

KIZUNA

Linking Japan and the World



JAPAN GOV
THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN



Welcome to the inaugural issue of KIZUNA, the official magazine of the Government of Japan.

This bold work of calligraphy is 絆 (*kizuna*) written in Japanese. *Kizuna* means the enduring bonds between people—close relationships forged through mutual trust and support.

Originally describing the rope used to tether domestic animals such as horses and dogs, the meaning of *kizuna* has evolved over the years. A passage in *The Tale of the Heike*, compiled in the 13th century, uses the term to refer to the bonds of love between a father and his children. More recently, *kizuna* has gone beyond bonds tying together family and close acquaintances; it is now used in a broader sense of human ties and connections. Of particular note is the *kizuna* born among people during natural calamities, which fosters feelings of solidarity and serves as the underlying strength to overcome hardships.

Similarly, the *kizuna* cultivated among the countries of the world has the power to deepen cooperation for a better future. By reporting on a wide variety of topics concerning Japan, we hope that this magazine will provide opportunities for Japan and the rest of the world to connect and build strong *kizuna*.



KANAZAWA SHOKO
Calligraphy Artist

Born in Tokyo in 1985, she started learning calligraphy from her mother when she was five years old. One of the notable young calligraphers of today, her solo exhibitions have been held throughout the world, in cities such as New York, Singapore, and Prague. She has been selected as one of the Tokyo 2020 official poster artists.

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KIZUNA

COVER

For the inaugural issue of KIZUNA,
calligrapher KANAZAWA Shoko
writes the Japanese symbol
絆 (*kizuna*).

春

Yamanashi 山梨

Spring. Delicate pink hues spread throughout the islands under gentle sunbeams—it's *sakura*! The cherry blossoms appearing on the shores of Lake Kawaguchi add color to another symbol of Japan's unique seasonal beauty: the majestic splendor of Mount Fuji.

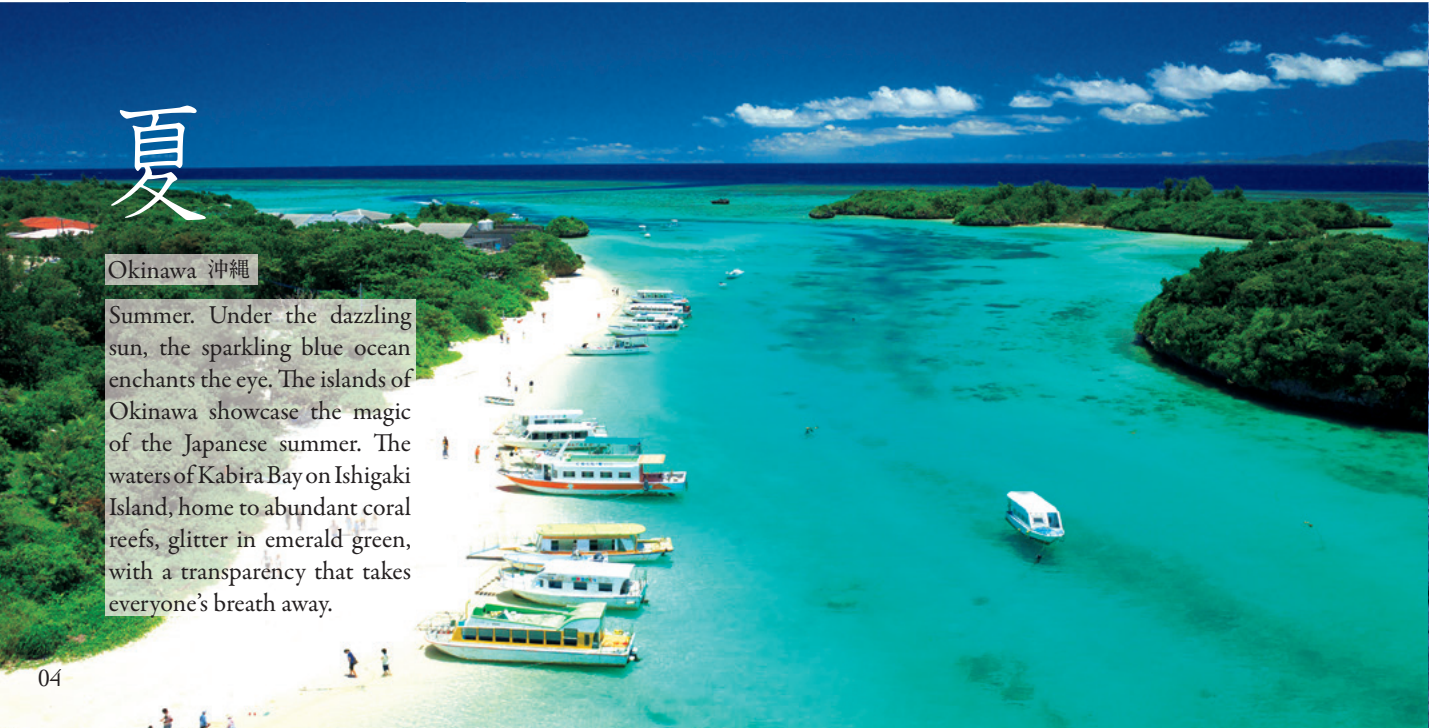


SEASONAL BEAUTY IN JAPAN

夏

Okinawa 沖縄

Summer. Under the dazzling sun, the sparkling blue ocean enchants the eye. The islands of Okinawa showcase the magic of the Japanese summer. The waters of Kabira Bay on Ishigaki Island, home to abundant coral reefs, glitter in emerald green, with a transparency that takes everyone's breath away.



秋

Kyoto 京都

Autumn. In the cool, crisp air, trees blaze forth in the brightest of reds. The colorfulness of Kyoto, the ancient capital with over 1,200 years of history, changes along with the flaming tree leaves. Even, the three-story pagoda of Kiyomizu-dera Temple wears an aura unique to this time of year.

Spring, summer, autumn, and winter—blessed with a wide variety of changes in nature, Japan looks absolutely different with every passing season. Each of them authentically expresses the soul of the country. Every one of the seasons captures the hearts of visitors and never let them go.

冬

Hokkaido 北海道

Winter. A silvery world appears and envelops everything with silence and serenity. An amazing variety of natural wonders make Hokkaido, Japan's vast northern island, a treasure trove of life. Beneath the frost-covered trees of Kushiro Marsh, a group of red-crowned cranes elegantly wades through the still waters, epitomizing the marvelously bountiful habitat.

SPEECH OF THE PRIME MINISTER

AT HIS INAUGURATION PRESS CONFERENCE

(AN EXCERPT)

SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

FULL TEXT: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/99_suga/statement/202009/_00001.html

I am SUGA Yoshihide and I have been designated as the 99th prime minister.

Up to today, as Chief Cabinet Secretary in the second Abe Administration, I have worked on critical issues affecting the future of this country, namely reviving the Japanese economy, reconstructing Japan's diplomacy and national security, and realizing a social security system oriented to all generations. In addition, since the beginning of the year, I have been tackling head-on the spread of novel virus infections and the greatest economic downturn in the postwar period, an unprecedented situation Japan has never faced before.

In order to overcome the crisis and enable all citizens to restore their daily lives with peace of mind, we must thoroughly carry on with the initiatives the Abe Administration has promoted and advance them further. I recognize that as the mission given to me.

Right now, the highest-priority issue we must take on is responding to the novel coronavirus. We will absolutely prevent an explosive outbreak and thoroughly protect the lives and the health of the public. On top of that, we will aim to balance these measures with socioeconomic activities. We will streamline our countermeasures, strengthen our screening structures, and secure medical treatment structures.

At the same time, it is extremely important that, amidst economic conditions that remain severe, we protect employment and ensure that businesses are able to continue their operations. To those in need, we will extend our economic measures.

