

NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

August 2021 • Volume 53 • No. 8

BURSTING POINT

**Bureaucracy means some visiting journalists
have had a frustrating time at Tokyo 2020**



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In this issue

JUSTIN MCCURRY

The deadline for this issue came, frustratingly, midway through the Tokyo Olympics. At this point it is too early to gauge with any authority what the legacy of the Games will be. We know Japan's athletes have got off to an exhilarating start, winning gold medals in judo, gymnastics, in the pool and elsewhere. But we also know that daily Covid-19 cases in the capital are soaring and, according to one report, could reach 10,000 by the end of August. Whether the current wave is in any way related to the presence of tens of thousands of Olympic-related visitors will become apparent over time. For now, it seems appropriate for the *Number 1 Shimbun* to stay on firmer ground and report on what our contributors witnessed as this bizarre fortnight of elite sport got under way. Asger Røjle Christensen describes the hoops through which visiting journalists have had to jump to cover Tokyo 2020, while Nicolas Datiche captures the atmosphere inside the main press center in a series of photos. The indefatigable Mark Schreiber has resoled his walking shoes to revisit the architectural legacy of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and the doomed 1940 Games. Elsewhere, the winners of the FCCJ's Freedom of the Press awards, Saori Ibuki and Swe Win, explain what motivates them, David McNeill reviews the English-language edition of Shiro Ito's book, *Black Box*, and Ilgin Yorulmaz examines the cost to women of the pandemic in Japan. We are also fortunate to be able to publish an extract from *Black Box*, the final part of David Peace's critically acclaimed *Tokyo Redux* Trilogy.

THE FRONT PAGE

- 04 **From the President**
Suvendrini Kakuchi

COVER STORY

- 05 **Strained to bursting point**
Asger Røjle Christensen

FEATURES

- 07 **Testing times**
Photography by Nicolas Datiche
- 12 **A tale of two Games**
Mark Schreiber

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

- 16 **FCCJ Freedom of the Press Awards**
- 17 **Two steps forward, one step back**
Saori Ibuki
- 19 **Back in the darkness**
Swe Win

BOOKS

- 21 **Tokyo Redux**
- 25 **"I have no regrets"**
David McNeill

CLUB ACTIVITIES

- 27 **Manmade disaster**
Ilgin Yorulmaz
- 29 **New members, New in the library, Regular by eggs**

EXHIBITION

- 31 **Tokyo 2020 Olympics**

THE FRONT PAGE

From the President

SUVENDRINI KAKUCHI

Dear members,

After a gap of more than six years, I am again president of our beloved FCCJ. For those of you who don't know me, a quick introduction: I am a Sri Lankan journalist and have lived in Japan for more than three decades. My writing focuses on Japan-Asia relations and sustainable and development issues, a theme that has gained global attention over the past few years.

As we start another year, the new Board looks forward to welcoming new members and invites input from everyone representing the diverse categories that form our Club. We are also keen to exchange opinions about expanding activities that are led by journalists and associates. Let us work together.

Directing the FCCJ at this time is not easy. Members are acutely aware that many of our activities have been put on hold for the past year due to ongoing government emergency regulations to reduce Covid-19 infections. The tough measures have forced the Club to close its restaurant and alcohol services on weekends or stay open only for limited hours. Moreover, committee members who work hard for the Club are reluctantly delaying our exciting evening events and special brunches. All they can do is wait eagerly to return to normalcy and revive the dynamic pace of our other wonderful range of activities and offers that have kept the Club humming along for so long.

The pandemic has threatened our very survival. We are facing new difficulties linked to the reduction of our services. Like other organizations, the FCCJ is dealing with a drastic drop in financial revenue and the resignations of some of our members. There is no doubt this is due to the lack of a Club-like atmosphere, which has disappointed many people, and I totally understand that. Oh, how I long for those press conference with sit-down lunches or that quiet Sunday evening with friends at the bar.

The challenge now is to restore the energy of the FCCJ and encourage those who have taken a break, to return. We also need to attract new members. An urgent next step in this direction is for us to get together quickly and plan. As president, I believe that this is the time to try out new ventures and take chances. We must start working on new preparations to bring exciting times back to the FCCJ.

And, yes, I strongly believe that is possible. The Club continues to offer many opportunities for our members, and that's what we are going to focus on this year.

Before I sign off, please allow me revisit the many benefits of FCCJ membership. The Club is where the news is made, a



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place where diverse guests are invited to speak, irrespective of whether they represent mainstream or alternative viewpoints. The open nature of the FCCJ makes it an incubator that is rich in global information, turning it into a platform for unique opportunities to network. This is a privilege that's not easily available in many other venues in Japan. Members can also enjoy excellent cuisine at a reasonable cost and have ownership of a secluded social space with friendly and attentive staff. It is a place to relax with family and friends, in the best location in Tokyo.

The current state of emergency is scheduled to last until the end of August, so we hope to see more of you at the Club after that. Please do not hesitate to send me an email or leave a message at the front desk with your suggestions about turning the FCCJ into the sparkling venue it aims to be this year.

● Suvendrini Kakuchi is Tokyo correspondent for *University World News* in the UK.

COVER STORY

STRAINED TO BURSTING POINT



JENS DRESLING

Bureaucracy means some visiting journalists have had a frustrating time at Tokyo 2020, despite the efforts of overworked staff

ASGER RØJLE CHRISTENSEN

We are in a bubble - maybe the most famous bubble in the world right now. I am sitting here in the workroom at the Tokyo Media Center looking around at colleagues from all over the world with different degrees of mask-wearing, and feeling very much like I'm in a bubble.

The *Number 1 Shimbun* editor asked me to write about my experience re-entering Japan to cover the Olympics. I was a regular FCCJ

member for 13 years, but half a year ago I was forced to move back to Denmark by income losses caused by the pandemic. This is my first time in Japan since January.

I certainly feel qualified to write this, as I have not only had to find my own way through the jungle of testing, downloading apps and separate web systems; I have also helped most print media colleagues from my country to do the same. It has been quite a job, and I have learned a lot.

▲
Asger in the
workroom at the
Tokyo Olympics
Main Press Center

STRAINED TO BURSTING POINT

As a political reporter for many years, I understand very well the need for a bubble. Japan has serious problems with the spread of the delta variant, and the authorities have not managed to get Japan's population vaccinated in time to avoid that, which is another important story to dig into. Japanese are infecting other Japanese, and the bad luck was that the numbers seemed to surge during the weeks leading up the Olympics, forcing the decision to hold competitions entirely without spectators.

But, based on the narrative – which is strong in Japan and in many other countries – that the pandemic is a disaster brought in from abroad, it's clear that the arrival of 79,000 foreigners at a time when the borders are otherwise strictly closed is bound to create uneasiness. That makes a bubble necessary – however troublesome.

Japan is a bureaucratic society, and the running of such a bubble in the name of infection control is unavoidably a bureaucratic affair. But many times during recent weeks, I have asked myself: does it have to be so unmanageably bureaucratic, with so many different systems, so many emails with the same message, which just makes the whole thing more difficult to operate?

The Tokyo 2020 office has created a bureaucratic mess. And with all the public awareness, with the prime minister promising that the media bubble will from now on be more effectively isolated, lowly staff members are obviously scared to make decisions that could lead to them taking the blame for any small infection outbreak. As a result, many do not dare to be flexible. Or, rather, they only give way at the last minute, as the resources to do otherwise are not there. That means it is far from fair, with some journalists frustrated by being on the end of strict – or unfair – decisions, while others seem to catch a break.

Everything is left to the very last moment. The system, website and applications were not ready by the original deadlines. When they were suddenly ready to go, we spring into action, and the Tokyo 2020 staff immediately fell behind in their effort to respond. That, in turn, led to complaints about late responses or no responses at all.

Also, for privacy reasons, there are many ways into the different Olympic-related websites. I understand that privacy is important. But those many different login sites make it impossible – or at least confusing – to remember which password is for which website.

In the end, we succeeded in getting at least everybody into the country. A few had their activity plans approved and their OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) app perfectly running at arrival, only to find others who hadn't bothered to do this but were still given permission to enter Japan with the stroke of a bureaucratic pen

the day before their flight from Denmark. And I understand the frustration of colleagues who diligently accepted three lonely days in isolation at a small Japanese hotel room, when others were more fortunate, avoiding isolation when organisers were rushed into processing them at the last-minute.

As I tried to complete my own procedures and help my Danish colleagues over the past few weeks, I often felt sorry for the stressed staff at the 2020 press relations office. They have been caught in the middle of a situation they had no part in making. I have often thought that they are doing their best in very difficult circumstances.

But, ultimately, theirs is an impossible job. As we all know from the news, the Olympic coronavirus bubble is full of holes. It's leaking every hour. They may have good intentions, but there simply aren't enough staff and other resources to keep the bubble secure.

Critical questions are being asked in parliament, the government is on the defensive, and ministers are promising to fix these problems. We receive admonishing emails asking us to behave and make our colleagues behave. But if the whole operation was stricter, it would create even more frustration among journalists who are just trying to do their job, and at an event their companies have paid a lot of money to send them to.

Sometimes it's hard to see the rationale behind particular bureaucratic arrangements. For example, limits on access to mixed zones – areas where reporters can

have a quick word with athletes after their competitions – has caused a lot of frustration among my Danish colleagues. They wonder how, if they have already been granted access to a particular venue, these extra restrictions in the mixed zone improve safety?

The Olympics are now in full swing, and a rush of gold medals for Japan in the first week generated headlines that were about something other than the pandemic. But these will still end up being a much tamer Olympics than we had expected a few weeks ago, when we thought at least some spectators would be allowed to attend events.

That decision is a pity for the athletes, disappointed ticketholders and sports reporters visiting Tokyo. My job, however, is mostly to report on the various rules and regulations, and the strange atmosphere around the city during the Games. It's sad to say, but for someone like me, these Olympics have become a very good story.

**Japan is a
bureaucratic society,
and the running of
such a bubble in the
name of infection
control is unavoidably
a bureaucratic affair.**

● Asger Røjle Christensen was a regular member of the FCCJ from 1989 until 1995, and again from 2013 until January this year. He is still an ex-Kanto regular member and looks forward to visiting the Club again as soon as Japan reopens its borders.

