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Elon Musk Releases Detailed Plans for Colonizing Mars and Other Planets

June 21, 2017 by PAUL RATNER

Having previously teased that he'd like to put one million people on Mars, tech billionaire and serial entrepreneur Elon Musk released the specifics of his plan to colonize space. His paper "Making Humans a Multi-Planetary Species" outlines what kind of technology humans will need to make that dream a reality, including how to build a city on Mars, as well as the timeline for this endeavor.

Musk proposes that it's a necessity to make humans a space-faring civilization, citing the inevitable "doomsday event" that will befall us sooner or later. One big goal in making us a "multi-planetary species" would be to create a city on Mars that works not just an outpost but as a self-sustaining settlement that will drive the planet's colonization.

The SpaceX, Neuralink, and Tesla Motors CEO sees Mars as the best destination for such a city because it has conditions better suited for a human colony than other planets - it has atmosphere, it's rich in resources, its day is 24.5 hours, similar to Earth's. In fact, the red planet is so similar to Earth that "if we could warm Mars up, we would once again have a thick atmosphere and liquid oceans," writes Musk.

Here's how Musk compared Earth and Mars head to head:

Mars vs Earth

The big problem in getting people to Mars now is the cost. It would cost about \$10 billion per person, if we were to use traditional "Apollo-style" approaches. Musk wants that number to go down by 5 million percent. If the number is closer to \$200,000 per person (a median house price in the U.S.), Mars colonization would become a reality. Musk sees this number dropping even lower eventually, to below \$100,000 per person.

How would Musk bridge that gap? Most of the improvement would come from rocket reusability, while other cost savings would lie in figuring out how to refill in orbit and produce propellant on Mars. Choosing the right propellant is also important. Musk says methane would be easier and cheaper to harvest on Mars than, for example, hydrogen.

Musk transport system

Musk also gives some details on how a trip to Mars aboard one of his ships would look like - a trip he estimates would take about 115 days. It's important to make such a journey "fun and exciting," with zero-gravity games, movies, lecture halls, cabins and a restaurant, Musk writes.

Once we figure out how to get humans to Mars in an efficient and consistent manner, Musk imagines that the colony there would need a million people for a self-sustaining city. To get them there would require 1,000 ships, each carrying 100 people. With travelling to the red planet possible every 26 months thanks to having to wait for favorable alignment with Earth, the whole process of colonizing Mars would take about 40-100 years after the first ship goes, which is currently planned for 2023.

<http://bigthink.com/paul-ratner/elon-musk-releases-plans-for-colonizing-mars-and-other-planets>

IOC approves addition of 5 sports for 2020 Tokyo Olympics

By STEPHEN WILSON

OLYMPICS AUG. 04, 2016 - 06:30AM JST (10)RIO DE JANEIRO —

Olympic leaders approved the addition of five sports to the program of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics on Wednesday, including the return of baseball-softball and the introduction of youth-oriented events such as skateboarding and surfing.

International Olympic Committee members voted unanimously to accept the five-sport package, which also includes karate and sport climbing.

The five were put forward for inclusion last year by Tokyo organizers, taking advantage of new IOC rules that allow host cities to propose the inclusion of additional sports for their own games. Wednesday's approval was for the Tokyo Games only.

The new sports will add 18 events and 474 athletes to the program. The Tokyo Games will now feature 33 sports and about 11,000 athletes, compared to the usual number of 28 sports and 10,500 athletes.

While baseball and softball - both highly popular in Japan - will be returning after a 12-year absence, the other sports will be making their Olympic debuts.

The IOC called it "the most comprehensive evolution of the Olympic program in modern history."

"Taken together, the five sports are an innovative combination of established and emerging, youth-focused events that are popular in Japan and will add to the legacy of the Tokyo Games," IOC President Thomas Bach said.

Baseball will have a six-team tournament, short of the eight-team format sought by officials from the sport's international federation. Women's softball will also have six teams. The games will be played at a shared venue in Yokohama.

Skateboarding will have street and park events, and feature 80 athletes - 40 men and 40 women. In climbing, 40 competitors will take part in the disciplines of speed, bouldering and lead (also known as sport). Karate will have 80 athletes competing in men's and women's Kumite and Kata events, while surfing will have two shortboard events for 40 competitors.

The surfing competition will be held on natural waves at a beach location in Chiba prefecture.

Skateboarding and sports climbing events will be held in temporary venues in urban settings in Tokyo, while karate will be contested at the Nippon Budokan in the capital.

Organizers hope skateboarding will catch on with worldwide viewers as halfpipe in snowboarding did in the Winter Olympics.

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/olympics/view/ioc-approves-addition-of-5-sports-for-2020-tokyo-olympics>

Good or Bad, Baby Names Have Long-lasting Effects

Jeanna Bryner Date: 13 June 2010 Time: 10:31 AM ET

Choosing a baby name proves to be a challenging task for many parents. And they're wise to work hard at it. A name can have a profound impact on a child that reverberates well into adulthood, a growing body of research suggests.

