

# NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

December 2013  
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## COLLUSION

## CRIME

Should journalists be afraid of the dark?



## CONSPIRACY SCANDAL

## CORRUPTION

## INCOMPETENCE

## COVER UPS

What the secrets bill means  
for investigative reporting

+

Tepco vs. the foreign media

The ins and outs of writing about sex in Japan

Our man in Yangon

Does Tokyo Motor Show still matter?

Khaldon Azhari in profile



# Rebuilding for resilience



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## From the President



THE FCCJ IS BACK IN THE NEWS, HELPING KICK OFF a media storm on the Designated Secrets Protection Bill. Opposition had been mounting when Abe's Cabinet approved the controversial bill on Oct. 25. When Lower House deliberations began on Nov. 7, the FCCJ's Freedom of Information Committee had already consulted with me on a statement opposing the bill. Approval from the Board of Directors followed. We opted for the morning of Monday Nov. 11 to inform our members and issue a statement to

the leading political parties and media outlets. Sincere apologies to our members, who were informed later in the day.

It was an official press holiday but the news spread quickly on the web thanks to Ayako Mie's piece in *The Japan Times*.

Following on our heels came a remarkable photo of eight prominent Japanese TV newscasters holding a large banner opposing the secrecy bill at the Japan National Press Club (in the *Mainichi Shimbun*).

As I write, articles from other news outlets that followed include: NHK, Kyodo News, *Global Post*, Jiji Press, Xinhua, Nuclear News, Free Press Association, *Akahata*, *Nikkan Gendai*, *Daily NoBorder*, *L'Opinion* and *Asahi Shimbun*. Interview requests came from Fuji TV, Kyodo News, and even *Hokkaido Shimbun*. In addition, Yukihisa Fujita of the DPJ introduced the FCCJ protest during the House of Councilors debate on the bill and repeatedly suggested that Minister Masako Mori should meet with us.

Obviously not everyone was pleased with our statement. We were visited by a representative from one leading party who questioned the statement's language. I also heard from members who disagreed with the statement and felt it was inappropriate to issue it as the Club is an organization claiming political impartiality.

Historically, the FCCJ has remained neutral on controversial issues, but we cannot stay silent regarding actions that affect the freedom of the press. Another example was in May 2002, when FCCJ president Kaz Abiko issued a statement, with the consent of the Board of Directors, opposing the personal information protection bill (*kajin joho hogo hoan*) that was being discussed at the Diet. The statement said that it would pose a serious threat to press freedom, and provide the government with means to put pressure on news organizations.

Unfortunately, as we go to press, the bill was pushed through the Lower House and is likely to make its way through the Upper House.

In other, more positive Club news, we're very excited to announce our new series of breakfast talks with business leaders and journalists called "Asa-kai," on the first Tuesday of every month (with some exceptions) from 7:30-8:45am. The first Asa-kai is scheduled for Dec. 3, with former Sony chairman and CEO Nobuyuki Idei, who now runs the management consultancy Quantum Leaps Corp., and NPO Asia Innovators' Initiative. Our Jan. 14 Asa-kai will feature the popular Bloomberg journalist William Pesek, well known for his widely published columns on economics, markets and politics. We'll put the speaker schedule up on the website soon.

Finally, just a few words about former Newsweek Tokyo Bureau reporter and FCCJ member Jeanne Sather who passed away on Nov. 11. I first met Jeanne in the early 1980s when she kindly assigned me to shoot several of her stories, despite my obvious inexperience at the time. We became fast friends and remained in touch all these years. Jeanne remained the quintessential journalist even during her 15-year cancer battle. Even in passing, Jeanne will remain an inspiration for so many of us.

— Lucy Birmingham

There is a list of links mentioned in this column at the end of my message on the website ([www.fccj.or.jp/number-1-shimbun/](http://www.fccj.or.jp/number-1-shimbun/)).



## GOOD MORNING, YANGON

**Thomas Kean** finds the former somnolent Myanmar city a hotbed of change and challenges for a resident journalist

JOURNALISTS LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN IN Myanmar over the past two-and-a-half years have found themselves at the center of one of the most engaging narratives of political, economic and social change in decades. Iconic moments have come thick and fast, from the grainy image of President Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi sealing their rapprochement underneath a portrait of the country's father of independence – and the opposition leader's father – General Aung San, to Barack Obama emerging from Air Force One on the tarmac at Yangon International Airport. Just don't believe any scribe who tells you they saw it all coming. The manner of the country's emergence from military rule has been almost as much a surprise to the former generals as readers in London, New York and Tokyo.

Yes, Yangon can be a frustrating city in which to live, and for foreign correspondents and freelancers it lacks the convenience of nearby Bangkok or even Phnom Penh. While a mobile SIM card now only costs \$150, internet connections are still frustratingly slow. The electricity and water supplies continue to operate to their own schedules (as I write this, the hum and diesel fumes of the neighbor's generator are filling my apartment). And all the government officials are located in Nay Pyi Taw, a five-hour drive up a new four-lane highway, called the "Highway of Death" in recognition of its frequent fatal accidents.

Then there's the cost of living. While most of us stood staring, mouths gaping, at the reforms that were taking place, Yangon became an expensive place. Okay, food is still cheap, particularly if you stay away from the Roquefort and Danish bacon at CityMart. But finding somewhere both liveable and reasonably priced to unpack the laptop and notebooks has become an almost Sisyphean task. What you would have paid to rent a large house in the Golden Valley neighborhood two years ago is now not enough to secure a 1000-square-foot apartment with a creaking lift and no natural light.

But the lure of a city – and country – opening up to the world is strong. And nowhere is the impact of the reforms more obvious than in Yangon. The former capital, which remains the most important city, provides front row seats to the pleasure and the pain of the new Myanmar, from the grinding traffic to the formerly empty expat bars now crowded with development specialists and business consultants wielding freshly printed business cards.

Some will lament that this once-sleepy city of six million has lost its provincial feel. New signs of the hyper-globalized world are appearing each

day. Condominiums and sports cars are rapidly proliferating and the rust-bucket taxis have been mostly scrapped. The black market moneychangers are slowly disappearing off the streets as more businesses accept ATMs and credit cards. International businesses are scrambling to secure office space at eye-watering rates, while hotel rooms are not much cheaper. The leaders of the fast food wave have already arrived, with two Lotteria stores serving up beef burgers and chicken drumsticks. If living in a city that is irreversibly changing appeals, then Yangon calls louder than anywhere else in the world.

These new features of life may sound superficial but there have also been meaningful reforms that have completely changed the environment for journalism.

People are no longer afraid. From senior government ministers to dispossessed farmers and lawyers fighting a corrupt judicial system, all speak openly about their hopes and fears for the reform process. Just three years ago, when I was covering the 2010 election for the *Myanmar Times*, only a handful of local politicians, activists and analysts were brave enough to publicly speculate on what the election could mean for Myanmar. Members of the military government, like Thura Shwe Mann – now speaker of the Parliament, and a presidential aspirant – kept their heads down, following Senior General Than Shwe's script to an overwhelming election win. Today, Thura Shwe Mann tells public audiences that democracy is the only form of governance that can bring economic prosperity. They have set the tone for a dramatic shift in public discourse in which new voices can be heard, from the transgender community to ethnic minorities.

Censorship is gone: After five decades, the Ministry of Information's Press Scrutiny and Registration Division has been confined to the dustbin of history. New publications are appearing at a rate unlike anywhere else in the world. During a three-month period earlier this year, a dozen daily newspapers were launched, the majority of them independent of political parties, the government or major business identities. Though some have already disappeared, more are appearing all the time. With no credible journalism schools, fresh-faced graduates with degrees in zoology and physics are being given the chance to put questions to government officials as well as visiting prime ministers. The expatriate editors and journalists at the few English publications, like the *Myanmar Times*, are invariably young, and keen to both break stories of importance and add depth and nuance to the international coverage of the country. There has never been more to write, analyze and explore in print.

Myanmar is no longer one of the world's most dangerous places to be a journalist. In fact, in less than three years, the country has become a beacon of media freedom with a print industry that is thriving, vibrant and censorship-free. Visiting foreign correspondents no longer have to employ tactics that would not be out of place in a John le Carré novel to evade the dreaded Military Intelligence and, later, Special Branch. But it also has that other important ingredient – a captivating story that readers everywhere care about. ❶

Thomas Kean is the editor of the English-language edition of the *Myanmar Times*, a weekly newspaper based in Yangon. He has lived in Myanmar for the past six years working as a journalist and editor.