FEATURE

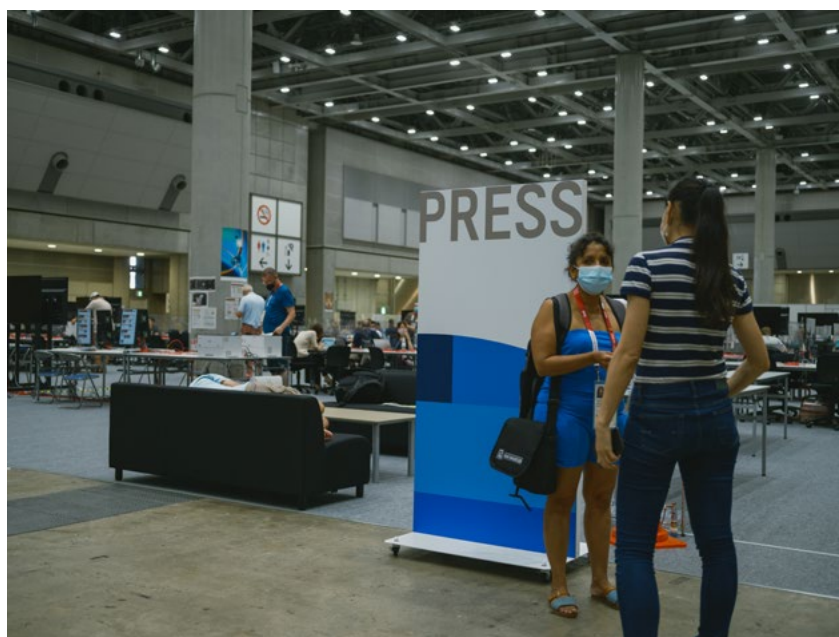
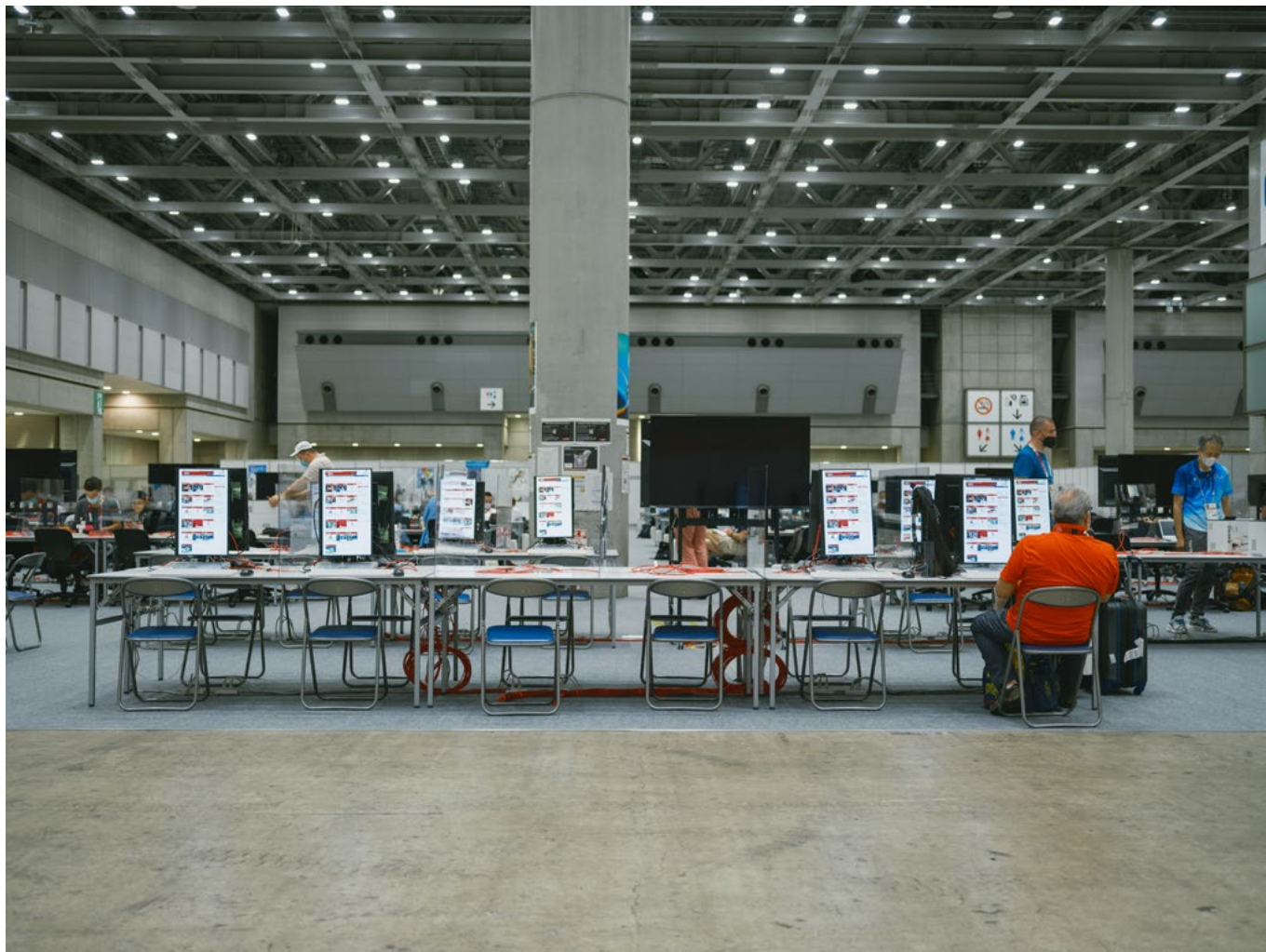
TESTING TIMES



After repeated promises that the Tokyo 2020 will be “safe and secure,” visiting journalists find themselves covering an Olympics like no other

Photography by Nicolas Datiche

TESTING TIMES



Photography by Nicolas Datiche

TESTING TIMES

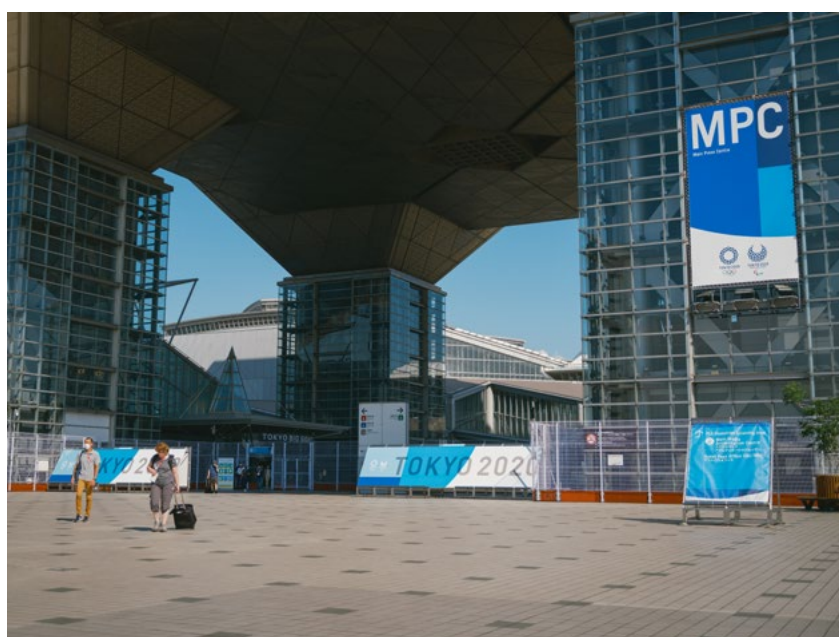


Photography by Nicolas Datiche

TESTING TIMES



TESTING TIMES



Photography by Nicolas Datiche

FEATURE

A TALE OF TWO GAMES

**Mark Schreiber on
the structural legacy
of the doomed 1940
Tokyo Olympics and
the wildly successful
summer of '64**



WIKIPEDIA

MARK SCHREIBER

▲
A poster for the 1940 Games, which were supposed to have been held in Tokyo.

It was at the conclusion of the 1936 Berlin Olympiad that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced the next Games would be hosted by Tokyo, to begin from September 21, 1940. But within one year of the Berlin Games, the Japanese military was engaged in full-scale hostilities in China. In July 1938, four months after Tokyo received its final approval at the 37th IOC Session in Cairo, the Japanese government advised the IOC of its decision to forfeit hosting of the Games.

No Olympics were held in 1940 or 1944. London hosted the first postwar Games in 1948, followed by Helsinki (1952), Stockholm (1956) and Rome (1960).

Fourteen years after Japan's surrender and seven years following the end of the allied occupation, Tokyo once again made a pitch to host the Games. A delegation from Tokyo's metropolitan assembly traveled to Munich for the meeting of the IOC, where they addressed committee members' two biggest concerns:

A TALE OF TWO GAMES

security and food sanitation. Tokyo, the IOC was assured, was fully up to international standards.

Still, with Detroit, Brussels and Vienna in the running, Tokyo was seen as something of an underdog. But when the IOC delegates put the matter to a vote on March 26, 1959, the outcome came as a surprise to many: Tokyo won on the first ballot, taking 34 out of 58 votes.

An unsung hero of Tokyo's win was a Japanese-American businessman from Seattle named Fred Isamu Wada (1907-2001). Working quietly in the background, Wada visited numerous Latin American countries to campaign for Tokyo. (Wada would be honored with the Order of the Sacred Treasure while the 1964 Games were still in progress.)

In his 15-minute acceptance speech, diplomat and journalist Kazushige Hirasawa told the IOC, "Westerners refer to our country as being in the Far East, but thanks to the new jet age, the distance is no longer far. If anything, 'far' refers to the differences in understanding between countries and peoples."

October 10 was selected for the Games' opening day after research verified that date had the lowest incidence of rainfall.

Over the next four years, preparations would transform much of Tokyo's landscape. Washington Heights, a 924,000 square meter U.S. Air Force housing complex near Harajuku and Meiji Shrine, was moved to the suburb of Chofu to make space for construction of the stadium and other facilities, including space for housing and feeding some 5,500 athletes representing 94 countries. NHK set up a new broadcast center in Shibuya to handle foreign TV requirements.

Two new major hotels opened in Tokyo over the summer of 1964 – the New Otani (just over a year later to be featured as the villain's lair in the James Bond film "You Only Live Twice") and the Tokyo Prince. The Hibiya subway line and the Tokyo Monorail, linking Hamamatsuchō station with Haneda international airport, also went into service.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department proactively doubled its pickpocket squad from 40 to 80 plainclothesmen in June. By the start of the Games, it would further augment the squad to 200.

Nine days before the start of the Games, the all-electric New Tokaido Line, better known as the *shinkansen*, went into service. Work on an ambitious "bullet train" project for a standard-gauge express train linking Tokyo with Pusan, Korea, via undersea tunnel, had initially begun in 1941, but was halted due to wartime materials shortages. Built with a loan of \$80 million from the World Bank in May 1961, the *shinkansen's* Hikari limited expresses eventually reduced travel time between Japan's two largest urban areas by half that of the old narrow-gauge Tsubame expresses.

An extra dividend from successfully holding the 1964 Olympics was the selection of Osaka to host the 1970 World Exposition. Held from March 15 to September 13, 1970 the *Osaka Banpaku* set a new record of over 64 million paying visitors, surpassing the 1967 exposition in Montreal (with a turnout of 54,991,806) and the 1962 event in Seattle (with 9,609,969 visitors).



An aerial view of Meiji Jingu Stadium in Tokyo

At least three venues used at the 1964 Olympics predated plans to host the Games in 1940; work on others had begun in anticipation of the 1940 Olympics; and the remainder were built or modified after the decision to award Tokyo the Games in 1959.