"There is a reason why baby name books are extremely popular," said David Figlio of Northwestern University in Illinois. "We're always trying to think about the first bit of a child's identity and so if we as a society pay a lot of attention to names it makes a lot of sense that people's names might influence how they think about themselves and the way in which people might think about them."

Plenty of research suggests the name chosen impacts a baby's life well into adulthood. For instance, donning your newborn boy with a girly sounding name could mean behavioral problems later in life. And unique baby names that only your child will have can be a hardship too.

A British study of 3,000 parents released in May suggests one-in-five parents regret the name they chose for a child, many of whom were distressed over the unusual or oddly spelled names they'd chosen. And even those who didn't explicitly regret the name choice admitted there were names they knew now they wished they'd chosen then, according to the study conducted by Bounty.com.

Girly names

Boys with names traditionally given to girls are more likely to misbehave than their counterparts with masculine names, research suggests. Girls given boy names also see an effect.

Socioeconomic status and expectations

Just as a person's accent or clothing can indicate something about that individual's background or character, so can a first name. And just like any other external indicator, names can lie.

Meeting low expectations

The link between a name and success later in life could have to do with these kids fulfilling others' expectations of them. Names that sound as though they came from a family of low socioeconomic status, might be tagged as less capable of achieving, for instance.

Self-esteem

Whether or not your name sounds upper class might not matter if you don't like it. Accumulating research has shown a strong link between a person's like or dislike of his or her name and high and low self-esteem, respectively.

Unusual vs. common names

When it's time to pick baby's name, there are two types of parents, those who want an unusual baby name and those who prefer a more common name donned by lots of kids. Turns out, even if the particular name chosen doesn't make a difference in a child's success later in life, whether or not that name is common or unusual does matter.

The difference between choosing, say, one of five common, relatively likeable names is small in terms of any impact on the child's life. "If you're choosing between a relatively likeable, common name and one that is really odd, that definitely could have an impact," Twenge said.

<http://www.livescience.com/6569-good-bad-baby-names-long-lasting-effects.html>

5 Reasons Japanese Convenience Stores Rock

By Scott R Dixon LIFESTYLE DEC. 26, 2013

If you have ever lived in or visited Japan, odds are you have come to love these convenience stores which are amazing places. But what exactly makes Japanese convenience stores so different and special compared to those overseas? Here are five reasons why we think these “conbini” totally live up to the hype.

Food quality

Although many convenience stores around the world stock food, Japan stands out for the high-quality food available at almost all hours of the day. It is not surprising that a country whose cuisine had been added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list would even value the quick, ready-made food in convenience stores.

Rice balls with all kinds of yummy fillings can be bought for around 100 yen each while affordable ready-made meals often use locally sourced and seasonal ingredients. During the winter, you can warm yourself up quickly with a bowl of oden or a steamed pork bun. And in summer, all kinds of different ice cream treats fill the freezer section.

Free public restrooms

There are convenience stores practically every few blocks in larger cities in Japan and most of them have clean restrooms anyone can use. Many of them are a pretty good size as well, just in case you need to change your clothes mid-day. So stop hunting for that public bathroom and just look for the glowing sign of a convenience store. Even if you’re not actually buying anything at the store, a quick “*sumimasen toire o tsukaimasu*” (“Excuse me, I’m using/would like to use the toilet”) will be greeted with a smile and a nod.

Services galore

Japanese convenience takes the word “convenience” very seriously and is more than just a store full of products. In fact, a lot of people come in and don’t even buy anything. Many use the in-store copy machines, ATMs, movie/concert/overnight bus ticket kiosks and instant picture printers. Many stores also have some sort of partnership with delivery services, making them a great alternative to long lines at the post office, and you can even arrange for your luggage to be kept safe and shipped to the airport, saving you the hassle of lugging it with you on the trains to catch your flight.

All the vices you need

Besides toothpaste and milk, Japanese convenience stores also sell just about any vice you need. The bookshelves normally stock porn magazines and saucy manga, and you can buy cigarettes or booze 24 hours a day. Of course if you are an alcoholic, chain-smoking porn-addict, you might want to stay away, but, hey, the cashier won’t judge you – they merely ask that you hit the button on the register touch screen saying “I confirm that I’m over 20 years of age”

Hospitality

One of the first things you will notice in a Japanese convenience store is the attentiveness of the staff. Besides making sure to greet everyone who enters, the stores are usually kept immaculately clean and everything is lined up neatly on the shelves. And if you buy a ready-made meal that needs heated up, the cashier will be more than happy to microwave it for you and provide everything from disposable chopsticks to tiny plastic spoons and drinking straws. There is even a hot water pot to use for your recently purchased cup ramen, and staff will bag your purchases separately if you have both hot and cold items—well, that or do some exceptionally clever packing.

