

## Young Rate Leisure Higher than Salary

Young Japanese are strongly leisure-oriented and prefer to work for companies which have a five-day workweek system—even at lower pay—rather than the more common six-day week, according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Labor.

The survey was conducted in June among students who will be starting their first jobs next spring. The students were at nine universities, nine junior colleges or higher technical schools, and nine senior high schools—three each in Tokyo, Aichi and Osaka Prefectures.

As many as 66.2% of those surveyed said they would opt for jobs with lower wages if it meant they could have ample leisure time. Asked what factors would influence them in choosing their future employer, 79.5% of the respondents said they would attach the greatest importance to whether or not a company is on a five-day workweek.

One question cited the example of Company A, which has two days off a week but offers lower wages, and Company B, which offers higher wages but gives only one day off a week. The biggest number of respondents, 38.8%, said they would prefer to work for Company A if the wage difference with Company B was between ¥10,000 and ¥20,000 (\$70-\$140 at the rate of ¥140/\$) per month. Five percent replied that they would choose Company A even if the wage difference was greater than ¥40,000 (\$285). Averaged out, the young people would prefer to work for a company with a five-day workweek system if the wage difference was up to ¥18,000 (\$130) a month, which would be 13-14% of the average starting salary.

## MITI Office to Help Asian Computer Trainees

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry plans to establish an office next fiscal year to handle administrative details relating to foreign computer software engineers coming for training in Japan, most of them from Asian countries.

The proposed office will serve as the central agency to manage the training of foreign computer software engineers at private companies in Japan. Currently all matters related to such training are left to the private companies accepting the trainees.

MITI said that such a central office is necessary to prevent Japanese companies from hiring such trainees without authorization. The ministry is reportedly concerned that the current chronic shortage of computer software engineers may prompt companies to employ the Asian trainees as substitutes for Japanese engineers.

At the same time, the proposed office is expected to help promote coordination with Asian countries in the field of computer software, such as the transfer of computer technology.

Training of the foreign computer software engineers accepted through this office will be financed by official development assistance (ODA) funds and the training term will be extended to three years from the present term of two years, in accordance with the upgrading of software.

The office will also help make various arrangements concerning the trainees such as the issuance of guarantees for their visas.

## Small Farmers Keep Declining

The number of Japanese agricultural households continues to decline, but while there are fewer small farmers the number of large-scale farmers is on the rise, according to an annual government survey.

The survey, conducted as of January 1, 1989, by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, put the number of farming households at 4,194,000, down 1.1% from a year before. The number has been falling by around 1% a year since 1975, when the Japanese economy entered a phase of stable growth.

The survey showed a particularly sharp drop—down 5% to 574,000—in the number of farming families also engaging in nonfarming business but depending on agriculture as their primary source of income. The number of specialized farming households fell 1.7% to 603,000.

Agricultural families with a total farming area of 2.5 to 3.0 hectares increased 0.8% in number and those with more than 3.0 hectares grew 3.7%. The category of more than 5.0 hectares showed a 9.6% surge. But smaller categories with less than 2.5 hectares all went down. The figures excluded the northernmost main island of Hokkaido, where there has traditionally been a preponderance of large-scale farmers.

The ministry says the results of the survey reflect an increasingly severe agricultural climate due to mandatory cuts in rice-farming acreage, continued price reductions for rice and liberalization of farm produce imports. It predicts that the reduction in small farmers and the rise in the number of larger farmers will accelerate along with progress in import decontrol.



## Food Imports, Labels To Face New Checks

In a move to ensure the safety of swelling food imports, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries plans to launch a probe into how countries exporting farm produce to Japan are controlling agricultural chemicals and food additives, as well as the labeling of foods. The investigation is to start in fiscal 1990, which begins next April 1.

The probe will start with the collection and analysis of data gathered from Japanese embassies in exporting countries and overseas offices of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). Ministry officials say regulations on farm chemicals and food additives differ widely from country to country.

The ministry also plans to enhance its food surveillance system in order to check whether labels attached to imported foods match the actual contents. For this purpose, it plans to obtain new equipment such as gas chromatographic analyzers. The ministry will also accept requests from local governments and consumer organizations to carry out analysis on imported food products.



## Survey Shows Rise In Foreign Residents

The number of foreigners living in Japan totaled a record 941,005 at the end of 1988, according to a survey by the Immigration Bureau of the Justice Ministry.

The figure, accounting for 0.8% of Japan's population, represented an increase of 8.5% from 1986 when the previous survey was conducted.

People from Asian countries, most of whom were born in Japan, topped the list of foreign residents with 868,000, accounting for an overwhelming 92.2% of the total, followed by those from North America with 37,000 (4%), and those from Europe with 22,000 (2.3%).

The number of permanent residents declined, but temporary residents like students, trainees and entertainers increased sharply. There was a particular increase of Chinese students and Filipinos in the category of entertainers like dancers and singers.

The number of foreigners married to Japanese nationals also increased.



## MITI to Promote Pacific Design Swap

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry plans to promote exchanges with Pacific Rim countries, particularly those in Southeast Asia, in the field of design as part of measures to expand imports and cement cultural ties.

The plans include the establishment next year of a "Pacific Rim Committee for the Promotion of Design Culture Exchanges" to be organized by Japanese businesspeople, designers, artists and researchers. The committee will sponsor a design culture exchange conference by inviting designers, scholars and other persons concerned with design from Asian countries.

At the same time, the committee will dispatch a design exchange mission, made up of Japanese designers and corporate market planners, to Asian countries to give local designers advice on how to develop designs meeting the tastes of Japanese consumers and help them produce commodities marketable in Japan.

MITI hopes that such activities of the committee will not only help expand Japan's imports of manufactured goods from Asian countries but also promote cultural exchanges with these countries.



## Merger Will Make Second-Biggest Bank

Mitsui Bank, Japan's seventh-largest commercial bank in terms of outstanding deposits, and Taiyo Kobe Bank, the eighth-largest, have agreed to merge next April 1. The two banks' combined deposits at the end of last March totaled ¥36,891.6 billion (\$298,025 million according to *American Banker* magazine), making the merged bank the world's second-largest after Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank, also of Japan.

The total number of the two banks' domestic branches is larger than that of Dai-ichi Kangyo. The merged bank is to be known as Taiyo Kobe Mitsui Bank for the time being, with a new permanent name to be decided within three years.

The merger will give holders of Taiyo Kobe stock eight Mitsui shares for every 10 Taiyo Kobe shares; stockholders in Mitsui will receive 10 Taiyo Kobe shares for every eight Mitsui shares.

The merger is aimed at two goals: expanding the scope of banking operations, and boosting capital adequacy in accordance with the capital-to-assets ratio and other universal rules laid down by the Bank for International Settlements.

Taiyo Kobe's president, Yasuo Matsushita, said the merger "is designed to build up a strong and flexible management base that will enable us to cope with any change stemming from remarkable progress in the liberalization and internationalization of finance."

The merger will widen the gap between large and small banks among Japan's 13 biggest commercial banks. Banking industry officials say there is a possibility of further bank mergers in the future, including smaller banks merging between themselves and large banks absorbing small ones.