**SPOT THE BLOOPER...**

The surviving member of the Kennedy presidential family highlighted this historical link when she landed in Tokyo, noting that because of her father's plans in particular "it is a special honor for me to be able to work to strengthen the close ties between our two great countries."

Kennedy, who is expected to present her credentials to Emperor Hirohito on Nov. 19, noted that her arrival coincides with "the 50th anniversary of my father's presidency." Nov. 22 marks a half-century since President Kennedy's assassination.

Ambassador Kennedy probably had the Japanese from the moment she opened an introductory video posted on the US Embassy website last week with the famous Kennedy smile and a simple



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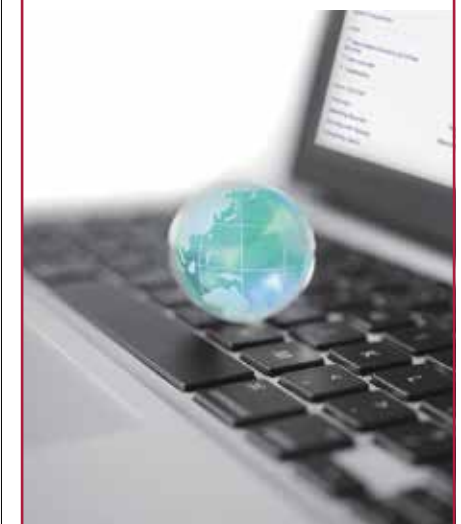
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**For those already in on the secret, the application form is available on the FCCJ website or from the 19F Club office.**





In April 2011, while Fukushima's fires still smoldered, foreign journalists scrambled to find sources that could shed any light on what was happening. In an Iwaki City car park, I found a nervous maintenance worker on a rare R&R break from the Daiichi plant.

Among his bombshell claims was the allegation that the earthquake had damaged Reactor 1 before the tsunami knocked out the plant's cooling system. Conditions onsite were Spartan and dangerous, he said. Workers were exhausted; nobody at the top seemed to know what they were doing.

Nearly three years later, with parliament set to pass a new state secrecy bill as No.1 Shimbun goes to press, foreign correspondents might ponder a sobering question: Would they find themselves on the wrong side of the law if they did the same thing today?

No, insists Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Since the bill was submitted to the Diet on Oct. 25, he has repeatedly denied it would gag the media or restrict the public's right to know. "There is a misunderstanding," he told the Diet on Nov. 26, the day the Lower House passed the bill. "It is obvious that normal reporting activity of journalists must not be a subject for punishment under the bill."

Few people outside the ruling bloc of the LDP and New Komeito, however, seem to believe him. The legislation has triggered protests from Human Rights Watch, the International Federation of Journalists, the Federation of Japanese Newspaper Unions, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations and the FCCJ. Hundreds of Japanese academics have signed a petition demanding it be scrapped.

As the bill made its way through the Diet, an expert for the UN Human Rights Council said it included "serious threats to whistleblowers and even journalists reporting on secrets." "Transparency is a core requirement for democratic governance," warned Frank La Rue, the special rapporteur on freedom of expression.

Mizuho Fukushima of the Social Democratic Party delivered her verdict at an FCCJ press conference on Nov. 14. "It represents a grave threat to journalism because it covers such a wide and vague range of secrets," she said. Fukushima pointed out that the bill casts its net so wide it even includes a clause for "miscellaneous" secrets.

Inevitably, perhaps, debate on the new law has been viewed through the prism of the Fukushima crisis, which revealed disastrous collusion between bureaucrats and the nuclear industry. Critics say journalists attempting to expose such col-

'THE AVERAGE PERSON WILL NOT EVEN KNOW WHAT PIECE OF INFORMATION HAS BEEN DESIGNATED A STATE SECRET, OR WHO MADE IT SO

## Shhh. The lights go out for whistleblowers and (possibly) journalists

by David McNeill



evant public servants to secrecy even after they quit.

During Diet deliberations in November, Masako Mori, the minister in charge of the bill, admitted that security information on nuclear power plants could be designated secret because the information "might reach terrorists." But who decides on such likelihoods? Bureaucrats, said Sohei Nihi, a Japanese Communist Party lawmaker who spoke at the Club alongside Fukushima.

"One of the most dangerous aspects of this bill is that the average person will not even know what piece of information has been designated a state secret," or who made it so, he told the FCCJ audience. He and Fukushima said that even lawmakers would not be safe from the law's huge reach. "The bill is fundamentally flawed and must be scrapped," he concluded.

Few of the bill's opponents argue against Japan's right to protect classified information. Some say Japan has long been Asia's diplomatic leaky bucket. In *The Economist* magazine last month, Nobutaka Machimura, an ex-foreign minister who heads the LDP's taskforce on the law, said America and other Japanese allies "complain that information entrusted to it is too often leaked."

Article 1 of the law states its purpose is to "prevent leakage of designated secrets . . . to guarantee the security of this state and its people." But independent lawmaker Taro Yamamoto, who won a Diet seat on an anti-nuclear ticket last December, said the Fukushima accident showed that when it counted, the Japanese state acted against the people.

He reminded the FCCJ audience that

in March 2011, government bureaucrats withheld data harvested from an expensive radiation tracking system, called SPEEDI (System for Prediction of Environmental Emergency Dose Information).

Thousands of refugees from the town of Namie, about five miles from the plant, inadvertently fled into the most contaminated areas. The information was, however, passed on to the U.S. Embassy and military in Japan, allowing its personnel to plan for evacuation. "All this was before the new secrets bill," said Yamamoto.

The SPEEDI debacle was far from the only example of information management or censorship during the Fukushima crisis. For the first few days of the nuclear drama, the public airwaves filled up with government officials and elite nuclear scientists who initially said that there would be no radiation crisis. Academics straying from that message were effectively banned from television and radio. It was two months before Tepco admitted that the Daiichi plant had suffered a triple meltdown. Journalists without independent sources were left in the dark.

*New York Times* reporter Nori Onishi sets the scene of that time. "In the first couple of months after 3.11, the public inclination was to still trust what the government was saying and what the media was describing, but that started to break down by May," he says in a paper by Kyle Cleveland, a professor at Temple University Japan. "The foreign media had written about the meltdown in the first week of the disaster, and the Japanese government had criticized the foreign media for being alarmist, and here they were a few months later saying, 'Oh yeah, I guess there were meltdowns.'"

Understandably, perhaps, the government has mostly attempted to steer debate away from Fukushima and toward rising tensions in Asia, where it feels it is on safer political ground. A draft of the secrecy bill, published in the *Asahi* online newspaper in October, cites the "increasingly complex international situation" and the "growing importance of securing information related to national security."

One possible application for the new law could be seen in November, when Japan held some of its largest-ever military exercises in Okinawa. Six Japanese warships, 380 military planes and 34,000 troops took part. Local journalists complained of restricted access and arbitrary bans. Protestors say they were harassed. Journalists who argued against the restrictions were told they should "stop trying to help China," said one newspaper reporter, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Japan already restricts classified infor-

mation. The National Public Service Law mandates punishment for civil servants who leak to the media; the Mutual Defense Assistance Law stipulates 10 years in prison for whistleblowers who reveal secrets on Japan's alliance with the U.S. Violators of the 2002 Self Defense Forces Law face five years in jail if they reveal classified national security issues.

Opponents of the bill say Japan's press club system also helps restrict the flow of information from official Japan to the public. The latest (2013) World Press Freedom survey, published by journalism watchdog Reporters Without Borders, ranks Japan just 53rd, behind most advanced democracies and even Lithuania and Ghana. "Why do we need another law," asked Yamamoto. "What the government is truly trying to do is increase the power of the state."

Partly in response to such criticisms, and under pressure from its Buddhist-backed coalition partner New Komeito, the LDP has inserted a clause giving what it calls "due consideration" to the public's right to know. Article 21 of the bill cites "appropriate" news gathering activities, meaning those that "mainly have the purpose of serving a public interest, to the extent they do not constitute violations of law or employ exceptionally inappropriate means." Unfortunately, there is no independent outside body to monitor how this will be applied.

For hints on how the government will define "inappropriate," some commentators have been recalling the case of Takichi Nishiyama. In 1971, he famously reported for the *Mainichi Shimbun* newspaper that Tokyo had agreed to secretly absorb substantial costs of the reversion of Okinawa from U.S. to Japanese rule in 1972, including \$4 million to restore farmland that was requisitioned for bases. The young journalist was convicted of handling state secrets after revealing his source, a married Foreign Ministry clerk with whom he was having an affair.

