, since then I started to learn basic Japanese language and was influenced by the Japanese culture.



Penang Bon Odori Festival

Apart from that, JAGAM Northern Branch also promote study tours to Japan as well as Japanese sports like ground golf.



Introducing of ground golf at Han Chiang High School



Reception for Birthday Celebration of His Majesty The Emperor of Japan

How is your involvement in Japanese related activities?

Basically, our activities is to promote studies in Japan in high school, the Japan Education Fair and Japanese Festival (Matsuri, Aki Matsuri, Bon Odori, Japan Festival in school, and more).

What is the most interesting element about Japan?

One of the special element of Japan is that Japanese people are very down to earth. Other than that, Japanese people really appreciate the originality. For example, in Kyoto they try to preserve their buildings in original way. They try not to change the structure but preserve the Japanese traditional streets and many more. They really appreciate the past, the old classic vintage until today.

Who is the Japanese person who influence you the most?

I like Japanese who are very aggressive, action fast in taking and passionate. I really appreciate Japanese who dare to try new things and always be in front to lead people, I would like to emulate and work together with them to make events and activities more successful.

There are many leaders in Japan who are really great for Malaysians to look up to. For example, former Toyota president, Toyoda Akio and also the Panasonic bosses. I think they are really at the top because they have a lot of philosophies and they regenerate to transform the economy/state of Japan after World War II.



Mr. Shaun Chiam with the Japanese leaders and delegates from Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur

As a Chairman of the JAGAM Northern Branch and Vice President of JAGAM, I think a lot of leaders are out there but I would like to say thanks to Mr. Fukuda who started the alumni world wide “kokoro to kokoro”, “heart to heart”, ways to link together. I think he is the one who started this and really put in a lot of effort. Without his effort, the

JAGAM would not connect together as one.

What is your favorite place in Japan?

I think the place that is the most memorable to me is Yokohama. Yokohama actually was the first place that I touched down in Japan. It's like my second hometown. I've been there and stayed there after I graduated so, the city has given me a close connection with the local and the people there are so sincere and nice. Back then, when I didn't know how to speak Japanese, they tried to interact with me and I love Yokohama City because I'm an island guy who was born in Penang and used to be surrounded by the sea. One of the reason I choose Yokohama is because of its location near the sea. So I could go to the seaside to see the sea, go back to the city and go to the mountain area for hiking.



Mr. Shaun Chiam during early times in Japan

What is your favorite Japanese food?

The first time when I reached Japan, the first food that I tried was sushi and it cost about 790 yen for a whole box. Sushi is my favourite. There are many types of sushi, and what I like the most is the raw ones. Ika (烏賊 / Squid) sushi is my favourite type of sushi.

What is the Japan custom/culture that you like the most?

The Japan culture that I adore is the “omotenashi” or hospitality.



Japan Cultural Festival at the EcoWorld Gallery in Penang

What are the future plans of your organization in terms of promoting Japan?

For me, to be part of JAGAM, I'm willing to share my experience in Japan and I want to continue to share it with our members and society. So one day I'm going to make JAGAM core values for the members so that JAGAM will continue to sustain. One day, even when I'm not here anymore, my vision is to encourage everyone to continue the activities. My mission is to go to every school, to assist the students in setting up a Japan club in the school and I would like to help to teach Japanese language in schools.

