

## Looking towards the Beijing 2008 Olympics

The great performances by Japan's top-level athletes at international meets such as the Olympic Games give hope and inspiration to many people, and contribute to the formation of a bright and active society. In August 2008, the Olympic Games will be held in Beijing, the first time since the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, 20 years prior, that the games will be held in Asia. 37 medals have been won including the 16 gold medals in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games creating much excitement among the people, and even more excitement is expected for the Beijing 2008 Olympics.

Efforts have been made by MEXT for measures to improve the international competitiveness based on the "Basic Plan for the Promotion of Sports." In this Topic, we will introduce the maintenance of the National Training Center (NTC) and the holding of the minister-level meeting for sports in the Asia region as a major effort of MEXT towards the Beijing 2008 Olympics.

### 1. Maintenance of the National Training Center (NTC)

To enhance the performance of our top-level athletes, the maintenance of a base that holds a practice ground for each sport and accommodation facilities to conduct intensive and continuous training is essential. For this reason, MEXT began the maintenance of NTC in 2004 in the Nishigaoka district of Kita ward, Tokyo, where the Japan Institute of Sports Sciences stands, and after its completion in December 2007 it has been used concomitantly since January 2008.

In collaboration with the neighboring Japan Institute of Sports Sciences, it is possible to conduct higher quality training at this center, and it is expected to be used for residential training right before the Beijing Olympics.

Moreover, in the case of nautical sports, outdoor sports and altitude training, existing training facilities are used and designated as "Event-Specific NTC Affiliated Facilities," which is planned to enhance the facilities through high functionalization.

### 2. Meeting of Asian Sports Ministers

In August 2007, in order to build a trend for the promotion of sports in the Asian region and to wish for the success of the Beijing Olympics, the "Meeting of Asian Sports Ministers" was held at the guesthouse in Osaka City to exchange opinions about measures to raise the international presence of the Asian region in the sporting world. This meeting was hosted by Japan and held for the first time, with 26 countries and related institutions from the Asian region participating.

As stated above, this year's Beijing Olympics will be the first to be held in Asia after 20 years, and there is great hope for further interaction between each country from this opportunity, as well as the flourishing of Asian athletes at this event. Additionally, the cooperation of the Asian nations as a whole is crucial for the success of this event.

At the meeting, the "Declaration for the success of the Beijing Olympics" was adopted unanimously with the content of: a) promoting sports and making efforts to enhance the athletes' performances for the success of athletes from the Asian nations in the Beijing Olympics, b) promoting global interaction through sports to further activate the interaction between the Asian nations towards the Beijing Olympics, and c) making the best efforts for the Beijing Olympics to be held with great excitement and success. Reaffirmation about the importance of the spirit of fair play and the importance of doping prevention activities also took place.

In addition, it has been decided that the "Meeting of Asian Sports Ministers" will be held continuously from now on, with the next meeting to be held in Iran.

## **“Measures to protect children’s mind and body and to promote the school-wide actions for securing safety” (Central Education Council Report)**

Recently, issues concerning mental health, and health problems such as allergies, children’s eating habits (such as having no breakfast and having an unbalanced diet), and incidents and accidents in and out of the school including the school zone are occurring. For this reason, schools must ensure a safe and secure environment, and establish a firm instructional structure to protect and develop children physically and mentally.

Ever since the “Measures to protect children’s mind and body and to promote the school-wide actions for securing safety” was consulted on at the Central Education Council in March 2007, school health, dietary education, school lunches, and school safety have been discussed by the School Health and Safety Committee within the Subdivision on Sports and Youth. In addition, meetings have been held and public comments have been heard from people with experience in the school environment, and a report was compiled on January 17, 2008.

The report shows the fundamental concept for protection of children’s health and safety at first, then proposes concrete measures in order to promote cooperation among schools, families, and the local community as well as to make efforts for enhancement of the internal structure of schools, concerning each section of school health, dietary education, school lunch and school safety.