In 2000 and 2002, declassified U.S. diplomatic documents from the National Archives and Records Administration proved beyond all doubt that the pact existed. A senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs official later concurred. But Nishiyama has never been cleared. His crime, it seems, was using "inappropriate means." ❶

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David McNeill writes for *The Independent*, *The Economist*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other publications.



As the third anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear accident approaches and the fuel rod removal begins, journalists are mixed about Tepco's handling of the press

## Tepco vs. the foreign press

by Justin McCurry

Alitany of technical mishaps aside, poor management of its relations with the foreign media was for a long time a recurring theme in Tokyo Electric Power's handling of the crisis at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. The sense that the facility's hapless operator was covering up as much as it was revealing about the true nature of the March 2011 triple meltdown and its aftermath led Reporters Without Borders to accuse Japan of obstructing independent coverage of the accident in its 2013 global media report.

Having been closely involved in about half a dozen media visits to Fukushima Daiichi and, like many other Tokyo-based correspondents, a regular visitor to the exclusion zone around the plant over the past two years and 10 months, I found RWB's criticism excessive.

It jarred with my experience of reporting on Fukushima, and that of many colleagues, and failed to explain the large body of fine reporting that has emerged from inside and outside the power plant, much of it from the same independent journalists the Japanese authorities were supposed to have thwarted so successfully.

That said, press tours of Fukushima Daiichi by members of the Foreign Press in Japan [FPIJ] – a network of accredited journalists working for overseas-based media organisations – prompted mixed reactions from among those covering Japan's worst-ever nuclear accident.

It is clear from discussions with colleagues who have attended at least one of the tours that while Tepco deserves praise for responding to FPIJ pressure to organize tours for a significant number of journalists, it still has work to do in improving access and explaining, warts and all, the challenges it faces as it embarks on a long and costly decommissioning operation.



AP PHOTO/TOMOHIRO OHSUMI, POOL

Members of the media wearing protective clothing study the spent-fuel pool inside Reactor 4 at Fukushima Daiichi

"I think Tepco's instinct is still to stage manage as closely as it can," says David McNeill, who writes for the *Economist*, the *Independent* and the *Irish Times*. "I always feel like I'm being rushed from site to site, that Tepco officials are uncomfortable under scrutiny and have no idea, or willingness, how to explain technical issues. They still don't realize that it's better to be open than try to keep the company line that everything is under control – which they've laughably tried to maintain since March 2011."

Despite his reservations, McNeill acknowledges that the site visits present opportunities to write first-hand about key issues affecting the cleanup. "The fact that we're on-site at all, seeing what's going on at Daiichi with our own eyes, is priceless," he said. "Tepco can't control everything."

A good example is the potentially risky removal of more than 1,300 spent fuel assemblies from the storage pool in Reactor No. 4. On a visit organized early last month, 20 FPIJ writers, photographers and broadcasters were given unprecedented access to the fuel pool, and the opportunity to quiz one of the engineers responsible for making it safe over the coming 12 months.

Joel Legendre-Koizumi, a correspondent for the French broadcaster RTL who has made multiple visits to the plant, said his coverage had benefited from greater access to information during the recent trip, and from better overall communication between journalists and officials.

"As for the risks involved in the fuel removal, we all know what they are because of our own background research," Legendre-Koizumi said, giving

a cautious welcome to Tepco's own take on the dangers.

Reporting on Fukushima has forced journalists with little or no scientific background to quickly acquaint themselves with the language of nuclear energy and radiation. Still, a common complaint is Tepco's apparent reluctance to explain the technological difficulties the myriad tasks at Fukushima Daiichi entail. More often than not, procedures such as the removal of spent fuel from Reactor 4 or the construction of barriers to prevent leaks of contaminated water have been deemed worthy of only cursory explanation.

"I found the overall level of technical explanation had, if anything, declined," McNeill says of the November tour. Legendre-Koizumi echoed that sentiment. "More background briefing on the technology being used would have been much appre-

ciated. Too often time is limited. Daiichi is one thing, but is just one part of the puzzle. Tepco still has a lot to explain."

Mari Yamaguchi, a reporter for the Associated Press, says it is our job as journalists to challenge Tepco's reluctance to shed more light on the technical challenges presented by the cleanup. "I don't think we can expect Tepco to go out of their way to show us the risks, though it would be nice if they did," Yamaguchi says. "But to be able to get any sense of the risks and problems, we have to know enough about the technical details and ask the right questions. It's part of our job to do that."

While arrangements have been made for pooled photographs and video footage, the ban on print reporters taking photographs, and restrictions on access to certain areas of the plant, angered some reporters.

"Generally speaking, I did not find the trips particularly useful," says Pio D'Emilia, a correspondent for the Italian broadcaster Sky TG24. "Lots of time was wasted on pro forma security issues and briefings."

"Both from a pen journalist and TV reporter's point of view, such visits should have been more focused on direct reporting. TV reporters should have been allowed more time to do their stand-ups, and in general, journalists should be treated better than sheep. Citing 'safety and security' reasons to make actual reporting almost impossible is not exactly the best for us, or for Tepco."

A notable absence from all of the trips has been any contact with ordinary workers at the site, with the exception of a handful of handpicked managers from contractors. "There is the deliberate attempt to prevent any contact between journalists and workers," says D'Emilia. "This is a stupid approach, because all of us have already found a way to contact, meet, interview and even befriend many workers."

As the third anniversary of the disaster approaches, there is a good chance that a large group of foreign reporters will again find themselves at the heart of the nuclear crisis. While Tepco appears to have accepted that granting access to FPIJ members is now non-negotiable, this is no time for complacency on our part.

"We should stop thinking of these tours as privileges and more as a right," says McNeill. "The onus is on Tepco to show accountability for all the money they're using, and the chaos they've caused."

Yamaguchi notes that Tepco has adopted a more progressive attitude towards female reporters visiting the plant; the prime minister's office has tried, unsuccessfully, to ban them, citing a lack of changing facilities for women at the site.

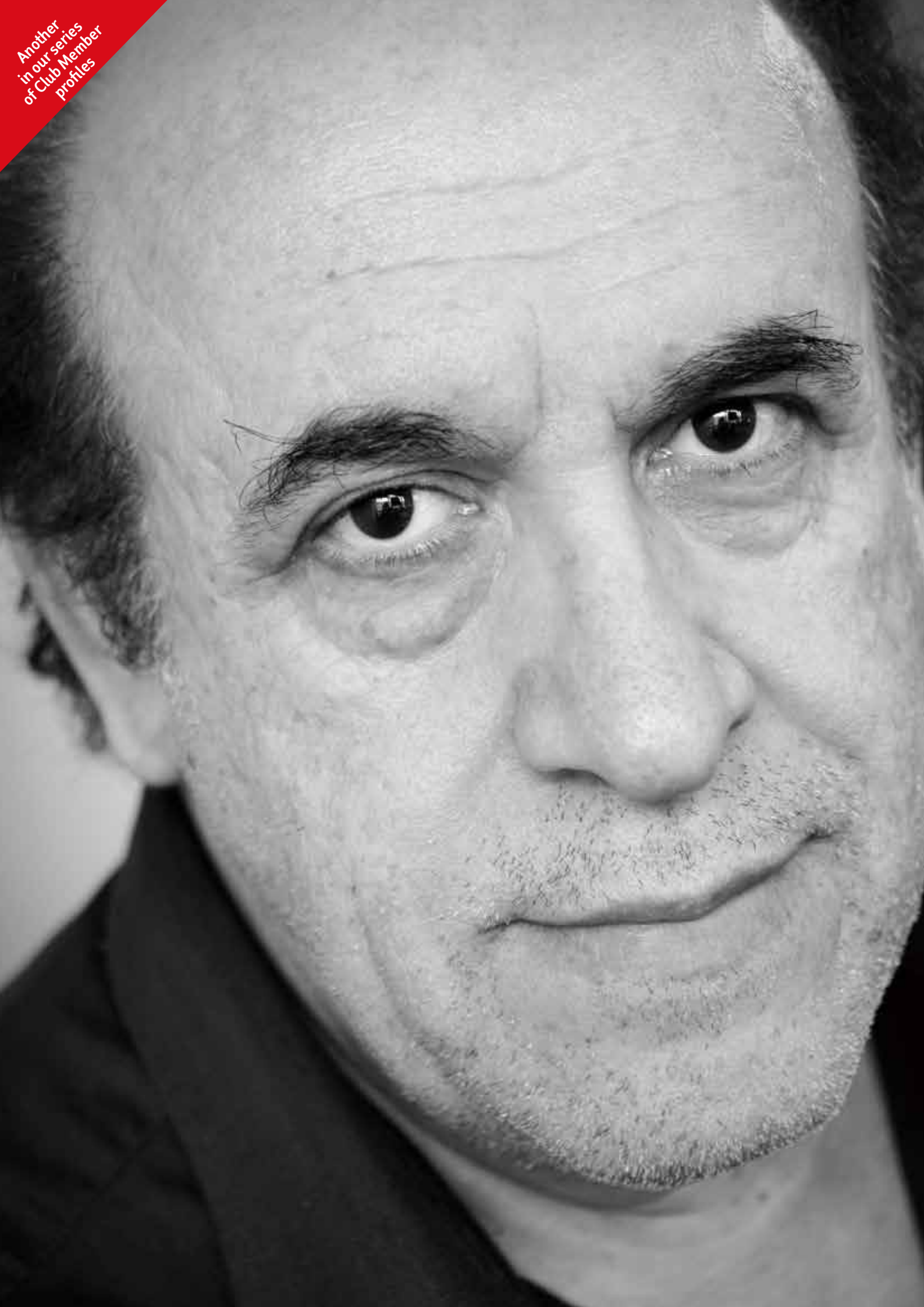
But she called on the utility to make a similar commitment to establishing parity between Japanese and foreign reporters. "I get the impression that Tepco tends to make FPIJ tours simpler, and with access to fewer or different places than those for the Japanese media," she says.

