

Thank you for your assistance this year (this section has been quoted from President Komaba's message.)

Amid the ferocious COVID-19 pandemic that we have been battling since last year, Japan rescinded its second State of Emergency in January and then had repeated emergencies instated and rescinded following this, but our peak of 25,000 infections per day in August calmed down from November in a dramatic decrease, which led to daily infections being recorded in the 100s.

However, infections are once again on the rise due to the new omicron variant, and there are currently concerns over whether or not we can inoculate everybody with a third booster shot of vaccine.

News from around the world revealed that America's presidential elect, Joe Biden, was appointed president in January. In August, America withdrew its troops from Afghanistan, and the Taliban once again took control of the country. In November, Olaf Scholz was sworn in as Germany's new Chancellor. In the field of sports, the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic games were held in August. It was a big relief that these ended without any dramatic problems, considering that it was hosted when Japan was experiencing its peak in COVID-19 infections.

Japan's economy began to gradually recover after crashing as a result of the risks involved with the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Quarterly Estimate of GDP issued by the Cabinet Office (on December 8th), year-on-year GDP figures for January to March 2021 were down by 1.9%, April to June figures were up by 6.1%, and July to September figures saw no change in percentage points, which in real terms means a reduction of 1.8% for January to March, a 7.3% increase for April to June, and a 1.2% increase for July to September.

However, the reason for the July to September period seeing minus figures over the same period in the previous year are due to, (1) Pressure on oceangoing distribution, (2) Restrictions on supplies throughout the supply chain due increases in COVID-19 infections in developed nations, and (3) A shortage of semiconductors. Although problems (1) and (2) are expected to be resolved in stages as we enter 2022, it will be difficult to resolve problem (3) in the short term, and this situation is forecast to continue into 2022.

Although demand within the automotive industry has returned to normal in comparison to last year, the lack of components due to problems (2) and (3) listed above have resulted in a drastic reduction of production since July, and a shortage of supplies in relation to vehicle demand will continue into the beginning of next year.

With regard to the aim of zero emissions, it has been clarified that all vehicles in Europe will be EVs between 2030 and 2040, and Japan's automobile manufacturers are moving ahead with establishing a framework of options that cover EVs, FCVs, PHEVs and hydrogen engines, etc. A spokesperson for a Japanese company, which has a high ratio of sales among developed countries in comparison to European countries, which are focusing more on sales to markets that already have an infrastructure in place, is quoted as saying, "We are not a company that solicits EVs, but a company that supplies the most suitable vehicles to environments in which they are practical, sustainable and easily purchasable on markets in nations with different power supply structures, infrastructures and government systems, etc."

And lastly, KSK has achieved a wide range of Kaizen results amid an environment in which it is not possible to promote our creative Kaizen system and allow small group activities to take place. We have also launched startup activities as a new set of initiatives while carrying out our regular business affairs, and we are currently moving ahead with the development of air sterilization purifiers, the installation of 3D printers and the development of products, and the development of lithium-ion batteries.

In addition to focusing on our customers in the automotive industry, we will also leave no stone unturned in the coming year to ensure that we are able to contribute to a broad range of customers throughout the world.

Thank you all very much for your assistance over the course of the past year. I am sincerely grateful. I look forward to your continued support in the coming year.

Automotive area (Who is the enemy and what are its true intentions?: Toyota's new EV strategies aimed at selling 3.5 million units)

To be honest, I was shocked. Toyota Motors (hereinafter "Toyota") announcement of its new EV strategies released on December 14th, 2021, came as a big surprise. However, the news that shocked this journalist the most was not the earnest shift across to EVs that Toyota showed us. It was its formidable PR strategy. The general impression this left was "is Toyota, which has always aimed at silencing the media, really giving us a straight announcement?"

Is Toyota Aiming at Wiping Clean its Image of Infiltrating the Media?

It was announced that Toyota's target for EV sales by 2030 is 3.5 million units per year. This target adds 1.5 million units to its 2-million unit target (EVs + FCVs) that was indicated in September 2021. In other words, does Toyota really think that it can sell 3.5 million units? A spokesperson for Toyota said, "We are not really sure if it is possible to sell 3.5 million units. However, as long as there are customers who want EVs, Toyota intends to do everything it can to cater to these requirements." A former Toyota employee let slip that "I doubt if Toyota really believes that it can sell 3.5 million units." Vehicles are chosen in accordance with customer decisions. If there really is a worldwide shift across to EVs by 2030 and the number of customers who wish to buy them increases explosively, then Toyota will manufacture up to 3.5 million units to meet demand. However, if this shift across to EVs fails to move ahead as expected, there is a chance that a target of 3.5 million units is an unassailable goal... This journalist felt that this is a correct interpretation of Toyota's claim of "aiming for 3.5 million units in sales." However, no phrases indicating that they "may not be able to meet this target" or that they were "not declaring that this number would be sold" were actively included in the press conference, so it was seen as a declaration of introducing a full lineup of EVs covering thirty models, from passenger vehicles through to commercial vehicles, to be released onto the market by the year 2030. Of these, sixteen models were revealed in their actual form, although most of these were thought to have been mockups. It appears that most of the media personnel who were in attendance felt that Toyota was at last getting serious about EVs, and the number of articles that included this in their title line stood out. Toyota has been concerned up until now that the "message we wish to state is not getting across to the media." This probably means that they have been searching for a method to get the media to believe that their stance on EVs is proactive without a shadow of doubt. The result of this was an easily understood presentation that actually pointed to audacious figures and a large number of vehicles, and the announcement was designed to provide transparency indicating that Toyota's stance toward EVs is not regressive.