Economic revival will continue to be the matter of the highest priority of the administration. We will carry on with Abenomics, with its three pillars of monetary easing, fiscal investment, and the Growth Strategy, and we will continue to advance further reforms.

We will first overcome this crisis, and afterwards, we will undertake intensive reforms and make necessary investments towards a “post-corona” society. By doing so, we would like to restore a robust economy once more.

Above all, the novel coronavirus has revealed the necessity of digital transformation and the review of supply chains. Going forward, we will move up what we can do in this area and establish an agency in charge of digital transformation as a structure to coordinate related policies that are divided across multiple ministries and agencies and press forward with them vigorously.

Also, even in the “post-corona” age, we will continue to work hard to realize environmental measures and a decarbonized society as well as a stable energy supply.

I was born the eldest son in a farming family in Akita. The desire to cherish local communities and restore the vitality to all of Japan's communities flows consistently and ceaselessly in me.

When I assumed the position of Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications during the first Abe Administration, I established the “hometown tax” system. People coming to Tokyo from outside want to contribute in some fashion to their

hometowns and want to maintain their ties with them in some way. There is no doubt that they feel that way. So that is how, from what I myself thought, I proposed the “hometown tax” system and made it into a reality.

As Chief Cabinet Secretary, I worked to bring vitality back to communities, in particular those outside the major cities. What brought me the most joy is that last year, for the first time in 27 years, land prices in areas outside the major cities switched to increasing in value. That was an impact of visiting foreign tourists, so-called inbound tourism, which is a trump card in our efforts for regional revitalization. When the Abe Administration was inaugurated, the number of foreign tourists was 8.36 million. Last year, that number was 32 million. Agriculture too has seen exports of agricultural, forest, and fishery products expand from 450 billion yen to 900 billion yen last year. I want to continue to work hard on policies that bring vitality to local areas.

It is children who will hold the future of Japan in their hands. Addressing the declining birthrate has been a longstanding challenge for Japan. We have pressed forward with making kindergartens, day-care centers, universities, and vocational schools free of charge as well as with male national civil servants taking a minimum of one month of childcare leave. I would also like to build a social security system oriented to all generations through which young people are able to have peace of mind about the future as well.

In order to provide wide-reaching support for households hoping to have children and lower the hurdles as much as possible, we will have insurance cover fertility treatments. A society in which people can bear and raise children with peace of mind and a society in which women can stay healthy and be actively engaged -- I intend to thoroughly develop such an environment.

In the field of diplomacy and national security, the environment surrounding Japan is becoming increasingly severe. Against that background, I intend to

deploy policies that place a well-functioning Japan-US alliance as their linchpin. In order to defend our national interests to the end, I intend to strategically implement the free and open Indo-Pacific while also building stable relations with neighboring countries, including China and Russia.

I will aim for a total reassessment of our postwar diplomacy, doing my very best to resolve the abductions issue in particular. I will closely collaborate with the United States and other relevant countries and continue to make all-out efforts to realize the return of all of the abductees as early as possible.

I have always thought that our society still has a tremendous amount of unusual things that stand significantly apart from the common sense held by the public. I will never overlook them and, listening to voices on the ground and carefully looking at what is in line with common sense, act boldly. That is my belief. I will continue to do this, never wavering.

Self-help, mutual help, and public help and “*kizuna*” (bonds) are the vision of society I aspire for. To begin with, we must try to do things ourselves. Then we should assist each other within our families and communities. Then beyond that, the government will provide protection with a safety net. I aim to create this kind of government that the public trusts. ●



PRIME MINISTER SUGA YOSHIHIDE'S PERSONAL TIMELINE

December 6, 1948

Born in Akinomiya Village, Ogachi-gun (currently Yuzawa City), Akita Prefecture

Born the Son of a Strawberry Farmer



SUGA Yoshihide was born the eldest son of a strawberry farmer in Yuzawa, a town in Akita Prefecture in northern Japan. The region lies under snow for four months of the year, but is rich in natural beauty with forests of fine Akita cedar.

1966

Graduated from Akita Prefectural Yuzawa High School

Student Days Filled with Karate



Suga moved to Tokyo after high school and worked at a factory to save up for tuition and then entered university. During his student days he trained in karate. Hard work and the discipline of karate are the foundations upon which he built his career as a politician.

1973

Graduated from the Faculty of Law, *Hosei* University (in Tokyo)

1987

Elected to the Yokohama City Council, serving two terms

1996

Won his first election to the House of Representatives

Political Career



Suga served two terms on the Yokohama City Council before being elected to the National Diet in 1996 (photo). As Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, he led the establishment of a hometown tax system that provides a deduction for taxpayers who make donation to the local government of their choice. He was the longest serving Chief

Cabinet Secretary (from 2012 to 2020) in Japanese history, holding press conferences twice a day, almost every day, which totaled more than 3,200 occasions during his tenure.

2002

Named Parliamentary Secretary for Land, Infrastructure and Transport

2003

Named Parliamentary Secretary for Economy, Trade and Industry

2006

Named Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, Minister in charge of Privatization of the Postal Services, and Minister of State for Decentralization Reform

2012

Named Chief Cabinet Secretary and Minister in charge of Strengthening National Security

2014

Named Chief Cabinet Secretary and Minister in charge of Mitigating the Impact of U.S. Forces in Okinawa

2018

Named Chief Cabinet Secretary, Minister in charge of Mitigating the Impact of U.S. Forces in Okinawa, and Minister in charge of the Abduction Issue

April 1, 2019

Announced the name of the new imperial era "*Reiwa*" as Chief Cabinet Secretary

September 16, 2020

Becomes 99th Prime Minister of Japan

Loves Morning Walks and Sweets



No matter how busy he may be on a given day, Suga has made a routine of taking early-morning walks to clear his head. He is not a drinker but has a sweet tooth, enjoying Japanese confectionery made from red bean paste, or Western-style pancakes, which he particularly loves.

SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR POLICY OUTLOOK FROM THE FIRST POLICY SPEECH

Prime Minister Suga outlined eight major policies in his first policy speech to the Diet on October 26, 2020.

1 TACKLING THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

Balance novel coronavirus countermeasures and economic activities, protect employment, and ensure that businesses can sustain their operations while preventing explosive outbreaks through measures to prevent infections.

2 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Carry out regulatory reforms under an agency in charge of digital transformation while heading towards a “with corona” and post-coronavirus society.

3 BECOMING CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2050

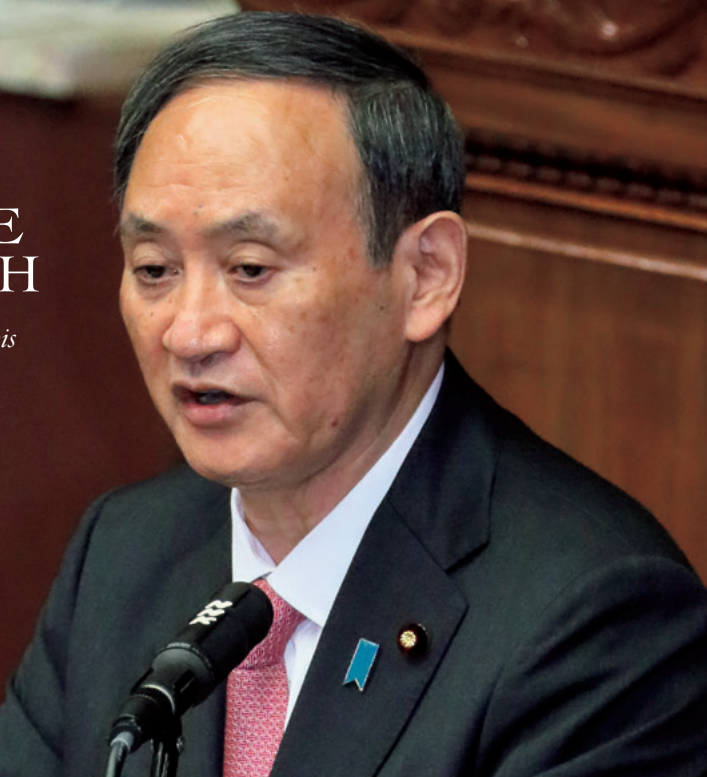
Aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero.