In the future, the aims and contents of this report will not only be informed to the persons concerned with education, but widely publicized and spread to the whole society in order to protect, secure, and promote the actions made for children’s health and safety. MEXT plans to discuss and implement concrete measures such as examining the legal system for improvements.

### **Report Summary**

#### **I. The fundamental concept for the protection of the children’s health and safety**

- The school is the place that children whose mind and body is at the stages of growth and development get together and form their personality, on condition that their health and safety is being secured.
- Schools must cultivate the basic knowledge of children so that they will be able to nurture their own health, and secure their own safety.
- The measures concerning the children’s health and safety must be implemented effectively with the cooperation among their family and the local community.
- The cooperation concerning the children’s health and safety should be worked on for establishing the basic partnership between their family and the local community that is necessary for educational guidance and student guidance.

#### **II. Measures to improve school health**

- Environmental improvement to make full use of the school nurse’s expertise in school health activities
- Improvement in the function of the supervisor of school health in responsibility for the arrangement of school health activities
- Improvement in the classroom teacher’s daily observation for children’s health
- Achievement of school management with emphasis on school health
- Effective use of the professional knowledge such as school doctors for school health activities
- Improvement in the leadership of the board of education concerning school health
- Realization of a school environmental hygiene that secures a healthy school life for children
- Realization of school health activities with the cooperation among schools, families and the local community

#### **III. Measures to promote dietary education at schools**

- Improvements of the school lunch as a “familiar educational material”
- Promotion of dietary education as a school-wide activity
- Promotion of the allocation of diet and nutrition teachers and realization of dietary education using their expertise
- A thorough hygienic control for a secure and safe school lunch
- Promotion of dietary education based on the cooperation among families and the local community

#### **IV. Measures to improve school safety**

- Formulation of a school safety plan for ensuring children’s safety generally
- To secure the safety of school facilities
- Improvement of the maintenance of safety management systems of schools
- Establishing an internal school structure that can respond appropriately to emergencies
- Improvement of the qualities and abilities of school personnel concerning school safety
- Strengthening the safety management systems based on the cooperation among families and the local community

## Exhibition Project commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Japan Media Arts Festival: “Power of Expression, Japan”

Japanese media art, in the forms of digital art, games, anime, and manga, widely accepted nationally, has been not only stimulating the creation and activation of the Japanese art world but also gathering international attention with its “Japan Cool” presence. It takes the crucial role of heightening interests as well as encouraging further understanding of Japan.

To provide opportunities for commending and appreciating great works in the realm of media art, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, in commemorating the 10th anniversary of its “Media Art Festival” since 1997, held the “10th anniversary commemorative exhibition project ‘Power of Expression, Japan,’” from 21 January to 4 February 2007 at the newly opened National Art Center, Tokyo in Roppongi.

In the “Power of Expression, Japan” as the underlying theme in this exhibition project, “Japanese Media Art” from digital art, games, robots, to anime and manga were introduced from three perspectives: the past, present, and future. The exhibition is a composite of three divisions: the introduction of the path of Japanese media art from 1950 to the present [1. Media Art of Japan 1950-2006], a search for the origins of Japanese media art from the Edo period tracing back as far as to the Jomon Period [2. Origins of Expressions], and the future visions of Japanese media art [3. The Possibility to the Future]. In addition, various events such as symposiums, live performances, and talk sessions held by the top-level runners of media art, etc., as well as projections of image work, attracted 62,000 visitors in 14 days. (See: <http://plaza.bunka.go.jp/ex/index.html>)



