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Photo courtesy: TOKOKAI

Japanese Lighthouses Watch over Ships and Seafarers

Kōuneshima Lighthouse

By 1887, marine traffic in the Seto Inland Sea had increased dramatically. However, the route from Hiuchinada to Akinada faced a notorious challenge: the Kurushima Strait, where tidal currents could reach approximately 10 knots. As a result, urgent efforts were made to develop an alternative route from Hyakkanjima passing through the Mihara Seto to Ōgeshima. This passage was a narrow, winding channel running between numerous islands, both large and small, making the construction of lighthouses essential.

By the end of 1893, construction began simultaneously on nine lighthouses (or beacons): Hyakkanjima

Lighthouse, Ōhamasaki Lighthouse, Chodayusho Beacon, Kosagijima Lighthouse, Kōuneshima Lighthouse, Ōkunojima Lighthouse, Mebarusaki Lighthouse, Nakanohana Lighthouse, and Ōgeshima Lighthouse. They were lit around May 1894.

After the Sanyo Railway (present-day JR Sanyo Main Line) reached Onomichi in October 1891, the city transformed into a major hub for sea-land transportation and increasing ship traffic. With the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War on August 1, 1894, the completion of the lighthouses was expedited. Construction began, and they were lit just over five months later.

Location: Aza Uchinoura, Setodachokone, Onomichi, Hiroshima Prefecture

Start of operation: May 15, 1897

Structure: Stone

Height: 4.9 m

Illumination: Iso W 8s (4s light, 4s dark)

Range: 12.0 nautical miles (about 2 km)



MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy in the Philippines Holds 3rd Commencement Exercises

On February 3, MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy Inc (MMMA), a merchant marine academy operated jointly by MOL and Magsaysay Maritime Corporation (MMC) in the Philippines, held its third commencement exercises at the school in Dasmariñas City, a suburb of Manila.

The ceremony welcomed many distinguished guests, including Bernard P. Olalia, Undersecretary of the Department of Migrant Workers, and Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Kazuya Endo, as well as A. Magsaysay, Inc. CEO and President Doris Magsaysay Ho, MOL Chairman Junichiro Ikeda, and approximately 640 other attendees. The ceremony celebrated the achievements of MMMA's third class of graduates, who completed the entire curriculum, including shipboard training.

In his congratulatory address, MOL Chairman Ikeda delivered the following message to the graduates: "Fully utilize the knowledge, leadership, and drive for growth you cultivated during

your studies to protect people's everyday lives across the blue ocean—our shared vision. Furthermore, strive to pursue safe operations, safeguard the environment and the lives of people around the world, and experience firsthand how your efforts contribute to global development."

Going forward, approximately half of the graduates will work onboard MOL Group-operated vessels as third officers and third engineers after obtaining their maritime licenses. They will build their careers, aiming to become captains and chief engineers while working on a global stage.

As the importance of Filipino seafarers—who form the core of the MOL Group's seafaring workforce—continues to grow, the group will continue cultivating outstanding, immediately deployable seafarers through MMMA's rigorous four-year training and foundational education, meeting the needs of the international community.



At the Commencement Exercises



New graduate taking the pledge

Seafarer Training Facility in the Philippines to Be Re-established on Premises of MOL Maritime Academy

MOL Training Center (Phils.) Inc. held a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a new seafarer training facility within the premises of MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMMA) on January 19.

The new facility will feature state-of-the-art navigation, engine, and cargo-handling simulators, along with other hands-on training equipment, enabling an expanded range of training programs in areas such as navigation skills, engine management, and emergency response. It will also be equipped with comfortable dormitory rooms and dining facilities so that cadets can fully

concentrate on their training. This initiative will further strengthen the human resources foundation that supports the group's world-leading standards of safe vessel operations. Moreover, the group will expand its training programs to include students from across Southeast

Asia in addition to Filipino seafarers, thereby enhancing its role as a key training hub for its fleet. Establishing the new facility within the premises of MMMA will also deepen engagement among instructors and trainees, foster



Groundbreaking ceremony

educational synergies through interaction between MOL seafarers and MMMA cadets, and broaden cadets' understanding of the seafaring profession.

