

S&T to Be Supported by Society and the Public

Because of its dearth of natural resources, Japan has used its expertise in S&T as the driving force for development. This is still true today, and it is likely to remain so in the future. However, recent public opinion surveys have shown declining interest in S&T on the part of the general public, particularly among young people. Although most people think that S&T make contributions to society, few seem to feel a real affinity for S&T, and many feel a sense of unease at the rapid progress in these areas. In the light of this situation, the 3rd S&T Basic Plan emphasizes that S&T should be supported by the public and be perceived as being a benefit to society. The basic approach of the Plan is that the understanding

and support of the general public can be achieved in two ways: first, by ensuring that the achievements of R&D efforts do result in innovations that benefit society and the general public, and, second, by enhancing public accountability (for example, by explaining S&T policy and its achievements in an easy-to-understand manner). The CSTP cooperates with related institutions in conducting activities to encourage widespread interest in S&T on the part of the general public. Investigative research was conducted in order to deepen public understanding of S&T in 2006, and the results are being published.

Eliminating Scientific Misconduct

In recent years, scientific misconduct both at home and abroad has become a major problem facing society. Scientific misconduct destroys trust in S&T and has a major adverse effect on scientific and technical progress. It must never be permitted.

In the light of the current situation, the CSTP touched on measures to deal with this problem in its recommendations entitled "Basic S&T Policy" issued in December 2005. These measures are also clearly specified in the 3rd S&T Basic Plan. To quickly develop specific measures to deal with the problem, in February 2006 the CSTP finalized a basic policy entitled "Appropriate Measures to Deal with Scientific Misconduct," and provided its opinions and recommendations to relevant

ministries and agencies. In the future, relevant ministries and agencies will take appropriate action based on this basic policy.

Regarding the inappropriate use of research funds, the CSTP decided upon its measures to prevent the inappropriate use of research funds in August 2006, calling for the preparation of rules and thoroughness in institutional management of research funds by ministries and institutions. Furthermore, in order to eliminate illogical overlapping and excessive concentrations of research funds, a new system is being developed, centering principally on MEXT. Through these measures the government will act stringently to ensure thoroughness in the appropriate use of funds.

A Unique Activity

During the summer open days for children (August 23-24, 2007), Dr. Naoki Okumura of the CSTP held classes under the theme of "Let's enjoy science," with a view to letting the children who will lead Japan's future know about how interesting science is. The 21st century is sometimes called "the age of photonics or light," and the children were shown how light-based technologies such as optical fiber broadband IT and energy and environmental technologies such as solar cells play important roles in their daily lives. They learned that light becomes visible as well as invisible according to wavelength, and about the energy-saving features of the light emitting diodes (LED) used in modern traffic lights. They also

made their own simple spectrographs, and experienced the rainbow colors in the light around them.



Summer open days for children