1. The oldest sports facility used during the 1964 Games was Meiji Jingu Stadium in Shinjuku Ward. Construction was completed in 1926, making it Japan's second oldest stadium after Koshien in Nishinomiya, Hyogo Prefecture. "Jingu kyujo" can also claim the distinction of being one of the few professional stadiums still standing in which the New York Yankees' legendary outfielder Babe Ruth played, during a goodwill visit in 1934.

In 1964, Jingu Stadium hosted an exhibition baseball game. Adhering to rules at the time requiring all players be amateurs, the United States squad was made up mostly of collegiate players. They defeated a Japanese amateur all-star team, 6-2. Plans are for the stadium, sports grounds and neighboring Prince Chichibu Memorial Rugby Ground to be demolished and rebuilt over the next several years.

2. Baji Koen (Equestrian Park) in Tokyo's Setagaya Ward predated the decision to host the 1940 Games. It was established to celebrate the birth of the crown prince (presently Emperor emeritus) Akihito on December 23, 1933. Prior to that, equestrian events were essentially within the purview of the Japanese Imperial Army calvary, and no civilian facility existed in Japan.

Fifty thousand *tsubo* of mostly wooded land in Yoga village was procured for the park, at the price of ¥6 per *tsubo*. The park was officially named in 1936, and the same year an additional 15,000 *tsubo* were added to be used for dormitories, housing and garages. Much of the manual labor was provided by student "volunteers" from nearby Tokyo Agricultural University, who engaged in what was called *kinro hoshi* (volunteer service).

3. The Toda Rowing Course, located in Toda City, Saitama Prefecture, across the Arakawa river from Tokyo, was originally planned for the 1940 summer Games. Following their cancella-

A TALE OF TWO GAMES



Toda rowing course

tion, the project was continued as a flood control measure. In 1964, a total of 370 rowers from 27 nations competed.

4. Also designated for the 1940 Olympic but aborted before any construction began, was the Komazawa Olympic Park. Prior to the war, most of the land, in Setagaya and Meguro wards, was used as the Tokyo Golf Club, with 18 holes and par 72. While on a state visit in April 1922, Great Britain's Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) played a round of golf there with Prince Regent Hirohito.

By October 1949, Komazawa been the venue for handball and field hockey events during the 4th National Athletic Meet. From 1953 to 1962 its stadium served as home field of the Tokyu Flyers, later Toei Flyers, of Japanese professional baseball's Pacific League.

The Komazawa Olympic Park General Sports Ground currently encompasses 41.3 hectares under the management of Tokyo Metropolitan Park Association. On the premises can be found the [Tokyo Olympic Memorial Gallery](#), which opened in 1993.

5. The site of the Nippon Budokan (martial arts hall), an arena with more than 14,000 seats, had once served as the residence of the Tokugawa family. Following the Meiji Restoration, it was taken over by the army's Imperial Guard.

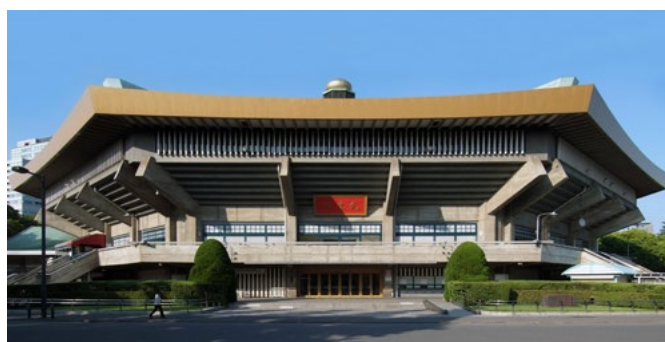
Architect Mamoru Yamada modeled the Budokan on the octagonal Yumedono (Hall of Dreams) at the Horyu-ji temple in Nara, built during the eighth century.

In 1964, the Budokan played host to the first judo competition (which was male-only) to be held at a summer Games. Japanese judoka were prevented from a clean sweep of the gold medals by Dutch judoka Anton Geesink's win in the unlimited weight category.

Two years after the Tokyo Games, the Beatles became the first foreign rock group to perform at the Budokan. Over the previous half-century history, dozens of music performers, from Bob Dylan to Frank Sinatra, have taken advantage of the Budokan's favorable acoustics to perform there.



Komazawa Olympic Park



Nippon Budokan hall's main entrance



Yoyogi National Gymnasium

6. Yoyogi National Gymnasium, designed by late architect Kenzo Tange, wowed visitors with its futuristic lines and suspended roof. In 1964, it was used for swimming events and basketball. The building houses two gymnasiums. At this year's Games, the first will host handball events and the second will be the venue for Paralympic badminton matches.

From earlier this year, the government's Council for Cultural Affairs recommended that the gymnasium be included on the list of important cultural assets, a singular honor rarely accorded sports facilities.

A TALE OF TWO GAMES



A sign along the Koshu Kaido indicates the halfway point of the 1964 Olympic marathon



Prince Chichibu rugby ground



A train on the Tokyo monorail, which began service in September 1964, crosses the Goshiki-hashi (five-color bridge), in Minato ward, Tokyo. The bridge was named for the doomed 1940 Olympics.

7. The Prince Chichibu Memorial Rugby Ground, which enjoyed the patronage of Emperor Hirohito's younger brother - hence its name - was built in 1947 and subsequently underwent several upgrades. It hosted the soccer semifinal, on October 20, 1964, in which Hungary defeated the United Arab Republic 6-0. (Three days later, Hungary would go on to take the gold medal, beating Czechoslovakia 2-1.)

The [Japan Olympic Museum](#), is also near the rugby ground and main Olympic stadium. As with many other sports facilities, access has been affected by the pandemic, so those planning to visit should call ahead to inquire about opening hours.

8. On the afternoon of October 21, 150,000 people converged on a section of Koshu Kaido (Highway 20) in Chofu City to see Ethiopia's Abebe Bikila, winner of the marathon in the 1960 Rome Olympics, lead the runners at the midway point. Abebe would set a new Olympic record of 2 hours, 12 minutes and 2 seconds. He was followed by Britain's Benjamin Basil Heatley, who took the silver, and Japan's Kokichi Tsuburaya, who won bronze.

The turn-around point during the race was a large yellow and red traffic cone in the center of the road. A stone monument, representing a dove, can be found just off the pedestrian sidewalk. It was erected in July 1965.

● Mark Schreiber writes the Big in Japan and Bilingual columns for *The Japan Times*.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

FCCJ FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AWARDS

Journalists covering Myanmar military coup, Japan LGBTQ rights honored at ceremony

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan recently named the winners of its Freedom of the Press Awards 2021. The Board selected the journalists of Myanmar as a group as the winners in the Asia-Pacific category, and Saori Ibuki, a reporter with *Buzzfeed*, was the recipient of the Japan award.

The awards recognize outstanding journalists and media organizations that have made important contributions to upholding the values of a free press in the region, often under extreme pressure, including by pursuing coverage of taboo subjects.

"I believe that championing the freedom of the press, including through these awards, is one of the most important things we do," said the then FCCJ President Isabel Reynolds. "And, sadly, the need for voices to speak up for the freedom of the media is only growing as time passes."

The coup in Myanmar in February 2021 was followed by a severe crackdown on media organizations and individual journalists who believe in press freedom and democracy.

Simply for covering pro-democracy protests, journalists and citizen journalists have been shot and injured, beaten, arrested and tortured - yet they have continued to risk their lives to get the story to the outside world.

"We want to celebrate the courage of the journalists and citizen journalists of Myanmar - their commitment to getting the story out," said Simon Denyer, co-chair of the FCCJ freedom of the press committee. "Without their determination to risk their own lives we would have little or no idea what is really happening there."

Swe Win, editor-in-chief of *Myanmar Now*, who was himself jailed for seven years during a previous period of military rule, accepted the award on behalf of the country's press corps.

"We are very honored on behalf of all our colleagues in Myanmar to be recognized like this," he said. "We have been in great mental and physical disarray since the coup ... we are on the verge of becoming another North Korea right in the middle of Southeast Asia."

Although some journalists had been released the previous week, Swe Win said many remain behind bars or in hiding, and called the releases "just part of the usual psychological warfare."

"Our reporter who was released from prison yesterday, she saw a number of individuals who were brutally tortured, who had ribs broken," he said. "There are many young girls, there are many women, many family members of activists. If you cannot find me, you take all the immediate family. This is the worst kind of mistreatment we have ever seen."

The Freedom of the Press Japan Award went to Saori Ibuki, a news reporter at *BuzzFeed Japan*, for her articles on the human cost of discrimination towards members of Japan's LGBTQ community.

"Ibuki-san approaches her subject with a compassion and determination that all of us can learn from," said Justin McCurry, co-chair of the freedom of the press committee.

In a series of moving articles late last year, Ibuki wrote about the suicide of a 25-year-old student at Hitotsubashi University who had been outed against his will. She followed up with articles about his family's fight for compensation and their desire for Japan to become a place where, in their words, "he would have been able to live."

"Discrimination and the violation of the human rights of LGBTQ people have always been visible and tangible to me," Ibuki said, recalling conversations she had with a transgender schoolfriend. "I've met so many people who were hurt but still were hoping to make change and willing to share their stories."

Ibuki added: "Every story has empowered me and given me the drive to keep going, and every story is irreplaceable. But one common thing that everybody said is that they don't want the younger generation to experience the same thing they had to in Japan. Change is necessary, it is urgent, the issue is very critical and we have much more work to do as journalists in Japan."

Ilgin Yorulmaz, Club Secretary and Board liaison for the freedom of the press committee, saluted the winners for their courage and resilience. Referring to the undemocratic treatment of journalists in her home country Turkey, Yorulmaz said, "The press exists in every regime in the world. But a free press exists only in democratic regimes. Maltreatment of journalism is meant to suffocate democracy ... what is being left out of breath is not just a journalist's legitimate reporting but also the public's right to know."

