

Boys and girls, the day after tomorrow, on Monday, we are scheduled to have our 74th Entrance Ceremony, and all of you are going to see our new freshmen, your new *kōhai*. I am sure that you have been looking forward to this experience. Many of you are planning to try to induce freshmen to join in your club activities. There must be a lot of good things that you want to pass on to them. You should tell them about our Sports Day, the *Gaien-sai*, and other extra-curricular activities. I hope you will tell them a lot about our school and its proud traditions. And I do hope you, yourselves, will all have fulfilling student lives at Aoyama High School.

At this starting point of a new trimester, I would like to talk about *two/three* things. First, *according to The Japan News by the Yomiuri Shimbun*, on February 23rd the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said that the space probe Hayabusa2 had successfully touched down on the asteroid Ryūgū, about 340 million kilometers from the earth, and that it had likely collected samples of some of the asteroid's surface materials, such as soil and rocks. Ryūgū has a diameter of about 900 meters and is in an orbit between the earth and Mars. It is believed to contain organic matter and water that could lead to the creation of life. Hopes are high that an analysis of the samples might help illuminate the origins of the solar system and living beings. If Hayabusa2 succeeds in bringing back surface samples from the asteroid, and if those samples contain water and organic matter that are essential for life, we may be able to get clues to the evolution of the solar system and to the origin of life. I do hope the feat achieved by Hayabusa2 may arouse your interest in science.

Second, the referendum on Futenma relocation resulted in a 'No' vote greater than 70%. Though the result is not legally binding, it is likely to embolden anti-Henoko groups and Okinawans in general. The government has restarted reclamation work at Henoko, in Nago, for a facility to replace the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. While the Henoko replacement may be a reasonable compromise, the total number of military facilities in Okinawa will remain almost unchanged, and opinions are divided as to whether or not it will reduce any of the burdens that Okinawans are forced to bear. The government insists Futenma's relocation to Henoko is the only solution to eliminating the dangers of Futenma, and that it can't wait any longer. It was in 1996 that the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed on returning the Futenma site to Japan on the condition that the base's functions would be

relocated within Okinawa Prefecture. And now, 23 years later, Okinawans want Japanese people in other prefectures to share their burdens and to help convince the U.S. to reduce its presence in Okinawa. This is a matter of national security. What other choices do Okinawans have? What other options do we have? Or do we really have any? As I have told you before, much of the airspace over Tokyo is under the jurisdiction of the United States Forces Japan, which is headquartered at Yokota Air Base in Fussa City, and flights through that space are significantly restricted. In other words, Tokyoites face a dilemma similar to that faced by Okinawans, and we should all consider how it might be best to try to deal with this dilemma.

Third, and last, we are going to witness the abdication of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito and the end of his reign. The new era is scheduled to start on May 1st. Crown Prince Naruhito is going to ascend to the throne and become the 126th Emperor. During the Heisei era, we have suffered from many mega-disasters: the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake, the Unzen volcanic eruption, the Higashi-Nihon earthquake and tsunami, other huge quakes, and heavy rains. The global climate seems to be changing radically. In many places in the world, people have also suffered from terrorist attacks and armed conflicts. We are not sure that our society will be able to enjoy further prosperity economically, politically, and culturally. Nobody knows what will happen, even in the near future. Thus, as I often tell you, it is essential for you to keep on learning as many things in various fields as you can. Learning helps increase people's happiness, and we should not stop learning. I do hope the new era will be a peaceful and prosperous one. And I do hope you will be able to lead fulfilling lives in this age of uncertainty. Don't take a dark view of your lives. There may be many more chances in the new era for you to attain achievements that will change our society for the better.

Today, I have told you **two/three** things: first, **that you should become interested in science**; second, that we should try to deal with a dilemma that we Japanese face; and, third, that you should keep on learning so as to be able to help change society for the better.

One more thing—I hope all of you will be gentle and kind with one another, not ignoring your friends or speaking ill of them. Every student deserves respect. **Don't come down so hard on your friends. As I have told you, it takes only a moment to destroy a good relationship, and it takes very long time to become reconciled with one another.** You should always try to be considerate

toward your friends. Listen to them, especially when they are in low spirits, try to understand, and just be there, close to them, offering your friendship. A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.

Thank you very much.

975 words