Probably, the fact that EVs may not sell as well as touted was held close to their chests. This journalist was therefore shocked at the formidability of Toyota on pushing so hard with this announcement in

order to wipe clean their image of actively infiltrating the media with regard to EVs.

During a question-and-answer session for journalists during the press conference, president Toyoda said that "if you don't think that 3.5 million units and thirty models is proactive enough, I'd like to tell us exactly what we need to do for you to evaluate us as proactive." Hidden behind these words is Toyota's true intention of stating "So, how about 3.5 million units sold every year across thirty models? Don't you ever say that Toyota is regressive again!" This was the feeling that I received when seeing the broad grin spread across president Toyoda's face.



Source: XTECH

Keihin Seimitsu Kogyo (ISO14001 surveillance)

Continuing on from last month's IATF16949 surveillance activities, ISO14001 surveillance activities were implemented in Hokkaido on December 1st, and in the head office and Kanuma Plant between December 21st and 22nd.

Each branch began preparing for this in the early stages, and it was confirmed that all appropriate measures had been implemented to meet all requirements, and that improvements are constantly being made to ensure efficient operations.

The result of this is that all activities were completed without problem, with surveillance only being carried out on certain areas.

Post-editorial Notes: (Looking back over the past year and thoughts on Japan's general election and America's presidential election—the scars remaining from the American Civil War)

Looking back over the course of the past year, I was most disappointed in the rule established by the Liberal Democratic Party in September in which there is no change to general elections being a closed environment in which the prime minister of Japan is able to slide into his or her position under the decision of only Diet representatives of the ruling party (although we are able to watch it on TV), which I felt was a timeworn strategy that prevents everybody being able to take part in stark comparison to America's presidential election, which was a huge event held in January that was both open and extremely exciting.

Despite this, the author, who had lived in America, also got the feeling that there are various elements of ambiguity present in American people (a race that I am particularly fond of). Although the level of achieving the SDGs is rather low throughout, there are still large and dark differences particularly in Goal #10 with regard to relations between African-Americans and white Americans, and between the Democratic party and Republican party.

There are many extremely eminent African-Americans in the US, including former president Obama and the general manager of General Motors, etc., who I have met.

Known as the Black Lives Matter movement ever since a police officer violently killed a black man in May of last year, it is extremely regrettable that the overall dignity of racism has been dragged down due to a very small number of violent criminals (poverty-stricken people with nothing to lose).

Another area of deep darkness is the battle between conservatives (Republicans) and liberals (Democrats) that has divided the country.

Although ideologies have changed since the American Civil War, I can't help but feel that current actuality has a very close resemblance to this.

The frank and spirited men and the high-tension girls who worked hard like the girls from Japan's Osaka never discussed which political party they supported. I always got the feeling that this didn't strike a chord within them.

The American Civil War started in 1861 between the Union states (North: 23 northern states, 22 million people) who were in agreement with the government to end slavery, and the Confederate states (South: 11 southern states, 9 million people) who wanted to continue slavery and supported succession from the country by establishing independence for their states, etc. Spurred on by Abraham Lincoln's call for "Government of the people, by the people, for the people," the North launched its attack, bringing about the downfall of the Confederacy and ending the war in Richmond, the capital city of the southern army, in April 1865, thereby reconstructing all states back into the Union.

I get the feeling that America, that nation capable of coming together as one in a startling manner in times of emergency, still smolders with differences of opinion over the Civil War even now, more than 150 years later. Even today, the country is divided into the large numbers of pious Christian conservatives mainly occupying the Midwest and Southern states who support the Republican Party and the liberals promoting freedom mainly occupying the east and west coasts of the country who support the Democratic Party, and I feel that the concept of electing total idiots like Donald Trump to the presidency because "he is the Republican nominee" is the motivating force behind this division.

I sincerely hope that now Joe Biden has been elected president the country will once again "promote what is right for the world (not only America) in a straightforward manner" and receive the respect it deserves.

<Postscript>

The deepest impression that former president Obama left on the author was when he was the first US president in office to visit Hiroshima in May 2016.

The memory that is deeply ingrained in my mind is when he visited the area on which America dropped the atomic bomb and called for the abolishment of nuclear weapons and embraced the representative of the victims. He expressed the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in a literary manner by saying, "death fell from the sky and the world was changed." Although he did not actually offer an apology, he displayed great courage in going against all previous US presidents and visiting the area, which made me realize what a great man he was.