

---

## The Netherlands and Japan Strengthen Relations Through Sport at a Wheelchair Basketball Event Held as Part of the Sport for Tomorrow Programme

---



Photo from Sport for Tomorrow Consortium

As part of the Sport for Tomorrow programme, a Wheelchair Basketball Experience event was held on 9 November 2015 to mark the official visit to Japan of the Prime Minister of the Netherlands His Excellency Mark Rutte. The event was hosted jointly by the Japanese Paralympic Committee and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Japan at the Shiba Junior & Senior High School, in Tokyo's Minato ward. Players from both the Dutch and Japanese national teams taught 30 children the basic techniques of the sport and the children then had the opportunity to try it out for themselves.

Japanese Wheelchair Basketball players, Kiyoshi Fujisawa and Wataru Horie, and Dutch national team members, Marc van de Kuilen and Mustafa Korkmaz with team manager Toine Klerks first demonstrated how to pass basketballs and shoot baskets from a wheelchair to 30 elementary and junior high school children, 15 each from Japan and Netherlands. The children then played a match with these players and experienced the excitement of the sport firsthand. The players also played a 2x2 match, and the watching children were amazed to see the skills and intensity of Wheelchair Basketball.

Under the theme “Japan and the Netherlands Connecting through Sports,” the aim of the event was to send the message that sport fosters health, social unity and self-esteem. It also highlighted how anyone can enjoy the benefits of sport regardless of physical impairment. Also in attendance were Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Japan

Radinck Jan van Vollenhoven, Japanese Paralympic Committee President Mitsunori Torihara, Japan Sports Agency Commissioner Daichi Suzuki, and Governor of Tokyo Yoichi Masuzoe.

The event was co-hosted by the Japanese Paralympic Committee and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Japan, with the cooperation of the Tokyo Metropolitan Sports Association for the Disabled, and the Japan Wheelchair Basketball Federation. It was also supported by the Dutch national government, which is promoting the enhancement of sporting ties between the Netherlands and Japan. The event has been recognised as an initiative of the Sport for Tomorrow programme, a Japanese government-initiated promotion for international cooperation through sport. The Sport for Tomorrow Consortium coordinated public and private sector member organisations to identify the best way for them to collaborate to ensure the event served as a valuable opportunity to promote the power of sport. Sport provides a wonderful outlet for persons with an impairment to become more engaged in social activities, and pioneers the way towards a fully inclusive society. Recognising these benefits, the consortium is working to effectively demonstrate the power of sport to act as a force for good through the Sport for Tomorrow programme. Kiyoshi Fujisawa, a member of the Japanese team at the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation Asia Oceania Championships, was delighted with the opportunity the event offered to the children: "It was fantastic to see children from different countries interact and get to know each other through Wheelchair Basketball. This kind of event really shows the true value of sport."

**For further inquiries, please contact:**

Weber Shandwick

Email: [sportfortomorrow@webershandwick.com](mailto:sportfortomorrow@webershandwick.com)

**About the Sport for Tomorrow Programme:**

The Sport for Tomorrow programme is one of the Japanese government's commitments to leveraging the power of sport and further promoting the Olympic and Paralympic movements to create a brighter future for people throughout the world. The programme aims to implement a variety of sporting events and activities that will engage over ten million people in over 100 countries spanning a seven-year period, culminating in 2020. This will enable Japan to achieve its objectives of providing assistance to developing countries, training future sports leaders at new international sports academies, and protecting both athletes and the integrity of sport by promoting global anti-doping initiatives. In 2014, the Sport for Tomorrow programme engaged some 520,000 worldwide people through its various activities.

**About the Sport for Tomorrow Consortium:**

The Sport for Tomorrow Consortium was launched in August 2014 in order to align the concerned organisations in both the public and private sectors with a common vision. Chaired by representatives of the Japan Sports Agency, the newly established government agency within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the consortium's Steering Committee is made up of key members of the Japanese sporting community with the remit of making the optimal use of existing resources. The Japan Sport Council serves as the consortium's secretariat.

###