

JAPAN PRIZE NEWS

THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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Dr. Kao and Dr. Ito Awarded 1996 Japan Prizes Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress Attended the Presentation Ceremony



Dr. Charles K. Kao

The presentation ceremony for the 1996 (12th) Japan Prize took place on April 26 at the National Theatre in Tokyo. This year's two laureates were Dr. Charles K. Kao (62), Vice-Chancellor and President, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, in the category of "Information, Computer and Communication Systems;" and Dr. Masao Ito (67), Director-General, Frontier Research Program, The Institute of Physical and Chemical Research (RIKEN), and President, Science Council of Japan in the category of "Neuroscience".

Japan Prize is presented annually by The Science and Technology Foundation of Japan (JSTF) to scientists and researchers who have made substantial contributions to the advancement of science and technology as well as to the peace and prosperity of humankind.



Dr. Masao Ito

JAPAN PRIZE

Presentation Ceremony

Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress attended the presentation ceremony as did some 900 prominent guests, including representatives from the Three branches and competent Ministers; numerous ambassadors to Japan; eminent scholars and researchers; representatives from policy, finance, and industry sectors of government; and the media.

The ceremony began with a rendition of Overture Japan performed by the Toho Gakuen Orchestra. Prof. Jiro Kondo, Foundation Chairman and Chairman of the Japan Prize Selection Committee delivered the opening address and introduced the two winners and spoke about their achievements. After the chairmen from the two selection panels outlined the reasons for their choices, Foundation President Dr. Masami Ito presented each winner with a certificate of merit, a commemorative medal, and a cash award of 50 million yen.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Kao said, "Optical fiber communications is one of the key infrastructures for progress in our information age. Communication improves understanding between people. Communication promotes peace and prosperity. Having participated in the conceptual research, and in the development and production stages throughout my career, I deem myself most fortunate to have been at the beginning of it all." And Dr. Ito, in his acceptance speech, said, "I have devoted myself to brain research believing that since what is present in the brain is neuronal circuit network, the shortest way to obtain access to the enormous riddle of the brain is to elucidate the functional principles of the neuronal circuit network. It seemed to me that the cerebellum was the most suitable part of the brain as a target for my research."



The laureates, honored by Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress

Banquet

Following the presentation ceremony, a banquet was held at Hotel Okura in Tokyo on the evening of April 26, in the presence of Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress with approximately 250 distinguished guests in attendance.



A view of the Banquet

An opening address by the Foundation President, Dr. Masami Ito, was followed by dinner, after which his Majesty The Emperor honored the two winners with a congratulatory toast. A second toast

Address by His Majesty the Emperor



Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Dr. Charles Kuen Kao and Dr. Masao Ito on being presented the 1996 Japan Prize today. Dr. Kao was awarded the prize for the category of "Information, Computer and Communication Systems" while Dr. Ito was selected for the category of "Neuroscience."

Dr. Kao conducted research on optical fibers and made a major contribution to the exploitation of optical fiber communications which are currently finding wide application. Dr. Ito researched the cerebellar neural mechanisms which control movement, and his findings had a major impact on neuroscience research related to learning and memory mechanisms in the brain.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere respect to these two distinguished scholars for their outstanding achievements.

In recent years great strides have been made in science and technology, and humanity receives immeasurable benefits from these advances. We give deep thought to the fact that today's advancements in science and technology are the product of the outstanding intelligence and tireless efforts of many scientists. Also, we consider it crucial that the development of new science and technology be monitored to ensure that it promotes the happiness of all humanity. In this sense, the Japan Prize is very significant in that it commends scientists whose accomplishments made a major contribution to the advancement of science and technology as well as to peace and the prosperity of humanity.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere hope that the researches of these two distinguished scholars will further develop and contribute more and more to the welfare of humanity.

Thank you.



His Majesty The Emperor proposing a toast

was made by H.E. Juro Saito, President of the House of Councillors. A third toast was proposed by H.E. Seiroku Kajiyama, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, who asked the guests to join him in toasting the Japan Prize's contribution to world peace and prosperity.