Work in display “Yes Panora-ma!” Tanaka Katsuki 2005 ©Tanaka Katsuki

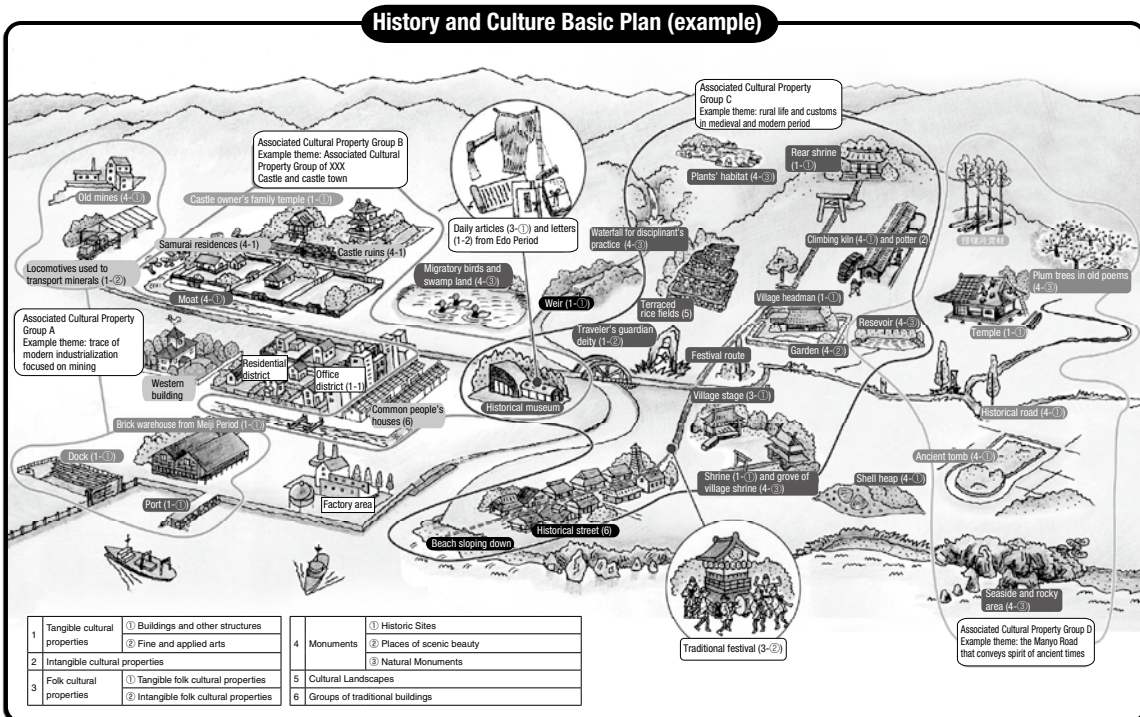
## Report by the Planning and Research Commission within the Subdivision on Cultural Properties of the Council for Cultural Affairs

Based on the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties implemented in 1950, the current system of protection of cultural properties in Japan has expanded its targets for protection and taken on a wide variety of protection methods. However, the comprehensive, rather than simplistic, approach to the protection of cultural properties is not necessarily enough. In addition, it will be more important that the public widely understands and participates in the activity of the protection of cultural properties in order to preserve and pass on cultural properties to future generations. Based on the situation above, the Planning and Research Commission was established within the Subdivision on Cultural Properties of the Council for Cultural Affairs in July 2006. The commission discussed the measures required to further improve the protection and utilization of cultural properties in the future, and compiled a report in October 2007.

In terms of a comprehensive grasp of cultural properties, the report proposes the measures below; each municipality will establish a "History and Culture Basic Plan" that provides policies to protect and utilize cultural properties in a comprehensive way as well as the surrounding environment. Based on this "History and Culture Basic Plan," associated tangible and intangible cultural properties will be sorted into "Associated Cultural Property Groups," and the municipality will establish the plan that prescribes the way of protecting and utilizing each "Associated Cultural Property Group." In the case where cultural properties are concentrated in a certain region, a "Historical and Cultural Protection and Utilization Zone" will be established in the municipality in order to create a cultural space with a core of "Associated Cultural Property Group."

As a measure to inherit cultural properties throughout the entire society, various proposals are made including publicizing information on outstanding efforts to utilize cultural properties and make them available to the public, constructing the framework for an environment that encourages private organizations to protect and utilize cultural properties, and promoting partnerships between the government and private organizations.

