

A message from Consul-General Keizo Takewaka

2017 Spring Imperial Decorations: the Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG

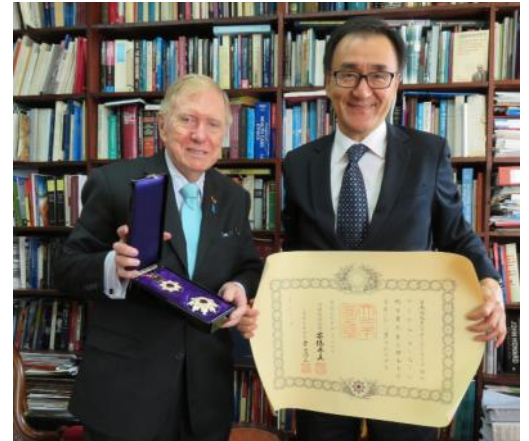
The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star in the 2017 Spring Imperial Decorations.

Mr Kirby kindly shares a few words about receiving the Imperial Decoration.

Naturally, I was grateful, as an Australian citizen, to be selected to receive the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star. I was honoured to receive the insignia from Prime Minister Abe, as I had earlier had the most intense and fruitful meetings with him in my capacity as Chair of the UN Human Rights Council's commission of inquiry on human rights violations in DPRK (North Korea). He conveyed to me the deep sense of affront and outrage that is widespread in Japan over the piratical conduct of North Korea in sending its agents to Japan to seize peaceful citizens and to take them back to serve apparently trivial purposes in North Korea. The grief and distress of many families can be easily imagined. I shared the same sense of concern and this was expressed in the report of the commission. That report was upheld by the Human Rights Council, The General Assembly and even made its way, exceptionally, onto the agenda of the Security Council.

It was also a profound honour for me to be received in audience by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. I will never forget that audience or the words of encouragement expressed by the Emperor on that occasion.

The honour was not only a personal or national one. It was a tribute to the hard-working secretariat and officers



Consul-General Takewaka visited
Mr Kirby on his return from Tokyo

of the United Nations who worked with honesty and dedication in preparing our report in little more than 6 months. It is as damning as it is readable and confronting. I view the decision to confer the award on my colleague Marzuki Darusman (Indonesia), past special rapporteur of the United Nations, and me as a clear signal that the Japanese Government has not abandoned its determination to pursue the crime against humanity involved in the abductions in the international community and other crimes revealed in our report. The recent dangerous escalation in the security situation, caused by North Korea, simply underlines the importance of the international civilised community finding a solution to these irresponsible acts, and rendering those who are guilty of great international crimes, accountable for the wrongs they have done and are doing.

Dear Readers,

As this year marks the 75th anniversary of Japan's attack on Australia in 1942, I attended several commemorative services in Sydney. Hearing the words 'Lest we forget' I was deeply moved to feel not only the conviction that we must remember the victims of the war, but also the resolve that we must strive for peace and the future. The participation of the young generation in those events was also very valuable, since they will make the future.

Young people are active in creating Japan-Australia ties as shown here in the AJS NSW University Awards 2017 (p.3) and the JET Program (p.4). These links promise much for the future.

Other key players are those who will be involved in Rugby World Cup 2019 and the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Sports go beyond national boundaries to reach infinite exchanges.

Our international connections are diverse and strong, as this year's list of Spring Imperial Decorations bore witness. The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG has been recognised by the Japanese Government for his achievement contributing to promoting understanding in the international community of the situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) including the issue of abductions of Japanese citizens.

Turning to a different topic, this newsletter also includes a report on Ehime prefecture (p.8). Regional tourism is playing an increasingly important role in Japan and tourism is another avenue which helps to develop exchange between our two countries.

Keizo Takewaka

Commemorative services in Sydney

On 6 May, a ceremony commemorating the **75th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea** was held at Darling Harbour, Sydney, by the Australian National Maritime Museum and Naval Officers Club. Senior members of the Royal Australian Navy, representatives from the US, and Mr Keizo Takewaka, Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, were invited to participate and laid floral wreaths [right].



On 1 June, at the HMAS Kuttabul naval base, a memorial service was held to commemorate the **75th anniversary of the attack on Sydney Harbour** by Japanese midget submarines. Consul-General Takewaka was invited to the ceremony and laid a wreath. He also laid a wreath in front of a midget submarine inside the RAN Heritage Centre [left].



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