How foreign correspondents report from the peninsula — and from Japan

Profile: The new New York Times Bureau Chief Motoko Rich

Sexy pages: Yoshiwara hosts unique book store

Waiting for Putin: A history of deals on the northern isles
In search of the ultimate sphere

Mention the word “bearing” and most people imagine the ball, the shiny metallic sphere inside. Not only are they beautiful, but today these spheres are among the most perfectly crafted human creations, closer to being perfectly spherical than any other object, natural or manmade. Perhaps the best example is NSK’s highest-precision ball bearing that deviates by just 50 nanometers – 50 billionths of a meter – from perfectly spherical.

Why does NSK go to such extremes in search of perfection? The more perfect the sphere, the less friction and energy loss and the greater the precision in the bearing. Although the incremental gain in energy efficiency from a single improved bearing may be minute, considering that the world’s automakers build about 12 billion bearings a year into their products, tiny steps can amount to quantum leaps. At NSK, that’s why we will never rest till we reach the perfect sphere.
WITHIN THE FIRST FEW days of my being elected by the Board of Directors as the new president of the FCCJ (after Peter Langman resigned to take up a new post in Hong Kong), I was faced with a major decision over what to do about the Club’s proposed move to new premises in October 2018. I received what I regard as expert opinion that showed there could be problems with the move.

I decided that I must act with responsibility to all concerned, not least to all of our Members who have a financial (and in the case of Regular Members) stake in the welfare of the Club. I also wanted to act with responsibility toward our landlord and toward our staff.

Around the time I assumed the presidency, our two Kanji (Statutory Auditors) Inuma-san and Honjo-san issued a report to the Board that had the tone of an alert. They suggested that, “the FCCJ would need to give notice to MEC (Mitsubishi Estate), the company handling the FCCJ move project, to temporarily halt (not terminate or postpone indefinitely) any work on FCCJ facilities at the new site” until the FCCJ could “sort out” its position on the move.

They came to this conclusion after recognizing the fact that the decision on this most important project in the recent history of FCCJ was made (a) under an agreement with our landlord Mitsubishi Estate of March 2015, and we were under legal obligation to move from the Denki Building to newly constructed premises at Marunouchi 3-2 (aka the New Fuji Building), and (b) we took this decision because the cost to maintain and overhaul our current premises was beyond our means.

The Kanji, however, felt that the financial projection made to justify the size of the new premises was optimistic and short on specifics.

As president, I felt I had to take heed of warnings from some in the Club that the move could involve financial risks – and that the new premises might not match the Club’s requirements in terms of the standard of facilities we need to operate at least at our current level. While not necessarily accepting these arguments, I had an obligation at least to heed them.

(The agreement with MEC is confidential so I would not describe it here.)

So, please bear with us as we seek to reexamine, as quickly as possible, the options that are open to the Club as we approach the move. We will keep you fully informed at every step of the way.

In the meantime, the House & Properties committee is following up with Mitsubishi Estate on the overall building project’s construction schedule needs, but advised the Board that a swift decision should be made. Also, the Board’s F&B&Search Task Force has completed an English language version of a request for proposals from prospective F&B outsourcing contractors.

Myself and the Board are working hard to find solutions to these and other related issues, and we welcome any suggestions.

Khaldon Ashari

The reality is rather different. The board that was in place in March 2015 signed a contract, with General Membership Meeting approval, that committed the Club to larger premises and an amount of rent which some suggest we can’t afford, and also to a penalty in the event FCCJ wishes unilaterally to withdraw from the contract.

I personally am supportive of the Club moving from its current premises, and in fact see real advantages to making our home in new premises that are better equipped to meet the needs of a modern press club.

So, I have approached the issue of the move with an open and, I hope, careful and positive, attitude. I have seen and heard enough, however, during my first two months in office that gave me some doubts about the ability of FCCJ to pay the rent of the new premises, and issues regarding the capability of the new premises to provide us with catering and other facilities equal to those we enjoy at present.

With this in mind, I quickly launched an inquiry into the pros and cons of the move, with input both from those who favor going ahead “as is” and those who have different views. By doing this, I wanted to be sure that we act with responsibility to all parties but with the interest of you our members as our first priority.

I decided to call for a pause in contract negotiations so that all sides of the case could be rapidly reassessed and presented to the Board. We are busily examining every possible option to make sure that the FCCJ gets the best possible deal regarding the terms of the move and – more importantly – that it does not land itself in difficulty (or worse) by embarking upon a move that is not viable, financially or logistically. As president, I feel this responsibility keenly. I also feel a duty to keep members fully informed of what is happening, and why.

This is your Club.

