



Japanese undergraduate Toshimi Kikuchi (centre), 21, with (from left) NTU alumna Claire Neubronner, 23, NTU students Carissa Loh, 22, and Lim Meng Jiat, 23, and NUS alumna Soh Wanwei, 24. Ms Kikuchi, who was here on a week-long student exchange programme, was moved to tears on receiving a farewell present from Ms Soh. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

They meet again after trip to quake-hit Japan

By KEZIA TOH

IT WAS a desolate picture – children kicking a soccer ball amid rubble, wrecked cars and broken household items.

Yet for third-year Singapore Management University (SMU) undergraduate Alan Hii, 23, the scene at Iwate prefecture in Japan after the March 11 tsunami last year also gave him hope.

“It was such a depressing scene but the children managed to find joy in the middle of it, which was very admirable,” he said.

Mr Hii was part of a group of 100 Singaporean students who participated in a trip to quake-hit Japan in August last year.

Called Singapore Youth Ambassador for Tohoku, the programme was organised by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Japan National Tourism Organisation and the Japanese Embassy in Nassim Road.

The students were split into three groups and each headed to a different prefecture – Iwate, Yamagata and Akita – in the hilly Tohoku region, the hardest hit by

the disaster.

Together with the local residents, they helped clear debris left behind from the disaster. They also attended quake-related talks at the universities there.

Yesterday, more than 20 Singaporean students who participated in the trip met up again with eight Japanese undergraduates whom they had met while in Japan last year.

They were here as part of a week-long student exchange programme, which ended yesterday.

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