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

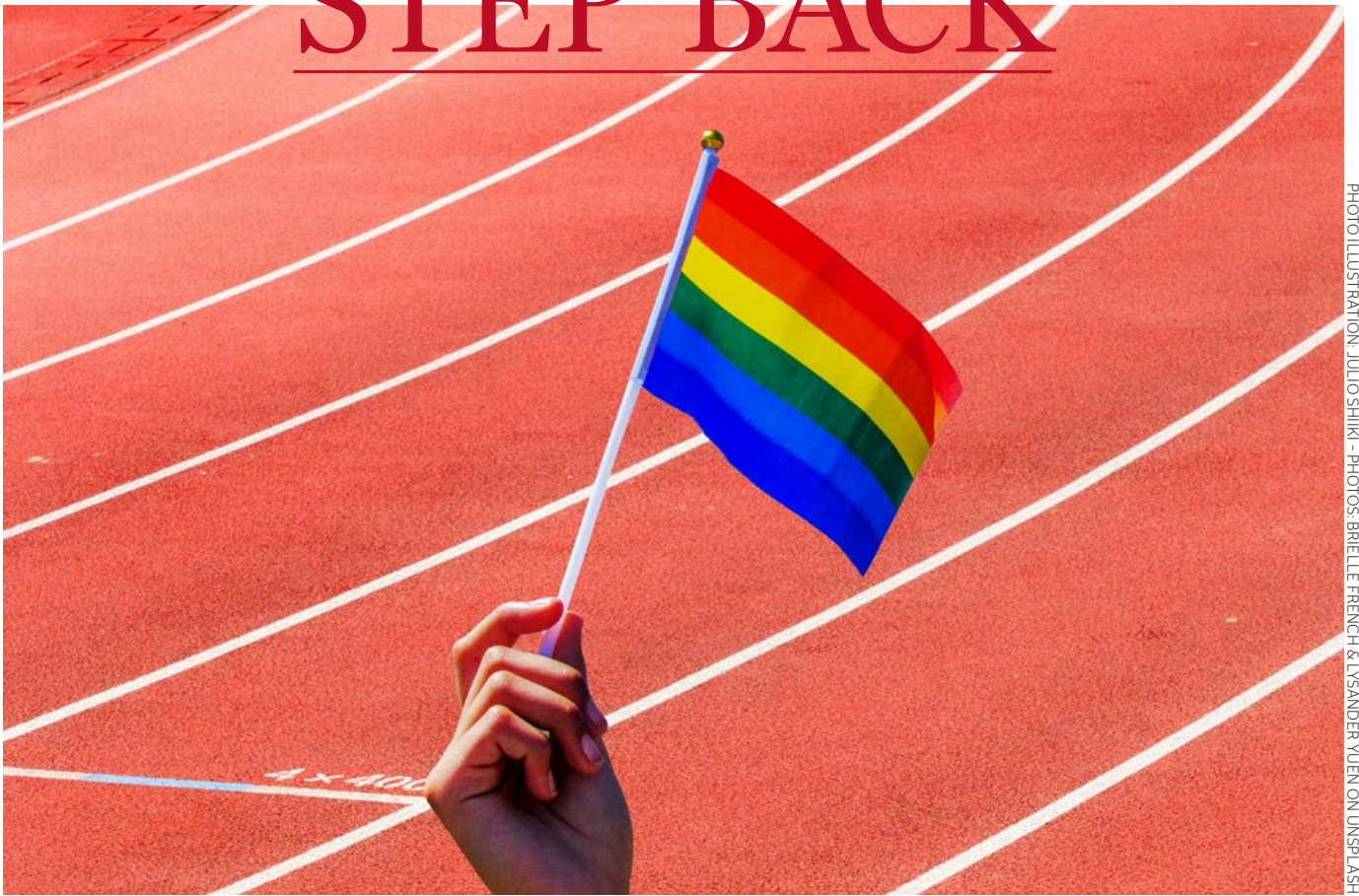


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: JULIO SHIKI - PHOTOS: BRIELLE FRENCH & LYSANDER YUEN ON UNSPLASH

Journalists in Japan have a responsibility to report honestly on the battle for LGBTQ rights

SAORI IBUKI

On the evening of July 28, 2018, rainbow flags flew outside the Liberal Democratic Party's headquarters in Tokyo's Nagatacho district.

Thousands of protesters had gathered after LDP Diet member Mio Sugita called same-sex couples "unproductive" in an opinion piece published by monthly magazine *Shincho* 45. She claimed no one wanted tax money to be "wasted" on policies supporting them.

The protest started at dusk and continued as the sky changed from pale violet to a darkness that did not diminish the rage, hurt and fear of the protesters, who repeatedly chanted "Stop the hate!"

In May this year, people holding rainbow flags again gathered in front of LDP headquarters, this time to protest against another discriminatory comment made by an LDP Diet member. Kazuo Yana claimed LGBTQ people went against "the

TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

preservation of the species,” a comment that sparked widespread public criticism.

The scene was similar to the one three years earlier, when protesters formed a long line on the sidewalk across the street from LDP headquarters. But one thing was different: along with flags and protest signs, people held flowers and candles to mourn the loss of those who have been victimized by the discrimination prevalent in Japanese society, especially in the political realm.

They held a 24-hour sit-in. It began as the sky turned dark, until turning bright pink as a new day dawned. But a new day has yet to begin for the victims of discrimination in Japan.

Soshi Matsuoka is a gay writer who organized the petition calling on Yana to resign.

Nearly 100,000 people have signed it so far.

Matsuoka says Sugita and Yana's comments showed the LDP had learned nothing over the past three years.

Many members of Japan's LGBTQ community share the same sense of frustration. They describe the current situation as two steps forward and one step back.

In 2015, Tokyo's Shibuya and Setagaya wards became the first local administrations to enact ordinances offering same-sex couples partnership certificates. More than 100 cities and prefectures have since followed suit.

In the same year, a gay student at Hitotsubashi University School of Law died after falling from a school building. He had been outed against his will. His death shed light on the stigma surrounding sexual minorities in Japan and led Mie prefecture to become the first local government to enact an ordinance banning outing.

The LDP formed a Special Mission Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in 2016, and this year announced the first draft of what's known as the LGBT Understanding Promotion Bill.

The bill has been a hot political topic. After strong opposition from party members such as

Yana, the LDP failed to introduce it to the Diet ahead of the Olympics. Yana made his comment about “preservation of the species” while the bill was being discussed at a party meeting in May. The committee eventually approved the bill.

On Valentine's Day 2019, 13 same-sex couples from all over Japan sued the government to fight for marriage equality. The Sapporo District Court ruled in March that not allowing same-sex couples the right to get married constitutes discriminatory treatment and does not have a reasonable basis. The lawsuits still continue in five areas.

The Sapporo court ruling was a long-awaited victory for the plaintiffs. But one of them, Ikuro Sato, was not able to see it happen. He died two months earlier, without being able to make his lifelong wish come true: to marry his beloved partner.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games promised to be an important milestone for the LGBTQ community. Many people worked hard to welcome LGBTQ athletes. They hoped the government would do its part by enacting legislation that embodied what the Olympic Charter explicitly forbids – any kind of discrimination, including that based on sexual orientation.

When the LDP failed to pass the bill in time for the Olympics, Gon Matsunaka, head of Pride House Tokyo Legacy, said he felt like he had been “lied to all this time”.

Media coverage of LGBTQ-related issues has increased and has taken different forms. Most stories focus on the important injustices sexual minorities face. But sometimes the media itself are the source of injustice. Sugita's *Shincho* 45 article is one example.

Our responsibility as journalists is to keep learning and to respect the voices of those who've been hurt but who want to share their stories to show solidarity with other LGBTQ people and work for social change.

Many speakers at the May protest spoke of those who they have lost after being stigmatized and facing harsh discrimination. They said they don't want younger generations to go through what they've had to suffer.

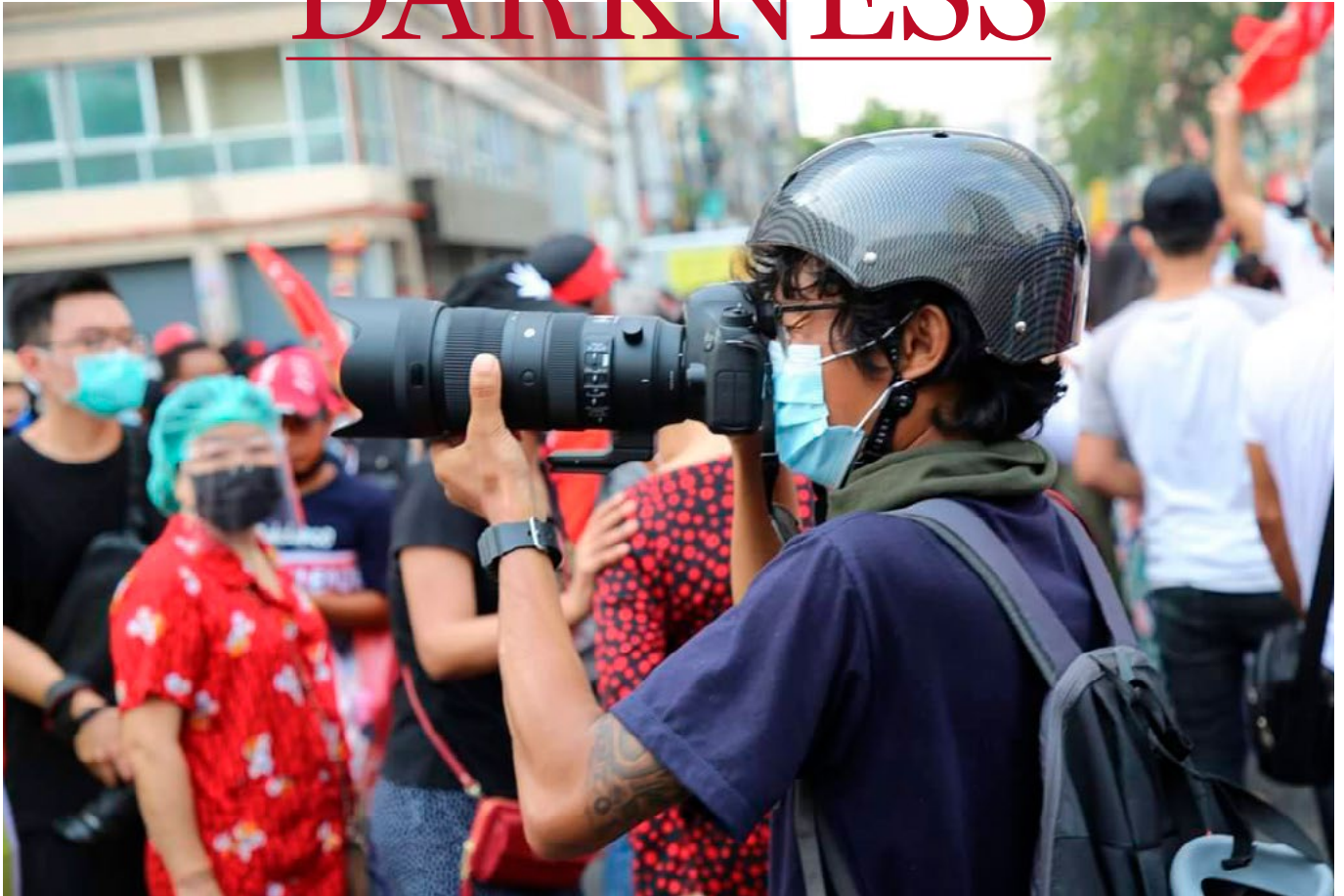
This is an urgent issue. Change is needed. As journalists in Japan, we have so much work to do.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games promised to be an important milestone for the LGBTQ community. Many people worked hard to welcome LGBTQ athletes.

● Saori Ibuki is a reporter with *BuzzFeed Japan* and the recipient of the 2021 FCCJ Freedom of the Press Japan award.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

BACK IN THE DARKNESS



With every form of free speech now brutally suppressed, one of the major victims of Myanmar's coup has been the independent press

SWE WIN

▲
A Myanmar Now reporter covering the protests against the military coup in Yangon in March. (Photo/Myanmar Now)

The military coup in February put an abrupt end to hopes of democracy and liberty in Myanmar.