The banquet continued with a congratulatory message from H.E. Fawzi Shobokshi of Saudi Arabia, the representative of the diplomatic corps in Japan. Thereafter, H.E. Walter F. Mondale, the U.S. Ambassador to Japan, followed with his own congratulatory speech.

The end of the banquet was highlighted by a performance from Chiba University and Utsunomiya University. To close the banquet, Dr. Kao and Dr. Ito delivered speeches of thanks.

JAPAN PRIZE

Memorable Album of the Laureates



Dr. Kao (left) and his younger brother. Dr. Kao was born in Shanghai, China, where he lived for his first 14 years.



Later he went to study in London where he met and married his wife in 1959.



He still has his classroom skills.



In anticipation of more free time, he revived his pottery talents.



With pet dogs.



Now those ideas and hopes will be passed on to the next generation.

Dr. Kao

Dr. Ito



Family photo when Dr. Ito (right) was a first-grader. His father died when he was three.

Studied in Australia for three years under Dr. Eccles, Nobel prize winner in physiology and medicine in 1963. His eldest son, Minami, was born in Australia.



"Whenever I was in the library, I was always wearing a grimace," says Dr. Ito looking back on his research days.



Retired from Tokyo University in March 1989. During his last lecture, he was presented with a memento (cerebellum-shaped coral) by his students.



Showing codfish he caught in Sweden in 1993.



He was elected chairman of the Science Council of Japan in 1994. Chatted with the then prime minister Murayama at prime minister's official residence.

JAPAN PRIZE

Japan Prize Week



Reception Party hosted by Hong Kong Economic and Trade Representative (April 23)



Commemorative Lecture by Dr. Kao at the Science Council of Japan (April 25)



Reception Party hosted by American Ambassador (April 25)



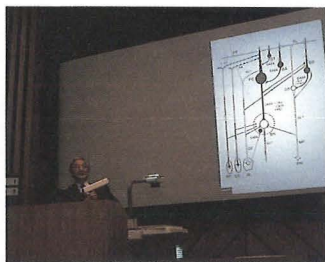
Holiday in Kyoto (April 28)



Press conference at the Japan Press Center (April 23)



Visit to Japan Academy (April 25)



Commemorative Lecture by Dr. Ito at the Science Council of Japan (April 25)



Friendly talk with Japanese scientists (April 27)

Selection of Laureates Begins for the 1997 (13th) Japan Prize

The categories for the 1997 (13th) Japan Prize are "Systems Engineering for an Artifactual Environment" and "Biotechnology in Medicine." Candidates have been recommended through numerous letters of nomination received by the Foundation from around the world. The 1997 (13th) Japan Prize Selection Committee will be established in the Foundation and the results will be announced in December. The presentation ceremony will take place in April 1997.

Systems Engineering for an Artifactual Environment

The world is composed of -- and human actions take place in -- an environment of artifacts in modern society. Systems engineering plays an important role in the creation and management of artifacts for the sustainable development of an artifactual environment, with a view to enhancing the welfare of mankind.

"Systems Engineering for an Artifactual Environment" covers a wide variety of technologies and knowledge systems for the creation of an artifactual environment such as design engineering, product engineering, measuring and control engineering, robotics, knowledge engineering, computational sciences, safety and reliability engineering, standardization, quality control engineering and so on.

The 1997 Japan Prize will be awarded for achievement in the above technologies and knowledge systems, or contribution to progress of related basic disciplines and technologies.

Biotechnology in Medicine

Rapid progress in biotechnology has led to advances in medical sciences, resulting in the development of new methods of preserving and improving human health. The prosperity of the human race in the 21st century and beyond will depend on our ability to wisely apply the fruits of medical research to the understanding of human diseases.

The 1997 Japan Prize will be awarded to the scientist who has made a significant contribution to medicine through a discovery in the field of biotechnology including molecular biological technology and organ transplantation that not only promotes an understanding of human diseases, but also markedly improves our ability to prevent, diagnose and treat those diseases.

Monthly General Science and Technology Seminars

The Foundation is holding a monthly General Science and Technology Seminar for the general public free of charge. The aim is to disseminate and develop information and ideas regarding science and technology.

Lecturers at the seminars include well-known scholars, scientists, and engineers who speak in easy-to-understand Japanese.