I have little desire to apportion blame to previous Boards, but it is only fair to say that, if the question of what kind and size of Club we wished to become had been asked of the membership before the move was agreed, we might not have found ourselves in the difficulty we face now. The financial aspects and the “affordability” of the move were not properly examined, and this runs counter to the spirit of transparency I feel this responsibility keenly. I also feel a duty to keep members fully informed of what is happening, and why. This is your Club.

I have little desire to apportion blame to previous Boards, but it is only fair to say that, if the question of what kind and size of Club we wished to become had been asked of the membership before the move was agreed, we might not have found ourselves in the difficulty we face now. The financial aspects and the “affordability” of the move were not properly examined, and neither was the “cost”: we might have to pay by drafting new members simply to boost revenues when some of those new members might have little interest in the role of a press club.

So, please bear with us as we seek to reexamine, as quickly as possible, the options that are open to the Club as we approach the move. We will keep you fully informed at every step of the way.

In the meantime, the House & Properties committee is following up with Mitsubishi Estate on the overall building project’s construction schedule needs, but advised the Board that a swift decision should be made. Also, the Board’s F&B&Search Task Force has completed an English language version of a request for proposals from prospective F&B outsourcing contractors.

Myself and the Board are working hard to find solutions to these and other related issues, and we welcome any suggestions.
The troublesome task of covering Kim

**WHILE SOME MEDIA ARE OPENING BUREAUS IN PYONGYANG, REPORTERS ARE STILL FACED WITH CRUCIAL CHALLENGES WHEN IT COMES TO REPORTING ON JAPAN’S RECLUSIVE NEIGHBOR.**

By ANDY SHARP

Even so, Fifield says, North Korea is the biggest challenge because it’s so difficult to get information and paint a real picture of what’s happening. “This involves talking to a wide range of people,” the New Zealander says. “North Koreans who have an advantage, having previously spent four years in Seoul covering the Koreas for the Financial Times and speaking ‘workable’ Korean. She’s visited Pyongyang seven times and travels to the South Korean capital about once a month – taking the flight from Haneda to Gimpo more often, she jokes, than she rides the Yamanote Line.

Even so, Fifield says North Korea is the biggest challenge because it’s so difficult to get information and paint a real picture of what’s happening. “This involves talking to a wide range of people,” the New Zealander says. “North Koreans who have an advantage, having previously spent four years in Seoul covering the Koreas for the Financial Times and speaking ‘workable’ Korean. She’s visited Pyongyang seven times and travels to the South Korean capital about once a month – taking the flight from Haneda to Gimpo more often, she jokes, than she rides the Yamanote Line.

Even in Pyongyang, Fifield doesn’t have it easy. A few years ago, an official trip for a group of overseas reporters to North Korea happened to coincide with a rocket launch. They were unable to report from the scene because they had no idea what was happening, while correspondents elsewhere had access to South Korean media and other sources.

T**HE BUREAU CHIEF**

Even closer to the story is Alastair Gale, the Wall Street Journal’s Seoul bureau chief, who will be returning to Japan this year after a five-year stint in the peninsula.

Gale, who leads a handful of reporters in Seoul, says that while coverage of Korea from outside the country varies by publication, it is weaker – since reporters miss out on interaction with news sources such as business and government people. “It is by definition harder since there’s a lot you absorb just by being here and being surrounded by events,” Gale says. While stories such as the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 phone debacle and international tension, often the big local stories are stories about political or celebrity scandals that don’t have much of an audience outside the country. “The leader of the ruling party went on hunger strike recently but I don’t think it got much coverage in the foreign press.”

On covering the North, he proceeds with caution. “Often there’s a herd mentality on North Korea coverage because everyone is working from the same minimal source material and the sexiest story is the one that gets the most attention,” Gale says. Crossing borders With an accompanying interpreter, Anna Fifield interviews people on the street in Pyongyng for a Washington Post video, above. (Main photo, an elite South Korean soldier on the demarcation line between the two Koreas.

**OUR MAN IN PYONGYANG**

Eric Talmadge is possibly closer to the story than any journalist with an address in Tokyo – he’s the Pyongyang bureau chief for the Associated Press and is based there, on average, for about 10 days a month. (AP also opened a bureau there in September to join a handful of international media outlets including Kyodo News.)

After more than a decade of reporting on Japan – and Asian-Pacific security

Talmadge accepted his new job in Pyongyang in 2014 (the bureau opened in 2012) due to it being a “unique challenge professionally.”

Talmadge has a staff of two local reporters and a driver, and usually travels to Pyongyang with Singapore-based photographer Maye-e Wong. He says the restrictions he faces – especially as an American – are primarily related to access.

Even so, he says, he’s managed to pull off exclusive interviews with the head of the Foreign Ministry’s U.S. division, a senior official at the nation’s space agency, and a two-hour interview with the foreign minister – a meeting that took place in New York as the result of “groundwork done in Pyongyang.”