The Southeast Asian nation, rich in land and resources but impoverished by decades of military mismanagement, exploitation and brutal oppression, initially opened up to limited democratic reforms in 2011.

When 65-year-old military chief Min Aung Hlaing led the junta that launched the coup, any political gains that had been made over

the past decade were terminated. To justify the attempted seizure of power, he used the pretext of fraud in Myanmar's November 2020 general elections, in which Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won a resounding victory. No credible evidence has been provided to support the junta's claims.

The military coup council has since pledged to hold new elections after an emergency period expected to last at least two years.

Very few take these pledges seriously. They

BACK IN THE DARKNESS



► Swe Win, editor-in-chief of *Myanmar Now*.

The future of the media in Myanmar is bleak. State-run news outlets have become a tool to spread military propaganda.

see the country not only being thrust back into the previous repressive military state they remember from earlier years, but also being shaped into a nation not unlike North Korea. In such a place, every form of free speech is brutally suppressed and there is no space for any form of independent judiciary.

Myanmar's public responded to the coup with mass protests, a Civil Disobedience Movement in which thousands of government employees refused to go to work, and most recently a largely youth-led armed resistance.

To date, more than 900 civilians have been murdered by the junta and thousands of people incarcerated, including leaders like Suu Kyi.

One of the major victims of the coup has been the independent press, which emerged as a feature of Myanmar's limited democracy over the past decade.

After February 1, newsrooms were raided. Several publications including *Myanmar Now*, which I work for, had their operating licenses revoked and their websites blocked. Most of the staff of the outlets targeted by the junta were forced to flee to territories along the country's border areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations. From there, they continue their professional work despite the logistical difficulties.

Several dozen journalists have also been arrested. Only a few were released in June, among them a female multimedia reporter from *Myanmar Now*. One of the released reporters was re-arrested on July 11 for no clear reason. Nearly all of those journalists who were freed have since gone into hiding.

Gathering news on the ground has never been as dangerous for us as it is today. There is an unprecedented level of surveillance over journalists' work. Our reporters inside the country can no longer identify themselves as being associated with *Myanmar Now* when they conduct phone or in-person interviews, and they run the risk of being arrested if somebody reports their activity to the military authorities.

Soldiers and police have been known to randomly check the mobile phones of civilians and explore their social media accounts and photo galleries. Any criticism of the military junta or a suggestion of sympathies with the resistance movement is easily interpreted as an indication that the individual is a dissident, or worse, a "terrorist." An immediate arrest usually follows.

The group of reporters and editors who have fled to the country's border now serve as the major backbone of *Myanmar Now*'s day-to-day operations. *Myanmar Now* operates seven days a week to cover the overwhelming news developments throughout the country. These range from street protests to the arrests of suspected dissidents to the armed resistance movement's targeting of the junta's forces and its civilian collaborators.

The future of the media in Myanmar is bleak. State-run news outlets have become a tool to spread military propaganda. There are no options left for professional reporters to work independently under the junta.

Private media that are still able to legally operate inside the country now appear to be faced with two options: avoid criticism of the junta or spread their propaganda in either obvious or nuanced ways.

Over the past decade we had been eagerly waiting and working for the day when we could finally shed all remnants of the military dictatorship from our lives. But now, we are back in the darkness again.

BOOKS

TOKYO

REDUX



In the final novel in his Tokyo Trilogy, David Peace explores the death in 1949 of Sadanori Shimoyama, the first president of the Japanese National Railways, and its unresolved legacy. In this extract, set just before the 1964 Olympics, we meet Murota Hideki, a private investigator ...

June 20, 1964

Ton-ton. Ton-ton. Ton-ton. Ton-ton ...

Murota Hideki twitched, jumped, and opened his eyes. His heart pounding, his breath trapped, he swallowed, he choked, he spluttered and coughed. He wiped his mouth, he wiped his chin, he blinked and blinked again, looking down at the desk, the sticky desk and brown rings, the dirty glass and half-emp-

ty bottle, looking up and around the office, the tiny office and yellow walls, the dusty shelves and empty cabinet. His desk, his office, all dirt and all dust -

Ton-ton. Ton-ton. Ton-ton ...

He put his hands on his desk, pushed himself up and the chair back. He got to his feet and walked over to the window. He closed the window, closed the city, the stench from the river and fumes, the noise of construction and trains, always that stench,

TOKYO REDUX

that noise: the stench of the past, the noise of the future: Edo stench, Olympic noise –

Ton-ton. Ton-ton ...

He sat back down in his chair at his desk, his collar wet, his shirt damp. He took out his handkerchief. He wiped his neck. He tried to unstick his shirt from his vest, then to straighten his thinning hair, the smell of his clothes and his hair fighting with the stink from the sink in the corner, the trash can by the door, the ashtrays on his desk, the alcohol on his breath. That taste, that taste, always that taste. He picked up a packet of cigarettes from the desk, took out a cigarette and lit it. He squeezed the end of his nose and sniffed, massaged his right temple with cigarette fingers and closed his eyes, the dream hanging over him still, all dirt and dust, all stench and noise, with that taste, that taste –

Ton-ton ...

Trapped, stale –

He opened his eyes, stubbed out the cigarette, and then called out, Yes?

The door opened and a thin, young man in a tight, grey-shiny suit stepped into the office. He gave the mess of the room the quick once-over, spent a moment-too-long on the empty bottles of cheap Chinese wine, did the same to Murota Hideki, then smiled and asked him, Is this Kanda Investigations?

Like it says on the door, said Murota Hideki.

And so you're Murota-san, the owner?

And sole employee. Next question?

Excuse me, said the young man, putting down his new and expensive-looking attaché case. He reached inside his jacket. He took out a silver-plated name card holder. He took out a card from the holder. He put the holder back inside his jacket. He approached the desk. He held out the name card in both hands, bowed briefly and said, I'm Hasegawa.

Murota Hideki pulled in his stomach and got to his feet. He reached across the desk to take the card from the man. He read the name on the card, the profession, position and company beneath. He shook his head, tried to hand the card back to the man, saying, Not interested.

The young man frowned: But you don't –

Yeah, I do know, said Murota Hideki. You're an editor. You work for a publishing house with a famous weekly magazine. But I don't talk to the press. It's bad for business.

The man gave the office the quick once-over act again, this time with a sneer: Business good, is it?

Good, bad or gone-to-the-fucking-dogs, it's my business, not yours, said Murota Hideki, flicking the card at the man, the card falling to the floor. See, about once or twice a year, some skinny,

young hotshot like you shows up here, in their tight suit with their smart mouth, asking for one of two things: if I got any dirt on anyone famous to sell, or if I'll spill some sexy private-eye bullshit for the feature they're writing. Either way, each time I tell them what I'm going to tell you: you got the wrong guy, now go get lost.

The young man bent down. He picked up the card from the floor. He held it out towards Murota Hideki again, in both hands again, but this time in a longer, deeper bow as he said, Excuse me. I apologize. But thank you. Now I know you're the right man. And so I'd be very grateful if you would please just listen, at least just listen to what I have to say. Please.

Murota Hideki looked at the man standing there, with his card out and his head bowed. He rolled his eyes and sighed, then sat back down and said, Go on then, sit down.

The man looked up. He thanked Murota Hideki. Then with the card still in his hands, he sat down, smiled and asked, Do you by any chance remember the name Kuroda Roman?

Murota Hideki nodded: A writer, yeah?

I'm impressed, said the young man. You read a lot?

Murota Hideki shook his head: Just the papers.

Then you must have a good memory.

Unfortunately, smiled Murota Hideki. But that was what they call a good guess, you being in publishing.

So you don't remember Kuroda Roman then? You've never read any of his books then?

Nope. Sorry.

Don't be, said the man. Few people have these days. He was briefly popular during Taishō, then there was a period of mental illness and silence. He published nothing more before or during the war, a couple of translations maybe, that was all. But then he did have a few

books published *après-guerre*, as they used to say. Mysteries, true-crime, that kind of thing. I thought, in your line of work, there was a chance you ...

Be the last thing I'd read, said Murota Hideki.

Really, said the young man, staring at Murota Hideki, smiling at Murota Hideki. But you were a policeman, right? During the war, after the war? I'd heard cops liked reading true-crime books? Just thought you might've read –

Murota Hideki held the man's stare, ignored his smile, swallowed and said, Who told you that?

Told me what?

That I was a policeman?

Well, he did.

Who?

Kuroda Roman, said the man, looking away now, but still

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TOKYO REDUX

smiling. Well, not in person, in one of his books. You're in one of his books, you see. *Tokyo Bluebeard: Lust of a Demon*. It's the one about -

I can imagine what it's about, said Murota Hideki.

But you've not read it, said the young man, nodding to himself. Well, you've not missed anything, it's not that good. And you're only mentioned very briefly. About how -

I was dismissed, said Murota Hideki.

For improper conduct, yeah.

For fucking a pan-pan gal on my beat, said Murota Hideki, still staring across his desk at this man, this thin, young man, in his tight, grey-shiny suit.

Yes, said the man.

Murota Hideki picked up the packet of cigarettes from his desk again, took out a cigarette and lit it. He inhaled, then exhaled, blowing the smoke across the desk at the man, saying, It's no secret. It was in some of the papers, or a version of it. Nearly twenty years ago now. So that's my story. Now you going to tell me yours, Mister Editor, tell me why you're sitting here? Or you going to keep on sitting there, wasting my time?

Excuse me. I apologize, said the young man again. That came across very badly. I just wanted to say, I know you're an ex-policeman. And I know you lost your job, but that it was a long time ago now. But I also know that you know how to keep a confidence. You don't betray people.

Murota Hideki said nothing. He glanced at his watch, his watch running slow again, losing time again.

The man coughed, cleared his throat, then said, Sorry, I'll get to the point: Kuroda Roman has disappeared. He's gone missing. And we'd like you to find him.

"We" being who exactly?

Our publishing house.

Why, asked Murota Hideki. You said yourself, no one's heard of this guy or reads his books these days?

Unusually, said the young man, lowering his voice. And somewhat foolishly, one of my predecessors advanced a number of quite substantial payments to Kuroda. Understandably, the owners of our publishing house are very keen to recoup the money. Or the manuscript.

Murota Hideki stubbed out his cigarette, looked up at the man, shook his head and said again, Not interested.

Why, asked the man, frowning again.

Pre-marital background checks, divorce cases, some insurance, that's what I do, said Murota Hideki. Nothing heavy, no debt-collecting, that's not what I do.

No, no, no, said the young man. That's not what we want you

to do. We just want you to find him, that's all.

Murota Hideki shook his head again: But you're not bothered about him, not concerned for the man's welfare, right? You just want your money back, yeah?

Yes, said the man. But you don't have to do that part, our lawyers will handle all that.

If you can find him.

If you can find, said the young man, smiling again. That's why I'm sitting here, wasting your time.

Murota Hideki stared at the man, not smiling, saying, Just because I'm mentioned in one of his fucking books? That's why you're sitting here, asking me?

Not only that, said the man, still smiling. Actually, that was my idea, asking you. See, I thought you might've met the man, met Kuroda Roman, back then, before.