This is the Japanese convenience store: a friendly place open 24 hours a day where you can get almost anything you want.

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/lifestyle/view/5-reasons-japanese-convenience-stores-rock>

Op-Ed: 'Label It Yourself' Campaign — Citizen Action to label GMOs (edited)

By Anne Sewell March 20, 2012

A nationwide campaign has begun in the USA to label foods that may contain GMOs, to make the public aware of the dangers of genetically modified organisms in food. People from across the USA, who are concerned by the increasing scientific data that indicates serious economic, environmental and public health risks associated with GMOs, are taking matters into their own hands by labeling foods that may contain GMOs (genetically modified organisms). The nationwide campaign to "Label It Yourself" has begun.

If there is nothing to hide, why hide it?

Polls have consistently demonstrated that the vast majority of Americans want to know if the food they are purchasing contains GMOs. They have a right to know what they are buying and consuming. More than 40 countries around the world require the labeling of genetically engineered food. However, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has refused mandatory labeling, citing industry claims that genetically engineered food is the same as conventional food. But with an estimated 80% of processed food in the USA containing GMOs, Label It Yourself is asking: "If there's nothing to hide, why hide it?"

What are GMOs?

GMOs, also known as transgenics, are plants or animals that have been created by splicing DNA into them from other plants, animals, bacteria, or viruses, in order to create an organism that would not otherwise occur in nature. Most of the GMOs on the market have been created to tolerate herbicides and pesticides applied to crops, in many cases incorporating the pesticide into the plant itself.

Health, Nutritional and Environmental Effects

While the long-term impact of GMOs on humans are unknown, increasing evidence connects these genetically modified organisms with potential health problems (including infertility, birth defects, allergies, and digestive problems), environmental damage (including degraded soil health, and biological pollution) and violation of farmers' and consumers' rights.

'Label It Yourself' campaign

As more and more like-minded citizens across the USA advocate mandatory labeling, the Label It Yourself campaign offers shoppers tools to know what products are most likely to contain GMOs, and also to label the products themselves. Open source labels are available for download so that people can create stickers to do their own labeling of GMO food products in stores.

93% of US consumers support labeling of GMOs

A 2010 Thomson Reuters PULSE™ Healthcare Survey poll found that 93% of US consumers support the labeling of GMOs. And yet, despite these findings, and President Obama's promise during his presidential campaign to push for labeling, the US government has refused to allow labels for GMO food to appear on grocery shelves in America. "Human beings are not just consumers or voters as the corporate and political advertising industry likes to believe. People are free, and they want the truth, which, if you think about it, is the only thing worth advertising," says a member of the Occupy Wall Street Food Justice Working group. "Label It Yourself is a citizen's campaign to empower people to make informed decisions about the food they buy, without waiting for government or corporations to do it for them."

<http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/321535>

What's Wrong With the Drinking Age

Kurt Michael Friese, Chef 8/4/11

Indulge me, if you will, in something of a birthday rant.

Today my daughter turns 21. Although it has been legal for her to drive, vote, smoke and kill and die for her country for quite some time, she now is officially permitted by society at large to enter a bar and have a beer. As a father, and with this being my youngest child and only daughter, am I concerned that this will lead to some sort of bingeing behavior now that the forbidden fruit is within her grasp? Short answer: No.

If I could wave a magic wand, there would be no drinking age. I find the concept of it to be the largest single mass abdication of parental responsibility in our society. As a group, the American people decided we were unable to raise our children with the understanding that wine, beer and cocktails are foods, and so we asked our government to treat them as drugs. We erected a barrier between childhood and adulthood that kids could see over but were told they could not cross.

Of course, if I were to wave that magic wand today, there would be dead kids all over our highways, because most of them were not raised to appreciate a simple glass of wine with dinner. They were not taught that, like the rest of the food in front of them, there's a "just right" amount, and there's a "too much" amount. A single glass of wine has never hurt anyone, and actually can be a healthful (as well as delicious) addition to a meal.

Instead, they were taught the irreconcilable lesson: Authority says it's dangerous, while society says it's just about the most fun you can have and will lead to the stuff that's more fun. Doubt that? Go to a high school health class, then watch a beer commercial during a football game.

This applies not just to beer and wine but cocktails as well. Skill in preparation and moderation in consumption are the keys, but a vast majority of bars emphasize only speed and strength with a cheap price. Witness the prevalence of straight-alcohol shots of every flavor and description that get lined up on bars throughout Iowa City's downtown every night.

Kim and I taught our daughter that these things are foods and that overdoing any food is unwise. Try eating a full-sized package of double-stuff Oreos or a 32-ounce porterhouse steak and the way you'll feel afterward is not too dissimilar to a hangover. Did I always set a perfect example? No. No one ever does. But we did the best we could and we succeeded.