4 CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Areas outside of Greater Tokyo account for 70% of consumption. Increase incomes in these areas through agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industry reforms and restoration of tourism demand.

5 CREATING NEW FLOWS OF PEOPLE

Aim to create new flows of people from urban to rural areas and between companies, including to small- and medium-sized enterprises and startups, opening up a path for future growth. Welcome finance-sector professionals from overseas, aiming to be a global financial center.



6 REFORMING SOCIAL SECURITY

Aim to eliminate the number of children who must wait to receive childcare arrangements, promote the taking of childcare leave by male employees, make fertility treatments covered by public health insurance, and allow online medical consultations on a permanent basis, among other initiatives.

7 RECONSTRUCTION FROM THE GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE

Aim to undertake reconstruction and revival of Tohoku with an even greater sense of speed. Advance the development of national land structures that are resistant to natural disasters.

8 PROMOTING PROACTIVE DIPLOMACY

Aim to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law; promote proactive diplomacy at the summit level.

“We will get rid of bureaucratic sectionalism, vested interests, and the notorious habit of following past precedents and make our utmost efforts to advance regulatory reforms with a sense of speed.”

From the next page onwards, some of the topics related to these policies are introduced. ▶

The Japanese government has urged the public to avoid the Three Cs. A key finding of the government's retrospective tracing approach is that these three conditions facilitate transmission of the virus.



AVOIDING THE THREE Cs: A KEY TO PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Japan has been preventing an explosive outbreak of COVID-19 by focusing on avoiding the so-called "Three Cs" (closed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings), key findings of its unique approach of tracking back infection routes, while seeking to revive the economy without locking down.

As the long fight against COVID-19 continues, Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide, in his first policy speech, stated that the Japanese government would do everything it could to continue preventing an explosive outbreak and thoroughly protect the lives and health of the public. He also spoke about advancing the recovery of the economy through the resumption of socioeconomic activities.

Since the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Japanese government has taken a so-called "cluster-based approach," which has focused on finding the source of infection clusters (outbreaks) in order to prevent large-scale spread. That approach was adopted because the public health authority

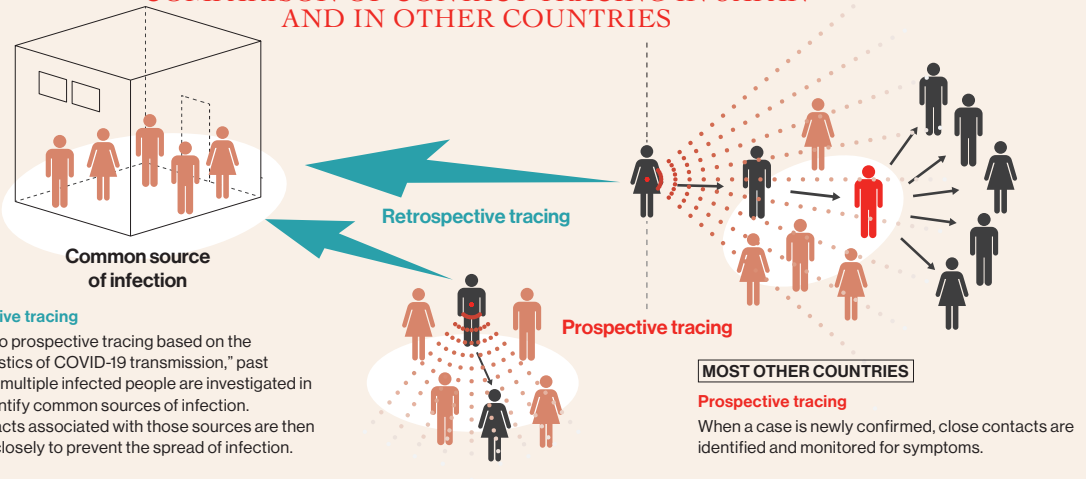
discovered early on that much of the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 is propagated by an exceedingly small proportion of people carrying it. By tracking past activities of multiple patients so as to identify the common sources of infections, and exhaustively surveying and monitoring close contacts associated with those sources, further spread of infections can be minimized and delayed.

At the end of February, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare established the Cluster-Response Task Force comprising of experts on infectious diseases in Japan to develop and implement the cluster-based approach. Working with local governments where clusters had arisen, the task

Wearing masks and washing hands, which are effective means of preventing the spread of COVID-19, have been customary in Japan since before the pandemic.



COMPARISON OF CONTACT TRACING IN JAPAN AND IN OTHER COUNTRIES



force gathered and analyzed data for use in planning how to combat the pandemic. At the frontline, municipal health centers carried out not only “prospective tracing,” which aims to identify close contacts of patients to prevent further spread, but also “retrospective tracing,” which surveys patients’ behavioral histories by conducting thorough interviews.

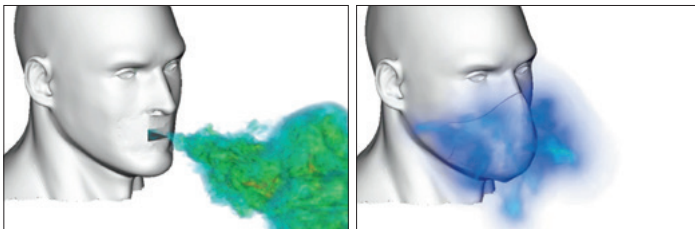
“One of our focuses has been retrospective contact tracing, which tracks past activities of infected people to discover possible sources of infection and thereby identify clusters,” SAITO Tomoya, director of the Department of Health Crisis Management at the National Institute of Public Health, recalls. “This investigation revealed that the ‘Three Cs’ (closed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings) are the major risk factors that could lead to the occurrence of clusters.”

Since this finding, the Japanese public has been repeatedly reminded to avoid places and situations where these three conditions overlap. By declaring a state of emergency in April and May and calling

on the public to voluntarily refrain from leaving the home unnecessarily, the government successfully encouraged the wider public to avoid the Three Cs. Later on, the World Health Organization (WHO) began circulating a global message through social media encouraging people to avoid the same Three Cs.

Another notable tool for stopping the spread of COVID-19 is the wearing of masks. Fugaku, the Japanese supercomputer that has taken the top spot in two consecutive global performance rankings, has run simulations of the effectiveness of face masks and of how airborne droplets spread in high-risk places and situations such as restaurants and elsewhere. Publicly released findings of the research show that wearing a mask can significantly mitigate the danger posed by these high-risk settings. In Japan, hygienic practices such as wearing masks and washing hands, which are effective means of preventing infections from spreading, were customary prior to the pandemic, allowing Japanese society to smoothly adjust to life under the “new normal.”

The fight against COVID-19 is not yet over. In the meantime, Japan will continue to take the necessary steps to combat the pandemic, striking a balance between preventing the spread of the infection on the one hand and keeping the economy going on the other. ●



The simulation using supercomputer Fugaku shows that not wearing a mask (left) fails to suppress the extent to which airborne droplets are spread during actions such as coughing compared to when wearing one (right).

AIMING FOR A DIGITAL SOCIETY FOR DIVERSE HAPPINESS

Through the use of digital technology, Japan is rapidly advancing digital transformation that is human-centered and leaves no one behind, contributing to the happiness of every individual by allowing diverse citizens to choose digital services suited to their needs.

