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## Excursions

### Our first ever visit to Tokyo

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We are 4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate students from Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi who were awarded the EIIRIS Internship at Toyohashi Tech. Under the guidance of Professors Makoto Ishida and Adarsh Sandhu, of EIIRIS, we are both studying the synthesis and physical properties of graphene—the magic single layer of carbon that spawned the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2010.

We have enjoyed our stay in Toyohashi ever since the first day we landed at Nagoya Airport on May 15th. The tranquillity, green surroundings, and wide open skies at Toyohashi very refreshing. It's our first visit to Japan, and we have found that although Japanese people sometimes look slightly serious, in reality they are very friendly, polite, kind, and a pleasure to meet.

Last week we made our first trip outside Toyohashi: we visited Tokyo. One of the most dynamic and costliest cities in the world. One of our childhood dreams became a reality!

Our trip started with a ride on the bullet train or *Shinkansen*. It was too quick to even take a nap and we arrived at Shinagawa Station in Tokyo in about 80 minutes. We first visited one of Professor Sandhu's students at Tokyo Institute of Technology. Its museum and the 'cheesecake' library were amazing!

In the afternoon we visited the beautiful Meiji Shrine, where in spite of the rain, the trees and historic wooden structures produced a very soothing atmosphere. To our surprise, we found that some of the architecture of the buildings was simpler to that of such structures in India. We have learnt that shrines in Japan have big 'toris' at their entrances, which intriguingly is also a signature of the Buddhist architecture prevalent in India.

After Meiji Shrine we walked around some of the modern parts of Tokyo including Tokyo Tower near Roppongi, which reminded us of parts of Paris.

The next day we decided to have a ride on the jet-coasters at Fujiyuku Highland amusement park on the outskirts of Tokyo. Our hearts nearly popped out of our mouths at the first steep fall of the 'Fujiyama' roller coaster. Believe us, we have experienced a lot of roller-coasters, but this one was really scary! We saw Mt. Fuji too.

That evening we returned to Tokyo and went to the Odaiba beach area. Our walks around Tokyo led us to think that Japan has some excellent replicas of internationally recognizable icons, such as Tokyo Tower that resembles the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty in Odaiba. We look forward to seeing a replica of the Taj Mahal!

Next morning, we visited the Asakusa area and took photographs near the the sensational 'Sky Tree' really is an engineering marvel. We also walked around Senso-ji Temple, where ambience resembled Indian pilgrim centres. The market around the temple was an excellent place to buy traditional Japanese souvenirs.

Finally, we went to 'Akihabara' the Okatu's hub of Tokyo. Apart from the anime-market, every electronic gadget we could think of was on sale. We also scanned for the café-maids. After shopping at Akihabara, we took the last Shinkansen to Toyohashi and bid goodbye to the city of sky-scrapers.

In a nut-shell, we loved Tokyo. We have been to Paris too. Both seemed to be equally lively, Paris seemed to be more cultural, but in terms infrastructure and the use of technology, Tokyo is really better and far more complex.

Finally, we would like to thank Toyohashi Tech, and EIIRIS in particular for giving us this opportunity to conduct research here, and see the sights of this fascinating country.



Mr Chandra Prakash at the entrance to Meiji Shrine



Ms Gauri N. Patwardhan at Odaiba in front of Tokyo beach



In front of the Sky Tree in Tokyo