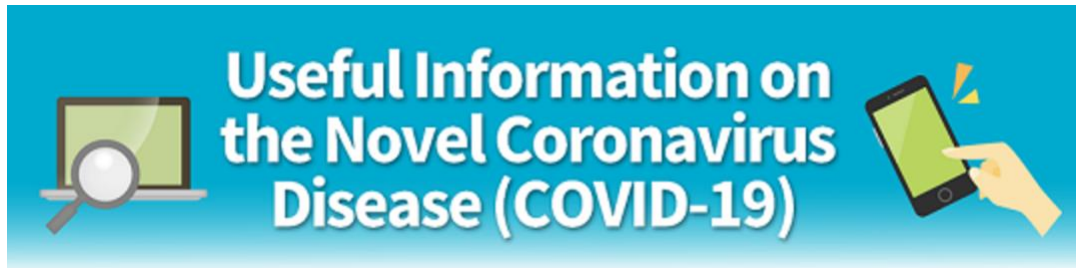


# Japan Focus



*Consulate General of Japan, Los Angeles  
Japan Information & Culture Center  
June 2020, Vol. 12, Issue 6*



## Japan Works to Resume Socio-economic Activities While Preventing COVID-19 Clusters

[During a June 18 news conference](#), Prime Minister ABE Shinzo discussed Japan's efforts to tackle COVID-19 through prevention of cluster infections. Japan will actively test people believed to be at risk, while also calling on the public to avoid the three Cs (closed spaces with poor ventilation, crowded spaces and close-contact settings). Japan is also undertaking efforts to resume socio-economic activities to protect people's livelihoods, while taking the utmost care to prevent infections. Japan has introduced a new app for contract tracing that does not obtain personal information, and alerts individuals who may have come in contact with someone who tests positive. The prime minister also talked about plans to explore steps for allowing foreign visitors back into Japan, beginning with business travel.

## Japan-EU Teleconference Meeting

On May 26, Prime Minister ABE Shinzo held a Japan-EU Leaders Video Teleconference Meeting with Charles Michel, President of the European Council and Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission. They discussed such issues as measures



Credit: Cabinet Public Relations Office

to address the COVID-19, economic measures and continued collaboration between Japan and the EU.



At a Aug. 2019 meeting - Credit: Cabinet Public Relations Office

## Prime Minister Abe, UN Secretary-General Hold Phone Meeting

On May 22, Prime Minister Abe spoke with UN Secretary-General António Guterres on the phone. Prime Minister Abe conveyed Japan's support for the United Nations' efforts to address COVID-19, and that it would

continue working closely with the UN organizations. The prime minister also explained Japan's efforts to prevent the virus' spread. In response, Secretary-General Guterres expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Japan's generous support.



## Prime Minister Abe's Message to the Global Vaccine Summit 2020

The Global Vaccine Summit 2020 held on June 4, hosted by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, featured messages from global leaders. Prime Minister Abe referred to the current fight against COVID-19, including development of therapeutics in the short-term. He also noted importance of creating vaccines and ensuring their equitable access by all including developing countries in the medium to long term.



### Foreign Minister Motegi, Bill Gates Hold Talks

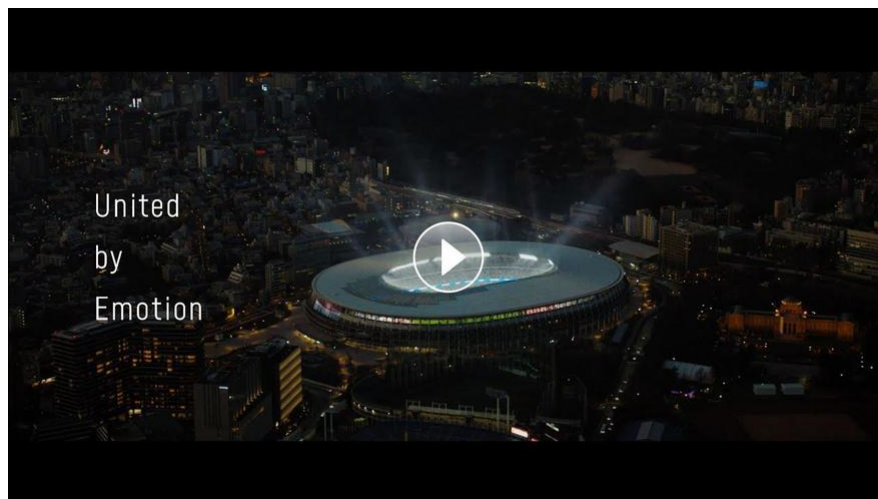
In a May 29 call, Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu congratulated Mr. Bill Gates, chairman of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Co-founder of Microsoft, for being conferred the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun in April 2020 and expressed his respect for strenuous activities of the Gates Foundation to combat the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Foreign Minister Motegi explained the Japanese government's efforts to respond to infectious diseases including COVID-19, and stated the importance of developing vaccines and ensuring fair access to vaccines. Read about Mr. Gate's Spring decoration [HERE](#).



### Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games: "United by Emotion"

The Tokyo 2020 games are a year away, but as preparations continue the focus is on ideas and concepts that Japan seeks to share with the world, including the motto, "United

by Emotion," which emphasizes the power of sport to bring together people from diverse backgrounds and allows them to connect and celebrate in a way that looks beyond their differences.



## Olympic Day - June 23

On June 23rd each year, Olympic Day celebrates sports, health, and being the best you can be. Participants from around the globe commemorate Olympic Day on June 23, when the International Olympic Committee was founded in 1894. This year's Olympic Day featured [the world's largest 24 hour digital-first Olympic workout](#).

## Sustainability Pre-Games Report

The Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tokyo 2020) is also committed to delivering a sustainable Tokyo 2020 Games, according to its Sustainability Pre-Games Report released in late April. Click the title to learn more!

Areas of focus include:

- Activities promoting 100% renewable energy electricity use during the games
- Use of hydrogen energy in line with Japan's transition to a hydrogen-based economy
- The reduction of CO2 emissions
- Promotion of the 3Rs concept (reduce, reuse, recycle) at Tokyo 2020 venues
- Participation by Tokyo 2020 in the Sports for Climate Action Framework and various activities to raise awareness of climate change

- Promotion of diversity and inclusion



## MEXT Scholarship Applications Now Being

### Accepted

Students from approximately 160 countries and regions around the world have studied in Japan under the Japanese Government (Monbukagakusho, or MEXT) Scholarship program established in 1954. The Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles accepts applications for Japanese Government scholarships from candidates who are U.S. citizens and reside or attend universities in Southern California and Arizona. 2021 scholarships for research (graduate) students, undergraduate students, and specialized training college students are now available. Please click on the link at the title to learn more.



### Consul General MUTO Discusses Japan's Approach to COVID-19 in Webinars

On June 2, [Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles MUTO Akira and President of JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles Ms. KAIFU Yuko engaged in a special webinar discussion](#) on

Japan's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was co-presented by the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles and JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles.

On June 23, Consul General Muto participated in a webinar discussion on [“Lessons Learned from COVID-19: East Asian Perspectives”](#) organized by Pacific Council on International Policy. Participants included Mr. Abraham Wen-Shang Chu, Director General of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Los Angeles, and Consul General



Kyung Jae Park of the Republic of Korea in Los Angeles. They explained about COVID-19 responses in each region.



## COVID-19 and Improved Air Quality

One side effect of the global shutdown in response to the pandemic has been improved air quality, due largely to lower emissions due to fewer vehicles on roadways; and Los Angeles was one of the most dramatic examples of this worldwide, with the beautiful San Gabriel mountains clearly visible every day. This only illustrates the importance of reducing emissions of all kinds, and the need to expand the numbers of clean vehicles, including those fueled by hydrogen – an area of research strongly supported and led by Japanese companies, including here in the Los Angeles area, as illustrated by the following case studies:

### **100% Renewable Hydrogen Power for Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles!**

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) gave their approval to a project by FuelCell Energy which will supply clean power to Toyota’s Long Beach port operations and renewable hydrogen for a growing fleet of fuel cell trucks and vehicles at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. In conjunction with Toyota’s existing fuel cell powered heavy-duty truck project at the Port of Los Angeles, Japanese companies are strongly supporting the creation of a hydrogen economy here in southern California!

