

# SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN HOW TO FIGHT GLOBAL WARMING

Thai pupils taught ecofriendly ways of life at Toshiba camp in Japan



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PREMYUDA BOONROJ  
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As the clock ticked past midnight, several high-schoolers from Japan, Thailand, USA and Poland were still up working on articles for the "Act-Eco Journal". They wanted to show readers what they had learnt from fieldtrips about a greener lifestyle and attempts to tackle global warming.

The 3rd Toshiba International Youth Conference brought together 19 high school students and 11 teachers early this month to review, in a journalistic way, efforts in Japan to solve global environmental challenges. The theme was trying to halve CO2 emissions by 2050.

The camp, organised by non-profit organisation BeGood Cafe, started off at Josai Awa Kamokawa Learning Centre in Chiba prefecture.

These bright young minds explored, jotted down notes, and took photos of what they saw at a range of sites: from the simple and ecological community at "Kamokawa Nature Kingdom" amid Chiba's rich green mountains to the concrete jungle of metropolitan Tokyo. In the capital they visited the "Tokyo Uden 2017" bio-diesel scheme and a rooftop honey project in Ginza. They also visited Josai International University founder Mizuta Mikio's Japanese farmhouse, built 150 years ago, and the Toshiba Museum to see what modern technologies might be significant in the future.

Working in three groups - Lifestyle, Business/Politics, and Science/Technology, they produced articles about their fieldtrips for the camp journal at the end of each day.

On the fifth day, students interviewed Japanese congressman Mitsuji Ishida, who advocates renewable technologies and sustainable communities, plus Institute for Sustainable Energies Policy researcher Shota Furuya, and the president of an environmental advocacy company called Sustena, Miyako Maekita.

The idea of writing a journal came from feedback from previous years. The aim was to give students a sense

of accomplishing a mission and results they could share with others back at home, according to BeGood Cafe chairman Kiyoshi Shikita.

Tanachit Sangchan, from Assumption College in Lampang, said the journal made the camp positively different. It helped him to learn how to work with international friends and prepared him for a university workload.

Despite the tight schedule and pressing deadlines, the students managed to complete their tasks nicely, thanks to evenings of "sharing and reflection", in which they reviewed daily lessons and made suggestions for fellow campers' articles.

Thawatchai Sangdee, from Triam Udom Suksa School, said the "sharing and reflection" was a big help in exchanging details with others who may have seen different things during fieldtrips. He also wished that Thailand had similar intense-but-fun camps on environmental or developmental topics for youths.

The conference concluded with presentations by pupils from the eight schools that attended about practical measures and things to do later.

Shota Utsumi and Maya Hirohara, from Keio Shonan Fujisawa Senior High School, vowed to promote the concept of local production for local consumption to cut down CO2 emissions. Meanwhile, Hitashi First High School's Yusuke Horie and Mariko Kikuchi said they would start with small steps like using ecofriendly products and organising use of oil candle-making during the school festival. Waseda University Senior High School's Shinya Hara, Ritaro Kasai and Takumi Nagashima said they considered recycling used oil from their school cafeteria.

School for Environmental Studies' Diana Eng, Ashley Hernandez, Nina Luksanapol and Alejandro eyed spreading the word about sustainable lifestyles with friends and families. They also thought of organising a weekend environmental conference for New York high school pupils, and doing small but key things such as keeping a rooftop garden, buying pro-

duce from local farmers' markets, and reducing use of plastic bags.

Students Arkadiusz Kacala and Jakub Ubysz said the camp made them realise that Poland's simple countryside lifestyle could be good for a sustainable future and they could still prevent environmental problems back home. The Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technology's Anastazja Karolewska and Aleksander Martyniak said they would explain what they learnt to peers and urge them to engage in ecological movements.

Triam Udom Suksa School's Supawich Wongkietkachorn and Thawatchai Sangdee said they would start a "no-plastic bag" campaign at school and promote the exchange of local products in their communities.

And Assumption College Lampang's Teerapat Sutjaluk and Tanachit Sangchan said they would collect old cooking oil from the school canteen and do a science project on Vegetable Diesel Fuel (VDF), which reduces CO2 by 2.62 kg per litre.

