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For proficiency in the Japanese language



HANDING OVER a visiting card is almost a ritual for businesspersons in Japan. "A business card is a person's identity," said T. Karthik, president, Nihongo Bashi Pte. Ltd., Singapore. "It is not to be carelessly thrown across the table towards the recipient or to be handled carelessly, but to be received with respect and put away carefully."

Treating with respect

He demonstrated the right way to hand over the card, holding it with the fingers of both hands with the name facing the recipient, and bowing slightly when the card was accepted. To treat the card with disrespect was to treat

the person with disrespect.

"Japanese people have protected their culture and become modern. They respect their elders and their society is hierarchical, in a similar way to South Indian society," Mr. Karthik said, adding that this was one reason why several professionals from the South found it easy to understand Japanese culture.

Japan was the second largest information technology market and was rapidly increasing its operations, so those who learnt the language would be at a great advantage when it came to doing business with the Japanese during the coming years.

There was not as much competition over going to Japan compared to going to the United States, so those who made an early start would be "getting on to a wave at the lower end" and being carried to the crest without much effort.

January next, Nihongo Bashi would launch a Japanese language programme at the PSG Institute of Management, offering students the option of studying in Japan so that they could absorb the language better by interacting with native speakers of the language. They would do half the course at PSGIM and the rest in Tokyo, Mr. Karthik said.

Cross-cultural workshops

There were plans to organise "cross-cultural workshops" for executives, to tell them how to cope with Japanese cultural issues that might be difficult for a foreigner to understand just by observation. There were also likely to be exchange programmes through university partners. Already, over 200 students at the college had been learning Japanese for the last two years, making PSGIM the biggest centre for the language in Coimbatore.

Engineering students

The course had attracted students from 14 engineering colleges in the region and even housewives had attended classes to get a basic knowledge of Japanese. The new course would give learners an advanced understanding of the language.

A.A. MICHAEL RAJ

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