MEGURI2040: The Nippon Foundation's Autonomous Vessel Project

New Coastal Containership *Genbu*: World's First Level 4 Autonomous Commercial Operation

As part of the Nippon Foundation's "MEGURI2040" unmanned vessel project, the newly built coastal containership *Genbu* began commercial service on January 30, achieving the world's first Level 4 autonomous operation. Level 4 refers to the technological stage that enables fully autonomous navigation without human intervention under specific conditions.

The *Genbu* measures 134.94 meters in length, has a gross tonnage of 5,689 GT, and can carry 696 TEU. It operates a weekly service connecting Kobe and Tokyo via Osaka, Nagoya, Shimizu, and Yokohama. Designed from the outset for autonomous operation, its defining feature is the Maritime Autonomous Surface Ship (MASS) autonomous ship certification from Nippon Kaiji Kyokai (ClassNK). Having passed the national ship inspection, the vessel is now authorized to operate

using its autonomous navigation capabilities.

The shipowner is IKOUS Corporation, with operations managed by Suzuyo Marine Co., Ltd.

The *Genbu* will transport motorcycles and other products for Honda Motor Co., Ltd. This initiative addresses a host of challenges facing Japan's domestic shipping industry, including an aging workforce, labor shortages, and frequent accidents caused by human error. More than 50 companies and organizations are participating in the project, contributing not only to technological development but also to institutional design and rulemaking.

The vessel is equipped with systems that support three core functions: situational awareness, decision making, and ship handling. Features such as remote engine monitoring, advanced situation-



Genbu

al awareness, and automated berthing and unberthing are intended to reduce crew workload and improve safety.

At the press conference introducing the *Genbu*, Mitsuyuki Unno, Executive Director of the Nippon Foundation Ocean Affairs Department, emphasized, "Through this commercialization, we aim to alleviate the crew shortage, enhance vessel safety, and accelerate innovation in the maritime sector." Going forward, the plan is to accumulate data through commercial operations and use it for practical verification as well as for the development of domestic and international regulations.

NYK Holds 2026 Dry Bulk Safety Conference in Athens

NYK convened its third annual Dry Bulk Safety Conference in Athens on January 21. The event brought together 150 participants representing 70 Greek shipowners and other companies active in the dry bulk sector. Originally established in 2010 in Japan for domestic shipowners and ship-management companies, the conference first expanded to Greece in 2024.

At the conference, NYK met with Greek shipowners and related companies to share case studies of past accidents and incidents, along with countermeasures and initiatives for crew welfare. The company also introduced "NAV9000 Plus," an evolution of its proprietary safety standard "NAV9000" for the group's operated vessels, shipowners, and ship management companies. Additionally, new fuel additives developed by group company Nippon Yuka Kogyo Co., Ltd. were introduced and demonstrated. NYK also introduced MarCoPay, a seafarer-tailored electronic money platform whose coverage has been expanded through a collaboration with Kadmos. Furthermore, NYK Shipmanagement Pte. Ltd., the group's ship management company, showcased IT-driven vessel management practices that leverage AI to optimize operations.

The panel discussion, which included participating shipowners, featured diverse industry experts who addressed deepening challenges in maritime training, competency, safety standards, and ergonomics. Talks focused on Generation Z, digitalization, and risk management frameworks, with participants exchanging opinions on safe operations and seafarer education.

JMSDF Anti-Piracy Task Force Sails for Somali Coast and Gulf of Aden

The departure ceremony for the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's 53rd Deployment Surface Force for Counter Piracy Enforcement (DSPE), bound for the Somali coast and the Gulf of Aden, was held on January 28. The destroyer *Yudachi* departed from Mutsu City in Aomori Prefecture. Under the command of Captain Toshio Tsutsumi, the *Yudachi* carries approximately 200 personnel, including eight Coast Guard officers who make up the 53rd Deployment Investigation Team for the Waters off Somali. It will relieve the destroyer *Ōnami*, currently deployed as part of the 52nd Team. The *Yudachi* will also conduct intelligence-gathering activities in the Middle East.

During the ceremony, Escort Fleet Commander Yoshihiro Goka read an address from Self-Defense Fleet Commander Katsushi Ōmachi, stating: "The international situation is growing increasingly complex. Incidents such as piracy, influenced by recent developments in Somalia, have seen a slight increase. Amid the fluid and unpredictable situation in the Middle East, counter-piracy operations and intelligence-gathering activities are directly linked to ensuring the safety of Japan's maritime traffic."

