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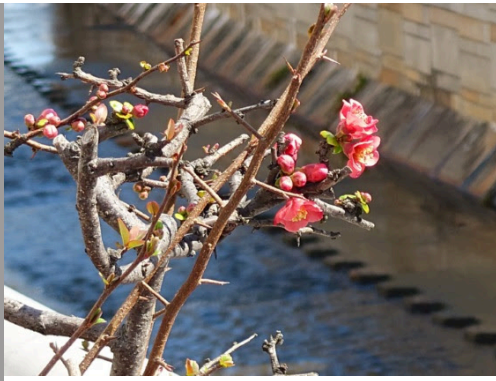


[The Nippon Foundation News] March Greetings

Greetings from The Nippon Foundation. The weather in much of Japan around this time of year is known as *san-kan shi-on*, which literally translates as “three cold, four warm.” This refers to the fact that the weather shifts back and forth between days of cold weather and warm weather with large temperature fluctuations. Earlier this month, Tokyo had two days in a row of sunny weather with daytime temperatures of around 20 degrees Celsius, followed by snow mixed with rain the next afternoon. Japanese plum (*ume* in Japanese, also known as Japanese apricot) trees are among the first to bloom during this time of year, signaling that spring is just around the corner. When the plum blossoms fade and *sakura* cherry trees begin to bloom a few weeks later, it will feel like spring has finally arrived.

One of the downsides to the arrival of spring for many people in Japan is that it also means the arrival of hay fever season. This is a relatively recent development that Japan has mostly experienced since the 1960s. To rebuild in the aftermath of World War II, large sections of forests were cut down to use the lumber for construction. These trees were replanted with varieties of fast-growing cedar and cypress trees, which were then cut down for their lumber while still relatively young. As imported lumber became more affordable, however, these trees grew for a longer time and as they aged, they also began emitting large quantities of pollen.

Not all people are affected, and of those who are the degree varies, with common symptoms being itching in the eyes, nasal congestion, and sneezing. Many people wear surgical masks and some people wear specially designed eyeglasses when going outside to keep the pollen away from their nose and eyes. Even before the coronavirus pandemic, people wearing masks were a common sight in Japan during this time of the year.



'Ume' plum blossoms are a sign that spring is around the corner

INDEX - March 14, 2025

News

- [My Condolences on the Passing of Ayako Sono \(2025.3.05\)](#)
- [Launch of Demonstration Tanker 'KIKOU MARU' with Plans for Hydrogen-Fueled Engine Installation \(2025.02.17\)](#)
- [World's First 'Mobile' Fleet Operation Center Completed \(2025.2.05\)](#)

My Condolences on the Passing of Ayako Sono



I am deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Ayako Sono, former Chairperson of The Nippon Foundation.

During the nine-and-one-half years that she served as Chairperson, from December 1995 to June 2005, Ms. Sono devoted herself to the Foundation's development. The way she worked to address various social issues with love and passion deeply impressed many people. Her leadership and many activities have been passed down to all of us at the Foundation today.

We are very fortunate to have experienced the many contributions she made to Japanese society, her compassion for others, and her rigorous attitude. Her legacy will continue to inspire and influence many people for years to come.

Yohei Sasakawa
Chairman
The Nippon Foundation

[Full Article](#)

Launch of Demonstration Tanker 'KIKOU MARU' with Plans for Hydrogen-Fueled Engine Installation

Demonstration test voyage with zero emissions planned for 2026



A newly built tanker vessel being developed by The Nippon Foundation Zero Emission Ships Project's Marine-Use Hydrogen-Fueled 4-Stroke Engine / Hydrogen Engine-Compatible Large Coastal Tanker Development Consortium (led by Yanmar Power Technology Co., Ltd.), to be equipped with a marine-use hydrogen-fueled 4-stroke high-speed engine, was launched on February 14, 2025, and named *KIKOU MARU*.

[Full Article](#)

World's First 'Mobile' Fleet Operation Center Completed

MEGURI2040 Fully Autonomous Ship Program completes compact center that can support ships remotely during disasters

Right-side view



Left-side view



On February 5, 2025, The Nippon Foundation MEGURI2040 Fully Autonomous Ship Program completed a "mobile" Fleet Operation Center that has been under development for remote navigational support from land for multiple ships. This Fleet Operation Center is housed in a cargo trailer that can be pulled and moved anywhere, meaning that in the event of a disaster or other emergency, it can be moved to a safe location and continue to provide remote navigational support to multiple ships.

[Full Article](#)

Yohei Sasakawa Blog Chairman of The Nippon Foundation



[World's First "Mobile Fleet Operation Center" Completed to Provide Remote Navigational Support for Unmanned Ships from Land \(2\). \[2025/3/11\]](#)

[World's First "Mobile Fleet Operation Center" Completed to Provide Remote Navigational Support for Unmanned Ships from Land.\(1\).](#)[2025/3/10]

[New Arctic Map Marks "Crucial Step" in Completing Mapping of Entire Ocean Floor Under Seabed 2030.\(2\).](#)[2025/2/27]

[New Arctic Map Marks "Crucial Step" in Completing Mapping of Entire Ocean Floor Under Seabed 2030.\(1\)](#) [2025/2/26]

[Japanese Fishermen, Researchers Joining Hands to Collect, Analyze Vital Data on Oceanic Changes](#) [2025/2/18]

[The Nippon Foundation, Scottish Association for Marine Science Embarking on Landmark Research into Deep-sea "Dark Oxygen" \(2\).](#) [2025/2/13]

[The Nippon Foundation, Scottish Association for Marine Science Embarking on Landmark Research into Deep-sea "Dark Oxygen" \(1\).](#) [2025/2/12]

Yohei Sasakawa Blog Top Page

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