Still staring, not smiling, Murota Hideki shook his head, But I didn't. Never met the man, even heard of him.

Doesn't matter, said the young man, reaching down to pick up his attaché case. Might have been a bonus, might have helped, but it's not important. What *is* important is that I'm sure *you* are the right man to find him.

Murota Hideki reached for another cigarette from his packet and lit it: What about the police, they know he's missing? Any family, friends reported him missing?

No, said the man, opening his case.

Murota Hideki inhaled, exhaled, then smiled and said, Popular guy, this writer of yours, yeah?

Used to be. Briefly.

When did you last see him?

Me, said the man. I've never seen him, never met him.

Murota Hideki inhaled again, exhaled again, then sighed and said, Great. So how long's he been missing ...?

About six months, we think ...

You *think*?

We're not sure, said the young man, taking out a large brown envelope from his attaché case.

Look, Mister, er, Hasegawa?

Yes, said the young man.

This isn't one of your mystery novels, this ain't the movies. It's a big city, getting bigger by the day, in a big, big country. Believe me, this is a big place to get lost in and six months a long time to be lost for, 'specially if a man don't want to be found. See, my guess is your man isn't missing, your man isn't lost, he just don't want to be found.

Mister Murota, said the man, the case on his lap, the envelope in his hands, I know this isn't a novel, I know this *ain't* the mov-

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TOKYO REDUX

ies. But we need to find this man, we want our money back, and we want both done quickly. Now if you don't want the job, we'll engage someone else.

Murota Hideki stubbed out his cigarette: I didn't say that. But it would be negligent of me if I didn't warn you of the difficulty in finding missing persons.

I appreciate your honesty, said the young man. But we're well aware of the difficulty involved in finding him.

Murota Hideki stared at the man again, smiling at the man now: You aware of the expense involved, too?

Yes, said the man, nodding. And we're prepared to pay whatever it takes, pay whatever you ask.

Still smiling, Murota Hideki said, Well, I take my pay in US dollars. Fifty of them a day, plus expenses.

Expenses in yen, asked the young man.

Murota Hideki nodded: All in cash.

Of course, said the man. But you should also be aware that there will be a substantial bonus if this matter can be resolved by midnight on the fourth of July.

How substantial?

Five thousand US dollars, said the young man. Cash.

Murota Hideki stared across his desk at this man again, this young man, this man who said his name was Hasegawa, and he whistled, then said, You really want him found.

Our owners do, said the man. Yes.

Murota Hideki glanced at the calendar on his desk, then looked back up at the young man: Why the rush?

The contract for the manuscript, for which the advances were made, expires at midnight on the fourth of July.

Murota Hideki glanced at the calendar again, then looked back up again: And if it's not *resolved* by then?

Then we'd no longer require your services.

Murota Hideki nodded, then nodded again, then said, Of course, there is one other possibility, one I'm sure your owners must have considered: he may be dead.

Of course, said the young man. But dead or alive, the monies still need to be repaid, either by the man himself, or from his estate if, in fact, he is deceased. So if you do find proof he's dead, you'll still receive your bonus.

Before the fourth of July?

Before midnight on the fourth of July, yes.

Murota Hideki glanced at the calendar again, reached for his notebook and pen, opened his notebook, looked up at the young man and said, Okay, first I'll need some basic -

I do apologize, said the man. But we've been dancing for rather longer than I imagined, and I have another -

It was you who asked me to dance ...

And I do apologize, said the young man again, placing the large brown envelope down on the desk in front of Murota Hideki. Then, reaching back into his attaché case, he took out another envelope, opened up this envelope and began to count out two hundred and fifty US dollars in various denominations. He placed the notes down in a pile on the desk next to the large brown envelope, then he began to count out eighteen thousand yen, again in various denominations, again putting the notes down in a pile on the desk in front of Murota Hideki as he said, In that envelope, you will find all the pertinent information we have about Kuroda Roman. The money I am giving you is for five days work, plus some yen on account for expenses.

Murota Hideki nodded and said, Thanks.

You're welcome, said the man. I'll call again in five days, at ten o'clock on Thursday, the twenty-fifth, to see how you're progressing and to give you more money.

Murota Hideki nodded again: Thanks.

The young man smiled, reached inside his attaché case again

and took out a type-written document. He placed it on the desk, on top of the envelope and the money, in front of Murota Hideki and said, I'd be grateful if you'd just write your name and address in the space provided and then add your seal. Just to acknowledge receipt of the money. I'll bring a copy for you when I come again on Thursday.

Murota Hideki filled in the form with his name and address, then took out his *han-ko* from the top drawer of the desk and did as he was told.

Thank you, said the man, taking the piece of paper from Murota Hideki. He put it inside his attaché case, then closed and locked the case, smiled and said, Until Thursday.

Murota Hideki did not get up, he just smiled back and nodded, then watched the young man in his tight, grey-shiny suit walk towards the door, watched him open the door, then turn back in the doorway to bow and to thank him - One last thing, said Murota Hideki.

Yes, said the man, glancing down at his left wrist, at the cuffs of his jacket and shirt, the face of his watch. Yes?

This manuscript? This manuscript you say one of your predecessors *foolishly* advanced so much money for ...

Yes, said the young man again.

What's it about?

The Shimoyama Case, I think it was, said the man, sighing then saying, I'm sure you must remember ...

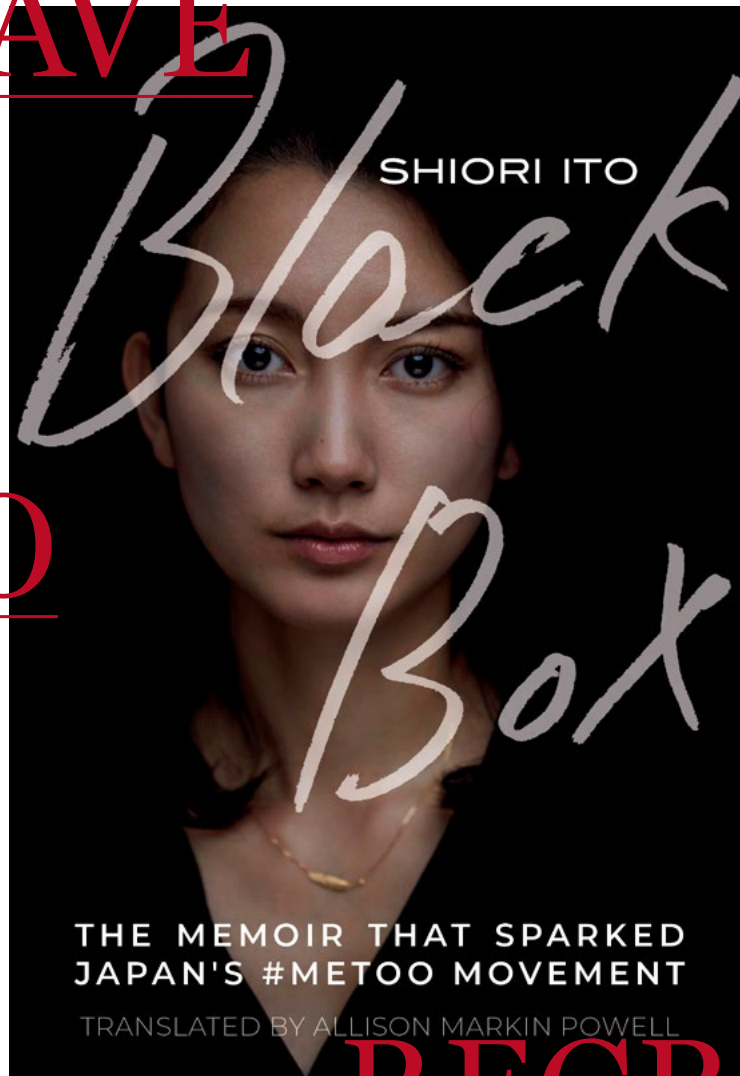
Yes, said Murota Hideki. I remember.

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BOOKS

“I HAVE

NO



REGRETS”

As the English translation of Shiori Ito’s book, *Black Box*, is published, she says her fight for justice goes on

DAVID McNEILL —————

It is over four years since Shiori Ito sent a proposal for a press conference at the FCCJ in which she said that one of Japan’s better-known journalists had raped her in a Tokyo hotel. Ito had begun nervously reaching out to the Japanese and foreign media, not to avenge herself for what happened, she said, but to challenge public attitudes to sexual assault. The proposal was initially rejected by the FCCJ, which was nervous about airing unproven claims.

It is testimony to Ito’s persistence and courage that a few months later (after the publication of her book, *Black Box*), the FCCJ relented. The book was both a startling *J’accuse* (she outed her assaulter as Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a biographer of then prime minister Shinzo Abe), and a wrenching account of its psychological aftermath. Ito describes feeling like an “empty shell, ruled by fear.” “I thought I had control over my own body, but someone else had been able to take over,” she wrote.

“I HAVE NO REGRETS”

Ito says she still cannot bring herself to reread the original memoir, which was a bestseller in Japan, and which has been translated into Chinese, Korean, Italian, French and Swedish. In July, it was finally published in English (translated by Allison Markin Powell). “I have only read it once since writing it,” she said during a recent interview in Tokyo. “It’s hard to describe, because I don’t want to revisit it even though I have to talk about it.”

Ito reluctantly returned to Japan last year during the pandemic after fleeing to London to escape trolling that included threats on her life. She has filed lawsuits against three of her most prominent harassers, including a former professor at the University of Tokyo, and Mio Sugita, a conservative politician who suggested in a BBC documentary that Ito was to blame for her own assault (Sugita has since repeatedly ‘liked’ tweets defaming Ito).

Yamaguchi, meanwhile, appears to have prospered, landing work, says Ito, allegedly thanks to his powerful supporters. He continues to insist the 2015 encounter was consensual and has filed countercharges against her. Last year, she says he filed a criminal case, meaning she was investigated by the police. “That was shocking. I thought I was empowered and I thought I could say what I wanted to say. But it shook me.”

The struggle continues, then, despite her landmark victory against Yamaguchi in a civil court in December 2019. “My life has been difficult in Japan,” she admits. “But on the other hand, I feel that it has become easier to speak, to be myself and how I have been struggling and feeling in Japanese society as a woman. We need to keep supporting the victims of sexual crimes, and not only in the legal system. I’m shedding a light on what we needed to see and what is horrible to see.”

In the book Ito writes how, in the early hours of April 4, 2015, she awoke in a hotel room to find Yamaguchi on top of her; the last thing she remembers was sharing a sushi meal with him. When the sexual assault was over, and she had returned from the bathroom, distressed and in pain, she says Yamaguchi asked if he could keep her underwear as a ‘souvenir’. Ito crumpled to the floor. Staring down at her, Yamaguchi said: “Before, you seemed like a strong, capable woman, but now you’re like a troubled child. It’s adorable.”

