



# From Japan to the Northwest

News From the Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle



Dear friends of the Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle,

Our monthly newsletter, "From Japan to the Northwest," is intended to share important and interesting information related to Japan, our region, and the consulate's activities.

You can find [past issues of the newsletter here](#).



Shizuoka, Japan

(Credit: Japan National Tourism Organization)

Welcome to the February 2024 edition of From Japan to the Northwest!

In this month's edition, we will cover the recent events in support of Ukraine, Prime Minister Kishida's policy speech for this session of the Diet, and a blooming forecast for cherry blossom trees in Japan. Finally, be sure to check out the article about the official U.S.-Japan Tourism Year 2024. This year is a golden opportunity to visit Japan and experience the delights of Japanese culture, sightseeing, and cuisine!

We will continue a **once-a-month publication schedule** to bring you the most important news from Japan and our region. Please be sure to **follow us on social media by clicking the icons below** for more frequent updates on local Japan-related events and the consulate's activities.



## 1. Speeches from Prime Minister Kishida

### Policy Speech by Prime Minister Kishida to the 213th Session of the Diet



Credit: Prime Minister's Office of Japan

On January 30, 2024, Prime Minister Kishida gave his policy speech to the Diet during the plenary sessions of the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors. In his speech, the prime minister started by voicing his condolences towards the victims of the Noto Peninsula Earthquake, expanding on how they have made a difference in the relief and reconstruction effort.

Prime Minister Kishida went on to talk about how he wanted more tangible achievements during this Diet through political reforms based around restoring trust in politicians; economic reforms working to increase wages for higher costs and changing industry to be greener; and changing society to be more inclusive, encouraging child rearing, and cracking down on sexual misconduct. He also talked about regional vitalization through increased tourism, reformed agriculture, and increased safety and security in the face of natural disasters. He also mentioned the reconstruction of Fukushima, working to restore people's livelihoods. Finally, the prime minister spoke about diplomacy and security, focusing on increased diplomatic engagement with other countries, specifically mentioning ASEAN, the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. cooperation, and the trilateral relationships of Japan-ROK-U.S. and Japan-ROK-China, especially focusing on China.

Prime Minister Kishida ended the speech with conviction to change Japan for the better. For the sake of the younger generation, he called all the parties of the Diet to come together.

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### 2024 National Rally to Demand the Return of the Northern Territories





Credit: Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan

On February 7, 2024, Prime Minister Kishida attended the 2024 National Rally to Demand the Return of the Northern Territories held in Tokyo and gave an address.

Since August of 1945, Russia has occupied the Habomai Islands, Shikotan Island, Kunashiri Island, and Etorofu Island off the coast of Hokkaido, Japan. All of these islands are under Japanese jurisdiction, but Russia has not released their hold on the islands. February 7 was designated as "Northern Territories Day" as a way to raise the awareness of the Northern Territories issue among Japanese people, and to give further boost to the campaign for the reversion of the Northern Territories nationwide.

In his address, Prime Minister Kishida talked about the current difficulties in being diplomatic with Russia amid the ongoing war. The prime minister heard from President Matsumoto of the League of Residents of Chishima and Habomai Islands and a group of junior high school students descended from former island residents, who urged him to continue to work towards the return of the islands.

Prime Minister Kishida ended by emphasizing the importance of nationwide public awareness on this issue and the need for Japan to make its position on the issue clear to foreign powers.

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## 2. Japan and Ukraine Relations

### [Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction](#)



Credit: Prime Minister's Office of Japan

On February 19, 2024, Prime Minister Kishida held the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction in Tokyo and delivered a keynote speech.

Prime Minister Kishida started the speech by expressing his respect for the strength and courage of the Ukrainian people, continuing by referencing his role as the G7 leader last year and how he led international discussion in support of Ukraine.

Prime Minister Kishida also stated that he held the Japan-Ukraine Conference for the Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction to make what he called "Japan's unique contribution." This involves investing in Ukraine through the public and private sectors, especially support for key areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, and the IT industry.

Prime Minister Kishida outlined three principles and five actions Japan would take to support Ukraine. The principles are:

- (1) Inclusiveness – Emphasizing human dignity, Prime Minister Kishida spoke of long-term support for Ukraine's self-sustaining development and reconstruction.
- (2) Partnership – the prime minister spoke of how working with the people of Ukraine rather than just giving unilateral support would be better for both countries.
- (3) Knowledge and technology - Japan's public and private sectors will work together through an all-Japan approach, utilizing the knowledge derived from Japan's postwar and disaster reconstruction efforts, as well as advanced technology and knowhow from the private sector.

The five actions focus on specific policies, including loosened visa requirements for Ukrainian citizens involved in the cooperation projects, loans and investment for Ukraine, increased business connection, and a new tax convention.

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## **Meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and Ukrainian Prime Minister Shmyhal**



Credit: Prime Minister's Office of Japan

On February 19, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Denys SHMYHAL, Prime Minister of Ukraine, who was visiting Japan to attend Japan-Ukraine Conference for the Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction for about 35 minutes starting around 6:35 pm.