After this year, all schools - mostly selected because of their consistent engagement in environmental activities - would change, except Polish schools that joined this conference for the second year, as each school has to participate for three consecutive years, Toshiba International Foundation president Fumihiko Namekawa said. While students take turns each year to attend, teachers will remain the same in order to ensure consistency and teachers' deeper understanding, he said.

Teachers at the conference had a chance to enhance abilities to promote environmental and scientific education, plus intercultural communication and networking through workshops held by the Japan Centre for International Exchange.

Next year, the conference will be held in Japan and Toshiba Thai Foundation is looking to send members of Thai non-government groups to learn how to organise such events to pave the way for Thailand to host the camp some time in the future, or have the ability to organise a similar event on a national scale, Toshiba Thai Foundation chief Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul said.

## POPULAR SCIENCE F... BE TAKEN TO CITIES

In their uniforms, young students smiled happily when their buses arrived at Bitec in Bang Na. Around them were students from other provincial schools, getting off the buses to catch a glimpse of Thailand's advanced technology exhibited at the National Science Fair 2010, which is being held until next Sunday.

If the Abhisit government is to be commended for anything, it is its concrete efforts to allow these underprivileged students to witness developments outside the classroom.

Starting in the 2009 fiscal year, the Education Ministry has been allocated an average Bt345 budget per head to promote extra-curricular and field studies. This recognises the fact that students, confined in classrooms, can rarely learn how to be creative. The result is most of them would be left behind forever. When they enter the labour market, it will be flooded with inexperienced and low-skilled people, and that shackles the country with low national competitiveness.

Based on the 12 million students nationwide who attend Basic Education Commission and private schools, the programme needs a budget of Bt4.14 billion a year. By contrast, each year, the government pays out about Bt60 billion for the medical bills of civil servants.

There is no question that this investment is worthwhile, when you see the smiles on the visiting students' faces and their enthusiasm, particularly when they participate in scientific experiments.

Exploring new technology in spacious exhibition areas is expected to feed enthusiasm to pursue further knowledge. Unlike children in the capital, who are accustomed to shopping complexes - where fairs are an indispensable feature, and museums and many other events are available year-round, it's rare for provincial

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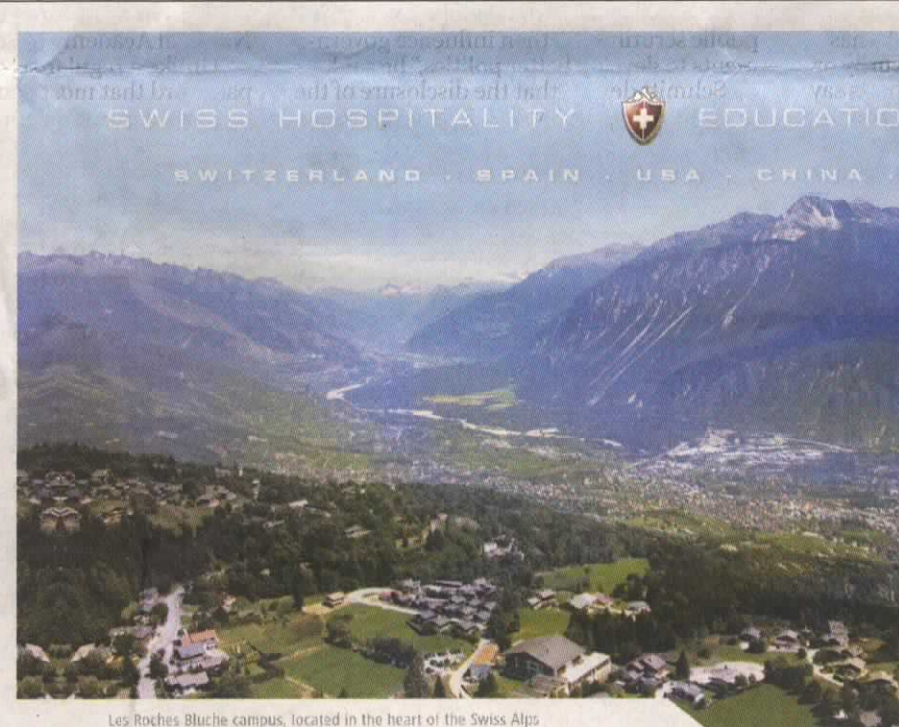
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