"I'm not sure if this is because that's what they think we are interested in, or if it's due to the additional time needed for interpretation. Also, I'm not happy that our tours always come after those for Japanese journalists, so sometimes what we see is no longer really news."

Tepco – take note. **1**

Justin McCurry is Japan and Korea correspondent for the *Guardian* and the *Observer*. He contributes to the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Lancet* medical journal, and reports on Japan and Korea for France 24 TV.





Another  
in our series  
of Club Member  
profiles

## Khaldon Azhari: Pan Orient News

by Monzurul Huq

Syrian Khaldon Azhari's early years were the essence of the Dickensian term, "the best of times and the worst of times." He was born to an intellectual family in what is now the war-ravaged town of Homs. His father, Mohammad Azhari, was a journalist and owner of a daily newspaper, in a world where reality could turn upside down anytime with the change of the regime. And change was frequent: only short intervals separated coups d'état-toppling governments. Managing the newspaper meant his father always had to walk a tightrope, unaware of what the future was holding for the country and for his family. In 1968, he lost ownership of the newspaper when it, and all the other dailies, was seized by the government.

However, this shocking twist of fate did not deter young Khaldon from cherishing the dream of becoming a journalist like his father. He saw the determination that the vocation demands as well as the high level of satisfaction from conveying a message to one's readership. His family, on the other hand, was firmly against him choosing the vocation that proved so harsh to his father. Instead, Khaldon was sent to pursue higher studies in petrochemical engineering, which his mother thought would ensure a steady source of income without the mental agony that his father had to endure. But after getting a university degree in petrochemical engineering, he remembered the joy of writing.

"When I was in elementary school, my father helped me write essays on different subjects, which silently planted in my mind the seeds of love for playing with words. Then I started to help my father write news fillers and other items for his paper." During those early years he particularly enjoyed compiling Arabic crosswords. Through the popularity of the crossword section, his name became known to newspapers subscribers in his hometown.

"My father was a pan-Arab nationalist and suffered through the years of regime-imposed strict censorship. He was in and out of prison, but never gave up the profession, despite the lack of material reward. Over the course of time, I learned the art of walking through the minefield of news making." Though it was not easy to be a journalist in a country where

everything was controlled and supervised, he was soon writing a regular column in the university student newspaper and also started taking photos. This drew the attention of the editor of his hometown's main newspaper, who approached him to write for the daily.

"It started well, but after the editor-in-

future was turning bleak and I wanted to see the world." After returning from a visit to Italy, he found a job in the ministry of tourism. After working in Lebanon, and traveling to the U.S., a twist of fate brought him to Japan, where he found himself once again in the world of journalism. He has stayed in the country since.

'MY FATHER SUFFERED THROUGH THE YEARS OF STRICT CENSORSHIP . . . OVER TIME, I LEARNED THE ART OF WALKING THROUGH THE MINEFIELD OF NEWS MAKING.'



"My earlier encounters with journalism still fascinated me so I was always looking for an opening to return. In Japan I got an offer to work as a journalist in the press section of the embassy of Oman. It was in the early 1990s, a time when Japan was becoming more interested in the Arab world."

He left the embassy in 1998 to get more involved in mainstream journalism, realizing that he could work independently to feed the Arab press with news and analytical pieces on Japan. He established the K A News company and began providing news services to a number of Arab countries. In 2006 he established Pan Orient News in the U.S. with a branch office in Tokyo. Currently he covers Japan for Petra News Agency of Jordan and also feeds UAE News Agency with Japan content. In addition, he writes for the Qatar-based daily *Al Sharq*, and works as a commentator for Radio Cairo and Saudi TV. His media outlets cover a number of Arab countries, but his homeland is absent. "I'm a Syrian journalist in Japan, but I don't report for any Syrian media. It's because the Syrian media is part of the government and you need to belong in order to report."

As a journalist with such diverse experiences and a life marked by attacks on press freedoms, Khaldon has a clear view of his country's present crisis and what could have prevented it. "In Syria there was a need for reform, a need for freedom of expression and diversified newspaper ownership. If we had only had a free media, we would definitely have had a better chance of avoiding the disaster that we are embroiled in now." ❶

chief was replaced, the new editor did not like my writing and transferred me from the political division to the city life section. Although my articles were popular, the new boss fired me from the newspaper." Not everyone in the family was unhappy with the outcome. His father by then had already passed away; his mother held a party to celebrate the return of her son from the uncertain world of journalism.

With that sad episode, Khaldon came to the bitter realization that his country was not a place for a journalistic career. He briefly went back to university, but "the

Monzurul Huq represents the largest-circulation Bangladeshi national daily, *Prothom Alo*. He was FCCJ president from 2009 to 2010.

ANDREW POTHECARY

Is the tuned-in global reader more understanding of nuance than the media? A story gone viral makes one wonder.

## Reporting Japan's changing sexual landscape

by Abigail Haworth

"I don't really go along with this story I'm afraid. . . In fact I didn't bother to read it." This was a comment from someone named Frank under my Oct. 20 article on *The Guardian* website about young Japanese rejecting conventional relationships. Frank said he had recently lived in the Shonan area of Japan. He was so incensed by the article's headline, "Why Have Young People in Japan Stopped Having Sex?" that he declared the whole piece to be "utter garbage!"

That, of course, is Frank's prerogative. In these days of instantaneous online commentary anyone can express an opinion about a piece of journalism without having read it – and many, as we all know, do. But a huge number of people did read the article (which appeared in print in the *Guardian* Media Group's Sunday publication, *The Observer Magazine*).

To date, it has had 90,694 shares on Facebook, it has been Tweeted 8,170 times and, according to the newspaper's latest figures, it has been viewed close to five million times. It also prompted numerous spin-off articles, TV panel discussions and a lovingly crafted but unprintable piece of poetry from a reader in Los Angeles.

So why did it take off? The provocative headline and colorful ex-dominatrix who opened the piece no doubt played a role. Yet I don't think prurient interest alone explains it. One would have to have a staggeringly low opinion of the readers who plowed through almost 3,000 words to believe that.

Putting it down to prurience is also out of step with how the country is viewed overseas today, particularly by people under 40. In much of the world, the vast reach of Japanese cultural exports like anime, fashion and technology has in turn inspired a desire for deeper knowledge about the society. Smart young people are far more clued in and comfortable with all things Japanese than previous generations. (A revealing aspect of the recent eyeball-licking story – expertly exposed as a hoax in this magazine – was that it demonstrated how far-fetched and ridiculous "weird Japan" stories have to be these days to spark a reaction.)

This sense of easy familiarity came through in the comments on social media

about my article. Many people in their 20s and 30s in Britain and the U.S. related to Japanese singletons without a second thought, commenting on how precarious job prospects, financial dependence on parents and insecurity about the future were affecting their own sex lives and personal relationships.