More information – Long Beach Post: <https://lbpost.com/news/renewable-power-plant-port-toyota>

### **Signaling Bright Prospects for Fuel Cell Heavy Duty Trucks!**

As is being proven by Toyota and Kenworth at the Port of Los Angeles in long-term trials of fuel cell trucks, hydrogen provides a viable fueling option for a cleaner world. And in a strong move supporting prospects for hydrogen fuel cells becoming the preferred clean option to power heavy-duty trucks in the years to come, Toyota and member company

Hino Motors have joined forces to develop trucks to help decarbonize the freight industry of the near future.

Designs and more information:

- <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/toyota-announces-heavy-duty-fuel-cell-truck-development-plans>
- <https://www.futurecar.com/3859/Toyota-is-Developing-a-Hydrogen-Powered-Fuel-Cell-Truck-With-its-Hino-Motors-Unit>



## JETRO Survey Shows Conditions at Japanese Companies in the US Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Following are results of a JETRO Survey (May 27 to June 1st, responses by 834 companies in the US):

### **Sales & Production**

- 75% of companies (618 companies) answered that sales decreased in the last month compared to the prior year.
- 30% of companies expect sales to recover by the end of the year. Most companies are already back in production.
- The percentage of companies with suspended operations recovered to 3.3%, a significant improvement over the 28.2% of companies with suspended operations at the end of April. About 80% of companies in production are reducing their production capacity.

### **Reopening Business & Challenges**

- In order to reopen business, the main challenges are ensuring safety and eliminating employee's anxiety. A small number of companies answered that delays in supply chains were a major challenge.
- Since the U.S. Embassy in Japan is currently suspending interviews for visa, Japanese companies have difficulties in personnel relocation due to uncertainties in the issuance of visas. If it is a short stay (within 90 days), the Japanese staff can visit the U.S. without a visa; however they must quarantine at home for 14 days from the time of their entry, which delays the ability to support local U.S. operations.

### **Reviewing Supply Chain**

- 70% of companies answered that they have no plan to review their supply chain. One of the reasons may be the fact that Japanese companies in the U.S. are

obtaining 80% of their supply within the U.S., and less than 10% of supplies are coming from China, ASEAN, etc.

- The remaining 30% are considering reviewing their supply chains. According to the JETRO Survey (multiple answers allowed), 60% of companies responded “the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (such as shut-downs of their supplier’s factory in the source country)” as a reason. (About 50% answered “the US-China trade conflict” as a reason.) As for future directions on this issue, 42.6% identified “diversify suppliers”, 36.9% chose “procure within the U.S.”, and 17% chose “expand domestic production”.



Credit: UA News, Dr. Takeshi Inomata

## University of Arizona Professor Takeshi Inomata Co-Leads Team Credited with Mayan Monument Discovery

An international team led by University of Arizona professors Takeshi Inomata and Daniela Triadan has uncovered in Tabasco, Mexico the largest and oldest Mayan monument ever discovered, according to UA

News. The findings, a major discovery, were also published in the journal Nature. Click the title to learn more about the team's findings.



Amabie (credit: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare)



Yogen no Tori (credit: Kyodo News)

## Japan Culture: Mythical Creatures As Charms to Fight COVID-19



Two mythical creatures are drawing attention in Japan in hopes that they serve as charms that end the COVID-19 outbreak:

**Amabie** is a half-fish, half-human creature, originally depicted in a woodblock-printed news sheet in 1846, that is said to have emerged from the sea in what is now Kumamoto Prefecture. The creature predicted a bountiful harvest, followed by an epidemic. Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has included Amabie as part of its campaign against COVID-19. Read more [HERE](#) about Amabie.

**Yogen No Tori** is a two-headed bird that first appeared in a journal written in 1858 in which the bird prophesied a cholera outbreak in Japan and offered to protect those who prayed to it. The image has resurfaced particularly in Yamanashi Prefecture, where the text was found, in hopes of serving as a charm to end the current pandemic. Learn more it [HERE](#).

<http://www.la.us.emb-japan.go.jp> | [info@ls.mofa.go.jp](mailto:info@ls.mofa.go.jp)  
Consulate General of Japan, Los Angeles