This evening I will take my daughter to a local watering hole and indulge with her in her first (legal) drink. Probably scotch. Followed by a long and filling meal with the appropriate beer or wine. Just our way of civilizing consumption. After all, Kim and I raised a civilian, not a consumer.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kurt-friese/whats-wrong-with-the-drin_b_918946.html

Economic Inequality: It's Far Worse Than You Think

The great divide between our beliefs, our ideals, and reality

By Nicholas Fitz | March 31, 2015

According to Pew Research, most Americans believe the economic system unfairly favors the wealthy, but 60% believe that most people can make it if they're willing to work hard.

In a candid conversation with Frank Rich last fall, Chris Rock said, "Oh, people don't even know. If poor people knew how rich rich people are, there would be riots in the streets." The findings of three studies, published over the last several years in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, suggest that Rock is right. We have no idea how unequal our society has become.

In their 2011 paper, Michael Norton and Dan Ariely analyzed beliefs about wealth inequality. They asked more than 5,000 Americans to guess the percentage of wealth (i.e., savings, property, stocks, etc., minus debts) owned by each fifth of the population. Next, they asked people to construct their ideal distributions. Imagine a pizza of all the wealth in the United States. What percentage of that pizza belongs to the top 20% of Americans? How big of a slice does the bottom 40% have? In an ideal world, how much should they have?

The average American believes that the richest fifth own 59% of the wealth and that the bottom 40% own 9%. The reality is strikingly different. The top 20% of US households own more than 84% of the wealth, and the bottom 40% combine for a paltry 0.3%. The Walton family, for example, has more wealth than 42% of American families combined.

We don't want to live like this. In our ideal distribution, the top quintile owns 32% and the bottom two quintiles own 25%. As the journalist Chrystia Freeland put it, "Americans actually live in Russia, although they think they live in Sweden. And they would like to live on a kibbutz." Norton and Ariely found a surprising level of consensus: everyone — even Republicans and the wealthy—wants a more equal distribution of wealth than the status quo.

This all might ring a bell. An infographic video of the study went viral and has been watched more than 16 million times.

In a study published last year, Norton and Sorapop Kiatpongsan used a similar approach to assess perceptions of income inequality. They asked about 55,000 people from 40 countries to estimate how much corporate CEOs and unskilled workers earned. Then they asked people how much CEOs and workers should earn. The median American estimated that the CEO-to-worker pay-ratio was 30-to-1, and that ideally, it'd be 7-to-1. The reality? 354-to-1. Fifty years ago, it was 20-to-1. Again, the patterns were the same for all subgroups, regardless of age, education, political affiliation, or opinion on inequality and pay. "In sum," the researchers concluded, "respondents underestimate actual pay gaps, and their ideal pay gaps are even further from reality than those underestimates."

These two studies imply that our apathy about inequality is due to rose-colored misperceptions. But while Americans acknowledge that the gap between the rich and poor has widened over the last decade, very few see it as a serious issue. Just five percent of Americans think that inequality is a major problem in need of attention. While the occupy movement may have a tangible legacy, Americans aren't rioting in the streets.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/economic-inequality-it-s-far-worse-than-you-think/>

Japan an unhealthy longevity superpower**Aug. 16, 2016 06:30 am JST**

Want to live long? Laugh. Got nothing to laugh about? Laugh anyway. Force yourself. Seriously. Many factors go into longevity, some obvious, others mysterious. It makes sense, somehow, that a mirthful disposition would be conducive to long life, and so it is – people who laugh naturally and readily live, on average, seven years longer than those of sour mien. The surprise is that even forced laughter is life-promoting – not as much so a natural laughter, but by roughly two years over non-laughers.

Japan's longevity is world-leading, men living on average 79 years, women 86. A closer look blunts the celebration that seems to call for, says Sapio (September): "Japan is an unhealthy longevity superpower." Health ministry statistics illustrate the point. On average, they show, Japanese spend the last 10 years of their lives ill or incapacitated to the point of needing care.

The conventional wisdom on health and longevity is deceptively misleading, the magazine finds. Eat sensibly, exercise moderately, rest sufficiently – and live long. It's still good advice, but far from the whole story. It fails to include what medical experts now consider the most important point of all – "connectedness." Isolation is the biggest killer, the best promoter of illness.

Dr Yoshiki Ishikawa cites American research comparing the longevity of married people versus the single or divorced; people who socialize or engage in volunteer activities versus people who don't. The difference is too marked to be mere chance: the death rate for "unconnected" men versus "connected" men is 2.3 times higher; 2.8 times higher for women.

Particularly striking in Japan are regional differences in longevity. Yamanashi and Shizuoka Prefectures top the list. Nature in both places is abundant and beautiful (they share Mount Fuji) – leading to much hiking, climbing and vegetable consumption. Shizuoka in particular boasts an old tradition of fostering the "connectedness" Ishikawa touts. The prefecture is rich in "cooperative associations," membership dues financing group travel, group dinners and drinking and other forms of life-stretching, health-promoting conviviality. (Presumably the dining and drinking doesn't veer into the excess that would render it self-defeating.)