Readers from countries as diverse as Brazil and Nigeria drew parallels with their societies, too: a growing tendency to delay marriage, greater solo living in cities, the difficulty of juggling work and

### ONE OF THE LEAST-DISCUSSED SUBJECTS IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS WAS LACK OF SEX, DESPITE ITS PROMINENT BILLING IN THE HEADLINE

children. A single woman in India talked about her desire for a career and her fears it was incompatible with traditional expectations. A retired Danish woman talked about how Denmark was adjusting to a population in which over 50 percent of urban dwellers were single.

In the end, it's hard to say how much Japan does offer a window on the global future – it's complicated, and there are few straight parallels with other countries. But the article seemed to resonate so widely due to the perception that Japan is dealing with the human and emotional consequences of issues like demographic change and technological advancement before anyone else. "Japan is the future," said one commenter. "Japan has got it all figured out," said another. "A nation too sane for its own good," said another.

All of this is not to say there weren't some responses along the usual "Japan is weird" lines. Of course there were. As a friend in Tokyo noted, that's par for the course even if the subject is *ikebana*. But interestingly, one of the least-discussed subjects in those first few days was lack of sex, despite its prominent billing in the headline. If the subject did come up, it was talked about as a normal or understandable

response to circumstance.

All that changed for the worse when other big media outlets picked up on the story and started recycling it as faux "news." The conversation shifted as their spin-offs took the usual sensational course of twisting facts and ignoring context. Suddenly, an epidemic of indigenous "sexlessness" was being blamed for falling births and Japan was allegedly hurtling towards extinction – exactly the kind of groundless scaremongering my story dismissed. These distortions, in turn, were then picked up by indignant Japan watchers who used them to criticize the "viral" *Guardian* story without appearing to read it.

It was fascinating to watch this media cycle play out. But it wasn't that fruitful. The topic of sex and relationships in Japan is hugely complex, with many different sides and apparent contradictions that are all worth exploring. Media sensationalism doesn't help the debate. And neither do kneejerk cries of "cultural stereotyping"

at genuine attempts to explain sexuality in Japan. Most readers, I believe, can discern what is hyped or silly, and those who can't or won't are not worth bothering with. (See *ikebana*, above).

Sex is fun, and in my opinion writing about sex should be fun whenever possible, too. But it's a fine line to get it right when it comes to Japan. I suspect that's only going to get harder as technology develops and ever-new forms of virtual interaction become commonplace.

Whatever happens, Japan is increasingly unlikely to be alone in suffering the indignity of media hyperbole. A few days ago, *The Guardian* ran a story about new research showing that British people are having 20 percent less sex than they did 10 years ago. Reasons cited included more people living alone, economic recession and addiction to technology. The headline made the one on my article seem subtle. It asked: "Are Smartphones Causing a Bonking Crisis?"

**Abigail Haworth** is senior international editor at *Marie Claire* U.S., and a contributor to the U.K.'s *Observer Magazine*. She has won numerous awards, including an Overseas Press Club of America award, and was nominated for the 2013 Orwell Journalism Prize. She lived in Tokyo for 10 years, and is now based in Bangkok.

Tokyo Motor Show may no longer be a top-tier global affair, but this year it got back on track



AP PHOTO/SHIZUO KAMABASHI

## The 2013 Tokyo Motor [Side?]show

by Peter Lyon

For decades, the Tokyo Motor Show was one of the world's major car shows, ranked as a Tier-1 event alongside the Detroit, Geneva and Frankfurt shows. Held every second autumn, it was adored by the world's motoring media as a leader in environmental technologies and a place where unique, magical concept cars made their debut.

In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, however, Tokyo's global importance waned and it dropped to Tier-2, forcing a move in 2009 from Chiba's Makuhari Messe to the more compact Tokyo Big Sight venue on the capital's waterfront. That pretty much coincided with an en masse withdrawal from the Tokyo show by Detroit's Big Three automakers (which we'll get to later), and the emergence of China's car market as the world's largest, which heightened the global importance of motor shows in Shanghai and Beijing.

In 2011, any hope Tokyo had of reasserting its global stature was overwhelmed by the Tohoku disasters and subsequent power cuts. There was a definite pall over the proceedings.

### BOUNCE-BACK FROM BALLS-UP

That made this year's show critical. But the organizers – JAMA, the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association – were hit with a double punch due to the unfortunate triple booking of the Tokyo Motor Show right on top of the Los Angeles Auto Show and China's Guangzhou Motor Show. In today's hyper-connected world, you have to wonder how a balls-up like this could happen.

Even with its back against the wall, though, Tokyo has managed to bounce back and pull off a first-class effort, reminiscent of its days as a Tier-1 show. With 40-odd

world premieres, including some crucial debuts from major European carmakers, the Tokyo show was surprisingly well attended by international media. Even the general public were getting into the act, with over 135,000 visitors converging on Tokyo Big Sight on the opening Saturday. That's more than 15 percent up on last year's figure.

Before the hoi-polloi are allowed in, though, every motor show around the world gives the automotive media a relatively uncrowded exclusive look at the exhibits. "Press Day" features 15-minute media briefings by the CEOs (or other executives) of all the major automakers, usually capped by a dramatic unveiling. For many foreign journalists, though, coverage of the Tokyo show started several days before the Nov. 20 presser marathon.

Honda invited more than 250 journalists from around the world, flying them in business class and shacking them up at top hotels like the Imperial and the Peninsula (all of which is standard for those who cover cars). Arriving on the Sunday, three days prior to Press Day, journalists were given a full-day's test drive session of the company's latest safety technologies and near-to-production vehicles at Honda's Tochigi Proving Ground.

Aiming to celebrate the debut of its FCV concept and Lexus RC coupe, Toyota also invited over 260 journalists and offered them test drives of the fuel-cell FCV at a track near the Toyota headquarters while Lexus invitees were given several high-speed laps of Fuji Speedway in sports cars like the LFA and IS-F.

Meanwhile, Nissan invited 100 select foreign journalists who all stayed at the Conrad Hotel. Why 100? you may ask. That's the maximum number of journal-

### The wraps come off Honda's S660 concept

ists that could test drive the GT-R Nismo in four days of exclusive track access at Chiba's Sodegaura Raceway – just 25 slots per day. Nissan's fastest-ever sports car, the GT-R Nismo was unveiled by CEO Carlos Ghosn on Press Day, along with the electric-powered BladeGlider concept.

In addition to attending lavish parties, some visiting scribes used their free time to ferret-out unique stories. Invited by Nissan Germany, several influential journalists went out into the cool Tokyo night air and found souped-up GT-Rs blasting around the city's expressways in a kind of real-world "Fast and Furious: Tokyo Drift."

Wanting something out of the ordinary, a colleague from Italy followed up on a rumor she had heard about spiritual cleansers, guys who rid your new or used car – and you too! – of unwanted spirits and gremlins that may have caused or will cause accidents or mishaps. As she found out, the Japanese might not be a very religious people, but they certainly are superstitious.

One of the questions on everyone's lips was, "Why aren't the Americans here? Is this a boycott?" The answer is that America's Big Three (GM, Ford and Chrysler) finally stopped trying to save face and owned up to the reality that with a combined Japan market share of less than one percent, none of them could justify spending the millions of dollars required for a global motor show stand. For example, GM Japan, which imports Chevrolet and Cadillac models, only sells around 1,200 a year. That's just 100 cars a month. In Japan, the Honda Fit sells 100 cars every 3 hours. And with design, construction and staff costs of an average motor show stand topping \$1 million, it is pretty easy to see why the Americans were not here.

The Koreans and Chinese were not here either. But that's another story.

Will Tokyo ever recapture its status as a Tier-1 global motor show? Many foreign colleagues say no. Apart from the importance the Chinese shows now have in Asia, one sure measure of global significance is the number of automaker CEOs who turn up. With no American bosses in sight at Big Sight, Renault-Nissan's Carlos Ghosn was the only non-Japanese heavy hitter on the scene. So by that measure it seems Tokyo is destined to remain for the foreseeable future a strong Tier-2 show at best.

**Peter Lyon** was based in Tokyo for 25 years. He contributes new-car test-drive reports, columns, car industry news and videos to major car magazines and websites in seven countries.



► The internet plays host to groups spouting hatred and terror, but some social network companies do better than others at halting their spread

## Combatting the web of hate

by Julian Ryall

The amount of religious and racial hate being preached on the internet is rising rapidly, with some social media companies guilty of failing to shut down extremist groups that promote Nazi ideology or call for the extermination of Christians, Muslims or Jews.

And as the recent protests against Korean residents of this country demonstrate, Japan is not immune from similar forms of race-based hatred.

