

Thai Ambassador to Japan Suvidhya Simaskul Visits AIST Tsukuba

On May 11, 2005, Mr. Suvidhya Simaskul, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to Japan, visited AIST Tsukuba, with the Minister-Counsellors of Industry, of Agriculture. They received an explanation of the AIST research strategies and the collaboration with Asian countries from Senior Vice President Kodama, International Affairs Department Director-General Matsuo, and Research Coordinator Kamimoto. With regard to the general agreements that AIST concluded last year with the two Thai research institutes, both parties actively exchanged views on the promotion of joint research between Japan and Thailand. Ambassador Suvidhya expressed his country's intention to

consider financial support to facilitate such joint research activities.

After the meeting, the party toured Science Square Tsukuba, followed by a visit to the Research Center for Photovoltaics where they were shown the power generation research facilities, and a pilot plant to generate hydrogen and methane concurrently from food waste. The ambassador's tour ended with a stop at an exhibit displaying a diesel engine that operates on dimethyl ether (DME) and a ride on a DME diesel microbus.



Czech Vice Education Minister Kolar Visits AIST Tsukuba

On May 25, 2005, Dr. Kolar, the Vice Minister of Education of the Czech Republic, visited AIST Tsukuba, together with delegates from the country's science academy, universities and research institutes. AIST's Senior Vice President Kodama and International Affairs Department Director-General Matsuo offered them an explanation of the organization's transition from a government agency to an independent administrative institution and its ongoing reforms. The Czech side responded with many questions and a frank description of the issues faced within the Czech Republic, such as the reform of universities with centuries of history and difficulty in coping with changes in research institutes caused by changes in social structure.

The party toured Science Square Tsukuba, admiring technologies achieved through AIST's research in measurement standards, robotics, environmental



conservation, and collaboration between the medical and the engineering organizations. They showed particular interest in robotic technologies because the term "robot" is derived from the Czech language. At the end of the visit, the vice minister expressed his earnest hope that AIST would dispatch a delegation to the Czech Republic in order to understand the country's state of research and development and create a close partnership.

Egyptian Foreign Trade and Industry Minister Rachid Visits AIST Tokyo Waterfront

Mr. Rachid Mohamed Rachid, the Minister of Foreign Trade and Industry of the Arab Republic of Egypt, visited AIST Tokyo Waterfront on July 21. The minister was briefed by Vice-President Nakajima and others on the history and reform of AIST. His questions and opinions referred mainly to how AIST, as a publicly funded research institute, should utilize its intellectual assets.

Mr. Rachid then examined the displays of AIST's research on exhibit in AIST Tokyo Waterfront and showed particular

interest in the high-definition immersive 3D display, the micro-tubular fuel cell, the density standard based on a silicon sphere, and the robot seal "Paro".

He was also interested in the research activities at other AIST sites and instructed the accompanying embassy staff to arrange a visit to other AIST research centers including the one in Tsukuba the next time an Egyptian delegate comes to Japan.



Norwegian Education and Research Minister Clemet visits AIST Tsukuba

On May 30, 2005, Ms. Clemet, the Minister of Education and Research of the Kingdom of Norway, visited AIST Tsukuba, together with Norwegian Ambassador to Japan Grutle and others. AIST's Senior Vice President Kodama and International Affairs Department Director-General Matsuo offered them an explanation of the organization's reforms and research strategies, which was followed by an active discussion on scientific and technological research and development. After Director Owadano of the Energy Technology Research Institute outlined his organization's research activities, Senior Research Scientist Sakai from the Institute's Fuel Cell Group, who was present there at the



strong request of the Norwegian side, made a presentation describing her research and her interaction with Norwegian scientists, including her experience during her stay in Norway as a student. Ms. Clemet praised the presentation and emphasized the importance of the involvement of the younger generation in research collaborations.

While the minister expressed some frank opinions, including remarks on the small number of female scientists at AIST, the meeting was held in a congenial atmosphere. Ms. Clemet ended her visit by referring to the discussion as having been very frank and fruitful.