“Our stories about daily life in the capital and the provinces provide a window into the North that I think is a very important aspect of our being there,” Talmadge says. “Every foreign correspondent in Japan would agree that having actually been, or being, here informs their work in a very similar way and makes their work better.”

Though NKNews.org, a website focused on the country, published a roughly 4,000-word report in 2014 that alleged the U.S. news agency pulls its punches, Talmadge says there’s a reason for AP being in Pyongyang, and it isn’t that they are just waiting for the country to someday open up.

“Every story that we write, every headline we get out and talk to people on the street, every time we sit down and complain or debate with officials there about how we wrote a story or why we took a certain photo is part of that effort,” he says. “The most important thing is to produce the best journalism that I can, right now, and tenaciously build on each success, big or small. It may sound corny, and I know not all agree, but I honestly believe we are fighting the good fight – for everybody.”
Behind the negotiations for the Kuril Islands

When is a Kuril Island not a Kuril Island? When Tokyo so insists, and with Russian President Vladimir Putin due to arrive here in December, and serious negotiations on territory promised, the issue of “what’s in a name” could become important. The definition of the “Kuril Islands” in that document did not include the southern Kuril islands of Etorofu and Kunashiri or the islands north of Etorofu – i.e. to the north of Japan’s self-proclaimed Northern Territories. Therefore they could not have been renounced in that San Francisco Peace Treaty.

The U.S. has had an impressive record of changing policies to fit its Cold War strategies. It has helped keep Tokyo and Moscow at loggerheads for over sixty years. It seems that in 1947 Washington secretly promised Moscow it would accept Shikotan and the Habomais, sign a peace treaty, and handover and north of Etorofu – i.e. to the north of Japan’s self-proclaimed Northern Territories. Therefore they could not have been renounced in that San Francisco Peace Treaty.

Today, there is another way for Japan to argue its case, but it means having to criticize the U.S. by asking the following question: Why did Washington take such a hard line in forcing Yoshida to sign away the Southern Kurils? And why did U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles include all the territory Tokyo now describes as its Northern Territories in the definition of the Kurils to be renounced? The only territory he agreed to exclude was the Habomais, promised to Tokyo.

The treaty also insists the matter was all decided back in the 19th century. In the 1855 Shimoda Treaty between the Tokugawa regime and Czarist Russia, Japan gained ownership of the southern Kuril Islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri and Shikotan. All the other islands further north went to Russia. Then, in the Treaty of St. Petersburg in 1875, Japan negotiated, the transfer of ownership of all the “Kuril” north of Etorofu to Japan in exchange for all of Sakhalin going to Russia. From that it is supposed to follow that since the word “Kuril” was used to describe the islands north of Etorofu, the term Southern Kurils (Minami Chishima) can only refer to islands included in the 1875 handover and north of Etorofu – i.e. to the north of Japan’s self-proclaimed Northern Territories. Therefore they could not have been renounced in that San Francisco Peace Treaty.

Sophistry? Undoubtedly, in addition to the Nishimura statement, there is also the well-known fact that when Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida signed the San Francisco treaty he complained bitterly about the fact that he was being forced to sign away Minami Chishima. Indignant, he said he was so unhappy that Tokyo to this day refuses to release the documents sent to the U.S. in protest. If released they would undermine Tokyo’s argument that it never renounced Etorofu and Kunashiri. (A ministry of foreign affairs map at the time showed the two islands clearly included in territory lost under San Francisco.)

Tokyo has some more arguments, some slightly more sophisticated. One of them is that the San Francisco treaty does not stipulate to whom Japan is renouncing the Kurils, meaning they do not necessarily belong to Russia. Another is that since Moscow has never signed the treaty (it walked out of negotiations), it has no right to claim any of the Kurils anyway.

More logical-minded Japanese, both on the communist left and conservative right, realize the contradictions and insist that Japan should blame the U.S. and claim all the Kurils.

Japan has a better position when it quotes the Allied war-time Cairo and Potsdam Declarations on which Japan based its 1945 surrender. Both stated that Japan should only be stripped of territories it had gained from greed and aggression. So supporters of this argument say that since Tokyo gained the Kurils through peaceful negotiations in 1855 and 1875 it should not have been forced to give them up. But Moscow would then have to explain why it took southern Sakhalin as the prize for its aggressive 1904 war against Russia.

There is another way for Japan to argue its case, but it means having to criticize the U.S. by asking the following question: Why did Washington take such a hard line in forcing Yoshida to sign away the Southern Kurils? And why did U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles include all the territory Tokyo now describes as its Northern Territories in the definition of the Kurils to be renounced? The only territory he agreed to exclude was the Habomais, promised to Tokyo.

