



## [The Nippon Foundation News] Stroking ox and praying for success

Greetings from The Nippon Foundation. As we mentioned last month, the Year of the Ox under the Chinese zodiac cycle begins with the Lunar New Year on Friday, February 12. Tenman-gu shrines can be found across Japan, and often feature statues of an ox lying down. These shrines honor Sugawara no Michizane, a leading poet and scholar in ninth century Japan who was born in the Year of the Ox and is reported to have been fond of the animals. The statues are called *nade ushi* ("stroking ox"), and legend has it that if you have an ailment, rubbing the corresponding body part of the statue will provide a cure. One of the best known of these shrines in Tokyo is Hirakawa Tenmangu near the Imperial Palace grounds, which has several statues of oxen in front of the main shrine.

Michizane was posthumously deified as Tenjin, the god of scholarship. Because of their association with scholarship, Tenman-gu shrines are also popular places for students to pray for success in entrance examinations, which in Japan are held from mid-January to early February. *Ema* are small wooden plaques sold at shrines, on which prayers or wishes can be written and may have a standard wish already printed on them. They are hung on a rack at the shrine and later burned in ritual ceremonies, so that the wishes can be received by the gods.



*A statue of an ox (left), and 'ema' (right) hanging on a rack at Hirakawa Tenmangu. The center plaque shows a picture of Sugawara no Michizane with the inscription 'entrance exam success.'*

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## Announcing Support for The Valuable 500

Network of 500 leading global companies promoting employment of persons with disabilities



The Valuable 500 is a global network created as a call to the CEOs of 500 global companies to promote reforms that will enable persons with disabilities to demonstrate their potential social, business, and economic value. The Nippon Foundation has agreed to cooperate with The Valuable 500 as a Global Impact Partner and to provide support totaling US\$5 million (approximately 520 million yen) over the three years from 2021 to 2023 to promote inclusion in business for persons with disabilities.

[Full Article](#)

## Global Appeal 2021

### Call to end stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy made with endorsement of International Trade Union Confederation

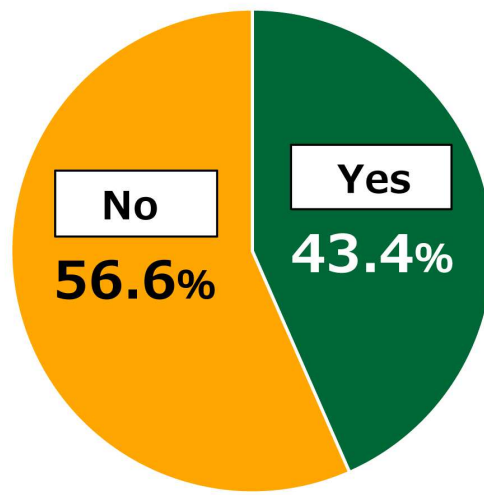


The 16th Global Appeal to end stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy was launched in an online ceremony on January 31, 2021, World Leprosy Day. Organized by the Sasakawa Leprosy (Hansen's Disease) Initiative, this year's appeal was endorsed by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and focuses on the right to work.

[Full Article](#)

## Awareness Survey of 18-Year-Olds

### Gaps in Education



The 33rd installment of the Awareness Survey of 18-Year-Olds was carried out from December 1 to 4, 2020, on the subject of "Gaps in Education." More than 40% of the survey's respondents replied that they felt there were gaps in their own educational environment compared with those of others, and one in two felt that there are gaps in access to education. Roughly half of all respondents see these gaps widening going forward, but of those who feel that gaps exist, the portion who expects them to widen increases to two-thirds.

[Full Article](#)

## Yohei Sasakawa Blog

Chairman of The Nippon Foundation



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