Representing the Japan Shipowners' Association, NS United Shipping Executive Officer Takamasa Takami conveyed his thoughts to the crew embarking on their mission: "Please ensure the safety of Japanese merchant ships. Stay safe!"

Additionally, the International Seafarers' Labor Association and the All Japan Seamen's Union participated in the send-off, watching the *Yudachi* depart from the quay.



Announcing Winners of ‘Port Scenery’ Photo Contest 2025

The winning entries for the Port Scenery Photo Contest 2025, held by The Ports & Harbours Association of Japan and the Port and Coastal Disaster Prevention Council as part of Marine Day events, have been announced.

Now in its 34th year, the contest seeks works that capture the power of ports supporting trade and industry, vibrant scenes of ports and coastlines, and the appeal they hold for people. Below are the winners in the major categories.

Grand Prize, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Award: *Burning Sky*



Director-General of Ports and Harbors Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Award: *Asuka III Debut*



Chairman of the Japan Ports Association Award: *Traveling Neputa*



Chairman of the Port and Coastal Disaster Prevention Council Award: *Land, Sea, and Air Disaster Prevention Drill*

Captain Jima's Fun Pilot Diary

31 Interview with a Captain During the COVID 19 Pandemic 210623 - Nagoya Port

Last night's assignment was to pilot a small car carrier from Nagoya to Cape Irago. After boarding, I exchanged greetings with the captain and went over the piloting procedures for the passage—an interaction that usually gives me a good sense of the captain's and crewmembers' personalities and skill levels.

This vessel, the *Dream Jasmine* (40,000 gross tons, 190 meters long), is operated by a Japanese shipping company specializing in car carriers. The entire crew consisted of sharp, efficient Filipino seafarers. It looked like we would be able to work together smoothly.

At the Catholic Port Church where I belong, the priests have long been key members of the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS), a Catholic ministry that visits foreign ships and takes crewmembers shopping or to church. AOS has a presence in every major port around the world, and I benefited greatly from their support during my active years. When I attended Mass last Sunday, Father Y said to me, "Given the current situation with the pandemic, I'm supposed to film a video showing how seafarers are feeling and present it at the AOS national conference. But the last time I went to great effort to visit a ship, I thought I was recording video—only to discover later that I had taken nothing but

still photos. So, I really need you to film some video for me." With the deadline approaching, I decided to take on the task.

For the interview mentioned above, I boarded the ship a little early and immediately began asking the captain a few questions.

When I asked, "Are you facing any difficulties during the COVID 19 pandemic?" he replied, "We're relieved that none of our crewmembers are infected, but on top of our regular duties, we now have to handle various infection prevention measures, so things have become extremely busy."

"What's the biggest change onboard compared to before the pandemic?"

"It's frustrating that we can't greet visitors with hugs or handshakes like we used to."

Up to this point, his answers were more or less what I had expected.

"So, what do you hope for from the church now?"

"Prayer," the captain said firmly.

His request was simple: "Please pray for us—that the pandemic will end soon and that we can regain our previous way of life."

Naturally, I had expected something along the lines of "Please lobby the government to allow crewmembers limited shore leave" or "Please increase opportunities for priests to visit the ship."



Capt. Masujima

[Prayer First]

It might sound strange coming from a Catholic like me, but his answer was unexpected. At the same time, it struck at the very heart of things, prompting me to reaffirm my own faith.

Of course, if I had asked, "What else?" the kinds of requests I had anticipated earlier would surely have followed.

His response reminded me of the Biblical story of "The Judge and the Widow" (Luke 18:1–8), in which Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray.

In a certain town, there was a judge who cared nothing for people. A widow kept coming to him persistently, saying, "Judge my case and protect me." Eventually, the cold hearted judge said, "I will grant her justice, if only to stop her from wearing me out with her continual visits."

Jesus told this parable to show that if we pray persistently, God will answer.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, everyone longed for it to end. Within that shared



Filipino captain during interview



Ship of the same type at anchor

longing, I was reminded anew of the particular importance of the health of seafarers—men who have lived for nearly a year inside the confined iron box that is their ship. I felt compelled to pray earnestly for their well-being.

