

## Japanese contribute to local UP projects

UP maintains good relations with various countries as part of its vision to be internationally competitive. Japan has recently made a significant contribution to learning and research at the institution when scientists of this country visited the Department of Geography, Geoinformatics and Meteorology in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. Furthermore, the Japanese Embassy made it possible for the University's Vision 20/20 Clinic to purchase much-needed ophthalmic examination equipment with a generous donation.

## Embassy donates to UP's Vision 20/20 Eye Clinic

UP's Vision 20/20 Eye Clinic, based at the Pretoria West Hospital, has acquired ophthalmic examination equipment thanks to a donation made by the Japanese Embassy. It is valued at more than R420 000 and will be used to identify eye deficiencies like cataracts.

Through its Department of Ophthalmology, the University of Pretoria and the Gauteng Department of Health formed a public-private partnership to perform cataract surgery at the Pretoria West Hospital. This manifested in the Vision 20/20 Eye Clinic. The clinic serves a large community in Tshwane and the surrounding areas.

Vision 20/20 is the global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness, a programme of the World Health Organisation (WHO) formed many years ago. The term '20/20 vision' is used to express normal visual acuity, that is the clarity or sharpness of vision, measured at a distance of 20 feet. According to the WHO, about 80% of blindness is avoidable, as it results either from conditions that could have been prevented or that can be controlled by applying interventions such as cataract operations.

Prof Polla Roux, head of the Department of Ophthalmology, mentioned that half of the blind people in the country have already been cured by cataract operations. "To have advanced examination equipment like this is thus very important," said Prof Roux.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Japanese Embassy, His Excellency, Mr Toshiro Ozawa, acknowledged the relationship the embassy has with the University of Pretoria and the Vision 20/20 Eye Clinic. He said the Japanese Embassy was "well aware of the Vision 20/20 mission of campaigning for a right to sight, which is a global campaign with the objective of eliminating avoidable blindness by the year 2020".

Prof Cheryl de la Rey, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University, thanked the Japanese Embassy for its contribution. She said the Vision 20/20 Project illustrates the fact that by working together we can do more. This can be achieved by providing the best resources to eradicate and address a burden of diseases, especially among the poor.



Prof Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UP and the Japanese Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Toshiro Ozawa, unveil the plaque at the Vision 20/20 Ophthalmic Unit.

## Scientists contribute to local capacity development

A group of highly qualified Japanese scientists from the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC) visited the University of Pretoria to contribute to undergraduate learning, postgraduate supervision and world-class research in the Department of Geography, Geoinformatics and Meteorology (GGM).

The capacity development visit to UP from 23 February to 1 March 2011 forms part of a broader Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS) Project between South Africa (Department of Science and Technology (DST)) and Japan (the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)). The project focuses on climate variability and extends over a period of three years (2010 to 2013).

Prof Motoyoshi Ikeda of JAMSTEC and former dean of the Graduate School of Environmental Earth Science of the Hokkaido University has already presented guest lectures to UP students in meteorology and environmental sciences, while Drs Motoki Nagura, Wataru Sasaki and Satyaban Ratna of JAMSTEC gave valuable advice to UP's postgraduate students in special work sessions. A similar delegation will visit the University again later this year, as well as in the following years of the project.