

New warmth via research scheme

Tokyo

THE first meeting last month of the Joint High-Level Advisory Panel set up under the new US-Japan Science and Technology Agreement focused on problems of 'comparable access to common base technology' in Tokyo. But Japanese representatives also expressed interest in participation in research on global environmental change, a new area for Japan.

According to officials at Japan's Foreign Ministry, Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita has been advised that Japanese participation in research on the greenhouse effect and acid rain would be well received in the United States. Takeshita intends to host a conference on global environmental problems in Tokyo this year and may propose a joint US-Japan research programme when he visits Washington next month.

The fourteen members of the advisory panel include Deborah Wince-Smith, assistant director of the US Office of Science and Technology Policy, Mary Good, chair of the US National Science Board, and Robert White, president of the US National Academy of Engineering. Among the Japanese members are Michio Okamoto, former president of Kyoto University, Saburo Nagakura, president of the Graduate University of Advanced Studies, and Minoru Oda, president of the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research. Wince-Smith said that discussions had been "free" and "very positive" and that the group did not try to "revisit" the issues that made negotiation of the US-Japan agreement long and difficult. But several Japanese participants noted that the problem of "comparable access" was not easy to solve quickly.

Both nations would like to see equal access to each other's research at the 'generic' or 'pre-competitive' stage, that comes before 'applied research' generates actual products. The problem is that whereas US base technology is often developed in government laboratories, to which foreign researchers have access, much Japanese technology is developed in private companies closed to outsiders. The US government has considerable leverage even over research performed in private laboratories, as much of it is paid for by the Department of Defense funds. The same is not true in Japan.

Japanese panel members stressed that progress towards putting foreign researchers in company laboratories is likely to be slow, and that much discussion is needed. Some members believe the quickest way to increase joint access to basic research would be to strengthen Japan's university system. **Alun Anderson**

Foreign critics hit a nerve in self-conscious West Germany

Munich

FOREIGN researchers' eloquent criticisms of academic life and society have caused a stir in West Germany, a country unusually concerned about what foreigners think of it. The criticisms appear to have hit a raw nerve throughout the country, provoking a response of shame and self-analysis. West Germany has had to cope with a rising number of foreign workers and ethnic German 'returnees' from Eastern Europe.

The widely reported comments appear in a report (*Through the eyes of others: experiences of foreign researchers in Germany*) issued by the respected Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The non-profit foundation brings hundreds of researchers to West Germany every year for periods up to two years. It has supported more than 12,000 foreign researchers in the past 35 years.

The negative experiences described in the report stand in sharp contrast to the generally glowing reviews received in the past. This may in part be explained by the fact that Humboldt fellows have only recently been required to fill out questionnaires about their stay in Germany. Voluntary contributions formed the basis of earlier reports issued in 1965 and in 1977.

Although the overwhelming majority of researchers felt they profited from their stay in West Germany, the criticisms attracted the most attention. Most disturbing to West Germans was the increasing xenophobia and insensitivity that the researchers encountered in West German laboratories, libraries and on the streets.

One frequently quoted account was by a black South African scholar who first came to West Germany in 1958. He wrote that in his first three-year visit he had been openly confronted with racism only once and had struck up friendships with West Germans on the street and in the labour unions where he sometimes worked, leading him to consider West Germany his "second homeland". Twenty years later, he felt "wounded" by "harsh, unpremeditated words flung at him" in the streets.

Although his experiences are more extreme than many of those described by foreign researchers, the image of "material riches" accompanied by "emotional poverty" was a common theme in their reports.

In addition to its message for West German society at large, the report included criticisms of everyday university life. Comments such as "more confrontation than cooperation" and criticisms of the hierarchical organization were commonplace, especially from West European or North American researchers. One researcher wrote that "German professors are the last German kings".

Despite the criticisms, Heinrich Pfeiffer, general secretary of the Humboldt Foundation, said that in the past eight years the foundation has been "overrun with applications" from all over the world. It is at present planning a drive to raise money so that it can offer a hundred new fellowships to researchers from China and the Soviet Union. There have been growing numbers of applications to the foundation from both countries in recent years. **Steven Dickman**

Harvard group to teach Soviet diplomats

Boston

THE Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced that it will accept an offer by the Harvard Negotiation Project to conduct a five-day 'negotiation workshop' for mid-career Soviet diplomats in Moscow this spring.

Although bilateral cooperative efforts have lately been flourishing between the United States and the Soviet Union, negotiation skills of diplomats have not kept pace with the improved climate, according to the Negotiation Project's director Roger Fisher.

Fisher, a professor at Harvard Law School, says the new arrangement represents "a crucial, early step in the development of a needed skill", namely to learn "how to handle differences" between the two nations through diplomatic channels.

The negotiation workshop will be held at the Soviet Ministry's Diplomatic Academy in Moscow, which provides advanced training for experienced Soviet diplomats.

Among Fisher's suggestions for alternative processes are "pre-negotiations" where parties sit down together to reach a mutual understanding of the scope and quality of the outcome desired through the negotiation process. Fisher calls international conflict "a growth industry", and says that improving conflict resolution procedures is necessary "in order to make the civilized world work". Now that the Soviets have agreed to a workshop, the Negotiation Project wants to persuade the State Department of the United States to accept a similar arrangement. So far, the State Department has not accepted the offer.

Seth Shulman