Sailors' Toilets Classic Stories of the Sea By Akinori Sugiura

In the age of sail, the toilets used by sailors on large ships were placed in the projecting bow. They were extremely simple—just a wooden seat with a round hole cut into it. Smaller warships often didn't even have this basic setup, leaving sailors to relieve themselves by hanging over the gunwale, much as they did on Columbus's ships. Even the seated versions functioned as a kind of natural flush toilet, with waste dropping straight into the sea. Positioning the toilets at the bow had several advantages: they were close

to the sailors' quarters, they were usually downwind while the ship was under sail, they reduced the chance of fouling the hull, and they were easy to rinse clean. These sailors' toilets came to be known in English as "heads," because they were located in the "head," the ship's bow. The word is still used informally today to refer to crew toilets in general, not only on warships. Officers, of course, used portable chamber pots. For urination, however, it seems that officers and crew alike just went over the side.

Eko Noguchi Named Miss Japan ‘Marine Day’

The 58th Miss Japan Contest was held on January 26 at the Keio Plaza Hotel Shinjuku in Tokyo, where Eko Noguchi, 21, was crowned Miss Japan “Marine Day.” Over the next year, Noguchi will promote the importance of the ocean through Marine Day and other marine-related events.

The Miss Japan Contest is Japan’s premier beauty pageant. Chosen from among the 13 finalists selected from numerous contestants, the Miss Japan Grand Prix, “Angel of Water,” “Green Ambassador,” “Marine Day,” “Miss Kimono,” and Semi Miss Japan.

Noguchi achieved the remarkable feat of winning both the Grand Prix and the “Marine Day” title.

Currently a third-year university student, Noguchi is the eldest daughter of mountaineer Ken Noguchi. Influenced by her father since childhood, she has climbed mountains both in Japan and abroad.

She was inspired to enter the pageant by her desire to incorporate new perspectives into the environmental conservation activities she has pursued so far and to broaden the scope of her work.

Born in Tokyo, she collaborated with a team of chefs dedicated to preserving Ja-

pan’s rich marine and culinary heritage for future generations while pursuing her university studies, gaining a profound sense of the interconnectedness between mountains and the sea.

“I never imagined receiving both the Grand Prix and the ‘Marine Day’ title at the same time—it was a real surprise. I want to connect my past activities with the mission of ‘Marine Day’ and work hard, together with everyone involved.”

Originally shy, she gained confidence through repeated challenges in mountain climbing, which led to her current drive and initiative.

After receiving the award, the first thought that came to Noguchi’s mind was getting her small vessel operator’s license.

“Once I have the license, the sea will feel even more accessible and enjoyable,” she said. In addition to cleanup activities in the mountains and the sea, she hopes to experience and share the joys of the ocean, such as marine sports.

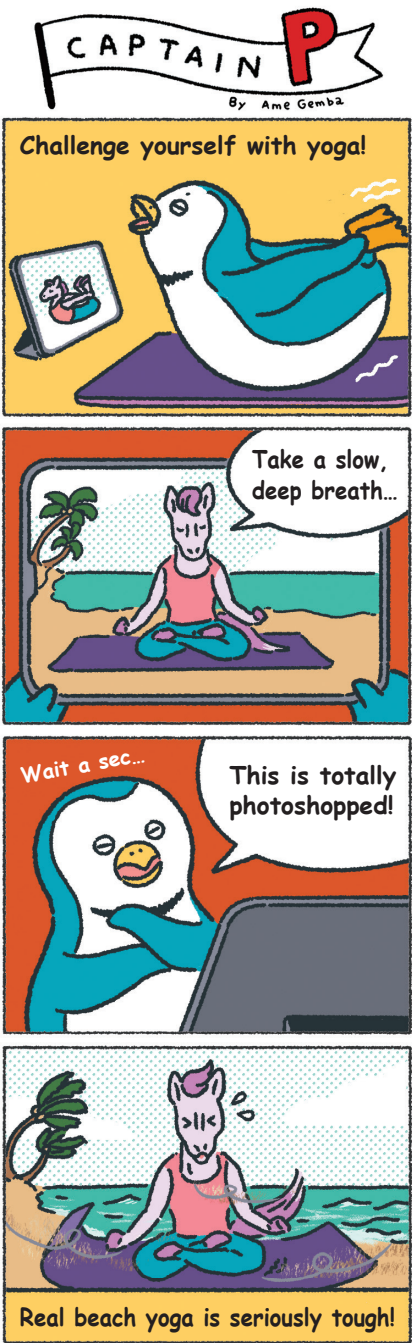
Noguchi expressed her aspirations: “For Japan, an island nation, the sea is indispensable. I want to convey the importance of protecting our marine resources.”