According to Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, there are at present some 20,000 websites and social media links that threaten other religious or ethnic groups. They range from neo-Nazi groups in America to the School of Contemporary Online Jihad and Baidu forums in China that are a platform for taunts and warnings to Japan. That figure is up from 15,000 sites just a couple of years ago.

"The internet does not cause hatred, but it reflects what is going on in society and multiplies the messages that are being sent, making it appear that there is far broader support for these attitudes than really exists," said Rabbi Cooper, who gave an overview of the Wiesenthal Center's 15th annual report, titled "Digital Terrorism & Hate Project" at the FCCJ on Nov. 6.

As if to underline Rabbi Cooper's point, an Indonesian man went on trial the same day in Jakarta, accused of plotting with other extremists to blow up the embassy of Myanmar in the Indonesian capital to avenge the deaths of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. Police said Separiano, 29, learned how to build a crude bomb on the internet and linked up with like-minded individuals via Facebook.

In spite of that case, Rabbi Cooper said that Facebook performs the best in terms of dealing with hate speech on its pages, with two dedicated teams – one in Silicon Valley in California and the second in

Ireland – tasked with monitoring pages added to the site and removing any that fail to meet their standards on hate speech.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center does not always agree with Facebook's policies, however. The company considers Holocaust deniers' attitudes to be free speech and therefore protected. If the government of Iran, on the other hand, denied the Holocaust had happened as part of its propaganda against Israel and the Jews, that would be considered hate speech and removed.

While Facebook is performing reasonably well, Rabbi Cooper said Twitter gets an F grade. Just hours before the social networking giant launched its IPO on the New York Stock Exchange, driving the value of the seven-year-old company to \$25 billion, Rabbi Cooper said Twitter "has done nothing" to stop links to hate sites.

"Increasingly, terrorist organizations are using Twitter as part of their marketing strategy and for command and control," he said, pointing out that live Tweets had gone out shortly before extremists attacked the Westgate shopping center in Kenya in September urging Muslims not to go to the mall.

"Twitter has a responsibility to address these issues as terrorism is not an issue of free speech; it is an existential threat," Rabbi Cooper said. "They have an obligation, especially as a for-profit company, to be a good corporate citizen and they should be doing everything they can to degrade or block these messages."

The annual report gives YouTube a C grade for its performance over the last year, with Rabbi Cooper saying the terms of usage are very good,

but the commitment to carrying out those terms is "wobbly." That permits videos to be uploaded providing, for example, step-by-step explanations of how to construct a bomb in your own kitchen or how to create home-made napalm.

The center's on-line presentation demonstrates just what is available in cyberspace, as well as how easy it is to locate. Sites exist extolling the virtues of Nazi official Reinhard Heydrich, one of the main architects of the Holocaust, while a posting on a Baidu forum states, "The Jew is the second-lowest ethnic group. The Japanese are the first."

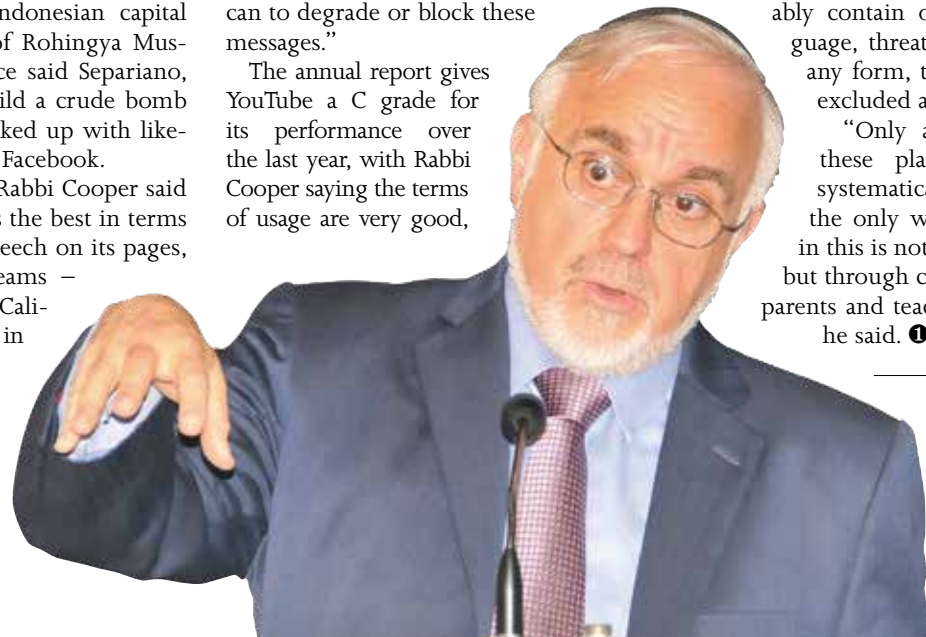
Instead of praising the achievements of Martin Luther King, the mlking.org website is run by white supremacists and promotes "The Truth About King" and "Black Invention Myths." Sites in the Philippines call on young people there to join the extremist Moro National Liberation Front; others promote Nazi-themed sports bars in Korea or Thailand. Yet more are operated by Al-Qaeda and teach the would-be suicide bomber how to go about his or her gruesome task.

Halting the proliferation of such attitudes is extremely difficult, Rabbi Cooper said, but if a hate message can be taken down – even for a short time – then he considers it a success. "Our approach with these hate sites is to go to the company that provides the platform and show them their own terms of usage,"

he said. And as those contracts invariably contain obligations on language, threats or intolerance in any form, then posters can be excluded and pages removed.

"Only a small section of these platforms are being systematically abused, but the only way to make a dent in this is not through new laws, but through companies, activists, parents and teachers standing up," he said. ●

Julian Ryall is the Japan correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*.



Rabbi Abraham Cooper speaking at the Club

## Ai Weiwei film is anything but sorry

by Julian Ryall

Before arriving in China in 2006, Alison Klayman, like most people around the world, was only vaguely aware of the artist Ai Weiwei and his works. But her timing was fortuitous. A request from a friend to shoot video of Ai in 2008 coincided with his emergence as a fearless political dissident, as well as an internationally acclaimed artist.

The Philadelphia-born film-maker struck up a close friendship with Ai, now 57, shortly after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. This was the moment when the artist/activist crossed the line from favored celebrity to hunted dissident by posting photos and comments on his blog criticizing corrupt officials behind the shoddy construction of schools that collapsed killing more than 5,000 children.

Klayman, 29, has had her lens trained on Ai ever since, and *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* is the documentary result. Her directorial debut has been described as "One of the most engagingly powerful movies of the year," "stirring," "important" and "riveting." It won the Special Jury Prize at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.

"I had already been in China for two years when I first met Weiwei, so I did not go there specifically looking for him or not even necessarily knowing who he was," Klayman said in an interview shortly after her documentary was screened at the FCCJ on Nov. 12, an event also attended by producer Colin Jones.

"I met him in 2008 through my roommate, who was curating an exhibition of some of the 10,000 photos he took while he was in New York," said Klayman, who plans to live in Tokyo for the next year. "My friend said it would be great if they had a video to accompany the exhibition, so we just struck an agreement that I would make the video but I would not be paid.

"Now I know how lucky I was, not just to meet him but also that he came to know me through me pointing a camera at him all the time," she added. "From the very beginning, we hit it off."

Klayman said Ai cut a "very regal figure" and could go from being very serious to hilarious in a heartbeat.

"He liked to joke around and that was very appealing, but he can also be intimidating," she said. "If there is something that he does not like, he will tell you. He is also willing to dive into political issues – and I'd never heard such strong and directly critical comments from a Chinese citizen before."

Curious whether speaking out against the government would get him into trouble, Klayman asked Ai why he had not already been arrested.

"He told me that in 2008 that a police officer had told him that if they wanted to get him, they could," she said. "It would not have to be a political reason, it could be any reason they wanted. And in the end, he was detained for economic reasons."

Initially, the monitoring of Ai's activities was negligible, but Chinese authorities began to ramp it up as he spoke out about the Sichuan earthquake scandal. Undeterred by a severe beating by the police in Chengdu in Aug. 2009, he was briefly placed under house arrest in Shanghai in November 2010 while the authorities tore down his newly built studio in Shanghai.

One month previously, he had been frustrated in efforts to leave China as the government feared he might attend the ceremony at which fellow dissident Liu Xiaobo was to be presented with the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize.

Meanwhile, Ai blogged and Tweeted a constant stream of scathing social com-

mentary and critiques of Chinese government policies.

