

This newsletter is being sent to current and former The Nippon Foundation fellows, and persons who have asked to be added to the mailing list or have been introduced by The Nippon Foundation staff.



[The Nippon Foundation News] Demons Out, Good Fortune In!

Greetings from The Nippon Foundation. Although not an official public holiday, *setsubun* is a popular festival to mark the end of winter and beginning of spring, observed one day before the start of spring on the traditional Japanese lunar calendar. This year setsubun, which literally translates as “seasonal division,” fell on February 3. The tradition most associated with this festival is called *mamemaki* (bean-scattering), where roasted soybeans are thrown outside the home, temple or shrine while shouting *oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi* (demons out, good fortune in). When done at home, a person wearing an *oni* (demon) mask or costume will often stand outside to add to the atmosphere. The beans are intended to banish evil spirits and allow good fortune to enter for the new year. Another setsubun custom is the *ehomaki* (lucky direction roll), a thick sushi roll made with seven ingredients to represent the seven gods of happiness. The entire roll is eaten in silence, facing the direction considered auspicious for the coming year, while thinking about good fortune. The *ehomaki* tradition began in the Kansai region, but the rolls, as well as beans and *oni* masks, can now be purchased at convenience stores and supermarkets across Japan.



Decorative beans and an oni mask (left) and an ehomaki (right)

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- The Nippon Foundation's Setouchi Oceans X Project Wins 2025 NIKKEI Blue Ocean Award (December 19, 2025)
- World's 1st Automated Passenger Ferry (MASS) Enters Commercial Service (December 10, 2025)

World's 1st Successful 'Zero-Carbon' Voyage

Using Japan's 1st dual-fueled hydrogen tugboat with biomass fuel



With a view toward achieving carbon neutrality in Japan's coastal shipping by 2050, The Nippon Foundation launched the Zero Emission Ships project in January 2022 with the aim of developing ships fueled by hydrogen, a next-generation fuel known as the "ultimate clean energy" that does not emit greenhouse gasses while the ship is operating. On December 24, the project successfully conducted the world's first zero-carbon voyage using a mixture of hydrogen and biodiesel fuel in a tugboat equipped with hydrogen dual-fueled engines.

[Full Article](#)

The Nippon Foundation's Setouchi Oceans X Project Wins 2025 NIKKEI Blue Ocean Award

Named winner of 2025 Resource Circulation Category



Nikkei cited the fact that the project is being carried out across organizations including prefectural governments, private-sector companies, academia, and

fisheries associations to survey the actual state of ocean debris and establish proven methods for collecting ocean debris over a large geographical area, with the highly unique goal of disseminating a “Setouchi model” internationally. This model shows potential for adaptation in other regions, as well as for promoting recycling using ocean debris as a resource.

[Full Article](#)

World's 1st Automated Passenger Ferry (MASS) Enters Commercial Service

'Olympia Dream Seto' connects Okayama and Shodoshima



The MEGURI2040 Fully Autonomous Ship Program aims to address crew shortages and reduce accidents caused by human error by achieving autonomous navigation and implementing stable transport of people and goods. On December 5, the project's remote island passenger ferry *Olympia Dream Seto* was certified by the Japanese government as an “autonomous vessel” (MASS), marking the world's first launch of commercial navigation using autonomous navigation functions for a passenger ferry engaged in regular service.

[Full Article](#)

Yohei Sasakawa Blog Honorary Chair of The Nippon Foundation



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