Okinawa on the other hand, with nature, sunshine and conviviality to spare, somehow went astray. For years it was Japan's longest-living prefecture. Women still do well, ranking 3rd nationwide, but men have fallen to 30th place. The Westernized diet gets the largest share of the blame, with the stress of hosting military installations likely a close second. Too much fast food, too little exercise. "I see this as where Japan as a whole is heading," Dr. Kazuhiro Nagao tells Sapio.

Cancer, the scourge of the body as dementia is of the mind, varies remarkably by region. Akita, Niigata, Yamagata and Ishikawa Prefectures are notorious for stomach cancer. All are on the Sea of Japan, all are snowed in in winter, and all, consequently, have diets heavy on pickles and therefore salt.

Bowel cancer rages in Akita, Aomori, Kyoto and Wakayama Prefectures; lung cancer in Wakayama and Ishikawa Prefectures; liver cancer in Fukuoka, Osaka and Wakayama Prefectures. Tokyo is tops in breast cancer. A final anomaly: cancer death rates tend to be lower in prefectures where cancer rates are highest. That's where the best care is to be found.

<https://japantoday.com/category/features/kuchikomi/japan-an-unhealthy-longevity-superpower>

Loving Homework

By Anthony Fensom

Homework is the bane of schoolchildren worldwide, but is still pushed on kids by parents and educators. Is the battle really necessary?

Getting up at six o'clock in the morning again to do homework on a weekday, my 9-year-old daughter declared she was finished with extra study.

"When kids rule the world, there will be no homework," she proclaimed.

With that day yet to arrive, kids around the world are still racking up plenty of hours on homework. According to a recent study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, kids in Shanghai top the global study league with an average of 13.8 hours per week, nearly three times the OECD average of 4.9 hours.

Children in Australia and the United States did around six hours a week of homework set by teachers, while those in Japan reported a surprisingly low 3.8 hours. However, Japanese kids do a lot more extra work in juku (cram) tuition, which helps prepare for future school entrance examinations.

Does all that extra work pay off? Based on the latest 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey of 15-year-old students, Asian teens outperformed the rest of the world, with those in Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Macau and Japan the top performers.

Among the OECD countries that took part in PISA, Japan ranked first in reading and science and second in mathematics performance, continuing its strong record. By contrast, Australian students ranked 17th in math, 10th in reading and eighth in science, falling further behind its Asian neighbors.

And when it comes to our kids' future, studying more pays off in the long run. A tertiary-educated worker in Japan typically earns around 52 percent more over the course of his or her working life than someone whose highest qualification is high school.

Japan even has its own special play school for future workers. At Tokyo's KidZania, "a land of kids, by kids, for kids," children can try out more than 80 different jobs, including being a doctor, firefighter or journalist.

But all work and no play makes Jack (or Taro) a dull boy. Researchers advise parents to spend time on physical activity with their kids, to ensure children lead healthy lifestyles.

So next time your kids complain about homework, just remind them it is for their ultimate benefit. But also spend time having a walk, run or swim, because kids need all the power they can get to rule the world.

<http://st.japantimes.co.jp/essay/?p=ey20141107>

Chinese Factory Replaces 90% of Humans With Robots, Production Soars

By Conner Forrest July 30, 2015,

The gravest fear that has rippled through humanity from the technology industry is that, someday, almost all of our jobs will be replaced by robots.

While that fear is often laughed off as something that will only happen far into the future, the truth is that it's actually happening right now.

In Dongguan City, located in the central Guangdong province of China, a technology company has set up a factory run almost exclusively by robots, and the results are fascinating.

The Changying Precision Technology Company factory in Dongguan has automated production lines that use robotic arms to produce parts for cell phones. The factory also has automated machining equipment, autonomous transport trucks, and other automated equipment in the warehouse.

There are still people working at the factory, though. Three workers check and monitor each production line and there are other employees who monitor a computer control system. Previously, there were 650 employees at the factory. With the new robots, there's now only 60. Luo Weiqiang, general manager of the company, told the People's Daily that the number of employees could drop to 20 in the future.

The robots have produced almost three times as many pieces as were produced before. According to the People's Daily, production per person has increased from 8,000 pieces to 21,000 pieces. That's a 162.5% increase.

The increased production rate hasn't come at the cost of quality either. In fact, quality has improved. Before the robots, the product defect rate was 25%, now it is below 5%.

Shenzhen Evenwin Precision Technology, also based in Dongguan, announced a similar effort in May 2015. This region of China is often referred to as the "world's workshop" due to the high number of factories located there.

The shift happening with automation has been in the works for many similar companies in the area for quite some time. Foxconn, the controversial manufacturer of many gadgets such as the iPhone and iPad announced its robot initiative back in 2011.