Today, there is another way for Japan to argue its case, but it means having to criticize the U.S. by asking the following question: Why did Washington take such a hard line in forcing Yoshida to sign away the Southern Kurils? And why did U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles include all the territory Tokyo now describes as its Northern Territories in the definition of the Kurils to be renounced? The only territory he agreed to exclude was the Habomais, promised to Tokyo.

The treaty also insists the matter was all decided back in the 19th century. In the 1855 Shimoda Treaty between the Tokugawa regime and Czarist Russia, Japan gained ownership of the southern Kuril Islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri and Shikotan. All the other islands further north went to Russia. Then, in the Treaty of St. Petersburg in 1875, Japan negotiated, the transfer of ownership of all the “Kuril” north of Etorofu to Japan in exchange for all of Sakhalin going to Russia. From that it is supposed to

Gregory Clark is a former Moskow-based Australian diplomat who first came to Japan as Bureau chief for the Australian, and writes a regular opinion column in the Japan Times. More information can be found at www.gregoryclark.net.
In midsummer this year, Motoko Rich arrived in Japan to reconquer, before officially taking up her post as the New York Times Tokyo bureau chief. Two days before she was going to return to the Big Apple, she found herself rushing out to Sagamihara to cover Japan’s worst mass killing since World War II.

The slayings of 19 handicapped people at the Tsukui Yamayuri-en care facility, allegedly carried out by former employee Satoshi Uematsu, led Rich to write about one of those wounded, Kazuya Ono, a 48-year-old autistic man with severe mental disabilities who survived grievous knife wounds to his throat and abdomen. In her Sept. 8 article, Rich wrote about his parents’ desire that the world learn not only what happened to him, but his name as well. That flew in the face of a policy by Kanagawa Prefecture police, Japanese media and other victims’ families to keep them anonymous because they were handicapped.

“The Onos are the only family that has come forward to speak out,” says Rich. “Clearly Kazuya was a very challenging child to raise, and yet their love for him is so strong.”

Covering the massacre was her first time dealing with Japan’s media cartels—the kisha clubs. She was denied access to a press conference after the massacre, and describes the police attitude as “astoundingly non-transparent.” It was a learning experience about Japan for the veteran reporter, who began her new job in August and now oversees a group consisting of correspondent Jonathan Soble and two researchers.

“I’m so excited. I feel really, really lucky,” Rich says. “Every correspondent comes and does it in their own style. They have a new way of looking at the country and the story and they have their own interests and that informs their coverage. The editors knew that one of the frames I would bring was my background.”

BORN IN LOS ANGELES to a mother from Hokkaido and a father from New Jersey, Rich lived in Japan twice: once from second to fourth grades at the American School in Japan, and then during a summer internship with the Daily Yomiuri. Her résumé also includes education at Yale and Cambridge, and reporting at the Financial Times and the Wall Street Journal. She joined the New York Times in 2003, covering the economy, real estate, publishing and education. Tokyo is her first foreign assignment.

“It was true 40 years ago and it’s still true today that Japanese view me as gaunt,” she says. “They look at my face and are surprised to see the name on my media, whereas in the United States people regard me as more Asian. So I’m kind of betwixt and between, and that will inevitably inform my coverage.”

Rich says her love of journalism stems from a passion for hearing people’s stories and noticing little details—like how children in Japan bow to a soccer field after a successful and safe practice, a phenomenon she noted in a recent piece about how her family is adjusting to Tokyo.

But like many journalists, she’s deeply concerned about the state of the industry. As smaller newspapers continue to fold across the U.S., the Times has been offering staff buyouts for the past three years.

“The role of the press as a watchdog is being lost as a result of the decimation of the regional newspaper industry and it’s very sad, but there are a lot of new things that are happening that are incredibly effective,” she says, pointing to articles by her Asian-American colleague Michael Luo on Mebhum and the Times about how a woman in Manhattan told him to “Go back to China!” After going viral on social media, the story turned into a series of video vignettes about the issue, as well as a Times live chat.

“This became a front-page story. And there were so many other ways in which it could reach around the world digitally—that’s so new and exciting,” says Rich. “While feeling this profound sadness about what we’re losing, we must also look ahead to what we’re gaining and how we can take advantage of it.”

SOME OF THE THEMES and topics that Rich is paying particular attention to in Tokyo include gender and its relationship to culture and the economy (more and more important), the 2020 Olympics, as well as first-person and quirky features. She notes how Martin Fackler, chief until last year, did a story on Japan’s love of fax machines that made the front page.

