

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic games are over now. Japan won a total of 58 medals, including 27 gold medals, which is the largest number ever for Japan at an Olympic Games. There were number of new events, such as BMX and skateboarding, as well as mixed-gender events in table tennis, judo, badminton, and swimming. Younger athletes, especially those under 20, attracted much attention. They seemed to enjoy being in the limelight. The youngest medalist ever was a 12-year-old girl in skateboarding. All the athletes who participated in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic games deserve praise, whether they won a medal or not. What matters most is the process through which they struggled to become representatives of their own countries.

As you know, the government has extended again the period of the fourth state of emergency until the 12th of September, which means that it will include two days of the *Gaien-sai*, and the Metropolitan Board of Education has decided to restrain the activities of Metropolitan high schools during the extended period. That means that the festival will not be open to your guardians or the general public. You will be able to perform plays on stage, but without the usual audiences. You will have to wear face masks on stage. We could have created movie clips of our plays, as we did last summer, and enjoy watching them online, but you did not choose that way. We have to accept the new rules for our school festival, and we should be thankful that it will at least be possible for us to perform plays. I know it will be hard for you, being restrained from performing plays on stage with the usual kind of audiences, as you would have been able to do under the original rules, but we don't have time to spend complaining about the age that we live in. I do hope you will accept the reality and enjoy new ways of making your *Gaien-sai* a success, a festival through which, even under emergency conditions, you can meaningfully pass on proud school traditions to your *kōhai*, the next generation.

I'm not sure when or how the COVID-19 spread might cease, but it may still take at least half a year for all of us to be fully vaccinated. It seems almost an impossible hope that you will all have the fulfilling student lives at Aoyama High School that we would wish. I have to tell you again that this is still an emergency situation. We must be patient, wise, and strong enough to win the fight against this fifth surge of COVID-19.

At the starting point of the second trimester of 2021, I would like to talk about two things.

First, according to a report issued in June by Amnesty International, which is famous for its global efforts against the imposition of the death penalty, China has been violating the human rights of people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and the

Beijing government has received worldwide condemnation for subjecting people of the Uyghur ethnic group to confinement in internment camps, torture, forced labor, and forced abortions and sterilization, as well as for forcing Uyghurs to swear allegiance to the Communist Party of China. It is said that the birthrate among Uyghurs has declined dramatically in recent years. Unfortunately, only a limited amount of information is available regarding specifics of what has been happening in the region, which makes it impossible to confirm many of the accusations with certainty, the existence of severe problems is definitely clear. Last year, the B.B.C. broadcast an interview with the Chinese Ambassador to the U.K. The interviewer asked penetrating questions and showed a drone video of local officials forcing Uyghurs onto the cars of a train, suggesting the possibility of the existence of concentration camps like those the Nazis operated during World War II. The Ambassador repeatedly insisted there was no proof of any violation of Uyghur human rights, and that the Uyghurs were happy because of the splendid policies of the Communist Party. Such complete denials are common practice among China officials. While it might seem that Japan has no involvement in what has been occurring there, one of the main industries in the Xinjian Autonomous Region is cotton cultivation, and Uniqlo has been being accused of using cotton produced by forced Uyghur labor, which seems to have resulted in a dramatic fall in the company's stock valuation. Our government seems a little bit reluctant to act concerning the human rights of Uyghurs, perhaps because we have additional problems with China to deal with, such as sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. Other East Asian nations, specifically, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei, have issues concerning "ownership" of the Spratly Islands. Some African nations are reluctant to criticize China because they have become financially dependent on it. And the world knows that the Chinese market is essential to the world economy. What do you think the Japanese government should do? I would like to hear your opinions. Many of the twelfth graders will have gained the right to vote in the House of Representatives election next month. Perhaps you ought to consider candidates' diplomatic policies when you decide for whom to vote.

Second, it has been more than a year since the anti-government protests started in Hong Kong. At the end of November, last year, Hong Kong's supporters of democracy scored landslide victories in district council elections. Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, said that she would listen humbly to the opinions of the public, but I was worried about how the leaders of mainland China were going to deal with this situation and with Hong Kong's citizens, most of whom were born and have been brought up in a democratic society. Most of the pro-democracy district council members have already resigned in response to the Beijing government's tightening of its control over Hong Kong. It is nearly a quarter of century since Hong Kong was returned to China

in 1997. For 150 years previously, they had been governed by the United Kingdom. During those 150 years, citizens became accustomed to British ways in almost everything. The new Hong Kong is still young. People seemed to be enthusiastic until only a relatively short time ago. They seemed to want greater democracy. China promised that there will be “One Nation, Two Systems” until 2047, but the Beijing government is clearly not keeping that promise. It now seems like a long time ago that people’s initial demands changed into broader calls for expanded democracy and an investigation into allegations of police brutality. I’m afraid that Hong Kong as we have known it might be lost under the single-party dictatorship of Beijing.

China has become the world second largest economic superpower as the result of economic reforms. This has produced super rich citizens and left poor workers and farmers behind. The Beijing government has recently shifted its economic policies into more suppressive ones. If the government fails in those policies, both the rich and the poor might explode in violent protests. Xi Jinping’s dictatorship might actually be fragile enough to collapse in a moment, and he may feel compelled to tighten his control of this huge nation even more than before. Where will this Asian giant go?

Today I have talked about two things: first, the violation of the human rights of people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and, second, the danger that Hong Kong might be lost under the single-party dictatorship of Beijing.

In closing, I hope you and your families are all well, keeping safe, and free of COVID-19 infection. And I also hope that, through your activities during the *Gaien-sai*, you will be able to add new pages to our school’s traditions.

Thank you very much.

網掛けの部分は省略しました。