At the beginning of the meeting, Prime Minister Kishida welcomed again Prime Minister Shmyhal's visit to Japan and stated that Japan-Ukraine Conference for the Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction produced the remarkable outcomes, including the signing of over 50 cooperation documents by the public and private sectors. In response, Prime Minister Shmyhal expressed his pleasure at the successful holding of today's conference through the cooperation of the two governments, and appreciation to the Japanese side for its cooperation, and stated that he would like to convey President Zelenskyy's appreciation and respect for Prime Minister Kishida.

Prime Minister Kishida conveyed that Japan will steadily follow up on the outcomes of today's conference, including a tax treaty and an investment agreement, and will make efforts to further expand the involvement of the private sector, as well as introduce measures to ease multiple visa requirements for Ukrainian private sector officials involved in cooperation projects.

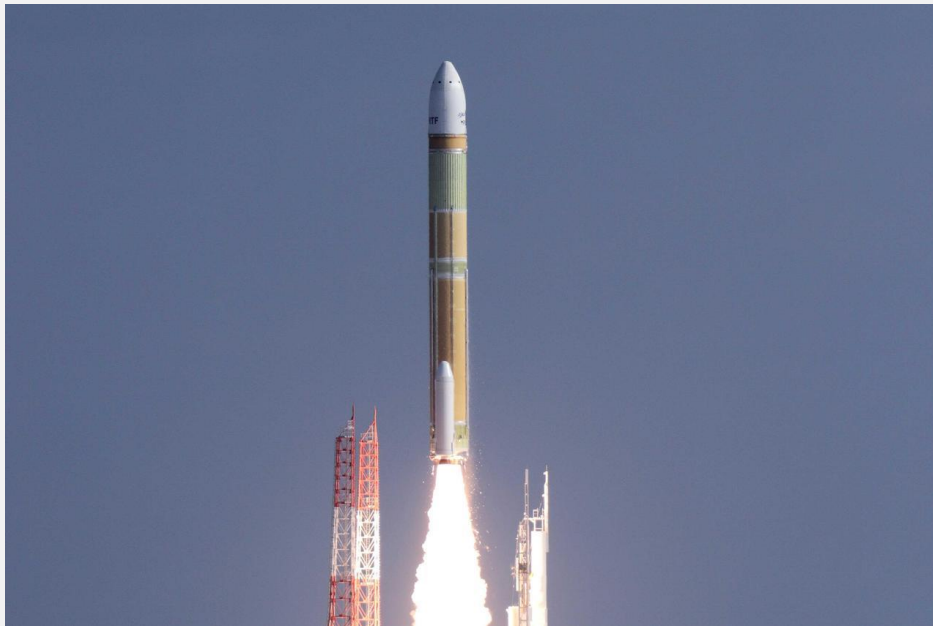
The two sides exchanged views on efforts toward peace, including the Peace Formula. Prime Minister Kishida conveyed that the preliminary consultations on the Information Protection Agreement, for which Prime Minister Kishida announced the start of coordination during his visit to Kyiv last March, have been completed and that the decision has been made to start formal negotiations. Prime Minister Shmyhal welcomed the start of the negotiations.

Finally, Prime Minister Kishida stated that Japan will continue to stand with Ukraine until peace returns to the beautiful land of Ukraine, and both sides concurred to firmly follow up on the outcomes of Prime Minister Shmyhal's visit to Japan and today's conference.

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### 3. Japan in Space

#### [Launch Result of the second H3 Launch Vehicle](#)



Credit: JAXA

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) launched the second H3 Launch Vehicle (H3TF2) at 9:22:55 (JST)\* on February 17, 2024 from the Tanegashima Space Center.

The Launch Vehicle flew as planned, and the second stage of the H3 Launch Vehicle was injected into the predetermined orbit. Approximately 16 minutes and 43 seconds after the liftoff, the separation of the CE-SAT-IE was confirmed.

Additionally, based on the post-Earth orbit data from the second-stage vehicle, JAXA confirmed that, the separation signal was sent to the TIRSAT, controlled re-entry of the second stage was performed, and the separation of the Vehicle Evaluation Payload-4 (VEP-4) was verified.

JAXA appreciates all for the support shown on behalf of the launch of the second H3 Launch Vehicle.

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## 4. Godzilla to the Red Carpet

### 'Godzilla Minus One' Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects

Earning \$52 million at the North American box office, *Godzilla Minus One* is the highest grossing Japanese-language film ever released in America and the fifth-highest grossing non-English language film in North American box office history. And now, *Godzilla Minus One* has made history by receiving a nomination for an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects.

"I feel that the times have changed in that the character Godzilla is able to be nominated for an Academy Award," said Director, Screenwriter, and Visual Effects Supervisor Takashi Yamazaki, "I think it is a wonderful day for Godzilla!"