“Japan is a wonderful, marvelous place,” says Rich. “There are things that are odd and weird and the great thing about being a foreign correspondent is to be able to write about things that locals may dismiss as ‘Oh, everyone knows that.’ But we don’t want people in Asia to think we’re writing about things that are happening that are odd and weird and the great thing about being a foreign correspondent is to be able to write about things that locals may dismiss as ‘Oh, everyone knows that.’ But we don’t want people in Asia to think we’re writing about them as exoticized beings.

“Our mission here given that our office is so small is not to be part of pack journalism, but to try to do something different. Our audience now is truly global. So we’re trying to think about how do you write a story that appeals to people in Asia and other parts of the world, and not just Americans.”

Beyond the Nobels

Japan has a number of coveted international prizes in science and technology, some of them created by well-known business figures.

by JERRY MATSUMURA

O

n Monday, Oct. 8, news headlines detailed Stockholm report-

ed that Japanese biologist Yoshinori Ohsumi, 71, a professor at

the Tokyo Institute of Technology, had won the Nobel Prize in

medicine for discoveries on how cells break down and recycle con-

tent, a garbage disposal system that scientists hope to harness in

the fight against cancer, Alzheimer’s and other diseases.

He was the 25th Japanese Nobel Prize winner since 1949, when Dr.
Hidoki Yukawa, a physicist, received the first Nobel Prize to be

awarded to a Japanese citizen, “for his prediction of the existence

of mesons (a subatomic particle) on the basis of theoretical work

on nuclear forces.”

The greater part of the Japanese public was not even aware of the

prize at the time—though citizens were not prohibited to receive it,

unlike in Hitler’s Germany. But coming soon after their disastrous

defeat in World War II, Yukawa’s recognition gave the Japanese

particular pride and encouragement.

Now Japan is not only in the top league of Nobel Prize recipients (in

the field of natural science, the number of winners is second only to

behind the U.S.), but it also issues a number of international prizes

which offer major incentives for the world’s most talented scholars

and researchers. In fact, where Japanese awards and Nobel Prizes

cover the same categories, it is often the case that outstanding merit

is recognized first in the awarding of a Japanese prize. (In 2012, for

example, Professor Ohsumi won the Kyoto Prize, one of Japan’s top

private awards for global achievement.)

Out of a total of some 600 science and technology prizes, there are

four at the top based on financial value. This does not necessar-

ily mean that they have the greatest significance, let alone that the

amount of prize money or the order represents the degree of impor-

tance or recognition. As with Nobel Prizes, nominations are sought

from around the world.

THE KYOTO PRIZE WAS

started in 1985 by the Inamori Foundation in

Kyoto, founded in the previous year by Kazuo Inamori, the founder

and Chairman Emeritus of Kyocera Corporation, with his personal

funds. Three annual prizes of ¥50 million are awarded to outstand-

ing individuals or groups in the categories of Advanced Technology,

Basic Sciences, and Arts and Philosophy. Particularly characteristic

of The Kyoto Prize is the Arts and Philosophy category, indicating the

importance Inamori attaches to the enrichment and elevation of the

human spirit that is lagging very much behind the progress in sci-

technology and technology.

Nine of the past Kyoto Prize recipients have gone on to receive the

Nobel Prize, including South Africa’s Dr. Sydney Brenner, who made

significant contributions to work on the genetic code and Dr. Jack

Watson of the U.S., the co-inventor of the integrated DNA.

The Japan Prize has been awarded annually since 1985 by the Sci-

ence and Technology Foundation of Japan (renamed as the Japan Prize

Foundation in 2010). The foundation was created in response to the

demand from around the world for a major government’s wish for a prestigious international prize of the Nobel Prize class to be issued locally. It was largely funded from a personal donation from Matsushita and the Osaka Expo ’90 Foundation to commemorate the 1990 Osaka Interna-
tional Exposition. Each year the foundation invites nominations of the world’s awards in the scientific and other fields, and issues two prizes. The Kyoto Prize and Japan Prize – the latter was renamed the Kyoto Prize in 2012; above, the 2016 ceremony for the Japan Prize winners attended by the imperial couple – share a number of features in common. Each was founded

with the personal funds of the industrialists concerned. And, in both cases, the founder had built up his business from modest beginnings, suggesting they both shared a desire to

repay society.

Inamori, who founded the Kyoto Prize, is a dynamic, char-

ismatic entrepreneur who founded a small ceramics company and built it into the Kyocera Corporation, the world’s lead-

ing high-tech ceramic and electronic products company. He

is also the founder of IBID, the first long-distance telephone

company to challenge Japan’s telecommunications monop-

oly, and in 2010 was appointed chairman of the then bank-

rupt Japan Airlines at the

pleading of the Japanese

government.