Dongguan is about an hour's car ride north of Shenzhen, which is widely regarded as one of the top regions in the world for gadget manufacturing. The growth of robotics in the area's factories comes amidst a particularly harsh climate around factory worker conditions, highlighted by strikes in the area. One can only wonder whether automation will add fuel to the fire or quell some of the unrest.

Some of the influx of robotics in the region is due to the Made in China 2025 initiative, and we will continue to see automation affect the area and potentially reduce the number of manufacturing jobs. Additionally, in March, 2015, the Guangdong government announced a three year plan to increase automation in the region by subsidizing the purchase of robots.

According to the International Federation of Robotics (IFR), electronics production was one of the biggest growth drivers for the sales of industrial robots. China was the largest market for industrial robotics in 2014 with nearly 60,000 robots sold.

<http://www.techrepublic.com/article/chinese-factory-replaces-90-of-humans-with-robots-production-soars/>

'Superhuman' slugger tops year's list of buzzwords

BY DAISUKE KIKUCHI, STAFF WRITER

A superhuman effort on the baseball field inspired the top buzzword of the year, it was announced Thursday, in a contest that highlights social, political and entertainment trends.

The winning entry was *kamitteru*, or superhuman behavior, honoring the clutch performance of Hiroshima Toyo Carp outfielder Seiya Suzuki.

The phrase was used by the team's manager, Koichi Ogata, when Suzuki hit a game-ending home run for the second straight day against the Orix Buffaloes in June.

"I'm not the one who said kamitteru, so it's a bit difficult to react, but I'm very happy about it," Suzuki said at an awards ceremony held at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward.

His team won this year's Central League championship for the first time in 25 years. "I will never forget that kamitteru was awarded in a great year for Hiroshima Toyo Carp," he said.

The Jiyukokuminsha publishing house also announced nine other winners in the 2016 U-Can Shingo Ryukogo Taisho (2016 U-Can New Words and Buzzwords Awards).

Winners last year included phrases pointed at Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, such as *Abe seiji wo yurusanai* (We will not tolerate Abe's politics) on the Diet's passage of controversial security bills, as well as "SEALDs," based on the massive protests organized by the bills' opponents.

Another winner was *Hoikuen ochita. Nihon shine* (Didn't get a day care slot. Drop dead, Japan) targets Abe's *ichioku sokatsuyaku shakai* (dynamic engagement of all citizens) plan. The remark was used in a blog post penned by an anonymous writer who was angry with the ongoing day care shortage. Becoming a hot topic, it made its way into debates in the Diet and triggered promises of legislative change from lawmakers.

Two entertainment buzzwords were also selected as winners: PPAP (Pen-Pineapple-Apple-Pen), a smash-hit video by comedian Pikotaro that earned Guinness World Record honors as the shortest song to break the Billboard Hot 100, and "Pokemon Go," an augmented reality smartphone game that appealed to both hardcore and casual players of all ages.

The editorial team of the weekly Shukan Bunshun magazine was also recognized for the buzzword *gesu furin* (sleazy affairs), in response to the magazine's many scoops this year on adultery committed by celebrities.

Other winners include *seichi junrei* (holy pilgrimage), *Toranpu gensho* (The Trump phenomenon), *amoore* (love), *mainasu kinri* (negative interest rates) and *morido* (layer of clean soil).

The six-member selection committee included political scientist Kang Sang-jung, poet Machi Tawara and manga author Mitsuru Yaku. The group was without its former leader Shuntaro Torigoe, a journalist who was defeated by Yuriko Koike in this year's Tokyo gubernatorial election.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/12/01/national/superhuman-slugger-tops-years-list-buzzwords/#.WUox9euGOUk>

Sleep deprivation has genetic consequences
Effects from disruption of DNA expression will take years to detail
BY DAVID BROWN, THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON – Hey, you, yawning at 2 in the afternoon. Your genes feel it, too. A new study, paid for by the U.S. Air Force is helping illuminate what happens at the genetic level when we don't get enough sleep.

It turns out that chronic sleep deprivation — in this experiment, less than six hours a night for a week — changes the activity of about 700 genes, which is roughly 3 percent of all we carry.

About one-third of the affected genes are ramped up when we go with insufficient sleep night after night. The other two-thirds are partially suppressed. Hundreds of “circadian genes” whose activity rises and falls each day lose their rhythm.

Among the genes disturbed by sleep deprivation are ones involved in metabolism, immunity, inflammation, hormone response, the expression of other genes and the organization of material called chromatin on chromosomes. These changes may help explain how inadequate sleep alters attention and thinking and raises the risk for illnesses such as diabetes and coronary heart disease.

“The findings will identify some of the pathways linking insufficient sleep and negative health outcomes,” said Derk-Jan Dijk, a physiologist at the University of Surrey in England, who led the study. “But how these things ultimately lead to obesity or diabetes is an unanswered question at this moment.”