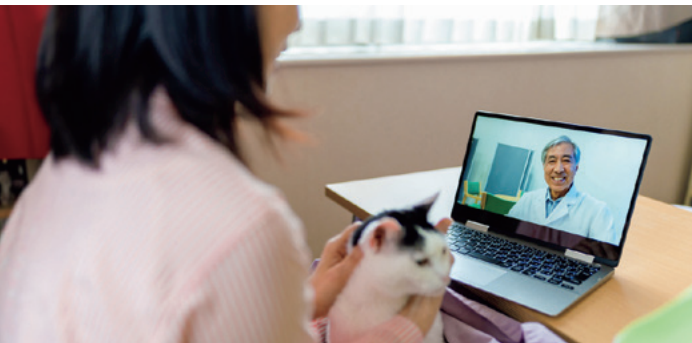
With one of the world's leading broadband networks (connecting 98.8% of households with FTTH internet lines) and mobile phone service covering 99.99% of the population, Japan offers nationwide access to fast data transmissions. Meanwhile, in the industrial sector, there is growing utilization of digital technology, such as ICT solutions that reduce workloads and raise productivity at manufacturing sites. However, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic a major issue has been brought to light: the particularly slow pace of digitalization in administrative services, exemplified by complicated procedures and slow benefit payments.

In response to this situation, the Suga administration, inaugurated in September 2020, has characterized the "realization of a digitalized society" as a policy matter of utmost importance and is quickly moving to develop policies for bold deregulation.

In his first policy speech, Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide made a powerful declaration about creating a new society in which citizens can complete a variety of procedures without visiting government offices, and where those living in rural areas can do the same work and receive the same medical care and education as those residing in large cities. Additionally, the administration has pledged to establish an agency in charge of digital transformation that, with the involvement of exceptional digital professionals from the private sector, is set to become a powerful force for vigorously carrying out the digital innovation policy of the administration.

So as to bring greater convenience to the lives of citizens, the digital agency will be newly established in 2021. The new agency will proceed with combining and integrating the national government's information systems, and will take an integrated, user-oriented approach to reforming administrative services and operational systems. In addition, the government will make arrangements so that citizens can use their My Number Social Security and Tax Number Cards as a comprehensive tool for completing administrative procedures.

Not only will this digital agency create more sophisticated administrative service systems, but it will also simultaneously encourage digitalization



Top: There is an increasing demand for telemedicine, which is expected to play a major role in preventing infections during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Right: While closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an elementary school was able to keep in contact with students through online classes.





in areas of the quasi-public and private sectors that are essential to the lives of citizens, such as medical care, education, and disaster prevention, thereby improving fundamental aspects of everyday life. Ensuring interconnection among information systems is essential to providing better digital services—especially in areas where the jurisdiction of multiple ministries and agencies overlaps. However, given the current lack of standards for interconnecting different information systems, the government will first focus on establishing such standardization.

For example, in the transportation sector, the government is working to establish an environment where all transportation-related data, including timetables, routes, fares, and real-time data on delays, is interconnected, aiming to realize mobility as a service (MaaS), which, in its essence, provides customers with seamless transportation services over multiple transportation modes such as railways, buses, and taxis.

The Japanese government will make a united effort to digitalize the whole of society by deepening partnerships and cooperation among ministries, agencies, local governments, and enterprises. Specifically, the government will actively promote


the concepts of “human-centered digitalization” and “digitalization with no one left behind,” both of which aim to add value to various services by engaging in reforms that prioritize the perspective of the public, while simultaneously allowing people to participate in society at the time and place of their own choosing, enabling them to demonstrate their full creative abilities. These two concepts will thus form the basis for the administration’s digital policy, seeking to contribute to the creation of a “diverse happiness.” ●



Haneda Innovation City commenced full-scale autonomous bus operations in September 2020. Similar initiatives to run autonomous buses are starting up across Japan.

JAPAN'S GREEN INNOVATIONS FOR ACHIEVING CARBON NEUTRALITY

Japan will forge ahead with innovative research and development to solve global environmental problems.

A photograph of Dr. YOSHINO Akira, an elderly man with glasses, wearing a dark suit and a blue striped tie. He is sitting outdoors, smiling, in front of a modern glass and steel building. A blue banner with white Japanese text is visible in the background. The text reads: "Dr. YOSHINO Akira, director of the Global Zero Emission Research Center (GZR), is driving innovation toward solutions to global problems." data-bbox="330 431 601 467"/>

Dr. YOSHINO Akira, director of the Global Zero Emission Research Center (GZR), is driving innovation toward solutions to global problems.

In an October 2020 policy speech, Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide declared that Japan will aim to reduce nationwide greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero to realize a carbon-neutral society. He further stated that addressing climate change is not a constraint on economic growth and that proactive climate change measures will lead to major economic growth for the country. Based on this conception, which brings a paradigm shift at the mindset level, Japan will do its utmost to realize a green society.

The key to achieving this ambitious goal is to further roll out innovative technologies, so Japan will encourage accelerated research and development toward realizing the utilization of such technologies. The Global Zero Emission Research Center (GZR), established by the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology in January 2020, will play a



The GZR's new research facilities, slated for completion in March 2021, will become a center of Japanese innovation in the field of the environment and energy technologies.

central role in that effort. The GZR brings together numerous research projects related to the environment and energy technologies to enhance them by generating synergies among them, while leading cutting-edge research in cooperation with laboratories around the world.

The director of the GZR is Dr. YOSHINO Akira, the 2019 winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, who has been hailed for his many accomplishments, particularly his pioneering research into lithium-ion batteries. Dr. Yoshino expresses his enthusiasm when saying, "Japan has long made progress with many research projects on zero-emission technology. I want to bring these research topics together at the GZR to turn the institute into a national and international hub for research on zero-emission technology."

One of the most important

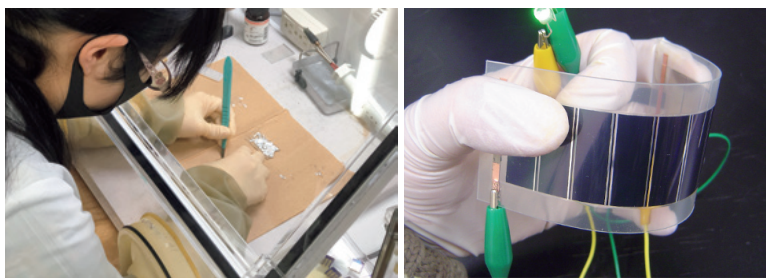


Multi-junction solar cells, which can generate power more efficiently, are expected to be applied in vehicles and elsewhere.

research topics at the GZR is next-generation solar cells, the technology for which Japan has been a leader in terms of research and development. For example, Japan has enabled the production of ultra-lightweight solar panels by using a thin film made from perovskite, a new material. In addition, the GZR has been developing multi-junction (tandem) solar cells consisting of layered materials, which boast vastly better conversion efficiency than conventional cells, allowing for more power generation in a smaller space. If those technologies are made feasible, they would facilitate installation in locations where placing conventional

solar cells has traditionally posed a challenge, such as the walls of buildings or the roofs of factories or warehouses that cannot support heavy loads. Furthermore, the cells are expected to have an even wider range of usage, including being installed in vehicles and used as power sources for IoT devices such as stand-alone sensors. By developing various technologies, the GZR is exploring further possibilities for solar cells and working to expand their adoption.

Dr. Yoshino says, "Addressing global environmental problems presents a golden business opportunity for creating major brand-new industries. Leading the world in that field and spurring innovation will make a major contribution to Japan's national interests as well." Following the new government's bold policy of advocating a virtuous cycle of the economy and the environment as a pillar of the country's growth strategy, Japan will contribute to the future of humanity and the Earth. ●



The GZR is also conducting research on solar cells with organic thin films using materials other than perovskite. Since that could enable a solar cell to be produced by simply applying a layer of coating on flexible film, it would allow for power generation on curved surfaces.



Japan's agricultural, forestry, and fishery exports have an excellent reputation. Clockwise, from top left: rice and sake, tea fields, strawberries, and cattle used in *wagyu* production.

