

Journey So Far: JICA Friendship Scholars' Association (JICA-FSA)

JICA-FSA has been established as a student support system by-and-for the receipts of JICA Friendship Scholarship. The envision of JICA-FSA is to enable a constructive platform, building strong networking of IITH scholars through guidance and mentorship program. JICA-FSA is thriving to extend a support system to IITH students interested in pursuing their higher studies in Japan. Association is also involved in establishing IITH Alumni Japan Chapter and has organized Alumni meet in November 2019.

Why Association: In the CONNECT-IITH 2016, none of the graduated scholars were present as they were not invited. Thus, their absence intrigues the sense of disconnect between the scholar and the project. This disconnect was never felt earlier in the project since its inception in 2012. Till 2015, all of the scholars were the student and they had formed an informal community to discuss their issues and problem. In order to fill the void and to give a structure to the informal community, discussion to have an association triggered within scholars. **Inception:** An idea to have a formal association for JICA Friendship Scholarship receipts was discussed in the length at CONNECT-IITH-2017 in Kyoto, which was moderated by Dr. Mahendra Kumar Pal (the University of Tokyo).

A few ideas which were explored are-1. establishing an association comprising of already graduated scholars meaning an alumni network, 2. creating a team of senior members who can mentor current scholars and 3. putting a team of enthusiastic members representative in each region who can connect current and graduated scholars and IITH students.

Dr. Tanima Biswas (Waseda University), Dr. Swapnil Ghodke (Nagoya University) and Dr. Nitish Rajoria (Keio University) volunteered to represent the association and choose to go with

the idea of the mentorship program.

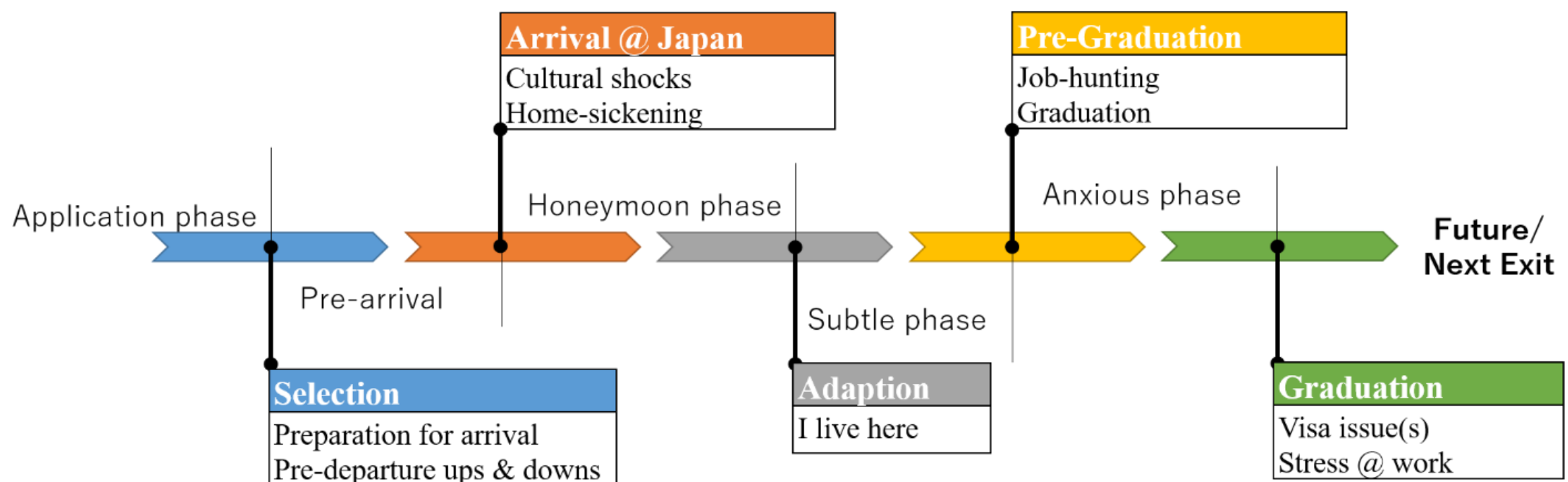
With a month-long effort, a team of mentors residing in various part of Japan namely Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Sendai and Kyushu was put in placed to pave the path forward.