Not only is *Godzilla Minus One* the first Godzilla film to earn an Academy Award nomination in the franchise's 70-year history, it's also the first ever Japanese-language film to earn a nomination in the Best Visual Effects category.

The Academy Award nomination follows *Godzilla Minus One*'s nomination for Best International Film by the Critics' Choice Awards, which Yamazaki attended on January 14 in Santa Monica, California.

"For us Japanese, the Academy Awards is really a 'very far away place,' a place we have seen on TV and admired from afar. Being able to step into such a place with Hollywood is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and we can't wait!" said Yamazaki.

"We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to the many people who have supported the film and helped us get this nomination," said Yamazaki, "I hope everyone is excited by this announcement!"

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## 5. Sakura Season

### [Sakura Flowering Status in 2024 \(Japanese\)](#)

This website is a tracker for when cherry blossoms are blooming throughout Japan. Have a look if you plan to visit Japan this spring and want to participate in *hanami*! The website updates three times daily and is only available in Japanese.

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## 6. New Member of the "United Nations 10-Member Group"

### [Appointment of Dr. KOTANI Motoko as a Member of the "United Nations 10-Member Group"](#)

On February 20th, the United Nations announced new members of the "United Nations 10-Member Group", and Dr. KOTANI Motoko, Executive Vice President for Research, Tohoku University was appointed as a member of this group. The Group is mandated to give advice to the United Nation's annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum). The STI Forum discusses the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the perspective of science, technology and innovation.

The Government of Japan welcomes the third appointment of a Japanese citizen to the Group by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, following Dr. NAKAMURA Michiharu, President Emeritus of the Japan Science and Technology Agency, and Dr. KAWAI Maki, President of the National Institute of Natural Sciences. The Government of Japan expects that Dr. KOTANI's knowledge and experience will contribute to advancing the discussion on the use of STI to achieve the SDGs.

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## 7. Japanese WPS Taskforce

### [Launch of the Taskforce on Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\)](#)





Credit: MOFA

On January 29, the Taskforce on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was established to provide coordination across the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) under Ms. KAMIKAWA Yoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. This stems from the unanimously-adopted “Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Resolution 1325” from the United Nations in 2000, which stated that international peace, conflict prevention and conflict resolution require the equal participation of women, protection from sexual violence in conflict, and gender equality. To implement this and relevant resolutions, Japan has formulated and implemented three national action plans.

At the launch meeting, Minister Kamikawa explained the foundational concept for WPS as follows: we have a better chance to achieve sustained peace not only by protecting and helping women and girls, but also if women hold leadership positions and participate in conflict prevention, reconstruction, and peacebuilding. She stated that her activities since assuming the position of Foreign Minister have reinforced the importance of developing a cross-cutting structure for implementing tangible initiatives to advance WPS, which led to the decision to establish the taskforce. Minister Kamikawa expressed that, as the international community faces a complex crisis, she was determined to advance a forward-looking agenda and WPS that contribute to peace and stability in the international community, at all levels from policy to the field, while integrating Japan’s unique initiatives in disaster risk reduction and other areas.

MOFA will further intensify its WPS efforts through the taskforce. In addition, it will strengthen coordination with relevant ministries and agencies, while gaining further insight through hearings with outside experts.

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## 8. Let's Go to Japan!

[U.S.-Japan Tourism Year 2024](#)





Credit: JNTO

2024 will mark the first time both the United States and Japan have developed this kind of union, which seeks to promote increased travel, mutual tourism, and cultural exchanges between the two countries. The Tourism Year agreement is a project of the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA), and the Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA), in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office and U.S. Commercial Service, the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, and Brand USA.

## 9. Consulate News & Activities

### Decoration Conferment Ceremony for Mr. Hideo Dale Kaku, Former Commander of the Nisei Veterans Committee, Inc.



Credit: Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle

On February 12, 2024, a conferment ceremony and reception were held at the Official Residence to congratulate Mr. Hideo Dale Kaku, former Commander of the Nisei Veterans Committee, Inc., on his receipt of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays. Mr. Kaku's family, friends, Japanese American community members, and many others were in attendance.

Consul General of Japan in Seattle IYORI Makoto expressed his appreciation for Mr. Kaku's many years of continued contributions and formally conferred the Order. Mr. Kaku spoke about his endeavors to improve the welfare of the Japanese American community and enhance the friendly ties between Japan and the United States, motivated by the pride in his Japanese heritage instilled in him by his parents. He thanked his wife, friends, colleagues, and Japanese American community members for their support and expressed gratitude for the honor of receiving the Decoration.

Mr. Kaku was awarded the Decoration for his outstanding contributions to promoting friendship between Japan and the United States as well as to improving the welfare of the Japanese and Japanese American community in the United States.

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That's it for this issue of "From Japan to the Northwest."

Thank you for reading. Until next month!

Sincerely,  
Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle

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View [past issues of "From Japan to the Northwest" here.](#)

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