CREATING
**VIBRANT
COMMUNITIES**
BY EXPANDING AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS

Spreading quality, appealing Japanese agricultural, forestry, and fishery products and food around the world will revitalize local economies and further encourage Japan's growth.

With its bountiful natural environment on both land and sea, Japan boasts agricultural, forestry, and fishery products with an entrenched popularity in Asia and beyond. The annual value of Japan's agricultural exports exceeded 900 billion yen in 2019, a figure that is forecast to grow further. At the same time, these agricultural exports hold increasing promise to boost the Japanese economy further through the revitalization of local economies that raises incomes in areas outside of Greater Tokyo, which account for approximately 70% of domestic consumption.

Under the new Japanese administration led by Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide, the government is working with relevant ministries and agencies to provide a powerful push to expand those exports. In April 2020, when Prime Minister Suga was Chief Cabinet Secretary, the government arranged a system for expedited procedures by setting up a headquarters at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to supervise negotiations with countries of destination and the certification of establishments in Japan. That has significantly improved export operations, which previously had involved cumbersome requirements for companies, such as regulations that varied by countries of destination. The government has set new export value targets of 2 trillion yen by 2025 and 5 trillion yen by 2030, promoting a national effort to reform the country's agriculture, forestry, and fisheries so as to deliver the industry's products to the world.

Many companies have already produced positive results in expanding exports. One such company, Henta Seicha Co., Ltd., manages 25 ha of tea fields at the foot of Mt. Kirishima in the southern Kyushu prefecture of Kagoshima. The company produces pesticide-free, organic green tea leaves and sells powdered tea and other products. They began

exporting in 2015 in accordance with a motto that advocates providing overseas markets with environmentally friendly, delicious, and reassuring Kirishima tea. Riding the powdered-tea boom in the West, the company has grown at a rapid pace, and is forecast to export 14 tons of products in 2020, primarily to the United States, the EU, and Asia.

An important issue that comes up with organic farming, in addition to inconsistent yields, is how to prevent agrochemicals from floating over from neighboring farmland. Henta Seicha's response was to establish a method to prevent such flows by purposely developing tea fields surrounded by forest. That allowed the company to make the transition to organic farming that is pesticide-free, and to receive organic accreditations recognized in Western countries, where health consciousness is high. The company's president, HENTA Koichi, said, "Organic farming involves constant work, such as improving the soil. But if we can keep on making good products, then I believe the demand will definitely be there."

Henta Seicha has meanwhile acted to further expand tea leaf exports, such as popularizing organic farming among nearby growers and working with them to run promotions outside Japan. President Henta said, "By expanding exports like this, I truly feel that we can create jobs in the local community and revitalize towns. That is our mission."

Japan's quality agricultural, forestry, and fishery products and foods are made possible by the hard work and ingenuity of local producers. Growers' efforts to expand agricultural exports will show the world the appeal of Japanese food, while creating vibrant local economies throughout Japan. ●



Top: Henta Seicha is aggressively courting overseas buyers. The company invites them to visit its tea fields to build trust in the product's quality, aiming for an increase in steady demand. Bottom: Higher levels of health consciousness worldwide have fueled the global popularity of Japanese tea. In response to that demand, the Japanese government has become involved in promoting more exports.



Henta Seicha has benefited the entire local community by successfully expanding its exports. President Henta (middle of front row) is eager to double the production of organic farming.

At Futaba Future Lab, located at Futaba Future School and run by an approved specified NPO (nonprofit organization), Katariba, many activities are offered to enhance interactions among people. University students provide support and advice for local school students, who in turn run a café for local residents.



INNOVATION AND INTERACTION DRIVE FUKUSHIMA'S REVITALIZATION

As the 10th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake approaches, Fukushima finds renewed hope as recovery picks up pace.

Left: A variety of demonstrations are conducted at this robot test field. In the photo, physicians from Bokutoh Hospital in Sumida City (Tokyo) are conducting a test to determine whether blood for a transfusion can be transported via a drone. Right: A summer school, run by a university from outside the prefecture, teaches local children about agricultural science.



Almost 10 years have passed since March 11, 2011, when the Great East Japan Earthquake inflicted massive damage on eastern Japan. In a policy speech, Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide said, “Without the reconstruction of Fukushima, there will be no reconstruction of Tohoku. And without the reconstruction of Tohoku, there will be no revival of Japan.” Today in Fukushima, great progress is being made toward overcoming the destruction wreaked by the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident.

One project moving Fukushima’s reconstruction forward is the Fukushima Innovation Coast Framework. To bring back industries lost to the disaster, the project is setting up research centers and other facilities seen as key to creating cutting-edge industries in coastal areas of Fukushima. Companies and students are being encouraged to take on new challenges in such fields as energy and reactor decommissioning, as well as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. In March 2020, the Fukushima Robot Test Field opened fully to serve as a hub for the development and testing of robots on land, sea, and air. It is one of the world’s largest robot testing centers, with various facilities, including a runway for launching unmanned aerial vehicles, an indoor tank for testing robots running on and under water, and an urban field for emergency search and rescue drills.

Furthermore, the following September saw the opening of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum to share the memories and lessons of the earthquake and nuclear accident with future generations. The museum is welcoming numerous visitors from Fukushima Prefecture and beyond.

Meanwhile, the region is cultivating its future leaders. Futaba Future High School, which opened in 2015, is collaborating with other communities to provide a unique type of problem-solving based curriculum to students. Its students will develop the talents needed to carry out the region’s reconstruction and bring innovation to society. In addition, the region is inviting figures from universities within

the prefecture and beyond to engage in a wide range of educational research and networking, aiming to pool together the country’s knowledge in Fukushima to revitalize local communities. University instructors run an agricultural science summer school for local children, while university students work with local residents to add further value to their agricultural products by promoting primary producers’ diversification into processing and distribution. Those and other new ideas are helping to solve problems in industrial reconstruction, urban development, and other fields.

Since the earthquake, over 360 companies have come to coastal Fukushima to run their business. ITO Yasuo, executive managing director of the Fukushima Innovation Coast Promotion Organization, said, “The local residents and children who are actively working toward Fukushima’s reconstruction have collaborated with highly motivated young people and companies from across Japan to make Fukushima a leader in solving problems. The exchange is enabling further revitalization in Fukushima and injecting a fresh stimulus.”

The avid interactions of people and their activities taking place in Fukushima are making the region’s future more and more promising. ●

Right: The Namie roadside rest and service area opened in August 2020. Among the items for sale are locally produced vegetables and seafood. Additionally, hydrogen produced at the Fukushima Hydrogen Energy Research Field is used for the area’s electricity.
Bottom: The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum opened in September 2020. Before its first month ended, the museum had already attracted 10,000 visitors.



TOWARD A FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC



As the balance of power in the world becomes increasingly complex, Japan aims to promote peace, stability, and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific region by establishing a free, open, and rules-based international order in the region.

