



Masters in Maritime Safety and Security

Japan provides a training and education program for officers of Asian coast guard agencies and is seeking international cooperation in a bid to ensure safety and security at sea in Asia.

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TANKERS and container ships carrying commodities, such as oil, foodstuffs and manufactured goods, travel back and forth through the sea lanes connecting the Middle East and Asia. These are vital routes, not only for Japan but also for the global economy. However, problems including piracy, smuggling, accidents at sea and environmental pollution are occurring in the waters through which these sea lanes pass. How to guarantee safety in the waters has become a major issue.

To solve these problems, Japan offers various

- 1 Students in the third Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program visit the Haneda Air Base of the JCG.
- 2 Students in the third Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program exchange opinions.
- 3 Students in the first Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program pay a courtesy call to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (center) in September 2016.

Photos: Courtesy of Japan Coast Guard

forms of assistance to countries with coastlines in the waters concerned. For example, Japan provides countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam with patrol boats. In addition, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) work together to provide training related to the issues, including crackdowns on crimes at sea, disaster prevention and rescue, and hydrographical surveys, to the staff members of coast guard agencies in the respective countries, in Japan. They also dispatch JCG staff members to the respective countries as JICA experts in an attempt to help the coast guard agencies there build up their organization and provide the bodies with support in the area of personnel training.

JICA and the JCG began implementing the Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program in collaboration with the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in 2015. This Program is a one-year master's course for junior coast guard officers from the JCG and coast guard agencies in the respective Asian countries. The Program is aimed at training personnel equipped with advanced practical and applied

knowledge related to maritime safety and security, analytical and problem-solving abilities, and international communications skills. At the same time, the Program promotes cooperation with the respective countries. A master's program for the junior officers of coast guard agencies is a rarity worldwide. In the past two completed Programs, the Master of Policy Studies has been awarded to a total of sixteen students in the Program who came from Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

The students study basic subjects, including international law of the sea, international security studies, and international relations, at GRIPS in Tokyo for the first six months. In the remaining six months, they take lessons more closely related to maritime safety and security practice, such as the policy for search and rescue, salvage and maritime disaster prevention and the maritime police policy at the Japan Coast Guard Academy in Hiroshima Prefecture. The students also write a policy paper equivalent to a master's thesis as part of the Program.

A range of cases on maritime safety and security, such as piracy and oil spills at sea, are taken up in a case-study lesson on maritime safety and security policy. The lesson places emphasis on the students thinking up solutions for the cases provided and discussing them with the other students.

"There were clashes of opinions among the students because each country has different religions, cultures and systems," remembers Hiroaki Onodera, Assistant Director for International Cooperation at the JCG, who took part in the first Program. "But our understanding of each other deepened through discussions and the experience of living together. Our training period is over, but we remain bound by strong ties as members of the same class."

A total of seven staff members from the JCG, the Philippine Coast Guard, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, Marine Department Malaysia and the Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG) are studying in the third Program, which commenced in October 2017.

Rajinda Daniel, one of the seven students, is in charge of coordinating coast guard units at the SLCG. Fishing and tourism take advantage of the

abundant marine resources that flourish on the coast of Sri Lanka. The waters are also an important marine transportation route. Japan has provided various forms of assistance to the SLCG, including the supply of patrol boats and technology transfers for protecting the marine environment.

Daniel says that oil spill response has improved dramatically in Sri Lanka thanks to training provided by the JCG related to the prevention of oil spills and how to respond to them. Daniel notes that he applied for the Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program because he was convinced that he could learn a lot of policies from Japan.

About six months have passed since Daniel arrived in Japan. He says that he is improving his skills in analyzing matters from an international perspective through information exchanges with fellow Program students from other countries, in addition to gaining knowledge about international law and learning ways of dealing with problems that occur at sea.

Daniel says that he plans to study search and rescue at sea, which is underdeveloped in Sri Lanka, as the theme of his policy paper, adding that he hopes to reflect the outcome of this study on his country's policies and disseminate the knowledge he has gained in Japan to a large number of his juniors after returning to Sri Lanka.

A network for a peaceful, safe sea is spreading across the waters in Asia. 



Hiroaki Onodera (right) of the JCG, who took part in the first Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program, with Rajinda Daniel, a staff member of the Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG) who is participating in the third Program.

Photo: Hiroshi Sakurai