Evolution and features: Change is the law of nature and JICA-FSA is no indifferent. Association has continued to evolve based upon the internal discussion and feedbacks from scholars to form a vibrant proactive team. Dr. Mohit Joshi (Kyoto University), Dr. Sai Chandra Teja (Osaka University) and Dr. Mahendra Kumar Pal (University of Tokyo) were tapped upon to revamp the association. Team formulated the mission and vision of the association to address the new issues faced by the scholars based upon their experience and interaction with scholars.

Team further proposed an organizational structure which comprises three teams- Management Team, Executive Team and Mentors' Team for hassle-free execution of association activities. This structure serves as the foundation of the association. The main activities of the Association include:

- To hold/assist an annual meeting (CONNECT IITH);
- To coordinate and exchange information among members and its chapters throughout Japan and between the Association and IITH.
- To promote any other activity which meets the Association's objective.

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A comprehensive support system of JICA-FSA is a comprises of various assistance at a different stage during and beyond the scholars' stay in Japan. Following schematic diagram illustrating the nature of assistantships provided at a different stage of scholars' life.

Current Team: JICA-FSA is currently being run by a vibrant enthusiastic team of scholars and team members are:

1. Mr. Atul Singh, Tohoku University, Sendai
2. Dr. Brijesh Sharma, Osaka University, Osaka, Analytical Engineer, Horiba Advance, Techno
3. Mr. Surya Pratap Singh, Kyoto University, Kyoto
4. Dr. G. Pruthiviraj, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo Japan
5. Dr. Vikas Kuntal, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
6. Ms. Bhargavi Thakur, The University of Tokyo, Asst. Manager, JR East

Timeline: Back in 2014, an event titled "Human Resource Forum" was envisioned, designed and executed by Ms. Junko Komoto, then coordinator of FRIENDSHIP Project. The primary objectives of the event were to create a platform to showcase the collaborative activities of IIT H with Japan and to facilitate the job-hunting of scholarship students.

The event was renamed to CONNECT-2015 IITH-Japan Industry-Academia Interaction Seminar by Mrs. Miki Matsuo, then project coordinator. The event spanned over two days, in which the first day was dedicated to job-hunting, interactive session for scholars (Knowledge sharing seminar), and the second day was dedicated to IITH-Japan Industry-Academia Interaction.

Since 2016, the CONNECT-IITH event has been redesigned and the current event is comprising of cultural activities on the first day while the second day is reserved for industry-visit and job-hunting activities. The scholars are introduced to HRs of various reputed companies and are advised to discuss the job-opportunities.

In 2017, scholars visited Myoshin-Ji Temple, one of the biggest temples in Kyoto and practised ZEN, meditation. In 2018, scholars paid a visit to Miraikan - The National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo.

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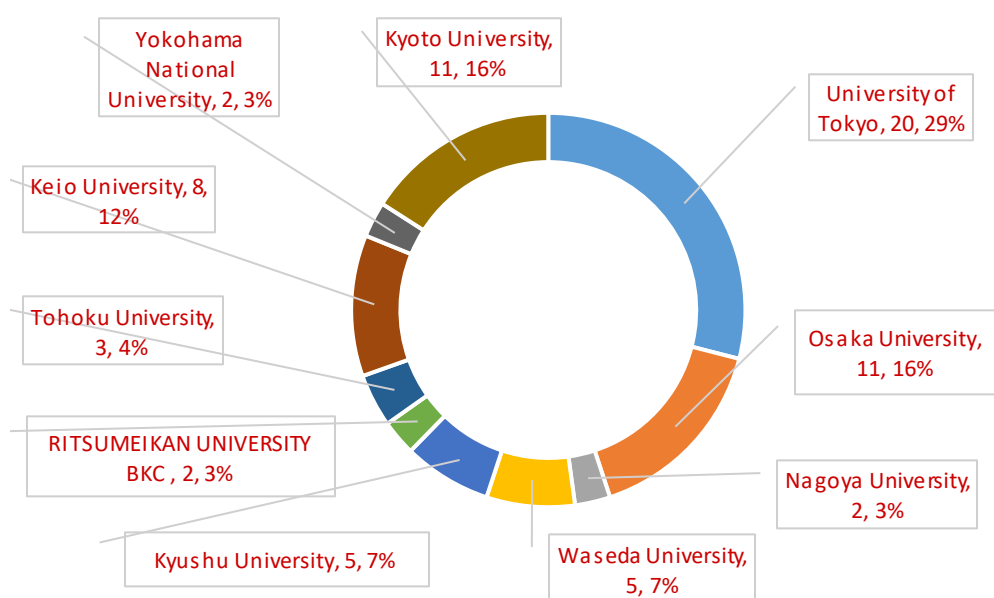
In 2019, JICA-FSA organized the CONNECT-IITH event in Tokyo and hosted Prof. B. S. Murty, Director, Prof. Siva Kumar, Dean IAR, Prof. Sireesh Saride, Dean Planning for a dinner. This dinner was organized as “IITH Alumni Meet in Japan” and was attended by 100+ IITH graduates working and studying in Japan. An office-bearer of IITH Alumni Association participated virtually.