Ito recalls that exchange in her book as an example of the rapist’s need to “dominate and subjugate”. “Several months before the press conference, what I had learned in my reporting on chikan (public groping) was that it went beyond a sexual predilection ... for the perpetrator, it takes no more than a moment to satisfy his desire. But for the person on the other end of the experience, it will mark them for life.” She cites an NHK survey

on ‘Things That Lead You to Think That the Other Person Consents to Sex’:

- **Eating together, just the two of you 11%**
- **Drinking together, just the two of you 27%**
- **Getting in a car, just the two of you 25%**
- **Revealing clothes 23%**
- **Being drunk, 35%**

“There’s not a single item in this list that indicates sexual consent,” she wrote.

Black Box is billed as the memoir that sparked Japan’s #MeToo movement, though in truth that moment flared briefly but quickly morphed into #WithYou – an acknowledgment that victims might not want to admit it has happened to them, even now. Most have remained anonymous even as Ito has trudged her lonely public path. She was crushed by her first press conference in June 2017 when she aired her story to a room full of mostly indifferent male reporters.

A flood of hate mail followed, accusing her of being a prostitute and setting a honey trap for Yamaguchi. These days, she says, an assistant opens her inbox first, shielding her from the worst of its contents. “I’m trying to find a way to cope with it. I was worried that I would burn out, but I think it’s important to talk about this – not just rape but the harassment that follows anyone who speaks out.”

Ito famously pushed the police to investigate her assault, enduring a humiliating ritual at the police station: reenacting the rape using a life-sized dummy as a group

of male officers looked on, taking photographs. Yet, there is still little difference in how police handle such cases, she said. “The number of female officers hasn’t changed dramatically – they work closely with prosecutors. They think rape is difficult to work with.”

Still, her career as a journalist prevented her from staying silent, she said. If she couldn’t face the truth of what had happened to her, how could she go on? Whatever her attacker did to her, she added, it could never be worse than the psychological damage of running from herself. Her decision to speak out was correct, she insisted. “It has been difficult but rape is visible now. We see more cases in the media, we’ve had demonstrations in Tokyo and in many other cities. I have no regrets.”

“I’m trying to find a way to cope with it. I was worried that I would burn out, but I think it’s important to talk about this – not just rape but the harassment that follows anyone who speaks out.”

● **David McNeill is professor of communications and English at University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, and co-chair of the FCCJ’s Professional Activities Committee. He was previously a correspondent for *The Independent*, *The Economist* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.**

CLUB ACTIVITIES

MANMADE DISASTER



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: JULIO SHIKI - PHOTOS: AIONY HAUST & ENGIN AKYURT ON UNSPLASH

The hidden cost to women of holding the Tokyo Olympics during the pandemic

ILGIN YORULMAZ

On the same day as a fourth state of emergency took effect in Tokyo on July 12, a group of prominent women came to the FCCJ to warn what this could mean for their gender. Akiko Matsuo, an organizer for the Flower Demo, a women's activist group; Japan Medical Women's Association Executive Director Masami Aoki; and the International Women's Year Liaison Group chief executive officer Yoshiko Maeda criticized the decision to proceed with the Tokyo Olympics despite the alarming rise in the number of coronavirus cases in and around the capital.

They cited warnings by experts that the Games could act as a superspreader event and even lead to an Olympic variant. And they questioned the wisdom of holding such an expensive event amid an economic downturn.

Health professionals, social workers, teachers and other frontline workers in the fight against the pandemic are overwhelmingly women, who get little or no attention from the central government.

Matsuo went as far as labeling the impact on women of holding the Tokyo Olympics "state femicide", adding that the event should have been canceled. "The livelihoods of Japanese women and Japanese society are now at risk," she said.

There was also criticism of the Japanese government's

MANMADE DISASTER

mishandling of the Covid-19 crisis and its failure to provide adequate economic support, especially to women who have lost their jobs during the pandemic. Some had even become homeless, they said.

Women comprise an estimated 70% of the part-time, contract, and casual workforce in Japan. Many have lost income since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020, but are ineligible for state benefits. As a result, more are losing their homes and becoming homeless, Matsuo said. Sadly, the number of young women who are taking their own lives is also rising. Suicides by women in the year to June were up 25%, the first year-on-year rise in more than a decade. In addition, the pandemic has exacerbated disparities in the division of household labor and caring responsibilities for family members.

Despite years of “womenomics” and other government initiatives, the Olympic host nation still ranks a dismal 120th out of 157 countries in the global gender gap index. Its economic impact aside, the pandemic has exposed other, mostly hidden, consequences beyond just economic ones.

Matsuo noted that domestic violence and unwanted pregnancies had increased during the pandemic, “with teenage girls giving birth to and then abandoning babies in parks and shopping malls”.

Equally troubling were the evictions of mostly elderly women from government-owned flats to make way for the construction of Olympic sites, added Matsuo.

Matsuo questioned the decision to recruit more medical staff, nurses and even nursing students for the Olympics despite the ongoing state of emergency and the already strained medical system, which shows signs of collapse. That also affects women, who make up an overwhelming 70% of the medical workforce in Japan.

Aoki, executive director of the Japan Medical Women's Association, said no country had succeeded in bringing the pandemic under control, and warned that with or without spectators, large scale events like the Olympics, which bring together athletes and other people from around the world, should not be allowed, especially when only about a quarter of the Japanese population had received two doses of Covid-19 vaccines.

“I am perplexed at why such a simple thing is not understood by the International Olympic Committee and the intelligent leaders of the Japanese government and Tokyo metropolitan government,” Aoki said. She argued that Japan was not doing even the bare minimum in terms of virus prevention, despite hosting the 2020 Games.

“I believe that the attitude is very complacent and unaware of just how scary the pandemic truly is,” she added. “Leaders

who lack imagination have made the unthinkable decision to hold the Olympics, Covid-19 further marginalizes the vulnerable in every way, especially women and those who are financially unstable.”

Maeda, the International Women's Year Liaison Group CEO, stressed Japan's inadequate containment methods, including the still low number of tests and insufficient vaccination.

As the majority of those in the medical field are women, “the burden of the Covid-19 pandemic is a burden on women,” Maeda said. Women also make up 60% of the essential workers who are unable to work from home, she added.

A study in October 2020 found that over a fifth of hospitals saw 20% of their nurses leaving the profession - twice the figure from the year before.

“This is a manmade disaster,” Maeda said.

Azusa, a psychiatric nurse who attended the FCCJ event, said the pandemic meant cancer patients are having to wait for treatment as more hospital beds and other resources are being allocated to Covid-19 patients. This has made nurses feel stresses and guilty, she said.

Azusa said many nurses were angry, after 18 months of strict measures to avoid transmitting the virus to vulnerable people, including self-isolation, avoiding their families and staying at hotels.

“When they see people who are going out, eating at restaurants and going about their lives while they themselves are sacrificing so much, they feel hatred towards those people,” Azusa said.

Nagano, from the Tokyo Teachers Association, explained why so many teachers

opposed plans for hundreds of primary, junior and senior high school children to attend Olympic events during the pandemic, when so many sporting and other school events have been canceled. Opposition from teachers forced several local governments to abandon the plans.

Japanese women from all walks of life protested against the Tokyo Olympics, while an online petition calling for the Games to be cancelled attracted more than 450,000 signatures. But the International Olympic Committee, the Japan organizers, the Suga administration and much of the Japanese media ignored public opinion. The Games opened, as scheduled, on July 23.

The impact of that decision will linger long after the athletes have returned home, Matsuo warned. “Once the Olympics and the Paralympics end, what the women living in this country will be left with is the pandemic lasting even longer.”

Women comprise an estimated 70% of the part-time, contract, and casual workforce in Japan. Many have lost income since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020, but are ineligible for state benefits.

● Ilgin Yorulmaz is a reporter for BBC World Turkish. She is secretary of the current FCCJ Board and co-chairs the Diversity Committee.

CLUB ACTIVITIES

New members

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

WENDY ORTHMAN, General Manager, Global Communications, INFINITI



STEPHEN COUGHLAN has held various roles within the automotive industry over the past 18 years. Born and raised in sunny Sydney, Australia, he currently holds the position of senior manager, product communications at INFINITI (the premium brand of Nissan Motor Corporation). He moved with the company as it relocated its global headquarters from Hong Kong back to Yokohama in early 2020. This is his second stint in Japan, having worked for Toyota Motor Corporation in Aichi Prefecture between 2006 and 2008. A true lover of all things with wheels, on weekends he can often be found at car meetings, talking to owners and fellow enthusiasts of Japanese sports cars (particularly those from the 1970s -1980s), as well as indulging his passion for photography. He is delighted to be back in Japan and looking forward to reconnecting with friends, meeting new contacts and exploring more of the country in the post-Covid era.



MICHELLE HOGAN,
Manager, Global Communications, INFINITI



KENICHIRO TSUKAHARA joined INFINITI, a division of the premium car brand of Japanese automaker Nissan Motor Corporation since July 2020. He is now in charge of internal communications and external communications for the Japanese media as a member of INFINITI's Global Communications Department. He has gained more than 12 years' experience as a public relations specialist since beginning his career as a PR consultant at one of the largest PR firms in Japan, Kyodo Public Relations Co., Ltd., in 2008. Before joining INFINITI, Tsukahara worked for Hitachi Automotive Systems, Ltd. (now Hitachi Astemo, Ltd.) as a public/investor relations specialist for nearly eight years. He has a Master's degree in International Journalism from the University of Leeds, UK.

**REGULAR MEMBER**

JUN SAITO, Managing Editor of
Foreign News Desk, Jiji Press

**PROFESSIONAL/JOURNALIST ASSOCIATE MEMBER**

CHRISTINA AHMADJIAN,
Professor, Hitotsubashi University

CLUB ACTIVITIES

New in the library

1

**Black Box**

Shiori Ito

The Feminist Press

Gift from Shiori Ito

2

**Defiance: A Photographic Documentary of Hong Kong's Awakening**

Ich Bin Ein Hong Konger (ed.)

Rock Lion Publishing

Gift from Peter Langan

3

**Jotei Koike Yuriko**

女帝 小池百合子

Taeko Ishii

Bungeishunju

4

**Taiyaku eigoban de yomu nihon no kempo**

対訳 英語版でよむ日本の憲法: Constitution of Japan

Motoyuki Shibata (trans); supervised by Sota Kimura

Aic Press Inc.

Gift from Aic

5

**Kikeba jibunno kimochi ga mietekuru eigo speech**

聴けば自分の気持ちがみえてくる英語スピーチ

Keiko Adachi

Sanshusha

Gift from Sanshusha

6

**Kataritsugu senso to minshushugi**

語り継ぐ戦争と民主主義

Sorin Hakkaku

Akebishobo

Gift from Sorin Hakkaku



EXHIBITION

TOKYO 2020 OLYMPICS

AUGUST 7 - SEPTEMBER 3, 2021

When the Olympic Games came to Tokyo in 1964, I was looking forward to seeing Abebe Bikila, the barefoot marathon champion. I was totally captivated when I saw a picture of him in a photo magazine running barefoot at the Rome Olympics. Early in the morning on the day of the competition, I took a position at the corner by the entrance to the National Stadium. Abebe ran calmly like a great philosopher, and the Japanese marathon runner, Tsuburaya, ran behind him, tilting his head. My eyes filled with tears as I pressed the shutter on my camera. That was my first Olympic experience.