While the Indo-Pacific region has been the engine of the economic growth of the entire world, it has faced a variety of threats in recent years including piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing. To ensure the stability and prosperity that the region has enjoyed, it is important to firmly uphold fundamental principles

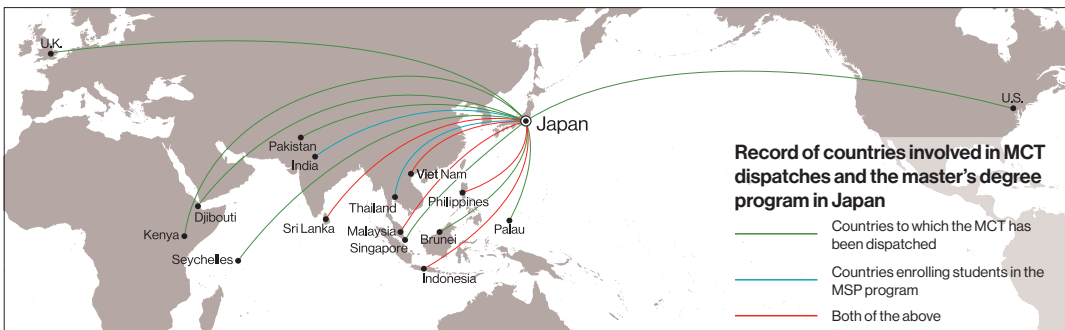


NOHARA Masako (left) completed the MSP program, and YOSHIOKA Yu (right) works with the MCT. Yoshioka became the first female dispatch officer, and shares her experiences gained in the field with participating countries.

of the international community, such as free trade, freedom of navigation and the rule of law. Guided by this philosophy, Japan works together with other like-minded countries to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific. Japan places great importance on a future international order in the Indo-Pacific region that is free and open.

Located in the center of the Indo-Pacific region, ASEAN is the cornerstone of those efforts to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific. Based on this recognition, Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide visited Viet Nam and Indonesia in October 2020 as his first overseas visit after assuming office. ASEAN and Japan are together aiming to

realize fundamental principles such as the rule of law, openness and transparency in the Indo-Pacific region, and Japan, as an Indo-Pacific country, announced that it will work steadily toward a free and open Indo-Pacific while acting in close cooperation with Viet Nam, Indonesia and the other ASEAN countries. Earlier in the same month, the Second Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Tokyo. There, the four Ministers concurred on further developing practical cooperation in various areas such as quality infrastructure, maritime security, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. The Ministers also reaffirmed their





The MCT is a group of professionals with specialist skills. The team provides customized training based on the requests from recipient countries.

Speedboat training for the Philippine Coast Guard in 2017 (the white hull was provided by Japan).

strong support for ASEAN’s centrality and unity as well as the ASEAN-led regional architecture, underlining their full support for the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.” They also welcomed proactive efforts by other countries including Europe toward a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Playing an important role in collaborating with countries to build a free and open rules-based international order is, for example, the Japan Coast Guard (JCG), established in 1948. After providing assistance over several decades to improve coast guard capabilities based on the requests from other countries, the JCG established a specialized team named the Mobile Cooperation Team (MCT) in October 2017. MCT members with expertise and skills in such areas as search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, and environmental disaster prevention are dispatched

to Indo-Pacific countries to give intensive training.

The JCG also set up the Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program (MSP), a master’s degree program for junior coast guard officers from coast guards across Asian countries that helps develop human resources for those countries. In this one-year program, junior coast guard officers, together with junior officers from the JCG, take courses in international law, international relations, maritime police policy, and other relevant subjects at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies and the Japan Coast Guard Academy.

A total of 47 officers have enrolled in the MSP since the

program started in 2015. Glen B. Daraug, one of the first generation alumnus from the Philippine Coast Guard, says, “In Japan, I was able to develop the skills of decisiveness, dynamism, and advanced knowledge. We can continue to safeguard the sea that links us together and ensure the maritime order in accordance with international law.”

A single country alone cannot deal with cross-border crimes at sea and maintaining worldwide maritime order is a difficult task. Through cooperation with other countries, Japan will continue to promote the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific with the greatest priority on realizing the values of “free and open.” ●



Prime Minister Suga visited Viet Nam and Indonesia on his first overseas visit. Japan concurred with both countries to work together toward a free and open Indo-Pacific region for a peaceful and prosperous future of the region.
 Left: Met with H.E. Mr. NGUYEN Xuan Phuc, the Prime Minister of Viet Nam.
 Right: Met with H.E. Ir. H. Joko Widodo, the President of Indonesia.



Top: Robots conduct every step of the PCR testing process, protecting healthcare workers from the risk of infection.
Right: The technical capabilities cultivated in the development of industrial robots enable such actions as opening a lid with a mechanical arm.



COVID-19 TESTING ROBOTS

PROTECT HEALTHCARE WORKERS

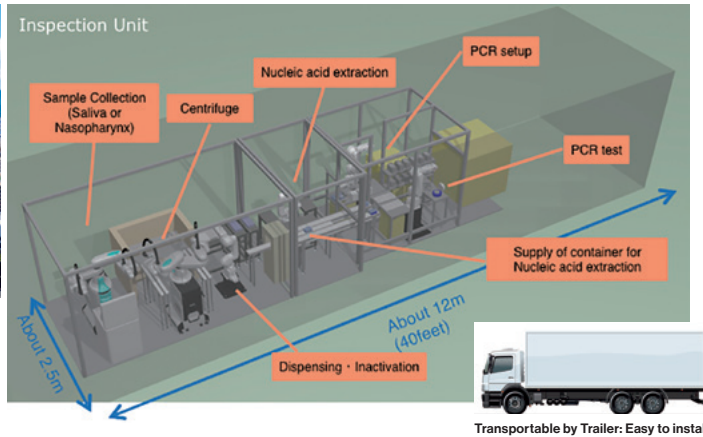
An automated PCR testing system, based on Japanese robotic technologies, will contribute towards resolving problems hindering healthcare.



Top: Mediaroid is part of the Kobe Biomedical Innovation Cluster, where innovative medical technologies are developed to serve the global community.

<https://www.fbri-kobe.org/kbic/english/movies/#movie02>

Right: The robotic PCR testing system can be loaded into a truck container and taken where needed.



As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, all eyes are on an automated polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing system developed by Mediaroid Corporation, a Kobe-based company that produces robots for medical use. Kobe city is home to Japan's largest cluster of biomedical technology, with more than 360 research facilities, hospitals, manufacturers, and universities concentrated in one area, where government, industry, and academia work together to develop state-of-the-art medical technologies. The PCR testing system is the fruit of public-private cooperation between the city of Kobe and Mediaroid.

Mediaroid is a joint venture company established by Sysmex Corporation, which deals in clinical testing equipment and reagents, and Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd., a leader in

industrial robot technology. PCR testing faces the difficulty of procuring enough personnel to perform complex procedures, while also needing to protect those workers from infection. Combining the know-how of the two companies has made it possible to create an innovative system that uses robots to provide a stable testing regime, while shielding healthcare workers from the risk of infection at the same time.

The system automates all the procedures required for PCR testing, such as inactivating samples, extracting their nucleic acid, and subjecting them to PCR inspection. The industrial robot technology developed by Kawasaki Heavy Industries enables robots to accomplish those precise motions.

"Robots are useful for solving medical problems, but making them work is not as easy as it sounds. Using a robotic arm to open a specimen container

involves a complex series of precise motions, and that requires a high level of technology," says ASANO Kaoru, president of Mediaroid.

The robotic system also contributes to greater efficiency. In existing methods, tests are normally conducted in batches of 96 samples, but the new system is capable of handling eight-sample batches, one after the other. The time it takes from accepting a sample to reporting the result is reduced to 80 minutes, one-third the time it takes now. One system can perform 2,000 tests per day (16 hours), making it particularly suitable for venues where speed is important, such as international airports. The goal is to introduce the new system in 2021. It is also a space-saving unit that can be loaded into a 40-foot container and transported to large events, where it can be set up for testing.

If robotic testing systems become ubiquitous and test results are made rapidly available, air travel and public events can be enjoyed again without anxiety. "We will continue to contribute to social solutions with our robotic technology," declares President Asano.



Hinotori, Japan's first surgical robot system, was also developed by Mediaroid. "We believe that such excellent robot technology can contribute to the betterment of medical care," says President Asano.