An office-bearer of Suzuki and Embassy of India, Tokyo also graced the event with their presence.

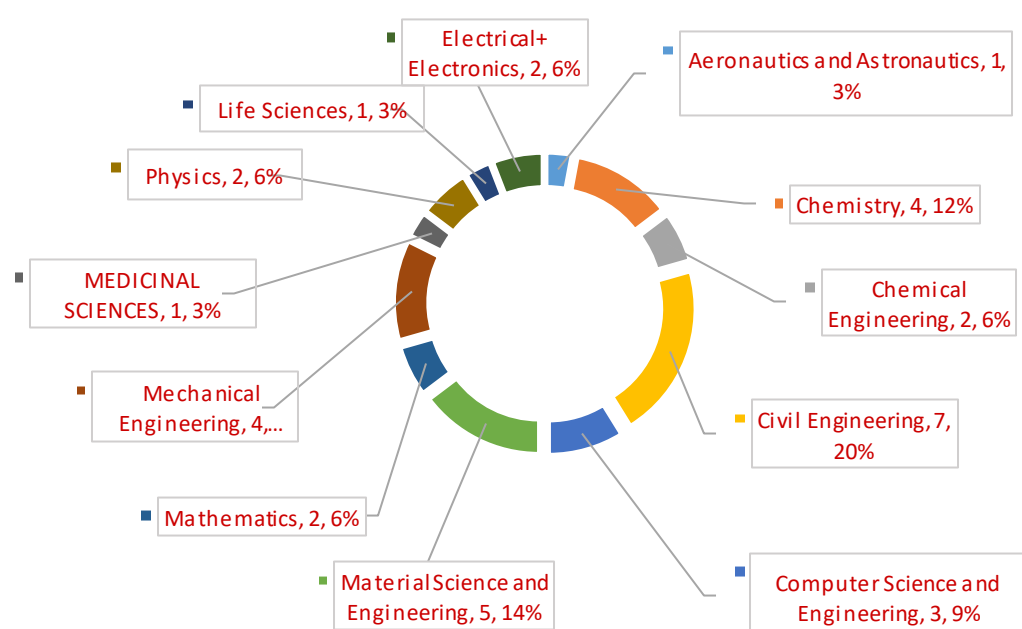
Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, CONNECT-IITH-2020 was organized virtually and attended by scholars in India and in Japan. The event also welcomed all IITH graduates who had secured admission in various prestigious universities in Japan. Prof. B.S. Murty, Prof. Pinaki Bhattacharya, Prof. C.K. Mohan, Prof. Siva Kumar, Prof. Kotaro Kataoka, JICA Official, Friendship Project coordinator and 100+ scholars attended the event.

For more details, please visit our homepage <http://www.jica-fsa.com/> or feel free to write to us @ jica.fsa@gmail.com You may also follow us on Facebook via <https://www.facebook.com/jica.fsa/>

Association in Numbers*



*(As of Aug 2020)
Numbers of enrolled scholars in different Japanese universities



Departments chosen by enrolled scholars



Dr. Mahendra Kumar Pal,
Researcher
Hyogo Earthquake Engineering Research Center (E-Defense)
National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Resilience (NIED)