"When I first met him, there were no surveillance cameras pointed at his front door, but when that happened he knew that he was making a choice, that he was crossing a line," Klayman said. His life was no longer his own.

"But it was ridiculous to put cameras on his front door because he was Tweeting all the time," she said.

Even though the atmosphere was intimidating, Klayman said that as a foreign filmmaker, she rarely felt personally at risk.

"In the film, we went to a police station to complain when he had been assaulted by the police and that was a little intimidating, but I was an accredited foreign journalist and I thought the most likely the worst that could happen was that I would be kicked out," she said. "But Weiwei and other Chinese citizens were taking a much bigger risk."

Klayman went to New York to edit the film in late 2010, with the opening of his exhibition at the Tate Modern in October 2010 acting as a bookend to the movie.

Ai was arrested on April 3, 2011, and held for 81 days before being suddenly released. The incarceration made him aware that he had a weak spot that the Chinese authorities could press at any time, Klayman believes, but she said his fundamental principles remain unchanged.

"He is passionate about some universal themes; free expression, transparency, the rule of law, respect for the voice of the individual and the individual's life," she said. "Those have not wavered and his core beliefs have not changed. After he was released, he told me that he would have to find a new way to play the game."

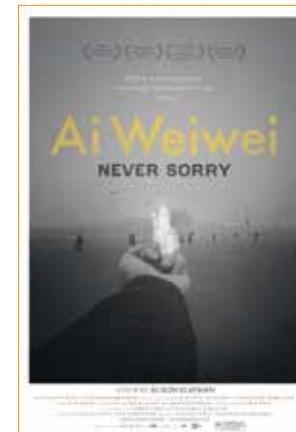
Currently, the Chinese authorities refuse to return Ai's passport.

"For an internationally renowned artist, that's a big restriction," said Klayman, adding that he has effectively been sidelined within China as well.

"He's not covered in the domestic press and his domestic social media presence was shut down in 2009, so it has been impossible for him to maintain a blogging presence," she said. "It's hard to remain famous when you can't reach people or when it is forbidden for others to write about you."

Despite the handicaps, Weiwei is attempting to reach a new audience through his latest project, heavy metal music, even though he himself admits he has a bad singing voice.

"I think he will always believe in the possible – and if you do that, you will always remain an optimist," Klayman believes. ●



The film's director, Alison Klayman, and poster



▶ The present LDP government has stepped back from the policies of its more accessible DPJ predecessor

## The Abe administration's retreat from transparency

by Carsten Germis

Much is being written these days about the planned state secrets law that has been introduced to the Diet by the Shinzo Abe administration. Rarely has a bill faced so much public skepticism. And rightly so: the bill does not specify what would become a state secret, and the threat seems quite real that freedom of information and freedom of speech might be curtailed under its auspices.

The Japanese government bureaucracy has a long history of attempting to conceal unpleasant information. One wonders what might happen in the future when a journalist uses information he's gathered about a new problem at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, or new data regarding the radioactive levels in food products. The vagueness of the bill's wording allows the executive too much power to decide what is a secret and what is not.

Japanese bureaucrats do not need more power to hide unpleasant news. Indeed, what is badly needed in this country is quite the opposite: more public scrutiny of government policy.

Through my daily activities as a correspondent, my doubts regarding the intentions of the Abe government in dealing with foreign journalists have been growing. There is indeed much talk about transparency and openness, but the practice, at least in my experience, is quite the opposite – and I do not believe that the problem relates merely to language skills.

Those who participate in press tours organized by the Foreign Press Center Japan know that there are basically two large groups of foreign correspondents in Japan: those from primarily non-Asian countries who are directed to the English-language channels on their headsets and those, mainly from China and Korea, who speak Japanese so fluently that they need no special assistance. Both groups have their problems with access to information under the Abe administration.

English, as the global language, makes it possible to obtain nearly every kind of

information in Japan necessary for good reporting. Those looking for English-speaking sources can find them – even if it sometimes takes a little longer in Japan than in other countries. But since Abe came to power many of those sources seem to have become more careful in what they will reveal.

My experience in Japan began during the administration of the Democratic Party of Japan. All three administrations – Hatoyama, Kan, Noda – all tried to explain their policies, and their officials could be often heard saying things like, “We know we have to do more and become better.”

Foreign journalists were invited by Deputy Prime Minister Katsuya Okada, for example, to exchange views. There were weekly meetings in the Kantei

with officials where current issues were discussed – more or less openly. There was much criticism of the government's stance in various matters, but the officials tried to make their positions understood to the correspondents.

atives to talk with the foreign press has been almost zero. In the four years I have been reporting here, I have put in approximately 30 to 40 interview requests to the government. For all that effort, I have received only one response, from former Minister of State for Administrative Reform Renho under the DPJ regime.

This closed shop mentality of the Japanese political elite does not really affect the freedom of reporting, because there are plenty of other sources from which to gather information and make credible reports for our foreign audience. But it reveals how little the Japanese government, especially the current Abe administration, understands that – in a democracy – policy must be explained to the public.

### JAPANESE BUREAUCRATS DO NOT NEED MORE POWER TO HIDE UNPLEASANT NEWS... WHAT IS BADLY NEEDED IS QUITE THE OPPOSITE

Such an effort is no longer visible under the Abe administration. Despite Abe's use of Facebook, there is no evidence of openness. The old “cartels of the mind” have instead become stronger. Finance Minister Taro Aso, for example, has never tried to talk to foreign journalists or to provide a response to questions about the massive Japanese government debt. In fact, there is a long list of issues that foreign journalists want to hear Japanese government officials address: energy policy, the risks of Abenomics, constitutional revision, opportunities for the younger generation, the depopulation of the regions. But the willingness of the government represen-

It does not seem funny any longer when colleagues tell me that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has no one at all in its press affairs department who will speak English or provide information. It reflects their lack of understanding about how important it is in a globalized world to show openness and goodwill. But, indeed, this government is secretive not only with the foreign press, but also with its own citizens.

The DPJ government made a degree of effort to field critical questions and to engage in dialogue, but the current regime has clearly retreated from that standard. No doubt this is one reason why the outcry over the planned state secrets law has been so loud and determined. 📌

Carsten Germis is the East Asia Correspondent for Frankfurter Allgemeine (Germany) and a member of the FCCJ Freedom of the Press Committee.

## FCCJ EXHIBITION: A Global Eye for the Irony of Joy



Photographs by David Coll Blanco

WHEN HE DIED AT AGE 39 IN SEPTEMBER, DAVID COLL Blanco, the talented photographer from Barcelona, left behind many friends from a decade in Japan. David also left behind a body of work worth celebrating: a portfolio remarkable for its warm eye for the joy to be found, ironically, in the most unlikely places.

From Dec. 7 thru Jan. 10, a selection of images from David's years in Japan (2001-2011), and his explorations of Europe, Asia and the Americas, will be on display in the FCCJ Main Bar. The Club's Masukomi

sushi bar will feature images from Onjuku, the Chiba fishing port where he spent his final three years in Japan, living with his wife Mimi and infant daughter Maia (who is now five).

Organized and curated by his friends, with generous support from the Spanish Embassy, Desigual and Due Due, this exhibition is a celebration of warmth and light in the darkest month of the year. At the end of its run, the images will be available for interested collectors, with proceeds going to Maia. 📌

## FCCJ 2013 AUTUMN GOLF TOURNAMENT

The annual FCCJ Autumn Golf Tournament was held at Lakewood Golf Club, with its excellent views of Mt. Fuji, on Nov. 15. Veteran Club member Yoshisuke Iinuma, who has been the runner-up several times in the past, captured the cup. The overall winner was Kazunobu Takita for the men's division and Miyuki Sato came in first among the women. The best gross winner was, once again, Yoshinori Asai, who shot an 81. Participants celebrated at a party the next day at the Club.

– Duke Ishikawa





## Remembering Jeanne Sather

FORMER NEWSWEEK TOKYO BUREAU reporter and FCCJ member Jeanne Sather died of metastatic breast cancer in Seattle on Nov. 11, 2013. She was 58.

Jeanne was born in Tacoma, Washington, and raised in the lumber town of Hoquiam, where her father was a veterinarian. While majoring in Communications at Michigan State University she spent a year studying abroad in Kobe, the start of an enduring engagement with Japan. After earning her master's degree in Japanese from Honolulu's East-West Center and a master's in journalism from the University of California-Berkeley, she moved back to Japan and worked as a reporter, editor and translator at NHK and the Asahi News Service in the early 1980s. In 1986 she joined Newsweek's Tokyo Bureau and was a frequent presence at the FCCJ before moving back to the U.S. in 1989 to teach journalism at California State University, Chico. Returning to the Seattle area, she reported for Reuters, the Puget Sound Business Journal, and the Seattle Times. She had a regular column on MSN and was the first editor of the Seattle-based health website, OnHealth.com.