Based on these proposals, we will pursue measures to protect and utilize cultural properties in a comprehensive way as well as measures to inherit cultural properties throughout the entire society.



Above cultural properties in each Associated Cultural Property Group are examples which are classified by each theme.

## Preservation measures for the kofun (tumulus) murals

### [The dismantling of the Takamatsuzuka kofun stone chamber]

#### ○ Takamatsuzuka kofun murals

Located in Asuka village, Nara prefecture, and constructed around the end of the 7th century, the Takamatsuzuka kofun is an extremely valuable piece of cultural heritage along with the Kitora kofun, with its murals in the kofun stone chambers depicting richly colored paintings (of the Four Symbols (Black Tortoise, White Tiger, Azure Dragon) and figures). The murals were discovered in 1972, the tomb was designated a historical landmark 1973, and in 1974 the murals were designated as national treasures.

#### ○ The path to dismantling

With the discovery of the murals and the opening of the stone chamber, the environment that had been long preserved has changed and the repeated damage through mold has deteriorated the plaster, etc. For this reason, the association that considers eternal preservation measures of the murals have considered fundamental preservation measures, and reached the conclusion that further preservation at the site will be difficult. The preservation plans that “dismantle and repair by entirely removing the stone chamber murals, and in the future secure an environment that will not be influenced by negative elements such as mold, and finally return it to the original site,” was decided on June 2005. Following this, there were real-size models of the tumulus mound and the stone chamber of the Takamatsuzuka which were made to help prepare for the dismantling, production and adjustments of hauling devices, etc., as well as the preparations to set the preservation house and the cooling of the tumulus mound part in order to maintain the humidity and temperature at certain levels within the stone chamber.

#### ○ The dismantling of the stone chamber

Excavations to take out the stone chamber have been underway since October 2006, and in parallel to the excavation, the process of dismantling the stone chamber has started from April 2007. On the 5th of the same month, with the ceiling stone as the start, pieces were taken out one after another. By June, all of the national treasure murals were brought to a temporary repair facility, with the final four floor stones taken out in August, completing the dismantling of the stone chamber. This was the dismantling process:

- ① Cutting the ground (Separating the murals from the ground and other stones)
- ② Hauling (Using hauling devices)
- ③ Transferring (From insulated preservation house to the operation pedestals of the same height as the tumulus mound)
- ④ Wrapping/Rotation (Setting stones with a metal frame, then rotating the mural surface upwards)
- ⑤ Transporting with special transport vehicle
- ⑥ Bringing to repair facility

#### ○ Future developments

The murals that have been taken out will go through removals of mold marks as well as fortification treatments of weakened plasters. The tumulus mound after the excavation will be temporarily maintained by being refilled with sod.

In the future, initiatives will be taken to investigate the reasons for deterioration as well as the measures to prevent it, and to deal with the works of preserving/using the murals.



The hauling of the ceiling stones  
(28 May 2007)

### [The stripping of the Kitora kofun murals]

The Kitora kofun, similarly to the Takamatsuzuka kofun, is located in Asuka village, Nara prefecture and was constructed around the end of the 7th century. The star chart depicted on the ceiling of the chamber is considered East Asia's oldest. Additionally, it has been designated as a special historic site because of its representation of all Four Symbols – Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Black Tortoise and Vermillion Bird – that is a historically and academically valuable cultural property. Later investigations revealed that there is a depiction of Zodiac animal-headed figures with human bodies beneath the Four Symbols.

The murals within the Kitora kofun stone chambers have suffered considerable damage since its discovery, and swift preservation measures were considered essential. Based on the discussions made at the “Research committee for the preservation and usage of the special historic site, Kitora kofun,” there will be mold investigations in the stone chambers, as well as the stripping down of the murals one after another which have been underway since August 2004. Currently, all of the Four Symbols in addition to the Mouse, Ox, Tiger, Horse, Dog, and Boar of the Zodiac animal-headed figures with human bodies, are being taken down.