Born in 1932, Inamori battled disease and various family problems as a youth. In 1956, immediately after graduating from Kogushi-ma University, where he majored in applied chemis-

ty, he joined a small

insulator company in Kyo-

to after being rejected by other larger companies. In 1959, he left this company to start up a tiny opera-

tion of his own, enduring all manner of hardships before eventually building up a large personal fortune. He reportedly regards his hard-won wealth as something

entrusted to him to administer for the benefit of humanity. Of the Kyoto Prize he wrote: “I first conceived the idea of the Kyoto Prize in 2002. The concept of the prize is that it honors individu-

alists who have achieved great things in various fields of science and technology, and that the enrichment and elevation of the human spirit, which is lagging very much behind the progress in science and technology.”

While the Nobel Prizes, of course, remain the most coveted

of the world’s awards in the scientific and other fields, Japan’s prizes are attracting growing interest from research-

ers all over the world. And those prizes, of course, are only the

winners, but also draw attention to Japan’s commitment to

great advances in science and technology.

JAPAN’S TOP PRIZES

Kyoto Prize: www.inamori-f.or.jp

Japan Prize: www.japanprize.jp

Blue Planet Prize: www.af-info.or.jp

International Cosmos Prize: www.expo-cosmos.or.jp

THE LATE KONOSUKE MATSUSHITA (1894-1989), who founded The Japan Prize, was Japan’s most successful postwar busi-

nessman and one of the most inspirational role models of all
time, particularly during Japan’s high-growth period. Born

in a poor farming family, Matsushita worked at various manual jobs from the age of nine before opening a small one-

room electrical-parts factory in Osaka in 1918. Always in search of innovation, he developed a series of home electrical appliances and pushed his company to the forefront of the industry. His accomplishments as leader, author, humanitarian, moral philosopher and management man-

ager are astonishing, and his philanthropy accelerated as he aged. In 1979 he established the Matsushita Institute of Gov-

ernment and Management (MIGM), designed to develop and promote leadership for the 21st century. Yoshikihoko Noda, the

former prime minister, was among the first of its graduates.

The Japan Prize, which was established four years before

Matsushita’s death at 94, was “intended to honor scientists, of whatever nationality, whose research has made a substan-

tial contribution to the attainment of a greater degree of prosperity for mankind.” His philosophy, however, was not a science-centered one, but rather an ideal of happiness and prosperity coming from open-minded people with human-

itarian values who had the courage to tackle society’s most intractable problems. The Showa period came to a definitive end in 1989, as it marked the deaths of both Emperor Hiro-

hito and Matsushita.

While the Nobel Prizes, of course, remain the most covet-

ed of the world’s awards in the scientific and other fields, Japan’s prizes are attracting growing interest from research-

ers all over the world. And those prizes, of course, are only the

winners, but also draw attention to Japan’s commitment to

great advances in science and technology.

Cover photo: The Kyoto Prize medal, left, Yoshinori Ohsumi at a press conference after receiving the Nobel Prize in medicine this year (and who won a Kyoto Prize in 2012); above, the 2016 ceremony for the Japan Prize winners attended by the imperial couple.

Kosuke “Jerry” Matsumura is a freelance journalist based in Tokyo, formerly affiliated with Hugo Publications in London.
GLOBAL WARMING

GLOBAL TEMPERATURES ARE WRITING new highs, the polar ice caps are melting, sea levels are rising and deforestation continues, albeit at a reduced rate, according to Sir David King. He also cited a worrying outlook for our planet and mankind would appear pretty bleak. Yet in the face of even more alarming statistics, such as a surge in global sea levels of as much as eight meters, Sir David King, the UK Foreign Secretary’s Special Representative for Climate Change, remains remarkably upbeat.

The nations of the world are faced with a crisis, he said at a press conference at the FCCJ on Oct. 5, but they have recognized it as such and have made plans and commitments to halting emissions that are harmful to the environment. Watanabe is keen, he said, then we should avoid a global catastrophe.

But there is, he emphasized, a lot of room for error or not a moment to lose. “The last 14 months have each been the hottest month for that time of the year for the whole planet, while the hottest years on record have all been in the UK, he said. “What this demonstrates, of course, is that the trend is upwards and will go on inexorably upwards unless global actions are taken.”

The Paris Agreement, signed by 195 countries at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2015, is designed to achieve the targets set out for a global scale, with a commitment to limit global temperature rise to 2 degrees centigrade above the pre-industrial age. An increase of 1.5 degrees would obviously be preferable, King said.

In addition, the nations gathered in Paris provided nationally determined voluntary climate action plans to prevent the climate crisis. Unfortunately, when all the promises were added up and decided not to meet the Kyoto Protocol and incorporating the forested land, our world is on a pathway of a temperature increase of as much as 4 degrees.

“Four degrees is potentially calamitous,” King said. “If we have a temperature exceeding 41 or 42 with high humidity over three days, even people who are in the shade will die. They cannot get rid of their body heat fast enough. People will survive in air conditioning, but of course the risk is that air conditioning will fail under those conditions as well.”