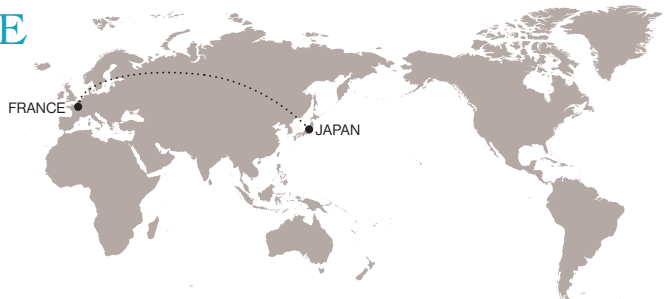
Imai (left), master brewer at Kura Grand Paris, and Inagawa (right), CEO of WAKAZE. Both received guidance on brewing techniques in France from Nadine (middle), an ocnologist in Burgundy.

REVOLUTIONIZING SAKE FROM PARIS WITH LOVE

Producing sake in France, a young venture company from Japan is attempting to share the great taste and potential of sake with the world.

WAKAZE

Founded in 2016 with the idea to turn Japanese sake into a worldwide alcoholic drink, WAKAZE established the Kura Grand Paris sake brewery in 2019. It won the Platinum Award in the *junmai* (pure rice) category of the Kura Master 2020 sake competition, as well as the Silver Award at the International Wine Challenge 2020 for the "C'est la vie" sake produced in Paris. The sake brewery uses local ingredients to produce sake that defies conventional norms.



Under the new administration led by Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide, the Japanese government is working to expand exports of the country's products from farms, forests, and fisheries. Sake is one of the important products involved in this endeavor. However, while awareness of Japanese food culture is gaining pace around the world, there is increasingly the mistaken notion that sake simply is a drink with a high alcohol content and is not pleasing to the taste buds. In order to overcome these misconceptions, WAKAZE Inc., a Japanese venture company, is attempting to produce a more vibrant food and drink culture for the world.

The CEO of the start-up company, INAGAWA Takuma, once stumbled across some exceptionally fine sake, enabling him to dispel his preconception that the drink equated simply to strong liquor. Passionate about expressing his love of sake to the people of the world and especially in France where he had previously studied, Inagawa set up WAKAZE in 2016, together with IMAI Shoya, who himself comes from a family of sake brewers and

was trained at Japanese breweries. The company then went on to establish the Kura Grand Paris sake brewery in the outskirts of Paris in 2019.

"I want to produce sake that is loved by the local people," asserts master brewer Imai. It is extremely difficult to produce sake in a completely different environment with different ingredients, such as French rice, water, and yeast. Yet, with all sorts of information at his disposal—from Edo-period literature to the latest theses and articles—Imai is constantly on the lookout for ways to produce sake that suits the region. What the company is really aiming to do is to make sake brewing "open-source." By making sake-brewing techniques available to the world, the start-up hopes that everyone can enjoy sake that is—like beer and wine—tailored to their specific part of the globe.

The types of sake WAKAZE produces are popular with local people not just for their reasonable prices, but also because, due to their versatility, they can be enjoyed on any occasion. As well as pure rice sake, WAKAZE offers other craft varieties, including sake brewed with locally sourced



WAKAZE also produces craft sake using French lemons and herbs.

citrus fruits, and a sake matured in cognac casks. Each of the sake variations comes with a recommended pairing and fresh cocktail ideas, making sake more accessible for everyone. "Our mission is to get more people into sake and dispel the mistaken notions surrounding the beverage. We want to expand the sake market and create opportunities to learn more about the diversity of not only sake, but Japanese food too," reveals Inagawa.

Breathing such new life into sake brewing, WAKAZE will no doubt go on to expand the possibilities of the drink and revolutionize Japanese cuisine around the world. ●

Left: The rice used is from Camargue in southern France. WAKAZE employees themselves visit the growing region to discover the particular characteristics of the ingredients they use. Right: Kura Grand Paris is one of the largest sake breweries in Europe. The brewery receives inquiries from all over the world on their techniques for producing sake from local produce.





Randy Bass reunites with former teammates at an event commemorating the Tigers' feats in the 1985 season.

RANDY BASS

Born in Oklahoma in 1954, Bass has been a sports enthusiast since beginning to play baseball at a young age. First drafted by the Minnesota Twins in 1972, he later played for other MLB clubs, including the Kansas City Royals and the Texas Rangers, before coming to Japan in 1983, where he joined the Hanshin Tigers. With a powerful swing and excellent bat control, his success at the plate helped lead the Tigers to their first Japan Series championship in 1985. After leaving the Tigers and returning to the United States in 1988, Bass ran a farm in Oklahoma. In 2004, he began a 15-year stint as a Democratic state senator.

Professional baseball enjoys immense popularity in Japan, and the American Randy Bass may be the most famous foreign-born player in the history of the sport here. After playing for several major-league teams in the United States for 11 years, he signed with the Hanshin Tigers, by far one of the most beloved teams in Japan. In 1985, his third year in Japan, Randy Bass belted 54 home runs, helping to catapult his team to its first league championship in 21 years. He blasted home runs in three straight games during the Japan Series, as the Tigers went on to claim their first championship

1980s BASEBALL STAR

BRIDGES JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

In the 1980s, American professional baseball player Randy Bass became a legend of the sport in Japan. Even today, long after retirement, he retains a close connection to the country.





Top: Even though he has retired, Japanese baseball fans have never forgotten what Randy Bass accomplished.
Right: After retiring, Bass kept himself busy as a member of the Oklahoma Senate.



in franchise history. Today, whenever a new foreign-born player joins the team, fans wonder whether he will be “the next Bass.” He says, “It’s just a humbling experience to be able to know they put everything on me.”

This slugger beloved by Tigers fans, now 66, is still so enamored with Japan that he “could go and live there right now.” Bass was amazed by the Shinkansen, which the team rode to away games. Praising the high-speed rail network that connects far-flung cities in a matter of hours while maintaining astounding punctuality, Bass said, “It’s just so efficient, and it’s a wonderful way to travel.” The place he loved the most on the road was Tokyo, where he would often get

together downtown with foreign-born players from other ball clubs. While Tokyo is renowned as a city with a bustling nightlife, it is also surrounded by abundant nature. Bass recalled, “It was beautiful up in the mountainous parts of Tokyo. You just never forget that. So peaceful and so quiet.” He said that on one day off, he went to catch fish in a river in the mountains, pitched a tent with friends, and enjoyed an unforgettable day of rest.

After retiring from baseball in 1988, Bass returned to his home state of Oklahoma, where he ran a farm and, beginning in 2004, he served as a member of the Oklahoma Senate for 15 years.

Despite his busy schedule, he has found time to visit Japan several times a year for events such as an all-star game for retired ballplayers from Japan’s professional league. Wanting to give something back to all the people who helped him during his time in Japan, Bass has been actively engaged in exchanges with the country, participating in events such as those organized by the America-Japan Society. He says that Japanese children—not even born when he was playing baseball in the country—still come to visit him in Oklahoma, asking him for a handshake or autograph because of what they have heard from their parents. “It is really a cool thing that Japanese people come over and interact with people in Oklahoma.” Bass believes that “baseball has the power to unite people.”

He may have hung up his spikes after making the dreams of Japanese baseball fans come true, but Randy Bass is still building bridges between Japan and Oklahoma. ●

There are still plenty of natural surroundings outside of Tokyo, Bass’s favorite place to play on the road.



More than 130,000 Shinkansen trains travel between Tokyo and Osaka annually, running with an average delay of under 20 seconds.

PROMOTING KIZUNA BETWEEN VIET NAM AND JAPAN



Active as a Coordinator for International Relations in Japan, Nguyen Bui Anh Thy works valiantly day after day for the future of Viet Nam and Japan.

