

第4部 課題

第15回 毎日パソコン入力コンクール 全国大会

【課題】

第4部 英文B

Hokuriku Shinkansen a chance for revitalization,
new opportunities

制限時間5分

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Editorial: Hokuriku Shinkansen a chance for revitalization, new opportunities 

The Hokuriku Shinkansen bullet train line is set to be inaugurated on March 14, bringing the Hokuriku region and the Tokyo metropolitan area closer together. With the opening of the line, the trip from Tokyo to Kanazawa through seven prefectures, which previously took 3 hours, 50 minutes and required passengers to change trains, will be cut down to a single trip of 2 1/2 hours. 

Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures hope that the opening of the line will bring in more people from the Tokyo metropolitan area for sightseeing and business, thereby boosting the local economy. It is important for regions and industries in these areas to rediscover what makes them appealing and to continue to promote these things both domestically and overseas so that the opportunity now presented will not simply end with a temporary boom. 

We hope that the opening of the line will be a stimulating development -- not only for the Japan Railway (JR) group companies operating the line and the local bodies hosting stations, but also for other areas that are worried about a drift of people toward Tokyo and Kanazawa. Hopefully, those areas will convert the sense of crisis they have into an opportunity to change their mindset. 

Four years ago the Kyushu Shinkansen was fully opened. Kumamoto Prefecture, which lies between Fukuoka and Kagoshima, feared that it would become a pass-through site, and locals racked their

brains to come up with ways to survive. They then began promoting Kumamoto as a brand -- symbolized by the prefectural mascot Kumamon. The effort was not restricted to administrative authorities and a handful of businesses; small factories and farmers also started promoting Kumamoto, and this boosted not only Kumamoto Prefecture, but the whole of Kyushu. 📄

If the opening of the new Shinkansen line provides a chance for competition and benefits its users, that alone is welcome news. But it would be sad to see neighboring stations or prefectures trying to snatch customers from each other. We hope they will share information, form joint projects and aim to achieve growth for the Hokuriku and Shinetsu regions as a whole. 📄

The fastest type of train on the new line is named "Kagayaki," meaning "brilliance," but the opening of the line does not signify a bright future for all parties. Normally, when a new Shinkansen line is opened, the operation of existing lines that have hitherto shouldered local transportation is transferred from JR to another party. In this case, a new third-sector type company formed by private businesses and prefectures or other local bodies will take over the role. Limited express trains will be done away with in line with passengers' shift to bullet trains, making management conditions tough. If the new company remains in the red, then it will put pressure on the finances of local bodies. Raising train fares and taking away convenience could speed up the flow of people out of these areas. 📄

The looming inauguration of the Shinkansen line to Kanazawa has fired up talk about the quick opening of another section extending to Fukui and Tsuruga, and about selecting a route that

will eventually lead to Osaka. However, the Japanese archipelago now faces a host of problems, including an aging population, a declining birthrate and financial difficulties. People's eyes seem to be focused entirely on the Shinkansen, but we also urgently need comprehensive discussion regarding problems on the flip side of the coin -- namely, existing lines along the same route. We should also take a step toward thinking about how big a role other modes of transportation besides rail will play, and about building up cities and towns. ↩

March 13, 2015(Mainichi Japan) ↩





Yoroku: Lessons from a late-Edo intellectual on intercultural relations ↩


The late Edo Period intellectual Yoshida Shoin (1830–1859), featured in an ongoing historical drama series on NHK television, tried to stow away on one of the "black ships" in U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry's fleet. His attempt was unsuccessful, but he instead became part of a legend surrounding Perry and a white flag. ↩


Perry is said to have presented Japanese officials with a white flag along with a note that accused Japan of using its policy of isolation as an excuse to turn down requests from various countries over the years to engage in trade, and that if it continued to do so, the Americans would use military force. If that occurred, the United States would win, Perry is said to have written, and ordered Japan to raise the white flag as a sign of surrender and wish for reconciliation. ↩

Many intellectuals since the late Edo Period referred to this

"white flag letter," despite there being no record of it in the U.S. Shoin, however, said that he didn't believe in the veracity of such a letter. In a recently published book, "Yoshida Shoin," author Kenshin Kirihara explains how Shoin came to believe that the story surrounding the letter was fake based on his own experiences and philosophy. 

Shoin found it doubtful, judging from the Japanese language ability of the interpreter he interacted with on a U.S. ship off the shores of Shimoda, that the Americans had the linguistic ability to write such a letter in classical Japanese. He had also seen an American survey vessel raise a white flag, and knew that in the international community, white flags were a sign of truce. 

Perry's white flag episode appeared as a historical fact in a Japanese junior high school history textbook in 2001. The incident was criticized for fomenting anti-American sentiment by placing an emphasis on gunboat diplomacy, and led to a broader debate about historical understanding. Subsequent research has largely suggested that while a white flag was indeed presented to Japan, the accompanying letter was a fake. 

Shoin tapped his own wisdom to understand how to deal with the international community. Through his travels he was able to accept the West, and as an educator, passionately advocated the importance of creating relationships with foreign powers based on equality. He came face to face with cultures different from his own and left behind a legacy from which people today have much to learn. ("Yoroku," a front-page column in the Mainichi Shimbun) 
January 20, 2015(Mainichi Japan)