The experiment's results are “consistent with what we know from animal studies,” said James Krueger, a sleep researcher at Washington State University. “But until you do it in a human, you don't know. We now have a survey of what genes are affected in humans by chronic sleep loss.”

What is clear is that inadequate sleep is a big problem. In the federal government's periodic National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 37 percent of adults in 2008 reported “inadequate sleep” and 29 percent “severe sleep deprivation.” In a different survey in 2010, about 30 percent of employed adults reported sleeping six hours or less each day. Among night-shift workers, the prevalence of “short sleep” was 44 percent — and in those in warehousing and transportation, it was 70 percent.

A two-decade study of Wisconsin parents published last month found that 41 percent of parents of children younger than 18 slept for less than seven hours each night, and 8 percent for less than six hours. Only 31 percent of American high school students sleep eight hours on an average school night.

Adapted from:

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/08/world/science-health-world/sleep-deprivation-has-genetic-consequences/#.Vc0yz2AVfFI>

The Four Seasons in Japan

The Japanese make a lot of the fact that they have four distinct seasons - as if it was something unique to their country. Actually, the fact that the archipelago covers several climatic zones and is caught between the Asian continent and the Pacific does cause dramatic mood swings in the weather. Cold, dry winters and hot, humid summers can be found all over the world but there are certain seasonal treats that only Japan can offer and others that have their own local twist.

Winter

The snows of winter are eagerly awaited by skiers and snowboarders, who fill popular resorts such as Hakuba and Naeba and parade the latest fashions on the slopes. Winter sports have become hugely popular in recent years and the 1998 Winter Olympics held in Nagano were hugely successful. The Yuki Matsuri (snow festival) held in Sapporo every February attracts thousands of tourists from Japan and abroad. The chilly weather takes its toll on the nation's health and it's common to see people wearing white gauze masks over their mouths. The masks are not to protect the wearer but rather to prevent others from catching the cold - very considerate.

Spring

In spring, one of the best-loved symbols of Japan makes a dramatic sweep across the country. Sakura (cherry blossoms) bloom usually from the end of March through April in a kind of wave starting in southern Kyushu and working its way northeast. News reports keep the populace up to date on the best places to enjoy hanami (lit. flower viewing). The hanami tradition has been popular since the Heian Period (794-1185) and is a good example of the Japanese view of beauty in nature. And so every year, hundreds of thousands of Japanese of all ages gather beneath the pink blooms, sing karaoke, dance and drink till they fall over.

Summer

In summer, temperatures get to the mid-30's in most areas and the humidity can be unbearable. Only Hokkaido is spared the worst of the extremes. At the weekend, people flock in their thousands to the beaches or to the relative cool of the mountains. Summer is also the season of matsuri (festivals) and hanabi (fireworks). The biggest festival of the year, Obon is held in August (July in some areas). The annual hanabi taikai (fireworks display) held on the Sumida River in Tokyo is hugely popular, drawing over a million and a half people every year. Started in 1733 by rival firework makers Tamaya and Kagiya, the dramatic and exhilarating explosions still draw excited shouts of 'Tamaya!' and 'Kagiya!' from the crowd. Although schools are on vacation in July and August, high school baseball teams are busy vying for a chance to represent their prefecture at the baseball championship held at Koshien Stadium in Hyogo Prefecture. The event is eagerly followed by the whole country.

Autumn

The end of summer and beginning of autumn sees the arrival from the Pacific of typhoons, tropical storms equivalent to hurricanes in the West. Most typhoons hit the Kyushu region first and then proceed across the country, wreaking havoc. Some of the worst typhoons have killed thousands of people. A typhoon was also responsible for sinking the fleet of the invading Mongols in the 13th century, earning itself the name kamikaze (divine wind). September is the time for tsukimi (moon viewing). Like hanami, it is a tradition dating from the Heian Period although it is not as popular today. As the weather cools in October and November, leaves begin to change color and suddenly the landscape is a dramatic palette of red, brown, orange, yellow and green. The koyo (red leaves) of late autumn are an often breathtaking sight, especially against a backdrop of Mt Fuji or a temple in Kyoto.

<http://www.japan-zone.com/culture/season.shtml>

Japanese Women Face Tough Reality in Work and Marriage

Kawaguchi Akira

Despite much-trumpeted policies aiming to encourage female participation in the workforce, Japanese women must contend with both an economic gender gap and the gap between their aspirations and the reality for careers and marriage.

Japan's Persistent Gender Gap

In the *Global Gender Gap Report 2014*, published by the World Economic Forum, Japan **ranked 102nd** out of 142 countries for economic participation and opportunity (104th overall). Japan scored at a consistently low level for a major developed nation, with a female-to-male ratio of 0.12 for legislators, senior officials, and managers (112th); 0.75 for labor force participation (83rd); 0.87 for professional and technical workers (78th); 0.60 for estimated earned income (74th); and 0.68 for wage equality for similar work (53rd). Since the first report was published in 2006, it has made no tangible improvement.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Act was passed 30 years ago. While it cannot be denied that there has been some progress in raising the economic status of Japanese women in that time, other developed countries have achieved a faster reduction in the gender gap.