“So in parts of the world where there is not much air conditioning available, reality rates would be extremely high once temperatures get to that level,” he said. “And the challenge of climate change is not just temperature rise but it’s also sea level rise, changes in rainfall patterns, monsoon patterns and so on.”

King pointed to flooding as another great challenge. “Britain, like Japan, is an island nation and as sea levels rise, storms at sea mean the water recirculation is further and further inland and more and more people are at risk from flooding,” he said. “When, for example, we looked at China, we learned that under a medium-level future emissions scenario, we were looking at half a billion people in South-East Asia being at risk from flooding in a given year.”

Then there is the problem that was identified by King as “the biggest challenge” – that of ocean warming, which happens more slowly than atmospheric warming and consequently will continue for many years after emissions have been brought under control. If action is not taken urgently, then an increase in sea levels by one meter by the end of the century is likely, meaning such places as Calcutta, Shanghai, New York, London and Tokyo are at risk of inundation. The worst-case scenario is if it becomes impossible to reverse the melting of the Greenpeace ice sheet and sea levels rise fully eight meters.

The Paris Agreement included a resolution to ensure that measures are taken. "That’s not going to do it because the alternatives are so dire for mankind," King believes. “Not only is it doable, but we have to do it because the alternatives are so dire for mankind.”

The UK, for example, passed the Climate Change Act in 2008, under which the government vowed to reduce emissions by 80 percent by 2050. It also created a national climate fund to the tune of $13.5 billion – larger than the UN’s commitment of $10 billion – to help reduce CO2 emissions, primarily by helping developing countries transition to a low-carbon future and over time developing resistance against the effects of climate change.

UK elections – which only account for 2 percent of the global total – are already down by 30 percent from 1990 figures and Britain is on course to two emissions by 57 percent by 2030. And King was keen to emphasize that Britain’s vote to leave the European Union will have no impact on the UK’s climate targets.

King also suggested that the climate crisis could also be seen as an unprecedented opportunity. “The falling costs of energy installation are dramatic, but we also need new technologies, in the area of bioenergy, smart grids and so on,” he said.

Japan and the UK are among 22 countries to receive the Mission Innovation scheme unveiled in Paris, providing $80 billion each year to companies to carry out research and development of the clean energy sector. “The mission is to allow every country, every company, to carry out research and development of the clean energy, on the grid or off-grid, for all purposes by between 2025 and 2030,” he said. This concern was one of the reasons why those technologies to emerge from what is a collaborative program.

There are some bright spots in a bleak report on the effects of climate change.

Turning down the heat
by JULIAN RYALL

GLOBAL WARMING

SLOWLY RISING SEAS

The world has been in a slow climate crisis for many years. Even before the 20th century, sea levels were rising, glaciers were melting, and the earth’s average temperature was increasing. The rise in sea levels has been gradual, and the rate of warming has been relatively slow, with a temperature increase of about 0.1 degrees Celsius per decade. However, the rate of warming has accelerated in recent years, with a temperature increase of about 0.3 degrees Celsius per decade.

The rise in sea levels has been a major concern for coastal communities, as rising sea levels can lead to flooding, erosion, and loss of habitat. In addition, rising sea levels can also affect the ocean’s acidity, which can have a negative impact on marine ecosystems.

The rise in sea levels is a result of the warming of the ocean, which causes the water to expand and increase in volume. As the ocean warms, it expands, and the water level rises.

The rise in sea levels is also a result of the melting of glaciers and ice sheets. As the temperature increases, glaciers and ice sheets melt, contributing to the rise in sea levels.

The rise in sea levels is expected to continue, with an increase of about 0.3 to 0.6 meters per decade. This increase will have a significant impact on coastal communities, as well as on the ocean and marine ecosystems.
... at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 21 for an unusual look at the phenomenon of professional wrestling — puroresu on these shores — with this sneak peek of DDT: We Are Japanese Wrestlers. The screening will be preceded by a live PowerPoint presentation (you read that right) by DDT star Super Sasadango Machine, custom-created for his FCCJ appearance. From its beginnings with the great Rikidozan and now generating over $100 million a year, pro wrestling is very serious business indeed. But thanks to the Dramatic Dream Team (DDT), it is also sometimes very silly business, with matches that strike a perfect balance of the hair-raising and the hilarious. The team’s astounding athleticism, creative costuming and dazzling choreography have made it one of the top names in indie wrestling, with ardent fans spanning the globe. Co-directed by wrestler Muscle Sakai and acclaimed documentarian Tetsuaki Matsue (Live Tape, Flashback Memories 3D), both of whom will be on hand for the Q&A afterward, the film is a fittingly scruffy tribute to DDT’s tough boys with soft underbellies, as they approach their 20th anniversary. (Japan, 2016; 74 minutes; Japanese with English subtitles.) – Karen Severns

The FCCJ is pleased to offer members a substantial discount on subscriptions to LexisNexis’ news database service, Nexis.com. The Members-only deal allows for flat-rate access at ¥7,900 per month – offering big savings on a service that normally costs ¥12,600 per month.