“Knowledge is the first step. I want to turn that small wave into a big one,” she emphasized.



Eko Noguchi, Miss Japan “Marine Day”

Miss Japan “Marine Day” was established following the creation of the Marine Day national holiday, which is intended to deepen appreciation for the ocean’s blessings—vital for Japan, a nation surrounded by the sea—and to foster understanding and interest in marine-related issues.



NUMBER PLACE

Level: Intermediate

		6	9	1				
5		4			6			
		8			4	5		1
			4	9	2	1		
1						9		4
8		1		7			4	
6		2			8		1	3
		7		6			9	5

This Month’s ‘Number Place’ Puzzle

How to Play

Number Place is a puzzle in which you fill the empty squares with the numbers 1 through 9. Each row, column, and 3×3 block must contain every number exactly once. Complete the puzzle using the given numbers as clues and fill in all the squares accordingly.

On board, small diversions such as reading, light exercise, or simply gazing at the sea through the window can be surprisingly powerful. As one such break, why not try our familiar monthly Number Place puzzle? Time spent with

numbers sharpens your focus and clears your mind. Amid busy days, enjoy a small sense of accomplishment and gently reset your spirit. Please enjoy this month’s puzzle. (Find the answers in next month’s issue.)

The answers to last month's (February issue) questions are below.

5	3	4	6	7	8	9	1	2
6	7	2	1	9	5	3	4	8
1	9	8	3	4	2	5	6	7
8	5	9	7	6	1	4	2	3
4	2	6	8	5	3	7	9	1
7	1	3	9	2	4	8	5	6
9	6	1	5	3	7	2	8	4
2	8	7	4	1	9	6	3	5
3	4	5	2	8	6	1	7	9

Use the Floor For This Easy Stretch! Stretch Those Tight Hamstrings!

- (1) From a kneeling position, step forward with one foot.
- (2) Place both hands on the floor and keep your back straight.
- (3) Exhale while pushing your hips back.
- (4) Hold for 20–30 seconds, feeling the stretch in the back of your thigh and the buttock of the front leg.
- (5) Repeat on the other side.

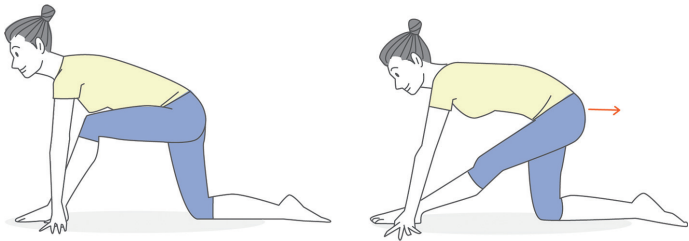


Illustration courtesy: illustAC

Today’s Delicious Dish: Meat and Potato Stew

A simple, hearty potato stew made in the microwave, with excellent nutritional balance

■ Ingredients (1 serving)

- ½ medium potato
- 50 g ground meat
- ¼ onion
- 20 g pizza cheese
- 1 cup water

- ½ teaspoon granulated consommé
- Salt and pepper, to taste

■ How to cook

1. Cut the potato into 1 centimeter sticks and thinly slice the onion.
2. Place the potato in a microwave-safe soup cup, loosely cover with plastic wrap, and microwave for 2 minutes.

3. Add the onion and ground meat. Pour in the water and granulated consommé, cover again with plastic wrap, and microwave for another 2–3 minutes.
4. When the meat is cooked through and the potatoes are tender, season with salt and pepper. Top with cheese and let the residual heat melt it to a soft and gooey consistency.



Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries website (Recipe, perfectly matched for rice)
<https://www.maff.go.jp/j/seisan/kakou/mezamasi/recipe/index.html>