

S&T Articles from Japan

November 2009

NSF Tokyo Regional Office

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1. **[Cut Budget Fat]** The Government Revitalization Unit (GRU), a newly established organization by the Hatoyama administration, began to work on eliminating wasteful or unnecessary spending from JFY 2010 (Japanese Fiscal Year 2010: April 2010-March 2011) budget requests which totals more than ¥95 trillion (~\$950 billion). State Minister for Government Revitalization, Yoshito Sengoku, who heads the Unit, hopes to slash ¥3 trillion (~\$30 billion) off this amount. In order to accomplish the reduction, GRU established working groups consisting of seven Diet members, experts outside the government, and local government workers who deemed as having no conflicting interests in the projects being reviewed. The working groups are to examine 447 government programs/projects in 9 days from November 11 to 27, 2009. (Summary of an article in Japan Times – 11/8/09)

2. **[Cancellations, Freezes, Cuts]** The first round of the GRU's review on JFY2010 budget request was completed on November 17th, and recommended abolishing the GX Rocket project by JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency), freezing the next-generation supercomputer project by RIKEN, and halving the budget for the national conversion of analog to digital television. The companies involved in these projects have begun to worry aloud about the losses that these review results might create. (Summary of an article in Nihon Keizai Newspaper – 11/18/09)

3. [Supercomputer Project Not Frozen, maybe] Mr. Naoto Kan, Vice Prime Minister and Head of the Government Strategy Office, in commenting on the GRU's recommendation that the 'Next-generation Supercomputer' project be frozen, said that all the S&T budgets will be reviewed again from the scientific viewpoint after the GRU's examination is completed. Researchers concerned about the GRU's decision to freeze the supercomputer project had appealed the Government to re-consider the GRU's decision. (Summary translation of an article in Nihon Keizai Newspaper – 11/23/09)

4. [Opposition by University Presidents] The presidents of nine prestigious universities voiced their opposition to the sharp cuts in science and technology budgets recommended by the GRU. They said in a joint statement that the public investment in universities in Japan already ranks low among the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, and further cuts will lead to the collapse of Japan as a world leader in science and technology. The University of Tokyo President Junichi Hamada said that Japanese universities have reached the internationally competitive level and they have made efforts to pass on the benefits to the society. He said that the universities and he cannot ignore the proposed cut in the S&T budgets. Keio University President Atsushi Seike said Japan must contribute not only to its own development but also to that of the world. (Summary of an article in Japan Times – 11/25/09)

5. [Nobel Laureates Comment] Top Japanese scientists, including four Nobel laureates, have criticized the government plan to slash research budgets, warning that the country will lose its high-tech edge. Dr. Ryoji Noyori, 2001 Nobel Chemistry prize winner, said "I wonder if the reviewers are ready to face the judgment of history." Kyoto University professor Shinya Yamanaka, a pioneer in embryonic stem cell research said "I am deeply concerned about the development, which is just beyond my comprehension." (Summary of an article in Japan Times – 11/27/09)

[\[NSF Tokyo Office will soon report to summarize the S&T portion of the GRU's review results.\]](#)

6. [Global Entrepreneurship Week] GEW (Global Entrepreneurship Week), a worldwide movement across 85 countries aimed at promoting innovation, was held in Japan the week of November 16, 2009. Mr. John Roos, U.S. Ambassador to Japan, one of the main speakers at the daylong event, relayed his experience as a lawyer in Silicon Valley, the hub of venture capitalists in California. He thinks the turning point towards innovation will be

when risk taking is embraced. He said that Japan and U.S. are the two most innovative countries in the world, and thus should lead other countries in solving such global issues as climate change. To encourage Japan to fully take on the leadership role, he has been talking to academic institutions to promote entrepreneurship and companies to encourage employees to start businesses of their own. He said that promoting entrepreneurialism is one of the priorities of his ambassadorship. (Summary of an article on Japan Times – 11/27/09)

7. [New Icebreaker Voyages to Antarctica] Japan's new icebreaker, *Shirase*, departed Tokyo Bay on December 10 with an Antarctic Expedition team on board. The fourth-generation ice-breaker, furnished with the state-of-the-art technologies, carries the same name as the third one which will be sold to Weathernews Inc., a weather information provider. The company will revive it as a place where information on the Earth's environment and climate change will be distributed. (Summary of an article in Nihon Keizai Newspaper – 11/10/09)

8. [Gordon Bell Prize] The IEEE Gordon Bell Prize-2009 was awarded to Dr. Tsuyoshi Hamada, Assistant Professor at Nagasaki University, and his group for realizing super-fast computing by connecting 256 GPUs (Graphics Processing Units) in parallel. It enabled calculation speed of 158 trillion times per second, faster than the Earth Simulator's (the fastest computer in Japan) 122 trillion times per second, at a cost of only ¥38 million (~\$0.38 million). It is expected to be used for complex calculations in astronomy. The Gordon Bell Prize is nicknamed as the "Nobel Prize in computer science". (Summary translation of an article in Nishi-Nihon Newspaper-11/27/09)

9. [New Funding Opportunities and Awards from MEXT (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology), JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science), JST (Japan Science and Technology Agency), and NEDO (New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization)]

JSPS accepts proposals (deadline of December 11, 2009) for 'Eminent Scientists Awards.' JSPS provides an average of four awards per year to foreign researchers who possess a demonstrated record of outstanding research achievements equivalent to Nobel Laureates. The proposals should be sent to JSPS from the heads of Japanese host institutions. The award consists of business class roundtrip air tickets, per diem of ¥42,000 (~\$420), and a family allowance of ¥10,000 (~\$100) per day (if accompanied by a family member). Further details can be found at: <http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-awards/index.html>