Traditional Roles and Corporate Discrimination

There are two main reasons for the size of Japan's economic gender gap. First, the traditional roles of the husband as breadwinner and the wife as homemaker retain a strong influence. The employment rate for women with children less than three years old is only 30%, which is extremely low compared with the 52% average for members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. As women are expected to take on the bulk of responsibility for housework and raising children, it is difficult for them to establish a career path.

The second reason is corporate discrimination against women. Most Japanese companies have internal training systems that are based on lifelong employment. Under these systems, companies hire new graduates and spend time training them, transferring them regularly every few years. For companies with nationwide operations, it is common for each transfer to require relocation. The systems are unfavorable to women, many of whom are unable to leave their families and transfer to other locations and end up quitting their jobs instead. For these reasons, women are discriminated against in the recruitment process, and even if they are hired, they are not given the same opportunities as male employees in terms of position, training, and promotion.

A typical form of discrimination can be seen in the personnel management systems adopted by around half of major corporations, which divide employees into different career tracks. New staff members are recruited into either the *sōgōshoku* (managerial) or *ippanshoku* (general clerical) track. The former usually involves transfers between different offices and leads to management positions, while the latter has no transfers, but no possibility of promotion to management level.

In 2012, 72% of corporations hiring personnel for a *sōgōshoku* track requiring transfer between locations stated that more than 80% of their hires in that category were male. In the same survey, 52% of corporations with an *ippanshoku* track stated that more than 80% of employees hired for this track were female. In other words, the two-track system is effectively used to divide employees by gender. Japan is the only developed country where this kind of loophole is openly in use.

<http://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a04601/>

Ramen vs. “Washoku”: The Changing Face of Japanese Cuisine

Barak Kushner

A Sea of Ramen

The 2012 book *Slurp!* explores the history of ramen from Chinese origins to its place in modern Japanese pop culture.

After I wrote my ramen history *Slurp!* I was asked by more than a fair share of Japanese newspapers and publishers, why now? Why was there a boom in ramen sales in the West, or in Japan for that matter?

In contrast to the stereotype of a delicate and fairly bland *washoku*, contemporary Japan almost floats on a sea of various forms of ramen. Currently, the world devours close to 103 billion packages of instant ramen a year, and ramen accounts for a significant portion of meals eaten outside the home in Japan. At last count there were tens of thousands of ramen shops throughout Japan, as well as films, cartoons, songs, television shows, magazines, books and blogs—a virtual avalanche of popular culture, all focusing on ramen. This is now starting to trickle out to the rest of the world—there is a Michelin-starred ramen restaurant in Hong Kong and a recent surge in ramen dining in London, which supposedly has more than 20 shops. Ramen has gone global. But is it Japanese?

Why has ramen perhaps taken over as the archetypal example of Japanese food even though it is apparently considered insufficiently Japanese to be listed as such in the UNESCO application? Is ramen popular because it is full of umami, or due to some other factors? We should note that the entire ramen boom, which really took off in the early 1990s, intersects with the precise downturn of the Japanese economy and the rise of what has been labelled as Japan’s “lost decades.” In short, the international ramen explosion that is now happening has less to do with government promotion and the limited success of establishing *washoku* as a world cuisine and more to do, perhaps, with the fact that, like the sandwich, ramen is a “platform food” that can easily be adapted to local tastes.

Ramen is Japan! To many, it embodies the culmination of the country’s postwar history. The noodle soup has left an indelible mark on Japanese society and fused itself so tightly to contemporary culture that a Japan without ramen is unthinkable, as several corporate executives and ramen consultants told me in interviews. It is not just because ramen is a tasty diversion but more because ramen itself has become a staple consumer element deeply tied into popular culture and is, more importantly, a face of Japan to the wider world. Like Sony, Toyota, and Panasonic, the rise of ramen parallels Japan’s rise from the ashes of World War II into an economic powerhouse. And it is not only Japanese who have made this connection between ramen and their country’s popular culture. A cursory look at how ramen is sold around the world demonstrates that selling ramen as a Japanese product is good for sales. In Taiwan, a country with its own long noodle traditions, ramen is often expressly sold as *rishi* or in the “Japanese style,” to set it apart from native competitors. And it is frequently more expensive as well.

I propose that ramen has successfully developed, in a way different from sushi and other “exotic” Japanese foods, as an item linked to locale and popular culture. In addition, ramen has now become a “brand idea” in Japan, specifically shaping and promoting certain regional characteristics in the minds of consumers as a way of divvying up the dizzying homogeneity of contemporary Japan.

<http://www.nippon.com/en/features/c02203/>