The service will be billed by the Club. The FCCJ benefits from all subscriptions sold under this arrangement. Nexis provides access to news and information from more than 34,000 sources, including Kyodo News, Jiji, Yonhap, Xinhua, AP, Reuters, AFP, all major world newspapers and specialist news sources. Also included is a database of U.S. and international company information, biographical databases, country profiles and a U.S. legal database.

For those already in on the secret, the application form is available on the FCCJ website or from the 19F Club office.
TONG PEI is the Chief Reporter of the Tokyo branch of the Beijing Daily. He graduated from Nanchang University with a major in Japanese in 2008, and joined the Beijing Daily in October that same year. He has served as a journalist in the economic department and the international department. After MH370 disappeared in March, 2014, the focus of Tong’s reporting was on the search and rescue situation of the Chinese government and living conditions of the victims’ families. Tong assumed his present position in Japan in December 2014, where he reports on politics, technology, medicine, urban management and other issues.

REINSTATEMENT (P/JA)

Horace White, USA Tech Weekly

PROFESSIONAL/JOURNALIST ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Yukiko Kishimoto, Freelance
Mari Yamamoto, Daily Beast, the LA Times

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Akinori Tamura, Nikken Sekkei Civil Engineering Ltd.

REGULAR MEMBER

New Members

STUDY TOUR TO JAXA

Nationalism in Asia: A History Since 1945
Jeff Kingston
Wiley-Blackwell

Gift from Jeff Kingston

Tales from Victoria Park: Short Stories of Indonesian Women in Hong Kong
Todd Crowell
Blacksmith Books

Gift from Todd Crowell

Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History
Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney
The University of Chicago Press

Gift from Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney

Kamikaze Diaries: Reflections of Japanese Student Soldiers
Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney
The University of Chicago Press

Gift from Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney

Daihyoteki nihonjin
Kanzo Uchimura; Hiroyuki Fujita (trans.)
I-BAS Shuppan

Gift from Hiroyuki Fujita

The First Modern Japanese: The Life of Ishikawa Takuboku
Donald Keene
Columbia University Press

The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan
Akiko Hashimoto
Oxford University Press

For Dignity, Justice, and Revolution: An Anthology of Japanese Proletarian Literature
Heather Bowen-Struyk (ed.); Norma Field (ed.)
The University of Chicago Press

True Crime Japan: Thieves, Rascals, Killers and Dope Heads: True Stories From a Japanese Courtroom
Paul Murphy
Tuttle Publishing

Okinawa: The History of an Island People
George H. Kerr; Mitsugu Sakihara (afterword)
Tuttle Publishing

Japan Company Handbook (Autumn 2016)
Toyo Keizai Inc.

Note: These books are selected from the list of recent releases and may not be available in all libraries.

FCCJ REGULAR MEMBERS MET with a life-size model of the 50 meter-long real H-II Launch Vehicle on Oct. 20 at the Tsukuba Space Center of Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA.)

After a short briefing, the participants toured the Space Dome, the exhibition hall, and learned about the earth observation satellites and the International Space Station activities. The tour also featured the Japanese “Kounotori” space station cargo transfer vehicle that is making a significant contribution to international space research.

Koichi Wakata, the veteran astronaut and International Space Station Manager, received the members at the space station mission control room and talked about JAXA’s objectives and its own experiences in space.

- Haruko Watanabe

Exciting progress in 3D Bioprinting

Researchers at Rothch are working to adapt existing “non-technological” technology to precisely print human or animal cells in three-dimensional biological functioning forms, known as 3D bioprinting. This emerging field has the potential to revolutionize medical research and, one day, enable the creation of artificial organs.

The doors to this research are opening in medical science and, one day, it’s conceivable that 3D bioprinting technology could be developed and used to print human cells. The goal is to print cells on a layer-by-layer basis from precisely determined sites and then to fuse the printed cells into functional structures.

The 3D bioprinting system requires development of the three-dimensional printing processes to be developed in the near future. By incorporating the 3D bioprinting system, it is expected that the 3D bioprinting technology will be able to contribute to the development of artificial organs for medical use.
“I JUST FLOAT ALONG.”
Pat M, USA, LEAF Owner

100% ELECTRIC NISSAN LEAF.
ELECTRIFY THE WORLD.

#NISSAN