A single mother of two, Jeanne reinvented herself as a fierce advocate for cancer patient rights after being diagnosed with breast cancer in 1999 when her children were just 13 and 8 years old. She wrote "Jeanne's Diary," a frank week-by-week account of her first series of cancer treatments, for OnHealth, followed by "Running with Fear," a first-person cover story for the Seattle Weekly which took a first place Society of Professional Journalists award in 2004. She wrote extensively for the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance website while advocating for patient rights at the state capital and lobbying pharmaceutical companies for improved patient access to cancer drug trials. She was frequently quoted in the press on cancer topics.

In 2006 Jeanne launched the groundbreaking cancer blog The Assertive Cancer Patient, www.assertivecancerpatient.com, which brought her dozens of friends, and thousands of readers, from around the world, most of them women like herself who were living with advanced cancers. She unflinchingly detailed the highs and lows of battling the disease and the health care system until her last days. Even in her final months, she always made time to counsel and encourage her friends and those in need.

Jeanne passed away peacefully at the Bailey-Boushay House hospice in Seattle, and is survived by her sons Akira and Robin. She will be sorely missed.

### JOIN THE MOVIE COMMITTEE ...



... at 6:45 pm on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2014 for the captivating *Au Revoir L'ete*, followed by a Q&A with director Koji Fukada, producer Kiki Sugino and rising star Fumi Nikaido. Three years after his blackly humorous *Hospitalité* scooped up awards and wowed international audiences, Fukada returns with a charming homage to Eric Rohmer that wears its influence on its colorful sleeve.

Accompanying her aunt to the countryside for a few weeks in the waning days of summer, 18-year-old Sakuko (the beguiling Nikaido, of *Himizu* fame) meets a variety of local characters, befriends a Fukushima refugee who works part-time at his uncle's love hotel, and observes the increasingly complicated love lives of her aunt and other adults with growing interest. Leisurely paced and gently comical – but packing an emotional punch or two – *Au Revoir L'ete* is a ray of summer warmth for a frigid January.

– Karen Severns

(Japan, 2013; 125 min.; in Japanese with English subtitles)

### DESFOR CELEBRATES HIS FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

Max Desfor, veteran AP cameraman, Pulitzer Prize winner and former FCCJ president turned 100 on Nov. 8, and celebrated the next day with some 100 guests at the National Press Club in Washington D.C.

Desfor is one of two survivors of the 180 AP staffers who covered World War II, according to the news agency. He covered the Pacific theater, photographing the return to Saipan of the B-29 bomber Enola Gay after the Hiroshima A-bomb attack and the Sept. 2 1945 Japanese surrender on the U.S. battleship Missouri.

He won his Pulitzer in 1951 for photography with his Korean War pictures, notably the dramatic shot of refugees crawling across a bombed bridge. (On display in the Club's 20F Interview Room.)

Desfor was based in Tokyo for many years and served as FCCJ President in the 1974-5 period. He retired from the agency in the '70s and directed photography at *U.S. News and World Report* until 1980.

He became a newlywed for the second time when he married his long-time friend Shirley Belasco, 92, when he was 98.

Desfor has said there was no secret to his photography, just: "Shoot first and ask questions later."



– from New York Times Lens blog

### NEW MEMBERS



**ABI SEKIMITSU** rejoins the FCCJ as Managing Editor, Microsoft Applications, Media & Publishing, where she oversees the news strategy for all of Microsoft's consumer media products in Japan. Previously she worked at Reuters News as General Manager, Southeast Asia & Pacific, based in Singapore. In her 25-year career at Reuters, Abi has worked in Hong Kong, Japan, U.S., UK, India and Singapore. She is a native of Kobe, and holds a journalism degree from Northwestern University in the U.S.



**TAKESHI FUJITANI** joined the *Asahi Shimbun* in 1987, after graduating from International Christian University in Tokyo. In 1992-93, he read a master's degree at School of Oriental and African Studies in London. From 1997 to 2000, Fujitani was based in Rome, covering Mediterranean Europe and the Balkan region. He reported the civil war in Zaire, armed rebellion in Albania, and remained in Belgrade during NATO's air strike against Serbia in the Kosovo crisis. As a Jakarta correspondent, he covered the aftermath of tsunami and earthquakes and bombing attacks by radical Islamic groups, as well as the peace process in Aceh. In 2008, Fujitani, then Deputy Foreign Editor, was assigned as an editor-in-charge for an African special issue, featuring Bono and Bob Geldof as guest editors. He was the Bangkok-based Asia Editor for four years before assuming the post of Senior Digital Producer last May.

### REINSTATEMENT (REGULAR MEMBERS)

Abi Sekimitsu, Microsoft Japan  
Takeshi Fujitani, The Asahi Shimbun

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Brendan O'Sullivan, O'Sullivan Partners K. K.  
Katsunari Yoshida, Denkishizai Co., Ltd.

Kenji Arakawa, Yamaha Corporation  
Hajime Murozaki, Sales on Demand Corporation  
Kazuyoshi Suzuki, Medical Corp., Shouhakukai

### REINSTATEMENT (ASSOCIATE MEMBERS)

Satoshi Shiraishi  
Takao Ito, Mitsubishi Ore Transport Co., Ltd.

### NEW IN THE LIBRARY

#### The New Continentalism: Energy and Twenty-First-Century Eurasian Geopolitics

Calder, Kent E.  
Yale University Press  
Gift from Professor Kent E. Calder

#### Running The Shikoku Pilgrimage: 900 Miles to Enlightenment

Chavez, Amy  
Volcano Press  
Gift from Ms. Amy Chavez

#### Fallout From Fukushima

Broinowski, Richard  
Read HowYouWant

#### JT, Zaimusho, Tabaco Riken

Matsuzawa, Shigefumi  
Wani Books Co., Ltd  
Gift from Mr. Shigefumi Matsuzawa

#### The Journal of Asian Studies

Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom Ed.  
Cambridge University Press  
Gift from Mr. Frankie Leung

#### The Road to Recovery: How and Why Economic Policy Must Change

Smithers, Andrew  
Wiley  
Gift from Mr. Andrew Smithers

#### Japan Company Handbook Autumn 2013

Toyo Keizai Inc.

#### Get a G.R.I.P.

Silberman, Andrew W.  
Media Tectonics  
Gift from Mr. Andrew Silberman

#### Fukushima; Japan's Tsunami And The Inside Story Of The Nuclear Meltdowns

Willacy, Mark  
Pan Macmillan Australia  
Gift from Mr. Mark Willacy

#### Year Zero: A History Of 1945

Buruma, Ian  
The Penguin Press

### UNTOLD STORY IN INNOVATION AWARD – WIN CASH FOR COVERAGE

The Japan Society of Northern California, in cooperation with the U.S.-Asia Technology Management Center of Stanford University hosts the Japan-U.S. Innovation Awards Program. A category that may be of interest to FCCJ journalists is the "Untold Story in Innovation Awards," in which the winner will receive a prize of U.S.\$3,000 (Gold) at the awards ceremony at Stanford University, California in the summer of 2014. There is also a prize of U.S.\$1,000 (Silver) for the runner up.

The program invites independent writers and journalists to submit a pitch proposal in English of an unpublished instance of a successful innovation within a large and already established Japanese company

or a foreign company that does business in Japan. On the basis of their pitch applications, finalists will be selected to write up their 1,000-word article for judging. Those interested in writing, please contact Dr. Richard Dasher at [rdasher@stanford.edu](mailto:rdasher@stanford.edu) or visit [www.usinnovate.org/untold-story-award-selection-process](http://www.usinnovate.org/untold-story-award-selection-process). The deadline for the pitch proposal is Jan. 13, 2014.

In 2013, the Gold Award winner was presented to Steve Ross, anchor/reporter for the Orient News Network and a visiting member of the FCCJ. Sandra Katzman, an Asia-Pacific Defense Forum journalist, received the Silver Award.

# FCCJ

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For more on the benefits of membership for yourself or a colleague, contact Naomichi Iwamura at [iwamura@fccj.or.jp](mailto:iwamura@fccj.or.jp) or 03-3211-4392 for further details







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