Transmitting information to foreign residents of the city, giving presentations at schools, and offering introductory lessons in Vietnamese culture and language at the international exchange association; Nguyen Bui Anh Thy puts tremendous energy into her activities. With three years' experience as a Coordinator for International Relations, she continues to cheerfully strengthen bonds between Japan and her home country of Viet Nam. "In Viet Nam, many people are familiar with Japan because our education includes learning about the country's history and geography," Nguyen adds,

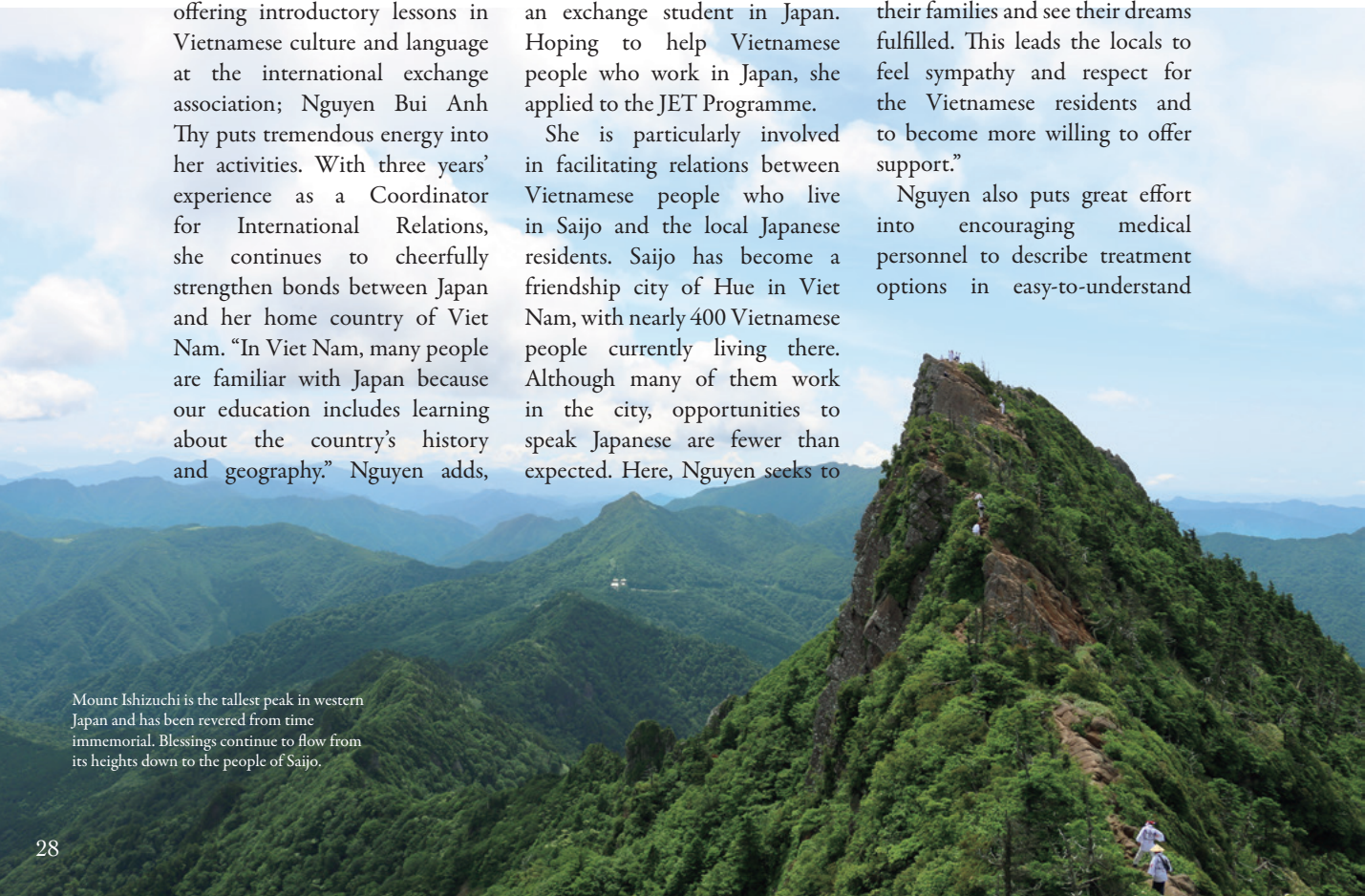
"I am one of those people." In college she majored in East Asian Studies, which included time as an exchange student in Japan. Hoping to help Vietnamese people who work in Japan, she applied to the JET Programme.

She is particularly involved in facilitating relations between Vietnamese people who live in Saijo and the local Japanese residents. Saijo has become a friendship city of Hue in Viet Nam, with nearly 400 Vietnamese people currently living there. Although many of them work in the city, opportunities to speak Japanese are fewer than expected. Here, Nguyen seeks to

get them involved in events that introduce Vietnamese culture, or Vietnamese language classes. "These events and classes are popular with both the Vietnamese participants and the locals who have had few interactions with Vietnamese people and are unfamiliar with their culture. Through such occasions, the Vietnamese participants can tell the local residents that they came to Japan not only to earn money, but also to provide for their families and see their dreams fulfilled. This leads the locals to feel sympathy and respect for the Vietnamese residents and to become more willing to offer support."

Nguyen also puts great effort into encouraging medical personnel to describe treatment options in easy-to-understand

Mount Ishizuchi is the tallest peak in western Japan and has been revered from time immemorial. Blessings continue to flow from its heights down to the people of Saijo.





Japanese, as many foreigners especially struggle with the language barrier during times of illness. Although the recent COVID-19 crisis has limited her activities, she has been persevering in every way possible. She even made a video, featuring interviews with several dozen people, including foreigners living and



In addition to assisting foreign residents, Nguyen also plays a role in conveying the attractions of Saijo City to the rest of the world. At an event held in Hue, dressed in a *yukata*, she informs Vietnamese people about life in Saijo.

working in Saijo, the companies that have hired them, and other local citizens, asking about the charm of the city and their thoughts about international exchanges. “I believe that having everyone share their feelings frankly will enhance mutual understanding.” Her enthusiasm for building bilateral ties stops at nothing.

According to Nguyen, the charms of the city of Saijo are its

NGUYEN BUI ANH THY

Born in Binh Duong Province of Viet Nam, and having visited Japan twice as an exchange student, Nguyen found work upon her return to her home country in the Consulate General of Japan in Ho Chi Minh City, and was also involved in a project of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Wanting to become more involved in cultural exchanges between the two countries, she applied to the JET Programme, and was assigned to the city of Saijo in Ehime Prefecture. She is a big fan of sumo wrestling.

abundant bounty of nature and the warmth of its people. “Saijo has really delicious water, and of course the vegetables and fruit cultivated using such pure water are wonderful. There is even someone who grows crops of food used in Vietnamese cuisine, such as lemongrass, just for me! I’m impressed by how thoughtful everyone is.”

Nguyen, who talks about her desire to introduce Japanese ways of craftsmanship to people in her homeland, is hoping for even stronger relations between both countries. “I feel that both Vietnamese and Japanese people share a strong sense of altruism, and naturally want to do something for others. Japan has a long history of supporting Viet Nam. I hope that the relationship between the two countries will be more equal and that cooperation and exchange will become deeper and broader, going beyond the



“After returning to Viet Nam, I would like to support Japanese people seeking new opportunities and challenges in business, work, and academia in the country.”

economy and culture to cover other fields such as education and disaster prevention. I sincerely believe that, by building a deep partnership between both countries and joining forces, we will find solutions to many global problems.” ●

Saijo City has many springs of subterranean water originating from Mount Ishizuchi. The water is available to all, including people who come from outside the city. Nguyen’s beloved daughter is a big fan of the water.



ABOUT THE JAPAN EXCHANGE AND TEACHING (JET) PROGRAMME



The JET Programme began in 1987 with the goal of promoting grassroots international exchange between Japan and other nations, and is now one of the world’s largest international exchange programs. In 2019, the JET Programme welcomed 5,761 participants, and there are currently more than 70,000 alumni from 75 countries living in all parts of the world.

The JET Programme official website >> <http://jetprogramme.org/en/>

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