There isn't a more interesting sporting event than the Olympic Games. Top athletes from more than 200 countries gather to compete for the title of being number one in the world. Another source of enjoyment is experiencing different cultures and ethnicities among competitors on the various national teams.

Acquiring a press pass to shoot the Olympics is no easy task, and it wasn't until the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Games that I finally got to shoot a Games. I realized my dream of taking photographs at the Summer Games at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, and I have been shot at every winter and summer Olympics since then.

For the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, I created the Aflo Sport Photographer Team. We have been serving as the official photographer group of the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC)



Koji Aoki

since then. Aflo Sport also provides images for the JOC official photo book, which is released for each Games. I very much enjoy editing and producing the books.

During the Olympics, I shoot from morning to night, forgetting about everything else. I get so immersed in taking photos that I don't need to sleep until the Games are over. The most important task for us is to photograph all of the Japanese athletes participating in the Olympics and to provide these images to media both in Japan and worldwide. However, I've always tried my best to also find the time to shoot for myself.

Koji Aoki – Aflo Sport Chief Photographer

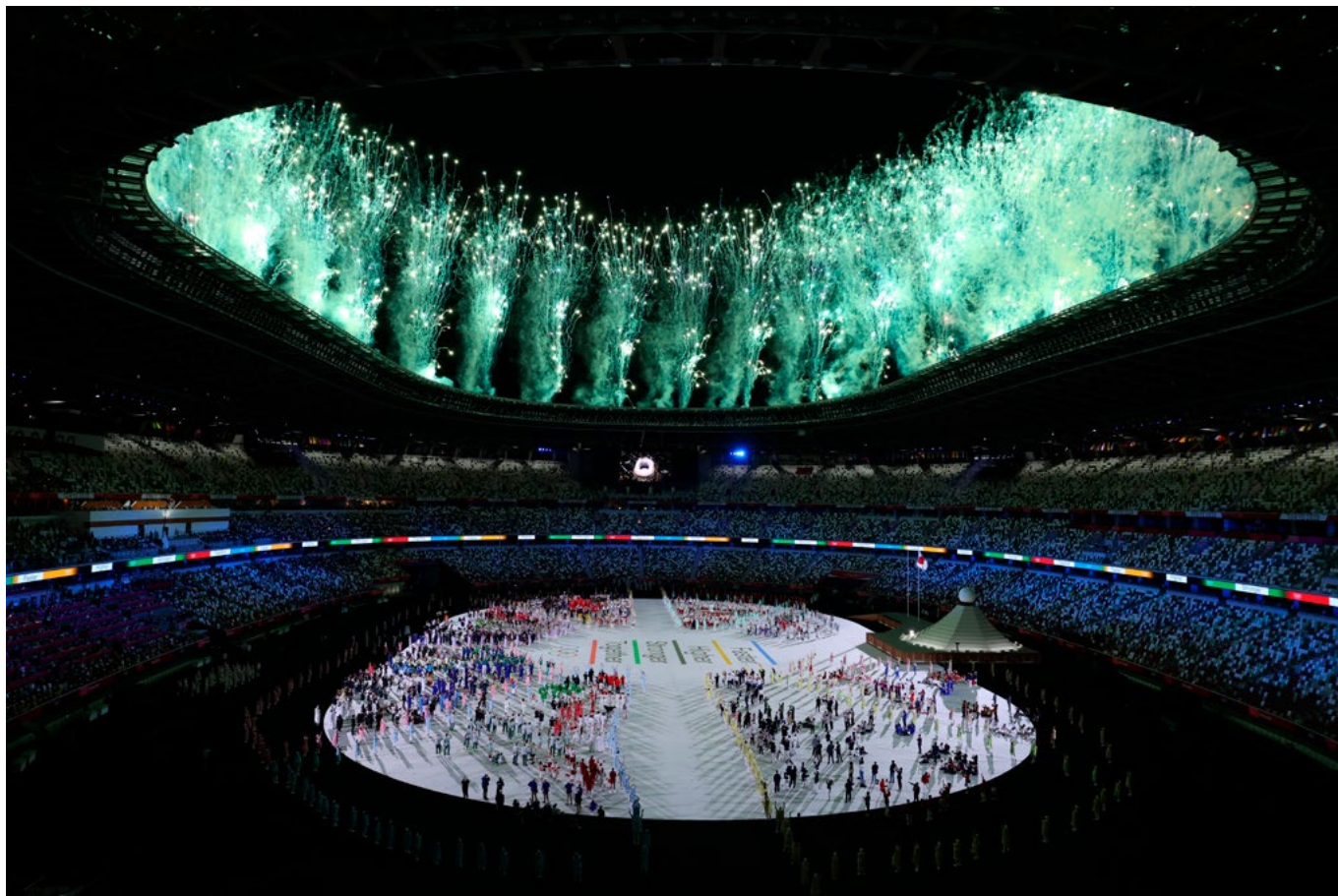
Koji Aoki was born in Japan and in his early 20s went to Switzerland

to study philosophy and religion. While in Switzerland, he obtained a ski instructor's license and for five years he worked as a professional ski instructor, both there and in Japan. Aoki began working as a photographer in 1976, and with his linguistic ability, he frequently goes overseas. Aoki made use of his global experiences in seeking new imagery with an international perspective. He has a long track record of shooting both summer and winter Olympic Games, including the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics, where he was leader of the official photo team. Aoki is president and chief photographer of the Aflo sports-stock and production companies.

● Bruce Osborn, FCCJ Exhibition Chair

EXHIBITION

Tokyo 2020 Olympics: August 7 - September 3, 2021



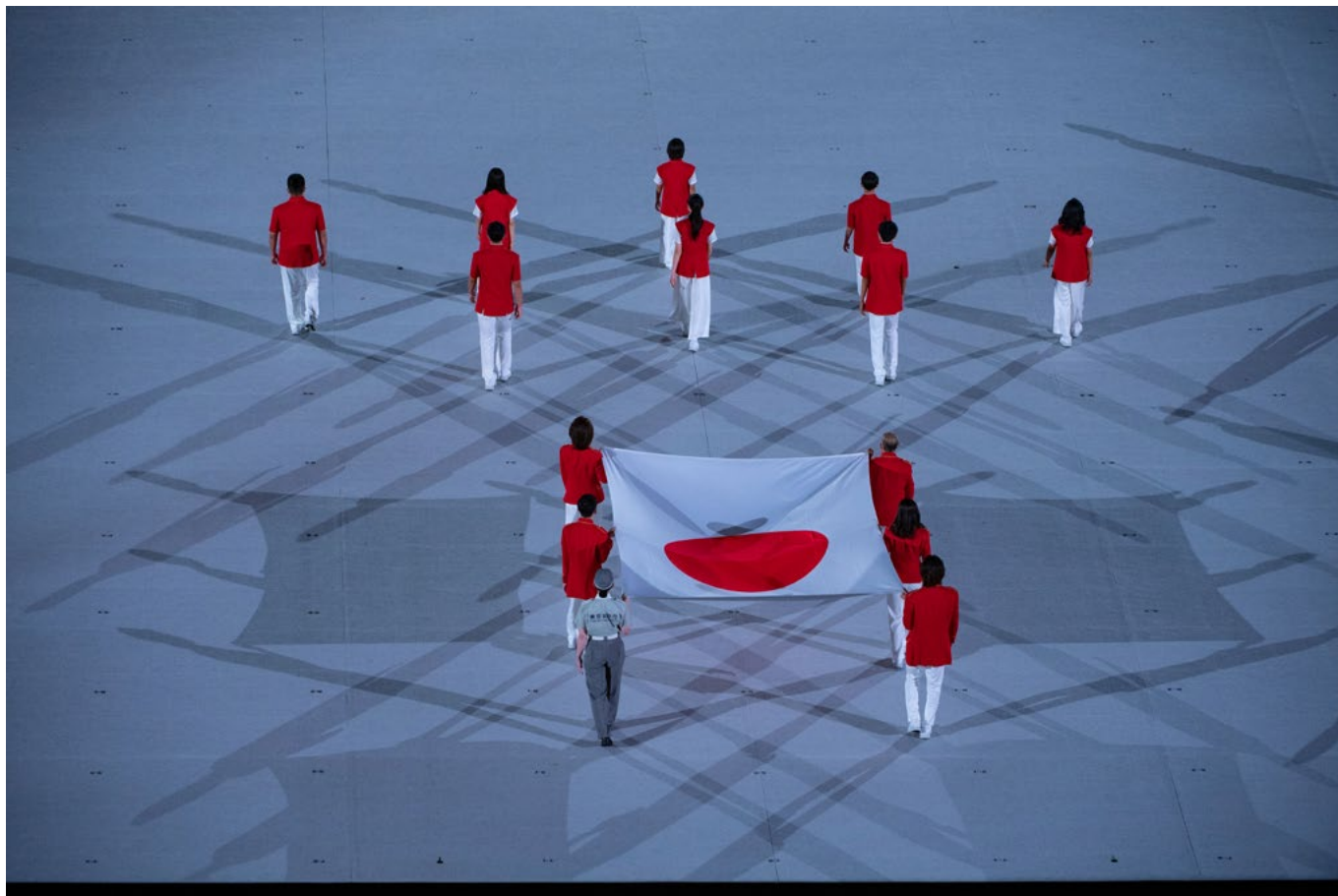
JULY 23, 2021. Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo, Japan. (Photo by Naoki Morita/AFLO SPORT)



JULY 23, 2021. People watch fireworks outside the Olympic Stadium during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony at the National Stadium in Tokyo, Japan. (Photo by AFLO SPORT)

EXHIBITION

Tokyo 2020 Olympics: August 7 - September 3, 2021



JULY 23, 2021. Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo, Japan.
(Photo by Enrico Calderoni/AFLO SPORT)



JULY 23, 2021. Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo, Japan.
(Photo by Enrico Calderoni/AFLO SPORT)

EXHIBITION

Tokyo 2020 Olympics: August 7 - September 3, 2021



JULY 25, 2021. Boxing Men's Light (63kg)
Round of 32 during the Tokyo 2020
Olympic Games at the Kokugikan Arena
in Tokyo, Japan.
(Photo by Naoki Morita/AFLO SPORT)



JULY 25, 2021. Weightlifting: Men's 67kg
during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at
the Tokyo International Forum in Tokyo,
Japan. (Photo by MATSUO.K/AFLO SPORT)

EXHIBITION

Tokyo 2020 Olympics: August 7 - September 3, 2021



JULY 28, 2021. Daiki Hashimoto (JPN), Gymnastics - Artistic: Men's Individual All-Around Final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Ariake Gymnastics Center in Tokyo, Japan.
(Photo by YUTAKA/AFLO SPORT)



JULY 28, 2021. Yui Ohashi (JPN), Swimming: Women's 200m Individual Medley Final during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Center in Tokyo, Japan.
(Photo by Koji Aoki/AFLO SPORT)



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