Currently as an emergency measure, spatulas, etc. are being used to strip off parts of the star chart on the ceiling that are in danger of falling down, in addition to the considerations being made in regards to the use of diamond bands/saws as means to strip off mural parts.

## **UNDESD: United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development**

Sustainable Development is a concept that denotes a development that fulfills the needs of the current generations, without losing the ability that fulfills the needs of future generations. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) supports this sustainability from an educational perspective, and is expected to take an overall initiative by joining various fields such as environmental education, education for international understanding, and human rights education together.

Based on the proposal made by Japan, the 57th session of the General Assembly of the UN held in December 2002 passed the resolution that sets the decade from 2005 to 2014 as the “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.” This resolution selected UNESCO as the lead agency for the promotion of the Decade of ESD, requests it to develop a draft international implementation scheme, and invites Governments to implement the Decade of ESD in their respective action plans.

Following this, the international implementation scheme that will be the guiding principle of specific measures of states were approved at the 172nd UNESCO Executive Board in September 2005.

With this in mind, in December 2005, the Inter-ministerial Network Conference mainly involving the Cabinet Secretariat; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; and the Ministry of the Environment was held. In March 2006, the “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development action plan in Japan” was put into effect.

Furthermore, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO compiled the suggestions in regards to promoting the international initiatives to be taken for the “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” in August 2007, and gave a proposal to the UNESCO Director-General. With this, Japan proposed a resolution that seeks to further promote education for sustainable development to UNESCO and its member states, collected 45 collaborative proposal states and was adopted at the UNESCO General Assembly held on October 2007.

In addition, the Basic Act on Education revised in December 2006 ordains as one of the educational objectives, “to foster an attitude to respect life, care for nature, and contribute to the protection of the environment” (Article 2). The School Education Law revised in June 2007 stipulates as one of the objectives of compulsory education, “to foster an attitude to respect life and nature, and contribute to the protection of the environment, as well as promote activities which provide experience in nature, inside and outside of the school.

Currently, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, is propagating education towards the persons concerned with education, and promoting the actual practice of learning through experience in the local community, as well as supporting initiatives in higher education institutions based on the action plans in Japan.

## The International Student Policy as a National Strategy

As of May 2006, approximately 120,000 international students are studying at institutions of higher education in Japan, higher than the target number expected in the “Plan to Accept 100,000 international students” formulated in 1983.

Recently the international student exchange policies have been spotlighted at various governmental conferences. In the “The second report of the Education Rebuilding Council” (Education Rebuilding Council, June 1, 2007) and “Asian Gateway Initiative” (Council for the Asian Gateway Initiative, May 16, 2007), it was proposed that the policy on the international students exchange should be drawn up and promoted as a national strategy, not only for education, but also for foreign policies, industrial policies and so on. As a result, this proposal was also included in the “Economic and Fiscal Reform 2007” (cabinet approval on June 19, 2007). Japan’s policy on international student exchange is at a major turning point.

As stated in the proposal above, we must keep in mind the standpoint of foreign policies and industrial policies as well as educational policies, and we are up to the stage where our international student exchange must be strategically carried out as a nation. For example, we must explore the acceptance of international students that is linked closely with foreign policy and is able to deal with the global affairs of the time. In addition, we must also proceed on with discussions on the international student exchange support systems focusing on Japan’s globally competitive fields.

While we must maintain our expansion course of international student exchange from the perspective of increasing Japan’s global contribution, we should secure the quality of international students and avoid just simply increasing the number of students. Therefore, we must build systems to prioritize the support of top international students, and thoroughly manage their enrollment. Furthermore, it is necessary to discuss new support measures including the double-degree system so as to promote an effective inter-university relationship and highly demanded short-term study abroad in response to the continuous globalization in our world today.

To deal with these issues, MEXT has launched discussion mentioned above at a newly-created international student working group under the Central Education Council University Subdivision, and will work hard by combining the strengths of related institutions for a national strategy suitable for our nation’s condition.

